The Royal City of al-Qahira
The Fatimid Dynasty

- A Shi‘i group of Ismai‘li (“seveners”) sect
- 909 dynasty established in N. Africa based in Mahdiyya (Tunisia) with support of Berber tribes
- 969 Conquer Egypt and establish rival caliphate based in al-Qahira
- Late 11th century control outside of Egypt challenged by Turks (Levant), Zirids and Banu Hilal (N. Africa)
- 12th c. Crusader threats
- 1169 fall to the Ayyubid dynasty
Segregating the Ruling class from the Ruled
Elements of the Fatimid Royal City

• Walls and Gates
• The role of the Palace
• Inscriptions
• The remaking of space through ceremony
• Branding of an architectural and artistic style
Bab Zuwayla (1092)  Bab al-Futuh (1087)
A double-arched window from the Western Palace incorporated into the Bimaristan of al-Mansur Qalawun.
Architectural Influences Beyond Egypt

La Zisa Palace: Main Hall with Shadirwan and water channel.

La Cuba Palace: View of the Main Iwan
A contemporary reinterpretation

Azhar park – Cairo 2007
Central medallion in the façade of the al-Aqmar mosque 1125 CE – inscribed with the names Muhammad and Ali
The Ayyubid Wall