

The Abbasids | Abbasid Egypt

‘Fustat – on the eastern bank of the Nile and south of Cairo – was the main commercial capital.’

Egypt was directly ruled by the Abbasids between 132 and 358 / 750 and 969. Its agricultural and commercial activities provided valuable revenues, and its location acted as a gate to North Africa. A governor supported by an army and an administrative elite, was appointed to manage Egypt. Fustat – on the eastern bank of the River Nile and south of Cairo – was the main commercial capital. The city still had a majority population of Coptic Christians and the Mosque of ‘Amr Ibn al-‘As was the main place of worship for Muslims. The governor and his army occupied the ‘Asakir district adjacent to Fustat.



Name:
Textile fragment

Dynasty:
Hegira 193–8 / AD 809–13 Abbasid

Details:
Museum of Islamic Art
Cairo, Egypt

Justification:
The oldest surviving example of an official tiraz textile produced at the highly respected workshops of Fustat, which was patronised by the court and government. This piece was made in the name of Caliph al-'Amin (r. 193–8 / 809–13).



Name:
Single earring

Dynasty:
Hegira 1st–2nd century / AD 7th–8th century Umayyad or Abbasid

Details:
Museum of Islamic Art at the Pergamon Museum
Berlin, Germany

Justification:
During the Abbasid period, Egypt's urban population was prosperous and sophisticated. A variety of craft workshops and industries thrived, including jewellery-making enterprises.



Name:
Nilometer

Dynasty:
Hegira 247 / AD 861 Abbasid

Details:
Cairo, Egypt

Justification:
The Abbasids exploited Egypt's potential agriculturally. The governor was responsible both for ensuring that taxes were collected and that the Nilometer, used to estimate the level of the Nile and predict the coming harvest, was in working order.



Name:
Nilometer

Dynasty:
Hegira 247 / AD 861 Abbasid

Details:
Cairo, Egypt

Justification:
Detail of the exterior of the Nilometer taken from across the Nile.



Name:
Wooden panel

Dynasty:
Hegira 3rd century / AD 9th century Tulunid

Details:
Museum of Islamic Art
Cairo, Egypt

Justification:
The Copts excelled at woodwork. The Nile was a major supply route for all sorts of raw materials from Sub-Saharan Africa, such as ebony and ivory, both of which materials have been employed on this inlaid panel.
