

The Fatimids | Sartorial Splendour: Tiraz and Contemporary Costume

'Complete tiraz garments are rare, but fragments indicate they came in an array of colours.'

At the court in Cairo the caliph's wardrobe and his personal tiraz items were cared for by female staff. Scented flowers from the palace garden would be used to perfume his clothes. A second palatial wardrobe catered for the general court. Complete tiraz garments and other contemporary outfits are rare, but many extant fragments indicate that these textiles were of linen or silk, often embroidered with silk, and in an array of colours. Further clues about the appearance of tiraz items and contemporary dress in general, come from Fatimid wood and ivory carvings and ceramics, which show male and female figures feasting, hunting or making music in outfits that include turbans, shawls and belted tunics, many embellished with tiraz bands.



Name:

Fragment of a robe

Dynasty:

Hegira 427–87 / AD 1036–94 Fatimid; reign of Al-Mustansir billah

Details:

Museum of Islamic Art at the Pergamon Museum

Berlin, Germany

Justification:

Fragment of a tiraz textile datable to the reign of Caliph al-Mustansir (r. 427–86 / 1036–94).



Name:

Frescoed architectural fragment from a bathhouse

Dynasty:

Hegira 5th century / AD 11th century Fatimid

Details:

Museum of Islamic Art

Cairo, Egypt

Justification:

A seated reveller wearing typical Fatimid dress. The bands around his upper arms may be tiraz panels.



Name:

Rectangular piece of wood

Dynasty:

Hegira 5th century / AD 11th century Fatimid

Details:

Museum of Islamic Art

Cairo, Egypt

Justification:

At court, guests would turn out in precious costumes, often sporting tiraz garments that had been bestowed on them as gifts.



Name:
The 'Lady of Sabra' plate

Dynasty:
Hegira, second half of the 4th century / AD 10th century Fatimid

Details:
Museum of Islamic Art
Raqqada, Kairouan, Tunisia

Justification:
A female dancer who appears to be wearing a dress with frills and embroidered panels.



Name:
Human head

Dynasty:
Hegira, mid-4th–mid-5th centuries / AD 10th–11th centuries Fatimid–Zirid

Details:
Museum of Islamic Art
Raqqada, Kairouan, Tunisia

Justification:
Rare sculptural fragments such as this one from Tunisia can tell us about contemporary costume – here, a specific type of turban.
