

The Atabegs and Ayyubids | Court Life

'A plethora of smaller courts co-existed, with complex political alliances.'

There was no central court in Syria and Northern Iraq during the 4th–6th / 10th–12th centuries, rather a plethora of smaller courts co-existed with complex political alliances. The rulers often began as atabegs appointed by the Seljuqs of Iran (r. 429–590 / 1038–1194), but they soon established courts of their own. They built their palaces within citadels to protect them from the constant threat of the Crusaders, the best surviving example of which is the palace within Aleppo Citadel.



Name:

Gold necklace

Dynasty:

Approximately hegira mid-7th century / AD 13th century Ayyubid

Details:

Museum of Islamic Art
Cairo, Egypt

Justification:

A gold filigree necklace that probably belonged to a queen; once the Atabegs and Ayyubids came to power life at court reflected their privileges.



Name:

Pitcher

Dynasty:

Around hegira late 6th century / AD 12th century Atabeg

Details:

National Museum of Damascus
Damascus, Syria

Justification:

A painted pitcher depicting courtly entertainment. The Atabeg court enjoyed lavish entertainment, employing singers, dancers and musicians.



Name:

Pitcher

Dynasty:

Around hegira late 6th century / AD 12th century Atabeg

Details:

National Museum of Damascus
Damascus, Syria

Justification:

A painted pitcher depicting courtly entertainment. The Atabeg court enjoyed lavish entertainment, employing singers, dancers and musicians.



Name:

Armlet

Dynasty:

Hegira 5th century / AD 11th century Late Fatimid or Atabeg

Details:

National Museum of Damascus
Damascus, Syria

Justification:

A heavy gold bracelet that was probably worn on the upper arm by a court dancer.



Name:

Citadel of Aleppo

Dynasty:

Hegira 6th–7th century / AD 12th–13th century Zangid, Ayyubid and Mamluk

Details:

Aleppo, Syria

Justification:

Palaces were constructed within the region's massive citadels, such as Aleppo Citadel, which was fortified by the Atabegs and Ayyubids.



Name:

Citadel of Aleppo

Dynasty:

Hegira 6th–7th century / AD 12th–13th century Zangid, Ayyubid and Mamluk

Details:

Aleppo, Syria

Justification:

Aleppo Citadel, exterior view illustrating its magnificent size.
