

# The Mamluks | The Mamluk System

'Mamluks were purchased, received as gifts or taken as prisoners of war.'

The remarkable prowess of the Mamluk sultanate relied on an intricate hierarchical structure of military slaves with the Mamluk sultan at its helm. Mamluks were purchased, received as gifts or taken as prisoners of war. Initially, most were Turks, Kurds or Mongols, joined by Circassians and Georgians from the 8th / 14th century onwards. Every new Mamluk recruit was put through a complete medical examination to ensure his fitness for service. Once accepted, he learned about Islam and was taught basic Arabic; he was expected to have an unquestioning loyalty to his sultan.



**Name:**

Coat of armour

**Dynasty:**

Hegira 7th–8th century / AD 13th–14th century Mamluk

**Details:**

National Museum of Damascus  
Damascus, Syria

**Justification:**

Every Mamluk owned a sword, a lance, a bow and arrow and a suit of chain-mail body armour so that he would stand a fighting chance of withstanding blows from swords and being shot at by arrows.

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**Name:**

Scaled armours (cuirass), and swords

**Dynasty:**

Hegira 7th century / AD 13th century Mamluk

**Details:**

Jordan Archaeological Museum  
Amman, Jordan

**Justification:**

On completion of his training every Mamluk received a set of military equipment and a horse.

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**Name:**

Sword

**Dynasty:**

Hegira 907 / AD 1501 Mamluk

**Details:**

Museum of Islamic Art  
Cairo, Egypt

**Justification:**

The equipment of commanders or sultans was often embellished with gold-inlaid blessings or their official titles.

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