

The Mamluks | Everyday life in the Mamluk Sultanate

‘Every activity, inclusive of eating and the observance of personal hygiene, was undertaken “In the Name of Allah”.’

Almost all the empire’s population, rich and poor, lived their lives from the cradle to the grave according to Islam. In their quest for Paradise they observed five daily prayers, preceded by thorough ablutions, gave charitably to the poor, fasted during the month of Ramadan and tried to visit the Holy City of Mecca at least once in their lifetime. Important legal issues were based on religious law or Shari’a, derived from the Holy Qur’an and the traditions of the Prophet Muhammad. Every activity, inclusive of eating and the observance of personal hygiene, was undertaken ‘In the Name of Allah’ and with the sole intention of carrying out His wishes and pleasing Him.



Name:

Marble plaque

Dynasty:

Hegira 8th century / AD 14th century Mamluk

Details:

Museum of Islamic Art
Cairo, Egypt

Justification:

Muslims pray towards Mecca; its direction within buildings is marked by a prayer niche (mihrab) in the qibla wall, or by a plaque similar to this one.



Name:

Inheritance document

Dynasty:

Hegira 793 Dhu al-Qaeda (AD October 1st 1391) Mamluk

Details:

Islamic Museum, al-Aqsa Mosque / al-Haram al-Sharif
Jerusalem

Justification:

All legal documents were drawn up according to the directive of the Qur'an and shari'a law.



Name:

Marble cenotaphs

Dynasty:

2536: Safar 893 (January–February 1488); 2537: Safar 899 (November–December 1493) Mamluk

Details:

Museum of Turkish and Islamic Arts
Sultanahmet, Istanbul, Türkiye

Justification:

Dignitaries were buried in elaborate tombs which together with mausolea are typical of pre-Islamic culture.



Name:
Incense burner

Dynasty:
Hegira 9th–10th century / AD 15th–16th century Mamluk

Details:
Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum, Glasgow Museums
Glasgow, Scotland, United Kingdom

Justification:
Perfume and incense were integral to a Muslim's personal hygiene, and were used to fragrance the interiors of mosques, palaces and ordinary residences.



Name:
Sabil (Water Dispensary) and Kuttab (Qur'anic School) of Sultan Qaytbay

Dynasty:
Hegira 884 / AD 1479 Mamluk

Details:
Cairo, Egypt

Justification:
Mamluk rulers demonstrated their charitable giving by building public fountains and Qur'anic schools (sabil-kuttab), whereby the public fountain (sabil) is downstairs, and the school (kuttab) is upstairs.
