

The Umayyads | Administrative Reforms

'Each province continued in the tradition of the previous regime.'

For the first 70 years of their rule the Muslims made no attempt to introduce a new, Arabic-speaking administrative system for the whole of the dominion, rather each province continued in the tradition of the previous regime. In Syria the language of the revenue department was Greek, while its administration was still in the hands of local Christians. In the fiscal administration, however, the Arabs introduced an innovative system according to which all fully fledged members of the new polity were entitled to regular stipends ('ata'); a system that was financed by the taxes of the local populous. The main taxes were land tax (kharaj), a fixed rate in kind or money and the poll tax (jizya), which was imposed on every mature non-Muslim and means tested according to income. Priests, monks, and the disabled were exempt from paying jizya.



Name:

Citadel of Amman (general view)

Dynasty:

Around hegira 110 / AD 728 Umayyad

Details:

Amman, Jordan

Justification:

The citadel was an important Umayyad administrative centre comprising the infrastructure necessary for administration of the province.



Name:

Distance marker (milestone)

Dynasty:

Hegira 66–86 / AD 685–705 Umayyad

Details:

Museum of Turkish and Islamic Arts
Sultanahmet, Istanbul, Türkiye

Justification:

Milestones were used to define the distance between cities; this one marked 109 miles from Damascus to Elia (Jerusalem).



Name:

Lower half of a sculpturesque high relief

Dynasty:

Hegira about 109 / AD 727 Umayyad period

Details:

National Museum of Damascus
Damascus, Syria

Justification:

The lower half of an enthroned Umayyad ruler shown in the fashion of a Roman emperor because the Umayyads saw themselves as heirs to the Roman Empire.



Name:

Fresco panel: 'The Family of Kings'

Dynasty:

Hegira first third of the 2nd century / AD second half of the 8th century Umayyad

Details:

In situ at Qusayr 'Amra

Amman, Jordan

Justification:

The portraits of six great rulers from both the East and the West. Their names are inscribed in Arabic and Greek, symbolic of the world the Umayyad caliphs had inherited.

**Name:**

Weights

Dynasty:

Hegira first half of the 2nd century / AD first half of the 8th century Umayyad

Details:

Aqaba Archaeological Museum

Aqaba, Jordan

Justification:

Bronze weights such as these excavated at Aqaba were used daily in all kinds of commercial activities.
