

# The Umayyads | Court Ceremonials and Pastimes

'During the audience the caliph or his representative would sit on an elevated throne.'

Literary sources indicate that there were two types of audience: public (majlis al-`amm) and private (khas), the latter restricted to the closest aides and counsellors. During the audience the caliph or his representative would sit on an elevated throne (sarir), while the audience would be seated according to rank. Some buildings, like Qusayr `Amra, Khirbet al-Mafjar near Jericho, and Qasr al-Hayr al-Gharbi in Syria, have extensive iconographic programs showing musicians, dancers and female gift-bearers, pastimes that became an integral part of Umayyad court life.



**Name:**

Fresco panel: 'Group of Musicians'

**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:**

A fresco, depicting a female dancer and three musicians one of which is the boy shown here playing a flute. Dancing and music-making were popular pastimes at court.



**Name:**

Fresco panel: 'Seated Bear Playing a Musical Instrument'

**Dynasty:**

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

**Details:**

In situ at Qusayr 'Amra  
Jordan

**Justification:**

This fresco of a bear playing a lute can perhaps be interpreted as a masquerading dancer.



**Name:**

Fresco panel: 'Dancers'

**Dynasty:**

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

**Details:**

In situ at Qusayr 'Amra  
Amman, Jordan

**Justification:**

The image of a fully clad girl dancing goes back to the Roman repertoire and is present, painted, on Fatimid pottery.



**Name:**

Fresco panel: 'Tall Standing Woman at the Edge of a Pool'

**Dynasty:**

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

**Details:**

In situ at Qusayr 'Amra  
Amman, Jordan

**Justification:**

This fresco depicts a group of three women, one of whom carries water in a bucket seemingly to bathe the attendant children; the image suggests that nudity at the Umayyad court was common.

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**Name:**

Fresco panel: 'Hunting Scene'

**Dynasty:**

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

**Details:**

In situ at Qusayr 'Amra  
Amman, Jordan

**Justification:**

The theme of the hunt belongs to a standard court repertoire in Islamic art; this fresco is preserved in situ at Qusayr `Amra and occupies the whole of the upper register in the audience hall.

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