

The Fatimids | Sartorial Splendour: Tiraz and Contemporary Costume

‘Fatimid caliphs would select the most ornate tiraz textiles to reward dignitaries and courtiers.’

On special occasions the Fatimid caliphs would select the most ornate tiraz textiles or robes-of-honour to reward dignitaries and courtiers. The prime minister for instance would receive 30 complete outfits, which he was free to distribute among his staff. Others were given to high-ranking guests of the court or – at celebrations or anniversaries – even to members of the public at large. Tiraz costumes varied in type and style depending on the rank of their recipients. Gilded silks were for princely dignitaries, and there was a variety of silks for government staff.



Name:

Large dish

Dynasty:

Hegira 5th century / AD 11th century Fatimid

Details:

Museum of Islamic Art
Cairo, Egypt

Justification:

Court musicians like the woman depicted on this plate would have been among those rewarded with precious textiles, tiraz among them.



Name:

Fragment of woven linen

Dynasty:

Hegira late 5th–7th century / AD 12th–13th century Fatimid

Details:

National Museums of Scotland (NMS)
Edinburgh, Scotland, United Kingdom

Justification:

This elegant gilded silk fragment includes sections of a benedictory phrase.



Name:

Silk fragment

Dynasty:

Hegira the 540s to 70s / AD second quarter of the 12th century Fatimid

Details:

National Museums of Scotland (NMS)
Edinburgh, Scotland, United Kingdom

Justification:

On some textiles the calligraphy is used as a decorative feature rather than legible script.
