

The Atabegs and Ayyubids | Madrasas and Education

'Apprenticeship is often illustrated on the frontispieces of scientific and philosophical manuscripts.'

Literacy levels were high and the patronage of colleges competitive. Scholars – 'ulama' – from Iraq, Iran, Central Asia, al-Andalus, the Maghreb and Egypt poured into the madrasas, finding refuge in Damascus and a fertile teaching ground. Under waqf agreements (endowments) scholars were given grants, salaries and somewhere to live. Good students were awarded an ijaza (certificate) by their tutors. The process of apprenticeship is often illustrated on the frontispieces of scientific and philosophical manuscripts.



Name:
Inkstand

Dynasty:
Hegira second half of the 7th century / AD second half of the 13th century Ayyubid

Details:
Museum of Islamic Art at the Pergamon Museum
Berlin, Germany

Justification:
An ink pot would have been a valuable possession for a scholar. These two examples, one cylindrical and the other rectangular, were lavishly decorated and creatively designed.



Name:
Stand

Dynasty:
Hegira 6th–7th century / AD 12th–13th century Ayyubid

Details:
The British Museum
London, England, United Kingdom

Justification:
An ink pot would have been a valuable possession for a scholar. These two examples, one cylindrical and the other rectangular, were lavishly decorated and creatively designed.



Name:
Madrasa al-'Adiliyya

Dynasty:
Hegira 568–620 / AD 1172–1223 Atabeg/Zangid and Ayyubid

Details:
Damascus, Syria

Justification:
The madrasas were the main educational institutions and visual symbols of culture, as can be seen by Madrasa al-'Adiliyya's distinctive portal.



Name:
Madrasa al-Shu'aybiyya

Dynasty:

Hegira 545 / AD 1150 Atabeg / Zangid

Details:

Aleppo, Syria

Justification:

The madrasa had a qastal or water distributor nearby which supplied water to the whole district. The madrasa features calligraphic and vegetal carving of exceptional quality.



Name:

Manuscript on geography

Dynasty:

Hegira 741 / AD 1340 Mamluk

Details:

National Museum of Damascus
Damascus, Syria

Justification:

This encyclopaedic work, entitled 'Taqwim al-Buldan' ('The Almanac of Countries') was compiled by the Ayyubid prince Abu al-Fida (d. 732 / 1331); it became a standard educational resource.



Name:

Manuscript on geography

Dynasty:

Hegira 741 / AD 1340 Mamluk

Details:

National Museum of Damascus
Damascus, Syria

Justification:

'Taqwim al-Buldan' ('The Almanac of Countries'), which used a notably scientific categorisation of information.
