

# The Atabegs and Ayyubids | Travelling and Trading

‘Despite the political antagonism, Muslims and Franks traded with each other.’

Travel was perilous during the Middle Ages and most of the trade and pilgrimage routes between the Mediterranean, Central Asia and Arabia were extremely dangerous. As the Frankish Crusaders attacked, these routes became even more unstable. Castles and citadels were built at strategic points, such as those at Karak and Shawbak in Jordan. Despite the political antagonism, Muslims and Franks traded with each other, crossing each others’ territories and imposing taxes on each other.



**Name:**  
Qal'a Shmemis

**Dynasty:**  
Refortified and enlarged to current dimensions in Hegira 628 / AD 1230 Mostly Atabeg and Ayyubid with some Mamluk restoration

**Details:**  
Salamiyya region, Syria

**Justification:**  
The castle was crucial to the security of one of the main trade routes between Hama and the Syrian Steppes.



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**Details:**  
Salamiyya region, Syria

**Justification:**  
General view of Shmemis Castle on top of the mound.



**Name:**  
Khan al-'Arus

**Dynasty:**  
Hegira 577 / AD 1181–2 Ayyubid

**Details:**  
On the Damascus–Homs road, Syria

**Justification:**  
A fortress-like caravanserai, Khan al-'Arus is located on the Damascus to Homs road. The style is typical of that used for military defences in the Ayyubid period, particularly during the time of Saladin.



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Khan al-'Arus, general view.

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