

The Umayyads | Court Ceremonials and Pastimes

'An elaborate ceremonial of receptions and audiences evolved.'

From the 2nd / 8th century, the Umayyad caliphate increasingly directed its attention to the East as a reaction to a series of unsuccessful attempts to conquer Constantinople. This shift led to a closer identification with Iran, an identification reflected in the art and architecture but above all in court ceremonials. An elaborate ceremonial of receptions and audiences evolved, which emphasised the separation of the ruler from his subjects. The surviving Umayyad palaces with their extensive decoration in various media, as well as literary sources from the period, permit us to form an idea about the court ceremonials and pastimes of the ruling elite.



Name:
Floor painting

Dynasty:
Hegira 109 / AD 727 Umayyad

Details:
National Museum of Damascus
Damascus, Syria

Justification:
A floor painting with a female carrying a basket of fruit. The image is a personification of Earth and it was probably intended to evoke the prosperous rule of the Umayyad caliph.



Name:
Floor painting

Dynasty:
Hegira 109 / AD 727 Umayyad

Details:
National Museum of Damascus
Damascus, Syria

Justification:
A hunting scene with musicians that suggests a strong Sassanian influence. The image is at the beginning of a series depicting the hunt at the Islamic court.



Name:
Qusayr 'Amra

Dynasty:
Hegira, after 92 / AD 710 Umayyad

Details:
Amra, Jordan

Justification:
The hammam at Qusayr 'Amra is one of the most impressive buildings extant. Its style and ethos belong to the caliphal hammam culture of the Umayyad period.



Name:
Fresco on the Cupola

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:

A fresco on the cupola in the hot-room (caldarium) at Qusayr 'Amra. It depicts the constellations and signs of the zodiac.

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