Water | Water and Everyday Life

‘An attendant hired to distribute water in cups sat behind the grille and handed the water out.’

The obligation to provide fresh water to the urban population led to the development of a distinctive public monument: the water fountain, or sabil. Sabils – of which a number were built by the Mamluks (r. 648–92 / 1250–1517) in Cairo and Jerusalem – consisted of an underground cistern and a chamber with window grilles facing onto the street at ground level. An attendant hired to distribute water in cups sat behind the grille and handed the water out to passers-by. The sabil-kuttab had a similar fountain arrangement, with the addition of a covered first-floor gallery which served as a children’s elementary school (kuttab).

Name:
Sabil (Water Dispensary) and Kuttab (Qur'anic School) of 'Abd al-Rahman Katkhuda

Dynasty:
Hegira 1157 / AD 1744 Ottoman

Details:
Cairo, Egypt

Justification:
The form of the Sabil-kuttab of Abd al-Rahman Katkhuda reflects its dual function as a public sabil at street level and a school or kuttab in the porch on the first and second floors.

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Sabil (Water Dispensary) and Kuttab (Qur'anic School) of 'Abd al-Rahman Katkhuda

Dynasty:
Hegira 1157 / AD 1744 Ottoman

Details:
Cairo, Egypt

Justification:
Interior view of the arched porch at the Sabil-kuttab of Katkhuda.

Name:
Sabil (Water Dispensary) and Kuttab (Qur'anic School) of 'Abd al-Rahman Katkhuda

Dynasty:
Hegira 1157 / AD 1744 Ottoman

Details:
Cairo, Egypt

Justification:
Detail of entranceway to the Sabil-kuttab of Katkhuda.

Name:
Sabil of Sultan Qaytbay

Dynasty:
Built in AH 887 / AD 1482, then renovated in AH 1300 / AD 1882–3 The building dates to the Mamluk period and was renovated in the Ottoman period

Details:

Jerusalem

Justification:
The sabil is located in the Haram al-Sharif in Jerusalem and was built on the site of an earlier sabil. With its distinctive cupola, it was constructed by the Mamluk Sultan Qaytbay (r. 872–901/ 1468–96) in 887 / 1482.

Name:
Sabil of Sultan Qaytbay

Dynasty:
Built in AH 887 / AD 1482, then renovated in AH 1300 / AD 1882–3 The building dates to the Mamluk period and was renovated in the Ottoman period

Details:
Jerusalem

Justification:
Close-up view of calligraphic roundel on the wall of the Sabil of Qaytbay.

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Sabil of Sultan Qaytbay

Dynasty:
Built in AH 887 / AD 1482, then renovated in AH 1300 / AD 1882–3 The building dates to the Mamluk period and was renovated in the Ottoman period

Details:
Jerusalem

Justification:
Close-up view of the windows of the Sabil of Qaytbay.