

Water

For Muslims, water is the secret of life and a blessing from God. In the Qur'an, God says '... and We made out of water every living thing.' (21: 30). According to Islamic law, it is forbidden to deprive anyone who is thirsty of water, even if the source is privately owned. According to the Hadith ('Sayings of the Prophet'), Muslims are partners in water, fire and grass – naturally occurring phenomena – that belong to all. While the right to water is an entitlement of every living being, there are water-ownership rules concerning land irrigation. For example, a well-digger gets to be the first to irrigate his land, after which water may be used in the surrounding area so long as it remains sufficient. This is usually an area of 40 cubits radius, a reserved area known as the haram. The same word is used to designate a sacred space, particularly a mosque. Harim, which is a variation of the previous word, and which passed into English as 'harem', is used to designate the part of the house to which access is forbidden, particularly the women's quarters. Throughout history, Muslim societies have worked on developing ways to maintain regular and sufficient water supplies. Like most societies the needs were diverse: drinking water, water for washing and ritual purification (



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

Hegira 1157 / AD 1744

Ottoman

Cairo, Egypt



Small bucket

Hegira 8th century / AD 14th century

Nasrid

National Archaeological Museum

Madrid, Spain



Norias (nawa'ir) of Hama

Hegira 6th–10th century / AD 12th–16th century

Atabeg, Ayyubid, Mamluk, and Ottoman

Hama along the Orontes River, Syria