

## Water | Water Usage: Drinking and Washing

'Water is scarce in desert regions, and thus valuable.'

Because water is scarce in desert regions, and thus valuable, the implements with which people drink and wash are often ornately decorated. In wealthy households – such as that of a Mamluk governor of Qus in Upper Egypt – water would have been poured over guest's hands from inlaid metal ewers and into basins for washing before and after meals. Often, Mamluk inlaid-metal basins are decorated with a whorl of fish on the inside base so that when the basin is filled with water, the fish appear to be swimming. Likewise, fish are among the motifs found in Mamluk green-glazed pottery which imitates Chinese celadon wares.



**Name:**  
Goblet

**Dynasty:**  
Hegira, second half of the 4th–first half of the 5th centuries / AD 10th–11th centuries Fatimid–Zirid

**Details:**  
Museum of Islamic Art  
Raqqada, Kairouan, Tunisia

**Justification:**  
Glass-making technology, inherited ultimately from the Romans, was strong in the Mediterranean during the 4th and 5th / 10th and 11th centuries. Glass was used for drinking vessels and many other domestic items.

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**Name:**  
Ewer

**Dynasty:**  
Hegira 709–41 / AD 1309–40 Mamluk

**Details:**  
Museum of Islamic Art  
Cairo, Egypt

**Justification:**  
A brass ewer and basin inlaid with silver and copper and decorated with the blazon of Emir Tabtaq, governor of Qus in Upper Egypt from 708–40 / 1309–40.

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**Name:**  
Basin

**Dynasty:**  
Hegira 8th century / AD 14th century Mamluk

**Details:**  
Museum of Islamic Art  
Cairo, Egypt

**Justification:**  
A brass ewer and basin inlaid with silver and copper and decorated with the blazon of Emir Tabtaq, governor of Qus in Upper Egypt from 708–40 / 1309–40.

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**Name:**  
Wash basin and jug

**Dynasty:**  
Hegira second half of 7th century / AD second half of 13th century Post-Zangid

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

**Justification:**  
A brass ewer-and-basin set that is inlaid with gold and silver. A complex design of hunting and banqueting scenes together with zodiacal signs, all within medallions, are linked together by calligraphic blessings aimed at the user.

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**Name:**  
Ewer

**Dynasty:**  
Hegira 7th century / AD 13th century Ayyubid

**Details:**  
Burrell Collection, Glasgow Museums  
Glasgow, Scotland, United Kingdom

**Justification:**  
A 7th- / 13th-century Syrian glazed-ceramic ewer that would have been used for drinking-water.

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