

Water | Water and Everyday Life

‘Once a year when the River Nile was in flood, the water was transported in animal skins on the backs of camels or mules to the cisterns.’

Sabils were often constructed adjacent to mosques and were supported by waqfs, or charitable endowments. In Cairo, once a year when the River Nile was in flood, the water was transported from the river to the sabil, and carried in animal skins on the backs of camels or mules. The water was then brought to a stone basin on the ground-floor from which the attendant scooped cupfuls for all those who were thirsty. In some sabils the water from the cistern fed a fountain which emptied into a basin.



Name:
Nejjarin Funduq

Dynasty:
Hegira 1123 / AD 1711 'Alawid

Details:
Fez, Morocco

Justification:
An ornate public fountain, known in Morocco as sikaya, offered water to guests staying at the caravanserai (funduq in Morocco).



Name:
Sabil (public fountain) of Yussef Dey

Dynasty:
Hegira 11th century / AD 17th century Muradid (Ottoman)

Details:
Bizerte, Tunisia

Justification:
The sabil located on one of the quays of the Old Port in Bizerte, is inscribed with poetic verses celebrating the generosity of Yussef Dey and giving thanks for the abundance of water.



Name:
Sabil (Water Dispensary) and Kuttub (Qur'anic School) of Sultan Qaytbay

Dynasty:
Hegira 884 / AD 1479 Mamluk

Details:
Cairo, Egypt

Justification:
The richly decorated sabil façade, similar to the fountain built by order of Sultan Qaytbay in Jerusalem, is one of the most prominent monuments in Cairo.
