

Water | Water and Everyday Life

‘Wells and domestic or palatial fountains also became the focus of decorative embellishment.’

In addition to sabils and sikayas, wells and fountains became the focus of decorative embellishment. Early medieval examples of well-coping survive from Morocco and Algeria, made from ceramic with a stamped decoration of stylised vegetation. While large stone basins are often associated with the provision of water for humans, waqf documents show that some were intended for use by animals. Palatial fountains set in public and private gardens, as found in the Western Islamic world and elsewhere, exhibit decorative fountainheads of lions, deer and dragons. Often, water is designed to pour from the mouths of these creatures into basins and pools which is then channelled through the gardens.



Name:
Coping of a well

Dynasty:
Hegira 586 / AD 1190 Almohad

Details:
Ethnographic Museum
Tetouan, Morocco

Justification:
Glazed ceramic well-curbs that are stamped with geometric, floral and architectural motifs. They are octagonal on the exterior and cylindrical on the interior and would have marked the location of a well in a house or courtyard.



Name:
Coping from a well

Dynasty:
Hegira 9th century / AD 15th century

Details:
Museum of Tlemcen (National Agency of Archaeology)
Tlemcen, Algeria

Justification:
Well-coping of a similar style and design to that typically found in Morocco; it is made of green-enamelled ceramic and is embossed.



Name:
Fragment of a basin

Dynasty:
Hegira 5th century / AD 11th century Taifa Kingdoms

Details:
National Museum of Antiquities and Islamic Arts
Algiers, Algeria

Justification:
This fragmentary piece of carved marble comes from a 5th- / 11th-century Algerian basin. It is decorated with an Arabic inscription and a scene of a horse and groom in relief.



Name:
Menara

Dynasty:
Hegira 5th / AD 11th century (first lake); Hegira 10th / AD 16th century (first pavillion); Hegira 11th / AD 17th century (final monument) Almohad; Sa'did; Alawid

Details:
Marrakesh, Morocco

Justification:
The first Almohad king 'Abd al-Mu'min had two large lakes dug in Marrakesh, one outside the town, sahirj el-bgar (the lake of the cattle) for use by the stock-breeders, and one within his private orchard, sahirj al-menara (the lake of the lighthouse, or minaret).



Name:
Fountain spout

Dynasty:
Hegira 339–90 / AD 950–1000 Umayyads of al-Andalus, Caliphate period

Details:
National Archaeological Museum
Madrid, Spain

Justification:
The wide-open mouth of this gilded bronze deer indicates that it was used as a fountainhead. Animals such as lions and deer are often associated with fountains and water.



Name:
Alhambra

Dynasty:
From Hegira 636 / AD 1238 to the reign of Muhammad V (AH 754–94 / AD 1354–91) Nasrid

Details:
Granada, Spain

Justification:
The design of the royal garden at the Alhambra Palace is based on the description of Paradise found in the Qur'an, with its four rivers of milk, honey, wine and water.
