



# The Sultan's Fountain: An Imperial Story of Cairo, Istanbul, and Amsterdam

*Agnieszka Dobrowolska, Jaroslaw Dobrowolski*

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The small sabil-kuttab (a charitable foundation particular to Cairo that combines a public water dispensary with a Quranic school) built in 1760 opposite the venerated Sayida Zeinab Mosque is almost unique in Cairo: it is one of only two dedicated by a reigning Ottoman sultan, and--astonishingly--it is decorated inside with blue-and-white tiles from Amsterdam depicting happy scenes from the Dutch countryside. Why did the sultan, Mustafa III, cloistered in his Istanbul palace, decide to build a sabil in Cairo? Why did he choose this site for it? How did it come to be adorned with Dutch tiles? What were the connections between Cairo, Istanbul, and Amsterdam in the middle of the eighteenth century? The authors answer these questions and many more in this entertaining and beautifully illustrated history of an extraordinary building, describing also the recent conservation efforts to preserve it for posterity.

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