The first person to introduce the madrasa in the Islamic west was the founder of the Hafsid dynasty, Abu Zakariya Yahya, who established the Shamamayya madrasa at Tunis in 1249. It was a simple urban house reworked to accommodate students and offer them a place of instruction and prayer. Other madrasas, such as the Muntasiriyya, begun by the caliph al-Mustasir (r. 1343–52), were built expressly for the purpose. It had a modified four-walled plan, which was undoubtedly adopted from eastern models, probably those of Mamluk Egypt (see Chapter 6), with which the Hafsid maintained close relations. All of these buildings have been so transformed by restoration, particularly in the seventeenth century, that much of their original aspect is obscured. The Hafsid’s claim to be champions of the faith can be seen not only in buildings they commissioned but also in objects. A good example is a five-volume manuscript of the Koran [147, 148], which was endowed to the Mosque of the Qasba in Tunis in March 1405 during the reign of al-Mustawakkil (r. 1394–1419). The manuscript was copied on small folios (24 × 16 cm); the paper was dyed in a range of colors from light brown to purple. Each page has fifteen lines penned in silver ink with gold chapter headings, verse markers, and marginal illumination. The script used is a typical Maghribi hand, which is distinguished from eastern Islamic scripts by the uniform thickness of the duktus, the rounded bowls of the descenders, and the peculiar dottedness of the letters fa‘ and qa‘f. This script had developed in the western Islamic lands during the eleventh century as a

regional variant of the new style of calligraphy favored in the eastern Islamic lands. The manuscript is unusual in several ways. It is an early example of a Maghribi manuscript of the Koran written on paper, for in the Islamic west parchment continued to be used for copying the Koran long after it had been supplanted by paper in the Islamic east. Its format is vertical, while most earlier manuscripts of the Koran in Maghribi script tend to have a square format. Finally its color scheme of silver and gold on tinted paper recalls one of the most famous early Koran manuscripts from the Maghrib, the so-called Blue Koran. Produced at Kairouan in the middle of the tenth century, it was a seven-volume set with gold writing on parchment dyed a deep blue. According to an early Hafsid document, the Blue Koran was in the library of the Great Mosque of Kairouan ca. 1300, and its unusual color scheme might well have provided the model for the Hafsid manuscript a century later.

The binding of the Hafsid manuscripts made of blind-tooled leather. The spine connecting the upper and lower covers is modern, but the rest, including the foredge flap, is original. The upper flap has a carpet format, with several borders enclosing a rectangular field with a central octagram. The central star and the borders are filled with a braided pattern created by blind tooling. The lower and foredge flaps have the same format, but the field is entirely filled with the braided pattern. The use of blind tooling, the central octagram, and the braided pattern are all features found on earlier bindings in the library of the mosque at Kairouan, but in order to adapt the traditional elements of a square binding to the rectangular shape of these volumes, corner-pieces have been added to create the carpet format already standard in the Islamic east.

**The Marinids**

After the Almohads were defeated at Las Navas in 1212, they withdrew to North Africa, but their rule there lasted only for a few years, as the Marinids, a tribe of nomadic Zenata Berbers, began to invade Morocco from the Sahara in 1216. They took the Almohad capital of Marrakesh in 1269 and reestablished it to second place after the foundation of their new capital, Fas al-Jadid (New Fez), on 21 March 1267. Marinid history falls into two periods. The first, from 1269 to 1358, is marked by military exploits, urban expansion, and government stability. Most of the major Marinid foundations date from this period. The second, from 1358 to 1465, is a period of slow erosion of the political structure, territorial regression, and internal division. The material prosperity of the Marinid state was based on agriculture, urban industry, and trade, particularly the gold trade with Mali. This prosperity and the image that the Marinids adopted as successors to the Almohads and champions of Maghribi Islam explain the large number of their pious foundations, many of which have survived intact, unlike those of their Hafsid rivals.

One of the first Marinid building projects (1294) was the enlargement of the congregational mosque of Taza, which had been founded by the Almohads in 1242. This eastern Moroccan town had long been of strategic importance, as it commanded the gap between the Rif mountains and the Middle Atlas, thereby controlling the major artery between Morocco and points east. One of the first towns taken by the Marinids, Taza became a base for their expansion throughout Morocco. Once in control, they lavished special attention on this provincial town, rebuilding the fortifications, endowing madrasas and a hospital, and, most importantly, enlarging the congregational mosque. According to an inscription there, the sultan Abu Ya‘qub Yusuf (r. 1286–1307) expanded it by four bays (Arab: hal) in the direction of the qibla and two more bays on the east and the west (149), thereby doubling the area of the prayer hall. The Marinid additions are clearly distinguishable from the Almohad originals on the interior by the greater width of the arches and their rounder horseshoe shape and on the exterior by a distinct break in the gabled tile roofs. The Marinids also added an enormous new court to the east of the mosque, which is virtually the same size as the mosque itself, some 72 by 44 meters. Like the expansion of the Great Mosque of Córdoba in the ninth and tenth centuries, the enlargement of the mosque testifies to the growth of the town’s population and its increased importance under the Marinids.

Following Almohad tradition, the aisle in front of the qibla
wall in the mosque at Taza is punctuated by three vaulted units: wooden vaults in the corners flank a superb pierced plaster vault in front of the mihrab [150], itself elaborately carved in stucco. Supported by lambruequine arches, the bay is entirely revetted in intricately carved plaster. An eight-sided zone of transition, with muqarnas squinches alternating with triangular windows which repeat the shape of the squinch, supports the sixteen-sided cupola. The cupola itself is formed of thirty-two ribs which interface to form a star in the center. The space between the ribs is filled with pierced arabesque and epigraphic decoration on several levels. The elaborate ribbed dome in the bay in front of the mihrab is a North African feature which can be traced back to the tenth-century restorations to the mosque at Córdoba, but the immediate prototype was the Almohad dome in the Great Mosque of Tlemcen dated 1136.13 To the right of the mihrab at Taza is a closet for the wooden minbar, which is in North Africa is usually rolled out of storage when needed for the Friday sermon. The minbar follows the classic Almoravid form, with marquetry decoration made of precious woods and ivory and assembled in octagonal patterns exactly coordinated to the risers of the stairs.14

In the center of the prayer hall, the three bays in front of and flanking the old mihrab were marked on the exterior by pyramidal roofs and on the interior by lambruequine arches and elaborate decoration in carved stucco. An enormous bronze chandelier (diameter 2.5 meters) [151] is suspended from the bay in the center. Composed of nine circular tiers of diminishing size arranged like a wedding-cake, it could hold 514 glass oil lamps, and is the largest extant example of a type of chandelier found throughout North Africa. Its arabesque and epigraphic ornament is pierced and engraved with great delicacy, and the underside is decorated with sixteen intersecting ribs which repeat the design of the dome in front of the mihrab. A poem inscribed on the interior states that it was offered to the mosque by Abu Ya'qub in AH 694 (1294). According to a medieval account, the chandelier cost eight thousand dinars to make and weighed 32 quintals. The minbar and the chandelier are the most spectacular of the contemporary furnishings preserved in the mosque, which also include several other lamps and an 'anatza, or wooden screen in the form of a mihrab, placed on the court façade of the prayer hall.

The importance of Taza lies in its position controlling access to and from Tlemcen, the capital of the 'Abd al-Wadids or Zayyayids, another Berber dynasty, related to but usually in conflict with the Marinids.15 The Marinid sultan Abu Ya'qub attacked Tlemcen four times and laid siege to the city for eight years, establishing a fortified camp to its west. Known as al-majallat al-maqari (the victorious camp) or more simply Mansura, it contained baths, caravanserais, a hospital, and a congregational mosque within its four kilometers of walls. All that survives are the ruins of the mosque built in 1303; its pisé walls measure 65 by 85 meters. In plan, it beakens back to such Almohad congregational mosques as the one at Rabat,16 also built to serve a large army garrison. Several stone portals give access to the inner, which had a square court surrounded by arcades. The prayer hall had thirteen aisles of six bays perpendicular to the qibla wall, with three additional aisles parallel to it, all carried on onyx columns. The nine bays in front of and surrounding the mihrab formed a large (fourteen-meter) square, whose pillars must have supported a dome or pyramidal wooden roof. On the mihrab stands the minbar, thirty-eight meters high and ten meters to a side [152]. Built of dressed stone, like the portals, the tower would have been crowned with a cubic domed lantern, but half of its exterior and all of its interior has fallen. Relief carving and stucco courses divide the exterior into four stories of unequal height. The lowest, which contains the principal entrance to the mosque, is particularly elaborate. Conico-concave arches are set within an inscribed rectangular frame, the whole decorated with arabesques and interlaced and cusped arches. The light blue tile insets that heighten the design are an unusual feature in stone, but shell motifs carved in high relief are set in the spandrels. The whole arrangement derives from such Almohad models as the Oudaiya Gate at Rabat.17 Above the portal is a series of muqarnas corbels which may have supported a balcony or awning. The second story is relatively plain, with windows or blind arches within larger lambruequine frames. The tall third story is covered with lace-like net panels, while the fourth has cusped-arch arcades, much like the earlier minaret at the congregational mosque of Tlemcen. Although many of the individual features have precursors in Almohad mihrabs, the overall conception is more harmonious, making this, even in its ruined state, one of the most pleasing monuments built by the Marinids.

Abu Ya'qub's siege of Tlemcen was unsuccessful; he was assassinated in 1307, and work on Mansura was left unfinished. Three decades later his grandson, Abu'l-Hassan 'Abd al-Malik (r. 1331-48), finally took Tlemcen and incorporated it into the Marinid dominions. The mosque at Mansura was apparently finished at this time (the foundation inscription on the minaret refers to Abu Ya'qub as deceased), and the congregational mosque in Tlemcen itself was restored. The most spectacular of Abu'l-Hassan's works in the area, however, is the shrine complex perched on the northern slope of Mount Zaim, above the town of al-'Ubbad, two kilometers east of Tlemcen. The shrine centers around the grave of the well-known Andalusian mystic Abu Madyan Shu'ayb (d. 1087), known popularly as Sidi Bu Medine. Soon after his death, during the reign of the Almohad ruler Muhammad al-Nasir (1199-1214), the mystic's grave was marked by a tomb, but only under the Marinids in the fourteenth century was it converted into a shrine complex which included a residence, mosque, alabaster font, and madrasa. The mystic's tomb, heavily restored in the eighteenth century, is a small square covered by a tiled pyramidal roof; the forecourt (5.4 meters square) is a tetrastyle arium whose onyx columns and capitals are brought from Mansura. Below the tomb is a ruined multi-room structure which may have served as a residence for rich pilgrims.

A narrow court separates the tomb from the congregational mosque, built on the site of a garden purchased by the Marinid sultan for the new construction. The glory of the mosque is its extraordinarily richly decorated portal [153], although the constructed approach makes it somewhat difficult to appreciate. The portal is laid out in much the same
way as the lower story of the minaret at Mansura, with concentric, cusped arches set within a rectangular frame, but the cusped arches and frame are worked in brick inset with pieces of glazed tile, and their mate surface contrasts with the tile mosaic covering the rest of the portal. Known in North Africa as zalij, the tile mosaic is laid out in arabesque patterns in light blue, brown, and black set against a white ground. The portal is crowned with an inscription band mentioning the patron of the mosque, Abu'l-Hasan 'Ali, and the date 739 (1338–9). A flight of eleven steps leads to an elaborately decorated vestibule [154]. Above a plain dado, the sides are revetted with carved stucco panels of blind arches filled with vegetal ornament and cartouches filled with inscriptions set on an arabesque ground. The ceiling is covered by a stunning maqurjus vault. These mate surfaces contrast with the tile mosaic on the intrados and back side of the portal. Doors on the sides give access to small rooms for a Koran school and shelter for pilgrims, and magnificent bronze doors at the head of the stairs open to the interior.

The mosque is a small rectangle (19 by 20 meters), with the standard arrangement of a court surrounded by arcades and a prayer hall with five aisles perpendicular to the qibla.

The arcades in the prayer hall stop one bay short of the qibla wall, and the bay in front of the mihrab is covered by a stucco dome. Above a plain dado, most of the interior surfaces are revetted in richly carved stucco. A minaret (25.5 meters high) decorated with lozenge-net panels soars above the north-west corner of the court. Inscriptions throughout the mosque invoke God's help and show that the building was intended as a monument to commemorate the sultan's taking of Thlemmec two years earlier.

To the east of the mosque across a small alley lies the ablution facility, with well-preserved latrines and baths. The madrasa lies on the west side at the top of the hill. Like the mosque, it has an elaborate tiled façade, which is reached by a flight of steps on the north-east. A block of latrines projects from the north-west corner. The doorway opens to a court surrounded by arcades [155]. The lateral sides have small cells (2.55 by 2 meters) for the students, twelve on the ground floor and twelve more on the upper story, accessible by a stair to the left of the entrance. In the south-east corner of the ground floor is a suite of four additional cells, probably for the teacher. Opposite the entrance, the square prayer hall is covered by a wooden dome whose base is inscribed with a poem lauding the patron, Abu'l-Hasan 'Ali, and giving the date Rab II 747 (July–August 1346). This date, eight years after the foundation of the mosque, may mark the completion of the work. A marble slab encased in the column to the left of the mihrab eulogizes the gardens, orchards, houses, windmills, baths, and land bought by the sultan and endowed to the madrasa and mosque.

Constructed in brick, the buildings at 'Ubaid are richly decorated in the techniques and styles typical of Marinid architecture: glazed tile is played off against stucco, and wood, more abundant than in many other areas of the Islamic world, is used for awnings, ceilings, and vaults. The high level of patronage allowed for particularly lavish fittings, such as the bronze doors to the mosque and the onyx columns and capitals. The remarkable state of preservation gives a good sense of how the complex was used by residents and visitors. The rural site allowed for the construction of separate buildings, of which the madrasa was clearly one of the most important. It was almost as large in area as the mosque, and it remained an important center for instruction in the Maghrib.15

Madrasas were a particularly significant focus of Marinid patronage, for they were erected to combat both the apparent heresy of the Almohads and the decentralizing tendencies inherent in the Sufism that had helped bring the Marinids to power. Notable examples remain in Meknes, Marrakesh,
and Salé, but the largest number are still found in Fes. The most elaborate there is the Bu Inaniya madrasa [156], built between 1330 and 1355 for the sultan Abu Inan Fasis (r. 1348–59). Set on a trapezoidal site between two branches of the main artery that connect New Fes with the heart of the old city, the complex also straddles a channel of the Wadi Fes. The principal street façade is lined with shops, which provided income for the foundation, and its right end is a tall minaret, from which one could see all the other minarets of the city. It is the only madrasa in Fes with a minaret, indicating from afar the additional function of the complex as a congregational mosque. On the other side, the street is an extensive latrine, whose size indicates that it was intended for public use. Its façade preserves the remains of an extraordinary water-clock, with thirteen consoles, some of which still support bronze bowls which were rung to mark the hours. This unique device, built by Abu Sa’id (r. 1310–31) in 1317 and restored by Abu Inan Fasis, was a mechanical wonder in its day.

The entrance to the Bu Inaniya madrasa lies in the center of the principal façade and is marked by an arched bridge connecting the two buildings. A stair roofed with an elaborate wooden muqarnas vault gives access to a large paved court [157]. On the sides, lambrequin arches led to two-story square (five-meter) halls surrounded by wooden domes. These halls, intended for instruction, recall the lateral iwans in madrasas of the east. On the fourth side of the court and separated from it by the channel of the Wadi Fes stands the prayer hall. It has two aisles parallel to the qibla separated by four onyx columns. Each aisle is covered by an elaborate wooden vault, decorated with complex star patterns. Narrow corridors and staircases lead from the entrance vestibule to the cells for students, some of which have small windows overlooking the court. The Bu Inaniya madrasa is remarkable for its size, integration of diverse elements into a harmonious plan, and lavish decoration, although the details are somewhat less inventive than in earlier Marinid madrasas. Nevertheless, the decorative formula developed by the Marinids, with tile mosaic dadoes surrounded by carved plaster walls and wooden cornices and coves, was so successful that it was maintained virtually unchanged into the sixteenth century (see Chapter 17).

The strength of Marinid piety can be seen in the large dynastic necropolises at Chella (Arab. Shillah). Located on the outskirts of Rabat and once the Roman town of Sala Colonia, the site is one of the most picturesque in Morocco, with lush gardens cascading down the hillside to the Bou Regreg estuary below. Much of the site fell into ruins after the great earthquake of 1755, and while the remains are of limited artistic interest, the total effect is memorable and unusually evocative. An imposing portal [158] set within massive walls was begun by Abu Sa’id and completed by Abu’l-Hassan, enclosing a cemetery already in use in the mid-thirteenth century. The heart of the complex is a rectangular block (44 by 29 meters) erected near a spring at the foot of the hill. It comprises a mosque, a minaret, several tombs, and a hospice for Sufis (Arab. zawiya). The tombs house the remains of the early Marinid sultans and their family up to Abu’l-Hassan (d. 1351), after whom they were buried on a hilltop overlooking Fes. Some idea of the once lavish decoration can be gleaned from the exterior of Abu’l-Hassan’s tomb, with a relief panel in which colonnettes support three cusped arches, themselves supporting shorter colonnettes and a lozengy-net panel, an arrangement recalling the decoration of the minaret at the Almohad mosque of Hasan (1196) in nearby Rabat.
The Nasrid court at Granada remained a brilliant center of Islamic civilization, despite its precarious position between the Christian kingdoms to the north and the Marinids to the south, until all of the Iberian peninsula was brought under Christian control in 1492, and nearly eight centuries of Islamic civilization there came to an end. The Alhambra, the royal city of the Nasrids, dominates Granada from the south [159]. It comprises the most extensive remains of a medieval Islamic palace anywhere and is one of the most famous monuments in all Islamic art. Like all Nasrid buildings, those of the Alhambra are structurally simple, with trabeate construction and heavy stone walls supporting light wooden roofs, the whole concealed behind a glittering façade. A virtual encyclopedia of Nasrid architecture and decoration in glazed tiles, carved and painted stucco, and carved and joined wood, the Alhambra is particularly notable for several superb muqarnas vaults. As early as the ninth century the site contained a citadel called al-hamra (the red), probably because of the color of its walls. In the eleventh century the citadel was linked with the town's defenses to the north, and between 1082 and 1086 Yusuf B. Nafirallah, the Jewish vizier to the Zirid rulers of Granada, built his palace there. Two centuries later, Muhammad I (r. 1230–72), founder of the Nasrid dynasty, made the Alhambra his residence. Over the next two centuries his descendants continued to enlarge and embellish it. Most of the work was done by Yusuf I (r. 1333–54) and Muhammad V (r. 1354–91, with interruptions), although Charles V (r. 1516–56) added a palace in the Renaissance style, and Philip V (r. 1700–46) redecorated some rooms in an Italianate style. The site subsequently fell into ruin but was rediscovered in the early nineteenth century by the Romantic, who supplied the buildings with the names commonly used today.

The Alhambra is contained with a walled enclosure (740 by 220 meters) punctuated with twenty-three towers and gates [160]. As its western end is the Alcazaba (Arab: al-qasba, fortress); to the east are the remains of several palaces, a mosque, baths, and an industrial zone with a mint, tanneries, and ovens. Across a ravine to the east of the enclosure are the palace and gardens of the Generalife (Arab: jinnah al-arif, gardens of the overseer). The Alcazaba, the oldest part, is a double-walled fortress of solid and vaulted towers containing barracks, cisterns, baths, houses, storerooms, and a dungeon. Access from the north was controlled by the Armas gate; access from the south was controlled by the Gate of Justice (Arab: shar'ia, erroneously for shurut al-a’is, esplanade), which is decorated with carved stone, cut brick, marble, and glazed tile. The Puerta del Vino, framed with ceramic spandrels and stucco panels, is a ceremonial portal to the main street of the royal quarter.

The core of the Alhambra, the so-called Casa Real Vieja (to distinguish it from the addition of Charles V), consists of several palaces arranged along the northern curtain wall and incorporating several of its towers. The palaces follow the traditions of palace design in the western Islamic world, with rooms arranged symmetrically around rectangular courts.

One entered the Palace of the Myrtils from the large square facing the Alcazaba and passed through the first court, whose foundations indicate that it had an oratory and minaret, into the second or Machuca court. Only its northern portico and a tower survive; from it passages lead to a dwelling, another oratory, and the façade of the Muxuar (Arab: mudawwar, place of the royal audience), the present public entrance. The Muxuar is a rectangular room with a flat roof supported on six columns; from it one passes through a narrow doorway into the Cuarto Dorado, whose plain lateral walls emphasize and illuminate the splendid carved stucco façade at its south [161].

This internal façade, crowned by windows which allowed women to watch the activities unsupervised and a muqarnas cornice supporting deep caves, presents the visitor with two identical doors: that on the right leads back to the Muxuar, while that on the left leads via a bent passage to the Court of the Myrtils. The court (36.6 by 23.5 meters) contains a long pool bordered by low hedges. Doors along the side walls open to rooms for the sovereign's wives, service areas, and the palace bath. At either end porticoes of seven arches on slender marble columns protect lavish tile and stucco decoration on the walls. A door in the center of the northern portico opens to the Sala de la Barca, which has a magnificent joined wooden ceiling in the shape of a ship's hull, giving the room its name. It was once the sovereign's bed- and sitting-room. Beyond is the Hall of the Ambas-
sadors [164], a large (11.30-meter) square room contained within one of the massive towers of the enclosure walls. Deep alcoves in its walls overlook the city; the one opposite the entrance is the most richly decorated, and the poem inscribed on its walls indicates that it was the throne recess. The floor and walls are superbly decorated with tile and carved plaster; the ceiling, composed of many thousands of individual wooden elements joined into a pyramidal vault, depicts a starry sky and may well symbolize the seven heavens of Paradise.

The area to the south of the Comares court was modified when Charles V constructed his palace there, but a street once led from the Mexuar past the royal mausoleum (turnada), a square building with a central lantern, to the Palace of the Lions. One passed from its entrance through a bent passage to the relatively intimate Court of the Lions (28.5 by 15.7 meters) [165]. An arcade supported on slender columns arranged singly or in groups of two, three, and four surrounds the court and the kiosks protecting at either end. At its center a fountain with twelve white marble lions (perhaps preserved from Yusuf b. Naghrillah's eleventh-century palace) spouts around an elevated polygonal basin inscribed with verses by the Andalusi poet Ibn Zamrak (1333–ca. 1393). To the south is the square hall of the Abencerrajes; squinches support a stellar vault and superb muqarnas vault, which may also represent the dome of Heaven. On the east of the court is the Hall of the Kings; it comprises alternately square and rectangular spaces, with subsidiary side chambers separated by elaborate muqarnas arches and covered with muqarnas and painted vaults. The paintings, which are on gesso over leather, portray men in Arab dress and romantic fables of chivalric deeds. To the north of the court is the Hall of the Two Sisters, a square hall with alcoves on its ground and first floors. Muqarnas squinches support an octagonal drum with eightpaired windows and another superb muqarnas vault [164]. From the hall one passes through another vaulted room to the exquisitely decorated belvedere of Lindaraxa overlooking the gardens below.

This splendid architectural setting was embellished with the finest products of local workshops. Among them is a group of large wing-handled vases overlake-decorated in lustre [165]. They are known as Ambrosia vases because several were found in the palace in the eighteenth century. At least eight have survived more or less intact, in addition to several large fragments. The many thick-walled vase