Koran manuscripts. It is generally described as neat and balanced, with an equal division between flat and round shapes and heavy and light strokes. It is easy to read, especially for modern readers, since it is the basis for modern typography.

Naskh’s larger counterpart is known as thuluth (or thulth), a verbal noun designating a third part or portion. The earliest sources about the measured script (al-khatt al-manṣūb) contain proportional names such as one-half (nisf), one-third (thuluth) and two-thirds (thuluthbyal), and writers since medieval times have puzzled over what these names mean. The Mamluk chronicler al-Qalqashandi, for example, puts forward two hypotheses. One theory tries to apply these names to the proportion of straight lines in a particular style. Thus, thuluth is said to have one-third straight lines (and two-thirds curved). According to another theory, the names relate to the size of the pen (qalam) used to write on the different-sized pages. Other modern writers on the subject have suggested that the proportional system derived from the number of rhomboidal points made by pressing the nib of the quill pen on paper. All of these theories must remain hypothetical as the information given in the early sources is unclear. Most of it is known only second-hand, and later authors clearly did not understand what earlier sources were talking about.

The al-Nadim makes such a hash out of what his predecessor Ibn al-Thawabā (d. 890) had said a century earlier that it is impossible to translate the passage so that the numbers and headings agree. Noting the differences between the scripts that Ibn al-Bawwab penned and the versions of naskh and thuluth that we know today, other scholars, notably those who are themselves calligraphers, have designated Ibn al-Bawwab’s scripts differently. Habiballah Faiçal, for example, called Ibn al-Bawwab’s text script naskh mixed with rayhān as well as traces of thuluth, Uğur Derman used simply rayhān for the text script and tawqī’ī for the display script. Both are round scripts later included as two of the Six Pens.

The first of these round scripts, rayhān (literally, sweet basil), may go back to ‘Ali ibn ‘Ubayda al-Rayhani (d. 814–5), a man of letters and intimate of the ‘Abbāsid caliph al-Mu‘mān who was described in the Ebrīṣ as a master of elegant writing and style. Like naskh, rayhān is a small script (its larger counterpart today is muḥāqqiq). The modern version of rayhān is written with scripts on alif and lam, looped letters that are open (not filled in or blind), as well as longer tails and more rounded bowls than those used in naskh, all features that can be seen in Ibn al-Bawwab’s hand in this Koran manuscript.

The second of these round scripts, tawqī’ī, is the verbal noun of the intensive form waqqā’i’a derived from the verb waqqā’u (to sign) and designates the inditing or registering of a ruler’s decree. It has been determined that in ‘Abbāsid times the term came to mean the ruler’s official signature, written in the form of a short slogan or motto added to a decree after it had been written to verify it. Like the protocol on a papyrus scroll [Figure 2.1], the signature was written in a
distinctive large script. We know about 'Abbasid versions of this formal signature only from textual sources,101 for the first surviving documents with such signatures survive only from the twelfth century [Figure 6.7]. Such signatures, like handwritten signatures today, are marked by unauthorized connections between letters. For example, alif, which should never connect to the following letter, can be connected to dal in this script, and similarly ta' to tym. Final nun is often indistinct so that it can be indistinguishable from ta'. In the prefix alif-lam, the alif is usually connected to the preceding word and dissolves into a small horizontal stroke leading into the lam. Initial ta' is distorted into a wavy line. The fluidity shows that these were chancery scripts, in which speed was essential. This pair was then adopted for fine calligraphy, used mainly for signatures and colophons. Ibn al-Bawwab's large display script shows such unauthorized connections between letters that do not regularly join in the frontispiece [Figure 5.9], for example, alif connects to ba' in the word abi in the octagonal compartment on the upper left. Similarly, in the sura heading [Figure 5.8], the tails of ta' impinge on the next word and the initial alif in the last word ayat begins with a swinging stroke.102

The round scripts that Ibn al-Bawwab used in his Koran manuscript, then, fall between the scripts as we know them today.103 Ibn al-Bawwab's hand in this manuscript also differs from the round script used in contemporary Koran manuscripts made in the region, which generally have shorter tails and smaller bowls, features associated with modern naskh.104 We should not be surprised at such differences in style, for no such standardization was possible at this time. Although any single copyist may have thought that he was writing a particular type of round script, it is anachronistic to imagine that these scripts were uniform in all times and places. Styles of writing changed. Criteria varied. Those of us taught to write cursive in American schools in the 1950s and 1960s were all expected to emulate the swooping cursive written in white on green chalk posted at the top of the blackboard. Such standardization through a printed text, however, is a modern phenomenon, and no such style sheet was available in medieval times when learning was multi-centered and transmitted individually from master to pupil. The same holds for literary works. Whereas people today expect a standardized printed edition with a single date of publication, medieval texts were revised constantly. Epic poetry was recited orally, with variations possible at each recital and committed to writing long after composition. Standardization is a modern phenomenon.

We can see the variations possible in the round scripts at this time by examining another – and quite different – manuscript signed by Ibn al-Bawwab: a luxury codex containing the collected works of the pre-Islamic poet Salama ibn Jandal as recorded in two recensions A Basran one by al-'Asma'i and a Kufan one by Abu 'Amr al-Shaybani which was read before 'Umar that were united in the ninth century

by Muhammad ibn al-Hasan al-Ahwai.105 Penned on large [43 x 31 cm] sheets of fine creamy paper in gold and black ink, the 34-folio manuscript contains a large gold colophon stating that it was copied in Ramadan 408/January-February 1018 by 'Ali ibn Hilal, referring to Ibn al-Bawwab [Figure 5.10]. The manuscript quickly became a prized possession in eastern Iran, for an extremely elaborate and partly effaced ex-libris on folio 14a says that it was for Abu Sahl ibn Hisham al-Muwaffaq, leader of the Shi'ite community in Khurasan and vizier who bore these titles c. 455-461/1063-4.106

This copy of the poems of Salama ibn Jandal juxtaposes two round text scripts for text and commentary. On regular pages, the lines of Salama's poetry written in a large heavy script are followed by shorter lines of commentary written in a smaller and lighter one. Size and script thus distinguish text (in this case, eight poems with 136 verses) from commentary. The two distichs of Salama's poetry are too long to fit in a single line, so the line text runs off at an angle to the lower left.107 This format sets the model for other poetic texts, notably copies of al-Busiri's poem on the Prophet's mantle made in Mamluk times [Figure 8.8].

On the last page with the colophon [Figure 5.10], Ibn al-Bawwab modified this logical juxtaposition of larger and smaller scripts for poem and commentary. At the top are three lines concluding the commentary on the distich found on the previous page. They are written in smaller script, followed by a circle with a dot, indicating that the text has been proofread [muqabalat].108 The indented double line below, written in the same small script, gives the concluding qasida by Salama ibn Jandal, the third in this collection: To whom belong the traces of encampment [talakun] which resemble a well-written sample of writing [al-kitab al-munammad].109 The verse belongs to the well-known genre comparing the charcoal remains of a campfire in the sands to black writing on a white page, a poetic metaphor showing that the pre-Islamic Arabs knew about writing.110 The remaining text on the concluding page gives the chain of transmission. The name of the immediate authority – the early tenth-century grammarian Abu 'Abdallah Muhammad ibn al-Abbas Yazdi – is written in the large bold script usually reserved for the words of Salama, followed by the chain of transmission back to Umara in the smaller lighter script.111 Script no longer coincides with content, an indication that the juxtaposition of scripts was still a new phenomenon.112

The large bold script, typically used for Salama's poetry and here used for the name of the transmitter, can be identified as thuluth due to its elongated proportions (alif measures about seven times the height of the punctuation dot) and such features as alif with a crown at the top right and a foot on the bottom left, large dal, and open squiggle stroke for ta' marbuta that darts upward like final ra'. Medial mim, as in the name muhammad in the center of the line [Figure 5.10a], is written as a folded stroke rather than a circle. Words
are nested inside each other, and the impulsive forward motion is emphasized by the diagonally set dots and the sloping vocalization for *fatḥa* and *kasrā*, written with a thinner pen. The calligrapher used the same pen for the shorter lines penned in a small neat script to be identified as *rayḥān* because of its sweeping curves, serifed *alif*, and *tā marbūta* with an open eye.113

Not content with these two text scripts, Ibn al-Bawwab used several other round scripts for display. The colophon is penned written in large gold letters. They are much like the ones used for the large line in *thulūth*, but with two significant differences: the unauthorized connections, notably between the *ra*’s of *shāhī* and *ramadān* in the center of the top line (Figure 5.10b), and the blind eyes of the letters that are filled with black ink. Compare, for example, the *minīs al-muḥammad* at the end of the colophon in *tawqī‘* (Figure 5.10c) with those in the same word in *thulūth* (Figure 5.10a).

Ibn al-Bawwab played with yet other scripts and colors on the opening page of this de luxe manuscript (Figure 5.11). The second line recording that the manuscript contains the words of Salama ibn Jandal are set off in an elegant script notable for its strokes of uniform thickness, tall straight *alifs*, rounded bowls, and open eyes. It can be identified as another of the Six Pens, *muḥaqqaq*. The name derives from the root *huqqa*, meaning to be or become just, right, correct, or true.114 The second form *huqqa* has a similar but intensified meaning, and *muḥaqqaq*, the past participle of the second form, was applied to speech or language to mean sound, compact, or orderly. Chroniclers used the term *muḥaqqaq* in two ways: on the one hand, for well-penned and formal execution,115 and on the other, for a specific script that became popular for transcribing Koran manuscripts.116 *Muḥaqqaq* is said to have been the first script systematized and geometrically defined by Ibn Muqla;117 but it seems to have still be evolving at this time.118

As compared to *naskh* and *thulūth*, the letters in *muḥaqqaq* are more upright, with well-spaced ligatures and a marked horizontality. Initial *alif* sits on the baseline, it usually has a small wedge-shaped serif at the top right, but never swings outs at the lower left. By contrast, in *naskh*, *alif* is a straight stroke without a hook at the top but often with a bend at the lower left. In *muḥaqqaq*, final *ha* (as in *salām* or *salām*) is written as a loop that is closed at the bottom, as distinct from the same letter in *thulūth*, a squiggle open at the bottom. In *muḥaqqaq*, letters such as *ta*’ and *waaw* generally end in straight, sharp tips that point diagonally downward without the returning upward hook used in *thulūth*. The emphasis is on the bodies and heads of the letters, as sublinear elements are reduced. Tails do not descend as far below the baseline as they do in other scripts. Rather, the bowls of descending strokes in *muḥaqqaq* are shallow, elliptical, and sometimes extended to encircle the following letter, as here with the bowl of *nun* in *ibn* that encircles the opening letters of *jandal*. Because of its pointed ends and linearity,
muhāqqiq is sometimes called dry (yabis) as opposed to the wet (marrattal) thuluth.

Ibn al-Bawwab used a variant of large script for the top line with the hamsala, penned in black outlined in gold. In many ways the script resembles muhāqqiq, although the alif is bolder, almost triangular, and end with a left-turning foot, features typical of thuluth. Ibn al-Bawwab deliberately varied his color and style of script to set off the text with the invocation to God.

The text in smaller script at the bottom of the page contains Salama’s genealogy. Two generations were inadvertently omitted on the first and third line, and so they were added in the margin, with a comma-like stroke in the text marking the place where they should be inserted. The dot in a circle at the end indicates that the text has been proofread. Compared to the script used in Ibn al-Bawwab’s Koran manuscript [Figure 5.8], the letters here are set more spaciously and have much shorter tails, a comparison that shows how the calligrapher could vary his hand to suit different types of text, as with the Koran and poetry. Yet many features of punctuation are the same. Muhrila letters like ‘ayn, for example, are regularly marked and dots set on a slope. What is most remarkable about this fine manuscript of Salama’s poetry is the virtuosity of the hand: the scripts are all clean, crisp, and unwavering, hallmarks of a master calligrapher.

In succeeding centuries the round scripts used by Ibn al-Bawwab at the turn of the tenth to eleventh century became pre-eminent for transcribing the Koran and other important texts, especially in Iraq and adjacent lands. As with Ibn Muqta and broken cursive, Ibn al-Bawwab’s canonization of round scripts for both text and display was later seen as a benchmark. The question therefore arises: why did these round scripts rise to prominence at this time?

What caused the canonization of round scripts?

Scholars have put forward at least three different lines of reasoning to explain why copyists in the late ninth or early tenth century transformed the regular round scripts into calligraphic styles worthy of transcribing the Koran and other important texts. These explanations are not necessarily exclusive. Rather, they reflect the different interests of the scholars who proposed them, as well as their different approaches to the subject.

Déroche, belittling his training and erudition as a paleographer, proposed that the answer to this question may have something to do with the type of pen used for the new style of writing. He speculated that it could have been a new type of reed pen, a new method of sharpening the nib, or a new way that the pen was held, placed on the page, or moved across it. Both Ibn Muqta and Ibn al-Bawwab commented on the importance of preparing the nib correctly, since the point determines the handwriting. Such changes in pen are known in
other calligraphic situations. To write italic script, for example, one uses a special pen.

Furthermore, the canonization of round script came at a time of significant changes in the materials used in the Islamic lands to make books. This was the period when paper replaced parchment as the main medium of support. A20 Paper, which had been used in the Abbasid chancellery since the beginning of the ninth century, was adopted for secular manuscripts at least from the mid-ninth century. The change from parchment to paper also seemed to engender a change from dark-brown, tannin-based ink (hrijj) to black soot ink (miidaj). Ibn al-Nadim, our earliest major source for Arabic calligraphy, first mentions Ibn Muqla as one of three viziers who used black ink. Thus, a first type of answer to the question is physical: new materials such as pen, paper, and black ink may have led to the canonization of round scripts in the tenth century. Such practical factors caused similar changes in scribal traditions elsewhere: in fourteenth-century China the ready availability of paper and a more supple brush caused the modification of Clerical Script (lishtu) to the simpler Regular Script (kishtu). A21 In fourteenth-century Russia the change from parchment to paper engendered an evolution from uncial to semi-uncial script.

Whelan, reflecting her training as an art historian, proposed a historical explanation, suggesting that the canonization of round scripts reflected the new role of the chancery secretary as copyist. Whereas kufic Koran manuscripts were transcribed by members of the ulama who did not sign their work, manuscripts in round scripts include colophons signed by people bearing the epithets warraq (bookseller or copyist) or kattib (scribe or secretary). The adoption of round scripts coincided with the development of the chancery under the 'Abbasids and its central bureaucratic direction through the office of vizier. A22 It may have been secretaries, then, who introduced these new materials and styles. Ibn Muqla, for example, was first a member of the chancery and then a famous calligrapher.

Tabbaa, as part of his broader argument for the revival of Sunni Islam, suggested that political motivations lay behind these calligraphic innovations. A24 He argued that Ibn Muqla, as vizier of the 'Abbasid caliph al-Muqadhir, adopted the new proportioned script to represent the seven readings of the Koran collected by Ibn Mujahid. Ibn Mujahid’s seven readings were made official under Ibn Muqla’s auspices in 322/934 when the scholar Ibn Miqsam was forced to retract his claim that the consonantal text of the Koran could be read in any manner that was grammatically correct. The following year another Koranic scholar, Ibn Shanabuth, was similarly condemned and forced to renounce his support for the permisibility of other variant readings. In the same vein, Tabbaa argued that the second reform of Koranic script by Ibn al-Bawwab was rooted in contemporary political events, specifically the promulgation of an official Sunni theology under the ‘Abbasid caliph al-Qadir (r. 991–1031). The caliph's struggles against religious dissent culminated in the so-called Epistle of al-Qadir (al-risala al-qadiriyya). This text, which was read in the palace in 1018, condemned Shi‘ism in all its forms as well as Mu‘tazilism and even Ash‘arism.

To my mind, Tabbaa’s political arguments are not convincing for several reasons. One problem is the limited scope of his inquiry, which concentrates on Koran manuscripts. This unjustly truncates the field of inquiry, for round script, unlike kufic, was not exclusive to Koran manuscripts. Broken cursive, along with other styles of round script, was used for many other types of texts copied at the same time as their Koranic counterparts. These include not only religious works such as treatises on Traditions and the life and qualities of the Prophet but also Sufi manuals, grammars, histories, poetry, and even Arab-Christian texts, a diverse group whose subject matter has little to do with official theology. A25 Moreover, these diverse manuscripts were made for a variety of patrons. Some were, as wealthy men of the time, staunch Sunnis. Others were not.

In my opinion, such a political reading also distorts the character and impact of both calligraphers. A26 Religious tensions splintered the Islamic community in the medieval period, but there is no evidence that copyists developed or adopted styles of writing to address these issues. The names of famous calligraphers like Ibn Muqla and Ibn al-Bawwab are convenient pegs on which to hang the names of stylistic changes, but doing so reiterates the prosopographical bias of the sources, particularly biographical dictionaries. A28 Associating names with stylistic innovations also reflects our modern age of scientific discovery, in which the name of an inventor is made synonymous with the invention and the name of a designer adds caché to a dress or handbag. Artistic change, by contrast, is a continuous process.

Tabbaa’s association of round scripts with Sunni Islam is also based on negative evidence. He argued that the work of Ibn Muqla and Ibn al-Bawwab had virtually no impact in Egypt during the period of rule by the Shi‘ite Fatimids (969–1171), since he knew of no Koran manuscript in broken cursive or other round script made there until the beginning of the thirteenth century. A29 Arguing from evidence that is always dangerous, since what has survived does not necessarily reflect what was made. Absence of evidence is not evidence of absence. No Koran manuscript in these scripts can be attributed to Fatimid Egypt, but as yet we have no evidence to attribute any Koran manuscript to Fatimid Egypt. A30 It is plainly wrong, however, to imagine that the Fatimids did not commission such manuscripts.

Medieval historians describe the enormous libraries in Fatimid Cairo. According to the Fatimid historian al-Musabbih (d. 1020), whose eye-witness account has been preserved in the Khitat, the topography of Cairo by the Mamluk historian al-Maqrizi, A31 the treasury contained a superb library based on the caliph’s personal holdings. The works belonged to all categories of science and letters and were
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of remarkable quality. Masterpieces written by famed calligraphers in the proportioned script (al-khatt al-mansub) were so numerous and so beautiful that one could be sure, the Fatimid historian adds, of never seeing the equivalent belonging to another monarch. Al-Musabbiḥ also describes the vast deposits of the royal library attached to the Fatimid court, which contained, among other things, twenty copies of the history by al-Taḫari, a work that stretched thirty volumes in the modern printed edition, and one hundred copies of al-Jamhara, the monumental dictionary by the ninth-century philologist Ibn Durayd. Even allowing for the usual hyperbole in al-Musabbiḥ's panegyric, it is clear that the Fatimids owned lots of books, many of them in the "proportioned script."132

Of this richness, only two manuscripts belonging to the royal Fatimid library have been identified.133 One is a unique copy of Abu 'Ali al-Hajjari's commentary al-Tuẖqat wa'l-nawadir transcribed for al-Afdal, son of the Armenian commander Badr al-Jamali and Fatimid vizier from 1094 to 1112.134 The title at the top is written in a legible round hand, with long swooping tails in which the width of the stroke changes, as in broken cursive. The ex-libris of the Fatimid vizier at the bottom is written in a standard round script, as is the librarian's note in the middle saying that the manuscript was added to the library of the Fatimid caliph al-Fā'iz (r. 1154-160).

The second manuscript that belonged to the Fatimid library is also a unicum: a genealogical treatise about the Quraysh tribe transcribed by the celebrated grammarian Ishaq al-Najjarimi in 355/966.135 This manuscript was not prepared for the Fatimids, but rather transcribed at Baghdad in the tenth century. It then passed to Egypt, where it was registered in the library of the Fatimid caliph al-Zaḫir (r. 1149-54). Befitting its origin in 'Abbāsid Baghdad, the genealogical treatise is transcribed in the broken cursive used there in the tenth century. Such a script cannot have carried any adverse political implications, for the manuscript was readily accessioned into the library of the 'Abbāsids' rivals, the Fatimids.

These two manuscripts are not enough to define a Fatimid style of calligraphy,136 especially as only the title pages have been published and moreover as one of the two manuscripts was written for the 'Abbāsids, but they do tell us that Fatimid librarians in the twelfth century wrote a clear and readable round hand. The tendency to run together letters such as dal and final ha shows the hand of a librarian who wanted to speed up his work, but the lengthening of connectors, like the one between 'ayn and mim in the word 'amanah, in the ex-libris in both manuscripts shows that the librarians were also concerned with visual effect. Sparse though the evidence is, these two manuscripts confirm textual descriptions that the Fatimids knew, appreciated, and used round scripts.

The misleading association of round script and Sunni Islam is particularly troublesome as it has led to further erroneous conclusions, notably the association of not only round scripts but also geometry with Sunni Islam. Tabbaa raised the idea that the proportioned script was yet another of the many applications of geometric principles to Islamic art in the late tenth and eleventh centuries. He differentiated between the visible geometry of the rectilinear kufic script and the invisible geometry of Ibn al-Bawwab's proportioned script, described by the sixteenth-century Mamluk chronicler al-Tayyibī as a script without any visible external edges (an la tura min al-kharjiż zowyahī).137 Tabbaa suggested that the proportioned script, like geometric strapwork and muqarnas, exemplified the assimilated geometry that pervaded a variety of artistic forms in the eleventh century.

Tabbaa ultimately rejected the idea that geometry was the primary cause in motivating the formation of the proportioned script, but his idea was enthusiastically taken up by Gürün Nęcipoğlu.138 She suggested that the geometric mode, which she called girih from the Persian word for knot, appeared first in manuscript illumination, citing the frontispiece to the Koran penned by Ibn al-Bawwab at Baghdad in 591/1195-6 (Figure 5.3) as the earliest example of the new round script and interlaced patterns composed of stars and polygons. Like geometric interlacing, round script was thus, she argued, part of the Sunni revival. She concluded that the "geometric mode seems to have represented a new visual order projecting a shared ethos of unification around the religious authority of the 'Abbāsid caliphate, the locus of orthodoxy and the ultimate source of legitimacy for the fragmented Sunni states."139

In my view, the canonization of round scripts (and also geometry) had nothing to do with religious sectarianism in the tenth century. There is no evidence to show that Ibn al-Bawwab and his associates transcribed their copies of the Koran for the ruling 'Abbāsid caliphs or their court. Rather, such evidence as we have suggests that these copies were prepared for the Buyūdīs and other Shi'ites of the time. Moreover, the same scripts were used not just for Korans, but for a variety of texts, including genealogies, histories, Sufi manuals, and many other subjects. Koran manuscripts were particularly fancy and so the wish to assume pride of place in studies of calligraphy, but it is essential to remember that the same copyists used the same scripts to transcribe other texts.

The adoption of round scripts as calligraphic scripts worthy of transcribing the Koran and many other types of texts represents the triumph of the secretarial class, scribes who had long used round script, paper, and black ink. Such changes were not grounded in theological disputes, but rather reflect social and cultural changes, in which the old guard—devout scholars who penned unsigned copies of the Koran in kufic script for public recitation or display in mosques—was gradually displaced by a professional class of secretaries who provided books to private patrons. This new class of copyists was, if anything, rather lax in its knowledge of the Koran, Traditions,
religious law, and the like. The change in calligraphic style was not abrupt, and kufic continued to be used alongside round styles for several centuries [Figure 4.10]. We associate the adoption of round scripts with the names of Ibn Muqla and Ibn al-Bawwab, but their names are only emblematic of a gradual change that took hundreds of years to effect.

Notes


3. In his original publication, Les Manuscrits du coran, aux origines de la calligraphie coranique, Bibliothèque Nationale, Département des Manuscrits, Catalogue des Manuscrits Arabes [Paris, 1983], Déroche also had an NS II, an intermediate style that shared characteristics between NS I and NS III, but this category had dropped out by the time of his next major publication, Abbasid Tradition.

4. In his catalogue of the fragments in the Khalili Collection (Abbasid Tradition), Déroche generally put the pages in his NS III style [nos. 75-7, 81] before those in NS I [nos. 78, 80, 83-90, 92-81]. The problem of distinguishing the two is clear from no. 83, which is described only as a miniature form of NS, and no. 91, which is said to be related to [but different from?] NS III.


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‘Manuscripts of the Qur’an’ in EQ, 263–3, he opts for the name ‘kifah nashkhi’, because, as he notes, its basic shapes are closer to those used in round scripts.


17. Whelan, in unpublished notes, suggested that this new script might be called warraqi, after the Arabic word for copyist. She made her suggestion on the basis of a manuscript by Ibn al-Nadim, one of the Abbasid period calligraphers known as the ‘Koran Illuminated’, nos. 186-7. Six other folios from different sections were given by the dealer Korkor Minassian to the Metropolitan Museum of Art (26.161.1) and the Library of Congress (LC) 85-114,534a-aa and AL 30. To judge from photographs, the Khalili Collection [Déroche, Abbasid Tradition, no. 79] puts another folio of this manuscript (KFG 26), which Déroche puts in his MS III category. This double page is CBL, 1417, fol. 33r-34r.

18. For example, Arboon, Koran Illuminated, nos. 23-6, and David James, Qur’ans and Bindings from the Chester Beatty Library: A Facsimile Exhibition, exhibition catalogue (n.p., 1980), no. 12, put the script in the category of broken cursive, Tabbaa, ‘Transformation of Qur’anic Calligraphy’, 134, n. 39, followed Déroche and Whelan in designating the script as round.

19. The first line on folio 1b of the folio in the Khalili Collection, for example, contains the last word of Surah 70 and the gold rubric with the name of the next chapter [71, Noh], the page count (thirty-six). The bifolio in the Metropolitan Museum of Art (26.161.1) has the verse count [165] for Surah 6 [Al-An’am]. Elaine Wright has confirmed for me that the pages in the Chester Beatty library are similar. The heading on folio 114a of CBL, 1417a gives the name of the chapter (Al-Talim, 3) and the verse count [300], the heading on folio 110b of CBL, 1417b gives the name of the chapter (Al-Furqan, 23) and the verse count [77].

20. The Library of Congress holds 56 folios (CSM 85), also given by Minassian. The Khalili Collection (KFG 26, Déroche, Abbasid Tradition, no. 75) has another folio from this manuscript, which in turn is connected to twenty-three folios in the Bibliothèque Nationale (ms. arabes 5826, Déroche, Manuscrits du coran I, no. 35).

21. Coins issued under the Abbasid in the ninth century have a standard form, with legends in kufic including Koranic verses and the names of the caliph and his appointed heir. Governors with extraordinary independence were allowed, or assumed, the right to add their names as well. Coins minted in the eastern Islamic lands, these names were added in round script. A dirham minted at Balkh in 929/930-5, for example, has the name of the Banjirat governor Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Ahmad written in a round script (Sheila S. Blair, ‘Legibility versus Decoration in Islamic Epigraphy: The Case of Interlacing,’ in World Art: Themes of Unity in Diversity, Acts of the XXVIth International Congress of the History of Art, ed. I. Lavin [University Park and London, 1988], fig. 3). Similarly, a dinar issued at Nishapur in 352/967-8 (A. U. Pope and P. Ackerman [eds.], A Survey of Persian Art [from the Prehistoric Times to the Present, repr. 1918–9 [Tehran, 1977], pl. 148] uses a round script for the name of the Samanid governor Na’ir ibn Ahmad. Adding the governor’s name in a round script was a way to distinguish his name from those of the other rulers written on the coin. Moreover, the governor’s name was the part of the legend added locally to a design supplied by the central administration.
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30. One example is the commemorative text carved in the name of the Buyid 'Adud al-Dawla at Persepolis in Safar 344/955, See Sheila S. Blair, The Monumental Inscriptions from Early Islamic Iran and Transoxiana. Supplement to Quaestiones [Leiden, 1994], no. 6. The frontispiece inscription is carved next to Achaeemian and Sasanian inscriptions in the palace of Darius. The text relates that Ali ibn al-Sari, the scribe (al-kašf) from Karaj, read the earlier texts to 'Adud al-Dawla. The role of the scribe who drew up the inscription is also clear from the fact that the letter is not a square, but three traits - dots above the letters of the variety of body shapes, including four types of final ya', and the upper added to the bottom of alf in independent or final form - shows that the copyist who customarily wrote in the right hand. When designing a text to be carved in stone, he tried to adopt a more angular monumental style, but features of his regular round hand show through.

31. The single bifolio survives in the Museum of Turkish and Islamic Art, Istanbul (no. 13800). See Déroche, 'Collections de manuscrits anciens du Coran à Istanbul,' no. 1 and pl. IV. A note on the recto of the first page (near the beginning of the regular juz '6), written in the same ink and hand as the rest of the text, contains an endorsement notice set inside a gold band which extends into the margin with a gold palmette. The text says that these parts (juzu') of the Koran endow in God's path were copied by Shanbak (or Shanbal) ibn Muhammad ibn 'Abdallah ibn Shanbak (or Shanbal?). The text is copied in a round style similar to other two manuscripts, though more matured and crowded. Alf has a hook to the left, and the tails of the letters nun and final ya are deeply curved. Shanbak also shows a tendency to slant the letters in individual words. Letters are pointed but not vocalized. Individual verses are not marked, but groups of verses receive a gold kufi ha.

32. On the various functions of Koran codices, see François Déroche, Le livre Manuscrit arabe: précédes d'une histoire [Paris, 2004], 24-35.

33. Whelan, 'Writing the Word of God.'


35. A large fragment of 170 folios is in the Chester Beatty Library [ms. 1434]; Arberry, Koran Illustrated, no. 31. Another sixteen folios, including the dated colophon, belong to Istanbul University [A657] one double page is published in Ayman Mu'al Sayyid, al-Niffar al-irj bayya al-makhtutta wa 'ilm al-makhtutta [Istanbul, 1997], pl. 3]. In unpublished notes, Rice also identifies a fragment from the shrine at Alarab. See Whelan, 'Writing the Word of God,' n. 97.

36. Tabbani made this point as well in Transformation I: Qur'anic Calligraphy.

37. Déroche's chart VI [Abbasid Tradition, Table VI, 136-7], compares ten homographs, or letter shapes, from manuscripts in broken cursive with those in kufic codices.

38. El/half, 'al-Niffari.' He spoke of waqf [standing], during which time he was addressed by God, who inspired him to write down his words.

ADOPTION OF ROUND SCRIPTS

Al-Niffari's work is thus a replica of Muhammad's experience, symbolized by waqf, the place of standing at 'Arafa and the culmination of the hajj in which the pilgrim recalls the Prophet's farewell journey. Al-Niffari considered letters a well that the mystic must penetrate, for as long as one remains bound to the letters, he was fettered by idols. See Annemarie Schimmel, Mystical Dimensions of Islam [Chapel Hill, 1977], 80-3 and 411.

39. Al-Ibrāhīm Shadhan also used the epithet al-Bayyizi, presumably al-bayyīzī (the tradesman or middleman), an unusual epithet also used by 'Umar ibn Fadl ibn Yusuf, who signed a bronze pen box made in 524/1130, probably made in north-eastern Iran [Hermitage CA-13668]. The name of the copyist's father, Shadhan, was common in Iran in the eleventh and twelfth centuries [Blair, Monumental Inscriptions, 2001].

40. Istanbul, Suleymaniye Library, Sehid Ali Pasa no. 1843, dated Jumada 1 176/November 986. The Kitāb al-šabāb al-makhtūtta al-bayyīzī bi-niṣwa al-ṣinワちis composed by the judge and grammarian Abu'l-Qasim al-Hasan al-Sirafi [d. at Baghdad on 3 February 921]. Al-Sirafi, in addition to teaching a wide range of subjects, was himself a professional copyist. Later sources describe how he copied some ten folios a day, earning ten dirhams or living expenses [el/half, 'al-Sirafi']. F. Krenkow, editor of al-Sirafi's work on grammarians, identified the copyist 'Ali ibn Shadhan as a transmitter of hadith mentioned by Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani. See Tabbaa, Transformation I: Qur'anic Calligraphy, n. 47. Salih al-din al-Munajjied, al-Kitāb al-irdawi al-makhtūtta bi-niswa al-falāshī hā wa al-hā al-thuluth [Istanbul, 1996], pl. 32; Estelle Wheeler, 'Early Islamic: Emerging Patterns [622-1056]', in Islamic Art and Patronage: Treasures from Kuwait, ed. Esin Atal [New York, 1999], fig. 9; Derman, Art of Calligraphy, no. 10. Derman noted that this first dated example to replace the dots used for vocalization with the vowel markers that are still used today.

41. For example, an elaborately decorated fragment dated 389/998-9 (Ramażân-az Şakir, Gani-i hizar sala-yi kitabkhāne-yi markazi-yi dost-i qad-i tıvātı qafı va ha bāz az tıvātı [ Mashhad, 1367/1980]. 65] was penned by al-'Abbās ibn Muhammad ibn al-'Abbās al-muṣaffili (the copyist of Koran manuscripts) al-Qazvini at Rayy for the treasury of the mother of the chief commander 'amr ibn al-umrā. The latter may well be Abu'l-Qasim 'Ali Simūrī, last of the Simūrī governors of Khurasan, who himself had made the first surviving endowment to the shrine, a fragment from a kufic Koran endowed in 436/1045 [ms. 3004; Shakir, Gani-i Hizar Sala, 30]. Another fragment in the shrine collection, containing juz '13 written in four lines of broken cursive per page on 142 folios [ms. 96; Ahmad Gulchin-i Ma'ānī, Rāhnamā-yi gashiyya-yi qur'ān [Mashhad, 1347/1966], no. 17; Shakir, Gani-i Hizar Sala, 31 and 68] was endowed there in Rabī' I 395/January-February 1003 by Abu'l-Qasim Mansur ibn Muhammad ibn Kathir, member of a well-known family from Khurasan and viceroy and head of the bureaucracy there under the Ghaznavid sultan Mahmud. The date in the endowment provides a terminus ad quem for the manuscript, and the patron's affiliation suggests an attribution to eastern Iran. The decoration of these pages, in turn, relates to an undated fragment with juz '7' nine written in six lines of broken cursive [Paris, BN, ms. arabe 7363]; Francis Richard, Splendeurs persanes: manuscrits du Xle au XVle siècle [Paris, 1997], no. 108].

42. Salih al-Din Munajjied [Al-Kitāb al-ʿArabī] gives examples of several other manuscripts written in the tenth century. A few in broken
cursive are specifically dated. One in Tehran [pl. 19] is the final page of a treatise on predestination, Risala 7t-ta'lidatu wa'l-dalala, transcribed by 'Ali ibn Taahir ibn Sa'd in 364/974. At the bottom is the attestation of the author, the Buyid vizier 'al-Sahib ibn 'Abbad, dated two years later. His broken cursive is as stately and mannered as that of the transcriber and attests to the author's training as a secretary. Another manuscript in Istanbul [TKS, Ahmad III 3666, pl. 31] is a copy of Ibn al-Nahha's collection of pre-Islamic poems, al-Musannaf, dated 378/981-2. It too shows the graceful broken cursive that was already standard by the end of the tenth century.

43. Whelan, 'Writing the Word of God', 118-19. One example is the endowment note at the top of a folio from a manuscript endowed for the Umayyad Mosque of Damascus in Dhu'l-Qa'da 298/July 911 by 'Abd al-Mun'im ibn Ahmad (figs. 15-16). Whoever added the brief note tried to imitate the kufic script used for the original text, but the letters often betray traces of a round hand. For example, the strokes in the note, unlike those used for the text, vary in thickness, with a marked contrast between thick letter and thin baseline. The tail of 'al' ends with a swooping curve. The upright strokes of the two lamps in allah have little tails or serifs. In other instances, alif consists of a straight vertical stroke, without any bend to the right at the bottom.


45. They name not only the reigning caliph and sometimes the heir apparent, but also the vizier in office and the attendant in charge of the factory.

46. Inscriptions on several tiraz were for the 'Abbasid caliph al-Muktafi (r. 902-8) show a particularly distinctive type of broken cursive. Florence Day, 'Dated Tiraz in the Collection of the University of Michigan', Ars Islamica 4 (1935) 436-47, singled out the inscription on one piece dated 293/905-6 in the collection of the University of Michigan as remarkable in combining circles, sweeping curves, sharp angles, triangles set on a corner, strong tall verticals, and crisp pointed serifs.

47. These pieces can be found in virtually every major collection of Islamic art. Among the many pieces of this slipware that survive, only one has a historical inscription, a pen box in the Hermitage (no. 1533-57 with the name Muhammad ibn Fadl [Krachkovskaya, Kuficheskoj Pis'me, fig. 4]). For an analysis of the distinctive knotted kufic found on some of them, see Lisa Volov (Collombe), 'Plaited kufic on Samanid Epigraphic Pottery', Ars Orientalis 6 (1966): 107-34.


49. In addition to two quires in the Khalili Collection [QUR65] and QUR168, Déroche, Abbasid Tradition, no. 81, another fragment in the National Library, Istanbul [MS 5] has an elaborate inscription on folio 13b stating that the manuscript was copied at Madinat al-Siqliyya [that is, Palermo] in 572/982-3 by [Francois Deroche, 'Traditions et innovation dans la pratique de l'écriture au Maghreb pendant les IXe/Xe siècles,' in Afrique du Nord antique et médiévale. Numismatique, langues, écritures et arts du livre, spécifiques des artisfigiles (Actes du VIe colloque international sur l'histoire et l'archéologie de l'Afrique du Nord, ed. S. Lancel [Paris, 1999], 337-384].

50. See Chapter 4 for details of the various abjad systems used in the east and west.


52. Déroche, 'Cercles et entrelacs.'

53. Several scattered folios were preserved in the library of the Great Mosque of Kairouan. See B. Roy and P. Poinsot, Inscriptions arabes de Kairouan (Paris, 1950-8), nos. 9b and 9c. Déroche, Le Livre Manuscrit arabe, 48, has suggested that an examination of the pages shows that, despite the claims in the colophon, the text is a collective work, although he does not specify why.

54. This type of final 9a' can be seen on the folio in the Nurse's Koran illustrated in Lings and Safadi, The Qur'an, no. 25.

55. BI, Supp. grec 911, Paul Géhin, 'Un manuscrit bilingue grec-arabe, Baô, supplement grec 911 (année 1043)', in Œuvres et manuscrits du Moyen-Orient, ed. François Déroche and Francis Richard (Paris, 1997), 161-75. According to its two colophons, the same scribe Euphemios transcribed both texts in 1043. The particular style of Greek used, known as the 'ace of spades,' allowed Géhin to localize the small [77 x 14 cm] and provincial manuscript to southern Italy rather than the Levant, the other area where bilingual Greek-Arabic texts were copied. Various aspects of the Arabic script confirm the localization to southern Italy. Euphemios used a distinctive style of broken cursive, especially for final 9a' and fa'iqaf. Nusr has a long bent tail similar to the one used in the Nurse's Koran, but of a uniform thickness. Medial fa'iqaf resembles a diamond. Final fa' ends with a short horizontal tail, whereas final qaf has the same long tail as 9a'. The system of pointing also points to the Maghrib. The letter fa' is pointed with one dot below and qaf with one dot above, the system that remains typical in the Maghrib in later centuries.

56. Copy transcribed by Muhammad ibn Ahmad ibn Yasin in Ramadan 383/October-November 993, TIEF 453-6, MMA 40.164.57, Khalili Collection KF090, see Déroche, Abbasid Tradition, no. 83.


58. Born by Muhammad ibn 'Ali ibn al-Husayn whose copy was finished in Safar 188/February 998, Istanbul, TKS H23; Tabbaa, 'Transformation 1: Qur'anic Calligraphy,' figs. 10-11. The word al-sofar, meaning compass, became the name of the dynasty that ruled eastern Iran from 850 to 1003 because it was the profession of the founder, Ya'qub ibn al Layth.

59. Born by Abu Bake' 'Abd al-Malik ibn Zara' ibn Muhammad whose copy was finished on 6 Dhu'l-Hiijja 394/34 September 1044, Istanbul, TKS Y-7130; Tabbaa, 'Transformation 1: Qur'anic Calligraphy,' figs. 16-17. Rudhibar, a Persian word meaning a district lying along or bisected by a river, was a common toponym in Islamic Persia. The Rudhibar along
the Helmand river in south-western Afghanistan was famous in early Islamic times. The most famous site of this name in medieval times was the one in Gilan province that became a center for Isma'ilite activity. See Elia, "Rudhabar."

60. Balkh, known as the 'mother of cities' and now in Afghanistan, gained fame as the entrepôt at the crossing of routes east-west from Iran (Washington, DC, 1970), 14.


62. This point is often made; see, for example, Tabbaa, 'Transformation 2: Qur'anic Calligraphy,' 134, n. 55 and Gulchini.

63. Al-Nadim, Fihrist, 17.

64. Al-Nadim, Fihrist, 373-7.

65. Ibn Muqla is said to have set forth his rules of calligraphy in a small treatise entitled Risalat al-khatt wa'l-qalam (Cairo, DK, no. 4). Although sometimes written as his work (e.g., Elfr. Calligraphy: [V/60]), the treatise has never been edited or published, and scholars like François Déroche, Manuel de codicologie des manuscrits en écriture arabe (Paris, 2000), 230 and n. 2 (citing a 1974 doctoral thesis at a Cologne University that was unavailable to me), are skeptical of its authenticity. Until a critical edition is published and the authority of this treatise verified, it is difficult, if not methodologically unsound and premature, to base any arguments on it.


67. The translator Franz Rosenthal evidently thought so too, as he included this long passage as part of the previous section.

68. Ibn Khallikan 1:151 and Hajji Khalili 3:151, both cited in Abbott, Rise, 33. Hajji Khalili's phrase al-khatt al-badi' gave rise to Schoeder's misapprehension that this was the name of a new script; see above, note 36.


70. We have at least one case in which we can compare an actual example with what a Mamluk writer, in this case Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani (1372-1449), called musabih: the stylized kufi used for the illustration in a copy of al-Harithi's Maqamat (Assemblies) penned and illustrated by Ghazi ibn 'Abd al-Rahman al-Dimashqi [BL Or. 9718.1]. A. Mayer, 'A Hitherto Unknown Damascene Artist,' Ars Islamica 3 (1942): 168. See further, Chapter 8, note 49.

71. The Chester Beatty Library [ms. 1644], for example, has two folios from a Koran codex with 17 lines per page that have been mounted in an album of calligraphy, with a note in an eighteenth-century hand claiming that it was written by Ibn Muqla (James, Qur'ans and Bindings, no. 32). Tabbaa, 'Transformation 1: Qur'anic Calligraphy,' n. 35, lists other examples.


73. The text in the boxes, which begins with the word 'amal (work or effort) is written in a shorter and more crowded hand flanked by knotted ornamental scrolls. The purple ink is also used in the text proper.

surviving example on paper copied by 'Ali ibn Shaddan in 361/972 (Figure 3.8).

83. These dots are clearest when the verse ends at the left margin, as in long, two, nine, eleven, etc. on the page illustrated here (Figure 5.8). On the third line, Ibn al-Bawwab penned the last two letters in the final word of verse 61 (waw and nun) in the margin and added the blue dots there.

84. The statement is somewhat perplexing, as the text actually reflects the verse count of the Barrat Abu 'Amr [Dutton, 'Red Dots II,' 17]. Abu 'Amr's reading was widespread, but the discrepancy between what the frontispiece says and what the text actually contains might lead to the suspicions of Richard Ettinghausen, the renowned expert on Islamic art, about the authenticity of this manuscript; see Arberry, Koran Illuminated, ix. Nevertheless, this manuscript, like one attributed to Ibn Muqla in Ramprang, remains the best surviving example of this famous calligrapher's style.

85. The chapter heading here gives the name [Sura al-Kahf, The Qam, 54] and the verse count (53 verses), with the place of revelation [Mecca] written in the same script in the margin below the rounded marking of the place of proclamation. The verse count is given in the archaic ordering, hends, and units (here, khamsum wa khamsa, five and five) used in Whelan's Group 1 manuscripts (see Chapter 3). Finding it here in a manuscript made at Baghdad in 391/1000-1 adds weight to Whelan's attribution of that group to Iraq.

86. It can also assume the form of a closed circle that it has in naskh, as in the word makkhāyi, the place of revelation written in gold in the margin of Figure 5.8.

87. The colophon to a small Koran manuscript in the British Library (Add 72474), Pope and Ackerman, Survey, pl. 338, reads, Ibn al-Bawwab, p. XIII, Linga and Safadi, The Qur'an, no. 54, Tabbaa, 'Transformation 1: Qur'anic Calligraphy,' fig. 29) says that the colophon was written in Jamal 1 427/1326-33 by Abu Quraysh al-Sa'id ibn Ibrahim ibn 'Ali ibn Ibrahim ibn Sulaym al-mudarris [the Elder]. The colophon adds that the copyist was the son of a disciple of al-Jawhari (d. c. 1009), the celebrated lexicographer of Turkish origin who taught Arabic and particularly calligraphy in Damascus and Nishapur. Despite his epitaph, the copyist did not work alone, for as Rice pointed out (p. 315, a note on one illuminated folio) [28] says that Abu Mansur Naji ibn 'Abdallah was responsible for the illumination (ridabbi). According to an anonymous treatise that Rice considered an early commentary to the text, Ibn al-Bawwab was a master of many round scripts, including the six that later came to be grouped as the Six Pers as well as others such as hawashi (literally, glosses) and gold script qalama al-dhahab. He is also said to have given distinction to textual and Koranic scripts (muyaza qalama al-mutm wa al-muslim) and written kufic script. See Rice, Ibn al-Bawwab, 7, citing an anonymous treatise in Berlin (We 167, vols. 43-50). The treatise was published by W. Ahlwardt, Verzeichnis der Arabischen Handschriften (Berlin, 1877), 1, M/S 7. Although the treatise is unsigned and undated, Rice judged the clarity and simplicity of its style signs of antiquity.

88. Rice actually used the form nakhši, the form used by Abbott, Risė, but most scholars prefer the noun naskh. He also wondered whether the gold script used for the chapter headings might be the qalama al-dhāhibi mentioned in the text on calligraphy.

89. See, for example, Tabbaa, 'Transformation 1: Qur'anic Calligraphy' and Solango Oyri's article, 'Calligraphy' in EQ.

90. See, for example, the discussions in Safadi, Islamic Calligraphy, 63, Habiballah Fa'izi, Atlas-i khatt: tabaqat dar khatt-i islamī (Teheran, 1330/1912), 384-392.

91. The root thašth means to take or be a third of something; Edward William Lane, An Arabic-English Lexicon (London and Edinburgh, 1863), 1446. The second, intensive form thalathā means to triple.

92. See, ibid., p. 353; see also Abbott, Risė, 31, and Dodge's note in his translation of Ibn al-Nadim, Fihrist, 13, n. 23.


94. The pen was measured by animal hairs (sha't al-birdhawn), probably the hairs of a donkey. A pen twenty-four hairs wide was used to write the large script known as tumur, often used for the protocol (see Chapter 8). In descending order, the next sizes were thaluthāyin (literally two-thirds and hence sixteen hairs), nisf (half, twelve hairs) and thalathā (one-third, eight hairs).

95. See, for example, the canon of proportion reconstructed by Ahmed Moustafa reproduced in Soucek, 'Calligraphy,' pl. III.

96. See the lengthy discussion in Abbott, 'Arabic Calligraphy,' 87-93, and the various charts and lists in Abbott, 'Arabic Calligraphy,' Table 1; al-Nadim, Fihrist, 13, n. 33, and Tabbaa, 'Transformation 1: Qur'anic Calligraphy,' 133, none of which gives a complete listing of the twenty-four scripts mentioned by Ibn al-Nadim at the end of the passage. The most recent study, Vladimir A. Atanasov, 'Les realités subjectives d'un paleographer arabe du Xe siècle,' Gazette du Livre Médéval 43 (Autumn, 2003), 104-132, argues that Ibn al-Nadim was not only by his visual appearance, but also according to social, codicological, and genealogical principles, thereby making a parallel between writing of the world and society and projecting an idealized conception of the world and society on writing. This essay is the most provocative on the subject, attempting to get behind the reasoning for Ibn al-Nadim's classifications and put the tenth-century scholar's work in context, but it too ends up with only twenty-one scripts. Ibn al-Nadim's text may be corrupt, and so far as it stands, it remains difficult to interpret.

97. Fa'izi, Atlas-i khatt, 304. The traces of thaluth include the upturned tails on rā', as in mustātir and mustashtir, the last words before the marginal blue dots in the third and sixth lines of Sura 54 (Figure 5.8). Derman, Art of Calligraphy, 203, noted that the script was actually rayhan. Mohamed Zakariya repeated this information in his lecture, 'Criticism in Islamic Art: The Case of Calligraphy,' delivered at the colloquium 'Expanded Frontiers,' held at Virginia Commonwealth University on November 6, 2004, and slated for publication. His colleague and fellow speaker Nabil Safwat concurred.

98. Al-Nadim, Fihrist, 261.

99. Compare, for example, the same phrase written in rayhan and naskh by Zakariya, Calligraphy, 23 and 25, or the charts of the individual letters forms drawn by Habiballah Fa'izi, Talash-i khatt, 10th edn (Teheran, 1334/1955-6), 312-13, and reproduced in Els, 4, 1566-3, and Fa'izi's chart of naskh is also shown here as Figure 13.2.

100. M. Stierer, Fatimid Decrees: Original Documents from the Fatimid Chancery, All Souls Studies (London, 1964). 126-8; Els, 5, 2; 'Tawi.' 'Tawi was one of two terms used for the official signature in early Islamic times. The other, 'ullama, which originally meant distinctive
sign, was common in Fatimid Egypt and the western Islamic lands, whereas tawqī’ was standard in the east. The Ottomans later used a third term, tugha, which was also an emblem like the tawqī’ ruled by the Turkish dynasties which came to power in the Islamic lands from the tenth century. See Chapter 11 and Figure 11.15.

101. The Ghaznavid historian Abū ‘Alī-Fadl Bayhaqī, for example, mentions a letter that the ‘Abbasid caliph al-Qa‘im sent the Ghaznavid ruler Mas‘ud that containing the caliph’s signature (tawqī’), ‘may aid is desired of God!’ (fī tadā ‘ībāh).

102. In other su’a headings, the allīya of ayat is connected to the last word of the verse in the context of the preceding heading for Surat al-Tur (folio 2414), where the ‘ayn of arba’ connects to the allīya.

103. If we insist on labeling his scripts, the most accurate might be a text script merging naskh with rayhān and a touch of thuluth and a display script based on thuluth but varying toward tawqī’. Such a description is accurate, but sounds more like a recipe in a cookbook.

104. See, for example, the manuscripts dated in the early eleventh century illustrated in Tabbaa, ‘Transformation 1: Qur’ānic Calligraphy’, Figs. 24 and 25–26.

105. Istanbul, TKS Baghd. 125. For the manuscript, see Rice, Ibn al-Bawwab, 19–23; Munajjid, Al-Kitāb al-‘Arabi, pl. 23; Derman, Art of Calligraphy, no. 14. For the poet, see El‘fī, ‘Salama b. Dijānd’. His diwan has been edited by Fakhri al-‘In Qābāwī (ed.), Diwan Salama Ibn Dijandal [Aleppo, 1387/1968].

106. Anxious to prove that the subject of his own monograph, Ibn al-Bawwab’s Koran manuscript in the Chester Beatty Library, was the only authentic work by this star calligrapher, Rice discounted the authenticity of the colophon on several grounds. Noting the half-century gap between the date in the colophon and the date supplied by the ex-libris, Rice argued that the colophon had been added, although he did not specify when. He also suggested that the shiny gold colophon was not similar to the gold opening line of text. Derman, Art of Calligraphy, no. 14, a noted Turkish authority on calligraphy who valued the poetic manuscript as part of his national patrimony, countered Rice’s reasoning, arguing that it was the ex-libris that had been added a half century after transcription and that indeed colophon and opening line differed because they were different scripts. Derman did not explain, however, why someone rubbed out the part of the ex-libris in naskh, but left the line in broken cursive, probably because that script had become too difficult to read. This must have been done by a later owner who did not want his predecessor’s ownership known.

All scholars agree, in any case, that the manuscript of Salama’s poetry is a fine example of a luxury manuscript made in the eleventh century and one that itself served as a model for another copy, including the colophon, made as early as the fourteenth century. [The second copy of Salama’s poems is contained in an anthology of three works. T.I.E.M. 2015; see Rice, Ibn al-Bawwab, 53–4.]

107. Munajjid, Al-Kitāb al-‘Arabi, pl. 23; Qābāwī, Diwan Salama Ibn Dijandal, pl. 4.

108. On the term, see Adam Gacek, The Arabic Manuscript Tradition, a Glossary of Technical Terms and Bibliography, Handbuch der Orientalistik (Leiden, 2001), 112. Such marks had been used at least since the tenth century, as in the copy of al-Muharrad’s grammar copied by Muhallib ibn Ahmad at Baghdad in 347/958 [Istanbul, Kopta Library 1508; Ramazan Şen, ‘Le caractère du Manuscrit de l’écriture de quatre manuscrits du IVe s. H./XVe s. AH.’ in Les manuscrits du Moyen-Orient: essais de codologie et paléographie, ed. François Déroche [Lille: Parenthese, 1986], pl. IV, 112.]

The word kitāb, which later came to designate the Koran and is usually translated as book or scripture, had not yet taken on this meaning when Salama was writing. On the word, see Daniel A. Madigan, The Qur’an’s Self-Image: Writing and Authority in Islam’s Scripture [Princeton, 2001] and his article ‘Book’ in EQ, 1124–51.

109. Elsewhere, Salama ibn Dijandal also mentions other elements of writing, such as inkwells (dawā’ir) and parchment (jūdūd muhāqqaq); poem 3, verse 3; Qābāwī, Diwan Salama Ibn Dijandal, 536.

110. Al-Yazdī (d. 932) was a friend of al-Jahiz; see al-Nadīm, Fihris, 1049.

111. Compare this arrangement to the more logical one in the printed edition [Qābāwī, Diwan Salama Ibn Dijandal, 508–9], where Salama ibn Dijandal’s concluding qasīda is written in large bold script and the entire chain of transmission is written in the smaller script.

112. Rice called the smaller script naskh, but these features make Derman’s identification of rayhān more likely.

113. Lane, Lexicon, 2:605–6.

114. For example, in his manual for secretaries, Masīwadd al-bayan, ‘Ali ibn Khalaf, an eleventh-century secretary in the Fatimid chancery, who was one of the main sources for the Mamlik chronicler al-Qalqashandi, made the distinction between careful [muhāqqaq] and careless [muqab] execution. The treatise survives only in an incomplete manuscript in Istanbul [TKS Fatih 428], but was used by Stern, Fatimid Decrees, 105. The Fatimid secretary reports:

The exact script [muhāqqaq] is such that its letters are precisely shaped if taken one by one. It is nobler than the negligent [muqab] and is only used for important matters, such as appointments, registrations [isjālat], and grants of property, which are meant to be kept for generations, and letters addressed by kings to kings which must indicate the importance of the sender and the addressee. Negligent script [muqab] is such that its letters run into each other and are joined together; it is derived from the exact script and used in order to expedite important correspondence which must not be delayed, and for common affairs. It appears more pleasing to the eye as long as one looks at it as a whole, but as soon as the single letters are distinguished and are compared with the letters of the exact script, it becomes manifest how great the difference is.

Ibn al-Nadīm uses the term muhaqqaq in describing the origins of Arabic writing according to sources other than Ibn Thawbah. Ibn al-Nadīm says that during the ‘Abbasid period there developed a style called the ‘īqā’, which was the formal type [muhāqqaq] known as ṭarfī. Al-Nadīm, Fihris, 15.

115. Ibn al-Nadīm (Fihris, 16), for example, lists muhaqqaq as one of the scripts that derived from ‘īqā’, a script said to have been invented by al-Fadl ibn Sabh, known as Dhu’l-Ri’asiyūn (possessing two positions) because he was both vizier and army commander under al-Ma‘ūn [r. 813–33].

116. See Youssif’s article ‘Calligraphy’ in Elr, 4:689, presumably citing the multiscripts attributed to Ibn Muqta in Cairo.

117. The allīfa and lām in the basma, for example, have no script, a feature standard in later muhaqqaq.

118. Déroche, Abbasid Tradition, 133 and elsewhere.
rather fickle courtier who won the caliph with polish and good manners. In Sourdel's view, Ibn Muqla's political program was hard to gauge and his financial acumen outweighed by his talents as poet and calligrapher. But even then, Sourdel concluded that Ibn Muqla's calligraphic impact was difficult to define. Ibn Khalikan credits Ibn Muqla's brother Abu 'Abdallah al-Hasan as the real inventor of the proportioned script, and according to Ibn al-Nadim, both brothers followed the calligraphy of their grandfather. It seems that Ibn Muqla, in calligraphy as in politics, was more an opportunist than an innovator.

Furthermore, Ibn al-Bawwab did not share the partisan religious beliefs of his predecessor Ibn Muqla. Although the caliph al-Qadir was intent in reinforcing 'Abbasid propaganda and persecuting Shi'ites, Ibn al-Bawwab was not associated with the 'Abbasid court. His main patrons were the Buyids, the Daylamite dynasty that rose to power in Iran and Iraq as 'Abbasid grip over the provinces waned. Like most Daylamis, the Buyids were Shi'ites, probably first Zaydis and then Imamis or 'Ja'faris (Twelvers). Under their rule, Qumm became a center of Shi'ite theology, and the Baghdadi teacher Ibn Bahawayh, known as Saddak (d. 953), became one of the foremost thinkers of Imam Shī'ism. Ibn al-Bawwab frequented the government circles of the Buyids. He worked in Shiraz as librarian for the Buyid Baha' al-Dawla. Ibn al-Bawwab also used to preach in Baghdad at the Mosque of al-Mansur, and when the Buyid vizier Muhammad ibn 'Ali ibn Khalaf, known as Fakhr al-Mulk, assumed the governorate for the Buyids there in 1010, he made Ibn al-Bawwab one of his intimates.

As Rice (Ibn al-Bawwab, 13) showed, the copy of the Koran penned by Ibn al-Bawwab suggests that the calligrapher shared the Shi'i leanings of his patrons. The verse count at the beginning (Figure 5.9) says that the Koran uses the Kufic version established by 'Ali ibn Abi Talib, who is eulogized with the phrase 'alayhi al-salam (peace be upon him), a phrase used by the Shi'ites instead of the Sunni form rida ya'allah 'alayh (may God be pleased with him). Since the text does not actually follow this version, the frontispiece may have been added as a selling point, but the eulogy in the colophon at the end of the text refers to the Prophet's pure family (thuthali al-talatun), and the colophon invokes blessings on the Prophet's family (alalih). Such references to the Prophet's family were favored by Shi'ites, whose claims to legitimacy were based on descent through the Prophet's line. Similar calligraphy for the Prophet's family show up in contemporary mosques in Iran, such as the Friday mosque at Nayin (Blair, Monumental Inscriptions, no. 9). Rather than promoting the Sunni branch of Islam, Ibn al-Bawwab's copy of the Koran and others like it (e.g., Khalili Collection QUR848, David James, The Master Scribes: Qur'ans of the 9th to the 14th Centuries 40, ed. Julian Raby, The Nasser D. Khalili Collection of Islamic Art [London, 1993], no. 1, a manuscript whose unexplained provenance and remarkable similarities to the Ibn al-Bawwab manuscript in Dublin might raise a few eyebrows) may have been made for the nascent Shi'ite community in Iran and Iraq. See also the comments of Sheila S. Blair and Jonathan M. Bloom, "The Nasser D. Khalili Collection of Islamic Art," Persica 13 (1993–5): 77–90.


Ibn 'Abbâsan (d. 838), the fi rst great poet of the abbâsids, was born in Basra in 753 and died in Baghdad in 838. He was the son of the caliph al-Mansur and the father of the caliph al-Mutawakkil. Ibn 'Abbâsan's poetry is characterized by its devotion to the Ahdâd al-dawla (the glory of the state) and the praises of the Abbasids, and it is considered one of the foundations of Abbasid poetry. His poetry is known for its elegance and conciseness, and it has been praised for its ability to capture the spirit of the Abbasid court. Ibn 'Abbâsan's influence can be seen in the works of later poets, and his legacy continues to be celebrated in the contemporary world of Abbasid poetry.
entirely true, as the Koran copied by Shanbak ibn Muhammad in Murs in 335/946-7 is written in a round script (see above, note 31).

130. Anna Contadini’s attribution (Jattal Art at the Victoria and Albert Museum [London, 1998], 10-11) of a small manuscript in broken cursive dated 428/1037 [CBL 1350] to Fatimid Egypt is not convincing. Only one Koran manuscript has so far been attributed to the patronage of the Fatimids in North Africa; the so-called Blue Koran (Figure 4.16).


132. Al-Maqriti also preserves a long account of the sad looting of the Fatimid treasures in 461/1068 from a work entitled Kitab al-Dhakha’a [Book of Treasures]. Books were stolen from forty separate depositories in the palace and included 2,400 boxed Korans [khuttam qur’an fi sab’at] written in the proportioned scripts [al-khatar al-manabah]. See further Paul E. Walker, ‘Fatimid Institutions of Learning,’ Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt 34 [1997]: 179-200.

133. The information that we have has recently been collected by Ayman Fu’ad Sayyid, ‘L’art du livre,’ Dossiers d’archéologie, no. 333 [May 1998], 289-3.

134. Fu’ad Sayyid reproduces the title pages from the two surviving volumes, this one in Cairo (DK, no. 343 luga) and the other in the library of the Asiatic Society of Bengal in Calcutta.

135. It is now in Public Library in Rabat, Morocco.

136. See Chapter 6 and Figure 6.7 for discussion and illustration of the scripts used in the Fatimid chancery.

137. See Chapter 6 for further discussion of al-Tayyibi’s manual.


139. Necipoğlu, Topkapi Scroll, 108.

140. Whelan, ‘Writing the Word of God,’ 123.

CHAPTER SIX

The Proliferation of Round Scripts

In the late eleventh, twelfth, and early thirteenth centuries, round scripts came to dominate the calligraphic scene, as copyists strove to transform their regular hands into graceful and imposing scripts suitable for larger codices containing important texts, including the Koran. Some copyists in the eastern Islamic lands continued to use the broken cursive supposedly canonized by Ibn Maqla, but the script became increasing stylized until it was gradually relegated to headgaps and inci dentials. Secretaries and copyists there also played with other round scripts. Like the majuscule and minuscule scripts used in the West, these round scripts eventually came to be grouped in sized pairs later canonized as the Six Pens – tawqī’  and its smaller counterpart riqa’, ṭablathinshkh,  and muhallaqatrayhan. Contemporary copyists in the Maghrib, who eschewed the adoption of paper and communal use parchment, created their own distinctive style of round script, which also came in larger and smaller sizes. The development of regional varieties of round scripts is clearly related to the historical situation, in which distinct cultural centers arose at Baghdad, Nishapur, Cairo, Cordoba, and elsewhere. Since these scripts had not yet reached their canonical forms, scholars sometimes categorize the same specimens under different names, and one of the aims of this chapter is to delineate significant features of individual examples.

The stylization of broken cursive

broken cursive had a long and varied shelf life. In these centuries it was used not only for Arabic but also for Persian. The first surviving manuscript in new Persian – a copy of al-Haravi’s pharmacological work entitled Kitab al-Anbiya’ [Book of the Prophets] (Figure 6.1) inscribed in 447/1055-6 by the poet ‘Ali ibn Ahmad Asadi al-Tusi – copied in a rough broken cursive, with a larger and more polished version used as display script in the opening two lines with the Persian invocation to God. The text script is characterized by strokes of varying thickness, left-facing serifs, diagonal tails, and a spur on the alif; the display script is a more stylized version. In it, the vertical strokes of the four alifs in the first line are drawn out to contrast with the horizontal bars of gof in the second line, which is so