According to Ravandi, the letters of the alphabet are constructed of combinations of the circle or its segments and the straight line, its diameter. He identifies the circle and its diameter with the world and the equator, respectively. Applying this concept to writing, he divides the diameter of a circle into ten rhomboidal dots. Taking each of the nineteen homographs in turn, he describes its shape, ending with a verse that epitomizes the form. In many cases (specifically, alif, dal, ra', kaf, lam, mim, nun, waw, and lam-alif), he distinguishes the methods of constructing the letters in various round scripts, mentioning naskh, thuluth, riqa', and muhaqqaq. The textual descriptions are accompanied by drawings that illustrate Ravandi's theories (Figure 6.11).45

Alif, according to Ravandi, is upright like a human and measures ten dots high in all scripts that are complete with ten, a reference to the ten days of fasting during the pilgrimage mentioned in Koran 2:196. In thuluth and muhaqqaq, it is permitted to have a dot-sized point or serif on the right [wali, literally wild] side of the upright stroke and another on the bottom of the opposite side, so that the upright stroke of the alif measures eight dots. Ba' is like alif, ten dots and straight so that it is as wide as alif is tall. It has one dot on the right side on top of the first dot. Both the head and tail of ba' should be one dot high, but when writing hurriedly, the letter becomes curved like a polo mallet. The letter jim, Ravandi says, has a top that is half the size of ba' (i.e., five dots wide), and a body that is half of a circle.

Reading Ravandi's text shows, however, that his descriptions are somewhat fanciful and that his geometric system of dots was drawn up after the fact and forced to fit an alphabet that had been constructed along other lines. His descriptions yield some letters with odd proportions. The tail of jim, for example, is much larger and rounder than is usual and stretched to fit a semi-circle. Some of his scripts are so convoluted as to make no sense without illustration. He describes the letter fa', for example, as a whole ba' with the upside-down heads of ba'[ma'kas-1 sar-i ba'] attached to it. Qaf is like fa', but with two upside-down heads of ba', a quarter of an alif, and a ba' at the end. It is difficult to see how a scribe could draw the letters following these instructions. Rather, Ravandi was trying to describe letters so that they fitted a mental landscape based on Aristotelian views of the universe. The scribe of the sole surviving manuscript of Ravandi's history, although transcribed only a generation after it was composed, clearly did not understand what was going on in the section on calligraphy, for sometimes the drawing simply does not illustrate what the text says. For example, Ravandi reports that some people say that the teeth of sin are like a carpenter's saw, but that this is wrong and that the teeth of sin should not be level. The illustration, however, shows a sin with teeth of equal height.

Ravandi was apparently trying to apply proportional theories to round styles of writing that were still in the process of development. Such theories of proportion (tanastib) were popular in the late tenth and eleventh centuries with mathematicians and philosophers such as Abu Wafa' al-Buzjani [d. 997–8], Ibn Haytham [d. 1039], and the Ikwan al-Safa', or Brethren of Purity. Based on classical prototypes, these theories were a legacy of the translation of classical works that had taken place under the 'Abbasids in the ninth century. Ibn Maslha is later credited with developing the proportioned script (al-khatt al-mansub), but the system of dots was apparently not codified by the early thirteenth century when Ravandi tried to apply proportional theories to writing. Ravandi's text also shows that by the early thirteenth century the round scripts had not yet been codified into the three sets known as the Six Pens. Of the four scripts that he discusses, the one most frequently mentioned is naskh. It is sometimes paired with thuluth. This is not, however, the way that the scripts were to be paired in later times in Iran (see Chapter 7).

Along with its illustrations, Ravandi's text is useful for the information it supplies about court patronage of scribes and the status of calligraphy in this period.46 Ravandi belonged to a family of calligraphers. His other maternal uncle, Mahmud ibn Muhammad (brother of Ravandi's teacher Taj al-Din Ahmad), was also a fine calligrapher who taught calligraphy to the Saljuq sultan Tughril III from 579/1183.
PRE-EMINENCE OF ROUND SCRIPTS IN THE EARLY MIDDLE PERIOD

According to Ravandi, when the sultan became proficient, he began to transcribe a thirty-part Koran manuscript, employing painters and illuminators to ornament it and spending one hundred Maghribi dirhams on each of the thirty parts. Mahmud took this occasion to introduce his nephew to the sultan, and Ravandi claims that he himself was responsible for most of the illumination in the Koran manuscript.84

Ravandi continues that Tughril penned another small copy of the Koran, meant to be carried on his person. When his calligraphy master, the historian's uncle Mahmud, went to Mazandaran in 585/1189, he presented the small Koran manuscript, along with a letter in the sultan's handwriting, to the ruler of the name of a third party who was unable to do so. In size, it confirms that different sizes and formats of Koran manuscripts were used for different purposes. It also shows the connection between official correspondence and fine manuscripts and tells us that a finely calligraphed and illuminated book was deemed an appropriate gift from one prince to another.

Pairs of text scripts

In addition to pairings with individual styles of text script, which were often juxtaposed to other display scripts, copyists in these centuries also interspersed two or more text scripts on the same page. The juxtaposition of large and small scripts was particularly suitable for multilingual copies of the Koran, as in the four-volume manuscript with interlinear Persian translation and commentary by Abu Bakr 'Ali al-Surahabi that was transcribed by Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Malik Muhammad ibn 'Ali al-Nishapuri in 584/1189 for the Ghurid amir Ghiyath al-Din Muhammad ibn Sam [Figure 6.6]. Like the Hamadan Koran probably made at the court of the Great Seljuqs [Figure 6.9], the Ghurid copy was a luxury manuscript, slightly larger (41 × 33 cm) and with much gold illumination. It too has a well-attested provenance: in 654/1256 Qutb al-Din Muhammad, one of the shaykhs at Turbat-i Shaykh Jam‘, ended the manuscript to the shrine of his grandfather Ahmad Jam‘, where it remained until 1498 when it was transferred to the Iranian National Museum.69

The standard page in the Ghurid Koran codex has six lines of sturdy black script for the Koranic text and six lines of smaller black script for the Persian translation. The text script is closest to thu`luth: it is a large horizontal script with flattened bowls and typical letters such as dal slightly pitched to the left with right hook and left-curving foot. Tails of letters like ‘aa match the preceding stroke. Penned with a thick stroke, Diacriticals are added with a thinner pen. The translation is written in a small serifless naskhi using the old dotted form of dal and smaller letters to distinguish muhthila letters like ‘ayn from their homographs. The copyist's hand is somewhat ungainly: the last words in the line are often thinner and lighter than the first, an effect akin to the lightening of individual letters in the Bust Koran [Figure 6.6a]. The finest effort was reserved for the elaborate illumination, which occupies one-half of the written surface in this left half of the double page marking the middle of the text.

Just as copyists played off large and small scripts for text and commentary in Koran codices, so too scribes juxtaposed similar pairs in documents. We know this from a remarkable cache of pilgrimage certificates preserved in the Umayyad Mosque of Damascus.10 The group comprises 150 rolls (rotuli), ranging in date from 476/1084 to 510/1110. They are juridical or legal documents certifying in the name of witnesses whose signatures are inscribed at the bottom that a certain person executed the greater and/or lesser pilgrimage (hajj or umrah) in the name of a third party who was unable to do so. In size, they originally measured 20–50 cm wide and up to 310 cm long, though most are now fragmentary.

One of the few intact examples is a roll dated to the last ten days of Shawwal 594/24 August–3 September 1198 [Figure 6.12].11 Like most early rolls, this one is made of two sheets of fine cream-colored paper pasted together lengthwise. Each sheet measures about 36 by 21 cm and has five or six evenly spaced laid lines per centimeter. Also like most early rolls, this certificate is entirely calligraphic. It is inscribed in black ink with panels containing single lines of large and medium-sized thu`luth alternating with slightly shorter panels containing double lines of smaller naskhi. At the top is the basmala, written in a large and stylized thu`luth. Next comes a line of smaller thu`luth saying that the certificate attests to both the greater and lesser pilgrimages (hajj and umrah). The other panels of heavy black thu`luth continue Koran 9:23–3, promising believers God's mercy, pleasure, and gardens of enduring delight in which they will dwell forever. The smaller interlinear text contains the attestation, including the date and the signatures of three witnesses at the bottom. These last two lines are written in a sloppier hand, probably because they were added to a document that had been prepared in advance.

The document represents fine calligraphy designed for exhibition. The thu`luth is stylized with a marked contrast between the thick letters and the almost hair-like terminals, especially on final mim, ba’, and ra’ and the left foot of independent alif. The basmala is particularly extreme. It is stylized in the fashion of Ibn al-Bawwab, but with an extra long extender between the sin and mim of bism serving as a bridge beneath which are written the last two words, al-rahman al-rahiim. The final nun of al-rahiim is a large swooping stroke that encompasses most of the following word al-rahiim, whose long descending tail matches the preceding stroke. Penned with a thick stroke, this invocation was meant to be identifiable from afar. It contrasts to the smaller and more hurriedly written naskhi, which also contains several unauthorized connections, especially in familiar words and phrases such as allah ta’ala [God the Great].

Altogether, the calligraphy shows that the scroll was meant to be seen as much as read, a function confirmed by its physical aspect. Large and heavy documents like this one were made for display, probably on
the walls of a mosque or house. Some rolls still have traces of glue on the back; others were once framed. They were intended to attest to the pilgrim's prestige, even if he had earned his title *hajji* thanks to the paltry contributions of a substitute. A roll like this one marks the epitome of monumental and monochrome calligraphy. From this time onward, the visual aspect of these rolls was dramatically altered by the addition of pictures to supplement the words. Schematic illustrations of the holy stations visited along the journey, first hand-painted and then block-printed, were inserted between the lines of text, which in turn was written in various scripts, colored, and block printed as well. In these later rolls, the image begins to replace the word.

In both the Churid Koran manuscript (Figure 6.6) and the pilgrimage scroll (Figure 6.13), the copyists used different scripts to call attention to different types of text, typically juxtaposing a large script for the Koranic text against a smaller one for the non-Koranic. Such a juxtaposition of large and small scripts was a natural evolution of the different scripts used for text and display, particularly in Koran codices. In this period, copyists also came to use two scripts within the Koranic text itself, a development possible in part because of the large sheets of paper now available for these codices. The first dated example using two scripts for the Koranic text to survive (Figure 6.13) is a large (43 × 31 cm) manuscript finished on 15 Jumada I 582/3 August 1186 and signed by Abī Bakr ibn Abī al-Rahman al-Malikī. His epigraph, 'the royal secretary,' implies that he worked for one of the local rulers who proliferated in Iran and surrounding areas with the decline of the Great Saljuqs. Abī al-Rahman also bears the epigraph *zarin qalam* (golden pen), indicating how highly he was esteemed.

He was clearly trying to show off his virtuosity in this ambitious codex.

A typical page in this Koran manuscript has nineteen lines of script. The upper, middle, and bottom lines are written in a large script. Its modest sublinear flourishes and pointed tails resemble *mutaqaq*. But it also includes unauthorized connections between letters, notably to *alif* (Figure 6.13a). Sandwiched in between are sixteen lines of a smaller script, eight in the upper half of the page and eight in the lower. The small script is somewhat of a hybrid. In later times *mutaqaq* was typically paired with its smaller counterpart *rayhan*, and both scripts in this manuscript share certain features such as pointed tips and *alif* with a serif. Nevertheless, the small script lacks some of the characteristic features of the *rayhan* used in later times such as the spacious and upright quality and the flat dots. In some ways it looks like regular *nasikh*. But it too includes unauthorized connections (Figure 6.13b) typical of a scribal hand. The copyist's unfamiliarity with juxtaposing different sizes of text script is clear from the bottom line, where he ran out of room and had to squeeze in the last word vertically (Figure 6.13c).

Not content with simply juxtaposing these two scripts within the text, the copyist Abī al-Rahman *zarin qalam* used *thuluth* for the
prefatory note to the reader, a new form of prose and a new style of writing were developed, with the aim of replicating the appearance of the ‘original’ manuscript. This was accomplished through the use of a wider variety of scripts, including kufic, naskh, and thuluth, as well as a greater emphasis on the use of gold and silver in the decoration of the text. This development was facilitated by the growing literacy of the general population and the increased demand for copies of the Koran.

The text continued by discussing the proliferation of round scripts in the early Middle Period, mentioning the use of different scripts and their evolution over time. It highlighted the importance of the copyists and the various techniques they employed to create these manuscripts, including the use of gold and silver inlays, and the use of different script styles to create a more visually appealing and aesthetically pleasing text.

The following passage provides a detailed account of the use of different scripts and their evolution over time:

"Within a continuous text, the use of different scripts can be observed, with the copyists employing different script styles and shapes to create a more visually appealing and aesthetically pleasing text. The copyists used both traditional scripts such as kufic, naskh, and thuluth, as well as newer scripts that were developed during the early Middle Period. This evolution of script styles was facilitated by the growing literacy of the general population and the increased demand for copies of the Koran.

The text continued by discussing the importance of the copyists and the various techniques they employed to create these manuscripts, including the use of gold and silver inlays, and the use of different script styles to create a more visually appealing and aesthetically pleasing text. The copyists were highly skilled and were able to create a variety of scripts that were both functional and visually pleasing. This evolution of script styles was facilitated by the growing literacy of the general population and the increased demand for copies of the Koran."
who transcribed the treatise on the qualities of the Prophet c. 1050 [Figure 6.5]. In the twelfth century, these epithets were often replaced by al-khatib (the secretary), used in many manuscripts made in Iran and Syria (e.g., Figures 6.8, 6.9 and 6.10 as well as the copy of 'Imad al-Din's history of Jerusalem transcribed in 595/1199). The term designates a scribe who worked in the state chancery. Muhammad ibn Muhammad al-Amid al-Islam Awhad al-Din's epithet khittat marks a new stage. The term derives from the verb khat. to write, the noun khatt is generally used to designate fine writing or calligraphy. The appearance of this epithet shows that calligraphy had come of age in the middle period.

Maghribi script

At the same time that copyists in the eastern Islamic lands were refining round scripts, their counterparts in the Islamic west were developing a distinctive round style dubbed maghribi. As in the east, the round script used in the Islamic west was written in different sizes and forms. Scholars, beginning with Octave Houdas' 1886 article on maghribi scripts, have tried to assign geographic names to the various sizes and styles. Perhaps on analogy with the three pairs of majuscule/minuscule scripts that make up the Six Pens, maghribi scripts are often juxtaposed as a pair of opposite sizes: andalus, from al-Andalus, the Arabic name for the Iberian peninsula, is often used for a small, compact variant that is the counterpart of a larger and looser style known as jazi (literally from Fez in Morocco). By the sixteenth century the two are said to have merged into one average-sized script.

These names, however, are modern and cannot be taken as representative of geographic production. Manuscripts from the same city were transcribed in different scripts, and manuscripts from different places were sometimes transcribed in similar scripts. We should not be surprised by the intermingling of scripts, for scholars and copyists often moved, especially in this volatile region. One need think only of the theologian and philosopher Ibn Rushd (1126–98), known in the West as Averroes, who traveled regularly through the Almohad domains, from Córdoba to Marrakesh, being variously chief judge and in exile. Large objects were moved as well. The most spectacular example is the enormous (it measures almost 4 meters tall) and splendid minbar ordered in 1 Muharram [New Year's Day] 532/19 September 1137 by the Almoravid ruler 'Ali ibn Yusuf. Made in Córdoba, it was shipped in pieces some eight hundred kilometers to the Straits of Gibraltar and over the Atlas Mountains to be installed in the new congregational mosque that the sultan had founded in Marrakesh.

Manuscripts moved accordingly. For example, a codex on Prophetic Traditions made in Valencia in 568/1173–3 was read aloud in the mosque at Córdoba sixteen years later. As more and more
manuscripts from this region are published, we are learning that they were copied at many more sites than had been recognized previously. In this period alone, we know of manuscripts transcribed in Córdoba, Málaga, Seville, Valencia, Ceuta, and Marrakesh. Until we have a clear analysis of the characteristics of the different variants, it seems best to steer clear of geographic rubrics and group the scripts under the heading maghribi with an adjective denoting relative size (small, medium-sized, or large).

Maghribi script is visually distinct. Descending letters have large bowls with swooping curves. The shafts of the letters often swell at the top, and they, like most initial strokes, begin with a left serif. The strokes on fa' and kaf are generally diagonal and contrast with the rounded bodies of these letters. Final alif ends with a spur or point at the bottom. Sad is a smooth loop, without any initial bump. Most of these features are found in the typical round hand used in Abbasid times (see Chapter 5), especially the type of broken cursive used in Koran manuscripts made in Sicily [Figure 5.4] or Tunisia [Figure 5.5] at the turn of the tenth to eleventh century. Maghribi script differs, however, from broken cursive in having strokes with a more uniform thickness in which the differences between thick and thin are much less pronounced. This more uniform stroke may well be due to the way the copyist cuts his pen.

In addition to its visual distinctiveness, maghribi script also uses a different system of pointing and vocalization. To distinguish fa’ from qa’, the former is pointed with a single dot below the letter, whereas the latter has a single dot above the letter. These letters thus differ from the standard form used in the east [and in modern typography] where fa’ and qa’ are marked with one or two dots below the letter. The maghribi system is also distinct from that used in early Islamic times, as at the Dome of the Rock [see Chapter 3], where almost the opposite system is found [qa’ is pointed with one stroke below the letter to differentiate it from fa’, which is pointed with one stroke above the letter]. The archaic system of pointing fa’/qa’ was already in use by the tenth century in the Maghrib and shows up in the scant surviving handful of manuscripts made across the region from Andalusia to southern Italy.46 Furthermore, in the maghribi tradition, hamzat al-qaf’ is marked with a red or yellow dot and hamzat al-waṣl with a green dot, the same system that had been used in certain kufic Koran manuscripts that are ascribed to the region [Figure 4.8]. Monumental inscriptions from the Maghribi also show distinctive spelling and orthography, including writing out the long alif in words such as baḍrwa. The different system of vocalization may also reflect different pronunciation in the West, for Koran manuscripts made in North Africa have a red dot under the letter to indicate 'imālā. These maghribi variations in pointing and orthography parallel the distinctive system of abjad numbering used in the region.48

There are several possible reasons why such a distinctive style of round script developed in the Islamic west. With its sweeping curves this style was particularly appropriate for the material and format of the Koran manuscripts made there. Parchment remained in use in this region at least until the fourteenth century, long after it had been replaced by paper in the east. Maghribi Koran manuscripts also have a distinctive shape: they are often small and square, measuring some 15 cm on a side. The distinctive maghribi style of script may also be the result of the method used to train copyists. According to Ibn Shaddān, the renowned fourteenth-century historian from North Africa, in the Maghrib calligraphers were trained to write whole words.49 Calligraphers in the east, by contrast, were trained to write separate letters.

Déroche amassed the evidence from extant manuscripts to prove that a distinct style of script had already developed in the Maghrib by the middle of the tenth century.50 The first surviving manuscript in maghribi script that he identified is a copy of Ishaq ibn Sulayman al-Jahili’s Kitab ma’rifat al-bawā wa aqṣamīthī trangscribed in 346/957, probably in Andalusia.51 From that point, the number of dated manuscripts in maghribi script increases, reaching more than a dozen by the end of the eleventh century. They include scientific, legal, and polemical treatises as well as copies of the Koran and commentaries on it. Most are poorly published, and the study of the palaeography and codicology of maghribi manuscripts is still in its infancy.

The fanciest of these manuscripts in maghribi script were, as elsewhere in the Islamic lands, Koran codices. The earliest so far identified date to the beginning of the eleventh century. They include two fragmentary folios in Istanbul, each with four lines of text, written in brown ink on an oblong sheet of parchment.52 The earlier (Figure 6.1.5) contains the end of the twenty-eighth section, followed by a twon-line colophon stating that the section [juz’] was finished in Rajab 308/March–April 1008. The later contains the end of the Koran 1134-1146] followed by a colophon, written in an angular kufic script, saying that the manuscript [mushaf] was completed on 6 Safar 1316 October 1040. The Tareq Rabj Collection in Kuwait has recently acquired a slightly earlier copy of the Koran in a similar format, but with a more compact script. Unlike the two folios in Istanbul, this manuscript is amazingly complete, bound in two volumes, and dated 393/1535 to 395/1537.

The script used in these three manuscripts, especially the two fragmentary ones in Istanbul, exemplifies the fully fledged maghribi style, notable for its sweeping curves on final letters like nun and sad. Final alif descends below the line. Final ba’ is written like an inserted matn. Sin is written with little teeth that resemble a saw. Sad and kaf have rounded bodies and sloping tops. Dal looks like pursed lips seen from the side, as in the penultimate word of the first line al-ḥamd. Ha’ is also distinct: the initial form looks like a boot turned to the left [as in huwa, the penultimate word in the penultimate line of the Koranic text]. The script on the earlier folio in Istanbul, which is more spacious [the lines measure 2 cm, as opposed to 1 cm in the
In the first half of the twelfth century, the city of Córdoba, despite political instability and shifting rulers, became the center of an artistic renaissance, regaining the intellectual, artistic, and social pre-eminence it had held over a century earlier under the neo-Umayyads. In addition to the fabulous minbar made there in 539/1147 and shipped to Marrakesh, the finest Koran manuscripts were transcribed in that city, to judge from a copy dated 539/1143. Although typically small (18 x 19 cm), this codex is remarkable for several frontispieces that relate to contemporary architectural decoration, and the knotted kufic used as a display script is remarkably similar to that found on the minbar.

In the second half of the twelfth century, the center of fine manuscript production in the Maghrib shifted to Valencia. The best-known copyist there was Abu Muhammad ‘Abdallah ibn Muhammad ibn ‘Ali ibn Mufrji ibn Sahl al-Ansari, known as Ibn Ghattus. He was already renowned in his own time, for he is mentioned in the Tukmilat, the biographical dictionary written by Ibn al-‘Abbar, the historian, traditionalist, littérateur, and poet who lived in Valencia from 1129 to 1156. Like his contemporary Ravandi, who worked at the opposite side of the Islamic lands, Ibn Ghattus came from a family of copyists: he ran a family business that seemed to have specialized in transcribing the Koran. Ibn Ghattus also taught calligraphy to outside pupils, such as the imam of the mosque known as Rhabbat al-Qadi.

Manuscripts in the hands of Ibn Ghattus and his contemporaries (Figure 6.16) are typically small, square, single-volume codices transcribed in the standard spindly form of maghribi script with
twenty to twenty-five lines per page. The densely packed pages are
eNhanced by copious illumination, including frontis- and finispieces,
chapter headings, marginal medallions, and colophons. The prolif-
eration of this type of codex coincides with the proselytization of
the region under the Berber dynasty of the Almoravids. These reviv-
alist reformers apparently created a large market for such manuscripts,
which were often commissioned by private individuals, probably for
personal use.

The text script used in this copy penned by Yusuf ibn 'Abdallah ibn
'Abd al-Wahid ibn Yusuf ibn Khalidun is a typical maghribi hand,
written in brown ink, with red for vocalization and blue for other
signs except for the characteristic green dot for hamzat al-wad and
yellow dot for hamzat al-qat.' The display script is a typical maghribi
kufic, with chapter headings written in gold. Individual verses in this
manuscript are not usually marked, although occasionally they are
set off, as in other contemporary copies, by a pyramid of three gold
balls. Groups of verses are marked by gold ornaments: a pointed oval
for five and a circle for ten. The text is divided into sixty-sixths (hizb),
marked by circular ornaments, as here at the top of the right page,
where the sixtieth coincides with the beginning of the sura and so the
marginal palmette is inscribed with a circle bearing the word hizb.

In penning their texts, maghribi copyists like Yusuf ibn 'Abdallah
showed an inclination for symmetry that made the layout of their
pages different than that found in the east. For example, they stylized
the basmala differently. According to the eastern tradition, known
since the time of Ibn Al-Bawwab (Figure 3.8) and seen in later manu-
scripts such as the one penned by Yaqut in rayhan (Figure 7.1) and by
his Mamluk counterparts in both muhaqqaq (Figure 8.1) and nakhab
(Figure 8.3), copyists filled out the first line of a sura by stretching
the connector between the sin and mim of the word bism. In the
Maghribi, however, copyists regularly extended the connector
between ha' and mim in al-rahman so that it occupies half or even
three-quarters of the line. They thereby created a wider space in
the center of the line that contrasts with the rest of the densely covered
page and immediately draws the eye to the beginning of the sura.

Maghribi copyists sometimes treated the end of the sura in the
same way. When finishing a sura, a copyist typically stretched the
last words to fill out the line and then left a space in which to add a
line of gold kufic script with the title and verse count of the next sura,
as here on the left page with the end of Sura 63 (al-Munafiqun) and
the beginning of Sura 64 (al-Tauhid). Sometimes, however, the
copyist penned the last word or two of a sura in the middle of a line.
The gold kufic text with the chapter heading was then added around
these words, as on the right-hand page. Here the copyist even divided
the numbers of the verse count, putting the sura name and the first
digit of the verse count on the right and the rest of the verse count on
the left side of the text word. The desire for symmetry has overridden
any concern with readability.

In these centuries copyists in the Maghribi also used a larger script
for multi-volume Koran manuscripts. To judge from two twenty-
volume copies in the library of the Ben Yusuf Madrasa in Marrakesh,
these multi-part manuscripts were already made in the first half of the
thirteenth century, and many other undated copies may date from
the late thirteenth century or early fourteenth. These multi-volume
manuscripts typically have from five to ten lines of bold script per
page, with as little as two or three words per line. The most illus-
rious is a ten-volume copy (Figure 6.17) transcribed at Marrakesh by
the penultimate Almohad amir Abu Hafs 'Umar al-Murtada in
634/1236. It is rectangular (38 x 22 cm) in format, though many
other copies are square and the same size as the single-volume ones.
PRE-EMINENCE OF ROUND SCRIPTS IN THE EARLY MIDDLE PERIOD

Done on parchment, Abu Ha's 'Umar's manuscript shows the standard features of maghribi script and orthography. The calligraphy is, however, rather awkward, perhaps because the copyist was a prince rather than a master calligrapher. Note, for example, the double stroke for lam in ilk, the second word in the second line of Sura 37 [Lugman], the waving dal in the same word, and the angled bend at the bottom of mun. Many other undated manuscripts show smoother variant of this large script.65 Headings are typically done in a large square kufic, sometimes in panels and sometimes not. In the copy penned by Abu Ha's 'Umar, for example, the sura title is written in white kufic set in an elaborate gold braided border.

As opposed to the single-volume codices in small script, these multi-part manuscripts in large script seem to have been associated with members of court.66 They often show a lavish use of gold, whereas cheaper copies are done with yellow paint. These large manuscripts also had fine bindings. The volumes from the copy penned by the Almohad amir in 654/1256, for example, retain elements of their original bindings of brown goatskin gilded and blind-tooled in strap-work patterns.67 These are the earliest known examples of gold tooling on leather, a technique that did not appear on European bindings for another two centuries. They confirm the care and interest taken in books in the Maghrib at this time and show that during this transitional period calligraphers throughout the Islamic lands were experimenting with different types of round script.

Notes
1. In Roman script, minuscule is thought to be a deviation of the larger and more majuscule form produced by kinesthesis, see Edward M. Catich, The Origin of the Script: Brush Writing and Roman Letter: [Davenport, IA, 1991 [1968]], 144.
2. This period corresponds to the later centuries of Hodgson's earlier middle Islamic period, outlined in his Book Three, Marshall G. S. Hodgson, The Venture of Islam [Chicago, 1974], 217–329.
3. The script in a seven-part Koran manuscript dated 392/1585 in Dublin (CBL 1431), for example, has been called variously zāysh or thuluth by Arthur J. Arberry, The Koran Illuminated: A Handlist of Kowans in the Chester Beatty Library [Dublin, 1967], no. 44: Yasser Tabbaa, The Transformation of Arabic Writing: Part 1 Qur'anic Calligraphy. 4th Orientalis 31 [1991]: table 3, labeled it zāysh, but David James, Qur'an and Bindings from the Chester Beatty Library: A Facsimile Exhibition, exhibition catalogue [n.p., 1980], no. 21, called it thuluth.
4. Dorothea Duda, Islamische Handschriften I Persische Handschriften, in Die Iluminier-ten Handschriften und Inkunabeln der Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek, Österreich Akademie der Wissenschaften, Phil.-Hist. Klasse, Denkschriften, 167 [Vienna, 1983], 1–3, pl. 1–2. Born and raised in Tus in north-eastern Iran, the copyist and poet moved west, seeking the patronage of several local rulers in central and northern Iraq. In the colophon to this manuscript, he identifies himself as the poet ’al-i sha’ir, and the year after he had transcribed the pharmacological text, he finished composing his epic poem Garshaspnama, which he dedicated to the local ruler of Nakhchivan. The pharmacology may have been transcribed there as well, but later the poet moved to the court of the Shaddadid Ma'mun at Ani.
5. These would correspond to what Derman called warraq or naskhi-thuluth and eastern kufic, but they seem to me to be variants of the same script.
6. The same flourishes are found, for example, in a copy of Muhammad ibn 'Umar Radunayni's Tarjuman al-balagha transcribed in 507/1113–14 by Abu'l-Hasan Daylamiasfar [Istanbul, Fatih Library no. 5133, Encyclopaedia Iranica, ed. Ehsan Yarshater [London and New York, 1995], 'Calligraphy,' pl. 324.
7. The latest dated example I know in this script is a small [19 × 15 cm] manuscript with seventeen lines to a page [Masjhad, Astan-i Quds, no. 84] that was finished by Abu'l-Hasan 'Ali ibn Muhammad ibn Muhammad in mid-Rajab 620/mid-October 1223, although its colophon may have been altered; see Ahmad Gulchin-i Man'ani, Rahnama-yi ganita-yi qur'an [Masjhad, 1347], no. 43; Martin Lings, The Qur'anic Art of Calligraphy and Illumination [London, 1976], no. 107.
8. The earliest of these multi-volume codices is this one [Figure 6.2] transcribed by 'Uthman ibn Husayn al-warraq (the copyist or bookseller) in 466/1073–4. The shrine at Masjhad is said to own sixteen parts of this manuscript, pages from which have often been reproduced, see, for example, Gulchin-i Man'ani, Rahnama, nos. 21–3; A. U. Pope and P. Ackerman [eds.], A Survey of Persian Art from Prehistoric Times to the Present, repr. 1928–9 [Tehran, 1977], pl. 930; G. Lings, Qu'ranic Art, pl. 11; The Arts of Islam, exhibition catalogue, Hayward Gallery [London, 1976], no. 504. The manuscript was endowed to the shrine in Rabî' II 654/July–August 1257 by 'Ali ibn Abi'l-Fadl. The same scribe signed another Koran manuscript with interlinear Persian translation dated Muharram 480/February–March 1571 [TKE 3280; Ayman Fuad Sayyid, Al-Kitab al-`Arabiyah al-Makkhiti wa `Ayn al-Makkhiturat [Cairo, 1997], pl. 7]. The copyist Abu Bakr ibn Ahmad ibn 'Uyaynallah al-Ghaznavi signed at least two similar manuscripts, one dated Ramadan 566/June 1171 [Cairo, DK; Pope and Ackerman, Survey, pl. 930C] and another dated Muharram 571/June–July 1177 [TKE 426; Lings, Qu'ranic Art, pl. 19; Fuad Sayyid, Al-Kitab al-`Arabiyah, pl. 8; Tabbaa, 'Transformation I: Qu'ranic Calligraphy,' fig. 7; M. Ugar Derman, The Art of Calligraphy in the Islamic Heritage, trans. Mohamed Zakariya and Mohamed Asfour [Istanbul, 1998], no. 17]. Other similar, but often undated examples are also illustrated in Lings, Qu'ranic Art, 12–21.
11. This is the case with the copy transcribed by 'Uthman ibn Husayn [Figure 6.3]: according to the colophons from jaz '1 and 22 illustrated in Gulchin-i Man'ani, Rahnama, 46–71, he wrote [kataba] and gilded [khabba] the manuscript in 466/1073–4. Close study of the manuscript might prove whether this claim was true or whether he was merely the supervisor in charge of a team.
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12. For example, broken cursive was used for headings in a small copy of the Koran [BL Add. 7344] transcribed in Jumada 1 i 427/March 1036, Pope and Ackerman, Survey, pl. 928.


19. Sometimes we know this from close examination of a particular manuscript, as was the case with Ibn al-Bawwab, who both transcribed and illustrated his Koran manuscript. Sometime we know the role of the scribe from signed colophons. This was the case with ‘Ali ibn Ahmad al-warraq, who claimed to write, vowel, mark, gild, and bind the Nurse’s Koran [Figure 5.5]. Similarly, Ibnshayn al-warraq and Abu Bakr ibn Ahmad ibn ‘Ubaydallah al-Chazanawi wrote and gilded their splendid Koran manuscripts made in 1186/1773 [Figure 6.2, 6.3] and 1187/1777, respectively. Muhammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahid transcribed and painted the copy of the Kitab al-diyarq dated 595/1199 [Figure 6.4].

20. The colophon in the last two lines on the left page is written in a similar script to that used in the rest of the text, but the letters are more crowded and undulating and the words written on a sharper diagonal slope. Abu Bakr Muhammed ibn Abu Rall al-warraq had similarly shifted from upright mashk to a more curved hand in the colophon to the treatise on the characteristics of the Prophet penned for the Chazanawid Amir c. 1050. Stern, ‘Manuscript from the Library of the Chazanawid Amir,’ fig. 8.


23. Stern, Fatimid Decrees, no. 6.


25. Stern, Fatimid Decrees, 92.


27. Thuluth was used, for example, as a display script on the opening pages in a large Koran manuscript copied in broken cursive in 573/1177–8 by Abu Bakr Ahmad ibn ‘Abdallah al-Ghaznavi [TKS EI 43: Lings, Glossary of Art, no. 19]. Compared to the thuluth used by Ibn al-Bawwab, Abu Bakr Ahmad’s script is more attenuated, with long, almost triangular stems set on a larger ground. It recalls the style of thuluth used on twelfth-century buildings, such as the maqamat erected in Tabaristan, Afghanistan, in 1025/1616–7, for the long stems and flowing curves made this script particularly suitable for architectural inscriptions (Sheila S. Blair, Islamic Inscriptions [Edinburgh, 1998], 88–93 and fig. 6.37).

28. One rare example of thuluth as a text script is a now-dispersed thirty-volume manuscript of the Koran transcribed for the library of the Zangid prince Quh al-Din Muhammad ibn Zangi, ruler of Sinjar in the Jazira from 1198 to 1217. David James, The Master Scribes: Qur’ans of the 10th to the 12th Centuries AD, ed. Julian Raby, The Nasir al-Din Khâhili Collection of Islamic Art [London, 1992], no. 7; D’Oriente di Saladin: l’art des Ayyoubides [Paris, 2001], no. 216; Guesdon and Vernay-Noury, L’Art du livre arabe, no. 42. Though of modest size, the manuscript is lavishly transcribed in gold outlined in black, with five lines of thuluth per page and incidents in broken cursive. The extensive use of gold makes this an expensive manuscript and places it within the flourishing school of book painting that developed at the Artuqid court in the Jazira in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries. Several copies of al-Jazira’s Automata transcribed in thuluth, for example, were produced at the court of Diyarbekr in 603/1206, and Rachel Ward, ‘Evidence for a School of Painting at the Artuqid Court,’ in: The Art of Syria and the Jazira, 1100–1250, ed. Julian Raby, Oxford Studies in Islamic Art 1 (Oxford, 1985–94), has suggested that other illustrated manuscripts might have been produced there as well. Despite its obvious expense, the script of the Koran manuscript is rather carelessly executed, so that the gold strokes do not completely fill the black outlines. The approach is more painterly than calligraphic.


30. Born to a distinguished family in Isfahan, ‘Imad al-Din rose to favor in Baghdad under the Abbasid vizier Ibn Husayn. Around 1145, Ibn Husayn had ‘Imad al-Din appointed governor (nā‘ib) at Wasit. After the vizier’s death in 1159/1164, ‘Imad al-Din fell from favor and spent two years in poverty before regaining a position with Nur al-Din ibn Zangi. ‘Imad al-Din then moved on to the court of the Ayyubid prince Saladin, where he composed a history in rhyming prose (najat) recounting the battles waged and won by Saladin against local rulers and invading crusaders. Fine copies of ‘Imad al-Din’s history were already produced during his lifetime. For a short biography, see EI2, ‘Imad al-Din.’

31. Vlad Atanasiv, the scholar who has probably looked the most closely at Mamluk manuscripts, called the script a ‘rayhizated muhaqqiq’ in a personal communication. Tabbaa, ‘Transformation 1: Qur’anic Calligraphy,’ Table 3, used rayhan.

This manuscript was the subject of one of the earliest publications by Richard Ettinghausen, 'A Signed and Dated Seljuq Qur'an,' Bulletin of the American Institute for Persian Art and Archaeology 4, no. 2 (December 1935): 93–102. See also The Arts of Islam, no. 508, Tabbaa, 'Transformation 1: Qur’anic Calligraphy,' figs. 5–6.

33. Curiously, the verse count and benediction suggest that Muhammad ibn al-Husayn made his copy, like the one transcribed by Ibn al-Bawwab one hundred and fifty years earlier, for a Shi‘ite audience. An illuminated page at the beginning of the Philadelphia Koran (fol. 1r) illustrated in Pope and Ackerman, Survey, pl. 927B, Tabbaa, 'Transformation 1: Qur’anic Calligraphy,' fig. 351 gives the verse count of the Koran according to different reckonings – 6,217 according to the school of Medina, 6,314 according to the school of Basra, and 6,666 according to the school of Kufa. The border band around the opening sura (fol. 1r) states that this copy follows the Kufan school, the same one mentioned in the frontispiece to Ibn al-Bawwab’s copy. Similarly, the colophons in both manuscripts ask for blessings on the Prophet’s family.

34. A note in a rough hand around the edge of the opening folio says that it was given in pious endowment by Amir Ahmad Jawsh during the period when Shaykh Muhammad al-Fihri served as Shaykh al-Islam in the Azhar Mosque in Cairo. The shaykh served in this position during the decade before his death in 1707, so the endowment can be dated between 1757 and 1758. The donor Ahmad Jawsh can be identified from contemporary texts as a pious military man of Albanian origin who died in 1786. According to the Egyptian historian al-Jabarti, Amir Ahmad Jawsh liked to frequent the bookshops of Cairo, where he purchased books to endow to the Mosque of Shaykh in the benefit of the students. Presumably this was one of the books he purchased for sale. How it then moved from Cairo to Philadelphia is not known.

35. Muhammad b. Hassan al-Tayyibi, The Kind of Arabic Calligraphy According to the Method of Ibn al-Bawwab (in Arabic), ed. Salahuddin Munajjed (Beirut, 1961), pl. 45; in al-Tayyibi’s example of muhalt, the words are even separated by dots. See further Chapter 8.

36. The title is given in the older form; literally, the second sura in which the cow is mentioned. The lower rubric contains Koran 15:76–80, saying that it (i.e., the Koranic codex) is a well-guarded book that the only the clean shall touch.


38. Four sections (aṣṣa) have survived [nos. 9, 13, and 53; Damascus, Musée de l’épigraphie arabe 2637, no. 27, Kitab Collection ms. VII.1–4], at least two in their original goatkinds bindings. See B. W. Robinson, Islamic Painting and the Arts of the Book, Catalogue of the Kitab Collection (London, 1976), 387–8; Linge and Safadi, The Qur’an, nos. 55 and 157; L’Orient de Saladin, nos. 247–9.

39. Cairo, DK 507. Both of these manuscripts were done on paper, but it was not the only medium used under the Zangids of Syria, for a damaged fragment of a Koran manuscript [Istanbul, TIEM, ms. 76] is copied on parchment.

40. The format with an even number of lines per page is repeated in a Koran manuscript made in Cairo for the Mamlik amir Baybars in the opening decade of the fourteenth century [Figure 8.13]. This Zangid manuscript thus shows that some of the roots of Mamlik calligraphy might be traced back to local traditions in Syria and the Jazira.

41. One is a copy of ‘Imad al-din Ishā‘i’s Kitāb al-fath al-quss fi ‘l-fath al-qaḍi, transcribed by Muhammad ‘Umar ibn Muhammad ibn Ahmad ibn al-Baqi‘ in ‘Irān al-arabi fi ‘l-kaht [the secretary] at Amīd [modern Diyarbakır] and finished in mid-Sha‘bān 595/mid-June 1199 (St Petersburg, Institute of Oriental Studies C-345, L’Orient de Saladin, no. 611). The same script was used for fine illustrated manuscripts, including copies of al-Hariri’s satirical, the Maqamat, such as a copy in Paris [BN, ms. arabe 6094] with several miniatures dated 615/1222 (Ettinghausen, Arab Painting, 79; Oleg Grabar, The Illustrations of the Maqamat [Chicago, 1984], no. 3; L’Orient de Saladin, 88). It is penned in a well-developed naskh with full vocalization and diacritical marks. The copyist was intent upon ensuring accuracy and readability, despite – or perhaps because of – the treatise’s rather complicated literary style.

42. This is not to say that the same style of naskh was used everywhere. Other round styles were used elsewhere as well. A manuscript of poetic fragments chosen by al-Tha‘alibi transcribed at the city of Zarbā in the Yemen in 621/1224 (BN, ms. arabe 3305), for example, shows a round hand with long tails in the style of Ibn al-Bawwab, but maintains the older tradition of placing dots or letters below di‘āṭ, ṭa‘‘ and ẓa‘‘ to distinguish them from their homographs, dhal, ẓa‘‘, and ẓa‘‘. See Guesdon and Vernay-Nouri, L’art du livre arabe, no. 40.

43. For a short biography, see El‘z, ‘Ravandi.’


45. Ravandi does not mention ṣayḥun or ṣawiwi, perhaps because he considered them smaller or larger versions of other scripts (muḥaqqaq and tīga‘), respectively.

46. These drawings are also reproduced in Gülru Necipoğlu, The Topkapı Scroll: Geometry and Ornament in Islamic Architecture, The Getty Center in the History of Art and Humanities [Santa Monica, CA, 1993], figs. 92a and 92b.

47. See also Pope and Ackerman, Survey, 1737.

48. Part of the manuscript remained with ‘A‘la‘ al-Din Arslan, ruler of Maragha [c. 1188–1208]; part with Begirsum, a Seljukid slave commander who ruled eastern Anatolia from 1185 to 1193, and part with the painters. None of it survives today.

49. The endowment notice inscribed in thuluth at the top and bottom of this page (Figure 1.8) also shows how long the lapse can be between the time a luxury Koran manuscript was transcribed and the time it was endowed, in this case seventy years.

50. During reconstruction after the devastating fire of 1863, the documents, like the fragments from early manuscripts of the Koran, were sent to Istanbul, where they are now kept in TIEM. See Dominique Sourdel and Janine Sourdel-Thomine, ‘Une collection médiévale de certificats de pèlerinage à la Mekke conservés à Istanbul,’ Les actes de la période seldjoukide et bouride jusqu’a 1540/1541,’ in Études médiévales et patrimoines turc, ed. Janine Sourdel-Thomine [Paris, 1953], 167–233. Sule
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51. İstanbul, TİEM, no. 4752; Aksoy and Milstein, 'Haji Certificates,' pl. 2.

52. The pictures show the major stations of the Haji ending with the Prophet's mosque in Medina and the Haran al-Sharif in Jerusalem. The first surviving example with illustrations is dated 788/1383. The introduction of an illustrative cycle required a longer surface, and later rolls are larger and made of a thicker, darker paper that often splits into two layers. The individual sheets measure some 70 by 30 cm, the so-called 'half-baghdad' size that will become standard in later centuries [see Chapter 7 and Figure 7.3]. The largest rolls have three sheets pasted together vertically to make up a document over two meters in length. The calligraphy, particularly the bismilla, also became larger and more elaborate, written in various scripts, including broken cursive, and sometimes highlighted in red or gold. At first the pictures were hand-painted, but to speed up production and meet the burgeoning demand, block printing was soon introduced. The earliest example with block printing is dated 677/1278-9, and by the second quarter of the thirteenth century, block printing had replaced hand painting. All elements of the designs were printed, ranging from the frames and the images to the calligraphy, including the bismilla and other Koranic and piety texts.

53. CBL, 1473; Ancher [Paris, 1997], 164-75.

54. Such epithets became common under the Maghribis. See Chapter 12.

55. This technique of highlighting God's name in gold will continue in other areas, such as a tiny Koran manuscript made at Konya in 677/1278 [CBL 1466, see Chapter 9, note 1].

56. St Petersburg, Russian Academy of Sciences, C-189, Yuri A. Petrovskiy, et al., Pages of Perfection: Islamic Paintings and Calligraphy from the Russian Academy of Sciences, St Petersburg [Lugano, 1999].


58. Ab al-Wahhab, 'Al-‘inâya bi'l-kutub wa jama‘ah fi’ zi’iqiyâ al-tânîsîyâ [min qarn al-thalith ila al-kamîl li hilal’]. Revue de l'Institut des Manuscripts Arabes 1, no. 3 (1953): 85, mentioned that he knew of some twenty scrolls who used the epithet al-warraq on manuscripts dating from the tenth to the twelfth century.

59. See above, note 41.

60. See the article 'Khatt' in EI/2.


64. Jerrilynn D. Dodds [ed.], Al-Andalus: The Art of Islamic Spain [New York, 1992], 97.

65. Calligraphers in the Maghrib slice the reed into flat slats whose tips are trimmed with a blunt or rounded end that gives a rounded outline to the letters. See N. Van den Boogaert, 'Some Notes on the Maghribi Script,' Manuscripts of the Middle East 4 (1989): 50.

66. This system of pointing is found in the sole manuscript that escaped the destruction of the enormous libraries maintained by the Umayyad rulers of Córdoba: a copy of Abu Mansur al-‘Idlibi’s treatise on religious law, al-Mukhtasar, transcribed by Husayn ibn Yussuf for the neo-Umayyad caliph al-Hakam II in Shaban 335 [July 790] (Fayruz, Qur’aniyyin Mosque Library); E. Lévi-Provençal, 'Un manuscrit de la bibliothèque du califat al-Andalus,' Revue des établissements et des collections de l'Université de Paris 18 (1934): 198-200; David Wansven, 'The Library of the Al-Hakam II al-Mustansir and the Culture of Islamic Spain,' Manuscripts of the Middle East 5 (1990–1): 99, n. 5; Dodds, Al-Andalus, 177, fig. 3. The same system of pointing is used in a copy of Abu Khatam al-Sijistani’s philological treatise Kitab al-nakhkh transcribed by Muhammad ibn Hakam ibn Sa‘id, finished on 2 Jawda II 396/9 March 404, and ascribed to North Africa [Palermo, National Library, ms. III. D. 10; Giovanni Curatola, Eruditi dell'Islem [Venice, 1995], no. 80]. It occurs in a small, bilingual [Greek-Arabic] copy of the Gospels transcribed in southern Italy in 1043 [Paris, BN, ms. grec suppl. 911; Paul Cöthi, 'Un manuscrit bilingue grec-arabe, BnF, supplément grec 911 [année 1043]; in Scribes et manuscrits du Moyen-Orient, ed. Jean Richard, 'L'écriture et la calligraphie,' in L'art islamique [Lausanne, 1961], 113, n. 16].


68. This system was used in both the Blue Koran [Figure 4.10] and the Koran manuscript transcribed in broken cursive at Palermo in 1727 [Palmero, Figure 5.4].


71. Vatican, ms. Arab 310. Déroche showed that the dates in earlier manuscripts, such as a copy of the Koran dated 388/953 [University of Istanbul, A6733] and one of Malik ibn Anas’ celebrated treatise on jurisprudence, Kitab al-nawwatt, transcribed by Muhammad ibn Muhammad ibn ‘Ali in 377/980 [Dublin, CBL 1001; Arthur J. Arberry, The Chester Beatty Library: A Handbook of the Arabic Manuscripts [Dublin, 1955-66], no. 1], were not authentic.
73. TIEM, SE 13216 and 13644; François Déroche, ‘Deux fragments coraniques maghrébins anciens au Musée des Arts turc et islamique d’Istanbul,’ Revue des Etudes Islamiques 59 (1991): 230–3. The folios were probably preserved because they bore dates.


75. Uppsala University Library, Dodds, Al-Andalus, no. 74.


77. Both manuscripts are in the National Library in Rabat; nos. 1820 and 12618, respectively; see Dodds, Al-Andalus, no. 77; De l’Empire romain aux villes impériales: 6000 ans d’art au Maroc (Paris, 1990), no. 497.

78. The sole exception is a paper copy dated 354/1159–60 that was sold at Christie’s in 1990 (lot 49).

79. A copy of the Arabic translation of Dioscorides’ De Materia Medica in the Bibliothèque Nationale [ms. arabe 385] is on parchment, while the other two, in the Vatican, are on paper: the romance of Bayad and Riyad [ms. ar. 368, Dodds, Al-Andalus, no. 82] and a copy of al-Suli’s treatise on the fixed stars produced at Ceuta in 651/1253 [ms. Ross. 1013; Ettinghausen, Arab Painting, 110]. As elsewhere in the Islamic lands, paper seems to have been adopted first for secular purposes and only later for Koran codices.

80. Istanbul University Library, A6754; Dodds, Al-Andalus, no. 73.

81. The gold and blue decoration is reminiscent of the mosaic decoration added in June 965 over the walls of the Alhambra in the Great Mosque in Córdoba, and the interlaced strapwork patterns resemble the type used in the minbar and on contemporary bindings, as on a copy of the Koran dated 577/1178 [Rabat, National Library, ms. 12609; De l’Empire romain, no. 496; Dodds, Al-Andalus, no. 78]. The colophon to the manuscript dated 518/1124 is written in a stately blue kufic outlined in gold and set within a bordered frame [Dodds, Al-Andalus, 305], a script similar to that used in the mosaic inscriptions in the mosque. In it the unnamed scribe invokes God’s protection on the city of Córdoba. He might have been referring to the unsettled events of the times, for the manuscript was finished in the year that Hamdín ibn Muhammad al-Mansur, first ruler of Córdoba in the Almoravid-Abd al-Mu’minid era, acceded to the throne and four years before the last Almoravid ruler in Marrakesh was killed by the Almohads.

82. James, Master Scribes, 89–91. Nevertheless, the principal Almohad capital was Marrakesh and a second capital was established at Seville after the Almohads conquered the Iberian peninsula in 1248.

83. Ibn ‘Abbar, nos. 927 and 1370; cited in James, Master Scribes, 84 and n. 2.

84. One manuscript signed by Ibn Ghattas himself has survived: Cairo, DK 196, Dodds, Al-Andalus, no. 76. According to Ibn ‘Abbar, Ibn Ghattas’ son Abu ‘Abdallâh Muhammad devotes himself to copying the Koran. The chronicler credits Abu ‘Abdallâh Muhammad with copying one thousand Koran manuscripts, of which two have survived: the first dated 566/1168 (Tunis, al-Handaliyâ 1377), and the second dated 578/1182–3 [Istanbul University Library, A6754; Dodds, Al-Andalus, no. 79; Dorman, Art of Calligraphy, 108].

85. This is a Khalili Collection, QUR18; James, Master Scribes, no. 20. Another similar one was done at Seville in 625/1226 (Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, cod. arab. 1); Dodds, Al-Andalus, no. 80. It measures 22 × 30 cm, slightly larger than the one illustrated, which measures 17 × 16 cm and has twenty-five lines to the page.