The Birth of Kufic

The birth of Kufic represented, in many ways, a radical break with the past in which Hijazi had still been anchored. The rules that were defined at the outset of the Kufic tradition essentially remained the same throughout its lifespan. Whereas Hijazi styles were akin to individual handwriting, Kufic represents a mature calligraphy based on extremely precise definitions. Let us take one letter, medial ‘ā’, as an example.

In style A.I, the letter rests on the baseline and its vertical bar slopes to the left, with well-defined ‘eyes.’ But in B.II, it extends over both sides of the baseline, which coincides with the letter’s median horizontal bar; the ‘eyes’ are small, while the vertical bar is straight and linked to the baseline by a nearly circular stroke to the left. In D.I, the same letter sits on the baseline and consists of a semicircle that rests on a vertical bar with a pointed head. In much the same way, key letters appear in consistently the same form in each of the seventeen main Kufic styles, which boil down to six broad families. The adherence to these rules is, in most manuscripts, very close, becoming looser in less stylistically accomplished examples.
A novel codification

Kufic scribes’ rigorous approach to writing was underpinned by an elaborate geometrical codification. As this has already been discussed elsewhere, I will only restate, here, its most essential elements. Kufic manuscripts were laid out with a stable number of lines per page, and these were strictly parallel and equidistant. Each line was, in turn, divided into parallel ‘interlines’, equal to the thickness of the pen, which defined the main pivotal points of the letters. This interline grid was closely adhered to in manuscripts of the highest standard. For example in the Qur’an of Amājīr (Figure 31), which was completed in 876, probably in Syria, the body of the elongated letters (ḥāf, dāl) and the vertical stroke of final ẓāw reach up to the second interline. The top of wāw, fā’/qaf, ḫa’, mīm and initial āyn falls on the third interline, while ʿālif and the other tall letters are six interlines high. Likewise, the whole script is codified along the lines of this geometrical grid. The underlying model was followed in virtually all Kufic manuscripts, but with more or less precision according to the lavishness of the commission and skill of the scribe.

The text box of Kufic manuscripts was also laid out with a fixed proportion of width to height, for instance $\sqrt{2}$, 3:2 or $\sqrt{3}$. Once it had been chosen for a given manuscript, this proportion was scrupulously maintained by scribes, page after page. The precision achieved in practice is all the more remarkable because Kufic manuscripts were not ruled. It was probably obtained by placing a template grid under each page while writing; one could imagine a wooden board with the layout drawn in ink. The parchment, as prepared at the peak of the tradition, was translucent enough to let such a grid show through. Finally, although the original page dimensions were often altered through time by trimming and wear, it is probable that the text box’s long side was made equal to the page’s short side and that the page, in turn, had a constant ratio of width to height (Figure 32).

Kufic, in sum, was built upon a geometrical expansion that linked its elements, from the thickness of the pen to the page, through a series of proportional relationships. In the same spirit, the art of illumination developed towards more and more abstract forms based on a geometrical grid of equal modular units, either square or rectangular.
These features, which occur in even the earliest Kufic manuscripts, are a world away from the previous phase represented by Hijazi. Only a few of them can be traced back to earlier scribal traditions. In Kufic, the quires were universally titled with hair facing flesh, as in Syriac.10 The use of geometrical decoration in bands to mark the beginning of a new chapter was also a primarily Syriac usage before Islam.11 While it is occasionally encountered in Hijazi, it became the norm, grew and improved in Kufic. Sometimes, a stylistic kinship is also apparent: for example, the sura markers with rope-and-pearl motifs encountered in some early Kufic Qur’ans have close Syriac equivalents — note, in Figure 39, the treatment of the surface and marginal flourishes.12

As already mentioned, it was common, in Syriac manuscripts of the sixth to seventh centuries, to write the title of each new chapter in red (Figure 34). In a few Hijazi examples, red sura titles can be noticed, but they are in a different script from the text and could be later additions.13 At any rate, this type of title became frequent in Kufic styles B and C. The pen used is thinner than in the rest of the text, which makes it resemble Syriac headings (Figure 60). This relatively awkward feature would, in fact, be difficult to understand in the context of Kufic manuscripts’ accomplished calligraphy and decoration, had it not been a legacy from earlier sources.

The interline system of Kufic, on the other hand, does not find a clear parallel in any earlier tradition. In Greek, Coptic and Christian Palestinian Aramaic, the body of the letters was sometimes encompassed by a (theoretical) median interline which bisected the area between two baselines.14 This usage may have prefigured the codification of Kufic, but it is also much simpler. Similar remarks apply to layout. The Kufic text box partly resonates with the line-by-line ruling used in Greek, Coptic and CPA, but it also exhibits fundamentally novel features: the use of a constant text box proportion; the absence of visible ruling; and, in spite of this, the extremely precise justification of the lines, whereas they commonly fluctuated at the beginning and end in earlier traditions. The strokes of Kufic calligraphy are also markedly thicker than before. These differences all contribute to create a distinct visual impact of the page, to which we shall return.

In the end, the novelty of Kufic remains essentially unexplained by reference to earlier scribal traditions. Some of even the earliest Kufic manuscripts surpassed what had preceded them in visual harmony...
and geometrical rigour. Their uniformity in structure and writing suggests the conscious creation of a tradition. But when, and under what impetus? The answer to this question begins with the oldest surviving Islamic monument: the Dome of the Rock.

The inscriptions at the Dome of the Rock

The Dome of the Rock was built in 72/692 by the caliph 'Abd al-Malik (there has been some debate as to whether construction began or ended at that date). It contains the earliest extant Arabic monumental inscription, marking a watershed in our documentation of the script. Shortly before then, the material record still suggests a relatively primitive approach to writing. We have already mentioned the Ṭāʾīf inscription of 678 and its kinship to Hijazi (Figure 12). In

By contrast, the record clearly shows, at the Dome of the Rock, a dramatically transformed script. The mosaic inscription that runs around both sides of the inner octagon is a compilation of Qur'ānic and non-Qur'ānic passages that stress the oneness of God and the prophecy of Muḥammad, in an implicit refutation of Christian doctrines of the Holy Trinity. The original name of the founding caliph, 'Abd al-Malik, was replaced in the ninth century by that of his Abbasid successor, al-Ma'mūn (r. 813–33). However, the foundation date (at 72) has been left intact, which led Max van Berchem to see this as a gesture of symbolic appropriation rather than historical forgery (a change of foundation date would indeed have seemed absurd in contemporary eyes). A similar process has been repeated in the copper plaques which once stood above the north and east doors. The greater part of their text, written in elegant Kufic, consists of Qur'ānic passages comparable to the above; but the last two lines, which are in a compressed, uneasy script, are in praise of al-Ma'mūn and his governor (Figure 37). The joint between the original and added parts is still visible.

If we turn to the script of these texts, we note that the baselines of writing are almost perfectly straight and, where applicable, parallel and equidistant. By superimposing six equal interlines on each line of script, we define not only the thickness of the stroke (be it mosaic tesserae or engraved copper); but also the curves of each letter.

the inscriptions from Khashna (dated 52/672, Figure 35) and Ḥafnāt al-ʾAbwād (64/684, Figure 36), one can observe a move towards more geometrical letters forms: straighter lines and approximate circles, rectangles or triangles. Even so, the script remains irregular in shape and size, and far removed from the interline codification of Kufic. Our evidence, however limited, suggests that the underlying reform of writing had not taken place by 684.17

35. (left) Inscription from Khashna (Hijazi, 52/672).
36. (right) Inscription from Ḥafnāt al-ʾAbwād, ‘ near Karbalā’ (Raq, 64/684).
The same grid applies to all parts of the inscriptions, except for the additions by al-Ma'mun. This shows that, by or shortly after 692, the Arabic script had been codified in the geometrical terms that remained at the basis of the Kufic tradition.

In the copper plaques, the letter shapes tend towards two basic elements: the straight line and the circle. The ʿalif is four interlines high throughout, making its proportion to the line 6/4 = 3/2 (this is also true of ʿālām, kāf, ʿaʾ and ẓāʾ). The only exception to this rule is the top line, where these letters all have a height of five interlines. This pattern might have been intentional, for it also occurs in early Qur'anic manuscripts. In the rest of the text, the interlines are also used in a consistent manner: for example, the body of the elongated letters (such as ẓād and hāʾ) is two interlines high; the top of initial ʿāyn, medial ḥāʾ and of ʿawāl is three interlines high; while the loop of final ẓāʾ extends two interlines below the baseline.
The mosaic inscription, with its combined length of some 240 metres, is of an altogether different scale. Close observation reveals different patterns of writing between three of its parts:

Part A: the outer side of the inscription.
Part B: the south to southwest sections of the inner inscription.
Part C: the northwest to southeast sections of the inner inscription.

Disparities can be noted, first of all, in the way the letters adhere to the interlines. In part A, the construction of šād/dād and final kāf is as follows: first interline, horizontal stroke; second interline, void; third interline, horizontal stroke; fourth interline, top of vertical stroke (Figure 38). By contrast, in the rest of the inscription, the vertical stroke is much shorter: in part C, the whole letter is even sometimes compressed to make it fit, under the third interline (Figure 40). Furthermore, in A, the vertical stroke of medial bāʾ/tāʾ/ thāʾ and the like is three to four interlines high; whereas in B and even more commonly in C, it varies between two and three interlines. While the interline grid is more closely followed in part A, its relatively supple rendition in B and C results in a more accomplished script.

These divergences are reflected in the techniques employed by the mosaicists. In part A, the thickness of the stroke is regularly equal to five tesserae but in B, it fluctuates between four and five and in C, between three and four. These fluctuations are partly balanced by the size of the tesserae, which gradually increases between parts A, B and C, so that the overall stroke width remains relatively regular. Part C is set further apart by a distinctive brilliance: its gold tesserae were probably placed at a downward angle to the wall surface, which allowed them to reflect daylight in the direction of viewers at ground level. While on the outer side (part A), simple successive rows of black and white lines frame the text, a triangular repeat pattern with four colours (black, white, but also green and red) has been used on the inner side (B and C). This distinction echoes the overall order of the decoration, which is relatively crude on the outer side and more refined on the inner side.

These differences of execution suggest that two or three teams of mosaicists—who could have been masters and pupils from the same atelier—were at work on this project. Having each been assigned a different part of the text, they responded to the same requirements, based on the same template, in slightly different ways.

The imprint of calligraphers can also be felt at varying degrees in the inscription. Throughout the text, the sharpened endings of some strokes seem to reproduce the movement of the calamus, for example in alif maqṣūra (Figure 41).

A discrepancy can be noticed in the initial ʾayn: in part A, its hook tends towards the strict form of a circle, as against a more indistinct
curve in B and C (Figure 42). In A, its lower part often ends in a
downward bevel which slices through the horizontal stroke; whereas
in B and C, it merges into the latter stroke, which either finishes
vertically or in an upward bevel. The shape observed in B and C more
closely echoes the reality of reeds and manuscripts, where the hook
is either oval or consists of two distinct strokes, and the lower bevel
is vertical or points upwards.

Diacritical signs are almost nonexistent on the outer side of the
inscription (part A) and the first sentence of its inner side (which
belongs to B), but they become frequent in the remainder of that
side (including the whole of part C). These signs either consist of
oblique dashes, ovoid dots, or an intermediary shape + that is, the
forms encountered in Hijazi manuscripts (Figure 43). If the sloping
dash is the most natural form to be obtained with a reed, the same
could be said of the square or rectangle with tesserae. These dots and
dashes, if anything, tend to disturb the natural flow of the design:
their rationale does not belong to mosaic.

All these elements imply that Arabic calligraphers with a
background close to Hijazi were at work, along with the mosaicsists,
on this inscription, particularly the inner side of the octagon. The
higher standard of craftsmanship observed on that side, in both script
and mosaic technique, reflects the overall architectural scheme of the
building, with its ritual focus on the sacred rock.31

In practice, the calligraphy was the first part of the inscription to
be set, as revealed by the way the green tesserae follow the contours
of the gold before merging into the ground.32 Marguerite van
Berchem has noted that the underdrawing was generally done in
red for the gold and silver tesserae, as opposed to dark grey for
the green and blue.33 Because the mosaic is so well preserved, the
layers of plaster that lie beneath it have not been fully documented.
But what is known converges with observations made at the Great
Mosque of Damascus and on a mosaic from the market of Baysan
dating to the reign of Hisham (724–43) to show that Umayyad
mosaists followed regular Byzantine practice.34 It is thus possible
to tentatively reconstruct how the work was carried out.

At the outset, the walls were covered with a relatively thick layer
of plaster, which primarily served to suppress irregularities of
surface. Guidelines resembling the interlines may have been drawn
or incised at this level. Their use was not systematic in the craft, but
they are commonly attested for geometrical mosaics, where they
acted as a template upon which the design was articulated.35 At the
Dome of the Rock, such guidelines could have considerably aided
the craftsmen in ensuring the continuity of their two immensely
long inscription bands. The next step was to gradually cover the first
coating with a fine layer of adhesive plaster, the setting bed. This
was added in small sections, day after day, so that the underdrawing
could be painted and immediately executed with tesserae while the
surface was still fresh.36

These technical aspects of the craft reveal the close collaboration
that was required, for a work like this, between calligraphers and
mosaicsists, often standing side by side on the same scaffolding.
While laying out such an enlarged script, a geometrical grid
will have helped preserve the coherence of the design and have
facilitated its execution, especially by craftsmen whose language
was not Arabic. Indeed, the rationale that was placed at the heart of
calligraphy – not only in this inscription, but in the Kufic tradition
as a whole – mirrors that of mosaic, with its parallel rows of tesserae
and underlying grids.37 We may be close, here, to the context that
led to the spectacular transformation of Arabic script.
The Dome of the Rock represents the symbolic climax of 'Abd al-Malik’s state building programme. After or even during the war he waged against his rival Ibn Zubayr, he engaged in a vast effort to consolidate the Muslim polity. First, the official language of the diwan was changed, from Persian in the East and Greek in the West, to Arabic. This resulted in better control over the administration, where Muslims also began to replace non-Muslims. In the material record, we thus see bilingual papyri giving way to exclusively Arabic documents.

Second, after numerous experiments, the gold and silver coinage underwent a revolutionary transformation, with the introduction of a purely epigraphic design in 77/697. Beyond a defiant gesture towards Byzantium, these coins represented a formidable vehicle of propaganda for the basic precept of the new faith, engraved on their small surface: ‘There is no God but God alone, He has no associate.’ The standardization of coinage went along with a fiscal reform which moved away from tribute taking towards regular taxation. In a gesture of territorial control, ‘Abd al-Malik also improved the road system of Syria and Palestine, as notably attested by milestones discovered in the region of Jerusalem and the Golan.

One essential idea underlies these various initiatives: the construction of a viable and strong state, able to control its territories and assert its distinctive religious identity in the midst of a predominantly Christian environment. But they also share a more concrete trait: their reliance on the Arabic script, whether for practical or symbolical purposes. Its codified form was thus consistently spread across different media during this period.

The milestones of ‘Abd al-Malik

Seven milestones dating to the reign of ‘Abd al-Malik’s have been discovered to date. Two of them, found at Abū Ghish and Bāb al-Waḍi, closely echo the copper plaques at the Dome of the Rock in their letter forms. They are articulated upon a ten-interline grid: we are clearly dealing, here, with a reformed version of the script (Figure 44). At Bāb al-Waḍi, the diacritical signs on the last line are also dashes, as in Kufic, rather than dots. To this list can be added a third milestone from Khuzayba (only published as a squeeze) and a fourth from ‘Ayn Hemed (now very fragmentary). A fifth milestone (Khân al-Hathrûṣ, Figure 45) is also based on the same codification, but more loosely applied: the tall letters tend to be slightly inclined, and the writing as a whole echoes manuscript calligraphy, traces of preparatory lines that mark different horizontal levels in the script – a basic version of the interlines – can be seen. The five milestones from the region of Jerusalem also share the same wording, except that some indicate the distance to Damascus and others to Jerusalem: they thus form a coherent group, with small variations.

Two further milestones dated 85/704 have been found near the village of Fiq, in the Golan. Also from Fiq is an inscription in the name of ‘Abd al-Malik dated 73/693 or 83/703, which commemorates a ground levelling. The script of the three Golan inscriptions is more primitive than in the Jerusalem group, recalling the earlier
text from Khashna (Figure 46). This could reflect either a lower rank of patronage (and the work of non-professional engravers), or a chronological evolution from one group to the other.

The latter possibility has been defended by Amikam Elad, who noted several differences in wording between the two sets of milestones. Most remarkably, whereas an explicit date is given in the Golan, the name 'Abd al-Malik' is simply followed by the phrase 'rahmat allâh 'alayh ('God's mercy be upon him') in the Jerusalem group. In classical Islam, such a formula would have been funerary, which led Elad to think that the caliph had recently died at the time. This would place the date of the Jerusalem milestones in or shortly after 86/705. But it presupposes that the formula had already acquired this connotation in the early Umayyad period, an idea that still requires confirmation. In either case, the reformed script was applied to the milestones during or immediately after the reign of 'Abd al-Malik.

The epigraphic coinage

Coins, by their very scale (about 3 cm in diameter), stand in the sharpest possible contrast to monumental inscriptions, yet they are also precious documents of the script's evolution. As already mentioned, a purely epigraphic design was introduced in gold coinage by 'Abd al-Malik in 77/697, then in silver from 78/698. Although the gold dirhems carry no mint names, it is thought that they were all produced at Damascus in the Umayyad period.

The production of silver dirhems was decentralized until 84/703, with more than forty active mints. There followed, in 85-9/704-8, a period of centralization when they were only produced at Damascus, Waw and a peripatetic mint in the northern provinces. The provincial mints resumed operation in 90/709.

45. Milestone of 'Abd al-Malik (Khân al-Beitron, 685-705).

46. (above) Milestone of 'Abd al-Malik (Fig. 704). The original stone slab, of which only half now remains, had an elongated format.

47. Epigraphic gold dirhem struck in 77/697, probably at the mint of Damascus.
In 85-6/704-5, an improved design was introduced at Wāṣīṭ (Table 2). On the obverse, the size of the circles around the field was increased in order to create more space for the central text. The most important innovation lay in the script itself. Until 85, the execution recalls freehand writing, with relatively irregular strokes that tend to curve slightly. By 86, the letter strokes had become perfectly straight, with curves tending towards geometrical circularity.39 By contrast with earlier issues, these coins give the impression of a sharp horizontal levelling of the script. Close observation reveals that the letters follow, with slight variations, a sixfold interline grid on the obverse, which becomes threefold on the reverse, probably as a result of the latter’s smaller lines (Figure 48).39 A reformed version of the script was, in other words, introduced in the silver coinage at Wāṣīṭ between 85 and 86.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mint</th>
<th>Year (A.D.)</th>
<th>Obverse</th>
<th>Reverse</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wāṣīṭ</td>
<td>85</td>
<td><img src="image1.png" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image2.png" alt="Image" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wāṣīṭ</td>
<td>86</td>
<td><img src="image3.png" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image4.png" alt="Image" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Damascus</td>
<td>86</td>
<td><img src="image5.png" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image6.png" alt="Image" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Damascus</td>
<td>98</td>
<td><img src="image7.png" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><img src="image8.png" alt="Image" /></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Umayyad issues of silver coinage at Wāṣīṭ and Damascus.

The reduction of the design to this scale would have required minute engraving of the dies on which the metal was struck.36 This technical prowess is not entirely surprising: fine figurative compositions had been executed on coins since Antiquity and were still produced in the early decades of Islam, notably in the eastern provinces (see, for example, Figure 59).36 On the reformed epigraphic dirhams themselves, the engravers were also able to create a succession of perfectly circular plain and void concentric rings whose thickness is comparable to the interline height.

The new design, which is attested solely at Wāṣīṭ until 89/708, suddenly spread to the eastern provinces in 90/709.37 The contrast is particularly sharp in some Iranian mints, like Merv, where earlier epigraphic issues had retained a distinctive roundedness inherited from Pahlavi, which was at once severed (Figure 49). Interestingly, although they are all based on the same model, the new issues are

48. (above) The interlines on a dirhem struck at Wāṣīṭ in 88/705.
49. Epigraphic dirhams from Merv. (left) 84/703. (right) 90/709.
not strictly identical, which suggests that their dies may have been engraved locally.\textsuperscript{39}

An altogether different path was followed at the capital mint, Damascus, where a distinct style with rounded letter endings was belatedly developed from around 98/717 (Table 2).\textsuperscript{40} This Damascene style remained essentially unchanged until the end of the Umayyad period, but it was not adopted elsewhere, except sporadically in the West. On the contrary, from 105/724 onwards, the western mints of Ifriqiya, al-Andalus and the northern mints of Arminiya then al-Bab began to move, one after the other, towards variations on the Wāsiṭī model, leaving Damascus alone out of this trend.\textsuperscript{41} Wāsiṭī thus emerged as an avant-garde post for the design of epigraphic coinage between 704 and 705.

The city had been founded only a few years earlier by al-Hajjāj ibn Yūsuf al-Thaqafi, the Umayyad governor of Iraq (694–714).\textsuperscript{42} Al-Hajjāj had been actively involved in ‘Abd al-Malik’s state-building programme, notably the spread to Iraq of the epigraphic coinage initially introduced at Damascus. He appears, between the very end of his reign and the beginning of al-Walid’s, to have played a leading role in the adaptation of the reform script to coinage.

\textit{Umayyad manuscripts of the Qur’an}

The centralization, standardization and spread of coin issues, in fact, recall the movement from the diversity of Hijazi to the structural uniformity of Kufic. At the beginning of his chapter on calligraphy, al-Nadim writes:

The first person to write Qur’ānic manuscripts in the early days and to be known for the beauty of his calligraphy was Khalīl ibn Abi al-Hayyāj, and I have seen a Qur’an in his own hand. So I chose him to write copies of the Qur’an, poetry and reports for al-Walid ibn ‘Abd al-Malik. He is the one who wrote in gold the inscription which is in the qibla of the Prophet’s mosque, peace be upon him, from ‘al-shams wa ash shabāb’ until the end of the Qur’an. It is said that ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd al-‘Aziz said to him: ‘I want you to write me a manuscript on this model.’ So he wrote it and decorated it, and ‘Umar started to look over it and admire it, but its price was too high, so he returned it.\textsuperscript{43} ‘Abd al-Malik’s son and successor, al-Walid (r. 705–15), ordered the rebuilding of the Prophet’s mosque at Medina around 706. The work was carried out by his governor of the city, ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd al-‘Aziz (who would reign as caliph between 717 and 720). Like the Dome of the Rock and the Great Mosque of Damascus, the building was adorned with an inscription in gold mosaic.\textsuperscript{44} Although Nadim’s account cannot be taken word for word,\textsuperscript{45} it suggests that the calligraphers who worked on these projects came to produce, under Umayyad patronage, Qur’ānic manuscripts based on the same model, which they also decorated. This idea finds a clear resonance in the material record.

A first stage of the underlying transformation is heralded by ‘Marcel 13’ (Saint Petersburg), a manuscript found in the nineteenth century at the Mosque of ‘Amr (Fustat) by Jean-Joseph Marcel and recently rediscovered by Déroche.\textsuperscript{46} The surviving folios (now 57 x 31 cm) represent one-quarter of the whole Qur’an, an unusually large fragment for this period. The script indicates that, as at the Dome of the Rock, we are lying but one small step ahead of Hijazi. Being based on a loose and probably early version of the interlinear system, the calligraphy is more angular than Hijazi, yet more curvilinear than Kufic (Figure 50).\textsuperscript{47} The upright strokes have a tendency to slightly slant to the right, as if a scribe accustomed to Hijazi had been trying to write them. But as in Kufic, the letters follow precise definitions also shared by at least two other manuscripts: Arabe 330c (BNF), which is of comparable size, and the smaller Umayyad Qur’an of Damascus (TIEM $F^3E321$).\textsuperscript{48}

In these manuscripts, the diacritical signs are no longer ovoid dots, but dashes that tend to be slightly thickened. Red dots indicate the vocalization in a manner that would become the norm in Kufic: above the line for short ‘a’ (fatḥa); at the level of the line for short ‘i’ (dammā); and below it for short ‘i’ (kasra); pairs of red dots in the same positions also mark the indefinite case ending (tamānī).\textsuperscript{49} The notation of medial alif is more complete than in Hijazi, but less so in classical Kufic.\textsuperscript{50}

The layout, likewise, directly prefigures Kufic. There is no ruling, yet the attention devoted to the text box is revealed by the use of line-end fillers and elongation to justify the lines. Both Marcel 13 and Arabe 330c have twenty-five parallel and equidistant lines.