458 Pair of doors with geometrical and floral carving and inscriptions
Height 206cm, width 181cm
Ismaili Shrine Museum, Mashhad
Persia, 1440

These doors are probably from a mosque though they are not inscribed with sacred texts. The outer frame is restored. Fastening is secured by a central column in a bronze sheath and a bronze ring-handle. Each leaf is divided into three panels, the two uppermost inscribed 'imārāt al-wali al-Muhammad al-Najīb al-Mutanā bar 'the work of master Hasan/ Husayn, son of master Muhammad, the carpenter, it was completed' fi bād 'a'shar rahi al-Ammal shamsi niswah bi'n-nās al-tāb bar 'in the 17th of the month Rabi' al-Awwal in the year 846 of the hijra [1442 AD].

The large panels consist of small interlocking pieces of wood set in raised wooden moldings. At the centre of each is a six-pointed star enclosing a six-petalled flower set with a decorative boss, a vestige of the large nail heads used to strengthen the doors. The remaining pieces radiate from the central star and enclose fragments of a floral pattern. The patterns throughout recall contemporary book-bindings, decorated manuscript margins and floral carpets.

Unpublished

459 Panel inscribed on two lines
Length 110cm
Ismaili Shrine Museum, Mashhad
Persia (Mashhad), Safavid period, 1554

Inscription unread
Unpublished

460-b Two horizontal carved panels
a. Length 370cm, width 24cm
b. Length 210cm, width 26cm
Museo Frederico Marés, Barcelona
Spain (Toledo), 7th-12th century

The animal medallions suggest Fatimid stylistic influence.
Published: Terrasse (1963, p. 425, pl. 32).

461 Carved panel from a private house
Length 900cm
National Museum of Hispano-Moresque Art, Granada
Spain, Almohad period, 12th century

The beam is decorated with a foliated kufic inscription reading al-mardhim tu'l-surur al-dāl' al-maṣ'ad [lit. ...] 'Honour and perpetual joy to its owner ...'

The style of the kufic, with acorn finials, broad, knobbled leaves in profuse describing near circles or slanting sharply backwards. Here, the round letters are not voided and there is no marked horizontal axis. The motto may also be compared to those found on ivories, ceramics and other objects.
Published: Puertas (1971, XXI, fos. 1, pp. 181-3, pls. 1-3).

462 Carved panel from a private house
Length 700cm
National Museum of Hispano-Moresque Art, Granada
Spain, Almohad period, 12th century

The beam is decorated with a foliated kufic inscription reading al-harām in-ta'l-su'ur al-dāl' al-maṣ'ad [lit. ...] 'Honour and perpetual joy to its owner ...'

The style of the kufic, with acorn finials, broad, knobbled leaves in profuse describing near circles or slanting sharply backwards. Here, the round letters are not voided and there is no marked horizontal axis. The motto may also be compared to those found on ivories, ceramics and other objects.
Published: Puertas (1971, XX, fos. 1, pp. 109-12, pls. 1-3).

464 Carved panel with foliated kufic inscription
Archaeological Museum, Province of Toledo
Spain, Almohad period, 13th century

The inscription from the Koran, Surah XVI, 48. A monotonous central axis is here avoided by partitioning off the upper portions of the panel and filling it with patterns unrelated to the inscription. The kufic shows affinity with contemporary north African scripts while the foliation above is related to simpler and bolder Egyptian forms (compare no. 446).

Unpublished
Wood

454 Beam with foliated kufic inscription
Length 35.0 cm, width 10.2 cm, height 3.4 cm
Instituto Valencia de Don Juan, Madrid, Spain (Toledo), Almohad period, 12th century
Inscription unread.
Unpublished

455 Beam with foliated kufic inscription
Length 12.7 cm, width 5.2 cm, height 9.8 cm
Instituto Valencia de Don Juan, Madrid, Spain, Almohad period, 12th century
Inscription unread
Unpublished

466a-d Four rounds carved in relief, painted and inscribed
Diameter of each 6.8 cm
Joseph and Jean Soustiel Collection, Paris, Turkey, Ottoman period, 18th century
Roundels of this sort are found in most Ottoman mosques, usually suspended from columns or set in the penitential niche beneath the dome. These four form part of a series which should also include ‘Umar, Ali, Husayn and Fātima. They are inscribed in thuluth jali.
Published: Soustiel (1973) pp. 6-37, no. 44.

Marble and Stucco

In Islamic times, at least in the early and medieval periods, the supreme art among the Muslims was their calligraphy. The Arabic script proved a heaven-sent tool in the hands of Muslim artists and considerable effort went into the production of masterpieces of calligraphy, both that inscribed in stone and that written in ink in manuscript material. It is the former type, the lapidary, which concerns us here and some fine examples of which can be seen in this exhibition.

To speak in the broadest terms, the scripts used in Arabic epigraphy are two: the early, square script, called kufic, and the later cursive, naskhi. From its name the first would appear to have connections with the city in Mesopotamia named Kufa, though any direct link with that city is impossible to prove. The meaning of the second, naskhi, is basically that of copying, that is writing at some speed and therefore naturally in a less square script. The former, dating from the very early Islamic times, and possibly earlier, began in a simple style and gradually over the years became more and more elaborate, until virtually none but the artist himself could read the inscription. It finally gave way to the cursive naskhi about the end of the 12th century, though kufic continued to be used in some places, particularly in the east of the Islamic empire, for some time alongside the cursive. Naskhi was also to develop over the centuries, reaching great heights of elaboration and artistry, though again leaving the reader with a difficult task of deciphering.

Apart from its purely decorative role, particularly as part of mosque architecture in Islam, Arabic epigraphy was put to other uses. Most importantly it was employed on tombstones, especially those of the famous and the influential and these inscriptions are therefore often of great interest to the historian. There is a third less common, though perhaps equally valuable type of Arabic inscription, that which commemorates the construction of some building or something similar.

As for the contents of these various kinds of inscriptions written in Arabic, certainly the first two, the decorative mosque inscription and the funerary inscription, will make use of Koranic quotations. Indeed mosque inscriptions are generally found to contain little else except perhaps a date of building. Funerary inscriptions begin with pious phrases and other relevant citations from the Koran before the scribe
comes to the essentials of his inscription, the name and titles of the deceased and the exact date of his death, even those containing fixed pious phrases and wishes for his safe entry into heaven. Commemorative inscriptions generally come straight to the subject and give the name and title of the builder, perhaps also the name of the man who actually undertook the work of construction. Apart from the date of construction, mention might sometimes also be made of the source of the funds from which the work was carried out.

How do the exhibits listed below in this Catalogue fit into the general remarks above? The earliest inscription, no. 470, cannot be regarded as typical of the simple epigraphic kufic, since, rather than being inscribed, it has been written onto the stone. It is therefore to be seen in the context of the written material of the early period and, while the script can still be referred to as kufic, it is inevitably more cursive than the inscribed type. The text is too fragmentary to permit comment.

Examples of simple lapidary kufic are to be found in no. 474, (probably 10th century); no. 477 (10th century), the three line inscription of no. 478 (10th century); the first band of no. 478 (10th century), and no. 487 (10th century). No. 477 also has a hamula, i.e., the Koranic phrase 'In the name of God, the Compassionate... in what is termed foliated kufic, a term to be discussed below. No. 477 is a magnificent piece of craftsmanship and falls into the second group outlined above, the funerary inscription. No. 478 also indicates the beginnings of foliation in the second band. The simple kufic set in the arch of the mihrab in no. 474 fulfills a decorative use inside the mosque and bears the shahida, the Muslim profession of faith, 'There is no god but God; Muhammad is the Prophet of God'. Both nos. 488 and 487 show simple kufic inscriptions on columns. Whereas the latter clearly is commemorative, for the names of the ruler and the builder of the palace are given, the former is probably purely decorative.

But kufic did not remain simple in style. The beginnings of foliated kufic have already been noted above in nos. 477 and 478. Foliated kufic may be defined as having leaf-like decorations of the apices of the letters. Apart from the examples given above of this foliated script, no. 476 (14th century) should also be cited here. It is almost certainly of a purely decorative type.

Apart from foliated kufic, what is generally called floriated kufic also developed and this kind is represented in this collection. Floriated kufic has the same basic decoration as foliated and in addition floral motifs grow out of the letters. No. 478 (10th-11th century) shows this in its fairly early development, while the inscriptions of no. 475 (11th-12th century) already show a much more advanced form. These are also mihrab inscriptions and decorative.

A further development of the kufic script was the plaited variety, even more decorative than the types described above and probably the most difficult of all to read. No. 481 (11th century) is a combination of the foliated type and the plaited — a combination perhaps typical of North Africa only. Although primarily a decorative script it is here used on a tombstone.

The only example of the cursive script, naskhi, is no. 496, dating from the 14th century and therefore showing an already fairly well developed form, carrying too all the letter dots, unlike the early simple type of naskhi and the later which became very elaborate. This is a funerary inscription.
469. Stucco fragment with spray of leaves, fruits and grapes
Height 11.0 cm, width 7.8 cm
National Museum, Damascus, from the façade of Qasr al-Hhey al-Ghauri, Syria, Umayyad period, 8th century

Extensive use of stucco in architectural decoration was a novelty introduced by the Umayyads into Syria from recently conquered Mesopotamia. The newly rich ruling classes built themselves a series of pleasure palaces and in order that these palaces could be more quickly and completely decorated, easily worked plaster with wall paintings was preferred to the more expensive mosaics and stone facings. The technique used in the stuccos from this castle seem to have been moulding followed by hand carving of the partly set plaster. These fragments when excavated were so fractured that it was not possible to determine the precise position of all of them on the building facades. In this spray can be seen a combination of stylisation in the uniformity of detail combined with a semi-naturalistic treatment in the freedom of rhythm.

Published: Cresswell (1953, pl. 159, figs. 6, 26a, 6, 0, 6). The elements of the pattern are taken from the Hellenistic and early Christian repertoire of Syrian art such as vine leaves with 'eyes' and vines, grape clusters, palmettes and half-palmettes, stylised flowers and acanthus leaves enclosed in scrolls. Though naturalistic, these elements are treated as geometric units, all growing from the same scroll regardless of species. The scrolls order the pattern by grouping the elements into self-contained compartments, absolutely symmetrical in this panel. The surface is completely covered, those elements which are not identical are complementary. The scroll motif is organised on an axis around a focal point, the central acanthus crown. This scroll motif is one of the most endurable and adaptable themes in Islamic design.

Published: Cresswell (1953, pp. 176-7, pl. 80A, n. 6, c), (1959, fig. 149).
473 Stucco moulded and carved paneling
Length 392cm, height 65cm
Iraq Museum, Baghdad, no. A 1046.3
Mesopotamia, Abbasid period, 9th century

This piece comes from an Abbasid site at Tell Sabi Abyad in northern Mesopotamia, and is a typical Abbasid panel. It is a beautiful example of the Abbasid style, characterized by its elegant curves and intricate details. The panel is made of a special kind of clay called stucco, which was used extensively in Abbasid architecture. The panel is decorated with a series of geometric and floral patterns, which are typical of the Abbasid period. The panel is an important example of Abbasid art and should be preserved for future generations.

474 Stucco mihrab
Height 140cm, width 156cm
Iraq Museum, Baghdad, no. A 1376
Mesopotamia, Abbasid period, 9th century

This carved stucco mihrab has traces of red and green paint on a blue ground. The arch of the mihrab spans two semi-engaged columns with bell capitals and bucket-shaped pedestals and is carved with the shahada in simple kufic. Below the niche as it was in its run a frieze, carved in variant forms of the same kufic with the word Allah, extending beyond the mihrab. The niche is filled with d continuous pattern, in the bevelled Samarran style, of added half-palmettes developing into alternating with bulbus vase-like motifs. In each side two steep-cut interwoven scrolis run the length of the columns and develop into an arabesque pattern of stylised leaves over the shoulders of the arch. The whole is enclosed in a rectangular frieze of two intersecting wavy tendrils linked in a double loop over the centre of the arch. The frieze extends above the niche forming a second frame filled with the same arabesque elements. On the basis of the Samarran influences, Sarré dates the mihrab to the 10th century. Equally striking, however, is its stylistic affinity to Persian stucco and faience mihrabs of the Seljuk period and later, many of whose features this mihrab contains in germ.

Published: Sarré (1961, p. 63-76)

475a, b Two fragments from a marble mihrab with inscription in foliated kufic

a. Length 170cm, width 36cm
b. Length 162cm, width 40cm
Iraq Museum, Baghdad, no. A 8586
from the Nuri mosque, Mosul, North Mesopotamia, Zangi period, late 11th-early 12th century

The inscription on these two fragments is from the Koran, Surat II, 144. These fragments were taken from a mihrab and then incorporated into the late 12th century Nuri mosque in Mosul. The balance between the lower and upper registers is maintained by the ogee-shaped linking strokes and the S-shaped key and final mina. Typically, the relatively sober style of these letters of the earlier or alf-lammu style persian are usually more adventurous and imaginative.

Published: Sarré and Herzel (1911, J., p. 5-7, fig. 101) Frensch and Nasyabandi (1931, p. 445, fig. 51)

476 Fragment of a slab inscribed in foliated kufic
Height 72cm, length 70cm
Iran Rustam Museum, Tehran, no. 3280, found at Sarmaj Persia (Kurdistan), 11th-12th century

Hasanawiy was a robber chieftain who compelled the reigning Buwayid dynasty to recognize his claim to most of Kurdistan until his family's usefulness as holders of this buffer zone was exhausted in 1015. Little is known about Hasanawiy but the reportedly splendid nature of his reign seems to be reflected in this stone slab which may have formed part of a triumphal inscription over the doorway of his castle at Sarmaj. While the meandering and cross-cross border with its pattern of regular geometric shapes in the Sasanian tradition of grand architectural ornament, the unbroken foliation of the kufic makes the body of the lettering illegible. The details of the lettering may derive from tribal rather than urban sources.

A companion piece has been published by Diment (1953, pl. XIV, 1-7)
477 White marble slab, inscribed on both sides

Height 30cm, length 74cm
British Museum, London, no. 1975 2-1-7

Egypt, Fatimid period, 9th–11th century

This slab bears two inscriptions in kufic, both simple and foliated Bismillah al-rahman al-raheem hada yaha Muhammad b [2] Fakih Ashmâti tasuufiya fi shah shâr Jâmi’l asãhãr sana siti wâ-khanumm as-thahibba mû’a barhabun Allâh ‘In the name of God, the merciful, the compassionate, this is the tomb of Muhammad b [2] Fakih al-Ashtâni who died in the month of Jumadâ II in the year 336 [947 AD]. God is our sufficiency’ Bismillah al-rahman… ‘In the name of God, the merciful…’

Ashmâti refers either to a small town in the Nile delta (Asheim) or a town in Upper Egypt (Al-Ashmunain).

478 Border of a marble cenotaph inscribed on three sides

Length 193cm, height 13cm
Museum of Islamic Art, Cairo, no. 3295, acquired from the Ministry of Waqf in 1902
Egypt, Fatimid period, 10th century

Inscription on the upper surface is from the Koran, Surah III, 16-17. On the side… [illegible]. The foliated margin of the panel encloses a high-relief kufic inscription, almost in the bevelled style, with one letter in the form of a five-petalled rosette with a plumed leaf above. A second panel from this cenotaph, also in the Museum of Islamic Art, Cairo (no. 15551), bears an elegant funerary graffiti on the reverse, though without a date. The earliest specimen of such finely carved friezes is in the cenotaph of Khadija bint Muhammad (died 635) in Cairo near the mausoleum of the Abbasid caliphs. In the present case, the personage was evidently Sha’bâ, his Fatimid dating.

Published: Cairo (1969, no. 188)

479 Frieze from a marble cenotaph

Height 40.5cm, width 55.5cm
Museum of Islamic Art, Cairo, no. 3295
Egypt, Fatimid period, 10th century

The inscription is from the Koran, Surah CXII, 3. The carved panels enclose a high-relief kufic inscription, almost in the bevelled style, with one letter in the form of a five-petalled rosette with a plumed leaf above. A second panel from this cenotaph, also in the Museum of Islamic Art, Cairo (no. 15551), bears an elegant funerary graffiti on the reverse, though without a date. The earliest specimen of such finely carved friezes is in the cenotaph of Khadija bint Muhammad (died 635) in Cairo near the mausoleum of the Abbasid caliphs. In the present case, the personage was evidently Sha’bâ, his Fatimid dating.

Published: Cairo (1969, no. 188)

480 Relief in marble of a ruler drinking and a musician

Kairo Museum, Tuniisia, Fatimid period, 10th century

Though wine drinking and its depiction are blasphemeous in Islam, representation of the ruler drinking is frequent in Fatimid art (compare no. 270). This motif seems to have been an ancient central Asian symbol of sovereignty and appears in Abbasid paintings and coins as well as in Persian miniature paintings and ceramics.

Unpublished

481 Fragment of a marble funerary stele with foliated kufic inscription

Length 60cm, height 43cm
Museum of the Great Mosque, Kairouan, Tuniisia, Fatimid period, 10th century

This fragment is only part of a stele. The inscriptions are from the Koran, Surah I, III, 18 and 185, and XXXI, 69-7. As well a date is given mân uñu arba’în na’ arba’î mû’a wa-hamm a šukrâ ‘of the year 440 [1048 AD], [he died] bearing witness [that there is no god but God].’ The other half of the fragment gives the names of the deceased and of the craftsmen. See Roy and Poinssot (1958, pp. 620-2, no. 474). The two pieces of stylized acanthus leaves are a feature peculiar to Spain and North Africa. The alphabet is closely related to that of an inscription on a screen in the al-Mur’âzah in Kairouan. See Phylé (1920, Anhang). Unusual are the pendant foliations with curling ends, the palmette-like foliations of ‘â’ and the circular knots in the upwards strokes of ‘â’ and ‘y.’

Published: Roy and Poinssot (1958, pp. 622-3, no. 474, pl. 71-3)
482 Carved marble panel
Height 127cm, width 37.5cm
Museum of Islamic Art, Cairo, no. 7049
Egypt, Ayyubid period, 13th century

This half-panel is decorated in high relief with pointed oval compartments containing harpies, a winged sphinx and two human figures holding beakers and bottles while being swallowed (or regurgitated) by scale fish. This suggests an allusion to Jonah and the whale, though the pair of figures drinking is difficult to explain. The border consists of a frieze of fish alternately gaping and with closed mouths. The aquatic character of these themes suggests that this slab may have been a shadurwud, 'well', or an inclined slab over which water trickled from a wall fountain into a pool. Many comparable Ayyubid and Mamluk panels survive in Cairo, though they mostly have a chevron pattern designed to enhance the rills of water. Such slabs are a common feature of domestic and palace architecture throughout the Islamic world.

Published: Cairo (1969, no. 195)

483 Window grille of marble
Archaeological Museum, Province of Cordoba
Spain (Cordoba), Umayyad Caliphate, late 8th-9th century

This grille is probably one of a series of different designs copied from earlier Syrian models. They may be compared with trunco-door and window grilles from Qayr al-Hayr al-Gharbi and Kharbat al-Mafjar.

Published: Torres-Balbás (1965, figs. 302-3)

484 Corinthian marble capital with kufic inscriptions
National Archaeological Museum, Madrid
Spain (Cordoba), Umayyad Caliphate, 10th century

Classical capitals from sites in North Africa and Spain were re-used extensively by Umayyad builders in their own structures. The Corinthian capitals from Spain remain close to classical models in that they retain the superimposed rows of acanthus leaves, distinct volutes and abaci, which mask their underlying forms but emphasise their weight carrying function. In this early example, the modelling of the acanthus leaves is still naturalistic but the volutes have undergone a considerable degree of stylisation. The adored palmettes beneath the inscription, a motif of Sassanian origin, and the symmetrical design of flowers and scrolls, on the opposite side, are purely surface decoration. The fragmentary inscription has been reconstructed by Gómez-Moreno (1953, p. 53):

'In the name of God, blessing on the amir 'Abd al-Rahman II, son of al-Hakam, may God confer honour upon him.'

Published: Gómez-Moreno (1953, no. 6, pl. 2a, and 1955, p. 51); Torres (1955, pl. 15)

485 Rectangular marble basin with chamfered sides and carved scrolls
National Museum of Hispanic-Moresque Art, Granada, no. 5669
Spain, Umayyad Caliphate, 10th century

The Archaeological Museum, Toledo, has a Visigothic basin of similar design, see de Aranguren (1958, pl. 10). The problem of the stylistic relationship between Visigothic and Islamic art in Spain still remains to be investigated.

Published: Mackendrick (1968, pls. 8a, b, c)

486 Panel of marble from wall or door surround
Archaeological Museum, Province of Cordoba
Spain (Madinat al-Zahra), Umayyad Caliphate, 935-76

The palace complex at Madinat al-Zahra, on which the caliph 'Abd al-Rahman III is said to have spent a third of his annual revenue over a period of thirty years, has still not been completely excavated or reconstructed. The evidence suggests that the Umayyad prince was attempting to recreate in some way the desert palaces of his ancestors in Syria. The wall decorations are particularly reminiscent of Syrian models.

Published: Soudail-Thomine and Spuler (1973, p. 282, pl. 96)
488 Capital of marble with kufic inscription
National Archaeological Museum, Madrid
Spain (Madrid al-Zahra'), Umayyad Caliphate, 9th-10th century

The dated inscription is unread. The basketwork technique of this capital suggests a Byzantine rather than a classical model.
Published: Torres-Balbas (1958, pl. 424).

489 Rectangular marble ablation basin
Archaeological Museum, Province of Seville
Spain, Umayyad Caliphate, 10th century

One of a number of early undated ablation basins and fragments with animal motifs. The detail and naturalism of this basin (the gait of the ducks, the scoring of their feathers and of the turtle's scales, and fishes' fins) set it, and contemporary examples, apart from earlier Fatimid models and the vogue for animal sciences as does the unexplained plant motif of the lower frieze.
Published: Gómez-Moreno (1953, p. 193, fig. 251).

490 Carved panel of marble from wall or door surround
Height 148cm, width 93cm
Archeological Museum, Province of Toledo
Spain, Muluk al-Tawaf period, third quarter 11th century

This panel is decorated with scrolls, palmettes, pine-cones and birds. Here the paramount stylistic influence seems to be that of Syrian decorative art of the type employed at Mshatta.
Published: Gómez-Moreno (1953, p. 214, fig. 212); Soutil-Thomine and Spuler (1973, pl. 181).

491 Capital and base of marble with kufic inscriptions
Archeological Museum, Province of Toledo
Spain (Toledo), Almoravid period, 11th century

The inscription is unread. The process of stylistic synthesis initiated at Madinat al-Zahra (see no. 487) continued to make vigorous progress in provincial workshops after the fall of the Umayyads and the political fragmentation of the Iberian peninsula. Characteristic are the use of bead-and-crest mouldings and the prominence given to the abacus.
Published: Makhlouf (1966, pp. 160-2, fig. 9).

492 Milk-Shaped marble funerary stele of a princess
Height 14cm, width 92cm
Archeological Museum, The Alcazar, Province of Malaga
Spain (Cordoba), Almoravid period, 1103

The niche of the mikhef is inscribed after the basnala
saa qalit Allah 'ltd Muhammad
hâlâ ghab bihi bâdi' al-amir
Abi al-Hasan 'Ali b. Tâibi
al-Sanjîlî tamûfi yirhamha
Allah baqyl al-qâmûq wiq Râbi
al-âshir sara sitt saa nî's
sea-arâsh'ma
'God's blessings on Muhammad,
this is the tomb of Bâd, daughter of the amir Abi'Hasan 'Ali b. Tâibi al-Sanjîlî. She died, may God have mercy upon her, on the night of Sunday 14th Rabi' II in the year 406 [17th January 1103].'

On the columns is the signature of the sculptor as-Sanjîlî. The frieze which surrounds the columns is inscribed with verses from the Koran, Surra III, 18 and 53. The dead are buried with the head towards Mecca, hence the significance of the mikhef, hence the orientalization of the form, hence the direction towards Mecca. The ornaments of the spandrels are classical scallops widely used in western Islam. The decorative effect of the inscription depends upon slight exaggerations typical of Spanish and North African kufic and on a consistent treatment of recurring and related letters and combinations.
Published: Lefevre-Provost (1931), pp. 20-4, 224; Soutil-Thomine and Spuler (1973, p. 157, pl. 145).
493 Column base of alabaster with interlace pattern and inscription
Height 19 cm, width 29 cm
Instituto Valencia de Don Juan, Madrid
Spain (Toledo), Almoravid or Almohad period, 12th century
The inscription unread
Published: Torres-Balbis (1968, p. 424)

494 Sections of a stucco panel with traces of paint
Length 132 cm, height 65 cm
Museo Frederico Maris, Barcelona
Spain (Toledo), Mulik al-Tawa’il or Almohad period, 12th century
Alternate medallions are here filled with animal paintings a few traces of which may still be discerned.
Published: Terrac (1969, p. 426, pl. 20, 2)

495 Octagonal capital
Archaeological Museum, Province of Granada Museum, Granada,
no. 2051
Spain, Umayyad period, 12th century
Foliage decoration surrounds a series of eight niches.
Published: Unpublished

496 Tombstone of marble with cursive inscription
Length 170 cm, height 230 cm
Instituto Valencia de Don Juan, Madrid, from Niebla (Huelva)
Spain, Nasrid period, 1328–9
This prismatic stele presents a shape common throughout the Islamic world. It is inscribed on four sides, one line on each side. The text is highly unusual as it contains no Koranic formulas.
Published: Unpublished

497 Carving of a horse in relief
Instituto Valencia de Don Juan, Madrid
Spain (Toledo), Almohad period, 12th century
Published: Unpublished

Arts of the Book

In the general introductions the unique status of the Arabic script in Islamic society has been stressed both as a bond uniting all Muslims in all periods and also as the most important and universal language for artistic expression and decoration. This status derives from the belief that it was the chosen medium for the recording of the Word of God in the Koran. The special exhibition in the Kings Library at the British Museum, London, organised by the British Library Authority, displays the full story unfolding through history of the copying of the Koran in an impressive sequence. But it would not be possible to do justice to the artistic progress of calligraphy and illumination without including here other manuscripts of the Koran since these represent so large a proportion of surviving evidence for these arts up to the 12th century and some of the noblest and most monumental examples of book production in the later centuries.

The measured dignity of the early vellum Korans with their sparse gold and polychrome enhancements appropriately opens the sequence (nos. 498–9) in a style which was practised throughout the community so that it is not possible to discriminate between one centre and another of the Islamic world in the attribution of these early 8th–9th century oblong kufic pages. They are followed by the simultaneous development under Fatimid and Seljuk rule in the 10th–11th centuries of a more sophisticated and self-conscious style of kufic in upright pages with geometric title pages of great abstract beauty, bound in leather covers over wood in a similar style (nos. 501 and 504). With the irruption of the Seljuk Turks a fresh interest in pattern whether in building or in the book is shown in various kinds of interlacing in brick-vaulting and stucco decoration. But nowhere is this kind of art so immediately available as in the illumination of manuscripts (nos. 508, 513–4).

The next high point is in the Ilkhanid period in Persia after the conversion of Ghazan to Islam in 1295, rivalled by the contemporary work in the Mamluk centres in Cairo and Damascus (nos. 527–8) which continues into the fifteenth century. The Mongol invasions of 1222 to 1258 for all the immense damage inflicted on the cities of Persia, Mesopotamia and Syria led on the one hand to dispersal of refugee craftsmen and so to wider diffusion of the arts and on the other to far closer and more direct contact with the art of China at the other end of the Mongol empire. Here was an old and mature culture in which the first and greatest art was painting.
The great minister of the Ilkhansh Gha'zan and Uljaytu, the Jewish doctor administrator, theologian and historian, Rashid al-Din, himself a convert to Islam, was fascinated by Chinese science, printing, historiography and painting. In his time there started in the Mongol capitals of Tabriz and Sultanayeh the practice of ordering fine books of history with illustrations which added to the interest of the text by vivid pictures of events which could be projected into contemporary idiom dress and architecture in landscape (nos. 530). Hitherto only limited categories of books had been illustrated in the Islamic world, mainly scientific where they had inherited from Greek precursor a tradition of astronomical, botanical and medical books or bestiaries. This continuous aspect of the book is a major feature of the special exhibition of Islamic science at the Science Museum, South Kensington. Here we show a few examples for the sake of their artistic merit and interest. However even works like the book on the Fixed Stars by al-Sufi (no. 500) based upon the Greek of Ptolemy has illustrations redrawn in an Islamicised style; and the same is true of the translations of the *Materia Medica* of Dioscorides (nos. 518–23). In all these, the foreign realism or illusionism has been modified to admit the patterning and symmetry which was a constant bias in Islamic art, but vitiolised also by touches from direct observation of nature especially in a feeling for animals. But all remained conceptual with no concession to the passing moment. None the less there was already a tendency to add to these works unnecessary detail of figures or trees and plants for the sake only of decoration. A special instance of such irrelevant adornment is to be seen in the frontispieces prefixed to each volume of the great collection of Arabic songs the *Kitāb al-Aghâns* (nos. 515–7). These may be inspired by the example of author and patron portrait in Byzantine manuscripts; but these are more hieratic and correspond more closely to a Sasanian tradition of royal portraits of which no example survives: they are there to claim royal protection even when the work was probably not a royal commission. The Caliph at first, and thereafter all Muslim rulers, claimed to have inherited the worldly as well as the civil and military authority of their predecessors in the Mediterranean and the old Persian empire, and thus to have appropriated all outward panoply of crown, throne, and the courtly style of the hunt and the luxuries of pages, musicians and dancing girls. This kind of frontispiece was later modified and henceforth became stylistically no different from the other illustrations, only preserving the tradition of depicting the patron in suitable princely occupation, hunting or receiving the book commissioned from the author or copyist.

Very different was the new tradition inaugurated under the later Ilkhans, in which the sense of space and movement was adapted from the great vertical or horizontal paintings of China to the framed area of the book, by the device of cutting off of the composition both at the top and sides. A generation after Rashid al-Din (died 1218) this new concept was extended to include the dramatic treatment of the great Persian epic, the *Shahnama* or *Book of Kings* (nos. 533–4) and before the end of the 14th century to lyric and romantic poetry, especially the *Quintet*, *Khamsa* of Nizâmî and his imitators like Khwajâ of Kirman and Amir Khusraw of Delhi, none of whom had anticipated that their poetry would be illustrated but realised on their own descriptive and metaphorical powers. When this final step was taken the painters had a rather different task, although they might still be called to illustrate an event from the legend of Alexander the Great or an exploit of Bahram Gur the great hunter. Now all was to be conceived on a visionary plane where the natural setting was as important as the action in achieving the mood of the poet. Although history was still illustrated by the Persian or Turks or Mughal miniaturist, he was now free to show the world as the mirror of the divine creation. This stage of development in the art of the miniaturist like all periods of transition is one of special interest and this is reflected in the fullest possible representation which has been sought through the selection of the exhibits (nos. 548, 550–1, 555).

After the decline and break up of the Ilkhans empire in 1336 the greatest patrons of the arts are remembered to have been the Jalayirids, rulers of a Mongol successor state based on the twin capitals of Tabriz and Baghdad. The most important of these reigns for the arts of the book were those of Uways (1338–74) and Ahmad (1382–1410). The surviving work of the first reign is almost entirely preserved in Istanbul and is therefore unfortunately not represented in this exhibition; but for the second we have the evidence of four key manuscripts (nos. 541–5) to show the break through, from the mixed tradition of illustration tied to the text to a penetration into the world of imagination equal to that of the poet, as shown in one of the masterpieces of the time and the earliest to contain the authentic signature of a painter, Junayd, whose fame is recorded in a text of 150 years later (no. 544).

By this date 1396 we have already reached the age of Timur, that great and ruthless conqueror who in all his savage campaigns took care to save the leading artists and craftsmen. Many were removed to his capital Samarkand, including calligraphers and painters; but it has yet to be shown that this capital was a major centre for the arts of the book as it was for architecture and its decoration with tilework. His son and successor Shahrukh was a generous supporter of scholarship and book production at his capital Herat, but it was the next generation which produced a crop of princes connoisseurs who were artists themselves. We are privileged to see for the first time since the 15th and 16th centuries juxtaposed such masterpieces as the two anthologies prepared in Shiraz for Iskandar Sulân (died 1414) with other examples of his workshop (nos. 550–5) and the actual hand of his cousins Ibrîhim and Baysunghur (nos. 554, 558) who were both accomplished calligraphers. It was Baysunghur who founded in Herat in a brief fifteen years a school that remained for generations the standard to which artists inspired in Persia, Turkey, Transoxiana and the Sultanate and Mughal realms of India. Baysunghur is explicitly said to have recruited his library staff from Tabriz, including the painters Sayyid Ahmad and Khwâji 'Ali and the bookbinder Qâwân al-Din who is said to have invented folio cut-out work. Two early examples are shown in the exhibition (nos. 559 dated 1431 and 564 dated 1448) both
from Herat. Another technique was also developed in Herat, the use of moulds in decorating the outer covers instead of laborious hand tooling (no. 549). By the second half of the 15th century large moulds were in use with pictorial designs covering the main field of the cover first found about 1446 (nos. 607–8). Again, the use of painted lacquer on binding seems to have begun in Herat in the time of Sultan Husayn at the end of the 15th century: but the wider use of this practice came in the first half of the 16th century when they became very close to miniature painting (nos. 602, 605–6).

Nos. 556-7 represent the work of the two greatest scribes of the time in Herat, ‘All Jafar who was pupil of Mir ‘Ali of Tabriz the inventor of the nasta’liq script, and Muhammad b. Husayn called Shams al-Din Bayasunghi who taught fine writings to the prince himself and designed monumental inscriptions on the mosque of Gauharshad wife of Shahrukh at Mashhad. The school is equally noteworthy for its illumination. But for this art the finest period may well be under the Turkman rulers of Western Persia and Mesopotamia who after 1453 absorbed the greater part of the Timurid empire except for Khurasan (nos. 572–3), and after the revival of Timurid art in Herat under Sultan Husayn Bayqara (1470–1506).

This is the classic age of the arts of the book in Persia, when the school achieved perfect balance between the miniature and the writing and illumination of the manuscript and when relation between figures, architecture and landscape were harmonious without insipidity. Sensibility assured the perfection of gesture to convey relation and choice of colour to give emotional warmth. How great a part was played by the master Buhad will never now be known but his is the name which has eclipsed all others of his contemporaries in reputation. Three of the most famous of the manuscripts containing his best attested work are shown together with several other candidates for consideration as his work or at least as being near to him in style (nos. 580–1).

Although the ‘classical’ Persian style of miniature painting was formed in Tabriz under the Jala’i’r, it reached maturity in Herat after a short honeymoon period in Shiraz under the impetuous prince Iskandar. Shiraz was an old centre of Persian culture, lately the home town of Hafez, greatest of lyric poets, and of new developments in architecture. Herat though long a large and wealthy city standing at the gateway from Persia and the West to Central Asia had not previously been capital of a major state, as it became under Shahrukh in 1405 on the death of his father Timur. He had been governor in Herat since 1397 and never deserted it until his own death in 1449. It immediately outshone Timur’s capital of Samarkand. All the Timurids were steeped in Persian culture and art; and although themselves Turks by race and speech, they had whole-heartedly accepted both Islam and the heritage of Persian poetry and architecture. At the same time Turkish art was encouraged and Turkish scholarship protected (no. 561). After 1449 there were bitter internal feuds in the Timurid family and much territory was lost to the Turkman including the Persian heartland of Shiraz and Isfahan, but there was no complete breach in Herat where

Abu Sa’id was in control almost throughout this time until his death in 1468. Then it entered on a second period of flowering under Sultan Husayn, who still controlled the area of greater Khurasan stretching from the south-east corner of the Caspian to Ghazni and Kundahar, to Merv and Balkh, some 750 miles from east to west and 400 from north to south, now divided between Afghanistan, Persia and Soviet Turkmenistan. Thus Herat in the 15th century in many ways resembled the contemporary city states of Italy both in their patronage of humanism and the arts and in internecine violence and political intrigue, but where scholarship, witty talk and fine penmanship were equally esteemed.

However there was a serious development in Persia in these same circles built and endowed large numbers of religious foundations mainly for the benefit of the Sufi teaching orders. Shahriz is himself had built a shrine complex at Ghausur Gab a few miles from the city of Herat which had grown up around the tomb of the mystic ‘Ansari (1006–81) and he visited it as a pilgrim once a month.

What is the secret of this classic art of the Persian miniature? The effect is built up from a combination of closely focused, intensely felt images, some human, some architectural, some of natural life, plants or animals. The essence of each of these is seized at its most typical, that is to its most complete position, so as to exhibit its qualities fully displayed—a flower in bloom, a horse in action, girls in graceful pairs bathing or picking flowers; men as heroes or experiencing extremes of grief or concerted action; the saint Yousuf fleeing from Zulaykha through miraculously opening doors (no. 581). Here the architecture is rich and complex, arranged in a pattern which has only as much structural coherence as can be accepted by the willing mind. So none of the images is as much an illustration of a particular subject as something to be enjoyed purely for design, colour and association.

The compositions are combinations of visual types, just as the poems are built up of an infinite variety of individual images, all conventional but felicitously united so as to form a new harmony. This persistent and sometimes repetitive use of single figures or groups thus corresponds to a literary usage; but the miniature is not literary; its beauties are formal, patterns of line and colour covering the whole surface of the picture space which is often enlarged freely outside the framed area of the text pages into the margins, but never so violently as to break the unity of the book. This unity was helped by the identity of design used in buildings and their pictures and in manuscript decoration by the illuminator.

But the miniature had a deeper significance in this classic age; it expressed more immediately than the poetry the Sufi view of art. Jami, the great exponent of the concept of beauty as the essence of the Creator and therefore as source of all love and devotion, could write (in H. G. Browne’s translation)

"Tis love alone from thyself will save thee
Even from earthly love thy face avert not
Since to the Real it may serve to raise thee."
"Each mundane atom He a mirror made
And His reflection in each one displayed".
So each human face is a faint reflection of the divine face. So in no. 581 Yusuf is presented as the ideal of human beauty taken as a type of celestial beauty (hence his halo) while Zalaykhah is the personification of overcoming love and so can represent the soul of the mystic. For at the end of the poem when Zalaykhah and Yusuf are finally united she has a vision of celestial beauty and so passes over the bridge (a common Sufi metaphor) to love of divine perfection which eclipses her earthly love.

Sharing in this same cultural life during the second half of the 15th century were the courts of the Turkmans princes first of the Black Sheep branch and then of the White. They inherited some of the tradition of book production from the Herat of Shashkoh and some of the older artists of the Jalayrid period in their capitals of Baghdad and Tabriz (nos. 568–74). This north-western school is of special significance for the future because the Safavid house which ruled all Persia during the 16th and 17th centuries sprang from Ardashir north of Tabriz and in the furthest corner of Azerbaijan and they were moreover closely related to the White Sheep Turkmans. Consequently when Shih Ismail II was able to establish a court it was at Tabriz where he had conquered the White Sheep family, whose library staff he inherited. The young Safavid school thus started with a style of rich and exuberant brilliance (nos. 590–1) that made a lasting contribution to the great painting school of his successor Shah Tahmasp (1524–76).

In the first half of this long reign the Persian arts of the book reached their highest point of excellence in professional control and richness of invention. Organisation of the library allowed of a great level of production and the accomplishment of such extraordinary achievements as the completion of a Shihârâmâ with no less than 258 whole page miniatures: of these only two carry signatures while the names of many artists of the time are recorded: so here is an opportunity for endless attribution, but the greatest praise must still go to the two successive masters of this team Sultan Muhammad who had taught the young Shah as prince to draw and understand the art; and after about 1540 Mir Musawir (nos. 595–6, 620). These manuscripts were written by the best calligraphers of the age, Sultan Muhammad Nûr and Shah Mahmûd of Nishapur who was surnamed Zarîn Qalân (Golden Pen): both were pupils of leading scribes of the previous generation, the first of Sultan 'All of Mashhad and the second of 'Abd of Nishapur, thus demonstrating the chain of artistic descent which permitted the maintenance of such standards of excellence. In addition two of them (nos. 596, 590) also bear the signatures of masters of illumination, while we have already praised the technical achievements in binding at this time and especially the pictorial bindings in lacquer and moulded leather. Around 1545 the Shah began to lose interest in the book arts and although other members of his family stopped in to provide patronage, especially Ibrâhim Mîrzâ the Shah's nephew and governor of Mashhad until his murder in 1577 (see no. 614) but Qârim as the royal capital still

claimed the top artists, such as those represented in the recently discovered manuscript of 1573 (no. 613).

There is some evidence that this was however fading before the brilliance of the younger team of artists who worked in no. 613 who also had started to show their virtuosity in a number of separate figure studies which were to claim an increasing share of their time in the new reign of Shah 'Abbas I (1578–1629). One of these artists 'Abdîq Beg was named head of the court library in 1596 and no. 621 may well have been offered to him by his pupils as a splendid tribute to him on that occasion. The son of the second of these older artists 'Ali Aqhar was to earn an even greater reputation under the name of Aqîl Rizâ as a figure painter.

In him we can see the flowering of this elegant and often exuberant line in compositions where figures combine in intricate patterns of an almost abstract beauty (no. 620); in later life Riza seems to have found court patronage too restrictive and to have given full reign to this tendency to manercism in figure drawings of great virtuosity either in ink (no. 631) or colour (no. 632). Thus did the formal qualities of design always strong in Islamic painting become dominant in later Safavid work. Riza was the man of the hour and he was followed by his son Shâhî and his pupil Mu'in, a master of a more fluid, less staccato line. This was indeed an individual expression of a more general less extreme tendency, to which manuscripts such as nos. 633–4 bear witness. In them what had been patterning of margins with designs called descriptively abrat (literally cloud forms) and a special technique of book adornment invaded the field of the miniature and becomes dominant, so that the figures look as though they were themselves wind-borne.

Here we see the link between calligraphy and two of the other major themes illustrated in Room I of the exhibition – the arabesque and the figure – also shown in the arts of the book. We have some examples of more or less fully developed sketches in which designers have shown how the modulated line articulates an action-picture of a bird (no. 641), or can become a full-blown design for use in the applied arts (no. 657). How calligraphy itself can develop into a regulated kind of decoration is seen in the Turkish imperial naghâ' (nos. 622, 637) with a degree of control beyond any craft today, yet with a free interpretation within the statud bounds. The popular counterpart may be seen in the frequent formation of calligraphy into bird or animal forms animating the slogans of sectarian propaganda or charm. So the example of the 19th century resembles that of a thousand years earlier on the Samanid pottery (no. 295 compared with no. 641).
497 Four fragments from painted floor compositions
Overall dimensions:
- Height: 22.5cm, width: 11.5cm
- Height: 21.5cm, width: 12cm
- Height: 19.7cm, width: 24.5cm
- Height: 28.5cm, width: 25cm

National Museum, Damascus, from Qar al-Hayr al-Gharbi, Syria, Umayyad period, about 730

In 1935, at the palace of Qar al-Hayr al-Gharbi not far from Damascus, Schaanenberger discovered substantial remains of wall and floor paintings which had once decorated two large halls. The two large compositions which were found there and which are now housed in the National Museum, Damascus, are of the earth goddess with tritons, and of musicians and a hunter pursuing gazelles. The goddess is eastern Roman in style but the hunting scene displays strong Sassanian influences. These four fragments are from unidentified subjects but they all display the strength of Persian influences in matters of artistic production under the caliph Hisham (ruled 724-43). Fragments b and c represent floral and vegetal decoration and are outlined in a darker colour so that the design may be distinguished from the background. The design contains a straight line suggesting that it may have belonged to a border decoration. Fragments a and c are parts of figures. The bushy eyebrows and beard imply that a is a figure of a man, whereas c seems to be that of a woman wearing a three-lobe crown and a headdress which passes beneath the chin.

Published: Schaanenberger (1934, 4, pp. 86-121); Ertiningsih (1999, pp. 33-4)

498 Double-page from a Koran on velvet
Height: 3.2cm, width: 8.4cm
National Library, Tunis, no. 197
Radi
Mesopotamia (Baghdad), Abbasid period, 9th century

The text is from Sura XIX, and is written in kufic in gold on a blue background. Similar pages are in the Fogg Art Museum, Harvard (no. 1987, 2), the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (no. 33.486) and the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin (M.3 452) and these pages are said to have come from a Koran presented to the mosque of Mushhad by the caliph al-Ma'mun (ruled 813-37). Closer to the style of this double page is a small leaf in the Freer Gallery of Art, Washington (no. 45.46) though this leaf has lost most of the blue pigment and the writing is in black ink. See Atif (1975, no. 2).

Unpublished

499 One page with gold heading, a rosette and 3 lines of kufic from a Koran on velvet
Height: 23.5cm, width: 39cm
Iran National Museum, Tehran, no. 4789
Persia, 9th-10th century

This Koran consists of 154 folios with gold Sura headings. The colophon is written hurubuhu ta dakhhabah [copied and gilt by] 'Ali ibn Abi Tahib. No date is given. Ali, the fourth caliph (ruled 656-66), is traditionally credited with the invention of the kufic script, named after his capital, the newly founded city of Kufa. No Koran manuscript of such an early date has survived and ascriptions to 'Ali found in colophons are undoubtedly apocryphal. All early Korans are written on velvet and are oblong in shape. The earliest known page manuscript is dated 937 and the present fragment is certainly earlier than this though it is difficult to be certain of its place of origin since there is little if any stylistic difference between Korans produced in Syria, Mesopotamia and Persia at this time.

Published: Juhrami (1946, no. 2)

500 Sayyar al-Kawsikib al-Talhibi, 'Forums of the Fixed Stars', by 'Abdurrahman al-Shafi
Height: 26.5cm, width: 18.2cm
Bodleian Library, Oxford, MS. Marsh 144
Persia (Shiraz), Buyid period, 1009-10

This manuscript consists of 419 folios with 75 drawings bound in plain 17th century leather. The colophon indicates that the book was copied and illustrated by al-Hassan ibn 'Abdurrahman ibn 'Umar b. Mohammed, the son of the author. This illustration represents a figure of the constellation Sagittarius. The linear quality of the illustrations of this manuscript may perhaps be explained by their having been originally traced from a celestial globe with engraved figures. The work was commissioned from al-Shafi by the Buyid amir 'Abd al-Dawla in about 960. This copy was probably made in Shiraz, the Buyid capital, and its style is a fusion of Abbasid and Persian traditions. 'Abd al-Dawla also commissioned al-Shafi to make a large silver celestial globe. This manuscript is the earliest known example of al-Shafi's work and is also one of the earliest examples of Islamic book illustration.

Published: Wellens (1979, pp. 1-27); Ertiningsih (1992, pp. 59-61); Robinson and Gray (1979, no. 1, p. 9); Jansen (1977, pp. 40-4)
593 Page from a Koran
Height 26.5 cm, width 33 cm
Museum of the Great Mosque, Kairouan
Tunisia (Kairouan), Zirid period, about 1048

This page comes from a Koran dedicated to the Great Mosque at Kairouan by the Zirid prince al-Mu'tizz b. Bādīs (1014–61) and was found in an abandoned room in the mosque. Within an ornate border is the Koranic text which is inscribed in kufic beginning pp. 1st word "bismallīh, 'in the name of God.' The words are surrounded by gilt vegetal motifs.

Unpublished

594 Double-page from a Koran written on vellum
Height 14.3 cm, width 20.7 cm
Museum of the Great Mosque, Kairouan
Tunisia (Kairouan), Zirid period, 10th–early 11th century

These two pages are decorated with two semi-circles and an interfacing border which is an unusual design to find on a Koran. On the reverse of one of these pages is an inscription in gilt on a background of vegetal motifs. The inscription consists of two words of which the first is legible and reads huraa, 'be still.' Like no. 593, this is one of the many pages found in the Great Mosque at Kairouan.

Unpublished

595 Cover from a leather binding
Height 11.3 cm, width 17 cm
Museum of the Great Mosque, Kairouan
Tunisia (Kairouan), Zirid period, 8th century

This is the upper cover from a binding of reddish brown leather placed on a poplar wood board. Its decoration is hand tooled and consists of two rectangular fields inside one another containing interlacing geometrical designs. This conforms with the decoration of other bindings which were found in the Great Mosque at Kairouan.

Published: Marqāz and Poinset (1948–52, p. 197; pl. XXIIb); Poinset (1956, pp. 41–44, pl. 17)

596 Part of a leather binding
Height 22 cm, width 14.3 cm
Museum of the Great Mosque, Kairouan
Tunisia, Aghlabid period, 10th century

This is part of a binding in which the decoration was applied by blind toothing on leather placed on a wooden board, compare no. 595. The border consists of interlacing circular shapes with a dot in each. This is a characteristic motif which recurs in many of the bindings found in the Great Mosque at Kairouan. The central field is occupied by intricately braided or plaited bands. The reverse of this side would have functioned as the bottom of the box or cover and consists of a piece of leather on which a dedication is written in kufic letters stating that it was a gift to the mosque made by an Aghlabid princess.

Unpublished

597 Lower side of a leather binding
Height 11.5 cm, width 18 cm
Museum of the Great Mosque, Kairouan
Tunisia, Fatimid period, 9th–10th century (perhaps 11th century)

The decoration of the raised central palmette is placed horizontally with scroll-like leaves emerging towards the four corners. The design of the interior of the palmette is also found on capitals of late Sassanian buildings and in the mosaics of the Dome of the Rock, Jerusalem. The raised technique of decoration was achieved by gessoing cords on to the poplar wood board on which was placed the leather which was then tooled. The other side is covered with parchment. This binding is one of several found in an abandoned room of the Great Mosque at Kairouan (see also nos. 105–6). This example, however, differs from the others in its technique which is of Coptic origin and is related to the 7th century Anglo-Saxon binding of the St. Cuthbert gospel at St. Cuthbert College.

Published: Marqāz and Poinset (1948–52, p. 56, fig. 23); Poinset (1954); Missier (1957, no. 43, fig. XIII); Ewing (1959, pp. 115, pl. 63b)