Manuscript Treasures from Afro-Eurasia

Scribes, Patrons, Collectors, and Readers

Edited by
Jacopo Gnisci, Sophia Dege-Müller, Jonas Karlsson
and Vitagrazia Pisani
in collaboration with Alessandro Bausi

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Umberto Bongianino

The Vatican al-Ṣūfī and the Library of Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAlī al-Ghāfiqī al-Shārrī in Thirteenth-century Ceuta

Abstract: This article presents and contextualises an exquisite copy of the Arabic star atlas *Kitāb ṣuwar al-kawākib al-thābita* ('Book of Configurations of the Fixed Stars') made in Ceuta, in 1224 CE, for the library of a local scholar and philanthropist. The first part of the article discusses some of the manuscript's distinctive illustrations, proposing some observations on how the figural repertoire associated with the constellations was transmitted and altered in the medieval Islamic West. The second part concentrates on the manuscript's patron, Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAlī al-Ghāfiqī al-Shārrī, his library and his intellectual pursuits, shedding some new light on the scholarly milieu of thirteenth-century Ceuta.

1 Introduction

The most remarkable manuscript of the Arabic star atlas *Kitāb ṣuwar al-kawākib al-thābita* ('Book of Configurations of the Fixed Stars') to have survived from the Islamic West is today kept in the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, under the shelf mark Rossiano 1033.[1] This profusely illustrated and illuminated paper codex actually contains two separate works by two different authors: the first is the *Kitāb* itself (fols 1^{r}–103^{v}), a treatise on the constellations by the Persian astronomer Abū al-Ḥusayn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Ṣūfī (903–986 CE); the second is a didactic poem on the same subject, in metre *rajaz*, composed by his son Abū ʿAlī al-Ḥusayn Ibn al-Ṣūfī and titled *Urjūza fī ṣuwar al-kawākib* ('Poem on the Configurations of the Stars', fols 105^{r}–120^{r}). The juxtaposition of these two Arabic works on constellations within the same book makes perfect sense, and is attested in at least one

1 Levi della Vida 1935, 280; Piemontese 2008, 296–298. The manuscript has been fully digitised and is freely available online: <https://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS_Ross.1033> (accessed on 5 September 2024). The Arabic transliteration system used in this article is that of the *International Journal of Middle East Studies*.

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other medieval codex.[2] In the Vatican manuscript, the text of al-Ṣūfī's treatise is almost entirely preserved and enhanced with forty-six drawings of constellations – some rather simple, others more elaborate – which have so far received very limited attention, despite their value as a source for the study of Islamic visual culture and the arts of the book in the medieval Maghrib and al-Andalus (Muslim Iberia).

Although thematically related, the *Kitāb* and the *Urjūza* belong to two different literary genres, and in the Vatican manuscript, they were also penned by two distinct individuals, whose Maghribī scripts differ noticeably from one another. The colophon at the end of the *Urjūza* (fol. 120^{r}) – and, therefore, of the whole codex (Fig. 1) – states that the copy was completed in Ceuta in the year 621 of the Muslim calendar (1224 CE) for Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAlī b. Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Ghāfiqī al-Shārrī (1176–1251), a known local scholar of Andalusī descent. However, there is no colophon at the end of al-Ṣūfī's treatise that may confirm that the first work was copied and illustrated at the same time and in the same place as the second. The patron's name does appear in the illuminated title page of the *Kitāb* on fol. 1^{r} (Fig. 2), but the chrysography here was clearly executed after the work had been transcribed, by the same calligrapher who wrote the title page of the *Urjūza*, on fol. 105^{r}, and probably also the final colophon. Thus, the text and images of al-Ṣūfī's treatise may conceivably be slightly earlier than 1224, and they could have belonged to a copy that was not originally made for al-Shārrī. Nevertheless, the paper support employed in both parts is very similar, and the manuscript, as a whole, displays a certain aesthetic unity. This was achieved through its illuminated elements of paratext, which make use of the same tripartite colour scheme of gold, blue and red featured in the constellation drawings. The evident care that went into the assemblage and finish of this codex for the edification of its patron speaks volumes about the bibliophilic culture of medieval Ceuta.

2 Doha, Museum of Islamic Art, MS.2.1998, copied and illustrated in Baghdad in 1125. This manuscript is possibly the most authoritative and earliest extant copy of both works: see Savage-Smith 2013. On Ibn al-Ṣūfī's poem and its transmission history, see Carey 2009.



Fig. 1: Dated colophon of Ibn al-Ṣūfī's *Urjūza fī ṣuwar al-kawākib*. BAV Rossiano 1033, fol. 120ʳ. Photograph © Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana.



Fig. 2: Title of al-Ṣūfī's *Kitāb*, with a dedication to Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAlī b. Muḥammad al-Shārrī. BAV Rossiano 1033, fol. 1r. Photograph © Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana.

This article delves into BAV Rossiano 1033 with the intention of shedding some new light on how astronomical knowledge from Classical Antiquity and the Islamic East was transmitted in the medieval Islamic West. In the first part, the focus will be on the figural repertoire associated with the signs of the zodiac and the other constellations. The most remarkable illustrations of the Vatican al-Ṣūfī will be examined in relation to those of the only other Maghribī copy of the same work known to us, an undated manuscript in Paris (BnF arabe 2488), probably from the fourteenth century.[3] Comparisons will also be drawn with Islamic celestial globes

3 De Slane 1883–1895, 441–442.

and other iconographic sources, exploring the possible reasons and models behind some of the artist's choices. The second part of the article will concentrate on the scholarly and artistic milieu of medieval Ceuta, the library and collecting habits of Abū al-Ḥasan al-Shārrī, and the reasons why the elites of the time seem to have cared deeply about manuscripts such as the Vatican al-Ṣūfī.

2 The illustrations of BAV Rossiano 1033

Al-Ṣūfī's treatise was meant as a revision and expansion of the star catalogue in Claudius Ptolemy's *Almagest*, compiled around 150 CE. The Persian astronomer updated the stars' ecliptic longitudes to the year 964, included a discussion of the star names used by the Bedouins of pre-Islamic Arabia, and corrected numerous errors of calculation (longitudes, latitudes, and magnitudes) that he identified in the astronomical literature of the day.[4] The purpose of the work is essentially didactic and, for this reason, the constellations are not simply described: they are illustrated. Each constellation in the extant manuscripts is always drawn twice: as it appears in the sky, and mirrored, as depicted on celestial globes. This was done to help readers and scholars recognise star formations from both direct observation of the firmament and scientific instruments. The Vatican al-Ṣūfī is no exception: its forty-six pairs of drawings illustrate all the classical constellations mentioned by Ptolemy, except for Cassiopeia, which is missing due to the loss of one folio between fols 23 and 24.[5]

BAV Rossiano 1033 opens with the author's lengthy preface (fols 1^{v}–8^{r}), followed by the three canonical parts that make up the treatise. The first (fols 8^{r}–40^{v}) deals with the northern celestial hemisphere and contains twenty illustrations: Ursa Minor (*al-dubb al-aṣghar*, 'the lesser bear', fols 8^{v}–9^{r}), Ursa Maior (*al-dubb al-akbar*, 'the greater bear', fol. 10^{r}), Draco (*al-tinnīn*, 'the serpent', fol. 12^{v}), Cepheus (*qayqāwus* or *al-multahib*, 'the blazing one', fol. 14^{v}), Boötes (*al-ʿawwāʾ*, *al-ṣayyāḥ*, *al-baqqār* or *ḥāris al-shamāl*, 'the howler', 'the cowhand' or 'the sentinel of the north', fol. 16^{v}), Corona Borealis (*al-iklīl al-shamālī* or *al-fakka*, 'the northern crown', fol. 17^{v}), Hercules (*al-jāthī*

4 Carey 2007, 65–66. For an extensive discussion of al-Ṣūfī's methodology, the structure of his treatise, and its impact on later literature, see Kunitzsch 1986; Carey 2001, vol. 1, 66–85; Brentjes 2021, 63–71.

5 The classical constellations mentioned by Ptolemy are forty-eight, but in al-Ṣūfī manuscripts, Ophiuchus is normally depicted together with Serpens, and Centaurus with Lupus, resulting in forty-six pairs of illustrations. BAV Rossiano 1033 lacks Cassiopea but features an additional illustration: a horse representing a Bedouin constellation on fol. 39^{v}.

ʿalā rukbatayhi or *al-rāqiṣ*, 'the kneeling one' or 'the dancer', fol. 19^{v}, here missing its mirror image due to the loss of one folio between fols 19 and 20), Lyra (*al-lūrā*, *al-silyāq*, *al-awr*, *al-ṣanj*, *al-miʿzafa* or *al-sulaḥfā*, 'the harp' or 'the tortoise', fol. 20^{r}), Cygnus (*al-ṭāʾir* or *al-dajāja*, 'the bird' or 'the hen', fol. 22^{r}), Perseus (*barshāwus* or *ḥāmil raʾs al-ghūl*, 'the carrier of the ghoul's head', fol. 25^{r}), Auriga (*mumsik al-aʿinna* or *al-ʿannān*, 'the one clutching the reins', fol. 27^{r}), Ophiuchus with Serpens (*al-ḥawwāʾ wa-l-ḥayya*, 'the snake charmer and the snake', fols 30^{r}–30^{v}), Sagitta (*al-sahm*, 'the arrow', fol. 32^{r}), Aquila (*al-ʿuqāb* or *al-nasr al-ṭāʾir*, 'the eagle' or 'the flying vulture', fol. 33^{r}), Delphinus (*al-dulfīn*, fol. 34^{r}), Pegasus (*al-faras al-aʿẓam*, 'the greater horse', fols 35^{r}–35^{v}), Andromeda (*andhrūmīd*, *al-marʾa al-musalsala* or *al-marʾa allatī lam tara baʿlan*, 'the chained woman', 'the woman who did not see a husband', fols 37^{v}–38^{r}), a second horse representing a Bedouin constellation partly overlapping with Andromeda (fol. 39^{v}), Equuleus (*qiṭʿat al-faras*, 'portion of a horse', fol. 40^{r}) and Triangulum (*al-muthallath*, 'the triangle', fol. 40^{v}).

The second part of the *Kitāb* (fols 41^{r}–74^{v}) deals with the constellations of the zodiac and contains twelve illustrations: Aries (*al-ḥamal*, 'the ram', fols 42^{r}–42^{v}), Taurus (*al-thawr*, 'the bull', fols 45^{v}–46^{r}) Gemini (*al-tawʾamān*, 'the twins', fols 49^{r}–49^{v}), Cancer (*al-saraṭān*, 'the crab', fol. 51^{r}), Leo (*al-asad*, 'the lion', fol. 53^{v}), Virgo (*al-ʿadhrāʾ* or *al-sunbula*, 'the maiden' or 'the ear of wheat', fols 56^{v}–57^{r}), Libra (*al-mīzān*, 'the scales', fol. 59^{v}), Scorpio (*al-ʿaqrab*, 'the scorpion', fol. 62^{r}), Sagittarius (*al-rāmī* or *al-qaws*, 'the marksman' or 'the bow', fol. 64^{v}), Capricorn (*al-jadī*, 'the kid', fols 66^{v}–67^{r}), Aquarius (*sākib al-māʾ* or *al-dalw*, 'the pourer of water' or 'the bucket', fols 70^{r}–70^{v}), and Pisces (*al-samakatān* or *al-ḥūt*, 'the two fish', fols 76^{r}–76^{v}).[6] The third part (fols 75^{r}–103^{v}) deals with the southern celestial hemisphere and contains fourteen illustrations: Cetus (*qayṭus*, fols 73^{r}–73^{v}), Orion (*al-jabbār* or *al-jawzāʾ*, 'the giant', fols 78^{v}–79^{r}), Eridanus (*al-nahr*, 'the river', fols 81^{v}–82^{r}), Lepus (*al-arnab*, 'the hare', fol. 83^{v}), Canis Maior (*al-kalb al-akbar*, 'the greater dog', fol. 85^{v}), Canis Minor (*al-kalb al-aṣghar*, 'the lesser dog', fol. 87^{r}), Argo Navis (*al-safīna*, 'the ship', fols 89^{v}–90^{r}), Hydra (*al-shujāʿ*, 'the valiant one', fol. 93^{r}), Crater (*al-bāṭiya*, 'the jug', fol. 94^{v}), Corvus (*al-ghurāb*, 'the raven', fol. 95^{r}), Centaurus with Lupus (*qayṭawrus wa-l-sabuʿ*, 'Centaurus with the predator', fols 98^{r}–98^{v}), Ara (*al-mijmara*, 'the brazier', fol. 101^{r}), Corona Australis (*al-iklīl al-janūbī*, 'the southern crown', fol. 102^{r}) and Piscis Austrinus (*al-ḥūt al-janūbī*, 'the southern fish', fols 103^{r}–103^{v}).

Among the striking features of these forty-six illustrations is the extensive presence of gilt, more generously applied than in any other extant manuscript of the *Kitāb* from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Gold paint (also known as

6 Fols 73–76 are bound in disorder, which is why the illustration of Pisces follows that of Cetus. The correct order is fols 72, 76, 74, 75, 73 and 77.

shell gold) was not just used to mark all the stars inside each constellation, but also a wide variety of ornamental features and details, including the collars, cuffs, armbands and belts of male and female figures, as well as Boötes's turban, Perseus's sword, Auriga's reins, Aries's horns, the diadems on the heads of Andromeda and Aquarius, the mast finial of Argo Navis, the tail of Canis Maior, the feathers of Aquila's thighs and the plumes of Pegasus's wings. As has already been mentioned, the text of al-Ṣūfī's treatise was arguably the first part of the codex to be completed, before the *Urjūza* was appended to it with its illuminated colophon, and before both works were endowed with chrysographic title pages. Nevertheless, the use of gilt in the illustrations of the *Kitāb* was clearly planned from the beginning. That is demonstrated by the explanations given by the copyist himself, in order to facilitate the interpretation of certain drawings. At the end of the chapter on Ursa Minor and immediately before its visual rendition (fol. 8^{v}), for instance, the copyists seamlessly added the following sentence to al-Ṣūfī's text:

> المنقوطة بالذهب المعلمة بالسواد في الصورتين جميعا هي من الصورة والمنقوطة بالحمرة المعلمة باللازورد هي الخارجة عن الصورة والمنقوطة باللازورد بغير علامة هي التي لم يذكرها بطلميوس.
>
> The stars marked with gold dots and numbered in black (*al-manqūṭa bi-l-dhahab wa-l-muʿallama bi-l-sawād*) in both images belong to the constellation; the stars marked with red dots and numbered in blue (*bi-l-lāzaward*) lie outside the constellation; and those marked with blue dots without numbers are those that Ptolemy did not mention.[7]

These legends are largely omitted from the latter chapters, by which point the reader is supposed to have become familiar with the colour code. This ingenious system noticeably improves on earlier and contemporary practices of marking stars in al-Ṣūfī manuscripts, which never include the colour blue. Whether devised by the copyist (who was probably also the draughtsman) or derived from the exemplar, this tripartite colour code speaks to the unusually high degree of integration between text and image in the Vatican al-Ṣūfī. In particular, the stars and asterism marked in lapis blue throughout the manuscript – those that 'Ptolemy did not mention' – immediately draw the reader's attention to the alternative cosmological views of pre-Islamic Arabia. Although al-Ṣūfī's treatise was certainly 'instrumental in displacing the traditional Bedouin constellation imagery and replacing it with the Greek/Ptolemaic system which ultimately came to dominate all astronomy',[8] BAV Rossiano 1033 is significantly preoccupied with highlighting Bedouin star formations within and around the Ptolemaic constellations, wherever possible.

7 All translations from the Arabic, unless stated otherwise, are by the author.

8 Savage-Smith 2013, 153.



Fig. 3a: Illustrations of Cepheus. BAV Rossiano 1033, fol. 14ᵛ. Photograph © Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana.

That can be seen, for instance, in the illustration of Cepheus (Fig. 3a). The constellation is depicted as a bearded man in motion, wearing a short tunic and pointed headgear, defined by al-Ṣūfī as a *qalansuwa*, the tall hat in the shape of a sugarloaf used by the Abbasid caliphs and their viziers.[9] This image differs noticeably from those drawn in contemporary Iraq and Iran, and its low conical mitre resembling a helmet might reflect a Mediterranean or even Maghribī iconographic type, as it evokes the hat worn by Cepheus in some classical Roman globes and medieval Aratean manuscripts.[10] Although possibly inspired by Latinate representations, the hand that drew the Vatican Cepheus also cared to add, in lapis blue, two groups of stars specific to the Arabic-Bedouin tradition: *al-qidr* ('the cooking pot') near the figure's right forearm, and *kalb al-rāʿī* ('the shepherd's dog') between the figure's knees, near four other unnamed stars on his left thigh.[11] The latter name is explained by the fact that the Arabs called Cepheus's left-knee star *al-rāʿī* ('the shepherd'). These non-Ptolemaic asterisms are discussed in al-Ṣūfī's text and shown in the illustrations of other contemporary manuscripts of the *Kitāb*, but nowhere quite so neatly as in the Vatican codex.

3 Picturing the constellations in the medieval Maghrib

The only scholar to have succinctly compared the drawings of BAV Rossiano 1033 with those found in the other surviving medieval copies of the same work is Moya Carey, in her unpublished doctoral thesis.[12] According to Carey, the Vatican al-Ṣūfī features more 'classical' (i.e. Latinate) versions of some constellations when compared to Eastern manuscripts produced in Baghdad, Mardin, Mosul and Maragheh between the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. A compelling example is the iconography of Delphinus, depicted in the Islamic East as a composite animal with the body of

9 Dozy 1881, vol. 2, 401.

10 <https://www.thesaxlproject.com/assets/Uploads/00-Cepheus-master-1a-Mar-2017-.pdf> (accessed on 5 September 2024); see also Nicolle 1988, vol. 1, 234. David Nicolle interprets Cepheus's headgear as a 'conical helmet of almost European form which has an extended neckguard', and he claims that this and other military features of the illustrations 'almost certainly reflect actual late twelfth- and thirteenth-century Moroccan military equipment'.

11 Left and right are always defined with respect to the constellation as it appears in the sky, not on a globe. Note that the text does not speak of 'knees' but of 'legs' (*rijl*). It was up to the illustrators to decide where to place the stars (on Cepheus's feet, calves, knees …).

12 Carey 2001, vol. 1, 159–160.

a fish and the head of a lion (or, in one case, a simurgh), while in the Vatican al-Ṣūfī, it is simply represented as a fish, in line with the Aratean tradition.[13] The same naturalistic rendition of Delphinus is found in the Paris al-Ṣūfī manuscript, as well as on two celestial globes produced in Valencia at the end of the eleventh century.[14] These four sources – the two al-Ṣūfī manuscripts and the two Valencian globes – constitute what Carey called 'the Maghrebi group' of Islamic constellation iconography. However, while it is certainly possible that the Maghrib developed distinctive ways of depicting the stars due to 'its geographical distance from a "mainstream" of Islamic constellation iconography', the evidence in this regard is somewhat inconsistent. The same picture can vary considerably across the four artefacts: for example, Cepheus wears a *qalansuwa* in the Vatican al-Ṣūfī but a turban in the Paris al-Ṣūfī (Fig. 3b), and on the two Valencian globes he does not have any headgear at all (in fact, he is completely naked). Such discrepancies reveal two important problems that Islamic art historians should bear in mind when trying to classify celestial imagery into different iconographic traditions.

The first concerns the nature of al-Ṣūfī's treatise and the relation between its many extant manuscripts. As has already been mentioned, the *Kitāb* was conceived as an illustrated atlas since it first came out of al-Ṣūfī's pen in Shiraz, in 964. However, the earliest manuscript known to us dates from 161 years later: it was transcribed in Baghdad, in 1125.[15] By that time, we should imagine numerous copies (and copies of copies) of the *Kitāb* circulating throughout the Islamic world, illustrated in ways that had probably already departed noticeably from the original drawings by al-Ṣūfī, according to transmission patterns that are impossible to reconstruct. We do not know exactly when the *Kitāb* became known in al-Andalus and the Maghrib, but that probably had already happened in the eleventh century.[16] The circulation of al-Ṣūfī's

13 <https://www.thesaxlproject.com/assets/Uploads/00-Delphinus-master-8-July-20172017.pdf> (accessed on 5 September 2024).

14 The two metal globes are in Florence, Museo Galileo, 2712 (dated 1080 or 1085), and Paris, BnF, Département des Cartes et Plans, GE A-325 (undated, but attributable to the same maker as the Florence globe): see Savage-Smith 1985, 217, 236.

15 See above, n. 2. Emilie Savage-Smith has convincingly suggested that the colophon of Oxford, Bodleian Library, Marsh 144, may not be contemporary with the main text and its illustrations, therefore, its date (1009–1010) cannot be considered reliable: see Savage-Smith 2013, 147–152.

16 It is worth mentioning here an Andalusī copy of the *Almagest* dated 1085, today in Tunis, Bibliothèque nationale de Tunisie, 7116, on which see Bellver 2021. The notes and colophon of this manuscript state that it was transcribed from a codex kept in an important library in Valencia, which had been collated with a copy of the *Almagest* owned by an Eastern scholar of astronomy (a certain Abū al-Qāsim al-Munajjim), which, in turn, had been copied from a manuscript owned by ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Ṣūfī. This suggests two things: firstly, that al-Ṣūfī was known in al-Andalus before 1085; secondly, that between the death of al-Ṣūfī in 986 and 1085, the transmission chain of

treatise in the medieval Islamic West is attested only indirectly: at least one copy – probably sourced in Toledo – must have been available to the translators of Alfonso X of Castile (r. 1252–1284) for them to base on it the text and drawings of the first chapter of the *Libros del saber de astrología*, as well as some of the drawings in the *Lapidario*.[17] There is also evidence of a Latin adaptation of the *Kitāb*, possibly carried out in Sicily, between the end of the twelfth and the beginning of the thirteenth century.[18] Then, of course, we have the two surviving Maghribī copies of the work, but since the earliest one dates from 1224, its illustrations may well reflect a late stage in the Maghribī iconographic tradition, always assuming that they were copied from a Maghribī exemplar.



Fig. 3b: Illustration of Cepheus. BnF arabe 2488, fol. 19ᵛ. Photograph © Bibliothèque nationale de France.

a work such as the *Almagest* could comprise up to four links of successive copies. It is probable that al-Ṣūfī's *Kitāb* was transmitted according to a similar pattern. In fact, the 1125 manuscript of the *Kitāb* today in Doha was transcribed from a copy dated 1036, which, in turn, was transcribed from a copy that belonged to a pupil of al-Ṣūfī's, who checked it against his teacher.

17 Comes 1990; Fernández Fernández 2019.

18 Kunitzsch 1986, 74.

When considering the constellations depicted in any manuscript of the *Kitāb*, it is certainly useful to distinguish between essential iconographic features that are mentioned by al-Ṣūfī in relation to the stars' positions (such as Cepheus's *qalansuwa*), and features that are not specified in the text (such as the aspect of Delphinus's head). The latter were more liable to variations dictated by the artists' inclinations and the impact of other iconographic models. However, some striking variations are also found in the former. Despite the several references to the stars on Boötes's staff (*ʿaṣā*) in the text, for instance, the two drawings of Boötes in the Vatican al-Ṣūfī do not include this attribute (Fig. 4). Was it a conscious choice, or an omission dictated by negligence? Similarly, Virgo's wings are an essential feature of the constellation as described in the *Kitāb*, but in our manuscript, Virgo is represented as a wingless woman, with the stars normally positioned on her wings distributed instead across her shoulders, arms and lap (Fig. 5). Wings were also omitted from the drawings of the Paris al-Ṣūfī, but this absence cannot be considered a Maghribī peculiarity: in contemporary manuscripts from the Islamic East, Virgo is also occasionally depicted wingless.[19] This fact has been interpreted as a sign that some illustrators were not themselves astronomers, but other explanations could be proposed: perhaps the scribe and artist of the Vatican al-Ṣūfī was bothered by space constraints, or maybe the exemplar he was copying already featured a wingless Virgo, and he did not dare alter its iconography so drastically. Ultimately, it should be borne in mind that the *Kitāb* is not a treatise with a single-minded purpose: readers interested in the technicalities of each star's position and magnitude would have mainly consulted its co-ordinate tables, while its figures served as artistic approximations and visualisations of something that is ultimately invisible. Their presence, combined with al-Ṣūfī's discursive parts on star nomenclature and lore, is what made the work also popular with armchair astronomers, scholars of other disciplines and wealthy gentlemen.[20] Its prized copies were meant to educate but also entertain with their fanciful illustrations, often enhanced with ornamental details and distinct characters – bellicose, sensual, eerie, grotesque – imparted by the hand who drew them.

19 A wingless Virgo can be seen, for instance, in a manuscript produced in Mayyafariqin in 1131 (Istanbul, Topkapi Palace Library, A. 3493), but also in BnF arabe 2489 (1266–1267), and in Oxford, Bodleian Library, Marsh 144 (probably late twelfth century).

20 Savage-Smith 2013, 153.



Fig. 4: Illustrations of Boötes. BAV Rossiano 1033, fol. 16ᵛ. Photograph © Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana.

The second iconographic problem concerns the relationship between the illustrations of al-Ṣūfī manuscripts, the images engraved on celestial globes, and other kinds of astrological and mythological imagery from the broader visual culture. Some medieval Islamic globes bear inscriptions mentioning that the stars engraved on them were placed according to the information contained in al-Ṣūfī's *Kitāb* (save the necessary updates to their longitudes).[21] There is also ample evidence to suggest that the *Kitāb* was used by readers 'who wanted to identify the constellations on their globes, for [...] every wealthy gentleman and prominent ruler would have had a globe as part of his library and collection of treasures'.[22]

21 Savage-Smith 1985, 27, 31–32, 86–87.

22 Savage-Smith 2013, 153.

However, the illustrations of al-Ṣūfī manuscripts can sometimes depart noticeably from those seen on celestial globes, not least because of the difference between a flat and a spherical surface, and between the two techniques of drawing and engraving. Thus, the stark and naked human figures represented on the two Valencian globes from the late eleventh century have little in common with the extravagant and richly clad constellations of the Vatican al-Ṣūfī. Other factors such as different iconographic sources were equally at play: just to give one example, Lyra is depicted as a plant with three leaves in BAV Rossiano 1033, but as a tortoise in both celestial globes. It is probable that the maker(s) of these globes never had the chance to see an illustrated copy of the *Kitāb*. Yet, at least one interesting similarity can be found in the Vatican al-Ṣūfī and the two Valencian globes which hints at the existence of iconographic trends encompassing different media and contexts of production.

It is a well-known fact that, in the Arabic tradition, Perseus is represented holding not the head of Medusa, but of a male demon identified as the ghoul.[23] However, as has already been remarked by Carey, the artist of the Vatican al-Ṣūfī went one step further and depicted the ghoul as a three-faced head with three goatees and four eyes, held by the hair by a particularly combative Perseus wielding a large, gilded sword (Fig. 6a).[24] This three-faced ghoul is unique within the extant corpus of al-Ṣūfī manuscripts, but finds a close parallel in the two Valencian globes, where Perseus holds not one but three heads joined at the back (Fig. 6b). While seemingly unknown in the Islamic pictorial tradition, three-faced demons and allegoric figures are attested in medieval Christian art, and especially in Romanesque sculpture: three instances from around 1200 are carved on the façades of the churches of San Pietro in Tuscania (central Italy), San Martín in Artáiz (Navarre) and on a capital in the cloister of the Tarragona Cathedral.[25] It has been suggested that such three-faced characters may embody medieval reinterpretations of classical triple deities or triune pagan gods such as Hecates, Mercury or Lugus.[26] Be that as it may, we are dealing here with an iconographic eccentricity that appears specific to the western Mediterranean.

23 Wellesz 1959, 9.

24 Carey 2001, vol. 1, 102, 159–160.

25 Sastre Vázquez 1997.

26 <https://www.romanicoennavarra.info/imagen_trifronte_artaiz.pdf> (accessed on 5 September 2024).



Fig. 5: Star catalogue and illustration of Virgo. BAV Rossiano 1033, fol. 57^{r}. Photograph © Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana.



Fig. 6a: Illustrations of Perseus. BAV Rossiano 1033, fol. 25ʳ. Photograph © Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana.



Fig. 6b: Perseus on a celestial globe made in Valencia, in 1080 or 1085. Florence, Museo Galileo, 2712. © Museo Galileo.

The sword of Perseus is a classic case of an accessory iconographic convention: since it does not include any stars, it is not mentioned in al-Ṣūfī's treatise, but there is not a single manuscript of the *Kitāb* that does not feature it as part of its illustrations. That can be partly explained by considering that, in the medieval Islamic world, the image of a swordsman holding a severed head was particularly rich in meaning, being equally associated with the warrior planet Mars (*al-mirrīkh*).[27] This iconographic rendition of Mars is attested in Greater Syria and Iraq from at least the twelfth century, but disappointingly not in the Maghrib or al-Andalus. However, its prophylactic and apotropaic properties would have expedited its diffusion through texts, and possibly also images, in both Muslim and Christian Iberia. Thus, in the Andalusī treatise of celestial magic *Ghāyat al-ḥakīm* ('The Goal of the Wise'), attributable to Maslama b. Qāsim al-Qurṭubī (d. 964), Mars is described as having 'the aspect of a man riding a lion, holding in his right hand

27 Carboni 1997, 17; Carey 2001, vol. 1, 101–102; Caiozzo 2003; Caiozzo 2011, 66.

a sword and in his left hand the head of a man; his clothes are iron and silk'.[28] According to the same work, if this image is carved on a magnetic stone at a particular hour when Mars is in his Aries house, such amulet would work wonders for good and evil, but especially evil. Also,

> if the image of a standing, armoured man is engraved on one of the stones of Mars, he being girt with two swords, one of them drawn in his right hand, and with the head of a man in his left hand, at his hour, [when Mars is] in his house, such drawing causes its bearer to project awe and might upon everyone who sees him or associates with him. I have seen this drawing with my own eyes, on a carnelian set in the ring of one of the people who shared with me this method.[29]

Just like al-Ṣūfī's star atlas, the *Ghāyat al-ḥakīm* was translated into Castilian by command of Alfonso X, and it enjoyed an immense success in late medieval Europe.[30] It is probable that such planetary associations would have been familiar to the medieval readers of al-Ṣūfī's treatise, and perhaps to the very artist responsible for the Vatican manuscript.

Seen in this light, a wingless Virgo does not appear particularly problematic, because its iconographic treatment outside strictly astronomical contexts did not entail wings: the *Ghāyat al-ḥakīm* does not mention them, nor were they ever depicted in thirteenth-century Islamic metalwork and ceramics featuring zodiacal imagery.[31] In fact, in these other contexts the emphasis was put on the ear of wheat (*al-sunbula*) held by Virgo, the traditional name of its brightest star (Spica), while the anthropomorphic element was reduced to a non-gendered figure, a masculine one, or a male and female couple symbolising the maiden with Mercury, Virgo's planetary lord.[32] It is perhaps worth remembering that Virgo was considered the tutelary astral sign of Umayyad Córdoba, and that a statue associated with her was placed on the city's Bāb al-Qanṭara ('Gate of the Bridge'), also known as Bāb al-Ṣūra ('Gate of the Effigy').[33] In the chronicle of Ibn ʿIdhārī al-Marrākushī (early fourteenth century) we find the following entry for the year 397 (1006/1007 CE):

28 *Kitāb ghāyat al-ḥakīm*, ed. Ritter 1967, 111. On the attribution of this work to Maslama b. Qāsim al-Qurṭubī, see Fierro 1996.

29 *Kitāb ghāyat al-ḥakīm*, ed. Ritter 1967, 123. This passage is discussed and translated in Graham 2020, 17.

30 *Picatrix*, ed. and tr. Attrell and Porreca 2019, 3–5.

31 See, for instance, Hartner 1973–1974, 116; Fehérvári 1973, 92, n. 12.

32 Carboni 1997, 35.

33 De Santiago Simón 1969–1970.

> The astral conjunction occurred in Leo in this year, when the seven planets approached each other, and then it reached *al-sunbula*, which is Virgo (*al-ʿadhrāʾ*), the mistress of Córdoba, whose effigy was placed by the wise men of antiquity on the southern gate of the city, which is Bāb al-Qanṭara. Some claimed that Saturn was in the highest position, presaging the ruin of the [Umayyad] dynasty. The astrologers became very vocal, warning the oblivious population of terrible things to come.[34]

The original identity of this lost statue is unknown: it could have been either a Roman goddess or a Visigothic effigy of the Virgin Mary.[35] A similar statue was placed on the Bāb al-Ṣūra of the palatial city of Madīnat al-Zahrāʾ, 5 km to the north-west of Córdoba, in the mid tenth century, and a later source considers it a portrait of one of the caliph's concubines, al-Zahrāʾ, after whom the city was allegedly named.[36] The veracity of this account is questionable, and several scholars have argued that the statue (and the city as a whole) could have been associated with *al-zuhara*, namely the auspicious planet Venus who, according to the twelfth-century historian Ibn Ghālib, governed al-Andalus and endowed its inhabitants with a good temperament.[37] The semiotic and iconographic conflation of Virgo with Venus, similar to that of Perseus with Mars, should be taken into account when studying BAV Rossiano 1033, since its context of production must have been deeply influenced by the Andalusī tradition of picturing the sky and conceptualising cosmic forces.

But the Vatican al-Ṣūfī is also a manuscript where the personal style and preferences of the artist played a significant role. That can be seen, for instance, in the way Andromeda is depicted, with the Bedouin constellations of two fish drawn outside the main figure, and not overlapping it as described in the text (Fig. 7a). The stars forming the outline of the two fish are correctly positioned on Andromeda's chest, legs and lap, but the artist seems to have consciously sacrificed astronomical accuracy for compositional clarity, shrinking the two animals and positioning them below Andromeda's left arm and right foot. This is another unique instance within the extant corpus of al-Ṣūfī manuscripts, including the Paris one, whose drawing was clearly based on a different model (Fig. 7b). An-

34 Ibn ʿIdhārī, *al-Bayān al-mughrib*, ed. Maʿrūf and ʿAwwād 2013, vol. 2, 305. A similar statue was placed above of one of the gates of Pechina (Almería), in imitation of the Bāb al-Qanṭara in Córdoba: see al-Ḥimyarī, *al-Rawḍ al-miʿṭār*, ed. ʿAbbās 1975, 79. On the astral conjunction of 1007 and its symbolic meaning, see Samsó 2020, 160–162.

35 De Santiago Simón 1969–1970, and Calvo Capilla 2014, 15–16, argue in favour of a pagan goddess, while Ocaña Jiménez 1982 believes it to have been a statue of the Virgin Mary, as did Évariste Lévi-Provençal before him.

36 Al-Maqqarī, *Nafḥ al-ṭīb*, ed. ʿAbbās 1968, vol. 1, 523–524.

37 Al-Maqqarī, *Nafḥ al-ṭīb*, ed. ʿAbbās 1968, vol. 3, 150. On Venus (*al-zuhara*) as a possible eponym of Madīnat al-Zahrāʾ, see Acién Almansa 1995, 189–190, and Fairchild Ruggles 2004, 83–84.

dromeda is also depicted with the two fish across her chest and legs in the Alfonsine *Lapidario*, indicating that the conventional iconography for this constellation did circulate in thirteenth-century Iberia (Fig. 7c). As for the precious diadem she wears in the Vatican al-Ṣūfī, as well as the gilded bands on her collar and sleeves, they adhere to the same pictorial conventions for representing luxury and high status as those followed in the illustrated love story of Bayāḍ and Riyāḍ (Fig. 8), preserved in a roughly contemporary Maghribī codex also in the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana.[38] The physiognomy and hairstyle of some female figures (such as Virgo) in the Vatican al-Ṣūfī and the ladies portrayed in the Bayāḍ and Riyāḍ manuscript are equally comparable.

These stylistic parallels are hardly surprising, and admittedly not very useful for pinning down the specific models behind the iconographic trends and departures represented in the Vatican al-Ṣūfī. Because of their idiosyncratic postures, distinctive attributes and diagrammatic nature, the illustrations of al-Ṣūfī's *Kitāb* fall into a category of their own, and can be related only loosely to the scenes and characters of the so-called princely cycle, the ubiquitous figural language of medieval Islamic art.[39] If, for instance, the image of two wrestlers, fronted gentlemen or seated cup-bearers was ever supposed to represent Gemini in a carved ivory casket from tenth-century Córdoba, or in the twelfth-century painted ceilings of the Cappella Palatina in Palermo, then their model could not have been al-Ṣūfī's *Kitāb*, where Gemini are always drawn standing, facing the same direction, with their inner arms linked and their outer arms raised.[40] On the other hand, zoomorphic constellations, such as Aquila, Leo or Lepus, are depicted in the Vatican al-Ṣūfī according to conventions so widespread across the medieval Mediterranean as to be indistinguishable from the eagles, lions and hares found in the broader visual culture of the period. In a recent article, Sonja Brentjes divided the extant corpus of al-Ṣūfī illustrations into four categories, based on their treatment of male bodily features: 'Mediterranean', 'western Asian', 'South Asian' and 'East Asian'.[41] BAV Rossiano 1033 is not explicitly mentioned in the article, but while only tangential comparisons with other iconographic sources may be possible, its illustrations should undoubtedly be placed at the core of the Mediterranean tradition identified by Brentjes.

38 Vatican City, BAV, Vat. ar. 368. For a discussion, edition, Italian translation, and copious illustrations of this manuscript, see D'Ottone 2013.

39 The most complete catalogue of the characters, scenes, and themes in the Islamic princely cycle is found in Grube and Johns 2005.

40 Grube and Johns 2005, 161; Anderson 2015, 122.

41 Brentjes 2021, 74.



Fig. 7a: Illustration of Andromeda with the two fish. BAV Rossiano 1033, fol. 37ᵛ. Photograph © Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana.



Fig. 7b: Illustration of Andromeda with the two fish. BnF arabe 2488, fol. 59ᵛ. Photograph © Bibliothèque nationale de France.



Fig. 7c: Illustration of Andromeda with the two fish, from the *Lapidario* of Alfonso X, *c.* 1270. Real Biblioteca del Monasterio de San Lorenzo de El Escorial, h-I-15, fol. 2ᵛ. Photograph © Patrimonio Nacional.



Fig. 8: Illustration from the *Ḥadīth Bayāḍ wa-Riyāḍ*, early thirteenth century. BAV Vat. ar. 368, fol. 13ʳ. Photograph © Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana.

One last question to be addressed here concerns the relationship between the Vatican and Paris manuscripts. Although copied in the same region and probably less than a century apart, most of their illustrations only bear a distant resemblance, indicating significant discrepancies between the models available to the two artists. If, for example, we compare the depiction of Hercules in both manuscripts, we would hardly see any similarities between the rubbery and schematic image of a youth in the Paris al-Ṣūfī and the richly clad old man portrayed in the Vatican al-Ṣūfī (Figs 9a–b). The latter was endowed with a dimension of sidereal solemnity that is completely missing from the former. His striped and elegantly draped tunic, so different from the garments worn by the other constellations,

may have been derived from the lion's hide carried by Hercules in some Aratean manuscripts from medieval Europe.[42] Both illustrations show Hercules without the distinctive club or sickle in his right hand, but this accessory is not mentioned in the text, and it is also missing from at least one Eastern manuscript, the codex produced in Baghdad in 1125.[43] The extended index of Hercules's left hand in the Vatican al-Ṣūfī is a unique feature, and a potentially significant one: it resonates with several medieval descriptions of the statue topping the ancient lighthouse of Cádiz, then identified with Hercules and believed to be endowed with supernatural powers.[44] According to the geographer and eyewitness Muḥammad al-Zuhrī (d. before 1161), the statue of Cádiz represented a man stretching his left arm, clenching his fingers in a fist, and pointing his index in the direction of the Strait of Gibraltar.[45] It was allegedly destroyed in 1145/1146, but its memory endured and may well have provided the inspiration for an artist living in thirteenth-century Ceuta. However, al-Zuhrī and other sources also claim that the statue held a staff in its right hand, while Hercules is frustratingly empty-handed in the Vatican al-Ṣūfī.

If the aspect, postures and attributes of most constellations in the Vatican manuscript differ noticeably from the Paris ones, there is, at least, one clear instance of a shared iconographic model: the illustration of Centaurus with Lupus (Figs 10a–b). The two figures are so similar as to be almost perfectly superimposable, which means that the two draughtsmen were probably copying from the same source, or from two sources that shared a common prototype.[46] The enhancements made to the illustration in the Vatican al-Ṣūfī – the gilding of Lupus's ears and Centaurus's belt and headgear, as well as the texturing of his equine body – are indicative of the artist's modus operandi, and they allow us to identify his personal touch elsewhere in the manuscript. It is worth noting that in both the Arabic *Almagest* and al-Ṣūfī's treatise, Lupus is generically named *al-sabuʿ*, 'the predator', and in most medieval copies of the *Kitāb* it was depicted as a lion. The Vatican and Paris al-Ṣūfī are the only manuscripts where Lupus appears as a wolf, a Maghribī specificity also attested in the two

42 <https://www.thesaxlproject.com/assets/Uploads/00-Hercules-Master-2-22-April-2019.pdf> (accessed on 5 September 2024).

43 See above, n. 2.

44 Carracedo Fraga 1991.

45 Al-Zuhrī, '*Kitāb al-djaʿrāfiyya*', ed. Ḥadj-Sadok 1968, 217. Another twelfth-century author that describes the statue of Cádiz as pointing towards a specific direction is Abū Ḥāmid al-Gharnāṭī (d. 1169). See also al-Ḥimyarī, *al-Rawḍ al-miʿṭār*, ed. ʿAbbās 1975, 448.

46 It goes without saying that the copyist of the Paris al-Ṣūfī could not have used the Vatican al-Ṣūfī as a model, since most illustrations in the two manuscripts differ considerably from one another.

Valencian globes.[47] Representations of canids are relatively rare in medieval Islamic art, with the notable exception of two Andalusī caskets datable to the twelfth century, featuring dogs or wolves hunting goats as part of their decoration.[48] Their stylistic affinity with the figures of Lupus, Canis Maior and Canis Minor in the Vatican and Paris manuscripts is evident, and it may reflect an iconographic cross-pollination peculiar to the Islamic West.



Fig. 9a: Illustration of Hercules. BAV Rossiano 1033, fol. 19^{v}. Photograph © Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana.

47 <https://www.thesaxlproject.com/assets/Uploads/00-Centaurus-master-17-Oct-2021.pdf> (accessed on 5 September 2024). Lupus is also represented as a wolf in the Alfonsine *Lapidario*.

48 Madrid, National Archaeological Museum, inv. 51015 and inv. 51944: see Galán y Galindo 2005, vol. 2, 93–96, nos 03013 and 03014; see also Zozaya 2004. As shown by Juan Zozaya, the sketch of a dog was also drawn on the inner face of one of the wooden tablets forming the core of inv. 51944. Zozaya believed this drawing to depict a Sicilian breed of dog, the *cirneco dell'Etna*, and on this sole basis, he attributed the casket to Sicily.



Fig. 9b: Illustration of Hercules. BnF arabe 2488, fol. 27ᵛ. Photograph © Bibliothèque nationale de France.



Fig. 10a: Illustration of Centaurus with Lupus. BAV Rossiano 1033, fol. 98ʳ. Photograph © Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana.



Fig. 10b: Illustration of Centaurus with Lupus. BnF arabe 2488, fol. 142ᵛ. Photograph © Bibliothèque nationale de France.

4 A scholar's library in medieval Ceuta

The city of Ceuta, a strategic seaport and entrepôt on the Strait of Gibraltar, was also an important cultural hub in the western Maghrib, where manuscripts of all genres were copied and circulated, and astronomy was studied and practiced: suffice it to mention here the treatise on the astrolabe authored by Qāsim Ibn al-Shāṭṭ (1246–1323), a denizen of Ceuta.[49] The local historian Muḥammad b. Qāsim al-Anṣārī (d. 1422) reports that, already in the eleventh century, the city boasted several libraries (*khazāʾin ʿilmiyya*) assembled by families of notables and scholars in their own homes.[50] One of them belonged to the jurist Abū ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Ibn al-ʿAjūz (d. *c*. 1030), who had travelled extensively to Kairouan (in present-day Tunisia) and al-Andalus in quest of knowledge. In the twelfth century, important collections of manuscripts were owned by the local judge Ibn al-Daqqāq al-Tamīmī (d. 1110), who would dispense teaching in his own mosque, and by his pupil, the famous *qāḍī* ʿIyāḍ (d. 1149), who was also a prolific copyist known for his fine handwriting.[51] Among the most impressive manuscripts that survive from medieval Ceuta is a lavishly illuminated Qur'an, transcribed by a certain Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. ʿAlī b. Shuʿayb al-Anṣārī in 1191.[52] If one compares its final page (Fig. 11) with that of BAV Rossiano 1033, completed thirty-three years later (Fig. 1), it is evident that they both employ the very same decorative vocabulary: from the glittering braiding of the colophons' frames, similarly outlined in lapis blue, to the foliated marginal vignettes and the gilded trefoils enhanced with blue and red dots used as verse markers and space fillers.

49 Samsó 2020, 404, 409–410. On the society, economy, and cultural life of medieval Ceuta, see Ferhat 1993 and Chérif 1996.

50 Vallvé Bermejo 1962, 415–417; Binebine 1992, 24; Chérif 1996, 176–177.

51 On these scholars, their activity and the manuscript culture of twelfth-century Ceuta, see Bongianino 2022, 202–203, 212, and bibliography.

52 Istanbul, Topkapı Palace Library, R. 27: see Bongianino 2022, 300, 321, 324, and bibliography.



Fig. 11: Final chapters and colophon of an illuminated Qur'an produced in Ceuta, in 1191. Istanbul, Topkapı Palace Library, R. 27, fol. 196ʳ. Photograph © Milli Saraylar Başkanlığı.

The Ceuta Qur'an and the Vatican al-Ṣūfī were produced by skilled book artists trained in the Andalusī style of calligraphy and illumination, and they epitomise the cultural proximity of this part of North Africa to Muslim Iberia – a proximity that reached its zenith precisely in the thirteenth century, with the arrival of

countless refugees fleeing from the Christian conquest of Seville, Córdoba, Valencia, Murcia and Majorca.[53] It is for this reason that the illustrations and codicological features of the Vatican al-Ṣūfī should be considered primarily against the background of Andalusī manuscript culture. Knowledge did not just travel across the strait through the circulation of books: scholars-cum-copyists also travelled, in large numbers, from al-Andalus to Ceuta and vice versa. To take one example, the Ceutan traditionist Muḥammad Ibn Marzūq al-Taghmarī al-Sabtī (d. *c.* 1200) is reported to have studied in Seville, Málaga, Almería and Algeciras, and transcribed numerous books in his meticulous handwriting, which he presumably took back to his hometown at the end of his journeys.[54] The patron and first owner of the Vatican al-Ṣūfī, Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAlī b. Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Ghāfiqī al-Shārrī (1176–1251), was a major player in this milieu of cultural interactions between the two regions.[55]

Al-Shārrī's father and grandfather were both *ḥadīth* transmitters from a prosperous Andalusī family – the Banū Yaḥyā al-Ghāfiqī – who had migrated from Murcia to Ceuta in 1166, looking for a politically more stable environment.[56] Al-Shārrī was born ten years later, in Ceuta. Here, he studied Qur'anic readings and *ḥadīth* initially under his father, then under the most prominent local teachers, some of whom were also Andalusī expatriates. He completed his education in Fez, so that by the 1200s, he was a fully-fledged intellectual, well-versed in Qur'anic studies, prophetic traditions, Islamic jurisprudence, as well as Arabic grammar, rhetoric and belles-lettres. Regrettably, al-Shārrī's biographers do not mention any formal or natural sciences (such as mathematics or medicine) among his fields of expertise, and the Vatican al-Ṣūfī is the only known evidence of his interest in astronomy. What the sources do mention, however, is al-Shārrī's insatiable bibliophilia. Not only was he a prolific copyist, but also an eager book collector: he would travel long distances in order to find rare or precious manuscripts for his library, and he would strive to acquire them whatever their price. Towards the end of his life, he decided to share his vast book collection with all local students and scholars, establishing what al-Anṣārī calls 'the first library

53 Chérif 1996, 153–154.

54 Ibn al-Abbār, *al-Takmila*, ed. Maʿrūf 2011, vol. 2, 381, n. 1731.

55 For a complete biography of Abū al-Ḥasan al-Shārrī, see Liazid Haddu Bakiui and Rodríguez Figueroa 2012.

56 An illuminated Qur'an made to celebrate the birth of al-Shārrī's father Muḥammad in 1143 is today in the Istanbul University Library, A 6755: see Bongianino 2022, 300, 306–307.

endowed for the people of knowledge in the Maghrib'.[57] This institution was part of a *madrasa* founded by al-Shārrī in 1238, which housed all the 'ancient originals and rare works (*al-uṣūl al-ʿatīqa wa-l-muʾallifāt al-gharība*)' that he had amassed over the years.[58] It is most likely that the Vatican al-Ṣūfī was one of the manuscripts eventually endowed by al-Shārrī to his *madrasa*, which continued to function as a prestigious centre of learning even after its founder fell out of favour with the governor of Ceuta and was exiled to Almería in 1244. Seven years later, al-Shārrī died in Málaga, unable to fulfil his desire to see his hometown one last time.

Although we know the name of many young scholars who studied in al-Shārrī's *madrasa* in the second half of the thirteenth century, and even of some of their teachers, the holdings and scope of the *madrasa*'s original library are difficult to reconstruct. Because of its dispersal, we must rely entirely on the few references in the sources, and on the extant manuscripts that mention al-Shārrī as their owner or dedicatee. Besides the Vatican al-Ṣūfī, I have been able to identify seven such manuscripts so far. The first is clearly one of the 'ancient originals' mentioned by al-Anṣārī, a volume of the vast juridical treatise *al-Nawādir wa-l-ziyādāt* ('Rarities and Additions') by Ibn Abī Zayd al-Qayrawānī (922–996), copied in Kairouan in 993 and checked against the author's exemplar.[59] More than two centuries later, al-Shārrī came by this book and inscribed his ownership statement on its title page. The second manuscripts is a volume from the famous *ḥadīth* collection known as *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, an authoritative copy made in 1139 that al-Shārrī acquired and used for teaching a century later.[60] His ex-libris can be seen both on the title page and below the final colophon, written in his own hand. The third manuscript is a commentary on a work of Islamic law authored by an Egyptian

57 Al-Anṣārī, 'Une déscription de Ceuta', ed. Lévi-Provençal 1931, 154: '*Hiya awwal khizāna wuqqifat bi-l-Maghrib ʿalā ahl al-ʿilm*'. For a Spanish translation of the whole passage, see Vallvé Bermejo 1962, 413–417.

58 Al-Anṣārī, 'Une déscription de Ceuta', ed. Lévi-Provençal 1931, 153. On al-Shārrī's *madrasa*, see also Martínez Enamorado 2002, 45–47.

59 Fez, Qarawiyyīn Library, 793/2/2 (*Kitāb al-iqrār*): see al-Fāsī 1979–1989, vol. 2, 434. Two other manuscripts in the Qarawiyyīn Library are said to bear al-Shārrī's ex-libris, but I have, so far, been unable to verify this: see al-Fāsī 1960, 22–23.

60 Turin, Biblioteca Nazionale Universitaria, a. IV. 18: see Bongianino 2022, 202, 219. This manuscript is mentioned by the Ceutan traditionist Ibn Rushayd al-Fihrī (d. 1321), who declares that his teacher 'had studied the *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* under Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAlī al-Shārrī, and he auditioned it from the ancient exemplar of unequalled prestige, the master copy that belonged to the excellent transmitter Abū Bakr Muḥammad Ibn Khayr, which was written in his father's hand': see Ibn Rushayd, *Ifādat al-naṣīḥ*, ed. Ibn al-Khawja 1973, 109.

contemporary of al-Shārrī, a scholar named Abū al-Ḥasan al-Abyarī (1164–1219).[61] The fourth is a multivolume copy of the renowned treatise on Islamic doctrine, devotion and mysticism, *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn* ('The Revival of Religious Sciences'), by the Persian philosopher al-Ghazālī (d. 1111).[62] Al-Shārrī left brief ownership statements on the title pages of all these books. That was probably also the case with the fifth manuscript, a polemic about the correct interpretation of selected Arabic poems from pre-Islamic Arabia, but because the codex is acephalous, all that remains is al-Shārrī's reading note at the end of the text, below the colophon.[63] The work was composed in the first half of the eleventh century by a certain Abū Ḥātim from Xàtiva (near Valencia), and its presence in al-Shārrī's library demonstrates his interest in literary disquisitions of the most rarefied kind.

The remaining two manuscripts are different, in that they were produced specifically for al-Shārrī and include his name in their colophons. One is a volume of the monumental Arabic dictionary compiled by the Andalusī lexicographer Ibn Sīda (1007–1066), copied in 1205 'for the library of the jurist Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAlī, son of Shaykh Abū ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Ghāfiqī al-Shārrī, may God perpetuate his honour and beneficence'.[64] The other is a manual of style and rhetoric aimed at avoiding solecisms in writing and speech, *al-Madkhal ilā taqwīm al-lisān* ('Introduction to the Emendation of Language') by the Sevillian grammarian Ibn Hishām al-Lakhmī (d. 1181).[65] The manuscript was copied in 1210, but its rounded and elegant Maghribī script is so similar to that of the *Urjūza* in BAV Rossiano 1033 that it can reasonably be attributed to the same penman, perhaps a professional copyist employed by al-Shārrī (Fig. 12).

61 Rabat, Bibliothèque Nationale du Royaume du Maroc, 338 K (*al-Taḥqīq wa-l-bayān fī sharḥ al-Burhān*). A later ex-libris on the manuscript's title page shows that it soon left Ceuta to enter the library of the emir of Menorca Abū ʿUthmān Saʿīd b. Ḥakam b. ʿUmar b. Ḥakam al-Qurashī (d. 1282).

62 Formerly in the London and Oslo, Schøyen Collection, 5321, various parts were repeatedly auctioned in London, Sotheby's, on 12 October 2005 (*Arts of the Islamic World*, lot 17), 7 October 2015 (*Arts of the Islamic World*, lot 211), and 27 October 2020 (*Arts of the Islamic World & India including Fine Rugs and Carpets*, lot 401). This manuscript was endowed to the library of the Qarawiyyīn Mosque, Fez, by the Marinid sultan Abū ʿInān in 1350.

63 Real Biblioteca del Monasterio de San Lorenzo de El Escorial, Árabe 296. The work is titled *al-Tanbīh ʿalā al-mughālaṭa wa-l-tamwīh wa-iqāmat al-mamāl ʿan ṭarīqat al-iʿtidhāl bi-l-Burhān al-kāfī wa-l-bayān al-shāfī*. On the correct identification of this work, see Martínez Antuña 1941, 271–276.

64 Tunis, Bibliothèque nationale de Tunisie, 18492. The work is titled *al-Muḥkam wa-l-muḥīṭ al-aʿẓam*, of which this is the eighth and last volume.

65 Real Biblioteca del Monasterio de San Lorenzo de El Escorial, Árabe 99. The title page of the manuscript gives the name of al-Shārrī as the official transmitter of the work.

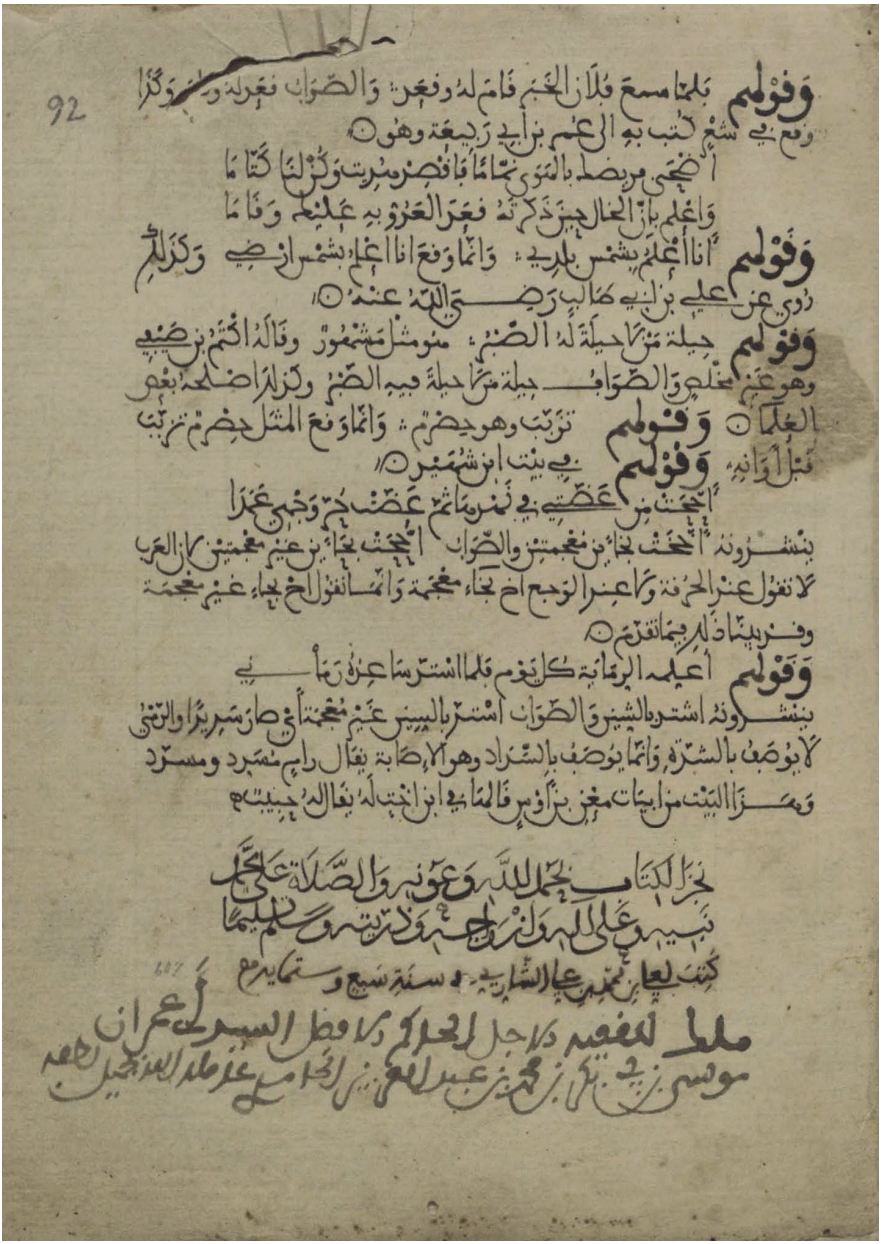


Fig. 12: Ibn Hishām al-Lakhmī, *al-Madkhal ilā taqwīm al-lisān*, final page and colophon with a dedication to al-Shārrī. Real Biblioteca del Monasterio de San Lorenzo de El Escorial, Árabe 99, fol. 92ʳ. Photograph © Patrimonio Nacional.

The extant books from al-Shārrī's library paint the picture of a well-rounded intellectual concerned not only with *ḥadīth* or jurisprudence, but also with spirituality, lexicography, belles-lettres, pre-Islamic poetry and, of course, astronomy. Similar to most of the Andalusī and Maghribī notables of his time, al-Shārrī was proud of his Arab lineage and profoundly engaged with the history of the Arabic language and its literary tradition: for a man of his background and social status, eloquence and general erudition were as necessary as doctrinal competence and legal expertise. Al-Shārrī seems to have pursued in equal measure the two qualities that, according to Thomas Bauer, defined the Muslim scholars of the late medieval period: piety and refinement.[66] These values probably informed the teaching activities that took place in his *madrasa*, just like they dictated what books he acquired and commissioned for his library. As an illustrated and illuminated codex, the Vatican al-Ṣūfī must have been among the library's treasures; out of its surviving manuscripts, it is undoubtedly the most impressive. Thanks to this book, al-Shārrī, his family and his pupils could visualise the constellations as codified in the Graeco-Roman tradition, perhaps comparing them with the engravings of a celestial globe, and verifying them through their personal observations with an astrolabe. But they could also learn in the *Kitāb* how their own ancestors, the Arabs of pre-Islamic times, grouped the stars and what they called them, according to an altogether different tradition. These evocative Bedouin names and their lore would have been studied in depth, with the help of advanced dictionaries such as Ibn Sīda's, and of commentaries on pre-Islamic poetry such as Abū Ḥātim's. Then, they would have been used to make erudite references, improvise verses and captivate listeners during social gatherings of various kinds, held perhaps under a starry sky.

Abbreviations

BAV = Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana.
BnF = Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France.

66 Bauer 2021, 151–169.

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