

The Earliest Manuscripts of Kairouan (9th-11th Centuries): New Approaches for a More Accurate Dating

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Abstract

Based on the close examination of 32 manuscripts produced in Kairouan between the 9th and the 11th centuries, this article reassesses the content and function of their paratext and interrogates some diagnostic features of their scripts and page layout. In the first part, we demonstrate that some dated notes can refer to auditions and readings that occurred decades before the production of the manuscripts on which they appear, and therefore cannot be used as *termini ante quem* for dating them. In the second part, we discuss some key palaeographic parameters for a better understanding of Ifrīqī scripts, their origin, and their development, with a view to establishing a set of reliable criteria for a more accurate dating and contextualisation of this little-known material.

Keywords

Kairouan, Arabic manuscripts, Audition certificates, Reading certificates, *Muqābala*, Colophons, Arabic palaeography, Ifrīqī scripts, Mālikī law, Ḥanafī law

Résumé

Établi sur l'examen minutieux de 32 manuscrits produits à Kairouan entre le IX^e et le XI^e siècle, cet article réévalue le contenu et la fonction de leur paratexte et interroge certaines caractéristiques diagnostiques de leurs écritures et de leur mise en page. Dans la première partie, nous montrons que certaines notes datées peuvent se référer à des auditions et des lectures qui ont eu lieu des décennies avant la production des manuscrits sur lesquels elles apparaissent, et ne peuvent donc pas être utilisées comme *termini ante quem* pour les dater. Dans la deuxième partie, nous discutons de certains paramètres paléographiques clés afin d'envisager une meilleure compréhension des écritures ifrīqiyennes, de leur origine et de leur développement, en vue d'établir un ensemble de critères fiables pour une datation et une contextualisation plus précises de ce matériel peu connu.

Mots clés

Kairouan, manuscrits arabes, certificats d'audition, certificats de lecture, *Muqābala*, colophons, paléographie arabe, écritures ifrīqiyennes, droit mālikite, droit ḥanafite

Introduction

Although still largely uncatalogued, the collection of manuscripts from the Great Mosque of Kairouan – today kept in the National Laboratory for the Preservation and Conservation of Parchment and Manuscripts in Raqqāda – has been opening up to the scholarly community over the past 60 years, thanks to the important work of philologists and textual historians such as Joseph Schacht, Miklós Murányi, and Jonathan Brockopp.¹ More recently, the laboratory has begun digitising significant parts of its holdings (albeit without allowing free access to the images), while also becoming the focus of the Kairouan Manuscript Project, a network of scholars and heritage management professionals who are contributing to the study, conservation, and promotion of the

1 See, in particular, Joseph Schacht, "On Some Manuscripts in the Libraries of Kairouan and Tunis", *Arabica* 14/3 (1967), p. 225-258; Miklós Murányi, *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Hadīṭ- und Rechtsgelehrsamkeit der Mālikīyya in Nordafrika bis zum 5. JH. D. H.*, Wiesbaden, Harrassowitz, 1997; Jonathan Brockopp, *Muhammad's Heirs: The Rise of Muslim Scholarly Communities, 622-950*, Cambridge University Press, 2017, p. 165-209.

collection.² Through their research, three generations of specialists of Arabic manuscripts and Islamic law – many of whom from Tunisia – have achieved groundbreaking progress in the identification of the literary works preserved in Raqqāda and their transmission history.³ However, little has been done to understand the manuscripts from a palaeographic perspective. The difficulty of accessing the laboratory, which does not currently have a reading room, has so far prevented a comprehensive study of the corpus, and the codicological (rather than textual) significance of the collection remains largely unexplored. The remarks generally made on the script, layout, and material of Qayrawānī manuscripts are as tentative and vague today as they were 60 years ago. Thus, the “old handwriting” first described by Schacht has remained “*ein archaischer kufischer Duktus*” in Murányi’s jargon, an expression mirrored by Brockopp’s elusive category of “North African Kufi”.⁴

Despite the evident lack of interest in the subject, the palaeographic diversity represented in the corpus is considerable and worthy of investigation. Leaving aside the numerous Qur’āns preserved in the Raqqāda collection, which will not be discussed in this article, of particular significance is the coexistence of (at least) two distinct groups of Qayrawānī manuscripts, already attested in the 9th century: those written in formal bookhands, slowly traced and generously spaced, and those jotted down in informal scripts, showing a marked cursiveness. As discussed in the following pages, recognising these two groups

2 The Kairouan Manuscript Project (KMP) is based at the Centre for the Study of Manuscript Cultures, University of Hamburg: <https://www.csmc.uni-hamburg.de/kairouan.html> (last accessed: January 2023).

3 See in particular Ibrāhīm Šabbūh, “Siġill qadīm li-maktabat ġāmi‘ al-Qayrawān”, *Revue de l’Institut des Manuscrits Arabes* 2 (1956), p. 339-372; Muḥammad al-Buhlī al-Nayyāl, *al-Maktaba al-aṭariyya bi-l-Qayrawān: ‘arḍ wa-dalīl*, Tunis, Dār al-ṭaqāfa, 1963; Naġm al-Dīn Hintātī, “Min al-Asadiyya ilā l-Muḥtaliṭa fa-l-Mudawwana”, in *Dirāsāt ḥadāriyya ḥawl al-Qayrawān*, ed. N. Hintātī, Tunis, Ġāmi‘at al-Zaytūna, 2015, p. 39-52. On the legal documents of the Raqqāda collection, see Moez Dridi, “Un contrat d’achat hafsīde d’une résidence d’agrément (*burġ*) dans la région de Kairouan”, in *Campagnes et archéologie rurale au Maghreb et en Méditerranée. Actes du sixième colloque international du Département d’Archéologie (Université de Kairouan)*, ed. J. Ben Nasr, M. Arar, N. Boukhchim, Tunis: Simpact 2017, p. 247-268; *Id.*, “Le contrat de mariage d’une toute jeune fille (*ġāriya*) dans l’Ifriqiya pré-hafsīde”, *Les Cahiers de Tunisie* 70, 222-223 (2019), 313-342. Also relevant is a recently defended PhD dissertation: ‘Afāf al-Ḥannāšī [= Afef Hannachi], *Ḥawāriġ al-nuṣūṣ bi-l-maḥtūṭāt al-mu‘arraḥa bi-l-maktaba al-aṭīqa bi-l-Qayrawān ilā awāsīṭ al-qarn al-ḥāmis al-ḥiġrī: dirāsa kūdikūlūġiyya*, Faculty of Human and Social Sciences, University of Tunis (2021). We thank the anonymous reviewers for bringing to our attention this study, a detailed inventory of 355 manuscripts on which a date was recorded. It should soon be published by the National Library of Tunisia (in Arabic) and by Penn State University Press (in English).

4 Schacht, “On Some Manuscripts”, p. 253, 257; Murányi, *Beiträge*, p. 25, 83, 110; Brockopp, *Muhammad’s Heirs*, p. 179, 201-203.

is essential to our understanding of the manuscripts' functions and the copyists' aims. Similarly, a typical feature first observed by Schacht, "a whole line or part of a line [...] left empty in the middle of each page", has not yet received any attempts at an explanation. In fact, a variety of different approaches to the *mise en page* of Qayrawānī texts has never been properly described, let alone historicised, just like the different kinds of paper and parchment in the corpus have never been examined in any detail.

While this delay is certainly due, in part, to the already mentioned disarray and inaccessibility of the material, it also betrays a streak of scepticism towards the methodological value of palaeography and codicology, eloquently summarised by Brockopp's statement that "paleographic dating is more art than science".⁵ If Murányi's work systematically discounts the possibility of dating and contextualising manuscripts on the mere basis of their physical and aesthetic features, Brockopp repeatedly acknowledges the potential of a palaeographic approach to the material, but he does not seem to consider it necessary for drawing conclusions on the texts he analyses.⁶

Admittedly, the efficacy of a palaeographic approach to the corpus has never been tested: other methods have traditionally been privileged (textual criticism, prosopography, history of scholarship), and it would be unwise for anyone to propose dates on the basis of palaeographic parameters that have not yet been securely established. The groundwork should first be laid by identifying some diagnostic features of script and layout in those manuscripts that can be securely dated thanks to the information contained in their paratext: colophons, audition and reading notes, and other marginalia. A necessary condition, however, is to be able to interpret this information correctly. As it happens, the secondary literature on, and the available editions of, Qayrawānī manuscripts are blemished by significant misunderstandings about the content and function of their paratext, and the role of the scholars mentioned therein. This has inevitably led to some erroneous assumptions about the date and context of production of certain manuscripts.

In this article, we do not mean to present newly discovered texts in the Raqqāda collection, but to discuss and reassess manuscripts already identified by specialists such as Murányi and Brockopp.⁷ Some of the dates proposed

⁵ Brockopp, *Muhammad's Heirs*, p. 106.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 168, 188. More recently, Brockopp has reconsidered the advantages of palaeography: see Jonathan Brockopp, "Early Mālikī Manuscripts: A Retrospective", *Asiatischen Studien - Études Asiatiques* 78/1 (2024), p. 3-17: 13.

⁷ The manuscripts in Raqqāda are arranged in folders (*milaff*), each comprising different serial numbers (*rutbī*). In this article, we shall refer to each manuscript as ms. Raqqāda *milaff-rutbī*. For instance, ms. Raqqāda 4-1651 can be found in folder 4, under the serial number 1651.

for these manuscripts will be questioned, and a palaeographic evaluation of the material will be attempted on the basis of the latest developments in the field. The aim of this article is twofold: firstly, we shall redress some misunderstandings by demonstrating that certain dated notes can refer to auditions and readings that occurred decades before the production of the manuscripts on which they appear, and therefore cannot be used as *termini ante quem* for dating them. Secondly, we shall present some key palaeographic parameters and diagnostic features that we have observed across a representative sample of Qayrawānī manuscripts, some of which held in libraries outside Tunisia, in order to establish a series of basic criteria that we hope will provide useful points of reference for future research.

1 Understanding the Paratext

In conformity with scholarly practices attested throughout the medieval Islamic world, the manuscripts of Kairouan are replete with paratextual elements that record the historical transmission of the works they contain: title pages with added transmission chains (*isnād* pl. *asānīd*) and specifications of the recension (*riwāya* pl. *riwāyāt*), ownership statements (*tamlīk* pl. *tamlīkāt*), final colophons (*ḥātima* pl. *ḥawātim*) occasionally including dates and names, notes recording auditions (*samāʿ* pl. *samāʿāt*), readings (*qirʾa* pl. *qirʾāt*), and collations (*muqābala* pl. *muqābalāt*), sometimes also dated and signed. In the realm of Islamic literature, the paratext – which, as Gérard Genette put it, “ensures the presence of the texts in the world”⁸ – is where the oral transmission of a given work is recorded and presented to the reader.⁹ However, the study of these documents cannot be approached on the basis of preconceived notions about their nature and function. One needs to bear in mind that the above-mentioned types are fluid concepts, often difficult to demarcate: for instance, they can appear in combination with one another, and their meaning can vary considerably according to their exact wording and location within the manuscripts. It is also important not to assume that observations made about the paratext of Islamic manuscripts from other periods and contexts should necessarily retain their validity when applied to the Qayrawānī corpus. The thriving scholarly milieu of Ifrīqiya between the 9th and the 11th centuries was based on a social understanding of the processes of teaching and learning

8 Gérard Genette, *Seuils*, Paris, Seuil, 1987, p. 8.

9 Jacqueline Sublet, “Dans les marges du manuscrit arabe : l'espace de la transmission orale”, in *Le Livre au Moyen Âge*, ed. J. Glénisson, L. Holz, Paris, Presse du CNRS, 1988, p. 111-113.

steeped in local specificities, both cultural and doctrinal, and it deserves to be defined in its own terms, especially with regard to scribal practices.

Let us take as an example the audition notes featured in Qayrawānī manuscripts. Historians and manuscript specialists working on the central Islamic lands have related the appearance of *samāʿ* in the 11th century and their increasing codification from the 12th century onwards with the emergence of madrasas as institutions of formal education, the popularisation of reading practices, and the multiplication of public reading sessions whose date, location, and participants were officially recorded in a quasi-notarial fashion (hence the concept of audition ‘certificates’).¹⁰ However, numerous manuscripts from Kairouan record auditions that took place in the 9th and 10th centuries, at a time when the notion of madrasa did not exist, and only the scholarly elites partook in the study and transmission of works of *fiqh* and *ḥadīth*. Also, the very succinct content of these documents implies a somewhat different function from the conventional notion of *samāʿ* – more constative than performative – and shows the predominance of small and rather informal circles. Some Qayrawānī notes even attest to the transmission of Mālikī knowledge in what seem to be clandestine gatherings, due to the occasional Fatimid persecutions of local Sunnī jurists.¹¹ Finally, the traditional focus on learning and scribal activities in contexts such as late medieval Damascus has led scholars to associate the practices of auditing and reading texts with that of obtaining transmission licenses (*igāza* pl. *igāzāt*), to such an extent that *samāʿ* and *igāza* are sometimes treated as synonymous, and the two notions have become conflated under the label of *igāzat al-samāʿ*.¹² Nevertheless, while audition notes abound in the Qayrawānī corpus from a very early date, the

10 Tilman Seidensticker, “Audience Certificates in Arabic Manuscripts: the Genre and a Case Study”, *Manuscript Cultures* 8 (2015), p. 75-91: 76; Konrad Hirschler, *The Written Word in the Medieval Arabic Lands: A Social and Cultural History of Reading Practices*, Edinburgh University Press, 2012, p. 32-70; Adam Gacek, *Arabic Manuscripts: A Vademecum for Readers*, Leiden/Boston, Brill, 2009, p. 52-55; Jean-Charles Ducène, “Certificats de transmission, de lecture et d’audition : exemples tirés d’un ms. du *K. Ḡamāl al-Qurrāʾ wa Kamāl al-Iqrāʾ* de ‘Alam al-Dīn al-Ṣaḥāwī”, *Arabica* 53/2 (2006), p. 281-290: 281-282; François Déroche et al., *Islamic Codicology: An Introduction to the Study of Manuscripts in Arabic Scripts*, London, Al-Furqān Islamic Heritage Foundation, 2005, p. 332-334.

11 Murányi, *Beiträge*, p. 107. In particular, Murányi refers to ms. Raqqāda 10-1648, discussed below.

12 See, for instance, Gacek, *Arabic Manuscripts*, p. 51-52; Jan Just Witkam, “The Human Element Between Text and Reader: The *Ijāza* in Arabic Manuscripts”, in *The Codicology of Islamic Manuscripts: Proceedings of the Second Conference of al-Furqān Islamic Heritage Foundation*, ed. Y. Dutton, London, Al-Furqān Islamic Heritage Foundation, 1995, p. 123-136.

verb *ağāza* or the noun *igāza* are virtually never found in the manuscripts' paratext, suggesting that *samā'āt* (and *qirā'āt*) were not necessarily recorded to officialise a student's attainment of a transmission license.¹³ For all these reasons, the simple identification of certain Qayrawānī notes as 'audition certificates' (*Hörerzertifikate*) without any further remarks on their different functions risks misconstruing them as an immutable phenomenon across time and space.

1.1 *The Problem of Audition and Reading Notes*

If, as it seems, *samā'āt* could have more than one purpose, and if they meant different things depending on where, when, and by whom they were noted down, it is worth questioning their assumed role as unfailing tools for dating manuscripts. Modern scholars have long regarded audition and reading certificates as invariably relevant to the history of the manuscripts that contain them, and as solid *termini ante quem* for their production: the students could not have left such notes, at the end of the lectures they attended, on manuscripts that had not yet been copied.¹⁴ How to explain, then, the existence of *samā'āt* and *qirā'āt* that clearly predate the making of the manuscripts on which they appear? This seeming paradox is epitomised by a Qayrawānī codex today kept in the British Library, comprising the *Kitāb al-Nuḍūr* ("Book of Vows") from the legal compilation of Ibn al-Qāsim al-'Utaqī (d. 191/806).¹⁵ In this specific case, a dated colophon records the completion of the copy in the year 394/1003, followed by a note declaring that the work was read before 'Alī b. Muḥammad b. Masrūr al-Dabbāğ (271/884-359/970) in the year 344/955-6 [Figure 1].¹⁶

13 Of the 32 manuscripts we consulted, only ms. Raqqāda 4-96 presents an audition note recording the attainment of an *igāza*: see Murányi, *Beiträge*, p. 31; Brockopp, *Muhammad's Heirs*, p. 207, No. 23.

14 Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Munağğid, "Iğāzāt al-samā' fi l-maḥṭūṭāt al-qadīma", *Mağallat Ma'had al-maḥṭūṭāt al-'arabiyya* 1 (1955), p. 232-251; Georges Vajda, *Les certificats de lecture et de transmission dans les manuscrits arabes de la Bibliothèque nationale de Paris*, Paris, Éditions du CNRS, 1956; Stefan Leder, Yāsīn al-Sawwās, Muḥammad al-Ṣāğarğī, *Mu'jam al-Samā'āt al-dimašqīyya al-muntaḥaba min sanat 550/1155 ilā 750/1349*, Damascus, Institut Français de Damas, 1996; Déroche *et al.*, *Islamic Codicology*, p. 332-334; Gacek, *Arabic Manuscripts*, p. 52-53; Andreas Görke, Konrad Hirschler (eds), *Manuscript Notes as Documentary Sources*, Beirut, Orient Institut/Ergon-Verlag, 2011.

15 Ms. Or. 9810.E. On this manuscript see Miklós Murányi, "A Unique Manuscript from Kairouan in the British library: The *Samā'*-work of Ibn al-Qāsim al-'Utaqī and Issues of Methodology", in *Method and Theory in the Study of Islamic Origins*, ed. H. Berg, Leiden, Brill, 2003, p. 325-368.

16 Murányi understands the gap between the two dates as the time of "preparation of the book": see *ibid.*, p. 339.

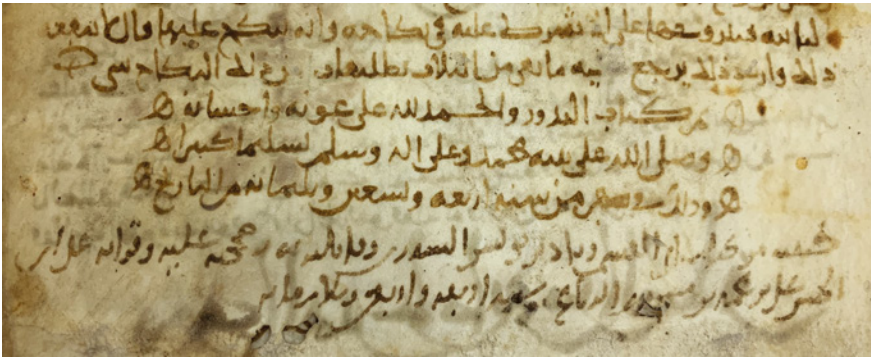


FIGURE 1 Colophon and audition note at the end of the *Kitāb al-Nuḍūr*, from the legal pronouncements of Ibn al-Qāsim al-ʿUtaqī. London, British Library, ms. Or. 9810.E, f. 20b, detail
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1. ◉ تم كتاب النذور والحمد لله على عونته واحسانه ◉
2. ◉ وصلى الله على نبيه محمد وعلى اله وسلم تسليما كثيرا ◉
3. ◉ وذلك في صفر من سنة اربعة وتسعين وثلاثماية من التاريخ ◉
4. ◉ كتبت من كتاب ابي القسم زياد بن يونس السدري وقابلته به وصحته عليه وقراته على ابي
5. الحسن علي بن محمد بن مسرور الدباغ سنة اربعة واربعين وثلاث مائة
1. End of the Book of Vows, praise be to God for his help and beneficence.
2. May God pray upon his prophet Muḥammad and his family, and grant him perfect peace.
3. That occurred in Ṣafar of the year 394.
4. I transcribed it from the book of Abū l-Qāsim Ziyād b. Yūnus al-Sudrī, and I collated it with it, and I checked it against it, and I read it before Abū
5. al-Ḥasan ʿAlī b. Muḥammad b. Masrūr al-Dabbāḡ in the year 344.

Thus, it appears that sometime after the manuscript was copied, its owner appended to the colophon a note referring to the study of the work he had undertaken in his youth, five decades earlier, under his teacher Ibn Masrūr al-Dabbāḡ.¹⁷ Because of this reading record, the manuscript would have been

17 Interestingly, the anonymous owner mentions the first copy of the work that he made, before 344/955-6, from a manuscript that belonged to Ziyād b. Yūnus al-Sudrī

conventionally dated to before 344/955-6, were it not for its dated colophon, which incontrovertibly places its production half a century later. Since dated colophons occur only very rarely in the Qayrawānī corpus, one is left wondering how many other manuscripts may have been misdated on the basis of similar notes.

The practice of recording old *samāʿāt* and *qirāʾāt* on newly produced manuscripts is also attested in al-Andalus in the same period. A case in point is a copy of the *Kitāb al-Siyar* ("Book of Warfare") by Abū Ishāq al-Fazārī (d. 183/805) today in the Qarawiyyīn Library in Fes.¹⁸ The third part of this manuscript was copied in 379/990, probably in Cordova, by ʿAbbās b. Aṣḥab al-Hamadānī (d. 386/996), as evidenced by its dated colophon. However, a brief note on its title page refers to an audition occurred in the 320s/932-941 (the year's unit is effaced). In his analysis of the manuscript Murányi overlooked this audition record, but he convincingly argued that ʿAbbās b. Aṣḥab had studied the *Kitāb al-Siyar* under Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Malik b. Ayman al-Qurṭubī, around the year 322/934.¹⁹ It can thus be concluded that the *samāʿ* harks back to the lectures attended by ʿAbbās b. Aṣḥab in his youth, half a century before he transcribed this specific copy of the work.

The notes on the two manuscripts just discussed do not correspond to the received notion of audition and reading 'certificates', since they were clearly not written at the time of the events they record, as attestations to a student's credentials. Rather, their purpose was to supplement information about the work's transmission history, regardless of the actual manuscript on which they were inscribed. Therefore, the years mentioned in these and other similar *samāʿāt* and *qirāʾāt* cannot be taken at face value and used for dating the material: that can only be securely done through a manuscript's colophon, provided it was written by the same hand as the main text. Needless to say, it is fundamental not to mistake audition and reading notes for colophons, as it has occasionally happened.²⁰ However, dated colophons are mostly attested in the Qayrawānī corpus from the late 10th century: earlier manuscripts tend to

(282/895-361/972, on whom see Murányi, *Beiträge*, p. 225-228). This later copy was likely entrusted to a professional scribe, as suggested by the quality of the script (see below, pp. 285-286 and Figure 14).

18 Ms. 1968. On this manuscript see Miklós Murányi, "Das *Kitāb al-Siyar* von Abū Ishāq al-Fazārī. Das Manuskript der Qarawiyyīn-Bibliothek zu Fās", *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 6 (1985), p. 63-97.

19 *Ibid.*, p. 80.

20 See, for instance, Murányi, *Beiträge*, p. 101-102, and Brockopp, *Muhammad's Heirs*, p. 183-184, where an audition note dated 271/885 is called a colophon.

speak to us through more ambiguous kinds of paratext.²¹ The question, then, is whether we can extract from these notes any evidence that is relevant for determining the manuscripts' context and time of production. To attempt an answer, we shall now examine two early fragments preserved in Raqqāda, both of which contain texts transmitted by Yahyā b. 'Umar al-Kinānī (d. 289/902), one of Kairouan's most important Mālikī jurists in his generation.²² The two texts are, respectively, the first part of the *Mağālis* ("Sessions") of the Egyptian scholar Ašhab b. 'Abd al-'Azīz (d. 204/820),²³ and the *Kitāb al-Da'wā wa-l-bayyināt* ("Book of Legal Proceeding and Proofs") from the legal teachings of the same master.²⁴

1.2 *Two Manuscripts from the Circle of Ibn al-Labbād (d. 333/944)*

The *Mağālis* fragment consists of 14 folios of scrap parchment densely written in a cursive, casual script, and it does not include any colophons. However, it is interspersed with numerous annotations, some of which contain dates. The first one appears on f. 1a, under the work's title and transmission chain [Figure 2a]: it records an audition in the first person. Importantly, neither this *samā'* nor the work's title were written by the manuscript's copyist.

21 Two exceptionally early dated colophons, mentioning the years 256/870 and 258/871-2, are recorded by Brockopp, *Muhammad's Heirs*, p. 200-201, Nos. 2-3. They can be found at the end of Mss. Raqqāda 29-38 and 46-1/1786. Of these two colophons, the second is unquestionably authentic, but the first seems to have been tampered with, or it may have been copied *verbatim* from the exemplar. On Ms. Raqqāda 40-1/1786 see also al-Ḥannāšī, *Ḥawāriḡ al-nuṣūṣ*, p. 28.

22 The figure of Yahyā b. 'Umar is relatively unknown to contemporary historiography: see Fuat Sezgin, *Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums*, Leiden, Brill, 1967-2000, vol. I, p. 475; Murányi, *Beiträge*, p. 92-117. The most complete introduction to this scholar's life and work is found in Yahyā b. 'Umar al-Kinānī al-Andalusī, *Kitāb Aḥkām al-sūq*, ed. M. 'A. Makki, Cairo: Wizārat al-tarbiyya wa-l-ta'lim, al-Idāra al-'amma li-l-taqāfa, 1956, p. 59-102.

23 Ms. Raqqāda 4-1651: see al-Ḥannāšī, *Ḥawāriḡ al-nuṣūṣ*, p. 46; Brockopp, *Muhammad's Heirs*, p. 184, 205, No. 15; Murányi, *Beiträge*, p. 104-106.

24 Ms. Raqqāda 10-1648: see al-Ḥannāšī, *Ḥawāriḡ al-nuṣūṣ*, p. 34-35; Brockopp, *Muhammad's Heirs*, p. 184, 203, No. 11; Murányi, *Beiträge*, p. 106-107.

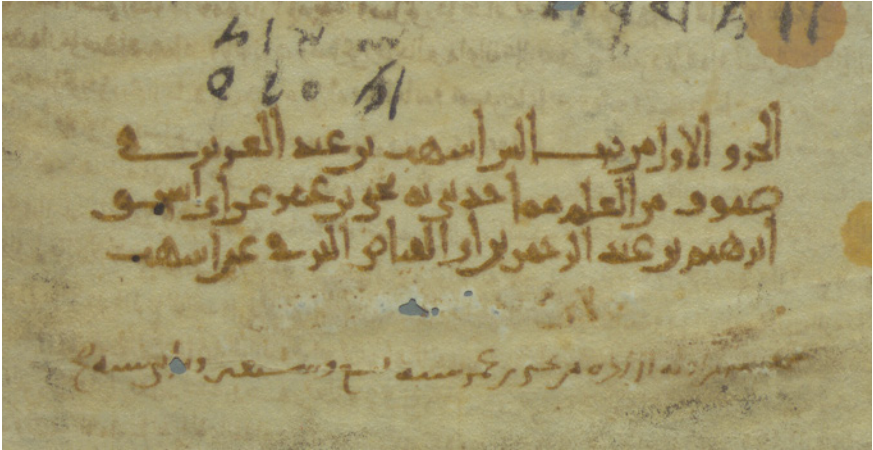


FIGURE 2A Title and *rivāya* of the *Mağālīs* of Aṣḥab. Ms. Raqqāda 4-1651, f. 1a, detail
© AL-MAḤBAR AL-WAṬANĪ LI-ṢIYĀNAT WA-TARMĪM AL-RUQŪQ
WA-L-MAḤṬŪṬĀT

1. الجزء الاول من مجالس ائمة بني امية في
2. صنف من العلم مما حدثني به يحيى بن عمر عن ابي اسحق
3. ابراهيم بن عبد الرحمن بن ابي الفياض البرقي عن ائمة
4. سمعته من اوله الى اخره من يحيى بن عمر سنة تسع وسبعين ومايتي سنة صح

1. The first part of the Sessions of Aṣḥab b. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz on
2. the categories of knowledge. It belongs to what was transmitted to me by Yaḥyā b. ‘Umar, from Abū Ishāq
3. Ibrāhīm b. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Abī l-Fayyāḍ al-Barqī, from Aṣḥab.
4. I audited it from its beginning to its end from Yaḥyā b. ‘Umar in the year 279. Correct.

This terse audition note has been relied upon to place the production of this manuscript before the year 279/892-893, in the context of Yaḥyā b. ‘Umar’s lectures. However, the manuscript’s content does not read like the text received by Yaḥyā b. ‘Umar. That is because a further link is added to the *isnād* in the title: an unnamed student of Yaḥyā’s that had already received the text of the *Mağālīs* from his teacher at the time when these pages were written. If Yaḥyā were the final transmitter, his teacher would appear as the penultimate authority in the transmission chain (“*aḥbara-nā Abū Ishāq al-Barqī*”); instead, the text mentions Yaḥyā himself as the penultimate authority: “*aḥbara-nā Yaḥyā*

b. ‘Umar” [Figure 2b]. As is normally the case in Qayrawānī manuscripts, the identity of the final transmitter is here concealed behind the first-person personal pronoun “-*nā*” (or elsewhere, “-*nī*”). However, his name is made explicit in several marginal notes left by some of his pupils [Figure 2c]. These brief glosses, which read like digressions made by a teacher during his lectures, are introduced by the expression “*qāla Abū Bakr*”, a name that can be identified with Abū Bakr b. al-Labbād (d. 333/944), who had indeed studied under Yaḥyā b. ‘Umar in his youth.²⁵ Another pupil of Ibn al-Labbād even added his teacher’s name to the transmission chains in two places (a faded remnant of these additions can still be seen in Figure 2b, between the lines).



FIGURE 2B *Isnād* from the *Maḡālis* of Aṣḥab, mentioning Yaḥyā b. ‘Umar as the transmitting authority. Ms. Raqqāda 4-1651, f. 14a, detail

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1. اخبرنا ابو بكر وابو عبد الله قالا
2. اخبرنا يحيى بن عمر قال قال لي ابو اسحق البرقي اشهب [...]

1. Abū Bakr and Abū ‘Abd Allāh²⁶ informed us – they said:
2. Yaḥyā b. ‘Umar informed us – he said: Abū Ishāq al-Barqī told me: Aṣḥab [...]

²⁵ Murányi, *Beiträge*, p. 189-194.

²⁶ This is almost certainly Abū ‘Abd Allāh b. Masrūr al-‘Assāl (d. 346/958), on which see Murányi, *Beiträge*, p. 213-217.



FIGURE 2C Two marginalia from the *Mağālis* of Aṣḥab, referring to teachings of Abū Bakr b. al-Labbād. Ms. Raqqāda, 4-1651, ff. 1b-2a, detail
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1. قال ابو بكر الذي قال اشهب هو قول ملك واصحابه خلا عبد الملك بن الماجشون فانه لا يقول به
2. قال ابو بكر اختلف قول بن القسم فيها فروى سخنون عن بن القاسم انه لا قيمة [...]
1. Abū Bakr said: what Aṣḥab reported is the opinion of Mālik and his companions, except for ‘Abd al-Malik al-Māġišūn, who does not say that.
2. Abū Bakr said: Ibn al-Qāsim’s opinion on the matter is debated: Saḥnūn related from Ibn al-Qāsim that it has no value [...]

All these elements suggest that the manuscript was copied and annotated in the circle of Ibn al-Labbād, and not in that of his teacher a generation earlier. In fact, the fragment is most likely to date from after the death of Yaḥyā b. ‘Umar in 289/902: had it been written during his lifetime, it would contain the text of the *Mağālis* as received and taught by him, not by one of his students, especially since the copyist lived and worked in his same city. Further evidence for the use of this manuscript is provided by a *qirā’a* inscribed on the verso of its last folio and dated 334/945-946 [Figure 2d]. The note informs us that the text was read before a teacher from the same generation of Ibn al-Labbād, named Abū ‘Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. Masrūr al-‘Assāl (d. 346/958).²⁷ Because Ibn al-Labbād had died in 333/944, the manuscript was now being studied in the circle of the next surviving transmitter from Yaḥyā b. ‘Umar.

27 See the previous footnote.

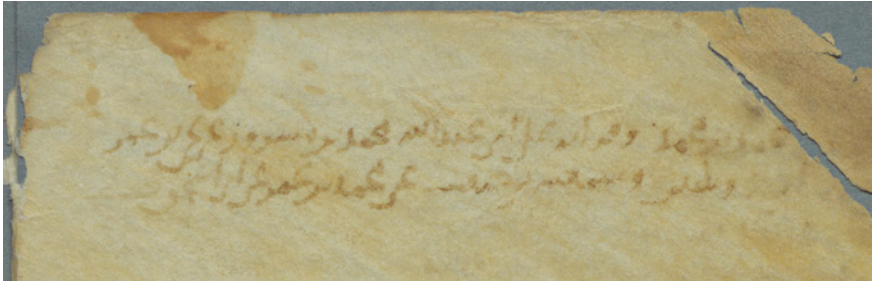


FIGURE 2D Reading note from the *Mağālis* of Aṣḥab. Ms. Raqqāda, 4-1651, f. 14b, detail
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1. [...] محمد بن محمد قرأه على أبي عبد الله محمد بن مسرور عن يحيى بن عمر
2. [...] سنة [أربع وثلاثين وسمعت عن حبيب؟ عن محمد بن عمر عن أبي إسحق

1. [...] Muḥammad b. Muḥammad, and I read it before Abū 'Abd Allāh b. Masrūr [who received it?] from Yaḥyā b. 'Umar
2. [...] in the year] 334. I audited it from Ḥabīb?, from Muḥammad b. 'Umar, from Abū Ishāq.

What was, then, the purpose of the audition note dated 279/892-893? Who wrote it, and when? Because of the use of the first person, Ibn al-Labbād must have penned it himself, on a manuscript containing his own *riwāya* of the text and presented to him by one of his pupils, sometime between Yaḥyā's death in 289/902 and his own demise in 333/944. In doing that, he meant to record the year in which he had studied the *Mağālis* of Aṣḥab under Yaḥyā b. 'Umar, providing supplementary information about the transmission history of this work as part of his teaching.²⁸ It is tempting to suggest that this occurred towards the end of his life, when the urge to document his legacy was felt more strongly. Perhaps this copy, originally made and annotated by one of his pupils, had become the exemplar (*aṣl*) on which the old Ibn al-Labbād based his lectures, and which his students used to collate their own copies. Be that as it may, while truthful and significant, the date in this *samā'* cannot be used as a *terminus ante quem* for dating the manuscript.

²⁸ In a way, this note complements the information given in the first lines of text on f. 1b, recording the date when Yaḥyā b. 'Umar received the text of the *Mağālis* from his teacher Abū Ishāq al-Barqī in Egypt, in 264/877 (or 274/887).

The second fragment that is of interest here contains the *Kitāb al-Daʿwā wa-l-bayyināt* from the legal teachings of Aṣḥab b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz, a text transmitted according to the exact same pattern as the *Mağālīs*: from Aṣḥab to Abū Ishāq al-Barqī, to Yaḥyā b. ʿUmar, to a Qayrawānī scholar not named in the title [Figure 3a]. The manuscript consists of 18 folios, 16 of which are made of paper and contained in an outer parchment bifolio that comprises the title page. The script is neat and regular, very different from that used in the *Mağālīs* fragment. After a succinct colophon, a note dated 273/886-887 has so far been interpreted, again, as evidence that the manuscript was copied before that year [Figure 3b]. That would make it one of the oldest surviving examples of Islamic paper, certainly the oldest from the Mağrib.

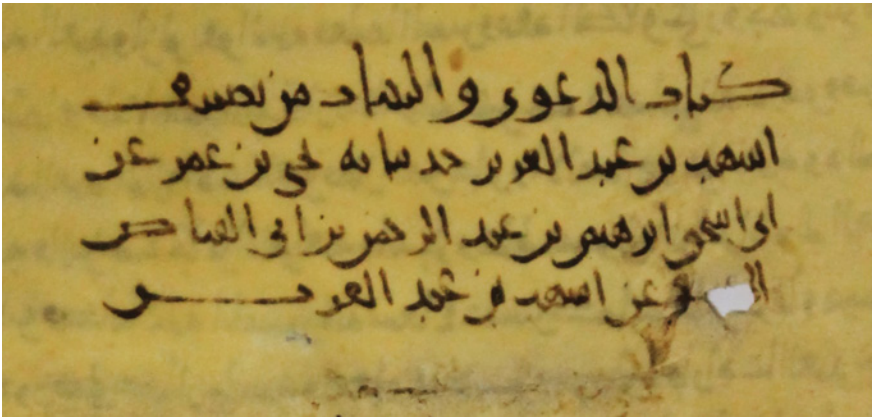


FIGURE 3A Title and *riwāya* of the *Kitāb al-Daʿwā wa-l-bayyināt* of Aṣḥab. Ms. Raqqāda 10-1648, f. 1a, detail
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1. كتاب الدعوى والبيانات من تصنيف
2. أشهب بن عبد العزيز حدثنا به يحيى بن عمر عن
3. أبي إسحاق إبراهيم بن عبد الرحمن بن أبي الفياض
4. الـ[بر]قي عن أشهب بن عبد العزيز

1. Book of Legal Proceeding and Proofs, from the works
2. of Aṣḥab b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz. Transmitted to us by Yaḥyā b. ʿUmar, from
3. Abū Ishāq Ibrāhīm b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Abī l-Fayyād
4. al-Barqī, from Aṣḥab b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz.

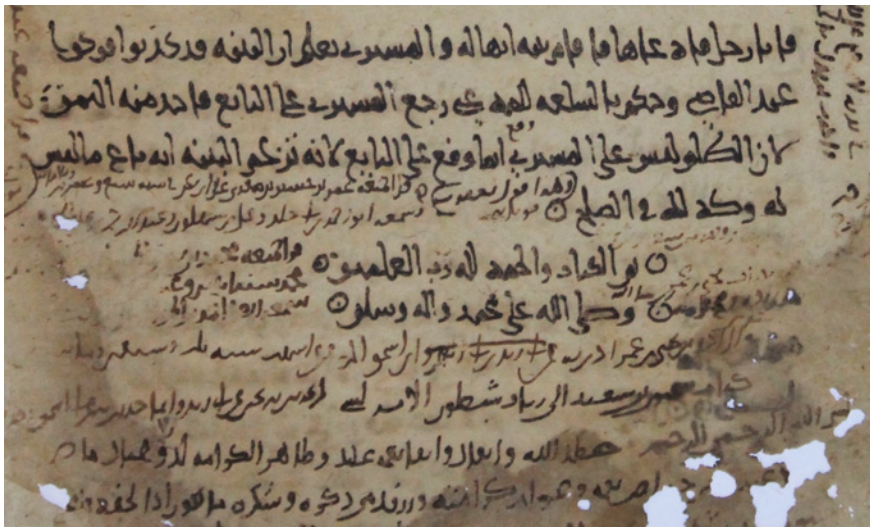


FIGURE 3B Colophon and notes at the end of the *Kitāb al-Da'wā wa-l-bayyināt* of Aṣḥab. Ms. Raqqāda 10-1648, f. 17b, detail
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

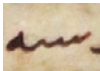

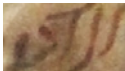

1. ◉ تم الكتاب والحمد لله رب العالمين ◉
 2. ◉ وصلى الله على محمد وآله وسلم ◉
 3. [...] من أوله؟] إلى آخره من يحيى بن عمر أذن به؟ عن [[إبي زيد بن إبي الغمر و]] إبي إسحق البرقي عن أشهب سنة ثلث وسبعين ومائتين]
1. End of the book, praise be to God, Lord of the Worlds,
 2. And may God pray upon Muḥammad and his family, and grant him peace.
 3. [...] from its beginning] to its end from Yaḥyā b. ‘Umar. He heard’ it from [[Abū Zayd b. Abī l-Ġumr and]] Abū Ishāq al-Barqī, from Aṣḥab, in the year 273.²⁹

Brockopp considers this “a reader’s remark [...] from 273/886-887, well before Yaḥyā b. ‘Umar’s death”.³⁰ However, the wording of this note closely resembles that of the *samā’* on the title page of the *Mağālīs* fragment. It also expresses

29 The lacuna at the beginning of the line makes it impossible to know the exact nature of the note, but the use of the preposition *min* (rather than *‘alā*) indicates that it was probably a *samā’* (rather than a *qirā’ā*).

30 Brockopp, *Muhammad’s Heirs*, p. 184, 203, No. 11.

TABLE 1 Paleographic comparison between the notes of the *Mağālis* fragment (dated 279/892-893) and the *Kitāb al-Da‘wā wa-l-bayyināt* (dated 273/886-887), written by the same hand

	Ms. 10-1648, f. 17b	Ms. 4-1651, f. 1a
يحيى		
عمر		
سنة		
إلى آخره		

the same purpose: not to record a reading of the manuscript, but to provide supplementary information about the transmission history of the work. In fact, the script of both notes is so similar that can be safely ascribed to the same hand: that of Abū Bakr b. al-Labbād. The identical treatment of certain combinations of letters cannot possibly be accidental: we refer, in particular, to the ligature between *yāʾ* and *ḥāʾ* in the word *Yaḥyā*, the *ʿayn* positioned above the *mīm* in the word *ʿUmar*, and the identical ductus in words such as *sana* and *āḥiri-hi* [Table 1].³¹

As in the *Mağālis* fragment, the margins of the *Kitāb al-Da‘wā* contain glosses introduced by the expression “*qāla Abū Bakr*”. That confirms beyond a reasonable doubt that this manuscript too was used in the teaching circle of Ibn al-Labbād, the final transmitter of the text, and that it must have been produced after the death of *Yaḥyā b. ʿUmar* in 289/902. In fact, a second dated note on the colophon page records the reading of the whole manuscript before Ibn al-Labbād by one of his pupils, in the year 327/938-939 [Figures 3b-3c]. This date provides a much more reliable *terminus ante quem* for the fragment, and

31 Ibn al-Labbād left another audition note, with the date 271/884-885, on a copy of an anti-Shāfiʿī polemic composed by *Yaḥyā b. ʿUmar*, *Kitāb al-Ḥuǧǧa fī l-radd ʿalā l-Šāfiʿī* (Ms. Raqqāda 10-242). On this ms. see al-Ḥannāšī, *Ḥawārīǧ al-nuṣūṣ*, p. 32; Brockopp, *Muhammad’s Heirs*, p. 202-203, No. 9; Murányi, *Beiträge*, p. 95; François Déroche, “Les manuscrits arabes datés du III^e/IX^e siècle”, *Revue des études islamiques* 55-57 (1987-1989), p. 343-368: 347, No. 18; Schacht, “On Some Manuscripts”, p. 249, No. 26.

also for the use of paper in Ifrīqiya, which is more likely to have commenced in the first half of the 10th century than in the second half of the 9th century.³²

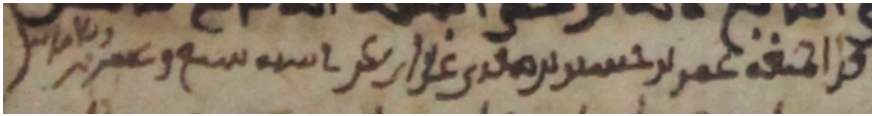


FIGURE 3C Reading note from the *Kitāb al-Daʿwā wa-l-bayyināt* of Aṣḥab. Ms. Raqqāda 10-1648, f. 17b, detail
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WA-L-MAḤṬŪṬĀT

1. قرا جميعه عمر بن حسين بن صغدي؟ على ابي بكر في سنة سبع وعشرين وثلاثماية

1. ʿUmar b. Ḥusayn b. Ṣuġdī? read all of this before Abū Bakr in the year 327.

Although roughly coeval and containing *riwāyāt* of the very same scholar, the two manuscripts just discussed differ noticeably in terms of their aesthetic and materiality. As already remarked, the *Mağālīs* fragment is made of scrap parchment leaves written in a very cursive script, with almost no diacritic dots: the text was jotted down hastily, perhaps under the direct dictation of Ibn al-Labbād. Conversely, the *Kitāb al-Daʿwā* was neatly copied on rectangular folios of regular size, with even margins, using a carefully traced script peppered with diacritics. It is tempting to consider it the work of a professional scribe, entrusted with the creation of a fair copy to be used as a reference text during Ibn al-Labbād's lectures. Unlike contemporary Baghdad or Cordova, the activity of professional copyists (*warrāq*, pl. *warrāqūn*) is virtually unattested in the sources on 10th-century Ifrīqiya.³³ Nevertheless, it is likely that some Qayrawānī scholars, although not identified as *warrāqūn* in the biographical dictionaries, did specialise in the production of finely penned and skillfully

32 The earliest dated manuscript on paper produced in Kairouan is today in Dublin, Chester Beatty Library, ms. Ar 4475. It is a copy of *al-Dabbʿan maḡḡhab Mālik* by Ibn Abī Zayd al-Qayrawānī, made in 371/982: see Umberto Bongianino, *The Manuscript Tradition of the Islamic West: Maghribī Round Scripts and the Andalusī Identity*, Edinburgh University Press, 2022, p. 52, 80–81, 88.

33 Hady Roger Idris, *La Berbérie orientale sous les Zirīdes, x^e-xii^e siècles*, Paris, Adrien-Maisonneuve, 1962, vol. II, p. 777 and 790, mentions two poets from Sousse and Mahdia who were also *warrāqūn*. It is also worth noting that the calligrapher and illuminator of the so-called 'Nurse's Qurʾān', a lavish manuscript endowed to the Great Mosque of Kairouan in 410/1020, signed his work as ʿAlī b. Aḥmad *al-warrāq*: see François Déroche, "Le prince et la nourrice", *Journal of Qurʾanic Studies* 19/3 (2017), p. 18–33.

made manuscripts. Some relevant examples will be discussed in the second part of this article.

1.3 *Two Manuscripts from the Circle of Abū 'Ayyāš (d. 295/907)*

The misinterpretation of *samā'* notes such as those mentioned above seems largely driven by the desire to prove the existence of very early manuscripts in the Raqqāda collection, in particular from before the year 300/912-913.³⁴ Such manuscripts do exist, but they need to be identified through other methods. A case in point is that of two more fragments of the legal teachings of Aṣḥab b. 'Abd al-'Azīz: the second part of the *Kitāb al-Itq* ("Book of the Unconditional Manumission of Slaves"),³⁵ and the second part of the *Kitāb al-Mukātab* ("Book of the Conditional Manumission of Slaves").³⁶ Both of them were transcribed, on parchment, by Abū l-'Arab Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Tamīm (d. 333/945), a Qayrawānī scholar from the generation of Ibn al-Labbād who left his signature on both title pages [Figure 4a].³⁷ Since the script on the title pages is consistent with that of the main text, the particle "*li-*" can be taken to mean that Abū l-'Arab transcribed the manuscript for himself.



FIGURE 4A Title of the second part of the *Kitāb al-Itq* of Aṣḥab, with the ownership note of Abū l-'Arab Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Tamīm. Ms. Raqqāda 2-1649, f. 1a, detail
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34 Déroche, "Les manuscrits arabes datés"; Brockopp, *Muhammad's Heirs*, p. 199-209.

35 Ms. Raqqāda 2-1649: see al-Ḥannāšī, *Ḥawārīḡ al-nuṣūṣ*, p. 101-102; Murányi, *Beiträge*, p. 122, 202-203. The manuscript contains 14 folios.

36 Ms. Raqqāda 30-119: see al-Ḥannāšī, *Ḥawārīḡ al-nuṣūṣ*, p. 148-149. The manuscript contains 12 folios.

37 Murányi, *Beiträge*, p. 196-205.

1. [الجزء الثاني من كتب
2. العتق لاشهب
3. ابن عبد العزيز رواية سخون بن سعيد
4. محمد ابن احمد ابن تميم

1. Second part of the Book
2. of the Manumission of Slaves, by Ašhab
3. b. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz, recension of Saḥnūn b. Sa‘īd.
4. It belongs to Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Tamīm.

Neither manuscript contains any dates earlier than the mid-10th century. However, Abū l-‘Arab added a collation note after the colophon of the *Kitāb al-‘Itq* [Figure 4b], declaring that he checked his copy against the original of his master Abū ‘Ayyāš (d. 295/907).³⁸ Unlike *samā‘āt*, collation notes are intrinsically relevant to the history of the manuscripts on which they appear because they relate to scribal activities. Thus, the *muqābala* must have occurred upon completion of this very copy of the *Kitāb al-‘Itq*, and there are no signs in it or throughout the two manuscripts transcribed by Abū l-‘Arab that he may have accomplished the task after Abū ‘Ayyāš had died and his original had changed ownership. In fact, both fragments appear to be the product of the teaching circle of Abū ‘Ayyāš, attended by Abū l-‘Arab as a student: the penultimate authority in the transmission chains is Saḥnūn (d. 240/854), who was directly instructed by Ašhab, and the *isnād* implicitly refers to Abū ‘Ayyāš as the final transmitter (“*qāla aḥbara-nā Saḥnūn*”).

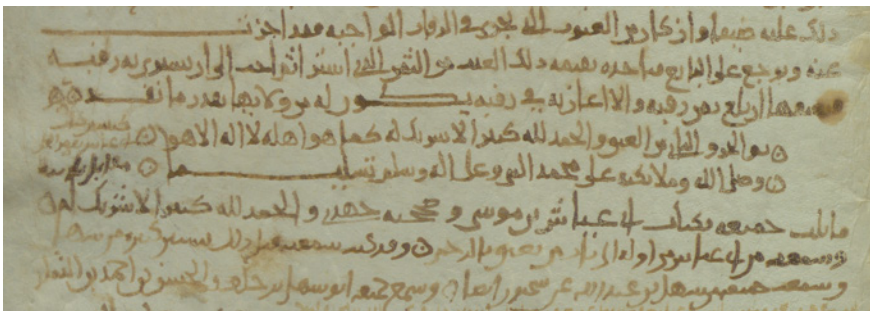


FIGURE 4B Colophon and collation note of the second part of the *Kitāb al-‘Itq* of Ašhab. Ms. Raqqāda 2-1649, f. 14a, detail
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38 *Ibid.*, p. 121-123.

١. ٥ تم الجزء الثاني من العتق والحمد لله كثيرا لا شريك له كما هو اهله لا اله الا هو ٥
 ٢. ٥ وصلى الله وملائكته على محمد النبي وعلى اله وسلم تسليما ٥
 ٣. قابلت جميعه بكتاب ابني عياش بن موسى وصحته جهدي والحمد لله كثيرا لا شريك له

1. End of the second part of the Unconditional Manumission of Slaves, much praise be to God, He has no associates, as is due to Him, there is no god but He.
2. May God and His angels pray upon the prophet Muḥammad and his family, and grant him peace.
3. I collated all of this with the book of Abū ‘Ayyāš b. Mūsā, and I corrected it as far as I could. Much praise be to God, He has no associates.

This hypothesis can be confirmed in the light of a reading note inscribed by Abū l-‘Arab after the colophon of the *Kitāb al-Mukātab* [Figure 5]. Here, the scholar explicitly refers to the manuscript on which he is writing – calling it “this book of mine” – and records that he read it before his teacher Abū ‘Ayyāš, while holding it in his hands. It goes without saying that the activity here described must have taken place when Abū ‘Ayyāš was still alive and well. Moreover, Abū l-‘Arab’s reference to the manuscript’s materiality through the use of the verb *masaka* (“to hold fast, to clasp”) proves beyond doubt that the *qirā’a* was carried out on this very copy of the *Kitāb al-Mukātab*. According to Murányi, another manuscript in Raqqāda containing a portion of Ašhab’s *Maḡālis* (which we have so far been unable to locate) was transcribed by Abū l-‘Arab from the original of Abū ‘Ayyāš, and collated with it, in 289/901-902.³⁹ It is very likely that the two fragments here discussed were copied at around the same time.⁴⁰

39 *Ibid.*, p. 203.

40 Other manuscripts copied by Abū l-‘Arab in the circle of Abū ‘Ayyāš can be dated to the same years, for instance the *Kitāb al-Ġaṣb* (“Book of Usurpation”) and the *Kitāb al-Ḥaġġ* (“Book of Pilgrimage”) of Ašhab b. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz. The inventory numbers are Mss. Raqqāda 2-1650, 26-9/465, 40a-1/80, 44-1/140 for the *Kitāb al-Ġaṣb*, and Ms. Raqqāda 31-148 for the *Kitāb al-Ḥaġġ*. See al-Ḥannāšī, *Ḥawārīġ al-nuṣuṣ*, p. 93, 102-103; Murányi, *Beiträge*, 202.

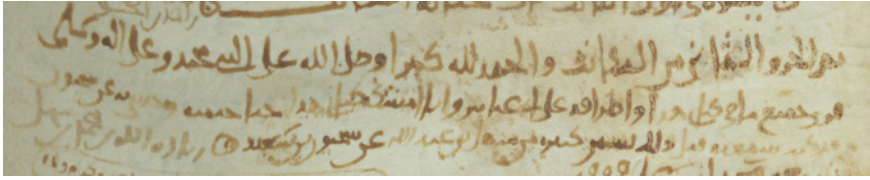


FIGURE 5 Colophon and reading note of the second part of the *Kitāb al-Mukātab* of Aṣḥab. Ms. Raqqāda 30-119, f. 12b, detail
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WA-L-MAḤTŪṬĀT

1. تم الجزء الثاني من المكاتب والحمد لله كثيرا وصلى الله على النبي محمد وعلى اله وسلم
2. قري جميع ما في كتابي هذا واطرافه على ابي عياش وانا امسكه⁴¹ كتابي هذا حتا ختمته
وحدثني به عن سخنون
3. وقد كنت سمعته قبل ذلك بسنين كثيرة من سهل بن عبد الله عن سخنون بن سعيد ⊙

1. End of the second part of the Conditional Manumission of Slaves, much praise be to God, and may He pray upon the prophet Muḥammad and his family, and grant him peace.
2. All that is contained in this book of mine – each of its parts – was read before Abū ‘Ayyāš, while I held this book of mine [in my hands], until its end. [Abū ‘Ayyāš] transmitted it to me from Saḥnūn.
3. I had already audited it many years before from Sahl b. ‘Abd Allāh, from Saḥnūn b. Sa‘īd.

1.4 *A Manuscript from before 272/885-886*

By emphasising the need to scrutinise and question the content of every audition note we do not mean to deny that they can sometimes provide reliable evidence for the date by which a manuscript was produced and circulated. That can be seen, for instance, in an early copy of the *Kitāb al-Zakāt* (“Book of Almsgiving”) from the *Mağālis* of the Egyptian jurist Ibn Abī l-Ġumr (d. 234/848).⁴² It consists of a parchment booklet made of 14 folios, written in an accurate angular script with diacritic dots and marks that affords us a rare glimpse into the aesthetic of formal Ifrīqī bookhands before the 10th century, as discussed in the second part of this article. The *Mağālis* of Ibn Abī l-Ġumr were

41 The pronoun *-hu* is clearly redundant: Abū l-‘Arab wrote it before realising the necessity to specify the object of the verb, and he did not erase it after adding the words “*kitābī hādā*”.

42 Ms. Raqqāda 3-3/84; see al-Ḥannāšī, *Ḥawāriḡ al-nuṣūṣ*, p. 55; Brockopp, *Muhammad’s Heirs*, p. 203, No. 10; Murānyī, *Beiträge*, p. 83-85, 233.

also transmitted in Kairouan by Yaḥyā b. ‘Umar, just like the *Mağālis* of Aṣḥab, and this manuscript may well have been compiled under his supervision and used in his teaching circle (a gloss on f. 3b begins with “*qāla Yaḥyā*”). An anonymous reading note after the colophon refers to the year 272/885-886: as we have seen, that alone would not suffice to date the fragment from before that year. However, in this case the *samā’* is combined with a reference to a reading of the text that took place under Yazīd b. Ḥālid (d. around 286/899-900), a contemporary of Yaḥyā b. ‘Umar [Figure 6a].⁴³ That creates a strong connection between the date mentioned in the note and the use of this very manuscript as a learning prop. Unlike those *samā’āt* that hark back to a specific node in the transmission history of a work, this note refers to a contextual teaching session formed by at least three people: Yazīd b. Ḥālid, a pupil who read the *Kitāb al-Zakāt* before him, and a second pupil who audited the reading and recorded it on the manuscript. The date 272/885-886 is thus a reliable *terminus ante quem* for the manuscript’s production, since it was written down by a student partaking in an activity (and a learning circle) unrelated to the transmission of the text. His purpose, as suggested by the wording of his note, was probably that of correcting his own copy of the *Kitāb al-Zakāt*.⁴⁴

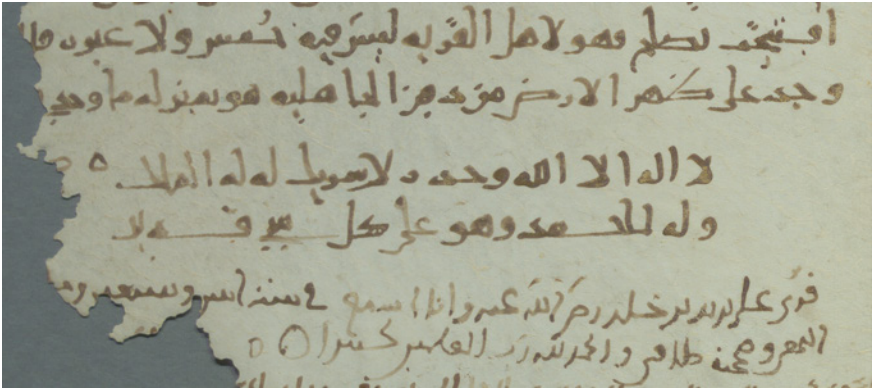


FIGURE 6A Colophon followed by a reading and audition note, from the *Kitāb al-Zakāt* of Ibn Abī l-Ḡumr. Ms. Raqqāda 3-3/84, f. 13a, detail
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43 On Yazīd b. Ḥālid see Murányi, *Beiträge*, p. 83-85.
44 In this note, the date (“*fī sanat itnayn wa-sabʿin wa-miʿatayn*”) appears in a darker ink because the scribe had to dip his *qalam* in the inkwell before writing it. The words “*wa-anā asma*” clearly show that his *qalam* had gone dry. The hand, however, is one and the same: note, in particular, the distinctively wavy *aliḥs* throughout the note. If, for the sake of argument, we consider the date a later addition by the same scribe (or by someone with a very similar handwriting), that would necessarily mean that the rest of the note was written at an earlier moment in time, most likely the year 272/885-886.

1. لا اله الا الله وحده لا شريك له له الملك
2. وله الحمد وهو على كل شي قدير
3. قرى على يزيد بن خلد رضي الله عنه وانا اسمع في سنة اثنين وسبعين وما [يتين ...]
4. انتهى وصحته طاقتي والحمد لله رب العلمين كثيرا ☉☉

1. There is no god but God, he has no associates. To Him is the power
2. and the praise, and He has mastery over all things.
3. It was read before Yazīd b. Ḥālīd, may God be pleased with him, while I was listening, in the year 272 [...]
4. It was completed, and I corrected it as [well as] I could. Much praise be to God, Lord of the Worlds.

1. ☉ كتاب الزكاة من
2. ☉ مجالس أبي زيد عبد الرحمن بن أبي الغمر
3. ☉ عن عبد الرحمن بن القاسم
4. ☉ لعبد الله بن اسحق ☉

1. Book of Almsgiving from
2. the Sessions of Abū Zayd ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Abī l-Ġumr
3. [transmitted] from ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. al-Qāsim.
4. It belongs to ‘Abd Allāh b. Ishāq.

This fragment also provides further insight into the custom of declaring the name of a manuscript's owner on its title page, preceded by the particle “*li-*”. In the previously mentioned booklets copied by Abū l-‘Arab the inscriptions on the title pages are in his handwriting [Figure 4a], but in the case of the *Kitāb al-Zakāt* the title is a later addition, and the “*li-*” introduces the name of a later owner [Figure 6b]. This person is ‘Abd Allāh b. Ishāq (d. 371/981), who transmitted the text from Abū ‘Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. Masrūr al-Dabbāg, the already mentioned disciple of Yaḥyā b. ‘Umar.⁴⁵ It goes without saying that this kind of paratext is especially liable to misunderstandings, since it could have been added at any moment in the history of a manuscript. Also, in Kairouan, ownership statements were sometimes tampered with, or altogether effaced [Figures 2a, 3a]. In some literary papyri from 9th-century Egypt, the use of “*li-*”

45 On ‘Abd Allāh b. Ishāq see Murányi, *Beiträge*, p. 230-233. The chain of transmission of this work, from Ibn Abī l- Ġumr to ‘Abd Allāh b. Ishāq, can be reconstructed thanks to an *isnād* added on f. 1b. ‘Abd Allāh b. Ishāq was also a disciple of Ibn al-Labbād, and he left a *samā‘* note on the manuscript of the *Kitāb al-Da‘wā wa-l-bayyinat* from the legal teachings of Aṣḥab b. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz (ms. Raqqāda 10-1648, f. 17b).

on the title page is combined with the word “*samāʿ*”, emphasising the direct involvement of a manuscript’s copyist-cum-owner in the transmission of the text.⁴⁶ That, however, does not seem to occur in Kairouan. It is therefore important to consider the function of these notes on a case-by-case basis, since names introduced by “*li-*” may belong to scholars who had little to do with the manuscript’s production, or even with the work’s transmission.

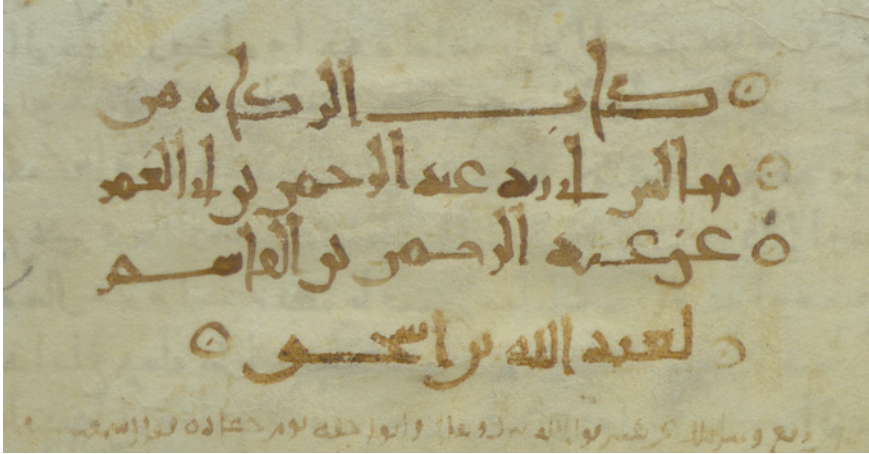


FIGURE 6B Title of the *Kitāb al-Zakāt* of Ibn Abi l-Ġumr. Ms. Raqqāda 3-3/84, f. 1a, detail
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1.5 Final Remarks

To summarise, the different notes and marginalia mentioned so far offer a wide variety of contextual information, but only a fraction of them can be used to approximate the date of a manuscript. The *samāʿāt* preserved in the Qayrawānī corpus do not correspond to the received notion of audition ‘certificates’, and they do not necessarily refer to didactic activities hinged on the manuscripts that contain them. That is particularly true of those audition notes left by teachers and transmitters who wished to record the date when they first received a certain text. Other *samāʿāt* provide more reliable *termini ante quem*, especially when they were written by a student and record, together with the audition of a text, a reading or collation of the manuscript on which they appear. Marginal notes mentioning a teacher’s gloss or digression are equally important to

46 Mathieu Tillier, Naïm Vanthieghem, “Une œuvre inconnue de Wakī b. al-Ġarrāḥ (m. 197/812 ?) et sa transmission en Égypte au III^e/IX^e siècle”, *Arabica* 65 (2018), p. 675-700: 683, 698; Mathieu Tillier, Naïm Vanthieghem, “Un traité de droit mālikite égyptien redécouvert : Aṣbaḡ b. al-Faraḡ (m. 225/840) et le serment d’abstinence”, *Islamic Law and Society* 26 (2019), p. 329-373: 345.

understand the circles in which a text was studied, but they seldom include dates and were sometimes added years, if not generations, after the production of a manuscript. The same can be said about ownership notes inscribed on the title pages. Thus, in the absence of dated colophons, the information derived from the paratext must always be combined with a careful evaluation of the stage of transmission of the text as presented in each individual manuscript. This conventional approach, as we have seen, is far from infallible, and it could benefit greatly from the development of palaeographic criteria able to offer additional tools for navigating the Qayrawānī corpus. That is the purpose of the second part of this article.

2 A Palaeographic Approach to the Corpus

Arabic palaeography is a very uneven discipline: while topics such as Quranic calligraphy have received considerable scholarly attention over the past decades, the study of standard bookhands is still in its infancy.⁴⁷ Also, the scripts of certain regions and periods have been investigated in much greater detail than others, with medieval Ifrīqiya firmly remaining on the margins of old and new debates alike. Very few studies have so far attempted to describe and discuss the variety of scripts represented in the Qayrawānī corpus.⁴⁸ Since palaeography is an intrinsically comparative discipline, this scholarly lacuna can be largely ascribed to the difficulty of accessing the Raqqāda collection and to the lack of a sufficient number of published images of its holdings. However, Qayrawānī manuscripts can also be found outside Tunisia, in the public libraries and museums of Paris, London, Leiden, Milan, Fes, Damascus, Istanbul, Riyadh, and other cities.⁴⁹ Once correctly identified, they can offer supplementary palaeographic data of great importance for reconstructing the development of scribal practices in Kairouan, between the 9th and the 11th centuries.

47 On the problems surrounding the study of Arabic bookhands see Déroche *et al.*, *Islamic Codicology*, p. 210-219; François Déroche, "Les études de paléographie des écritures livresques arabes : quelques observations", *Al-Qanṭara* 19/2 (1998), p. 365-381.

48 For some preliminary remarks see Bongianino, *The Manuscript Tradition*, p. 46-63; *Id.*, "Le Kitāb Sibawayh X 56 sup. de la Bibliothèque Ambrosienne et les écritures de l'Occident arabe avant la diffusion du maghribī arrondi", in *Paléographie des écritures arabes d'al-Andalus, du Maghreb et de l'Afrique subsaharienne*, ed. M. Jaouhari, Rabat, Centre Jacques Berque, 2015, p. 5-25. The Arabic terms for different Quranic scripts employed in the medieval book inventory of the Great Mosque of Kairouan are discussed in François Déroche, "A Note on the Medieval Inventory of the Manuscripts Kept in the Great Mosque of Kairouan," in *Writings and Writing: Investigations in Islamic Text and Script*, ed. R. Kerr and T. Milo, Cambridge, Archetype, 2013, p. 67-86.

49 A list of the manuscripts consulted by the authors is provided in the Appendix.

In the following pages, we aim to better frame and define the notion of Ifrīqī scripts, a palaeographic category already mentioned by Ibn Ḥaldūn at the end of the 14th century with reference to the earliest Arabic scripts of Kairouan: “The Ifrīqī script [*al-ḥaṭṭ al-Ifrīqī*], the old form of which is still known today, was close to the forms of the eastern script [*al-ḥaṭṭ al-Mašriqī*].”⁵⁰ A close look at the features shared by some of these early bookhands can reveal a good deal about the nature, date, and context of production of certain manuscripts, and about the aesthetic models and inclinations of their copyists. At the same time, the palaeographic variations within the corpus can be effectively interrogated to better understand the diachronic evolution and synchronic diversity of the Ifrīqī tradition. In particular, we shall concentrate on three key parameters: firstly, the distinction between formal scripts and more casual styles; secondly, a selection of diagnostic features such as the angularity or roundness of certain letter shapes, the evidence of connections with coeval Egyptian and Andalusī bookhands, and the indicators of a script’s genuine antiquity or deliberate archaism; thirdly, the historical development of book and chapter titles in bold, calligraphic styles.

2.1 *Formal Bookhands and Casual Scripts*

As pointed out in the introduction, the earliest manuscripts of Kairouan can be divided into two categories: those written in formal bookhands, slowly traced and generously spaced, and those featuring tight-knit, informal scripts showing a marked cursiveness, best defined as casual scripts. Recognising these two groups is essential to our understanding of the manuscripts’ functions and the copyists’ aims, but it does not really help us appreciate how Ifrīqī scripts evolved. Formal bookhands did not ‘turn’ into more cursive styles over time: in fact, both scripts seem to have coexisted all along the 200 years under discussion.

As already remarked, the *Kitāb al-Zakāt* from the *Mağālīs* of Ibn Abī l-Ġumr shows the kind of accurately traced, angular bookhands that a proficient Qayrawānī scribe – perhaps a *warrāq* – would have employed already before 272/885-886 to write fair copies with plenty of diacritic dots [Figure 7]. A very similar script and layout are found in an undated manuscript of the *Kitāb al-Itq wa-l-tadbīr* (“Book of the Manumission of Slaves”) transmitted by the judge and jurist Asad b. al-Furāt (d. 213/828).⁵¹ Without wanting to go into detail here, the paratext of this fragment reveals it to be the product of a Ḥanafī circle active in Kairouan in the middle of the 9th century, a date also suggested

50 For a discussion of this passage of Ibn Ḥaldūn’s *Muqaddima* see Bongianino, *The Manuscript Tradition*, p. 15-20.

51 Ms. Raqqāda 1-265; see al-Ḥannāšī, *Ḥawāriḡ al-nuṣūṣ*, p. 40-41; Murányi, *Beiträge*, p. 24; Schacht, “On Some Manuscripts”, p. 238, No. 12.

by its palaeographic features [Figure 8].⁵² In both manuscripts, for instance, the initial *kāf* is elongated and traced as two parallel lines connected at one end and topped by a diagonal stroke at the other. In final position, *kāf* has a tall oblique stem resembling the letter *dāl* (*kāf dālīyya*). The letter *ṭāʾ* – just like *ṣād*, *dād*, and *zāʾ* – is characterised by an elongated, trapezoidal body, and its stem is always added with a separate stroke, whether it be vertical or oblique. The *qalam* used by these scribes was crisply nibbed at an angle, which gave the letters a neat shading, and the stems of *alif*, *ṭāʾ*, *zāʾ*, final *kāf*, and *lām* generally present leftward serifs. Tails and bowls are often bent and formed by broken lines, elongations abound, and the intention of giving the script a geometric appearance is very noticeable. If one also considers the good quality of the parchment in these manuscripts, and the evident care with which the text box was justified and the margins delimited, the possibility of them being the work of two professional copyists becomes highly likely.



FIGURE 7 Page spread of the *Kitāb al-Zakāt* of Ibn Abī l-Ġumr. Ms. Raqqāda 3-3/84, ff. 1b-2a

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52 On the Ḥanafī manuscripts from Kairouan see Clément Salah, “Le *maḡḥab* ḥanafite d’Ifriqiya (11^e-14^e)/v111^e-x^e siècle): Asad b. al-Furāt (m. 213/828) et la transmission du *Kitāb al-Aṣl* d’al-Šaybānī (m. 189/805)”, *Asiatische Studien – Études Asiatiques* 76/4 (2022), p. 853–921.



FIGURE 8 Page spread of the *Kitāb al-Itq wa-l-tadbīr* from the *Kitāb al-Aṣl* of Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Šaybānī (d. 189/805), transmitted in Kairouan by Asad b. al-Furāt. Ms. Raqqāda 1-265, ff. 1b-2a

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As we have seen, the manuscripts transcribed by Abū l-ʿArab in the circle of Abū ʿAyyāš – such as the *Kitāb al-Itq* and *Kitāb al-Mukātab* of Aṣḥab b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz – can also be dated to the end of the 9th century, but they feature scripts that are considerably more cursive and informal. Here, the initial *kāf* is traced as a semicircle topped by a diagonal stroke, and in final position, as a *lām* whose bowl does not plunge below the base line, and whose straight stem is only occasionally topped by a diagonal stroke. The body of *šād*, *qād*, *tā*, and *zā* is oval, compact, and in the case of *tā* and *zā* it is often traced in one single stroke together with the stem. The *qalam* used by Abū l-ʿArab was nibbed as a blunt point, which gave the letters a uniform thickness, and the stems of *alif*, *tā*, *zā*, final *kāf*, and *lām* do not present any serifs. Tails and bowls are short and rounded, elongations are rare, and the script has a compact, almost crammed appearance [Table 2]. Interestingly, a very similar casual script was used to transcribe another work transmitted by Asad b. al-Furāt, the *Kitāb al-Sariqa wa-qaṭʿ al-tariq* (“Book of Theft and Highway Robbery”), produced in

the same Ḥanafī circle as the *Kitāb al-Itq wa-l-tadbīr*, which features instead a formal bookhand.⁵³ When comparing the script and layout of these two contemporary manuscripts [Figures 9-10] it becomes clear that one – the *Kitāb al-Itq wa-l-tadbīr* – is a fair copy written without space constraints and with an eye to conveying a certain solemnity, while the other – the *Kitāb al-Sarīqa wa-qaṭʿ al-ṭarīq* – is unaffected by aesthetic concerns: its copyist simply tried to cram within its pages as much text as possible.



FIGURE 9 Page spread of the *Kitāb al-Sarīqa wa-qaṭʿ al-ṭarīq* from the *Kitāb al-Aṣl* of Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Ṣaybānī (d. 189/805), transmitted in Kairouan by Asad b. al-Furāt. Ms. Raqqāda 1-264, ff. 1b-2a
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53 Ms. Raqqāda 1-264: see al-Ḥannāṣī, *Ḥawārīq al-nuṣūṣ*, p. 38-39; Salah, “Le *maḡhab* ḥanafīte d’Ifriqiya”; Murānī, *Beiträge*, p. 23-24; Schacht, “On Some Manuscripts”, p. 238-239, No. 12.




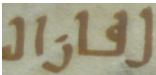
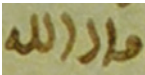



FIGURE 10 Page spread of the *Mağālis* of Aṣḥab. Ms. Raqqāda 4-1651, ff. 5b-6a
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TABLE 2 Comparison between some letter shapes in four Ifriqī manuscripts from the late 9th century

Ifriqī scripts of the late 9th century	Formal bookhands		Casual scripts	
	Ms. 3-3/84	Ms. 1-265	Ms. 2-1649	Ms. 1-264
	Realization of <i>kāf</i> (initial and final position)			

TABLE 2 Comparison between some letter shapes (*cont.*)

Ifriqī scripts of the late 9th century			
Formal bookhands		Casual scripts	
Ms. 3-3/84	Ms. 1-265	Ms. 2-1649	Ms. 1-264
Realization of <i>ṭā'</i> (medial position)			
Stems of <i>alif</i> and <i>lām</i>			

Formal bookhands and casual scripts continued to be employed side by side in 10th-century manuscripts. For instance, the first part of Ašhab’s *Mağālīs* transcribed in the circle of Ibn al-Labbād and discussed in the first part of this article features one of the most cursive and hurried scripts of the whole corpus [Figure 10]. Also very informal and idiosyncratic is the hand of ‘Abd Allāh b. Masrūr al-Tuġībī (263/876-346/958), who transcribed in Kairouan several portions of the work of the Egyptian jurist Ibn Wahb (d. 197/812).⁵⁴ The cursiveness and looseness of these scripts is so remarkable that one could almost be excused for considering them a later development, representative of a phase when the constraints of earlier, angular styles were eventually overcome. However, they date from the same period – the second quarter of the 10th century – when a relatively unknown scribe named Abū l-Qāsim Yaḥyā b. Muḥammad b. Tammām employed some the most striking examples of

54 On ‘Abd Allāh b. Masrūr al-Tuġībī, see Murányi, *Beiträge*, p. 208-213. For some images of what remains of his copy of the *Ġāmi‘* (“Collection”) of Ibn Wahb, see Miklós Murányi, *‘Abd Allāh b. Wahb (125/743-197/812): Al-Ġāmi‘ – Die Koranwissenschaften*, Wiesbaden, Harrassowitz, 1992; al-Nayyāl, *Al-Maktaba al-aṭariyya bi-l-Qayrawān*: p. 34-35. The recorded shelf marks are mss. Raqqāda 7-224, 246, and 266 (folders unknown). In Brockopp, *Muhammad’s Heirs*, p. 207, No. 22, the portion containing the *Kitāb al-Ši‘r wa-l-ġinā’* (“Book of Poetry and Song”) from the *Ġāmi‘* of Ibn Wahb is said to date from before the year 290/902-903. That is because of a note recording ‘Abd Allāh b. Masrūr’s audition of the work in that year, in the house of his master ‘Īsā b. Miskīn (d. 295/907). However, the manuscript was probably produced two or three decades later. On this manuscript see also al-Ḥannāšī, *Ḥawāriġ al-nuṣūṣ*, p. 31.



formal Ifrīqī bookhands to have survived.⁵⁵ His ownership statements can be seen on the title page of a copy of the *Kitāb al-Ḥağğ* ("Book of Pilgrimage") by

55 None of the extant biographical dictionaries include an entry on this scholar, but his name is mentioned in connection to Abū Yūnus Nuṣayr (d. 304/916): see Abū Bakr 'Abd Allāh al-Mālikī, *Riḥlāt al-nuṣf fī tabaqāt 'ulamā' al-Qayrawān wa-l-Ifrīqiya*, ed. B. al-Bakkūš, Beirut, Dār al-Ḡarb al-Islāmī, 1983, vol. 11, p. 124-125. See also Miklós Murányi, "Geniza or Ḥubus: Some Observations on the Library of the Great Mosque in Qayrawān", *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 42 (2015), p. 183-199: 190.

al-Māḡišūn (d. 164/780-781),⁵⁶ as well as on at least two portions of the *Kitāb al-Samāʿ* ("Audiences") by ʿAbd al-Malik b. Ḥabīb (d. 238/853).⁵⁷ His script is regular, stylised, characterised by the ample initial *ʿayn*, the oblique stems of *ṭā*, *ẓā*, and an abundance of broken lines that slowed down the writing pace [Figure 11]. His titles are bold and angular, almost calligraphic, with exaggerated shading and elongations. This skilful copyist – possibly a *warrāq* – clearly sought to embellish his handwriting by accentuating its geometric qualities, drawing inspiration from the 'New Abbasid Style' of Quranic calligraphy developed in the Muslim East during the 10th century, also attested in this period in both Ifrīqiya and Sicily.⁵⁸ Angular traits and elongations remained a constant feature of the most formal Ifrīqī bookhands until the 11th century; however, their appearance in Qayrawānī manuscripts became increasingly dictated by deliberate aesthetic choices.

2.2 *The Origins of Ifrīqī Scripts*

Since cursive, casual scripts coexist with formal, angular bookhands already in the earliest extant manuscripts from Kairouan, it is likely that both writing modes were imported and adopted in Ifrīqiya as part of the same scribal paradigm. And because neither Islamic scholarship in general, nor the Mālikī or Ḥanafī works mentioned so far originated in the Maḡrib, it is only logical that the antecedents of Ifrīqī scripts and their palaeographic features should be sought further east, as insightfully observed by none other than Ibn Ḥaldūn.⁵⁹ The material evidence for Arabic manuscripts copied in the Maṣriq before the 10th century (besides the many extant Quranic fragments) is scant and

56 Ms. Raqqāda 3-1628: see al-Ḥannāšī, *Ḥawāriġ al-nuṣūṣ*, p. 67; Miklós Murányi, *Ein altes Fragment medinensischer Jurisprudenz aus Qairawān. Aus dem Kitāb al-Ḥaġġ des ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz b. ʿAbd Allāh b. Abī Salama al-Māḡišūn* (st. 164/780-81), Stuttgart, Kommissionsverlag F. Steiner, 1985, p. 8-9 and plates; Murányi, *Beiträge*, p. 53-54.

57 Mss. Raqqāda 19-278 and 4-272: see al-Ḥannāšī, *Ḥawāriġ al-nuṣūṣ*, p. 24, 87; Murányi, *Beiträge*, p. 348-351.

58 On the 'New Abbasid Style' see François Déroche, *The Abbasid Tradition. Qurʾans of the 8th to the 10th Centuries AD*, London, The Nour Foundation/Azimuth/Oxford University Press, 1992, p. 132 ff.; Alain George, *The Rise of Islamic Calligraphy*, London, Saqi, 2010, p. 115-125. On some New Style Quranic manuscript in Raqqāda see Mourad Rammah, *Lumières de Kairouan*, Tunis, Simpact, 2009, p. 46, 48-49; *De Carthage à Kairouan. 2000 ans d'art et histoire en Tunisie*, ed. M. Fantar et al., Paris, Association française d'action artistique, 1982, p. 272-275. On the Palermo Qurʾān (dated 372/982-3) see Jeremy Johns, "The Palermo Qurʾān (AH 372/982-3 CE) and its Historical Context", in *The Aghlabids and their Neighbours: Art and Material Culture in Ninth-century North Africa*, ed. G. Anderson, C. Fenwick and M. Rosser-Owen, Leiden/Boston, Brill, 2018, p. 587-610.

59 See here, p. 25.

problematic, but some interesting traces of palaeographic proximity survive from early Islamic Egypt, where so many Qayrawānī scholars spent their formative years. It is in the scripts of literary papyri from between the late-8th and the mid-10th centuries that one can find compelling similarities with Ifrīqī bookhands, to such an extent that the derivation of the latter from the former appears undisputable. These similarities are evident in formal and informal hands alike.

For example, the angular bookhand of the *Kitāb al-ʿItq wa-l-tadbīr* transmitted by Asad b. al-Furāt is comparable with that of a papyrus in the Austrian National Library, a fragment of Mālik's *Muwaṭṭaʿ* likely dating from the 9th century [Figure 12].⁶⁰ The angularity of *ṣād*, *dād*, *ṭāʾ*, *zāʾ*, and *kāf*, the open final *bāʾ*, *tāʾ*, *ṭāʾ*, and *fāʾ*, and the shape of certain diagnostic letters such as *ʿayn* and *dāl* betray not only the same movements of the hand, but also the use of a very similar implement. In both manuscripts the punctuation consists of circles, sometimes provided with a dot in the middle, possibly indicating the collation of the passage against the written exemplar or the teacher's recitation.⁶¹ Moreover, in this and other coeval papyri *fāʾ* and *qāf* are marked according to the system that would become the norm in Ifrīqiya and the broader Maḡrib, featuring one diacritic dot below the *fāʾ* and a single one above the *qāf*.⁶² This is clearly another feature that Qayrawānī copyists derived from Egyptian scribal practices, even though the standard way of marking *fāʾ* and *qāf* in the Maṣriq soon shifted to using one dot above the former and two above the latter.

60 Vienna, Austrian National Library, A. P. 236 (formerly PERF 731): see Nabia Abbott, *Studies in Arabic Literary Papyri II: Qurʾānic commentary and tradition*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1967, p. 114-128; Brockopp, *Muhammad's Heirs*, p. 105-110.

61 This, at least, is the commonly held view on the use of circles enclosing dots, known as *dārāt al-iḡāza* ("circles of licence"): see Gacek, *Arabic Manuscripts*, p. 65-66; Mustapha Jaouhari, "Notes et documents sur la ponctuation dans les manuscrits arabes", *Arabica* 56, 4/5 (2009), p. 315-359: 327-328; Abbott, *Studies II*, p. 88 and *passim*. To our knowledge, this view is solely based on a passage by al-Ḥaṭīb al-Baḡdādī (d. 463/1071) and cannot be uncritically applied to the manuscripts of Kairouan. As mentioned above, the notion of *iḡāza* is virtually unattested in Ifrīqiya in the early period, when circles may have simply been used as punctuation marks, irrespective of the manuscripts' collation or their owners' status as accredited transmitters.

62 Nabia Abbott, *Studies in Arabic literary papyri I: Historical Texts*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1957, p. 38, 57; Abbott, *Studies II*, p. 129; Adolf Grohmann, *Arabische Chronologie. Arabische Papyruskunde*, Leiden, Brill, 1966, p. 95.



FIGURE 12 Papyrus fragment of Mālik's *Muwattaʿa*, 9th century. Vienna, Austrian National Library, A. P. 236, recto

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On the other hand, a papyrus scroll containing a corpus of *ḥadīṭ* transmitted by ‘Abd Allāh b. Lahī’a (97/715-174/790), today in Heidelberg, shows the very same kind of jagged cursivity that characterises the script of ‘Abd Allāh b. Masrūr al-Tuġībī, active in Kairouan in the first half of the 10th century [Figure 13].⁶³ The papyrus in question, dateable to the first quarter of the 9th century at the latest, is roughly a century older than the manuscripts copied by Ibn Masrūr al-Tuġībī, but just like them, it features obliquely arranged lines of text, hurriedly traced and tightly spaced, more suited to a rough draft than a neat copy. The palaeographic similarities include the bowls of final *lām* which, just like in final *sīn*, *šīn*, *ṣād*, and *qād*, stretch under the initial letters of the

63 PSR Heid. Inv. Arab. 50-53; see Raif Georges Khoury, ‘Abd Allāh Ibn Lahī’a (97-174/715-790), *juge et grand maître de l’école égyptienne : avec édition critique de l’unique rouleau de papyrus arabe conservé à Heidelberg*, Wiesbaden, Harrassowitz, 1986.

following word, as is particularly evident in the recurrent formula *fa-qāla rasūl Allāh*. The letters *ṣād*, *ḍād*, *ṭā'*, and *ẓā'* have an oval body in the shape of a simple loop, and initial *kāf* is rounded, recalling the form of an S. In final position, *kāf* is traced as a single, curved downstroke resembling a *lām* whose bowl does not plunge below the baseline [Table 3].

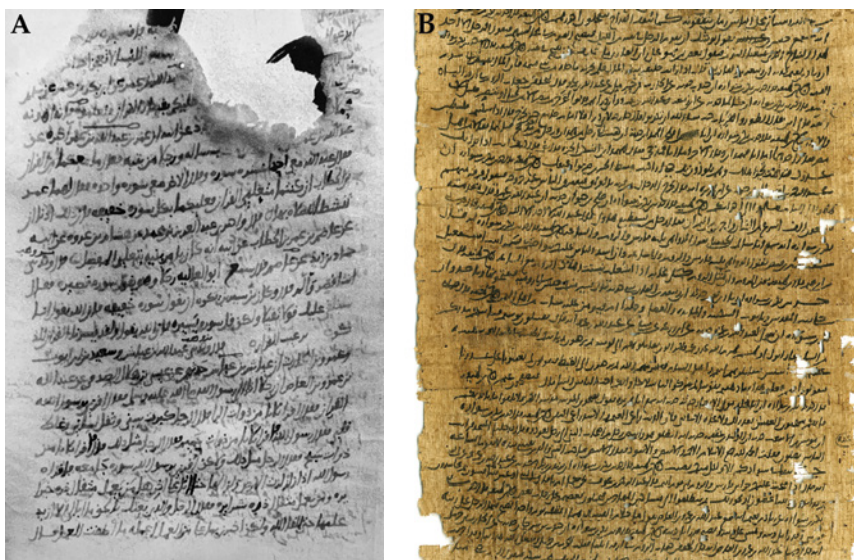


FIGURE 13 Comparison between Ifriqī and Egyptian casual styles. A) *Kitāb al-Ġāmiʿ* by Ibn Wahb, copied by ʿAbd Allāh b. Masrūr al-Tuġībī in the first half of the 10th century. Ms. Raqqāda 7-224, f. 3a (image from Murānyī, *ʿAbd Allāh b. Wahb*); B) Papyrus scroll with *ḥadīṭ* transmitted by Ibn Lahīʿa, probably early 9th century. Heidelberg, Library of the Institute for Papyrology, PSR Heid. Inv. Arab. 50-53, detail. © Universität Heidelberg

TABLE 3 Comparison between Ifrīqī and Egyptian scripts used in literary contexts (9th-10th centuries)



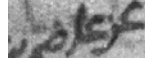



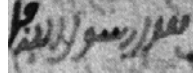









Formal bookhands		Casual scripts	
Ms. Raqqāda 1-265	Vienna National Library A. P. 236	Ms. Raqqāda 7-224	PSR Heid. Inv. Arab. 50-53
			
			

TABLE 3 Comparison between Ifrīqī and Egyptian scripts (*cont.*)

Formal bookhands		Casual scripts	
Ms. Raqqāda 1-265	Vienna National Library A. P. 236	Ms. Raqqāda 7-224	PSR Heid. Inv. Arab. 50-53
			
			

These cursive traits typical of casual scripts were already observed by Octave Houdas in some Ifrīqī manuscripts, and by Jean David-Weill and Adolf Grohmann in the Egyptian literary papyri: interestingly, all three scholars interpreted them as a first step towards the development of Mağribī round scripts.⁶⁴ Conversely, Nabia Abbott understood the coarser and looser hands featured in some papyri as early forms of modern eastern bookhands (i.e. what she calls ‘*naskhī*’).⁶⁵ However, more recent scholarship has demonstrated that the transformation of angles into curves, the sporadic lifting of the *qalam*, the adoption of broader angles, and the suppression of elongations and superfluous strokes in the scripts of 9th-century Egypt were simply the means by which local scribes achieved cursiveness when writing informally.⁶⁶ If some of these casual traits are found in later formal bookhands, be they Mağribī of Mašriqī,

64 Octave Houdas, “Essai sur l’écriture maghrébine”, *Nouveaux mélanges orientaux*, Paris, Imprimerie Nationale, 1886, p. 85-112: 93-94, pl. 2; Jean David-Weill, *Le dǧāmi‘ d’Ibn Wahb*, Cairo, Institut Français d’Archéologie Orientale, 1939, vol. 1, p. iv; Adolf Grohmann, “Review of Nabia Abbott, *Studies in Arabic Literary Papyri 1*”, *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* 58 (1962), p. 242-248: 244.

65 Abbott, *Studies 1*, p. 3-5; Nabia Abbott, *Studies in Arabic Literary papyri III: Language and Literature*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1972, p. 11.

66 Geoffrey Khan, *Arabic Papyri: Selected Material from the Khalili Collection*, London, The Nour Foundation/Azimuth/Oxford University Press, 1992, p. 39-45; Eva Mira Grob, *Documentary Arabic Private and Business Letters on Papyrus: Form and Function, Content and Context*, Berlin/New York, De Gruyter, 2010, p. 159-172. See also Marina Rustow, *The Lost Archive: Traces of a Caliphate in a Cairo Synagogue*, Princeton University Press, 2020, p. 160-172.

it is simply because they were at some point codified and standardised. The formal bookhands of the 9th and early 10th centuries – which Déroche calls *écritures livresques abbasides* – did not yet contemplate them, and remained essentially angular, featuring sharp bends, compound letter shapes, elongations, serifs, and a frequent lifting of the *qalam*.⁶⁷ It is this dichotomy between formal (Abbasid) bookhands and casual, cursive scripts that was imported from Egypt and the central Islamic lands into the scholarly milieu of Kairouan, as shown by the earliest surviving manuscripts in Ifrīqī scripts. As for the extant manuscripts copied on paper in Syria, Iraq, and Iran during the same period, they present striking palaeographic similarities with both the Egyptian and the Qayrawānī material, corroborating the impression of robust trans-regional trends and practices in the written codification of early Islamic scholarship.⁶⁸

2.3 *The ‘Evolution’ of Ifrīqī Scripts*

In a manner of speaking, the ‘New Abbasid Style’ represented in the 10th century the calligraphic version of Abbasid bookhands, and it is precisely toward this style that the finest Ifrīqī scripts gravitated until the mid-11th century. As can be seen in the manuscripts penned by Abū l-Qāsim Yaḥyā b. Muḥammad b. Tammām, crisp angular traits, elongations, marked serifs, and the attention to the contrast between thin and thick strokes (the so-called ‘shading’) were the means by which the most gifted Qayrawānī scribes enhanced their handwriting [Figure 11]. Another excellent example of this aesthetic trend, dating from 394/1003, is the script of the *Kitāb al-Nuḍūr* from the legal pronouncements of Ibn al-Qāsim al-‘Utaqī, discussed at the beginning of this article.⁶⁹ Its title page, in particular, features letters with tall and sinuous shafts, an emphatic use of shading, and the *kāf* of the word “*kitāb*” is even graced with a delicate, stylised palmette [Figure 14]. It is precisely this kind of textual enhancement that would have been expected from a *warrāq*, and indeed, the owner’s note below the colophon suggests that he had this fair copy made from his old personal manuscript [Figure 1].

67 Déroche, “Les manuscrits arabes datés”, p. 362-365.

68 We refer, in particular, to the formal Abbasid bookhands employed in ms. Or. 298 of the Leiden University Library (*Ġarīb al-ḥadīṭ* by Ibn Sallām, copied in 252/866), in ms. Ar. 3494 of the Chester Beatty Library (*Ġarīb al-ḥadīṭ* by Ibn Qutayba, copied in 279/892), and in ms. Veliyüddin Efendi 3139 of the Beyazıt State Library in Istanbul (*al-Ma’tūr min al-luġa* by Abū l-‘Amaytal al-A’rābī, copied in 280/893); and to the more casual, cursive scripts of ms. Zāhiriyya 334 *ḥadīṭ* of the National Library of Damascus (*Masā’il* of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, dated 266/879), and ms. Çorum 248 of the Süleymaniye Library in Istanbul (*Ġarīb al-ḥadīṭ* by Ibn Sallām, copied in 319/931-2 in Damascus).

69 See above, p. 7-8.



FIGURE 14 Title and *rīwāya* of the *Kitāb al-Nuḍūr* from the legal compilation of Ibn al-Qāsim al-ʿUtaqī. London, British Library, ms. Or. 9810.E, f. 1a, detail

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At a slightly lower level of penmanship, but still in the domain of formal bookhands, some Ifrīqī manuscripts from the end of the 10th century show the influence of Maḡribī round scripts, which had by then gained currency in al-Andalus: the tails of final *ṣād*, *ḍād*, *qāf*, and *mīm* acquired a semi-circular shape, and the body of *ṣād*, *ḍād*, *ṭāʾ*, and *ẓāʾ* was sometimes traced as a flat oval.⁷⁰ This probably happened because of the growing cultural contacts between Kairouan and Muslim Iberia, which entailed the circulation of both

⁷⁰ That can be seen, for instance, in a portion of the *Mudawwana* now in the British Library, ms. Or. 9810 C, on which see Murányi, “A Unique Manuscript”, p. 330. On the origins of Maḡribī round scripts in al-Andalus, see Bongianino, *The Manuscript Tradition*, p. 72-116.

scholars and manuscripts between the two regions.⁷¹ Some Qayrawānī manuscripts may well have been copied by locals who had travelled and studied in Cordova, or that transcribed Andalusi exemplars written in Mağribī round scripts, which would explain their palaeographic hybridity. Nevertheless, these are exceptions that did not change the essentially eastern and angular character of Ifrīqī bookhands, which was preserved well beyond the demise of Abbasid bookhands in what appears to be a deliberate pursuit of scribal archaism. A case in point is one of the latest surviving fragments from Kairouan, a copy of the *Kitāb al-Itq* from the *Mustaḥraġa* ("Compilation") of Muḥammad al-'Utbi (d. 255/868), datable to the year 446/1054-5, today in Paris.⁷² Its stark, conservative script [Figure 15] demonstrates how little Ifrīqī bookhands actually 'evolved' over the course of almost 200 years, calling into question some entrenched notions about the palaeographic method: while the diachronic record of letter shapes remains a valid practice, it should always be combined with a consideration of the scripts' nature (formal/informal, archaising/innovative), the scribes' models, and the scrutiny of more macro-level features such as the manuscripts' *mise en page*, punctuation techniques, and use of chapter titles. It is precisely to the last of these aspects that we shall now turn.

71 Maribel Fierro, "Proto-Maliki, Maliki, and reformed Maliki in al-Andalus", in *The Islamic School of Law: Evolution, Devolution, and Progress*, ed. P. Bearman, R. Peters and F. E. Vogel, Cambridge Mass., Harvard University Press, 2005, p. 57-76; Aurélien Montel, "Kairouan, une ville au cœur des réseaux savants andalous (III^e/IX^e-IV^e/X^e siècle)", in *Sociétés en réseaux dans le monde musulman médiéval*, ed. S. Denoix, Paris, Éditions du Comité des travaux historiques et scientifiques, 2017, p. 31-43; Manuela Marín, "Ifriqiya et Al-Andalus, à propos de la transmission des sciences islamiques aux premiers siècles de l'Islam", *Revue de l'Occident musulman et de la Méditerranée* 40 (1985), p. 45-53; Mohammed Talbi, "Kairouan et le Mālikisme espagnol", in *Études d'Orientalisme dédiées à la mémoire de Lévi-Provençal*, Paris, Maisonneuve et Larose, 1962, vol. 1, p. 317-337.

72 BnF, ms. arabe 6151. The date is found in a colophon of another portion of the same work, written by the same scribe, today in Raqqāda: see Schacht, "On Some Manuscripts", p. 245, note 5.



FIGURE 15 Page spread of the *Kitāb al-ʿItq* from the *Mustahṣa* of Muḥammad al-ʿUtḥī (d. 255/868). Paris, BnF, ms. arabe 6151, ff. 1b-2a
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2.4 The Development of Chapter Titles

Perhaps the most widely encountered feature throughout the Qayrawānī corpus, and therefore a valuable term of comparison, is the use of chapter titles and, more generally, of textual demarcations between the different thematic units of each booklet. By considering the diachronic development of new strategies of textual sub-division, it is possible to adduce supplementary evidence for approximating the date of a manuscript, be it a rough copy written in a casual script, or a fair one featuring a formal bookhand. The earliest Qayrawānī manuscripts from the second half of the 9th century and the first decades of the 10th century are characterised by rather plain and discreet chapter titles: because the copyists did not switch to a larger *qalam* or bolder script, their size and ductus are essentially the same as the main text. These titles mainly stand out thanks to indentations and the use of empty space before and after them. In some instances they are followed, and occasionally also preceded, by circles, with or without a dot in their middle [Figure 16]. It goes without saying that these circles were not intended as punctuation or collation marks, but simply

as decorative elements. Interestingly, they are also found in the chapter titles of earlier and coeval literary papyri [Figure 12].⁷³

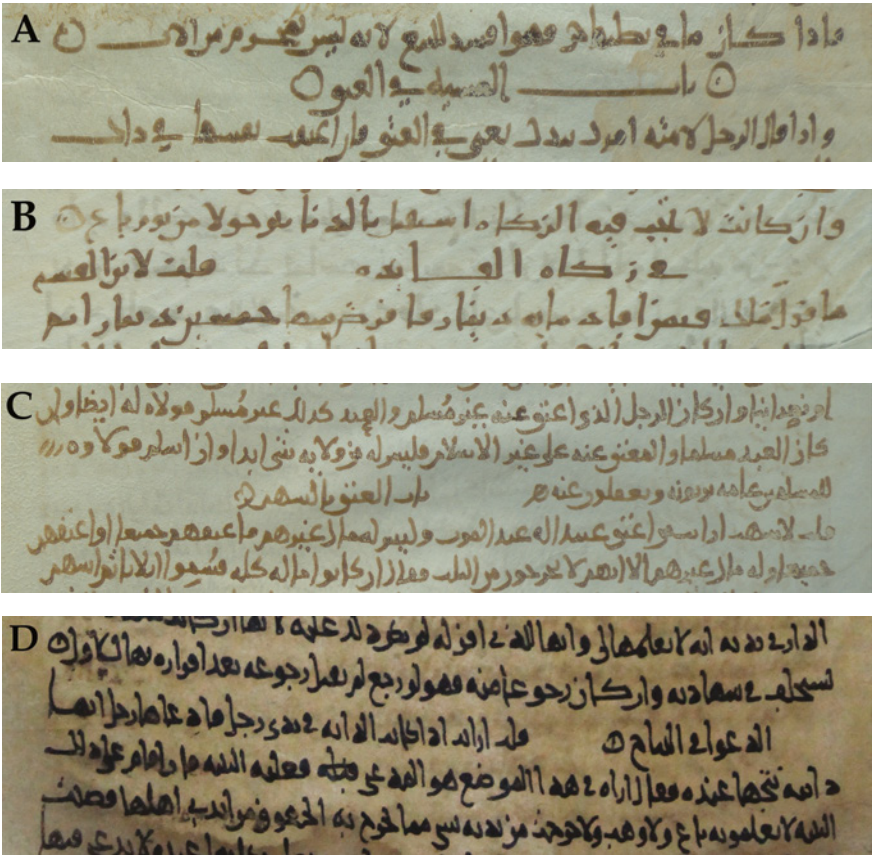


FIGURE 16 Chapter titles in the earliest Qayrawānī manuscripts. A) Title from the *Kitāb al-Itq wa-l-tadbīr* of Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Šaybānī. Ms. Raqqāda 1-265, f. 4b, detail; B) Title from the *Kitāb al-Zakāt* of Ibn Abī l-Ġumr. Ms. Raqqāda 3-3/84, f. 7b, detail; C) Title from the *Kitāb al-Itq* of Ašhab. Ms. Raqqāda 2-1649, f. 6b, detail; D) Title from the *Kitāb al-Da'wā wa-l-bayyināt* of Ašhab. Ms. Raqqāda 10-1648, f. 5a, detail

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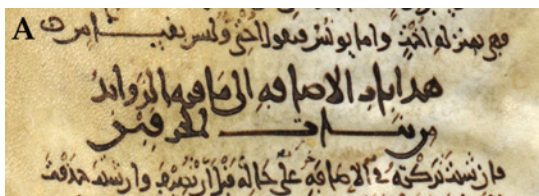
73 Abbott, *Studies III*, pl. 8; Abbott, *Studies II*, pl. 6, 9, 23.

It is only from the second quarter of the 10th century that a new aesthetic trend gradually emerged. In this later period, chapter titles were made to stand out by means of scripts that are clearly distinct from the rest of the text: the copyists switched to a larger *qalam* producing a bolder lettering, sometimes even disproportionately so. Decorative circles before and after the titles mostly disappeared. Moreover, their ductus and letter shapes often departed from the main text by showing accentuated elongations, stylisation, and shading [Figure 17]. Together with chapter titles, also some colophons started to feature oversized, stylised scripts, in what appears to be a clear break from the evenness of earlier manuscripts, even those penned in formal bookhands. Because this approach to textual demarcation only developed at a later stage, its appearance in Qayrawānī manuscripts conventionally dated to a very early period casts doubt on such attributions.

A case in point is an acephalous booklet containing part of a commentary on Ibn Wahb's *Muwatta'*, bearing the record of an audition occurred in 293/906.⁷⁴ In light of the evidence presented in the first part of this article, this *samā'* cannot be considered a reliable *terminus ante quem* for the manuscript's production [Figure 17d]. In fact, the way this note is phrased reveals the intention to record the date when the manuscript's owner (who is clearly not the copyist) completed his study of the work under Yaḥyā b. 'Awn (d. 298/910-911), but also to provide a full *isnād* going back to the work's author, namely Ibn Wahb.⁷⁵ This kind of transmission notes, even when they end with a date, could have been added to the manuscript well after that date (in this case, 293/906). The bold chapter titles and oversized colophon found in this booklet support our view that it was in fact copied several decades later.

74 Ms. Raqqāda 4-96: see al-Ḥannāšī, *Ḥawāriğ al-nuṣūṣ*, p. 56; Brockopp, *Muhammad's Heirs*, p. 207, No. 23; Murányi, *Beiträge*, p. 30-32.

75 On Yaḥyā b. 'Awn see Murányi, *Beiträge*, p. 148.



3. His prophet Muḥammad and upon his family, and grant him perfect peace.
4. I audited it from Yaḥyā b. 'Awn, who transmitted it to me from his father 'Awn, from 'Abd Allāh b. Wahb, in Ġumādā 1 of the year 293.

It must be noted here that the development of large, stylised chapter titles can only be appreciated in formal Ifrīqī bookhands, which were used by particularly skilled scribes or professional *warrāqūn* to produce fair copies for themselves or their clients. The demarcation of textual divisions was always kept at the bare minimum by scholars writing in casual Ifrīqī scripts, concerned as they were to economise on scribal support when jotting down the texts they studied. Thus, an unidentified *ḥadīṭ* fragment in the Raqqāda collection, dated by its colophon to 426/1035, makes very little effort to differentiate the main text from the titles of its sub-sections, and from the colophon itself [Figure 18].⁷⁶ While the fragment is considerably more recent than most of the material discussed so far, its crammed layout and inconspicuous chapter headings are reminiscent of some of the earliest manuscripts in the corpus. An idiosyncratic spiral replaces here

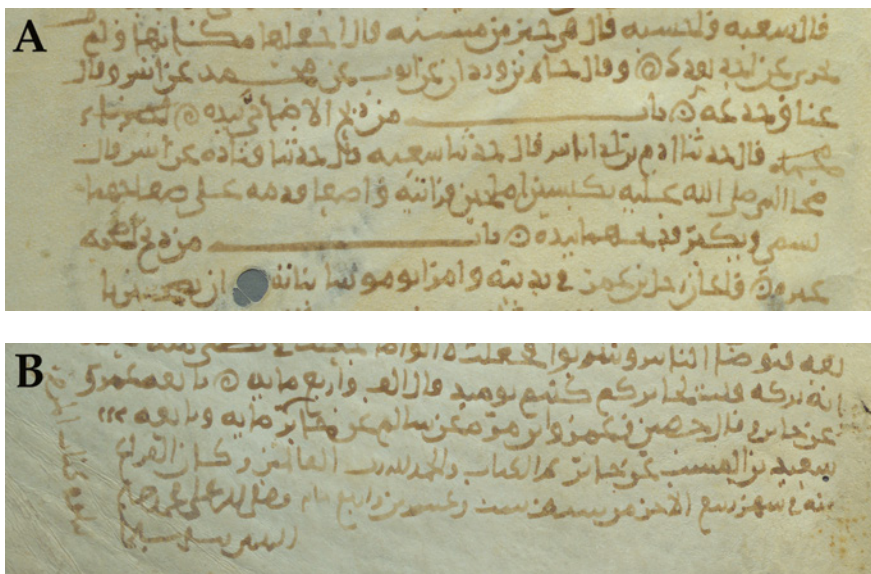


FIGURE 18 Unidentified *ḥadīṭ* fragment (*Kitāb al-Adāḥī*), ms. Raqqāda 5-16 Z. A) Chapter titles on f. 2a, detail; B) Final colophon dated Rabī' 11 426/1035 on f. 4a
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⁷⁶ Ms. Raqqāda 5-16 Z: see al-Ḥannāšī, *Ḥawāriḡ al-nuṣūṣ*, p. 372.

the more common circular marker with a central dot, perhaps denoting a later development in Ifrīqī methods of punctuation. Be that as it may, this example reveals the essential role of securely dated or dateable manuscripts in the definition of sound palaeographic and codicological criteria, and the mistakes we risk incurring until more such manuscripts are identified.

3 Conclusions

In the first part of this article, we have attempted to show that some dated notes in the earliest preserved manuscripts of Kairouan (9th-11th centuries) can refer to auditions and readings that occurred decades before the production of the booklets on which they appear, and therefore cannot be used as *termini ante quem* for dating them. The mention of a date in the paratext, especially in audition and transmission notes, should always be interrogated as to its purpose, and related to the stage and mode of transmission of the relative text. In those cases where that is impossible, mainly due to the fragmentary nature of the material, dates ‘floating in a vacuum’ should not be taken at face value. That of discovering and publishing increasingly earlier manuscripts is a worthy endeavour, but its pursuit cannot prescind from a careful assessment of the evidence (or lack thereof). For instance, a loose folio from a copy of Saḥnūn’s *Mudawwana* in the Raqqāda collection has been recently described as “one of the oldest dated legal text known to survive”, because it bears an audition note referring to the year 235/849-50.⁷⁷ However, an objective reading of this partly effaced note does not reveal any connection between the date in question and the manuscript’s context of production: it simply mentions that someone audited part of the *Mudawwana* from Saḥnūn himself, in 235/849-50.⁷⁸ Through the several examples discussed in the first part of this

77 Ms. Raqqāda, 69-10/495; Jonathan Brockopp, “Saḥnūn’s *Mudawwanah* and the Piety of the “Sharī‘ah-minded”, in *Islamic Law in Theory: Studies on Jurisprudence in Honor of Bernard Weiss*, ed. A. K. Reinhart and R. Gleave, Leiden, Brill, 2014, p. 129-141: 136. On this manuscript see also al-Ḥannāṣī, *Ḥawāriḡ al-nuṣuṣ*, p. 25.

78 The note appears to be written in the first person (*sami‘tu-hu*) by someone who was alive in 235/849-50, but the text is lacunose and may have been preceded by a verb in the third person (e.g. *qāla fulān sami‘tu-hu*). This practice is attested, for example, in Ms. Raqqāda, 30-110 (*Kitāb fi-hi aḥādīṭ li-Sufyān b. ‘Uyayna*), where a note after the colophon states: “*qāla Yaḥyā qara‘tu ḡamī‘a-hu ‘alā Ibn Abī ‘Abbād bi-l-Qulzum fi Ṣawwāl sanat itnayn wa-sittīn wa-mī‘atayn*” (“Yaḥyā said: I read all this before Ibn Abī ‘Abbād in Qulzum in Ṣawwāl 262”). Evidently, this date cannot provide a *terminus ante quem* for the manuscript’s production. On this manuscript see al-Ḥannāṣī, *Ḥawāriḡ al-nuṣuṣ*, p. 33; Brockopp, *Muhammad’s Heirs*, p. 202, No. 8; Murányi, *Beiträge*, p. 103-104.

article, we hope to have convincingly argued for a reassessment of the received notion of audition ‘certificates’, and for a more scrupulous approach to the relation between texts, paratexts, and the physical manuscripts that contain them.

Our second aim was to highlight some key palaeographic parameters and diagnostic features that we observed across a reasonably sized sample of Qayrawānī manuscripts, some of which held in libraries outside Tunisia, in order to establish a set of basic criteria for describing and contextualising Ifrīqī scripts. Although traditionally construed as a category of Maġribī scripts, their close adherence to the writing modes of 9th-century Egypt and the central Islamic lands reveals them to be little else than Mašriqī scripts transplanted to the Maġrib. Abandoning the simplistic narratives of evolution from angular to cursive scripts, we have argued for the concurrent development of formal bookhands and casual scripts within the Qayrawānī milieu, documenting their appearance in two distinct categories of manuscripts: fair copies produced by skilled penmen or professional scribes on the one hand, and personal copies hastily written on second-rate parchment on the other. We have also tried to bring into sharper focus the diverse aesthetic inclinations of Ifrīqī scribes, variously engaged with the calligraphic standards of the ‘New Abbasid Style’, the subtle influence of Maġribī round scripts, the desire to archaïse their handwriting, and the practical necessity of cramming as much text as possible onto costly parchment sheets. A diachronic reading of these trends can offer valuable insights into the time and context of production of certain manuscripts, especially if combined with the observation of features that were only gradually introduced during the 10th century, such as dated colophons, paper, and bold chapter titles. Of course, these are but preliminary remarks aimed at paving the way for a sound palaeographic understanding of Ifrīqī scripts, which by itself will never be sufficient to securely date the fragmentary and heterogeneous material in the corpus. It is only thanks to the synergistic relationship of textual criticism, palaeography, codicology, and socio-cultural history that scholars will be able to ascribe the earliest manuscripts of Kairouan to the right circles, and to assign them a correct date.

Appendix – A List of the Qayrawānī Manuscripts Discussed in the Article

Current location	Shelf mark	Author and title	Composition	Date
Dublin (Ireland) The Chester Beatty Library	Ar 4475	Ibn Abī Zayd al-Qayrawānī (310/922–386/996) <i>Al-Ḍabb ‘an maḍhab Mālik</i>	Paper 153 folios	371/982
Leiden (Netherlands) Universi- teitsbibliotheek	Or. 14.038	Saḥnūn b. Sa’īd (d. 240/854) <i>Al-Mudawwana (Kitāb al-istibrā’)</i>	Parchment 4 folios	First half of the 11th century
London (United Kingdom) The British Library	OR.9810.C	Saḥnūn b. Sa’īd (d. 240/854) <i>Al-Mudawwana (Kitāb al-nikāḥ)</i>	Parchment 19 folios	381/991
London (United Kingdom) The British Library	OR.9810.E	Ibn al-Qāsim al-‘Utaqī (d. 191/806) <i>Samā’ (Kitāb al-nudhūr)</i>	Parchment 20 folios	394/1003
Milan (Italy) Veneranda Biblioteca Ambrosiana ^a	x 56 sup.	Abū Bišr ‘Amr Sībawayh (d. 180/796) <i>Al-Kitāb fī al-naḥw</i>	Parchment 115 folios	First half of the 11th century
Paris (France) Bibliothèque nationale de France	Arabe 6151	Muḥammad al-‘Utbī (d. 255/868) <i>Al-Masā’il al-mustaḥraḡa min al-asmī’a (Kitāb al-‘itq al-awwal)</i>	Parchment 21 folios	446/1054–5
Princeton (USA) Princeton University Library	Islamic Mss., Third Series, No. 827	Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam (d. 214/829) <i>Al-Muḥtaṣar al-kabīr fī al-fiqh</i>	Parchment 2 folios	Second half of the 10th / first half of the 11th century
Raqqāda (Tunisia) Al-Maḥbar al-waṭanī li-ṣiyyānat wa-tarmīm al-ruqūq wa-l-maḥṭūṭāt	1–264	Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Šaybānī (d. 189/805) <i>Kitāb al-aṣl (Kitāb al-sarīqa wa-qaṭ’ al-ṭarīq)</i>	Parchment 12 folios	Second half of the 9th century

a A portion of the same manuscript is in Kazan (Russia), National Archives, *fond* 10, *opis’* 5, *delo* 822.

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Current location	Shelf mark	Author and title	Composition	Date
Raqqāda (Tunisia) Al-Maḥbar al-waṭanī li-ṣiyānat wa-tarmīm al-ruqūq wa-l-maḥṭūṭāt	1–265	Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Šaybānī (d. 189/805) <i>Kitāb al-aṣl (Kitāb al-ʿitq wa-l-tadbīr)</i>	Parchment 24 folios	Second half of the 9th century
Raqqāda (Tunisia) Al-Maḥbar al-waṭanī li-ṣiyānat wa-tarmīm al-ruqūq wa-l-maḥṭūṭāt	2–1649	Ašhab b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz (d. 204/820) <i>Kitāb al-ʿitq</i>	Parchment 14 folios	Before 295/907
Raqqāda (Tunisia) Al-Maḥbar al-waṭanī li-ṣiyānat wa-tarmīm al-ruqūq wa-l-maḥṭūṭāt	2–1650	Ašhab b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz (d. 204/820) <i>Kitāb al-ḡaṣb</i>	Parchment 2 folios	Before 295/907
Raqqāda (Tunisia) Al-Maḥbar al-waṭanī li-ṣiyānat wa-tarmīm al-ruqūq wa-l-maḥṭūṭāt	3–3/84	Ibn Abī al-Ġumr (d. 234/848) <i>Maḡālis Ibn al-Qāsim (Kitāb al-zakāt)</i>	Parchment 23 folios	Before 272/885–886
Raqqāda (Tunisia) Al-Maḥbar al-waṭanī li-ṣiyānat wa-tarmīm al-ruqūq wa-l-maḥṭūṭāt	3–1628	ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz al-Māġišūn (d. 164/780–781) <i>Kitāb al-ḥaġġ</i>	Parchment 2 folios	Second quarter of the 10th century
Raqqāda (Tunisia) Al-Maḥbar al-waṭanī li-ṣiyānat wa-tarmīm al-ruqūq wa-l-maḥṭūṭāt	4–96	Unkown <i>Kitāb tafsīr Muwaṭṭaʾ Ibn Wahb</i>	Parchment 9 folios	Second quarter of the 10th century

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Current location	Shelf mark	Author and title	Composition	Date
Raqqāda (Tunisia) Al-Maḥbar al-waṭaṇī li-ṣiḡānat wa-tarmīm al-ruqūq wa-l-maḥṭṭūtāt	4-272	ʿAbd al-Malik Ibn Ḥabīb (180/796-238/853) <i>Al-Samāʿ (al-ġuzʾ al-awwal min Kitāb al-Šahādāt)</i>	Parchment 21 folios	Second quarter of the 10th century
Raqqāda (Tunisia) Al-Maḥbar al-waṭaṇī li-ṣiḡānat wa-tarmīm al-ruqūq wa-l-maḥṭṭūtāt	4-1651	Ašhab b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz (d. 204/820) <i>Al-ġuzʾ al-awwal min Maǧālis fī ṣunūf min al-ʿilm</i>	Parchment 14 folios	Before 333/944
Raqqāda (Tunisia) Al-Maḥbar al-waṭaṇī li-ṣiḡānat wa-tarmīm al-ruqūq wa-l-maḥṭṭūtāt	5-16 Z	Unkown <i>Kitāb al-aḏāḥī</i>	Parchment 4 folios	426/1035
Raqqāda (Tunisia) Al-Maḥbar al-waṭaṇī li-ṣiḡānat wa-tarmīm al-ruqūq wa-l-maḥṭṭūtāt	7-224	ʿAbd Allāh Ibn Wahb (d. 197/812) <i>Al-Ġāmiʿ</i> (a section on Quranic sciences)	Parchment 27 folios	Before 346/958
Raqqāda (Tunisia) Al-Maḥbar al-waṭaṇī li-ṣiḡānat wa-tarmīm al-ruqūq wa-l-maḥṭṭūtāt	10-242	Yahyá b. ʿUmar (d. 289/902) <i>Kitāb al-ḥuǧǧa fī l-radd ʿalā al-Šāfiʿī</i>	Parchment 12 folios	Before 333/944
Raqqāda (Tunisia) Al-Maḥbar al-waṭaṇī li-ṣiḡānat wa-tarmīm al-ruqūq wa-l-maḥṭṭūtāt	10-1648	Ašhab b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz (d. 204/820) <i>Kitāb al-daʿwā wa-l-bayyināt</i>	Parchment and paper 18 folios	Before 327/938-939

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Current location	Shelf mark	Author and title	Composition	Date
Raqqāda (Tunisia) Al-Maḥḥbar al-waṭanī li-ṣiyānat wa-tarmīm al-ruqūq wa-l-maḥṭṭūtāt	19–278	ʿAbd al-Malik b. Ḥabīb (180/796–238/853) <i>Al-Samāʿ (al-ǧuzʿ al-awwal min Kitāb al-ʿitq wa-l-tadbīr)</i>	Parchment 18 folios	Second quarter of the 10th century
Raqqāda (Tunisia) Al-Maḥḥbar al-waṭanī li-ṣiyānat wa-tarmīm al-ruqūq wa-l-maḥṭṭūtāt	26–9/465	Ašhab b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz (d. 204/820) <i>Kitāb al-ǧaṣb</i>	Parchment 2 folios	Before 295/907
Raqqāda (Tunisia) Al-Maḥḥbar al-waṭanī li-ṣiyānat wa-tarmīm al-ruqūq wa-l-maḥṭṭūtāt	29–38	Ṣaḥnūn b. Saʿīd (d. 240/854) <i>Al-Mudawwana (Kitāb kirāʾ al-arḍīn)</i>	Parchment 17 folios	Second half of the 10th / first half of the 11th century
Raqqāda (Tunisia) Al-Maḥḥbar al-waṭanī li-ṣiyānat wa-tarmīm al-ruqūq wa-l-maḥṭṭūtāt	30–110	Sufyān b. ʿUyayna (d. 186/811) <i>Kitāb fī-hi aḥādīṭ</i>	Parchment 1 folio	Before 333/944
Raqqāda (Tunisia) Al-Maḥḥbar al-waṭanī li-ṣiyānat wa-tarmīm al-ruqūq wa-l-maḥṭṭūtāt	30–119	Ašhab b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz (d. 204/820) <i>Al-ǧuzʿ al-ṭānī min Kitāb al-mukātab</i>	Parchment 12 folios	Before 295/907
Raqqāda (Tunisia) Al-Maḥḥbar al-waṭanī li-ṣiyānat wa-tarmīm al-ruqūq wa-l-maḥṭṭūtāt	31–148	Ašhab b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz (d. 204/820) <i>Al-ǧuzʿ al-sādis min Kitāb al-ḥaǧǧ</i>	Parchment 2 folios	Before 295/907

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Current location	Shelf mark	Author and title	Composition	Date
Raqqāda (Tunisia) Al-Maḥbar al-waṭanī li-ṣiyānat wa-tarmīm al-ruqūq wa-l-maḥṭṭūṭāt	40a-1/80	Aṣḥab b. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz (d. 204/820) <i>Kitāb al-ḡaṣb</i>	Parchment 8 folios	Before 295/907
Raqqāda (Tunisia) Al-Maḥbar al-waṭanī li-ṣiyānat wa-tarmīm al-ruqūq wa-l-maḥṭṭūṭāt	44-1/140	Aṣḥab b. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz (d. 204/820) <i>Kitāb al-ḡaṣb</i>	Parchment 4 folios	Before 295/907
Raqqāda (Tunisia) Al-Maḥbar al-waṭanī li-ṣiyānat wa-tarmīm al-ruqūq wa-l-maḥṭṭūṭāt	46-1/1786	Ṣaḥnūn b. Sa‘īd (d. 240/854) <i>Al-Mudawwana (Kitāb al-ṭahūr)</i>	Parchment 8 folios	258/871-872
Raqqāda (Tunisia) Al-Maḥbar al-waṭanī li-ṣiyānat wa-tarmīm al-ruqūq wa-l-maḥṭṭūṭāt	69-10/495	Ṣaḥnūn b. Sa‘īd (d. 240/854) <i>Al-Mudawwana (Kitāb al-ḥaḡḡ al-awwal)</i>	Parchment 1 folios	Second half of the 9th century
Raqqāda (Tunisia) Al-Maḥbar al-waṭanī li-ṣiyānat wa-tarmīm al-ruqūq wa-l-maḥṭṭūṭāt	(folder unkown)-246	‘Abd Allāh Ibn Wahb (d. 197/812) <i>Al-Ġāmi‘ (Kitāb al-‘ilm)</i>	Parchment	Before 346/958
Raqqāda (Tunisia) Al-Maḥbar al-waṭanī li-ṣiyānat wa-tarmīm al-ruqūq wa-l-maḥṭṭūṭāt	(folder unkown)-266	‘Abd Allāh Ibn Wahb (d. 197/812) <i>Al-Ġāmi‘ (Kitāb al-ṣi‘r wa-l-ḡinā’)</i>	Parchment	Before 346/958

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