



# REGIME CHANGE

**New Horizons in Islamic Art  
and Visual Culture**

Edited by  
**CHRISTIANE GRUBER**  
and **BIHTER ESENER**



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First published in 2024 by GINGKO  
4 Molasses Row, London SW11 3UX  
www.ginkgo.org.uk

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A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN 978-1-914983-13-9

Designed and typeset by Adrian Hunt  
Printed in Italy by Printer Trento

www.ginkgo.org.uk

#### 4. THE RE-ENDOWMENT OF ALMOHAD QUR'ANS UNDER THE EARLY MARINIDS (CA. 1250–1300 CE)

UMBERTO BONGIANINO



This essay originates from a fruitful panel discussion titled *Looking at the Margins*, in which my colleagues and I reflected on the issue of margins, both literal and metaphorical, in the study of Qur'anic manuscripts and their materiality. On the one hand, it is plain to all that the Muslim West in general, and Morocco in particular, occupies an embarrassingly marginal place in modern scholarship on Islamic calligraphy and the arts of the book. To give but one glaring example, the 2016 Washington exhibition *The Art of the Qur'an: Treasures from the Museum of Turkish and Islamic Arts*, possibly the vastest and most visited display of Qur'anic manuscripts ever organised, did not include a single specimen from the western Islamic world, despite the presence of very important Maghrebi codices in the museums and historic libraries of Istanbul.<sup>1</sup> As a way of redressing the tacit bias against the inclusion of the Maghrebi manuscript tradition within broader historical and art-historical debates, this paper aims to show that medieval Morocco, like other regions on the periphery of the Islamic world, expressed a system of aesthetic canons and material practices related to the copy and dissemination of the Qur'anic text that, when interrogated, can contribute to answering very central questions within our field.

On the other hand, the actual margins of Maghrebi Qur'ans are a still largely untapped source of historical information. By examining some remarkable instances of marginalia, colophons and endowment certificates, this paper wishes to offer fresh insights on the diverse contexts in which the manuscripts were produced, kept, read and displayed, and on the different symbolic functions they held

in the eyes of their patrons, users and beholders.<sup>2</sup> The aim is to reach beyond conventional palaeographic and codicological analyses by approaching Qur'anic codices as polysemic artefacts, endowed with doctrinal and ideological meanings that could accumulate with time, conflict with one another and change considerably, despite the invariability of the transmitted text. In fact, it is through their paratext that the manuscripts here presented reveal significant details of the history of the Qur'an in the medieval Maghrib, declaring their irreplaceable role within the society that created and consumed them, at the intersection of piety and politics.

The moment of regime change addressed by this essay coincides with the fall of the Almohad caliphate and the rise of the Marinid dynasty in the second half of the thirteenth century. In a nutshell, this period witnessed the replacement of an Islamic state established on revolutionary doctrinal stances (Mahdism, unmediated caliphal authority, rejection of traditional legal methods) with one that professed a return to pre-Almohad orthodoxy, mainstream Sunnism, and a realignment with Maliki juridical practices.<sup>3</sup> The final decades of the Almohad period saw the once-powerful Berber dynasty rule over a rapidly shrinking territory centred around Marrakesh, the metropolitan capital, with its vast palatial citadel and imposing congregational mosque, the Kutubiyya.<sup>4</sup> Despite the irreversible political decline of the Almohads, the reign of the penultimate caliph Abu Hafs al-Murtada (r. 1248–1266) was marked by a certain cultural vitality that sparked, among other phenomena, the production and circulation of luxury manuscripts inside and outside the court. Tucked away in the margins



Figure 1 Endowment certificate and beginning of Surah *Sād* (38:1–2) from a Qur'an endowed in Tinmal in 1251. The manuscript was copied and illuminated in Seville in 1235. Marrakesh, Ibn Yusuf Library, ms. 429. © Umberto Bongianino.

of Almohad history, the contextual evidence provided by some of these artefacts is here examined as a means to understand the Marinids' appropriation and refashioning of certain Almohad discourses and practices.

#### The Last Almohad Qur'ans

Al-Murtada was an intellectual and a keen bibliophile who surrounded himself with scholars and men of letters, commissioned works of prose and poetry for his library and endowed precious manuscripts to several religious buildings.<sup>5</sup> He also fancied himself as a calligrapher, and



after transcribing a ten-volume Qur'an in his own hand, in 1258 he donated it to the mosque of 'Ali Ibn Yusuf in the medina of Marrakesh, 'for the use of all Muslims, day and night'.<sup>6</sup> The endowment certificates of this manuscript and the account of the fourteenth-century historian Ibn 'Idhari concur that the Almohad caliph restored the old Almoravid mosque, while documentary evidence suggests that he also established a madrasa within it, furnishing it with other precious books from his library.<sup>7</sup> Al-Murtada's patronage even extended beyond the Almohad capital and reached the dynastic sanctuary of Tinmal, in the High Atlas

mountains to the South of Marrakesh. This is where the mahdi Ibn Tumart, the founder of the Almohad movement, had died and been buried in 1130, after which an imposing mosque was built, together with other structures catering for the ritual visitations regularly performed by the Almohad caliphs, their court, and their army.<sup>8</sup> Tinmal was also the place where the first three Almohad caliphs were laid to rest, next to the tomb of the mahdi.<sup>9</sup>

The earliest surviving Qur'an associated with al-Murtada is a lavish manuscript originally in twenty volumes, copied

in Seville in 1235, and subsequently transferred to Morocco where it entered the possession of the Almohad caliph.<sup>10</sup> The endowment certificate on the first folio of its only surviving volume (the sixteenth) states that it was donated by al-Murtada to the 'blessed and sanctified tomb' of Ibn Tumart in Tinmal, presumably for ritual recitation, on 16 Ramadan 649/2 December 1251 (Figure 1). This solemn and highly symbolic act is well described in the text of the document, which, despite some lacunae, can be reconstructed as follows:

[حيس هذه الربعة الكريمة المشتملة بعشرين جزءا ...]  
 [...] الخليفة الإمام المؤمن بالله تعالى المرتضى لأمره أمير المؤمنين أبو حفص ابن سيدنا الأمير  
 أبي إبراهيم ابن سيدينا الإمام الخليفة أمير المؤمنين ابن سيدنا الخليفة [ة أمير المؤمنين ...]  
 [...] وفقه الله بنصره وتأييده على القبر المبارك المقدس [...]  
 [...] رضي الله تعالى عنهم بروضته المباركة المقدسة كرمها الله تعالى [...]  
 [...] مبارك على الدوام وتعاقب الليالي والأيام وأقر [...]  
 [...] بركة القبر المبارك المذكور تجويزا تصحيحا تحبيسا [...]  
 [...] إلى أن يرث الله تعالى الأرض ومن عليها وهو خير الوارثين [...]  
 [...] بوب إليه وبركة القبر المبارك المذكور الذي حبس الربعة المباركة عليه [...]  
 لا يضيع أجر من أحسن عملا أمضى ذلك أيده الله تعالى وأجر الخيرة وذخره في يوم الجمعة  
 السادس عشر من شهر الصوم المعظم عام تسعة وأربعين وستمائة [...]  
 صحيح ذلك وكتب في التاريخ المذكور والحمد لله وحده

[The caliph, the imam], the believer in God the sublime, al-Murtaḍā li-amri-hi [lit. 'the one favoured by God's decree'], the commander [of the faithful Abū Ḥafṣ, son of our lord the emir Abū Ibrāhīm, son of our] lord the caliph, the commander of the faithful, son of our lord the caliph [... may God assist him] with His victory and support [endowed this noble Qur'an in twenty volumes ...] to the blessed and sanctified tomb [of the mahdī ... may God be pleased] with them, at his blessed and sanctified burial place, may God exalt it! [...] the blessed [...] in perpetuity, for all the days and nights, and he established [...] next to his blessed grave [...] sanctioned, authenticated, inalienable [...] until God inherits the earth and those upon it [...] and the *baraka* of the blessed grave to which this Qur'an was endowed [...] God does not discount the reward of those who perform good deeds. [Al-Murtaḍā] accomplished that—may God assist him and reward him abundantly—on the day of Friday, the sixteenth of the glorified month of fasting of the year 649. That is correct, and it was written on the said date, and praise be to God alone!

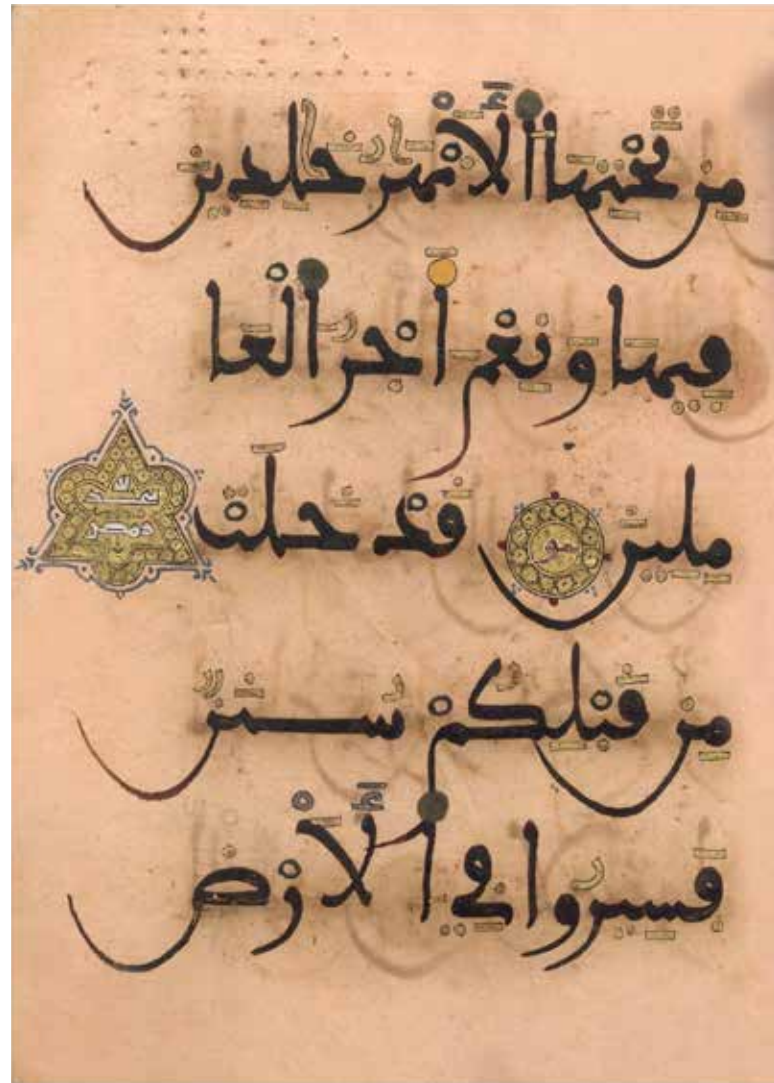


Figure 2 Endowment certificate and part of Surah *Al Imrān* (3:136–7) from a Qur'an endowed to the tomb of one of al-Murtada's wives in 1252. The manuscript is undated. Marrakesh, Ibn Yusuf Library, ms. 431. © Umberto Bongianino.

The same text was probably inscribed at the beginning of each volume of the Qur'an, and it was authenticated by the caliph in his own hand with the Almohad official motto (*alāma*) 'and praise be to God alone'.<sup>15</sup> From its wording, it is clear that al-Murtada sought to obtain blessings (*baraka*) from the grave of Ibn Tumart, while fervently invoking God's reward for his piety. The very same concepts are expressed in the brief account of al-Murtada's pilgrimage to Tinmal preserved in the chronicle of Ibn 'Idhari:



In the year 649 al-Murtaḍā set off with the entire Almohad army, regiments of Arabs and auxiliary troops, following the traditional arrangement established by his predecessors, preparing [for battle] and seeking God's guidance to succeed in his endeavour. And so he made the propitiatory visitation to Tinmal according to the custom of his predecessors, the descendants of 'Abd al-Mu'min, determined to commence his campaign with

this pious pilgrimage, inaugurating [his journey] with devout deeds, like his victorious ancestors before him. He departed from Marrakesh on the first of Ramaḍān to visit the tomb of his imam and receive his *baraka* by kissing and touching the soil of his grave. There he nobly implored [God], honouring the place like the poem says: 'We glorify it because glory is upon it, and we honour it because it is the abode of honour / We accomplish our duty with a pilgrimage that counts as our foremost obligation'.<sup>12</sup>

According to this passage, the caliph had left the capital with his army to fight the Marinids in northern Morocco, and the main objectives of his pilgrimage were to propitiate God and seek his guidance, to receive the *baraka* of Ibn Tumart, and to honour his tomb according to the custom set by his forebears. It is in this fraught ceremonial setting that we should imagine the twenty-volume Qur'an being read and displayed in Tinmal during al-Murtada's visit. However, it should also be noted that the manuscript had not come into existence as an Almohad artefact: the Almohads had withdrawn from al-Andalus in 1229, and by 1235 (the year in which the manuscript was produced) Seville was ruled by the rebel emir Ibn Hud.<sup>13</sup> After Ibn Hud's death in 1238, a group of local notables tried to reinstate the city's allegiance to the Almohad caliphs in Marrakesh, dispatching a delegation that may have carried the Seville Qur'an to Morocco as a diplomatic gift.<sup>14</sup> It was therefore its subsequent use, and not its inherent features, that made this a key Almohad manuscript, the only extant artefact that can be securely connected with the sanctuary of Tinmal.

يقول متملك هذه الربعة الكريمة العبد المعترف بذنبه المقتدر لرحمة ربه ورضوانه إبراهيم بن السيد أبي إبراهيم بن أمير المؤمنين رضوان الله تعالى عليهم إن هذه الربعة الكريمة صدقة على من يقرأ فيها من خيار المسلمين محبسة عليهم مؤبدة حبسًا لا ينقرض مدة الليالي والأيام وعلى مر السنين والأعوام فلا سبيل لأحد لبيعها ولا لتملكها بوجه ولا على حال بل تكون على ما ذكرته من الصدقة والحبس بحول الله تعالى وهو حسيب من يفعل بها خلاف ما ذكرته وأنا طالبه عند الله تعالى والله تعالى المسئول أن ينفعني بذلك لا إله إلا هو كل شيء هالك إلا وجهه له الحكم وإليه ترجعون وكتب بخط

In Safar 650/April–May 1252, immediately after his defeat by the Marinids, al-Murtada donated another lavish Qur'an, this time in ten volumes and written on pink paper, to the tomb of one of his wives, presumably in Marrakesh (Figure 2).<sup>15</sup> In particular, the text of the endowment certificate refers to 'the mother of our son Iṣḥāq, may God have mercy upon her and guide [her son] on the right path for as long as her grave abides in His mercy'.<sup>16</sup> Unfortunately, the chronicles do not provide any information about al-Murtada's wives, and very little is known about his offspring.<sup>17</sup> Mehdi Ghouirgate has convincingly argued that the resting place of the Almohad caliphs not buried in Tinmal was located just outside the palatial complex of Marrakesh, and that it may have included gardens and buildings.<sup>18</sup> It is unclear whether the rulers' wives would also have been buried there, but this endowment certificate suggests that even the tombs of secondary members of the caliphal household were provided with spaces where Qur'anic manuscripts were stored and used for ritual recitation in honour and remembrance of the deceased.

The last Almohad Qur'an that is relevant here is a monumental codex in four volumes, amongst the largest ever produced in the Muslim West.<sup>19</sup> The manuscript itself is undated, but thanks to four long notes preserved in its margins (Figure 3), we know that on 22 Sha'ban 635/9 March 1238 it was endowed to an unspecified building in Marrakesh by the Almohad prince Abu Ishaq Ibrahim, the brother of al-Murtada.<sup>20</sup> The four identical texts, penned by Abu Ishaq himself, set out the conditions of the donation and name the legal supervisor of the endowment, the jurist Abu Muhammad 'Abd al-Wahid al-Hazmiri, later appointed supreme judge of Marrakesh:

يده الفاتية العبد الفقير إلى الله تعالى المعترف بذنبيه إبرهيم المذكور أعلاه بحضرة مراکش حرسها الله تعالى في يوم الجمعة الثاني والعشرين لشعبان المكرم من سنة خمس وثلاثين وستمائة والصلاة الدائمة على سيدنا محمد النبي الكريم وعلى آله وصحبه وذريته أفضل التسليم ومن الله تعالى أسئلة العفو والمغفرة والرحمة لواهبيها ولمن فعل بها ما ذكرته ولمن قرأ فيها ولمن دعا لهم بالرحمة .ولجميع أمة سيدنا محمد صلى الله عليه وسلم أمين أمين والحمد لله رب العالمين كثيرا وكذلك يقول إبرهيم المذكور إنه جعل النظر فيها للفقير الأجل الأمجد الخطيب الصالح الفاضل أبي محمد عبد الواحد بن مخلوف بن موسى يعطيها لمن رآه برسم القراءة فيها على ما ذكرته ويأخذها منه متى شاء وجعلت له أيضا أن يقرأ فيها متى شاء وجعلت له أيضا أن يجعل النظر فيها بعده لمن شاء كل ذلك على الوجه المذكور لا تباع ولا توهب بل تكون محبسة على ما ذكرته ما بقي الدهر بحول الله تعالى وقوته لا رب غيره وكتب إبرهيم المذكور بخط يده الفاتية في التاريخ المذكور

The owner of this noble Qurʾān, the avowed sinner who seeks the mercy and favour of his Lord, Ibrāhīm, the son of the prince Abū Ibrāhīm, the son [and grandson] of the two commanders of the faithful—may God be pleased with them—declares this noble Qurʾān to be a charitable donation, endowed and immobilised in perpetuity, for the course of all days and nights until the end of time, for the benefit of the good Muslims who wish to read from it. Under no circumstances shall anyone sell it or seize it. Nay! It shall remain a charitable donation and pious endowment, by the might of God, who shall call to account whoever violates what is established here. I request as much from God the exalted, and I pray Him to make me profit from [this good deed]. There is no god but Him—everything will perish except for Him. He has the power, and to Him we shall return. Written by the aforementioned Ibrāhīm, in his own hand, in the city of Marrakesh—may God protect it—on Friday the twenty-second of the honoured Shaʿbān of the year 635. Eternal prayers upon the prophet Muḥammad, his family, his companions, and his descendants, and requests of mercy and forgiveness from God upon whoever reads from [this Qurʾān] and prays devoutly for them, and for the entire community of our lord Muḥammad, peace be upon him, amen, amen, amen.

The aforementioned Ibrāhīm also declares that he has appointed as custodian [of this Qurʾān] the most excellent jurist and most virtuous preacher Abū Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Wāḥid b. Makhlūf b. Mūsā. He shall give it to whomever he wishes for the purpose of reading from it, according to the conditions above, and he shall take it [back] whenever he wishes. He shall also read from it whenever he wishes, and he shall also appoint whomever he wishes to be its custodian after him. All that shall be done according to the conditions above, and let it not be sold or given away—nay! It shall remain a pious endowment as it has been ordained, until the end of time, by the might and power of God. There is no master but Him! Written by the aforementioned Ibrāhīm, in his own hand, on the aforementioned date.



• Figure 3 Colophon of the third volume of an undated Qurʾān in four volumes. In the margin there is an endowment certificate written by the Almohad prince Abu Ishaq Ibrahim in 1238. Istanbul, Topkapı Palace Library, ms. R 23. © Milli Saraylar İdaresi Başkanlığı.

This hitherto unknown document expresses very eloquently the desires and preoccupations that lay behind the endowment of precious Qurʾanic manuscripts by the Almohad elites, at a time when the irremediable decline of their fortunes rendered such symbolic acts of piety and spiritual leadership particularly poignant.

#### The Marinid Takeover: Recasting Continuity

In 1269, the Marinids launched their definitive attack on Marrakesh, conquered southern Morocco and put an end

to the Almohad caliphate. A group of Almohad notables and supporters retreated to Tinnal and defended it as the last bastion of the fallen regime for a few years, until the place was eventually captured by a Marinid contingent in 1275–1276, desecrated and looted.<sup>21</sup> The new rulers aimed to eradicate the cult of Ibn Tumart by removing all visible signs of Almohad patronage, and they seem to have broken at least some of the endowments made to the sanctuary, as suggested by a note left on the Qurʾān donated by al-Murtada twenty-five years earlier. Under the original endowment

▪ **Figure 4** Frontispiece and verse of Surah *Yūnus* (10:26) from a Qur'an copied and illuminated in Málaga in 1223. Note the re-endowment note above the frontispiece. Marrakesh, Ibn Yusuf Library, ms. 430. © Kingdom of Morocco, Ministry of Endowments and Religious Affairs.



certificate, a later hand rectified that the manuscript had been removed from Tinmal, brought to Marrakesh and re-endowed to the Kutubiyya mosque, then known as *jāmi' al-kutubiyyīn* (Figure 1). Other precious Almohad Qur'ans were seized and transferred to the Kutubiyya, presumably under the Marinids: a case in point is the only surviving volume (the eighth) of a manuscript copied and illuminated in Málaga in 1223 (Figure 4). Above and below one of its frontispieces, the very same hand added an endowment note according to the same formula used in the Tinmal Qur'an (*'ḥubbisa 'alā jāmi' al-kutubiyyīn'*), also recording the first words of the volume's opening verse.<sup>22</sup>

Soon after ousting the Almohads from power, the Marinids began to erect their own mosques and madrasas,



and to establish their own places of remembrance on the model of the former dynasty. Most notably, the sultan Abu Yusuf Ya'qub (r. 1258–1286) is said to have built a funerary complex around the tomb of his father, the founder of the Marinid dynasty 'Abd al-Haqq (d. 1217), along the Wargha River in northern Morocco.<sup>23</sup> The Marinid sanctuary was known as Tafartast, and its scant remains were tentatively identified by a team of archaeologists in the 1970s.<sup>24</sup> According to the extant sources, the complex included a mosque and a *zāwīya*, a sort of hostel for pilgrims and pious visitors. The historian Ibn Khaldun (1332–1406) even mentions that in Tafartast the Qur'an was ritually recited by order of the sultan, just as in Tinmal: '[Abū Yūsuf Ya'qūb] created a *ribāṭ* around the tombs of his father 'Abd al-Ḥaqq,

the head of the dynasty, and of ['Abd al-Ḥaqq's] son Idris, placed inscribed marble tombstones on their graves, and appointed readers for the recitation of the Qur'an, endowing lands and estates for that [purpose].<sup>25</sup>

From the point of view of patronage and religious practices, the continuity is evident despite the regime change: the Marinids not only inherited the custom of appointing Qur'anic reciters and endowing Qur'anic manuscripts from the Almohads, but they also espoused it enthusiastically. Both the textual and material evidence suggest that the royal funerary complexes of Shalla (in Rabat) and al-Qulla (in Fes) also housed precious Qur'ans donated by the Marinid sultans, as did the mosques and madrasas of their main cities.<sup>26</sup> For instance, a small repository specifically intended for Qur'anic codices was commissioned by Abu 'Inan Faris (r. 1348–1358) for the Qarawiyyin Mosque of Fes: its wooden door topped by a foundation inscription can still be seen to the left of the mihrab.<sup>27</sup> Interestingly, this arrangement closely mirrors the endowment conditions stipulated a hundred years earlier for the Qur'an donated by al-Murtada to the mosque of 'Ali Ibn Yusuf in Marrakesh, which was to be placed 'in the room reserved for the Qur'ans already endowed to this mosque, on the qibla side, near the mihrab'.<sup>28</sup> Unfortunately, it is not possible to determine where the Qur'anic manuscripts of Tafartast were stored, how and when they were used, and where they had come from. Were they Almohad codices re-endowed to the Marinid sanctuary, or rather newly produced copies?

Be that as it may, it seems that Abu Yusuf Ya'qub was acutely aware of the symbolic importance of appropriating earlier manuscripts and re-endowing them to his new foundations. This can be inferred from a passage in the early fourteenth-century chronicle of Ibn Abi Zar' mentioning the conditions that the sultan imposed on the Castilians after a successful military campaign in al-Andalus:

The truce was signed on Sunday, the twentieth of Sha'bān 684 [21 October 1285]. Then the emir [Abū Yūsuf Ya'qūb] sent Sancho [IV of Castille] back to his country, and ordered [Sancho] to dispatch to

him all the Muslim books and Qur'ans that were in the hands of the Christians and Jews in his country. [Sancho] thus sent him thirteen loads of books, among which were the noble Book of God, works of *tafsīr* (such as those of Ibn 'Aṭṭīya and al-Tha'ālibī), *ḥadīth* and related commentaries (such as *al-Tahdhīb* and *al-Istidhkār*), sources and branches of jurisprudence, Arabic language, and belles-lettres. [The sultan] ordered all that to be sent to Fes and endowed to the students of the madrasa he had founded there—may God make him benefit from such a deed!<sup>29</sup>

Ibn Abi Zar' thus reminds us not only that the early Marinids were significantly active on the Iberian jihad front, but also that they saw al-Andalus as a source of precious manuscripts from earlier periods, which Abu Yusuf was eager to rescue and utilise to boost his own image of victorious holy warrior, pious restorer of the Muslim heritage and patron of learning.<sup>30</sup> However, the symbolic legacy of al-Andalus may have played an important role already in the manuscript endowments of the late Almohads. As we have seen, the last caliphs of Marrakesh owned Qur'ans produced in cities like Seville and Málaga, capitals of a region that they had once ruled and still laid claim to, if only nominally. While the Marinid presence on the Iberian Peninsula was of limited territorial extent and cultural impact, Abu Yusuf and his successors seem to have capitalised on their ownership of Andalusi manuscripts to legitimise themselves as successors of the Almohads on both sides of the Strait of Gibraltar. Whatever their provenance, the ideological message of the Qur'ans re-endowed by the Marinids lay in their re-contextualisation, and in the political and doctrinal allegiance of their new readers and custodians.

#### Politics, Patronage and Pricked Margins

The most compelling evidence of a substantial Marinid campaign of confiscation and re-endowment of Almohad Qur'ans comes from the monumental codex originally owned by Abu Ishaq Ibrahim (Figure 3). In January 1297, some fifty-nine



Figure 5 Added colophon praising the Marinid sultan Abu Ya'qub Yusuf and recording the re-endowment of the manuscript in 1297. Istanbul, Topkapı Palace Library, ms. R 24. © Milli Saraylar İdaresi Başkanlığı.

years after it was first endowed in Marrakesh, the manuscript was provided with a new colophon at the end of its fourth volume, praising the Marinid sultan Abu Ya'qub Yusuf (r. 1286–1307) and recording its re-endowment in New Fes, the Marinid capital (Figure 5). That proves that the sultan

had come into possession of this sumptuous Qur'an by breaking the original Almohad endowment, and that he was fully aware of the symbolic weight of his act. The text of the colophon, entirely written in gold, reads as follows:

أمر بحبس هذا الكتاب العزيز وإصلاحه وجمعه وتحليلته بالذهب وثوب الحرير المذهب ابتغاء وجه الله العظيم ورجاء ثوابه الجسيم أمير المسلمين وناصر الدين المؤيد بالله المنصور بفضل الله ملك الملتين ومالك العدوتين السلطان العادل الكامل الأرفف الأشرف الأظهر الأظهر الأوسع الأصعد المجاهد المبارك أبو يعقوب بن أمير المسلمين وناصر الدين المعضود بالله المؤيد بنصر الله السلطان الأعدل المجاهد الأفضل الأخشى الأخشى الأروع الأروع المبارك المقدس المرحوم أبي يوسف يعقوب بن عبد الحق المريني أدام الله ملكهم وجعل البسيطة ملكهم وذلك بالمدينة البيضاء حضرته بفاس حرسها الله وذلك بتاريخ الموفي عشرين لشهر مولد النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم ربيع الأول المبارك من عام ستة وتسعين وستمائة نفعه الله تعالى بقصده الممدود بالحق اليقين وخذ ملكه إلى يوم الدين وصلى الله على محمد خاتم النبيين والمرسلين

The endowment of this honoured book, its restoration, its assembling, its illumination, and its cover of golden silk were ordered, seeking God's favour and hoping in His generous reward, by the commander of the Muslims and defender of the faith, the helped by God, the victorious through the favour of God, the lord of the two religions and the master of the two sides [of the Strait], the sultan, the just, the perfect, the most gracious and noble, the purest and most distinguished, the most serene and high, the blessed holy warrior Abū Ya'qūb, son of the commander of the Muslims and defender of the faith, the assisted by God, the helped through God's aid, the sultan, the most just, the holy warrior, the most distinguished, the most fearsome and humble, the most pious and redoubtable, the blessed, the saint, the late Abū Yūsuf Ya'qūb, son of 'Abd al-Ḥaqq the Marinid, may God prolong their reign and make the world their possession. This was done in his capital, the White City in Fes [New Fes], may God protect it, on the twentieth of the month of the birth of the Prophet, peace be upon him, the blessed Rabī' al-Awwal of the year 696. May God grant him long-lasting and undisputed success, and prolong his reign until the day of judgment. May God pray upon Muḥammad, the seal of all prophets and messengers.

As one of the earliest attestations of Marinid patronage and titlature, this document is a distillate of ideology that deserves a lengthy discussion. For the purposes of this essay, I will limit myself to pointing out the use of the verbal noun *iṣlāḥ*, which I have translated as 'restoration', although it can equally imply an act of 'reformation' or 'emendation' that the Marinid sultan declares to have carried out on the codex, an indirect reference to the heresy of the Almohads and to his role as the restorer of orthodoxy. It should be noted, however, that there is no evidence of any Marinid alteration of, or addition to, the Qur'an other than this boastful colophon. Evidently, the message that Abu Ya'qub wished to convey through his act of re-endowment was entirely symbolic and did not entail any actual change to the Qur'anic text, nor to the recitation practices hinged on the manuscript.

Presumably at around the same time, the upper margin of each folio was carefully pricked with fine needles to form the word *ḥabs* (pious endowment), the Maghrebi equivalent of the term *waqf* used in the central and eastern Islamic lands (Figure 6). This expedient may have been devised to make the Marinid re-endowment more difficult to break, because notes and certificates simply written with ink could be effaced very easily. Marginal perforations of the same kind also appear in other Qur'ans that can be tentatively

identified as Marinid endowments or re-endowments. A case in point is a manuscript in the British Library that was written on parchment (Figure 7), which may indicate an early Marinid date of production: after the fall of the Almohads paper was seemingly abandoned for these kinds of large, multi-volume codices.<sup>31</sup> A second example is the Qur'an on pink paper originally endowed by the Almohad caliph al-Murtada to the tomb of one of his wives (Figure 2), a lavish manuscript that the Marinids arguably seized and re-endowed like the Qur'an from Tinmal, although under different circumstances. Among the numerous Qur'ans

Figure 6 The word *ḥabs* pricked in the upper margin of one folio. Istanbul, Topkapı Palace Library, ms. R 22. © Milli Saraylar İdaresi Başkanlığı.





Figure 7 Page spread of a Maghribi Qur'an with three verses of Surah *Al-nisā'* (4:117–119). The manuscript is undated. Note the word *hab*s pricked in the upper margins. British Library, ms. Or. 11780. © The British Library Board.



Figure 8 Colophon of the sixteenth volume of a Qur'an made for the library of the sultan Abu Sa'id 'Uthman (r. 1310–1331). Note the word *hab*s pricked in the upper margins. Rabat, National Library of the Kingdom of Morocco, ms. K 2949. © Kingdom of Morocco, Ministry of Culture.

showing margins pricked with the word *hab*s, the latest I could identify is a fragmentary codex in the National Library of Morocco (Figure 8), made for the Marinid sultan Abu Sa'id 'Uthman (r. 1310–1331).<sup>32</sup> It is therefore possible to suggest that this peculiar system was invented in the second half of the thirteenth century and carried on for a few decades of the fourteenth century, before it fell out of use in the later Marinid period.

As reported by Ibn Abi Zar', the re-endowment of earlier books in Marinid Morocco affected not only precious copies of the Qur'an, and this is confirmed by the presence of perforated margins in non-Qur'anic manuscripts, especially of Maliki jurisprudence. For instance, the pages of a calligraphic copy of Malik's *Muwatta'*, written and annotated in Granada in 1148, were pricked to form the words *hab*s li-llāh (endowment to God) (Figure 9.1).<sup>33</sup> The very same expression appears in the upper margins of a manuscript of Sahnun's *Mudawwana*, produced in Calatrava la Vieja (in present-day Castille) between 1113 and 1116 (Figure 9.2). By gathering ancient Maliki commentaries that had escaped the Almohad persecutions, and by donating them to their mosques and madrasas, the Marinids eloquently proclaimed their victory over the former dynasty, but also their endorsement of the Maliki school and its contemporary exponents, the *fuqahā'*, who in turn recognised their legitimacy.<sup>34</sup> Some of these manuscripts, like the two just mentioned, had been copied in Muslim Iberia, and may have reached Morocco with the thirteen loads of books sent to Abu Yusuf Ya'qub by Sancho IV of Castille. While that cannot be securely established, it can be argued that the early Marinid sultans, who boasted the title of 'masters of the two sides of the Strait', invested considerable energy in the re-endowment of books to present themselves not only as defeators of the Almohads and the Christians, but also as rightful heirs to, and preservers of, the manuscript tradition of al-Andalus.

### Conclusion

The practice of endowing and re-endowing Qur'anic codices in the period of regime change that saw the Marinids replace the Almohads reveals interesting elements of both



Figure 9.1-2 The words *hab*s li-llāh (endowment to God) pricked in the upper margins of two Andalusī manuscripts of Malik's *Muwatta'* (9.1 above) and Sahnun's *Mudawwana* (9.2 below). (9.1) Doha, Museum of Islamic Art, MS.320.1999. © The Museum of Islamic Art, Doha. (9.2) Dublin, Chester Beatty Library, ms. Ar. 3006. © The Trustees of the Chester Beatty Library.

continuity and discontinuity. While the political outlook and dynastic preoccupations of the new rulers differed profoundly from those of their predecessors, it seems that the endowment of lavish manuscripts and the establishment of places and posts for their recitation was one of the existing accoutrements of rule adopted by the Marinids to mark their transition 'from tribal leaders to Islamic monarchs'.<sup>35</sup> However, they were also keen and careful to adapt this practice to their own legitimising discourses, and to emphasise certain aspects of discontinuity as part of their political, cultural and religious agenda. As for the manuscripts themselves, it is becoming increasingly clear that expressions such as 'Almohad Qur'ans' and 'Marinid Qur'ans' cannot be related to specific textual, codicological or aesthetic features, but only to extrinsic and mutable factors such as the name and

aims of a Qur'an's owner, the place where it was kept, and the circumstances in which it was read and displayed. For this reason, it is important to approach Maghribi Qur'anic manuscripts (and other religious books) beyond their textuality, as symbolic artefacts and political agents that can be interrogated by art historians just as fruitfully as the places of worship, learning and commemoration that housed them. As I hope to have demonstrated, one way of doing so is to look carefully in their margins.

## Endnotes

1. Massumeh Farhad and Simon Rettig, eds. *The Art of the Qur'an: Treasures from the Museum of Turkish and Islamic Arts*, 2016. For two Maghribi Qur'ans in the Museum of Turkish and Islamic Arts, see Seracettin Şahin, *The 1400th Anniversary of the Qur'an*, 2010, 234–39. See also Zeren Tanındı, 'Quelques corans maghrébins conservés dans les bibliothèques d'Istanbul', *Le Maroc médiéval: un empire de l'Afrique à l'Espagne*, eds. Yannick Lintz, Claire Déléry and Bulle Tuil Leonetti, 2014, 536–539.
2. For a general discussion of bequest statements and colophons in Islamic manuscripts, see Adam Gacek, *Arabic Manuscripts: A Vademecum for Readers*, 2009, 16–18, 71–76.
3. Mercedes García-Arenal, *Messianism and Puritanical Reform: Mahdīs of the Muslim West*, 2006, 174–192, 217–222, 231–234; Mohammed Kably, *Société, pouvoir et religion au Maroc à la fin du « Moyen-Age » (XIV<sup>e</sup> - XV<sup>e</sup> siècle)*, 1986, 55–80, 271–285.
4. Amira Bennison, *The Almoravid and Almohad Empires*, 2016, 115–117; Ambrosio Huici Miranda, *Historia política del Imperio Almohade*, 1956, II, 541–579.
5. Latifa Benjelloun-Laroui, *Les bibliothèques au Maroc*, 1990, 30–31; Ahmed-Chouqui Binebine, *Histoire des bibliothèques au Maroc*, 1992, 40–41.
6. Lintz, Déléry, and Tuil Leonetti, *Le Maroc médiéval*, 371–375; Gaston Deverdun and Mhammed Ghiati, 'Deux taḥbis almohades', *Héspéris* XLI, 1954, 411–423: 414 ff; Muḥammad al-Manūnī, 'Tārīkh al-muṣḥaf al-sharīf bi-l-Maghrib', *Majallat Ma'had al-makḥṭūṭāt al-'Arabiyya* 15/1, May 1969, 3–40: 6, 20–24.
7. Ibn 'Idhārī al-Marrākushī, *Al-Bayān al-mughrib fi ikhtiṣār akhbār mulūk al-Andalus wa-l-Maghrib. Al-qism al-thālīth: tārikh al-Mu-waḥḥidīn*, 1960, 414. Mention of al-Murtada's madrasa is made in the endowment certificates of two manuscripts: Marrakesh, Ibn Yusuf Library, ms. 460, and Rabat, Royal Library, ms. 927. These are the only surviving volumes of a multivolume copy of *Al-Tamhīd li-mā fi al-Muwaṭṭa'a*, authored by the Andalusī jurist Ibn 'Abd al-Barr (d. 1071).
8. Susana Calvo Capilla, 'Peregrination and Ceremonial in the Almohad Mosque of Tinmal', *Beiträge zur Islamischen Kunst und Archäologie VI: Encompassing the Sacred in Islamic Art*, ed. Lorenz Korn and Çiğdem

- İvren, 2020, 81–105; Pascal Burési, 'Les cultes rendus à la tombe du Mahdi Ibn Tūmart à Tinmāl (XII<sup>e</sup>-XIII<sup>e</sup> s.)', *Comptes rendus des séances de l'Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres*, 152/1, March 2008, 391–438.
9. Mehdi Ghouirgate, *L'Ordre almohade (1120–1269). Une nouvelle lecture anthropologique*, 2014, 403–447.
10. Marrakesh, Ibn Yusuf Library, ms. 429. On this Qur'an see Samīr Ayt Ūmghār, 'Min jāmi' Tinmal ilā jāmi' al-kutubiyyīn: riḥlat muṣḥaf Ishbiliyya', *Murrākush madīnat al-ams wa-l-yawm: al-tārīkh al-muta'addid*, ed. Samīr Ayt Ūmghār, 2019, 83–105; Lintz, Déléry, and Tuil Leonetti, *Le Maroc médiéval*, 359; Ḥasan al-Wazzānī, ed. *Dalīl ma'riḍ maṣāḥif al-Maghrib*, 2011, 96–97.
11. On the Almohad 'alāma see Umberto Bongianino, *The Manuscript Tradition of the Islamic West: Maghribī Round Scripts and the Andalusī Identity*, 2022, 343–347.
12. Ibn 'Idhārī, *Al-Bayān al-mughrib*, 402–403.
13. Huici Miranda, *Historia política*, 471–475; Isidro de las Cacicgas, *Sevilla almohade y ultimo años de su vida musulmana*, 1951, 20–28.
14. De las Cacicgas, *Sevilla almohade*, 29–30.
15. Marrakesh, Ibn Yusuf Library, ms. 431. On this Qur'an see Lintz, Déléry, and Tuil Leonetti, *Le Maroc médiéval*, 356–357; al-Wazzānī, ed. *Dalīl ma'riḍ maṣāḥif al-Maghrib*, 100–101.
16. Deverdun and Ghiati, 'Deux taḥbis almohades', 411–414.
17. Huici Miranda, *Historia política*, 629.
18. Ghouirgate, *L'Ordre almohade*, 430–431.
19. Istanbul, Topkapı Palace Library, mss. R 21-24, on which see Fehmi Kadhém Karatay, *Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi Kütüphanesi Arapça Yazmalar Kataloğu*, 1962, vol. 1, 86–87.
20. Huici Miranda, *Historia política*, 625. Abu Ishaq Ibrahim was vizier under the caliph Abu al-Hasan al-Sa'īd (r. 1242–1248) and was reappointed to the same office by al-Murtada upon his accession to the throne.
21. Henri Basset and Henri Terrasse, *Sanctuaires et forteresses almohades*, 1932, 31–33; Ghouirgate, *L'Ordre almohade*, 429, 444.
22. Marrakesh, Ibn Yusuf Library, ms. 430. On this Qur'an, which originally comprised twenty volumes, see Lintz, Déléry, and Tuil Leonetti, *Le Maroc médiéval*, 358; al-Wazzānī, ed. *Dalīl ma'riḍ maṣāḥif al-Maghrib*, 98–99.
23. Amira Bennison, 'Drums, Banners and Baraka: Symbols of Authority during the First Century of Marīnid Rule, 1250–1350', *The Articulation of Power in Medieval Iberia and the Maghrib*, ed. Amira Bennison, 2014, 201.
24. Joudia Hassar-Benslimane, 'A'In Ḳaruash, un nouveau site archéologique islamique dans le Gharb', *Bulletin d'archéologie marocaine* XII, 1979–1980, 361–376.
25. Ibn Khaldun, *Tārīkh al-'allāma Ibn Khaldūn. Kitāb al-'ibar wa-dīwān al-mubtada' wa-l-khabar*, 1999, vol. 13, 435.
26. On the Qur'ans endowed to Shalla, see Lintz, Déléry, and Tuil Leonetti, *Le Maroc médiéval*, 464; al-Wansharīsī, *Al-Mī'yār al-mu'rib wa-l-jāmi' al-mughrib 'an fatāwā ahl Ifriqiyya wa-l-Andalus wa-l-Maghrib*, 1981, vol. 8, 18. A volume from a multivolume Qur'an endowed to the tomb of a Marīnid princess at al-Qulla is in the Qarawiyīn Library, ms. 1966.

27. Xavier Salmon, *Fès mérinide: une capitale pour les arts 1276–1465*, 2021, 36; 'Abd al-Hādī al-Tāzī, *Jāmi' al-Qarawiyīn*, 1972, vol. 2, 332.
28. Deverdun and Ghiati, 'Deux taḥbis almohades', 415–416.
29. Ibn Abi Zar', *Al-Anīs al-muṭrib bi-rawḍ al-qirtās fi akhbār mulūk al-Maghrib wa-tārīkh madīnat Fās*, 1972, 363. The reference is to the Saffarīn Madrasa, then known as *madrasat al-halfāwiyūn*, on which see Salmon, *Fès mérinide*, 136–143.
30. Bennison, 'Drums, Banners and Baraka', 212–213; Kably, *Société, pouvoir et religion*, 80–92.
31. London, British Library, ms. Or. 11780. More research is warranted on the practice of splitting the Qur'anic text into multivolume codices under the Almohads and Marīnids. Apart from the single-volume format, the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries saw the production of Qur'ans in four, six, ten, twelve, twenty, thirty, and sixty volumes.
32. Rabat, National Library of the Kingdom of Morocco, ms. K 2949. On this manuscript see al-Manūnī, 'Tārīkh al-muṣḥaf', 24–26. A volume of this Qur'an is today in Cairo, Al-Azhar Library, ms. 1023 *maṣāḥif*.
33. On this manuscript see the Bernard Quaritch catalogue, *The Qur'an, Scholarship and the Islamic Arts of the Book*, 1999, 33–36.
34. Kably, *Société, pouvoir et religion*, 271, 279–285. On the often turbulent relationship between the Marīnid sultans and the clergy of Fes see Maya Shatzmiller, *The Berbers and the Islamic State: the Marīnid Experience in Pre-Protectorate Morocco*, 2000, 87–93.
35. Bennison, 'Drums, Banners and Baraka', 196. In her work, Maya Shatzmiller also discusses the Marīnids' 'acculturation to Islamic norms': see Shatzmiller, *The Berbers and the Islamic State*, 45–54, 100–104.

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