

Akkadian or West Semitic etymology, before quoting sections of the aforementioned text from Nineveh and of a document from Assur dated to 646 BC (STAT 2 167) in order to reiterate the well-known facts that African, or specifically Egyptian, communities lived within Nineveh and Assur and that some of their members bore names that did not signal their African origins. The brief section “African–Mesopotamian relations: the Neo-Assyrian experience” (pp. 217–9) seeks to place the study into “a historical context, examining the periods before, during, and after Assyrian rule”, using the Amarna period and the Neo-Babylonian Empire as comparisons, and ends in speculation about the fate of the “exiled Africans” after the fall of the Assyrian Empire, without mentioning the fact that Egypt’s Saite Dynasty joined Assyria’s fight against Babylonians and Medes.

After the bibliography (pp. 220–28) and the figures (pp. 229–37), there are appendices offering tables combining the material detailed in the chapter on “the individual level and the biographic perspective” (pp. 238–47) with the categories used in the subsequent chapter for gender/sex, age, class and temporal and spatial distribution, followed by tables of more detailed “demographic statistics” for Karlsson’s groups of identified, likely and anonymous Africans (pp. 247–9) and a table of “Egyptian names and words in cuneiform” (pp. 249–54). The volume concludes with indices of deities, people, places, texts, and Egyptian words (pp. 254–82).

The volume’s main merit is that Mattias Karlsson enables anyone with an interest in the Egyptian, Libyan and Kushite (Nubian) language materials hidden among the masses of onomastic evidence from the Neo-Assyrian textual sources to easily access this data and locate references to the most recent text editions and studies, most of which are available and fully searchable online as part of the Archival Texts of the Assyrian Empire corpus (<http://oracc.museum.upenn.edu/atae/>). Moreover, his table of Egyptian names and words as rendered in cuneiform will be useful for the identification of further Egyptian name material in newly discovered sources. By focusing on the people of African origin living in the Assyrian Empire, the book once again highlights this state’s multi-ethnic nature, especially in the seventh century BC.

doi:10.1017/S0041977X23000022

## **Umberto Bongianino: *The Manuscript Tradition of the Islamic West: Maghrebi Round Scripts and the Andalusí Identity***

**(Edinburgh Studies in Islamic Art.) 528 pp. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2022. £110. ISBN 9781474499583.**

Adday Hernández López

Universidad Complutense Madrid, Madrid, Spain  
[addayher@ucm.es](mailto:addayher@ucm.es)

Pre-modern Maghrebi calligraphy has been an outstanding issue for Arabic palaeography when compared with its Eastern counterparts. Through a thorough analysis of the script employed in a wide corpus of Maghrebi manuscripts, Umberto Bongianino has taken the first step towards filling what he describes as “a disconcerting gap” in the scholarship,



while also managing to reconstruct the activities of the calligraphers, copyists, notaries, and secretaries who produced this corpus.

The palaeographic analysis of around 250 manuscripts and documents produced in the Islamic West between 270/883 and 600/1204 has allowed Bongianino to identify and detail various previously unknown Maghrebi sub-styles and calligraphic modes. This achievement is accompanied by a detailed analysis of the historical context, which facilitates a better understanding of how this family of scripts developed as an expression of Andalusí cultural identity. According to the author, this calligraphic tradition has its origins in the scribal milieu of the Umayyad dynasty, that is, between the late third/ninth and early fourth/tenth centuries. Moreover, Bongianino points to the influence of the Christian communities of Iberia – an important component of Andalusí society – and their Latin-Visigothic substrate as one of the reasons behind the specificity of the Andalusí (and later Maghrebi) scripts. If Bongianino is right, his assumption constitutes a great discovery, since to my knowledge Andalusí script has previously been classified as a sub-group of the Maghrebi calligraphic style, and not as the original source of the whole Maghrebi family of scripts.

The volume includes illuminating pictures of some of the manuscripts, highlighting the special features of the Maghrebi scripts under analysis, and is divided into five chapters.

The introduction, written in an inviting and engaging style, recreates the historical and social conditions under which ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq Ibn ‘Aṭīyya (481/1088–541/1147), the last chief judge of Almoravid Almería, finished his *Fahrasa* (index), a work in which he carefully listed all the masters from whom he had gained knowledge, along with the books they had written. Bongianino presents here the particular case of the codex *ms. árabe* 1733, preserved in the Royal Library of the Monastery of St. Lorenzo in El Escorial (Madrid), which contains Ibn ‘Aṭīyya’s *Fahrasa*. According to him, this book is an example of the extent to which most of the preserved Maghrebi manuscripts have until now remained “misdated, misrepresented and misunderstood”. He likewise demonstrates that it is not an autograph item as previously thought, shifting the focus from the writing to the copying.

After the introductory chapter, in which Bongianino denies the Tunisian origin of the Maghrebi scripts, in chapter 2 he brings to the table the earliest evidence demonstrating the appearance of round scripts in an Andalusí context, with the emergence of two varieties and the possible influence of Visigothic Latin.

Chapters 3 and 4 offer a description of the evolution and spread of these Maghrebi (formerly just Andalusí) round scripts from the fifth/eleventh century onward, and their new features, which gradually became differentiated by geographical area. This, he argues, signals a professionalization and specialization of the copyists, and of calligraphy itself.

By employing prestigious Andalusí secretaries and calligraphers the Berber dynasties, and the Almohads in particular, found a means of legitimation while at the same time spreading the Andalusí script all across North Africa from the sixth/twelfth century onward. However, Bongianino has yet to offer an explanation for the exceptional development that took place afterwards, a subject on which he expresses his intention to continue investigating.

In the fifth and final chapter, the author includes an analysis of Qurānic manuscripts that illustrate the definitive rupture with the Kufic style that had traditionally been employed to copy the Qurān, alongside an examination of ten chancery documents.

In conclusion, Bongianino points to Ibn Khaldun’s insistence, in his *Muqaddima*, on the “idiosyncratic, self-contained nature of the Andalusí scribal milieu under the Umayyad dynasty” as a possible explanation for the birth of the Maghribi family of scripts:

With the Umayyads, al-Andalus became a separate political entity. They developed distinctive conditions as to sedentary culture, the crafts, and writing styles. As a result, their Andalusi script, as it is known today, also became special.

Finally, several useful appendices complete the volume, namely a list of the manuscripts considered, the works they contain, the copyists, the places where the manuscripts were copied, and remarkable colophons and notes, as well as an extremely useful glossary containing the codicological terms employed throughout the book. If I had to find one fault, it might be that the index of copied works is organized alphabetically by genre (*Adab and Botany; Adab and Meteorology ...*), whereas perhaps it would have been more practical to organize them simply by title, indicating the genre at the end. However, this probably responds to Bongianino's aim of linking the diverse genres to one or another variety of script.

This monograph on the manuscript tradition of the Islamic West is an invaluable contribution to the field of Islamic intellectual and cultural history. By focusing not just on the content of the texts, but also (and mainly) on the material aspects of the artefacts wherein those texts were copied, Bongianino provides the reader with a framework that allows for a better understanding of the written production, and of the way in which those works were written, read, transmitted, taught, and preserved – a relatively overlooked aspect in the history of the Muslim communities of this geographic area. In brief, this publication will surely become a definitive reference work in the field, preparing the ground for future research.

doi:10.1017/S0041977X23000423

## **Nadine Schibille: *Islamic Glass in the Making: Chronological and Geographical Dimensions***

**Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2022. ISBN 978 946270319 3.**

Veronica Occari

UCL Institute of Archaeology, London, UK  
[veronica.occari.16@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:veronica.occari.16@ucl.ac.uk)

This is a critical evaluation and (re)interpretation of analytical data of archaeological glass finds from different time periods and geographical regions of the early Islamic world. It significantly advances our understanding of the early Islamic glassmaking industry. Its main aim is to establish geo-chronological compositional markers to distinguish different production groups, and provide insights into the manufacture and circulation of glass in the early Islamic world. It achieves this through the examination of assemblages from early Islamic Egypt, Syria, Mesopotamia, and Spain and by tying the compositional data to the broader socio-economic context. The result is a journey through the different processes that over the centuries shaped an Islamic glassmaking tradition, its interconnectivity, but also its internal divisions and regional peculiarities. Schibille is a senior research scientist at the CNRS and has published extensively on many of the materials discussed in the text, and this work reads in many ways as a synthesis of this very often collaborative work.