

Furqân Visits Fez

A Berber Boy Discovers His Destiny

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King Fahd National Library Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Nagy , Luqman

Furqan Visit Faz. / Luqman Nagy 1 - Riyadh , 2011

51p : 29cm

ISBN : 978-603-500-127-4

1- Fez (Morocco) - Description and travel

2- Storytelling 3- Children - Books and reading

1-Title

916.4044 dc

1432/5451

L.D. no. 1432/5451

ISBN : 978-603-500-127-4

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Editions & Librairie Essalam

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E-mail: essalam@essalam.com.

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WRITTEN & ILLUSTRATED BY
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PREFACE

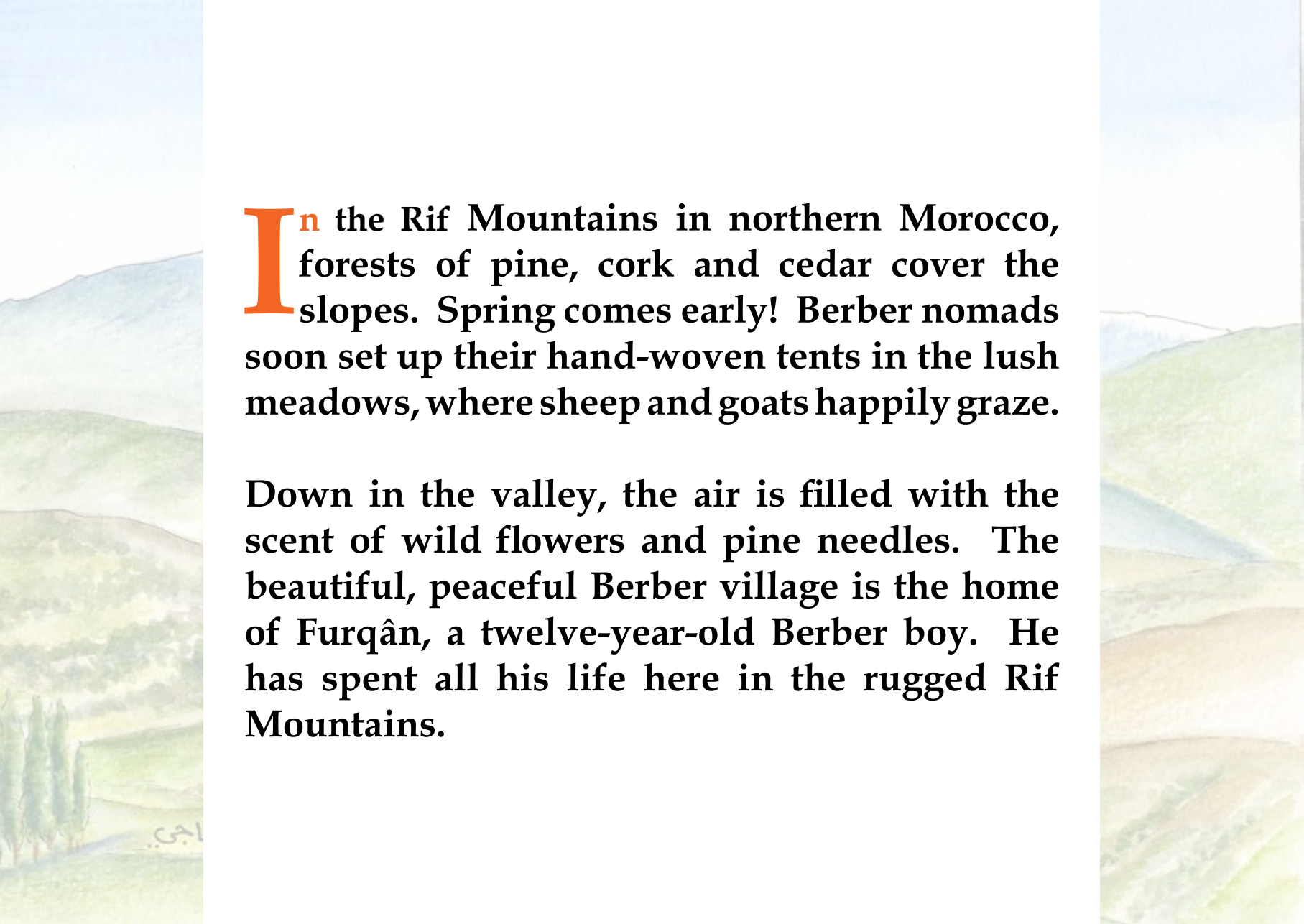
Within a few centuries of its birth in the deserts of Arabia, the universal message of Islam had quickly spread east and west to distant regions of the known world. By the 10th century CE, *Dar al-Islam* had become a land of civilized urban centres such as Samarqand, Baghdad, Damascus, Cairo, San'a, Qayrawan and Cordoba. All of these cities – along with many others – became not only important seats of Islamic scholarship, but also great trading emporia. Their markets (Arabic *sûq* [سوق], Persian *bâzâr* [بازار]) became famous for selling every known commodity. For example, Ibn Khaldun, the great 14th century Arab social historian, was amazed at the grandeur of Mamluk Cairo, when he first visited it. He described the city as “the metropolis of the universe, the garden of the world, the nest of human species, the gateway to Islam, ...”

Once Islamized, Morocco in the ‘Far West’, also established urban centres rivaling those of the east. Fez (Arabic *Fâs* [فاس]), for instance, with its sprawling *sûq* and Qarawiyyin Mosque/University, became the cultural jewel of all northwest Africa. Unfortunately, today, most of the great Islamic cities of the past have become modernized – losing both their inherent charm and beauty in the process. Fez is a rare exception. Its *sûq* remains the heart of the present-day city – a ‘city within a city’, possessing its own economy and unique traditional way of life. It occupies the greater part of Fez through which it flows like a river.

This book attempts to take its readers into the very heart of Fez, the ‘City of Islam’, whose bustling medieval *sûq* is a beehive of activity from dawn until dusk – a place where 30,000 master craftsmen, representing hundreds of different trades, eke out livelihoods in total accordance with the Noble Qur’an and the *Sunnah* of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. It’s also a place where any act, however humble, is believed to bring one closer to Allah.

This book relates the story of Furqân, a young Berber boy living in the 21st century, who makes his first visit to the remarkable city of Fez. He is undecided about what career path to follow until he spends a day in the *sûq*, where he finally makes a life-changing decision.

Furqân Visits Fez celebrates the noble and devout Muslim craftsmen and scholars of the *sûq*, whose varied artistic contributions have made Fez one of the great centres of Islamic civilization. *Insha’Allah*, readers will find this journey through the *sûq* – still a unique and essential part of Islamic society – both entertaining and educational.

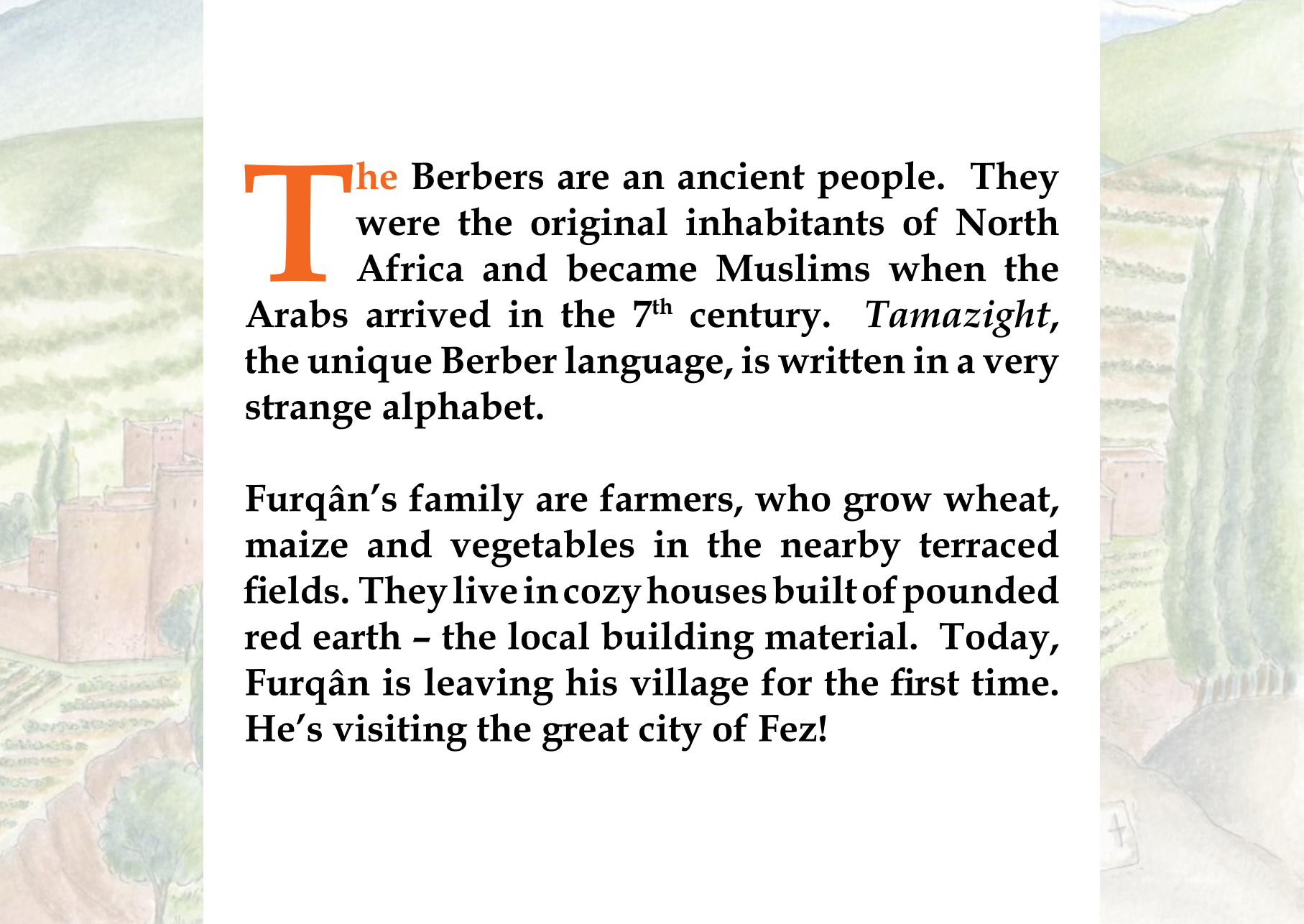


In the Rif Mountains in northern Morocco, forests of pine, cork and cedar cover the slopes. Spring comes early! Berber nomads soon set up their hand-woven tents in the lush meadows, where sheep and goats happily graze.

Down in the valley, the air is filled with the scent of wild flowers and pine needles. The beautiful, peaceful Berber village is the home of Furqân, a twelve-year-old Berber boy. He has spent all his life here in the rugged Rif Mountains.



ناجي




The Berbers are an ancient people. They were the original inhabitants of North Africa and became Muslims when the Arabs arrived in the 7th century. *Tamazight*, the unique Berber language, is written in a very strange alphabet.

Furqân's family are farmers, who grow wheat, maize and vegetables in the nearby terraced fields. They live in cozy houses built of pounded red earth – the local building material. Today, Furqân is leaving his village for the first time. He's visiting the great city of Fez!




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ناجی




The journey from the Rif Mountains to Fez takes only a few hours. Furqân soon arrives at one of the city's ancient gates. From outside, Fez resembles an enormous rock crystal encased within its crumbling city walls. Fez is indeed a precious jewel!

The green rooftops of the Qarawiyyin Mosque/University sparkle like an emerald in the morning sun. Furqân is eager to enter the 'City of Islam'. He yearns to visit the mosques, *madrasahs* and the *sûq* – the city's amazing marketplace.




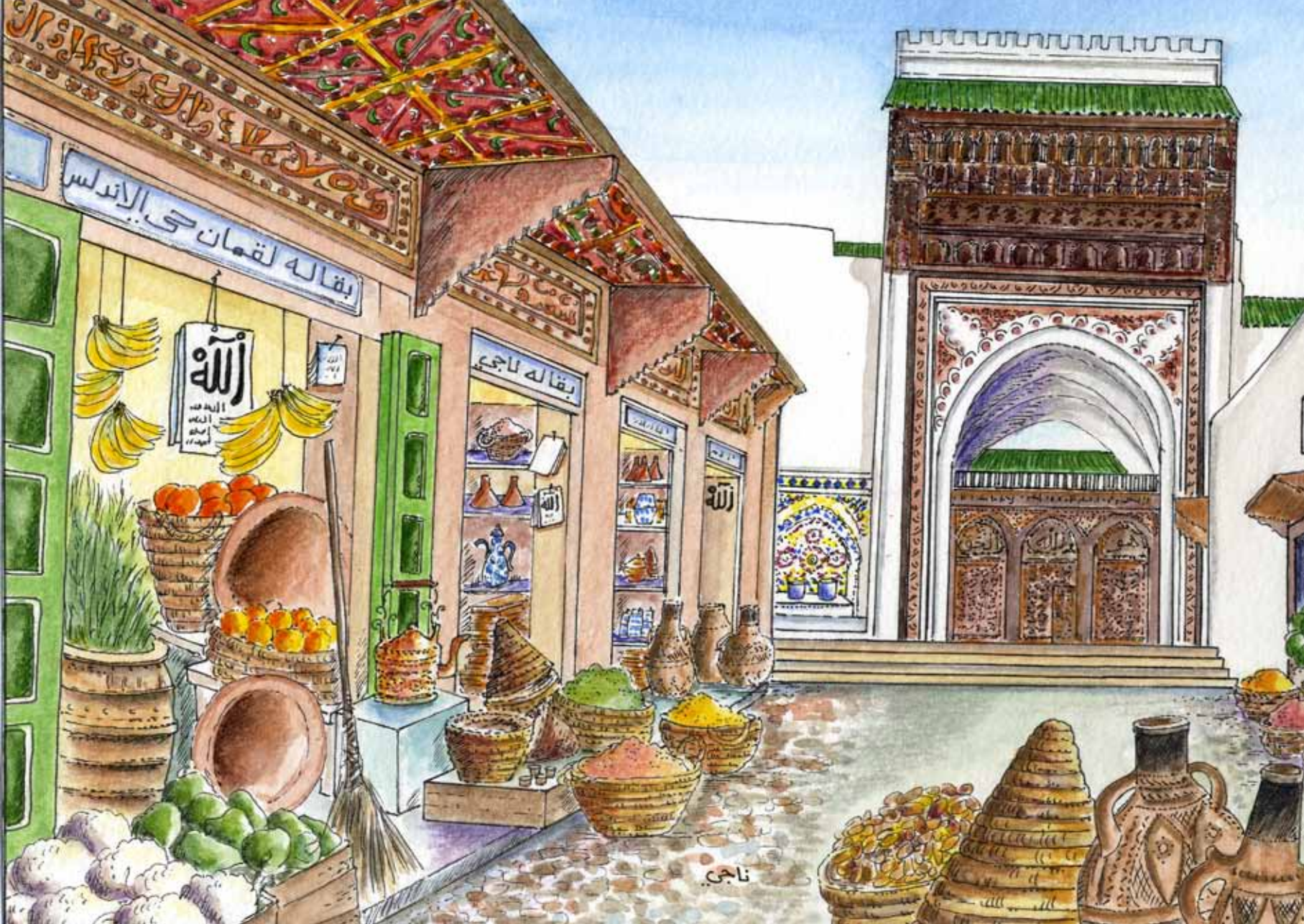



An illustration of a market stall. A sign at the top reads 'شان في الاندلس' (Shan fi al-Andalus). Below it, bunches of yellow bananas hang from a rack. A white sign with Arabic calligraphy is also visible. In the foreground, there are baskets of oranges and a large potted plant.

The *sûq* is a maze of narrow alleyways lined with tiny shops and *fundûqs* – warehouses overflowing with exotic merchandise. “*Balek, Balek!*” “Make way, Make way!” shout the mule train owners as the pack animals carry their loads through the marketplace. Furqân loves the excitement of the *sûq*!

The Al-Andalus quarter of Fez is the home of many skilled craftsmen. They are the descendents of artisans who fled southern Spain five hundred years ago! Their beautiful mosque stands at the top of a hill.


An illustration of a street scene. On the left, a tall building with a green roof and a crenellated top. In the foreground, there are several large, ornate metal pots or jugs. To the right, a small stall displays various items, including what looks like a bowl of fruit or flowers.





More than six hundred years ago, the Moroccan sultan, Abu Inan, built a beautiful *madrasah* in the middle of the *sûq*. He also built a remarkable water clock on a wall high above the street. The device was called *Dar al-Magana*, or 'clock house'.

No one knows exactly how the clock worked, but each hour one of the twelve doors above the twelve brass bowls would open. A bell would ring to indicate the time for prayers, ... not the time for starting and finishing work!





ناجي