

# كود لاروت

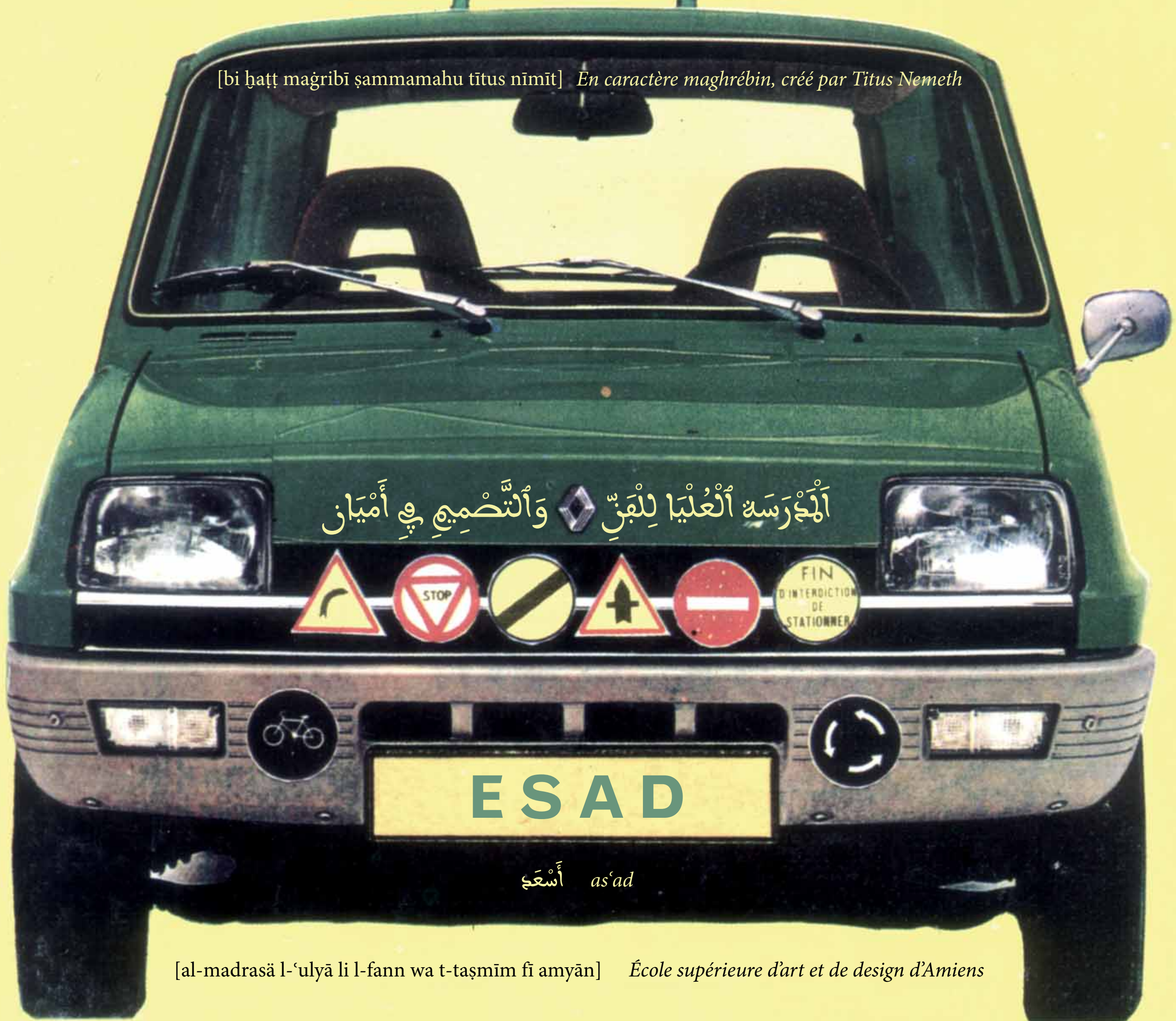
[kūd lārūt] Code de la route

# بالدارجة المغربية

[bi d-dāriġā l-maġribiyyā] En dialecte (sic) marocain

بِحَطِّ مَغْرِبِي صَمَّهْ تَيْتُوسْ نِيْمِيْتْ

[bi ḥaṭṭ maġribī ṣammamahu tītus nīmīt] En caractère maghrébin, créé par Titus Nemeth



أَسْعَدْ as'ad

[al-madrasā l-'ulyā li l-fann wa t-taṣmīm fī amyān] École supérieure d'art et de design d'Amiens

## The Maghreb

The term Maghreb **المَغْرِبُ الْعَرَبِيّ** (al-mağrib al-‘arabī) generally connotes a region containing Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia, but in older Arabic usage pertained only to the area of the three countries between the high ranges of the Atlas Mountains and the Mediterranean Sea. Its Arabic meaning is “place of sunset” or “western”. Relatively isolated from the rest of the continent and the Eastern Arab countries by the Atlas Mountains and the Sahara, the Maghreb has long been closely tied in terms of climate, landforms, population, economy, and history to the Mediterranean basin.

The Maghreb is home to distinct cultural achievements that were born from a mix of peoples and influences. Although the region fell to the Arab conquest in the 8th century and maintained closely linked to the Arab culture, most notably through the shared religion, the Maghreb developed quite differently to the Middle East. While exposed to assimilation attempts from changing rulers, the Berber people largely maintained their culture and language up to the present day; significant native Jewish populations shaped important cultural aspects; Ottoman rule introduced Turkish influence and most recently, European notions imported through colonialism have all participated in creating a unique cultural landscape.

*(this paragraph is partly based on the wikipedia article “Maghreb”)*

## Language and script

While all Arabs speak colloquial variations that diverge to different degrees from the literary Arabic **الْفُصْحَى** (al-fuṣḥā), the Moroccan language is so fundamentally different that it needs to be considered not a dialect, but a distinct language. Hence, the term **بِالدَّارِجَةِ الْمَغْرِبِيَّةِ** (bi d-dāriġä l-mağribiyyä ) used on the recto side of this poster is essentially wrong. Yet, for ease of communication and moreover, to reproduce the source that inspired its design, it seemed a justified rendering in the given context.

The calligraphic style developed in the region, though as distinct as the language, is linguistically speaking irrelevant. Or in other words, there is no relation between the Maghribi script **الْحَطُّ الْمَغْرِبِيُّ** (al-ḥaṭ l-mağribiyy) and Moroccan or any other language spoken in the Maghreb. Indeed, the majority of historic manuscripts written in the Maghribi script are written in literary Arabic. Written expressions of Moroccan or other so-called dialects of literary Arabic are the exception for there are no prescriptive grammars and script-conventions. The question remains a politically loaded issue to the present day, manifest in the fact that France is the only country that recognises Moroccan as an official language.

*Tinted areas indicate centres of Maghribi calligraphy along current national borders. The distinction between dark grey and grey stripes corresponds to different historic periods. Spain obviously ceased to practise the Maghribi calligraphy much earlier than the heartlands in North Africa.*



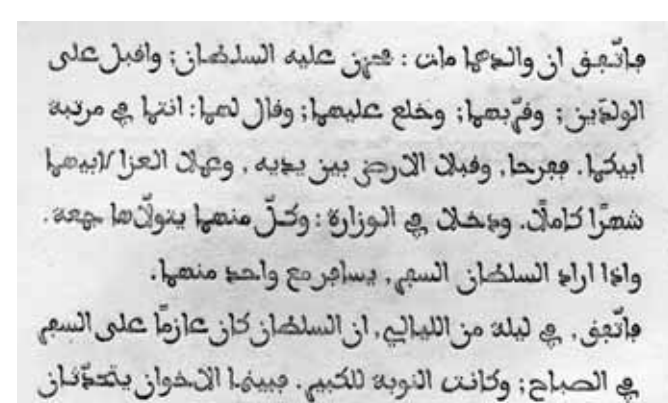
## The Maghribi script

The first traces of a distinct calligraphic style from the Maghreb date to the 10th century. While theories regarding its origin differ, the common denominator is that calligraphy in the Maghreb developed differently and independently from the craft practised in the Middle East. In its geographically distant position, Maghribi calligraphy took a different path and was only marginally influenced from other centres of cultural importance. The Maghribi style was, however, practised in a large area, stretching from Tunisia to Morocco and today's Spain. But apart from its geographic outreach, this style is remarkable for its continued use for roughly 900 years with relatively little changes to its characteristics. Up until the advent of lithography, scribes in the region produced manuscripts that are stunningly close to pieces sometimes produced hundreds of years earlier. This consistency is not absolute as there are stylistic and probably also regional and epoch-related variations, but all this needs to be thoroughly investigated and forms another aspect of this research.

## The Maghribi typeface

The typeface presented here is a historic revival and aspires to be in the category that John Downer classifies as *Revivals/Recuttings/Reclamations*. It forms part of a larger study about the Maghribi script, its history, its calligraphic and its typographic renderings. On

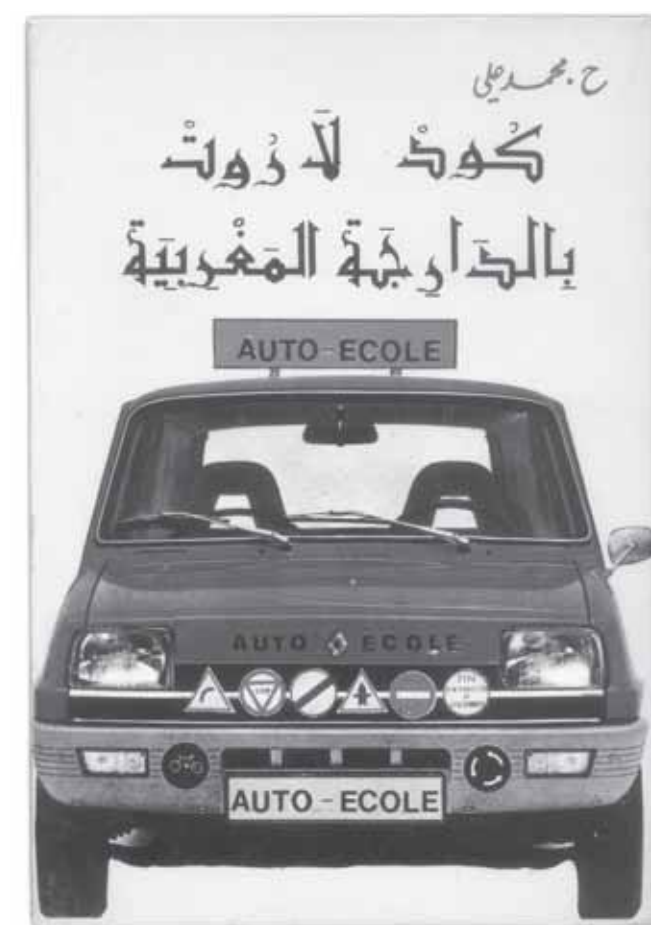
one hand, this typeface is the result of an exercise that aims to achieve a closer understanding of a historic process, craft and model. But more importantly, its motivation is to preserve a typographic milestone and make it accessible for contemporary Arabic typography.



*Sample of the imprint of the metal fount, original size.*

The source and inspiration of this revival is a typeface I stumbled across in the personal collection of a friend. Used in a small publication of typical nineteenth century Orientalism, this typeface immediately caught my attention. The book was published in Paris in 1893 (first edition 1853), and I had not come across this fount yet. It obviously predated mechanised typesetting, and indeed, as my research showed, it stems from a different period. In 1846, Marcellin Legrand was commissioned to cut a set of Arabic punches. This set was cut on a 24 point body, but the book I had seen was printed using a much smaller fount. Following further research and according to the sparse literature, Legrand cut a 17 point face only four years later. Both sizes are called

*Arabe Maghrébin*, but I only found printed traces of the smaller fount. It was used for a handful of publications in the tumultuous second half of the nineteenth century and made a final re-appearance as late as 1960, in a little publication of Berber poems. After this, it left the stage and was widely forgotten. I have not come across a single reference in any account of Arabic typographic history, but only sparse notes in old specimens. This revival and its accompanying research intends to shed some light on a gem of Arabic typographic history and this French contribution to the field.



*This poster also plays with the notion of revival. It is based on the cover of a 1970s driving school book from Morocco. Written in dāriġä it is a remarkable testimony of the regional culture. It is worth noting that while literary Arabic is the official language, in questions of survival such as a driving manual, the actually used language (the so-called dialect) is chosen.*

*The original cover employs a typeface typical for the period. Eventually, the links to France through the title (kūd lārüt), the Renault 5 and the motto of «Auto École» made it an appropriate choice for this poster.*

*Projet réalisé dans le cadre du Post-Diplôme « Systèmes graphiques, typographie & langage » de l'École supérieure d'art et de design d'Amiens*  
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