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Les périples de Kalila et Dimna.
Quand les fables voyagent dans la littérature et les arts du monde islamique / The journeys of Kalila and Dimna. Fables in the Literature and Arts of the Islamic World

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In my opinion, this book stands out as one of the most important contributions to the study of so-called 'Arab painting' for many years. Beyond its content, its methodology marks a turning point and should represent a model for all future research in the field. In the first place, the editors should be commended for attempting something other than studying 'Arab painting', a field that is as vast as it is ill-defined and poorly known and understood. The first major contribution of the book is thus to focus on a coherent and well-defined corpus, which consists of the Arabic manuscripts and more specifically the Arabic illustrated manuscripts of *Kalila wa Dimna*. This collection of fables of Indian origin was translated and extended in Middle Persian in the 6th century and from there into Arabic by Ibn al-Muqaffa' in the mid-8th century, to become a classic of world literature. The choice of this corpus is particularly relevant because, as Beatrice Gruendler reminds us, "the Arabic version of *Kalila and Dimna* is the direct or indirect source of all later translations, the starting point of its global dissemination," and this book is "the most widely distributed and translated book in the history of literature," as well as "one of the most frequently illustrated books," (p. 3), within the Arabic-speaking lands and beyond. As such, the second major contribution of the book is that the study of this corpus is not undertaken by a single scholar, but split between members of a multidisciplinary, bilingual team, cross-fertilizing various approaches and questions on the history of the text, the manuscripts and the paintings. Last but not least, this volume also broadens the spatio-temporal horizon to which 'Arab painting' is usually confined, by examining not only medieval, but also early modern

manuscripts up to the 18th century, as well as Arabic manuscripts in comparison with other linguistic, literary and pictorial 'schools', from the Ottoman Empire to Mughal India.

This book is thus a collective work consisting of four sections, thirteen chapters, and a catalogue of forty-six Arabic illustrated manuscripts of *Kalila wa Dimna* and related texts such as *Sulwān al-muṭā*. The sections are entitled: *Texts and paratexts*, *Questions of filiation*, *Building the image*, and *Oriental adaptations*. However, in order to better highlight the contribution of the individual articles and the perspectives they open up, I will present them in a different order.

One of the major problems in the study of 'Arab painting' is that most art historians have only a rather superficial knowledge of the texts that these paintings accompany and illustrate. Similarly, literary historians usually give little or no consideration to individual manuscripts and paintings. In fact, very few people have sufficiently solid training in both art history and literary history to study these two aspects concomitantly; hence the importance of teamwork and joint studies on illustrated manuscripts. The first chapter of the book, by Béatrice Gruendler, focuses on the Arabic text of *Kalila wa Dimna*, but unlike previous research on this text, B. Gruendler's study, carried out within the framework of a European research project (AnonymClassic), proposes for the first time to consider the entire corpus of complete Arabic manuscripts of the text, estimated at roughly 140 specimens, including illustrated ones.

B. Gruendler indicates from the outset that Ibn al-Muqaffa's original text is not only lost, but also impossible to reconstruct given the "lack of anything one might term "groups"" of manuscripts (p. 13) and the extreme diversity of the manuscripts. Starting with the preface by Ibn al-Muqaffa' himself, *Kalila wa Dimna* is usually presented as a work that straddles the line between wisdom and entertainment (see for example ch. 4, p. 95...). B. Gruendler further highlights the fact that it occupies a position between classical and anonymous/popular literature – A. Contadini describes it as: "rather than a mirror for princes, [...] a mirror for humanity" (ch. 4, p. 96) – and between written transmission, which usually preserves a minimum degree of stability, and oral transmission, which leaves more room for fluctuation and transformation. She argues that it is the result of a written transmission that is, nonetheless, fluctuating and cumulative, a "redactional continuum" (p. 13), which raises many questions about the nature of the changes from one manuscript to another, the authors of these changes and their motivations. B. Gruendler answers some of these questions by

comparing a sample of seven manuscripts dating from the 13th up to the 17th Century, and two chapters: Ibn al-Muqaffa's preface of "The purpose of the book" and "The cat and the rat." Each chapter is subdivided into meaning units, called "meaningful segments." B. Gruendler reveals that these segments differ considerably from one manuscript to another in number but also in formulation. Some manuscripts seem to use several sources (*Vorlagen*) at the same time, depending on the chapters and even within the same chapter, especially at the chapter's end and in the passages essential to its main message. In addition, most manuscripts show unique meaningful segments and formulations, which can be attributed to the copyists who, thus, appear as redactors, rewriters or co-authors, acting in and for different social milieux, notably achieving intra-lingual translations, below the elite. As such, B. Gruendler argues that *Kalila wa Dimna* was received and used not only as a book of wisdom, but also as a book that embodied an ideal of education, allowing to acquire and uphold a learned status (p. 34).

This form of reception of the text is extremely interesting. In this respect, B. Gruendler's remarks on its "mainly written (not oral) transmission" (p. 6) perhaps deserve to be nuanced. She indicates that "scant evidence of oral retelling has been found" (p. 6, n. 14) but she does not expand on this idea. This is probably an "*effet de source*": the choice of focusing on complete manuscripts to the detriment of other types of manuscripts such as collections of selected tales, for example, risks distorting our perception of the history of the text and its reception, or at least, ignoring important facets of its transmission, especially its oral transmission. Indeed, among the sources of the book are oral sources, including South Asian ones (see ch. 4, p. 96, 98; ch. 8, p. 233). Moreover, many Arabic manuscripts of *Kalila wa Dimna* bear written notes, some of which suggesting not only a below-the-elite transmission, but also most likely oral transmission, especially for teaching purposes. Another argument lies in the paintings. As shown in particular by Alain George in relation to another corpus of Arabic illustrated manuscripts, the *Maqāmāt*, and as is also known from the study of Persian illustrated manuscripts, illustrated manuscripts and paintings seem to have often been the subject of discussions in circles of sociability.

Although the specimen studied by B. Gruendler includes manuscripts with illustrations (BnF, Arabe 3465 and 5881; BL, Or. 4044), unfilled spaces for illustrations (BnF, Arabe 3466) and illustration captions (BnF, Arabe 3473), she does not comment on this aspect in detail. However, her twofold analysis

method, with a macroanalysis of the composition of the text broken down into meaningful segments and a micronanalysis of its formulation can provide very valuable methodological tools for the study of the paintings. Firstly, it stresses the importance of looking at the individual text of each individual manuscript in detail. In addition, the division of the text into meaningful segments, and the division of these segments into categories (frame dialogue, third-person narrative within the fable, interior monologue or dialogue, analogical images, maxims, and paratexts) (p. 9) could serve as a template for analysing and comparing iconographic programmes. Similarly, and in line with B. Gruendler's observations on A5881 and its paintings (p. 29-30), the study of the textual changes could be articulated with that of the paintings, which can be seen as additional changes to the manuscripts: Do the paintings paraphrase the text, change its sense slightly, reinterpret it more radically, or extend it, and in what way and for what purpose? Are there links between textual changes and images? For instance, are there links between the focus of the text on the ethical and philosophical ideas or on the narrative, and the absence/presence of images? Or between the level of language (classical Arabic vs Middle Arabic) and the quantity and quality of paintings? The fact that illustrated manuscripts show both similarities and dissimilarities is often explained by the hypothesis that they do not copy each other directly but draw on a common model, now lost (see e.g. ch. 5, p. 162, 164; ch. 8, p. 253). However, B. Gruendler's article rather suggests that slavish copying is extremely rare, if not non-existent, and that every 'copy' is in fact a more or less original recreation/reinvention motivated by precise reasons in a particular context that we should try to understand. In this regard, the question of the agency as well as of the anonymity of the copyist-redactors or, as B. Gruendler puts it, "anonymity as a type of authorship" (p. 33) can also be extended to the painters. Can the anonymous production of manuscripts and of paintings be situated in and explained by similar social contexts? Does the presence of paintings in Arabic manuscripts in itself reflect a less educated audience? Alongside the notion of a "redactional continuum," would it be possible to define a 'receptional' continuum?

Parallel to B. Gruendler's idea of "a redactional continuum" is Anna Contadini's idea of "visual intertextuality" in chapter 4. It seems to me, however, that it is preferable to use the term "intericonicity," which started to be theorised some fifteen years ago. A. Contadini cites numerous examples, from Mathura to Florence and from the 3rd up to the 16th century.

However, the main idea that “iconographic types travel” and that “there is a strong probability of elements of continuity” (p. 114), which had already been developed in particular by Julian Raby (see also ch. 8, p. 232), remains impossible to substantiate for lack of sufficiently documented specimens. A. Contadini also raises other questions, about patronage and readership, text-image relations, the aims of the images, and production centres... pointing to the main research perspectives in the field.

Some of these issues related to the production, circulation and reception of illustrated manuscripts are discussed in more detail in other chapters. As far as production is concerned, Nathalie Buisson and Annie Vernay-Nouri examine the painting materials of seven illustrated Arabic manuscripts (6 *Kalila wa Dimna*-s, and one *Maqāmāt*) dating from the 13th (BnF, Arabe 3465 (the oldest illustrated Arabic *Kalila wa Dimna*) and A6094 (*Maqāmāt*)), 14th (A3467) and 17th-18th centuries (A3472, 5881, 3475, 3470) (ch. 9). In addition to highlighting an evolution in the painting materials used, this study underlines that in the medieval manuscripts, the application of colours is more nuanced than previously thought, with, for instance, gradations, small touches and relief effects. Moreover, this study helps to answer several long-standing questions. For example, it suggests that *Kalila wa Dimna* A3465 and the *Maqāmāt* A6094, which are often associated with one another, were not made by the same artist. Moreover, it reveals that in medieval manuscripts, the preparatory drawing in red ink is not always followed by the colours, which may suggest the intervention of two different people for the drawing and colouring. As for later manuscripts, the study improves our knowledge of A3465: the added pages appear to be the work of two different painters who can be linked to other manuscripts, including A3470. The study also reveals features such as drypoint engraved lines and identical or inverted forms, suggesting that some manuscripts were copied after earlier models (perhaps A3465 for A3470 and Rabat for A3475; see also ch. 5, p. 154-156). Beyond extending our knowledge of the history of the pictorial materials, this study thus shows how physico-chemical analyses can contribute to a better understanding of the history of the manuscripts, their circulation and their reception and impact.

The relationships between manuscripts are also studied in chapters 5, by Annie Vernay-Nouri, 10, by Yves Porter in collaboration with Richard Castine, 6, by Bernard O’Kane, and 8, by Éloïse Brac de la Perrière. A. Vernay-Nouri returns to A3465 in more detail. Although the manuscript is undoubtedly

essentially from the early 13th century, it shows no less than seven types of paper, seven copyists’ hands, some showing orthographic particularities, three painters’ hands, and different added notes, as well as restorations, retouching and repainting. The Coptic foliation, which is often used as a reason to attribute the manuscript to Egypt, is not original but probably from the 14th century, which calls for nuancing this attribution. The codex also stands out in that many animals’ contours have been outlined with a thick black line, which seems to have been used to reproduce them in other, now lost manuscripts. The author also studies two (direct or indirect?) later copies: A3470 and Bodleian, E.D. Clarke Or. 9. In line with B. Gruendler’s conclusions, and despite the obvious relationships between the three manuscripts (particularly the image of an elephant that overlaps perfectly in all three copies, which suggests the use of a tracing paper or a stencil), each features unique illustrations which do not appear in the other two. Moreover, the paintings in A3470 and the Bodleian volume seem to have been copied after A3465 and other models, the latter using tracing papers or stencils. Two other manuscripts, one in the Munich Staatsbibliothek, Arab 615, the other sold at Christie’s in 2003, also seem to be related to this group in the late 17th century but they deserve further study. Just as B. Gruendler highlights the crucial importance of studying the text of each manuscript, A. Vernay-Nouri underlines the equal importance of examining the materiality of each manuscript. Indeed, the codicology, scripts, illuminations and paintings are essential to an accurate understanding of the history of a manuscript and its impact, and it is obvious that combining the two approaches to the manuscript, as a unique copy of a text and a unique physical object, is a prerequisite for any solid conclusion.

Chapters 10 and 6 appear in two different sections although they deal with the same manuscript: the second-oldest Arabic illustrated *Kalila wa Dimna*, datable to the late 13th century, now in Rabat, and chapter 6 also with its later copy (BnF, Arabe 3475, dated 1761). Yves Porter and Richard Castine propose an iconographic study with a focus on the Mongol costumes, which are one of the main particularities of this volume and whose meaning they question: are they to be read as indicators of different social statuses, as a tribute to the Mongols’ hegemony or as a denunciation of the Mongols as invaders? The article concludes that the actual power holders are systematically dressed as Mongols, but the other characters fluctuate. For instance, the same character may be represented as a Mongol or as an Arab. The story of the husband who surprises his wife’s lover is

illustrated by two paintings; the first shows the lover dressed as a Mongol, the second as an Arab (see also ch. 6, p. 187-191). The authors hypothesize that these apparent inconsistencies may reflect a political and moral critique, "questioning the relevance of [social] statuses, degrading them to the rank of a contingent position," (p. 319) in line with the philosophy of the book of *Kalila wa Dimna*. This approach and this hypothesis represent an original reading of text-image relations, in line with Aya Sakkal's research on the representation of the main characters and their costumes in 13th century-illustrated manuscripts of the *Maqāmāt*, supporting her conclusion that the representation of costumes can be a means of interpreting the characters in ways that may diverge to varying extent from the literal sense of the text.

Y. Porter, R. Castine and B. O'Kane interpret several aspects of the Rabat manuscript in different ways. For instance, B. O'Kane does not consider the inconsistencies in the costumes of certain characters as intentional, but rather as an indication of a "misunderstanding" (p. 196), a "mistake," (p. 191, 199, see also p. 193 (error), 196 (defective illustration), 198 (misinformation)), or "evidence [...] that the painter was not the calligrapher" (p. 187, 191), thus denying the artists their agency. To these two interpretations, it is possible to add a third one, based on the captions inscribed in the margins. For instance, in the aforementioned story of the husband who surprises his wife's lover, the main text indicates that the wife urges her lover to escape by a subterranean passage (*sirb*) which is close to or marked by a jar (*ḥabb*), while the caption of the first image reads: "image of a man entering upon his wife and finding a[nother] man whom she had hidden in the *ḥabb*" (and not in the *sirb* as translated by B. O'Kane.) In other words, while in the main text the *ḥabb* is only an indication of the way out, in the caption, it becomes a hiding place. In this case, it is possible that the figure dressed as a Mongol is not the lover but the husband heading towards the *ḥabb* where the lover is hiding; thus, logically, the lover is not depicted; there would be no inconsistency between the two paintings, where the husband is consistently depicted as a Mongol, but rather between the text and the caption, the latter being the direct source of the image.

This hypothesis is supported by other illustrations that do not follow the main text but the captions, such as in the story of the thief and the moonbeam (once again contrary to B. O'Kane's interpretation). In this story, the caption of the second illustration, showing the thief falling from the roof, has, to my knowledge, not been noticed so far although it is extremely interesting. Indeed,

it reads: "the image of the householder is most similar to [that] of Shaykh 'Alī al-Zāhirī [...]." This suggests that the captions are not erroneous, but rather give precise indications on the content of the illustrations and that these indications/instructions deliberately diverge from the main text. The iconographic programme is thus inspired not only by the text, but also by everyday life, as already shown by the Mongol costumes and further confirmed by the reference to this Shaykh 'Alī al-Zāhirī. But who is this shaykh? This name does not appear in Ibn al-Fuwaṭī's contemporaneous biographical dictionary. However, a manuscript of Badī' al-Zamān al-Hamadhānī's *Maqāmāt* copied by the great Baghdaḍī calligrapher Ahmad b. al-Suhrawardī, presumably in Baghdad in 692/1292, includes a dedication to "al-khizāna al-mawlawiyya al-ṣadriyya al-mu'zzamīyya / al-mun'imīyya al-makhdūmīyya al-żāhirīyya," i.e. the library of a certain al-Mawlā al-Ṣadr al-Mu'zzam al-Mun'im al-Makhdūm al-Żāhirī (Süleymaniye, Ayasofia 4283). This patron has not been identified yet, but the question arises as to whether he could also be the patron/recipient of the Rabat *Kalila wa Dimna*. Indeed, both manuscripts are copies of a classic of Arabic literature, and both are particularly refined, one copied by a great calligrapher and illuminated, the other illustrated. Moreover, their spatial (Baghdad) and temporal frameworks (the late 13th century) are consistent, as is the personality of the patron/recipient: a wealthy learned man owning a library. Did this patron ask to be represented in the above-mentioned painting as the householder beating the thief? This would be a surprising choice, because the householder is partially unclothed. At the same time, his face is perhaps individualised. In any case, this example highlights the importance of paying more attention to the paratext as an integral part of the manuscripts, and, once again, supports Y. Porter's rather than B. O'Kane's hypothesis about the patron and the context of production of the Rabat *Kalila wa Dimna*. While Porter uses the observation that "the strictly 'Persian' world seems completely absent from this volume" to attribute it to "a member of the Arabic-speaking elites of Baghdad" (p. 319), B. O'Kane places it in "the Iranian world" (p. 172) and attributes it to a member of the Ilkhanid elite (p. 173). I think that B. O'Kane's approach unfortunately shows the danger of analysing a work starting not from the work itself but from a number of external reference points, for example, in this case, a knowledge of the text that does not sufficiently take into account the specific version of the manuscript, including the lines that precede the paintings and the captions (which

are often not read or misread), and other, especially later, iconographic cycles.

As mentioned above, B. O’Kane examines the Rabat manuscript as well as its 1761 ‘copy’. As in previous articles, he reveals similarities, but also differences, “not quite a one-to-one correspondence” (p. 173). Nevertheless, he proposes a restitution of the original iconographic programme of the Rabat manuscript, which is incomplete, on the basis of the 1761 ‘copy’. However, we should recall that this restitution is hypothetical, and that, in the light of the previous articles, the very notion of copying deserves to be rethought and clarified by asking the question of what is copied, how, why, and what the act of ‘copying’ tells us about the status and history of both the model and the ‘copy’.

Chapter 8, by É. Brac de la Perrière, deals with a Mamluk *Kalila wa Dimna*: Bodleian, Pococke 400, dated 755/1354, and especially its less-known ‘copy’, datable to the 17th-18th century, in the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Her observations support several of the hypotheses presented above. Indeed, her study shows that the New York manuscript draws on several iconographic sources: Mamluk (Bodleian, Pococke 400, using stencils, and perhaps Munich, BSB, Cod. Arab 616), as well as Safavid and Ottoman. Once again, then, this is not slavish ‘copying’. An important observation is that the Bodleian volume has holes that show that it was used as a template, but these holes are visible only on some elements of the illustrations and not others – interestingly, not the halos and headdresses, which have been deliberately left out. Through this choice, the model was updated in the ‘copy’. Although it draws on diverse iconographic sources, the latter has a homogeneous palette, suggesting, as in ch. 9, that the drawing and colouring were the work of different people, most likely at different periods. É. Brac de la Perrière adds a very interesting dimension to the question of the production and destination of these late copies by asking whether this highly cumulative specimen could be a kind of forgery compiled from several sources to satisfy or attract a European customer.

Chapter 3, by Charles Coulon, also deals with the reception of a Mamluk illustrated manuscript, BnF. A3467, dating from the 14th century, but in a very unexpected way. Indeed, this manuscript exhibits numerous geomantic figures in the text and illustrations, which suggest that it was used for divination purposes. While the practice of bibliomancy, which consists of opening a book on a random page to draw an omen, is generally based on

texts that have a sacred or at least religious character, such as the Qur’ān or the *Şâhîh* of Bukhārī or the mystical poems of Hâfez, *Kalila wa Dimna* may have been used, albeit rarely, in this way, because of its double level of reading, between an apparent and a hidden meaning, and its astrological associations. However, A3467 seems to be the only known case of addition of geomantic figures to a manuscript that was not created from the outset as a bibliomantic or divination object. C. Coulon argues that the insertion of geomantic figures reveals a careful reading of the text and the illustrations, which are linked using two principles: the meaning of the name of the geomantic figure and its astrological correspondence. Contrary to A. Contadini’s observations about a certain “typological fixity of representation” (p. 98), especially for animals that would be associated with “easily recognisable characteristics” (p. 97) (see also ch. 2, p. 55,) C. Coulon shows that the same character can be associated with different geomantic figures depending on the context, e.g. the lion with al-’Ataba al-dâkhila/Jupiter/Justice or al-Humra/Mars/war and conflict. Moreover, the geomantic figures do not seem to be associated with the individual characters but rather with the images as a whole. C. Coulon rightly concludes by warning us against the “vertigo of analogy” and overinterpretation (p. 88-89).

The last five chapters examine other texts inspired by *Kalila and Dimna* in Arabic, Persian and Ottoman Turkish. Chapter 7, by Mounia Chekhab-Abudaya, discusses the only medieval, 14th century Mamluk illustrated copy of *Sulwān al-muṭā’*, now in Doha. The images are compared to the corpus of medieval illustrated Arabic *Kalila wa Dimna*-s, but in too general a manner (e.g. sovereign on his throne, lion, elephant...), without supporting the comparisons with specific examples or illustrations. Similarly, the stylistic comparison with late 13th-early 14th century Mamluk and Persian painting could have been more precise (e.g. paintings extending beyond the frame, attempts at inscribing the characters into three-dimensional spaces and especially landscapes....) Some illustrations seem to contain genuine mistakes: for instance, a landscape where a bird was later covered with gold (fig. 7.3), but the author does not dwell on this sufficiently. This article has another drawback: the captions of the illustrations have been switched. In my opinion, the most interesting element to note is that, like the references to illustrated manuscripts constituted *waqf* in public libraries associated with religious institutions mentioned by other scholars (ch. 4, p. 105; ch. 11, p. 334), this illustrated manuscript was constituted *waqf* in the

complex of the 'Ādiliyya Mosque in Aleppo at the beginning of the 17th century, showing that the image could have a place in Islamic religious contexts.

Chapter 11, by Aïda El Khiari, Nathalie Buisson, Frantz Chaigne, Françoise Cuisance, Rajana Fatima Amalarajah, Hoa Perriguey and Valérie Saurel, is about another *unicum*: an Arabic illustrated anthology inspired by *Kalila wa Dimna*, dated to 943/1537, most likely made in Damascus, now in a private collection. Like the probable forgery studied by É. Brac de la Perrière, this manuscript bears a fake date: the original date was manipulated to make it appear a century older. Like the other illustrated manuscripts discussed so far, this one draws on a variety of iconographic sources: Mamluk, Jalayirid, Ottoman, but again, the comparisons are neither particularly close nor supported by physical evidence such as evidence for the use of stencils, so that the risk of coming up against the limits of analogy raised by C. Coulon is present. As the authors point out, the study of this manuscript shows the diversity of forms of dissemination and appropriation of *Kalila wa Dimna* and how complex it can be to assign an identity to an illustrated manuscript in the absence of precise historical and material data, especially in fluid contexts.

Chapter 2, by Christine van Ruymbeke, analyses a story: "The sick lion, the fox and the donkey's ears and heart," by comparing the versions attributed to Ibn al-Muqaffa' in Arabic (according to André Miquel's translation), and Naṣrallah Munshī and Vā'iz Kāshifi in Persian. After the previous articles and especially Gruendler's on the extreme variability of the manuscripts, one might wonder whether it makes sense to study a kind of archetypal version of these texts, especially of Ibn al-Muqaffa', without considering their manuscript variants. In any case, C. van Ruymbeke suggests that certain aspects of the Persian versions, in particular Naṣrallah Munshī's whose oldest manuscripts predate Ibn al-Muqaffa', may shed light on an earlier state of the Arabic text. Besides, the author points to the intratextual links between the subplot and the main story, and to the nature of the Persian adaptations, which appear as exegeses of the main hidden political message, which is not spelled out but played out (p. 53) and needs to be decoded. She thus highlights that "an important part of the text's practical pedagogy" is about acquiring nimbleness at decoding (p. 57). This, in my opinion, refers once again to an oral level of reception and transmission, which is difficult to evaluate but which should not be neglected.

Naṣrallah Munshī and Vā'iz Kāshifi's Persian versions that were produced in courtly contexts

testify to the success of *Kalila wa Simna* in princely milieus, as also shown by the last two articles, the only two dealing with princely manuscripts, one Ottoman, the other Mughal. Chapter 12, by Francis Richard, brings to light an unpublished fragment of an Ottoman translation of Kāshifi's *Anvâr-i suhaylî*, now divided between the BULAC and the BnF in Paris. The author presents the text, which still needs to be identified, as well as the decoration and paintings. He shows that the manuscript was inspired by one or more Persian models, but was most likely produced by the royal Ottoman workshop in the second half of the 16th century.

Finally, chapter 13, by Mika Natif, deals with a well-known manuscript: the copy of Abū'l-Fazl's *lyār-i dānesh* made for Mughal emperor Akbar. The author focuses on the first painting of the volume, which shows the physician Burzoy presented before the Sassanid King Khusraw Anushirvan. Both the setting and the figures and their gestures are Mughalized, which allows her to hypothesize that the scene is updated depicting Abū'l-Fazl as Burzoy and Akbar as Khusraw Anushirvan and more distantly as Dabshalim. Natif also points out a notable absence: that of the book of *Kalila wa Dimna*. She argues that the "intentional blending of past and present" (p. 386) and the absence of the book emphasizes the role of its transmitters. The painting would then be a visual equivalent to Abū'l-Fazl's emphasis on the antiquity of the text and his lists of past authors and patrons, i.e. a kind of visual *isnād*, an allegory of the transmission of this Indian text and its return to India thanks to Akbar and Abū'l-Fazl. To the redactional continuum mentioned at the beginning, M. Natif adds a legitimacy "continuum between a mythical past and a glorious present" (p. 383).

Overall, this book opens up many perspectives for the study not only of *Kalila wa Dimna*, but also, more broadly, so-called 'Arab and Islamic painting.' Firstly, it stresses the crucial importance of a precise knowledge of the texts. In this respect, the text of each of the manuscripts mentioned still needs to be studied in detail, in particular to better assess the impact of textual changes on pictorial programmes. The study of text-image relations thus appears as one of the most interesting avenues of research at the level of the entire corpus and of each manuscript. The diversity of the articles reflects the wide diffusion of *Kalila wa Dimna*, not only geographically but also linguistically, culturally and socially. We can thus ask whether the diffusion of the text and the images took place in an articulated, parallel or differentiated manner. We can also ask whether the Arabic, Persian and Ottoman versions met different social audiences,

with a greater appropriation of the text by princely circles in the Persian and Ottoman contexts. Finally, this volume invites us to further implement the comparative approach between the Arab, Persian and Ottoman worlds, but also with Europe. We hope that these extremely rich perspectives will arouse new interest among scholars for many years to come.

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