

***Rum, Sin* and the Idea of the “Portrait” in Medieval Arabic Literary and Visual Culture**

Marcus Milwright

Even in the first century of Islam members of the political elite were commissioning two- and three-dimensional representations of specific individuals. According to the Egyptian author, al-Maqrizi (d. 1442) the first caliph of the Umayyad dynasty, Mu‘awiya ibn Abi Sufyan (r. 661–80), minted a coin bearing his own image. While no such coin has ever been located, a standing figure in Arab garb—presumably, as he dressed for the congregational prayer—appears on the obverse of a gold coin (*dinar*) minted in Damascus by ‘Abd al-Malik (r. 685–705), and on numerous copper issues from other mints in Greater Syria (fig. 1).¹ The country residences (*qasr*, pl. *qusur*) built for the Umayyad family in the same region contain other examples of “portraits” including two stucco statues of standing rulers—that originally adorned the facades of the palatial building of Qasr al-Hayr West and the bathhouse of Khirbat al-Mafjar. These sculptures are generally assumed represent caliph Hisham (r. 724–43) in the case of Qasr al-Hayr West, and the other his nephew, Walid ibn Yazid (caliph Walid II, r. 743–44), but their identities cannot be established with absolute certainty due the absence of supporting inscriptions.² The process of identification made somewhat easier in fresco cycle of the little bathhouse of Qusayr ‘Amra because the presence of short explanatory captions in Greek and Arabic. Most famous of all of the painted panels is

the one known as the "Six Kings." Although much denuded, the inscriptions and details of costume allow for the identification of four of the six: "Kaisar" (i.e. the Byzantine emperor), "Kisra" (i.e. either the Sasanian shah Khusraw I or Khusraw II), the Negus of Abyssinia, and Roderick, the Visigoth king at the time of the Arab conquest of the Iberian peninsula in 711.³

Monumental paintings, architectural carvings, and textile hangings depicting Muslim rulers and their entourages were evidently commissioned for palaces in later centuries, though little physical evidence has survived. Scholars such as Thomas Arnold, Richard Ettinghausen, and Nasser Rabbat have drawn attention to intriguing descriptions in Arabic written sources. Egypt appears to have enjoyed a long tradition of figural architectural decoration from the Tulunids to the Mamluk sultanate, although the content of these depictions varied considerably according to the ruler and dynasty. The son of Ibn Tulun, Khumarawayh (r. 884–96) ornamented a room known as the *Bayt al-Dhahab* ("House of Gold") with painted wooden relief-carvings. Depicting the ruler with his concubines and singing girls, the figures were apparently adorned with crowns and jewelry.⁴ Aside from the obvious extravagance entailed in the use of such gilded and bejeweled additions, these features may perhaps have aided in the identification of each figure. Other written accounts illustrate this desire to distinguish individuals within larger figural compositions. The Fatimid caliph al-Amir bi-Akham Allah (r. 1101–30) constructed a belvedere with painted representations of famous poets and their respective home towns. Each painting was accompanied by an excerpt penned by the poet in question.⁵

Predictably, the figural architectural paintings of the Mamluk period expressed greater concern for militaristic themes and principles of hierarchy. The domed structure (*qubba*) commissioned by Baybars I (r. 1260–77) in the citadel of Cairo contained paintings of the sultan, his amirs, and retinue in ceremonial regalia during a procession. The figures painted in the *Iwan al-Ashrafi* built on the citadel by sultan al-Ashraf Khalil (r. 1290–93) also included the principal amirs of the day, each one with his personal emblem

(*rank*) represented above his head.⁶ These Mamluk decorative programs do not survive, but we can get some sense of their character by looking at inlaid metalwork vessels such as the so-called Baptistère de Saint Louis, variously dated by scholars from the sultanate of Baybars I to the third reign of al-Nasir Muhammad ibn Qalawun (1310–41).⁷

This concern with representing the ruler surrounded by his retinue does not originate in the Mamluk period; during the twelfth and thirteenth century in northern Mesopotamia this type of highly formalized "group portrait" appears in architectural decoration, inlaid metalwork, and illustrated manuscripts. Centuries of weathering have removed many of the fine details from the carved figures on monuments like the bridge over the Tigris constructed by the Artuqid *atabak* of Hisn Kayfa, Qara Arslan (r. 1148–67), or the niche from the Gu' Kummēt at Sinjar (c.1240). The rendering of facial features, costume and attributes of office can be recovered with greater certainty from painted scenes in manuscripts of the early thirteenth century. Impressive examples of this genre are the frontispieces of the *Kitab al-Aghani* of al-Isfahani produced for the ruler of Mosul, Badr al-Din Lu'lu', in 1218–19, and the frontispiece of the *Kitab al-Diryaq* ("Book of Antidotes") now in Vienna. The latter manuscript may have been made for the same ruler and is usually dated to the 1230s. The young male attendants on either side of the ruler in the *Kitab al-Diryaq* frontispiece each hold an artifact (or in one case what appears to be a goose) symbolizing their ceremonial office at the court.⁸

A fascinating feature of the illustrated manuscripts produced in Syria, Iraq, and southeastern Turkey during the late twelfth and the first half of the thirteenth century is the proliferation of representations of specific individuals. Occurring on the frontispieces and in the illustrations within the texts, these paintings mainly depict patrons and authors⁹ (excluding representations of fictional character such as Abu Zayd and al-Harith in the *Maqamat* of al-Hariri¹⁰). The latter category of authors is perhaps most intriguing because it encompasses both Muslims and famous authorities from antiquity. The Islamic interest in the achievements of Greek-speaking schol-

ars of antiquity can be traced to the beginning of the "translation movement" in late eighth-century Baghdad.¹¹ Although the most active phase of translation of Greek texts into Syriac and Arabic was over by the eleventh century, this did not spell the end of engagement with the antique past. Indeed, the minor principalities that sprang up in northwestern Iraq, northeastern Syria, and the formerly Byzantine regions of southern Anatolia appear to have been particularly interested in Greek intellectual and visual culture. Classical spolia and architectural details appear on numerous Islamic monuments in these regions; Zengid and Artuqid rulers minted copper coins with figural motifs including astrological signs, imitations of antique profile portraits, and even such explicitly Christian designs as the Byzantine emperor crowned by the Virgin Mary.¹² The Hellenophile spirit implied by the "classical revival" buildings and figural coins is also much in evidence in the manuscripts of the period. The Artuqids are known to have commissioned new Arabic translations of the *Peri ilis iatrikis*, or *De materia medica*, of the first-century CE botanist and physician, Pedanios Dioscorides.¹³ The same dynasty employed for about twenty five years the engineer and author, al-Jazari (d. 1206). His book on fine engineering, *Fi ma'rifat al-hiyal al-handasiyya*, is clearly much indebted to the work of Antique scholars such as Philo of Byzantium (d. c.220 BCE) and Hero of Alexandria (d. 70 CE).¹⁴

To what extent can these representations in late twelfth- and early thirteenth-century Arab manuscripts be considered as portraits?¹⁵ Certainly, for all of their lively draughtsmanship and vivid coloration, they do not conform closely to a modern idea of a portrait. Missing are the highly naturalistic mode of representation and close attention to nuances of facial features that are commonly considered by contemporary audiences as hallmarks of a successful painted or sculpted portrait. We also assume that most contemporary portraits would be executed on the basis of first-hand experience of the subject. With the exception of the patron portraits (and it seems unlikely that these powerful men afforded long sittings for their court artists) the paintings in the Arabic manuscripts usually depict figures who were long dead. The rather schematic, linear

style sometimes borders on caricature, and there is often as much attention given to costume as details of individual physique and facial expression. Furthermore, in seeking out models for their representations of figures from the past, Islamic painters made considerable use of compositions from other manuscript traditions. An obvious example is the late antique "author portrait" frontispiece. From this basic prototype evolved the images of Evangelists in Byzantine, and other Eastern Christian gospel books as well as paintings in secular manuscripts such as the double frontispiece of Dioscorides and students produced in 626/1229 for the Syrian ruler, Shams al-Din Abu al-Fada'il Muhammad.¹⁶

Richard Brilliant, provides a good starting point for a wider definition of what might constitute a portrait in his *Portraiture* (1991). He writes, "Simply put, portraits are works of art, intentionally made of living or once living people by artists, in a variety of media, and for an audience."¹⁷ He also emphasizes the importance of establishing the socio-cultural norms of the audience for which a portrait was produced:

Portraits reflect social realities. Their imagery combines the conventions of behavior and appearance appropriate to the members of a society at a particular time, as defined by the categories of age, gender, race, physical beauty, occupation, social and civic status, and class. The synthetic study of portraiture requires some sensitivity to the social implications of its representational modes, to the documentary value of art works as aspects of social history, and to the subtle interaction between social and artistic conventions.¹⁸

These areas of interpretation can be most successfully approached in historical periods where abundant primary written sources exist that deal with the reception of art, and more specifically of portraiture. While the thirteenth-century Middle East is certainly not lacking for primary texts, very few of them concern themselves in any detail with the physical appearances of specific individuals or with the production and appreciation of portraiture (some

examples of such writings are considered in the following sections). The paucity available written sources on portraiture represents a serious constraint upon the interpretation of representations of individuals painted by Islamic manuscript artists, but it may be possible to offer some insights into these images by locating them within the wider literary culture of the period. This speculative approach takes as its inspiration Michael Baxandall's *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth-Century Italy* (1972). What is most relevant in the present context is the breadth of source material—from treatises on practical geometry to books of poetry and music—that Baxandall employs in his attempt to reconstruct the “period eye” of his archetypal patron, the “church-going businessman with a taste for dancing.”¹⁹

Those patrons whose names are recorded in surviving illustrated late twelfth- and early thirteenth-century manuscripts (or in historical references to the commissioning of illustrated manuscripts) are principally members of the ruling Turkic Muslim elites of Syria, Anatolia and northwestern Iraq.²⁰ As already noted, several of these powerful men exhibited a Hellenophile orientation in aspects of their patronage of scholarship and art. To what extent might this orientation, or other aspects of their cultural pursuits, education, or world view have influenced the production of representational painting by the artists who worked for them? Although a proper examination of the “period eye” of the elites of the Artuqid, Zengid, and Ayyubid courts is beyond the scope of a single article, some preliminary comments on this issue can be made through the examination of two themes. The first is the discussion of foreign portraits (probably mostly fictional) in historical texts and works of *belles-lettres* (*adab*) written prior to the thirteenth century. The second is the possible influence of the classical discipline of physiognomy upon the construction and subsequent interpretation of painted portraits. Both themes bear upon the question of whether there existed in the literary culture of Medieval Islam a set of ideas about what might constitute a meaningful portrait of an individual.

Medieval Islamic Accounts of the Arts of *Rum* and *Sin*

The admiration of the arts of non-Islamic cultures—particularly that of *Rum* (literally “Rome,” but meaning variously the ancient Graeco-Roman world, the Byzantine empire, or Anatolia) and *Sin* (China, or more broadly Southeast Asia)—is a recurrent theme in Medieval Arabic and Persian literature. This appreciation was often extended to the portable arts and architecture, but some of the most extensive accounts refer to representational painting and portraits found on textiles. An example of the appreciation of the skills of foreign artists is given by the eleventh-century writer, al-Tha‘alibi, in his *Lata‘if al-ma‘arif* (“[Book of] Curious and Entertaining Information”). Discussing the different sorts of representation (*tamthil*) produced by the Chinese (*Sin*), he claims:

They are extraordinarily skilled at shaping statues, and they excel at making carved representations and pictures. They carry this out to such a pitch that one of their artists will make a representation of a man, leaving nothing out except the man’s soul (*ruh*); then the artist will no longer feel satisfied with it, and will turn it into a man who is laughing. Then he will still be further dissatisfied, and will differentiate between the laugh of a man laughing derisively and one laughing out of confusion; or between a man smiling and one wondering in amazement; or between a laugh expressing pure joy and one expressing scorn. In this way, he makes one expression turn into another, and so on.²¹

There is, of course, no reason to assume that al-Tha‘alibi had seen such Chinese paintings and sculptures. Although the glazed ceramics from southeast China would have been commonly seen in the markets of the Middle East between the ninth and the eleventh century (and these imported items are singled out for praise by the author earlier in his book), it was not until the establishment of the Ilkhanate in the late thirteenth century that there is evidence for the importation of Chinese scroll paintings into the Islamic Middle East. The veracity of al-Tha‘alibi’s account of Chinese portraiture is

rendered even more questionable by the fact that it is almost identical to a description of the painting of the Greeks (*Rum*) penned by the ninth-century poet and satirist, al-Jahiz (d. 868–69), in his *Kitab al-Akhbar*. The earlier writer's appreciation adds the detail that the Greek artists were able to paint "a picture within a picture and repeat the process two or three times."²²

Like al-Tha'alibi's notional Chinese artists, one is left to wonder what *Rumi* (Ancient Greek or Byzantine) painters al-Jahiz had in mind. Even the finest icons and illustrated manuscripts produced during the so-called Macedonian Renaissance that came after the end of iconoclasm in 843 seem to lack—to the modern eye, at least—the intense degree of psychological insight implied by al-Jahiz in his account. Furthermore, had al-Jahiz actually seen examples of Byzantine painting it seems improbable that it would have been such masterpieces of Medieval "naturalism" as the Paris Psalter or the illustrated copy of the Homilies of Gregory of Nazianzos made for Emperor Basil I (r. 866–86). Nor, as an inhabitant of southern Iraq, is he likely to have seen many examples of classical Greek or Roman painting and sculpture. Both texts should be understood therefore as literary exercises meant for the entertainment of the reader. This sort of rhetorical description of art and architecture (*ekphrasis*) was, of course, a well established genre in the eastern Mediterranean region. Examples of *ekphrasis* appear in the works of numerous Greek and Latin authors from the first century CE, enjoying particular popularity in the Byzantine empire.²³

The accounts of al-Tha'alibi and al-Jahiz are not the only examples in Medieval Islamic literature of the intertwining of *Rum* and *Sin*. Another example of this phenomenon involves the portraits of the Prophet Muhammad that supposedly existed beyond the confines of the *Dar al-Islam*.²⁴ Known in numerous Arabic sources, the earliest example of the story of the miraculous portrait of the Prophet appears in al-Dinawari's *al-Akhbar al-tiwal*, completed in about 895. In this story the first caliph Abu Bakr (r. 632–34) instructs one 'Abd al-Malik ibn al-Samit to travel to Constantinople to meet the emperor (unnamed in this text, though later accounts such as that of the eleventh-century author, al-Bayhaqi, claim it to be Hera-

clius, r. 610–41). During this audience, the Muslim envoy is shown an "object" (*'atida*, presumably a box), apparently once owned by Alexander the Great, with many compartments, each containing a piece of cloth (*khirqqa*) with a representation (*sura*) of a man. The emperor draws them out and explains that they represent Adam, Moses, David, Solomon, and Jesus. According to al-Dinawari:

Then he opened another door and pulled out a black piece of cloth with a representation in white, which was the picture of the Prophet Muhammad. Upon seeing the picture the envoy wept. The emperor said, "What is the matter with you?" The envoy answered, "This is a representation of our Prophet Muhammad, God bless him and grant him salvation." The emperor asked, "By your religion is this indeed the representation of your Prophet?" The envoy replied, "Yes, this is the representation of our Prophet as if he were alive."²⁵

Links have been suggested with the Byzantine tradition of the Mandylion, the cloth carrying the miraculous impression of Christ that was presented to the first-century governor, Abgar of Edessa.²⁶ Byzantine literature has other examples of images of saints that were miraculously impressed onto the surface of a wooden board prior to the painting of an icon.²⁷ Significantly, no mention is made in al-Dinawari's account (or any of the later versions of this story) to the representations having been painted. Thus, the implication is that like the Mandylion they are of divine origin, being not made by human hand (a miraculous image of this sort is known in Greek as *acheiropoietas*).

A different emphasis is given in the "Chinese" version of the tale recorded by the Iraqi author, al-Mas'udi (d. c.956), in his *Muruj al-dhahab* ("Meadows of Gold"). In this case an Arab envoy from the Quraysh tribe is asked by the ruler of China if he would recognize his "master" (*sahib*, i.e. the Prophet) from his portrait (*sura*). A box (*safat*) is then brought and the envoy is shown a representation on a scroll of paper. Recognizing it as a likeness of the Prophet, the envoy recites a prayer. This scroll, and the others represent-

ing earlier prophets each carried a detailed biographical inscription. In answer to the Chinese ruler's question concerning how the Arab recognized images of the Prophets he replies tellingly: "By what was depicted of their things (*biman suwwara min amrhim*): Noah shown entering the Ark, Moses with his rod and the children of Israel, Jesus on a donkey and accompanied by the apostles." Muhammad was shown riding a camel accompanied by companions dressed in Bedouin outfits.²⁸

Another text, the anonymous eleventh-century work entitled *Kitab al-hadaya wa'l-tuhaf* ("Book of Gifts and Rarities"), also describes a similar luxurious box, though this time it forms part of a gift sent by the "King of China" to the Sasanian Shah, Khusraw I Anushirvan (r. 531–79). Woven in red-gold thread on a ground of lapis lazuli, the precious silk fabric in the box carried an image of the enthroned and crowned Chinese ruler attended by servants carrying flywhisks.²⁹ The description given in the *Book of Gifts and Rarities* sounds rather more like Roman-Byzantine royal imagery, and a similar image including the attendants with flywhisks (sing. *flabellum*) can even be seen in the niche of the audience hall in the eighth-century bathhouse of Qusayr 'Amra.³⁰

A more direct comparison between the representational arts of *Rum* and *Sin* is made in the *Sikandar-nama* of the Persian poet Nizami (d. 1209). According to this telling of the legendary exploits of Alexander the Great, the ruler of China was entertaining Alexander as a guest. During their conversation it was asked which craftsmen of the world were the best painters. In order to resolve this issue a curtain was hung from a dome and a *Rumi* painter set to work on one side and a *Sini* painter on the other, neither able to look at the other's work until both pictures were completed. When completed the initial inspection by the "king" (presumably meaning Alexander) suggested that the two works were indistinguishable, but soon the fundamental difference between them was revealed. According to Thomas Arnold's free translation, the poem continues:

Yet 'twixt the two a difference there was,-
The one reflected what the other gave.
This stirred the wonder of the sage of Greece,
As soon as he beheld the painted walls.
Here was a clue; he followed up the thread,
Until he tracked at last the hidden truth.
He bade the men of *Rum* again hang down
The curtain which divided this from that.
When once again the curtain hung down between,
One picture faded, while the other glowed.
With lustrous color shone the *Rumi*'s forms;
Rust overgrew the *Sini*'s mirror,- dimmed.
The king, amazed, beheld the *Sini*'s work
Lose semblance of all form and ornament.³¹

Thus, the *Rumi* painter's superiority in painting form and color is asserted over the Chinese skill merely in "polishing" to achieve a dim reflection of reality.³² This is not the only example of a painting competition in Islamic literature; al-Maqrizi describes a contest between al-Qasir (perhaps an Egyptian) and an Iraqi painter called Ibn 'Aziz both in the employ of Yazuri, the vizier of the Fatimid caliph between 1050 and 1058. A great patron of the arts, Yazuri instructed the artists to paint a dancing girl in a niche. Ibn 'Aziz employed color as a means to make the girl appear to emerge from the niche while the eventual winner, al-Qasir, used tonal contrast to achieve the effect of the girl entering the niche.³³ Of course, this topos of dueling artists has more ancient roots; Pliny (d. 79 CE) in his *Natural History* records the competition that apparently took place between the Greek artists, Zeuxis and Parrhasios in the fifth-century BCE.³⁴ Significantly, in all three examples victory was achieved through what was judged to be the most successful illusion of space and form.

The Expectations of the Viewer

Ettinghausen drew some cautious inferences about the nature of Iraqi and Egyptian painting styles from al-Maqrizi's account of the contest instigated by Yazuri.³⁵ In the comparisons between the painting of *Rum* and *Sin* discussed in the previous section, one might also detect a greater admiration for the former because of its more convincing attempts to create an illusion of the natural world. Certainly, it was principally to Byzantine and Late Antique prototypes that Middle Eastern manuscript painters of the twelfth and early thirteenth century looked for inspiration; Chinese modes of representation only start to exert a major influence on the arts of the Islamic book in the last years of the thirteenth century. In general, however, it would appear that the literary examples discussed above are of relatively little value as a source for reconstructing the visual characteristics of either Islamic or non-Islamic painting styles prior to the thirteenth century. Where these written sources are perhaps more useful is in establishing the ideas that existed about how representational art might affect the viewer and what expectations a viewer might then have of those "portraits" encountered in manuscript painting or other visual sources such as architectural decoration.

Firstly, the claims made for the abilities of the painters of *Rum* and *Sin* by al-Tha'alibi and al-Jahiz, unreliable as they most probably are as evidence for the appearance of actual representations, do suggest that both authors and their readers shared a belief that paintings has the potential to convey profound insights into human psychology. A worthwhile comparison can be made in this context with the discussion of icons in Byzantine literature. As Henry Maguire has demonstrated, Eastern Christians believed their icons to be highly lifelike (a characteristic that al-Dinawari also claims for the portrait of the Prophet owned by the Byzantine emperor), and to represent the known character traits and physical appearance of the given saint.³⁶ Secondly, it is apparent that representational images were held to possess considerable power over those who viewed them. Al-Dinawari's description of the display of box

of portraits is particularly notable for the emotional impact it has on the representative of caliph Abu Bakr; confronted by the image of Muhammad the Arab envoy is reported to have wept. In the "Chinese" version of the story given by al-Mas'udi, the Muslim viewer were moved to recite a prayer on seeing the representation of the Prophet.

Representational art was believed to be powerful in other ways. Images might have apotropaic qualities; for instance, the *Book of Gifts and Rarities* claims that a ring bearing the design of an aroused monkey would induce an erection in any man who wore it.³⁷ Darker resonances are found in al-Mas'udi's story of a carpet bearing the images of Sasanian shahs and the Umayyad caliph Yazid ibn Walid (Yazid III, r. 744) that was set before the Abbasid caliph al-Muntasir (r. 861–62). According to al-Mas'udi this same carpet was also beneath the feet of caliph al-Mutawakkil when he was assassinated in 861. It is implied that the depiction on the carpet of murderers who subsequently enjoyed short reigns—the Sasanian Shirawayh (it is unclear which ruler this is meant to be) and Yazid III—offered an ill omen for any monarch who displayed it.³⁸ Readers of the *Muruj al-dhahab* had only to look to the brief caliphate of al-Muntasir for confirmation of this prophecy. The dangerous lure of representational art is, of course, a preoccupation of iconoclasts of all religions. Numerous sayings attributed to the Prophet Muhammad (*hadith*) warned pious Muslims against the display of pictures, and the biographies of the Prophet also record his order to rid the Ka'ba of its idols and figural paintings.³⁹

It is interesting that in al-Mas'udi's anecdote about the Arab emissaries at the Chinese court the identification of the prophets should have been achieved through the recognition of specific attributes: the ark of Noah, the rod of Moses, and so on (much as a Byzantine observer might recognize the saint depicted in an icon). No mention is made of the facial or bodily characteristics that might aid in the process of identification (though this is a feature of some of the other versions of this story set in the court of Heraclius). Although no Islamic image of the Prophet Muhammad survives before the late thirteenth century,⁴⁰ a literate person could

still have gained some impression of his appearance from historical and biographical writings. For instance, one report, attributed to a companion of the prophet, and included in the history of Damascus composed by the chronicler Ibn al-'Asakir (d. 1175) claims that as a young man Muhammad was:

light-skinned with ruddy complexion, and had curly hair falling halfway over his ears. He walked holding his head high. He had a small hooked nose; dark eyes, flashing teeth, fine hair on his chest, stubby hands and feet, and a dense beard.⁴¹

Textual representation appears in most cases to have preceded painted portraits, and for most Islamic literary genres no accompanying illustrations were considered necessary. Significantly, the vast tradition of Arabic biographic writing—the most extensive corpus of textual representations of individual men and women in Islamic culture—never attracted illustrations. From the early thirteenth century there is one text, a copy of al-Mubashshir ibn Fatik's (fl. eleventh century) *Book of Choicest Maxims and best Sayings* (*Mukhtar al-hikam wa-mahasin al-kilam*) now in the Topkapi library, that allows us to correlate written descriptions and painted images. Compiled from Arabic translations of ancient Greek sources and completed in 1048–49, it is quite likely that al-Mubashshir's autograph manuscript was designed with accompanying illustrations.⁴² Aside from listing improving sayings of each featured man, al-Mubashshir gives the reader a brief description of his physical appearance. For instance, at the end of his section about the Athenian statesman, Solon (d. 558 BCE), the Arab author writes:

He was of pale complexion with blue eyes, a crooked nose, long beard, sparse hair on the cheeks, with a thin stomach, twisted shoulders, pleasant in speech, vigorous in language, and on his right forearm was a large mole (*khal kabir*).⁴³

Clearly, the artist of the Topkapi manuscript attempted to give Solon some of the physical attributes listed by al-Mubashshir, though he

omits the significant detail of the mole on his arm (fig. 2). Is it possible to take the interpretation of this sort of written and visual representation any further?

Some responses to this question can be offered by employing another area of antique Greek scholarship that found its way into Islamic culture: physiognomy, the discipline of reading character through the outward manifestations of the body and face. That physiognomy (in Arabic, *firasa*) was regarded as a legitimate scientific activity is indicated by its inclusion in the eleventh-century polymath, Ibn Sina's (d. 1037) list of the disciplines making up the branch of practical wisdom (*hikma*).⁴⁴ Most surviving Arabic treatises on *firasa* date after the eleventh century, but translated Greek works are known to have been circulating before this date. The most famous of these is the *Physiognomy* of Polemon of Laodicea, a second century politician and intellectual. Tellingly, Polemon is described by al-Jahiz as the *sahib al-firasa*, or "master of physiognomy."⁴⁵

The notion that character traits might be revealed in aspects of physical appearance is apparent also in Byzantine literature. Procopius (d. c.565) in his notorious *Secret History* remarks of emperor Justinian I (r. 527–65) that, "he bore a strong resemblance to Domitian, Vespasian's son, whose monstrous behavior left such a mark on the Romans that even when they had carved up his whole body they did not feel that they had exhausted their indignation against him: . . ." That said, Procopius does grudgingly admit the emperor possessed a round, and not unattractive face.⁴⁶ More explicit in its employment of physiognomic principles is a description of Emperor Basil II (r. 976–1025) in the *Chronographia* of Michael Psellus (d. 1078). He writes:

So much for his character. As for his personal appearance, it betrayed the natural nobility of the man, for his eyes were light-blue and fiery, the eyebrows neither overhanging nor sullen, nor yet extended in one straight line, like a woman's, but well-arched and indicative of his pride. The eyes were neither deep-set (a sign of knavishness and cunning) nor yet too prominent (a sign of

frivolity), but they shone with a brilliance that was manly. His whole face was rounded off, as if from the centre into a perfect circle, and joined to his shoulders by a neck that was firm and not too long. His chest was neither thrust out in front of him, nor hanging on him so to speak, nor again was it concave and, as it were, cramped; rather was it the mean between two extremes, and the rest of his body was in harmony with it.⁴⁷

Psellus emphasizes the balance between two extremes and the proportionality that, in his view, were exemplified in the body and face of the emperor. Most significant in the present context is that he enters into physiognomic interpretations of specific features such as the setting of the eyes and the shape of the eyebrows. It is also conceivable that physiognomic principles were employed in the creation of official portraiture produced for Roman and Byzantine emperors.⁴⁸

To what extent might the "science" of physiognomy have informed Arab painting in the thirteenth century? Returning to the portrait of Solon (fig. 2), one can point to features such as his large head (at least, in comparison to others in the painting), substantial square chin, long nose, relatively full lips, and large mouth. On these characteristics Polemon makes a number of interesting comments, "Largeness of the head is an indication of high ambition, understanding and intelligence . . . If you see that the chin has four edges, judge the owner for boldness and strength . . . The thick, long, round, strong nose indicates power, strength and great zeal . . ." and "Largeness of mouth and thickness of the lip indicates desires of the stomach and much eating, and in addition he is tyrannical and very patient." On the ruddy complexion of the cheeks Polemon remarks, "It indicates desirousness, perseverance, and treachery," and that red cheeks indicate "love of drunkenness and of greed." Elsewhere he notes, however, that the man who loves knowledge has "an evenly proportioned and upright build and a white color mixed with red."⁴⁹

Similar themes are perhaps present in two other paintings of scholars (figs. 3 & 4), one the third-century BCE Greek physician,

Erasistratos from an Arabic manuscript of Dioscorides' *De materia medica* dated 621/1224,⁵⁰ and the early Islamic physician and scientist, Ibn Bakhtishu' (d. c.829) from a copy of his own work, *Kitab na't al-hayawan* dating to c.1220–25.⁵¹ Comparing Ibn Bakhtishu' to his student, it is apparent that the artist has chosen, like the painter of Solon, to emphasize the size of the older man's head. That both Ibn Bakhtishu' and Erasistratos are shown in profile places great emphasis upon their curved noses, a feature that Polemon claims "indicates much thinking."⁵² Depicted as an old, rather downcast man, the prominent eyebrows of Ibn Bakhtishu' are conceivably a further indication of his character. Polemon remarks of this, "If the hair of the eyebrow is very thick, it indicates grief and sadness."⁵³ In common with the painting of Solon, ruddiness of complexion is clearly an important characteristic in the representation of Erasistratos. The redness of the whole body is a feature that Polemon claims indicates, "cunning and much thought." One also senses that the modeling of his arms is meant to convey not just knowledge but physical strength. Predictably, Polemon observes that those with solid, strong shoulders possess power and strength.⁵⁴

Lastly, we can look at the painting of Socrates from the Topkapi manuscript of Ibn al-Mubashshir's *Book of Choicest Maxims and Best Sayings* (fig. 5). The text itself provides a description of the man, "He was a man of light reddish or bluish complexion, stout in build and of ugly countenance. His shoulders were narrow, his motion slow but he was quick in verbal reaction. His beard was disheveled and he was not tall."⁵⁵ The account also mentions his shyness. Clearly, the artist of the Topkapi manuscript has retained little of this description. Neither stout, nor obviously ugly, only the narrow shoulders are perhaps apparent in the painting. In the previous images I sought to bring out largely positive characteristics—thoughtfulness, strength, perseverance, boldness, and so on—in the portraits, but is it possible that more negative personal traits might be communicated? Polemon observes, for instance, that thin shoulders are a sign of weakness and cowardice. The long neck of Socrates is a conspicuous feature, and Polemon states, "If you see that the neck is thin and long, judge for its owner good-

ness and bad habits.”⁵⁶ The large eyebrows might, like those of Ibn Bakhtishu’ denote grief and sadness.

How might this be rationalized with the status of Socrates as a towering philosopher, and a man who faced his death with great heroism? Interestingly, the supposed ugliness of Socrates is a recurrent *topos* that finds its way from Greek into Arabic literature. Most pertinent in this context is a story from an anonymous Arabic compilation of classical wisdom that a picture of Socrates was shown to a man who claimed to be a physiognomer. Not knowing the identity of the sitter, the physiognomer claimed, “This man is gripped by corrupt passion.” The account continues: “People then burst into laughter and said, ‘this is Socrates, the most chaste of all people!’ Socrates then said to them, ‘Wait, this man has not lied, since my character is as he said, but I govern myself and overcome my passion.’”⁵⁷

To assert that the painters of these manuscripts had a trusty volume of Polemon at their side when they started work on a portrait would be a stretch. Furthermore, my use of Polemon’s *Physiognomy* is highly selective, and it might be possible to advance quite different interpretations of the painted “portraits” discussed above using other parts of the same text.⁵⁸ Our fragmentary knowledge about Medieval Islamic libraries, and the reading habits of wealthy patrons means that any conclusions concerning the impact of the wider literary environment upon the patronage of painting and the instructions given to painters must remain highly tentative. For instance, the education of an Artuqid prince—a dynasty known to have been active patrons of illustrated manuscripts during the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries—is likely to have focused principally on *Qur’an*, *hadith*, and Islamic law, with other non-religious themes given less attention. That said, the illustrations discussed in the previous paragraphs appear in books that are, largely speaking, derived from Greek works of antiquity. Even a cursory survey of courtly culture of northern Mesopotamia in the twelfth and early thirteenth century reveals its considerable interest in Hellenistic culture, whether it be the commissioning of Arabic translations of Greek texts, the patronage of al-Jazari, or the

minting of classical-style copper coins. Areas like Syria, Iraq and Anatolia benefited from the vigorous interaction of Christian and Muslim scholars. Byzantine *ekphrasis* and hagiographic literature both illustrate the widely-held view that icons could capture the actual appearance and character of their subjects, and this belief also appears in the discussions of figural representation in works of *adab* and poetry. The cross-pollination between the Byzantine and Islamic world is also vividly manifested in art and architecture. For these reasons we are justified in trying to establish a preliminary definition of the “period eye” of wealthy Muslim patrons and the artists and scribes who served them.

Notes

¹On the “standing caliph” copper and gold coins, see: Steve Album and Tony Goodwin. *Sylloge of Islamic Coins in the Ashmolean Museum. Volume 1: The Pre-Reform Coinage of the Early Islamic Period*. London: Ashmolean Museum and Spink and Son, 2002, 91–99. For the specific reference to the supposed coin of Mu’awiya in al-Maqrizi’s, *Shudur al-’uqud*, see 93, n.65 and 95 n.67. Goodwin concludes that al-Maqrizi must have been referring to one of the “standing caliph” coins issued by ‘Abd al-Malik.

²These sculptures are illustrated and discussed in numerous publications, including: Garth Fowden. *Qusayr ‘Amra: Art of the Umayyad Elite in Late Antique Syria*, The Transformation of the Classical Heritage 36. Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 2004: 122–23, figs. 39, 46

³On this design, see: Oleg Grabar. “The painting of the six Kings at Qusayr ‘Amra,” *Ars Orientalis* 1, 1954: 185–87; Garth Fowden, *Qusayr ‘Amra*, 197–226.

⁴Ahmad ibn ‘Ali al-Maqrizi. *Kitab al-mawa’iz wa’l-i’tibar bi dhikr al-khitat wa’l-athar* (Bulaq 1853), I, 316. Discussed in: Richard Ettinghausen. “Painting in the Fatimid period: A Reconstruction,” *Ars Orientalis* 9, 1942: 112; Nasser Rabbat. *The Citadel of Cairo: A new Interpretation of royal Mamluk Architecture*, Islamic History and Civilization: Studies and Texts 14. Leiden and Boston: E. J. Brill, 1995, 171.

⁵Maqrizi, *Khitat*, II, 318. Discussed in: Sir Thomas Arnold. *Painting in Islam: A Study of the Place of Pictorial Art in Muslim Culture*. 1928, reprinted London and Toronto: Dover Publications, 1965, 127; Ettinghausen, “Painting in the Fatimid period,” 112.

⁶The written accounts of these decorative programs are discussed in: Rabbat, *Citadel of Cairo*, 129–30, 169–70.

⁷On the motifs represented on this basin and its date, see: David S. Rice. *Le Baptistère de Saint Louis*. Paris: Editions du Chêne, 1951; Doris Behrens-Abouseif. "The Baptistère de Saint Louis: a reinterpretation," *Islamic Art*, 3, 1989: 3–13.

⁸On this type of royal entourage and representations in manuscript painting, portable arts and architecture, see: Estelle Whelan, "Representations of the *Khas-sakiyyah* and the Origins of Mamluk Emblems," in Priscilla Soucek, ed., *Content and Context of the Visual Arts in the Islamic World*. University Park and London: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1988, 220–25; Nasser Rabbat, "Rank," *Encyclopaedia of Islam. New Edition*, 8, Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1995: 431–33; Rabbat, *Citadel of Cairo*, 173–77. On the frontispiece of the Vienna *Kitab al-Diryaq*, see also Oya Pancaroglu, "Socializing Medicine: Illustrations of the *Kitab al-Diryaq*," *Muqarnas* 18, 2001: 166–67.

⁹For studies of author and patron portraits in Arabic manuscripts of the thirteenth century, see: Eva Hoffman, "The Author Portrait in Thirteenth-Century Arabic Manuscripts: A new Islamic Context for a Late Antique Tradition," *Muqarnas* 10, 1993: 6–20; Robert Hillenbrand, "The Schefer Hariri: A Study in Islamic Frontispiece Design," in Anna Contadini, ed., *Arab Painting: Text and Image in illustrated Arabic Manuscripts*, Handbook of Oriental Studies: Section 1, The Near and Middle East 90, Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2007, 117–34.

¹⁰On the paintings in the extant thirteenth-century manuscripts, see Oleg Grabar. *The Illustrations of the Maqamat*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984.

¹¹On the translation of Greek literature in the early Islamic world, see Dimitri Gutas. *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture: The Graeco-Arabic Translation Movement in Baghdad and early 'Abbasid Society (2th-4th/8th-10th Centuries)*. London and New York: Routledge, 1998. Also Franz Rosenthal. *The classical Heritage in Islam*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975.

¹²On the interest in antique art and architecture, see Terry Allen. *A Revival of Classical Antiquity in Syria*. Wiesbaden: L. Reichert, 1986. On the figural coinage of this period, see Nicholas Lowick. "The religious, the royal and the popular in the figural Coinage of the Jazira," in Julian Raby, ed., *The Art of Syria and the Jazira, 1100–1250*, Oxford Studies in Islamic Art 1. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1985, 159–74.

¹³Mahmoud Sadek. *The Arabic Materia Medica of Dioscorides*. St-Jean-Chrysostome: Les Editions du Sphinx, 1983, 10–13; Minta Collins. *Medieval Herbals, the illustrative Traditions, The British Library Studies in Medieval Culture*. London and Toronto: The British Library and University of Toronto Press, 2000: 124–30.

¹⁴Ibn Razzaz al-Jazari. *The Book of Knowledge of ingenious mechanical Devices (Kitab fi ma'rifat al-hiyal al-handasiyya)*, translated and annotated Donald Hill.

Dordrecht and Boston: D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1974; Rachel Ward. "Evidence for a School of Painting at the Artuqid Court," in Raby, ed., *Syria and the Jazira*, 69–83.

¹⁵On views concerning portraiture in Persian art and literature, see Priscilla Soucek. "The theory and practice of portraiture in the Persian tradition," *Muqarnas* 17, 2000: 97–108. Also Arnold, *Painting in Islam*, 123–32.

¹⁶On this manuscript (Topkapi library, Ahmed III, codex 2127) and the double frontispiece, see: Sadek, *Arabic Materia Medica*, 17; Collins, *Medieval Herbals*, 127–29, pl. X; Eva Hoffman, "The author portrait."

¹⁷Richard Brilliant. *Portraiture, Essays in Art and Culture*. London: Reaktion Books, 1991, 8.

¹⁸Brilliant, *Portraiture*, 11.

¹⁹Michael Baxandall. *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth-Century Italy: A Primer in the Social History of Pictorial Style*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1972. The quote appears on 109.

²⁰Clearly others, such as wealthy merchants and scholars also purchased illustrated manuscript paintings in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, though less information survives concerning their identities. On non-royal patronage at this time, see: Oleg Grabar. "The illustrated *Maqamat* of the Thirteenth-Century: The Bourgeoisie and the Arts," in Albert Hourani and Samuel Stern, eds., *The Islamic City: A Colloquium*, Papers on Islamic History 1. Oxford: Bruno Cassirer and University of Pennsylvania Press, 1970: 207–22; Pancaroglu, "Socializing Medicine," 155–66.

²¹According to the translation in: *The Book of curious and entertaining Information. The Lata'if al-ma'arif of Tha'alibi*, translated Clifford Bosworth. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1968, 141. For the Arabic text, see Abu Mansur 'Abd al-Malik b. Muhammad b. Isma'il al-Tha'alibi. *Lata'if al-ma'arif*, ed. Ibrahim al-Ibyari and Hasan Kamil al-Sayrafi. Cairo: Dar Ihya al-Kutub al-Arabiyya, 1960, 220–22.

²²Al-Jahiz translated in Rosenthal, *Classical Heritage*, 44. Another version of the same story about Rumi painting is to be found in Ibn al-Faqih's, *Kitab al-Buldan*. See El-Cheikh, *Byzantium*, 59, n.100. It is unclear, however, whether al-Tha'alibi relied upon al-Jahiz, Ibn al-Faqih, or some other source for this passage.

²³Studies of Late Antique and Byzantine *ekphrasis* include: John Onians. "Abstraction and imagination in Late Antiquity," *Art History* 3, 1980: 1–23; Henry Maguire. "Truth and convention in Byzantine descriptions of works of art," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 28, 1974, 113–40; *idem*. *Art and Eloquence in Byzantium*. Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1981. Numerous examples of Byzantine *ekphrasis* are translated in Cyril Mango. *The Art of the Byzantine Empire, 312–1453: Sources and Documents*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1972.

²⁴On these stories, see: Nadia el-Cheikh. "Muhammad and Heraclius: A Study in Legitimacy," *Studia Islamica*, 89, 1996: 18–19; *eadem*. *Byzantium viewed by the Arabs*. Cambridge MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2004: 52–54; David Roxburgh. *Prefacing the Image: The Writing of Art History in Sixteenth-Century Iran*, Studies and Sources in Islamic Art and Architecture: Supplements to Muqarnas 9. Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2001: 170–74; Oleg Grabar and Mika Natif. "The Story of the Portraits of the Prophet Muhammad," *Studia Islamica* 96, 2004: 19–37.

²⁵According to translation in Grabar and Natif, "Portraits of the Prophet," 23–24. For the Arabic text, see Ahmad b. Dawud al-Dinawari. *al-Akhbar al-tiwal*, ed. 'Abd al-Mu'nim Amin. Cairo: 'Isa al-Babi al-Halabi, 1960, 18–19.

²⁶On the Mandyion of Edessa, see Robin Cormack. *Writing in Gold: Byzantine Society and its Icons*. London: George Philip, 1985.

²⁷Henry Maguire. *Icons of their Bodies: Saints and their Images in Byzantium*. Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996: 6–12.

²⁸Abu al-Hasan 'Ali ibn al-Husayn ibn 'Ali al-Mas'udi. *Les prairies d'or (Muruj al-dhahab)*, ed. Charles Barbier de Meynard and Abel Pavet de Courteille with corrections by Charles Pellat, Publications de l'Université Libanaise. Section des Etudes Historiques 11. Beirut: American University of Beirut Press, 1965, I, 345. The relevant section is translated and analyzed in Grabar and Natif, "Portraits of the Prophet," 24–25. See also Priscilla Soucek. "The Life of the Prophet: Illustrated Versions," in Soucek, ed., *Content and Context*, 193. Grabar and Natif note that al-Mas'udi's anecdote was drawn from an earlier source: a text by Abu Zayd Hassan al-Sirafi written in 916 and itself derived from the account of an Arab merchant who had travelled to China in 851.

²⁹Ghada Qaddumi, trans. *Book of Gifts and Rarities (Kitab al-Hadaya wa al-Tuhaf)*. Selections compiled in the Fifteenth Century from an Eleventh-Century Manuscript on Gifts and Treasures. Cambridge MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1996: 61–62 (no. 1). For another set of portraits of kings (this time in the Fatimid treasury in Cairo), see 381 (no. 231).

³⁰On this painting, see Fowden, *Qusayr 'Amra*, 115–41.

³¹Translated in Arnold, *Painting in Islam*, 66–68.

³²A different note is struck by al-Marzawi (d. after 1120) who claims that the craftsmen of Rum are the masters of the applied arts, but that they are inferior to the Chinese. See El-Cheikh, *Byzantium*, 60.

³³Maqrizi, *Khitat*, II, 318. Translated in Arnold, *Painting in Islam*, 22. See also Ettinghausen, "Painting in the Fatimid period," 112–13.

³⁴Pliny the Elder, *Natural History* XXXV.36.

³⁵Ettinghausen, "Painting in the Fatimid period," 113–14.

³⁶Henry Maguire, *Icons of their Bodies*, 15–46.

³⁷Qaddumi, *Book of Gifts and Rarities*, 115–16 (no. 102). Cf. 115 (no. 104).

³⁸Mas'udi, *The Meadows of Gold*, translated Paul Lunde and Caroline Stone, New York and London: Kegan Paul International, 1989, 268–69. Also discussed in Arnold, *Painting in Islam*, 64–65.

³⁹On the relevant *hadith*, see Dan Van Reenan, "The Bildverbot: A new survey," *Der Islam* 67, 1990: 27–77. On attitudes toward images in early Islam, see: Erica Dodd, "The Image of the word," *Berytus* 18, 1969: 35–61; Oleg Grabar, *The Formation of Islamic Art*, revised and enlarged edition, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1987, 72–98.

⁴⁰On the earliest Islamic images of the Prophet, see: Priscilla Soucek, "The Life of the Prophet," 193–217; Robert Hillenbrand. "Images of Muhammad in al-Biruni's Chronology of Ancient Nations," in Robert Hillenbrand, ed., *Persian Painting from the Mongols to the Qajars. Studies in Honour of Basil W. Robinson*, Pembroke Persian Papers 3. London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 2000, 129–46.

⁴¹Translated in Michael Cooperson. "Images without illustrations: The visual imagination in classical Arabic biography," in Oleg Grabar and Cynthia Robinson, eds., *Islamic Art and Literature*. Princeton NJ: Markus Wiener, 2001: 11.

⁴²On the biography of al-Mubashshir and the history of the *Mukhtar* and its subsequent translations, see Franz Rosenthal. "Al-Mubashshir ibn Fatik: Prolegomena to an abortive Edition," *Oriens* 13–14, 1960–61: 132–58. See also Eva Hoffman. "The beginnings of the illustrated Arabic book: An intersection between art and scholarship," *Muqarnas* 17, 2000: 47.

⁴³Abu al-Wafa' al-Mubashshir ibn Fatik. *Mukhtar al-hikam wa-mahasin al-kilam*. Published under the title, *Los Bocados de Oro (Mujtar al-hikam)*, ed. 'Abd al-Rahman al-Badawi. Madrid: Instituto Egipcio de Estudios Islamicos, 1958, 36. Translations of other biographical sketches from al-Mubashshir ibn Fatik's text, see Rosenthal, *Classical Heritage*, 28–29 (Plato), 33–36 (Galen). On the illustrations of the Topkapi manuscript, see Richard Ettinghausen. *Arab Painting, Treasure of Asia*. Geneva: Skira, 1962, 74–79.

⁴⁴On physiognomy in Islamic culture, see Antonella Gersetti. "The semiotic paradigm: Physiognomy and medicine Islamic culture," in Simon Swain. *Seeing the Face, Seeing the Soul. Polemon's Physiognomy from Classical Antiquity to Medieval Islam*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2007: 279–308. On Ibn Sina's views on *firasa* within the broader category of wisdom (*hikma*), see 285–87.

⁴⁵Al-Jahiz. *Kitab al-Hayawan*. Quoted in Antonella Gersetti and Simon Swain. "Polemon's Physiognomy in the Arabic tradition," in Swain, *Seeing the Face*, 309.

⁴⁶Procopius. *The Secret History*, trans. G. A. Williamson. London and New York: Penguin Books, 1966, 78.

⁴⁷Michael Psellus. *Chronographia* I.36. Translated by E. R. Sewter as Michael Psellus. *Fourteen Byzantine Rulers*. London and New York: Penguin Books, 1966,

48. The same author gives an interesting description of the physical appearance of emperor Constantine IX (r. 1042–55). See *Chronographia* VI.125–26 (*Fourteen Byzantine Rulers*, 220–21).

⁴⁸This possibility is explored in: Jas Elsner. “Physiognomics: Art and text,” in Swain, *Seeing the Face*, 203–224.

⁴⁹The quotes from Polemon’s *Physiognomy* are taken from the edition and translation by Robert Hoyland of the Arabic manuscript now in the library of Leiden University. See: Robert Hoyland. “A new edition and translation of the Leiden Polemon,” in Swain, *Seeing the Face*, 329–463. The specific quotations appear on: 421 (chapter 30), 415 (chapter 24), 417 (chapter 26), 415 (chapter 25), 419 (chapter 28), 429 (chapter 38), 447 (chapter 55).

⁵⁰The identity of ancient authority is confirmed in the marginal text, reading “surat Aristaratus” (“image of Eristatratos”). On the employment of marginal annotations of this type, see Bernard O’Kane. “The uses of captions in Medieval literary Arabic manuscripts,” in Contadini, *Arab Painting*, 135–44.

⁵¹These paintings are discussed in greater detail in Anna Contadini. “A question in Arab painting: The Ibn al-Sufi manuscript in Tehran and its art-historical connections,” *Muqarnas* 23, 2006: 47–84.

⁵²Polemon, *Physiognomy*. Trans. by Hoyland in Swain, *Seeing the Face*, 417 (chapter 26).

⁵³*Ibid.*, 437 (chapter 48).

⁵⁴*Ibid.*, 427 (chapter 36), 409 (chapter 20).

⁵⁵Mubashshir ibn Fatik, *Mukhtar*, 90. According to the translation in: Ilai Alon. *Socrates in Mediaeval Arabic Literature*, Islamic Philosophy, Theology and Science. Texts and Studies 10. Jerusalem and Leiden: Magnes Press and Brill, 1991, 44. Cf. Franz Rosenthal. “Art and aesthetics in Graeco-Arabic wisdom literature,” in *idem*. *Four Essays on Art and Literature in Islam*, The L. A. Mayer Memorial Studies in Islamic Art and Archaeology 2. Leiden: Brill, 1971: 8.

⁵⁶Polemon, *Physiognomy*. Trans. by Hoyland in Swain, *Seeing the Face*, 409 (chapter 20), 411 (chapter 23).

⁵⁷This quotation comes from an anonymous work entitled, *al-Mukhtar min kalam al-hukama’ al-arba’ah al-akabir*. Translated in Alon, *Socrates*, 43–44.

⁵⁸Anna Contadini notes the urgent need for scholars of Arab manuscript painting to make use of methodological advances – particularly in the analysis of the relationship between text and image – in other fields of manuscript studies. For these, and other observations on this subject, see her, “The Manuscript as a Whole,” in Contadini, *Arab Painting*, 3–16.



Figure 1. “Standing Caliph” dinar (696–97/77), SICA no.705. Ashmolean Museum, Oxford. By Permission of the Visitors of the Ashmolean Museum.



Figure 2. Solon and students. From a manuscript of al-Mubashshir ibn Fatik, *Mukhtar al-hikam wa mahasin al-kalim*, early thirteenth century. Topkapi Sarayi Library, Ahmet III, 3206 f.24r. After Ettinghausen, *Arab Painting*, 77. Reproduced courtesy of the Topkapi Sarayi Library, Istanbul.



Figure 3. Erasistratos and student. From an Arabic manuscript of Dioscorides, *De materia medica* (*Khawass al-ashjar*), 1224/661. Freer Gallery of Art, F1947.5. Photograph courtesy of the Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington DC.



Figure 4. Ibn Bakhtishu' and student. From a manuscript of Ibn Bakhtishu', *Kitab Na't al-hayawan*, c.1220–25. British Library, Or. 2784 f.101v. Photograph copyright British Library.



Figure 5. Socrates and students. From a manuscript of al-Mubashshir ibn Fatik, *Mukhtar al-hikam wa mahasin al-kalim*, early thirteenth century. Topkapi Sarayi Library, Ahmet III, 3206 f.48r. After Ettinghausen, *Arab Painting*, 76. Reproduced courtesy of the Topkapi Sarayi Library, Istanbul.

Nafpaktos: A Town to be Envied Even by Sultans¹

Evanthia Baboula

With its panoramic views over the Gulf of Corinth, the town of Nafpaktos is today a pleasant seaside resort with an active cultural life and easy access to the surrounding mountains. This part of Greece is also the summer home of thousands of Greeks who have emigrated to Canada and the United States. For most of its medieval and early modern history, however, the importance and identity of Nafpaktos were affected by its location near to the Gulf's entrance.

From the sixteenth to the early nineteenth century, Nafpaktos, a town associated with the battle of Lepanto, was under Ottoman rule. The documentation and photography which deal with Nafpaktos here were initially conducted in short sessions during 2006, 2007, and 2009 in the context of a larger interdisciplinary project which examines the architectural remains of the Ottoman period in southern Greece.² Some of this preliminary fieldwork comprised the documentation of structures such as fountains and their course. Additional documentation is drawn from the unrelenting work of enthusiastic scholars and local researchers who have devoted themselves to the reconstruction of the architectural and textual history of Nafpaktos during its long life. The observations on the Ottoman architecture of the town by Marinou and Petronotis and the collections of information included in a recent