What is a Painter in Medieval Islam? Reflections Based on Medieval Illustrated Arabic Manuscripts of *Kalīla wa Dimna*

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Painting in the Islamic and Arabic-speaking world in the medieval period gave rise to numerous studies. These focused on three main questions: first, the so-called "question of the image"[1]; then, the issue of preislamic and non-Muslim "influence", especially of the "classical" or "Hellenistic" traditions of Byzantium and the Syriacs[2]; and lastly, style[3]. In this regard, the so-called "Arab painting", an expression that, in its narrowest sense, refers to Arabic-language manuscript illustrations from the 11th up to the 14th Century, has often been described in negative terms, notably as being "limited", "simple", "flat", "repetitive", "stale", "casual", "non-inventive", "non-effective" etc.[4].

It is only recently that "Arab painting" started to be characterized not by what it is not but by what it is, i.e. as being the expression of a culture, a society and a tradition of representation. Thus, Eva Hoffman explored the very early "intrinsic and inseparable" relationship between Arab painting and contemporaneous intellectual culture[5]. A few other scholars, especially Anna Contadini, Bernard O'Kane and David Roxburgh developed the study of painting as visual translation of texts in more detail and depth[6]. Alain George highlighted the role not only of the written, but also the oral, performative and sociable life in the creation of Arab manuscript illustrations[7]. To these contributions, I would like to add a reflection on the very definition of the profession of the painter in the medieval Islamic and especially Arab world.

This is a very broad topic. I will thus limit myself here to pointing out the different sources and issues that can help us think the question, i.e. namely the three following points. The first is the textual sources on painting and painters, notably painters' signatures. The second is the material evidence of the illustrated manuscripts with a focus on three aspects that seem determinant for the definition of the profession of painting, i.e. the passage from text to image, the existence of repertoires of iconographic formulae, and the painter's *modus operandi*, especially on the basis of medieval illustrated Arabic copies of *Kalīla wa Dimna*[8].

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1 On the "question of the image" in Islam, cf. in particular the recent studies: Elias 2012; Naef 2015; Touati (Ed.) 2015.

2 Cf. notably Buchthal 1940; Weitzmann 1952; Sadek 1983; Hoffman 1993; Hoffman 2000; Contadini (Ed.) 2007, section 2; Hoffman 2013; Blair 2015.

3 For instance Ettinghausen 1962; James 1974; James 1978.

4 A textbook case of this tendency is Hillenbrand 1990 where the fine works such as the famous "Ḥarīrī Schefer" are presented as "honorable exception[s]" (Hillenbrand 1990, 152).

5 Hoffman 2000.

6 Contadini (Ed.) 2007; Contadini 2012; O'Kane 2012; Roxburgh 2013.

7 George 2011; George 2012.

8 This paper will focus on the six earliest illustrated Arabic copies of *Kalīla wa Dimna*: 1- Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France (hereafter BnF), Arabe 3465; 2- Rabat, Royal Library; 3- Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Cod. arab. 616; 4- Oxford, Bodleian Library, Pococke 400; 5- BnF, Arabe 3467; and 6- Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, Parker Library, Arab. 578. On these manuscripts, cf. especially Buchthal 1940; Rizkallah 1991; Barrucand 1986; Barrucand 1991; von Bothmer 1981; Atil 1981; Walzer 1959; Haldane 1978; O'Kane 2003; Contadini 2009. This paper has been undertaken as part of the research project *Kalīla wa Dimna: Manuscrits à Peintures du Monde Musulman au Département des*

https://doi.org/10.29091/9783954905478/004

The third and last point is the question of the relationship between painting on manuscripts and *painting* on other media.

Textual References to Painting and Painters in Medieval Islam

Besides a few Qurʾānic verses and Ḥadīths that are frequently cited in the discussion of the "question of the image in Islam", a few references to painting and especially book or manuscript illustration appear in Umayyad, Abbasid and late medieval Arabic and Persian texts[9]. The use of these sources is often complicated by the fact that they pertain to events that took place or manuscripts that were produced long before being described. Thus, one of the earliest references known so far is about a History of the Sassanids that was compiled most likely in Pahlavi in 113/731, then translated into Arabic and illustrated with portraits of the Sassanid rulers at the time of their death for the Umayyad caliph Hishām b. ʿAbd al-Malik (r. 724–743). However, this manuscript is only known from a description by the Abbasid polygraph Masʿūdī who saw it in Istakhr, in the house of a noble man, two centuries later, in 303/915–916, and wrote about it at some point before 345/956. Thus, it is impossible to know whether the first book was illustrated or whether it was embellished with paintings sometime after its completion, and whether the manuscript seen by Masʿūdī is the original Umayyad volume or a later copy. Anyway, the description belongs to Masʿūdī's own time[10].

The second type of textual sources on painting and painters consists in painters' signatures. The earliest signed painting seems to be a pre- or early Fatimid, tenth-century paper fragment showing a rider, which is signed by or at least bears the name of Abū Tamīm Ḥaydara, but this case seems to be unique[11]. Painters' signatures become slightly more common from the 11th C., but remain rare compared, for instance, to copyists' or illuminators' signatures[12]. To the best of my knowledge, only seven manuscripts from the 11th up to the 14th C. show painters' names. In five cases, the colophon states that the manuscript was copied and painted/illustrated by the same person[13], while in two manuscripts, the signature appears in the field of the painting.

Manuscrits de la BnF et dans les Collections Mondiales led by Annie Vernay Nouri (BnF) and Eloise Brac de la Perrière (University Paris Sorbonne) from 2012.

9 Among the most interesting sources are: Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ's preface to *Kalīla wa Dimna*: BnF, Arabe 3465, fol. 33v: Rice 1959, 208–209; Hoffman 2000, 37. For other textual references to illustrated *Kalīla wa Dimna*s see Atil 1981, 61; Raby 1987–88, 386–387. Mas'ūdī 1938, 92–93: Rice 1959, 208; Pedersen 1984, 92; Hoffman 2000, 37; Rāwandī 1921, 38–41, 57, 477: Blair 1993, 266; O'Kane 2003, 43. Soucek 1972; Touati (Ed.) 2015, chapters 1, 4, 5.

10 Masʿūdī 1938, 92–93; Rice 1959, 208; Pedersen 1984, 92; Hoffman 2000, 37.

11 This painting is thought to be an illustration of a hippological or a military science book, cf. Pedersen 1984, 91.

12 Déroche 2001, 600; Ritter/Ben Azzouna 2015, Appendix 2.

13 1- The earliest illustrated copy of ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Ṣūfī's *Ṣuwar al-Kawākib al-Thābita*, admittedly copied and illustrated (*katabahu wa ṣawwarahu*) by the author's son al-Ḥusayn in 400/1009–10 (Oxford, Bodleian Library, Marsh 144: Brend 1994; Soudavar 1999, 262–264, who questions the authenticity of the signature.) 2- Another copy of the same work, with Ibn al-Ṣūfī's *Urjūza*, signed by ʿAlī b. ʿAbd al-Jalīl b. ʿAlī b. Muḥammad in Bagdad in Muḥarram-Ṣafar 519/February-March 1125 (Doha, Museum of Islamic Art, MI-02098-80: Contadini 2012, 172.) 3- Another astronomical manuscript, but in Persian: this is the earliest illustrated Persian manuscript known so far: a copy of Farīd al-Dīn al-Shīrwānī's *Calendar of Seven Planets* carried out by Muḥammad b. ʿUmar al-Khasgharī probably in 616/1219 (Kuwait National Museum, Al-Sabah Collection, MS LNS 270: Vesel, Tourkin, Porter (Eds.) 2009, n° 6, 32, 33,

The first of these two manuscripts is the second earliest illustrated Persian manuscript known so far: Ayyūqī's *Warqah wa Gulshāh* where one painting is signed: "ʿ*amal* (work of) ʿ*Abd al-Muʾmin b. Muḥammad al-Naqqāsh al-Khūī* (or *al-Khuwayyī*) (the painter of Khoy)"[14]. The second manuscript is a copy of al-Ḥarīrī's *Maqāmāt* where one painting shows an architectural inscription stating: "*ṣanaʿahu* (made by) *Ghāzī b.* ʿ*Abd al-Raḥmān al-Dimashqī*"[15]. In both cases, no colophon is preserved. However, external information sheds some light on the identity of the painters who appear to be, like the previous ones, non other than the copyists. According to Melikian Chirvani, ʿAbd al-Muʾmin al-Naqqāsh al-Khūī's handwriting can be attributed to one of the copyists of the manuscript (scribe A). Moreover, his name appears in the endowment deed of the volume to the Karatay *madrasa* founded in Konya in 1251[16]. As for Ghāzī b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Dimashqī, he is known from contemporary literary sources as a skillful calligrapher and theorist of calligraphy who was active in Damascus where he died around the age of eighty in 709/1310, which makes it possible that he was the copyist as well as the painter of the manuscript[17]. Such textual references and painters' signatures thus provide useful information regarding the definition of the painters' profession, notably that copyists were also commonly illuminators and/or painters.[18]

Regarding the vocabulary, the Arabic root *ṣawwara* (imaged in the mind, formed, fashioned, figured, shaped, sculptured, or pictured[19]) and its derivatives: *ṣūra* and its plural *ṣuwar* (specific character, form, fashion, figure, shape, or semblance, the external state of a thing, image[20] / painting); *ṣūratu wajh* (literally image of the face, i.e. portrait); *muṣawwir* (for God (Qurʾān 59:22–24) and for painters); *muṣawwar* (illustrated) are common in early and Arabic texts. However, other verbs, namely ʿ*amal* (work of) and *ṣanaʿahu* (made by) are used in the

103, 118.) I would like to thank Charlotte Maury for drawing my attention to this manuscript. In the last two cases, I have not seen the colophons and I do not know the terminology used, which is not specified in the corresponding publications. 4- The famous Ḥarīrī Schefer carried out, including its writing and paintings (*bi-khaṭṭihi wa ṣuwarihi*) by Yaḥyā b. Maḥmūd b. Yaḥyā b. Abī al-Ḥasan b. Kuwarrīhā al-Wāsiṭī on Ramadan 6, 643/May 3, 1237 (BnF, Arabe 5847: James 2013; Roxburgh 2013.) 5- Naṣrallah Munshī's Persian version of *Kalīla wa Dimna*, copied and illuminated and/or illustrated (*ḥarrarahu wa dhahhabahu*) by Abū (?) al-Makārim Ḥasan in 707/1307–08. It is not absolutely clear whether the verb "*dhahhabahu*" refers to illumination or painting or both. Since we know from medieval textual sources that some artists such as Jamāl the Painter of Isfahan executed both illuminations and paintings (Rāwandī 1921, 57, 477; Blair 1993, 266; O'Kane 2003, 43), and since some words such as "*naqqāsh"* are used by both illuminators and painters in the late medieval period (below), it is possible that "*dhahhaba*" also refers to both types of painting, i. e. illumination and figurative painting.

14 Istanbul, Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi Kütüphanesi, H. 841: Melikian-Chirvani 1970, 79–80, fig. 57; Blair 1993, 266; O'Kane 2003, 43.

15 London, British Library, Or. 9718: Mayer 1942; George 2011, 6; George 2012, *passim*.

16 A relative of this painter is mentioned by the contemporary historian Ibn al-Fuwaṭī 1995 (n° 3843). His full name is Kamāl al-Dīn Yūsuf b. Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Muʾmin al-Qūnawī al-Naqqāsh and he is mentioned as a witness before a judge in 660/1261–62.

17 Melikian-Chirvani 1970, 80 affirms that the colophon of *Kitāb al-diryāq* dated to 595/1199, now in the BnF (Arabe 2964), is signed by the copyist and illustrator, but this is wrong.

18 Another Arabic manuscript: a copy of Abū Maʿshar's *Kitāb al-Mawālīd* shows one illustration where a book is inscribed with the following words: "ʿ*amal Qanbar* ʿ*Alī Shīrāzī* [?] *fī madīnatih al-Miṣr* [?] *waʾsalām* [?]" (work of Qanbar ʿAlī Shīrāzī [?] in his city Cairo [?], and peace [be upon you] [?]). This manuscript has long been dated to ca. 1300 before being reattributed to the late 15th century (BnF, Arabe 2583: http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b84229574/f11.item.zoom, and http://expositions.bnf.fr/islam/grand/isl_020.htm (last accessed 09.30.2017.)

19 Lane 1863–93.

20 *Ibidem*.

signatures that are inscribed within the paintings. Another word, the agent "*naqqāsh*" is more often used in the Persian-speaking world. It also appears in the name of two famous Ilkhanid illuminators: Muḥammad al-Kāshī al-Naqqāsh and Muḥammad b. Sayf al-Dīn al-Naqqāsh who were active in the 1300–40s[21]. Later, *naqqāsh* will be the common epithet for painters and draughtsmen in Iran and other parts of the eastern Islamic world.

Besides, some early Arabic texts seem to show a special interest in color. For instance, Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ states that one of the purposes of his version of *Kalīla wa Dimna* is "to show the images of the animals in varieties of colors and dyes" (*iẓhār khayālāt al-ḥayawānāt bi-ṣunūf al-alwān wa'l-aṣbāgh*). This, in turn, is supposed to be a source of companionship and pleasure (*uns*, *nuzha*), hence attachment (*ḥirṣ*) to the book, which would eventually assure its longevity[22]. Similarly, when Masʿūdī describes the portraits of the Sassanids, he clearly focuses on the colors of the royal vestments and crowns, before mentioning the objects (lance, sabre) and the position of the sovereigns (standing, leaning on a sword). He concludes with further remarks about the quality of the colors and dyes of the parchment or paper leaves. The famous anecdote about the painting that creates the illusion of coming out of or penetrating into a wall that is mentioned by Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ and Maqrīzī is probably also a matter of color contrast[23].

Why do these authors hardly mention shapes, but describe colors? Is it because the range of shapes is limited and it is color that makes the quality, the appeal of an image as well as the difference between images? Is design considered inferior to color? Is image making first a pretext to introduce color into books (and on walls)[24]? What are the qualities of a good palette: variety, purity, rarity (Masʿūdī insists on the wonderful (*ʿajīb*) and rare or antique character (*lā yūjad mithluhā fī hadhā al-waqt*) of the hues as well as of the materials)[25]? Is the difference and probably change of vocabulary from *taṣwīr* in the medieval Arab lands to *naqsh* in later Iran linked to a change of focus from color to other aspects such as design or composition? Later texts, especially by Persian-speaking authors also stand out by the fact that they give the names of several painters such as Jamāl the Painter of Isfahan in Seljuk Konya or Muḥammad al-Kāshī al-Naqqāsh in the Ilkhanid royal camp.

The Practice of Painting

As far as the question of the practice of painting and precisely manuscript illustration is concerned, three aspects seem to be determinant for the definition of the profession of the painter.

First, since manuscript illustration involves a text that is interrupted, rhymed by paintings, what is the relationship between text and image? Does the painter know the text and use it as

21 Ben Azzouna/Roger Puyo 2016; James 1988, n° 62.

22 Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ, *Kalīla wa Dimna*, preface: BnF, Arabe 3465, fol. 33v; Rice 1959, 208–209; Hoffman 2000, 37.

23 Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ, *Kalīla wa Dimna*, the story of the trompe l'oeil painter: BnF, Arabe 3465, fol. 48; Maqrīzī 1987, vol. 2, 318; O'Kane 2003, 82; O'Kane 2007, 140. O'Kane notes that none of the manuscripts of *Kalīla wa Dimna* where this episode is depicted attempts to recreate this illusion. The illustrations usually show Kalīla and Dimna conversing. Colors are also often specified in the descriptions of portraits of prophets and heroes mentioned in Touati (Ed.) 2015, chapters 4, 5.

24 According to David Roxburgh, "the manuscript was most likely regarded as predominantly a vehicle for polychrome images and illumination" as late as the early Timurid period (Roxburgh 2002, 54).

25 On the relationship between color, material and perception in medieval Arabic texts, see Coulon 2014.

his starting point to devise original paintings? Does he follow other types of textual or verbal, written or oral guidelines? Or does he simply copy one or several visual models?

Second, it has been argued that painters used to learn their profession like calligraphers, by copying previous works and that "the production of medieval illustrated manuscripts was essentially a copying process"[26]. Direct and faithful copying is of course attested throughout the history of Islamic and Arab painting. For instance, we can recall the "Hellenistic" sources of several Arabic illustrated manuscripts. It has been argued that the birth scene, as well as two other paintings (fol. 14r and 29r) in the Rabat *Kalīla wa Dimna* were direct citations of the *Maqāmāt* by Yaḥyā al-Wāsiṭī[27]. Three mid-fourteenth-century Mamluk manuscripts of *Kalīla wa Dimna* are obvious copies of each other[28]. However, the studies carried out so far on extensive illustration cycles, especially *Kalīla wa Dimna* and the *Shāhnāmah* in the medieval period revealed that in most cases, illustrated manuscripts of the same text "were copying neither one another nor any other pictorial source, but were original responses to the text"[29]. Beyond the few examples of direct copying that are, in my opinion, not to be interpreted as general indicators about teaching and production methods, but rather as specific responses to specific models or situations (such as the reproduction of a prestigious and esteemed model or a commercial production), is it possible to identify a kind of alphabet of painting?

Lastly, as practice involves a certain technique, what does this technique consist of?

From Text to Image

The study of text-image relationship is complicated for several reasons. First, different manuscripts necessarily involve different versions of the same text, which is particularly true of the copies of *Kalīla wa Dimna* that differ so widely that specialists consider it impossible to establish one critical edition of the text[30]. Thus, the study of text-image relationship should ideally rely not only on a general knowledge of the text as it is fixed in a given edition (or translation), but on a careful reading of the text as it appears in every manuscript[31].

Second, several studies of text-image relationship have focused on the so-called illustrated cycles, i.e. the episodes selected for illustration, and whether the illustrations are placed at the right place in the text, generally limited to the immediately surrounding lines. However, and as shown by a few recent studies, what the painter chooses to illustrate is at least as important as what he chooses not to illustrate[32]. Examining the whole text and decomposing it in illustratable moments seems to be the best way to really understand the choices of the painter, and how far or close they are from the structure of the text and/or the narrative. This method may also shed new light on the differences and similarities between various illustrated copies of the same text.

In most cases, it seems impossible to know whether it is the patron, the head of the workshop, the copyist and/or the painter who decides where to insert illustrations and/or what

26 Soucek 1974, 72–73; Simpson 1982, 105
27 Barrucand 1986, 25.
28 Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Cod. arab. 616; Bodleian Library, Pococke 400; BnF, Arabe 3467.
29 Simpson 1979, 324; O'Kane 2003, 212.
30 Gruendler 2013.
31 Anna Contadini's *A World of Beasts* may be taken as a model for this approach.
32 Kruk 2007; James 2013.

to illustrate. But is it possible to know who decides how to translate the selected text into images? In the case where the copyist and the painter are two distinct individuals, does the painter read the episode or at least the few lines above and below the space left empty for the illustration and propose visual equivalents to the author's words or does he follow more specific guidelines?

Despite the existence of medieval manuscripts with spaces left empty or illustrations and written guidelines, presumably to guide the painter[33], the existence of guidelines has been rejected by a few scholars[34]. However, there is at least one medieval illustrated Arabic manuscript of *Kalīla wa Dimna* where the presence of guidelines is possible and another where it is certain.

The first manuscript is the earliest illustrated copy of *Kalīla wa Dimna* that has come down to us (BnF, Arabe 3465). It is undated but datable by comparison with an illustrated copy of the *Maqāmat*, which is dated to 619/1222–23[35]. This manuscript shows inscriptions that stand out from later captions in several respects[36] (fig. 1–3). First, they are not laid out above the painting or in the outer margin but scattered over the painting area. Second, they do not consist in detailed descriptions but in single words. In this regard, they are particularly odd, because they simply identify the depicted figures. If proper names such as Dabshalīm, Bidpay etc. can be interpreted as an aid to identify a specific figure, other indications such as "the man sleeping" or "goose" (fig. 1) seem to be of no use for a better understanding of the painting. Are these words guidelines to instruct the painter?

Several objections can be raised to this hypothesis. First, these words are not systematic. In addition, they were certainly written using different inks and by different hands. However, this observation leaves open the possibility that some inscriptions may have been original, while others were re- or overwritten, altered (some erroneous inscriptions were corrected by a hand that is clearly different and distinct from the original) (fig. 2) or added. In fact, several inscriptions are in a handwriting that is rather close to, even though quicker than that of the main text (fig. 2). Moreover, several inscriptions have been erased (56, 66, 87v, 97) (fig. 3).

We can imagine that these words were intended as guidelines with both iconographic and compositional purposes: providing iconographic indications and pointing at the position of the figures. As a matter of fact, in several cases, the same word is repeated in different places. For instance, in the illustration of the story of the tortoise and the two geese (fig. 1), instead of the dual "*baṭṭatān*" that appears in Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ's text, the word "*baṭṭa*" is repeated twice (see also fol. 89v where "*fār*" (mouse) is repeated twice; and 122: "*al-kilāb*" (the dogs).)

Another possible objection to our hypothesis is that the single words inserted in the paintings often stand out by a vocabulary that is different from Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ's: for instance, "*ḥarāmī*" instead of "*sāriq*"; "*fār*" instead of "*jurdh*"; "*qiṭṭ*" instead of "*sinnawr*"; "*thuʿbān*" instead of "*aswad*" etc. However, these differences themselves can be considered as a further argument in favour of the hypothesis of the guidelines. As a matter of fact, the vocabulary of

33 As far as *Kalīla wa Dimna* is concerned, there is a fifteenth-century Arabic copy, which shows both spaces left empty and captions: BnF, Arabe 3466: http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b10329769c/f1.item.r=arabe%203466.zoom (last accessed 09.30.2017). But the practice of writing guidelines to guide the painter is also attested in medieval India as well as in the medieval West. I would like to thank Martina Wiener-Müller for drawing my attention to this comparative material.

34 O'Kane 2007, 143.

35 BnF, Arabe 6094: Buchthal 1940; Contadini 2009, 182–184.

36 The captions are discussed in O'Kane 2007.

the single words seems more generic and closer to an informal or oral register, and is hence more understandable or translatable into visual equivalents by an average painter.

Another interesting example is the illustration of one of the numerous stories of adultery in *Kalīla wa Dimna* (fig. 2). The text mentions "*rabb al-bayt*" (god or head of the household). Above this word appears another one: "*jawzuhā*", i.e. a misspelling of "*zawjuhā*" (her husband), which corresponds to a more common level of language. Lastly, the same word with the same misspelling is repeated above the figure of the husband in the illustration.

To summarize, we cannot ascertain that this manuscript was originally provided with guidelines for the painter, but several elements suggest that this might have been the case. Such guidelines were probably written by the copyist of the text in a more cursive handwriting or by someone from the same circle. The inscribed words were meant to be covered by the paintings or erased. However, some were forgotten, re- or overwritten (the main text itself happens to be re-/overwritten, for instance on fol. 114) or added.

Whether prewritten guidelines or added captions, explanations or commentaries on the paintings, these inscriptions are interesting because, in line with Martina Wiener-Müller's observations on astrolabes[37] and Alain George's work on manuscript illustrations, they highlight the fact that the scientific or literary written texts seem to have coexisted with several other levels of written or unwritten reception of them, and that instead of a direct impact of the text, we have to consider an intermediate, more common layer of interpretation before or around the images[38].

The second manuscript where the presence of guidelines is obvious is the latest medieval illustrated Arabic *Kalīla wa Dimna*. It has a colophon where the date is only partly preserved: Tuesday 20 Jumādā 7?1, but it bears a late- eighteenth-century inscription that was most likely written before the colophon was damaged. This inscription states that it was copied in 791/1389 (Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, Parker Library, Arab. 578) (fig. 4–5). In this manuscript, in at least three occurrences (fols. 75, 76, 115v), the word "*fār*" is visible under the rather translucent pictorial layer of a mouse. This iconographic identification seems to be unique. Its purpose is probably not to tell the painter to represent or draw a mouse but to paint the mouse in the appropriate color for this animal: gray.

As a matter of fact, this manuscript abounds in color indications[39]:

- *Zurqa*/*azraq* for blue (17v, 24v, 28v (green coat), 36, 37, 37v, 40v, 51v, 72v, 75, 125);
- *Khuḍra* for green (9v, 15v?, 24v, 37, 37v, 75?);
- *Zinjārī* (verdigris) for light green (72v, 108);
- *Aṣfar* or *zarnīkh* (arsenic, orpiment) for yellow (fols. 16v (unexecuted) (fig. 4), 17v, 37v (under a white surface), 75);
- *Nāranjī* for orange (27v (painted in yellow), 31v, 41v, 45, 49v, 52v, 54, 59v, 73?, 75 (yellow), 76 (yellow), 79?, 120? (yellow));
- *Wardī* for light pink (84v, 100v? (light violet); 105v? (light violet));
- *Abyaḍ*/*sukkar*(?) for white (17v (fig. 5, left), 39v);
- And lastly *raṣāṣī* for gray (92v, 99v (light violet) (fig. 5, right), 106, 116v, 134).

37 Wiener-Müller 2011, 280–281.

38 Wiener-Müller identifies it as a "combination of verbal description and visual representation" in a "bimedial or intermedial approach" in the context of the "adab-ization" or popularization of science (Wiener-Müller 2011, 281 and ff.)

39 O'Kane 2003, 40.

The use of two different color names for several colors (blue, yellow, white) suggests that the indications were probably written by different people. Indeed, it is possible to distinguish between at least two different inks: one is red, the other is more brownish. In both cases, it seems that the same ink was used to draw the figures and to write the color names (probably *asfar, sukkar* in red, vs. *zarnīkh, abyaḍ* in brownish red ?) On the other hand, the final palette appears consistent throughout the manuscript.

These observations are interesting in several regards. Not only do they provide clear evidence that guidelines were written for the painter, but they also shed more light on the practice of painting. As a matter of fact, it is well known that Islamic painters usually start by drawing the composition in red, then apply the colors to the different figures, and lastly finish the details in red, black and white lines. However, the evidence of this manuscript shows how distinct the two first steps, i.e. drawing and coloring are. They are not simultaneous but successive; they can be separate by a certain time gap and carried out by different people.

In the Cambridge manuscript, the fact that the draughtsman and the colorist are two distinct people is evident from several details. First, as mentioned above, it seems that it is the draughtsman who inscribed the color names, while he would not have needed to if he had to apply the colors himself. Moreover, there were probably two draughtsmen, but one colorist. In addition, several examples clearly show that the drawing was not always understood by the colorist. For instance, in the illustration of one of the substories of the introductory chapter (15v), the draughtsman drew a handle around the basket, but the colorist transformed it into a stick (see also 32v, 87v). Lastly, the drawing and the color indications were not always followed by the colorist (fols. 5, 16v, 27v, 28v, 75, 76, 99v, 100v?, 105v?, 120?, see above), which suggests a certain independence of the colorist and further underlines the special importance of color. Indeed, it is the colorist who gives the painting its most salient and final appearance.

A Repertoire of Iconographic Formulae?

Besides written or unwritten indications, it is possible that painters drew inspiration from a more or less established repertoire of iconographic formulae. As a matter of fact, while illustrated manuscripts that are exact copies of others seem exceptional, the similarities between illustrated Arabic manuscripts are undeniable. Besides the tight interlocking of text and image – which is manifest in the scale of the paintings that alternate with the text and generally occupy only a section of the page, and the fact that the illustrations are unframed and stand out against the same background as the text – the similarities include the frontal viewpoint; the symbolic rather than realistic sizes and proportions; the architectural and natural settings; the use of standardized, probably moralized poses, i.e. mainly three-quarter profile for humans and lions and profile for the other animals; as well as rather standardized typologies for rulers, judges, and other social/moral groups.

Some of these typologies are particularly well defined, established and widespread. For instance, the ruler usually appears crowned and seated on a throne, which is distinguished by a special shape of backrest, with pointed upper corners. He may hold a sword or a napkin, which symbolizes his military power on the one hand and his civil rule and probably patronage in the context of the *majlis* on the other hand.

Another particularly stable type is that of the lion (fig. 6), which is almost invariably represented with a head in three-quarter profile, a long, curved neck, and a body in profile. The

face is often mask-like, with a wide nose and a double-C-shaped mouth. The mane is thick. The stomach and the bottom show a different texture or color, and the tail curves between the hind legs and goes up on the side closest to the viewer.

Other conventions are used for other social categories, animals, as well as landscape elements such as the sky, rocks, plants or water. Like letter shapes circumscribe the possibilities of interpretation of the calligrapher, these prototypes appear as strongly established conventions that leave but a limited space for the expression of different perceptions. However, given the fact that, in theory, there are much less possibilities to represent letters than figurative images, and that the above described representations are highly conventional, the stability and wide use of these conventions is particularly striking: even the most skilled painters such as Yaḥyā al-Wāsiṭī depart from the norm only in a limited way.

The reasons behind the success of certain formulae are certainly diverse. Some scholars proposed to explain this stability or continuity by the topos of the strong respect for tradition or "intrinsic conservatism" of Islamic culture, hence art[40]. Others put forward economic reasons: the production of an illustrated cycle necessarily involves repetition, hence a somehow serial production[41]. However, while the use of stencils, tracing paper, pouncing or other methods of mechanical reproduction is "cumbersome and messy"[42] but possible, some conventions go far beyond time periods and media, for they stem from preislamic roots and are found on almost all possible media throughout the Islamic period.

In my opinion, to understand why certain formulae were so widely adopted, we first need to inventory them in a systematic way so as to identify their origins and reconstruct their history. Moreover, it would certainly be interesting to study these conventions in comparison with the conception of the society not in individuals but in social groups that are largely defined by their functions. In this regard, it is also certainly possible to link the use of formulae with a kind of demand and supply definition of painting. The receptors expected to find certain elements in the paintings, probably to be able to read them in a way that corresponds to their reading not only of the eighth-century text, but also of the contemporary society. Hence, these elements became an integral part of the training and practice of painting. In other words, when a painter had to paint a ruler or a lion, he learned to or had to do it in a predetermined and precise way[43].

A Precise Modus Operandi

The third element that seems determinant for the definition of the profession of the painter is technique. As mentioned above, it seems that medieval Islamic and Arab painters used to follow a precise *modus operandi* that is consistently repeated from one painting to the other and one manuscript to the other. First, they draw the composition in red. Then, they apply

40 Soucek 1974, 72, 78.

41 Hillenbrand 1990, 150.

42 Roxburgh 2002, 65. Roxburgh considers that the use of mechanical transfer methods was "occasional […] (perhaps even anomalous)" (Roxburgh 2002, 67).

43 In later, Persian painting, it seems that this rather restrictive frame cedes place to a more complex type of historicist selection, quotation, variation and emulation (Lentz/Lowry 1989, 376–379; Adamova 1992; Roxburgh 2002), which further underlines the idea that copying is by no means insignificant. The later attitude in Persian painting suggests a very different view of the function, practice, reception, and valuation of painting.

the colors. The application of colors itself has rarely been observed. I have personally carried out such observations with Patricia Roger-Puyo on an illuminated manuscript that was commissioned by the Ilkhanid vizier Rashīd al-Dīn (d. 718/1318)[44]. These observations revealed that the application of colors itself was carried out in a precise order: starting with gold, then outlining the contours in black before applying the colors one after the other: first, brown; second, blue; then, the other colors (red, yellow and green); and lastly a white finish, every time on all of the relevant areas of the painting.

Naked-eye and quick observations on medieval Arabic *Kalīla wa Dimna* manuscripts suggest that the order may vary from one manuscript and one painter to the other, but confirm the principle that colors are applied one after the other, filling in different, probably predetermined areas on the whole surface of the painting (i.e. gold on different areas, brown on other areas, etc.)[45], which may explain the often disparaged "unrealistic" Arab palette. In a manuscript with a relatively limited palette such as the Cambridge *Kalīla wa Dimna* where only four colors are used for textiles (blue, green, red, purple), it seems that the colorist simply managed to balance the four colors so that the same color is always applied on more or less distant areas, and never on two adjacent areas. The principles that guided the application of colors, thus, appear purely formal: a certain notion of variety, balance, and probably also contrast.

Contrary to the widespread opinion, we can also add that colors are rarely flat, but are often graded. Gradation is obtained by superimposing two or more hues of the same color or two different colors, starting with the lightest and finishing with the darkest, and sometimes adding a black touch, in a concentric way or from the body to the tip. This technique is applied to suggest the folds of textiles or to shade elements of landscape such as rocks, plants or water.

Once the different areas and layers of colors applied, the final aspect of the painting is achieved again with lines: usually red contours for light pink skins and black contours for all of the other surfaces. Black or white lines are also used to trace the details of faces, folds or furs, and to bring out the gradation of colors.

Painting on Books and on Other Media

The last issue that seems relevant for the definition of painting is the relationship between painting on books and painting or image making on other media, especially ceramics[46] and metalwork. Thus, several scholars argued that medieval manuscript artists and metalworkers

44 Ben Azzouna/Roger-Puyo 2016.

45 These observations are supported by several unfinished manuscripts such as a Qurʾān dated to 728/1327 by famous calligrapher ʿAbd Allah al-Ṣayrafī in the Chester Beatty Library (n° 1468, cf. Ben Azzouna 2014.) The "*Arḍah-dāsht*", the progress report most likely addressed by the calligrapher and head of workshop Jaʿfar al-Tabrīzī to his patron, the Timurid prince Bāysunghur Mīrzā of Herat ca. 1430, states that one of the illuminators "has applied gold (*ṭalā nahādah*) to [several illuminations] and he has outlined (*taḥrīr*)" several others. Likewise, other illuminators have "completed the groundwork (*bi-būm risānīdah*)" of several *sarlawḥ*s and are finishing the rest, whereas one of the painters "has finished the waves (most likely in silver) in two sea scenes […] and will begin to apply color" (TSMK, H. 2153, f° 98r: Lentz/Lowry 1989, 160; trans. in Thackston 1989, 323–325). The examination at high magnification of samples of an early seventeenth-century life-size portrait of the Mughal Emperor Jahāngīr also supports this observation (*Islamic and Indian Art* 2011, lot 322.)

46 Hillenbrand 1994.