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MINIATURE FROM AN ARABIC TRANSLATION OF DIOSCORIDES'S *DE MATERIA MEDICA*

IRAQ, BAGHDAD (?); 1224

H: 32.5; W: 23 CM

Pharmacology in classical Arab culture can be said to have drawn on three major sources: popular medicine (both local Arab medicine and knowledge acquired from the peoples of conquered lands), translations of works about medicines from earlier cultures, and Arab physicians' own observations and experiences.

This fragment, from a 13th-century transcription of Dioscorides's *De Materia Medica* (written in the 1st century), contains a description of the herb *luqabsus* (from the Greek *lykapsos*), probably viper's bugloss. In order to avoid misunderstandings and mistranslations, many medicinal plants were illustrated, and their Greek names were carefully transliterated into Arabic. This made it possible for those with a knowledge of Greek to verify and if necessary correct identifications of species. Manuscripts of this type are among the oldest with illustrations known from the Islamic cultural sphere.

Published in:

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[B. W. Robinson et al.]: *Persian and Mughal art*, Colnaghi, London [1976], cat.no. 3:2 (mentioned);

*Art from the World of Islam. 8th-18th century*, Louisiana, Humlebæk 1987, cat.no. 103a;

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Kjeld von Folsach, Torben Lundbæk and Peder Mortensen (eds.): *Sultan, Shah and Great Mughal: the history and culture of the Islamic world*, The National Museum, Copenhagen 1996, cat.no. 73;

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Ahmed Djebbar (ed.): *L'age d'or des sciences arabes*, Institut du monde arabe, Paris 2005, cat.no. 108, p. 182;

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Stig T. Rasmussen: *Klassisk arabisk litteratur i oversættelse til dansk: en litteraturhistorisk vejvisende antologi*, København 2018, pp. 162-163;