

Acknowledgements

This book has developed over an extended period from the mid-1990s to the present. I first came across medieval descriptions of the balsam plantation of Matarea during my doctoral studies in the Oriental Institute in Oxford, and have continued to collect evidence ever since. Other projects have come and gone over more than two decades, but I have always kept in mind the need to create a book-length treatment of balsam. Over the years I have accumulated many scholarly debts, and it is a pleasure to acknowledge them here (with apologies offered to anyone I have inadvertently missed from these lists).

I am deeply grateful to Emilie Savage-Smith for her enthusiastic support of this project, and for sharing her immense knowledge of Islamic medicine. Many others in Oxford also kindly offered their time and expertise, including Jeremy Johns, Julian Raby, James Allan, Robert Thompson, Sebastian Brock, Emmanouel Papoutsakis, Luitgard Mols, Ruba Kana'an, Chase Robinson, Jos van Lent and Martha Repp. I am especially indebted to Evanthis Baboula for her close reading of earlier drafts of chapters and for translating and commenting upon passages of ancient and modern Greek.

I have benefited from insights and information provided by many other scholars, curators and archivists over the last two decades. My thanks to Venetia Porter, Charles Burnett, Adrienne Mayor, Doris Behrens-Abouseif, Fahmida Suleman, Shamma Boyarin, Moshe Fischer, Katia Cytryn-Silverman, Orit Peleg, Domniki Papadimitriou, Ellen Kenney, Iain Higgins, Hélène Cazes, Zahra Kazani and my colleagues in the Department of Art History and Visual Studies and the Program for Medieval Studies in the University of Victoria. None of the people listed above are, of course, responsible for the errors or omissions in this book.

Photographs, maps and diagrams in the book were created by Iona

Hubner, Seyedhamed Yeganehfarzand and Naomi Shields. Mary Milwright read and annotated drafts of several chapters. The anonymous reviewer offered numerous helpful criticisms of an earlier draft of the book. I am grateful also for the guidance and wise advice provided by Nicola Ramsey at Edinburgh University Press and Carole Hillenbrand, the editor of the Edinburgh Studies in Classical Islamic History and Culture series. Parts of the research were supported by a fellowship with the Harold Hyam Wingate Foundation, a Frances A. Yates Scholarship at the Warburg Institute and a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council Internal Research Grant at the University of Victoria.

This book would not have been possible without the love and support of my family. I dedicate this study to my children, Loukas and Clio.