THE EARLY REPRESENTATIONS OF THE PROPHET
MUHAMMAD WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE
TO THE Mİ'RĀJ SCENES

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Unfortunately I encountered serious difficulties in Paris at the Bibliothèque Nationale, as I was not allowed to see the manuscript of the 1436 Mi‘rāj-Nāmah for more than a few seconds to check some four miniatures only. The reason given was that this particular manuscript was too precious to be shown to people although Dr. Hillenbrand had kindly provided me with an official letter of introduction. I hope that some of the staff in libraries and museums will be more generous in future and allow authorized people to study the manuscripts in their collections.
This thesis discusses the representation of the Prophet Muhammad in early Islamic manuscripts. It also investigates whether the art of representing living beings was indeed prohibited by the Prophet. The investigation mentions the well-known hadiths which are attributed to Muhammad and the contradictions between each one. The earliest surviving representation of Muhammad dates from the Ilkhanid period but the evidence is slight that Islamic representations of him were known before this period. The various Ilkhanid manuscripts with religious scenes are discussed in detail. There then follows the discussion of a religious manuscript, the Mi'raj-Namah, of the mid-fifteenth century, which deals with the miraculous journey of Muhammad to heaven. Finally, the appearance of religious scenes as frontispieces in Islamic secular books is discussed, and the Sufi element in the mi'raj theme is explored.
ABBREVIATIONS

BOOKS

Arnold, P.I. - Painting in Islam

Creswell, E.M.A. - Early Muslim Architecture

E.B. - Encyclopaedia Britannica

E.I. - Encyclopaedia of Islam

E.R.E. - Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics

Ettinghausen, A.P. - Arab Painting

" B.S.I.W. - From Byzantine to Sassanian Iran and the Islamic World

Grabar, B.P. - Byzantine Painting

Hamid, M.S. - The Mesopotamian School and the Place of Painting in Islam

Kraay, G.C. - Greek Coins

Al-Maqrizi, Kh.M. - Al-Khitat (Kitāb al-mawā'iz wa'l-i'tibār bi dhikr al-Khitat wa'l-athār).

Al-Mas‘ūdí, M.Dh. - Muruj al-Dhahab wa ma‘ādin al-jawhar
Al-Mas'ūdī, T.I. - Al-tanbih wa'l-ishrāf

Pope, S.P.A. - A Survey of Persian Art

Rice, B.A. - Byzantine Art

I.A. - Islamic Art

Robinson, D.C.P.P.B.L. - A Descriptive Catalogue of the Persian Painting in the Bodleian Library

C.P.M.M. - A Catalogue of the Persian Manuscripts and Miniatures in the Chester Beatty Library

I.P.A.B. - Islamic Painting and the Arts of the Book

P.P.I.O.L. - Persian Painting in the India Office Library

Al-Shawkānī, F.Q. - Path al-qādir

N.A. - Nayl al-awtār

Al-Tabarī, T.T. - Jāmi' al-bayān 'an ta'wīl al-Qur'ān

T.R.W.M. - Tārīkh al-rusul wa'l-mulūk

Weitzmann, L.A.E.C.I. - Late Antique and Early Christian Book Illuminations
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Introduction

The subject of this thesis is the investigation of pictures of the Prophet Muhammad in Islamic art in general and of the mi'raj scene in particular.

The first chapter deals with the prohibitions of painting recorded in the sayings of Muhammad. Many scholars have in fact already treated this subject in full detail, including the type of painting which is banned and the places where these paintings are to be found. These scholars have also discussed whether this prohibition was mentioned in the Qur'ān or not and they concluded that there is no reference to the illegality of depicting living beings.

This same subject is not repeated here, but in view of the link between this subject and the thesis as a whole it seems justified to reconsider this material. In these long-familiar hadīths each muhaddīth tells us that a special hadīth prohibits certain types of depiction in particular places, while others give the same hadīth but without evincing any hatred against the representation of any kind of living creature. The second section of the first chapter notes the contradiction between these sayings and certain recorded historical events.

In spite of the severe prohibitions recorded in the hadīths against the depiction of living creatures such depictions are commonplace from early Islamic times and they include depictions
of the Prophet Muhammad himself. These were done during the Mongol period, but certain evidence suggests that pictures of Muhammad were known during the 'Abbāsid period.

This evidence is explored in the second chapter, which deals with private and public libraries of both religious and secular books, recorded in the 'Abbāsid period. Illustrated books were known and these included official documents and books of varied topics. Surviving pictorial art of the period often depicts people of high rank, even Prophets and religious leaders. Islamic historical sources even record that there were in the pre-Ilkhanid period representations of the Prophet Muhammad in certain times. Besides, representations of Burāq and angels, as described in detail by Muhammad, are known in the 'Abbāsid period.

The third chapter discusses the religious policy and inclinations of the Mongols, because many doubts have been expressed about their sincerity towards Islam, given the fact that they used to change their religious allegiance so often. This fact has been used against the Mongols for some have alleged that this encouraged them to have pictures of Muhammad painted because they were not genuinely Islamic in their attitudes. The third chapter continues with a short history of the life of the authors of the two manuscripts which bear representations of Muhammad, especially Rashīd al-Dīn. The place and circumstances
in which these pictures were produced are also discussed. There follows an analysis of the text and illustrations of the Jāmi’ al-tawārikh and the Āthār al-baqīyah.

The fourth chapter deals principally with the manuscript of the 1436 Mi’rāj-Nāmah in Paris. The main text of this manuscript is written in Chaghatay Turkish and in Uighūr script. Accordingly a short account of the history and beliefs of the Uighūrs is given. There follows a description and analysis of each miniature in turn.

In the final chapter single-leaf miniature of the mi’rāj have been discussed. Some of the reasons which made the artist choose this particular scene are explored, and the force of tradition in this respect and the power of symbolic images, is assess; so too is the Sufī element in these scenes.

The conclusion to be drawn from these five chapters is that the theological prohibition of depicting living beings was repeatedly flouted, even to the extent that pictures of the Prophet Muhammad were painted. The places where these manuscripts were produced was not necessarily a private institution, for many a library was publicly dedicated to learning and it seems that many students, qādīs and theologians knew this. No Arabic or Persian authors seemed to have accused the Mongols of being anti-Islamic simply because they ordered pictures of Muhammad. Many authors describe in detail the slaughter which the Muslims suffered at Mongol hands and how the Mongols ruined mosques, schools
and other buildings. Yet when the Mongol settled they were eager to repair most of what they had damaged.

The question has been asked whether the early Ilkhanid pictures depicting Muhammad were intended as portraits. Some believe that they do not represent Muhammad and are done simply from the imagination of the artists, for they are not similar to the descriptions of him handed down in Islamic tradition. He is shown with slant eyes, round face and a small nose, together with certain distinguishing attributes. These indicate that, despite the Far Eastern elements in these pictures, the artists did intend the figure to be recognized as Muhammad.
CHAPTER I

THE ROLE OF HADITH IN FORMING THE ISLAMIC ATTITUDE TO PAINTING
1. The internal inconsistencies of hadith

The only canonical Islamic source which expressly forbids the representation of living beings is the hadiths which have been attributed to the Prophet Muhammad.

What one expects from Muhammad’s sayings is that they should be similar and consistent, but even today the orthodox belief about depicting animate beings in certain places like dresses, curtains, cushions, carpets and so on is not entirely fixed. Yet it is important for two reasons that the traditions which forbid painting should not contain discrepancies. First, they were recorded, according to tradition, from the Prophet, who rarely contradicted himself; and second, this matter is of fundamental concern for the religion of Islam.

Some investigation of these apparent contradictions is therefore required. Three basic categories of relevant hadith may be isolated:

a. Traditions which banned figural art in particular places:

1. ’Ali b. Abd Allah told us from Sufyān who said that he heard Abd al-Rahmān b. al-Qāsim saying that he heard from his father, who heard from ’Āisyah who said that on one occasion she put a decorated curtain on her door. When the Apostle of God saw it he removed it saying that those most severely punished on the Day of
Judgement would be those who imitated God.

'Aishah added that we made one or two cushions from the cloth." (1)

2. 'Aishah had bought a cushion decorated with living beings. But the Prophet Muhammad refused to enter the house. His wife asked him what sin she had committed that prevented him from entering. He replied: "The cushion inside; and people who make pictures will be asked on the Last Day to put life into their work. Besides, angels do not enter a house if there is any picture (in it)." (2)

3. Qutaybah b. Sa'id heard from al-Layth from Bakir from Basr b. Sa'id that Zayd b. Khālid had been told by Abī Talhah who said that the Prophet said that angels will not enter a house with pictures in it. Basr added: "It happened that Zayd felt ill. So we went to see him and we saw a curtain hanging on his door ornamented with figures. Basr said to 'Ubaid Allah al-Khulānī that Zayd had condemned us for keeping pictures in a house. Al-Khulānī replied "Yes, but only on clothes". (3)

4. Once, 'Ali b. Abī Ṭalib invited the Prophet Muhammad to his house. But the Prophet of Islam returned as soon as he saw a

1. Al-Bukhārī, Ummdat al-qāri; Sharḥ Sahīh al-Bukhārī (Cairo 1929), vol.IXIII, p.72.
2. Ibid., p.73.
decorated curtain. 'Ali asked him why he did so. He told him that angels do not enter a house if there is any picture in it. (1)

5. Al-Bukhārī records the tradition recounted by Abū Mu‘ammar ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Amrū who said that ‘Abd al-Warīth heard from ‘Abd al-‘Azīz b. Suhayb from Anas that ‘Ā’ishah had an ornamented curtain. When Muhammad saw it he asked her to remove it because its motifs interfered with his praying. (2)

6. ‘Ā’ishah said that the Prophet ordered her to remove a curtain from her door because it was decorated with winged horses. (3)

7. Muhammad b. ‘Awf told us Sa‘īd b. Abī Maryam told us that they heard Yahyā b. Aiyūb said that he was told by ‘Amārah b. Ghazyā that Muhammad b. Ibrāhīm told him that he heard from Abī Salama b. ‘Abd al-Rahmān from ‘Ā’ishah that it happened that the Apostle of God came from the battle of Tabūk or Khaybar. The wind blew and Muhammad saw her dolls which were hidden behind a curtain. He asked her about some of them which were in the shape of winged horses and he wondered if there were such creatures as horses with wings. She said "Have not you heard that Sulaymān (the

3. Muslim, Sahīh Muslim bi sharh al-Nuwawī, 1st ed. (Cairo 1930), vol. XIV, p. 87.
Prophet) had winged horses?" She added that Muhammad laughed at her reply. (1)

8. Abū Hurayrah heard the Prophet saying that the angel Gabriel refused to enter his house because there were statues on the door as well as a decorated curtain and a dog inside the house. The archangel told him to cut off the head of the objects so that they would look like trees, to transfer the curtains into cushions and put the dog outside. (2)

9. Yahyā b. Sulaymān said that he had been told by Ibn Wahb who said that 'Umar b. Muhammad had heard from Sālim from his father. He said that Gabriel promised the Apostle of God to come to his house, but he did not. It happened that he met Gabriel and asked him why he did not come. Gabriel replied "We do not enter a house if there is a picture or a dog in it." (3)

Clearly these hadiths prohibit the depiction of living beings in certain places but only the last two instances give any clue as to the kind of representations involved - i.e. whether they are of animals or human beings.

Perhaps the most convenient approach is to follow al-Bukhārī's

summary of the various views of certain theologians and legal schools. (1)

a. Al-Khaṭābī

All kinds of representations are most strictly prohibited, no matter whether they depict objects which cast shadow or only pictures and no matter whether they are done on a wall or carpet or any kind of material.

b. Ibn Batāl

According to hadīth no. 5, Ibn Batāl states that:

"Wearing a dress decorated with living figures, especially during prayer, is not agreeable (makruh). But whoever prays with it his prayer could be considered as acceptable (mujaza'ah), only because the Prophet did not repeat the prayer again. Besides, he said it interfered with his prayer; he did not say it stopped (qata'at) it".

c. Malik

He states that it is not proper to have statues (tamāthīl) on beds or domes but that there is no harm in using living creatures on carpets, pillows or clothes. Malik also disliked praying in a dome which has statues.

d. Al-Thawri

He does not object to figures depicted on pillows because they are used for sitting upon.

e. Abū Hanīfah

He and his followers banned Muslims from keeping statues in their houses as well as hanging decorated curtains. But they did not show any enmity to using things which were laid on the floor.

f. Shāfi‘ite madhhab

They said that because the Prophet Muhammad had prohibited the representation of living motifs (according to the various records of what Muhammad had said), all kinds of representation are prohibited, no matter where they are on walls, clothes, curtains or carpets.

g. Al-‘Arabī al-Māliki

This man stated in the marginal notes of Sahīh al-Tirmidhī that it is forbidden to keep objects which have bodies (ajisād), but if they are on clothes there are four possible rulings:

1. Those bodies (ajisād) are not prohibited apart from those which are printed on clothes (thawb).

2. He thinks that the representation of bodies is banned because of the hadith which ‘Ā‘ishah recorded about the removal of the curtains from her door by the Prophet.

3. If the picture (sūrah) has a complete shape, it is not
allowed to keep it. But if it has been cut into pieces in which the actual shape is difficult to recognize there will be no harm, as in the case of 'A'ishah when she made cushions from the curtain material.

4. Finally al-‘Arabī did not favour the use of decorated material in places of repute.

Of these four possibilities, al-‘Arabī prefers the third. (1)

From hadīths 1, 4, 5 and 6 it is clear that the Prophet Muhammad objected to the idea of having curtains with motifs of living creatures. Nevertheless he was quite satisfied when cushions were made from the same cloth. Muslim theologians have in general agreed about using decorated material in certain places. They divide the places into two categories, unrespectable (mumtahanah) which means that those objects used on the floor, and hung (mu'allaqah) on walls and ceiling. But these definitions are not absolute and the same material may be regarded as respectable by one person and unrespectable by another.

In part, this lack of agreement springs from the contradictory belief implied by the hadīths. For example, if a figural carpet were to be laid somewhere in a mosque it might legitimately be said that there was no harm inputting this carpet with its

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living decorations in the mosque because the motifs were going to be under the feet of the worshippers. But this attitude would imply that the floor of the mosque was an unclean place. There are further difficulties too. For instance, it is not easy to say that something which belongs to the Prophet of Islam is unworthy of respect, especially a cushion which Muhammad used to lean or sleep on. Certainly they are not sacred, for Muhammad was a mortal, but as his property they might be regarded as a source of blessing (barakah) by his successors.

There is disagreement too about whether curtains with human figures should be hung. In early Islamic times curtains used to be put in the entrance of a doorway to serve as a door or screen. They were therefore exposed to contamination by unclean hands. The same is true of garments which might touch dirty floors. The fact that both uses render the material open to contamination is crucial. To say that there is no harm in using material decorated with living beings so long as it is used in "despicable" (mumtahanah) places may well be acceptable. But the definition of a "despicable" place then becomes crucial. Material that is hung is open to contamination by dirt just as material that is sat or trodden upon. We notice in hadith no. 3 above, that Zayd and al-Khulani did not object to a curtain with living images on it. Muhammad, on the contrary, removed such curtains or refused to enter houses with decorated curtains in them (hadiths 1, 4, 5 and 6).

It seems that most of the traditions which have been
attributed to the Prophet reflect later Muslim doctrines rather than the feelings of the Apostle of God. Certainly the hadîths cited above do not yield a coherent and internally consistent body of opinion about the lawfulness of figural images amongst Islamic theologians.

A closer analysis will reveal some of these inconsistencies. In the first hadîth mentioned by al-Bukhârî, we notice that he states the names of many people who gave this particular account. They all remember the exact words and the incident itself; nevertheless, they are not sure whether 'A'ishah made one or two cushions.

The sixth and seventh hadîths are nearly similar for both mention the same kind of representation. But their content implies diametrically opposed attitudes. In the sixth hadîth Muslim says that the Prophet had ordered the removal of a curtain after expressing his disquiet to his wife. But Abî Dâ'ûd's record implies a contrary attitude in hadîth 7. The conclusion to be drawn from Abî Dâ'ûd's account (hadîth 7) is that certain objects are permissible even though they cast shadows, and they represent qualities or attributes which one of the prophets had, in this case Solomon, one of whose attributes is having winged horses.

In the fifth hadîth Muhammad gives the reason why he did not like a curtain with pictures to be hung on his door: besides the fact that it is an imitation of God's activity, it obstructs his praying. Muhammad is a prophet and certainly he should be an

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1. Indeed, there is no way in which they could be sure of such a thing.
example for all the Muslims. When he practised the religious rites (fara'id), he would have done so sincerely and with whole-hearted attention no matter where he was. But this hadith implies that a decorated curtain had interfered with his prayer and this makes it doubtful that the Prophet Muhammad had said such a thing.

Apart from throwing the artist in hell, many kinds of threats are mentioned in the books of traditions. Muslims are warned not to keep objects or pictures which incorporate depictions of living beings, for some theologians think that a house decorated with these objects is similar to the houses of idols. Nevertheless, the theologians no doubt knew quite well the difference between houses used for paying obedience to an object and houses of people who fast and pray and use figural art for decoration only. The judgement which has been applied to the painter is that of revolt ('asî) assuming that he does paintings for the sake of art only. The term 'asî is used for a backslider - one who is a Muslim but who flouts one of the ordinances of the faith. Thus the artist could be assimilated to a person who drinks wine or gambles. Yet no other type of person is threatened with the punishment that angels would not enter his house or that he lives in a place similar to temples. And this is in spite of the fact that gambling, drinking and so on have been specifically banned by God Himself in the Qur'an, while there is no mention of art and artists.

Another point worth being mentioned here is that in theological discussions artists and paintings are usually linked with the prohibition of keeping dogs in a house. The yoking together of these disparate concepts again leads to implied contradictions. Al-Bukhari states that the mosque in Madīnah in the time of Muhammad was not walled and that dogs used to enter the mosque, though not the sanctuary itself. If according to the hadiths just quoted — angels refuse to enter houses with dogs in them, is one to conclude that angels would not enter a mosque in which the Prophet himself had prayed? Such inconsistencies are not easily resolved and suggest that great care should be taken in assessing the authenticity of hadiths threatening the painter.

Al-Bukhari quotes the case of God's punishment of the Pharaoh: "Cause Pharaoh's folk to enter the most awful doom" to emphasise that the painter's torment will be even worse. Yet it may be argued that if the crime of the painter was as heinous as this, it would certainly have deserved mention in the Qur'ān itself, the prime source for the precepts of Islam, and not in sharh Sahih al-Bukhari, in which the author himself wrote down what he and others thought about the painter.

It is also noteworthy that none of the three caliphs who were

(2) Surah XL, 46.
(3) Al-Bukhari, op. cit., vol. XXII, p. 70.
intimate friends of Muhammad have left any record that he forbade the representation of human figures. Ibn Hanbal, who divided his book of hadīths into sections, depending on the tellers, attributes no hadīths on the unlawfulness of figural art to Abū Bakr, 'Umar b. al-Khattāb or 'Uthmān b. 'Affān. This omission is significant because these men embraced Islam in the early days and accompanied the Prophet constantly. Moreover, after the death of the Apostle of God, Muslims used to ask them various questions which concerned Islamic law and there appears to be no record of any pronouncement of theirs on painting.

The only two persons who do recount such traditions are the fourth Caliph, 'Alī b. Abī Tālib, and 'Ā'ishah, the wife of Muhammad. But the situation is still unclear because it is hard to credit that these people alone heard Muhammad forbidding Muslims from using living figures while the other three caliphs provide no evidence on a matter which would directly affect so many Muslims. It might be suggested, perhaps, that painting was not sufficiently important a subject to them to be worth mentioning. But 'Umar, for example, records that he heard the Prophet prohibit Muslims from wearing silk, (1) while 'Uthmān records that Muhammad gave orders to kill dogs and pigeons. (2) Certainly the representation of living creatures, if linked with idolatry, is intimately connected with the fundamental tenets of

2. Ibn Hanbal, ibid., p.520-4, no.521.
Islam and so is very much more serious than killing dogs and wearing silk.

b. Representation of Plants

1. Ibn ‘Abbās said, "I heard the Apostle of God saying that every painter will be put in Hell and each picture he does will torment him. But if you want to draw you can make plants and everything which does not have a spirit."(1)

2. Al-‘Abbās b. ‘Uthmān al-Dimishqi said that he heard from al-Walīd from ‘Afīr b. Ma’dān from Salīm b. ‘Āmir from Abī Umamah that a woman had asked the Prophet Muhammad if it were possible to paint (tusawr) a palm-tree in her house. Al-Dimishqi said that the Prophet had banned her from doing so.(2)

Mostly the theologians allowed Muslims to represent all kinds of plants in various places. The reason is that plants do not have a soul. Thus the artist in drawing them would not set himself up as an equal to God. In the first tradition, which has an isnād of regular type, Ibn ‘Abbās tells what he had heard from the Prophet. In the second Ibn Mājah recounts an incident which happened between a woman and Muhammad in which she was banned from having

a picture of a palm-tree in her house. Technically Muslims should follow this second precept, but in fact no theologian has been recorded as objecting to the decoration of mosques and other Muslim religious buildings with floral patterns. The contradiction between the two hadiths just cited seems to be more irreconcilable than the contradictions in the body of hadiths previously discussed.

Contradictions between hadiths and the history of Islam

Unfortunately historical chronicles and documents are frequently at variance with the books of hadith. In such cases it is clearly impossible to believe both sources. There seems to be little reason to suspect that historians deliberately set out to discredit religious texts. Besides, many authors wrote in both fields, history as well as religion, and even if they did not, the close relationship between religion and history in Islamic civilisation needs no emphasis.

The frescoes of the Ka'ba

Before Islam a fire had seriously damaged the Ka'ba and the Arabs decided to rebuild it. Internally the building was decorated with four fresco paintings. The first showed Jesus sitting in his mother's lap; the second Ibrāhīm with arrows in his hand; the third, plants; and the fourth figures in the shape of angels. After he had taken power in Mecca, Muhammad sent al-Fadl b. al-‘Abbās b. ‘Abd al-Muttalib to remove these
paintings from the wall except the one which was under his hands. Al-Aẓraqī states that this was the fresco of Jesus and Mary.\(^{(1)}\)

This account deserved detailed analysis. Perhaps its key feature is that the Apostle of God did not obliterate the picture of Jesus and Mary. As Zakī Muhammad Hasan said: "This was because of the respect Muhammad bore to Christianity and to our Lord Jesus. He was not afraid that one of his followers would worship the statues."\(^{(2)}\) Muhammad had good relations with the Christians in Arabia. As is well known, the first person who during the childhood of Muhammad recognized that this child would be the Promised Prophet was a Christian priest.\(^{(3)}\) Moreover when the tribe of Quraysh started persecuting Muhammad and the first Muslims, he advised them to emigrate to Abyssinia temporarily. Abyssinia was at that time ruled by a hereditary Christian monarchy whose chief at that time bore the title of Negus (al-Najāshī). Al-Najāshī met the representatives of the new faith. He asked them many questions about their religion. He did not find that much difference between the two religions and he refused to deliver the Muslims to the tribe of Quraysh.\(^{(4)}\)

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In the 7th century Muhammad would have been used to seeing Christian churches decorated with pictures of Jesus and Mary and he would have recognised these pictures as serving a religious function. Above all Muhammad knew that Mecca was the house of God before being the Muslim sacred place. On the other hand, one must also consider a hadith related by 'Ā'ishah to the effect that Muhammad did not like to keep things which contained crosses. Yet if we compare the incident which has just been discussed with that hadith, we realize that the hadith does not make sense. It is hard to believe that the Prophet of Islam should hate keeping crosses in his house and yet allow a fresco of Jesus to remain in the very centre of Islam.

The fresco of Ibrāhīm raises different issues. The Qur'ān says:

"O Ye who believe! strong drink and games of chance and idols and divining arrows are only an infamy of Satan's handiwork. Leave it aside in order that he may succeed" (2)

Accordingly the action of Muhammad in ordering the image of Ibrāhīm with arrows in his hand to be rubbed out need occasion no surprise, especially as arrows were used by the priests of the Jāhiliyya to foretell the future. (3)

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2. Sūrah V, 90.
It is hard to suggest why the representations of trees or plants were rubbed out. This detail is particularly striking because in later times Muslim theologians allowed the artist to draw various sorts of plants because such entities, though they were alive, had no soul. The fourth major motif in these paintings was angels. Muhammad Hasanin Haykal says that they were sketched in the shape of females. In the period before Islam, the Arabs thought that angels were females. In Islamic belief, by contrast, angels have been identified simply as being messengers between God and certain holy people such as prophets. Attempts to define the sex of these sacred creatures have been banned:

"And they make the angels, who are the slaves of the Beneficent, females. Did they witness their creation? Their testimony will be recorded and they will be questioned." (2)

The depiction of the angels in the Ka'ba as females may have been one of the main reasons why Muhammad removed the pictures of angels from it. Besides, they were done by non-Muslim hands and Muhammad of course wanted the Arabs to give up everything which might remind them of their previous religion.

2. SūrahXLIII, 19.
Coins

The coinage which had been in circulation before and immediately after the coming of Islam in Arabia was both Persian (Sasanian dirhams) and Byzantine (dīnār of Heraclius).\(^1\)

'Abū Tālib said that when he married Fāṭimah, the Prophet's daughter, he paid Muhammad money as a dowry.\(^2\) Presumably this consisted of foreign coins. In the eighth year of the Hijrah 'Umar b. al-Khattāb struck dirhams similar to those of the Sasanians. He added to these coins the legends "There is no God but God"; "Muhammad is the Apostle of God"; "Praise be to God".\(^3\)

The conclusion from these accounts indicates that Muhammad used to deal with foreign currency, in spite of the fact that these coins were struck by his enemies and bore the signs of their religions. Certainly he was not obliged to use them especially after the establishment of Islam. It would have been possible for him at that time to mint another type which did not have the portraits that were the standard decoration of Byzantine and Sasanian coinage. He also accepted the same kind of coinage from his son-in-law. If he had really hated the representation of living beings he would have asked‘Alī to give him other property according to the custom which was known at that time. Finally, the use of

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the same currency by his successors is a good indication that
Muhammad himself accepted representational art which was not
used for religious purposes.

The Conquest of Iraq

In the time of 'Umar b. al-Khattāb, the Muslim army
succeeded in adding Iraq to the Islamic empire. This conquest,
like that of Syria, brought the Muslims into contact with
figural art and their response is instructive. Al-Tabarī
mentions in his history that when the Muslim leader Sa'd b. Abī
Waqqās entered the Īwān of the Persian king he recited:

"How many were the gardens and the water-
springs that they left behind. And the corn-
lands and the goodly sites. And pleasant things
wherein they took delight! Even so (it was),
and we made it an inheritance for other folk."(1)

He then prayed with the army the prayer of victory in spite of
the gypsum statues which were in the Īwān.(2) There is no record
that 'Umar objected to this particular incident. Indeed, Sa'd
was one of the six men whom 'Umar himself selected to succeed him
as Caliph. (3)

2. Al-Tabarī, Tārikh al-rusul wa'l-mulūk, ed. De Goeje (Leiden
1893), Ser.I-5, p.2443.
A modern Muslim commentator on this incident, Zakī Muhammad Hasan, argues that the Muslim army in no way compromised its beliefs and that there was no harm in praying in a hall decorated in this way. He argues that the soldiers had never seen such objects used as idols during the jähiliyya; they were used for decoration only. Such an interpretation implies that painting and objects in general were licit at this period as long as they were not done by Muslim hands and were not used for religious functions. It implies too that statues were not particularly heinous; for the Arabs of the jähiliyya, though they worshipped idols which were sometimes brought from other countries as they had high artistic value, could in fact regard any object as worthy of veneration. Therefore they did not make any difference between a statue made to be worshipped and an object used for decoration. The litholatry of the pagan Arabs before Islam is well known, while the import of statues from Syria, presumably to be worshipped though possibly for sale, by the priest of the ka'ba 'Amrū b. Lahi al-Khuzā‘Ī is also recorded.

The account of the conquest of Iraq offers further corroboration about the tolerance of early converts to Islam on the matter of images. Al-Tabarī mentions a story about two donkey-men who had been captured by the Muslims. Their loads

2. No specific date has been given.
contained one golden horse with a silver saddle decorated with valuable stones; a cavalier made of silver; and a she-camel bearing a golden object in the shape of a man. The latter sculpture had decorated the crown of the Persian king. \(^{(1)}\) The Muslims seized these objects on the spot even though they depicted living creatures.

Other belongings of the Sasanian king had been sent to ‘Umar. These included the king's weapons, his clothes and the celebrated carpet, "the springtime of Khusraw". The extraordinary ornament of this carpet included rivers, flowers, birds and trees. It was woven with silk, golden threads and precious stones. ‘Umar, who was known for his justice, cut it into pieces and dispensed it among the Muslims at Madīnah. \(^{(2)}\) However, ‘Umar cut the carpet into pieces not because it contained depictions of animate beings. This particular article was far too expensive to be given to only one person. So the Caliph had to divide it among the Muslims according to Islamic law.

**Links between Christianity and the Islamic theory of image**

Three traditions may be cited in this context:

1. During the rule of ‘Umar b. al-Khattāb Syria was captured, and the Caliph himself went there. Al-Bukhārī records that he refused to enter a church, saying: "We do not enter your

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churches because of the statues which are inside." (1)

2. Ibn Abī Shaybah states in his book, from Sahl b. Sa'd from Hāmid who was informed by Bakr, that "A letter was sent to 'Umar from Najrān saying that they (the Muslims) did not find a place cleaner and better than a church to pray in. So 'Umar told them to sprinkle it with water and sidr, and pray in it." (2)

3. When 'Umar arrived in Syria one of the well-known Christians invited him to have a meal with him. (3) But the Caliph refused, telling the man that Muslims do not enter churches as long as they contain statues. (4)

It will be convenient to discuss these three incidents in turn. The chronicles recount that 'Umar refused to enter churches for a completely different reason from that given above. Muhammad Kurd 'Alī recounts that 'Umar wanted to pray while he was in a church at Jerusalem. The Patriarch Sophronius invited him to pray where he was. But 'Umar refused because he was afraid that the Muslims would take possession of the church after his death. So he gave the Patriarch a decree ordering the Muslims

2. Ibid.
3. Al-Bukhārī did not mention whether the Christian invited 'Umar to his house or in a church.
to pray in the church singly and ordering that no call to prayer
should be made from it. (1) The Muslim army was after all the
occupying force and 'Umar could have ordered his followers to
break the statues and images in the churches in order to be able
to pray there.

The second hadīth is difficult to accept at face value.
Muhammad had instructed Muslims to pray wherever they were,
especially if they were away from their homeland. Consequently
they have always found a place to pray. The same no doubt
occurred in Najran.

In the third hadīth, the reason given for the Caliph's
refusal to enter the church was that he hated figural art. Yet
the Christian in question seems to have been an ordinary person,
not a priest. If this person wanted to have 'Umar eat with him
the obvious place to choose would have been his own house,
not in a church. The account thus seems
strangely garbled in its present form and is hard to cite as
evidence in favour of 'Umar's intolerance of figural sculpture.

It does not seem likely that theological debate will cast
any light on the causes of this contradiction. Enough has
already been said in this chapter to indicate that the evidence
of hadīth as to the lawfulness of the depiction of animate beings
in Islamic art is by no means straightforward. Rather does it

1. M.K. 'Alī, Al-islām wa'l-hadārah al-šarabiyah (Cairo 1934)
   vol.I, p.141.
seem that many of the key hadiths are mutually contradictory and that they reflect substantially later Muslim views on the propriety of images.
CHAPTER II

SUBJECT MATTER OF THE MATERIAL IN 'ABBĀSID AND FĀTIMID LIBRARIES AND THE POSSIBILITY THAT RELIGIOUS SUBJECTS WERE PAINTED BEFORE 1300
Interest in books and the progress of knowledge was widespread in 'Abbāsīd times. Men of letters displayed emulation in producing books of high quality. Hence, perhaps, the number of books that survive, quite apart from those mentioned only in the sources. The high status of literary studies may have encouraged the use of illustrations. Celebrated teachers were assigned to the Caliph's children to act as their tutors. Al-Jāhiz was at first chosen as tutor for al-Mutawakkil's son, but unfortunately his physical gracelessness came between him and the job, so he was given ten thousand dirhams and dismissed. (1) Al-Sūlī was asked to teach al-Rādī and his brother. He taught them various subjects such as poetry, literature and the like. Each one had a number of books of his own. But it seems that al-Sūlī was not completely satisfied with the children as they paid more attention to poetry than other subjects. He believed that hadīth would be a more useful study for them. So he copied for them the hadīths of Abū al-Qāsim b. Bint Manī', the best muhaddith of that time, and also the records of 'Alī b. al-Jī'd, Ibn 'Āshāhand Abū Nasr al-Tamār. (2)

The Caliphs also enjoyed arranging educational meetings with men of science and learning at the court. The Caliph had to take part in the discussion, no matter what the subject was. His military and religious responsibilities made it incumbent upon him to be conversant with history, politics and religion. Hārūn

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al-Rashīd, for instance, before his succession was fond of administration and military matters. But this did not prevent him from asking learned men about various other topics. After he was proclaimed ruler of the Muslim world, he widened his horizons by inviting intellectuals and sages to his court. Sometimes, Hārūn al-Rashīd met scholars to discuss specific matters troubling him; these men included al-Kasā‘ī, al-Mubārak b. Fadālāh, Abū Mu‘āwiyah, Abū Yūsuf al-Qādī and al-Asma‘ī.1) Al-Ma‘mūn did the same. He himself was thoroughly acquainted with fiqh, some foreign languages, and Islamic philosophy — which was a fashionable study during his reign and which helped to develop the idea that the Qur’ān was created.2) Astronomy, arithmetic, geometry and other subjects were included in this activity and the translation movement,3) which involved Greek, Syriac, Persian and Hindu texts, had already started.4) Libraries became a part of the Caliph’s wealth like palaces and states. After the death of the owner, these belongings would go automatically to the new Caliph.5)

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3. Ibid. p.269.
4. The translation of books on various subjects such as chemistry, astronomy, medicine, military matters, literature and the arts began under the Umayyad dynasty. Khālid b. Yāzīd (d.85/704) was known as Hakīm al-Marwān (S.al-Dīwān, Bayt al-hikmah [Mosul 1972], p.9).
Private Libraries

Private libraries, especially those in palaces, were stocked with books brought from many different sources. Sometimes the author himself would dedicate and give his books to his patron. Hence we often find prefaces calling down praise and blessings upon a given Caliph. Al-Ma'mūn used to collect most of his books by putting into his treaties with the emperors of Rūm a condition that he should be sent books dealing with philosophy and wisdom especially those which were not in his library. The next source which provided people with books was, of course, the book shop. These shops supplied books especially to scholars. Book-sellers’ agents are known; they include Ismā‘īl b. Ahmad who died in 536/1141; Abu‘l-Ma‘ālī al-Kutubī, who was an agent for books and paper at Baghdad and who died in 568/1172; and Ibn Sūrah, who lived in Cairo. Thus the book industry was well established in this period. Al-Ya‘qūbī mentions in his account of Baghdad that there was a big market for books there. Most of the shops belonged to the warrāqīn and there were more than one hundred shops. Al-Maqrīzī also mentions some book-cases in Cairo which contained about 1,200 copies of the history of

1. Al-Dīwān, op. cit., p. 17.
3. Ibid., p. 241.
al-Ṭabarî and 1,600 books. (1) There were also many books of
al-Khalîl b. Ahmad, the author of al-‘Ayn. The number of book-
cases at the palace was forty and various subjects were covered.
For example, 18,000 volumes dealt with the wisdom of the ancients,
and there were 2,400 Qur'âns illuminated in gold and silver. (2)
Ibn al-Athîr mentions under the year 451/1059 that a fire
devastated much of Baghdad. One of the many things which were
damaged was a book-case which had been dedicated by Ardashîr.
Some of these books were unfortunately stolen, while ‘Amîd al-Mulk
al-Kindî took the rest. They totalled about 10,400 volumes dealing
with various subjects. (3)

Many high officials were as zealous as some Caliphs in
arranging meetings with intellectuals and in collecting books. (4)
Al-Jahiz states that the ministers of al-Rashîd, the Barmacids,
used to keep three copies of every new book that appeared. (5) In
the month of Muharram 461/1068, the minister Abû al-Faraj Muhammad
b. Ja‘far al-Maghribî and al-Khatîr b. al-Muwaffaq took twenty-
five camels loaded with books from the Palace in Cairo. (6) Ibn
al-Sâ‘î al-Baghdadî states that in 588/1192 the minister Abu’l-
Muzaffar ‘Ubayd Allah b. Yūnus sent his librarian to the house of

2. Ibid., p. 408.
3. Ibn al-Athîr, Al-Kâmîl fi’l-târikh, ed. C.J. Tornberg
   (Leiden 1863), vol.X, p. 5.
'Abd al-Salām b. 'Abd al-Wahhab b. al-Shaykh 'Abd al-Qādir al-Gīlī to seize his library. The librarian said that he saw many books on different topics, like Shīfa' by Ibn Sīnā, the Rasā'il ikhwān al-Safā, and books on philosophy, astrology and magic. (1)

The 'Abbāsid Caliphs and their ministers sent scholars to many cities beyond the Islamic world to collect books and information about education and culture. Muhammad b. Ishāq, for instance, was in charge of these operations in India. He himself knew many of the wise men in this part of the world and brought them to Baghdad to share in the cultural activities there. (2) A similar interest in foreign culture can be seen in the Ilkhānid court at Tabrīz centuries later. The famous library of the Rub' al-Rashīdī contained enormous amounts of books collected from all over the Islamic world. These books included about 300 volumes written in golden ink, 548 books dealing with calligraphy and 60,000 on scientific subjects. (3)

A third group of persons who possessed large collections of books were the learned men themselves. Unfortunately, most of the books they collected have not survived, for various reasons. Abū

1. Ibn al-Sā'ī, Mukhtasar ṣakhbār al-Khulafā', 1st ed. (Cairo 1891) p.120.
Hayyān, for instance, burned his own library because he thought that his books were not useful and that thus there was no sense in keeping them. He felt too that those who inherited his books might not appreciate the information they contained. Al-Ḡāfī Abū Sahl ʿAlī b. Muhammad sent him a letter blaming him for his foolishness. He replied that he was not the only person who had burned and washed his books. Abū Hayyān added that Abū Amrū b. al-ʿAlāʾ, who was one of the greatest scientists, had buried them though he was well-known for his wisdom.1 Dāʾūd al-Taʿī, who was called Taʾj al-Ummah, threw his books into the sea while Yusuf b. Asbāt put them into a closed cave. Abū Sufyān al-Thawrī tore about one thousand volumes into pieces, and al-Shaykh Abū Saʿīd al-Sīrāfī, while telling his son to take care of his books after his death, also added that if he realized that they were not useful it would be better to burn them. Abū Hayyān added that although he had burned and washed them he was sorry to be parted from such sincere friends, but the idea of losing them would be better than leaving them to ignorant people.2 Another well-known library belonged to Zabān b. al-ʿAlāʾ who was famous as a specialist in the Qurʾān, Arabic literature, history and poetry. His books reached the ceiling of his library, but unfortunately his devoutness led him to burn them.3 Ibn al-Fūṭī al-Baghdādī states that during the Mongol invasion of Mesopotamia the people of Hillah, Kūfah and other cities used to take food to Baghdad to

2. Ibid., vol.IV, p.217.
3. Ibid.
exchange it with the inhabitants for books. (1) During the
disturbances in Cairo in 461/1068 the covers of books were used
as footwear by slaves who also burnt the paper of those volumes.
The rest of the books were carried out of the country or damaged
by the climate which left a large amount of books ruined. Al-
Maqrīzī added that even in his own time that place was called
tilāl al-kutub, "the hills of books". (2)

Some authors composed books on many different kinds of topics.
One such author was Ahmad b. al-Tayb al-Sarkhasī. (3) He wrote a
substantial book on music, an introduction to the skill of
medicine, and books on the utility of mountains, the advantages
of Baghdad and its news, cookery, risālah fī wasīf mathāhib
al-Sābi'īn, and so forth. (4) Sometimes the Caliph himself
ordered the composition of a book on a given subject. Al-Khatīb
al-Baghdādī says: "Muḥammad b. Ishaq entered al-Mahdī's presence
when the latter had his son with him. Al-Mahdī asked him: 'Do
you know him?' Ibn Ishaq replied: 'Yes, he is the son of amīr
al-mu'minīn'. The Caliph said: 'Go and compose a book for him,
starting from the day of creation until today'. Al-Khatīb

1. Ibn al-Fūtī, Al-ḥawādīth al-ṣāmi'ah wa'l-tajārib al-nafī'ah
fī al-mā'ah al-sabī'ah, eds. M.R. al-Shibībī and M. Jawād
(Baghdad 1932), p.331.
3. He was killed during the reign of al-Mu'tadid in Muharram
286/January 899 (Ibn Abī Usayba'ah, 'Uyūn al-anbā' fī
ṭabaqāt al-ṣābah [Cairo 1882], vol.1, pp.214-5).
4. Ibid., p.215.
continues that Ibn Ishaq did so, whereupon the Caliph said: 'This book is very long, go and summarize it.' Al-Khatib adds that the author accordingly shortened it, and this was now a short book, while the big book remained in the book-case of the Caliph. (1) Al-Mansur, who was well-known for his wisdom, ordered the book of Kalila wa Dimnah to be translated for him. (2)

A large private library, whether it belonged to a Caliph, prince or high official, would require a sizable staff of specialists. The library of 'Adud al-Dawlah, for example, was known for its organization. His librarians prepared lists of their patron's books in alphabetical order. They also divided the library into sections. Each was dedicated to one particular subject. The workers whom he employed were described by the terms agent (wakil), superintendent (mushrif) and keeper (khazin) and they had to be educated and familiar with library matters. (3)

Sitt Nasim had the reputation of having a similar handwriting to that of the Caliph al-Nasir (575-622/1180-1225) so he employed her at his court after he started losing his sight. (4)

The 'Abbasi were famed for employing female slaves, usually

singers and dancers, as mentioned in the *Kitāb al-Aghānī*. But whether women also helped to adorn books for their patrons is another matter.

**Public Libraries**

The cultural activity of 'Abbāsid times extended also to such of the common people as were interested in education although they could not afford to buy the books they needed. Books were provided for public use at institutes like mosques, māristānāt and schools; some of these later became public libraries. Al-Qazwīnī mentions that the minister Abu'l-Tāhir al-Khātūnī had a big book-case in the mosque of Sāmarra' which contained many types of books, including some on calligraphy and the astrolabe. (1) On the day of the opening of al-Mustansīryah al-Mustansir donated about 80,000 books to it. (2) Māristāns were used not only as a place for treatment but also to house a medical library. Prince Nūr al-Dīn dedicated many volumes for the māristān in which Abūal-Wajd b. Abīal-Hakam was working. After Abūal-Majd finished his tour of duty in the hospital, he gave lectures to the medical students using the books in the library. (3)

The subject matter of the books in public libraries was

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principally scientific because these public institutions were founded notably for general reading but also for study. So we rarely find explicit references to books on entertainment, folktales or any kind of unscientific book.

Al-Mustansir designated for each faqīh a set ration of meat, oil, soap, pencils, coal, sweets and so on. (1) The student body there was huge, totalling 300 of which 248 studied fiqh, 30 the Qur'anic sciences, 10 hadīth and 10 medicine. (2) No historian mentions the existence of students of painting or other arts, so it seems safe to exclude the possibility of finding references to the existence of illustrated books in public libraries.

As in private libraries, specialists were employed. They included keepers (Khuzzān) copyists (nassakhīn), and deliverers (munāwlin) who were highly educated and accustomed to the study of history and hadīth. (3) Some of these public libraries were huge. Al-Maqrīzī mentions that the book-cases at the maṣrīstān in Cairo contained such large numbers of books that the Caliph would often come to visit this maṣrīstān to borrow some of them. There were some 200,000 volumes in many fields such as fiqh, grammar, language, history, tradition, siyar al-mulūk, chemistry and such like. The people who were in charge of this library

3. Ibid., p. 55.
were two copyists and two porters. When ‘Abd al-Rahîm b. ‘Alî founded al-Madrasah al-Fâdîliyah in Cairo he transferred to it from the palace about 100,000 volumes.

Reasons for the lack of surviving pre-Ilkhânîd pictures of Muhammad.

Popular subjects of illustration in the ‘Abbâsid period

a. Semi-Official Subjects

This kind of drawing was to be found on separate leaves attached to books of history or geography; possibly even separate single leaves were known. Thus we read that once a fine diagram was made for al-Mansûr. An artist (muhandis) was asked to draw the outline of a new state (dayâ’ah) called al-Sabâṭiyah, for the better understanding of the Caliph. Al-Hamadânî mentions that a map of the city of Baghdad was owned by the King of Rûm. The picture showed the capital’s markets, rivers, routes and gardens. He thought that the Caliph should have built his palace in the street known as al-Zarrâdîn. Usually this illustration was brought to the King of Rûm while he was drinking. Similarly, a map of the world had been done for

2. Ibid.
4. Al-Hamadânî, Baghdad madînat al-salâm, 1st ed., ed. S.A. Al-‘Alî (Paris 1977), p.59. It cannot be proved whether this map was Muslim or Byzantine work.
the Caliph al-Ma'mūn. Many scholars took part in designing this map. Stars, seas, cities and so forth were represented on it.\(^1\)

Clearly, the depiction of reality, not fantasy, was the aim of such diagrams. Such work aimed to be scientific rather than artistic; it was not done for the pleasure of a patron but to record information.

b. Books for Entertainment

The most important manuscripts which have come down to us from the earliest surviving examples of Arab book painting illustrate such texts as Kalīlah wa Dimnah and the Maqāmāt al-Harīrī. In adorning such books the illustrator was possibly free to choose the scenes for illustration. A book like Kalīlah wa Dimnah was so popular that perhaps artists competed to paint it. Originally composed for the King of India, Distlim,\(^2\) it was translated into Arabic by Abū Sahl al-Fadl b. Nūbakht al-Farīsī, who was one of the servants of the Caliph al-Mansūr.\(^3\) Abū al-Paraj al-Isfahānī mentions in his book Kitāb al-Aghānī that Abān b. 'Abd al-Hamīd had versified the book of Kalīlah wa Dimnah in order to make it easily learned

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by heart. (1) One may suggest that not only the text of this book was popular at that time, but also its illustrations. Its stories operated on several levels, such as the story of how the crows took vengeance of their enemy the owls by insinuating a spy into their midst. This crow misled the owls and compassed their downfall. The story is told with a wealth of incidental and moralising details, and includes several subsidiary tales.

The translator, Ibn al-Muqaffa', states in his introduction to the book that the aims of its author the philosopher were four. First, he wrote of the speech of animals so that people would derive amusement from it. Second, he presented the figures of animals in their various aspects to amuse the hearts of kings. Third, he wanted it to be coveted eagerly because of the pleasure derived from its pictures. This would make it in high demand by kings and the common people and would make it be copied more. The final and main aim of writing the book was hidden in the mind of the philosopher himself. (2)

The role of the artist who took part in producing such a manuscript is very clear. He, too, tried to show the hidden meaning of the book by selecting particular episodes which might be especially effective or important in his opinion. Sometimes

1. Al-İsfahanî, Kitāb al-aghāni, ed. N. al-Hūrînî (Cairo 1868) vol.XX, p.73.
2. J.N. al-Mudawwar, Ḥadārat al-islām fī dār al-salām (Cairo 1932), pp.214-5. For the reference to pictures, cf. the text of Ibn al-Muqaffa', where he advises the reader not to "be satisfied with the superficial beauties of the images by which it may attract" (Kallīlah wa Dimnah, tr. W. Knatchbull (Oxford, 1819) p.61.)
the application of a story to real life is clarified by details of depiction; thus the king of the crows is distinguished by a crown on his head and a step under his feet which is very similar to a royal throne.

Al-Mas'ūdī mentions that in the reign of al-Ma'mūn Sahl b. Harūn composed a book similar to Kalīlah wa Dimnah called Thu'lah wa 'Afrah, but unfortunately al-Mas'ūdī does not say whether the book was illustrated. (1)

Even more popular it seems, was the Maqāmāt al-Harīrī, a collection of the adventures of a rogue who flourishes by being untruthful and hypocritical, though sometimes he is miserable and poverty-stricken. The artists illustrating copies of this text may choose many different scenes. Some are taken from real life, like Abū Zayd standing before the qādi of Merv, (2) or Abū Zayd addressing people in Najrān. (3) Sometimes the subjects are quite unexpected: for instance, the life of poor people. People who spent incredible amounts of money on weddings could perhaps

2. Eighth maqāmah in a manuscript probably from Egypt and dated 734/1334, fol.30 verso. Now in Vienna, Nationalbibliothek, illustrated in R. Ettinghausen, Arab Painting (Geneva 1962), illus. p.150.
scarcely understand how a marriage between beggars would be. (1) There are also scenes of fantasy (e.g. the depiction of the marvels of the Eastern Isle) (2) and by contrast a scene of childbirth in the very same maqāmah of that manuscript (fol. 122v).

c. Scientific Books

No doubt the practical application of scientific knowledge encouraged the practice of attaching pictures to such texts, which were numerous. Sometimes such illustrations were vital. For instance, in order to explain a theory in geometry the author might have to draw circles, triangles, squares and lines; or a doctor might require illustrations of the instruments of his profession. There would be a premium on accuracy in such work. Possibly the authors themselves sometimes illustrated their work, for scholars were often unable to afford to pay even a small amount of money to a professional artist, who might well be accustomed to be paid high wages. Moreover in some studies, such as anatomy, an expert practitioner might well be a better choice to illustrate the work than an artist. Many an author copied his own works, as did al-Khalīl b. Ahmad and al-Tabarī. (3)

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Of course if a prince or a rich man wanted to have a luxury scientific book with excellent calligraphy and beautiful miniatures they would probably employ a calligrapher and painter especially for the job. One such case may be the miniatures of the Arabic translation of the Materia Medica of Dioscorides. Their initial function was to make the text more clear. But they became a work of art through the painter's imagination. Thus, the plant atraghalus which aids convalescence is certainly placed in the design, but to its left is painted a deer being chased by another animal.\(^{(1)}\) In the illustration of a pharmacy,\(^{(2)}\) shelves, bottles, vessels and other objects are clearly depicted but it is hard to tell whether the picture represents a pharmacy or a china shop or a storage room in one of the Baghdad\(\text{I}\) kitchens. The earliest surviving illustrated scientific manuscripts have very few illustrations (e.g. the codices at Leiden and Mashhad). Only gradually do they acquire numerous illustrations. This suggests that lavishly illustrated scientific manuscripts were a comparatively late development, i.e. the early 13th century.

It seems clear that, as many scholars have suggested, there is a close link between Islamic scientific manuscripts and those of the Byzantines. Thus, one Arabic version of the Dioscorides manuscript\(^{(3)}\) has a passage in which the author mentions that a particular herb can be used as a remedy for eye disease. Beside the text a man is shown sitting on a river whose surface is covered by the leaves of this plant. He is shown putting one of these leaves on his eye. This scene virtually repeats the

\begin{enumerate}
\item From Baghdad; dated 621/1224. Istanbul, Ayasofya, MS.3703, fol.29r. (Ettinghausen, A.P., illus. p. 89).
\item From Baghdad; dated 621/1224. New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, No. 57. 51. 21. (Ibid., illus. p. 87).
\item Now in the University Library of Leiden, Cod. Or. 289. Warn; dated February 1083.
\end{enumerate}
corresponding scene in a Greek copy executed in the 9th century. (1)

The Attitude of Muhammad towards his Representation

We may now consider the attitude of Muhammad towards representations of himself. As is well known, when the Prophet began his mission he ordered believers to damage idols which might remind them of their former religion. It is consistent with this attitude that he should have been opposed to being depicted. He was conscious of the danger that he might be worshipped by succeeding generations. This can be seen from a ḥadīth or story recorded by Ibn Sa‘d. During the Prophet’s last illness, his wives were talking about an ornamental church called Māriya in Abyssinia. Muhammad said that those people are most hated by God because they transform the graves of their saints into a temple after decorating them with pictures. (2)

His wishes were taken into consideration in the early days of Islam especially in the matter of his own burial. Al-

1. Now in Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, cod.gr. 2179. For these two scenes, see K. Weitzmann, "The Greek sources of Islamic scientific illustrations", Archaeologica Orientalia in memoriam Ernst Herzfeld, ed. G.C. Miles (New York 1952), pp.252-3, pl.XXIV, figs. 7, 8. For another example of these links see ibid., pp.253-4, pl.XXXV, figs. 9-10.

Shawkānī(1) states that:

"When the Companions (al-sahābah), may God be gracious to them, and the followers (al-tābi‘īn), needed to enlarge the mosque of the Apostle of God, may the blessing of God be upon him, because of the increasing number of the Muslims, the additions included the houses of Ḫumāt al-mu‘minīn with the room of ‘Ā’ishah in which were the graves of the Apostle of God and his two companions Abū Bakr and ‘Umar. They built high round walls so that the tomb could not be seen from the mosque while the common people were praying, which would have led to danger. They also built two walls from the two northern sides of the grave. They turned them till they met, so that nobody would face the tomb". (2)

Such accounts may help to explain why the owners of books recounting the life of Muhammad disliked representing him; he himself, we may safely assume, did not like to be depicted. However, this factor clearly did not prevent later Muslims from producing pictures in which he was represented.

1. Died 1255/1839.

For the evidence of earlier sources on this matter, see J. Sauvaget, La mosquée Omeyyade de Médine (Paris, 1947), pp. 89-90.
The possibility that there were representations of Muhammad before 1300

a. The degree of religious orthodoxy shown by the 'Abbāsid Caliphs

It has been suggested that the tenets of Islam prevented Caliphs from having pictures of Muhammad made even if they had so desired. Though the 'Abbāsids came to power on a wave of religious fervour they soon plunged into worldly pleasures, and again a religious revolt was fomented by the Prophet's descendants (ahl al-bayt). The 'Abbāsids adopted a strong anti-Shi'ite policy. The Caliph Mūsā b. al-Mahdī (158-169/775-785), for example, killed the Shi'ite leader al-Husayn b. 'Alī b. al-Hasan b. 'Alī. (1) When Harūn al-Rashīd was visiting the tomb of Muhammad in Ramadān 179/November 795, it happened that Mūsā al-Kāzim was also there. The Caliph seized the opportunity to stress his closeness to the Prophet and his family and addressing the Prophet's tomb, said: "Peace be upon you my cousin". Mūsā reciprocated by saying to the tomb: "Peace be with you my father". Harūn ordered him to be taken from Madīnah to Baghdad where he died in prison in 183/799. (2) In the year 236/850, al-Mutawakkil ordered the grave of Muhammad's grandson al-Husayn to be pulled down. He also prevented Muslims from paying visits

2. Ibn al-Sā`ī, op. cit., p.28.
to the tomb. (1) A boon companion at his court called 'Ubădah al-Mukhanath used to imitate 'Alī b. Abī Tālib during drinking parties to amuse al-Mutawakkil. (2) Shiite risings continued, so that whenever the Caliphs heard that one of the descendants of Muhammad had become a well-known person and that people respected him for his descent from the Prophet, they planned to kill him. (3)

The luxurious way of life followed by the early 'Abbāsid Caliphs was not that of good Muslims. The tax revenues were spent on drinking parties, slaves, entertainers and food. Nevertheless these rulers regarded themselves as rightful leaders of the Muslim community. We may conclude that the religion and tenets of Islam were not enough to prevent the rulers of that time from having pictures of the Prophet made, perhaps just for curiosity; moreover it is hard to see how this would make them bad Muslims. There might, however, have been some political danger in possessing a picture of Muhammad. People were accustomed to the fact that their Caliph drank wine; but if they heard that the Caliph or one of his followers owned a portrait of Muhammad they might have misinterpreted the fact and considered it as a challenge to the person of the Prophet. Such a situation could well have caused a rebellion against the ruling family.

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2. Ibid.
b. Representations of people of high rank

The predominant personality in Islamic history is of course the Prophet Muhammad himself. For this reason the Muslims in general and the Caliphs in particular may well have liked to have pictures of Muhammad in their books of history or copies of the Sirah. The curious incident at Qinnasrin in the time of the Caliph 'Umar b. al-Khattāb, where the image of the Byzantine emperor painted on a post was damaged by a Muslim and the Christians successfully insisted on the image of the Caliph being made and similarly disfigured, illustrates that royal images were known from the early days of Islam. (1)

A number of coins from early Islamic times bear representations of the Caliphs. A dīnār of Mu‘āwiya of which many copies survive shows him holding a sword in his hand. Al-Maqrīzī thought this unusual enough to be worth comment. (2) Another example is a golden dīnār with the picture of 'Abd al-Malik b. Marwān. He is shown with parted hair, bare-headed and holding a sword. The coin is dated 76/695. A celebrated fresco from Qusayr 'Amrah represents an enthroned and haloed person surrounded by two attendants. A fountain is placed in front of the scene. Among the numerous statues at Khirbat al-Mafjar attributed to al-Walīd

b. Yazid (125-126/743-744) is one interpreted by Hamilton as being "an effigy of the reigning Caliph himself." (1)

Several objects of the 'Abbāsid period bear representations of dignitaries who either sit on a throne, having a drinking party or chasing game. Even if these images do not represent a particular sovereign or dignitary they certainly symbolize the office itself. It is believed that al-Ma'mūn himself had a picture of Mānī. (2) If this is true, the illustration might have given him the idea of having a picture of Muḥammad especially as al-Ma'mūn was known for his extraordinary collection of books.

Al-Mas'ūdī states that he saw in the city of Istakhr in the year 303 an enormous book in which the history of the Persian kings was related. It was illustrated with portraits of twenty-seven Sasanian kings and queens. The first Sasanian king, Ardashīr, was drawn in red wearing blue trousers, crowned by a green crown and holding a spear. The last king, Yazdgird, was also shown wearing blue trousers and holding a spear. Al-Mas'ūdī continues that this book was translated from Persian into Arabic for the Umayad caliph Hishām b. 'Abd al-Malik. (3)

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In Vienna a unique medal survives bearing the portrait of al-Mutawakkil (233-247/847-861). On the obverse is shown a man leading a camel. The portrait is well laid out. The head-gear is strung with pearls although the dress is not the turban which was well known at that time. In fact it is more similar to the Bedouin head-dress. The figure occupies a larger area than the figure of the undistinguished man. (1)

Another medal shows al-Muqtadir. He is sitting on a sort of throne ornamented by pearls, and is putting his hand on his chest while the other rests on his lap. On the reverse a female slave sits on a similar seat and plays a lute. (2) A medal survives with the effigy of al-Mu‘tī (335-364/964-974). It shows him holding a cup with two attendants at his side. The reverse has a picture of a man playing on a musical instrument. (3)

Al-Mas‘ūdī tells us that Abu ‘l-‘Abbās Muhammad b. Sahl saw a carpet belonging to al-Muntasir (247-248/861-862), which was laid in his palace. The decoration consisted of a crowned king who was believed to be Shīrūya, as well as other kings including Yazīd b. al-Walīd. (4)

Naturally the caliphs were also aware of the ancient non-

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2. Illustrated in Arnold, P.I., pl.LIXb.
3. Ibid., pl.LIXa.
Muslim tradition of making images of important people. Innumerable representations of Christ at once come to mind. The Muslim attitude is illuminated by a story told by Abu'l-Fida:

"In the year 331/942 the King of Rûm sent a message to al-Mutaqî, asking him to return a handkerchief with which the face of Jesus had been wiped and on which the print of his face remained. This cloth was in the church of Edessa. The King of Rûm said that if al-Mutaqî sent it to him he would release a number of captured Muslims. Al-Mutaqî asked judges and jurisprudents about this matter, but they disagreed and some said: 'This handkerchief is still in the land of Islam, and it will be a big loss if he hands it to them.' Among them was the minister 'Alî b. 'Isâ who said: 'Rescuing Muslims from difficulties and capture is better than keeping this handkerchief.' The Caliph ordered the cloth to be delivered and he sent men to collect the captives."(1)

One conclusion that could be drawn from this account is that although churches were decorated with representations of Jesus, the existence of a single effigy not used for religious functions might give the Caliph the idea of having a similar picture of

Al-Mas'ūdī also mentions a representation of Kashājīm. (1) One side of the coin depicted him armed, the other side showed him sitting and thinking. (2) It is recorded, too, that pictures of ‘Alī b. Abī Tālib were painted on the swords of Rukn al-Dawla, ‘dud al-Dawla, Alp Arslān and his son Malikshāh as a blessing. (3)

In his description of the cases of furniture taken from the Fāṭimid palace in Cairo, al-Maqrizī states that apart from their precious contents, there were nearly one thousand curtains woven with golden threads and ornamented with portraits of kings and famous men. Beside each figure was written a summary of his life and his name. (4) Al-Maqrizī also mentions that the Fāṭimid Caliph al-Āmir bi Ahkām Allāh ordered painters to make pictures of poets to be put in wooden niches he had built. (5) The Tūlūnid Sultan Khumārah had his picture and that of one of his female slaves he cherished depicted in a house called Bayt al-Dhahab. (6)

1. Turkish leader in the time of the ‘Abbāsid Caliph al-Rādī bi’llāh 323-329/934-940.
5. Ibid., pp.486-7.
6. Ibid., p.319.
The illustrated books which survive from the pre-Mongol period also had many pages decorated with portraits of famous men. The important person was always drawn disproportionately large so that he could easily be distinguished from the other figures. This tradition can be seen clearly in the Aq̄ānī frontispieces. A volume of the Aq̄ānī manuscripts copied by Muhammad b. 'Abi Tālib al-Badrī and bearing the date 616/1219\(^{(1)}\) is of special interest for its frontispiece has been related by Faris to the Prophet Muhammad. The figure is sitting in the same attitude as that of a man of high rank. He wears a ring on his right hand and holds a sword. He is haloed and partly put in shadow by a piece of cloth made in the shape of a crescent and held by two winged figures. A band decorates his arms and on it is written the name of Badr al-Dīn Lū'lu'. Faris said that this illustration shows the Prophet Muhammad with two priests of Najārn, basing his identification of Muhammad on the ring and sword of the Prophet.\(^{(2)}\)

However, because the name of Badr al-Dīn Lū'lu' appears on the figure's dress, some scholars think that this portrait is of Lū'lu' himself.\(^{(3)}\) Faris counter-argued that the letters were not well and clearly written, and that besides, the surviving illustrations of the period had the words written above the

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1. Now in Cairo, Egyptian National Library. Adab 579, vol. XI.
2. B. Faris, Sawānīh masābih wa malāmīh islāmīyah (Cairo 1961), p. 64.
heads of figures. (1) It seems unlikely to me that this painting represents the Apostle of God at all. The artist committed too many mistakes to permit such an interpretation. Muḥammad should be more precisely identified by inscriptions or attribute, so as to distinguish him from the figures in other Aḥānī frontispieces. There is nothing intrinsically strange in the artist seeking a model taken from royal iconography. However, the miniature does not show any difference between Muḥammad receiving two Christian messengers and the figure of the ruler who is entertained by singers and female slaves in drinking parties. (2)

The figure here is bigger than the others, and the way of sitting is familiar from several caliphal images. Muḥammad was known to be a simple, modest person. On one occasion ‘Āʾishah said: "The Apostle of God used to repair his slippers, sew his clothes and do the household tasks like any of you does." (3)

It is true that Muḥammad possessed a number of swords. But he used to carry them only during wars, not in a peaceful meeting with men of religion. If we see his representation in late manuscripts, we notice that he is hardly ever drawn carrying a weapon.

The sword and ring are not necessarily indications that this person is Muhammad. The Caliphs used to inherit the belongings of Muhammad for their sanctity. Al-Säbi in his book *Rusūm dār al-Khilāfah* described the official robes worn by the Caliph on certain occasions. He says that the Caliph sits on a high chair covered with the best silk and velvets. A big black turban is on his head, red slippers on his feet, and he is girded with the sword of the Prophet Muhammad. He puts the Qur'ān of 'Uthmān b. 'Affān between his hands, wears the garment of Muhammad and finally he holds the rod of the Prophet. His attendants and followers should stand in order around his chair carrying weapons. They also wear embroidered and colourful clothes. Some hold a screen in front of the Caliph. If the Caliph wants to see people they lift it up; otherwise it is closed to prevent entry.\(^1\)

We conclude that the main figure in this miniature could be any 'Abbāsid Caliph.

The name of Badr al-Dīn Lū'lu' is surely not the signature of the artist because it occupies an important area in which a humble person like an illustrator or copyist would not have had the courage to write his name. Besides, inscriptions on *tiraz* bands are always reserved for rulers' names. A representation of this kind is known from the work of an artist called Yūsuf from

\(^1\) For references and discussion see Al-Säbi, *Rusūm dār al-Khilāfah*, ed. M. 'Awād (Baghdad 1964), pp.90-1.
Mosul. The particular work in question is a metal ewer dated 644/1246. The main decoration consists of medallions with a floral background. A seated figure is shown on the left hand side; this person sits on a high chair, wears a long robe, is haloed and extends his right hand while another person kisses it humbly. A third person appears at the right.

Similar representations may be found on an ewer in the British Museum dated 629/1232, also from Mosul, and on a candlestick owned by the Metropolitan Museum at New York. Rice finally drew attention to the fact that the frontispieces of the Aghānī volumes do not illustrate texts of those volumes.

c. References in Islamic sources to pictures of Muhammad

Al-Mas‘ūdī tells the story of a man, presumably from Quraysh, who went to the court of the Emperor of China. The emperor showed him pictures of all the Prophets. He identified them from the famous things which were associated with them. Nūh was represented with his ship and animals, Musa with the people of Isrā‘īl. Jesus was mounted on a donkey and surrounded by the disciples, and Muhammad rode a camel with his followers.

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3. Rice, op. cit., p.133.
who wore Arab slippers made of camel's leather. The man added that he saw the names of the Prophets, the places where they had appeared, the reason for each of their missions and a summary of their life. (1)

Two more stories are mentioned by Al-Dhahabi. (2) The first happened in Syria during the first stages of the Islamic conquest. The narrator of this story, Jubayr b. Mu'tam, said that he was in Busra where a group of Christians showed him pictures of some apostles which were kept in a small church but the Prophet Muhammad was not with them. Then they took him to a bigger church in which he saw pictures of Muhammad and Abu Bakr. (3)

The second story is quite long. It occupies about five pages. A group of Muslims were sent to meet Heraclius. They passed first by the Ghassanid prince Jabala b. al-Ayham al-Ghassani. He asked them about details of Islamic ritual such as fasting and praying. After that he showed them a piece of black silk with a red picture. He asked them if they knew who was represented there but they did not. The picture was of Adam.

The second was also on black silk but the picture of Muh was not recognized. The next picture represented a man with fine features and white beard; this was Ibrahîm. The next picture showed Mûsa; then in turn followed pictures of Harun b. 'Umar, Lût and Ishâq.

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2. No date is given.
3. Al-Dhahabi, op. cit., vol.I, p.297. Since al-Dhahabi died in 1348, the fact that he did not mention Muslim representations of Muhammad seems to suggest that none existed in this early period.
A person with the same features as Ishāq but with a mole on his lower lip was Yaʿqūb. Representations of Ismāʿīl, Yūsuf, Dāʿūd, Sulaymān and Jesus were kept in separate boxes.

However, the only person whom they were able to identify was Muhammad. The prince told the Muslims that the box which contained the picture of Muhammad was the last but he wanted to make sure that the picture showed the same person so he showed it to them in the middle. The prince told them that these pictures originally belonged to Adam who had asked God to show him the Prophets. God had accordingly sent him these portraits which had been kept in Adam's case in the place of the sunset (fī maghrib al-shams). When Dhū'Il-Qarnayn came he took them and handed them to Dānyāl to paint them on silk. (1)

No doubt there are some exaggerations in these stories which make it impossible to believe every single word. For example, Muhammad stated on many occasions that during his night journey to the Seven Heavens he met Ibrāhīm who resembled him very much. (2) The effigy of Ibrāhīm was very familiar to the Arabs who lived at that time. His representation was still visible on the walls of the Ka'ba until the seventh year of the hijrah. (3)

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Among the miniatures which they could not recognize was the picture of Jesus. Yet his portrait was surely familiar. Churches were decorated with pictures and statues of Christ in the Arabian Peninsula itself. Again it is hard to credit that the portrait of Muhammad was recognized from the start, as al-Dhahabī states, unless there were identifying features such as ring, turban, inscription, halo, angels, veil and the like. It is worth remembering that later portraits of Muhammad show him as being very different from the descriptions the Muslim authors gave. Finally, the length of the time scale involved here—from Adam to the 7th century A.D.—needs no comment.

Al-Dhahabī puts his two accounts under a heading entitled "What has been found in the way of pictures of our Prophet and pictures of the Prophets, May peace be upon them, through the People of the Book in Syria". The existence of such stories, however, would certainly encourage rulers to have their own portraits of Muhammad.

d. The depiction of two Islamic themes related to Islamic religious figures

Both themes usually accompany the figure of Muhammad in late miniatures.

1. Angels

Before the art of painting in Islam had started, angels were mentioned in various written Islamic sources. In the Qurʾān they
are described as being the intermediaries of God who descend from heaven to earth to deliver messages from Him to the Prophet.

"We (angels) come not down save by commandment of thy Lord." (1)

They also record what humans do in their daily life. Finally, they praise God night and day. (2) The important point about angels in our discussion is their attributes. Sūra 35 states:

"Praise be to Allāh, the Creator of the heaven and the earth, who appointeth the angels messengers having wings two, three and four..." (3)

Al-Qurtubi in his book of the interpretation of the Qur'ān, Al-Jāmiʿ li ahkām al-Qur'ān, says that Qutādah stated that:
"Some (angels) have two wings, some have three wings while others have four wings. They descend by them from heaven to earth and ascend (Ya‘rijūn) from earth to heaven". (4) On the other hand they were described as being sexless creatures, neither male nor female. However, the Arabs before Islam used to believe that

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1. Sūrah XIX, 64.
2. Encyclopaedia of Islam, III, s.v. "Malāʾika". Sūrah XXI, 19-20
angels were female and that they were daughters of God. After Islam, God sent down an Ayah in which He banned the view of the Jāhālīyīn, saying that they (angels) were servants of Allāh not His daughters. (1)

"And they make the angels, who are the slaves of the Beneficent, female. Did they witness their creation? Their testimony will be recorded and they will be questioned." (2)

And

"Lo! it is those who disbelieve in the Hereafter who name the angels with the names of females." (3)

There are various types of angels and each has a different duty. Thus Gabriel is the archangel and Michael blows the trumpet on the Day of Resurrection. There are also recording angels, and Munkar and Nakīr. (4)

2. SūrahLI, 19.
3. SūrahLIII, 27.
Angels obey the words of Allāh and they were the first creatures who knelt before Adam (who was made of clay) when God ordered them to do so, although they were created of light. Muslim historians usually start their books from the beginning of creation describing how God had created earth, heaven, His throne and angels. They also explain the events which occurred to certain people, especially Prophets, in which angels took an important part. Al-Tabarī states that on the Day of Judgement the sun will appear with "three hundred and sixty angels spreading their wings and pushing the sun in the sphere (falak)."

When God wanted to punish the people of Lūt, He first sent angels who had the appearance of young men to the house of Lūt, where a group of men came to attack them. These angels are described as having beautiful faces and a sweet odour. Gabriel hit them (the men) with his wing and blinded them. Al-Tabarī continues that in the early morning Gabriel put his wing under this village and lifted it up to heaven. The inhabitants of heaven heard the cocks crow and threw it down.

In Islamic times angels have been connected with the Prophet

1. SürahlI, 34.
4. Ibid., p. 337.
5. Ibid., p. 336.
Muhammad. An oft-told story runs that when Muhammad was about three years old, two men came wearing white clothes and opened his chest looking for something and then they covered his chest again. (1) These two persons are believed to be angels as they are the only creatures who have supernatural powers. Angels are also servants and representatives of God as well as His army, (2) and they were seen by various Muslims in certain circumstances. In the battle of Badr, for instance, God had sent a number of angels to help the believers against their enemy. They were distinguished by their white turbans, except Gabriel who wore yellow head-gear. Others said that they were on piebald horses. (3)

Muslim theologians state that angels have two or sometimes more wings; they are neither male nor female, they are spirits created from light; and they are intermediaries between God and his messengers on earth, so they do not appear to ordinary persons, no matter how good they are.

The first representation of an angel in the land of Islam, apart from the images in Christian churches, is the fresco which decorated the Ka'ba and has been explained already in the first chapter. Haykal tells us that the angels were represented as female (4) and their portraits were among the representations

2. Encyclopaedia Britannica, II, s.v. "Angel".
which the Prophet Muhammad ordered to be obliterated during the refurbishing of the Ka'ba. (1) We also have Qazwīnī's statement about Musaylamah al-Kadhāb:

"It has been stated that on a windy and dark night he (Musaylamah) said that the angel would descend on him on that night and the wings of angels produce clashes (Salsalah), and rattles (Khash Khashah). One should not leave one's house otherwise one would lose one's sight. He took an effigy (Sūrah), made of paper, which had two wings and a tail, and he tied it to objects that rattled (jalājil) and long threads and he released it. The wind took it up and people saw the picture and heard the rattle (jalājil) but they could not see the threads. When they saw that they were terrified that it would indeed take their sight away so they entered their houses. They heard a voice saying: 'Whoever enters his house will be safe', and so they believed him (Musaylamah)." (2)

As representational art developed in Islam, figures of angels began to appear on many objects. In explaining this motif one should distinguish between two types. The first type comprises winged creatures who have human bodies, the faces of women or men.

or even sometimes children and also have two wings, but that decorate non-religious scenes. If we trace the origin of this type we see that they go back to old traditions. Winged creatures used to represent goddesses in the Babylonian period (1998-1580 B.C.). Thus a figure of a female is shown with two wings and the claws of a bird and is standing on the backs of two lions. (1) Winged men with human or bird-faces are usually seen carrying the holy water behind an Assyrian dignitary. (2) A relief from the palace of Ashurnasirpal II from Nimrud, now at the British Museum, is decorated with the figure of a king in the middle repeated twice with a winged human-headed being who sprinkles holy water as a kind of blessing. (3)

In Greek art a figure with two wings was quite popular and was used on various objects to show different scenes. A coin from Leontini, dated 485-466 B.C., depicts inter alia a winged person holding either an arrow or a curved piece of cloth. (4)

The figure which has wings and a human body has many names and represents many different characters. In Greek art the

2. Ibid., p.132.
3. Ibid., pl.257.
figure often represented victory (nike), or Eros (as in a cup dated from the beginning of the 4th century B.C. and decorated with the figures of Dionysos and Ariadne). (1)

The Romans continued to use the winged figure as a victory symbol. On a frieze from the Basilica Ulpia of Trajan, a victory is shown on the left slaying a bull and on the right a second is decking a candelabrum. (2) Another frieze decorates a plinth in the same building in which a winged victory appears holding a palm-leaf in her left hand and a wreath in her right. (3) Winged figures decorate various triumphal arches like those of Titus, Trajan, Septimius Severus, Constantine and finally an unidentified arch which is now in the Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek in Copenhagen. (4)

In Sasanian monuments winged figures were also used, both for providing a kind of protection to the building itself as well as its inhabitants and just for decoration. In Tāq-i-Bustān, which is datable c.590, a relief of two winged female figures appears at the top part of an arch which adorns the entrance of

2. D.E. Strong, Roman imperial sculpture; an introduction to the commemorative and decorative sculpture of the Roman empire down to the death of Constantine (London 1961), p.95, fig.67.
3. Ibid., p.103, fig.133. Now in Florence, Bobli Gardens.
4. For details see Ibid., p.104, fig.141 (a-e)
an iwân. The one on the right side is very well preserved. The angel, whose wings are treated as if they were fish-scales, has curly hair and a band ornament on the head. The figure holds a ring or circlet in her right hand and a cup or ball in her left. (1) A rock relief also from Taq-i-BUSTân represents Khusraw II (590-628) at the centre wearing a long robe decorated with jewellery; a band of pearls surrounds the edges of his dress, and he is flanked by two winged figures. The first wears a long dress with a band of pearls and a belt around his waist, while trousers deck the lower part of his body, with a long robe over his whole figure. On the left side a figure of a winged female is shown wearing a long dress with many folds. (2)

The Sarcophagus of Constantina, from the mid-fourth century, (3) is decorated with winged figures who have the appearance of children. They have short hair and wear small disks suspended from necklaces around their necks. The first angel carries a basket filled with grapes and holds a bunch of grapes in the other hand. The other two are picking bunches from the vine. (4) The Byzantines continued the Roman symbol of the winged figure as an indication of victory. For example, in the representation of the Emperor Honorius on the diptych of Probus of the year 406, the crowned emperor is shown standing

1. Illustrated in SPA, vol.IV, pl.159B
2. Ibid., pl. 160B.
under an arch, holding a staff while on his left side a winged figure stands on an orb held by the emperor. (1)

In the art of Islam winged figures also appear but surprisingly principally in the later medieval period, not in Umayyad times for instance. During the Atabeg regime in Mūsul (521–660/1127–1261) some coins were struck which show angels or winged figures. A copper fils from the time of Qūtb al-Dīn Mawdūd (544–565/1149–1169) is dated (2) 555/1160, and is decorated with the portrait of a person flanked by two figures of angels spreading their wings; besides, it bears the title of the reigning ruler. (3) A second fils dated 566 is attributed to the time of the Atabeg sovereign Sayf al-Dīn al-Ghāzī (565–576/1169–1180). (4) This is very similar to the previous fils, for the effigy of a person whose face is slightly turned to the left and who is attended by two angels appears again. (5) A third example was struck during the time of Nāṣir al-Dīn Mahmūd (616–631/1219–1233), and is now in Istanbul, Humāyūn museum, no. 136. It was done in the city of Mūsul in 620/1223 and again bears similar representation. (6) Al-Husaynī suggests that these coins are influenced by

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2. Now in Baghdad, Iraqi museum no. 11676.
4. Now in Cairo, the Islamic museum, no. 1/17180.
5. Al-Husainī, op. cit., pp. 100–1, pl. 3, no. 36.
6. Ibid., pp. 116–7, pl. 3, no. 45.
Greek mints and he even thinks that the Atabegs employed foreign workmen who naturally copied what they had been using in their home countries. (1)

Winged figures can also be seen in a group of frontispieces. The first is the one in the Book of Antidotes dated 596/1199 from Iraq and soon after comes that in vol. IV of the Aghānī, executed in Mūsul in 614/1217. Similar figures in the frontispieces to vol. XI, (probably from Mūsul, 614/1217), vol. XVII (Mūsul, 615-616/1218-1219), vol. XIX (Mūsul, 615-616/1218-1219) and finally a copy of the Maqāmāt al-Harīrī (Egypt 734/1334).

Although Muslim angels of this group share many elements with the angels of foreign cultures, there are some distinctively Muslim features. Islamic angels usually have a feminine appearance and they were rarely represented as males or children, except of course the named angels (e.g. in Mamlūk illustrations). They wear colourful clothes and adornments similar to those which are worn by slaves or singers. They are often depicted flanking a sovereign. They are used not to commemorate or celebrate certain occasions like victory or the death of a particular dignitary but adorn scenes which show the private life of a person, like drinking parties. In the art of the book they were depicted mainly at the start of a manuscript like the Aghānī, Book of Antidotes and Maqāmāt al-Harīrī. Even so, many representations of sovereigns, ministers, judges and so on, lacked winged guardians

standing behind them.

Clearly Muslim authors and theologians provided artists with full descriptions of angels. However, the artist did not necessarily follow these clues. If he painted the scene of a ruler attended by two angels instead of body guardians, he drew part of his inspiration from court scenes and part from other sources.

Some representations of angels, however, are devoid of secular emphasis and sanctify the scene in which they appear. They are usually drawn with one or more religious figures. Representations of this group can clearly be seen in Christian art, often on either side of Christ, though they may flank the Virgin Mary - as on an ampulla from Monza - or other figures. (1) Other examples in early Christian art include the mosaics of Sta. Maria Maggiore (c.444) in Rome (2) and the Ascension scene on fol.13v of the Rabbula Gospels. (3)

A typical example of angels in a religious context in Islamic art may be seen in many manuscripts of the 'Ajā'ib

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1. Beckwith, op. cit., p.25, pl.42. Palestine, late sixth or early seventh century; Monza, cathedral treasury.
al-makhlūqāt wa gharā'ib al-mawjūdāt of al-Qazwīnī. The first part of the book deals with celestial bodies like the sun, moon, stars, planets — and also angels as they are considered to be the creatures who live in the seven heavens. (1) In a copy dated 678/1280, on fol. 36 recto, the representation of two angels appears for the first time in Islamic art. They are shown seated as they record the deeds of man. (2) They face each other as they write on scrolls held in their hands, with turbans on their heads. They are haloed and one wing is shown for each. This way of sitting so that the folds of the robes are stressed is very similar to a figure of the scribe on fol. 3c, the frontispiece of the manuscript of Ḥikhwān al-safā. The 'Ajā'īb al-makhlūqāt miniature shows Far Eastern elements like the slant eyes and puffy faces. (3) Another copy of the same manuscript was done probably in Iraq around 772-782/1370-1380 and is now kept in the Freer Gallery of Art in Washington. The first leaf (54-50v) represents the four angels who carry the throne of God and are in the form of a human, a bull, an eagle and a lion. The first figure is shown wearing a white turban and has two wings and very long plaits. A second representation of an angel in this manuscript shows Isrāʾīl. In the text, al-Qazwīnī states that Isrāʾīl is the one who blows a trumpet on the Last Day and if he blows all those who are in heaven and earth will be stunned. He

3. Ibid., p. 139.
mentions the description of the angel Isrāfīl which is given by Ka'ab al-Ahbar. Isrāfīl, he said, has four enormous wings; with the first he blocks out the east, with the second the west, the third is to clothe his body and the fourth is to cover himself from the greatness of God. His feet are under the seventh earth and his head ends under the throne of God in the seventh heaven. He also has a tablet which is made of precious stones between his eyes to record the orders of God. (1)

The Angel of Resurrection is depicted as a young man who has two long plaits, a turban on his head and a trumpet in his hand. The artist has paid great attention to the belts which surround the waist and chest of the angel and he has used them to fill the empty spaces in the miniature, while his two wings end in a dragon's head. The third miniature is the image of Michael (54-52v) who is responsible for the livelihood of bodies and provides wisdom and knowledge to souls. (2) He also has followers who are in charge of the world: the angels of wind, clouds, plants, animals and minerals. He is shown as a large figure wearing the same clothes as the previous angels: a long robe, a tunic with short sleeves and trousers to cover the legs. He is spreading his wings and holding his belt in his right hand. The way of sketching this figure with his neck turned towards the left is similar to that of dancers in medieval Islamic painting and without the text and the wings one could easily

2. So runs the Arabic text accompanying the miniatures.
think that this figure is a dancer performing one of her routines. (1)

A miniature from the same manuscript which is attributed to late 14th century from Baghdad represents Gabriel who, surprisingly enough, is drawn in the same manner as Isräfīl. Gabriel is blowing a trumpet, wearing a long green robe and a red tunic with short sleeves. He has two wings which also end in a dragon's head and the artist has also used the belts as decorative elements in this miniature. The only difference between the figures of Gabriel in Freer Gallery and the one in the British Museum is in the colours of the robes and wings, the shape of the turban and the end of the belt of Isräfīl which is parted at the front and has knotted ends, while the artist who drew Gabriel put an element similar to Chinese clouds under the belt and skirt.

2. Burāq

Burāq is the heavenly beast who carried Muḥammad from earth to heaven during the miʿrāj. Its representation is always connected with Muhammad and that particular incident. Many pre-Ilkhānid representations of similar figures in various media are known, and many scholars believe that the characteristics of Burāq are derived from such earlier representations of similar creatures. Sphinxes, i.e. fabulous creatures with the bodies of

animals and human heads, were known in Egypt, Syria and Greece while figures with the body of a bull and the head of a bearded man were used in Assyria. In Egypt this creature was called Hu. It was described as having a human head; it lived in the desert and incarnated the Sun-God Ra. Hence sphinxes were used at tombs, temples, gates and the mouth of the Nile as guardians. Also the human-headed sphinx was believed in Egypt to represent the Pharaoh himself, with varied symbolic and destructive roles.

From Gela in Greece comes a coin which is dated 480 B.C. whose reverse depicts the god of the river (Gelas), a being having the body of a bull and a bearded human head. In fact this is not the only Greek mint with representations of complete figures of winged animals like horses. The latter are mostly male rather than female; they have horns and are bearded. In classical myths similar figures have been mentioned which have feminine face and bosom, the bodies of either a dog or a

2. E.B., XXV, s.v. "Sphinx".
3. Encyclopaedia of religion and ethics, II, s.v. "Sphinx".
4. E.B., xxv, s.v. "Sphinx".
5. Ibid.
7. Kraay, G.C., p.295, pl.55, no.154 and also nos.155 and 156 in the same plate. The later two coins are dated between 495 and 480 B.C.
8. Ibid., pl.74, no.211; Sic ulo-Punic.
lion, serpent's tails, wings and paws. \(^{(1)}\)

In Mesopotamia the Assyrians had also adopted figures resembling those of Egypt and Greece. In Nimrud various types of sphinxes can be seen: a winged lion and bulls with human heads which were used as apotropaic guardian for buildings like gates and palace entrances. \(^{(2)}\) In Khorsabad (Dur Sharruki\(n\)), dated to the 8th century B.C., winged bulls are used on either side of a gate; they have human heads, are bearded and wear diadems. \(^{(3)}\) The sphinx was also a well-known feature in Persia and Cyprus. \(^{(4)}\) In Torre Annunziata a Roman griffin is represented. It is attributed to the Severan period, and has the head of a falcon, a hooked beak, a lion's body, paws, the ears of a dog and wings, while the tail ends in acanthus leaves. \(^{(5)}\)

Apart from such visual stimuli, the Muslim artist had the written Islamic sources to inform him about Burāq. Indeed Burāq enjoyed high favour among theologians as well as artists. It is described in many sources because it is the only beast

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4. *E.B.*, XXV, s.v. "Sphinx".
which has been mounted only by Prophets. It was described by 
al-Bukhārī as being neither male nor female, with a human face, 
amane similar to those of horses, just like a she-camel's, a 
cow's tail, a white colour and two wings on its thighs.\(^1\)
In addition to such written sources the artist could nourish 
his imagination with the religious stories which circulated 
among people during religious occasions like the celebration of 
the mi'raj, and obviously storytellers would recite the story 
in full detail, including the description of the peculiar 
figure of the beast which carried Muhammad to heaven. In 
addition, probably every Muslim has heard during his childhood 
that a white beast with a human face carried their Prophet to 
heaven, so there is a strong possibility that artists transferred 
what they were told or heard to paper. Not only the figure of 
Burāq was described but also other strong creatures like the 
Zagh or the talking crow which is described as having the head 
of a human being and the body of a crow.\(^2\)

Muslim beliefs about such creatures varied. The well-known 
sphinx of Egypt, according to al-Maqrīzī's account, is the half-

1. Al-Bukhārī, 'Umdat al-qārī; Sharh Sahīh al-Bukhārī (Cairo 
2. Illustrated in E. Baer, Sphinxes and harpies in medieval 
Islamic art (Jerusalem 1965), pl.XXVII. The Arabic text is 
that of al-Qazwīnī: 'Ajā'ib al-makhlūqāt, 15th century, 
Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, MS.Cod. Mixt. 
331, fol.228 recto.
buried big idol or Abu'l-Hül placed between two pyramids. Al-Maqrizi adds that in the book of 'Ajā'ib al-Bunyān "The Wonders of Buildings" the statue was described as having a head and a neck and a smiling face. It was painted with bright colours; its body was probably more than 70 cubits in length, and was buried in the sands of the desert and it was believed that it served as a talisman against the sands. (1) In the year 780/1378 a Sufi called Shaykh Muhammad Sā'im al-Dahr wanted to reform some abominations concerning this monument which had spread among the people in general and among Muslims in particular. So he disfigured the face of Abū al-Hül. Al-Maqrizi adds that from that day sand covered most of that area and people believed that it was because of what had happened to the face. (2)

Baer says that the Muslim artist copied these legendary figures from previous cultures and that the artist did not invent them, contenting himself with adopting them by adding some elements to distinguish them from the original foreign sources. (3) She continues "It is almost certain that these creatures were introduced into the Muslim world by artists and by writers". (4) However, reliable authors like al-Qazwīnī and al-Maqrizi would scarcely record stories which had been derived from scenes painted

2. Ibid., p.123.
4. Ibid., p.81.
by artists on objects. How could they then compose long screeds about the attributes of those creatures? On the other hand, one should notice that these later fabulous creatures were similar to Fatimid depictions.\(^1\) If these later figures were copies an obvious source would be Abū al-Hül, especially for Egyptian artists. But according to al-Maqrīzī's account we understand that the whole body of the Egyptian sphinx was covered with sand.\(^2\)

The description of Burāq as winged, white and so on is first mentioned by historians and theologians and they almost all agree on the attributes of this creature. There is thus no need to postulate much foreign influence. Moreover, Burāq is a religious element which is connected with the Prophet and that makes it unlikely that Muslim artists would seek inspiration for this Islamic religious figure in foreign sources. Their own religion, after all, provided them with full details. Moreover, Burāq has some attributes which distinguished this figure from other sphinxes.

Thus the crown which adorns the head is distinctive. In the case of representations of legendary creatures we realize that they wear different types of head-dress like diadems, head-gear similar to a turban and only occasionally a real crown. Another example is Burāq's face. Islam has fixed the sex of

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1. For a series of examples, see the Catalogue Exhibition of Islamic Art in Egypt (Cairo, 1969), pls. 4b, 21a, 33 and 38b.
Burāq which is neither female nor male; nevertheless, Muslim artists preferred the feminine figure to represent the heavenly beast, while most of the sphinxes of the ancient world were shown with a masculine look or sometimes even bearded. Such reflections indicate that the inspiration for the depictions of Burāq is best sought within the Islamic tradition.

One may divide the art of Islam which appeared in the early period into three types. The first consists of representations which existed in the time of the first rulers of Islam but were made by non-Muslims. An example is the money paid by 'Alī b. Abī Tālib to Muḥammad. (1) We also have the account of Ibn Rustah in which he mentioned that 'Umar b. al-Khattāb had a Syrian ornamented censer (2) made of silver and asked Sa'd to perfume the mosque of Madīnah on Fridays and in the month of Rāmāḍān. (3) These objects were imported from non-Muslim countries so they were of foreign manufacture; nevertheless they were used by Muslims and also by the prophet Muḥammad himself.

The second category consists of the representations of living beings which were done in the time of the Muslim Caliphs. For example, in the reign of the Second Caliph 'Umar b. al-Khattāb, dirhams were struck which were similar to Sasanian coins but the

2. Ibn Rustah used the word tamāthāl but he did not specify what kind of representations decorated the censer.
Muslims added the legends "Muhammad is the Apostle of God" and "Praise be to God". We also have the dinar of Mu'awiya on which his effigy was shown and a second dinar from the time of the Umayyad Caliph 'Abd al-Malik b. Marwan which bears the date 76/695. 'Abd al-Malik is here represented with a sword in his hand. From Qusayr 'Amrah we have the effigy of the enthroned ruler, the six kings who were conquered by the Muslims, numerous bathing and hunting scenes and also signs of the Zodiac. Several examples of representations of human beings and animals can be seen in qasr al-Hair West (c.728) and Khirbat al-Mafjar (c.743).

A third type of representations are those which appeared in early Islamic religious buildings and were done by the order of the Umayyad Caliphs. They show strong foreign influence. In the Dome of the Rock (687-91), for instance, various types of fruit can be seen depicted on the walls, such as cucumbers, cherries, dates, olives, pomegranates and grapes. Gems and precious stones in the shape of ear-rings, bracelets, crowns and diadems were also used to decorate the walls of the building. In the mosque of

2. Ibid., p. 9.
Damascus (705-15) the mosaic decoration represents not only plants but also houses and streams which show strong Byzantine influence.\(^1\)

We may conclude from the evidence of these three categories that, although representations of the Caliphs were used on coins, trees, natural scenes and jewellery decorated the main religious buildings in the Islamic capital Muslim rulers did not think of using the effigy of the Prophet Muhammad to decorate mosques or coins although they themselves were represented on coins. Muhammad himself had gone to great lengths to ensure that his own tomb would not become a place of worship. His hostile comments about the figural decoration in the Church of Mariyah in Abyssinia reflect the same attitude. Thus, despite the large number of churches in Syria which were decorated by figures of Christ and Mary, Muslim rulers refused to have effigies of the Prophet in any place. Had the Caliphs done this, they would have been in trouble because most Muslims would have considered it an insult to the person of Muhammad. A second reason which prevented rulers from representing Muhammad in the early period is that, when the Prophet built the first mosque at Madīnah, he did not use his effigy or any scene from his life for decoration. The Prophet Muhammad was a modest and simple person who lived like any other Muslim of that time. Showing his image on important places would have indicated that he was a powerful ruler and imply that this life was more important to him than the next. Accordingly, when 'Umar struck coins, he did not depict Muhammad on them because he knew that the Prophet did not want to be represented. 'Umar was a simple person too so he also, significantly enough, used only religious verses to decorate his coins.

1. Rice, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 15.
Representations of the Caliphs continued during the 'Abbāsīd period and, though the Caliphs themselves were not always pious Muslims, they continued to follow the example set by previous Caliphs in this matter. Accordingly, no representation of the Prophet Muhammad survives from the "Classical" period of Islam, i.e. from before the sack of Baghdad by the Mongols in 1258.
CHAPTER III

ILKHĀNĪD RELIGIOUS POLICY AND THE EARLIEST ILKHĀNĪD MANUSCRIPTS WITH SCENES OF THE PROPHET'S LIFE
Religion in the Mongol period with special reference to the attitude of the Ilkhāns towards the Islamic faith

Since the first existing examples of the figure of the Prophet Muhammad date from the Mongol times, the Muslim Ilkhāns have been accused of not being good Muslims, and being still under the influence of their previous religion. The Mongol rulers at first treated Persians, Arabs, Turks, Christians and Jews equally. They all were considered as subjects living in a land governed by the Ilkhānid dynasty. It was hard for the Muslims to adjust to this new and lowered status. (1) Indeed, Ibn al-Fūṭī tells us that when Hūlākū invaded Bagdad, Monday 5 Safar 656, almost everyone was killed apart from the Christians who were protected because Hūlākū had put Mongol troops in front of their houses. (2) Ibn al-Fūṭī adds that besides the Christians a group of merchants were also safe from the Mongols. These were the merchants who traded in Iran. He suggests that they probably passed by Mongol territory during their travels and secured a safe conduct when they realized the danger presented by the Mongols. This guarantee saved their own necks, their children, and also their neighbours who sought refuge in their houses. Besides these, the ministers Mü'ayyad

1. Ibn al-'Ibrī, Ṭārīkh mukhtasar al-duwaḥ (Beirut 1890), p.188.
al-Dīn b. al-‘Alqamī, Ibn al-Dāmghānī and Ibn al-Dawāmī were also saved though no reason is given for this. Thus numerous Muslims were spared, as were their mosques. Rashīd al-Dīn, the great historian of the Mongols mentions the restoration and repairing of monuments which resumed after life had become more settled. He writes, "They came to the city of Khabūshān, which is called Qūjān by the Mongols. It was ruined and neglected when the army of the Mongols arrived. Hūlākū ordered its architecture renewed and the imposition paid so that his subjects (there) would not pay anything. Water courses were dug, factories were founded and gardens were put beside the mosque. The minister Sayf al-Dīn Aqā had contributed a certain amount of money to rebuild the mosque. Hūlākū asked princes and chiefs to erect their houses there, each according to his financial state. Members of the ‘ulamā’ and legists were appointed once more with the same status as before and high salaries.

The currency in circulation during the reign of Hūlākū was much bigger in size, and its decoration and calligraphy less complicated, than later coins. Indeed they resembled late ‘Abbāsid coins, though their decoration consists of effigies of

3. Ibid., p.183.
monkeys, rabbits or human faces. Nevertheless they bear mottoes like "There is no God but God and Muhammad is the Apostle of God." Thus Hülakū, who demolished many mosques, killed countless Muslims, and built houses for idols(2) did not object to the minting of coins bearing Islamic inscriptions with the names of God and Muhammad. A similar combination of Islamic and non-Islamic elements had already occurred under the Umayyads.

Hülakū also appointed Muslims to high positions in Baghdad, such as 'Alā' al-Dīn 'Atā' Mulk al-Juwainī, Shams al-Dīn Muhammad b. Muhammad al-Juwainī and 'Imād al-Dīn 'Umar b. Muhammad al-Qazwīnī in the year 657/1259.3 Although he himself was a Buddhist, he gave to a Christian priest, the jāthīq, a house overlooking the river Tigris and this house had a bell on the door. Hülakū also seized two ribāts belonging to Muslims and the jāthīq obliterated the Islamic inscriptions carved on their walls and wrote Syriac ones there instead. (4) A major reason which predisposed Hülakū towards Christians was his Christian wife Duqūz haṭūn, (5) who was also his favourite wife. In his reign several churches were built throughout Ilkhānid

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4. Ibid., pp.333-4.
5. She was the daughter of Ayqū b. Awnk Khān, from the island of Gūd. Quatremère, op. cit., pp.93-5.
territory. She herself used to superintend the erection of most of these churches, such as the church of Mukhayam. This partiality for Christians also led to the establishment of diplomatic relations with the Christian princes of Europe. The Christian powers of Europe hoped to convert the Ilkhāns and make them their allies against the Mamlûks, and indeed western missionaries were sent to the Mongol realms. Nestorian missionaries had penetrated this area as early as the 7th century A.D.

Abäqā Khan

Abäqā Khan, who succeeded Hūlākū in 663/1265, was also known for his sympathy to Christendom. He had a Christian wife who may even have secured his baptism. She was a Byzantine princess who had been engaged to his father. But the death of Hūlākū prevented the marriage. Abäqā was eager to show his favour towards Christians; once when he visited the city of Hamadān when Christians were celebrating and he himself went to congratulate them. In earlier times, when someone became Muslim the theologians of the convert's former faith did not

1. Quatremère, op. cit. pp. 93-5.
dare object because the official religion was Islam. But under the Mongols the situation had completely changed. Al-‘Azzāwī notes that on 25 Rabī‘ II 663, a Christian was converted to Islam. The ḥālq imprisoned him in his house in order to execute him later on by drowning him in the river Tigris. When the Muslims heard this, they attacked the markets and shops of the Christians. After that they marched to the house of the ḥālq who was called Milīkhā but they could not get him because he escaped to ‘Alā‘ al-Dīn’s house. ‘Alā‘ al-Dīn sent the leader Tūkāl Bakhshī to save the house and the followers of the Christian priest. The Mongol leader put down the tumult harshly. (1)

In the year 673/1274 delegates were sent by Abāqā to Lyons while others arrived at the court of Rome in 1277. Both messengers found warm receptions at these courts. Edward I corresponded with the court of the Mongols in 673/1274. (2) In 677/1278 the Pope sent some Franciscans to Abāqā but this mission went no further than Persia. (3) Despite these contacts with the west, which have led some to believe that he had become a Christian, he never publicly admitted to being a Christian. (4) It seems rather that he was not against any particular belief.

Several Islamic buildings were erected or repaired during

2. Ibid., p.301.
his reign, especially in Iraq where most of the men in power were Muslims. Thus 'Alā' al-Dīn, who was a Muslim and responsible for the Diwan, ordered a new building to be added to the shrine of 'Alī b. Abī Ta'lib. He also dedicated salaries for the people who served this shrine. (1) Al-ʿAzzāwī gives numerous other details of this kind. In the year 670/1271, the minaret of the Jāmiʿ al-Khalīfah was renewed. The work was finished in the month of Shaʿbān but it fell down again in the month of Ramadān. (2) In Tabrīz which was the capital of the Ilkhāns, mosques were still in use for in the time of Abāqā, during the winter of 671/1272, an earthquake had caused the collapse of minaret crowns in that city. (3) Abāqā died of delirium tremens in 680/1282. (4)

Ahmad Takūdar 680-683/1281-1284

Abāqā's successor was given Christian baptism with the name Nicholas. (5) He was however on good terms with Islamic theologians and was eager to be present at their meetings. They encouraged him to embrace Islam, which he did shortly after his

2. Ibid., p.271.
4. Ibid., p.85.
succession, taking the name Ahmad Taqūdār. (1)

Accordingly he might be considered as being the first Ilkhan who believed in Islam. The result of this first conversion of an Ilkhan to Islam had evil consequences for the adherents of other religions, especially Jews and Christians. He expelled all courtiers who were non-Muslims from his court. He also turned all the Buddhist temples, Christian churches and Jewish synagogues into mosques. (2) He also "ordered that every Christian should be banished from his dominions". (3) He also started establishing good relations with other Muslim rulers. He sent Shams al-Dīn Atābeg, Masʿūd b. Kaikāʿūs, Qutb al-Dīn Mahmūd al-Shirāzī (the qāḍī of Siwās) and Shams al-Dīn Muhammad b. al-Sāhib on a diplomatic mission to Egypt. (4) In Iran and Iraq he repaired old buildings and erected new ones like schools, mosques and ribāts. Besides he began to organize the pilgrimage caravans to Mecca every year attended by troops as guardians. (5)

This new situation did not find any favour among other Mongol princes, who felt that danger was threatening the religion and laws of the Mongols as they used to be. (6) Following a revolt

2. Ibid., pp.60-61.
headed by his nephew Arghūn, Ahmad was put to death on 10 August 1284. (1)

Arghūn 663-690/1284-1291

In the reign of Arghūn Christianity, Judaism and Buddhism flourished. He even appointed a Jewish vizier, an ex-physician called Sa'd al-Dawlah. (2) According to the Tarīkh Vassaf, Sa'd al-Dawlah persuaded Arghūn and the Ilkhanid princes to believe that Chingiz Khan, the first leader and ruler of the Mongols, was also their Prophet, as was Arghūn, his heir. Sa'd al-Dawlah advised Arghūn to spread the faith of Shamanism among the subjects of the Mongol Empire. (3) He also persuaded Arghūn to try to transform the Ka'ba into a house for idols, and made a list of two hundred Muslims marked for execution. These included seventeen theologians who occupied high positions in Shirāz. Sa'd was supported by another Jewish official called Najīb al-Dīn Kaha1. (4) The illness of Arghūn prevented the success of these schemes, and Sa'd himself was killed in Safar 690 A.H. (5) The reign of Arghūn showed that in religious matters the essential

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5. Al-Sayyād op. cit., p.64.
factor was the attitude of the Khan himself. Although he was neither Jew nor Christian, he did not hide his sympathy towards Christianity. He renewed all the churches which had been ruined by the preceding Khan, Ahmad Takūdar. (1) He maintained earlier contacts with European monarchs, in 1289 A.D. proposing to the Christian powers a joint attack on the Holy Land. (2) Pope Nicholas IV sent him an embassy to thank him for his treatment of Christians. (3) Embassies between east and west became commonplace and commercial travel, exemplified by Marco Polo, flourished. Western friars travelled to Mongol courts on missions of conversion as well as diplomacy.

Arghūn believed in magic and on one occasion a divine came from India and claimed that he knew how to extend people's lifespan. Arghūn asked him to prepare an elixir. This consists of sulphur and mercury; Arghūn kept taking it for eight months during which he locked himself in a fortress at Tabrīz. He did not see any visitors except some of his intimates such as Sa'd al-Dawlah and Buddhist priests. His physicians briefly saved his life but eventually he drank three cups of concentrated stuff which killed him. (4)

Some glimpse of Muslim life in this period may be seen in the history of Rashīd al-Dīn. In 689/1290, he states, "When Arghūn Khan arrived at Tabrīz, the time for the festival of fasting had come. They set up four pulpits. Judges, theologians and the whole Muslim community was there and they prayed at the ‘Īd in a magnificent atmosphere. After that, judges and speakers were rewarded with robes of honour."(1)

Arghūn was followed by two Ilkhanid princes, Gaykhatū Khan, 690-694/1291-1295, and Baydu Khan, April-October 1295. The former had the typical Ilkhanid leaning towards drinking and amusement but he was content to offer Rashīd al-Dīn the post of vizier and when the latter refused he offered it to another Muslim called Sadr al-Dīn Ahmad al-Khālidī al-Zingānī, who was given the title of Sadr Jihān.(2)

Mahmūd Ghāzān

According to Ibn al-Wardī, in 694 "Ghāzān the King of the Tatārs embraced Islam. He said the two testimonies after his representative Nayrūz. Nayrūz strewed gold on the people, and that day was memorable. Afterwards Nayrūz prompted him as he recited some Qur'ānic verses. The month of Ramadān arrived and

2. Al-Ṣayyād, op. cit., p.68.
Ghāzān was fasting and Islam had spread among the Tatārs. Thus the religion of Islam became the official faith of the Ilkhanid empire.

Nevertheless, this does not mean that he completely renounced his Central Asian background, for - in defiance of Qur'ān IV. 26 - he married the widow of his father and his uncle, and a Muslim divine solemnised the marriage. Such compromises may help to explain the appearance of images of Muḥammad in this period.

Ghāzān was a very pious Muslim, as Ibn al-Futi says. When Ghāzān visited al-Madrasah al-Mustansiriyah at Baghdad in 696/1297, the theologians and teachers there, who were reading the Qur'ān, left the holy book and went to welcome him. Ghāzān was very upset about what they had done, and he asked them to give him an explanation. A doctor of the law replied "The Sultan is the shadow of God on earth. Magnifying him and paying submission to him are essential to the law".

Ghāzān naturally adopted Islamic titles. A copper coin dated 699/1299 bears the name of the city of Mosul and the inscription Sultan al-Islam. In Safer 697/November 1297 the Mongol amirs formally adopted the Muslim turban, but it is not certain whether their earlier headgear was used thereafter.

A group of miniatures survives in the Diwān of Mu'izzī which

2. Ibn al-'Ibrī, op. cit., p. 188.
4. At the Iraqi Museum, no. (5853).  
illustrates the patrons being attended by poets. In some of these representations poets wear the turban while the ruler wears a crown and courtiers adorn their heads with Mongol head-dress similar to helmets. However, in fol. 71b (ill. 39) we see a ruler or prince sitting on a cushion cross-legged and wearing a turban similar to that of the poet who stands in front of him offering his work.

Official policy towards other religions was now very severe. Mahmud Ghāzān had given instructions to the non-Muslim community to have signs to distinguish them from the Muslims. Christians, for example, were obliged to wear waist-bands and Jews had to put yellow pieces of cloth in their head-gear. These rules were in operation only for a few months because people took advantage of these decrees to attack and otherwise harm the Christians and Jews. Churches, temples, synagogues were demolished or transformed into mosques, colleges and other Islamic buildings. Nayrūz was the first person to encourage

1. Now in London, India Office Library (Johnson MS.), MS. 132: Etbe 903, 911, 913, 1028-30. Fols. 3b, 12b, 16b, 31a, 33a, 35a, 43b, 71b. The manuscript is dated between Dhu’l-Qa’dah 713/February-March 1314 and Dhu’l-Qa’dah 714/February 1315. For a discussion of the manuscript, see B.W. Robinson, Persian Painting in the India Office Library (London 1976), p. 4, ills. 2, 7, 9, 16, 17, 18, 20, 39.


Ghāzān to show his hatred for non-Muslims in this way.\(^{(1)}\)
The house which had been given to the Christian priest at Baghdad by Hülākū was returned to the Muslims who removed the Syriac inscriptions and destroyed the pictures and statues in it. The Muslims also recovered the ribāṭ which was known as Dār al-Falak from the Christians who had used it as a cemetery. The Muslims ruined the graves and used this place for delivering sermons, under the direction of Shaykh Sharaf al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Akbar.\(^{(2)}\)

Many sources mention that Ghāzān converted to Shi‘ism and that he sympathised with its adherents. On the first day of taking over the throne of the empire he ordered a channel to be dug between the river Euphrates and the tomb of 'Alī b. Abī Ṭalīb for the benefit of the people living around the tomb. At his orders other canals transformed the empty deserted territory around Karbalā‘ to useful agricultural land. He also built houses for the descendants of 'Alī b. Abī Ṭalīb and called them buyūt al-siyādāt. Such houses were built in many cities like Isfahān, Tabrīz, Shīrāz and Baghdad.\(^{(3)}\) In the year 696/1297, Mahmūd Ghāzān visited the shrines of 'Alī b. Abī Ṭalīb, Ḥusayn and Salmān al-Fārisī and ordered money to be given to the people who were in charge of these places.\(^{(4)}\)

\(^{(1)}\) Browne, op. cit., vol. III, p. 41.
\(^{(2)}\) Ibn al-Fūṭī, op. cit., p. 484.
in his account of this period that when Mahmūd Ghāzān went on his third expedition against the Mamlūks to Syria in 702/1303 he contributed new curtains for the shrine in Karbala', money and a regular amount of bread for the people there. Moreover he used to mention the name of the family of ‘Alī at the beginning of official documents before the names of the Ilkhānid princes and princesses and he struck coins bearing the names of the twelve imāms of the Shi‘ah. The reason given for this is that he saw the Prophet Muhammad twice in his dreams telling him to take care of the people related to the family of ‘Alī b. Abī Tālib.(1)

Üljäytū

On Ghāzān's death in 703/1304 his brother Üljäytū Muhammad Khudabandah succeeded him. He had been baptised during his childhood at the will of his mother, Urūk Khatūn, and bore the Christian name Nicholas.(2) Afterwards this Ilkhān converted to Buddhism,(3) and eventually he embraced Islam through the influence of his wife.(4) He also used Islamic titles for himself as can be seen from a coin of 705 in the Iraqi museum with the inscription Ghīyyāth al-Dunya wa'l-Dīn.(5) He also

ordered the court historian to write the history of Islam, (1) and fine Qur’âns were transcribed at the court (e.g. one dated 710/1310-11 which was done at the behest and under the supervision of his two ministers Rashîd al-Dîn and Sa’d al-Dîn, according to the introduction in fol.1a. This Qur’an is now in the British Library, Or.4945). Many Jews embraced Islam in his reign. (2)

Üljâytû himself, encouraged by a Shi‘ite notable called Tâj al-Dîn Awajî(3) and by Amîr Taramtâz, who asked him to be like Ghâzan, who had adopted Shi‘ism before him, turned to the Shi‘ite creed. He visited the tomb of ‘Alî b. Abî Tâlib where he had a dream encouraging him to profess Shi‘ism (4) and he accordingly did so in 707/1307. (5) Sectarian squabbles among the Sunnis may have encouraged him to take this step. (6)

A story told by the Muslim traveller Ibn Battûtah shows how bigoted a Shi‘ite Üljâytû became. According to Ibn Battûtah, the person who had encouraged Üljâytû’s change of creed was one Jamâl al-Dîn b. al-Muṭahhir, who told him that Abû Bakr and ‘Umar b. al-Khattâb were only ministers of the Prophet Muhammad, while ‘Alî was his cousin, son-in-law and successor. (7) Ibn

2. Ibid., p.49.
3. Ibid., p.50.
4. Ibid., p.51.
Battutah continues that Uljaytu gave orders that all subjects of the Mongol empire had to convert to Shi'ism. This degree met with varying responses. In Baghdad, for example, they refused to change their belief. One Friday, twelve thousand armed men went to the mosque at the time of the prayer, while the emissaries of Uljaytu were there. (1) They threatened the preacher that if he changed one word of his speech they would kill him along with the emissaries. (2) The people of Shiraz and Isfahan followed suit. When Uljaytu heard this, he ordered the qadi of these three cities to be brought before him at Qarabagh. Majd al-Din, the qadi of Shiraz, arrived first. He was put in a big enclosed space and wild dogs were released, but they did not attack him. Ibn Battutah adds that when this story reached the ears of Uljaytu he knelt in front of the judge kissing his foot. He also took off the robe he was wearing and put it on Majd al-Din.

After this incident Uljaytu changed his allegiance to Sunnism, adopting the Hanafi madhab. (3)

Before his conversion to Sunnism Uljaytu had decided to

2. As a result of his Shi'ism, Uljaytu omitted the names of Abi Bakr and 'Umar b. al-Khattab from the addresses usually given after the Friday prayer, and substituted the name of 'Ali b. Abi Talib. Ibid., p. 59.
3. Ibid., pp. 60-1.
build a shrine at Sultaniya, his capital, and to transfer the bodies of the Shi'i imams from Iraq to this place. This plan did not work and so the great mausoleum served as his own tomb(1) where he was buried after his death (perhaps by poison)(2) in Dhu'l-Qa'dah 716/January 1317(3).

Abū Sa'id 717-735/1317-1334

Soon after Üljäytü's death, famine ravaged Asia in 1318-19 and hail-storms followed soon after in 1320 A.D. Abū Sa'id asked his theologians about these events and they replied that they were the result of Muslims plunging themselves into frivolous amusements. Abū Sa'id accordingly gave orders to close all wine-shops leaving only one shop open in each district to serve travellers. (4) Thus it seems that he maintained the already traditional tension between the Mongol and Islamic ways of life.

Conclusion

It will be clear from the foregoing account that Mongol policy on matters of religion was not consistent. At first, the religion of the Mongols was Shamanism and it took them a while to

change their religion to Islam. It remains unproven that their quick conversion to Islam led them to misunderstand the faith. When Ahmad Takūdār embraced Islam it came as a surprise to his fellow-Mongols and he was soon assassinated. But the experience paved the way for later Khāns who never found any difficulties in their way when they left their previous religion. Indeed it could be said that Mahmūd Ghāzān, for instance, was a fanatic. His action against other religions was more extreme than any comparable decree in the first half-century of Islam. Nevertheless, such extremes were typical of Ilkhanid policy in general.

Two factors have encouraged a belief in the lukewarm attitude of the Mongols to Islam: their carefully cultivated relationship with the west and their own constant changes of religious allegiance. These two matters deserve further discussion.

It is true that relations with the West were strengthened in this period and that missionaries were sent from the West in increasing numbers. But the political situation obliged the Mongols to be on the side of the West as they shared the Western hatred of the Mamlūk state and they too sought to take the Holy Land from the Mamlūks. No doubt if either side had taken the Holy Land a split would have developed.

None of the Ilkhanid Sultans publicly confessed the Christian faith although most of them were baptised during their childhood. Arghūn's action against Muslims was in fact a reaction against
the policy of the preceding ruler Ahmad Takūdar, who had transformed non-Islamic buildings to Muslim uses.

The numerous changes of religious faith on the part of the Ilkhanids could first of all be due to private reasons - they might, for example, have felt dissatisfied with certain aspects of their current faith. But of greater importance was the influence of a person who had some special sympathy towards a given sect, and who had a strong personal hold over the Ilkhān. Sometimes such a person was a theologian who gave the ruler satisfactory reasons for a change of faith. New converts, too, were more susceptible than others to the arguments of theologians. Thus Üljäytū was persuaded that ‘Alī b. Abī Tālib and his descendants deserved more privileges than other Muslims, while Üljäytū's conversion from Shi'ism to Sunnism apparently originated in the miraculous escape of the Shīrāzī gādi. When Abū Sa'īd realized that calamities were happening in the land, he asked theologians to give a reason for this. He then gave orders immediately to close wine-shops in his kingdom entirely because theologians had asked him to do so.

The question of the sincerity of the Ilkhanid conversion to Islam is most relevant to this thesis because the earliest existing portraits of Muhammad date from this period. Some writers attribute the production of these pictures to the weak belief of the Khāns in Islam.

Yet counter-arguments could be presented. Quite possibly
illustration of the Prophet had been produced before Mongol times, though none survive. If this were indeed the case, Ilkhānid artists would simply have copied earlier models. It has been pointed out that the Mongols were familiar with religious painting from their Shamanistic tradition and that for this reason they practised religious painting in Islam too. But it seems preferable to believe that they realized that the faith of Islam was totally different from their ex-religion. This knowledge would not encourage them to be the first to paint pictures of the Prophet Muhammad unless they saw earlier examples.

One last point may be stressed here. The two earliest manuscripts with miniatures of Muhammad bear comparatively late dates within the Ilkhānid period. Significantly, they were produced in the reigns of the Muslim Khāns, not in the time of the non-Muslim ones. They can thus be seen as a deliberate affirmation of Islam, the newly-embraced faith of these rulers.

The Manuscript of Jāmi‘ al-tawārīkh

The author

Rashīd al-Dawlah Abu‘l-Fadā‘il Fadlallāh b. Abī‘l-Khayr b. Ghāli al-Hamadāni(1) was born in the city of Hamadān in

645/1247. (1) His father (2) was a Jewish grocer. (3) He entered the court of the Ilkhāns as a physician. (4) He was made a minister in the reign of Ghāzān on 3 Dhu’l-Hijjah 697. (5)

When the Mongols came to administer the cities they had conquered, their main problem was shortage of men in various administrative fields like ministers, judges, physicians, men of letters and so on. So the Mongols had to employ experienced people from the states they had conquered. (6) One of these learned men was Rashīd al-Dīn. He was minister during the reigns of three Ilkhānid rulers: Mahmūd Ghāzān, Üljäytū and Abū Sa‘īd. These rulers patronised the sciences, literature and the arts. (7) Rashīd al-Dīn was well read in many subjects, such as agriculture, geometry, theology and so on. (8) He was also gifted in languages, such as Persian (his mother tongue), Arabic (in which he composed most of his work), Mongol (which he had to learn in order to be

1. Quatremère, op. cit., p.II.
2. It has been stated in some sources that Rashīd al-Dīn, his father and his grandfather all believed in Islam, while other authors say that Rashīd al-Dīn was a descendant of a Jewish family and although he embraced Islam was still a Jew at heart.
4. Ibid.
5. Al-Sayyād, op. cit., p.84.
7. Ibid., pp.84-5.
8. Quatremère, op. cit., p.LIX.
accepted at the court of the Ilkhāns) and also Turkish and probably Chinese. (1) Although he amassed great wealth his benevolence and generosity made him spend large amounts on establishing cultural institutes and encouraging scientists. (2) He also rendered many services to the Islamic faith. For example, Browne states that "Rashīd al-Dīn sent a letter to Shaykh Safiyy al-Dīn of Ardabīl giving, after many compliments, a list of the supplies of meat, fowls, wheat, butter, honey, mast (yoghourt), perfumes and money which he proposes to supply to the aforesaid Shaykh's monastery (Khangah) for the festival to be held there in commemoration of the Prophet's birthday". (3) Once he was sent to Delhi where he met 'Alā' al-Dīn Muhammad al-Khaljī and advised him to stop drinking alcohol. The King did so and in return for his sincerity 'Alā' al-Dīn gave him wide estates, gold, silver, clothes, perfumes and so on. (4) He also used to contribute generously to men of religion. (5) Rashīd al-Dīn was concerned about the needs of Muslims especially those of great piety. This is apparent in a letter sent by Rashīd al-Dīn to the people of Sīwās, in which a house for darvīshes

1. Quatremère, op. cit., p.LIX.
5. Browne, op. cit., p.82.
was founded by Ghāzān (Daru's-siyadat-i-Ghazane). (1) In letter 10 from the minister to his son Sa'd al-Dīn, Rashīd al-Dīn requests that no extra money or taxes be taken from those who work on his land, and that sums of money be given to the poor people who live in that area, to strangers who may pass by and for the repair of public buildings. (2)

During the reign of Üljäytū a few Jews had converted to Islam, and Rashīd al-Dīn on the Mongol Khān's behalf arranged a test to see whether their conversion was for the sake of Islam or for something else. (3) He asked them to eat camel's flesh seethed in milk as this food is prohibited in Judaism. (4) He is believed to have belonged to the Shāfi'i sect. (5) Although he felt no sympathy towards the Hanafī sect he could not show it because Üljäytū adopted it. (6) Rashīd al-Dīn started losing his political and religious power after Üljäytū embraced Shi'ism. (7) 'Alī Shāh, the second minister of Üljäytū, intrigued against him. (8)

3. His enemies accused him of being a sincere Jew in spite of his belief in Islam.
5. Ibid., p. 50.
7. Ibid., p. 149.
8. Ibid., p. 164.
On one occasion when he felt ill, he did not pay a visit to the court and his enemy seized the opportunity to turn the Ilkhan against Rashid al-Din. (1) Finally a major accusation — that of killing Sultan Uljaytu — was brought against him. Rashid al-Din and the physician of Uljaytu, al-Jalal b. al-Haran, were both arraigned. Al-Jalal was asked about the cause of the Khan's death. He replied that the Sultan had a strong diarrhoea, and that he had decided to give Uljaytu an astringent medicine, while Rashid al-Din suggested an enema. But after a while Uljaytu died. This event was eventually made a pretext to put the great minister of the Mongols to death with his son Ibrāhīm in Jumāda I 718/July 1318. His head was carried to the city of Tabrīz, amidst shouts of "This is the head of the Jew who changed the words of God, may God curse him". (2)

According to al-Saqā'ī the minister was eighty years old when he was killed, (3) although if he was indeed born in 645/1247 he would have been seventy-three years old. Some sources mention that about a century later Sultan Miran Shāh, the son of Tiymūr, ordered the body of Rashid al-Din to be taken from the Muslim cemetery and buried in a Jewish cemetery instead. This was at a time when Miran Shāh was out of his mind. (4)

3. Ibid., p.184.
Rashīd al-Dīn was a historian, scientist and theologian as well as a man of letters. He left behind a large library of books which dealt with numerous subjects. He himself wrote many books. For instance, in science he wrote Kitāb tīb ahl al-Khiṭa (1) on the medicine of the people of al-Khiṭa. This contains a translation of some medical and scientific treatments from Chinese into Persian. (2) A second book is Kitāb bayān al-haqīqīq, which deals with scientific and theological matters like the explanation of some chapters of the Qur‘ān and al-athār wa‘l-īhyā‘, about agricultural economy. (3) There survives, too, a collection of letters which were sent from Rashīd al-Dīn to scientists and men of letters, and several books on theology.

Despite his interest in theology he did not at first publish in this field. However, he did so after a dream in which Muhammad appeared to him and encouraged him to continue the work on which he was engaged — a treatise arguing that Muhammad's ignorance was proof of his prophetic mission. (4) His works on theology were collected under the title al-majmū‘ah al-rashīdiyāh.

1. There is a copy of this book in Istanbul, Aya Sofya Library 3596. Ibid., p.373.
3. Ibid., p.377.
The first book is al-Tawdīḥat, or the explanation which deals with the interpretation of the Qur'ān, the mi'rāj of Muhammad to the Seven Heavens, hadīths of the Prophet and answers to those who disagree with the theologian al-Ghazālī. The second book is Muftāḥ al-tafāsīr or "Key for the Explanations." As soon as Rashīd al-Dīn had finished composing the previous book, he started writing this book which was finished in a short time. He said that the interpretation of the Qur'ān is a task requiring much time and that he was unable to finish all the chapters of the Qur'ān. Accordingly he selected certain Āyahs to explain. In his explanation he copied what other theologians had said before him and added some of his own thoughts. The Muftāḥ al-tafāsīr consists of various topics like the miracle of the Qur'ān itself and its eloquence, the doctrines and the conditions of interpretations of the Qur'ān, discussion of good and bad deeds, the transmigration of souls, and philosophical matters.

The book of Sultāniyya explains different topics such as inspiration, missions, prophecy, the immortality of the inhabitants of paradise, the meaning of the term "the last of the Prophets" and the difference between prophets, saints, caliphs and so on.

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4. Ibid., pp. 394-5.
The subjects discussed in *Lata'if al-haqayq* are the unity of God, the Prophetic miracles and similar subjects.\(^1\)

In the field of history the most important book by Rashid al-Din is *Jami' al-tawarikh*. The scope of the Ilkhanid empire in Islamic lands perhaps encouraged the Ilkhanid rulers to order a single history emphasizing the close relation between these countries instead of various books dealing with the particular history of a certain community. On the other hand the Mongol Khans wanted to stress the role of their ancestors.\(^2\) Ghazan was afraid that the history of the Mongols might in time be forgotten and the best way to avoid this was to record it.\(^3\) For this reason part of the *Jami' al-tawarikh* deals with the history of the Mongols. Having chosen Rashid al-Din for this task, Ghazan gave his minister the official documents which had been kept by previous rulers and asked him to divide them according to the time of issue, in order to get the right information.\(^4\) When the first volume of this enormous book was finished,\(^5\) Uljaytu\(^6\) asked Rashid al-Din to write a second volume about history of the world in general and history

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4. Quartremère, *op. cit.*, p.LXX.
5. It is called *Ta’rikh-i-Ghazani*.
6. Ghazan died before the book was finished.
of Islam in particular, and yet another volume on geography. (1)

Rashīd al-Dīn referred to the sources he depended on to get the information, especially on foreign countries, and the care which Uljäytū paid to this book and its content. He said: "As the King of Islam, may God cause his dominion to endure, is eager to inquire into and investigate all kinds of sciences and to find out about the art of tales and histories; and because he spends most of his auspicious time in acquiring all sorts of virtues and perfections, he spoke to me in the following terms after reading this history and editing it. Until this time, no book has been composed in any period which consists of the general history of the inhabitants of the world, explaining their states, with information about the classes of people and their races. And also there is not any book at all which contains information about all countries and regions. No previous king had paid attention to the need for such a work and started working on it. But now, praise be to God and blessing, the climes of the inhabited quarter (aqālīm al-rub' al-maskūn) are under our power and the power of the sons of Chingiz Khān. To the high presence of the Sultan have gathered wise men, astronomers, scientists and historians of religion and of nations. They are from the people of al-Khitā, Mājīn, India, Kāshīr, Tibet, Uighūr, Turks, Arabs and Franks. Each one has brought books containing the history, tales and beliefs of his own nation." (2)

Rashīd al-Dīn adds that he made inquiries from famous men of the nations he wrote about in order to get full and correct information about their history, customs and beliefs. He also states that the second source of his work is the books written about previous rulers.¹ He probably used such historians as al-Ṭabarī and Ibn al-Athīr.²

Two lengthy illustrated manuscripts of the Jāmi' al-tawārīkh survive. The first deals among other subjects with the history of the Mongols. A second part contains the history of the world.³ Browne has outlined briefly the division of the Jāmi' al-tawārīkh.⁴

Vol.I

Chapter 1: This deals with Turkish and Mongol tribes, their way of life, genealogies, beliefs and so on.

Chapter 2: History of Chingiz Khān, the Khāns who ruled before him and succeeded him, until the reign of Sultan Ghāzān.

Vol.II

Preface: An account of Adam, the patriarchs, and the Hebrew prophets.

Part 1: History of the Persians who ruled before

2. Al-Sayyād, op. cit., p.266.
4. Ibid., pp.72-3.
the conquest of the Muslims.

Part 2: Islamic history which starts from the time of the Prophet and dynasties which followed him. This section also includes material on the Frank, Chinese, Indians and Turks. (1)

Rashid al-Din finished writing the book in 710/1310-11. It was kept in the library of the mosque which Rashid al-Din had founded in the city of Tabriz. (2) In the introduction to the Jami' al-tawarikh, it is mentioned that although Ghazan had proposed that this book should be written, most of the work was done under the sovereignty and supervision of Uljaytu. For this reason Rashid al-Din proposed to present the book to Uljaytu. Nevertheless the Khan refused and asked his minister to mention the name and titles of the previous Khan Mahmud Ghazan. (3)

Quatremere has published the introduction which the author wrote in Arabic for his book. The content of this introduction explains the conditions under which people might copy any work of Rashid al-Din:

1. Rashid al-Din allowed other people to copy any book.

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3. Ibid., p.37.
2. The mutawwali(1) was to make one copy of these books each year, i.e., of The collection of Rashid al-Din (known as al-Majmū'ah al-rashidiyah)(2); one was to be in Arabic and another in Persian. Besides this, two copies were to be produced annually of Jami' al-tawārikh, Bayan al-haqāyq and al-Athār wa'l-Ihyā'.

3. The mutawwali was to choose quick, famous and skilful calligraphers. Places for their residence were to be provided by the mutawwali within the area of the Rub' al-Rashidi.

4. These copies were to be written on large, Baghdadī paper with a perfect script without any mistakes; and bound with fine leather.

5. The copyists were to finish their work at the same time.

6. Afterwards, the whole copies should be collected and put in a place between the mihrāb and the minbar.

7. Invocations for the composer of these works should be

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1. The man who was in charge of these books.
2. This contains Kitāb al-tawdīḥat; Muftāh al-tafāṣīr; al-sultāniyyah; and al-Latāyf.
recited. (1)

8. This invocation should be written at the end of each copy, as well as another text also written by Rashīd al-Dīn. This consists of: prayers to God and to the Prophet Muhammad; a statement by the author saying that he dedicated a copy of his book each year to a certain city in order to be at the service of the Muslims; men of letters and sciences at this city should explain to the people what is difficult to understand.

9. The mutawwali was to ensure that there was a dedication in the manuscript, such as "this manuscript has been dedicated to such a city in the reign of such a monarch".

10. The mutawwali was to write his father's name and his grandfather's also.

11. After the copying of the books was finished, the judges of Tabrīz should check them and see if they are the same as the original one. Then they were to certify this by signing them and handing them to the mutawwali.

12. The mutawwali should send Arabic copies to Arab countries

and Persian copies to the region where Persian is spoken.

13. When a copy of his work was sent to a city it was to be kept at a school in which a famous and learned teacher had already been employed. This teacher should be responsible for this copy. If someone should wish to borrow it he should leave a pledge with the teacher.

14. Each faqīh living in the Quarter (i.e. Rub‘-i-Rashīdī) was to write a copy of the jāmi‘ al-tawārīkh himself on large Baghdādī paper in Arabic or Persian, and it had to be finished within a certain time. If he finished earlier, he could start writing a second one if he wished. But if he did not complete the work he would have to leave the Quarter and another faqīh should be brought instead.

15. When the faqīh finished copying the book, this copy would be his own to sell or keep.

16. Anybody would be permitted to copy the main book but the copy should be made within the Quarter.

17. A borrower could also copy the book which was possessed by the faqīh.

18. The faqīh who lived in the Quarter was to have the advantage of copying more than anybody else.
19. Those who might change the rules or would not work according to the conditions laid down by Rashid al-Din would be subject to his curse. (1)

Supplements which covered the history of Üljäytü and Abū Sa‘īd were added later, in the Timurid period, by Hāfiz-i Abrū who states in a copy of the Jami‘ al-tawāriḵh (2) that: "This was done at the request of the Sultan Shāh Rukh Bahādur who wanted to know about the status of people who lived in the past. Books of history used to be read in his presence. Among them was the book Jami‘ al-tawāriḵh of Rashid al-Din Fadl Allāh, who finished it in the year 704/1304. When the Sultan became acquainted with the contents of the book he asked that there should be added to it the history of Üljäytü and his son Abū Sa‘īd to be an appendix to it". (3)

The Quarter of Rashid al-Din (al-Rub‘ al-Rashīdī)

Rashid al-Din provided numerous facilities for various people of different levels of education by establishing institutes and placing them all in one area. This was called al-Rub‘ al-Rashīdī ("the Quarter of Rashid al-Din"). It was founded in the time between the end of the seventh century and the beginning of the eighth century of the Hijrah, in the

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1. Quatremère, op. cit., pp.LCXXIV-CLXXIV.
2. Now in the Shrine Library at Mashhad.
eastern part of the city of Tabriz, in a place called Wilvānkūh which was distinguished for its bushes and fresh air. (1) The buildings in the quarter consisted of 24 caravansarays, 1500 shops, 30,000 houses for the inhabitants of the quarter, baths, stores, mills, workshops, paper-mills, a mint and a hospital. (2) This idea of gathering together various buildings, each one supplying particular services, was very common at that time. Ghāzān built a similar complex during his reign with a shrine to be his own grave after his death. (3) The mausoleum of Ghāzān was surrounded by mosques, a Shāfī‘ite college, a college for the Hanafī sect to teach in, a hospital, a library and observatory. Besides this there were colleges for teaching the sciences, an establishment for keeping books of law and baths. Five teachers and fifty servants were in charge of the orphans' house. Separate houses were reserved for widows, children who had no place to live and for the men of religion or sādah. Ghāzān also founded two less usual amenities. One was a fountain which was provided with many vessels, so that if any servant broke a vessel belonging to his master he could take one of these instead so that he would not be punished. The second foundation provided migrant birds with food during their sojourn in that area. Ghāzān put Rashīd al-Dīn in charge of this semi-city. (4)

1. Al-Sayyād, op. cit., p.432.
3. Quatremère, op. cit., p.IV.
These foundations may have inspired Rashīd al-Dīn to do likewise. Presumably he too wanted an establishment to commemorate him after his death. The Rubʿ of Rashīd al-Dīn was in fact more famous and perfect than the Rubʿ of Ghāzān himself. It is quite likely that because Rashīd al-Dīn knew the deficiencies of the royal foundation - since he was in charge of it - he was able to avoid repeating them. He was also a man of science and letters so he would be well acquainted with the necessities of such an establishment. He was also able to spend huge sums on the requirements of his quarter. Students used to come from various countries in order to join the colleges in the Rubʿ. They were allowed to decide for themselves what subjects to study. Rashīd al-Dīn gave them good salaries, and provided them with free accommodation in his quarter in a special area called Ḥay al-ṭalabah ("Students' Quarter"), which accommodated about 1000 students. Another 6000 used to live in the city of Tabrīz itself. They were also allowed to go to the school of Rashīd al-Dīn's sons. (1)

The staff who used to work and live in the quarter were Muhaddithīn, fūqāʾ and scientists. (2) Physicians were brought from India, China, Syria and Egypt. (3) Supplies for the hospital like oil, drugs, herbs and so on used to be ordered from various places. (4) Calligraphers, illustrators and muthahhbin

2. Ibid.
4. Ibid., p.82.
used also to work in the learned institutes. (1) Browne has published two letters of Rashid al-Din which concern the Quarter's library and its books. In one letter he bequeaths to the Rub'-i Rashidi a library of 60,000 volumes of science, history and poetry including 1,000 Qur'ans written by famous calligraphers. (2) Another letter sent to his agent ordered him to send presents to ten learned men in Tunis and the Maghrib in return for ten books in 36 volumes which they had sent to him. (3) Unfortunately, the Quarter was doomed with the execution of Rashid al-Din. It was exposed to plundering and rifling when he was killed in 718/1318 (4) and never recovered from this.

It is worth noting that several fragments of different volumes of the Jami' al-tawarikh are scattered in various collections. Some contain pictures of Muhammad with other well-known figures of Islamic history, while others do not, like the copy in Paris. (5) The reason is because each volume contains the history of a certain country. Thus every part is illustrated according to the contents of the accompanying text. Since some copies do not deal with the life of Muhammad, he is not depicted in them. Many copies of the text were prepared and sent to various Islamic countries. Some were written for the use of

3. Ibid., p.84.
one person only. It is not impossible that only the main volumes for public use were illustrated, since few private individuals would be able to afford illustrated copies.

It may be argued that Rashīd al-Dīn would not have had the courage to depict the Prophet unless he had already seen an illustrated pre-Ilkhanid manuscript with such pictures. After all, he depended for his Islamic history on Arabic sources. Moreover, the books were kept in the library of the Tabriz mosque in the quarter of Rashīd al-Dīn, and the completed manuscript used to be placed annually in the most sacred area in the mosque between the pulpit and the mihrab. The judges of Tabriz used to check the books themselves and sign for them. Given that Rashīd al-Dīn was a sincere Muslim, whose writings were about Islam and Islamic matters, it seems hard to believe that he would have taken the major step of introducing hitherto unknown pictures of Muhammad into his books. It is true that his enemies accused him of being a Jew by faith as well as race, but none of them charged him with insulting the person of Muhammad by decorating his books with religious pictures. This seems to indicate that even the ordinary Muslim was familiar with representations of the Prophet, not only the Caliphs had possessed these miniatures "secretly". It must be stressed again that these very volumes used to be sent to Muslim cities and were kept in schools or colleges under the supervision of well-known teachers.

1. Quatremere, op. cit., p. CLXIV. Of course, the volumes sent to mosques were not necessarily illustrated.
The Jami' al-tawarikh contains many topics dealing with the life, customs and history of certain peoples. But, apart from the Chronology of al-Biruni (dated 707/1307), no earlier illustrated versions of other histories, such as those of Ibn al-Athir or al-Tabari, are known. Two explanations for this may be suggested. Either Rashid al-Din wanted to show the importance of his own manuscript by adding to it attractive and colourful pictures, or miniatures were also to be found in other books of history which have not survived.

Artistic Analysis

1. Place of execution: Tabriz

Date: 710/1310-1311

Location: Edinburgh University Library.

Arab 20.

Fol.42r. Birth of Muhammad. pl.1

The miniature is situated at the lower part of the page.

The accompanying text reads as follows:

"The story of the birth of the Prophet, may the blessing and greetings be upon him, has been recorded often but the most correct version is this. He (may blessing and greeting be upon him) was born in Mecca, in the year of the elephant, on
Monday, 12 Rabî' I on 20 April in the twenty-fourth year of the reign of Anûširwân the Just. And in the year 882 in the history of Iskandar the Rûmûʾ. (1)

Rashîd al-Dîn then explains the term 'ām al-fīl, i.e. the year in which the Prophet Muhammad was born. In this year God sent flocks of birds to kill the ruler of Abyssinia who had decided to take his army and demolish the Ka'ba. Rashîd al-Dîn also mentions the parents of the Prophet Muhammad. But he reserves most of the detailed information he gives for the house in which Muhammad was born and how its position was transferred from one person to another. Then he returns to the main subject, the birth of the Apostle of God. "It was said that when his mother Āminah felt the throes of childbirth, she saw in her sleep that a person descended from Heaven. He told her that the child whom you bear is the most honoured among creatures and their master. If you deliver him, call him Muhammad and say: 'I seek the protection of the only One from the mischief of every persistently envious person'. Āminah told this story to 'Abd al-Muţţalib. It was told of her that she said: 'When I delivered him I saw his face shining,

1. The Arabic text of Rashîd al-Dîn in the same manuscript, fol.42r.
and the whole world was alight in it, and I saw the palaces of Syria and Iraq. Also a light went out of him and ascended to Heaven where it joined the stars'. When 'Abd al-Muttalib heard her speech he called him Muhammad. It was mentioned in books that "At the time of his birth all the idols in Mecca and the Ka'ba were overturned. In all the houses of fire which belonged to the Persians the fire died out. The water of the lake Sawah dried up and twelve balconies (shurafāt) fell down from the Īwāns of Kisrā Anūshīrwan". (1)

In his Sīrat al-nabī, Ibn Hīshām states: "When the Prophet was born, his fingers were grasped together except for his index finger. He was pointing with it as if he were praising. An account which was told by his mother ran as follows: 'When I delivered him I looked at him and he was kneeling and lifting his two fingers as if he were begging and supplicating'. It was also told that he caught a handful of earth and knelt down". (2)

Another account also cited in the Sīrah of Ibn Hīshām is told by Āminah. She said that a light came out of Muhammad during his birth. It was so bright that she was able to see the houses and markets of Syria. (3)

This picture on fol. 42R is oblong in shape and divided into three parts by columns. The arches are not visible here because

1. Text accompanying pl.1.
3. Ibid.
the lines of the margins cut the miniature at the top. The main incident is drawn in the middle. We see Āminah pointing in Muhammad's direction, paying no attention to the woman who is trying to feed her. Two angels, both with bare shoulders, are sitting near the foot of the mother. One of them is carrying the infant, while the other is holding a censer. The pillow looks as if it were flying in the air; apparently the artist lacked the skill to make the pillow seem settled on the floor. On the right hand side 'Abd al-Muttalib, the Prophet's grandfather, sits on a stool pointing with two fingers to the newborn child. On the left hand side stand four women. The gazes of the personages are turned towards the child and they seem unaware of the presence of the two angels who are sitting there - though Rashīd al-Dīn did not mention them in his text. Clearly an important event is happening and the child is marked out as unusual.

It is likely that the artist attempted to achieve harmony by putting his figures in order. For example, the three women to the left are facing the other three women standing under the main central arch. The old woman bent over her stick matches the figure of 'Abd al-Muttalib who is shown sitting also with a stick in his hand. An angel is engaged in taking care of the baby helped by a woman. The second angel is trying to comfort the mother by perfuming the air, while another woman is feeding her. Muhammad and his mother, both wrapped up in clothes, are the main figures in the illustration.

The birth of the Prophet had occurred on a mattress laid
on the floor. The artist has not attempted to represent the scene of a birth of some prince in a bed with luxury furniture like the bedrooms of the Ilkhāns and under the supervision of a physician.

The faces of Mary and the angels show Christian influence; probably the artist copied this scene from a Christian nativity scene.\(^1\) In many Christian models we see Mary surrounded by angels who have curly hair and are shown engaged in perfuming the air. Also, the figure of Joseph is replaced in the representation of the birth of Muhammad by the grandfathers of the Prophet and instead of the three wise men the Muslim artist depicted three figures of women.\(^2\) The arcades are decorated with palmettes which show Sasanian influence; the cup carried by one of the women is very similar to those used in Central Asia; and curtains are a distinguishing element in several Byzantine paintings.\(^3\)

The Ilkhānid painter also uses the figure of an angel in fol. 43\(^{\text{v}}\), although it is not mentioned in the text.

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The figures of the three women appear in a hadīth recounted by al-Malikī: "It has been handed down from Ka'b al-Ahhār and Ibn 'Abbās that Āminah said: 'A messenger came to me in a dream when I had been bearing Muḥammad for six months and he said to me, "Oh Āminah you are bearing the most good person. If you deliver him, call him Muḥammad and do not tell anybody". When the hour of delivery arrived, I was alone in the house, no male, no female knew about me and 'Abd al-Muttalib was on a journey. I heard an enormous noise which terrified me and then I saw something like the wing of a white bird wipe my heart and all the fear and pain went away. I turned and saw a white vessel. I drank it and a bright light was upon me. Then I saw very tall women like palm-trees. They resembled the women of 'Abd Munāf looking at me. Meanwhile I was crying and saying, "How do they know about me?"

In another account he states that the women told her that they were Āsyah the wife of Pharaoh, Mary the daughter of 'Umrān, and that the others were women of Paradise. (1)

Presumably the artist was familiar with the different accounts which used to be recited during the celebration of the birth of the Prophet. These contained more details than the text of Rashīd al-Dīn. We have already seen that celebrations of this day used to be held under the supervision of Rashīd al-Dīn

who used to supply various foods for this important occasion. Finally, although the text was written in Arabic, one may note that there is a Persian inscription in the middle announcing the birth of the Prophet of Islam.

This particular incident from the life of Muhammad was illustrated again in a later manuscript, and the relevant picture was published by Emel Esin. (1) But no information as to the date of execution or the title of this Turkish manuscript is provided there, though it is stated that painters produced it. In this painting the infant Muhammad is carried by his mother. The body of Muhammad is entirely covered by a white cloth and only the edge of his head appears. A flame halo surrounds almost his entire body. Aminah is veiled, a white cloth covers her head, and she wears a green gown. A group of men and women are standing in front of the child and his mother in a posture suggesting submission. All of them are wearing a white head-dress. The scene is set in a mosque, as may be seen from the tiles decorated with arabesques, geometrical patterns, arches and the lamp which as usual is suspended from the middle of an arch. Although the artist of the Turkish miniature has used delicate details such as the humble posture of the onlookers, the flame-halo or the decoration of the wall behind the main scene, his picture lacks the force of the Ilkhānid one.

The Christian representations which appear in the manuscripts of the Jāmiʿ al-tawārīkh and al-athār al-bāqiyyah of Edinburgh University Library are very similar to Christian examples especially as regards the layout of the scene in general, the dress and the hairstyles. But the landscape is treated in a Chinese way such as the cactus plants, wavy land and water. In the Annunciation of Mary in Rashīd al-Dīn's manuscript, in fol. 24, Mary is shown wearing a long wavy robe and stands in front of Gabriel who is represented as a bearded man with curly hair similar to Christian angels. The miniature shows the moment when Mary went to fetch water from a well. The Islamic example is very similar to the mosaic in the Church of San Marco in Venice and it is likely that the artist copied this scene or - more likely - one derived from that tradition. (1)

The Annunciation is also treated in the manuscript of al-Bīrūnī, but this miniature which decorates fol. 166b shows a different scene. The scene is divided into two parts: at the right we see Gabriel haloed and with two wings, while on the left Mary sits cross-legged and is shown spinning. However, this scene has also been treated in many Christian paintings. They show Mary sitting spinning when Gabriel appeared to her for the first time. (2)

The other representation which shows very strong Christian influence in the Bīrūnī is the miniature of the Baptism of Jesus, fol. 165. In this miniature we see that Christ stands in the river.

1. Arnold, P.1, p. 99, pl. XXIV a and b.
of Jordan while John stands on the bank. The scene in general
must have been copied from a Christian example but the faces, clothes,
plants and even the shoes of Jesus are drawn in a Far Eastern
manner. (1)

When Muhammad reached the age of nine (some say twelve), his uncle Abū Tālib took him to Busrā in Syria. On the way the caravan passed by a tower in which a Christian monk called Bahīrā lived. This caravan used to pass by this place, but Bahīrā had earlier paid no attention to it. Rashīd al-Dīn continues "Bahīrā saw a piece of cloud the size of a shield casting its shadow over the Prophet only and not the rest of the company. When the Prophet sat under a tree, he saw that green leaves appeared to protect Muhammad from the sun's rays". The priest came down and ordered a meal to be served for them. After the feast was over the monk took Muhammad aside and asked him many questions which concerned the signs of prophecy, such as his dreams and the mark between his shoulders. (1)

Other sources tell substantially the same story though they differ as to the age of the Prophet. Ibn Khaldūn says that the Prophet was thirteen or seventeen years old when he went to Busrā. Bahīrā saw the cloud overshadowing him and then he knelt before him. (2) In the Sīrah of Ibn Hīshām, on the other hand, a slightly different story is given. The cloud, according to him, was over the head of Muhammad, but after Muhammad had stopped

1. Text.
under a tree the cloud overshadowed the tree and its branches bent over Muhammad.\(^{(1)}\)

This miniature is oblong in shape and lacks any landscape. To the right Bahīrā stands in his tower pointing with his finger to the figure of Muhammad. Bahīrā is shown as an old, bearded man. He wears a long cloak covering his head and his body with many folds. A bare-headed man is standing behind him. Under the tower five camels are sitting, bearing heavy loads – for according to the text Muhammad went with his uncle to trade. But the artist has transformed the burdens into objects like flying balloons. Perhaps the artist wanted to show both camels and their loads. Four of them are arranged cross-necked in order to show the five heads. If the artist had drawn the loads on the back of the camels their backs would have been hidden. Three men are standing in front of the youth Muhammad looking at him. Another group behind the figure of Muhammad comprises bearded men with turbans over their heads. They make gestures of speech.

Muhammad is wearing a gown decorated with red squares and has two black plaits. Over his head is a blue cloud to protect him from the heat of the sun. An angel appears out of the cloud carrying a vessel probably containing flower juice,\(^{(2)}\) while in the other hand he is holding a folded paper which might be a

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2. Flower juice is usually used in religious contexts such as the celebration of the anniversary of Muhammad. If a person returns from the pilgrimage his relatives may sprinkle this liquid over the head of visitors who come to congratulate the pilgrim.
reference to Muhammad's mission of prophecy. The illustrator devised many details to make the spectator notice that this particular person was Muhammad. These include the angel pouring flower juice on his head and holding the scrap of paper in the other hand; the humble posture of the three persons standing in front of him; and Bahīrā pointing towards him with his index finger. But the artist apparently did not notice that the text itself provides him with indications such as the tree and the mark on Muhammad's shoulders identified by the Christian priest. This mark is said to have been located between his shoulders and to have been the size of a pigeon's egg. However, the mark on the back of Muhammad could not readily be illustrated because the artist did not wish to show the person of Muhammad bare-shouldered.

This event has also been illustrated in a Turkish manuscript. The picture is divided into two parts. A pink background is decorated with floral patterns - probably a carpet or the background itself. Various people sit with dishes in front of them. An elderly man sits on the right hand side, a helmet on his head. This ends in a plume. He wears armour and a sword in his belt. He resembles a leader or a king rather than

1. This single piece of paper is too small to be a copy of the Qur'ān.
an Arabic merchant, but he may well be the uncle of Muhammad, Abū Tailage. The Prophet Muhammad sits beside the monk Bahirā. Although the sources agree that Muhammad was under the age of twenty, he is shown here as a mature man. He wears a white turban and a white veil covers his face. A flame halo surrounds his head and neck. The monk is offering something to him while other monks are engaged in carrying vessels. At the back of the miniature a blue tent serves as a backcloth for Muhammad and the monk.

Ibn Ishāq states that when Muhammad was thirty-five years old the people of Mecca decided to rebuild the house of God. The tribes who used to live in the vicinity started collecting stones and when they had reached the stage of replacing the sacred stone, each troop tried to lift it in order to have the honour for themselves. Then they decided to fight but Abū Umayyah b. al-Maghīrah b. 'Ubayd Allāh b. 'Umar b. Makhzūm who was the oldest person in the Quraysh advised them to ask the opinion of the first person who entered this assembly hall. This was Muhammad, who was at that time called al-Amīn, "the honest". He put the black stone in a piece of cloth. Then he asked the head of each tribe to hold a part and then he lifted it with his hand and put it in the foundation. (1)

The artist has used the lines of the margins as a background for his figures. The Ka'ba itself is located in the centre. It consists of blocks of square bricks with an entrance or window covered with black cloth and with a band at the top. The band is decorated with floral golden patterns bordered by thin red lines. Muhammad is standing in front of the Ka'ba, holding the holy stone. He is also bearded, has a white turban on his head and two plaits hanging over his chest. Four groups of people are also taking part in this miniature. Two groups are holding the edges of the cloth while the other two are standing watching. It is true that this incident was famous in Islamic history. But it seems that it did not satisfy the imagination of the illustrator. For instance, no author mentioned that the majority of the men concerned were middle-aged (they are shown bearded, with moustaches). Their division - seven on the right side and nine on the left - is also not found in the sources. Nor are details of their clothes or shoes.

Fol.45V. The Annunciation. Pl.4

Before Muhammad was informed that he was going to be the messenger of God to mankind, he used to go to the outskirts of Mecca to ponder the state of the world. It occurred once during his period of isolation that Gabriel came to him with a missive in his hand. Gabriel asked Muhammad three times to recite after him. (1) "Read: In the name of thy Lord who

createth." Then the angel disappeared from the sight of Muhammad and left him in terror and fear. Muhammad tried to commit suicide. But Gabriel appeared to him again and this time in his real size. His head was in Heaven and his foot was on earth. He said to him "O Muhammad, you are the messenger of God. I am Gabriel." Whether Gabriel appeared for the first time in the form of an angel or a human is not certain. Ibn Khaldun states that the angel sometimes appeared to Muhammad in the shape of a man.

Al-Razi also supports this statement in his book al-Tafsir al-Kabir. In his interpretation of Surah XCVI, he states that the angels are the messengers of God to other angels. Al-Razi continues that al-Qadi said that Abu 'Ali al-Jabai said that God had sent angels to His prophets in the form of men. Such a case was Gabriel who was sent in the shape of a man called Dahiyah al-Kalbi and at another time in the form of a man.

1. Surah XCVI, 1.
4. "Praise be to Allah, the creator of the heavens and the earth, who appointeth the angels messengers having wings two, three and four. He multiplieth in creation what he will. Lo! Allah is able to do all things".
5. Farawah B. Fudalah al-Kalbi al-Quda'i embraced Islam before the battle of Badr. He lived in the reign of Mu'awiyah b. Abi Sufyan. He was so handsome a man that the Muslims said that he bore a resemblance to Gabriel (al-Dhahabi, op. cit., vol.II, pp.222-3).
man called Surāqah. But an angel sometimes appeared to a Prophet in his angelic form. (1)

Nevertheless the artist did not follow any of these sources. The figure of Gabriel here resembles the accepted form of angels. He is shown more as a woman than a man. He has two wings, bare shoulders and long black hair, and he is pointing to the Prophet. The crown which adorns his head was also used on the heads of the kings in this manuscript.

The wings of Gabriel do not start from his shoulders or neck but cover the whole arm. The feathers, especially on the arm, are very similar to the scales of a fish. They also appear in pls. 5, 7 and 9. From an early period of Chinese painting various types of wings were in use but they are different from the Muslim examples. In a group of paintings from a cave, dated c. 475-500, in a cave no. 249:p.101, we see the figure of Buddha standing in the middle of the scene on a lotus, surrounded by the thousand Buddhas in niches and also by two figures in the upper part and another two in the lower section of the painting. These figures are half naked and have wings, but the wings do not look like scales or feathers. As a matter of fact they are more similar to ribbons and they are tied on to the whole of the arm. (2) Another example can be found in cave no. 285:p.120 N. It is dated 538-9 and Gray gives the painting the title "Apsarases below a painted canopy". The winged figures are drawn

in a very fine way and the same type of wings as the example in cave 249: P. 101 appear here.\(^1\) From the seventh century we also have a winged figure but it represents Cupid, not an angel. The figure decorated a lid from Kuca. He is shown naked and his hair is shaved apart from some ringlets of hair at the back, front and two sides. He wears necklaces made of pearls and plays a flute. His wings are similar to those of Christian angels which start from the shoulders.\(^2\)

It is very possible that the type of wings used in the illustration of the Birth of Muḥammad (pl. 5) was copied from a Christian example. The second type, used in pls. 5, 7 and 9, is either an original creation of the artist or has been copied from some foreign source as yet unidentified.

The rough landscape serves as a seat for the Prophet and as a pattern between him and Gabriel, and it resembles the landscape in the miniature of the annunciation to Mary in the same manuscript. In the text Muḥammad is described as terrified by the appearance of the angel but in the illustration he seems unaware of any discomfort, sitting quietly listening to Gabriel as if he had been expecting him.

 Fol. 55\(^R\). The night journey of Muḥammad to Heaven (the miʿrāj)

\(\text{pl. 5}\)

The first extant miʿrāj scene is to be found in the manuscript of the Jāmiʿ al-tawārīkh on fol. 55\(^R\). The miniature shows the night

1. Ibid., p. 46, pl. 25 A.
journey of Muhammad to the seven Heavens in which he saw Paradise and Hell, met other Prophets and spoke to God.

It is not clear which part of the story this picture represents. Islamic tradition recounts that Gabriel brought Burāq to Muhammad to carry him to Heaven. While Muhammad was on Burāq, he heard a voice calling him to stop on his right hand side but he did not. Another voice came from his left, but he also continued on his journey. Then he saw a woman asking him to stop, and he did not pay attention to her either. Finally, Muḥammad arrived at Jerusalem. Gabriel told him that the first voice was that of the Jews, and if he had stopped his followers would have been Jews. The second voice was that of the Christians and his people would have been Christians if he had stopped. Finally, the woman symbolised the universe and if he had stopped he would have chosen this life for himself and for his people instead of the other life of eternal peace. Afterwards two vessels were offered to him, one of wine and the other of milk, and he chose the one with milk. The archangel told him that he had chosen the right path. If he had drunk the wine his followers would have sinned.\(^1\) In the text of Rashīd al-Dīn as in many other sources Muhammad was offered three vessels containing wine, water and milk respectively.

The miniature is divided into three sections. At the bottom on the left hand side is a grassy landscape, then a pale empty space and finally the blue sky. The main figure in this scene

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is Muhammad who is seated on Burāq with a bearded face expressing astonishment. Nothing of his body is visible but his face and right hand, for a long robe covers him. Adding two extra hands to the beast was done on purpose so that it could carry the holy book of Islam to emphasise the mystical event taking place and so as to add more charm to the illustration, though it costs the artist an unforgivable mistake.

The tail of Burāq ends in a half body of a crowned female. It has long black hair and carries shield and sword. The face is very similar to the face of Burāq in the same miniature. We have some earlier representations which are similar to this beast. From Qusayr 'Amrah, among the paintings of the Zodiac, the representation of Sagittarius shows the body and tail of a horse with a human head and holds a bow. (1) A second example is also the effigy of Sagittarius from the manuscript of al-Šufī, dated 400/1009-10. This figure is very similar to the Qusayr 'Amrah example which has body of a horse and the head of a human. (2) But the closest example to Burāq is a miniature which shows a water clock. This painting is from the manuscript of al-Jazari, the Book of Knowledge of

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Ingenious Mechanical Devices.\(^{(1)}\) The Water Clock\(^{(2)}\) is drawn in the green, decorated with twelve signs of the Zodiac. Sagittarius is shown holding a bow but he turns his head backwards. The tail ends in the head of a dragon which certainly shows Chinese influence.\(^{(3)}\)

The head of the dragon occurs also in the same manuscript which shows "The Basin of the Servant".\(^{(4)}\) The human figure holds a pitcher which ends in the head of a dragon.\(^{(5)}\) From a manuscript of the 'Ajä'ib al-makhlüqät of al-Qazwînî.\(^{(6)}\) The miniature, Freer Gallery no. 54.45r, shows the sign of Sagittarius who has the body of an animal and the torso of a human being. The archer is crowned and has Far Eastern features. The long tail of the animal ends in the head of a dragon which opens its mouth and looks in the

2. Freer Gallery, no. 30, 74 V.
3. Atil, op. cit., p. 103, illus. 44.
4. 30–75r.
5. Atil, op. cit., p. 110, illus. 51.
6. Late 14th Century, Iraq, Freer Gallery (nos. 54.33, 54.114 and 57.13). Ibid., illus. 58.
opposite direction from the archer. The wing of Cetus (1) also ends in the head of a dragon. The tail and the wing of Centaurus (2) both end in a dragon's head, as does the wing of the angel Israfil (3).

If we examine the origins of this figure, we realize that it derives from images of Sagittarius who is normally shown with the body of a horse and the torso of a man. As a result of Chinese influence the head of a dragon was added to the tail. In the manuscript of Jami' al-tawarikh, Rashid al-Din did not give the artist full information about the figure of Burāq. So the artist took as the nearest approximation to Burāq a sign of the Zodiac rather than a beast from the natural world. However the artist of the mi'raj did realize that he could not use the head of a dragon for the beast of the Prophet so he used the head he had already used for the front of Burāq with two hands. He occupied the hands at the back with shield and sword, natural objects to carry behind a person of high rank because they symbolize power and protection.

The next figure is a creature comprising chest, head and two arms which carries a long sword and a round shield. It looks like a bodyguard of the type shown in attendance on the Ilkhānid Sultān and princes of the Mongol house. Probably it represents Gabriel, although the archangel is usually drawn in the front of Muhammad. But this is the only angel in this manuscript whose head the artist adorns with a crown.

1. Freer Gallery, no. 54, 46r.
2. 54, 48r.
3. 54, 51v.
In front of the Prophet is an angel who has two wings, wavy hair, and bare shoulders. One of his feet is out of the lower margin while the other is on the border. He is offering Muhammad a vessel in a humble attitude. Behind him is another angel who wears an orange dress and looks as if he has been released from a box, for two decorated borders on his two sides and his right foot are swinging in empty space. Talbot Rice interpreted this scene as follows: "A second angel emerges from a pair of doors as she rests on a rainbow, thus opening the doors of Paradise to the Prophet". (1) If we accept Rice's hypothesis - and there seems to be no viable alternative - we must conclude that the artist did not pay sufficient attention to the drawing of heaven and earth, for he drew them so close together that Burāq and Gabriel are standing on the earth while the doors of the first heaven are already open for them.

The horizon which Rice mentioned is drawn in various colours. It starts from the head of the Prophet and ends at the side of the angel and is probably the mi'raj or the ladder which was made of light, and which Muhammad mentioned many times when he recited this story to Muslims. As al-Dhahabī says, "When he finished praying at al-Aqṣā mosque he said: 'And the mi'raj was brought to me, that upon which the souls of humans ascend. No creature has seen anything better than the mi'raj. Have you not seen a dead person when he opens his eyes wide looking at something in the direction of heaven? He does that because he is surprised at seeing it (the mi'raj)'". (2)

After Muhammad had declared his mission, the unbelievers decided to kill him, and each tribe planned to share in this

crime. They went to his house but they were disappointed because they saw his cousin 'Alī b. Abī Tālib sleeping in his bed. At the same time the Prophet and Abū Bakr had taken refuge in a mountain called al-Thawr. It happened that his enemies passed by this mountain and a shepherd told them that the two persons whom they were looking for were perhaps inside a cave. One of them started climbing towards the cave but he did not enter it because he saw a spider's web of such complexity that it seemed older than Muhammad himself. He also found a nest of two wild pigeons at the entrance so he thought that nobody could have entered this place for that opening was the only entrance to the cave. (1)

In the text Rashīd al-Dīn says that on the sixth day they felt thirsty. Passing by a woman, they asked her to give them some milk. But she told them that her she-goats were too emaciated to give any. Muhammad stroked the back of the beasts and he told the woman to milk them. The bowl was filled with milk and they all drank. The woman, who was called Umm Ma'bad al-Khuza‘iyah embraced Islam when she saw the unexpected milk.

The two travellers are depicted sitting in a deserted landscape which resembles the desert where these events happened. Muhammad with a turban on his head and a worried look is talking to Abū Bakr who looks as if he has just finished praying. His pose is that usually adopted by Muslims after they have finished praying or while they kneel during praying (sajdah): the legs

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are under the body and two hands are on the thighs.

Between Muhammad and Abu Bakr there is a hillock rising from the earth and serving to divide the two figures. Another prominent feature can be seen behind Abu Bakr but this time it is a cactus tree which divides the figure of the old woman, who is engaged in milking her goat, from her guests. The goats are drawn very close to nature apart from the strange eyes of one, which turns in the direction of Muhammad and Abu Bakr. The treatment of the whole scene suggests that the illustrator had read the text before he started drawing.

However there are three peculiar features in this miniature. First, the treatment of the land which is used also as a frame for the picture and is filled with dots. Dots are commonly used in pottery from the early Islamic period onwards to fill the empty space between the main decorative elements which usually consist of calligraphy, animals or floral patterns. The painter who executed this miniature may also have produced the illustration of the "Indian mountain" in the same manuscript, which has the same wavy landscape and many cactus trees. The one on the left hand side in the "Indian mountain" miniature looks very similar to the tree in the hijrah scene.

This artist seems very fond of complicated drawing. He used the wavy land to represent the desert, and paints bent branches and sinuous trunks. The wavy treatment of water in the miniature of the "Indian mountain" has been replaced by the many
and unusual folds of drapery worn by the figures. The second peculiar feature is the drawing of the woman sitting and milking her goat, which is very artificial. Probably the illustrator realized that he would lose the opportunity of showing the figures of the woman and the goat in full if he were to illustrate the figures in correct perspective as he understood it. Accordingly he preferred to draw the woman milking her animal from the rear, which is wrong. Finally, the third peculiar feature is a band like a serpent which may be intended to represent a path. This starts from the tree and ends in two ways.

Although the history of the hijrah is very long, and filled with important events, the artist chose to represent this particular scene. It is a curious choice. It might be argued that the scene when the Prophet and Abu Bakr are inside the cave which was closed by a spider's web and pigeons' nest would make a more dramatic choice. In fact a similar scene has already been treated in this manuscript in the illustration of the seven sleepers with their dog in a cave. This may be the reason which prevented the artist from repeating a similar incident.

2. Place of execution: Tabriz.

Date: 714/1314.

Location: London, British Library (on loan from the Royal Asiatic Society. [Morley, 1]).

Fol. 3A. Banu'l-Nadir. Pl. 7

The text accompanying the miniatures is in Arabic. The men
of the Jewish tribe of al-Nadîr decided to kill Muhammad by throwing a rock on him. But God saved him by informing him of what the Banu'al-Nadîr intended to do. The Prophet gathered the Muslims to attack their enemy in the month of Rabî' I and he besieged them for six nights. Finally they left their property to the Muslims and some went to Syria and others to Khaybar. (1)

The illustration of this particular incident is divided into several sections. The Prophet is shown on the right hand side, with his companions carrying swords and shields. He is shown holding a stick. (2) A full sun is shining; it was probably included to fill the gap at the top of the miniature. Besides the inscribed band on his arm, the Prophet is indicated by his proximity to an angel. This angel has a female face, is crowned and pours a liquid over the head of the Prophet. It seems that the angel did not want to waste the juice as she puts a bowl under the Prophet's arm to receive the liquid.

On the left wide of the miniature we see a fortress-like building. The edges of the balcony and the top part of the door are ornamented with floral patterns of Islamic type though the building belongs to Jews. The figures standing in a pose which suggests that they are asking for blessing from God or welcoming

2. Probably this was meant to be a flag, though it has been cut at the top. Besides, the piece of cloth which should be attached is missing.
Muhammad. However, one cannot be definite as to whether these people are Jews or Muslims, and this is a weakness in the conception of the illustration.

Fol. 7A. The battle of Badr al-Kubrā. Pl. 2

The battle occurred in the second year of the hijrah. Abū Sufyān was on his way back with his caravan from Syria to Mecca and Muhammad and the Muslims were in Madīnah when they determined to seize the wealth of this known hater of Muslims. The Muslims succeeded in their raid, and obtained rich booty. (1) This particular battle is very important in the history of Islam for many reasons. Muslim tradition states that God sent angels from Heaven to fight with the Muslims against the unbelievers. Rashīd al-Dīn mentions in his text that "A strong wind blew three times. With the first came Gabriel, may the blessing of God be upon him, with one thousand angels. With the second was Michael, may the blessing of God be upon him, with another thousand on the right-hand side. With the third was Isrāfīl, may the blessing of God be upon him, with a thousand on the left-hand side. Their distinguishing signs were red, yellow and green turbans made of light. They were mounted on piebald horses." (2)

On folio 7A, the picture shows seven persons on horses. Two are on the right-hand side and another five on the left. All of them carry objects which are probably spears. There is no

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2. Text, f. 6B.
difference between the figure of Muhammad and other figures. One might have presumed that he is the person who is wearing a green gown because Muhammad is usually drawn thus. But the theory seems untenable as he is drawn nearly hidden behind the person in the front of the picture. Another possibility is that the person on the right wearing the white robe is Muhammad although two other figures are wearing the same colour. However there are two qualities which distinguish this figure particularly: he wears a long sword suspended from a belt on his left shoulder, and the horse he rides inclines its head as if in respect for its rider. Two other miniatures in this manuscript use the same device. A dotted salient parts the two figures from the other figures.

The artist should, however, have taken the opportunity afforded by the text of Rashīd al-Dīn to indicate which figure was Muhammad. Angels took part in this battle and even their distinguishing marks are described carefully by the author. Instead the artist preferred to illustrate an ordinary scene in a desert showing men mounted on their horses, and he went to little trouble to identify Muhammad.

Fol. 8A. Banī Qanīqa'. Pl. 9

This scene too represents Muhammad in combat with enemies of Islam. Al-Ṭabarī states that the people of Qanīqa' or the Banī Qanīqa' were the first Jewish tribe to break faith with the Prophet. In Shawwāl of the year 2 of the hijrah, the Muslims
laid siege to the settlement of this tribe for about fifteen nights. The Banī Qanîqâ‘ made an agreement with the Prophet to the effect that if Muhammad allowed them to leave safely they would leave some of their property for the Muslim army. Muhammad agreed and thus the Muslims scored another victory. (1)

The figure of the Prophet is sketched on a blue background and is surrounded by white Chinese clouds. A number of angels are shown amidst the clouds on both sides. Stylistically this miniature is close to the manuscript of the Jāmi‘ al-tawārikh in Edinburgh University Library. For example, the angels here too have female faces, long black hair, bare shoulders and clothes with accentuated drapery. The spaces between the figures are filled with extraneous elements.

Comparison of the two manuscripts

The two manuscripts of the Jāmi‘ al-tawārikh were produced in the same period, for the first (2) was executed in 710/1310-1311 and the second in 714/1314; both were produced in Tabrīz. They seem to have been the work of different hands, but the second artist derived some elements from the earlier manuscript. These include:

- The angel who pours flower juice over the head of the Prophet in pls. 2 and 7.

- Patterns which consist of very fine squares are used

2. Edinburgh University Library, Arab. no. 20.
many times in the first manuscript also appear in pl. 7.

- The wavy and dotted prominences used to divide figures, e.g. pls. 4 and 8.
- The same type of angels.
- The same type of Chinese clouds.
- A similar colour scheme with a stress on pale tones. Perhaps the only new elements in the second group are the way that the horses which bear the Prophet bow and the peculiar sticks which the riders hold in their hands.

Because of the variety of subjects in the first manuscript we also see a remarkable selection of different miniatures. In the second manuscript the only subject concerning Muhammad is the series of battles of the Prophet which perhaps left little scope for the artist to show his skill.

Manuscript of al-Äthär al-Bägîyah'an al-Qurûn al-Khäliyah
("History of ancient people").

Author

The second early Ilkhanîd manuscript with scenes from Muhammad's life is almost equally celebrated and is of comparable date. It is a copy of a work written by Abû Rayhän Muḥammad b. Ahmad al-Bîrûnî, who was born in Dhu’l-Hijjah 362/September 973 in Khwarizm. He was acquainted with the language of Khwarizm, Arabic, Persian, Sanskrit, Syriac and Greek. He

1. E.I I, s.v. "al-Bîrûnî".
was also conversant with philosophy, geography, history, economy, botany, (1) arithmetic and astrology. (2)

He joined a political movement in Khwārizm headed by the Khwārizm Shāh Abu’l-‘Abbās. When this leader was assassinated in 385/995, al-Bīrūnī had to flee from Khwārizm. He joined the court of Sultan Abu’l-Hasan Shams al-Ma‘āli Qābūs b. Vushmgīr. At this time he published his famous book al-Āthār al-bāqiyā. (3)

When Sultan Mahmūd of Ghazna conquered Khwārizm in the year 407/1017, he brought with him a group of scientists including al-Bīrūnī. But al-Bīrūnī did not occupy a lucrative position in the Ghaznavid court until Mas‘ūd the son of Mahmūd became the ruler. Sultan Mas‘ūd was very generous to al-Bīrūnī. For example, when he finished writing his book al-Qānūn al-mas‘ūdī fī’l-hayāt wa’il-nujūm he gave him an elephant’s load of silver pieces. His other works were Tariq al-Hind (The Path to India) written in 421/1030 and al-Tafhlm li awwā’il Sinā‘at al-tani‘m.

Al-Bīrūnī died in Ghazna on 3 Rajab 440/13 December 1048. (4)

Artistic Analysis

Place of execution: probably Tabrīz.

Date: 707/1307

1. Al-Fīndī, op. cit., p.25.
4. Ibid.
Muhammad went to pilgrimage at the head of a large company and he gave them a speech telling them to live within the rules of Islam after his death. This particular episode is called his last pilgrimage for the Prophet died shortly afterwards. (1)

In the text the author mentions that Muhammad had banned Muslims from intercalating months in the lunar calendar to bring this into conformity with the solar calendar. This is called al-nasi'. His text discusses the movement of the sun, and how people calculate a lunar year and a solar year. The people of Constantinople, Alexandria, the rest of Egypt and the Syriac Christians follow, he says, the solar year which consists of 365½ days. This was followed by the Hebrews and the Arabs before Islam. When Islam came the Prophet prohibited al-nasi'. The subject is rather puzzling for calculating years and months is not easy to depict. For this reason, probably, the illustrator took the chance of choosing this secondary part of the text to paint. Nevertheless he made another mistake in choosing this scene. Many sources state that in the month of Dhu'l-Hijjah the Prophet went with the Muslims to visit places of pilgrimage like Muna and the

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mountain of 'Arafat. Haykal mentions that the Prophet was on his she-camel when he gave this speech. (1) Al-Bīrūnī did not mention this detail and the artist did not trouble himself to find it out from the sources. Since the obvious place to make such a speech was the mosque, the artist painted a mosque as the backdrop to the scene.

The miniature is oblong in shape. From the lines of the upper margin a lamp is suspended. It is not easy to guess the identity of the figure in the pulpit. It could be any Muslim, for the artist did not use any special element for the figure of the Prophet. The halo and turban are used to adorn all the figures including the two children. (2) Thus this scene could depict any mosque on a Friday when the imām addresses the Muslim congregation. For this reason this miniature is very similar to two illustrations in a manuscript of the Maqāmāt al-Harīrī (Paris, Bibliothèque National, arabe 5847). The first (3) shows Abū Zayd standing on a minbar, spreading out his hands, while others listen. They all wear a Muslim head-dress and are bearded. Three lamps are suspended from three arches. The second (4) represents Abū Zayd attacking the governor of the city of Rayy. This illustration is more similar to the al-Bīrūnī painting, especially its figures. Both Muhammad and

2. They might be the sons of 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib, al-Hasan and al-Husayn.
3. 28th Maqāmah, fol.84v.
4. 21st Maqāmah, fol.s.58R - 59v.
Abū Zayd are sitting in the same way, a cloth from the turban is over each one's shoulder and both have bearded faces.

The text of al-Bīrūnī says that Mūsā had announced that a prophet called Muhammad would come after him, while Jesus had mentioned him under the name of Ahmad. Al-Bīrūnī continues that Ash'ya(1) had stated in his book that God ordered him to stay in his tower and watch. Ash'ya said that he saw a man riding on a donkey and another mounted on a camel. One of them was crying that the city of Babylon had fallen down and that its idols had collapsed. Some suggest that the person is the Prophet of Islam while others say that he is Mūsā. Al-Bīrūnī defeats the latter hypothesis by indicating that Babylon was ruined during the time of Islam, so there is no doubt that according to the Islamic tradition this person is Muhammad himself.

The artist was very practical in his approach to this illustration. He drew an expressive scene in order to harmonize with the text. The miniature has been divided into two parts, a tower with the figure of Ash'ya looking towards the man riding on a donkey (who is identified as Jesus) and Muhammad on a she-camel. The artist takes no pains to emphasise the holiness of the illustration which has the figures of two Prophets; there are for example no angels to be seen. The only indication of the

1. A Jewish prophet (Isaiah).
importance of the person mounted on the camel is that Jesus points to him as if he were introducing him to Ash'ya. Jesus, it may be added, wears Islamic clothing including the turban.

Fol. 92R: Muhammad answering the envoys of Musaylamah; pl.12

Al-Biruni lists those who pretended that they were religious leaders. One of these is Musaylamah, who sent two messengers to Muhammad to engage him in discussion. (1)

The face of Muhammad has been rubbed out, but nevertheless one can distinguish him from the rest of the figures. He wears a green robe, sits in the centre of the Muslims and is drawn larger in size than the others to emphasise his importance. This immemorially ancient technique is to be found also in the Mesopotamian school of painting especially in the frontispieces of the Aghani volumes. Muhammad is not the only person who receives the messengers. An elderly person may be Abu Bakr and the scene includes also 'Ali b. Abu Talib and his two sons as well as another unidentified person. The messengers of the prophet are given haloes just like the Muslims. The Shi'ite sympathies of the artist are apparent in the depiction of the two sons of 'Ali b. Abu Talib and the two-pointed sword of 'Ali himself.

1. Text accompanying the painting.
Muhammad argues with the Christians of Najrān: Pl.13

The summary of this story is that a group of Christians including men of religion came to discuss his mission with the Prophet. They told him that Jesus was the son of God. Muhammad asked them to agree to follow the custom of mubahahā. (1) But their leader prevented them from accepting this condition and told them to pay tribute to the Muslims every year; Muhammad agreed to this. (2) The text accompanying the miniature explains the events which happened in the month of Shawwāl.

On the fourth day of Shawwāl Muhammad had argued with the Christians of Najrān and proclaimed his daughter Fātimah as representing the females in his family, Al-Hasan and al-Husayn as his sons and 'Alī b. Abī Talib as his close confederate.

Muhammad is represented here as a tall figure with a Mongol face and a big turban on his head - though it is not the usual colour. The whole family of 'Alī is shown, including Fātimah the daughter of Muhammad and 'Alī's wife. 'Alī's famous sword is depicted although it does not hang properly, for it should be on the left hand side.

Muhammad appoints 'Alī as his successor at Khum al-Ghadīr: pl.14

1. This means that if people disagree about something they meet and curse the one who lies (al-Qurtubī, op. cit., vol.IV, p.4).

2. Ibid.
The Shi‘i attitude of the artist is quite clear in this manuscript and it echoes the sympathies of the author. Al-Bīrūnī devotes much space to the life of ‘Alī, including his marriage, his death and other details. An incident which is considered to be an important event in the life of the Prophet and of ‘Alī is the alleged appointment of ‘Alī as Caliph after the death of the Prophet. According to al-Bīrūnī, on 12 Dhu‘l-Ḥijjah Muḥammad, while he was addressing his people on his last pilgrimage in a place called Khūm al-Ḡadīr, told them to obey ‘Alī as they did himself, for his son-in-law would be his successor.

This miniature looks like a copy of the preceding illustration, and was probably done by the same artist. Hence the Mongol faces, the dotted lines which adorn the robes, the sword of ‘Alī, the presence of al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn, the use of dark green and pale brown for the landscape, and the types of plant and Chinese clouds over the head of the Prophet. It is noticeable too that the artist has chosen the moment when the founder of Islam puts his hands on his son-in-law’s shoulder in order to emphasize the importance of ‘Alī and how close he was to the Prophet and to indicate that he was chosen by him to be their leader.

Other representations of mi‘raj scenes

The Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris is not the only Library which possesses manuscripts with mi‘raj scenes. The Topkapu Saray Library in Istanbul also has similar types of representations. This group consists of ten miniatures, attributed to the Ilkhanid period—i.e. the first half of the fourteenth century—and possibly done at the city of Tabriz by the artist Ahmad Mūsā.(2)

1. Text accompanying the miniature.
Accordingly it is conceivable that the manuscript of Paris may ultimately be influenced, perhaps by several removes, by the group of illustrations in Istanbul because the text with its illustrations was already known a century previously.

Although the two manuscripts both illustrate the ascension of Muhammad to heaven, it is quite obvious that each artist depended on a different text. Thus in the Album of Istanbul the figure of Burāq has almost disappeared\(^!(1)\) although many books of theology mentioned that Burāq carried Muhammad to heaven. In this group of paintings Gabriel replaces Burāq for he carries Muhammad on his shoulders. The Istanbul miniatures, like those of Paris, are arranged into two groups. In both cases a fairly unusual layout is common—either one thin margin or one line of script divides two miniatures which illustrate different scenes. In addition female slaves are the models used to represent the inhabitants of Paradise although in the Istanbul album their clothes look more elegant. A single illustration 20b (pl. 15) is later than the others and is attributed to the first half of the fifteenth century. It was perhaps done by 'Abd al-Hay at Herāt and is the same album as the other mi‘rāj scenes.

The present arrangement of these illustrations in the album does not follow the order of incidents recorded in the sources. For example fol.62a (pl.16) represents Muhammad at Jerusalem where he first started his journey, while we see that Gabriel

\(^{(1)}\) The only miniature which shows Burāq is fol.62a (pl.16).
carries Muhammad in fol. 42a (pl. 17) and crosses the mountain in fol. 42b (pl. 18). This reversed order is probably the result of the album format; it is unlikely to be the original one. For this reason, in my interpretation I will follow the incidents according to the literary sources not the number which those miniatures bear.

Fol. 20b. Gabriel appears to Muhammad. Pl. 15

Although this miniature bears a later date than the others and belongs to the Timurid period, it will be discussed at the beginning because it represents the first moment when Gabriel was trying to wake the Prophet to take him to heaven.

Muhammad is sleeping on a high step; on the left there is a huge book, presumably a copy of the Qur'an. On the other side is a basin to serve for wudu', while the lower part of the miniature shows a floor paved by bricks and decorated by a central fountain and candles. The figure of the archangel can be seen in the balcony looking at the Prophet. A line divides the house of Muhammad from the scene outside.

The lower part of the second section in this illustration shows a garden and the upper part a blue sky with the figures of angels. The angels are much better drawn than the architecture; in the Mi'raj Namah the situation is reversed. The artist in the Istanbul album has mixed two scenes which in
the Mi'raj Nāmah of Paris (1) occupy one miniature. Fol.3v (pl.24) shows Gabriel visiting the Prophet at his house and fol.5r. (pl.25) repeats the scene of celebrating angels in fol.20b. (pl.15) in the Topkapu Saray album.

The angels here are also carrying fans, censers, dishes filled probably with jewellery, and a copy of the Qur'ān. Central Asian features can be seen on the faces of the angels, who look like females.

Fol.68b. Muhammad on Burāq. Pl. 107

This scene represents Muhammad when he was still on earth. He wears a green robe. He is haloed and his face has been rubbed out. With his right hand he holds what seems to represent Burāq's wing and he holds with his left hand his right plait. He is surrounded by four angels, one at each corner of the illustration. The first angel carries a censer, the second and third are carrying flowers and the fourth holds what may be a censer. Their legs are not visible and only the ends of their trousers are shown. They are haloed, have a feminine appearance and their wings originate from their necks. Burāq in this miniature has a round and puffy feminine face and a crown adorns his head. The artist used red for the body of Burāq. It also has the tail of a peacock and four rings adorn its legs. The background which consists of a yellow land with scattered

1. Fol.3v (pl.24) and 5r (pl.25).
grass and flowers can be found in the miniature which shows Muhammad telling people the story of his ascension in the same album, fol.107a (pl.23).

Fol.62a. Muhammad arrives at Jerusalem. Pl.16

This scene depicts Muhammad at the sacred mosque of Jerusalem. Muhammad stayed here for a while and found a number of prophets waiting for him. In this scene we see the Prophet surrounded by a group of persons. Behind him is an arch which probably represents a mihrāb. He is offered a drink by two angels while all the men are looking towards their Prophet. This miniature is the only illustration which shows Burāq, who stands outside the mosque and has the face of a female.

Fol.62a. Gabriel carries the Prophet. Pl.17

Al-Bukhārī discusses the function of the archangel in this particular incident and why he accompanied the Prophet. Al-Bukhārī states that a hadīth told by Huthayfah stated that both Gabriel and Muhammad were riding upon Burāq. But al-Bukhārī notes that he is not sure of the authenticity of this hadīth because it is a suggestion only (ijtihād)\(^{(1)}\). Ibn Dahyah states that Gabriel was only a guide who showed Muhammad the mysterious world.\(^{(2)}\) But none of the sources seem to mention that Gabriel carried Muhammad on his shoulders. Muhammad is shown wearing a long gown with two plaits, with slanted eyes, an oval-shaped face and a beard; he wears a turban.


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2. Ibid.
The Prophet is here shown passing through heaven, meeting angels on his way. This miniature has also been interpreted as showing him passing above mountains. The background is painted in a rich golden colour with flames covering some of the angel's wings and white clouds which are said to be mountains. However, there is apparently no text which mentions that the Prophet passed mountains. Besides, the proper place of angels is the seven heavens not on mountains. All have a feminine appearance, especially Gabriel who is shown as being of big size, crowned and wearing ear-rings.


The upper part shows Muhammad carried by the archangel above water. The lower part of this miniature shows a scene probably taken from paradise. The figure of Muhammad is absent from this section but we see the hūrī of al-Jannah together with a palace and a tree.


The upper part represents the Prophet arriving at a door opened by a female angel. This is probably the door of Paradise. A round halo surrounds the head of Muhammad and an inscription with his name is placed beside his head.

The second scene shows Muhammad and Gabriel standing in a big window looking at the garden. Four figures of angels appear in the lower part of this miniature. These figures are apparently modelled upon a common scene in court painting, in which attendants are seen watching an important incident happen outside the building they are standing in. The big tree to the right hand side of the miniature is probably meant to represent Sidrat al-muntahā.

Fol. 61b. Muhammad sees the heavenly cock. Pl. 21.

The white cock stands on a stool, probably a throne, while angels are paying homage as if they are worshipping this animal. At first sight this seems most un-Islamic. But perhaps the artist wanted only to show that this cock was a creature of heaven. One may contrast the excellent drawing of the cock with the clumsy figures of the angels.
Fol. 31b. Muhammad meets angels in heaven. Pl. 22.

This miniature represents the introduction of Muhammad to the angels of heaven by Gabriel. The main figure is Muhammad who wears a long gown and white turban. The angels all look the same with their puffy faces, crowns, long plaits and feminine appearance.


The manuscript of the Mi‘raj Namah at Paris has a virtually complete set of scenes which illustrate the whole journey of Muhammad step by step. But for some reason the artist has omitted one important scene. This scene illustrates what had happened to Muhammad on earth after he had finished his journey.

Ibn Hishām tells us that when the Prophet Muhammad finished his journey he told what he had seen to his followers and the inhabitants of Mecca the next morning. Nobody believed Muhammad that he had taken only one night to travel between Mecca and Jerusalem, a journey of some two months. In Mecca many people gathered to hear this story including the intimate friend of the Prophet, Abū Bakr, who had been in Jerusalem. Abū Bakr asked Muhammad to describe the sacred mosque of Jerusalem because he had been there before. The Prophet said that God had put the place in front of his eyes, so he described it carefully. So he was believed by Abū Bakr and other Muslims. (1)

In the miniature the scene seems to be set in a garden, not in a mosque. Muhammad sits on a prayer carpet and a long cloak covers his head. The two figures who sit near to the Prophet are probably Abū Bakr and 'Umar b. al-Khattāb. The artist has also represented Jerusalem carefully; indeed, it looks as though the depiction has been taken from a plan. Ettinghausen has identified the main figure in this illustration as being a great Muslim ruler and the plane of a city which is carried by the angel as Constantinople, but this seems unlikely.

The group of miniatures in London, Istanbul and Edinburgh which survive from this early period may be divided - so far as the representations of the Prophet Muḥammad is concerned - into five different groups. The first shows Muḥammad as a simple person who wears an ordinary robe with a white turban on his head. He sits in the same way as the rest of the figures pls. 2, 3, 4, 6 and 10. The only distinctive feature in pl. 2 is the angel who appears at the top of the miniatures and in pl. 10, although a halo surrounds his head, the rest of the figures also have the same halo. The colours used in this group for the dress of Muḥammad are light, like blue and white.

The second group is that of the Istanbul pictures which represent Muḥammad wearing a long robe, white turban, a halo and two plaits pls. 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22 and 107. He is shown as if he were being led by Gabriel to meet God. For this reason he looks very humble, even frightened and simple. Also, we see him represented in pl. 22 smaller in size than the figures of the angels.

In the third group pls. 7, 8 and 9 Muhammad is shown heading an expedition to conquer the enemies of Islam. The artist in this group probably intended to show the power and supremacy of Muhammad by depicting him sitting on a horse, holding either a spear or sword and surrounded by the Muslims. He wears the same dress as the previous group but in pl. 7 the robe is not plain but is decorated by net-like ornaments.

The fourth group is represented by one example only pl. 11. It shows Muhammad together with another Prophet Jesus. Jesus has been mentioned in the Qur'ān in various chapters and is a respected Prophet in Islam so the artist did not emphasise Muhammad at his expense. For instance, they both wear plain robes and white turbans and are bearded and haloed.

The final group is represented in pls. 5, 12, 13, 14 and 23. Here the Prophet is shown wearing a different type of dress from that in the previous representations. The robe he wears is white or green or brown, he has a very light turban and a gown covers his head and body. Although the subject matter in these plates varies, the Prophet is shown wearing the same dress throughout. In pl. 5, for instance, the Prophet was on his way to meet God, so he has to be represented in different dress and colour. In pl. 12 the Prophet is answering the envoys of Musaylamah, so he is shown sitting and his size is bigger than the other figures which indicates that the artist wanted to emphasise the importance of the Prophet in this particular scene. In pl. 13 too Muhammad has to be distinguished from those around him while he argues with the Christians of Najrān.
Accordingly we see him wearing a high colored turban. Another piece from the same cloth is attached to the turban and covers most of the Prophet's body. In pl.14 the Prophet is shown meeting the Muslims themselves as he gives a speech on his last pilgrimage to appoint his son-in-law 'Ali b. Abi Talib to be his successor. He wears a long white robe and a white turban and a long black cloth covers his head and body. In pl.23 Muhammad is sitting on a praying carpet. He wears the same robe as in the previous miniatures.

These five groups were all done in nearly the same period but they share very few elements. This indicates that artists had not yet fixed on any distinguishing attributes for Muhammad. In some miniatures we see Muhammad depicted as being of small size; in others he is represented as being the same size as the rest of the figures and sometimes he is of larger size. He is shown in some miniatures wearing a plain robe while in others a robe with a gown covers his head and body. Haloes in these groups are used not for Muhammad only but also for angels and for the enemies of Islam. In this period when representations of the Prophet are encountered the presence of angels was not an obligatory feature for in some miniatures they surround Muhammad and in other miniatures they disappear.

We can conclude that although these groups of paintings were done in different cities by various hands and illustrate different manuscripts, the artists did not have a clear idea about the Prophet Muhammad and how he should be shown. Also they did not consistently use particular elements, such as one colour for his robe, angels, halo, special head-dress and so on, to identify his figure.
CHAPTER IV

THE MANUSCRIPT OF THE MI'RĀJ-NĀMAH
A short account of the Uighürs. Their history, religion and literature.

The Paris MS. of the Mi‘rāj-Nāma is written in Uighūr script, and it may be convenient to put this fact into context.

The Uighūrs were originally a nomadic Turkish tribe, but they rose to power on the ruins of the Turkish state in Mongolia and quickly established a strong government in the year 745. (1)

The Khan of the Uighūrs, who was called in the Chinese records Kou-li P‘ei-Lo, became Khan of the Orkhon under the name of Qutlugh Bilgä (Kou-to-Lou Pei-Kia K‘iu). (2) This Uighūr Khan had been supported by the T‘ang dynasty whose Emperor Hsuan-tsung gave the Khan the title Houai-jen. (3)

Chinese records state that the Khan of the Uighūrs ruled from the Altai to Baikal but the sources disagree on the date of his death; some say that he died in 745 and others mention the year 756. (4)

The Uighūrs who lived near the Chinese border were a great help to the T‘ang dynasty. A certain rebel called Ngan Lou-chan

3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
had captured two Chinese cities - Lo-Yang (in 755) and Tch'ang-ngan - but with the help of the Uighūrs the Chinese Emperor took the city of Lo-Yang back again in 757. As a reward, the Chinese Emperor gave the Uighūr Khān 20,000 pieces of silk. (1)

The Uighūr state had been in power for about a century when there appeared another body of nomads called the Ṭirḵhīz. (2) The Ṭirḵhīz had originally lived near the river Yansī according to the Chinese annals, and they are also known from Islamic sources for Muslim merchants used to buy musk from them. (3) They succeeded in capturing the capital of the Uighūrs, Qārā-balqassūn, in 840. (4)

In the second half of the ninth century (860), some Uighūr troops had emigrated to Bashq-Bālīq and founded another state which existed until the later Mongol period in the fourteenth century. Others who had left their lands after the Ṭirḵhīz had conquered their cities went to a city now called Kan-Tcheou but it was later captured by the Mongols. (5)

The Turks in general and the Uighūrs in particular used to believe in Shamanism but according to Bartold when the state of the Ghuzz collapsed a new religion - Manichaeism - was spread among the Turks by Soghdian merchants and missionaries in the

3. Ibid., pp. 31-2.
5. Bartold, op. cit., p. 46.
period between the sixth and eighth centuries. (1) According to Grousset, the occasion for this was that when the Khān of the Uighūrs, Teng-Li Meou-Yu (759-780), ascended the throne he was asked by the T'ang Emperor to help to destroy the rebellions that were threatening that empire. He duly restored the city of Lo-Yang to imperial rule on 20 November 762. During his residence at this city the Uighūr Khān met Manichaean missionaries from Soghdia. It seems that they persuaded him to accept their religion. (2) He took these Manichaean missionaries with him to Mongolia where Manichaeism started to flourish and later became the state religion. (3)

The Uighūrs established their religion in the heyday of their power in Mongolia and they stayed faithful to the Manichaean faith even when the Turks who lived in the west, near the border of the Islamic world, embraced Islam. (4)

In the years 770, 771 and 807, ambassadors from the Khān of the Uighūrs were sent to the Chinese court in order to establish a Manichaean community there. They asked permission to build Manichaean temples so that their co-religionists would be able to worship there. These temples were founded from King-tcheou to Hou-Pei, from Yang-tcheou to Kiang-sou, from Chao-hing to

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3. Ibid., p.173.
Tchö-Kiang and from Nantch‘ang to Kiang-si. (1) In 807, the
ambassador asked the permission of the Emperor of China to build
more temples in Lo-Yang and T‘ai-yuan. (2)

The Manichaean religion may be described in broad terms as a
mixture of Mazdakism and Christianity. (3) It was founded by the
sage Mānī, the son of Fāṭik, who lived during the reign of
Shāpur I and was killed by Bahram I. (4)

Mānī taught that God had given wisdom and knowledge to Adam,
gifts which on Adam’s death were transferred to Noah and Abraham.
According to the Islamic tradition, Mānī taught that God sent a
Prophet to each nation: al-Budrat to India, Zardusht to Iran
and Jesus Christ to Rūm and the west, while the last Prophet
would appear among the Arabs. (5)

According to Manichaean belief, the world is created from
two sources: darkness and light. Light is the origin of good,
and darkness the origin of evil. Mānī taught that this world is
worthless and that the best way is to put an end to it; hence he
forbade his followers to get married. (6) A faithful Manichaean

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2. Ibid.
3. Ibid., p.173.
4. Al-Shahristānī, Al-Mīlal wa‘l-nihal, ed. A.F. Muḥammad
   (Cairo 1948), vol. II, p.72.
5. Ibid., pp. 81-2.
should be truthful, generous, pray regularly, and avoid practising magic, idol-worship, murder, theft,\(^1\) and the killing of animals.\(^2\)

According to tradition, Mānī used the art of book painting to charm and to attract people's attention. The style of writing he and his followers used to explain the nature and precepts of their religion was very simple so that it could be readily and widely understood. Frescoes and book paintings produced by Manichaean hands were found by the expedition of Von Le Coq.\(^3\)

The Uighūr script derives from one of the northern Semitic alphabets and long remained in circulation among the Turks of the east who lived on the border of China. Even after they had adopted the faith of Islam, the Turks still used the Uighūr script in the courts of the Khāns.\(^4\) The Uighūr tongue was called the eastern dialect because it was spoken by the eastern Turks. After a while it was replaced by the Khāqānī tongue which in turn developed into Chaghatai. This latter language took its name from one of the sons of Chingiz Khān, Chaghatai.\(^5\)

Ibn 'Arabsāh\(^6\) states,

"The Chaghatai have a script called Uighūr which

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4. Encyclopaedia of Islam, IV, s.v. "Turks".
6. Ahmad b. Muhammad b. 'Arabsāh, an Arabic historian who was
is the famous Mongolian script. It has fourteen letters. The reason for having very few numbers of letters is that the letters of the mouth are written in one form and are also pronounced in the same way. The letters which produce the same sound are also the same. Those letters are Bā' and Fā', Zā' - Sīn and Ṣād, Tā'-Dāl and Tā'.

They use this script for signatures, forms, proclamations, letters, books, stamps, histories, poems, stories, tales, records, and on their travels, besides using it for everything which pertains to secular matters and the laws of Chingiz Khān."

Ibn 'Arabshāh adds that anyone who is skilful in using this script will be successful among them because it is the key to a livelihood amongst them. (1)

When the Uighūrs adopted the faith of Islam they started to live a new life which followed the rules and teachings of Islam.

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born in Damascus in 791/1392 and died in Cairo 854/1450. He was taken as a captive, when Timūr conquered Damascus in 803/1401, to Samarqand. He was acquainted with the Persian, Turkish and Mongolian languages (W. J. Fischel, Ibn Khaldūn and Tamerlane, tr. M. Tawfiq, ed. Y. Rūshā, and M. Jawād, [Beirut n. d.], pp. 21-2).

Their culture changed with their new way of life.

‘Abd al-Latif Bandarüghlu mentions that a certain epic, Ükhüz Qākhān, was very well-known by the Uighurs before the coming of Islam and that it was written in Uighūr script. After Islam, it was changed from a non-Muslim story to a religious tale. The hero became a Muslim from birth and refused to take milk from his mother unless she embraced Islam and believed in the One God. (1)

It will be clear from the foregoing remarks that the Paris manuscript of Mi‘raj-Nāmah has not only an artistic value but also a high degree of literary and religious importance.

After the Turks became Muslim subjects, Arabic and Persian languages became widely accepted as the appropriate language for educated people and they were therefore used in poetry, history and the like. These were the languages spoken at the royal courts of the Khāns. (2) Accordingly, it was Islamic rather than Uighūr civilisation that flourished. Naturally, only a certain proportion of the Uighūrs and Turks were able to speak the languages of the court and to understand the new literature. The common people sought to express their participation in their new culture by using their own mother-tongue. Indeed, they succeeded so well that they created a new religious literature which frequently

2. Ibid., p.61.
displayed influences from mysticism. (1)

This religious literature was called Adab al-Takāyā since it was compiled by the religious who lived in these institutions. (2) This literature was concerned with important landmarks and expressions of the Islamic faith, such as panegyrics of the Prophet or threnodies of Husain, (3) in which Arabic and Persian words were used. (4) This type of literature was so popular that after a short period even the learned began to imitate it. (5)

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2. Ibid.
5. Ibid., p. 61.
Manuscript of the Mi‘raj-Namah

The manuscript (Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Turc 190) dated 840/1436 was produced at the city of Herat in the reign of the Timürid prince Shah Rukh. Illustrated by fifty-eight miniatures, it was calligraphed by Malik Bakhshī in the Uïghûr script.

It is worth asking why these particular incidents were illustrated in such detail. Presumably this work was derived from certain Ilkhânîd miniatures of the Prophet Muhammad. Adab al-takāва was fashionable at that time and presumably the text of the Mi‘raj-Namah was very popular. While the entire history of the religion of Islam is important to every Muslim, there are certain events more important than others: the birth of Muhammad, the hijrah, the night of Qadr, the mi‘raj and so forth. Muslims throughout the world of Islam celebrate them by reciting the Qur’ān, giving speeches on this particular event and sometimes reciting verses of poetry.

The Mir‘raj-Namah manuscript is more tightly organised than earlier works with sacred subjects. The World History of Rashîd al-Dîn, for instance, deals with the life of the Prophet and some other important incidents. Thus we see figures of Jesus, Mary and other sacred figures. If the author had dedicated a complete volume on the history of the early period of Islam and the life of Muhammad, a second volume to the history of China and a third volume to the Mongol Khâns, the result would have been closer, we would have the same result and type as the Mi‘raj-Namah manuscript: a complete book would have given us
full details about the history of the Prophet only. This would also have resulted in more varied illustrations than in the manuscript under discussion.

No doubt the manuscript also benefited from being produced in the reign of Shāh Rukh (807-851/1404-1447), in the golden years of Timūrid art not only in painting but also in architecture, poetry and music. (1) Moreover, religious subject matter occurs in other manuscripts produced for Shāh Rukh, e.g. some volumes of the Jāmi' al-tawāriskh of Rashīd al-Dīn. Al-Sayyid tells us that a copy of Jāmi' al-tawāriskh which was written in Persia is now kept at Mashhad in the Shrine Library, no. 4101. It was copied in 1300 A.D. A supplement was later added to the original book composed by Rashīd al-Dīn. This addition was the history of Uljāytū and his son Abū Sa'īd. (2) The supplement was written in the Timūrid period by Hāfiz-i Abrū, who wrote at the end of this copy "By the will of the Sultan Shāh Rukh Bahādur who likes to be acquainted with the life of earlier people, books of history used to be recited in his presence. Among them was the book of Jāmi' al-tawāriskh of Rashīd al-Dīn Fadl Allāh who finished it in 704 A.H. When the Sultan learned about the significance of the book, he ordered that the history of Uljāytū and his son Abū Sa'īd should be added to the end of this book." (3) There is a strong

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3. Ibid., p. 280.
possibility that Shah Rukh also saw an illustrated copy of Jamīʿ al-tawārīkh, with pictures of Muhammad. Several illustrated copies of this Timūrid expansion of Rashīd al-Dīn's text exist. (1)

The Miʿrāj-Namāh manuscript is huge in size and is divided into two parts. The first section describes the night journey of Muhammad to the seven heavens while the second is the memorial of the saints. (2) Seguy mentions that the work is translated from an Arabic original by the poet Mīr Haydar. (3) The main text is written in Uighūr script. Some parts are in Arabic, Turkish and Persian. The four languages have been used at the same time in one work. Turkish was the language of the area where the manuscript of the Miʿrāj-Namāh was executed. We already know that Arabic and Persian were languages of the royal court.

The main problem concerns the use of Uighūr. Perhaps the manuscript in its original form was in Uighūr and was given as a present to Shah Rukh who ordered it to be copied and illustrated although he did not understand the main text. The three languages are evidence supporting this suggestion. Perhaps they were added later as a translation for the Uighūr script.

There is also a possibility that the author of the Miʿrāj-

3. Ibid.
Namah wanted to imitate the practice followed with Jami' al-tawārikh of Rashīd al-Dīn. This was produced in several copies in Arabic and Persian. Maybe in the case of the Mi'rāj-Nāmah some problems prevented the execution of a copy every year in more than one language. In the Uighūr text the copyist used black ink to write the main text. Golden ink was also used for some words. Probably these words had some religious significance and in order to emphasize their importance they were written in a different and more costly solution. Red ink also occurs; thus in fol.1v Arabic script in red ink reads "From Anas b. Mālik, May God be gracious to him, from the Prophet, May the blessing of God be upon him, Burāq was brought". When the Apostle of God had arrived near the throne of God the archangel Gabriel asked him to kneel. It seems that Muhammad had prayed for the author mentions in fol.38r an Arabic text which is usually recited during praying: "Salvation, prayers and beneficence are God's". Then follow two and a half lines in Uighūr script; then the litany continues: "Salvation be upon your Prophet and mercy and blessing". Another break is marked by the saying "Salvation be upon us and upon the virtuous worshippers of God". In the same page we find the Islamic testimony of faith written in red ink: "I affirm that there is no God but God and I testify that Muhammad is his servant and messenger".

When Muhammad guided by Gabriel arrives at the fountain of Kawthar, the author gives a relevant Ayāh in fol.45v:
"In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.
Lo! We have given thee Abundance;
So pray unto thy Lord, and sacrifice.
Lo! it is thy insulted (and not thou) who is
without posterity". (1)

In the Ṣāmi' al-tawārīkh, the copyist used either a different
colour or used big letters to write the titles of subjects or
the Qur'ānic verses.

The Arabic text in the Mi'rāj-Nāmah is written in big
letters using golden or turquoise colours, while the Turkish
text is written in smaller size at the upper part, the bottom
and sometimes the side of the page in black ink. Whoever wrote
the Arabic band at the top seems to have been not very well
acquainted with the language because there are many grammatical
mistakes, and the Arabic words are accompanied by many vowelling
marks. The Mi'rāj-Nāmah comprises three parts. The first group
deals with Prophets and angels. In the second, the artist
illustrates the luxurious life of the believer in Paradise and
in the third section the miserable state of the unbelievers
tormented in the fire of hell. Islamic tradition is in general
agreed that Muhammad met one Prophet or some other person in
each Heaven. Some state that Paradise occupies the first Heaven
while others say it is in the seventh. Hell is according to
most accounts situated in the first sphere. The author of the

Mi‘rāj-Nāmah manuscript divides the heavens according to their importance and their sacred meaning. Thus Prophets and angels of special significance are more important than the inhabitants of Paradise but on the other hand the latter are nearer to God than the sinners in hell.

The incident of the mi‘rāj is mentioned in many Islamic records. The first is the Qur‘ān itself in which God said:

"Glorified be He who carried His servant by night from the Inviolable place of Worship to the Far Distant place of Worship the neighbourhood whereof We have blessed, that We might show him of Our tokens! Lo! He, only He, is the Hearer, the Seer". (1)

The second source – hadīth – will be the main source used here. The third source is books dealing with the history of Islam.

The incident occurred in the night of Saturday 17th Ramadān, eighteen months before the Prophet’s flight to Madīnah. (2) Ibn ‘Abbās says that it took place in Mecca in the night of Monday 27th Rajab in the eighth year of the Prophet’s mission. (3) Al-Bukhārī states "It was in the 12th year of

1. Sūrah XVII, 1.
Prophecy. In the account of Buhayqī from Mūsā b. 'Uqbah from al-Zuhrī (it is said) that he (the Prophet) was carried up one year before he left for Madīnah. Al-Sadī said that it happened sixteen months before he moved to Madīnah. Accordingly al-İsrā' must have occurred the month of Dhu‘l-Qa‘da. (1) Al-Bukhārī adds that according to al-Zuhrī’s record it happened in Rabī’ al-Awwal, but some say it was on the first Friday of Rajab. (2)

The place from which the Prophet began his journey was al-masjid al-haram in Mecca, (3) but Ibn 'Abbās says that it happened when the Prophet was in the house of Fākhitah, Umm Hānī bint Ābi Ṭalib. (4) Before the Apostle of God went to the seven Heavens he visited al-masjid al-agsa in Jerusalem as is mentioned in the Qur‘an. Al-Rāzī says it was called al-agsa (the furthest) because of the long distance between Mecca and Jerusalem. (5) It is also called "the neighbourhood which We have blessed". There are two explanations for this title: first because it was surrounded by fruit and flowers and second because it was the place of the Prophets and of the descent of angels on earth. (6)

2. Ibid., p.40.
6. Ibid.
As the words *isrā’* and *mi’rāj* are going to be mentioned several times we should explain them in summary. *Isrā’* means walking or going during the night. It is derived from the verb *sara*, hence *asrā*.(1) *Mi’rāj* derives from *‘urūj* which means ascending. *Mi’rāj* was the medium which took Muhammad to Heaven.(2) The *mi’rāj* (ladder) was brought from Paradise stacked with pearls and angels were standing on both sides, left and right.(3) In the account of Ibn ‘Abbās it is mentioned that the Prophet said that the *mi’rāj* started from the sacred rock at Jerusalem and ended in Heaven. Each step was made of gold, silver, chrysolite and red corundum.(4)

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Description and analysis of the miniatures

Fol. 3v. The archangel wakes up Muhammad to take him to the heavens, p. 24.

The archangel Gabriel has a special function which sets him apart from the other angels. "He is one of the four archangels, one of angels favoured by or brought near (muqarrabūn) God, and one of the divine messengers. His duty is to bear the orders of God to mortal Prophets and to reveal his mysteries to them". (1) He is mentioned in the Qurʾān and called the "holy spirit" and "spirit of truth". (2) He is also the angel who sits on the left hand side of God. He has one hundred and forty wings. (3) Gabriel is Amīn al-wāḥī, Khāzīn al-Quds, al-Ruh al-Amīn, Ruḥ al-Quds, al-Nāmūs al-akbar and Tāʿūs al-malāʾikah (The Peacock of angels). (4) Al-Tabārî explains his name as follows. Gabri or Jabr in Arabic means ‘abd (servant) and ʿIl refers to God, so his name should be interpreted as ʿAbd Allāh, or the servant of God. (5)

Many books record that once the chief of the angels had appeared to the Prophet Muhammad while he was sitting with some

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1. E.I., I, s.v. "Djibrāʾīl".
2. E.B., XII, s.v. "Gabriel".
Muslims. Gabriel came in the guise of an ordinary human. He asked the Prophet about Islam and Muhammad told him that Islam is to affirm that there is no God but God, and that Muhammad is the Apostle of God, to pray, to give alms, to fast in Ramadän and to visit the house of God if you are able to. The archangel agreed with him and asked him about faith. Muhammad's reply was that faith was to believe in God and his angels, messages, his messengers, the last day and to believe that good and bad were foreordained. (1) It will be clear from the above discussion why it was Gabriel who was chosen to be the guide of the Prophet Muhammad during his ascent.

According to al-Bukhârî, Yahyâ b. Bukîr said that al-Layth told him from Yûnus from Ibn Shihab from Anas b. Mâlik who said that Abû Dhur heard the Prophet saying that while he was in his house in Mecca, Gabriel appeared to him from the roof and opened his chest in order to clean it with water from the well of Zamzam. Then he brought a basin of gold filled with wisdom and faith and put it in the Prophet's chest. (2) But Ibn `Abbás' account tells us that the Prophet Muhammad was in the house of Umm Hâni bint Abî Tâlib. They heard knocking on the door, so Fâtîmah opened the door; she was terrified at the sight of Gabriel. Muhammad asked Gabriel for the reason for his unexpected visit, and he was informed that he was going to meet God. (3)

1. Abû Da'ûd, Sunan (Cairo 1951), vol.IV, p.309, no.4695.
In the miniature we see that Muhammad is lying on a mattress on the floor talking to Gabriel who has come to rouse him from his sleep. The artist has used all his skill to decorate the house of Muhammad in which several sorts of decorated tiles are exhibited. The use of many kinds of tiles is a familiar feature of Timurid painting. An example is a miniature in Istanbul published by Basil Gray, \(^{(1)}\) from the book of Kalīlah wa Dimnah entitled by him "an attempted murder frustrated", probably done at Tabrīz between 1360 and 1347. \(^{(2)}\) The ornament of the room consists of tiles with patterns of hexagonal shape with golden dots inside. Other designs are also found. Tiled dadoes and walls are standard in later Persian miniatures, e.g., the scene of Iskandar before the Queen of Qayda, \(^{(3)}\) from a Shah-Namah \(^{(4)}\) done at Shīrāz and dated 18 Dhu'l-Qa'da/10 August 1560. Here the artist uses more than ten kinds of tiles. Each one is drawn with two or more colours. But the geometrical designs in the Mi'rāj-Namah looks clumsy, and one can easily recognize that various types of tiles are depicted. Their large size is unsuitable for a miniature.

An arch adorns the upper part of the illustration and this

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2. Istanbul University Library, f. 1422, fol. 11v.
feature can be seen in two miniatures from the school of Mesopotamia in the Paris Magamät. (1) On fol. 91b - 92a Abū Zayd is marrying a beggar and a female beggar, while on fol. 152a Zayd is teaching in a maktab.

In fol. 37 (p. 24) the figure of the Prophet Muhammad is distinguished by his white turban, green gown and flame halo. Yet surely when the Prophet saw Gabriel he did not immediately put his turban over his head while he was still lying in his bed. A second inconsistency is the simple mattress on the floor, which does not fit with the richly executed decoration of the wall, for no-one decorates his house with luxury tiles and then sleeps in such a simple way. Finally the angel instead of having his feet visible as is usual has a wavy haloed shape there.

Fol. 5r. The Prophet attended by a group of angels, pl. 25.

In this miniature we see the Prophet riding upon the heavenly beast Burāq. A huge flame halo surrounds his body which ends in a Chinese cloud. He is wearing a green robe as he himself is recorded as saying that he preferred to wear green because "it was the colour which the inhabitants of Paradise wore and it was also the most useful colour for visibility and the most beautiful colour in the eyes of spectators". (2)

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It would have been better if the artist had not used this number and size of Chinese clouds. Various expensive materials have been used but in the wrong place. Angels are shown engaged in celebrating the arrival of Muhammad in Heaven. Ibn 'Abbās said that he heard the Prophet say that he saw a number of angels praising God.\(^1\) Angels are creatures of God and He is the only One who is served by angels. No matter how they look, their main task is reciting blessings and praying to God day and night. But their function is certainly not spreading jewellery or perfuming the air behind the Prophet. Were it not for the wings and haloes of the angels one could say that this miniature represented a king or military leader who having conquered a city is surrounded by his people celebrating a great victory. The angels are generally engaged in talking or looking at each other. Their gaze is not directed towards Muhammad as in the relevant scenes in the manuscript of Jāmi' al-tawārikh in Edinburgh.

The Prophet is shown talking to Gabriel, and this particular scene is not unfamiliar in the art of Islam. It is very common to depict a ruler at the head of his court talking to a person who usually offers him some drink or food. The conversing angels are also derived from a court scene - they replace the male and female figures who are usually shown playing musical instruments, or serving drinks and food. Head-dresses in Islamic art are

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generally either long veils or ornamented hair with pearls. In this miniature and in later illustrations which represent this particular scene of the mi'raj the angels have a special style of coiffure which consists of two small and crossed ringlets of hair at the top while the rest of the hair is suspended over the shoulders. The belt also appears in this and several more of these miniatures. It comprises flowers connected with each other by a band and is usually depicted as golden.

Gabriel carries the flag of Islam in front of the Prophet Muhammad. It is square in shape with an inscription giving the name of God, Allah. Another part is decorated with three dots which resemble the ornaments of the angel's dresses.

Fol.5v. The Prophet arriving at the sacred mosque of Jerusalem, pl.26.

Muhammad said that he mounted Burāq and they reached a land planted with palm-trees in which he prayed. He was told later that this land was called Midyan and was near the tree of the Jewish Prophet Mūsā, and he was also asked to pray again in Bayt Laham where Jesus was born. When he arrived at Jerusalem he found Ibrāhīm, Mūsā and Jesus among other Prophets who welcomed his visit. A full flame halo surrounds the

figure of Muhammad probably to allow him to be easily distinguished from the other Prophets who are waiting for him. The artist used a full halo for Muhammad here whereas he drew the common halo which surrounds head and neck for the figures of the other prophets, but when he draws a half halo for Muhammad he does not use any golden halo for the other prophets. Muhammad is standing in this picture. His hands are not visible and two thin plaits are suspended over his chest.

There is a great resemblance between Muhammad - who has an oval-shaped face, pointed beard, slanted eyes and a white turban - and the second figure who stands on the left hand side. But the reason for this resemblance is obscure. In general the artist uses two types of faces in this manuscript, one for angels and the other for prophets. The faces of the angels are full and more feminine.

Floors in mosques are usually furnished with carpets but in this illustration the floor appears to be paved with pink bricks only. This way of arranging the bricks using unusual colours for the ground recalls a series of pictures in which Bahram Gur visits the seven princesses in their various coloured pavilions, or the miniature of Bahram Gur being introduced into the Hall of Seven Images. (1)

1. Published in Gray, op. cit., illustrated in p.75; the miniature is from an Anthology of Iskandar Sultan (Shirāz, 1410) now in the Gulbenkian Foundation Museum in Lisbon.
The Prophet of Islam leads other Prophets in prayer. The unusual element in this picture is that the artist has divided one incident into two or more parts. Here, for instance, the Islamic account tells us that when the Prophet arrived at Jerusalem he prayed with other Apostles of God. In the previous miniature the artist depicts the figures doing nothing but standing looking at each other. In pl.27 we see these figures again surrounding Muhammad.

Six Prophets are arranged symmetrically in threes; perhaps the artist found himself obliged to add extra figures in order to balance his work. Nevertheless there is no difference at all between the faces here. The artist did his best to variegate the faces he used for the figures of Prophets. For example he used a dark brown colour to paint the hair of beards and moustaches for the middle-aged men, white to indicate the old and a beardless face for the young.

The famous mosque of Jerusalem lacks furniture although the artist did not forget to depict its arches, lamps and tiles. Muslims do not use prayer rugs in mosques, but if the artist did not depict such rugs it would not be clear that Muhammad was praying with these Prophets. Séguy suggests that the qiblah is given by the small arch in the middle. If we accept her suggestion, however, the whole position of sitting will be incorrect. There are two reasons for this. First, the
carpet is laid towards the three figures sitting on the left, not towards the **mihrab**. Second, at the time of prayer everyone should pray in the same direction rather than sitting facing each other. The reason for drawing the figures of the Prophets in this way is that the artist wanted to show the faces of the Prophets as well as the **mihrab**. Accordingly, if he had depicted the figures praying towards the gibalh, their backs would have been turned to the spectator in order to face the wall, so their faces would have remained hidden. But if the artist wanted to show the faces then the scene would be orientated towards the spectator and this would mean that the wall of the **mihrab** would have to be imagined as being outside the picture. So the result is an ingenious compromise.

**Fol. 7v. Muhammad upon the black sea, al-Kawthar, pl. 28.**

Most if not all Islamic accounts agree that when Muhammad left Jerusalem he went directly to the first Heaven and saw the fountain of Kawthar in Paradise. The Arabic text at the top of the miniature mentions that Muhammad saw the ladder.

1. The direction of the gibalh was fixed on the Monday in the middle of the month of Rajab, seventeen months after the hijrah of Muhammad from Mecca to Madinah (Ibn Sa'd, *Al-tabaqat al-kabirah* ed. E. Sachau (Leiden 1909), Vol.I, pp. 3-4).

2. Maybe he meant the mi'raj. The best illustration representing the sacred ladder is the miniature of the mi'raj in the *Jami' al-tawarikh* at Edinburgh University Library, Arabic no. 20, fol. 55R, pl. 5.
around Heaven but there is no sign of this ladder in this illustration. The scene in this miniature is very simple; the artist did not bother to make the illustration of the Prophet more effective. Muhammad is shown upon Burāq while Gabriel is leading him towards the first heaven.

Fol. 9r. Muhammad arrives at the first heaven which has a turquoise colour and was created from al-minā stone, p. 29.

Ibn 'Abbās records that the distance between heaven and earth is 500 years and its thickness is 500 years. Ibn 'Abbās adds that Gabriel knocked at the door of the first Heaven but its guardians did not allow them to enter until they knew who was the person with Gabriel. According to the Prophet's saying in Ibn 'Abbās' account, this heaven is made of smoke and it was called al-rafī'ah (1). One of its doors is called Bab al-hafazah. The angel who was in charge of this heaven is called Ismā'īl and has 12,000 angels under his supervision. (2)

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1. Ibn 'Abbās, op. cit., p. 5.
If the artist had shown the Prophet surrounded by angels one could have thought that those angels were the inhabitants of the first heaven celebrating the arrival of Muhammad at their abode. But unfortunately he represents the same scene as in fol. 7V (pl. 28) except that instead of the concentration on the black sea he puts a flag in Gabriel's hand.

Fol. 9v. Muhammad meets Ādam, pl. 30.

This is the third miniature of the group which represents Muhammad meeting various people in the first heaven. In this illustration we see the Apostle of God meeting Ādam. In Islamic theology Ādam is called Abūal-Bashar or the father of humans. The name is Syriac and is derived from the word crust (adīm) because he was created from the crust of earth. Others have suggested that he was called Ādam because of the lightness of his skin. (1)

Muhammad is recorded as saying that during his passing through the place of Ādam he saw two groups standing on both sides of him. If he looked to his right he would smile and if

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1. Ibid., vol. IV, p. 49.
he looked to his left he would cry. The Prophet was told by Gabriel later on that those on the right were the people of Paradise and those on the left were the inhabitants of hell. (1) Gabriel introduced Ādam to Muhammad as his father; Muhammad saluted him and Ādam replied to his greeting saying "Welcome to the good son and good Prophet". (2)

Ādam is painted as being bigger than the normal size. There are two reasons for this. First, in many Islamic sources the enormous size of the ancient people including Ādam is stressed. When he descended from heaven to earth his head was at first in heaven and his feet on earth. Secondly, it is an ancient device in Islamic as in other schools of painting that the status is indicated by size (e.g. group of al-Aghānī miniatures in which the sultans are drawn larger than the rest of the figures). This tradition continued in the Mongol school, and here the figure of the Prophet Muhammad is bigger than the other figures. This can be seen in the manuscript of Al-Āthār al-baqiyyah in Edinburgh. The long sleeves of Ādam are equally standard in Islamic, especially Persian, painting. (4) It is

2. Ibid., p.41.
also found in pottery. (1) A study of characteristic examples shows that the emphasis on sleeves is often deliberate; the artist delights to show them. It does not seem to have been a dominant fashion even in the royal court, for not only is it totally unpractical but also if it had been generally accepted the artist would have depicted all his figures in this style, not particular males or females only. Often several varieties of sleeves are shown in female costume. Possibly the artist stressed sleeves to emphasise the importance of a particular figure. It could then be compared with using haloes, big size, different dress, style, crowns, depicting the main figures in the middle of illustrations, or any other method of drawing attention to a figure. It can also be seen as a reference to the respect and modesty of the person facing the key figure, as we see here very clearly. This feature can be seen in fols. 5v (p1.26), 9v (p1.30), 15r (p1.35, upper and lower parts), 17v (p1.38), 19r (p1.39), 22v (p1.42 upper part), 30v (p1.50), 42r (p1.58), and 51r (p1.65).

Also notable is the apparently female angel who puts her index finger in her mouth to show astonishment. Surprise should be directed to Muhammad himself as he is the unfamiliar figure in this place, not Adam who lives there. But probably the illustrator wanted to emphasize the size of Adam by including this astonished figure.

1. E.g. a Takabi dish at the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne. Illustrated in D.T. Rice, Islamic art (London 1975), p.68, ill.68.
Fol. 11r. Muhammad sees the white cock whose head is under the throne of God and his legs on earth, pl. 31

In the Islamic faith the cock is ritually clean and has an obvious connection with the early prayer in the morning. Al-Jahiz states that Muhammad banned Muslims from cursing cocks, especially those of white colour. (1) In the mi’raj text there is a reference to the Prophet Muhammad having seen a heavenly white cock but this is in the account of the seventh heaven. The reference is to an angel in the shape of a cock, his head under the throne of God and his legs on earth. He praises the name of God and when cocks on earth hear him they reply. (2)

Seguy says that "the image of the angel-cock suggests certain sources, particularly Shamanistic sources, according to which angelic creatures are able to fly because they are ornithomorphic. Mentioned in the Avesta, the cock, a sun-bird, seems equally connected with the cult of Mithra, in which it is a symbol of resurrection and eternal life". (3) This seems doubtful in view of Muslim hostility to Zoroastrianism and the Shamanism. Besides, in Islamic religion the cock has no symbolic meaning and a good proof of this is that eating the flesh of cocks is not prohibited in Islam. The only reason for connecting prayer with this animal is that it crows at the early hours of the day.

1. Al-Jahiz, Al-hayawan (Cairo 1905), vol. II, p. 94.
at the same time as Muslims make the call to prayer.

The artist did his best to show the real size of the animal although it means that he has to put the rest of the body at the edge of the page. For a change we have here the Prophet Muhammad mounted upon Burāq in front of the cock while Gabriel stands behind him exchanging glances with the Prophet and Burāq looking at the heavenly cock.

Pol.11v. Muhammad sees an angel who is half snow and half fire, pl.32.

Ibn 'Abbās states that Muhammad met this angel in the first heaven. He adds "(This is) an angel who is half snow and half fire. Fire does not melt the snow and the snow does not extinguish the fire. He has one thousand heads; in each there are a thousand thousand faces and in each face a thousand thousand tongues praising God in a thousand thousand languages. As part of his praise he says: 'Praise to the one who joins together snow and fire, you who join fire and snow together join your faithful worshipper'. And the angels reply "Amen"."(1) This angel was in charge of Heavens and identified as being a good angel to mankind.(2)

In the Arabic band attached to the upper part of the picture

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2. Ibid.
it has been mentioned that this angel is holding a rosary of snow in the left hand and a second made of fire in the right hand, and thunder is the voice of his praise. *Tasbīh* is the word commonly used to denote praise and it is the job of angels and believers to give this to God. The *sibhah* (rosary) is not recorded in this literature, so its presence here indicates that the artist copied what was happening around him in this miniature although it represents a creature who lives in heaven. Naturally it is not necessary for an angel to use a rosary to praise God.

The miniature is divided into two parts. The upper part contains the main background of bright blue. Golden clouds and balls are scattered in the sky while Muhammad mounts the heavenly beast. One of the elements which is commonly used in this manuscript is using two plaits for the figure of Muhammad. The right hand holds the left plait and the left hand holds the right plait. It is likely that there is no significance here; presumably the artist wanted to vary his work. The angel seems unaware of the presence of Muhammad. The fiery section is made of small flames drawn with red outlines on a golden background. (1) In the lower part of the

1. The artist has realized that if he draws the rosary which is made of snow, directly on the snowy half of the body the rosary would not be seen. So he makes the angel spread his left hand so that he can draw the white rosary on the blue background and the fiery one on the white half of the angel's body.
picture we see a small band probably representing water; it is now black.

Fol.13r. Muhammad arrives at the second heaven which is created from white pearls, pl.33.

When Muhammad was on his way to the seventh heaven he stopped at the second heaven. Angels welcomed his presence in this place. This heaven is made of iron and is called al-mā‘ūn. Here, Muhammad saw angels riding on horses and carrying spears; they are called the army of God according to Ibn ‘Abbās’s account. (1) The Arabic text mentions that this heaven is made of pearls but the artist did not use even a white colour as an indication of pearls. He preferred to keep it consistent with the other pictures. (2) The clouds here have a different shape from the clouds we have already seen in the former illustrations. They have the shape of flaming haloes, with two branches in the upper part and another two in the lower part. The belt of Gabriel occupies a good part of this miniature. A group of angels sits on the left side in a humble way and their gaze is directed towards the figure of Muhammad.

Fol.13v. Muhammad meets the angel who provides creatures with their livelihood, pl.34.

Séguy has identified this angel as being ‘Izrā‘īl, the

2. I.e. a blue background with golden Chinese clouds.
angel of death, in her interpretation of this picture. (1) If we read about the theology of Islam we see that ‘Izra’îl has an opposite function from this angel. When God decided to create man he sent Gabriel to bring a handful of earth to Him. But the earth refused to yield itself because it was influenced by the power of Satan. God sent Isrâfîl and then Mika’îl but the same thing happened. At the end ‘Izra’îl, whose strength was astonishing, was the only one who brought earth to God and for this reason God chose ‘Izra’îl to be the angel and lord of death. (2)

In Ibn ‘Abbâs’ account the place of ‘Izra’îl is the fourth heaven. He is described as being an enormous creature. His head is under the heavenly throne and his feet are on earth. On his right there is a board and on his left a big tree. When Muhammad asked how he grasped the souls of creatures, he replied that there are two doors in heaven for each living being. The first door provides him sustenance from heaven and through the second his deeds ascend to heaven. (3) Ibn ‘Abbâs adds that the names of all creatures are written on the tree there. When the life of any being is coming to an end the leaf on which his name is written turns yellow so that the archangel of death knows that this creature is going to die. He sends forty angels who are under his charge to bring his soul. ‘Izra’îl has two

2. E.I., II, s.v. "Izra’îl".
spears, one made of light to get the soul of good and another
made of indignation for the bad soul.\(^{(1)}\) It is very likely that
‘Izrā’īl has a different function from the angel who is
represented in this illustration.

The artist has used very bright colours like red besides
the various colours of the angel’s wings. He also varies the
costumes. For instance, he uses different kinds of clothes for
Gabriel and the Prophet. On Burāq’s head in this miniature is
a type of crown which consists of a golden border. At the top of
it there is a coloured part which we have already seen on the
head of Gabriel in other miniatures illustrated in this manuscript.
The angel wears a feathered head-dress and is shown barefoot and
enthroned. This iconographic type is often used in the mi‘rāj
scenes found on the first pages of books.

Fol. 15r(A). Muhammad arrives at the place of the angel who
has seventy heads, pl. 35.

During the mi‘rāj the Prophet Muhammad met an angel who
has seventy heads. Each head has seventy tongues and each
tongue gives God seventy sorts of praises. The Prophet for the
first time seems astonished by the appearance of the angel.
Burāq for the first time looks as if it stands on a flat surface
whereas in the rest of the miniatures it seems to be running in
heaven. The angel is standing in a respectful attitude in front

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of the Prophet. Although the angel should have seventy heads, space forbids their depiction. Instead the artist depicts about thirty-four heads.

Fol.15r(B)

The Prophet is introduced in this miniature to two figures. Both are bearded and wear Arab clothes; they have slanted eyes and flame haloes. There is no mention of those two figures at the top of the page because the band describes only the upper illustration. In the text which Séguy explained she interpreted those figures as John the Baptist (Yahyā) and Zacharias (Zakariyā). (1)

Islamic records are mostly agreed that the main person who met Muhammad at the second heaven was Jesus and in some other sources both Jesus and John are mentioned. Al-Dhahabī says: "When they arrived at the second heaven they were asked who was knocking. Gabriel replied: "Gabriel". It was asked, "who is with you?" He replied: "Muhammad". It was said: "Did they send for him?" He replied: "Yes." It was said: "Welcome to him, he comes to the best place." Then it was opened and I saw Yahyā and 'Isā (Jesus)." (2)

This story is also mentioned in:
Jesus was considered to be one of the most important Prophets but nevertheless we do not find any appearance or mention of him in the miniatures of the Mi'raj-Namah apart from the first two miniatures where all the Prophets of God are present at the mosque of Jerusalem.

Fol. 15v. Muhammad arrives at the white sea, pl. 36.

This miniature is entitled: "Arrival of the Prophet, may the blessing of God be upon him, at the white sea where numerous angels are present". But the artist did not bother himself to draw even the commonest figures in mi'raj scenes, i.e. angels, and the white sea. The only figures which are shown here are the Prophet Muhammad, Gabriel and Burāq. Burāq has a reddish skin spotted with oval shapes and dots. Thus the colour of Burāq in this manuscript is not white though this is the colour mentioned in Islamic literature. For instance, in the manuscript of Jami'al-tawārikh of Edinburgh (pl. 5) the artist had also shown Burāq dotted. The colour used for Burāq in general is either pink or light red with darker dots. Several representations of animals in secular manuscript show the same dotted bodies of various animals who do not otherwise share particular attributes. The Bestiary of Ibn Bakhtishu', for example, in the Pierpont Morgan Library, New York which is dated 1290-1, shows in fol.28r a mare painted in grey and yellow with black dots covering her body. (1)

'Ajā'ib al-makhlūqāt dated to the late 14th century and done in Iraq. Bodies of various animals are shown dotted with golden circles and some have a red border such as the representation of Ursa Major and the dragon, the figures of Sagittarius and Capricornus, Centaurus, the wild ox, and the Giraffe.

Several sources describe Burāq as having a white colour. Its name, Burāq, is derived from the word barīq (lightning). Al-Bukhārī explains that it was called Burāq either because of his bright clear colour or the name was derived from Baraq and so the steed was called Burāq because it moves very quickly like thunder. Another suggestion is that it has a white colour because this colour is the origin of all other colours. Moreover, the Prophet Muhammad liked this colour, for he said "wear white dresses because it is the best and shroud your dead with it".

1. Freer Gallery, no. 54.39r.
2. 54.45r.
3. 54.48r.
4. 57.13v.
5. 54.86v.
7. Ibid.
Muhammad is recorded to have said "A white beast was brought to me". Nevertheless the artist probably did not pay any attention to the main Islamic sources and he may have selected a bright colour because he thought it more attractive than a plain colour.

Fol. 17r. Muhammad arrives at the third heaven, pl. 37.

The distance between the second and third heaven is five hundred years and the third heaven is as thick as this. This heaven was made of copper and called al-muzayyanah, "the ornamented". The Prophet here saw angels carrying green flags. These angels are identified by Gabriel as being the angels of the night of Qadir in the month of Ramadān, and they are present at the assembly of dhikr, martyrs and crowds. In this miniature the artist represents the same scene as the representation of Muhammad arriving at the second heaven. The only change is that instead of making the angels kneel he draws them standing and greeting the newcomers to their heaven.

Fol. 17v. Muhammad meets Joseph and Jacob, pl. 38.

In the third heaven Muhammad met the Prophets Joseph, who was so handsome that he looked like a full moon, and his

father Jacob (Yaʿqūb). Jacob is shown with a white beard and moustache while Joseph has neither. They indeed look like father and son especially in the way of arranging their figures by putting Joseph at a lower level than his father, which probably shows a kind of respect as a son should in Islamic tradition always be in the shadow of his father, no matter how high his rank.

The face of the Prophet Muhammad is not clear and the belt of Gabriel is drawn with gold wavy clouds.

Fol. 19r. Muhammad with David and Solomon, pl. 39.

Although several sources omit the Prophet's meeting with Solomon and his father David, this manuscript of the Miʿrāj-Nāmah shows them accompanying the Prophet. David is represented as an old man while Solomon is a middle-aged man. Gabriel is introducing them with a slight bow which shows respect.

Fol. 19v. Muhammad meets an angel who has seventy heads, pl. 40.

Continuing his journey through the third heaven Muhammad saw a sea. Near it was an angel with seventy heads. This scene has already been encountered in the manuscript fol. 15r (pl. 35). Other angels are engaged in carrying objects which are hourglass shaped. Probably the artist meant them to represent a

1. Mentioned in the Arabic and Turkish text.
sort of throne because the main angel sits on a very similarly shaped seat. There are three of these objects being offered to Muhammad, Gabriel and Buraq. \(^{(1)}\)

Fol. 22r. Muhammad arrives at the fifth heaven which is made of gold, pl.41.

When Muhammad made his journey he passed through each stage but the artist has omitted to depict Muhammad's stop at the fourth stage and whom he met and saw there. The fourth heaven, however, does have the same importance since here Muḥammad met the Prophet Idrīs. \(^{(2)}\) This heaven is made of silver and is called al-zāhirah, "the flourishing". Besides, it is the place where the angel of death 'Izrāʾīl lives. \(^{(3)}\)

The fifth heaven is made of red gold and called al-munīrah "the shining". It contains hell in which bad and faithless people will be tortured for ever. \(^{(4)}\) Angels are standing in a humble way waiting to be introduced by Gabriel to Muhammad. Gabriel with his wings widely separated looks as if he is flying.

Fol. 22v(A). Muhammad meets Ismāʾīl, Ishāq and Lūt, pl.42.

This is the second illustration where the artist draws

1. They probably symbolise respect and the high rank of the three figures.
4. Ibid., p.11.
two different scenes on one page as if they were part of a single subject. The upper illustration is entitled "The meeting of the Prophets Isma‘îl, Ishaq and Lût", which means that only three persons are mentioned although the picture has four figures. Séguy says that the fourth figure is Hârûn, (1) which is likely for according to many Islamic books he was of a mature age with a long white beard. (2)

If the caption was written by the author who wrote the main text he would probably not write in the caption something different from the Arabic text. It thus seems unlikely that the fourth figure is Muhammad. Besides, Muhammad never met more than two persons in each heaven.

Fol.22v(B).

Muhammad sees a fiery sea which falls into hell on the day of Judgement. Since it is of fire it has been drawn in gold with red outlines.

Fol.24r. Muhammad visits the sixth heaven which is made of pearls, pl.43.

Many Islamic records mention that each heaven is made of

different precious stones or other valuable metals. Angels stand in rows to greet Muhammad. The Prophet is shown mounting Burāq looking towards the direction of Gabriel.

Fols. 24v - 26r. Muhammad meets the Prophet Müsā, pls. 44 and 45.

It is difficult to say (without seeing the manuscript) whether these folios comprise separate pages or whether they are attached to each other. But it seems that they were opposite to each other because the first line of Arabic text on fol. 24v (pl. 44) is continued in the line on fol. 26r (pl. 45). The Arabic text describes the incident when Muhammad met the Jewish Prophet Müsā, who wept when he heard that God gave Muhammad more respect and kindness than he gave him. We see Muhammad coming towards Müsā who wears the same clothes and looks the same as the group of prophets on fols. 5v (pl. 26) and 7r (pl. 27). He wears a long green robe, and his gown covers his head and body. Behind him appear three figures with turbans over their heads.

The architecture behind the figures is similar to a shrine. It consists of a black block and a golden block covered by delicate floral and geometrical patterns. The coffin is covered with silver and gold; the entrance is marked by a red curtain. People who pay a visit to the shrine go around this specific part. Perhaps, however, it represents a mosque entrance.
Fol. 26v. Muhammad meets Idrīs and Noah (Nūh) in the sixth heaven, pl. 46.

According to Islamic sources Idrīs lives in the fourth heaven and mostly they do not mention that Muhammad met Noah. Both wear long robes with very long sleeves to show their respect to the person who is coming towards them. Muhammad does not hold his plaits or spread his hands as usual, for his hands are hidden in the long sleeves of his gown as if he were exchanging respects with the two Prophets.

Fol. 28r. Muhammad reaches the seventh heaven, pl. 47.

This heaven is made of white gems and is called al-‘ajībah (the astonishing).¹ Because this heaven is the residence of God the illustrator used gold colour for the background, thus departing from his previous practice. It covers the bodies of Muhammad, Gabriel and Burāq.

Fol. 28v. The Prophet Ibrāhīm is shown on a minbar made of chrysolite, pl. 48.

The drawing here is small scale and different from the group of illustrations we have already seen; though the figures still have slant eyes and puffy faces.

¹ Ibn 'Abbās, op. cit., p. 17.
Architecture occupies a large part of the illustration. Séguy mentions that this building represents a throne, while the Arabic text says it is a minbar, which can only be found in mosques. The pulpit is decorated with dark green ornament on a lighter coloured surface. Nobody knows why the artist shows Ibrāhīm making a speech to the angels; homilies are delivered from minbars in mosques, telling Muslims how to act or behave. Three angels appear in the front row spreading their index fingers which is the sign of Shahādah in Islam. It looks as if one of them is teaching the other how to do it for the one who is close to the marginal line has used his left hand instead of his right. There is also another possibility — that the scene represents this group during prayers because Muslims also recite the Shahādah during the sujūd, but their faces should be directed towards one side while the imām (or Ibrāhīm in this case) should be leading them.

In the Mesopotamian school of painting we often see scenes from mosques. Generally they do not have such high minbars, and the mosques themselves are decorated by columns, arches, and lamps besides fine patterns and calligraphy. Plain tiles cover the upper part of the minbar. The blue background and dark coloured design and hexagonal shape of these tiles is similar to the tiles in fols. 3v(pl.24) and 7r(pl.27).

This miniature shows two groups of people; one is good and wears white clothes while the other is bad and wears striped clothes with white turbans on their heads.

In the Qur'ān, part of the Sūra of al-Wāqi‘ah reads:

"- And ye will be three kinds:
  (First) those on the right hand; what of those on the right hand?
  And (then) those on the left hand; what of those on the left hand?
  And the foremost in the race, the foremost in the race:"

Al-Rāżī says of the people of the right, ashāb al-maymanah, that they derive their name either from the books they bear in their right hand or from their faith lightened by the light of God. There are another two groups mentioned in the Qur’ān: those who smile and have shining faces and the faithless who are depressing and dark in colour. Here the artist makes the distinction between them by their clothes. But it is hard to credit that the seventh heaven has bad people as well as good.

1. SūrahLVI, 7-10.
although it would be quite acceptable if he depicted these two groups in one of the other heavens.

The miniature is divided into three sections. On the right the blue background is decorated with Chinese clouds. Underneath stand the bad people or those who wear white and black gowns with Muslim head-dress. The middle part consists of a violet curtain ornamented with golden floral patterns topped by an arch. The curtain is not intended to face the spectator because the bad people are supposed to be outside the building, not in another room. The third part looks like a mosque with tiles covering the lower part of the wall.

Fol.30v. Muhammad arrives at the black sea which has many angels, pl.50.

Beside the black sea Muhammad saw an angel whose head is under the throne of God and whose feet are on the earth. We do not know the reason for choosing a black colour for a sea in the seventh heaven because black denotes mourning and sadness in Islamic culture. The artist has repeated the figure of the angel used previously.

Fol.32r. Muhammad meets two angels, pl.51.

Muhammad and Gabriel are approaching two angels, one of which has seventy heads; each head has seventy tongues praising God. It was said in the Arabic text that "If all the seas are
to be poured in one eye (of the second angel) they would leave
the other unfilled". (1) The two angels, Gabriel and Burāq all
have their heads adorned with a similar type of crown.

Pol. 32v. Muhammad passes by two angels, pl. 52.

Whenever the first angel plunges himself into a sea, he
shakes his wings and God creates an angel from each feather.
Muhammad also saw another angel who has four heads; those of
a lion, bull, eagle and human being. The previous angel has
been identified as the angel who carries the throne of God on
the day of Resurrection. This figure is familiar from
theological and artistic sources. Al-Tabarī said that each
angel has the face of a human, bull and lion. (2) Another
account by al-Tabarī says that al-barq is an angel who has
four faces, those of a human, bull, eagle and lion. (3)
Al-Qazwīnī mentions that they are four in number; one of them
is in the shape of a human being and pleads for human beings
while that in the shape of a bull will plead for beasts, that
in the shape of an eagle pleads for birds and that in the

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1. Séguy in her description of this angel says "an immense
   angel from whose eyes pour the waters of all seas, in
   an attempt to join the one world to the other."
   Séguy, op. cit., pl. 29.


3. Ibid., no. 477.
shape of a lion pleads for predators.\(^1\)

The illustration attached to the text shows four figures. The human figure is in the shape of an angel; he or rather she has two long plaits. A head-dress very similar to a turban is over her head, while her face shows Far Eastern features. The dress she wears consists of a red robe and a green short gown which is similar to the angel's dress in the \textit{Mi'raj-Namah}, but in the \textit{Mi'raj-Namah} miniature the angel wears three garments not two.

In a later manuscript of the \textit{\'Ajā'ib al-makhlūqāt},\(^2\) we see that the angels of the throne had changed or evolved and their figures become very close and share similar elements. Here we find four winged figures, one of whom has a human head. The body of the second is that of a human but has the head of an eagle and he is also winged. The third again has a human-winged body with a bull's head, while the last is also similar to the previous but has a lion's head. Their legs are invisible while their bodies are human. All of them hold a ring; at the centre we see a crescent and silver stars.

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1. This information has been taken from a published manuscript of the \textit{\'Ajā'ib al-makhlūqāt}, Iraq, late 14th century (Washington, Freer Gallery of Art). See E. Atil, \textit{Art of the Arab World} (Washington 1975), p. 115, illu. no. 61.
In the representation of the Mi'raj-Namah, the angels are conflated and the four heads are attached to one figure. The second angel in fol. 32v (pl. 52) is the angel who dipped himself in the sea. His wings look like the scales of a fish.

Fol. 34r. Muhammad arrives at the Lote-tree (sidrat al-muntaha) pl. 53.

The Arabic text describes it as being an enormous tree. Some of its branches are made of chrysolite and others of pearls; its leaves resemble elephant's ears. Its fruit are several in number and four rivers spring from underneath it. The reason for choosing this particular tree to be in heaven is because it casts a shadow, is delicious to the taste and has a nice smell. (1)

This tree is mentioned in the Qur'an:

"And verily he saw him yet another time. By the Lote-tree of the utmost boundary. Nigh unto which is the Garden of Abode. When that which shroudeth did enshroud the Lote-tree. The eye turned not aside no yet was overbold." (2)

2. Surah LI, 13-17.
It is located in the seventh heaven. (1) Al-Bukhari mentions that its roots are in the sixth and the rest of it is in the seventh. Al-Bukhari continues that he heard from 'Iyad that its roots are in the earth because the two rivers which spring from this tree are on earth. (2) The two rivers are the Nile and the Euphrates. Two others are invisible because they are in heaven: al-Kawther and al-Salsabil. (3)

Another function of the Sidrat al-muntaha is that if anything travels from heaven to earth or vice versa it stops at this tree. The souls of martyrs and the faithful also stop at this point. (4) The Sidrat al-muntaha is represented as a big golden tree ornamented by green, yellow and brown spots. These probably symbolise the jewellery mentioned in the text although the branches were meant to be decorated, not the trunks. Leaves which resemble elephant's ears are mentioned in the text but omitted by the artist, perhaps because he found difficulty in illustrating them.

Fol.14v. Angels offer Muhammad three cups. pl.54.

During his ascension Muhammad was offered three cups, containing milk, wine and honey according to the text. There

3. Ibid., p. 46.
4. Ibid.
are two different sources of this story. Some authors say he was offered three types of liquid when he was still on earth. (1) Others say that only two vessels were offered. Also, it has been mentioned that this incident happened twice on earth and in the seventh heaven. A suggestion by al-Bukhārī is that Muhammad was offered these cups twice, once when he had finished praying at the mosque of Jerusalem and the second time near Sidrat al-muntahā. He adds that he might have been offered four ḫiṣā (vessels), each one taken from one of four rivers near Sidrat al-muntahā. (2) The Prophet Muhammad was congratulated by angels because he chose the milk and they told him that he had selected the right drink. (3)

For some reason Gabriel has disappeared from the scene. Three angels are offering three vessels, and are supported by a golden cloud.

Fol. 36r. Gabriel returned to his real size. pl.55.

When Muhammad and his guide Gabriel reached a certain point, Gabriel told the Prophet that he could not continue the journey with him, for if any person passed that point he would be burnt. (4) Many hadīths record this story. Al-Bukhārī says

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3. For details see Chapter III, p.134.
that Muhammad saw Gabriel in his original size, having six
hundred wings and covering the two horizons of heaven. (1)

Here the artist seems to have understood that the text
mentioned leaving Gabriel behind, leaving Muhammad to continue
the journey by himself. Gabriel is shown as a large-scale
figure while the Prophet is riding on Burāq leaving the
archangel behind.

In the previous representations of Burāq starting from
fol.28v (pl.48) a sort of wing had developed for the beast. (2)
Its chest is white and a white line may be discerned above the
front limb.

Fol.36v. Muhammad arrives near the Place of God. pl.56.

When the Prophet arrived at a place near the throne of
God, Gabriel told him to kneel down. Muhammad says that he did
not see God with his eyes but he felt Him with his heart. (3)
This is recounted also by the Prophet's wife 'Ā'ishā who said
that it was a big sin if somebody thought Muhammad saw God with
his eyes. (4)

2. In the texts of history and theology it is recorded that
Burāq has two wings attached to its thighs.
3. The Arabic text accompanying this miniature.
We see the Prophet kneeling as if he is praying and the Uighur text gives an Arabic litany usually recited by Muslims during prayer. He is drawn on a big golden cloud; the figures of Gabriel and Burāq have disappeared.

Fol. 38v. Muhammad in the seventh heaven. pl. 57.

When Muhammad talked to God the Lord told him the number of prayers Muslims should pray every day fifty. After he left the place of God he saw the Jewish Prophet Müsā who told Muhammad to go back to God and ask him to reduce the number. It was reduced to a smaller number but the same story happened again between him and Müsā, till it was settled at five times a day.

The mistake of the artist appears here very clearly, because Müsā is painted again although he had already been depicted in the sixth heaven. The illustrator knows he cannot omit this meeting between Muhammad and Müsā because one of the most important things which happened during the mi'raj was fixing the time and number of prayers.

Müsā appears in the same shape as we have already seen in the earlier representation.

Fol. 42r. Muhammad sees seventy thousand veils, made of light, fire, ruby, pearls and gold. pl. 58.

Angels are divided in such a way that each one stands near
a veil and seems to be a leader of a different group. With crowns on their head they stand welcoming the Prophet who is visiting their place. The only difference between the figures of leaders is in the way of arranging their hands. The first is shaking hands with Muhammad, the second wearing very long sleeves, the third is spreading his hand, and the fourth is drawn with crossed hands.

Although the veils are made of precious stones, they look very ordinary otherwise.

Fol. 42v. The Prophet sees seventy thousand tents. pl. 59.

These tents are surrounding the throne of God. In each tent there are fifty thousand angels engaged in paying homage to God. Again we have a similar miniature which resembles the previous one, but the veils have been transferred to tents; their ends appear above the Uighur text. Muhammad and a few angels appear standing in front of the tents. These angels are pointing with their fingers to each other apart from a single figure who bows his head and is shown from behind. The way of sketching this figure is unusual in Islamic art because Muslim painters usually like to show the full details of their figures and their faces are often shown.

Fol. 44r. Muhammad stands near the throne. pl. 60.

The Arabic text mentions that the Prophet had knelt over
(fawq) the throne of God. Muhammad is shown wearing a green robe, a white turban, and bearded. The background is represented in golden flame haloes.

A second group of the Mi'raj-Nama illustrations represents Paradise. Al-Jannah (Paradise) is guarded by an enormous angel who is pleasant-looking and has bright light shining out of his face. He is called Ridwan. The dust is made of red gold and saffron covered by pebbles and made of pearls and ruby. There are one hundred stairs; the distance between each is one hundred years. God prepared for each believer a tent made of pearl some thirty miles high and sixty wide. For each house there are one hundred doors.

The trees are quite different from the trees we see on earth for the leaves are made of silver and gold, and the trunks are emerald instead of wood. In an account recorded by al-Mundhiri which has been taken from al-muhaddith, Ibn 'Abbās

1. Ibn 'Abbās, op. cit., p.28.
4. Ibid., p.7.
describes the palm-trees of al-Jannah. He said that the trunks are green emerald, while the fruit are similar in size to gotlets and buckets; they are sweeter than honey and softer than butter. The rest of the fruits have the same names as on earth and they look like each other, but each fruit has a completely different taste. Each is offered by angels. These various accounts offer, then, a short description of Paradise and its meaning in the theology of Islam.

Five illustrations show various scenes of Paradise.

* Fol. 45v. Muhammad reaches the fountain of al-Kawthar. p. 61.

The fountain has domes made of red ruby, chrysolite and pearls. Al-Kawthar has been described as being sweeter than honey and whiter than milk. Its width is as wide as one month's walking; it smells better than musk and whoever drinks from its water will never be thirsty again. The architecture consists of three pillars crowned by domes and covered by ornament. Calligraphy has also been used here. On the first band is written "There is no God but God", on the second

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"Muhammad is the Apostle of God" and on the third "Ali is the regent (wali) of God". The artist of this miniature is very skilful in designing architecture especially religious buildings. He uses various kinds of patterns and tiles. He depicts curtains instead of doors.

The word which has commonly been used to apply to this particular body of water is hawd al-Kawthar. Hawd means "pool" but in fact this water is a sort of river. In the miniature it has been drawn like a pool which we usually see in Islamic painting located in front of a figure of a ruler or a prince. The main figure often occupies the central part of the illustration. For example, in Qusayr Amra, a fountain is facing the spectator as well as the prince. Also the Prophet Muhammad has been shown standing on the edge of a pool attended by Gabriel.

This folio illustrates a type of pool similar to that mentioned by al-Iṣfahānī in his account of al-Walīd b. Yazīd 126-126/743-744. Al-Iṣfahānī says that the Umayyad caliph sent to his favourite singer Maʿbad to come to Damascus. Before al-Walīd received him he ordered a pool to be filled with flower juice, musk and saffron and the edges to be furnished. (1)

Fol. 47v. Muhammad arrives at the door of Paradise, pl. 62.

This illustration should be put before the previous one because it represents one of the eight doors(1) which lead to Paradise with al-Kawthar fountain on the inside. The door is similar to an entrance of a mosque with its golden decoration and tiles of dark blue colour. The landscape looks like fertile agricultural land rather than Paradise. It consists of green stripes with green leaves and blue lands decorated by grass. Other stripes are variously coloured and probably represent rivers.

Fol. 49r. The Prophet sees a group of hūris: some are sitting on chairs and others are playing with each other, pl. 63.

Hūris are the pure women whom believers are promised in eternal life. Here they are engaged in sitting or holding each others' hands while one is picking a flower from a tree to offer it to another hūri. There is no doubt that this scene has been copied from a depiction of the royal court. Female slaves or princesses are often shown spending time in the gardens of a palace singing and dancing. This scene could also derive from a representation of a group of lovers sitting in a blooming garden amidst beautiful surroundings. The birds in Paradise are not the usual birds we see on earth. Al-Tirmidhī said

"Ibn Abī 'Umar told us, who heard it from Sufyān b. 'Uyynah through 'Amrū b. Dīndār from al-Zuhrī, from Ibn Ka'ab b. Mālik from his father who says that the Apostle of God, may the blessing of God be upon him, said that the souls of martyrs will be put inside green birds who eat from the fruit of Paradise or the trees of Paradise."(1) But here they are shown perched on the ḥūris' heads unaware of what is happening around them.

Nothing indicates that this scene represents Paradise on the holy day of Islam, apart from the flame halo which surrounds the heads of the Prophet and Gabriel. Friday in Islam is very important for the Prophet commanded Muslims to pray more on this day because it is the day when God created Ādam.(2) This is also the day when people pray in mosques in groups. Ibn 'Abbās says that on Friday the inhabitants of Paradise see God.(3) Yet the ḥūris here are enjoying themselves by riding camels and exchanging flowers, paying no attention to the Prophet who is visiting their place. The small stream running through green land in the first part of the miniature is often found in secular illustrations. Although Paradise has been promised as the residence of believers, we do not find any

single person who is enjoying a life of luxury in Paradise.

Fol. 51r. Muhammad sees a grand palace in Paradise. pl. 65.

Beside this palace stood a number of ḥūrīs. When Muhammad asked them who was the owner of the palace, they replied that it belonged to 'Umar. Séguys says that Muhammad here met "one of the first holy women of Islam", adding that this woman is the second wife of the Companion Talhah who converted her husband Talhah to Islam. (1) The Arabic text states that the Prophet Muhammad saw a palace and beside it he saw ḥūrīs. These pure women told him that the palace belonged to 'Umar.

This miniature also contradicts fol. 45v (pl. 61). This folio shows Shi'i influence by putting the name of 'Ali b. Abi Talib on the third building together with the names of God and Muhammad. In fol. 51r (pl. 65) it states that this palace is reserved for the Sunni Caliph 'Umar b. al-Khattāb.

The ḥūrīs are drawn inside an octagon, probably intended to represent entrance or the open court at the palace. But the artist does not seem clever enough to produce a successful miniature. Green bricks have already been used in fol. 7r (pl. 27) to cover the floor of the sacred mosque at Jerusalem.

All the miniatures of Paradise in this manuscript have many

1. Séguys, op. cit., p. 43.
elements in common, such as the small stream, trees or flowers, _huri_, wearing long dresses, blue sky and wide green expanses of land.

The third group is those pictures which represent hell. Fifteen illustrations show the unbelievers or those people who did not follow the precepts of Islam.

Hell contains seven layers. Muslims occupy the uppermost layer, followed in the second by Christians, then by Jesus, Sabeans, Magians, the Arabs who are unbelievers, and finally in the seventh are the people of Pharaoh. (1) Other descriptions of hell state that its fire is so strong that the ordinary fire of earth is only a small part out of seventy parts of the fire of Jahannam. (2) The unbeliever will be asked to descend on a mountain made of fire and whenever his hand or foot touches this mountain they will melt immediately. (3)

In hell there are 70,000 valleys. Within them there are 70,000 holes in which snakes live in order to bite the of the unbelievers. (4) In this dreadful state the unbelievers will certainly need water to cool them but they only find suppurating

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4. Ibid., p.245.
liquid (ṣadīq) which tears their bowels. Their drink was mentioned in the Qur'ān:

"(Are those who enjoy all this) like those who are immortal in the Fire and are given boiling water to drink so that it teareth their bowels?" (2)

"Lo! we have prepared for disbelievers Fire. Its tent encloseth them. If they ask for showers, they will be showered with water like to molten lead which burneth the faces. Calamitous the drink and ill the resting-place!" (3)

According to a recorded saying of the Prophet Muhammad the food of the inhabitants of hell will make them feel more hungry but they will never be given any food which satisfies them. (4)

In the group of miniatures in the Mi'raj-Namah, the most emphasised figures are those of the torturers themselves of which several types may be described. In the first miniature, fol.53r (pl.66), the figure looks almost human. He wears golden head-gear and a dress like that of angels in the manuscript.

2. SūrahXLVII, 15.
Besides these figures are those who work under the supervision of other terrifying-looking figures. They are half naked, their bodies coloured red, black or brown. (1) There are, thirdly, demons who have huge noses, strong and muscular bodies, round faces, clawed feet and sometimes a flame issuing from their mouths and heads. (2) The fourth type comprises those who have an oval shape and wrinkled faces. They have untidy hair or some form of head-gear or they are bald-headed with a flame issuing from their mouths, eyes and heads. (3)

Two sources might be suggested for these figures:

1. **Written Sources**

   This type can also be divided into two. The first such source is Islamic theology. For instance the Qur'ān describes the guardians of hell thus:

   "We have appointed only angels to be wardens of the fire, and their number have we made to be a stumbling-block for those who disbelieve."

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1. Fols. 53v (pl. 67), 55r (pl. 68), 61r (pl. 74), 65rB (pl. 78, lower part), 65v (pl. 79).
2. Fols. 53v (pl. 67), 57r (pl. 70), 61r (pl. 74), 61v (pl. 75), 63r (pl. 76).
3. Fols. 55v (pl. 69), 59r (pl. 72), 59r (pl. 73), 63v (pl. 77), 65rA (pl. 78, upper part).
They are nineteen in number\(^{1}\) and the reason for choosing this particular number is that human beings have nine physical and nine mental senses and one which is a link between the two. Accordingly nineteen guardians are needed to torture each sense.\(^{2}\)

The number 19 is repeated again in al-Qurtubi’s account given in the context of advising Muslims to recite the Basmalah because it has nineteen letters of which each letter will protect him from one of the nineteen angels of hell.\(^{3}\) In Islamic sources the guardians are always described as being angels but in the Mi`raj-Namah they are drawn so as to seem terrifying and ugly, so that nobody would believe that those figures are supposed to be angels. Only one figure is described as being ugly in Islamic theology (as well as in the minds of Muslims), and that is Satan (Shaytān or Iblīs). Muhammad ‘Abdah said that if somebody wants to express his disgust for something ugly he will say that it looks like "the face of the Shaytān or the head of the Shaytān". ‘Abdah added that while Satan is certainly invisible one can still feel that this must be the most ugly of creatures.\(^{4}\)

At the beginning Iblīs was an angel and guardian

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1. Surah LXXIV, 30.
of Paradise. (1) But when Allah asked him to kneel to Adam, he disobeyed His order. For this God cursed him by changing his appearance, (2) and put him in hell with those who might follow him on the Day of Judgement. Al-Bukhari adds that Iblis has the body of a pig, the face of a monkey, is beardless and instead of teeth has only one big piece of bone; he has four hands and holds an enormous bell. (3) He has many followers and those are snakes, ghilān and 'afārīt. (4) If we compare the figures of the Mi'rāj-Nāmah with the description given in theological texts about angels and satan, we will see that they are nearer to Satan than to angels, with their ugly faces, unfamiliar colours of the body and flames (probably because Satan is made of fire). On the other hand Iblis was the first person put in hell so he should be seen in hell, not as a guardian. Perhaps the artist unconsciously did not want to believe that angels, creatures of light and messengers between God and the Prophets, were the same who tortured people in hell. Accordingly we cannot say that the artist has depended on the accounts of Islamic theology. Muslim authors did not give full descriptions of the angels of hell.

The second type of written record is that of legendary tales in which the figures and description of ghūls and si'lāts have

2. Ibid.
4. Ibid., p.168.
been mentioned. Ghīlān appear in uninhabited and wild places such as deserts, and sometimes they appear to humans in various shapes to mislead them during their travels and so to cause them to perish.\(^{(1)}\) The sījāt (pl. sajālī) is identified as the witch of jinns. Muhammad 'Abdah said that a woman with an ugly face and bad manners is called sījāt.\(^{(2)}\) It is possible that these two images were in the mind of the artist when he set out to draw the guardians of Jahannam.

A similar figure to the demons of the Mi'raj-Nāmah is used elsewhere to represent a ghūl. In a manuscript of epic poetry dated 1397\(^{(3)}\), we see Rustam fighting with a ghūl or dīw. The demon is shown to be quite white in colour, with muscular arms, big face, huge nose, horns and clawed feet.

2. Visual Source

The second suggested source is visual, for quite possible the artist had already seen existing examples. Such monsters were even known in ancient civilizations. For instance, in Mesopotamian art a frequently encountered figure in palatial and cultic contexts is half human and half beast. People used to

\begin{enumerate}
\item 'Abdah, op. cit., vol. VII, p. 524.
\item Ibid., p. 525.
\end{enumerate}
believe that these figures had a magical power. Sometimes each figure represents a particular illness; people paint those figures on clay and wear them as a pendant for protection. (1) They can also be seen represented as guardians of the sacred tree of Sumer. (2)

In China we see these figures in sites under Buddhist influence. They are usually employed as symbolic guardians who carry weapons to protect the faith and decorate Buddhist temples. (3) Legendary tales associated with such creatures might still linger in the artist's mind when he came to paint the guardian of hell.

Fol. 53r. Muhammad meets the guardian of hell, pl. 66.

When the Prophet Muhammad arrived at the door of hell, he met the main guardian Malik. The Prophet greeted him but he did not reply till Gabriel told him who this person was. Malik is described as being rough and one who never smiles. (4) When Muhammad asked him to show him Jahannam he refused but he heard a voice ordering him to obey Muhammad.

In fol. 53r (pl. 66) we see Malik standing holding a hooked

1. Encyclopedia of World Art, IV, s.v. "Demonology".
3. Encyclopedia of World Art, IV, s.v. "Demonology".
4. Ibn ‘Abbās, op. cit., pp. 11-12
spear. He is the only figure among the guardians of hell in this manuscript who has a human look. Although it has been mentioned that Satan is waiting for Muhammad during his ascension at the door of hell, the artist certainly did not mean to illustrate Satan with Muhammad in this case. The figure here does not even look like a demon and he is the only one who is represented as a human. These horrifying images are intended only to show the terrible life of the damned in Jahannam. Besides, no Islamic source states that the Prophet of Islam met Satan in heaven.

Fol. 53v. Muhammad sees the tree of Zaqqum. p. 67.

This miniature illustrates the tree of Zaqqum, which is planted in hell. Its prickles are spears and its fruits are the heads of demons (‘afāرت) and lions. ‘According to the text this tree will be the punishment of the persons who banned others from doing ill while they themselves did so. This tree was mentioned in the Qur‘ān:

"Is this better as a welcome, or the tree of Zaqqum? Lo! We have appointed it a torment for wrongdoers. Lo! it is a tree that springeth in the heart of hell. Its crop is as it were the heads of devils." (2)

1. Encyclopedia of World Art, IV, s.v. "Demonology".
According to Islamic sources it will be the food of all unbelievers; God did not specify which kind of people would be punished by this tree.

This group of people is mentioned elsewhere in the Qur'ān:

"Enjoin ye righteousness upon mankind while ye yourselves forget (to practise it)? And ye are readers of the scripture! Have ye then no sense?" (1)

Al-Rāzī has suggested several interpretations for what was meant by the "good deeds" (a‘māl al-bir). He says that al-Sadī stated that these are the people who tell others to obey the instructions of God while they themselves disobey Him. Ibn Jurayj states that these people order Muslims to pray and give alms but themselves never did either. It may also be that those being threatened here are those who ask people to follow Muhammad but they themselves do not believe in him. (2) Anas states that Muhammad during his ascension to heaven saw people whose lips were being cut by clippers made of fire. Muhammad asked Gabriel about them and he told him that these were people who advised others to do good things but did not themselves follow suit. (3) Al-Sha'bī

1. Sūrah II, 44.
3. Ibid., p. 47.
states that a group from Paradise will ask a group from hell why they have been put in hell, while they enter Paradise because of their advice, and that the group from hell will reply: "We used to ask people to do good things but we have never done it ourselves." (1)

The fruit, branches and trunk of the tree are excellently rendered. A similar type of tree can be found in a late Timurid Shāh-Nāmah (2). We see Iskandar standing in front of the talking tree. Branches terminate in heads of beasts like a monkey, horse, lion and dragon as well as in a human head.

Here, we see the demons cutting the tongues of the unbelievers. Since their tongues had led them to hell, it follows that this part of the body should be tortured.

Fol. 55r. The tormenting of those who assume a false appearance, pl.68.

Al-Tirmidhī records the view of various persons that those most severely punished on the Day of Judgement will be those who show different faces, (3) but he does not specify the particular punishment reserved for this group. The torturers

are cutting the flesh of the men by clippers.

Fol. 55v. The punishment of those who take usury (ribā), pl. 69.

Passing by hell, Muhammad saw enormous men with huge bellies. Gabriel explained to Muhammad that those people used to take *ribā* (1). We see here the guardian of hell explaining this to Muhammad, while the evildoers are sitting surrounded by flames. They look as if they are complaining of their misery to Muhammad.

Fol. 57r. The punishment of those who fabricate falsehood against Muslims in order to take their wealth, and of others who foment riot among Muslims, pl. 70.

Ibn 'Abbās states that the Prophet during his ascensions saw men overthrown by fiery stones which fell in their mouths and eyes. Gabriel identified them as those that make trouble between people. (2) Demons are stabbing the men with spears, a punishment which is quite different from those specified by the theologians.

Fol. 57v. The tormenting of those who do not pray sincerely, pl. 71.

Muhammad saw this group in hell, their heads being crushed by rocks. They were described by Gabriel as having heavy heads.

for praying.¹ The punishment which is shown in this miniature is hanging men by hooks around their necks and wearing clothes which are in flames while the main guardian left them inside and went out to welcome the Prophet.

Fol.59r. The torment of women who did not cover their hair and consorted illegally with men. pl.72.

In this illustration women are hanged from their hair by hooks above the flames. This punishment agrees with the information of Ibn 'Abbâs.²

Fol.59v. The torture of women who insulted and disobeyed their husbands besides committing other sins. pl.73.

Ibn 'Abbâs states that the Prophet Muhammad saw women hanging from their legs inside a fiery oven. He asked Gabriel who those women were and was told that these were the women who had insulted their husbands.³

Even someone unfamiliar with any of the three languages used in the manuscript can easily see that these women had abused their tongues because this is the organ being punished in the miniature. The artist represents this scene three times in all.

3. Ibid.
The punishment of men who seized the wealth of orphans.

A prohibition on taking the money of orphans is expressed in the Qur'ān:

"Lo! Those who devour the wealth of orphans wrongfully, they do but swallow fire into their bellies, and they will be exposed to burning flame."(1)

Muhammad considered this sin as one of the seven violations (mubiqāt) in Islam.(2) Ibn al-Jawzī mentions the severe punishment awaiting these evildoers - fire will issue from their mouths, noses and eyes.(3)

Demons are giving these people a drink. Séguy suggests that this is the brew of the tree of Zagqum.(4) Their bodies are shown brown in colour, perhaps to indicate that they are burning. There is a tradition that the inhabitants of hell will be recognized by their black faces and blue eyes.(5) They first cry in tears, then afterwards they cry in blood till their cheeks

1. Surah IV, 10.
become like grooves.\(^1\)

However, none of these descriptions has been followed by the artist here. Throughout this part of the manuscript punishments are liable as much to depictions completely at variance with the text as to slight divergences from the text.

Fol. 61v. The punishment of women who bore false witness about paternity and thus misdirected inheritance. pl. 75.

The miniature here depicts a familiar scene. The black background is painted to divide the figures of Muhammad, Gabriel and Burāq from the flames in which the women are tormented by hanging them from their breasts.

Fol. 63r. The torment of the men who did not give alms. pl. 76.

God had ordered Muslims to give alms regularly. As the Qur'ān states:

"On the day when it will (all) be heated in the fire of hell, and their foreheads and their flanks and their backs will be branded therewith (and it will be said unto them): Here is that which ye hoarded for yourselves. Now taste of what ye used to hoard."\(^2\)

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2. Sūrah IX, 35.
Abū Hurayrat said that he heard the Prophet saying that on the
Day of Resurrection God will put heated pieces from hell on the
forehead and backs of those who did not give zakāt. (1) In Sharh
Sahih al-Bukhārī, the author says that these men will be burnt
by hot stone from Jahannam. (2) According to him the wealth of
anybody who does not give alms will turn on the Day of Judgement
into poisoned snakes which torment their owners (3) by strangling
them. (4) The Prophet Muhammad said that if someone’s wealth
comprised beasts like camels, cows, sheep and so on, and no zakāt
was given on them, the punishment of their owners would be
different. For on the Last Day these beasts will be much bigger
and enormous in size and their former owners would be trodden under
the feet of their animals and butted with their horns. (5) In this
miniature the wealth has been transformed into red millstones
surrounding the necks of the people who are tormented under the
supervision of a terrifying black figure at the centre of hell.

Fol. 63v. The torture of persons who used to visit and honour
people of high rank. pl. 77.

Muhammad warned Muslims to avoid being hypocrites because
there is a valley in hell called jub al-hazan which is reserved
for the hypocrites who visit princes and the unjust only because

3. Ibid., vol. XVIII, p. 264.
5. Ibid., pp. 544-5.
they are powerful people. (1) We see the sinners chained by their necks, hands and legs. The hypocrites look as if they are captives taken from a conquered city.

Fol. 65r(A). The punishment of persons who bore false witness and told lies against others. pl. 78

This is one of the great sins (Kabā‘ir) in Islam. (2) Those in torment have the heads of pigs with long fangs and tongues. They stand in two rows looking at Muhammad who is coming towards them.

Fol. 65r(B) Various kinds of tortures and suffering are being inflicted in this miniature, such as beating, suffocation and decapitation. There is no explanation for this part of the miniature in the Arabic text as published by Séguy. But according to her interpretation this punishment is "inflicted on those who performed no good acts". (3)

Fol. 65v. The punishment of people who did not stop drinking wine. pl. 79

The punishment for these people is mentioned by the famous muhaddith Ibn ‘Abbās who says that he heard from the Prophet that

3. Séguy, op. cit., pl. 56, part B.
those who died and were still drinking wine will be equated with idol worshippers. These sinners are also given something to drink by a red demon as in fol. 61r (pl. 74). The only new element we see here is the two basins on the right-hand side of the miniature.

Fol. 67v. The torture of people who have bad manners and are proud and disdainful of others, pl. 80.

As the text of the manuscript says, "on the Day of Judgement God will torment them severely by putting them between snakes and scorpions". Al-Tirmidhī states that whoever is proud will not enter paradise. In the hadīth collections snakes and scorpions are mentioned. Each snake has about seventy jugs of poison and the scorpions are the size of mules who bite wildly but al-Mundhīrī did not mention what kind of sin these people had committed to be punished by these beasts.

The manuscript of the Mi'raj-Namah is a masterpiece for which iconographic parallels are hard to find. But it is likely that the artist depended on many sources to produce such a work. The first source seems to have been the manuscript of Jāmi'al-tawārikh

3. Al-Mundhīrī, op. cit., vol. VI, pp. 244-5.
in Edinburgh (710/1310-11). In pl. 5 which represents the Mi'raj of Muḥammad, the artist of the Edinburgh manuscript had produced certain useful ideas such as that the Prophet on that night rode a beast with the head of a female, long black hair and the body of a riding beast. Moreover, although all the written sources of Islam mention that the colour of Būrāq is white, the first painter of this subject whose work survives draws it as reddish with dark red dots. The artist of the Mi'raj-Nāmah also followed this first artist in depicting Būrāq with a dotted body. The next element is the appearance of angels in that particular incident and indeed we see that in all the miniatures of the Mi'raj-Nāmah, angels appear in all the scenes. Pls. 25 and 54 in the Mi'raj-Nāmah, for instance, are similar to pl. 5 of the Jāmi' al-tawārīkh. In pl. 54, Muḥammad is surrounded by angels who offer him various drinks like milk, wine and water and in pl. 25 some other angels are carrying censers, dishes and a flag. In pl. 5 the artist depicts only one bowl but that is also carried by an angel. Essentially, therefore, these three scenes are closely related. Būrāq in the same miniature is engaged in carrying a copy of the Qur'ān and instead of the flag in pl. 25 we see the figure growing from the tail of Būrāq carrying a spear and shield.

The second source seems to have been the manuscript of al-Bīrūnī (707/1307). In pl. 11 the artist depicts the figure of Muḥammad and also another figure of a Prophet. We see Muḥammad
and Jesus both wearing long robes with white turbans on their heads; both are bearded. In a group of miniatures in the manuscript of Mi'raj-Namah, we see that the Prophet met several other Prophets (pls. 26, 27, 30, 35b, 38, 39, 42a, 45 and 48). In these plates Prophets were represented in the same way as the figure of Jesus in pl. 11. They are bearded and wear long robes and white head-dresses. They were not represented in a different way from pl. 11, e.g. sitting on a throne surrounded by angels and receiving Muhammad. They are all equal. They wear the same type of dress and share similar attributes.

The third probable source is the group of mi'raj miniatures in Istanbul which were done in the 14th century, possibly by Ahmad Musa. Because the text of this group is different from the Mi'raj-Namah’s text we see some differences in the scenes. But both show Muhammad visiting various places in the heavens, surrounded by angels, and led by Gabriel but not mounted on Buraaq. Pls. 21 and 31 both show the angel who has the aspect of a cock. The cock in these two miniatures is drawn very large, has a white colour and stands either on a chair (pl. 21) or on a platform (pl. 31). Pl. 22 represents Gabriel introducing the Prophet to a group of angels. This scene has been repeated in the miniatures which show Muhammad meeting angels in various heavens (pls. 33, 37, 41 and 43) in which we see angels introduced to the Prophet by Gabriel who stands between them and Muhammad. A second group which is represented in the works of Istanbul and Paris is those pictures which represent paradise (pls. 19, 20, 61, 62, 63, 64 and 65). They are fairly similar, and
show Gabriel leading Muḥammad and welcomed by the women of Paradise (ḥūris). In pl. 19, for instance, we see the Prophet mounted on Gabriel while an angel with two wings opens the door of Paradise for them. In the lower part a big tree is represented while ḥūris are engaged in talking. In the lower part of pl. 20, the Prophet is also shown with Gabriel looking through a window while another four ḥūris appear in a second window. Ḥāmid Muṣā might have given an idea to the artists of the Mi'rāj-Nāmah manuscript about the scenes of Paradise such as the appearance of buildings, gardens and the ḥūris. The latter have either a high head-dress or ordinary crowns and are engaged in talking. Pl. 62 represents the door of Paradise, but the door here is not an ordinary door and it is similar to mosque entrances. An angel appears welcoming the Prophet. The rest of the Paradise representations in the Paris manuscript are nearly similar. They all share elements such as the blue sky and a green landscape decorated with flowers and trees. The ḥūris here too are engaged in various activities like talking, holding hands, climbing trees and exchanging flowers. There is a strong likelihood that the artist of the Paradise scenes had seen some garden scenes which are depicted in secular manuscripts. They too show tall, slim females, wearing long dresses and short tunics and with long black hair. The background is normally a wide green landscape ornamented with colourful flowers and blooming trees.

The fourth source is of course the text which is found in the

manuscript of the Mi'raj-Namah. The main text is written in Uighur in which the author describes in detail the journey of Muhammad to the heavens. Verses describe the journey in summary and are written in Arabic, Turkish and sometimes Persian; they are used like titles for the miniatures. In pl. 24, for example, the Arabic text mentions that Gabriel appeared to Muhammad and told him that God wanted to meet him on that night. The Uighur text gives full details about this particular stage. It says that the Prophet was in the house of um Hani when Gabriel came to tell him that God had asked for him. The archangel brought him a beast while Michael brought him a jar filled with water from the fountain of al-Kawthar. Muhammad did his ablution using the water and later Gabriel washed his wings with it so that God would not put him in hell on the Day of Judgment. Muhammad continued that when he left the house he found Michael holding the reins of Buraq, surrounded by a large number of angels; he then mounted Buraq heading to the Aqsa mosque(1). The artist in pl. 24 has drawn the Prophet sleeping while Gabriel is waking him up. Also, in pl. 27, the Arabic text states "Muhammad prays in Bayt al-Maqdis leading the Prophets mentioned before (Ibrahim, Musa and 'Isa). May the blessing of God be upon them". The author of the Uighur text says that the Prophet met all the Prophets including Ibrahim, Musa and 'Isa who informed him that God would give him whatever he asked tonight and they all congratulated him. Then Ibrahim asked him to be their Imam and he led them in prayer(2). In Pl. 28 the Arabic version reads 'leaving Bayt al-Maqdis, the Prophet, may

2. Ibid, pp 34.
the blessing of God be upon him, saw the ladder which surrounds heaven and also he saw the Black Sea which is called al-Kawthar while he stands on air. The Uighur text says that the ladder of the mi'raj was brought to Muhammad. This ladder is between earth and heaven. It continues that the Prophet saw a huge sea and asked Gabriel about it. Gabriel told him that it was called al-Kawthar and that only God knew the width of this sea. The scene is divided into two sections. The upper part shows a blue sky with Chinese clouds and Gabriel appears at the front leading Muhammad who is shown on the back of Burāq. The second part shows the Black Sea of the sea of al-Kawthar. In pl. 29 the Arabic script above the miniature says "Arrival of the Prophet, may the blessing of God be upon him, at the heaven which has the colour of turquoise and is created from the stone of mīnā which is 500 years thick". The background is painted in light blue decorated with Chinese clouds, while Gabriel holds a flag and leads Muhammad. The Uighur text accompanying this miniature gives more details about this stage. It mentions that when they arrived at the first heaven, which has the colour of turquoise, Gabriel knocked at the door, and was asked who was knocking. Gabriel replied: "Gabriel". The man asked, "Who is with you?" He replied "Muhammad". The reply came: "Did they send for him?" He replied: "Yes". The reply came: "Welcome to him". The door man opened and Muhammad saw a large number of angels who saluted him. In the first heaven Muhammad also met Ādam. The Arabic text mentions this meeting in a few words only. The Uighur text says that Muhammad met Ādam who

1. Mirādi-nâme, p.4.
2. The word heaven is missing here.
also saluted him and Muhammad saw two groups of people on both sides of Ādam. When Ādam turned to his right he smiled and when he turned to his left he wept. The Prophet asked Gabriel about this scene and he told him that the people on the right were those who had done good deeds and those on the left were the people who had done bad deeds.

This first group of miniatures in the Mi'raj-Nāmah represents most of the illustrations (pps. 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 34, 35, 37, 38, 39, 42b, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 60, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79 and 80.) In this group the artists followed the Uighūr text which gave them more details about these scenes while the Arabic script was used as a title for the miniatures but not to explain in detail what happened at each stage. This fact can be seen very clearly in the illustrations which represent scenes from hell. The Arabic texts mention only the sins of the people who are put in hell but not the punishments. In pl. 68, for example, the punishment is not stated in the Arabic text but the artist draws exactly what the author says in the Uighūr text. The latter states that the Prophet saw a group of angels cutting the skin and flesh of men and feeding it to them. The Prophet asked Gabriel about those people and Gabriel replied that they were hypocrites(2). It happens again in pl. 69, for instance, where the Arabic text says that those people are those who practised ribā (usury), while the Uighūr script states that the Prophet saw a group of men who have big bellies

1. Mirād-j-nāmah, pp. 4 - 5.
2. Ibid., pp 22-3.
sitting in the fire of hell. Muhammad asked Gabriel who those people were and Gabriel said that those men used to practise ribā against people. In the miniature we see several men, half naked and with big bellies, sitting in the middle of a fire. In the rest of the miniatures the same thing happens repeatedly for we see that the artists followed the information given by the author of the Uighūr text.

In a different group of miniatures (pls. 33, 35a, 36, 40, 41, 42a, 43, 51, 58, 59 and 61) which illustrate various scenes we realise that artists did not follow what was mentioned in the Arabic or the Uighūr texts. In pl. 33 which illustrates the arrival of Muhammad at the second heaven which is created from white pearl, the artist depicted this scene on a light blue background decorated with golden gems. In pl. 36 the Prophet arrives at the white sea and here we also do not see any trace of a white sea. In pl. 41, the fifth heaven is made of gold but the artist depicts only the blue background and angels saluting Muhammad who is shown riding on Burāq. In pl. 43, the background should be drawn in white because this heaven is created from white pearl. In pl. 61, the text above the miniature mentions that the Prophet saw near the fountain of al-Kawthar three domes made of ruby, chrysolite and pearl. The artist indeed drew three domes but in different colours and decorated with fine ornament. In these plates we see that the artist had avoided the colour white and this fact can also be seen in the colour of Burāq which should be white. There is

perhaps no other reason for avoiding the white colour than that the
artists did not want to use a plain and pale colour in important
places of the miniatures such as backgrounds, domes, and the whole
body of Burāq. Also, in most of the Mi'raj-Nāmah miniatures we
realize that the artists used very bright colours like red, light
blue, orange and the like. In pl. 43, although the sixth heaven
should have a golden background, we see that the artist did not use
the colour gold because this particular colour has a special sig-
nificance in this manuscript. We see this in pls. 47 and 60 in
which the artist used gold for the background because pl. 47
represents the arrival of Muhammad at the seventh heaven in which
God is and pl. 60 shows Muhammad kneeling near the throne of God.

The third group of paintings in which the artist did not follow
the information given by the author is represented in pl. 35a. In
this plate the Prophet meets an angel which has seventy heads; in
each head there is seventy tongues. In pl. 40 also Muhammad saw an
angel who has seventy heads. In pl. 51 the same angel is depicted
again with another angel whose eyes are so wide that if the seas of
the whole world were poured into one eye it would leave the other
unfilled. In pl. 58 the Prophet saw 70,000 veils which are made of
light, fire, ruby, pearls and gold. Behind each veil there are
70,000 angels. In pl. 59 Muḥammad saw 70,000 tents near the throne
of God. Each tent is 70 times larger than the world and the distance
between each tent is 70,000 years; in each tent there are 50,000
angels. In all these descriptions the artists were unable to follow
all the details simply because it is impossible to illustrate 70,000
heads with 70,000 tongues, or an eye so wide that if the seas of the

world pour in it, it would leave it unfilled, or even depict 70,000 tents or 70,000 veils in such a small space on these miniatures. However the artist did not look for a foreign source to illustrate his scenes. They drew huge angels' heads and also a number of tents and veils in various colours.

Finally, we have a single miniature which is different from the previous groups. In pl. 42a the Arabic text says that the Prophet Muhammad met Isma‘īl, Ishāq and Lūṭ but in the miniature we see four persons standing in front of Muhammad. The Uighūr text states that Muḥammad met Isma‘īl, Ishāq, Ḥārūn and Lūṭ. This again proves that the artist had illustrated his scene according to the Uighūr text but not the Arabic.

We can conclude that in this Mi‘raj-Namah manuscript the artists tried to follow every single description given by the author in the text. The figure of the Prophet Muhammad is fixed here. He is represented in all the scenes as a slim figure, he wears a green robe and white turban, and has a beard and a moustache. But the artists of the 15th century manuscript did not reach this stage of stability and maturity only by chance, for the effigy of Muhammad was already known to them from the work of 14th century artists.
CHAPTER V

MI'RAJ SCENES IN SECULAR MANUSCRIPTS
Why artists chose the \textit{mi'ra\textdegree} \\

The first surviving \textit{mi'ra\textdegree} miniatures adorn the manuscript of \textit{Jami\textsuperscript{'} al-tawarikh} in Edinburgh University Library (MS. Arab. 20), a primarily secular text. After c. 1406 a series of \textit{mi'ra\textdegree} scenes start to appear, often as frontispieces, although there is no link between such frontispieces and the topic of the manuscript. \textit{Mi'ra\textdegree} scenes generally appear either in the first folios or in the following few pages, but there are exceptions in which this subject appears only after several earlier and unrelated illustrations. In its typical iconography the \textit{mi'ra\textdegree} scene represents the Prophet Muhammad mounted on the heavenly beast, Burâq, guided by Gabriel and surrounded by several figures of angels who carry various objects such as jewellery, candles, censers, flowers or fruit. The whole scene usually has a blue background with golden clouds of Chinese derivation.\footnote{Presumably their iconography originated in Ilkhan\textsuperscript{d} illustrations of the \textit{Jami\textsuperscript{'} al-tawarikh}.} According to Islamic tradition, the Prophet Muhammad did not meet any angels until he arrived at the first heaven. Other records say that when the Prophet reached the sacred mosque of Jerusalem angels offered him three cups of wine, water and milk. A third account recorded also by Ibn \textquoteleft Abb\textacute{a}s states that when

\footnote{1. Probably the blue background was intended to represent the place between earth and heaven or the sky itself.}
Muhammad and Gabriel ascended on the heavenly ladder (mi‘rāj) the Prophet saw a huge number of angels who were praising God. He also saw stars suspended from the sky, the smallest one bigger than enormous mountains on earth. (1)

In later versions of the scene the number of angels increased while the angels who in the Jāmi‘ al-tawārikh open the door of the first heaven or carry a sword, a copy of the Qur‘ān, and a cup, are now carrying vessels, dishes, flowers, jewellery and so on. Such, then, briefly stated, is the content of the classical mi‘rāj scene. It remains to discover why this subject ousted earlier Islamic traditions of frontispiece illustration.

I. Earlier frontispiece traditions in book painting in Islam

Earlier frontispieces may conveniently be categorised according to the persons depicted in them. Although these illustrations represent different people of various ranks, they have certain elements in common. There is, for example, a lack of clues which would make it possible to identify these people positively.

Clearly, however, they are persons of importance. Their representations adorn the first pages of the codices, and the painter stresses their importance by traditional devices.

For instance, these people occupy the central part of the

framed miniatures; they are larger than those around them; they are flanked by angels; and they sit on a throne or high chair. (1)

Analysis of selected examples will clarify the main features of this figural tradition. In order to give the fullest possible context for the development of mi'râj iconography, the descriptions and authors of rulers in Islamic and Byzantine manuscripts will be considered, as well as the descriptions of Solomon hunting scenes and a prince sitting in a garden in Islamic manuscripts.

It will be convenient to begin with the earliest surviving Islamic frontispiece, that to the Book of Antidotes, Kitâb al-Dirvâq, (2) dated Rabi' al-Awwal 595/January 1199. The frontispiece of this book represents a female dignitary depicted in a red medallion which consists of the entwined bodies of dragons. The female is shown cross-legged and wearing Turkish clothes. She sits on a cushion and is crowned. She holds a circle with her two hands, and is attended by two small female figures who appear at both sides. A second square frame surrounds the first. This has a pale yellow background and four figures, probably dancers, are drawn at the four sides of the illustration. They wear colourful dresses covering the upper parts of their bodies. Long trousers with an opening at the side show their legs. A piece of cloth surrounds their hips and a belt is suspended at the front. They wear varied jewellery which adorns their necks, wrists and hair. A folded handkerchief is attached.

1. Haloes are not included here because they were used for many other figures as well.

to the bracelets around their wrists.

2. Next in date come several volumes of the Kitāb al-Aghānī written by Abu'l-Faraj al-Isfahānī and now found in various libraries, e.g., at Cairo, Copenhagen and Istanbul.

2(i) Volume II is dated 614/1217 and probably originated in Mosul. The frontispiece has a gold background. Its upper part represents a number of females playing different musical instruments such as the harp, lute, tambourine, flute. Below this is a band of floral patterns. Then female figures occupy the next tier down. They clap their hands and play musical instruments. The landscape contains three ducks and three fishes.

Hamīd states that the text which follows this miniature bears the title "The story of the life and the death of 'Uday b. Zayd". The story mentions that 'Uday was a Christian poet who lived before Islam. He married Hind, the daughter of the King of Hīra. But al-Nuʿmān, the father of Hind, killed his son-in-law. The young widow in her grief decided to enter a convent, preferring to be a nun rather than a princess. (2)

2(ii) Volume IV of the same text is dated 1217 and was executed in Mosul. This volume has a frontispiece depicting an enthroned

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1. Now in Cairo, Egyptian National Library, Adab 579.
ruler. He holds a cup in his right and a handkerchief in his left hand. He is attended by companions who carry a bowl with fruits, a fly-whisk and other objects. Five other figures are engaged in playing musical instruments. The story describes Tuways, a famous singer of Madīnah who lived during the Umayyad period. Tuways decided to dye his hands and play the tambourine in case he saw the Umayyad governor of Madīnah, Abān b. 'Uthmān.\(^1\)

2(iii) Volume XI bears the year 614/1217 and was produced in Mosul.\(^2\) This illustration has been analysed in Chapter II above. It is believed that it depicts the meeting between the Prophet Muhammad and the Christians of Najrān. This frontispiece shows a man taller than the other figures sitting at the left holding a sword and wearing a ring. He wears a blue robe decorated with golden scrolls. A band can be seen on his arm with the name of Badr al-Dīn Lū'lu'. Two smaller figures stand in front of him while two winged figures appear at the top of the miniature.\(^3\)

2(iv) Volume XVII of the manuscript is also probably from Mosul and is dated 615/1218-9.\(^4\) In this volume the author tells the story of Mukhāriq who boasted to his friend that he could enchant a gazelle with his sweet voice. Al-Isfahānī notes that while Mukhāriq was singing a gazelle stopped to listen, so Mukhāriq won

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3. For details see Chapter II.
the golden bow which his friend had wagered. The main figure is enthroned, wearing the same blue robe; a cloth in the shape of a crescent surrounds his head. He has a round face and slanted eyes and is bearded. His head-gear is of fur. In his hand is a golden bow. On his right arm a band gives the name of Badr al-Dīn, and on the left Lu’lu’ ‘Abd Allāh. Two females are depicted on the upper part of the illustration; have black plaits decorated with pearls and golden bands around their foreheads. Each one holds a handkerchief in the shape of a crescent. Another group of females surrounds the main figure.

It tells among other things of Ta’bat Sharan, a pre-Islamic poet. He was given the title Ta’bat Sharan because when he was once asked to bring something good to his house he placed some serpents in a sack and put it under his arm. The miniature which adorns the frontispiece of this section shows a person mounting a horse. The man and the horse together occupy about three-quarters of the illustration. Diminutive females are shown around him; they seem to carry sticks. Again two figures of angels appear at the upper part of the miniature and the poet has an inscription band on his arm.

2. Istanbul, Millet Kütüphanesi, Peyzullah 1565.
3. Hamīd, M.S., p.177.
4. They cannot be swords because of their colour.
Volume XI is dated Ramadān 616/November-December 1219.\(^1\)
It includes the story of Namīr b. Tawlab, a well-known cavalier of the pre-Islamic period.\(^2\)

He has the same features and dress as the previous figures, and he is shown mounting his horse with a falcon at rest on his hand. Some scholars have identified these figures as being the persons whose life stories follow their representations in the volumes in question. Others have suggested that they are used as symbols of the sovereign himself. Ettinghausen says that they are representations of one dignitary showing him in various activities like receiving messengers, being entertained by boon companions, heading a hunting expedition and so on.\(^3\) He adds that the similarity between the incident mentioned by the author and the position of this figure is only because this particular story gave the artist an idea to draw the figure of his patron engaged in an activity similar to that described in the story.\(^4\)

There are many points to support this theory. Firstly, if we accept the suggestion that each miniature illustrates the topic which follows, we have also to accept that the representation of the eleventh volume represents the Prophet Muhammad being questioned by the Christian envoys of Najrān. For it is

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1. In the Royal Library in Copenhagen, ar. Ms. 168.
2. Hamīd, M.S., p.179.
4. Ibid., p.63.
unbelievable that the artist intended to draw other figures of poets, singers and so on as frontispieces for the other volumes and that here instead he painted the effigy of Badr al-Dīn Lu'lu'. Secondly, the name of Badr al-Dīn Lu'lu' should be intended for the figure himself because it is unlikely that the artist should put the name of his patron on the arms of people who have lower rank than Badr al-Dīn. In addition, he wrote the name of the dignitary not at the top of the miniature or at the head of the figure but on the arms. Thirdly, it is not likely that the artist who knows how to dress the figures of the females in luxurious, different and well-decorated clothes using various colours should use only one type of dress and ornament for the main person in each picture if that person is supposed to represent various people.

3. A version of the Kalīlah wa Dimnah, probably Syrian, is dated 1200-20. (1) The series of miniatures which represent birds and animals also starts with a scene of an enthroned prince on a red background flanked by two persons while the upper storey shows representations of a bird and plants.

4. A copy of a book devoted principally to describing animals, Na'at al-Hayawan, was copied at Baghdad and is dated 1230. (2) This manuscript has more than one frontispiece. One of them represents an enthroned female sitting cross-legged on a high chair. She is crowned and has a halo around her head. She is flanked by

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2. London, British Museum, Or. 2784.
two figures who are also shown haloed. Another illustration shows a similar scene of an enthroned dignitary attended by two figures. (1)

5. A version of the *Magāmāt al-Ḥarīrī* known as the Schefer Harīr was produced at Baghdad in 634/1237. (2) This manuscript starts with two illustrations. The first shows an enthroned lady who sits with crossed legs and is engaged in conversation with the figures around her. On the left and right two angels appear. The main scene is framed by a floral border. Hamīd suggests that this lady might be the wife of the person for whom this manuscript was executed, especially if we bear in mind the elements which distinguish her from the rest of the figures. These features include her size, head-gear, throne and also the two angels. They all emphasise the importance of this lady. (3)

A second frontispiece is to be seen on the opposite page; it represents a male who sits on a throne and it shares the same elements as the female figure.

6. A courtly scene is to be found also in the Book of Antidotes, *Kitāb al-Dirvāq*, a book of 13th century date probably from Mosul. (4) The frontispiece is divided into three registers on a red background.

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1. Hamīd, M.S., p.206, fig.39.
4. Vienna, Nationalbibliothek, A.P.10, fol.1 recto.
In the upper part we see a hunting expedition of six figures chasing two deer. They are accompanied by dogs and falcons. In the middle tier the artist depicts the main scene of a court headed by a ruler sitting on the left hand side on a cushion. He sits under a frieze, is haloed and wears a headdress similar to that which is worn by the main figures in the Aḥānī frontispieces. Two attendants are holding fly-whisks and a third figure is grilling meat, while a vase with flowers, a fruit bowl and vessels probably containing beverages appear at the back of the illustration. In the uppermost tier four figures are shown working in a garden. One of them carries a spade and another is digging. At the right and left side four persons are carrying a cup, duck, falcon and probably a spear among other objects. In the lower register a group of male and female riders appear. Details of dress indicate that they are Arabs, especially the figures of the females who are shown half-veiled and riding camels. The men are mounted on horses and engaged in talking to each other. The artist of this miniature has used similar elements for both sexes, such as the dresses, four plaits, haloes and so on. Nevertheless, one can distinguish between males and females by the beard, moustaches and the head-dresses.

7. The final manuscript in the category of frontispieces with ruler portraits is a copy of the Maqāmāt al-Harīrī, produced probably in Egypt in 1334 A.D.1 The young prince sits on a throne, holding a cup in his right hand and a handkerchief in his left. He wears a turban; his face like that of the rest of

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1. Vienna, Nationalbibliothek, A.F.9, fol.1 recto.
the figures shows central Asian features. The prince seems unaware of the acrobat who is depicted at the front of this miniature. A group of people who play musical instruments or carry various objects surround the throne of the dignitary. (1)

This brief list, then, gives a general conspectus of the tradition of ruler portrait that had become established by 1350 for use in the frontispiece of Islamic illustrated books.

A second figure who frequently occupies the first pages of Islamic manuscripts is the author, usually giving a lesson to his students. A brief check list of important early examples follows.

1. Perhaps the first book in this category is the Materia Medica (Khwāss al-‘Aqāqīr) of Dioscorides, (2) produced in Cairo in 626/1229. (3)

The frontispiece occupies two folios in which three persons are depicted against a golden background.

In fol. 1 verso we see a bearded and haloed person who wears a turban and a robe of many folds and who sits on a high chair. Although the chair looks very simple (it is without any decoration

2. The name of the artist has been mentioned on two plants which are depicted on p.29, recto and verso. The name is ʿAbd al-Jabbār b. ʿAlī al-Maqqāsh ab-s-?? (Hamīd, M.S., p.184, figs.21-2)
or canopy) we realize that this person is important. This figure stretches out his right hand while his left foot rests on a small footstool, and in front of him appears a table. The main person looks towards another two figures who appear in folio 2 recto.

The second miniature has the same golden background and similar architectural elements. The person in the middle seems young as he is drawn unbearded. A white turban adorns his head and he wears a striped robe. He bows his body and head in a very humble way and carries an open book. The figure behind him looks middle-aged. He carries a book in his hand.

Ettinghausen notes that this scene has been treated before in Byzantine Dioscorides codices, such as the one done for the Princess Juliana Anicia before 512 A.D. (1) Dioscorides himself is shown both in the Islamic manuscript and on the opening folio of the Byzantine codex. The Christian artist shows him frontally with his feet on a stool. The principal difference between these two illustrations is that Dioscorides is bare-headed in the Christian manuscript while he wears a turban in the Islamic illustration. A further significant difference is that beside Dioscorides in the Christian miniature is a dog and a woman, not another man or a student; she holds a representation of a medical plant. According to some beliefs, the dog was used to separate the bad part of this herb from the useful. (2)

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2. Ibid.
Ettinghausen explains that in the Islamic version the dog and woman were omitted because the former was unclean ritually and the latter was improperly dressed as well as being "inappropriate as a source of inspiration". This seems a very likely explanation. Although other medieval Islamic representations of dogs may be cited, these animals occur as a necessary part of the illustration. One illustration is entitled "A mad dog biting a man." The second is part of a herbal in which a hunting scene is depicted; a dog is seen chasing a deer. Ettinghausen warns against assuming that the double frontispiece derives directly from the Juliana Anicia codex. Hamid thinks that the person in the centre of this illustration with what he calls Egyptian features is the painter himself, giving as his reason that this manuscript was executed in Egypt. He also believes that the person who sits on the chair in fol.1 verso represents al-Malik al-Kämil Muhammad who was a Kurd. The figure certainly bears no resemblance to the "Egyptian" features of the other person but the grounds for establishing his origin seem to be slight. The copyist was from Mosul. Probably this miniature

4. Rice, I.A., pp.105-6, ill.104.
5. Ettinghausen, A.P., p.70.
7. Ettinghausen thinks it originated in either northern Iraq or Syria but he accepts the date 626/1229 (A.P., p.67, ill.68-9).
represents a teacher and his students or Dioscorides and two of his students. One feature especially is worth noting. The previous group of paintings shows how Muslim artists had used certain devices to distinguish a dignitary: his big size, his entourage of companions and so on. But in the illustration of the *Materia Medica* we do not see any of these characteristics. All we see is an ordinary person on a chair talking to two figures.

Probably this figure only seems to be a ruler because the central figure is shown as if he is paying homage to him. However, it is recorded that the Prophet Muhammad said that three persons will intercede on the Day of Resurrection: the Prophets, men of knowledge (‘ulamā’) and martyrs. (1) ‘Alī b. Abī Tālib instructed people as to how they should behave and deal with teachers. If, for example, someone joined a gathering he should greet everyone and give special regards and salutation to the ‘ālim. Moreover, one should sit in front of him and not tell him that someone contradicts his ideas. (2) Perhaps, then, the artist wanted to show his appreciation of the author.

A second frontispiece in this book of Dioscorides shows him giving a practical lesson to his student. The miniature has a golden background and a similar arch to that on fol. 1 verso. Dioscorides sits on a seat and puts his foot on a cushion. He wears a green gown with golden armbands and holds a herb, while

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his student wears a similar type of dress and is listening carefully to his teacher. He holds a plant whose roots are visible.

2. A similar type of illustration representing Aristotle delivering a lecture is found in a manuscript of the Na'at al-Hayawan executed at Baghdad in 1230. At the top of the miniature is written "The picture of the sage Aristotle". He is placed on the right; there is no difference between him and the other figure because the halo surrounds their heads. He is shown as a bald old man with a white beard; he puts his finger in his mouth and looks at the person who sits in front of him. The second figure is also bearded and wears a turban; he too puts his finger in his mouth.

3. Sometimes the artist likes to vary the formula somewhat. For instance, instead of showing the figure of the teacher or the author with their students he depicts him in a full page portrait. A copy of the Materia Medica of Dioscorides dated 15 Dhu'l-Hijjah 637/16 October 1240 also opens with the representation of a single person. He stands under an arch. He is drawn oversize in relation to the arch. He is turbanned and reads a paper or a book.

4. Again in Na'at al-Hayawan, a single figure of a physician appears. This time he does not wear a turban but a horned headdress. The background is decorated with wavy scrolls.

1. London, British Museum, Or.2784. (Ill. in Hamid, M. S., fig.40).
5. In the *Materia Medica* manuscript dated 17 Dhu’l-Hijjah 642/17 March 1245, the miniature of Dioscorides occupies the first page. He is represented as a turbanned figure sitting on a throne with a footstool. There is an arch from which decorated curtains are suspended. The whole scene is surrounded by a geometrical and floral frame. Were it not for the inscription in the upper part of the illustration one might easily think that this frontispiece represented a dignitary rather than a man of science.

6. An illustrated manuscript of *Mukhtar al-hikam wa mahasin al-kalim* ("The choicest maxims and best sayings") now in Istanbul was probably executed in Syria during the first half of the thirteenth century. The text contains anecdotes about well-known persons like Prophets and figures like Alexander the Great, Aristotle and others. This manuscript has an illustrated double-page spread at the beginning and end of the manuscript. In the frontispiece, each page shows seven wise men, but only as half length busts surrounded by geometrical frames. The double "finispiece", 173v. at the end of the manuscript, shows six figures of sages per page. The miniature is rectangular in shape and bears heart-shaped motifs made by two blue bands. The

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1. Bologna, Biblioteca Universitaria, Cod.ar.2954 (Ill. in Hamîd, M.S., fig. 138).
2. It says "The Picture of Dioscorides".
6. Colour illustration, ibid., p.75.
artist places his figures – bearded sages in long robes – in pairs within the empty spaces thus created.

7. In Istanbul also is a manuscript of the Rasā’il Ikhwān al-Safā produced in Baghdad in 686/1287. (1) Two frontispieces occupy fols. 3v. and 4r. Both reflect the continuation of the Mesopotamian style after the Mongols sack Baghdad in 1258. (2) On fol. 3v. the text states that five wise men had gathered together to write the Rasā’il Ikhwān al-Safā: Abū Sulaymān Muḥammad b. Maṣ‘ār al-Buṣṭī, known as al-Maqdisī, Abū’l-Ḥasan ‘Alī b. Zahrūn al-Zanjānī, Abū Ahmad al-Nahrajūrī, al-‘Awafī and Zayd b. Rafi‘ah. Three main figures are depicted here. An old man with a white beard sits at the centre, a person with a book in his hand is shown reading and a third figure is writing. Two of them wear long robes and turbans while the old person wears a long gown which covers his head also. They are attended by two servants. The upper register shows two figures reading. Fol. 4 r. gives the name of the book. Three persons are depicted at the centre and look as if they are engaged in serious discussion while a servant cools the air with a small fan. A second attendant carries an object, apparently a book. In the upper storey two other figures, presumably students, may be seen.

Both scenes are placed within an architectural framework. The central part is occupied by the group of five authors and their scribes while the top section contains the figures of the

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1. Library of the Sūleymaniye mosque (Esad Efendi 3638).
four students.

Some scholars suggest that these two miniatures represent the same scene twice because each illustration shows five figures representing the five sages. Ettinghausen in his interpretation refutes such a hypothesis, noting that there is no contemporary parallel for an artist illustrating the same scene twice in one manuscript. (1) He adds that it is likely that the figure who sits on the left hand side in fol.3v. is the scribe who is writing down what the two authors are saying. (2) He interprets the younger beardless figures in the upper registers as students. These figures do not re-appear in the second miniature.

In the examples analysed so far two main types of frontispiece for Islamic books may be isolated: representations of rulers and of authors. Certain exceptions to this general rule have been noted, such as the second frontispiece in the Na'at al-Haywan, (3) which shows a female figure standing. Geometrical designs interlaced with floral patterns were also very popular for frontispiece decoration at this time. (4) Such ornament was particularly common in the frontispieces of illuminated Qur'ans.

2. Ibid.
3. Produced in Baghdad in 1230; now in London, British Museum, Or.2784.
A manuscript of the Khamsah of Nizāmī dated Safar 848/May-June 1444, which has been attributed to Shiraz or Yazd, is an early example of this practice. The frontispiece (fols. 1b - 2a) of this manuscript has a flower at the middle with six petals painted over a pale yellow background. Within the empty spaces appear four figures of winged angels with Far Eastern features. They wear long robes, long trousers and are apparently females. They carry respectively a censer; a perfume burner; a crown and robe on a blue cushion; and a peacock.

The Byzantine tradition of frontispiece illustration

Among the several categories which comprise this tradition is a group of portraits of people of high rank. A few examples chosen at random will show the range of types which evolved in this category.

A full page representation of the Emperor Constans II is to be found on a calendar of Philocclus datable to 354 A.D. The emperor is shown sitting on a throne, haloed, and holding what seems to be a sceptre in his left hand. He distributes money

1. London, Keir Collection, MS. no. III. 82-100.
3. The original representation has been largely lost, but a scene done in the seventeenth century which is based on an intermediary Carolingian copy survives (K. Weitzmann, Late antique and early Christian book illumination [London 1977], p. 11, fig. IV).
with his right and sits under a canopy.\(^1\) In the Materia Medica of Dioscorides mentioned above, the princess Juliana Anicia is depicted on fol.6v.\(^2\) She is enthroned and distributes coins with her right hand while holding the codicillus in the left. She is attended by two female personifications: on the right, Magnanimity, and on the left Wisdom. The whole scene is depicted within an octagon framed by a circle.\(^3\)

Among post-iconoclastic examples the frontispiece to the Homilies of St. John Chrysostom is of major importance. It dates from between 1078 and 1081. The author is shown presenting his book to the Emperor Nicephorus Botaniates\(^4\) who is shown haloed, bearded, crowned and wearing a robe adorned with a cross. He holds the collected sermons in his right hand and indicates it with his left. He is made larger than the flanking figures as he stands on what seems to be a cushion. These figures are St. John Chrysostom and an angel with features of a feminine cast. The double portrait miniature of the Emperor John VI Cantacuzenos (1347-1354) is in a category by itself.\(^5\) He is depicted twice, once as emperor and once as monk. A depiction of the Old Testament Trinity occupies the upper part of the picture. Roughly contemporary is the portrait of the High Admiral Apocaucos from

2. Vienna, Nationalbibliothek, cod.med.gr.1; dated before 512 A.D.
A second major category is that of the author portrait, which was commonly found in early Christian art (before the codex was known) on papyrus rolls. Later when codices had become popular, the old tradition continued and developed in three stages. First, the portrait of the author was placed within a medallion, for example, in the manuscript of the Vatican Terence in which we see a half-portrait of the author. He is shown bare-headed, surrounded by two circles and placed on a step. Flanking figures hold the medallion. Second, the author is depicted in a frame with an inscription, as in the Vergilius Romanus. The author is seen sitting on a high chair, a book in his hand. A pulpit and scroll box are accessories. In the last development a full figure of the author is shown, e.g. in the Vienna Materia Medica in which two miniatures represent the author Dioscorides in two different positions. The first (fol. 3v) shows seven physicians engaged in discussion. The whole scene has a golden background framed by floral border. The central figure who sits on a chair and rests his foot on a step is identified as Galen. The other figures sit in three superposed rows. They are Grateuas and

1. This codex is now in Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Ms. Grec 2144; see D.T. Rice, Byzantine Art (Harmondsworth 1968) pp. 356-7, pl. 322.
3. Ibid., p. 11, fig. VIII.
4. Ibid., fig. III.
Dioscorides, Apollonius Mys and Nicander and the two figures at the bottom are Andreas and Rufus. (1) The second representation of Dioscorides adorns fol. 5v. He is writing in a book placed in his lap. On the left a figure, presumably the artist, is drawing on a paper stuck on a board in front of him, while the colours he uses are arranged on a table beside him. (2) A third figure (3) stands between Dioscorides and the artist holding a plant, although this figure should be placed in the middle as the artist has to turn to his right each time he wants to look at the herb.

A third type of person represented in the frontispieces of Byzantine manuscripts is an Evangelist. Naturally Gospel books are the principal source for these figures. Possibly because a specific tradition of Evangelist portrait was slow to evolve, these figures are variously depicted. (4) In general, of course, the Evangelist figures derive from representations of ancient poets and philosophers. (5) They were used for frontispieces of works on theology as well as the Gospels. (6) A Gospel attributed to the second half of the tenth century (7) represents St. Matthew.

2. Ibid., p.65, pl.17.
3. Weitzmann says that this figure is the personification of Epinoia "power of thought" (Ibid.)
on a golden background reading in a book in his hands. (1) This painting can fairly be regarded as typical of a very popular genre. Of more complex type is an 11th century book depicting the Evangelist Matthew, the Ancient of Days, two cherubim, Abraham and Isaac. (2) Matthew, the central figure, is shown within a circular frame. He sits on a chair, rests his foot on a cushion and writes in a scroll on his lap. (3)

Finally, there are a few exceptional subjects for frontispieces. These include a representation of the Church of the Holy Apostles at Constantinople depicted in a manuscript of the Homilies of James of Kokkinobaphos. This church appears in two copies of the manuscript, one in the Vatican (Vat. Gr. 1162) and the other in Paris (Bibliothèque Nationale Gr. 1208). (4) Other frontispieces depict decorative designs of flowers, architecture, animals and other subjects, all blended with calligraphy. This is a particularly common feature of Gospel books. (5) This kind of subject matter was common enough in early Byzantine mosaics but some of these features (e.g. certain architectural, floral and animal designs) may reflect Islamic influences. (6) A frontispiece of the eleventh century showing the Eusebian canons (7) is illustrated with a horse-shoe.

3. Grabar, B.P., p. 178, pl. 158.
5. Grabar, B.P., p. 177.
6. Ibid.
arch decorated with floral and geometrical ornament, and is
crowned by a scene including a fountain, an elephant (on the right)
and a loaded camel (on the left) and a person holding what seems
to be a whip. The landscape is represented by a strip of grass
with some flowers. Instead of the usual figure of a dignitary
or author, we see within the arch a table of letters. (1) These
are the concordances to the Gospel passages.

Another example which reflects eastern influence is the
frontispiece of the Rossano manuscript. It also represents
geometrical patterns which decorate the canon tables and is
attributed to Anatolia. (2)

This summary of some types of Christian and Muslim
frontispieces shows that the two traditions do have certain
compositions in common but there are significant dissimilarities
between them in the way those figures are depicted. Portraits
of dignitaries in Islamic manuscripts, for instance, show us
the private life of the ruler which is not for the eyes of the
public. The monarch is shown surrounded by servants who dance,
play music, serve food and drink. This is not the image of the
ruler familiar to the common people who see him only on certain
occasions at the main mosque of the city.

The Muslim artist did not normally make any distinction

between males and females in such scenes, as we have seen in a
copy of Kitāb al-Diryāq. (1) However, he made an exception when
depicting a princess or the wife of a ruler. Such figures may
be shown within a medallion but nevertheless we see four figures
of dancers at the corners of the illustration.

The other standard image of the Muslim dignitary shows him
practising one of his hobbies, such as horsemanship. This again
is an activity not witnessed by the common people.

Although Islamic authors frequently express their gratitude
towards certain people or dedicate their work to them, the artist
did not pay any attention to this. He did not naturally think of showing
the figure of the author presenting his work to his patron as
did his Christian counterpart. Nor did Islamic artists think of
representing a scene of a dignitary doing something good for his
people such as conquering a city to spread the religion of Islam
or leading prayers.

In Christian codices the artist usually depicted his patron
in a formal position. Emperors are to be seen wearing luxurious
clothes. If other figures are added their purpose is to point
some appropriate symbolic or other specific meaning for the scene.
Sometimes the author himself pays homage to the emperor. When
the author is the prime subject of the illustration he is shown
reading, writing, delivering a lecture or conversing with other
sages.

1. Vienna, Nationalbibliothek A.F.10, fol.1 recto.
The tradition of depicting authors in this way continued in Islamic times, with if possible increased emphasis on their role in teaching and writing. They are often depicted as seated higher than the other figures and their students bow to them or display complete concentration. This element is generally absent in Christian art where the author is often represented as a person showing respect to the Emperor.

A major question concerning frontispiece illustration in general has to be answered here: is there any connection between these scenes and the texts of the manuscripts?

Clearly where the illustration depicts an event not mentioned in the text, it can be considered as a foreign element to the manuscript. It is also true that whereas gratitude should be shown to the patron who encouraged his employee to execute a work and also to the author who composed the work, their portraits are not central to the text.\(^1\)

Another figure whose representation occupies the frontispieces of Islamic manuscripts is the Prophet Solomon.

To explain the popularity of this subject in frontispiece illustration, some general discussion of the role of Solomon in

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1. Indeed, most frontispieces have artistic and historic value only. They illustrate the style of painting typical of a given period, and occasionally the fact that a given work has been copied at that time has a certain historical significance.
Islamic thought is required.

Solomon in the Islamic as in the Jewish and Christian traditions was the son of David.\(^1\) He is mentioned frequently in the Qur'ān,\(^2\) and by the order of God birds, jinns and beasts were controlled by Solomon, who was also a Prophet.\(^3\) Islamic tradition adds many details to the story of the life of this particular Prophet who was a king and had unusual powers besides being the messenger of God. He used the power which God gave him to subdue other nations and force them to embrace his religion.

It is said that he had a carpet made of wood on which he and his army would stand. He would then order the wind to carry them wherever he wanted to go.\(^4\) Numerous other stories of his power are told, such as the way he completed the building of the temple of Jerusalem\(^5\) begun during the reign of David.\(^6\) He sent jinns and devils (shayātīn) to bring him marble, precious stones, musk and ambergris. When he had the materials, he ordered

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2. Surah IV, 163; VI, 84; XXI, 81-2; XVII, 15-6; XXXIV, 12-3; XXXVIII, 34-40.
5. The building is believed to have remained in a good condition till the conquest of Jerusalem by the Assyrian King Nabukhudnazzar who demolished the city and took its booty to Iraq (ibid., p. 76-7).
6. Ibid., p. 77.
the sacred place to be built in white, yellow and green marble. The ceiling and the floors were decorated with precious stones.\(^{(1)}\)

The throne of Solomon was also a wonder. It was decorated with two statues of lions near the foot of the chair, and two eagles at the top of the columns on each side. When Solomon ascended the throne the two lions stretched their forepaws and the eagles spread their wings to shadow him.\(^{(2)}\) No-one knew the secret of this throne and how to ascend it without being harmed by the lions. When Nabukhūdūnazzar captured the city of Jerusalem he wanted to sit on the throne of Solomon but the unfortunate king was wounded in the legs by the lions' forepaws and he lost consciousness.\(^{(3)}\)

The Qur'ān devotes a long chapter in sūrat al-Nāmil to the story of Solomon and Balqīṣ, the Queen of Sheba (Ṣaba').\(^{(4)}\) The hoopoe brought the news to his master Solomon that a Queen in Yaman ruled a great nation, and that her throne measured eighty dirā'ī in length, forty in width and thirty in height. The bird said that it was adorned with valuable stones like red rubies, pearls and green emeralds, and that it had curtains made of fine silk. The Queen and her people were unbelievers and used to worship the sun or 'lights' (anwār).\(^{(5)}\)

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2. Ibid., p. 78.
3. Ibid.
4. Sūrah XXVII, 22-44.
The hoopoe carried to Balqīṣ Solomon's message in which the name of God was mentioned. She asked her councillors about the meaning of the name of God. One of them said that God was a great demon ('afrit), who served the Prophet of the Banī Isrā’īl. Another said that he was three demons, not one. The third said that Solomon was a king who had been given great power by the king of the heavens who was called God and that his attributes were beneficence and mercy. (1) The Queen of Sheba decided to send him a present, saying that if he accepted it, this would prove that he was a king but that if he refused he would be a true prophet and they should follow his religion. (2)

Many accounts describe the presents she sent. Ibn 'Abbās states that twelve females wearing men's clothes and twelve males in female clothes carried bowls filled with musk and ambergris, two beads (one not pierced and the other with a bent hole), an empty glass, a stick which belonged to the Kings of Himyar and bricks made of gold. God told Solomon about the sorts of presents the queen had sent. Solomon then ordered a wall measuring nine parasangs to be built of gold and silver bricks. He ordered a winged beast which had a spotted body to be brought.

When Solomon sat on his throne, four thousand golden chairs were placed on each side for the wise men of his kingdom. After them came the jinns followed by rows of birds and beasts.

1. Al-Qurtubī, op. cit., p.195
2. Ibid., pp.195-6.
In her message the Queen of Sheba asked Solomon to prove that he was a Prophet by distinguishing between the male and female people, to pierce the beads and to identify the base and the top of the stick. He was successful in all these tasks. Later on she paid him an unexpected visit which ended in marriage. (1)

A marvel also accompanied the death of Solomon. When he died nobody noticed and after a year his body was discovered only after it fell down. (2)

Islamic sources have also paid great attention to the wisdom and justice of Solomon, and relate the celebrated case of the two women who both claimed to be the mother of a child and thus demanded custody. (3)

There was a vigorous tradition preserving the events of Solomon's life. But it is still not clear why Jesus, Musa, Lut, Ibrāhīm and other Prophets who like Solomon are frequently mentioned in the Qur'an (especially the first two) did not give birth to a comparable figural tradition, especially as some are widely accepted as greater than him. When Muslim artists represented various Prophets these pictures were mostly accompanied by texts which recounted the story of their lives.

From the various incidents which occurred during the life

3. Ibid., p. 27.
of the Prophet Solomon artists selected one particular scene to adorn a number of frontispieces in Islamic manuscripts.

This image shows Solomon enthroned with Balqīs, the Queen of Sheba, sitting on a similar throne while the army of Solomon, comprising various creatures, surrounds them. This scene gives a clue for the popularity of images of Solomon. He was a King and a Prophet at the same time so that to represent him and his environment would be easy because of the similarity to the life of the court where the artist worked. In addition, many literary sources describe the creatures who used to be under his control. This gave illustrators the chance to imagine and create various new figures such as demons and various kinds of animals.

There is, however, another reason which encouraged artists to use the image of Solomon enthroned as a frontispiece. Besides being mentioned in the Qur'ān and Islamic theological literature Solomon was also a theme of certain Persian poets. They describe his wisdom and his gift of understanding the language of birds which he had been given by God. Most of those poems are the work of Ṣūfī poets such as Niẓāmī (540-1145/604-1207) and Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī (d. 672/1273). This interest in the Prophet Solomon did not come from the admiration that Ṣūfīs had for Solomon but because he was one of those persons who had been given by God attributes which no one on earth had. Nicholson describes Solomon as a perfect man or murshid for the Ṣūfīs. (1) His ability of controlling the

birds on earth is mentioned by the poet Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī in his poem on "The birds of Solomon". (1)

- The eloquence of courtly birds is a mere echo: where is the speech of the birds of Solomon?
- How wilt thou know their cries, when thou hast never seen Solomon for a single moment?
- Far beyond East and West are spread the wings of the bird whose note thrills them that hear it.
- From the Footstool of God to the earth and from the earth to the Divine Throne it moves in glory and majesty.

The Ṣūfīs considered that knowing a language spoken by non-human beings was one of the wonders which God gives to the kind of person which every Ṣūfī wished to be. This hope was stated by Rūmī himself when he told the story of a man who asked the Prophet Moses to beg God on his behalf to help him to understand the language of birds and animals. (2)

- A young man said to Moses, "Teach me the language of the animals.
- That perchance from the voice of animals and wild beasts I may get a lesson concerning my religion.
- Since the languages of the Children of Adam are entirely for the sake of acquiring wealth and reputation, it may be that the animals have a different care.
- Namely, to meditate on the hour of passing away from the world.

The celebrated story of Solomon and the Queen of Sheba also attracted the Sufi poets. In this story the wealth which Solomon had is described in detail; nevertheless Solomon is described as a humble and faithful worshipper of God. Jalāl al-Dīn tells us the story of the gift which Balqīs sent to Solomon. It was forty mules loaded with gold. When Solomon was informed by God what the present was, he used gold to cover forty stages of the road which led to his palace. He then ordered her men to go back to their Queen and tell her about the wonders he had and to worship nobody but God and he threatened that he would take her throne to his own Kingdom if she did not accept these words. (1)

In the frontispiece of books of Persian poetry Solomon is shown enthroned, sitting sometimes with Balqīs, surrounded by his men, animals, birds, jinns and angels. This scene is set in a wide garden decorated with flowers and trees and indeed this particular scene was described in some lines of Nizāmī in his Makhzan al-asrār. (2)

One day, when Solomon was at liberty, his breath blew out a candle.

He transferred his court to the country. He set up his throne on this turquoise realm.

A typical example of these frontispieces is a Shah-Nāmah manuscript dated 1580 in the India Office Library. (3) Fol. 1b shows

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Solomon, fol.2a shows Balqīs. They are both attended by birds, demons, human figures and animals.

Another copy of the Shāh-Nāmah(1) starts with a double frontispiece. Solomon is shown sitting under a canopy wearing Muslim dress and haloed. He sits cross-legged on a high round throne conversing with a person who is probably his minister. Around him is a garden containing all sorts of animals such as elephants, horses, lions, rabbits, monkeys, donkeys, tigers, deer, snakes and so on. Behind Solomon the artist fills most of the space with birds who are shown flying or standing in the background. To the right are demons who have bodies similar to humans and heads of wild beasts with horns. Solomon is attended by two angels who carry big dishes, as well as by two other human figures. Balqīs faces Solomon. She also sits on a high seat, and is surrounded by two kinds of females and slaves who are shown entertaining their mistress by playing a tambourine and harp while the other two are dancing and offering objects in dishes.

The angels in this miniature are represented as slim and tall figures. They have Far Eastern features. They carry dishes and throw flames on the Queen. Most of the details enumerated here are found in other frontispieces depicting Solomon and the Queen of Sheba.

Besides representations of Solomon, enthroned rulers, authors, the ascension of Muhammad and various single scenes, one other subject for frontispiece illustration deserves analysis here: hunting scenes.

This subject is already found in paintings of the School of Mesopotamia. These show the main figure riding on a horse surrounded by his followers.


Ibid., p. 124, no.378-434, ill. 378.
The chase was of course celebrated as the sport of Kings and the upper classes. As such it is found on metalwork, ivory, wood and frescoes, all of which pre-date the earliest examples of the theme in manuscript painting. In these hunting friezes the figure of the sovereign is represented at the head of his retinue with a mounted on his horse, bow and arrows or a spear in his hands as he chases a gazelle or feline. Poets wrote verses in which they describe the skill and bravery of their patrons in the hunt.

Hasan Ibrāhīm Hasan, discussing the political collapse of the 'Abbāsids during the time of the Caliph al-Mu'tamid 'alā Allāh (256-279/869-892), gives as the reason for this the fact that "the Caliph was living a life of pleasure, practising hunting, playing and consorting with women". (1)

Al-Qalgashandī has a passage in which he explains some titles which were used at the Caliphal court. These include al-bāzdar. He states "al-bāzdar is the person who carries on his hands rapacious birds which are used for hunting". (2)

Al-Sābī mentions the staff who were in charge of the chase during the reign of the Caliph al-Mu'tadid (279-289/892-901). These include the men who carry falcons (ḥāzyārīn), hawks (ṣaqārīn), and others who take care of the dogs which are used for hunting (Kālābīn). In addition, there are persons who are

trained to hunt and to take care of lions (sabā‘īn), and those who are responsible for nets. (1)

Most of the 'Abbāsid caliphs were fond of the chase, especially al-Mahdī. He used to head a large retinue, all of them wearing fine clothes and carrying swords. (2) The Caliph in fact lost his life while hunting. Al-Tabarî states that in the year 169/785 al-Mahdī went to a village called al-Rađh to indulge his hobby there. He followed a gazelle which entered a ruined building and the back of the Caliph was hit by the door of this building. (3) Khumārawaighth, the second ruler of the Tulūnīd dynasty in Egypt, also had his preferred places for hunting. His men were trained to enter lions’ lairs and put them in cages. (4)

Many sovereigns spent great amounts of money on the animals used in hunting, like falcons and dogs. Others used arrows with golden edges. (5)

This historical background helps to explain why artists were interested in depicting this scene so often at the beginning of

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many manuscripts.

Typical of the genre is a hunting scene on the first page of a Khamsa of Nizāmī, dated 849/1445. It shows a green countryside with scattered figures of felines, rabbits, gazelles and foxes. The mounted human figures are headed by a king and carry arrows and spears. A similar iconography was used for decorating book covers, as in another Khamsa of Nizāmī dated 915/1509.

Finally, poetical manuscripts, such as the Khamsa of Nizāmī, the poems of Amīr Khusrau, the Bustān of Sā’dī and the Haft Awrang of Jāmī, often include other types of frontispiece, such as depictions of enthroned rulers sitting in a landscape.

The same figures appeared again and again but gradually they acquired new elements. The representation now occupies a full frontispiece or more. The prince now sits in a wide garden with attendants serving food and drink, though he is often shown in his palace as hitherto.

Such scenes can be seen in a number of secular manuscripts and also beside the representation of the mīrāj. For example, in a manuscript of Laila va Majnūn, dated 1532 and produced at Tabrīz, the representation of the enthroned prince in a garden

1. Manchester, John Rylands Library, Pers.36.
2. Dublin, Chester Beatty Library, no.182.
decorates the cover of the manuscript; the first miniature represents him sitting inside with his court. Such scenes could be multiplied. For instance, a copy of al-Qazvini's 'Ajā'ib al-makhlūqāt dated 1475 also represents an enthroned dignitary surrounded by many persons.

The types (hunting scenes and enthroned princes sitting in a garden) mentioned so far decorate the cover of the book or the first pages. These are then followed in many cases by the mi'rāj scene.

The foregoing discussion has established that in the early surviving examples of Islamic book painting a wide variety of scenes served for frontispiece illustration.

II The significance of the mi'rāj in Islamic tradition

The ascension of the Prophet Muhammad to heaven is one of the most important events in Islam, along with the lailat al-qadr, the month of Ramadān, the birth of Muhammad and the flight of the Prophet to Madīnah. The Muslim celebrates several such key events as festivals.

The nature of these celebrations and observances in the medieval period will be analysed below so that the full significance of the mi'rāj can be understood by analogy.

The Prophet of Islam was modest and if he celebrated these occasions it would be in a very simple way. For instance, he never commemorated his birthday. In the month of Ramadān he usually freed captives and gave charity to the poor. (1) In the Fitr festival which follows the month of Ramadān, Muhammad gathered with the Muslims in the mosque at Madīna. He started the celebration by praying; then he gave a speech. When he passed by the women accompanied by Bilāl he encouraged them to help others who were in need and the women took off their rings and other ornaments to give them as alms. (2)

The four caliphs who came after Muhammad lived the same simple life as their leaders; they never, for instance, allowed their servants to walk behind them as kings usually do. (3)

As the Muslim empire grew, their way of life changed, so that when they celebrated a religious event it turned into a great festival. Thus, when Sultan al-Ashraf decided to go on the pilgrimage, he chose the best beasts and had them loaded with various types of food. (4) Whenever the 'Abbasid Caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd went to Mecca he used to take a hundred jurists princes

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with their sons. But if he did not go on the pilgrimage in
certain years he sent three hundred persons instead, providing
them with food, money, clothes and so on.(1)

Not only the Caliphs but also the common people celebrated
these occasions. Ibn Battūtah tells us that the inhabitants of
Mecca celebrated al-'Umrah in the month of Rajab, especially on
the first, the fifteenth and the twenty-seventh days.

On the twenty-seventh, he notes,

"The streets of Mecca are crowned with processions
covered with silk and fine linen. Each person takes
part but according to their financial status. Camels
are ornamented with necklaces made of silk. The
curtains which cover the caravans are so long that
they almost touch the floor and they look like
domes".(2)

Fires and torches were carried by people who marched in front of
the processions on both sides towards the Holy House of God.(3)

The Caliph al-Mutawakkil went on the hajj with a great retinue

1. Al-Arbilī, Khulasat al-dhahab al-masbūk: Mukhtasar min
2. Ibn Battūtah, Rihlat Ibn Battūtah (Paris 1853), vol. I,
pp.382-3.
3. Ibid., p.383.
of judges and princes. He spent lavishly to provide this retinue with horses and fine clothes. (1)

A great celebration also starts at the beginning of the month of Ramadān. In the 8th/14th century, in the city of Abyār in Egypt, the doctors of law, judges and men of standing met at the house of the chief Qādī on 29 Sha‘bān. At the door of the Qādī, the naqīb was stationed to announce the names of the notables as they arrived. When all were there they proceeded to a high place on the outskirts of the city, followed by a body of the local Muslims. Ibn Battūtah continues that the place where they watch for the crescent moon which heralds Ramadān is furnished with fine and luxurious furniture. (2) When the month of Ramadān arrived, the Pātimid Caliphs sent their courtiers plates of sweets with gold at the centre. (3) The celebration was more lavish during the time of the ‘Īd al-fitr, the festival which follows the month of Ramadān. It was also known among people as ‘Īd al-hulal (the festival of clothes) because the caliph gave generously of clothes and dresses to princes and courtiers. (4)

In 380 A.H., during the reign of the Caliph al-‘Azīz bi‘llāh, a celebration took place. The Qādī organized the celebration by arranging people according to their religious status. The theologians and doctors of law had to be seated first and they

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4. Ibid., p. 452.
were then followed by the common people. All had to wait for the Caliph to arrive to start the ceremony. Al-'Azīz bi'llāh was mounted on his horse and held the rod (ṣadīb) of the Prophet Muhammad. The guards surrounding him had been chosen from many places. They were all very well dressed in clothes of pure silk, held swords made of gold and sat on golden saddles decorated with precious stones.\(^{(1)}\)

Al-Maqrīzī recounts the celebration of the same festival on one occasion during the reign of the Caliph al-Hākim bi Ahkām Allāh. They started on 29 Ramadān. The Muslim leader sat with his courtiers while reciting of the Qurān began. This was followed by speeches by men of religion explaining the religious occasion they were celebrating.\(^{(2)}\) Then the Sūfīs gave a performance and after that a special parade of horses and weapons began. These performances were a prelude to the main celebration on the following day. As part of this celebration the Caliph would mount his horse flanked by his courtiers while trumpets played to announce that his procession was going towards the mosque.\(^{(3)}\) In honour of the occasion the mosque was furnished with luxurious carpets and the mihrāb was decorated with gold. Since the Fātīmids were Shī'ites they used for the 'Īd special prayer carpets derived from a straw mat of the Shī'ī imām Ja'far b. Muhammad al-Sādiq. The Caliph led the prayers at the 'Īd and

2. Ibid., p. 452.
3. Ibid., pp. 452-3.
gave a speech from the pulpit; the latter object was also lavishly furnished. (1)

Abū Yahyā b. Abī Zakariyā b. Ishāq Ibrāhīm b. Abī Zakariyā Yahyā b. 'Abd al-Wāhid b. Abī Hafs, the sultan of Tunisia, celebrated the 'Īd in the year 527 A.H. by going to the main mosque attended by princes, relatives, servants, soldiers and ministers who went on foot while the Caliph was mounted. (2)

The birthday of Muḥammad was the occasion for another significant festival. This took place on 12 Rabī‘ I. A crowd of theologians would gather at a mosque to pray, and would then mount to go and celebrate the day with the Caliph. The street between the palace and the mosque would already have been swept and sprinkled with water. Once arrived at the appointed place, the theologians would dismount and march towards the place where the Caliph sat. The celebration would only start when the Caliph was seated in the place prepared for him. (3)

The Khatīb of the Anwar mosque would give a speech on the day that the Prophet Muḥammad was born. In it he would mention the good attributes of the reigning caliph and would invoke a blessing upon him. This speech would be followed by another two given by the Imāms of the Azhar and Aqmar mosques. (4)

4. Ibid., p.433.
At the beginning of the Muslim year - i.e. on 1 Muharram - the Caliph would give orders to contribute meat, sweets and money for the benefit of his courtiers.(1)

Other occasions which Muslims celebrate depend on the creed of the dynasty in power. Thus certain occasions are not very important in some beliefs while others consider them to be fundamental events. For instance, the Fatimid caliphs did not celebrate the birthday of the Prophet Muhammad only but also five other anniversaries. These were the birthdays of 'Ali b. Abi Talib, his wife Fatimah, al-Hasan, al-Husayn and the Caliph in power.(2)

In addition to joyful festivals, some Muslims used of course also to celebrate certain sad events of Islamic history, notably the day of 'Ashūrā', the first day of Muharram, on which the family of 'Ali b. Abi Talib was killed. In Fatimid Egypt all the shops closed on this day and people gathered to recite the story of 'Ali's family. Then they visited the shrines of the Shi'i Imams. (3) Commemorative feasts were held; the food usually consisted of cheese, pickles, bread and salads. The Caliph would express his sorrow in a novel way: he would sit veiled on an ordinary chair made of palm-leaves and without anything to support his back.(4)

2. Ibid., p.433.
3. Ibid., p.431.
4. Ibid.
On 10 Muharram the Fātimid Caliph did not appear to the public at all. By contrast, the days of Muharram were happy and cheerful occasions during the reign of the Alāūbid dynasty. They prepared banquets of rich food, ate sweets and went to the baths.

These in summary are the major religious celebrations of Islam. There were only minor differences between the ways that these occasions were celebrated in the various parts of the Muslim world. Despite this comparative uniformity of practice, very little reflection of these festivals can be found in Islamic painting. Some answer is therefore required for the absence of so many religious scenes in Islamic painting.

A single hypothetical example may clarify this problem. Let us suppose that the artist wanted to illustrate one of the festivals described above, such as the ‘Īd al-fitr. He would know that the Prophet Muhammad used to lead the prayers in the mosque of Madīnah and he would also know that Muhammad never went with attendants wearing silks and jewellery or sent gold to rich people during Ramadān. The artist would know very well that if he illustrated the Prophet accompanied by big processions, his work would be far removed from the actual life which Muhammad had lived. On the other hand, the illustrator wanted also to show the importance of the Prophet. One subject above all allowed him scope in this direction - the episode of the ascension, when

2. Ibid., p.490.
Muhammad, attended not by human bodyguards but by heavenly beings and mounted not on a splendid horse but on the unique creature Buraq, was taken through the seven Heavens.

III The other-worldly quality of the image

In the miniatures of the ascension of Muhammad not only Muhammad, Gabriel and Buräq were represented but also other figures of angels. The objects which the angels carried when they attended Muhammad during his night journey are of some interest. These features were depicted not only just because they were attractive but also because they symbolized royalty and honour. Islamic books indicate that those objects had already been known and used in political as well as religious contexts. Accordingly, the artist did not depict those features by accident and he was well aware of their symbolic associations. These objects may be tabulated as follows:

(a) Jewellery

The use of pearls, diamonds and so on goes back to an old tradition in Islamic art in which these objects decorate the most sacred places in religious and the important parts in secular architecture. The outstanding example of this trend is, of course, the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem in which jewellery like earrings, crowns and necklaces was depicted on the arcades facing the rock. (1) Several reasons may be adduced for using this

particular kind of ornament in certain places. First, it has been argued that this is an old tradition which had been taken from Christianity. The depiction of jewellery in places of worship or near the representation of particular people like Mary and Jesus is a common feature in Christian art. (1) Second, royal jewellery, especially crowns, certainly symbolises those who wear it. When the jewellery is of a shape very similar to Sasanian and Byzantine type, runs the argument, it can be interpreted to represent the Kisrā of Persia and the Emperor of Byzantium themselves. Since these two great empires were defeated by the armies of Islam, one might conclude that adorning the inner octagon of the Dome of the Rock with such motifs is an indication of the submission of these two empires to the religion of Islam. (2)

In secular architecture several cases may be cited. Diamond patterns were used in the palace of Khirbat al-Mafjar on the northern part of the entrance. This design was used together with a rosette and a heart-shaped pattern. (3) The Caliph al-Ma'mūn sent a ruby with a golden chain to be hung at the Ka'ba. (4)

An ornament in shape of a sun (shamsa) which was encrusted

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with gems, ruby and emerald with golden chain hung on the facade of the Ka'ba by the 'Abbāsid Caliph al-Mutawakkil.\textsuperscript{(1)} Moreover, it is believed that the throne of God is made of a green valuable stone.\textsuperscript{(2)}

It is therefore not surprising that in people’s minds jewellery was frequently connected with religious matters. For instance, the people of Iraq used to give as a present to Shi‘ite shrines golden objects in the shape of parts of the human body. If somebody, for example, had a disease in his head he would make a vow to the saint that if he cured him he would give a head made of gold.\textsuperscript{(3)} In addition, the Muslims used to decorate the most sacred place of the mosque, the mihrāb, with gold on certain occasions as a way of celebrating the particular occasion as well as honouring the mosque itself.\textsuperscript{(4)}

If jewellery in general did not connote honour and royalty God would not have promised the faithful houses made of precious stones.\textsuperscript{(5)} Besides, Paradise contains golden trees,\textsuperscript{(6)} and pebbles

\begin{enumerate}
\item Al-Azraqī, \textit{op. cit.}, p.155.
\item Ibn Battūtah, \textit{op. cit.}, vol.I, p.419.
\item Al-Maqrīzī, \textit{op. cit.}, vol.I, p.453.
\end{enumerate}
made of pearls, ruby and so on. (1)

In representations of the mi‘rāj jewellery is represented in many ways. It adorns the heads of angels and the angels often throw it from dishes towards the direction of Muhammad. Throwing something which has value over the heads of people was a common feature of Islamic celebrations, especially marriage. Al-Mundhir b. al-Mughirah al-Dimashqī who was present at a wedding party which took place during the time of Yahyā b. Khālid al-Barmakī said that the servants strewed musk and ambergris over the heads of the people who were invited. (2) The names of palaces, estates, farms and servants were written on pieces of paper which were strewed on people during the marriage of the ‘Abbāsid Caliph al-Ma’mūn and Būrān bint al-Ḥasan b. Sahīl. (3) The Fātimid Sultan al-Āmir bi Ḥakm Allāh threw money on the Ṣūfīs who came to perform in front of him to celebrate the ‘Īd al-fitr. (4)

The artists of the mi‘rāj miniatures generally realized that nothing would better emphasise the importance of Muhammad than representing angels throwing jewellery over his head.

(b) The Censer

This object is to be seen carried by angels. The usual shape is a round dish with a cover; it is coloured gold and has fine decoration. Sometimes this round dish has a high oblong part.

The normal use to which such censers were put was of course to perfume the air by burning incense. Since there was clearly no need to perfume the Heavens for the Prophet, the artist presumably copied what he had seen in real life. However, censers are optional features in any festivals in the Islamic religion. In addition, it is said that the Prophet Muhammad had asked the Muslims to perfume the Ka'ba with incense. The third Caliph 'Umar b. al-Khattāb used a censer which was brought from Syria to perfume the mosque at Madīnah. Censers were also used in marriage ceremonies.

(c) Flags

Sometimes we see flags carried by presumably the archangel Gabriel who precedes Muhammad. The type of flag shown in the mi'rarāj miniatures is a simple piece of cloth. It often resembles the clothes of the angels who are depicted in the same illustration.

1. Z. M. Hasan, Kunūz al-Fatimīn (Cairo 1937), p. 239.
2. Ibid.
There are two kinds of flags in Islam. The first, al-rāyah, is a piece of cloth tied to the upper part of a spear. The second is al-liwā which is also a piece of cloth but is folded to the spear. (1)

Each Muslim dynasty had its own distinguishing colour. ‘Amār heard from Abu ‘l-Zubayr from Jābir that the liwā of the Prophet was white in colour. (2) On the other hand, the rāyah of Muhammad was black, (3) which suggests that the Prophet used flags of two different colours for two distinct functions. The contrast continued in later periods: the colour of the Umayyads was white, while the ‘Abbasid flag was black. (4) Flags in general were not used just during wars but also during religious festivals in which they often bore religious texts. (5)

(d) **Light**

Light has a special significance in Islam as in other faiths. It is mentioned in the Qur’ān as an attribute of God Himself:

"Allah is the Light of the heavens and earth.

The similitude of his Light is as a niche

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2. Ibid., p.176.
3. Ibid., p.178.
5. Ibid.
wherein is a lamp..."(1)

Light is also used to indicate the right path, or the religion of Islam itself:

"Light upon light, Allah guideth unto His light whom he will. And Allah speaketh to mankind in allegories, for Allah is knower of all things."(2)

On the other hand, Islamic theologians have stated that angels were created from light;(3) this suggests that light symbolizes goodness and purity.

The manifestations of light relevant to mi‘rāj scenes include inter alia candles, torches and haloes. The latter feature in particular deserves detailed discussion. In the mi‘rāj scenes artists used the flame halo rather than the ordinary one, which was in Islamic as in Christian iconography - simply a golden ring surrounding the head. In the Mesopotamian school of painting virtually anyone was so depicted. In Ilkhānid painting this tradition continued. Thus in the illustrated manuscript of al-Bīrūnī dated 1307 the halo was used not only for the figure of the Prophet Muhammad but also for the messengers of the false Prophet Musaylamah al-Kadhāb.

1. Surah XXIV, 35.
2. Ibid.
By the Timūrid period, however, artists had started to understand the meaning of this element and they began to use it in different shapes for particular people. Thus the halo was developed in the Mā'raj-Nāma manuscript to flames surrounding the body. Sometimes it is even used for the figure of Burāq. It is employed for Prophets and for the head of Gabriel.

Another image of light is found in the Chinese clouds which in religious miniatures might have special meaning. It will be noted that although light here takes a different form from that of the haloes discussed above, it is still golden, the colour of fire. Thus the different representations of light share certain specific qualities.

Another category is that of the candles carried by the angels who accompanied Muhammad to heaven. Similar candles were used in religious celebrations. Al-Tha‘alibî describes the procession of a woman called Jamīlah bint Nāsir al-Dawlah Abū Muḥammad al-Hasan b. ‘Abd Allāh b. Hamdān, who made her visit to the Ka‘ba in the year 366 A.H. She strewed ten thousand dirhams on the Ka‘ba, freed three hundred slaves, gave the people fifty thousand pieces of cloth and used candles made of ambergis. In the 7th century, when the people of Abyār in Egypt saw the crescent moon of Ramadān they returned to their city carrying candles and torches and they lit candles in their homes and shops.

Besides the Chinese clouds, flaming haloes and candles, a fourth type of light is used in representations of the mi`rāj. This category consists of a plain, golden flame. These flames are placed in dishes carried by angels who are strewing them on the Prophet Muhammad. There is no doubt that this feature also represents holiness and honour, light being one of the main qualities of God.

(e) Flowers

Flowers are an important element in mi`rāj scenes. They occur as decorative motifs from the very beginning of Islamic art. In the Dome of the Rock the acanthus, which consists of big petals coloured either gold and green or blue and silver, is a major feature. (1) Scrolls were widely used on piers, soffits, drums and spandrels of the arcades. The main kind is a type with long leaves which look as if each one is attached to the other making a sort of long chain. (2) Patterns of flowers were also used to cover the main facade of the palace of Mshattā which was built about 743 A.D. The design is a triangle motif with fine floral ornament in the background while big rosettes are placed at the centre of the triangles. Other rosettes are depicted between the triangles. At the gates of Qasr al-Hair al-Charbi

2. Ibid., p.254.
there are friezes decorated with acanthus leaves, rosettes, scrolls and so on. (1) Similar rosettes occurred also at Khirbat al-Mafjar between the feet of the Caliph. It may well be that this motif is used not for the sake of decoration alone but as a symbol of royal qualities. (2) Among the sculptures found at Khirbat al-Mafjar are a group of girls, possibly female slaves, holding bunches of flowers in their hands. A similar female figure decorates the entrance of the palace hall. In her right hand she holds flowers which are painted in yellow and red. (3) Other similar figures decorate the bath. They carry baskets filled with flowers and wear necklaces, anklets and bracelets. (4) Thus in Umayyad buildings flowers are either associated directly with royal figures or decorate the most significant places in important buildings, which may suggest that they have some special significance. They were used inside the buildings, on the facades of palaces and in the entrance halls of baths (5) and palaces. Probably flowers were regarded as signs of honour as they always accompanied the figure of a dignitary, decorating his clothes and even his crown, which is frequently encrusted by

4. Ibid., p. 234.
5. The bath of Khirbat al-Mafjar was not an ordinary bath in its architecture and decorations and must have served wider functions than simply those of a bath.
jewellery in the shape of flowers or with floral patterns.

In addition flowers were used in association with calligraphy which was employed for sacred texts in cultic buildings. In a wider sense they are clearly the most popular design for the decoration of every ornamented object in any mosque. They can be seen in mihrābs, pulpits, Qur'ān-holders, doors and other wooden objects. Finally, all sorts of flowers are to this day widely regarded in the Islamic world as a symbol for greeting or welcoming people to the places they enter. For this reason they are found mostly at the entrances of buildings. In the mi'raj scenes flowers are carried by angels who offer them to the Prophet Muhammad.

(f) Fruit

In the Dome of the Rock various types of fruit and vegetables decorate the walls: cherries, cucumbers, dates, pomegranates, olives, grapes and so on. (1) Marguerite Van Berchem suggests that this exhibition of fruit on the walls of the Dome of the Rock is in fact a familiar scene which was derived from the markets of the city of Jerusalem. (2) More generally, they have been interpreted as representing luxury and symbolizing the fertility and richness of the land. (3) In the "western" floor fresco at Qasr al-Hair al-Gharbī a round medallion frames a bust of a female who

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2. Ibid.
holds a kerchief filled with fruit; this image is surrounded by borders on both sides which are decorated with leaves and grapes. (1)

In the "royal" apse in the bath hall of Khirbat al-Mafjar is a mosaic image of a big citrus fruit and a knife. This feature is still a puzzle and many interpretations have been suggested for it. One theory is that this image represents the Caliph, his wife and their child, or - more generally - man, woman and their child. (2) Another theory suggests that the artist has copied what he saw on the table of his patron. (3) This seems preferable, for the image is placed on the floor even though the artist could have placed it on the walls. Secondly, there is a contrast between this image and the nearly life-size figure of the Caliph standing on two lions and placed in a niche at the central part of the bath-hall facade. It seems strange for the artist to put one representation at the focal point of the building and depict the other under foot. Moreover women, especially wives, were rarely represented in Islamic culture as figures of importance. However, they do occur in the frontispieces of some Islamic books.

Fruits in general are one of the elements which have holy significance as they are mentioned in the Qur’an several times as an invocation - ”By the fig and the olive” (4) - and as one of the rewards which God promised to the faithful in Paradise,

1. Ettinghausen, A.P., p.35.
4. Sürah ICV, 1.
"Wherein are fruit and sheathed palm-trees."(1) The types of fruit used in mi‘raj scenes are difficult to identify. They are usually red in colour and round in shape which suggests that they are either apples or pomegranates. Perhaps the second is more likely. They are placed in golden dishes in rows, are carried by angels and offered to the Prophet Muhammad. A red fruit in a golden dish is a common feature in secular painting especially in the representation of a dignitary or of dancing parties at a court or of a garden scene.

(g) The lion

Although no Islamic sources mention that the Prophet Muhammad saw a lion during his ascent to Heaven, some artists depicted the figure of this animal in such scenes. The Prophet is shown stretching his hand towards the lion as if he were feeding him. The lion has an ancient iconographic significance in the Near East; it is often associated with royal dignitaries.

The lion is a symbol of power(2) and the Arabs used to attribute courage to this beast, and hence applying its name to certain people to indicate given qualities such as strength (He is stronger than a lion) or more generally, power - (He is the lion of the state).(3) The lion was used as a title for the

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1. Sürah LV, 11.
Prophet's uncle al-Hamza because he was courageous. In art the lion appears especially in hunting scenes. It is represented either being chased by a dignitary or in the act of hunting another animal, as in the floor mosaic of Khirbat al-Mafjar or in the statue of the Caliph on the facade of the bath.

Using the figures of lions as a support for an image, as here, may have a particular significance. Perhaps it indicates that this figure is so brave and strong that he can place his feet on lions. The lion also occurs on the facade of the west entrance in Mshatta.

(h) The ram

From early times the ram was connected with the Prophet Abraham. The Judeo-Christian and Islamic traditions recount how God sent a ram for sacrifice when Abraham was preparing to kill his son Ishāq (Isaac). Muslims believe that this ram was sent from Paradise. The horns of the ram were hung in the Ka'ba, but they were destroyed during the fire.

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6. Ibid., p. 306.
The Arabs apparently used to draw a good omen from rams; for instance, they describe a big cluster of dates as resembling rams. (1) 'Ubayd Allāh b. Ziyād decorated his palace with representations of rams. (2) In some miniatures of the mi'ārāj (3) we see the ram being carried by an angel in his hands. A similar example can be seen in a miniature from the Timūrid period. (4) This illustration represents a scene from a fairy tale. We see a dignitary sitting on a throne surrounded by a group of angels who carry peacocks, censers and flames and play musical instruments. An angel carries a ram or deer on his shoulders while a demon carries a similar animal but with horns in the same way as the angel who is represented in the mi'ārāj scene. (5) Rams appear also on the facade of the bath in Khirbat al-Mafjar behind the statue of the Caliph. Ettinghausen suggests that these rams refer to the hunt, a sport which was popular among dignitaries. (6) But in the mi'ārāj scene it certainly symbolizes something else for Muhammad never practised hunting. Perhaps it here symbolizes sacrifice for the sake of God.

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2. Ibid., p.158.
3. E.g. a ms of Saʿdī's Bustān, datable c.1500-15200 (Dublin, Chester Beatty Library).
4. Published in F.R. Martin, The miniature painting and painters of Persia, India and Turkey from the 8th to the 18th century, (London 1912), vol.II, pl.58.
5. This miniature is from the Imperial Library in Istanbul and is probably from Herāt; it is datable c.1440.
IV. The use of the mi‘rāj as a prefatory scene

A further reason why artists chose the subject of the mi‘rāj to adorn their work is that many authors mention the incident of the ascent of Muhammad to Heaven. There are standard introductions to many works of Islamic literature. The author starts in the name of God, blesses Muhammad and gives a summary of the book he has written.

Ibn Khaldūn, for instance, in his book Tārīkh Ibn Khaldūn, starts his introduction by thanking Allāh the Most High for the beneficent gifts which he gave to mankind. He addresses God as the most powerful Being who has no partner in Heaven or earth. Allāh has created human beings, providing them with their livelihood. The author then asks that the blessing of God be upon the Prophet Muhammad and his companions. The third part of Ibn Khaldūn’s introduction is devoted to explaining the meaning of history. Finally, he dedicates the book to the fair, learned, noble and generous Abū Fāris ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz b. Abūal-Ḥasan, the governor of Fāṣ.(1)

Al-Masʿūdī entitled the first section of his book al-Tanbīh wa’l-ishrāf “the purpose of this book”. He lists his previous works, giving a short account of each book. In these various works he records the division of races, their behaviour, the physical world, religions and sects.(2)

Al-Tabarī introduces his well-known book *Ṭārikh al-rusul wa'l-mulūk* by defining the qualities of God, e.g., oneness and grandeur, adding that God created man and gave him the senses of hearing and sight. Man should distinguish between good and bad; those who follow the right path will be rewarded with paradise. Al-Tabarī then speaks about the beginnings of history and mentions those who formerly lived on earth, including prophets, messengers and kings.\(^1\)

Finally, one may take the case of al-Maqrīzī, the author of *al-Khitat*. He begins by affirming his gratitude to God who gave us the most beneficent gift of all, which is knowledge. The name of the Prophet Muhammad is mentioned as are some of his qualities; e.g., he is the descendant of a holy family and God had selected him to be the last Prophet. He dilates on the usefulness of history, his own background and how he became interested in Egyptian history. Finally he asks God to make his book a reference book for kings, students, the common people and men of knowledge.\(^2\)

We see from these various examples that Islamic authors did not follow particular rules in their introductions and that each one wrote what he thought worth mentioning in his work.

The Persian poets followed the same tradition as earlier Islamic writers. Sa'dī (580/1184-691/1291) opens his work,

\[\text{\ldots}\]

the Gulistān, with the words: "In the name of God, the Merciful, the compassionate!" He continues by praising God:

"Praise be to God! (May he be honoured and glorified!) whose worship is the means of drawing closer to Him, and in giving thanks to whom is involved an increase of benefits". (1)

Sa'dī in his introduction to the Bustān also composed verses on God. (2)

- In the name of the Lord life-creating!
  The Wise One speech-creating within the tongue!
- The Lord, the giver, hand-seizing!
  Merciful, sin-forgiving, excuse-accepting!

In the poem by Jāmī (1414-1492) entitled Yūsuf and Zulaikhā, the poet starts his book with verses praising God: (3)

- Unfold, O God, the bud of hope: disclose
  From Thine eternal paradise one rose
  Whose breath may flood my brain with odour, while
  The bud's leaf-liplets make my garden smile.

In another chapter of Yūsuf and Zulaikhā which is entitled "The Creator" Jāmī again composes verses on God. (4)

- How long, my soul, in this false world wilt thou
  Pursue the Childish play which charms thee now?
- Thou, dainty bird, wast bred with care to rest,
- Far from this vain earth, in a sweeter nest.

4. Ibid., p.8.
Niżāmī also starts his book The Treasury of Mysteries with the same Introduction. (1)

1. In the name of God, the most Merciful and Compassionate (he) is the key to the door of the treasury of the wise.

2. The name of God is the beginning of thought and the end of speech. Complete thy thought and speech in His Name.

3. Existent before all creation, more eternal than all eternities.

4. Ancient Lord of the eternal universe, Decorator of the neck of the Pen with a necklace.

In the Seven Beauties (Haft Paikar) Niżāmī again begins by praising God: (2)

- O Thou from whom the Universe exists, before whom naught has been!
- Beginning of all things when things began, and at the end the End of everything!
- O Raiser of the lofty sphere, of stars Illumer, of their meetings Order!
- Author of (all) the stores of bounteous gifts, of all existent things Creative Power!

Finally the book of Niżāmī which deals with the story of Alexander the Great also starts by mentioning the name of God. (3)

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O God, World — Sovereignty is Thine:
From us (Slaves or creatures) adoration comes; God-head
(Lordship) is Thine!
Thou art the shelter of height (the upper world) and of
depth (the lower world);

This is, significantly enough, followed by Praise to the
Prophet Muhammad (unrelated to the mi'rāj). Jāmī says:(1)
- In separation Pine the souls of all:
- For pity, Prophet sent by God, we call.
- Art thou not he who pities all, and how
- Canst thou be distant from the wretched now?

Niẓāmī in the Iskandar Nāma says:(2)
- The special messenger of the Omnipotent:
- The arriver of the "Strong Proof" (to the people of the world);
- The most precious crown of noble ones (those accepted of God);
- More precious than man-born over;

Praises of the Prophet Muhammad occur several times in Niẓāmī's
work and their location is again significant: at the beginning of
each book like Haft Paikar and Makhzan al-Asrār.

In some books of Sufi writers this tradition is amplified by
the addition of a chapter consisting of poems describing the mirac-
ulous journey of the Prophet to heaven. Following this description
artists used the mi'rāj of Muhammad as a frontispiece in these books.

1. Jāmī, op. cit., p.16.
Nizāmī says in his book Iskandar Nāma: (1)

- A night that made the sky assembly-adorning (resplendent with stars),
- The night, through the splendour (of the stars) laid claim to (being) the day:
- The canopy (the seventh heaven) of seven kings (the seven planets) — the throne;
- The jewel (of the stars) arrayed in (its own) silk of chin (the azure sky):

In the Haft Paikar he says:

- When the world could not hold his crown (59) his throne was placed upon the 'Arsh by his ascent (60).
- To raise him from a lowly stage on high came Gabriel to him with (swift) Burāq (61).

In the Treasury of Mysteries Nizāmī begins with verses in which he describes the night journey of Muhammad: (3)

143. One midnight when the sun set the world-illuminating torch in motion,

144. The eyes of the nine heavens were his retinue; Venus and the moon carried his torch.

145. He left the Seven Spheres, the four quarters, and the six dimensions in the secret chambers of creation.

146. Day bade farewell to his footsteps; night was in ecstasy at his advent.

Many poets, such as Nizāmī, Hīlālī, Jāmī and others mention the incident of the mi'raj as one of the means by which God

distinguished Muhammad. The artist, just like the poet, presumably wanted to show his appreciation of his Prophet by depicting him at the beginning of the manuscript. Obviously there is no connection between the love stories of Khusrau and Shīrīn and Lailā and Majnūn and the qualities of God and his Apostle Muhammad. On the other hand it was a custom for Muslim authors to start their work with the bismillāh and by thanking God for the gifts He gave us, as well as asking for His blessings upon Muhammad. It should occasion no surprise that artists again imitated authors by first depicting the ascent of Muhammad to Heaven and only thereafter illustrating secular scenes. Muhammad is frequently mentioned in the introductory passages of otherwise secular poems but the poets may not evoke specific incidents which can be illustrated. For instance, artists could scarcely paint abstract attributes like the wisdom of Muhammad, or the blessings of the authors upon his Prophet. However, they took the opportunity to illustrate Muhammad's ascent when it was mentioned by the poets. This scene had a further advantage: its unmistakable uniqueness. Had the artist wanted to paint, for example, one of the crucial battles of early Islam, such a picture could scarcely be considered as a new scene. Battle scenes were a standard feature of Shāh-Nāmeh and other secular manuscripts.

It may be asked why of all the events of Muhammad's journey to the seven Heavens the miʿrāj was usually chosen. Yet to depict other scenes from this cycle, such as Muhammad meeting one of the Prophets, would have meant that Muhammad's preeminence would have been challenged by another Prophet sent by
God and the artist would naturally prefer to emphasize Muhammad. Alternatively, the artist could have illustrated one of the several scenes set in Hell. Yet scenes of hellfire and torture scarcely form an ideal introduction to a book of poems or history, and given the luxurious and often un-Muslim life of medieval courts, such scenes would not please the sight of the person for whom the manuscript was done.

A more promising subject perhaps would have been Paradise. In the mi'raj scenes which show Paradise the most essential elements were green lands, rivers of sweet water, fruit which one never sees on earth and palaces made of precious stones and jewels like pearls and rubies. Yet such descriptions which have been given by many Muslim authors are very difficult to illustrate. No matter how much the artist strives to suggest Paradise in such miniatures, they will resemble any representation of a garden on earth.

v. The mi'raj as a mystical symbol

The final reason which might have encouraged artists to depict the scene of the mi'raj at the beginning of secular manuscripts is that this incident has been mentioned in those manuscripts among other chapters because the poets in question were Sufis. Certainly the Sufis in general did not choose this journey of Muhammad just by chance but because they consider the mi'raj as a miracle first, and second because the Soul of the Prophet had ascended to heaven to meet God; and the relevance of this supreme act to the rest of mankind was clear.
Before we discuss the link between Sufism and the incident of the mi'raj, it is worth mentioning a short account about this sect. A true Muslim according to Sufism should purify himself from ill desires by praying to God, fasting and visiting the house of God, thereby bringing himself closer to God. According to their belief a person will never reach a stage of virtuous Salihin unless he gets past six difficult stages. He should choose hardship not prosperity; abasement not glory; strain not comfort; vigil not sleep; poverty not wealth; and finally he should prepare himself for death and never cherish hope. Sufism had spread all over the Islamic world and the Sufis were called people of the truth (Ahl haqiqah). But many people stood against this movement, especially jurisprudents and rulers, for they regarded the Sufis as people who had turned from the right path of Islam. Also, the Sufis recommended annihilation of self in worshipping God, monasticism, disdain of this temporary life and surrender of wealth. Most important of all, the Sufis asked people not to obey anybody but God and not to follow any law but His. In their belief the final stage which a purified saint could reach was meeting God. This spiritual experience had happened before when the soul of Muhammad went to heaven. This experience was the hope of every Sufi. Thus the Sufis renounced every earthly enjoyment in order to be pure enough to meet God. Accordingly, the incident of the mi'raj is mentioned in the literature of the Sufis. They took this story as an example.

which they followed, inventing similar experiences which had happened to them. The best known Sufi, Abū Yazīd al-Bistāmī,\(^{(1)}\) states that one day when he was sleeping he went on a journey in order to be united with Allāh in heaven. In the first heaven God had displayed in front of him very precious gifts and power by which he could rule the whole universe. But Abū Yazīd turned his face from all these temptations because he knew that God was testing him to gauge his true feelings towards Him. He told God that his wish was not to have those presents but to see Him. In the second heaven he saw a group of angels who fly 100,000 times a day to earth to see the mystical saints whom they immortalize in worshipping the Most High. The faces of these angels were shining like the sun. He then left the second heaven heading towards the seventh. In this heaven he heard somebody say "Abū Yazīd, stop, you have reached the goal", but Abū Yazīd did not pay any attention. He continued that when God saw his sincerity He transformed him to a bird and Abū Yazīd started to fly, passing by kingdoms, deserts, plains, seas and veils until he saw in front of him the angel who guards the throne of God. This angel was holding a pillar made of light which he asked Abū Yazīd to take. Abū Yazīd continued his flying in the heavens till he reached the throne of God where he saw angels who have as many eyes as the stars in the sky; from their eyes lights shine and those lights become lamps. From each lamp he heard a voice praising the name of God. Next, he arrived at a sea made of light and on the surface of this sea there were ships also made of light. He flew over this sea and reached the

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main sea on which the throne of God stands. He saw the whole heaven and earth smaller than a mustard seed. There he heard the voice of God calling him The Chosen, saying: "Thou art My Chosen and My Beloved and My elect among creatures". He then handed Abū Yazīd a cup filled from the fountain of Grace and he became more nearer to God than a soul to a body. An account attributed to Abū Yazīd states that he talked to the throne of God, for he envied it because God sits on it. The throne replied that God also makes his home in the heart of a humble believer. According to another source Abū Yazīd said that God said to him "Abū Yazīd, all of them are My creatures, except thee". Abū Yazīd replied "So I am Thou, and Thou art I, and I am Thou". In the account of the Sūfī author al-Qushairī a similar story about the meeting of God and the Prophet Muhammad is given, but the author adds that the Prophet talked to Allah but did not see His face. From the meeting of Abū Yazīd with God one might conclude that every sincere Sūfī can have the same spiritual experience as Muhammad had and accordingly Abū Yazīd makes himself equal with the Prophet. But Affifi says that although some Sūfīs had described journeys similar to the mi'rāj of Muhammad, they did not mean that their experiences were similar to Muhammad's ascent to heaven because this would suggest that Muhammad had not had a miracle granted to him as a Prophet. He continues "They all agree that it was a personal favour bestowed

2. Ibid., p. 27.
also used the term mi′râd to denote the various stages that the soul passes through in its journey to God. (2)

Persian literature of the eleventh century was influenced by Sufism, especially the work of most of the well-known poets. The Sufis did not have in mind anybody but God and worshipped Him night and day; they looked upon Him as the Beloved One whom they wanted to see and meet. This is exactly like an ordinary lover on earth who sleeps in the shadow of his beloved. Thus Sufi poets used the vocabulary of lyric poets, but employed these same words to describe God. They also used such symbolic words because God Himself had used them in his Book. Allah had, for instance, called his faithful worshippers His beloved people and called the relation love between Him and those people here. An example is

"Say, (o Muhammad, to mankind):
If ye love Allah, follow me; Allah will Love you and forgive you your sins.
Allah is Forgiving, Merciful." (3)

God also said "Allah loveth the good" and "Allah loveth those who put their trust (in Him)".

Sufi poets, then, used the language of love quite often not to refer to a wife or woman but with some other hidden meaning. To them the parts of the human body, and even inanimate things on

2. Ibid.
occasion, symbolised a divine attribute of God. Wine, for instance, means to the Sufis "ecstatic experience due to the revelation of the True Beloved", and the eye refers to "God's beholding His Servants and their aptitudes". (1) One of those lovers of God was asked whence he was coming and if he was going again? He replied "I came from the place of the Beloved and I am going to meet Him again". He was asked what his wish was. He said "I wish to see my Beloved about whom I think night and day". They asked him for how long he was going to talk about his Beloved. He replied that he would keep talking about Him till he was able to see Him. (2) Another account in which the language of love was used to describe God is that of the Sufi author al-Qushairī, who heard from Sariyā al-Saqti that in his dream he saw the well-known Sufi Ma'rūf al-Kharkhī sitting under the throne of God. God asked the angels who this person was and they replied "You are the Most Knowledgeable Person Allah". He replied "This man is Ma'rūf al-Kharkhī who gets drunk from My Love and will never wake up till he meets Me". (3) The vocabulary of love has been used by the great poets like Sa'dī who studied Sufism from 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jilānī (d. 1166) (4), Nizāmi who was a student of the Sufi teacher Akhū Farruk Raihani, (5)

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1. For details see A.J. Arberry, Sufism (London 1950), pp. 113-5.
2. Smith, op. cit., p. 4.
3. Al-Qushairī, op. cit., p. 11.
5. Encyclopaedia of Islam, III, S.V. "Nizāmi".
Jāmī who was a disciple of Sa'd al-Dīn Muhammad al-Kashghārī(1) and others. In these poems the journey of Muhammad was described, e.g. by Nizāmī in the section of the Treasury of Mysteries(2) where he describes the mi'rāj:

203. He drank the wine which God had prepared; he poured a draught of that wine into our clay.
204. Eternal Grace was the companion of his soul. Divine compassion was the cherisher; he was the cherished.
205. His lips were adorned with a sweet smile; he asked favours for his people.
206. His spirit was enriched by that treasure; all his aims were realised.

If we see the miniatures of the mi'rāj we realise that in most of these examples the incident itself and the glory of Muhammad reflect the descriptions of Sūfī poets. For example in pl. 86 in which Sa'dī states in his verses that Muhammad never worshipped al-Lāt and al-'Uzza, that he also stopped using the New and Old Testament, that his rank was higher than that of the angels because God had called him His messenger and asked him to come nearer to his throne - although He prohibited the chief of the angels, Gabriel, from coming nearer to it than a certain point. In pl. 90, Qatīlī describes Burāq on that night as shining in the sky like a light. In pl. 93, Jāmī states that the speedy journey of the Prophet from Mecca to al-Aqṣā happened within a minute and that

1. E.I., I, S.V. "Djāmī".
2. Nizāmī, op. cit., p. 103. Nizāmī also used similar words at the beginning of the Haft Paikar and the Iskandar Nāma.
the whole ascent from earth to heaven did not take that long because the door-knocker was still swinging when the Prophet returned back to his house. In pl. 94, Hātifī says that when Muhammad went from earth to heaven he was like an arrow going out of a bow. His smell filled heaven and the brides of heaven could not do anything but stare at him.

Thus the mi'rāj was of vital importance to the Sūfīs because as we have seen it symbolises the ascent of a soul from a purified and faithful person to meet the Most High, an experience which every Sūfī wished to have.

There are a few points which should be explained here. First we sometimes do not find any representation of the mi'rāj in other books of poetry. The reason is that not all men of literature at that time were Sūfīs. Accordingly, they do not mention the incident of the mi'rāj at the beginning of their books and the artist naturally does not use this scene. Another fact which emerges from the selected examples to be discussed in the next few pages is that the mi'rāj of Muhammad was used several times (as many as three occasions) in one particular manuscript.

Only a limited number of texts have mi'rāj scenes. The most popular is the Khamsah of Nizāmī. Typical examples are manuscripts dated: 848/1444; 848-9/1444-5; 868/1463; 865/1460-875/1470; 870/1465-880/1475; 910/1505; 911/1505; 915/1509; 946/1539; 975/1567; 983/1575 (to cite only the examples treated in this thesis; the same caveat applies to the manuscripts described below).
Jāmī (Haft Awrang, 16th century), (Yūsuf and Zulaikhā, 16th century and Subhat al-abrār 978/1570–988/1580).

Amīr Khusrau (Khamsah), 903/1497; 978/1571.

Maktabī (Laila and Majmūn) 895/1490–900/1495.

Sa‘dī (Bustān), 906/1500; 978/1570.

Qatīlī (Kitāb Vāmik u‘Aẓrā) 937/1530.

Hātifī (Laila and Majmūn) 938/1532) and (Tīmūr-Nāmah, 16th century).

Hilālī (The three poems) 982/1574.

Qāsimī (Khamsah) 988/1580.

Luqman-i-Ashnī (Zubdat al-tawārikh(1)) 919/1583.

Mohīr (Mihr u Mushtari) 860/1456.

Hāfiz (Diwan) 965/1549.

The reason for finding so many Nizāmī manuscripts with mi’rāj scenes is because these particular poems were copied frequently over the centuries and in time this scene became a very important part of the manuscript which the artist could not omit. But this does not mean that there are representations of the mi’rāj in every book of Nizāmī or other Sūfī poets. Sometimes we see the artist depicting the mi’rāj after an illustration of a hunting scene or of an enthroned prince and sometimes even after both of them. The mi’rāj scene has been used as a frontispiece in nos. 2, 5, 6, 9, 10, 12, 16, 20, 21, 22, 23, 25, 26, 27 and 28; the hunting scene can be seen first depicted in 3 and 15, and in some other manuscripts an enthroned prince is first depicted, like nos. 17 and 24. Moreover the picture of the mi’rāj is not used at the beginning of some books of poems even though these books do have the incident of the mi’rāj.

1. Turkish.
mentioned in their texts. Mi'raj scenes sometimes occur on later
pages or they may disappear completely. The reason seems to be
that artists sometimes preferred not to follow the old tradition
or liked to differentiate their work. An extreme example of this
is a manuscript of the Mi'raj-Namah in the Kevorkian collection
and dated 956/1549. It is astonishing that the artist did not
use even one representation of the mi'raj to symbolize the whole
journey of the Prophet. Instead he used an enthroned prince as
a frontispiece for this religious manuscript. This means that
although many Muslim artists used familiar elements there were
always some who refused to do so even though the result was a
great contrast between the scene itself and the text of the
manuscript.

1. B.W. Robinson, The Kevorkian collection. Islamic and Indian
illustrated manuscripts, miniature paintings and drawings
(unpublished catalogue, New York, 1953). Robinson attributed
this manuscript to Bukhara; Ibid., p. 73, no. CXXXIV.
Selected examples of mi'raj scenes from secular manuscripts

The mi'raj scene which has already been discussed was used as a frontispiece in Islamic manuscripts. It occurs so often that sometimes one manuscript has more than one representation of the scene. We also see that a hunting scene or an enthroned prince is depicted before the ascent of Muhammad. The reason is that the book of poems is divided into chapters. Accordingly, the artist would like to attach a representation of the mi'raj at the beginning of each section or on various pages. In the following pages several mi'raj representations which I came across during my study(1) will be described. I would like to point out here that the reason for choosing these representations is that they are the earliest representations I have been able to find.

1. Two miniatures (Dublin, Chester Beatty Library, MS.292 i and ii). Timurid period. Probably 1410.(2) Pl.81A and B.

The scene of the mi'raj is divided into two sections. In the first part(1), pl.81A, which occupies the right-hand page

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1. I am most obliged to Miss Titley for supplying me with a list of the mi'raj scenes in the manuscripts in the British Museum.

the figure of Muhammad is in the centre. His face has been repainted. The clouds have been used here to separate Muhammad and Burāq from the figures of the angels. Although Gabriel is shown in front leading Muhammad, the Prophet is shown not to be paying any attention as he is shown looking at the spectators or even perhaps in the direction of the Ka'ba which forms the other part of the illustration (the left-hand page). A group of angels are shown taking part in this procession from behind a cloud looking at Muhammad. As Muhammad was still in Mecca when the incident of the mi'raj took place the artist seized the opportunity to depict the whole view of the Ka'ba.

In fol.ii (pl.81B) the background is represented in green bricks with arches surrounding the main enclosure. Usually the cloth of the Ka'ba is made of one colour with a band of inscription. But here the artist has used black for the upper part and orange bricks for the lower. It is very clear in this miniature that the artist used his imagination to add some visible changes. For instance, by showing the angels in this miniature to be more active the artist directed the attention of the spectators to fol.ii (pl.81B) rather than the first one although the first one includes the figure of the Prophet. So one can say that he has created a different subject from the mi'raj. At the upper part of the illustration two angels are seen carrying what appears to be a piece of cloth crowned with flame. Presumably this indicates the cloth of the Ka'ba which to this day is offered every year by a Muslim country. But here the artist uses the figures of the angels to carry the
cloth to the sacred House of God.

Two points are worth noting here. Firstly, it did not happen that during the mi'raj a piece of cloth was brought to the Ka'ba by angels. Secondly, the custom of offering a cloth by Muslims came into practice at a later date. In addition to that, the incident of the mi'raj occurred during the night.

The artist has depicted the figures of worshippers wearing the hajj clothes, a thing that could not have happened since Muslims had not yet gained control of the Ka'ba and the only people who could have been there were non-Muslims. Finally, the upper part of the miniature is painted dark-blue presumably indicating night while the lower part is so clear that it can be nothing but day.

2. Khamsa of Nizâmi (London, Keir collection. no.III. 82-100, fol.5b. Shiraz style. Executed at Shiraz or Yazd, Safar 848/May-June 1444. (1)

The background of this frontispiece is painted dark blue and decorated with Chinese clouds. The upper part of Muhammad is represented as a flame halo. The lower part is shown dressed

1. Unillustrated. Fol.33a is dated Safar 848/May-June 1444, is fol.120a dated Jumâdâ II 847/October 1443 and fol.172a bears the date Jumâdâ I 847/September 1442. Robinson, Islamic Painting and the Arts of the Book, p.152, MS.no.III, 82-100.
in a green robe. Gabriel is depicted with many wings stretching out his hand towards Muhammad and with a crown adorning the top of his head. Angels are shown carrying censers and hiding behind the clouds. Burāq is shown as well, mounted by the Prophet, with a crown on its head.


The ascension scene occupies fol. 6a. It is the third picture in this manuscript, following a hunting scene and a picture of a prince sitting in a garden.

The face of Muhammad is not clear. An angel appears at the right side kissing the hand of the Prophet. In most of the representations of the *miʿrāj*, we see that Gabriel leads the Prophet on his journey. In this miniature we only see an angel in front of Muhammad but there is no difference between this figure and the rest of the angels, e.g. in the type of crown and dress. Some angels are shown wearing crowns, with a cap in the middle, others wearing head-dresses made of feathers, while the rest are shown bare-headed. On the left hand a creature is shown with only its head and two wings visible; it brings back to the memory the *miʿrāj* illustration in the *Jāmiʿ al-tawārīkh*. The face of the heavenly beast is difficult to identify. It has

a pink body, and the saddle is similar to the dress of the angel kissing the hand of Muhammad.

Even though this miniature has some "mistakes" - such as the presence of the angel who, for reasons of space, is depicted only in part - the artist has overcome successfully certain problems of draughtmanship. He paints an angel with its back to the spectators, indicating perhaps that no heavenly creature would turn its back to the Prophet. The angel descending from Heaven is shown facing the spectators, perhaps because it was too difficult to draw him looking at the bottom where Muhammad is depicted.


The Prophet is shown mounting Burāq. He is flanked by two figures who have a feminine appearance. At the lower part we see two female figures. One of them has her finger in her mouth. Under the beast a male is shown who has Far Eastern features, like the rest of the figures in this mi'raj scene. A Mongol head-dress adorns his head. The figure is shown looking in the direction of the spectators and not in the direction of the Prophet. On the left we see another figure of a female looking towards Muhammad.

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The scale of this painting is very large (40 x 30 cm.) and for this reason some scholars have suggested that this vellum might have been used as an illustration during the celebration of the incident of the mi'raj. In fact, there is a great possibility that this vellum was used as a cover for a manuscript. The following reasons support this suggestion. Firstly, there are several secular manuscripts, like the Shāh-Nāmeh, which are large in size, accordingly this scene might have been a cover for one of these manuscripts, especially as we have already seen that the representations of the mi'raj adorns several secular manuscripts. Secondly, if this illustration had been made for exhibiting only, we would have received some other scenes from the incident of the mi'raj which give more details about the ascent of the Prophet to heaven. But we have received only one representation which is similar to those scenes used as frontispieces.

5. 'Assar, Mīhr u Mushtari (London, Keir Collection, no. III. 104-126, fol.2b). Executed at Shamakha in the province of Shīrwan, 2 Shā‘ban 860/6 July 1456. (2)

The background is painted in dark blue decorated with Chinese clouds. Muhammad is shown wearing a white turban with a green baton on his head. He is also dressed in green. There are two angels with their heads and wings alone visible. Burāq

is shown as a female, crowned and with long hair.


In this miniature we see not only blue sky and golden clouds but also golden spots, which may represent gems or stars with a crescent decorating the sky. The sky is not painted in a single familiar colour, because several colours like orange, white and green have been used.

The face of the Prophet is covered with a white veil. Again there are no specific signs to distinguish the figure of the archangel Gabriel. The angels do nothing but exchange glances or talk to each other. None of the angels is depicted in entirety because they are hidden behind the clouds. Three figures stand in front of the Prophet spreading their hands as if they were inviting him to come to the place they indicate. The angels seem to be scarcely aware of the presence of the Prophet. The angels in this miniature are shown in the same way as the female figures in this same manuscript. They have similar faces and black hair ornamented with a thread of mother-of-pearl in the front. The crowns they wear are also found on the heads of the kings in the manuscript. Even Burāq is shown in the same feminine way.

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It is the second miniature in this book of poems. Muhammad is veiled, with a white turban and a halo. Gabriel who is seen in front of the Prophet is the only figure who is crowned among the angels. His face has been obliterated and he has three pairs of wings which start from his neck and cover a large amount of space in the illustration. Most of the angels' faces have been damaged. They have a feminine appearance and resemble a group of females in a garden scene in fol. 59b. They carry censer and dishes. Burāq is grey with a green saddle and is crowned.

This miniature represents the first stage of the ascent of Muhammad to heaven. It shows the archangel Gabriel leading Burāq towards the house of Muhammad. The house is depicted in a green garden with pinkish-grey hills behind, a scene we have already seen in secular miniatures. There are no Chinese clouds here although white clouds decorate fol. 202a and fol. 209b in the same manuscript.

The main figure in the mi'raj representations is certainly

2. Unillustrated.
the Prophet Muhammad. Normally, if an artist does not like to show the figure of Muhammad he either covers Muhammad's face with a white veil or places a flame halo upon Burāq's back to indicate the presence of the Prophet. But in this illustration we do not see any sign of the Prophet although this picture is entitled Sifat mi‘rāj rasūl or "the description of the ascension of the Prophet".

The angels here are bare-shouldered. Their hair is in the same style as that of the angels in the manuscript of the Mi‘rāj-Namah. Generally, in the representation of Burāq we find the artist emphasising the importance of this beast as a creature from the heavenly sphere. But in this illustration the artist shows Burāq as an ordinary beast which is being led along the right way.


This miniature reminds us of the latter representation of the mi‘rāj especially in the pale colours such as that of the background and the little attention paid by the artist to ornament in general, which usually covers the dresses of the figures, the background, the saddle of Burāq and so on. The upper part of Muhammad is replaced by a flame halo. The usual golden colour of the halo is replaced here by dark brown.

1. Unillustrated.
Gabriel, who is shown turning his head towards Muhammad, has a feminine appearance and his wings appear to originate in his neck. Angels are represented as children. They are three in number and are small in size; they are shown wearing short pink skirts and have green wings. They do not carry anything although their hands are stretched in front of them. Burāq, who is usually white, is painted here in pink and has the tail of a peacock. The head looks as if it has been directly attached to the body because the neck is invisible.


The first miniature in this book of poems represents the mi'rāj. The scene here is directed to the right side of the spectator unlike most of the illustrations where it is shown to the left. The Prophet, wearing a green robe, is mounted on Burāq. He is shown with a turban on his head and looks as if he were talking to Gabriel.

The artist of this miniature uses Chinese clouds instead of the round or flame haloes which were known in the former school of painting. The upper part of Gabriel's body alone is shown. He has Far Eastern features such as slanted eyes, puffy face,

straight and thin black hair. The artist seems eager not to paint parts of his figures out of the frame of the miniature; for this reason he has drawn the left wing of Gabriel turned towards the upper part. The rest of his body is covered with golden Chinese clouds. A number of angels can be seen in this miniature. The first is to be found in the right-hand corner. Nothing is visible of his body apart from his eyes. The second is in the lower right-hand corner and seems unaware of the presence of the Prophet. His wings have also been drawn in the same way as the wings of Gabriel. The left part of the illustration shows four figures of angels. The first is covered with clouds; his face and wings are the only parts which are shown clearly. The second is behind Muhammad while two others are in the lower part of the miniature. They are talking to each other and one of them is pointing towards the Prophet Muhammad.


The miniature of the mi’raj is the seventh picture in this manuscript. In this illustration we notice elements we have not seen in other representations of the mi’raj, for example, the unusual shape of the illustration. It is trapezium-like in shape. There are two possibilities; either this is an attempt by a creative artist to change the usual shape into

1. This manuscript is undated and unsigned. Robinson, C.P.M.W., vol.II, p.48.
something different, as we see some new elements in the miniature, or the scene has been copied from an original representation which adorned a book cover because the shape of this picture looks like the cover of a book. The Prophet is shown wearing a green robe, a white turban covers his head topped with a green baton and with a veil covering his face. Gabriel often has a special attribute which distinguishes him from the run of angels, like a crown, carrying a flag or leading the Prophet and so on. But here, we do not see any difference between him and the angels. Angels are taking an active part in the procession of the mi'raj. One can notice that they are indeed accompanying an important person. Only two of them are wearing crowns while the others are wearing head-dresses made of feathers. Although the number of angels is large each one has a task. Each angel is engaged in carrying something, be it candles, a dish with a pitcher, a container of probably rose water, dishes covered with golden lids and a ram. Two others strew pearls over the Prophet Muḥammad and a third angel offers fruit, probably of Paradise, from a dish.

However, the artist has forgotten that Gabriel led the Prophet to heaven or has chosen to neglect it for the idea is not reflected in the miniature. The shape of the wings of the angels is unusual, for they are either widely spread, crossed or bent. It is also surprising that the Chinese clouds which have been used so often to decorate the mi'raj representation are not shown here. The artist did not neglect using fine ornament to decorate even the smallest of the articles, such
as the saddle of Burāq, the clothes of the angels, the objects carried by the angels and the background which includes stars, crescents and fine ribbons.


The Prophet in this illustration wears a green robe with a string of beads in his hand but unfortunately his face has been damaged. The size of Muhammad, especially the upper part of his body, is shown bigger than that of the angels. If the artist meant the figure who carries a flag to be Gabriel he certainly occupies a new position because the usual place for the archangel is in the front as he is supposed to be leading Muhammad to heaven. The flag is painted with three colours, green, blue and orange and has golden inscriptions which bear the names of Muhammad and 'Alī. Gabriel has a feminine appearance and the lower part of his body is hidden by a Chinese cloud. The angels also appear as females; they are small-sized with long hair. One is shown strewing jewels over Muhammad. A second carries a censer. The only figure who is crowned is Burāq. It is also drawn as a female; it has a pink body and its hair is similar to that of the angels. Although this scene is a typical representation of the mi'raj we notice that the figures of angels are drawn in a way which shows them well-proportioned and slim.

1. See Robinson, P.P.L.O.L., p.25, nos.80-133; illu.86.
The miniature is divided into many sections; the largest and most important is the scene of the mi'raj. It has a dark blue background adorned by thin decorated band. The Prophet wears a green robe and has a halo. The angels are large in number, have a feminine appearance and in most cases their heads and shoulders alone are shown as they are hidden by Chinese clouds. A group of angels is shown at the upper part of the scene surrounding a circle and looking in the direction of Muhammad. Probably this flame-like circle is meant to be the door of heaven although Muhammad is marching in a different direction. Angels here have black hair and their figures are drawn in a very delicate way. Burāq has a pink body and is crowned.

At the lower part of the scene, on the right, there is a building symbolizing the Ka'ba covered with an ornamented black cloth. The structure is surrounded by walls. In the sahn there are figures wearing white turbans topped by red batons but they are large in size compared to the building. Beside the Ka'ba some other buildings are represented. It is difficult to identify whether the first is religious or secular because it consists of decorated boards, probably walls joined together with various colours and ornaments. The second building is square

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1. Unillustrated. The date is written on a small building.
Robinson, I.P.A.B., p.178, colour pl.19, pl.47.
in shape, presumably a garden or a balcony as we can see some figures and palm-trees. We also see a structure similar to a mosque with a minbar at the right-hand side. These buildings are shown on a white and pink background with some hurris on the horizon. A band of similar landscape surrounds the left and the upper part of the scene.


The mi'râj representation is depicted within the text of Subhat al-abrar. The illustration is divided into two scenes. In the first the Prophet is shown mounted on Burâq and looking towards Gabriel. Most of Gabriel's body is hidden by a Chinese cloud. Only one angel is drawn and he looks exactly like Gabriel. The angel stretches his hand forward supposedly showing the Prophet the way to heaven although he stands behind him. The structure which is represented by a big building; at the upper part we see a series of niches and in the middle a gate flanked by doors or arches. This building presumably represents Muhammad's house because it does not look sufficiently like a religious building to make someone think it indicates the Ka'ba or Jerusalem. This house is certainly a new element in the representation of the mi'râj. The reason for this sudden appearance is probably because although artists usually followed

the old tradition of book painting they also liked to add other elements to distinguish their work.


P1.89.

The cover of this copy of Nizāmī is decorated with a hunting scene. The picture of the ascent of Muḥammad illustrates fol.5r.

The figure of Muḥammad, Gabriel, three angels and Burāq occupy the upper part of the illustration. The Prophet is veiled while Gabriel stands in front of him. Gabriel is the only crowned figure among the angels. Although he looks very similar to the angels he is drawn as a male. The angels have a feminine appearance with their hair decorated with strings of pearls. The first carries a green dish containing flames. The second also carries a dish filled probably with jewellery. The third appears as if asking the blessing of God with his two hands stretched out in front of him. Burāq has a thin neck decorated with a collar. In the second part of the illustration a green dome is shown decorated on the right-hand side with ornament similar to that which covers the frame of the miniature. A landscape is represented consisting of grey mountains which does not have any significance apart from adding a new element to the illustration.

This miniature is in a very poor state. A big golden flame is used as a background instead of the dark blue. The face of the Prophet is covered with a white veil and he wears a turban with a red baton. Gabriel is shown at the right hand side of the illustration leading Muhammad. A cloud is used to separate the Prophet from Gabriel probably to emphasize that Muhammad occupies a higher position. The upper parts of the angels appear only. They are bare-headed with the style of hair used very often for angels and for the figures of females in secular miniatures. Part of the hair is allowed to fall down on the shoulders while the rest is piled up on top of the head and sometimes it is decorated with a string of pearls. One of them is carrying a censer and a second is offering something to Muhammad. But the Prophet seems unaware of his presence as he is engaged in conversation with Gabriel. There is also the possibility that the angel might be carrying something and following the Prophet since he is in the wrong position for making an offering. The artist seems ignorant of the position of Burāq. The artist seems to regard Burāq too highly as he makes it share the same halo with Muhammad. He also makes it share the second attribute of the Prophet by putting a veil over its face. There is no explanation for that except that the artist has been unaware

1. Dedicated to Ya‘quh the Aqqoyunlu. Meredith-Owens, op. cit., p. 69.
of some religious matters since it is a certainty that Buraq has a lower status than that of the Prophet Muhammad.


This book tells us the story of Laila and Majnūn. The picture of the miʿrāj illustrates the third miniature on fol.9a and is the only religious scene in this book. The cover bears a scene of a prince or a ruler sitting in a garden with his courtiers; some of his retinue are playing musical instruments. The first illustration shows an interior scene with an enthroned prince. The second shows a hunting scene. The third shows the miʿrāj of Muhammad to heaven. The fourth shows Laila and Majnūn at school and the fifth shows Majnūn in the desert. The last representation shows Majnūn talking to a person in a garden.

The picture of the miʿrāj is small in size and oblong in shape. One could say that in this miniature the artist emphasizes the procession in general for nothing is hidden behind the clouds which are only used as a decoration. Muhammad is shown wearing a brown robe decorated with delicate ornament on the sleeves and shoulders but unfortunately his face is not visible. Gabriel carries a censer and wears an orange dress with a belt consisting of flowers strung together with a golden band. This

1. This manuscript is dated (C. Rieu, Catalogue of the Persian Manuscripts in the British Museum (London 1881), vol.II, p.652.
belt is a familiar and popular element which has been used in many representations of the mi'raj and also in some other figures in secular manuscripts. Gabriel's head is adorned with a head-dress which has an ornamented golden frame topped by a coloured part similar to a helmet worn by Mongol figures in some miniatures. Angels are carrying dishes and wear very long robes which cover their feet contrary to the Prophet Muhammad whose feet are shown. The limbs and tail of Burāq are shown to be too thin compared with its body. It is white in colour as has been described in Islamic religious books.


Although this miniature has been painted in the same way as the rest of the representations of the mi'raj it has the fame of being one of the finest illustrations in Islamic art. The background is painted in dark blue with white Chinese clouds and is adorned with stars or gems. On the right hand side a golden disc appears surrounded by a white circle. The Prophet is shown

1. The calligrapher: Shāh Mahmūd Nishāpūrī. Done for Shāh Tahmāsp whose name can be seen on a palace wall on fol. 60. In eleven miniatures the names of the following artists are given: Mirzā 'Alī, fol. 48, 77; Sultan Muhammad, fol. 53, 202; Mīr Sayyid 'Alī, fol. 77; Aqā Mīrāk, fol. 166, and Muzaffar 'Alī, fol. 211. Fols. 213, 221 signed by Muhammad Zamān and dated 1086. Rieu, op. cit., vol. III, pp. 1072-3.
sitting on Burāq. He is veiled and haloed. Gabriel appears at
the head of the procession leading Muhammad to heaven. Angels
are carrying censers, fruit and dishes. One of them is carrying
what appears to be a copy of the Qur'ān. Another angel is shown
at the right side presumably carrying a head-dress or turban.
A golden frame decorated with birds, animals and plants
surrounds the miniature of the mi'raj.

19. Diwan of Hāfiz (Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS. Ouseley,
Ethe 819; Ouseley 1811, no. 168, fol. 51a). Rabī' I 956/
March 1549. (1)

Chinese clouds have been used here as cushions or as a
background for the figures of the angels. The Prophet wears a
blue robe and is mounted on Burāq. He is haloed but his face
has been obliterated. Gabriel sits on a bigger cloud than those
of the angels, probably to show his importance. He is shown
crowned and stretching out his hand inviting the Prophet. Angels
here are divided into groups of males and females. Males
wear crowns and carry dishes filled with golden flames and are

1. Unillustrated. B.W. Robinson, A descriptive catalogue of
the Persian paintings in the Bodleian Library (Oxford 1958),
p. 94. Robinson believes that the mi'raj scene is one of
four miniatures which are inserted into this manuscript and
he attributed these miniatures to the first half of the
16th century. Ibid., p. 163, no. 1086.
shown throwing them over the Prophet. The females are shown with several different hair styles; the hair may, for instance, be tied up or left falling onto their shoulders.

Some angels in this miniature have unfamiliar tasks such as the one at the lower part who is carrying the flame halo in his hands without a dish. A second carries the dish on her head and the third is bowing in front of Burāq kissing the front hoof. Burāq is painted in red and crowned. The faces of the angels and Burāq are very similar; the only difference lies in the head-dress.


The miniature of the mi‘rāj is used as a frontispiece for this book which tells the story of Yūsuf and Zulaykhā. Clouds take the shape of crescents or are wavy, or they look as if they are knotted. The figure of Muhammad is surrounded by a big plain golden area with a frame decorated with flames. He wears a white turban similar to those which are worn by other figures in this manuscript such as fol.37b and 56a. Gabriel is shown kneeling, looking at Muhammad. He wears the same sort of crown as the two other angels, Burāq and some other figures in fol.18b. His long black hair is shown falling onto his shoulders. The angels are engaged in various activities like carrying

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containers of rose water, probably a censer and a dish with fruit. The other three are throwing flames. At the left side of the miniature we see an angel on a golden background, kneeling on a cloud. He looks as though he is drawing open a curtain or opening a door. Probably the artist meant it to be the door of heaven. But the procession of the mi‘rāj is heading towards the front of the miniature and not towards the door. Another unfamiliar element is the angel who is shown throwing flames over Gabriel. Burāq has a pink body and its hoofs are painted in white. Ornaments which adorn the saddle of Burāq have been used as a border for the carpet in fol.25b.

Nothing is new in this miniature; even the open door of heaven has been placed in the wrong direction and the angel who threw flames over Muhammad and Gabriel. Other articles have been used in the other representations of this manuscript like containers, dishes, ornaments and so on.


The Prophet Muhammad is represented mounted on Burāq but his face is not shown because it is covered by a veil. He is haloed and stretches out his hands towards a lion which appears at the top part of the miniature. A flame halo surrounds the figure of the lion and it is shown welcoming the presence of

Muhammad in Heaven. Gabriel carries a green flag and three angels carry dishes containing flames. One of them is throwing the flame towards the Prophet but is looking in a different direction. The head of Burāq is adorned by a crown similar to the crowns on the heads of kings in this manuscript. A golden collar surrounds its neck. It has a red body dotted with white.

This miniature is crowded with figures perhaps because of the small size of the miniature. The artist seems to have wanted to depict as many figures as he could. But he could very easily have avoided this, despite the small amount of space, by drawing the figures smaller.


The miniature of the ascent of Muhammad to Heaven has been used as a frontispiece for this copy of Nizāmī. A flame halo surrounds the body of Muhammad and Burāq. But most of the figures of Muhammad is damaged especially the front part and the face. He wears a brown robe, a white turban and stretches out his hand. Gabriel has a crown similar to the crown of Burāq and one of the angels. He is represented as a male, with wings sprouting out of his neck. He carries a red flag decorated

with golden ornaments which is similar to the decoration on the
clothes of the angels in this miniature and other figures in
other illustrations in this manuscript. The artist has divided
the angels into two groups, male and female. Only one male, who
has a face similar to Gabriel and Burāq, wears a crown.
The other figures of females have tall and slim bodies and have
their hair either piled up on their heads or falling down onto
their shoulders. They carry dishes, containers and censers.
Burāq is crowned and has a saddle which is decorated in the same
way as the saddles used for horses in this manuscript.

The artist seems to be interested in decorating articles
with fine ornaments such as those which decorate the clothes
of the angels. We see that the same ornaments are used for
clothes, carpets, walls and backgrounds in other miniatures
especially fol. 32a which represents a bath scene. Instead of
decorating the clothes of the figures who are shown half-naked,
the artist used the ornaments to decorate the walls and
background.

23. *Bustān* of Saʿdī (Dublin, Chester Beatty Library, MS. 297,
fol. 6). Scribed by Mīr Sāliḥ al-Kātib. Circa 1570. (1)

Pl. 96.

1. The colophon on fol. 182a gives the name of the scribe
Muhammad Qāsim al-Haravī and dated 930/1523. But according
to the catalogue of the Chester Beatty Library the true scribe
is Mīr Sāliḥ al-Kātib whose name is mentioned on fol. 182b.
The background is a light blue decorated with white stars and Chinese clouds. The Prophet wears a green robe, a white turban, and a white veil covering his face. He points with his right hand towards Gabriel who appears at the left corner of the miniature while he looks at the angel who sits at the lower part of this illustration. Gabriel is shown bare-headed. One of the angels carries a dish and throws flames over Muhammad. The other four are looking towards Muhammad and one of them has his finger in his mouth. Burāq is grey in colour and has a feminine appearance.


Fols. 1b and 2a represent a scene of a dignitary in his palace and behind him there is a garden. His companions are engaged in dancing and playing musical instruments while a female offers him fruit. In the upper part we see figures playing chess while others watch from windows.

In fol. 27a the miniature of the miʿrāj is depicted. The illustration is oblong in shape with a dark blue background decorated with Chinese clouds which appear to be knotted and are connected with one another by waves of golden bands. The face of the Prophet is very clear, which probably suggests that it was

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repaigned at a later period. Presumably in the first representation, that is before it was painted, the face of Muhammad was covered with a white veil. Proof of this is seen in the figure of the Prophet Müsä in fol. 37a who is represented with a white turban on his head topped by a black peak and his face is covered by a white veil. Accordingly, the artist must have covered the face of Muhammad also, although the face of the Prophet Yüsuf in fol. 82a is visible.

Gabriel carries an orange flag which is decorated in the same way as the dress of Muhammad. He wears the same crown as the one adorning the head of one of the angels. Presumably, his face was also painted at a late period because it is different in style from the faces of the angels. The angels were drawn by the first artist. A male angel carries a dish with a cover and others carry a ram and flame.


The mi'raž miniature occupies the first two pages in this manuscript. It is illustrated in two folios. In the first the artist has depicted the main figures of Muhammad mounted on Burāq and Gabriel who is drawn very close to Muhammad. The

artist, however, could have drawn him on the other page. On the next page we see the figures of angels only. The Prophet is shown wearing a green robe and a brown gown, his face is veiled and he is engaged in conversation with Gabriel. Gabriel wears a golden crown like the other three angels and Burāq. His wings are turned towards the right. He points with his hands to the front as if he is indicating the path which he intends to conduct Muhammad along. A group of angels appear on the second page. They carry dishes filled with flames, a pitcher, fruit and censers. Some look as though they are descending from heaven while others are seen kneeling. Their hair is decorated with strings of pearls and some of them are shown wearing feather caps. They all wear similar belts except for Muhammad who has a piece of cloth tied around his waist. Burāq is painted in pink and has a collar round its neck.

From the big flame halo which surrounds the body of Muhammad and Burāq one can easily tell that this flame surrounds the figures of a rider and his mount. If the artist had painted fewer clouds in this miniature the scene would have been more attractive. But with all those clouds he has directed the attention of the spectators to the clouds rather than to the figures and the fine decorations he has used.


1. Meredith-Owens, op. cit., p.66.
This manuscript contains three parts: "the King and the beggar", "the qualities of lovers" and a version of Laila and Majnūn. The copyist signs himself as the poor slave Nasīr Astarabādī, Jumādā II 913 A.H. This book has three illustrations of the mi‘rāj, on fols. 4b, 57a and 106b.

Fol. 4b. pl. 98.

In the first illustration we see that a blue sky is used as the main background to the scene. The Chinese clouds appear to serve as cushions for the angels. Muhammad is holding the reins of Burāq with one hand while the other hand is placed on his chest. He wears a blue dress, black boots and has two plaits which are drawn black and thin in the Mongol style. A white turban adorns his head together with an orange or red baton. The same turban can be seen on the heads of some other figures in this manuscript. The flame halo is drawn in gold with red lines. Gabriel has Far Eastern features like slanted eyes, a tall and slim figure and has two plaits. His wings are drawn from the top of his shoulders. His face is turned towards Muhammad, his right wing and right hand are drawn out of the border of the picture. The artist depicts the angels as human beings, painting them as either male or female. The male angels in this miniature have golden crowns and short hair. One of them is carrying a flame while the other is kissing one of Burāq's hoofs although the artist knows that angels occupy a higher position in Islamic religion than Burāq. But it seems that he wanted to add some new elements to his picture. The
female angels have long black hair decorated with golden dots and carry flames. Four of them are seated on clouds. Burāq is painted orange with grey lines and is crowned with a crown similar to that of Gabriel; he also has two plaits.

Fol.57a, pl.99.

This miniature is used as a frontispiece for the second part of this book. The Chinese clouds, here, are used not just to support the angels but are used as mounts. They are drawn in similar shapes to horses mounted by two angels.

Muhammad is shown to be tall and slim, stretching out his hand and conversing with Gabriel. He wears a turban and his face is covered by a white veil. Gabriel is mounted on a cloud leading Muhammad to heaven. The same styles of hair, head-dress and face have been used for the figures of Gabriel and angels. Two angels carry flames, while a third sits on a cloud and bows humbly before Burāq, kissing its hoof. If the artist wanted to show the respect of an angel he should have shown him kissing the hand of the Prophet, not his beast. But it seems that the artist has no knowledge of religious matters. Burāq has been painted in violet dotted with a darker colour and its hoofs are painted in white.

Fol.106b, pl.100.

Clouds occupy a lot of space in this miniature. A halo
surrounds the figures of Muhammad and Burāq. The Prophet is veiled while Gabriel is seen kneeling in front of Muhammad pointing with his left hand. He wears a crown and has two plaits. Angels are spreading their hands to the front as if they are asking for blessing and are topped by flames. An angel holds the back hoofs of Burāq and another two are at the front. A second angel holds the right hoof with his hands trying to kiss it. A third angel also holds the other hoof with his left hand while his right hand is stretched forward topped by a flame. They have the same style of hair as the angel as in fol. 57a (pl. 99). An angel is shown pointing towards the front in the same direction as Gabriel. Burāq is shown with a pink body, is crowned and has two plaits. Despite the respect paid by the angels, Burāq seems unaware and the artist did not intend to represent it in a different pose.

Although these miniatures represent the same scene and illustrate the same manuscript there are differences. Thus we see in fol. 4b (pl. 98) that an angel holds the left front hoof of Burāq with his two hands. In fol. 57a (pl. 99), he holds the right front hoof. In fol. 106a (pl. 100) another angel joins the first angel in kissing the two hoofs of Burāq although he is also engaged in carrying a flame.

In the first miniature the Chinese clouds are not obvious because they have been used as seats for the angels. In fol. 57a (pl. 99) the clouds serve the same purpose but the artist has drawn them in zoomorphic shapes mounted by angels and has given
them various colours. In fol. 106b (pl. 100), the artist has used semi-circles of white and orange to decorate the wide expanse of golden background.

The hair of the female angels in fol. 4b (pl. 98) is black with golden spangles. In fol. 57a (pl. 99) the same sort of decoration is used for Gabriel, the other angels and Burāq. In the third miniature this particular style is used for the angels only. In the first representation the figures of Gabriel, Burāq and the male angels are crowned, however; the type of crown worn by Gabriel and Burāq is different from that worn by the rest of the angels.

The only head-dress seen in the second illustration is the white turban worn by the Prophet. In the third illustration a crown adorns the heads of Gabriel and Burāq. The carpet on the body of Burāq is red with a golden border, while a scroll-like ornament in black covers the back part of the beast. In fol. 57a (pl. 99) the carpet is illustrated again but the Prophet is now sitting on a saddle. The carpet appears again on fol. 106b (pl. 100) but it is now blue with white and golden scrolls and an orange border.
This is one of the miniatures of the mi‘rāj in which we see the procession directed to the right instead of the left. Clouds are used as chains to connect the figures of Gabriel and the angels to one another. Muhammad wears a long white robe decorated with gold with a white turban over his head topped by a black baton in the middle. His face is veiled and his dress is very similar to the dress worn by Bahrām Gūr in fol. 273b. Gabriel carries a green flag which is decorated in the same way as his trousers but in a different colour. On the metal part of the flag the names of God, ‘Allī and Muhammad are mentioned. We notice that the name of ‘Allī is mentioned before the name of the Prophet which indicates Shi‘ite influence. Gabriel’s wings, which seem to come out of his neck, are dotted. The angels are drawn as female and have their hair decorated with strings of pearls. They are carrying dishes. Burāq is drawn with a face similar to that of Gabriel but without any trace of a neck. It has a collar and wears a crown similar to that of Gabriel.


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2. Ibid., p. 54, nos. 156-201.
The face of Muhammad is veiled and he is drawn smaller in size than the bodies of the other figures. Gabriel is shown moving in a different direction from Muhammad. He carries a green flag but there is no certainty that the artist chose this particular colour, which is venerated in the Islamic faith, for symbolic reasons. In this picture many elements are painted in green, such as the lower part of the dress of the Prophet, the saddle and collar of Burāq, and the robes and wings of the angels. The artist has left some space between his figures which makes the illustration look tidier than many other representations of the mi'raj.

In this same Safawid manuscript there is another representation of Muhammad also taken from mi'raj iconography. In fol.109b (pl.103) the Prophet is shown being woken up by the archangel. The Apostle of God is shown sleeping as well but the artist has not forgotten to draw the essential elements which distinguish Muhammad - e.g. the veil, the flame halo and the turban. Gabriel has the same hair style as the angels in fol.6b (pl.102) but instead of the crown he usually wears, a flame halo surrounds his head.


This manuscript looks as if it is divided into two parts.

The upper part has a blue background and shows the figure of the Prophet. Below that we have the representation of the Ka‘ba which is drawn as a square structure surrounded by domes and columns. In the middle is the enclosure which is represented by blue and pink squares. The Ka‘ba is covered by a black cloth ornamented by calligraphy which reads "There is no God but God and Muhammad is the Messenger of God".

On the right hand side where the mi‘rāj scene is depicted the title of the incident is given in which the ascent of Muhammad is mentioned. The figure of the Prophet is replaced by a big flame halo and only a quarter of his body and his turban are represented. Gabriel is kneeling and looking behind in the direction of Muhammad. Crowned angels surround Muhammad and each one carries a dish with flames. Burāq has a pink body dotted with white and has the tail of a peacock.

Various Prophets are depicted in this manuscript but the artist does not hide their faces; he simply gives them flame haloes.

30. Two miniatures (London, Victoria and Albert Museum, no. 692-1876 (20) and 132-1885 (1)), Probably Shīrāz, 1590. Pls. 105 and 106.

Basil Robinson suggests that these paintings are from a manuscript of Nizāmī as they are similar in decoration and colouring to a painting of Majnūn rescuing a gazelle from a
hunter (V.A.M. no. 692-1876 (1a)), which is dated 1590 A.D. Robert Skelton also suggests that these two illustration of the mi'raj are from one manuscript. (1)

692-1876(2). P1.105.

This picture is divided into three parts: the brick-paved floor, the house and garden, and finally the sky which is filled with stars and adorned with angels. Near the house we see a jug and a dish, features which are usually depicted in secular illustrations in the context of washing the hands. Here, they most probably indicate that the Prophet made his ablutions before he left for heaven. The house seems to be made of ornamental boards topped by a blue dome. The Prophet Muhammad stands inside the door and is veiled. His hands are raised as if he were asking to be blessed. Two angels are carrying dishes with fruit, probably pomegranates, a fruit often offered to princes in secular illustrations. Burāq is treated as a beast here for Gabriel is leading it, though its face, which is similar to that of Gabriel's, crown, and fine saddle are sufficiently distinctive. The brick pavement in this miniature can also be seen in a miniature, no. 132-1885(2) in the same album which represents two figures conversing. Behind them is a building decorated with fine ornament.

1. I am grateful to M.R. Skelton for the information furnished in this paragraph.
Geometrical decoration adorns the building here. The sky is decorated with large stars and a lion appears at the top of the painting. Its (the lion's) location suggests that it is descending from heaven towards the Prophet, who seems unaware of it. Angels carry dishes with fruit. Only minor differences may be noted between these manuscripts: for example, various types of belts are used for the angels, the architecture is different and a new type of crown appears. The type of ornament used here recurs in an illustration in the same album (692-187 (7)) in which a dignitary sits with his followers.

The two friezes which cover the dome of the mosque in the miniature of the mi‘rāj have also been used in the secular illustration to decorate the place where the prince sits. The same style of hair is also used for the angels in the two miniatures of the mi‘rāj and for the two women who are shown standing on the balcony in the secular illustration.
CONCLUSION

In this thesis the early representations of Islamic religious themes and more especially portraits of the Prophet Muhammad in Islamic art have been discussed. It may be concluded from the foregoing chapters that the representation of living beings in general and religious figures in particular is not prohibited in Islamic painting as long as such representations are not used for worship. After the death of Muhammad his effigies start to appear in Islamic manuscripts and continued to flourish throughout the medieval period. It has been demonstrably proved in this research that Islamic religious art has its own character and internal development. This internal development springs naturally from the fact that the series of religious representations studied here recounts the life of Muhammad and also illustrates some other important events from the history of Islam. The Muslim artist has further proved that he has the ability of independent creation as he produces his finest masterpieces in the series of miniatures which represent scenes from a world of the imagination, of Heaven and Hell, which he has never seen.

However, this does not mean that Muslim artists of religious scenes did not borrow from other foreign sources which existed at that time. But the Muslim artists used these elements with a new touch and purpose which made them fit into distinctively Islamic scenes. It only happens very rarely that these foreign elements clashed with the main subject matter, i.e. the history of Islam and the Prophet.
Two further general remarks should be made here. Firstly, the range of subjects represented in Islamic religious art is strictly limited and the actual number of paintings is small. This arises not from the fact that this type of representation was prohibited but because religious painting in Islam was used only to adorn manuscripts and not to fulfil a religious purpose. Secondly, admiration should be given to those artists who had the courage to represent the person of Muhammad. Such artists were motivated not by irreligious intentions but purely by artistic considerations.
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