

STUDIES IN THE HISTORY OF ART • 74 •

Center for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts

Symposium Papers LI

*Dialogues in Art History,
from Mesopotamian to Modern:
Readings for a New Century*

Edited by Elizabeth Cropper

National Gallery of Art, Washington

Distributed by Yale University Press

New Haven and London

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This volume was produced by the Center for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts and the Publishing Office, National Gallery of Art, Washington
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Copyediting and design by Princeton Editorial Associates, Inc.

Copyediting and design by Princeton Editorial Associates, Inc.

The type is Trump Mediaeval, set by Princeton Editorial Associates, Inc., Scottsdale, Arizona.

The text paper is Gold East Matte Artpaper.

Printed in China by Oceanic Graphic Printing (USA), Inc.

Distributed by Yale University Press, New Haven and London
www.yalebooks.com

Abstracted and indexed in BHA
(Bibliography of the History of Art)
and Art Index

Proceedings of the symposium "Dialogues in Art History," organized by the Center for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts, National Gallery of Art and sponsored by the Paul Mellon Fund. The symposium was held April 21–22, 2005, in Washington, D.C.

The Center for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts was founded in 1979 at the National Gallery of Art to foster the study of the history, theory, and criticism of art, architecture, urbanism, and photographic media, through programs of meetings, research, publication, and fellowships, and through the formation of a community of scholars.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Dialogues in art history, from Mesopotamian to modern : readings for a new century / edited by Elizabeth Cropper.

p. cm. — (Studies in the history of art ; 74)
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 978-0-300-12162-9 (alk. paper)

1. Art. I. Cropper, Elizabeth, 1944– II. Center for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts (U.S.)
N7443.2.D53 2009
709—dc22

2008029824

ISBN 978-0-300-12162-9
ISSN 0091-7338

Frontispiece: Simone Martini with Lippo Memmi, detail of Gabriel from *Annunciation with Saints*, 1333, tempera and gold
Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence, photograph Scala/Art Resource, New York

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Concepts of the Portrait in the Islamic Lands, c. 1300–1600

To set the scene, we begin with two images showing prophets smiting idols: in one, Abraham destroys the idols (*al-asnam*) of the Sabians, who are equated with Buddhists (fig. 1); in the other, ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib, cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet Muhammad, smites the idol of Hubal after he and Muhammad have entered the sacred precinct (*al-masjid al-haram*) of the Ka‘ba in Mecca (fig. 2).¹ The former painting accompanies a text about the calendars of different cultures and the latter illustrates a universal history (that includes events from the life of Muhammad); they date to 1307–1308 and 1580–1590 C.E., respectively. Though the paintings may be related thematically—by the destruction of idols, ‘Ali supports the Prophet Muhammad in the restoration of monotheism at the Meccan Ka‘ba through the removal of the traces of polytheism which had accumulated there since the time of Abraham (who was also a destroyer of idols)—this is not my primary concern.² Rather, these manuscript paintings are of particular interest because they directly engage in making images of the destruction of images (the images in both paintings are idols). Hence the two paintings appear to risk the very practice that they depict, and conjure the common idea that Islam was against representational images.

This last understanding—as well as the idea of Islam as publicly “aniconic” from its beginning—is often noted by scholars, even

if the same scholars have also noted the times and places where the practice of making images flourished, and thereby have chipped away at the Orientalist view of Islam as an unchanging, static monolith.³ One aspect of image making that remains elusive in the reckonings of different art historians, however, seems to be a point made in the images we see: that they are manifestly not *what we see*. Both paintings undermine the reality of the idols by emphasizing their materiality—the idols are clearly fashioned from stone or metal, hence the use of gold and silver pigments in the paintings—and by showing that the idols are powerless in the face of human threat: they can only sit passively before their attackers. The idols do not possess the life force often ascribed to them by those who question the creative prerogative of their makers, the ability to fashion and create (treated as synonymous in the possess the life force often ascribed to them by those who question the creative prerogative of their makers, the ability to fashion and create (treated as synonymous in the Qur’anic usage of the verb *sawara*) reserved to God alone.⁴

That said, the two paintings locate these three-dimensionally fashioned objects amid scenes populated with human figures, some among them—Muhammad, ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib, and Abraham—the most important actors in Islam and thus especially sensitive subjects of representation. The later painting, following a convention developed from at least the mid-fifteenth century, veils the faces of both Muhammad and ‘Ali.⁵ Because the paintings appear to involve a

The Prophet Muhammad Meets Abraham in the Seventh Heaven, from a copy of the *Mi‘raj-nama* (Book of ascension), Herat, 1436, opaque pigment on paper
Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, Suppl. Turc 100, fol. 288v, photograph Bibliothèque nationale de France

contradiction, they raise the question of what legitimated them in the face of perpetual anxieties about the nature of images and their use. A simple answer would be that the specific formal language developed and applied by artists distanced the total visual field of the two-dimensional painting from the sensation of actual vision. The abstract properties of paintings, and the habit of always placing limitations on the detail even in portraiture, which would seem to require it, eliminated the risk of reading the painting as real. The act of depiction, incorporating both painting and drawing, required an image that negated its claim to any reality in its representational mode.⁶

This essay explores the mode of depiction employed in painted images of prophets and men, the Prophet Muhammad being the prime example, and a range of perspectives on and explanations for the figural portrait in the Islamic lands between 1300 and 1600, extracted from written sources.⁷ The reception and production of selected examples is also studied from the courtly contexts of Safavid Tabriz, Timurid Herat, and Ottoman Istanbul in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

Safavid Tabriz

When Dust Muhammad, royal calligrapher and courtier, sat down to compose a preface and to compile an album of collected works of art for the Safavid prince Bahram Mirza in Tabriz in 1544–1545, he was acutely conscious of an endemic tension in the Islamic lands regarding the legitimacy of image making and of portraiture in particular. (The two terms *image* and *portrait* tend to be subsumed under one Arabic noun, *surat*, though the difference between the two is sometimes marked in Persian language texts by the use of *chihra-gusha* to specify a painter of portraits.)⁸ His preface narrated a history of calligraphy and depiction from their beginnings until 1544–1545.

In the section of his preface discussing artists and illuminators of the past, Dust Muhammad notes that the “masters of depiction” (*arbab-i tasvir*) need not “hang their head[s] in shame” (*sar-i khijalat dar pish*) in the face of the “manifest of Muslim law” (*bi-zahir-i shar‘*) because the “begin-



nings of this craft can be traced back” (*maal-i in kar muntaha . . . mi-shud*) to the prophet Daniel.⁹ To prove this claim, Dust Muhammad adduces the tradition of the “Chest of Witnessing” (*sandug al-shahada*). When Adam mourned the fact that he would not see the prophets among his offspring, God sent him the Chest of Witnessing, which contained portraits of the prophets housed in “several thousand compartments” (*chand hizar khana*), as many compartments as there would be prophets in the span of human time.

In the tradition related by Dust Muhammad, the portraits were revealed to the companions of the Prophet Muhammad in Constantinople during an audience with the emperor Heraclius. There, each portrait was unrolled, shown to the prophet’s companions, and identified by Heraclius. (Though the point is unstated, Heraclius’ familiarity with unrolled, shown to the prophet’s companions, and identified by Heraclius. (Though the point is unstated, Heraclius’ familiarity with images, derived from his immersion in the cult imagery of the Byzantine world, vouchsafed his ability to identify the portraits of the prophets.) The meeting culminated with the revelation of a portrait that caused the companions to weep, because they attested that it depicted the Prophet Muhammad. Heraclius then explained that the portraits he possessed were copies painted by Daniel after the divinely created archetypes. Dust Muhammad concludes the anecdote by reiterating the origin of portraiture through Daniel and states that “because of this, the painter’s mind need not be scratched by the

1. *Abraham Destroys the Idols of the Sabians*, from a copy of *Kitab al-athar al-baqiya* ‘an al-qurun al-khaliya (The chronology of ancient nations) of al-Biruni, northwestern Iran or northern Iraq, 1307–1308, opaque pigment on paper, Edinburgh University Library, Edinburgh, MS Arab 161, fol. 88b



2. 'Ali Destroying Idols at the Ka'ba, from a copy of *Rawzat al-safa'* (Garden of purity) of Mirkhvand, Shiraz, 1580–1590, opaque pigment on paper

Christie's London, *Islamic Art and Indian Miniatures*, October 14, 1997, lot 143; photograph © Christie's Images Ltd. 1997

thorn of despair" (*khatir-i musavvir ra bi-khar-i nawmidi na-kharashad*).

In Dust Muhammad's preface, the tale is inflected with a religious polemic. The Chest of Witnessing portraits are copies after *acheiropoieta*, "unmade" images fashioned by God, constituted at the beginning of time and encompassing all of God's creation and its prophetic lineage. This series spanned the time between Adam, first man and first prophet, and Muhammad, "Seal of the

Prophets" (*khatm al-nabiyyin*) in the Muslim faith. The revelation transmitted to Muhammad would "seal," or close, the earlier revelatory traditions of the Jews and the Christians, the "People of the Book" (*ahl al-kitab*). In presenting and identifying the portraits stored in the chest, Heraclius participates in proving Islam's legitimacy and its abrogation of Judaism and Christianity, the other monotheistic religions. Regardless of the facts that Heraclius can identify all the prophets who preceded Muhammad, and that it is the Muslims in his midst who authenticate the image of Muhammad, the box indicates Islamic destiny from the beginning of time by functioning as a proleptic artifact. Although knowledge of the portrait tradition had been lost to Islam—this "relic" had been cast outside the boundaries of the "abode of Islam" (*dar al-Islam*)—the legitimacy of the art form could not in itself be questioned, regardless of what doctors of Islamic law had to say on the matter. Dust Muhammad sanctions depiction most directly by invoking a divine prototype—a complete set of images that were clearly distinct from their referents, both fashioned, conveniently, by God—and gives depiction a prophetic authority through the figure of Daniel.

Though versions of the Chest of Witnessing story from the tenth century and later—occurring in histories and the "Stories of the Prophets" (*Qisas al-anbiya'*) genre—typically dwell on descriptions of each individual prophet's facial features or the color of silk employed for each image, such elements are stripped from Dust Muhammad's version. But Dust Muhammad is not unconcerned with the visual aspects of these portraits. Through a literary sequence of events are stripped from Dust Muhammad's version. But Dust Muhammad is not unconcerned with the visual aspects of these portraits. Through a literary sequence of other stories in his album preface, which plays on inference, Dust Muhammad can suggest that the pictorial idiom current in non-Islamic traditions, whether Manichaean (derived from the false prophet Mani) or, by extension, European, is wholly distinct in visual terms and hence not permissible.

Non-Islamic painting traditions, embodied by such examples as Mani's Artangi Tablet (*lawh-i artangi*) in Dust Muhammad's history of art, confused viewers about the ontology of the image in front of them. The optical naturalism employed by their painters was

a mode of visual trickery that misled viewers into equating what they saw with the real thing. These viewers of Mani's Artangi Tablet were also constrained by their guilelessness (or mulishness, *bi-ghill*), impure spirit (their hearts could not reflect the "light of Islam" [*nur-i Islam*]), and short-sightedness (*kutah nazarani*). When Dust Muhammad juxtaposes the story of the Chest of Witnessing with the story of Mani's Artangi Tablet, he sets up an implicit comparison. Dust Muhammad's objective was nothing less than to deny the legitimacy of Mani's image and his claim that the painted silk he fashioned was proof of his prophethood.¹⁰ The comparison in Dust Muhammad's art historical preface between the Chest of Witnessing and the Artangi Tablet guarantees a legitimacy for the mode of depiction practiced in Iran.

The album assembled by Dust Muhammad showed these broad visual comparisons, as well as the specific subject matter of Islamic prophetic portraiture.¹¹ Primary examples of the latter were a series of paintings depicting scenes from the Prophet Muhammad's ascension, the *mi'raj* (fig. 3), presumably extracted from an illustrated volume of the *Mi'raj-nama* (Book of ascension). In his journey of supreme initiation, the Prophet Muhammad travels with Gabriel and the beast Buraq from Jerusalem to the seven heavens and the throne of God before traveling to paradise and hell. Reiterating a structure occurring in his preface, Dust Muhammad attributes the *Mi'raj-nama* paintings to the artist Ahmad Musa, who was active in the fourteenth century and "lifted the veil from the face of depiction" (*parda gusha'i-yi chihra-yi tasvir shud va tasviri ki hala mutadavil ast u ikhtira' kard*).¹² This active in the fourteenth century and "lifted the veil from the face of depiction" (*parda gusha'i-yi chihra-yi tasvir shud va tasviri ki hala mutadavil ast u ikhtira' kard*).¹² This last passage concludes by noting that Ahmad Musa "invented" (*ikhtira'*) the pictorial idiom (*tasviri*) practiced until the sixteenth century in the time of Dust Muhammad. Ahmad Musa stood at the head of a sequence of artists, a concept of artistic genealogy that is expressed in the album proper by interrelated visual examples, such as a late-fifteenth-century drawing attributed to Shah Muzaffar (fig. 4).

The sequence of works dispersed throughout the album infers a relation between Shah Muzaffar's drawing and Ahmad Musa's

chronologically earlier manuscript paintings and is merely one of many visual interrelations established between sets of works, whether calligraphies, paintings, or drawings in the album. Though viewers could reach their own conclusions about the specific relation between these separate studies and their place in the visual tradition, Dust Muhammad is ultimately claiming that the Persian images are exempt from any blame. Ahmad Musa, through the unique powers of his creative agency, invented a way of depicting things in the world that revealed something unseen (hence his act of "unveiling"):

3. Ahmad Musa, *The Prophet Muhammad Riding on Gabriel's Shoulders*, from a copy of the *Mi'raj-nama* (Book of ascension), Tabriz?, c. 1317–1335, opaque pigment on paper
Topkapi Palace Museum, Istanbul, H.2154, fol. 42a; photograph Topkapi Palace Museum





recurrence of Daniel, is a common structure in Dust Muhammad's conception of a history of art.

Dust Muhammad's specific theorization of depiction is thus far anomalous, perhaps even unique in the Islamic lands, especially his articulation of the visual differences between artistic traditions. He does not, however, dwell on the precise means of representing the Prophet Muhammad, or any other person, for that matter.¹⁵ If these portraits *represented* the prophets, how did they do so? If the image was to be identified, how would the individual prophet be recognized? It is on this score that Dust Muhammad's telling of the Chest of Witnessing story departs from most earlier versions.¹⁶

In an earlier version, from Mas'udi's *Muruj al-dhahab* (Meadows of gold), a history written before 956, the story is transported to China, where an Arab named Ibn Habbar from the Prophet Muhammad's tribe (the Quraysh) is asked by the king of China: "Would you recognize your master (*sahib*), that is to say the Prophet, if you saw him?" He replied, 'How could I, since he is with God?' The king then said: 'I do not mean his [person], I am talking of his portrait (*surah*).'"¹⁷ A box is then brought to Ibn Habbar, from which a scroll (*darj*) is removed that bears images of the prophets. The narrative in Mas'udi's history supplies much more information about the iconography and composition of the images examined by Ibn Habbar, but, more important, it clearly distinguishes between the person, now deceased, and his image.¹⁸ The Arab goes on to explain that he recognized the Prophet Muhammad and other prophets—including Noah, Moses, and Jesus—"by what was depicted of their things."¹⁹ The story re- explains that he recognized the Prophet Muhammad and other prophets—including Noah, Moses, and Jesus—"by what was depicted of their things."¹⁹ The story re- locates the burden of recognition to the prophets' attributes—whether Noah's ark, Moses' rod, or Jesus' donkey—and avoids the question of likeness (which Ibn Habbar evades by noting that these people are long since dead and that he had not seen them).

In each telling, the core story is slightly modified or adapted. The ultimate source of the Chest of Witnessing story is probably the *hadith*, traditions relating actions or utterances of the Prophet Muhammad by those who were close to him, as well as information about his appearance, virtues, and

4. Shah Muzaffar, *The Prophet Muhammad Riding on Buraq and Attended by Gabriel*, Herat?, late fifteenth century, opaque pigment on paper
Topkapi Palace Museum, Istanbul, H.2154, fol. 40b; photograph Topkapi Palace Museum

his creative act was oriented toward an inward gaze and not to the external world.¹³ Ahmad Musa's pictorial invention was copied and perpetuated over time by other artists who constituted a chain of transmission.¹⁴ His curiously prophetic name (Musa = Moses), no less than his action, makes Ahmad Musa an especially convenient parallel to Daniel, a prophet who guaranteed the transmission of an aesthetic by being the first man to make copies after a set of existing models. This cyclical model of history, which positions Ahmad Musa as a

miracles mediated through the early biographical compilations. Several stories from the biographical literature concern Muhammad's predestination as it is verified through verbal or visual sources. Most stories mention either the corroboration of verbal descriptions of the Prophet, as related by his companions to strangers who had not met him before, or the confirmation of such descriptions by Christians and Jews who had not seen him. References to visual representations are rare. In one example, an early Muslim named Jubayr ibn Mut'im is presented with an image of Muhammad by Christians in Syria and is able to confirm its resemblance.²⁰ The aspect that makes Dust Muhammad's story unique is his unqualified assessment of the image as licit. Its legitimacy is ensured by notions of artistic creativity—the specially endowed artist simply reflects something unseen by others, giving a deft twist to notions of subjectivity—and artistic form—the Islamic image is distinct from other art traditions that employ visual trickery.²¹

Timurid Herat

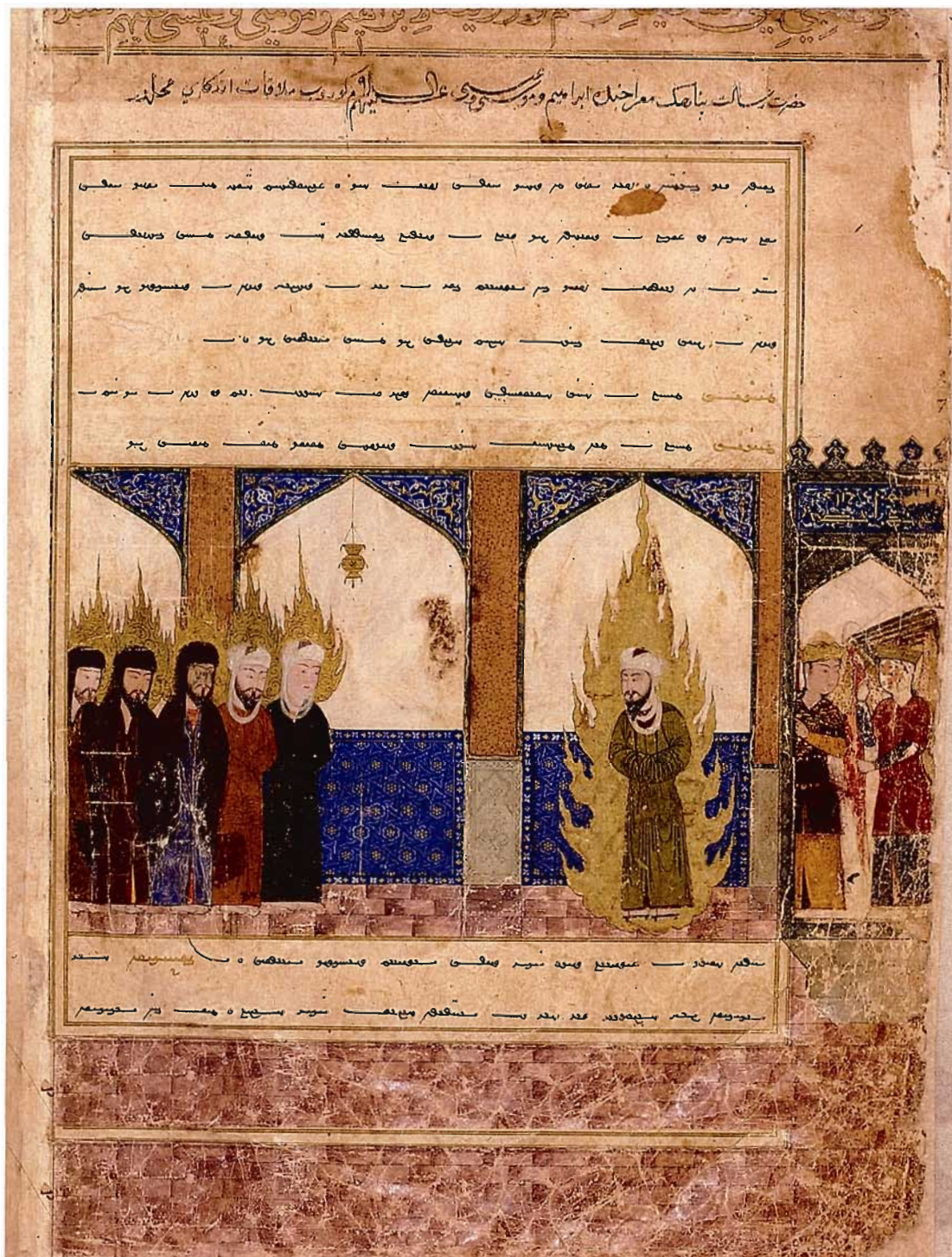
What is striking about Ahmad Musa's paintings is their direct and untroubled portrayal of the Prophet Muhammad. In this respect, they are like other well-known historical examples from the period of Ilkhanid Mongol rule over Iran (1256–1353), especially the historian Rashid al-Din's *Jami' al-tawarikh* (Compendium of chronicles).²² In the section of Rashid al-Din's world history relating events from the period of the Prophet Muhammad and the caliphate, numerous paintings freely show episodes from the Prophet's life. Of a later date, but relating events from the period of the Prophet Muhammad and the caliphate, numerous paintings freely show episodes from the Prophet's life. Of a later date, but comparable in its pictorial treatment of the Prophet Muhammad, is a copy of the *Mi'raj-nama*, dated 1436 and made in Herat, Afghanistan, during the time of the Timurid ruler Shahrugh (r. 1409–1447), son of Timur.²³ The *Mi'raj-nama* text is a Chaghatay Turkish translation from Arabic sources and is accompanied by a second text, Farid al-Din 'Attar's *Tazkirat al-awliya'* (Memorial of the saints), which contains biographies of seventy-two Sufi mystics. Of the two texts copied and bound into a single book, only the *Mi'raj-nama* contains paintings.

For a text of such brevity, it is uncommonly heavily illustrated.

One of four terrestrial scenes in the 1436 *Mi'raj-nama* takes place in the mosque at Jerusalem, where Muhammad meets the prophets who preceded him (fig. 5). Abraham, Moses, and Jesus introduce themselves to the Prophet Muhammad, each one dressed in a brown head covering resembling the shawl (*taylasan*) once worn by judges (*qadis*). Abraham asks Muhammad to lead the others in prayer.²⁴ Each prophet, including Muhammad, is identified by a flaming golden halo. After the prayer, Muhammad ascends to the first of seven heavens. There he meets the prophet Adam, who is depicted as physically larger than any of the others, though the adjacent text has nothing to say about this difference. (Adam's large size can be explained by the fact that men and women have become smaller with the passage of time and the gradual debasement of matter, a process noted in the Stories of the Prophets literature.) Throughout the entire sequence of paintings, the Prophet Muhammad is shown consistently as a man of middle age—his beard and mustache are brown—wearing a white turban, green robe, and sandals.

Moving on, the Prophet Muhammad meets the angel of prayer—a multiple-headed angel (modeled after the Buddhist deity Avalokitesvara) who sings litanies in praise of God with its seventy heads, each head endowed with seventy tongues—as well as the prophets Zacharias and his son John, who dwell in the second heaven (fig. 6). Much as the angels resemble one another in the depiction of the hair and wings, these two prophets, standing with their hands covered in deference to Muhammad, appear to be much as the angels resemble one another in the depiction of the hair and wings, these two prophets, standing with their hands covered in deference to Muhammad, appear to be the same age and to share the prophetic attributes of Muhammad. The other pairs of prophets that Muhammad meets—Jacob and Joseph, and David and Solomon (third heaven), Ishmael and Isaac (fifth heaven), Aaron and Lot (fifth heaven), Noah and Idris (sixth heaven)—are differentiated only by the colors of their robes and of their beards and mustaches (brown or white) to signal broad differences in age.²⁵ When the Prophet Muhammad later comes into the presence of God and prostrates himself before the throne of God, anthropomorphism ceases: proxim-

5. *The Prophet Muhammad Meets Other Prophets in the Mosque at Jerusalem*, from a copy of the *Mi'raj-nama* (Book of ascension), Herat, 1436, opaque pigment on paper
 Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, Suppl. Turc 190, fol. 5b;
 photograph Bibliothèque nationale de France



ity to the noncorporeal divine is manifested by an all-enveloping golden radiance.

During his journey of supreme initiation, Muhammad is not known to the angels guarding doorways, and he does not know the majority of the prophets he meets. Gabriel introduces Muhammad to the angels guarding the gateways to each successive heaven and also to the prophets who dwell in each one. Even Abraham, in the seventh heaven,

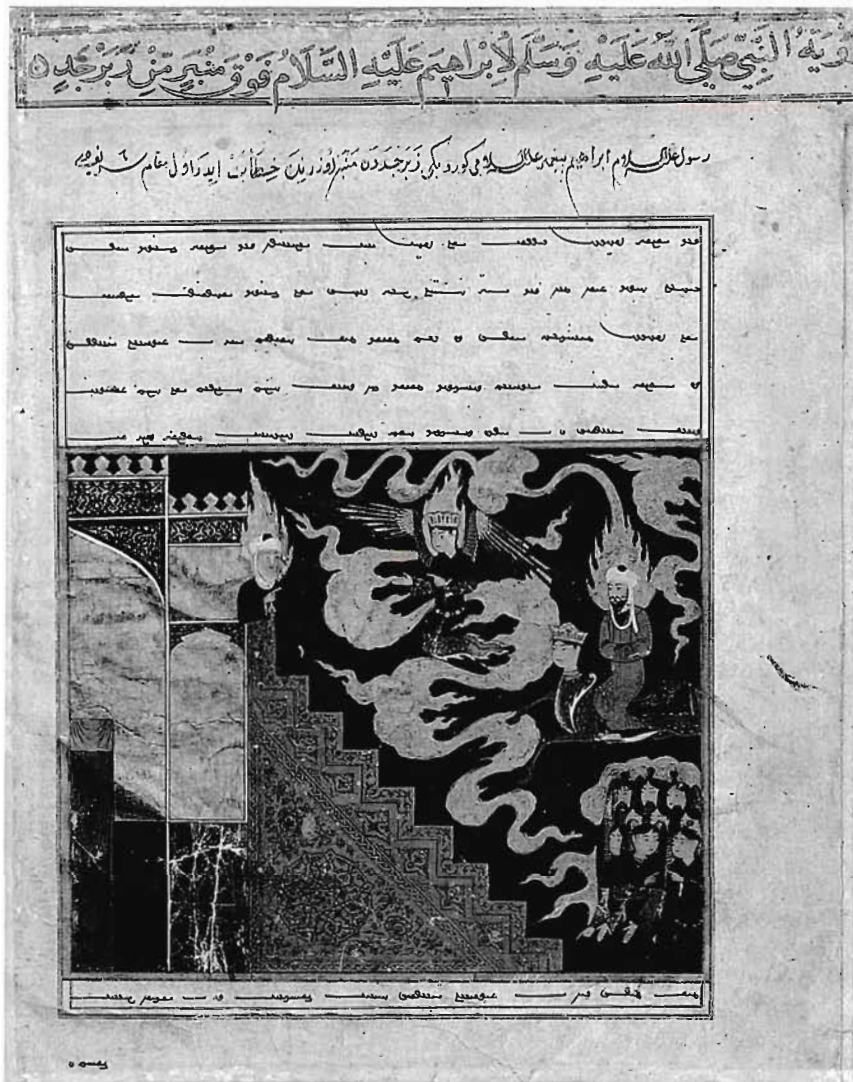
who had introduced himself to the Prophet Muhammad in terrestrial Jerusalem, is unknown to Muhammad in heaven (fig. 7). Muhammad sees Abraham, with a white beard, standing on a large pulpit (*minbar*) of green emerald and asks Gabriel: "Who is he?" Gabriel answers: "It is your ancestor, Abraham the prophet."²⁶ Muhammad steps forward, and the two prophets greet one another.



6. *The Muslim Angel of Prayer* (above); *The Prophet Muhammad Meets Zacharias and His Son John* (below), from a copy of the *Mi'raj-nama* (Book of ascension), Herat, 1436, opaque pigment on paper
 Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, Suppl. Turc 190, fol. 15; photograph Bibliothèque nationale de France

Given that all of these prophets had long since died, it is not surprising that Muhammad did not know them by their appearance. And the paintings—much like Ahmad Musa’s—do not help identify them: they eschew physiognomic peculiarities, resort-

ing instead to typologies for angels and for prophets. If we are to recognize prophets from their portraits, the pictures tell us, we can do so only through the differences in the colors of their robes, their types of headgear, or their mounts.



prophets he meets.²⁸ Muhammad's perfection had been secured in his early childhood.²⁹ This persistent leveling of difference among the elect is further emphasized by the broad range of figural types used to represent the sinners. Their diverse physical features—different skin tones, hair colors, body sizes, and expressive, contorted faces—are a suitable visual adjunct to the reality they face in hell: the form of torment meted out to them matches their specific sin.

Ottoman Istanbul

As we return to the sixteenth century and the Safavids' contemporaries and counterreligionists, the Ottomans, we encounter an unprecedented number of illustrated books containing portraits of living or once-living men, whether prophets or sultans. The sixteenth century—whether one looks east or west in the Islamic lands—witnessed the production of many illustrated books concerned with such subjects as the stories of the prophets (biographies of Muhammad among them) and the Shi'ite imams, and divination (for example, the *Fal-nama* attributed to the Shi'ite imam Ja'far al-Sadiq).³⁰ Chief among these books is the *Siyer-i Nebi* (Life of the Prophet), commissioned by the Ottoman Sultan Murad III (r. 1574–1595) and brought to completion by his successor Mehmed III (r. 1595–1603). Arranged in six volumes, the *Siyer-i Nebi* contains more than eight hundred paintings that enhance the descriptive properties of the text and the many events occurring from before Muhammad's birth until his death.³¹

Like the illustrated Timurid *Mi'raj-nama* of 1436, the paintings in the Ottoman *Siyer-i Nebi* of 1595 are characterized by an ecstatic Muhammad's birth until his death.³¹

Like the illustrated Timurid *Mi'raj-nama* of 1436, the paintings in the Ottoman *Siyer-i Nebi* of 1595 are characterized by an ecstatic aesthetic. These are highly legible compositions, overtly didactic in their directness: texture is suppressed, and sparse surface detail and limited extraneous elements avoid distracting the eye. They are painted with a bright, luminous palette, often of pastel hues and shimmering gold. Similarities to books on the history of the same period are chiefly evidenced in the frequency of illustration. But the countenance of the Prophet Muhammad, freely shown in the 1436 *Mi'raj-nama* and the early-fourteenth-century world history of Rashid al-Din, is now consistently

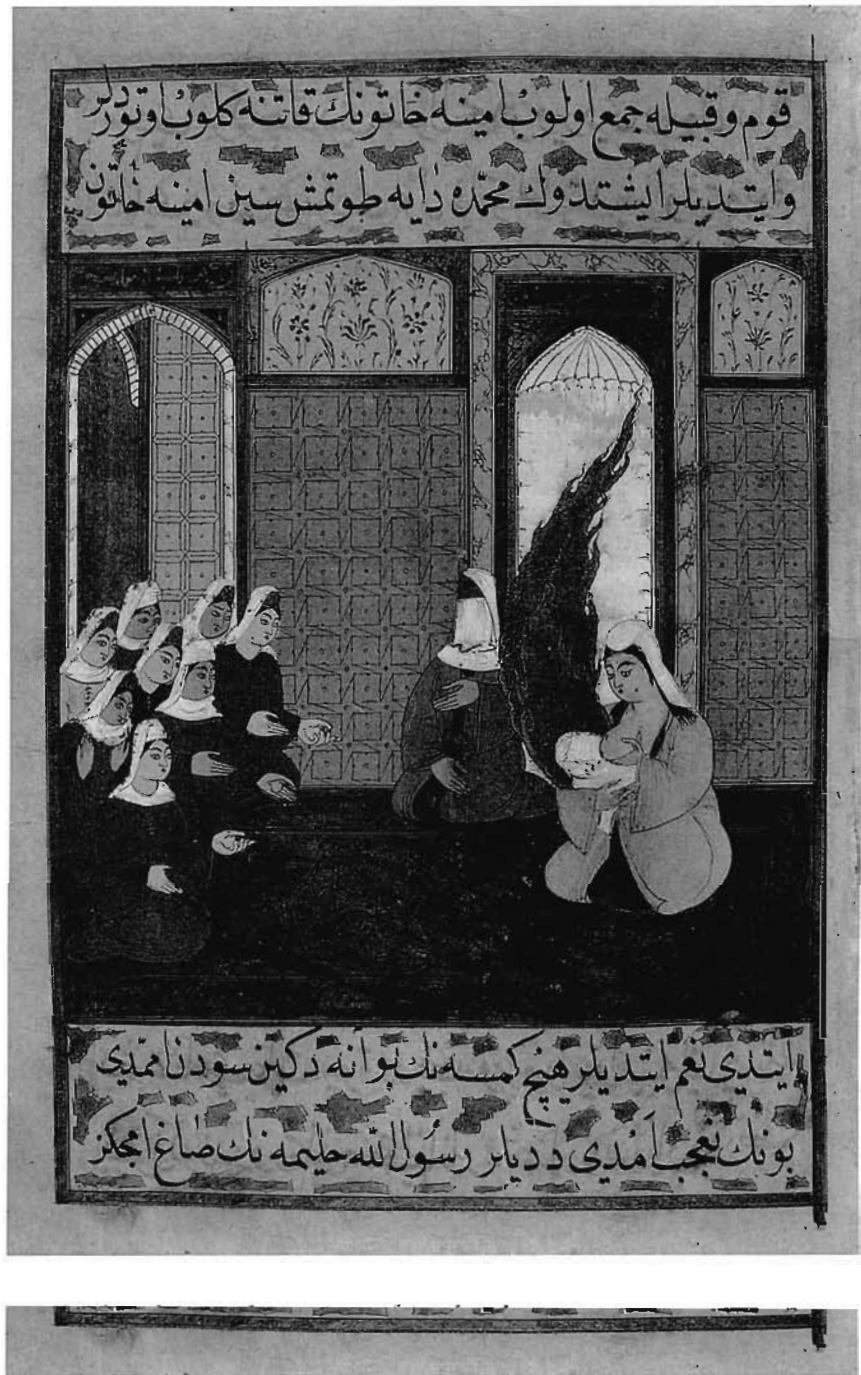
7. *The Prophet Muhammad Meets Abraham in the Seventh Heaven*, from a copy of the *Mi'raj-nama* (Book of ascension), Herat, 1436, opaque pigment on paper
Bibliothèque nationale de France
Meets Abraham in the Seventh Heaven, from a copy of the *Mi'raj-nama* (Book of ascension), Herat, 1436, opaque pigment on paper
Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, Suppl. Turc 190, fol. 28b; photograph Bibliothèque nationale de France

In this respect the images may visualize a fact made known to the reader later in the text of the *Mi'raj-nama*. In the section describing figures who have already entered paradise, we learn that they are all the same: they fact made known to the reader later in the text of the *Mi'raj-nama*. In the section describing figures who have already entered paradise, we learn that they are all the same: they are all the height of Adam (sixty cubits); they are all thirty years of age (the age attained by Jesus); they are all as beautiful as the prophet Joseph (who was proverbial for his good looks in Islamic tradition); and they are all identical in manner to Jacob. Moreover, these perfect denizens of paradise have no unwanted body hair or beard, and their eyes are coated with antimony (*surma*).²⁷ This passage explains the sameness attained by human beings in paradise, and even the typological similarities between Muhammad, who is still among the living, and the

concealed behind a white veil, his head framed by a golden aureole. The occultation of the Prophet's body—sheathed entirely in cloth—occurs even in infancy when he is tended by his wet-nurse Halima (fig. 8) and before he receives his first revelation on Mount Hira outside Mecca (fig. 9).³² The painting of Muhammad on Mount Hira gives the impression of radiating light. After he returns to Mecca from Mount Hira, his wife Khadija notices the brilliant light emanating from his face. It is this “light of Muhammad” (*nur Muhammad*) that offers the primary means of identification in the text and paintings of the *Siyer-i Nebi*.³³

The same technique of portraying the Prophet continues throughout the multiple volumes of the text. In a series of paintings that portray events from his life, his battles, and his miracles, he is shown wearing a green robe and a white turban and veil. In every instance, his *invisibility*, or an unavailable physiognomy, secures his identification among gatherings of people who are invariably deprived of any individuality. In this respect—despite the presence of the veil—the visual language of the portrait in the *Siyer-i Nebi* resembles the physical anonymity characteristic of the earlier *Mi'raj-nama*.

The visual appearance of Muhammad in the *Siyer-i Nebi* is all the more surprising given an earlier experiment in Ottoman portraiture, discussed below, and the fact that descriptions of the Prophet were in circulation, which ultimately gave rise to a calligraphic form termed *hilye* (Arabic *hilya*) in the Ottoman world. The *hilye* comprised a calligraphic arrangement of the “authenticated” description of the Prophet Muhammad, and other texts, as a verbal diagram on the Ottoman world. The *hilye* comprised a calligraphic arrangement of the “authenticated” description of the Prophet Muhammad, and other texts, as a verbal diagram on sheets of paper.³⁴ The description of the Prophet is usually given on the authority of 'Ali ibn Abi Talib, who described the Prophet in this way: “He is neither exceedingly tall, nor unduly short. He was of medium height. His hair was not short, nor too curly, nor was it very straight nor long. It hung with a wave. He was not thin. His flesh was firm. His face had a roundness. His skin was of rosy whiteness. He had large black eyes with thick long lashes. His bones were large and strong. He had very broad shoulders. . . . Between his shoulders he had the Seal of



Prophethood. . . . Whoever saw him for the first time was awestruck.”³⁵

Such descriptions, which expanded physical attributes into moral qualities, were available in a sixteenth-century copy of a book by al-Qadi 'Iyad ibn Musa (d. 1149) made for the Ottoman Sultan Süleyman the Magnificent (r. 1520–1566),³⁶ and yet they did not yield particularized visual portraits of the Prophet Muhammad. Even here the textual description is a cautious balance between carefully noted elements (the seal of prophethood, broad shoulders) that could conjure a

8. *The Wet-Nurse Halima Feeding the Prophet Muhammad*, from a *Siyer-i Nebi* (Life of the Prophet), Istanbul, 1595, opaque pigment on paper
Topkapi Palace Museum, Istanbul, H.1221, fol. 255a; photograph Topkapi Palace Museum

9. *The Prophet Muhammad Hears Divine Noises on Mount Hira*, from a *Siyer-i Nebi* (Life of the Prophet), Istanbul, 1595, opaque pigment on paper
Topkapi Palace Museum, Istanbul, H.1222, fol. 153a; photograph
Topkapi Palace Museum



specific subject in the viewer's mind, and a mode of linguistic regress that qualifies the description of other bodily aspects (height, hair) to the point that they elude specific imaginary reconstruction. 'Ali's description contains both positive and negative elements much like the self-canceling elements of visual representations.³⁷

My concluding example is another Ottoman illustrated book made during the reign of Murad III—but before the *Siyer-i Nebi*—that initially suggests an altogether different tradition at work in the concept of the portrait. In his preface to the book, titled *Kiyafetü'l-insaniye fi Sema'il 'ül-Osmaniye* (The appearance of humanity in the dispositions of the Ottomans; also known by the short title *Sema'ilname*), the court historiographer Seyyid Lokman explains his reason for compiling the text (completed before 1579).³⁸ Lokman writes that his purpose was to describe the physical characteristics of past sultans, and that, together with the artist Nakkash Osman, he had reviewed sources which might provide either verbal descriptions or visual depictions of the Ottoman sultans.³⁹ The problem lay in the fact that although the visual appearances of

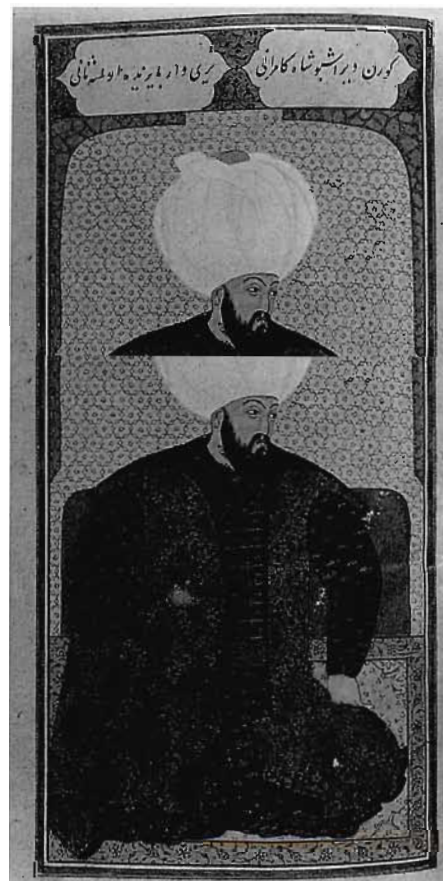
sultans who had reigned during Nakkash Osman's life were known to the artist—Süleyman I, Selim II, Murad III—earlier Ottoman rulers, especially from Osman Gazi to Murad II, were obscure. Sultans Mehmed II, Bayezid II, and Selim I were among those who had died before Nakkash Osman's lifetime and their portraits (figs. 10–12) appear on separate folios of the *Sema'ilname*.

In his preface, Lokman notes the “discovery” of a portrait series of the earlier sultans painted by European artists. Lokman and Nakkash Osman approached the grand vizier Sokollu Mehmed Pasha for assistance. With the imprimatur of the reigning sultan, the vizier procured the European portraits. Nakkash Osman used these to produce portraits of the first twelve Ottoman sultans and reconciled these images against what was known from native verbal descriptions assembled by Lokman. These included references to the shapes of eyebrows, beards, moustaches, and the form of noses and eyes. For imperial costume, Lokman based his descriptions on earlier texts, principally by Hoca Sadeddin Efendi. Gülru Necipoglu suggests that this information may also have been acquired “firsthand” by Lokman on

10. Nakkash Osman, *Portrait of Mehmed II*, from a *Kiyafetü'l-insaniye fi Sema'il 'ül-Osmaniye* (The appearance of humanity in the dispositions of the Ottomans) of Lokman, Istanbul, 1579, opaque pigment on paper
Topkapi Palace Museum, Istanbul, H. 1563; photograph Topkapi Palace Museum

11. Nakkash Osman, *Portrait of Bayezid II*, from a *Kiyafetü'l-insaniye fi Sema'il 'ül-Osmaniye* (The appearance of humanity in the dispositions of the Ottomans) of Lokman, Istanbul, 1579, opaque pigment on paper
Topkapi Palace Museum, Istanbul, H. 1563; photograph Topkapi Palace Museum

12. Nakkash Osman, *Portrait of Selim I*, from a *Kiyafetü'l-insaniye fi Sema'il 'ül-Osmaniye* (The appearance of humanity in the dispositions of the Ottomans) of Lokman, Istanbul, 1579, opaque pigment on paper
Topkapi Palace Museum, Istanbul, H. 1563; photograph Topkapi Palace Museum





13. Nakkash Osman, *Portrait of Osman I*, from a *Kiyafetü'l-insaniye fi Sema'il 'ül-Osmaniye* (The appearance of humanity in the dispositions of the Ottomans) of Lokman, Istanbul, 1579, opaque pigment on paper
Topkapi Palace Museum, Istanbul, H.1563; photograph Topkapi Palace Museum

14. Nakkash Osman, *Portrait of Orhan*, from a *Kiyafetü'l-insaniye fi Sema'il 'ül-Osmaniye* (The appearance of humanity in the dispositions of the Ottomans) of Lokman, Istanbul, 1579, opaque pigment on paper
Topkapi Palace Museum, Istanbul, H.1563; photograph Topkapi Palace Museum

15. Nakkash Osman, *Portrait of Murad I*, from a *Kiyafetü'l-insaniye fi Sema'il 'ül-Osmaniye* (The appearance of humanity in the dispositions of the Ottomans) of Lokman, Istanbul, 1579, opaque pigment on paper
Topkapi Palace Museum, Istanbul, H.1563; photograph Topkapi Palace Museum

visits to Bursa, the burial site of the early Ottoman sultans and princes, where he verified what Hoca Sadeddin Efendi recorded in his *Tajü't-tevarih* (The crown of histories; 1575), dedicated to Murad III. A portion of Sadeddin's work describes the sultans' turbans housed in the tombs in Bursa.⁴⁰

Several illustrated copies of the *Sema'ilname* were made; copies after Lokman and Nakkash Osman's version perpetuate its visual models. In each of these books, an "authorized" sequence of painted portraits accompanies the text to produce what can only be considered the tightest of correspondence between word and image arranged "authorized" sequence of painted portraits accompanies the text to produce what can only be considered the tightest of correspondence between word and image, arranged in a parallel structure. As Necipoglu has noted, the *Sema'ilname* was the first example to involve both text and image in "representing the personality of a sultan."⁴¹ The six portraits from the sequence shown here—Osman I, Orhan, Murad I, Bayezid I, Mehmed I, and Murad II (figs. 13–18)—reveal physiognomically distinct individuals, and yet the visual language of the sultans' postures and the architecture that frames them achieve the formal coherence—patterned on repetition—that is essential to the concept of imperial genealogy.⁴² In this respect, the

visual language of the painted images in the *Sema'ilname* is comparable to that of calligraphy. Gauging the shapes of the letters of calligraphy, and the crucial spaces between successive words and lines, accustoms the eye to pattern recognition. The same process allows viewers to distinguish the facial configurations of the successive Ottoman sultans.

The extraordinary circumstances of the creation of the *Sema'ilname*, discussed by Filiz Çağman and Gülru Necipoglu, amount to a reconstitution of verbal and visual order. The burden of establishing accurate physiognomy stemmed from the equation between Filiz Çağman and Gülru Necipoglu, amount to a reconstitution of verbal and visual order. The burden of establishing accurate physiognomy stemmed from the equation between physical appearance and character: capturing the form of individuals was essential to conveying their moral being.⁴³ Lokman's illustrated *Sema'ilname*, in its concern with mapping human geography as the key to human nature, is predicated on observation. Or that is what Lokman claims when he writes that the "veracity" (*sihhati zahir olmagile*) of the European portraits "became apparent" and that they were "drawn correctly" (*rast kalem*).⁴⁴ They were authenticated by comparing available portraits of the sultans made in the Ottoman artistic



tradition to the European versions. The similarity between the two sets was held to confirm the accuracy of European models of the earlier sultans' portraits, for which there were no Ottoman models.

What was Lokman looking for in the European portraits? Did he simply intend to provide Nakkash Osman with models? Or were the European images held to be authentic records whose authority resided in their stylistic attributes? Here matters become complicated. The Ottoman portraits clearly depart from the visual language of the post-Renaissance European paintings because they avoid the European codes of optical naturalism: the use of modeling, chiaroscuro, a naturalistic palette, and perspective. The Ottoman portraits of the sultans effectively selected what was needed from their European sources and applied the information to a preexisting local visual language that was wholly consistent with a long-standing Islamic visual tradition developed from the late fourteenth century onward in Iran.⁴⁵ This adaptation is fully revealed in the images of the *Sema'ilname* but is not described in its text.

There are other artistic vectors at work in the *Sema'ilname*: one can think of the later

Ottoman books of genealogy, the *Silsile-names*, that lay out the history of the prophets and trace the Ottoman dynasty's origin to Noah; all of the historical figures depicted in portrait medallions (fig. 19);⁴⁶ or an earlier and more distant visual analogue, a group portrait of nine authors—arranged in a grid that resembles a painted table of contents—who had advanced the science of snake-bite antidotes (fig. 20). This painting appears in a copy of Pseudo-Galen's *Kitab al-diryaq* (Book of antidotes, c. 1250).⁴⁷ In both examples, serial portraits show dynastic and intellectual authority. With figures positioned in a sequence, the portrait becomes a relational entity. Subtle internal differences are established by juxtapositions. The same process functions critically in the *Sema'ilname* despite its stated documentary. Equally important in Lokman and Nakkash Osman's *Sema'ilname* project is the echo of the topos of the Chest of Witnessing. The authority of the *Sema'ilname* is similarly founded on a source outside the Islamic lands.⁴⁸

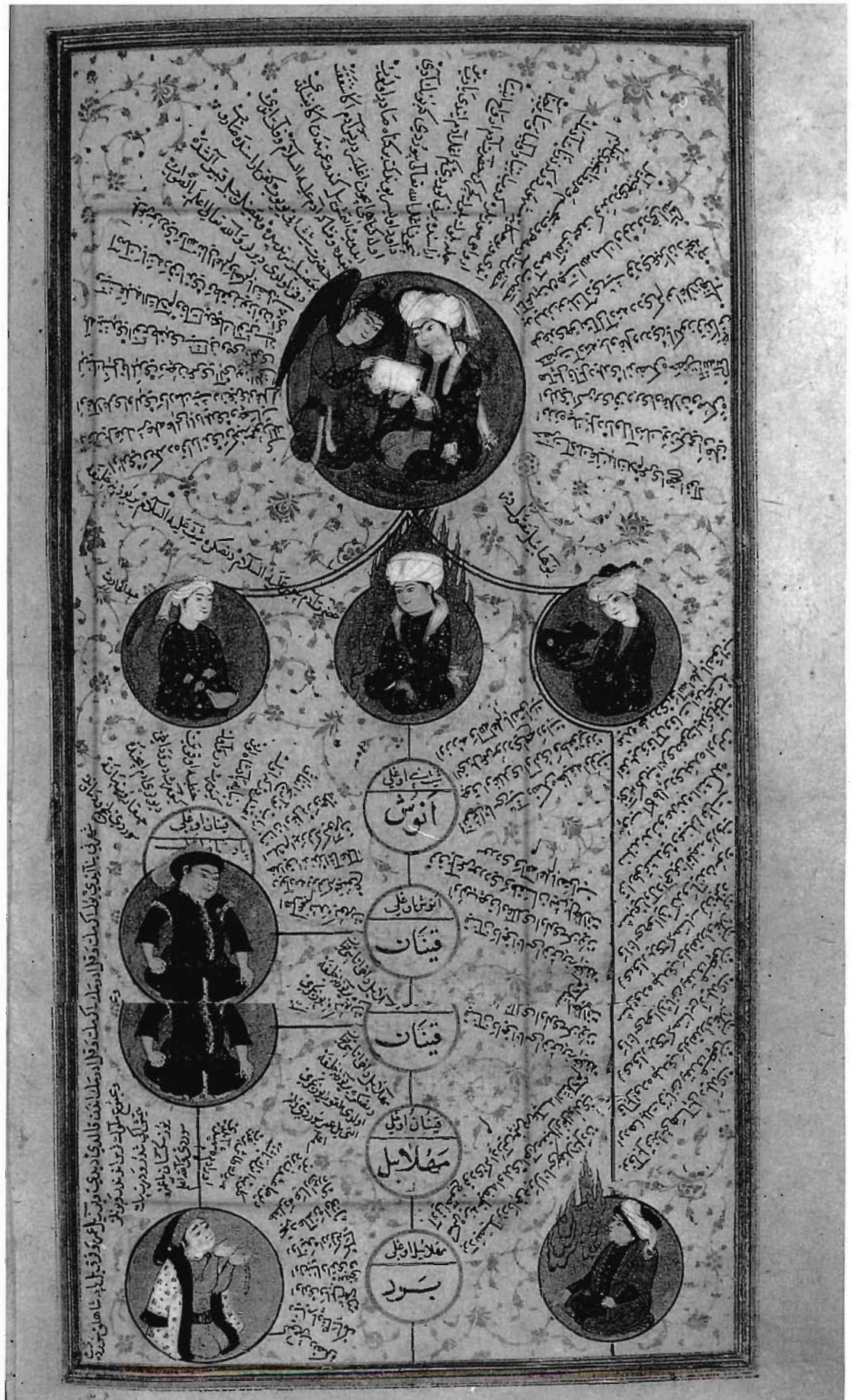
The notion of the portrait meant many things within the premodern Islamic lands and achieved as many different forms. What the examples in this essay share, however, is

16. Nakkash Osman, *Portrait of Bayezid I*, from a *Kiyafetü'l-insaniye fi Sema'il 'ül-Osmaniye* (The appearance of humanity in the dispositions of the Ottomans) of Lokman, Istanbul, 1579, opaque pigment on paper
Topkapi Palace Museum, Istanbul, H.1563; photograph Topkapi Palace Museum

17. Nakkash Osman, *Portrait of Mehmed I*, from a *Kiyafetü'l-insaniye fi Sema'il 'ül-Osmaniye* (The appearance of humanity in the dispositions of the Ottomans) of Lokman, Istanbul, 1579, opaque pigment on paper
Topkapi Palace Museum, Istanbul, H.1563; photograph Topkapi Palace Museum

18. Nakkash Osman, *Portrait of Murad II*, from a *Kiyafetü'l-insaniye fi Sema'il 'ül-Osmaniye* (The appearance of humanity in the dispositions of the Ottomans) of Lokman, Istanbul, 1579, opaque pigment on paper
Topkapi Palace Museum, Istanbul, H.1563; photograph Topkapi Palace Museum

19. Adam and his descendants, page from a *Silsilename* (Book of genealogy), Baghdad, October 1597, opaque pigment on paper
 Topkapi Palace Museum, Istanbul, H.1324, fol. 20b; photograph Topkapi Palace Museum



a level of circumspection. Dust Muhammad wants to confront anxiety about the image and the practice of depiction by siting their origin in a prophetic model (Daniel), derived from God, and a virtually prophetic artist (Ahmad Musa) who created a model perpetuated throughout Iran. Dust Muhammad's wider theory of artistic process and subjectivity reveals the common notion that the artist's or calligrapher's works were impressions of their makers: hence the use of the noun *athar*. The word also had the meanings of "trace," "footprint," and "memorial" or "monument"; thus its meaning as "work of art" always carries a connotation of precedent. This is also the word that Lokman uses to refer to the European portraits of the Ottoman sultans. It is a suggestive and highly metaphorical term that reiterates the notion that form, whether the human form created by God or images made by an artist, involves the impression of a presence. In every instance, overly descriptive elements that might unduly distract viewers, especially in treatments of prophets, angels, or sultans, who were already perfect beings, are suppressed. The paintings accompanying the *Mi'raj-nama* of 1436, the *Siyer-i Nebi* of 1595, and the *Sema'ilname* of 1579 entail an avoidance of description and a controlled visualization of difference. Whether in the context of production or of aesthetic appraisal, resemblances are translated into a language of absolute attributes, an ideal. In the instance of certain "portraits," especially of prophets and sultans, the mirage of the real embodied in verbal description cycled back into an abstraction.

cycled back into an abstraction.



20. Portraits of nine physicians, from a *Kitab al-diryaq* (Book of antidotes) of Pseudo-Galen, northern Iraq, c. 1250, opaque pigment on paper

20. Portraits of nine physicians, from a *Kitab al-diryaq* (Book of antidotes) of Pseudo-Galen, northern Iraq, c. 1250, opaque pigment on paper
 Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Vienna, A.F. 10, fol. 1b, photograph Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, picture archives

NOTES

Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are the author's.

1. For a discussion of the subjects illustrated in Muhammad ibn Ahmad al-Biruni's *Kitab al-athar al-baqiya'an al-qurun al-khaliya* ("The Chronology of Ancient Nations," or "Vestiges of the Past"), see Priscilla P. Soucek, "An Illustrated Manuscript of al-Biruni's *Chronology of Ancient Nations*," in *The Scholar and the Saint: Studies in Commemoration of Abu'l-Rayhan al-Biruni and Jalal al-Din al-Rumi*, ed. Peter J. Chelkowski (New York, 1975), 103–168. According to Ibn al-Kalbi (d. 819?), Hubal was one of the most popular idols of the Quraysh (Muhammad's tribe) and it was located inside the Ka'ba. Hubal "was of red agate, in the form of a man with the right hand broken off." The Quraysh fashioned a replacement hand from gold. See Hisham Ibn al-Kalbi, *The Book of Idols, Being a Translation from the Arabic of the Kitab al-Asnam*, trans. Nabih Amin Faris (Princeton, 1952), 23–24. Ibn al-Kalbi notes that the stones (*ansab*) worshipped by the Arabs were called idols (*asnam*) and images (*awthan*) when they resembled living beings (Ibn al-Kalbi 1952, 28). Ibn al-Kalbi's subject matter—his simple choice of writing about idols in the pre-Islamic period—made him the target of many attacks. Indeed, the author Rabghuzi writes in 1310 in his "Stories of the Prophets" of a time when "it was lawful to make statues of good and pure men after they had died, and to look at them" (Nasir al-Din ibn Burhan al-Din al-Rabghuzi, *The Stories of the Prophets: Qisas al-Anbiya'—An Eastern Turkish Version*, trans. H. E. Boeschoten, J. O'Kane, and M. Vandamme, 2 vols. [Leiden, 1995], 2:414).
2. Also see Ibn al-Kalbi for accounts about the perversion of Abrahamic monotheism and the Prophet Muhammad's treatment of the idols at the Ka'ba (Ibn al-Kalbi 1952, 4, 27).
3. The term *aniconic*—referring to the nonuse of images—was coined, and usefully employed, by Terry Allen in *Five Essays on Islamic Art* (Sebastopol, Calif., 1988), chapter 2. An assessment of the materials available for the study of painting of religious subjects is available in J. M. Rogers, "The Genesis of Safawid Religious Painting," *Iran* 8 (1970): 125–139. Rogers' notion of a "religious" (Sebastopol, Calif., 1988), chapter 2. An assessment of the materials available for the study of painting of religious subjects is available in J. M. Rogers, "The Genesis of Safawid Religious Painting," *Iran* 8 (1970): 125–139. Rogers' notion of a "religious" painting—referencing subject matter or themes that deal with figures from Islamic history or its cosmology—is modeled after, and expands on, the work of Thomas W. Arnold, *Painting in Islam: A Study of the Place of Pictorial Art in Muslim Culture* (Oxford, 1928), chapter 6.
4. In the text accompanying the painting of Abraham destroying the idols of the Sabians, for example, Abraham challenges the idols to eat and speak; when they do not, he hits them (Soucek 1975, 118). For a recent survey of the many materials available for the study of idols and idolatry, as well as a rich bibliography, see Finbarr Barry Flood, "Between Cult and Culture: Bamiyan, Islamic Iconoclasm, and the Museum," *Art Bulletin* 84, no. 4 [December 2002]: 641–659; and G. R. Hawting, *The Idea of Idolatry and the Emergence of Islam: From Polemic to History* (Cambridge, 1999).
5. Christiane J. Gruber, "Eschatology in the Visual Arts of Islam, Fourteenth to Sixteenth Centuries," in *Madness, Mayhem, and Millennia: Eschatology East and West*, ed. Christopher Beall (Ithaca, N.Y., 2007), suggests that the veil was introduced at first because of "metaphorical, rather than regulatory, impulses." The Prophet Muhammad's ineffability, another explanation for the use of the veil, is also suggested by many sayings such as one cited in Rabghuzi: "The people of the world were amazed: No one could look him directly in the face" (1995, 2:531).
6. Despite these efforts, viewers sometimes "disabled" the image by either rubbing out the face or inscribing a line across the neck. For examples, see Flood 2002.
7. Mughal painting offers the most notable exception to this visual language in the Islamic lands before 1600. Under the Mughal emperor Akbar and his successor Jahangir, court painters pursued the artistic possibilities of naturalism, presumably in response to both European artists and to painted and printed sources. A brief discussion of the Mughal material, and salient literature on the topic, is provided in Priscilla P. Soucek, "The Theory and Practice of Portraiture in the Persian Tradition," *Muqarnas* 17 (2000): 97–108; 101. The essay by Soucek is a superb introduction to the materials and the many issues at stake in the study of portraiture. For an essay exploring the problematic of verbal descriptions of historical persons in literary genres that were not accompanied by illustration, see Michael Cooperson, "Images without Illustrations: The Visual Imagination in Classical Arabic Biography," in *Islamic Art and Literature*, ed. Oleg Grabar and Cynthia Robinson (Princeton, 2001), 7–20.
8. A useful glossary of terms in Persian-language sources is in Yves Porter, *Peinture et arts du livre: Essai sur la littérature technique indo-persane* (Louvain, 1992).
9. For an English translation of the text accompanied by the Persian original, see Wheeler M. Thackston, *Album Prefaces and Other Documents on the History of Calligraphers and Painters* (Leiden, 2001), 200–201, 199–201.
9. For an English translation of the text accompanied by the Persian original, see Wheeler M. Thackston, *Album Prefaces and Other Documents on the History of Calligraphers and Painters* (Leiden, 2001), 4–17; 11–15.
10. Canceling out Mani's image and his claims operates on different levels in Dust Muhammad's text. See David J. Roxburgh, *Prefacing the Image: The Writing of Art History in Sixteenth-Century Iran* (Leiden, 2001), 176–178.
11. Examples of European and Chinese art in the album are discussed and illustrated in David J. Roxburgh, *The Persian Album, 1400–1600: From Dispersal to Collection* (New Haven, 2005), 295–304.

12. A compelling interpretation of the group of Ahmad Musa paintings and specific aspects of their iconography has been advanced by Christiane J. Gruber, "The Prophet Muhammad's Ascension (*Mi'raj*) in Islamic Art and Literature, ca. 1300–1600" (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 2005), chapter 3.
13. The idea runs through much philosophical writing of the Islamic medieval period and later. See Soucek 2000, 101–103; on the artist as "mirror," see Roxburgh 2001, 181–189.
14. Expanded discussion on the creative agency possessed by some artists can be found in Roxburgh 2001, 183–189.
15. In assembling this album, Dust Muhammad penned attributions to artists on single-page works and also identified the subjects of portraits. Several of the portraits show historical figures, including the last Timurid ruler, Sultan Husayn, and the Shaybani Uzbek ruler Shaybak Khan.
16. Many of these sources are discussed in Roxburgh 2001, chapter 6. Other sources, mainly from earlier historical periods—recorded in texts by Bayhaqi, Abu Nu'aym, Ibn al-Faqih, and Mas'udi—are summarized and discussed in Oleg Grabar and Mika Natif, "The Story of Portraits of the Prophet Muhammad," *Studia Islamica* 96 (2004): 19–37. An earlier version of the same article appeared in French: Oleg Grabar, "Les portraits du prophète Mahomet à Byzance et ailleurs," *Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres: Comptes rendus des séances de l'année 2002* (Paris, 2002), 1431–1445.
17. The passage was first referenced by Arnold 1928, 93. The translated excerpt here is from Grabar and Natif 2004, 24–25. For the Arabic text, see Mas'udi, *Muruj al-dhahab*, ed. Yusuf As'ad Dagher, 4 vols. (Beirut, 1965–1966), 1:162–164. Mas'udi includes the anecdote in a section about the kings of China and the Turks.
18. The painting of Muhammad, for example, depicts him mounted on a camel and surrounded by his companions, who wear shoes made of camel skin. Grabar and Natif 2004, 25.
19. Grabar and Natif 2004, 25. Mas'udi's anecdote also informs us that each prophet portrait was surmounted by a caption giving the prophet's name, genealogy, country, age, and other matters salient to his office.
20. Uri Rubin, *The Eye of the Beholder: The Life of Muhammad as Viewed by Early Muslims* (Princeton, 1995), 44–49. The last story involving a visual image is careful to assign ownership to the Christians.
21. I adopt the term *licit* from Johann Christoph Bürgel, who used it in his study of Persian poetry, music, and painting, *The Feather of Simurgh: The "Licit Magic" of the Arts in Medieval Islam* (New York, 1988).
22. These are mostly illustrated histories of the early fourteenth century. The paintings in Rashid al-Din's manuscripts and others are discussed in Priscilla P. Soucek, "The Life of the Prophet: Illustrated Versions," in *Content and Context of Visual Art in the Islamic World*, ed. Priscilla P. Soucek (University Park, Penn., and London, 1988), 193–209.
23. The manuscript is in Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France (Suppl. Turc 190). For basic references to it, see Francis Richard, *Splendeurs persanes: Manuscrits du XIIIe au XVIIe siècle* (Paris, 1997), 77; for reproductions of all of the paintings accompanied by glosses on them, see Marie-Rose Séguy, *The Miraculous Journey of Mahomet, Mirāj Nāmeḥ* (New York, 1977). For a recent analysis of the manuscript, see Gruber 2005.
24. Abel Pavet de Courteille, trans., *Miradī-nameh* (Paris, 1882), 3–4. For an English translation of the text, see Wheeler M. Thackston, "The Paris *Mi'raj*-nama," *Journal of Turkish Studies* 18 (1994): 263–299. Other versions of the event are more detailed. In his *Qisas al-anbiya'* completed in 1310, Rabghuzi notes that Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, Solomon, and Jesus all introduced themselves to Muhammad before the prayer began (1995, 2:597–600). Rabghuzi also tells us that Moses was of "tall stature" and "awe-inspiring," and that he held a staff.
25. In the text of the 1436 manuscript, the Prophet Muhammad meets, in order: Adam, John (Yahya), Zacharias (Zakariyya), Jacob (Ya'qub), Joseph (Yusuf), David (Da'ud), Solomon (Sulayman), Ishmael (Isma'il), Isaac (Ishaq), Aaron (Harun), Lot, Moses (Musa), Noah (Nuh), Idris, and Abraham (Ibrahim).
26. Pavet de Courteille 1882, 10.
27. Pavet de Courteille 1882, 21. The text goes on to describe aspects of their character and then discusses the houris. For a new translation and critical edition of the text, see Christiane J. Gruber, *The Timurid Book of Ascension (Mi'rajnama): A Study in Text and Image in a Pan-Asian Context*, 2 vols. (Valencia, 2007).
28. An alternative explanation for the style of the paintings is provided by Séguy, who notes: "However, luminosity of color, purity of line, and subtlety of decoration make up for the ignorance of perspective." (1977, 35). It must also be noted that the paintings in the manuscript were not intended to form a completely coherent system. Despite what we know of the condition of men in heaven, the impulse to differentiate the prophets in the manuscript paintings extends to varying the color of their hair to denote relative age.
29. In his telling of the tale, Rabghuzi notes that the angels Gabriel and Michael, in the form of white birds, came to Muhammad when he was four years old. They removed Muhammad's heart, washed it, and then returned it to him (Rabghuzi 1995, 2:529). Elsewhere in Rabghuzi's stories, he notes that the

- angel Gabriel usually visited the Prophet Muhammad on earth in the form of Diyha al-Kalbi, a contemporary of Muhammad (1995, 2:595). The Prophet Muhammad saw Gabriel only twice in the form of an angel. His six thousand wings were studded with emeralds, pearls, and rubies (Rabghuzi 1995, 2:596).
30. Rogers (1970) discusses many of them. See also Rachel Milstein, Karin Rührdanz, and Barbara Schmitz, *Stories of the Prophets: Illustrated Manuscripts of Qisas al-Anbiya'* (Costa Mesa, Calif., 1999).
31. The text is Mustafa Darir Erzurumlu's Anatolian Turkish translation of 1388, which was based on earlier biographies of the Prophet Muhammad. Zeren Tanindi notes that Darir had to choose between two existing biographies, one by 'Abd al-Malik b. Hisham (d. 834), the other by Abu al-Hasan b. Ahmad b. 'Abd Allah b. Ahmad al-Bakri (active in the thirteenth century). He selected the latter. See Zeren Tanindi, *Siyer-i Nebi: Islam Tasvir Sanatinda Hz. Muhammed'in Hayati* (Istanbul, 1984), 10. Her study is a comprehensive account of the Ottoman manuscript. Also see Filiz Çagman and Zeren Tanindi, *The Topkapi Saray Museum: The Albums and Illustrated Manuscripts*, trans., expanded, and ed. J. M. Rogers (Boston, 1986), chapter 12; and Carol G. Fisher, "The Pictorial Cycle of the 'Siyer-i Nebi': A Late Sixteenth Century Manuscript of the Life of Muhammad" (PhD diss., Michigan State University, 1981). For a modern Turkish translation of Darir's text, see Mustafa Darir, *Siyer-i Nebi: Peygamber Efendimizin Hayati*, ed. M. F. Gürtunca, 3 vols. (Istanbul, 1977).
32. The practice of veiling the Prophet Muhammad was by this time widespread and not particular to Ottoman Turkey. See, for example, the *Asar-i muzaffar*, a Persian verse translation by Khvaja Sayf al-Din Muza'far Bitikchi of the *Siyer-i Nebi*, copied in Iran or Central Asia in 1568 (Topkapi Palace Museum, Istanbul, H.1233; one folio is now in the Pozzi collection, Musée d'art et d'histoire, Geneva, inv. 1971-107/60).
33. Even when the Prophet Muhammad is identified as a future prophet by the Christian monk Bahira, he verifies the identity by locating the *muhr* (seal) between Muhammad's shoulders. The "seal" complements the physical descriptions that Bahira was aware of from the Torah and the Gospel in the story as a future prophet by the Christian monk Bahira, he verifies the identity by locating the *muhr* (seal) between Muhammad's shoulders. The "seal" complements the physical descriptions that Bahira was aware of from the Torah and the Gospel in the story recounted by Rabghuzi (1995, 2:538).
34. Several examples of the *hilye* are illustrated in Nabil F. Safwat, *The Art of the Pen: Calligraphy of the 14th to 20th Centuries* (Oxford, 1996), 52-69.
35. Safwat 1996, 46.
36. The title of al-Qadi 'Iyad b. Musa's work is *Kitab al-shifa bi-ta'rif huquq al-mustafa* (Safwat 1996, 46).
37. Cooperson describes 'Ali's account as a "thick description" and observes that the specific details "defamiliarize their object . . . to compel attention to previously unremarked detail and so create the impression that one is experiencing the object for the first time" (2001, 11).
38. The manuscript, which is fully illustrated—as are later copies of it—is discussed in recent essays by Filiz Çagman, "Portrait Series of Nakkas Osman," and Gülru Necipoglu, "The Serial Portraits of Ottoman Sultans in Comparative Perspective," in *The Sultan's Portrait: Picturing the House of Osman*, ed. Selmin Kangal and trans. Priscilla Mary Isin [exh. cat., Topkapi Palace Museum] (Istanbul, 2000), 164-187 and 22-61, respectively.
39. Necipoglu 2000, 39.
40. Necipoglu 2000, 39.
41. Necipoglu 2000, 34.
42. Necipoglu discusses the impact of the sequence and its subtle visual differences and parallels, which stress continuity and establish the "unified familial group identity of the Ottoman dynasty" (Necipoglu 2000, 34, 36).
43. This is a long tradition in Islamic societies and one that produced a large number of aphorisms, mostly appearing in wisdom literature, which brought together the traditions of the Greeks, Persians, and Arabs. Such books were variously philosophical or political in their orientation and function and not exclusively directed toward the ruler. One illustrative aphorism is attributed to Plato: "A king should start with reforming himself before he sets out to reform his subjects; otherwise, he would be like one who wants to straighten a crooked shadow before straightening his stick which is casting the shadow" [cited in Dimitri Gutas, *Greek Wisdom Literature in Arabic Translation: A Study of the Graeco-Arabic Gnomologia* (New Haven, 1975), 52]. Also see Charles-Henri de Fouchécour, *Moralia: Les notions morales dans la littérature persane du 3e/9e au 7e/13e siècle* (Paris, 1986). Aspects of character also found expression in speech and in writing, a belief that further enhanced the status of calligraphy and created the idea that calligraphy was a moral deposit of its maker (the notion was later extended to the arts of depiction). See Roxburgh 2001, 112-115; Roxburgh 2005, 75, 278-280.
44. Necipoglu 2000, 39.
45. The adaptive artistic process was duly noted by Necipoglu 2000, 32.
46. For a discussion of the *Silsilenames*, first illustrated in the reign of Mehmed III (r. 1595-1603), see Serpil Bagci, "From Adam to Mehmed III: Silsile-name," in Kangal 2000, 188-201, 281-283.
47. See Oya Pancaroglu, "Socializing Medicine: Illustrations of the *Kitab al-Diryaq*," *Muqarnas* 18 (2001): 155-172.
48. Necipoglu notes that Lokman ultimately suppresses his concern about the reliability of the European portraits of the first six Ottoman sultans in favor of "constructing a culturally acceptable iconic identity for them" (Necipoglu 2000, 40).