XXXI. Abraham about to sacrifice his son

XXXII. a. Joseph tempted by Zulaykhā

XXXII. b. Zulaykhā, as an old woman, brought before Joseph
The story of Abraham is often illustrated; we see him destroying his father’s idols and as a punishment for his blasphemy being cast into the flames of a huge fire by order of King Nimrod, and there comforted by an angel, and, later, about to sacrifice his son, who is generally given by Muhammadan writers the name of Ishmael, rather than Isaac. As the painters were most commonly employed to illustrate the poems of Sa’dí, Nizâmi, and other popular writers, such incidents in the life of Abraham as these poets recorded were those most frequently selected for pictorial treatment; thus, we often see Abraham and his son praying before the Ka’bah, which they built on the spot where it still stands in the city of Mecca (Qur’ân, ii. 121). Sa’dí in his Bûstân (ed. Graf, pp. 142-3) tells the story of Abraham’s entertainment of the fire-worshipper, which was introduced into English literature by Bishop Jeremy Taylor at the conclusion of his Discourse of the Liberty of Prophesying. It was the custom of the Prophet never to sit down to his morning meal until some traveller had come, with whom he could share it. One day an aged man made his way across the desert and was invited by Abraham to be his guest. When they sat down the Prophet said grace, but the old man did not utter a word, and when Abraham asked him, ‘Is it not our bounden duty when we break bread, to do so in the name of the Giver of it?’ he replied, ‘I observe no rite that I have not learned from my spiritual guide, the fire-worshipper’. Abraham is so filled with horror at the thought that he has unawares been entertaining an idolater that indignantly he drives the old man away. Then God sends down an angel to rebuke the Prophet for his intolerance, and the message of the angel is this: ‘If I have borne with this aged man and given him his daily bread for a hundred years, can you not bear with him for a single hour?’ Filled with shame at this rebuke, Abraham hurries after the fire-worshipper and brings the old man back again into his house and treats him as an honoured guest. In a sixteenth-century MS. of this poem the painter selects this last moment in the story as the subject of his picture; the Prophet, a tall dignified figure, is seen commending to the members of his household the white-bearded fire-worshipper, bent double with age, while a brilliantly coloured angel swoops down in a mass of flame that floats behind him like broken fragments of cloud (Plate XXX).

None of the great figures of Old Testament history have so profoundly stirred the imagination of Muhammadan writers as that of Joseph. The Qur’ân had given them a lead, in that it devoted a whole chapter, the Sûrah of Joseph (chapter xii), to the recital of his story, but this narrative was much amplified by succeeding generations. His adventures were taken as the
subject of poems by some of the most famous of the Persian poets, and the Yâṣîf and Zulaykhâ by Firdâswî, written about 1010, and that by Jâmi in 1483, are counted among the greatest achievements of the Persian genius. But neither was Firdâswî the first nor Jâmi the last of Persian poets to put the tale of Yâṣîf and Zulaykhâ into verse, and the list of such poems is a long one. Nine years after the completion of Jâmi’s romance the Turkish poet, Hamdi, completed his own popular poem which was modelled on those of his famous predecessors, and it still remains the finest Turkish poem on the theme, though it was taken up by many others in succeeding generations. This story not only made the same romantic appeal to Muhammadan readers as it has done to the Christian world for centuries, but, receiving at the hands of the Persian poets an allegorical interpretation, was made the vehicle for the inoculation of mystical doctrine. Joseph was taken as the type of the Celestial Beauty, i.e. God; and Zulaykhâ, as the personification of over-mastering and all-compelling love, was made to represent the soul of the mystic, the love of the creature being regarded as the bridge leading to love of the Creator. This application of the story to the apprehension of divine knowledge was set forth in the following verses of Jâmi, as finely translated by Professor Browne:

Though in this world a hundred tasks thou proyst,
’Tis Love alone which from thyself will save thee.
Even from earthly love thy face avert not,
Since to the Real it may serve to raise thee.
Ere A, B, C are rightly apprehended,
How canst thou con the pages of the Qur’ân?
A sage (so heard I) unto whom a scholar
Came craving counsel on the course before him, said,
‘If thy steps be strangers to Love’s pathways,
Depart, learn love, and then return before me! For, shouldst thou fear to drink wine from Form’s flagon,
Thou canst not drain the draughts of the Ideal.
But yet beware! Be not by Form belated;
Strive rather with all speed the bridge to traverse.
If to the bourn thou faint wouldst bear thy baggage
Upon the bridge let not thy footsteps linger.

The most popular details of the story, selected by the painters as subjects for illustration, were the drawing of Joseph out of the well into which his brethren had thrown him—his sale in Egypt—his temptation by Zulaykhâ

(For this is the name by which Potiphar’s wife is known to the whole Muhammadan world)—his imprisonment—his subsequent greatness. Though so far the Muslim version corresponds to that of the Bible, in no case does any Muslim painter appear to have taken any Christian picture as his model. In regard to other details of the story, no such borrowing would have been possible, because both the original account in the Qur’ân and the additions made by poets and others find no place in the Christian Scriptures, but are peculiar to the Muslim version. Thus, Zulaykhâ, in order that Joseph should entertain no doubt as to her feelings towards him, is said to have had pictures of herself and Joseph painted on the walls of her room, on the ceiling, and even on the floor; but wherever he turned his eyes he saw himself and his mistress, embracing or seated side by side, or Zulaykhâ kneeling at his feet. Such a picture, painted in 1475, is given on fol. 190 b of a copy of the Haij A’warîj by Jâmi in the Bodleian Library (Elliott 149), Plate XXXII a; another is in a MS. (Cod. Pers. 6, fol. 105) in the Biblioteca Casanatense in Rome.

The Qur’ân (xii. 31-2) relates that the ladies of Egypt were so scandalized by the behaviour of Zulaykhâ and took such good care that she should come to know of their disapproval, that she invited them to a feast, and having first set fruit before them, put into the hand of each a knife with which to skin it; just at this moment she called Joseph into the room, and as soon as they saw him, all the ladies cut their hands, crying out in amazement, ‘O God! this is no mortal being! this is none other than an angel!’ The implication appears to be that the ladies of Egypt were thus compelled to recognize that there was sufficient justification for Zulaykhâ’s passion for Joseph. This subject became a favourite one, especially among the later Persian illustrators, but nowhere received such attractive presentation as in the MS. of Jâmi’s Yâṣîf and Zulaykhâ in the British Museum (Or. 4335, fol. 104).

The poets carried the story far beyond the point reached in the Book of Genesis or in the Qur’ân. Potiphar dies and Zulaykhâ is reduced to a state of abject poverty, and with hair turned white through sorrow, and eyes blinded by continual weeping, she dwells in a hut of reeds by the roadside, and her only solace in her misery is listening to the sound of Joseph’s cavalcade as from time to time it rides past. After fruitless prayer to her idol for relief, she turns in penitence to the true God, Allah, and one day she prays in a loud voice for the blessing of God upon the head of Joseph. He hears towards the end of the tenth century A.D., was Joseph in the well, and the manner in which the painter had made the white body of the young man stand out against the black background of the well was much admired (Maqâlî, Kâfî, Vol. II, p. 118 (1, 6-7 a.f.)).
her cry and orders her to be brought before him, and learns to his surprise that this wretched woman is his former mistress. He then prays to God on her behalf; her sight and her beauty are restored to her, and a divine message bids Joseph marry her. This happy sequel to the story seldom finds an illustrator, but in the MS. in the Bodleian Library (Elliot 149, fol. 190) there is a picture of the interview between Joseph and the decrepit, afflicted woman (Plate XXXIIb).

Another Prophet of the Old Testament who fills a large place in Muslim literature is Solomon. Mention is made of him and his marvellous doings in four separate chapters of the Qur'an (xxi, xxvii, xxxiv, and xxxvii)—how God subjected to him the wind, and the birds and the jinn, and how he met Biliqis, the Queen of Sheba, and put her wisdom to the test. The painters found ample scope for the exercise of their imagination in illustrating this story, as it was elaborated by the commentators and, after them, by the poets. Pictures showing the two wise monarchs seated together, surrounded by birds and beasts and strange monsters of various kinds, are common, especially in the opening pages of romantic poems. One obscure verse in the Qur'an (xxvii. 44)—"It was said to her, 'Enter the palace'; and when she saw it, she thought it a lake of water and bared her legs. He said, 'Lo! it is a palace smoothly paved with glass'"—is explained by the commentators to have reference to a rumour that had reached to the ears of Solomon to the effect that the Queen of Sheba had hoofs and hairy legs like those of an ass; so he had a courtyard of the palace flooded and stocked with fish, and then covered with glass. Apparently the Queen of Sheba, for all her wisdom, was not acquainted with the transparency of glass; so when she saw the fishes swimming about, she lifted her skirts with the intention of wading through the water, and (according to the common account) Solomon recognized that her feet and her legs were beautifully formed, but that the rumour as to their being hairy was unfortunately true; so he refused to marry her until this blemish had been removed by means of a depilatory. The painter of a charming picture of this incident in a MS. of Majalis al-sûrah, by Sultan Huseyn Mirzâ, in the Bodleian Library (Ouseley Add. 24, fol. 177b), obviously considered this story to be scandalous, and he has represented Biliqis as entirely free from any such disfigurement; but at the same time he has so misunderstood the story as to depict the feet of the queen as actually covered by the water. The surprise of her attendant ladies and of Solomon and his jinn is naively indicated by the conventional gesture of putting the finger to the lips (Plate XXXIII).

In connexion with Solomon, some of the earliest representations of the jinn, those strange beings intermediary between the angelic and the human creation, make their appearance in Muslim art. According to the theologians, some of the jinn were true believers, while others were infidels; to the former class, of course, belonged those who did service to Solomon. But even these, as depicted by the painters, are terrific in appearance, being coloured either black or corpse-like white, and wearing bristling horns on their heads. While these hideous, but virtuous, beings are not uncommon in Muslim painting, devils and demons as ministers of evil are comparatively rare until a later date. In Muslim art the devil has never played so prominent a part as in the art of the Christian world, and in the picture which depicts his first historic appearance as a rebel against God, when God ordered the angels to bow down before the form of Adam before the breath of life had been breathed into the newly created man (Qur'an, xv. 30 sq.), the rebellious angel, Iblis, appears as a dignified figure, in human form, seated on a prayer carpet. In Indian paintings, especially those of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, devils occur much more frequently, and their hideous appearance suggests the influence of Hindu demonology, which has been so prolific in the production of such monsters. Pictures of Hell are likewise rare—in striking contrast to the frequency with which such eschatological subjects found a place in Christian art. There are few Muhammadan manuscripts like the Uighur MS. of Mir'aj Namâh, full of pictures of the progress of Muhammad through heaven and hell, painted in the fifteenth century at Harât, probably for the great Timurid sovereign, Shah Rukh. It is not impossible that the illustrators of this manuscript were influenced by the Buddhist representations of hell, of which their neighbours in Central Asia were so fond; but for some reason difficult to determine they did not copy imitators in later Muslim painting.

Equally rare are pictures of Heaven. The most charming of these are found in the same Mir'aj Namâh in the Bibliothèque Nationale (fols. 49, 49 b, 51), where the blessed are seen in a beautiful garden, paying visits to one another on their camels and exchanging bouquets of flowers. The vast literature, both in Arabic and Persian, describing the ascent of the Prophet to heaven and his passage through the various circles of the realms of the blessed might have provided abundant subject-matter for the activity of the painters, had not such books as a rule been regarded as belonging to the domain of theology and been thus protected from the sacrilegious touch of the painter's brush, in consequence of the hostile attitude of the students of such literature

1 Bibliothèque Nationale (Supplément persan 1559, fol. 106 b). (Plate XXXIV.)
2 Bibliothèque Nationale (Supplément ture 190).
3 Plate XXXV b.
towards his art. The Muhammadan world produced no poet like Dante who brought the consideration of the Last Things out of the domain of professional theological studies and embodied them in a poem that the ordinary man could read and would wish to have illustrated. On account of the great rarity of pictorial representations of the Muslim Paradise, mention may be made here of the painting reproduced by Professor M. Th. Houtsma, though as a work of art it is poor, and serves the purpose rather of a presentation of the members of the Holy Family than of the joys of Paradise. It represents Muhammad seated by the side of a tank of water, with his two grandsons, Hasán and Húsayn, behind him, while their father 'Alí stands on the other side of the tank with a cup in his hand and a group of unnamed persons by his side. In the upper corners of the picture are two buildings, from the windows of which eight unattractive hüris look out. In the centre of the picture, on the bank of the tank, grows a tree with wide-spreading branches, obviously intended for the lote-tree mentioned in the Qur'an (iii. 14, 16); on it are perched three enormous birds, one having a human head.\textsuperscript{1}

The other Prophets of the Old Testament do not appear to have attracted the painters to the same degree, but Jonah, who receives mention in as many as five chapters of the Qur'an, inspired a remarkable drawing in the Edinburgh MS. of Rashid ad-Din's History.\textsuperscript{2} The fine drawing of a Chinese carp, as the fish that had swallowed Jonah, is evidence of the influence under which the artist was working in Tabriz; it seems to be gazing with a certain degree of sympathetic interest at the unfortunate Prophet, lying exhausted under the gourd-tree, after the trying experience of his three days' ordeal (Plate XXXVI).

In the eighteenth chapter of the Qur'an there is an account given of Dhu'l-Qarnayn ('He of the two horns') and of his wanderings to the West and to the East. Most Muslim commentators look upon him as a prophet and identify him with Alexander the Great, and in this they were followed by the Persian poets. His most notable adventure, as given in the Qur'an (xviii. 92-6), is as follows: 'Then he followed a route until he came between the two mountains, beneath which he found a people who scarce understood a language. They said, "O Dhu'l-Qarnayn, verily Gog and Magog lay waste this land; shall we then pay thee tribute on condition that thou build a rampart between us and them?" He said, "The power wherein my Lord hath established me is better; but if ye aid me strenuously, I will set a barrier between you and them. Bring me blocks of iron"—until when he had filled the space between the two mountain sides, he said, "Blow upon it"—until when he had made it like fire, he said, "Bring me molten brass that I may pour

\textsuperscript{1} Internationales Archiv für Ethnographie, III, Tafel XII (Leiden, 1890). (Plate XXXV a.)  \textsuperscript{2} fol. 25.
upon it”. So Gog and Magog were not able to scale it, nor could they make a hole through it.

In a MS. in the Bodleian Library, written in Bukhārā in A.H. 960 (= A.D. 1553), Alexander, in the dress of a Turkī prince, is seen superintending the building of his wall between the two sides of a mountain pass; it is made of well-cut blocks of stone, between the interstices of which molten iron is being poured. In the foreground workmen are cutting up the ingots of iron, while another is working a huge bellows for supplying a blast of air to the furnace.

The Romance of Alexander had been well known in the East for centuries before the rise of Islam, and the Syriac and Pahlavi versions were among the sources from which the Muslim imitations were derived. The Persian poets, beginning with Nizāmī, added a large number of adventures to those recorded in the Qur’ān, and this poet says that he derived his information from Christian, Jewish, and Pahlavi sources; he had several imitators and they provided the painters with an abundance of subjects for illustration; but such elaboration of the story of Alexander belongs rather to the realm of romance than to that of religion.

With the biographies of the mystics, Muslim religious art enters on a new phase. The Acta Sanctorum of the Muslim Church constitute an enormous literature of their own, and the biographies of the members of the many different religious orders that have concerned themselves with the organization of the devout life in Islam form a considerable part of it. Except in the earliest generations, the majority of the mystics were affiliated to one or other of these religious orders, but apart from these there were also a number of isolated devotees, thaumaturgists, and innumerable martyrs. In the history of religious art the appearance of the Majālis al-Ushībāq, or Assemblies of the Lovers (i.e. the lovers of God), is especially significant. The reputed author of this work is Sultan Ḥusayn Mīrāzī, though his contemporaries doubted the truth of this claim. But for the present purpose the more important fact is that this prince had a number of painters in his employ, and their work influenced the artists of later generations. There are several illustrated MSS. of this book, one of the finest of which is in the Bodleian Library. The saints in whom the author was interested were those of the Muslim period, and the dates of those he selected range from the second century of the Hijrah down to his own time, for the author concludes with an account of himself as one of the lovers of God.

1 Elliot 340 (Fihā 2121), fol. 80.  
2 See p. 71.  
3 Ouseley Add. 24, fol. 55 b.
Two examples of pictures of these mystical saints are given in Plate XLVI: one who died early in the thirteenth century, Majd ad-Din al-Baghdadi, who is shown preaching to a mixed congregation of men and women; the poet Farid ad-Din `Attar (ob. 1230), who himself wrote a great work on the biographies of the mystic saints. A third, who died in the latter part of the same century, was Jalal ad-Din Rumi (ob. 1273), the renowned author of the Mathnawi-i Ma'navi, which is now being made accessible to English readers in a complete translation by Professor A. R. Nicholson.

No reliance can, of course, be placed on these pictures as being actual portraits of the holy personages concerned, since they were painted at least two centuries after their death. But in the case of some of the Indian mystics it is not impossible that the constantly recurring types, revealing in several instances a distinct individuality, may really be portraits, for some of them, such as Mu'tam Mir and his disciple, Mullâ Shâh, who was the spiritual guide of Prince Dârâ Shikoh (1615–1659), were historical personages who lived at a time when the art of portraiture was common in India and was cultivated with pre-eminent success. Groups of Indian mystics, the founders of various religious orders, or individual portraits, are also commonly depicted.

One of the most popular of these mystics with Indian painters was Idrâ'im ibn Adham—well known to English readers through Leigh Hunt's sonnet, 'Abou Ben Adhem'. Though many legends have attached themselves to his name, he appears to have been an historical character and to have lived in the eighth century of the Christian era. One of the commonest representations of him is as an ascetic before whom the angels have spread a meal; such pictures used to be believed to portray Jesus after the temptation in the wilderness, when 'angels came and ministered to Him', and it is probable that some such picture served as the model for the numerous Indian representations of the Muslim saint (Plate XLI).

Apart from the more famous mystics, whose disciples preserved the pious utterances of their teachers and collected the materials for their biographies, are the many nameless dervishes who wandered about the country, like the Franciscan friars in the Middle Ages, living on the alms of the faithful and winning the hearts of the common people by their songs of the love of God. A light-hearted merry company of such dervishes is presented in the picture reproduced in Plate XLVII, which bears a striking resemblance to the signed pictures by Mu'hammadi, who from a dated drawing in the Louvre we know

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Footnotes:
1. Oxeney Add. 24, fol. 51 b.
2. Id., fol. 53 b.
3. Id., fol. 78 b. (Plate XLI a.)
XXXV. Muhammadan representations of Paradise

XXXVI. Jonah and the fish
to have been working in 1758. Muḥammad ibn was particularly fond of drawing such lively bands, making merry and capering about with antic gestures, and behaving rather like a troupe of buffoons than professing religious, and he has thus put on record an aspect of the devout life of Islam which is in striking contrast to the commonly prevailing sternness and austerity of its exterior manifestations. Such vagabond groups of dervishes did not as a rule attract the more serious minded and learned among the mystics of Islam, but a Persian poet of note in the thirteenth century, Fakhr ad-Dīn ʻIrāqī, is said to have thrown in his lot with such a roving company of dervishes, attracted by the beauty of one of their number, and travelled with them from Persia to India; in the course of his wandering life he visited the holy cities of Arabia, Asia Minor, Syria, and Egypt; his poems gave offence to some of his brethren on account of their apparent antinomianism and the erotic character of their language; some of them have been translated by the late Professor E. G. Browne, including the following ecstatic ode:

Save love of thee a soul in me I cannot see, I cannot see,
An object for my love save thee I cannot see, I cannot see,
Repose or patience in my mind I cannot find, I cannot find,
While gracious glance or friendship free I cannot see, I cannot see.
Show in thy face some sign of grace, since for the pain wherewith I'm slain
Except thy face a remedy I cannot see, I cannot see.

In the accompanying picture ʻIrāqī is seen walking with a wild band of dervishes, some of whom are half-naked, carrying sticks like the qandah of the Hindu mendicant; one holds up a long banner, another blows a horn, another hugs a huge begging-bowl, and the rest carry various other symbols of their profession.

The Muslim orders of dervishes are not in agreement with one another on the question of the lawfulness or illegality of dancing as an accompaniment of religious emotion; while some sternly condemn it, others make it a regular part of their religious exercises, like the Mawlawīs, founded by Jalāl ad-Dīn Rūmī. The dance was often followed by a state of religious ecstasy, in which the worshipper lost all consciousness of the external world.

Of one of the saints of the Chisti order in India, Shaykh Adham (d. 1562), it is recorded that he possessed to the highest degree perception of God, a keen longing after ecstatic songs and dances, and the faculty of being overcome by religious ecstasy. In spite of his bodily feebleness and constitutitional weakness, and the languor which prevailed over all his limbs, which were

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1 E. Kühnel, Miniaturemalerei im islamischen Orient, Tafel 65, 66.
2 History of Persian Literature under Türtür Dümım, pp. 114–118.
3 Bodleian Library (Ouseley Add. 24, fol. 79 b) (Plate XLI b.)
such that he could hardly arise from his couch to perform the ceremonial ablutions, the prayers, and other necessary acts without the assistance of his attendants, yet whenever he heard the strains of holy song he would arise in ecstasy and would involuntarily join in the dance with such violence and strength that several persons could not, by their bodily power, restrain him. In Plate XLVIIIa, such a saint, Muhammad Tabàdîkânî (ob. 1486), is seen dancing in ecstasy with some of his disciples. An Indian picture represents a much larger group of venerable, white-bearded personages engaged in watching some aged mystics dancing; one has fallen to the ground in a state of ecstasy, another has to be supported by a friend, while another grey-bearded seems to be just on the point of collapse.

As several of the members of the imperial house of Dihli, particularly Shâh Jahàn and his family, were distinguished for their devotion to the saints, the painters often represented them as visiting a mystic or ascetic, and such honour was shown to Hindus as well as to Muslims. This tolerance of spirit is probably anticipated, when Bâbur is depicted as being welcomed by Hindu sannyásins, but it was true enough of a later generation, as shown by abundant historical evidence and frequent pictorial illustration.

Some of the most striking pictures of dervishes are those by Rizâ`Abbasi, who appears to have taken pleasure in turning from the frivolous subjects that generally occupied his attention in order to draw examples of some of the finer types of the Muslim dervish—serious, thoughtful men, grown old in pious meditation.

Apart from such pictures which undoubtedly represent persons and scenes that were familiar to the painter’s actual experience, there are many others which are prompted by a love for the strange and miraculous. The legends of the Muslim saints are full of strange stories bearing testimony to the wonder-working power of their sanctity, e.g., more than one is said to have ridden on the back of a lion, and several pictures of such an exploit are extant. Pir Râmûlî was once seated on a wall, meditating on some verses of the Qur’an, and in his abstraction he began to kick the wall with his heels; whereas on the wall began to move forward until the saint became aware of what had happened and bade it stop. Such marvellous stories and many others could provide the painter with abundant material for the exercise of

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2. Bodleian Library (Ouseley Add. 24, fol. 119).
3. Id. (Or. b. 3, fol. 47).
4. British Museum (Or. 1794, fol. 122 b).
6. India Office Library, Johnson Collection, Vol. XXII, p. 8 (Plate LXIV a); Bibliothèque Nationale, Suppl. pers. 1172, fol. 22.

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his art, but the miracles most commonly depicted were naturally those described in the works of popular authors, which the painter was called upon to illustrate. Thus, Sa’dî tells a story, in his *Bâstân*, of the dervish who crossed a river on his praying-carpet because he could not pay the fee of the ferryman, which gives occasion for illustration in a book that was popular throughout the greater part of the Muhammadan world and has been more frequently illustrated than almost any other (Plate L).

But representations of such a miracle are not confined to copies of Sa’dî’s *Bâstân*, since similar accounts of holy men crossing a stream are found in various *mas’ûd* of the Muslim world. Busbecq in 1562 heard such a story in Constantinople from the lips of a Turkish dervish who told him that the head of his monastery, a man famous for his sanctity and miracles, used to spread his cloak on a lake adjoining the monastery, and seated upon it, be carried wherever he liked. A more detailed variant of the same kind of legend is presented in the story of two rival saints, one of whom was once crossing a river with his disciples in a boat (according to one account), or seated on his praying-carpet (according to another), when a fearful storm arose and the terrified disciples expected every moment to be drowned; but the saint remained undisturbed, because he knew that it was the envious spite of his rival that had brought about the storm, and scanning the bank of the river he saw this rival looking out of a window. Then by the exercise of his miraculous power the saint caused two horns to grow out of the head of this ill-disposed wretch, so that he could not draw back his head, and then,shouting across the river, he cried out: ‘There shall you stay until you stop this storm.’ The rival, thus outwitted, had perforce to alay the tempest, whereupon his horns dropped off, and the saint with his disciples came safely to shore.

Any account of Muslim religious painting would be incomplete without reference to the copies of Christian pictures which became common in India in the sixteenth century. Akbar took a special interest in the Christian pictures which the Portuguese missionaries brought to his court, and there still remain on the wall of one of his palaces at Fatehpur-Sikri the faded traces of a fresco of the Annunciation. During the reign of his son, Jahàngir (1605–1628), the fashion of employing Indian painters to depict Christian subjects became more common, and various incidents in the life of the Virgin Mary frequently occur from this period onwards. In Persia also there are occasional examples of such pictures from the sixteenth century, while in

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1. India Office Library, *Rûh* 1142, fol. 27 b.
3. Bodleian Library (Or. 155, fol. 42). (Plate L.)
4. E. W. Smith, *The Mughal Architecture of Fatehpur-Sikri*, Part I, Plate CIX, Fig. 1 (Allahabad, 1894).
the eighteenth century there grew up an active school of painters of sacred subjects, of which Agha Sháh Najaf, who flourished in the reign of Karím Kháñ Zand (1750–1779) and lived on into the nineteenth century, was the most distinguished representative. They devoted themselves especially to the decoration of hand-mirrors and mirror cases, on which they not only painted portraits of Muhammad but also subjects from Christian hagiology, one of the favourite subjects being the Holy Family, with attendant saints and angels; the type of face in such cases is obviously imitated from Italian pictures.¹

The illustrators of the treatises on Muhammadan mysticism, referred to above, were interested merely in personality, so that the incidents they present are taken from the biographies of individual saints and teachers. Even in the case of the Diván of Hāfiz, in which story-telling is almost entirely lacking, and personal interest in regard to the poet himself is hardly excited at all, the painters have treated this volume (in the few instances on which they have illustrated it) as though it contained merely a series of historical incidents, and have made no attempt to bring out the mystical or devotional character of the book in accordance with the commonly accepted interpretation of the work. Indeed, mystical art in the narrow sense of the term is unknown to the Muhammadan painters, and since the theologians gave no encouragement to pictorial art, Islam has worked out no distinctive religious symbolism of its own. The crescent, which is commonly regarded as the typical emblem of the Muhammadan world, just as the cross is of Christendom, has only recently come to be accepted by Muslims as a religious emblem; it occurred sporadically only as a decoration on flags, &c., before its more general adoption by the Turks after their conquest of the Christian Byzantine empire.

The nearest approach to any painting of a symbolic character is found in some strange kneeling figures entwined in foliage, which occur in the earlier pages of a Persian MS. in the India Office Library.² No indication as to the special significance of these figures is given in the text of the work, which is a treatise on practical ethics, compiled in 1491 by a prolific writer named Húsayn al-Wājiz al-Kâshí.¹ On almost every page of this MS. there is painted a little figure, which might have been made to represent the particular virtue described in the text, had the artist so cared, but they are too commonplace to bear such an interpretation, and the only pictures that arrest attention are those in the first group, a specimen of which is given on Plate LII.

² No. 1097 (Erbé 2197), Ahl ì-Mubirí.
XXXIX. A mystic seated in a garden

XL. The poet Jāmi, seated with his friends
ONE of the strangest phenomena in Muslim religious art is the representation of Būrāq, the beast on which the Prophet is said to have ridden when he made his ascension to heaven on the occasion of his famous night journey. The starting-point for the detailed accounts of this night journey, elaborated by later writers, is in the chapter of the Qur'ān bearing that title (xvii, 'The Night Journey'): 'Glory be to (God) who caused His servant to make a journey by night from the sacred place of worship to the remote place of worship which We have encircled with blessings, that We might show him of Our signs'.

According to the common interpretation of Muhammadan theologians this journey was made, under the guidance of the angel Gabriel, from Mecca to Jerusalem, whence the Prophet ascended to heaven. The various accounts differ in several important particulars; sometimes the ascension is made by means of a ladder, sometimes by means of a tree; in another account it is simply stated that the Prophet was 'taken up'. Again, in one account an interval of six months elapses between the journey to Jerusalem and the ascension to heaven; more commonly, the two events are continuous; sometimes Būrāq is only brought in to convey Muḥammad as far as Jerusalem, sometimes the same mount carries him to heaven also. Passing through the seven heavens, one after the other, he meets in each one of the Prophets who were his predecessors, generally in the following order: Adam, John and Jesus, Joseph, Idris, Aaron, Moses, and Abraham. Then he is brought into Paradise and finally into the presence of God Himself. This is not a suitable occasion for examining the question, much debated by Muslim theologians, as to whether this journey was actually performed in the flesh by the Prophet or was only a spiritual experience vouchsafed to him in a vision of the night, for by the Muslim painter this heavenward journey was regarded as an actual physical experience and no mere dream. The problem that demands consideration here, therefore, is the origin of the type of beast that the painters chose for the animal on which the Prophet rode on this great occasion.

1 There is some uncertainty as to the derivation of this word, but the most plausible explanation is that it means 'the little flash of lightning', and that the beast was so named either for its swift pace or bright colour (J. Horovitz, 'Muhammeds Himmelfahrt', Der Islam, Vol. IX, p. 183). (Appendix D.)
2 Cf. Qur'ān, xvii. 64; lii. 1-18; lixii. 19-23.
3 These are summarized in Professor Miguel Asin's Islam and the Divine Comedy, pp. 4-51 (London, 1916).
one tradition it is said to have been a horse, and in another 'a white riding beast, smaller than a mule and larger than an ass'. It was the same beast as earlier Prophets had ridden upon, notably Abraham, who, according to Genesis xxii. 3, rode upon an ass, and likewise Jesus (St. John xii. 14); the Muhammadan writers could not wholly ignore this early record that it was the ass which had served as a mount for the Prophets, but it has been suggested that they were sensitive to possible scornful disparagement of so humble a beast, and were unwilling to describe Buraq as merely an ass, though they had to admit that it was something like one; hence the bifarious nature of this beast. Buraq was undoubtedly originally brought in to carry the Prophet to Jerusalem; when it had to make the further journey to heaven, wings were ascribed to it. So, in the oldest extant biography of Muhammad, that by Ibn Ishaq (d. A.D. 768), which has only come down to us in the recension of Ibn Hisham (d. A.D. 833), the description—put into the mouth of the Prophet himself—given of Buraq is that of a winged beast, white in colour, and in size intermediate between a mule and an ass. In the earlier narratives there is no mention of the human head which is so characteristic a feature of the pictorial representation of Buraq, and the first writer who suggests that this strange beast possessed any human feature was Thalâbi (d. A.D. 1036), the author of a well-known history of the Prophets, who quoted an untrustworthy tradition to the effect that Buraq had a cheek like the cheek of a human being. Later writers describe this marvellous beast in fuller detail; e.g. Khwândamir says: 1

'...Buraq was a riding beast smaller than a mule and larger than an ass, having a face like that of a human being and ears like those of an elephant; its mane was like the mane of a horse; its neck and tail like those of a camel; its breast like the breast of a mule; its feet like the feet of an ox or, according to one tradition, like those of a camel; its hoofs were like the hoofs of an ox. Its breast looked just like a ruby and its hair resembled white armour, shining brightly by reason of its exceeding purity. On its flanks it had two wings which hid its legs. The swiftness of this riding beast was such that in a single stride it could reach as far as eye could see.'

In the earlier versions of the story there is no agreement as to the sex of this animal; usually it is described as masculine, but Ibn Sa'd, whose biography of the Prophet was composed about seventy years later than that of Ibn Ishaq, makes Gabriel address Buraq as a female. 2 Accordingly, the painters commonly represented this beast as having a woman's head, but wisely made...

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3 Ed. Wüstenfeld, p. 264 (I. 6).  
4 For an account of this writer see p. 34.  
6 A. A. Beiwi, 'Mohammed's Ascension to Heaven', p. 19 (Studien zur semitischen Philologie und Religionsgeschichte, Julius Wellhausen ... gewidmet, Gießen, 1914).

XLII. Dancing dervishes in Constantinople
no attempt to reproduce in detail so complex a zoological curiosity as that suggested by Khwāndamīr. They had not to devise a new type of beast on the basis of any literary record, since their predecessors had provided them with abundant examples of such a hybrid animal, to serve as models for their own representation, for such a combination of the body of an animal with a human head goes back to the earliest periods of art—in the form of the sphinx in Egypt, Syria, Greece, &c., the centaur in ancient Babylon and Greece, and the Assyrian man-headed bulls. Several variants of the particular type—with animal body, wings, and human head—which most clearly corresponds to the commonest representation of Burāq in Muhammadān painting, make their appearance in some of the earliest periods of oriental art, e.g. on objects of stone, ivory, and bronze from Nimrud,1 and on a clay plaque from Eastern Crete (Plate LIV).2 At what period in the history of Muslim art any pictorial representation of Burāq made its appearance it is impossible to say, owing to the lack of primitive examples, but even in the lifetime of the Prophet some similar artistic fabrication had made its way to Medina, for among the many traditions that record how ‘Ā’ishah excited the anger of her husband by hanging up figured stuffs in her room is one in which she relates how she had hung over the door of her room a curtain in which were woven pictures of winged horses, but the Prophet tore it down.3

In the earliest picture of Burāq, however, that has hitherto been noted—namely, in the Jāmi‘ at-Tawārikh of Rashīd ad-Dīn, which is dated A.H. 714 (= A.D. 1314)—it is rather a centaur type that is followed, for the upper part of the body has two arms, as well as the usual four legs of an animal; in other respects also it presents features that are unusual, for Burāq holds in her hands a book, presumably a copy of the Qur‘ān, and her tail is upturned and ends in the upper part of a human body—the breast, head, and two arms, carrying in the right hand a long sword and in the left a round shield; the long thick masses of hair, curled up at the end, which hang down below each cheek, are similar to those of Burāq herself, and the crown on the head of each is of the same kind, and exactly resembles in shape and ornamentation that worn by kings in several illustrations in Berūnī’s al-Athār al-Bāqiyyah (Edinburgh University Library, no. 161); but the artistic origin of this strange caudal appendage is obscure. The incident represented in this picture forms part of Muḥammad’s adventures in heaven, where in the seventh heaven (according to some authorities) three vessels, containing several water, wine, and milk, are offered to him; of these he chooses the

1 British Museum, nos. 50914, 128904, 111104.
2 Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, no. G. 48B.
3 Ibn Ḥanbal, Musnad, Vol. VI, p. 228 ad fin.
4 Library of the Edinburgh University. (Plate LIII.)