

river (al-Ṭabarī, 3:41). Al-Balādhurī and Ibn al-Athīr, however, indicate that he was among the Umayyad elites slaughtered by the ‘Abbāsīd governor ‘Abdallāh b. ‘Alī at Nahr Abī Fuṭrus (modern-day Yarkon River) after the ‘Abbāsīd victory (al-Balādhurī, 7:550; Ibn al-Athīr, 4:321).

Historical sources tend to describe Ibrāhīm as part of the Qadariyya, the heretical movement advocating human free will. Al-Balādhurī especially emphasises his Qadarī affiliation (al-Balādhurī, 7:548). However, Ibrāhīm does not appear to have been a leader of the movement. He also does not appear in heresiographical sources and is not mentioned as a Qadarī until Yazīd’s revolt. Ibrāhīm was not a religious scholar of any merit, although Ibn ‘Asākir and al-Dhahabī report that he tried to persuade Ibn Shihāb al-Zuhrī to authorise him to transmit a book of *ḥadīth* reports (Ibn ‘Asākir, 7:246–7; al-Dhahabī, 5:377).

His caliphate lasted only two or three months and was not universally recognised. With the exception of his failed reign, the sources retain little about him, his beliefs, or the reasons he was chosen to succeed Yazīd.

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Iconoclasm

Iconoclasm is often assumed to be a characteristic feature of Islamic cultures, yet, with the exception of the repudiation of idolatry, the evidence for iconoclastic practice in the Islamic world is more variegated than many existing studies suggest. Derived from the Greek *eikōnoklastēs* (*eikōn* “likeness” + *klan* “to break”), first documented in eighth-century Byzantium, the term iconoclasm entered the lexicon of European languages only through the Latin *iconoclastus* late in the early-modern period (Bremmer). In modern scholarship it has assumed a capacious character and can refer to the defacement or destruction of artefacts, buildings, images, or inscriptions. These phenomena are well documented in the Islamic world, but phrases that include Arabic cognates, such as *taḥṭīm al-ayqūnāt* (“smashing of icons”) are modern translations of the term, while the Persian *but-shikānī* is of older vintage but refers specifically to the destruction of images perceived as idols. The archetype is the event in which the prophet Ibrāhīm (the biblical Abraham) destroyed the idols worshiped by his people in a foundational act of aniconic monotheism described in the Qur’ān (21:51–75; 37:91–6). The gesture was reiterated by the prophet

Muḥammad's reported destruction of the images and idols of Mecca after its capitulation in 8/630 (al-Azraqī, 165–9; Ibn al-Kalbī, 31). This break with the idolatrous past was repeated during the Islamisation of Arabia (Ibn al-Kalbī, *passim*; King, *Breaking*) and the later conquest of regions under the control of those not seen as belonging to the *ahl al-kitāb*, that is, adherents of religions that possessed a revealed scripture.

The implications of Ibrāhīm's iconoclasm for the production or reception of images in general are debated in *tafsīr* (Qur'ānic exegesis; see Mirza), but these events have been consistently invoked by those claiming Qur'ānic injunction and prophetic precedent for the destruction of images, especially three-dimensional sculpture. The conversion to Islam of the Īlkhānid *khān* Ghāzān (r. 694–703/1295–1304) in 694/1295 was reportedly accompanied by the destruction of idols, a gesture compared to that of Ibrāhīm (Thackston, 16). Conversely, when in 933/1526, the Ottoman vizier Ibrāhīm Pasha (d. 943/1536) set up three bronze statues looted from Buda in the Hippodrome of Istanbul, critics compared this unfavourably to the actions of his prophetic namesake: after the vizier's death, they were destroyed (Peçevī, 76–7; Yenişehirlioğlu). More recently, videos produced by the Taliban regime of Afghanistan showing their dynamiting of the Bāmīyān Buddhas in 2001 were captioned with the relevant Qur'ānic *āyāt*; the event was staged to coincide with the *īd al-adḥā*, which commemorates the sacrifice of Ibrāhīm, thereby adding to its Qur'ānic resonances (Elias, 19–20; Flood, Bamiyan). The iconoclasm of the prophets Ibrāhīm and Muḥammad was again invoked in reports and videos rationalising the smashing of antique statues in the

Mosul Museum by agents of the Islamic State/Daesh in 2014 (Anon.; Flood, *Idol breaking*; Harmanşah). This reiterative iconoclasm is equally relevant to periodic intra-Muslim iconoclasm targeted at graves and shrines, seen as innovations (*bida'*) and not associated with an originary Islam (Beranek and Tupek).

The *ḥadīth* extended proscriptive attitudes to all images of creatures possessing *rūh* (breath, spirit), even two-dimensional depictions on utilitarian objects such as metalwork and textiles (Paret, *Entstehungszeit*; van Reenen). The nature of the underlying concerns is not specified, but they seem to range from anxiety about the idolatrous potential of the image to its capacity for animation, an idea perhaps rooted in magical practice. Contrary to what is often assumed, most relevant *ḥadīths* do not prescribe the comprehensive destruction of the image or figured artefact. Instead, they recommend its recontextualisation (on the ground in the case of textiles, for example) or the partial erasure of the depicted figure. As pragmatic strategies for negotiating a world permeated by figured artefacts, both prescriptions come close to the spirit of late-antique rabbinical rulings on images, which recommend removing a depicted ear, finger, or nose in order to nullify any idolatrous potential (Blidstein, 11–2).

Juridical rulings on images tend to follow this pragmatic spirit, with little consensus regarding the status of figurative art or its appropriate treatment (Enani; Paret, *Textbelege*). Three-dimensional statuary and even figurines are exceptions, attracting consistent opprobrium; as monumental sculpture was reintroduced to the Islamic lands from Europe during the nineteenth century, this opposition was sometimes mobilised as anti-colonialism (al-Mahdi,

5:299; Peters). Certain genres of legal texts, such as *ḥisba* manuals (rules governing the marketplace), consistently mandate the alteration of figurative imagery in public spaces such as bathhouses or on ceramics, glass, and metalwork offered for sale in the *sūq*, or bazaar (Ghabin, 191–259). Extrapolating from the prescriptions of *ḥadīth*, defacement and partial erasure rather than destruction are the usual strategies prescribed by the jurists for rendering figurative images acceptable. Occasionally, they permitted less extensive alterations, such as the removal of a single eye, a practice documented textually and materially for Shīʿī Muslims in Ṣafavid Iran (r. 907–1135/1501–1722; Chardin, 7:19; Enani, 29–30; Paret, *Islamisches Bilderverbot*, 230). It is unclear whether such culturally or regionally inflected practices of iconoclasm inspired or reflected variations in juridical norms, which were in any case by no means the sole determinant of deliberate alterations to images.

In both normative jurisprudence and material practice, the fate of the images on figured artefacts was directly related to context and function, considerations complicated by mobility and portability. As objects moved, images considered acceptable in one context might become objectionable in others; figures on a brass candlestick made in northern Iraq for an unnamed ruler in 717/1317–18 were, for example, erased by scraping four decades later, when the object was donated by the governor of Mosul to the Mosque of the Prophet in Medina (Ballian, 128–30). In addition, attitudes to images could change over time, and what was considered acceptable by one individual might be rejected as inappropriate by others. In 1677/783–4 figures on a metal censer gifted for use in

the Prophet's Mosque by the pious caliph ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb (r. 13–23/634–44) were defaced by the ʿAbbāsīd governor of Medina (Ibn Rusta, 66). Later, the Ottoman sultan Aḥmed I (r. 1012–26/1603–17) covered or whitewashed Byzantine mosaics in the Church of Hagia Sophia in Istanbul that had remained visible for a century and a half after its conversion to a mosque (Necipoğlu, 217–8). He also destroyed with his own hands an English clock featuring automata, which apparently stood in a small mosque in the Topkapı Palace, a gesture that drew comparisons with Qurʾānic accounts of the prophet Ibrāhīm's destruction of idols (Çuhadar, 1:36; Bağcı, 37). The alteration or occlusion of figurative materials imported for the ornamentation of mosques is documented in various regions into the early modern period (Balafrej, 354–9). The reuse or recycling of figurative materials in the construction of mosques also often led to the materials' defacement. The doors of the Umayyad mosque of Bukhara were, for example, reused from private palaces; the figures that they bore were defaced but otherwise left intact (Narshakhī, 67–8). Post-conquest mosques built in other regions of the Islamic world attest to similar phenomena of selective defacement, sometimes associated with the conversion or destruction of shrines associated with antecedent dynasties (Eaton; Flood, *Refiguring*).

In the absence of detailed synchronic studies, there appears to have been significant historical and regional variation in the impact of iconoclasm, but contextual understanding is often frustrated by the lack of contemporary meta-data. This is especially true when dealing with the effects of individual initiatives; an attack on the Sphinx of Giza by a Ṣūfī dervish in

780/1378 is particularly noteworthy, since it was sufficiently unusual to be recorded by chroniclers, who portray the iconoclast as an extremist given to excessive asceticism (al-Maqrīzī, 2:415; Rabbat, 103–4). More comprehensive campaigns of iconoclasm sanctioned by ruling elites are often better documented. The edict against publicly displayed images reportedly issued by the Umayyad caliph Yazīd II (r. 101–5/720–4) in 104/723 is an early example. Its relation to Byzantine iconoclasm is much disputed (see, for example, Crone) and its impact contested, but clearly included antique statuary as well as Christian symbols (Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam, 113–4; Vasiliev; King, *Islam, Iconoclasm*; Flood, *Christian mosaics*; Sahner). A systematic bonfire of the vanities undertaken much later as part of a broader reassertion of orthodoxy by the Delhi sultan Fīrūz Shāh Tughluq (d. 790/1388) resulted in the figurative imagery depicted on the doors and walls of his palace being effaced, along with those on the clothing, furniture, horse trappings, tents, textiles, and vessels in use in his palace (Rashid and Mokhdoomi, 14; ‘Afif, 374–5).

At the other end of the spectrum are more opportunistic acts of defacement of illustrated manuscripts in libraries (Grabar, 45). Occasional textual references to such activities (for example, Dankoff, 194–7) can be supplemented by studying a number of extant manuscripts in which some or all of the depicted figures are altered or defaced. As Western mediaevalists have demonstrated (Camille), these constitute an unexploited resource for histories of reception, even if their utility is complicated by the difficulties of dating. The two most common methods are the smearing of the face by means of a finger or tool, or the drawing of a line (at once material

and symbolic) across the throat. In other cases, alterations are confined to the pricking of the eyes, a practice recalling accounts of the prophet Muḥammad’s reported treatment of the idols of Mecca, which he first blinded with an arrow and then destroyed (Ibn al-Kalbī, 31). Such practices bear more immediate comparison with the punishments meted out to human transgressors in various parts of the pre-modern Islamic world. These include the blinding of political rivals and traitors, and the blackening of the face (*taswīd al-wajh*) with charcoal or ashes (e.g. Sanamī, 108–9; Lange, 163–8). Other punishments tended to focus on hands and feet, aspects of the represented body also targeted by iconoclasts, despite the lack of prophetic sanction (Lange, 26–7, 61–2). In a few rare Indian manuscripts, the heads of animals and humans were later over-painted and transformed into flowers; in at least one Ottoman manuscript, heads were depicted as flowers from the manuscript’s inception, apparently to satisfy the concerns of a pious patron (Flood, *Lost histories*). Such documented practices are rare, but they extrapolate from the strategies recommended in *ḥadīth* for rendering figurative art acceptable. In so doing, they remind us that figurative art was not always considered incommensurate with piety, at least under certain conditions.

Moreover, the selective nature of many such interventions across a wide range of media suggests a greater spectrum of motivations than pious objections to anthropomorphic or zoomorphic art in general. Images of idols, evildoers, or the enemies of Islam are often singled out for defacement. Examples include depictions of Zaḥḥāk, the evil ruler of pre-Islamic Iran, in illustrated copies of the Iranian national epic, the *Shāhnāma*. In

some early-modern Ottoman and Persian manuscripts illustrating the prophet Muḥammad's biography, the smearing of depictions of the prophet's opponent 'Amr b. Hishām (d. 3/624), known as Abū Jahl, often leaves accompanying figures in the same scene intact. In such cases, the image functioned not as an object of abjection, but as a site for the embodied performance of affective piety through the physical repudiation of the enemies of Islam (Gruber, *Defense and devotion*, 107–8). Earlier, even the name of Abū Jahl in written texts cursing him was sometimes targeted by those keen to show their repudiation of a figure seen as odious (Sanāmī, 93–4). Both phenomena highlight a relationship between practices of iconoclasm and epigraphic erasure, which is especially relevant to cases of iconoclasm that constituted forms of damnatio memoriae. The role of epigraphic defacement and the erasure of personal names in Sunnī-Shī'ī rivalry (Bloom) underlines a significant overlap between alterations or interventions motivated by piety and by the desire to deface or destroy artefacts, images, and texts associated with political rivals. For example, a robe gifted by the Fāṭimids to Ḥasanak (d. 423/1032), the Sunnī leader of a Ghaznavid *hājīj* caravan passing through Fāṭimid territory in 414/1023, was dispatched to the 'Abbāsīd caliph al-Qādir (r. 381–422/991–1031), who had it ritually burned at the Nubian Gate in Baghdad, a site of infamy (Ibn al-Athīr, 9:239). Equally relevant are cases of architectural iconoclasm involving the palaces of opponents or the mosques, shrines, and temples patronised by both Muslim and non-Muslim rivals (Moin). In other cases, religious differences seem to have played little role in such acts. It is, for example, reported that when the Mongols besieged Herat in 619/1222,

their allies defaced royal portraits painted on the walls of its citadel (Sayfī Harāwī, 541). Recently discovered remains of wall-paintings from a Qarakhānid palace of around this date in Samarqand show at least one royal figure whose eyes and throat have been scored (Karev). On occasion, ephemeral portrait sculptures were even used to parody or ridicule (Rabbat, 110–1).

Physical interventions could co-opt representation for the repudiation of specific historical individuals, but they might also have a redemptive character, enacting notions of decorum or propriety in order to spare depicted figures or their viewers from ignominy. A gendered example concerns the occasional pricking of the eyes of the Tūrānian princess Manīzha in ninth/fifteenth- and tenth/sixteenth-century Persian paintings, a negation of the gaze that falls upon her lover Bīzhan, depicted semi-naked, as befitting his status as a prisoner. However counter-intuitive, even the deliberate defacement of devotional imagery (including depictions of the prophet Muḥammad) found in some early-modern manuscripts might occasionally be read in the same light. Somatic engagements with devotional images (most obviously kissing and touching) often resulted in smearing and erasures similar to those produced by deliberate defacement, but as inadvertent side-effects of devotional practice (Flood, *Bodies and becoming*, 470–1). These material effects of embodied devotion accumulated over time, but it is possible that more synchronic practices, such as the smearing or whitening of the depicted faces of prophets in early-modern manuscripts (Gruber, *Logos*, 229) should be understood not merely as acts of censure, but also as redemptive impulses rooted in devotion. In such cases, the luminous white veil added to the face lends further

iconographic valences that contrast with the blackening visited on the depicted bodies of reviled figures through iconoclasm.

This variety of normative opinions and material practices undermines any idea of a singular, trans-historical attitude to either images or their defacement and destruction in the Islamic world. Although impossible to quantify how commonly viewers of images were moved to alter, deface, or even destroy, the motivations for such acts included, but extended well beyond, the performance of proscriptive piety. To group all such alterations under the unifying rubric of iconoclasm, with its very specific cultural and historical associations, risks eliding distinctions between quite disparate and diversely motivated practices based largely on their material effects. Here the absence of any single analogous term in most Islamicate languages may be telling.

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