

**The Smithsonian Institution**  
**Regents of the University of Michigan**

---

The Lawfulness of Painting in Early Islam

Author(s): K. A. C. Creswell

Source: *Ars Islamica*, Vol. 11/12 (1946), pp. 159-166

Published by: Freer Gallery of Art, [The Smithsonian Institution](#) and Department of the History of Art, University of Michigan

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4515631>

Accessed: 06/01/2014 07:03

---

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



*The Smithsonian Institution and Regents of the University of Michigan are collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Ars Islamica*.*

<http://www.jstor.org>

# THE LAWFULNESS OF PAINTING IN EARLY ISLAM \*

BY K. A. C. CRESWELL

THE PAINTINGS OF KUṢAIR 'AMRA RAISE, IN AN IMPERATIVE FASHION, THE QUESTION OF the lawfulness or otherwise of painting in Islam. Even at the present day the belief is very widely held that all forms of painting are forbidden by explicit passages in the Koran, but

\* Bibliography: G. B. Toderini, *Letteratura turchesca* (Venezia, 1787), III, 45-74; *idem*, *De la Littérature des Turcs* (Paris, 1789), III, 47-78; *idem*, *Literatur der Türken* (Königsberg, 1790), II, 193-209. H. Lavoix, "Les Peintures musulmans," *Revue de l'Orient, de l'Algérie, et des colonies*, n.s., IX (1859), 353-69. H. Montaut, "De la Représentation des figures animées chez les musulmans," *Mém. de l'inst. égyptien*, I (1862), 61-65. F. Pharaon, "La Peinture et la sculpture chez les musulmans," *Mém. de l'inst. égyptien*, I (1862), I (1869), 442-46. L. Viardot, "Quelques notes sur la peinture et la sculpture chez les musulmans," *Gazette des beaux-arts*, I (1869), 556-59. H. Lavoix, "Les Arts musulmans," *Gazette des beaux-arts*, XII (1875), 97-113, 312-21, and 423-37. S. Lane-Poole, "Mohammad's Condemnation of Pictures," *Academy*, VIII (1875), 233 and 250-51; *idem*, [Review of *Les Arts Musulmans: Les Peintures arabes*, by H. Lavoix], *ibid.*, X (1876), 364. C. A. C. Barbier de Meynard [Review of *Les Peintures arabes*], *Revue critique d'hist. et de litt.*, n.s., I (1876), 333-35. J. Karabaček, "Über das angebliche Bilderverbot des Islām," *Kunst und Gewerbe*, X (1876), 281-83, 289-91, 297-99, 307-8, 315-17, and 332-33. M. de Nahuys, "Les Images chez les Arabes," *Annales de l'acad. d'archéol. de Belgique*, XLVIII (1895), 229-34. V. Chauvin, "La Défense des images chez les musulmans," *Annales de l'acad. d'archéol. de Belgique*, XLIX (1896) 403-30. J. von Karabaček, "Über die Auffindung eines Chalifenschlosses in der nordarabischen Wüste," *Almanach der K. Akad. der Wissensch.*, LII (1902), 356-57. Th. W. Juynboll, *Handleiding tot de Kennis van Mohammedaansche Wet* (Leiden, 1903), pp. 157-58. Muhammad 'Abduh, "*al-Šuwar wa'l-Tamāthil wa-Fawā'iduha wa-Ḥukmuha*," *al-Manār*, VIII (1904), 35, reprinted by Muhammad Raḥīd Riḍā, *Ta'rikh Muhammad 'Abduh*, II (1925), 499-501. M. van Berchem, "L'Art musulman au Musée de Tlemcen," *Journ. des savants*, n.s. IV (1906), 418. C. Snouck Hurgronje, "Kuṣejr 'Amra und das Bilderverbot," *Zeitschr. d. deutsch. morgenl. Gesellsch.* (=Z.D.M.G.), LXI (1907), 186-91; reprinted in his *Verspreide Geschriften* (Bonn und Leipzig, 1923), II, 449-56. L. Bréhier, "Les Origines de l'art musulman," *Revue des idées*, VII

(1910), 196-98. M. van Berchem, "Nouvelles et correspondance," *Journ. des savants*, n.s., VII (1909), 134-35; *idem*, "Aux Pays de Moab et d'Edom," *ibid.*, pp. 370-72. J. Horovitz, "Die Beschreibung eines Gemäldes bei Mutanabbi," *Der Islam*, I (1910), 385-88. T. W. Juynboll, *Handbuch des islamischen Gesetzes* (Leiden, 1910), pp. 166-67. Abd al-Aziz Shawīsh, "*al-Taṣwīr wa-Ittikhadd al-Šuwar*," *al-Hindaya*, II (1911), 487-91. C. H. Becker, "Christliche Polemik und islamische Dogmenbildung," *Zeitschr. f. Assyriol.*, XXVI (1911), 191-95, reprinted in his *Islamstudien* (Leipzig, 1924), I, 445-48. M. van Berchem, "Arabische Inschriften," in F. Sarre and E. Herzfeld, *Archäologische Reise im Euphrat- und Tigris-Gebiet* (Berlin, 1911), I, 36-38 (apropos of the Talisman Gate at Baghdad). M. H. Bulley, *Ancient and Medieval Art* (New York, 1914), pp. 265-66. H. Lammens, "L'Attitude de l'Islam primitif en face des arts figurés," *Journ. asiatique*, II<sup>me</sup> série, VI (1915), 239-79. A. Enani, "Beurteilung der Bilderfrage im Islam nach der Ansicht eines Muslim," *Mitteil. des Seminars für orientalische Sprachen zu Berlin*, XXII (1919), II Abt., 1-40. I. Goldziher, "Zum islamischen Bilderverbot," *Z.D.M.G.*, LXXIV (1920), 288. L. Massignon, "Les Méthodes de réalisation artistique des peuples de l'Islam," *Syria*, II (1921), 47-53. A. J. Wensinck, "The Second Commandment," *Mededeelingen der Koninklijke Akad. van Wetenschappen*, Afd. Letterkunde, Deel LIX (1925), Ser. A, No. 6. E. Herzfeld, *Die Malereien von Samarra* (Berlin, 1927), pp. 1-3. G. Migeon, *Manuel d'art musulman* (2d ed.; Paris, 1927), I, 101-3. T. W. Arnold, *Painting in Islam* (Oxford, 1928), pp. 1-40. Aly Bahgat and F. Massoul, *La Céramique musulmane de l'Égypte* (Cairo, 1930), pp. 38-39. Ahmed Mousa, *Zur Geschichte der islāmischen Buchmalerei in Aegypten* (Cairo, 1931), pp. 15-16. G. Wiet, "Le Décor des édifices—L'Interdiction des images," in L. Hautecoeur and G. Wiet, *Les Mosquées du Caire* (Paris, 1932), I, 167-83. A. J. Wensinck, "Šūra," *Encycl. Islām* (Leyden-London, 1934), IV, 561-63. G. Marçais, "La Question des images dans l'art musulman," *Byzantion*, VII (1933), 161-83. C. J. Lamm, "The Spirit of Moslem Art," *Bull. Faculty of Letters, Egyptian Univ.*, III (1935), 3-5. Zakī M. Hasan, in his notes to Ahmed Taymur Pasha, *Painting, Sculpture and*

this is a popular error for no such passages exist, as orientalists have frequently pointed out.<sup>1</sup>

Azraqī (d. 858 A.D.), author of the earliest extant history of Mecca, tells that Muhammad, after his triumphal entry into that city in Ramadan 8 (December, 629–January, 630) went inside the Kaaba and ordered the pictures in it to be obliterated, but put his hand over a picture of Mary with Jesus seated on her lap, and said: “Rub out all the pictures except these under my hands”; and Azraqī goes on to say that this picture remained until the Kaaba was destroyed in 63 H.<sup>2</sup>

Sa’d ibn Abī Waḳḳās and his Arabs at the capture of al-Madā’in, or Ctesiphon, used the great īwān for the Friday prayer and were not disturbed by the paintings decorating it, one of which represented the siege of Antioch by Khusrau Anūshirwān (538 A.D.).<sup>3</sup> Zakī Hasan tries to explain away this fact partly by the lack of time, the troops being so anxious to give thanks for their great victory that they did not stop to obliterate them, and partly by saying that “victorious armies do not always act according to religious principles.”<sup>4</sup> But he has to admit that these paintings were allowed to remain for two and a half centuries at least, for they were seen by al-Buḥturī, who died in 897 A.D.<sup>5</sup> An early example of Muslim painting may be mentioned; Yākūt says that the palace of al-Baidā’ at Basra, built by ‘Ubaid Allah the son of Ziyād ibn Abihi, was decorated with wall paintings.<sup>6</sup> Then, again, the rigid Caliph Omar used a censer with human figures on it, which he had brought from Syria, to perfume the mosque of Medina, and it was only in 785 A.D. that a governor of Medina had these figures erased.<sup>7</sup> This hardening of opinion toward the end of the eighth century is in perfect keeping with the evidence given below.

It is also well known that Mu’āwiya and ‘Abd al-Malik struck coins with their own effigies.<sup>8</sup> Recently, Zakī Hasan<sup>9</sup> has sought to explain the undisputed existence of painting under the Umayyad caliphs by saying that “they did not keep the straight and narrow way in

*the Reproduction of Living Forms Among the Arabs* [in Arabic] (Cairo, 1942), pp. 119–39.

[Professor Creswell’s article is a revised and supplemented version of his essay first published in his *Early Muslim Architecture* (Oxford, 1932), I, 269–71. ED.]

<sup>1</sup> The first to point out that the prohibition against painting comes not from the Koran but from the Hadith, was Lavoix, in 1859, in “Les Peintures musulmans,” pp. 353–54. He was followed by Pharaon, *op. cit.*, pp. 443–44; Lavoix, “Les Arts musulmans,” pp. 98–99; Karabaček, “Über das angebliche Bilderverbot des Islām,” p. 291; De Nahuys, *op. cit.*, pp. 229 and 233; Chauvin, *op. cit.*, pp. 405–6; Lammens, *op. cit.*, pp. 242–43; E. Kühnel, *Kunst des Orients* (Wildpark-Potsdam, 1929), p. 1; Migeon, *op. cit.*, I, 101–2; Arnold, *op. cit.*, pp. 4 ff.; Ahmed Mousa, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

<sup>2</sup> F. Wüstenfeld’s ed., in *Die Chroniken der Stadt Mekka* (Leipzig, 1857–61), pp. 111–13; quoted by Arnold, *op. cit.*, p. 7. This obliteration of pictures inside

the Kaaba is also mentioned by Balādhurī, *Futūh al-Buldān*, ed. M. J. de Goeje (Leyden, 1866), p. 40; P. K. Hitti’s trans. (New York, 1916), p. 66. See also Creswell, *op. cit.*, I, 40.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.

<sup>4</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 124.

<sup>5</sup> Creswell, *op. cit.*, p. 15, n. 10.

<sup>6</sup> *Mu’djam al-Buldān*, ed. F. Wüstenfeld (Leipzig, 1866–73), I, 792, l. 21—p. 793, l. 4. ‘Ubaid Allāh was killed at the battle of the river Khāzīr, near Mosul in 67 H. (686 A.D.); K. V. Zetterstéen’s article, “‘Ubaid Allāh b. Ziyād,” *Encycl. Islām* (Leyden-London, 1934), IV, 985.

<sup>7</sup> Ibn Rusta, *Kitāb al-A’lāk al-Nafisa*, ed. M. J. de Goeje, *Bibliotheca Geographorum Arabicorum* (= B.G.A.) (Leyden, 1892), III, 66, ll. 15–19; quoted by Enani, *op. cit.*, p. 25, and Arnold, *op. cit.*, pp. 8–9.

<sup>8</sup> Creswell, *op. cit.*, p. 96.

<sup>9</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 127.

matters of religion," except Omar ibn Abd al-Aziz, who, on one occasion, actually is recorded to have objected to a picture in a bath. He had it obliterated and exclaimed: "If only I could find out who painted it, I would have him severely beaten."<sup>10</sup> I suggest that this painting was most probably pornographic, as was often the case in hammams<sup>11</sup> and that this was the real cause of Omar's anger, for it has just been seen that he had no objection to a censer with human figures on it which was used to perfume the mosque of Medina.

Yet in spite of the silence of the Koran, the Traditions (Hadith)<sup>12</sup> are uniformly hostile to all representations of living forms.<sup>13</sup> Arnold, the latest scholar to discuss this question, believed that this hostility dates almost from the time of Muhammad, and held that the paintings of Ẓuṣayr 'Amra were executed in defiance of it.<sup>14</sup> Now although later caliphs and sultans certainly did defy the prohibition on many occasions, there appears to be good reason for believing that this prohibition had not yet been formulated at the time when the frescoes of Ẓuṣayr 'Amra were executed. When did the change take place? A valuable clue is provided, curiously enough, by the Patrology. Our first witness is John, Patriarch of Damascus<sup>15</sup> and the great opponent of the Iconoclasts, who in the words of Becker, "represents the whole world of thought of the Eastern church at that time." He did not live secluded in some distant monastery, but occupied a prominent place in the court life of the later Umayyad period, although he retired to a monastery shortly before his death. He belonged to an old Damascus family, the Banu Sardjūn, which had played an important part in the state administration under 'Abd al-Malik and even earlier. His active life must be placed roughly between 700 and 750 A.D.,<sup>16</sup> so that he was a contemporary of Ẓuṣayr 'Amra.

<sup>10</sup> Ibn al-Djawzī, *Manāḳib 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Aziz*, ed. C. H. Becker (Leipzig, 1899), p. 80; quoted by Enani, *op. cit.*, p. 33, and Arnold, *op. cit.*, pp. 46-47.

<sup>11</sup> al-Ghuzūlī, *Maṭālib al-Budūr* (Cairo, 1300 H.), II, 8; and Ibn al-Ḥādīdjī, *Mudkhal* (Cairo, 1348 H.), II, 178-79.

<sup>12</sup> The Hadith are traditions concerning the actions and sayings of Muhammad, which circulated orally until they were collected, sifted, accepted or rejected, systematized, and written down for the first time in the ninth century by Bukhārī, Muslim, Abū Dā'ūd, Malik ibn Anas, Ibn Sa'd, Ahmed Ibn Ḥanbal, and Ibn Hishām, each tradition being accompanied by its isnād, or chain of oral descent (e.g., so-and-so heard it from his father, who heard it from so-and-so, who knew the blessed Prophet). As early as the middle of the ninth century the number of Hadith in circulation was enormous, the majority false or suspect, for Bukhārī, who died in 870 A.D., only accepted seven thousand out of six hundred thousand which he had heard; see R. A. Nicholson, *Literary History of the Arabs* (Cambridge, 1930), p. 146.

<sup>13</sup> Snouck Hurgronje, *op. cit.*, pp. 186-91. van Berchem, *op. cit.*, p. 371. Lammens, *op. cit.*, p. 249. Enani, *op. cit.*, pp. 1-40. Arnold, *op. cit.*, pp. 5-19, 31, and 38-40.

For a complete list of references to this question in the early collections of Hadith, see A. J. Wensinck, *A Handbook of Early Muhammadan Tradition* (Leiden, 1927), p. 108. Snouck Hurgronje has shown that Karabaček's contention, that paintings are permissible in the entrance hall of a building ("Ḳuṣejr 'Amra," p. 229 and n. 69 on p. 237), is due to a misunderstanding of the text of al-'Asḳalānī. See also C. H. Becker, "Das Wiener Ẓuṣayr 'Amra-Werk," *Zeitschr. f. Assyriol.*, XX (1906), 373-75; reprinted in his *Islamstudien*, I, 300-304.

<sup>14</sup> Arnold, *op. cit.*, pp. 4-9 and 19.

<sup>15</sup> He died ca. 750 A.D. For his life and works see F. A. Perrier, *Jean Damascène: sa vie et ses écrits* (Strasbourg, 1863); J. Langen, *Johannes von Damaskus* (Gotha, 1879); J. H. Lupton, *Saint John of Damascus* (London, 1882); V. Ermoni, *Saint Jean Damascène* (Paris, 1904); and Becker, "Christliche Polemik und islamische Dogmenbildung," pp. 177-87; reprinted in his *Islamstudien*, I, 434-43. His three treatises "against those who depreciate the holy images" were written between 726 and 737 A.D.

<sup>16</sup> Becker, "Christliche Polemik . . .," pp. 177-78; reprinted in his *Islamstudien*, p. 434.

As Becker has pointed out, John knew the doctrines of Islam well, his quotations from the Koran in Greek are sometimes almost literal translations of the original, and he even gives the actual names of the suras cited.<sup>17</sup>

But although he was a violent opponent of the Iconoclastic movement and wrote his treatises "against those who depreciate the holy images"<sup>18</sup> under the strong emotion caused by the edict of 726, and although he wrote against Islam, he never refers to the Muslims as being guilty in this respect, but only to the Christians and Jews, whereas Theodore Abū Qurra, bishop of Ḥarrān,<sup>19</sup> who was a contemporary of Harun-al-Rashid and al-Ma'mūn and the first Father of the Church to write in Arabic, although he took most of his ideas from the writings of John, differs from him in this respect, for he includes the Muslims among the people opposed to painting. He does not actually refer to them as Muslims, but merely says: "Those who assert that he who paints anything living, will be compelled on the Day of Resurrection, to breathe into it a soul."<sup>20</sup> Although the Muslims are not actually named, the almost literal citation of the Muslim Hadith<sup>21</sup> proves that they are meant and, in addition, that the Hadith in question was already in circulation among the Muslims in the time of Abū Qurra. Thus the movement may be placed toward the end of the eighth century.

This fact is of considerable importance to students of Byzantine art, for it renders untenable the theory, put forward by Diehl<sup>22</sup> and Dalton,<sup>23</sup> that the Iconoclastic movement,<sup>24</sup> which took definite form in the edict of the Emperor Leo the Isaurian<sup>25</sup> in 726, was partly due to defeats inflicted on the image-worshipping Byzantine army by an army of men hos-

<sup>17</sup> "Christliche Polemik . . .," pp. 179-80; *Islamstudien*, p. 436. This suffices to show that Zakī Hasan's remark that Abū Qurra "could judge the Muslims by what he read in their books and not only by what they practiced" (*op. cit.*, p. 180), applies equally to John.

<sup>18</sup> Λογος πρωτος (—δευτερος—τριτος) απολογητικος προς τους διαβαλλοντας τας αγιας εικονας, in J. P. Migne, *Patrologia, Series Graeca* (Paris, 1857-81), XCIV, cols. 1231-1420, and three smaller treatises in XCV, cols. 309-86, and XCVI, cols. 1347-62.

<sup>19</sup> For his life, see C. Bacha, *Un Traité des oeuvres arabes de Théodore Abou-Kurra* (Tripoli, 1905), pp. 3-7. His works have been published at Beirut in 1904, and by G. Graf, *Die arabischen Schriften des Theodor Abū Qurra* (Paderborn, 1910); and the part that concerns us by J. P. Arendzen, *Theodori Abu Kurra de cultu imaginum libellus e codice arabico* (Bonn, 1897).

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 18-19; and Graf, *op. cit.*, pp. 297-98.

<sup>21</sup> From Bukhārī, *Le Recueil des traditions mahométans*, ed. L. Krehl and T. W. Juynboll (Leiden, 1862-1908), II, 41, and IV, 106: "On the Day of Judgment the punishment of hell will be meted out to the painter, and he will be called upon to breathe life into the forms that he has fashioned; but he cannot breathe life into anything"; see Arnold, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

<sup>22</sup> C. Diehl, *Manuel d'art byzantin* (Paris, 1910), p. 336.

<sup>23</sup> O. M. Dalton, *Byzantine Art and Archaeology* (Oxford, 1911), p. 13, and *idem, East Christian Art* (Oxford, 1925), p. 15.

<sup>24</sup> For an account of this movement see: K. Papparrégopoulos, *Histoire de la civilisation hellénique* (Paris, 1878). K. J. von Hefele, *A History of the Councils of the Church*, W. R. Clark's trans. (Edinburgh, 1896), V, 370 ff.; K. Schwarzlose, *Der Bilderstreit* (Gotha, 1890); A. Lombard, *Études d'histoire byzantine* (Paris, 1902), pp. 105-28; L. Bréhier, *La Querelle des images* (Paris, 1904); Diehl, *op. cit.*, pp. 334-39 (2d ed.; Paris, 1925), I, 360-65; Dalton, *Byzantine Art*, pp. 13-16; C. Diehl, "Leo III and the Isaurian Dynasty," *Cambridge Medieval History* (New York-Cambridge, 1936), IV, 5-11; H. Leclercq, "Images," in F. Cabrol and H. Leclercq, *Dictionnaire d'archéologie chrétienne* (Paris, 1907), VII, cols. 232-302; G. Ostrogorsky, *Studien zur Geschichte des byzantinischen Bilderstreites* (Breslau, 1929); G. Ostrogorsky, "Les Débuts de la querelle des images," in *Mélanges Charles Diehl* (Paris, 1930), I, 235-55; A. A. Vasiliev, *Histoire de l'empire byzantin* (Paris, 1932), I, 333-51.

<sup>25</sup> As a result of recent research, it now seems probable that Leo was of North Syrian and not of Isaurian origin; see Vasiliev, *op. cit.*, I, 311-12.

tile to all forms of human representation. This theory has been accepted by Wiet, who, after citing the decree of the Caliph Yazīd (see below), quotes Michael the Syrian to the effect that "l'empereur des Grecs, Léon, ordonna lui aussi, à l'exemple du roi des arabes, d'arracher les images des parois, et il fit abattre les images qui étaient dans les églises et les maisons, celles des saints aussi bien que celles des empereurs ou d'autres."

"Michel le Syrien," adds Wiet, "est logique avec la tradition de l'Église. On sait qu'au deuxième concile de Nicée, tenu en 787, les évêques qui condamnèrent les iconoclastes estimèrent que les mesures prises contre les images l'avaient été à l'imitation des musulmans."<sup>26</sup>

What was this decree of Yazīd? According to Theophanes (d. 818) "a Jew of Latakia, coming in haste to Yazīd, promised him a reign of forty years over the Arabs if he destroyed the holy ikons which were adored in the churches of the Christians in all his empire. But in this same year Yazīd died before most of the people had even had time to hear about his Satanic order."<sup>27</sup> The execution of this order had already begun in Egypt<sup>28</sup> when Yazīd died (January 26, 724), and his successor Hishām revoked it on his accession.

As for the famous Council of Nicaea of 787, Michael the Syrian, who wrote in the second half of the twelfth century, does not tell the whole story. The true facts may be learned

<sup>26</sup> G. Wiet, "Introduction," in E. Pauty, *Bois sculptés d'églises coptes* (Cairo, 1930), pp. 3-4.

<sup>27</sup> *Theophanis Chronographia*, ed. G. de Boor (Leipzig, 1883-85), p. 401. He places this event in the Year of the World 6215 (724 A.D.). Dionysius of Tell Maḥrē (d. 845 A.D.) places it in the year of the Greeks 1035 (723-24 A.D.); J. B. Chabot, ed., "Chronique de Denys de Tell-Maḥrē," *Bibliothèque de l'école des hautes études*, fasc. 112 (Paris, 1895), p. 19, and trans., p. 17. Michael the Syrian (*Chronique de Michel le Syrien, patriarche jacobite d'Antioche*, J. B. Chabot, ed. [Paris, 1899-1904], II, 457; trans., II, 489) and Bar Hebraeus (*Chronography*, ed. P. Bedjan, *Makhtē-bhānūth Zabhnē* [Paris, 1890], p. 118; *The Chronography of Gregory Abū 'l Faraj*, trans. E. A. W. Budge [London, 1932], I, 109) also mention it but without giving a date. Maḥrizī (*Khīṭāṭ* [Bulaq, 1853] I, 302, line 31; trans. by P. Casanova, *Mém. inst. franç. d'arch. orient. du Caire*, III [1893-1920], 165) said that it took place in 104 H. (June, 723-June, 724 A.D.). I must add, however, that doubts have been expressed regarding the authenticity of this story, e.g., by J. Wellhausen (*Das arabische Reich und sein Sturz* [Berlin, 1902], pp. 202-3) and A. Musil (*Ḳuṣayr 'Amra* [Wien, 1907], p. 155). It is true that Ṭabarī, as Wellhausen points out, merely stated that a Jew had prophesied that Yazīd would reign forty years, and that Eutychius and Butrūs ibn Rāhib knew nothing of the matter. But the silence is not complete, for other writers, equally early, speak of it, e.g., the Arabic historian al-Kindī (d. 961 A.D.), and three ecclesiastical historians, Dionysius of Tell Maḥrē, quoted above, the anonymous Syriac chronicle of the year 846

A.D., published and translated by E. W. Brooks, "A Syriac Chronicle of the Year 846," *Z.D.M.G.*, LI (1897), p. 584, and Severus ibn al-Muḳaffā', bishop of Aṣhmūnain in the tenth century; see al-Kindī, *The Governors and Judges of Egypt; or Kitāb el-'Umarā' (el-Walāh) wa Kitāb el-Qudāh*, ed. R. Guest, E. J. W. Gibb Mem. Ser., XIX (Leiden-London, 1912), 71-72; and Severus ibn al-Muḳaffā', ed. B. T. A. Evetts, trans., *Patrologia Orientalis (History of the Patriarchs of the Coptic Church of Alexandria)* (Paris, 1904-10), V, 72-73 (or ed. C. F. Seybold, *Alexandrinische Patriarchen—Geschichte* [Hamburg, 1912], p. 153, line 7); quoted by Lammens, *op. cit.*, p. 278. The objections of Wellhausen and Musil are therefore invalid. Moreover, on reading the proceedings of the Council of Nicaea, I have come across a contemporary witness, the bishop of Messina who, at the fifth session, stated that he was a boy in Syria when the caliph (σὺμβουλος) of the Saracens threw down the images: G. D. Mansi, *Sacrorum Conciliorum nova et amplissima Collectio* (Florentiae, 1769), XIII, col. 200.

<sup>28</sup> It is to this order that J. E. Quibell attributed the mutilation of the paintings and sculptures found during his excavations at the Monastery of Apa Jeremias at Saḳkāra; see his *Excavations at Saqqara (1908-9, 1909-10)* (Cairo, 1912), p. iv. J. W. Crowfoot found that the figure subjects in the floor mosaics of the churches at Jerash had been mutilated before the final destruction of the city by an earthquake, probably that of 747; see his *Churches of Jerash (British School Archaeol. at Jerusalem, Suppl. Papers, 3)* (London, 1932), p. 4; there can be little doubt that this was done in compliance with the same decree.

by referring to an original document, viz., the actual proceedings of the Council in question, which may be consulted by turning to the great work of Mansi. There we read that at the reopening of the fifth session (October 4, 787), Tarasius remarked that the accusers of the Christians had in their destruction of images “imitated the Jews, Pagans, Samaritans, Manichaeans, and Phantasiasti (or Theopaschites).”<sup>29</sup>

Whereupon the monk John, representative of the Eastern Patriarchate, asked permission to correct these erroneous ideas and to clear up the real origin of the attack on images, apparently speaking, like the bishop of Messina<sup>30</sup> from first-hand knowledge of the facts.<sup>31</sup> This is what he said:

After Omar’s death [February 9, 720] Ezid (Yazīd II), a frivolous and unstable man, succeeded him. There lived at Tiberias a leader of the lawless Jews, a magician and a fortuneteller and a tool of soul-destroying demons, named Tessarakontapechys [= 40 cubits high] . . . On learning of the frivolity of the ruler Ezid, he approached him and began to utter prophecies . . . saying: “You will live long and reign for thirty years if you follow my advice . . . Give order immediately without any delay or postponement, that an encyclical letter be issued throughout your empire to the effect that every representational (εἰκονικήν) painting, whether on tablets or in wall-mosaics or on sacred vessels and altar coverings, and all such objects as are found in all Christian churches, be destroyed and finally abolished, and so also all representations of any kind whatever that adorn and embellish the market places of cities. . . .” The impious tyrant, yielding to his advice, sent [officials] and most frivolously destroyed the holy ikons and all other representations in the whole province under his rule and, thanks to the Jewish magician, thus ruthlessly robbed the churches of God under his sway of all ornaments, before the evil came into this land. As the Christians fled lest they should [have to] overthrow the holy images with their own hands, the emirs who were sent for this purpose pressed into service abominable Jews and wretched Arabs; and thus they burnt the venerable ikons, and either smeared or scraped the ecclesiastical buildings.

On hearing this the pseudo-bishop of Nicolia and his followers imitated the lawless Jews and impious Arabs and outraged the churches of God. . . . When after doing this, the Caliph (Σύμβουλος) Ezid died no more than two and one-half years later [25 Sha’bān 105 = January 27, 724],<sup>32</sup> the images were restored to their pristine position and honor. His son Οἰλιδος (= al-Walīd—should be Hishām), filled with indignation, ordered the magician to be ignominiously put to a parricide’s death as a due reward for his false prophecy.<sup>33</sup>

Thus, this act of Yazīd was in no way inspired by the doctrine of Islam at that period; on the contrary it would never have taken place had it not been for the vain promises of a fortuneteller,<sup>34</sup> and it was promptly revoked by his successor.

How did the feeling arise? It has been suggested that it arose through the inherent

<sup>29</sup> Mansi, *op. cit.*, XIII, col. 196.

<sup>30</sup> See end of footnote 27.

<sup>31</sup> The importance of this cannot be overrated, for all the works of the Iconoclasts, the imperial decrees, and the acts of the iconoclastic councils of 753–54 A.D. and 815 A.D. were destroyed when their adversaries triumphed.

<sup>32</sup> This gives the end of July, 721 A.D., for the date of Yazīd’s act.

<sup>33</sup> Mansi, *op. cit.*, XIII, cols. 198 and 200.

<sup>34</sup> Let us remember that this was a period when “individuals” as Diehl says “put faith in the prophecies of wizards, and Leo III himself, like Leontius or Philippicus, had been met in the way by one who had said to him: ‘Thou shalt be King’”; *op. cit.*, IV, 6.

temperamental dislike of the Semite for human representations in sculpture and painting,<sup>35</sup> an antinaturalistic reaction in fact. This undoubtedly helped, but the internal evidence points to a direct Jewish influence. Lammens points out that the Hadith bearing on the question in many cases shows Jewish inspiration, for example, the sayings: "The angels will not enter a house containing a bell, a picture or a dog," and "at the end of the world when 'Isā appears he will break the cross and kill the pigs."<sup>36</sup> Bells were unknown in the time of Muhammad, and the *semantron* did not inspire the Arabs with any antipathy. Nor did they before Islam experience any special repugnance for pigs. The name *khinzīr* is met with, and the flesh of the wild boar appeared at feasts. The sayings cited above can only be explained as due to Talmudic influence.<sup>37</sup> Again it is remarkable that the earliest recorded instance of hostility to images and painting appears to have been inspired by Jewish influence, viz., the iconoclasm of Yazīd II, cited above. A Christian influence, springing from the iconoclastic movement which broke out in 726 A.D., is therefore unlikely, likewise a spontaneous Muslim impulse.

This Jewish influence was doubtless due to the internal effect of Jews who had been converted to Islam, like the famous Yemenite Jew Ka'b al-Aḥbār, who was called Rabbi Ka'b on account of his wealth of theological and especially Biblical knowledge. Ka'b entered Jerusalem with Omar, was converted to Islam in 638 A.D., and died in 652 or 654. He is frequently cited as an authority for Hadith, and Abd Allah ibn Abbas, one of the earliest expositors of the Koran, was a pupil of his, likewise Abū Huraira. Another famous Jewish convert was Wahb ibn Munabbih. These two men were the great authorities among the early Muslims on all points of ancient history.<sup>38</sup>

Finally, as a predisposing psychological basis for the hostility to painting, there was the feeling, so common among primitive peoples, that the maker of an image or a painting in some way transfers part of the personality of the subject to the image or painting, and in so doing acquires magical powers over the person reproduced.<sup>39</sup> This feeling, which is still prevalent in some parts of the world, was once very widely spread. The practice of making wax images of the person to be bewitched, and thrusting pins through them, was known to the Egyptians,<sup>40</sup> Greeks, and Romans, and was widely spread in medieval Europe, e.g., John of

<sup>35</sup> Viardot, *op. cit.*, I, 556-59; Barbier de Meynard, *op. cit.*, I, 333-35.

<sup>36</sup> Lammens, *op. cit.*, pp. 276-77.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 276-79.

<sup>38</sup> See G. Le Strange, *Palestine under the Moslems* (London, 1890), p. 142; and M. Schmitz, "Ka'b al-Aḥbār," *Encycl. Islām* (Leiden-London, 1927), II, 582-83.

<sup>39</sup> See P. Sébillot, "Superstitions iconographiques. I, Les Portraits," *Revue des traditions populaires*, I (1886), No. 12, 349-54, and *idem*, "Superstitions iconographiques. II, Les Statues," *ibid.*, II (1887), No. 1, 16-23; Chauvin, *op. cit.*, p. 423 ff.; E. Doutté, *Merrâkech* (Paris, 1905), pp. 136-38; his *Magie et religion dans*

*l'Afrique du Nord* (Alger, 1909), pp. 16-17; and J. G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough* (London-New York, 1890), I, 148-49 (2d ed.; London-New York, 1900), I, 10-18 and 295-97.

<sup>40</sup> A small model of a man made of wax, papyrus, and hair, which was intended to be burned slowly in a fire while incantations were recited, in order to produce some evil effect upon the person whom it represented, was obtained in Egypt by Budge in 1895. It is now in the British Museum, No. 37, 918; see E. A. W. Budge, *By Nile and Tigris* (London, 1920), II, 347; *idem*, *Guide to the Third and Fourth Egyptian Rooms* (London, 1904), p. 20.



Nottingham's attempt to bring about the death of Edward II in 1324, and the similar attempt of Agnes Sampson on the life of James VI of Scotland in 1589;<sup>41</sup> also the League's attempt to kill Henry III of France.<sup>42</sup> A similar attempt on the life of Muhammad is related by *Djannābī* and *Ali al-Ḥalabī*.<sup>43</sup>

My conclusion, therefore, is that the prohibition against painting did not exist in early Islam, but that it grew up gradually, partly as a result of the inherent temperamental dislike of Semitic races for representational art, partly because of the influence of important Jewish converts, and partly because of the fear of magic. It also follows that Muslim influence on the Edict of Milan is excluded.

<sup>41</sup> See M. Summers' introduction to his translation of [Institoris, Henricus], *Malleus Maleficarum* (London, 1928), pp. xix-xx and xxii. The wax dolls were called "Mommets."

<sup>42</sup> See P. de L'Étoile, "Veritable fatalité de Saint-Cloud," *Journ. des choses mémorables advenues durant le règne de Henry III*, ed. by J. Le Duchat and D. Godefroy (Cologne [Bruxelles], 1720), art. 8.

<sup>43</sup> Chauvin, *op. cit.*, pp. 425-26.