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Bodily Structures in the Ḥilye-i Sherīf

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This paper deals with a particular type of Ottoman calligraphy: The Ḥilye-i Sherīf of the late 17th century, focusing on the question in which way it was conceived with regard to bodily structures.[1] The Ḥilye-i Sherīf will be examined in its textual and graphic elements and their semiotics, and its development will be placed in the socio-religious circumstances of the period, especially traditions of piety, which informed the making and the artist of the Ḥilye-i Sherīf. Attention will be paid to diverse elements of meaning that may be addressed with regard to this multifaceted medium. The aim is to identify features of corporeality in the Ḥilye-i Sherīf, and to understand them in their particular relationship between form and contents.

Definition

A *hilye*, derived from the Arabic root (ḥ-l-y), is firstly and in *sensu stricto* an ornament, precious item or jewel. In a broader sense the concepts of "creation," "form" and "beautiful characteristic" may be derived.[2] For what was to become the Ḥilye-i Sherīf, a textual tradition describing the physical characteristics and the moral beauty of the Prophet Muḥammad was the core element, which was in turn based on prophetic traditions and collections of earlier texts that are subsumed under the term of *shamā'il*. In literary terms, the genre of *ḥilye* is drafted either in verse (*manẓūm*) or prose (*menshūr*). Hybrids appear in later lyrical variants. Finally, the term *Ḥilye-i Sherīf*[3] refers to a panel on which textual

[1] Work on the present article was begun in the course of the research project "Writing as an Intermediary. Text-image relations in early modern Islamic cultures" funded by the German Research Foundation (DFG) between 2017–2021 (DFG: KO 2130/9–1), at the Department of Islamic Art and Archaeology, University of Bamberg. As a further result from this research, I am planning my PhD thesis on the development of the Ḥilye-i Sherīf. For the present article, I am grateful for the suggestions by the reviewers and editors which have substantially clarified its expression.

[2] Uzun, Mustafa İsmet: "Hilye". In: *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 18 (1998), pp. 44–47, esp. p. 44: "yaratılış, sûret ve güzel vasıflar."

[3] For the textual origin of *ḥilye* literature and Turkish terms, cf. Zakariya, Mohamed: "The Hilye of the Prophet". *Seasons: The Journal of Zaytuna Institute* (Autumn-Winter 2003–2004), pp. 13–22, esp. pp. 13 and 16. Cf. also the article by Tobias Heinzelmann in the present volume.

elements in calligraphy of different sizes and geometric forms are arranged in a certain graphic scheme.

The Millennial Crisis

The decade before the millennium (1000/1592) and the following 17th century were, for the subjects of the Ottoman Empire and for citizens of Istanbul, a time of crises and wars. Pandemics such as the plague beginning 1588, the renewed Celali-uprising of 1596, natural disasters such as drought[4] as well as devastating urban fires 1633 and 1660 along with wars between East and West characterised a period in which darkness and fear were frequent.[5] At the beginning of the 17th century, when the Ottoman Empire had reached its largest territorial extent but ceased to expand further, its government, responsible for the well-being of the Empire and its subjects, was under strain. The thousandth anniversary of the *hijra* (according to the Islamic calendar) caused a wave of prophecies, for which the reigning sultan Murad III. (r. 1574–1595) was also receptive. The leaders of the Celali[6] and the Shiite[7] uprisings all claimed to follow a *mahdī*, with the aim to restore the supposed divine order and with an eschatological component. At the same time, political-cultural conflicts caused unrest in the capital, especially between the Sufi and the Qāḍīzāde adherents whose individual members had connections to the ruling elite. Thus, the millennium went along with a number of religious unrest and uprisings. Their contradictory views were also expressed in the way popular customs were performed and how pious traditions were presented. As a result, a dark mood settled on the whole era. One of the elements of hope to which larger parts of the Ottoman society adhered seems to have been a longing for the past, part of which was also described in terms of an Islamic "Golden Age," during which "pure" religion was supposed to have been practiced.[8]

Just as the troubled times turned individuals towards humble repentance or more likely to intensified pious reflection and the use of salvation literature, the coping strategies of the Ottoman rulers apparently aimed at unifying and strengthening the society of the capital through a number of processional acts

[4] White, Sam: *The Climate of Rebellion in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001.
[5] Kreiser, Klaus – Christoph K. Neumann: *Kleine Geschichte der Türkei*. Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 2003, esp. pp. 187–242.
[6] The Celali uprisings came out of social ethnic injustices and kept flaring up over a 70-year period. The protagonists were common people fighting against authorities; at the end of the 1690s they were especially virulent. Cf. also in Kreiser – Neumann, *Kleine Geschichte*, pp. 191–197, esp. pp. 192 and 196.
[7] The first ruler of the Safawids, Shāh Ismāʿīl I. (r. 1501–1524) presented himself as a godly incarnation of the deified fourth caliph ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib. His propaganda influenced many of the Turcoman tribes living in the eastern provinces of the Ottoman Empire.
[8] Kreiser – Neumann, *Kleine Geschichte*, p. 234.

using prophetic texts and reliquaries. Festivities and special events were celebrated within the walls of the palace or openly in the streets. Formal parades were held in the appropriate institutions or on open squares and processional streets.[9] Celebrations such as the sword girding (*ḳılıç alayı*)[10], the Festival of the Holy Mantle (*ḫırka-ı sherīf*)[11], circumcisions, weddings or even the "Procession festival of the lucky coin purse" (*sürre-i hümāyūn*)[12] were celebrated at certain days in the year.

Devotional Piety and the Veneration of the Prophet

Unrest and crises may have caused the spiritual-ideological upswing[13] as a new way of devotion. Forms of religious devotion were coupled with the Ottoman ideology of universal structure and world order. The Prophet Muḥammad and his earthly life were celebrated as expressions of God's mercy.[14] In public, for example in courtly ceremonies, relics of the Prophet were displayed in an almost liturgical way. The increased veneration of the Prophet went along with poetic texts based on prophetic traditions, which were used within rituals of newly created anniversaries, such as the celebration of the Prophet's birthday (*mevlid*)[15]. The starting point of festivities was the much renowned poem *Mevlūd-i sherīf*[16] written

[9] Faroqhi, Suraiya: *Kultur und Alltag im Osmanischen Reich. Vom Mittelalter bis zum Anfang des 20. Jahrhunderts*. München: C.H. Beck, 2003[2], pp. 183–206. For a detailed description of Ottoman pilgrimage cf. Faroqhi, Suraiya: *Herrscher über Mekka. Die Geschichte der Pilgerfahrt*. Düsseldorf/Zürich: Artemis & Winkler, 2000, pp. 51–55. Cf. also Wasti, Syed Tanvir: "The Ottoman ceremony of the Royal Purse". *Middle Eastern Studies* 41.2 (2005), pp. 193–200.

[10] The ceremony taking place after the Ottoman sultans took their throne; cf. Özcan, Abdülkadir: "Kılıç alayı". In: *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 25 (2002), pp. 408–410. Cf. also Wasti 2005, p. 198, Fn.7.

[11] The "Mantle of Beatitude" of the Prophet Muhammad, acquired for the Ottoman palace at some point, had previously (allegedly) been worn by caliphs on special occasions; Atasoy, Nurhan: "Hırka-i saʿadet". In: *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 17 (1998), pp. 374–377.

[12] Wasti 2005, p. 199 and Fn 9.

[13] During the 16th century, the Ottoman Empire, which had grown to a dominating power in the Middle East and in the Mediterranean, was increasingly influenced by the *Zeitgeist* of new science (essentially, mathematics, astronomy and astrology, among others) that also sought to understand and clarify the hidden spiritual structure of the universe. For example, the much-discussed new heliocentric worldview, already controversially debated in Europe, also found its way to Ottoman scholars. Some of these discussions went along with debates on the nature of the divine and with messianic movements; cf. Howard, Douglas A.: *Das Osmanische Reich. 1300–1924*. German transl. Jörg Fündling. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2018, pp. 165–170, esp. ch. 3 and 4, pp. 113–229. Cf. also: Hagen, Gottfried: *Ein osmanischer Geograph bei der Arbeit. Entstehung und Gedankenwelt von Kātib Čelebis Ǧihānnümā*. Berlin: Klaus Schwarz, 2003.

[14] Howard, *Das Osmanische Reich*, p. 169.

[15] The day of the official *mevlid* festivities was set on the 12th Rabīʿ al-Awwal. Cf. Schimmel, Annemarie: *And Muhammad Is His Messenger. Veneration of the Prophet in Islamic Piety*. Chapel Hill/London: UNC Press, 1985, p. 145.

[16] The text was written by Süleyman Çelebi (1351–1422) around 1409; Schimmel, *Muhammad Is His Messenger*, pp. 152–155.

around 1409, which was at first read out to small groups and audiences and became widespread all over the Ottoman sphere.[17] Sultan Murad III. (r.1574–1595) deemed in 1588 that the annual festivities with its custom of burning candles should take place within sight of the minarets. Annemarie Schimmel reports on the debates surrounding the new forms of devotion:

> "Authorities of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, like the mystically minded polymath Suyuti (who composed a work defending the 'good innovation' of the *maulid*) and the traditionist Ibn Hajar al-Haithami [sic], deemed it permissible that the Koran be recited and religious songs be sung, but they prohibited other musical entertainment and even more the use of lights and candles. Processions with candles and illuminations reminded them too much of the customs of their Christian neighbors [...]."[18]

Of special significance was the extraordinary congruence of three light festivals (Jewish, Christian and Muslim), which Howard termed the "Mevlid of the millennium" and which arguably was seen as a moment of healing or atonement by cosmological circumstances.[19]

A cornerstone of the veneration of the Prophet Muḥammad lies in following him in his way of life (*sunna*). There are a number of mentions in the Qurʾān which exhort the believer to follow the messenger of God as a "beautiful example" (*uswa ḥasana*) (Q 33:21). Schimmel mentions that over centuries the veneration of the Prophet developed far above the norm and that the biography of Muḥammad was invested in a "luminous haze of legends."[20]

With the change of living conditions after the Early Islamic period, difficulties arose with the adherence to religious practice. During the Early Modern Period many questions arose whether and to what degree believers could follow the practice of the Prophet, which had long attained religious-normative functions.[21] From the earliest times Muḥammad had been considered the ideal and role model for the believers. In the 12th century the veneration reached new peaks, according to Schimmel.[22] In the late 16th century, Ottoman thought underlined this with the notion of 'the Prophet as the Perfect Man.' As Emine Fetvacı notes:

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[17] Hagen, Gottfried: "Mawlid, Ottoman". In: *Muhammad in History, Thought, and Culture: An Encyclopedia of the Prophet of God*. (2 vols.). Ed. Coeli Fitzpatrick and Adam Walker. Santa Barbara: ABC-Clio 2014, pp. 369–373, here p. 370.
[18] Schimmel, *Muhammad Is His Messenger*, p. 146.
[19] Howard, *Das Osmanische Reich*, p. 170.
[20] Schimmel, *Muhammad Is His Messenger*, p. 10.
[21] Ibid., pp. 25–32.
[22] Schimmel, Annemarie: *Mystische Dimensionen des Islam. Die Geschichte des Sufismus*. München: Diederichs, 1995, pp. 303–321. In the section on the veneration of the Prophet, Schimmel shows how the Prophet rose in the esteem of mystics and intensity of beliefs through the centuries. The evolving new forms of expression manifested themselves in various literary works of the times. Beginning with the biographies of the Prophet (*sīra*), descriptions (*ḥilya*), eulogies (*naʿt*), worship of the Prophet through the metaphor of light (*nūr-i Muḥammadī*), and much more. Especially the works of Ibn ʿArabī (d. 1240) on the veneration of the Prophet, which

> "Emulating the Prophet Muhammad aligned with the Sufi concept of the 'perfect man' (*insān-ı kāmil*), derived from the Qur'anic notions that God created man in his image, and that man is God's representative or deputy (caliph) in the world.[69] The Prophet Muhammad was deemed the 'perfect man' by the influential medieval Andalusian mystic Ibn al-ʿArabī, who became the patron saint of the Ottoman house during the sixteenth century and was fundamental to the teachings of most early modern Ottoman Sufis."[23]

The following considerations target two fields of meaning by following the textual evolution of the *ḥilye* literature genre as well as the possible evolutionary steps of the Ottoman pictorial-visual representations of the Prophet. The foregoing statements on the textual evolution have explained the reasons for the start and the ongoing occupation with descriptions of the Prophet, which culminated in the art form of the single leaf.

Textual Origins of the Ḥilye-i Sherīf

Political and religious events that were experienced as threats influenced the changes and consolidation of the majority Ottoman-Sunni belief system as described above. It informed religious co-habitation to a degree that it became an equivalent of state religion.[24] The intense engagement with the Prophet Muḥammad can be seen in diverse artistic expressions under the reign of Murād III. (r. 1574–1595), for example in the "Biography of the Prophet" *(Kitāb-i Siyer-i Nebī*)[25] commissioned by the sultan. This veneration and the wish to pay homage, to become closer in every possible way to the long-departed messenger of God, permeated the Muslim community over the following generations. The pious longing went along with legendary traditions. According to one of them, Fāṭima, the Prophet's daughter, was so upset when it became clear the serious

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he interprets as the absolute perfection in the view of God (cf. p. 385) was important for the following centuries.

[23] Fetvacı, Emine: *The Album of the World Emperor: Cross-Cultural Collecting and the Art of Album-Making in Seventeenth Century Istanbul*. Princeton, Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2019, pp. 20–21.

[24] Characteristics include an emphasis on meaningful genealogy, which benefited both the new imperial ideology and the Ottoman sultans and high dignitaries to associate themselves with seminal figures of the past, especially the Prophet Muhammad himself. In the course of Ottoman expansion, the sultans invoked historical figures by gaining physical as well as spiritual supremacy of their tombs, thus claiming legitimacy of their rule. At the time of Sultan Mehmed II (r. 1444–46 and 1451–81), the tomb of the Prophet's companion Aiyūb al-Anṣārī was discovered; the rediscovery and ceremonial dedication of the tomb of the respected Sufi master Ibn ʿArabī (1165–1240) occurred under Sultan Selim I. (r. 1512–1520), and finally Sultan Suleyman I (1520–1566), during his campaign of conquest in Baghdad, came upon the tomb of Abū Ḥanīfa al-Nuʿmān (d. 767), the founder of the Ḥanafī school of Ottoman law.

[25] Sultan Murād's III (r. 1574–1595) reverence and love for the Prophet was obviously influenced by his teacher and mentor Hoca Saʿdeddīn Efendi (1536/7–1599), whose views he himself fed from the great mystic ʿAzīz Maḥmūd Hüdāyīi(1542–1628) of his time. Hüdāyī, in turn, studied the writings and Qurʾānic exegesis of Ibn ʿArabī, who reflected on the Prophet Muhammad as a "Perfect Man"; cf. Fetvacı, *The Album of the World Emperor,* p. 21.

illness would be his last and that she would never see him again that he set his son-in-law ʿAlī to writing a *ḥilye* about him. The Muslim community seems to have engaged early on with the description of the Prophet. Mohamed Zakaria reports on an "interesting but questionable hadith [...] refers, of course, not to the calligraphic composition of the *hilye* but to the physical, moral, and spiritual description of the Prophet."

> "He who sees my hilye after me, it is as if he had actually seen me, and he who sees it out of love and desire for me, God will forbid the fire of Hell to touch him. He will be safe from the trials of grave, and he will not be sent forth naked on the day of resurrection."[26]

It is important to state that the *ḥilye* allows the reader or beholder to connect in some way with the presence of the Prophet. Various scholars keep stressing this meaning. "The ones who see and read my *hilye*, the illiterates who rub it on their faces and eyes and bless my soul with their prayers will feel as if they have seen me."[27] Another way of communing with the Messenger after his passing was to establish a spiritual connection through dreamscape, which is of eminent importance for the *ḥilye*.[28] Zakariya cites a tradition: "He who has seen me in a dream has seen the truth."[29] The Messenger speaks of the existence and veracity of a dream-vision himself:[30] "The Prophet (ﷺ) said, 'Whoever has seen me in a dream, then no doubt, he has seen me, for Satan cannot imitate my shape.'"[31]

The theme of dreams can also be shown in the reported dream-visions of the Ottoman mystic Asiye Hatun[32] (d. after 1643). In her writings she noted, among others, the following dream: "On the blessed head of the Friend of God was a black turban. He was dressed in a honey-coloured garment. I see him as in a *ḥilya-i sharīfa*..."[33] The examples cited show the effort of connecting to the Prophet

[26] Zakariya 2003–2004, p. 21.
[27] Gruber, Christiane: "A Pious Cure-All: The Ottoman Illustrated Prayer Manual in the Lilly Library". In: *The Islamic Manuscript Tradition: Ten Centuries of Book Arts in Indiana University Collections*, (Ed.) Christiane Gruber. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009, pp. 117–153, here p. 132 und cf. also in Fn. 79. Cf. also Taşkale, Faruk – Hüseyin Gündüz: *Hat Sanatında Hilye-i Şerîfe: Hz. Muhammed'in Özellikleri = Characteristics of the Prophet Muhammad in Calligraphic Art*. Istanbul: Antik A.Ş. Kültür Yayınları, 2006, pp. 17–18 and Zakariya 2003–2004, p. 21.
[28] Numerous medieval and early modern case studies on the dream theme can be found in Felek, Özgen – Alexander D. Knysh (eds.): *Dreams and Visions in Islamic Societies*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2012. Cf. especially the contributions by Gottfried Hagen, pp. 99–122, and Özgen Felek, pp. 249–272.
[29] Zakariya 2003–2004, p. 21.
[30] Schimmel, Annemarie: *Die Träume des Kalifen: Träume und ihre Deutung in der islamischen Kultur*. München: C. H. Beck, 1998, p. 20.
[31] Sunnah.com. The Hadith of the Prophet Muhammad (صلى الله عليه و سلم) at Your Fingertips, URL https://sunnah.com/bukhari:6994 (last viewed 26.07.2021): Sahih al-Bukhari 6994, Book 91, Hadith 13; cf. Schimmel, *Träume des Kalifen*, p. 231.
[32] For Asiye Hatun, cf. Faroqhi, *Kultur und Alltag*, pp. 133–134.
[33] Schimmel, *Träume des Kalifen*, p. 187.

through knowledge, poetry, traditions, and rituals or spiritually on a different level of consciousness, as in a dream, to envision and recognise him.

However, in order to show the complete picture of textual evolution, the beginning of the *ḥilye* tradition must be considered. The term indicates a genre of literature that deals with the inner and outer characteristics of the Prophet Muḥammad, as orally transmitted by contemporary witnesses. The texts written on the single leaf *ḥilye*s are taken from the collection of the renowned traditionalist Muḥammad b. ʿĪsā at-Tirmidhī (d. 892). His *ash-Shamā'il an-nabawīya al-muṣṭafawīya / Shamā'il an-nabī* speaks of the beautiful aspects of the Prophet Muḥammad. In contrast to other traditionalist scholars he not only had an unusually diligent memory of traditions, but also managed to take a new perspective on the Prophet and Messenger of God by collating traditions about the life of Muḥammad — including the descriptions of his person — in a new way, focusing on his human aspects and organising the material accordingly. Tilman Nagel's description gives an overview of the content and structure of Tirmidhī's work:

> "The first twenty of overall fifty-six short chapters summarise details from the *ḥadīṯ* which are based on the appearance of Mohammed; his build, his personal care and his way of dress are dealt with here. Thirteen chapters on his way of eating follow. Then the reader can learn of Mohammed's way of speech, his laughter and his pranks and in what way he went to sleep. Important to Muslims and therefore especially comprehensive are those following chapters: in what way the Prophet fulfilled his ritual duties and how he read from the Koran. The last twelve chapters of at-Tirmiḏī are dedicated primarily to the significant character traits of Mohammed: his humbleness and modesty and the lifestyle resulting from them. But many [further] traditions [...] are interspersed — as the last chapter — as he presents himself to the Muslims in dream-visions."[34]

The chapters of the *Kitāb ash-Shamaʿil* are categorised according to different bodily aspects (hair, face), personal and religious behaviours (food, laughter and ritual washing, prayer), but also personal items (shoes, robe and turban). Ordering the material according to a *leitmotiv* within each chapter, Tirmidhī collected all relevant traditions from the close circle surrounding the Prophet, while strictly observing the transmission chain (*isnād*). The didactic procedure as well as the references on the meaning and explanation of the hadiths contributed to the image of authenticity and authority that secured the reputation of this text until the Ottoman 16th century.[35] Considering Tirmidhī's biographic dates, there is a legitimate question about his connection to the Ottoman Ḥilye-i sherīf of the 17th

[34] Nagel, Tilman: *Allahs Liebling. Ursprung und Erscheinungsformen des Mohammedglaubens.* München: R. Oldenbourg, 2008, cf. chapter III, section 3. "Die 'schönen Seiten' Mohammeds", pp. 267–288, here p. 277. Translation by Magret Sloan.

[35] Gruber, Christiane: "Between logos (*Kalima*) and light (*Nūr*): Representations of the Prophet Muhammad in Islamic painting". *Muqarnas* 26 (2009), pp. 229–262, especially cf. on p. 234.

century and how these texts were transmitted and received in the Ottoman society of the early modern period.

Another important collection is the work by the Maliki jurist al-Qāḍī ʿIyāḍ ibn Mūsā (1083–1149) with the title *Kitāb ash-Shifāʾ fī taʿrīf ḥuqūq al-Muṣṭafā*. Qāḍī ʿIyāḍs work, which also contains a detailed description of the bodily characteristics and moral virtues[36], additionally mentions details on the healing of sick and handicapped people in the paragraphs on prophetic miracles (*muʿjizāt*).

These two collections were considered the essential classics of *shamāʾil* literature that were known and appreciated by the Ottoman scholars at the beginning of the early modern period. Many exegetical commentaries (*sharḥ*) and explanations were penned to describe their usefulness or to show their viewpoints through translations or revisions. High-ranking scholars such as the mufti of Mecca Ibn Ḥajar al-Ḥaytamī (d. 1567)[37], the Ottoman historian Aḥmed Ṭāshköprüzāde (1494–1561) who at the end of his life dedicated himself to the study of the hadith, ʿAlī al- Qārī (d. 1605)[38], as well as the later polyhistorian Kātib Çelebi (Ḥājjī Khalīfa 1609–1658) — to name but a few — engaged with prophetic traditions, among them Tirmidhī's and Qāḍī ʿIyāḍ's works, and wrote their comments and explanations. The judgement on the usefulness and importance of these texts was universal among the later scholars. Primarily, they praise the reliable authority of Tirmidhī and the special collection of healing *ḥadīth*, especially important for the *ḥilye*.[39]

A group of important *ḥilye* texts which derived from the *shamāʾil* works show the evolution of the Ottoman-Turkish literary genre. The first known prose *ḥilye* work is *Risâletü ş-şemâiliyye* (also known as *Hilye-i Celiyye ve Şemâil-i Aliyye*) by Sheykh ül-Islām Khōja Saʿdeddīn Efendī (1536/7–1599) finished in 1580. A particular feature of this prose work is that Saʿdeddīn translated the collected traditions relating to the Prophet's descriptions, thus making them accessible to a new broad Ottoman readership.[40] The first 'autonomous' work in the literary genre of the *ḥilye* was the *mesnevi* poem by Khāḳānī Meḥmed Bey (d. 1606), finished in 1598. The author, mostly working as an accountant in state service, became honoured among the court poets, because his work was received at the

[36] Zakariya 2003–2004, pp. 16–20.
[37] Nagel, *Allahs Liebling,* p. 282 and p. 985 FN 110. Haitamī's statement that neither the Prophet nor the descriptions of his person must be denigrated underlines the high status that Tirmiḏī's work enjoyed.
[38] Özel, Ahmet: "Ali el-Kārî". In: *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi,* vol. 2 (1989), pp. 403–405, here p.403. Al-Qārī's commentary *Şerhü'ş-şifā'* on Qādī ʿIyāḍ's work was widely read in both Istanbul and Cairo.
[39] Kandemir, M. Yaşar – Mustafa İsmet Uzun: "eş-Şifâ". In: *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 39 (2010), pp 134–138, esp. p. 135.
[40] Uzun 1998, pp. 44–47, here p. 44.

Divān-ı Hümāyūn, the grand council.[41] The poem became known as the Ḥilye-i Khāḳānī and was widely disseminated; it became equally widespread among the elite and the populace.[42] Going by various statements in modern literature, scholars believe that the Ḥilye-i Khāḳānī may have been the inspiration for Ḥāfıẓ ʿOs̱mān's graphic display of the *hilye* — an obvious thesis, considering the reception of this lyrical work in the close courtly circle, in which Ḥāfıẓ ʿOs̱mān (1642–1698) also moved due to his courtly workshop and his teaching commitments.

Parallel to this development of the textual *ḥilye,* another group of pious texts dealing with personal items and relics from the life of the Prophet established themselves, sometimes accompanied with images.[43] Philosophical-mystical works and handbooks of prayer by authors such as Ibn ʿArabī (d. 1240) or the Imam al-Jazūlī (d. 1465) underline spiritual experience of the individual, frequently in connection with the veneration of the prophet. Christiane Gruber summarizes: "the Prophet is praised as the perfect or complete man (*al-insān al-kāmil*), as well as a vehicle or channel (*wasīla*), an isthmus or boundary point (*barzakh*), and a medium or intermediary (*wāsiṭa*) between God and man."[44] The interaction between spiritual approach and devotional practice is mirrored in the Ottoman prayer books (*Duʿā' mejmūʿası* and *Enʿām-i sherīf*).[45] In these works, schematic representations of Mecca and Medina also appeared, mostly at the end of the text. Later copies of these manuscripts also contain the *ḥilye* scheme designed by Ḥāfıẓ ʿOs̱mān, and there seems to be at least one copy of the *Enʿām-i sherīf* calligraphed by Ḥāfıẓ ʿOs̱mān himself.[46]

The fact that the physical appearance of the Prophet was subject to literary description and that several works highlighted the corporeal aspects of his life raises the question how visual images of the Prophet Muḥammad were presented at the same time. Which margin for variation was given and which developments or restructurings of representations can be observed?

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[41] Ḥāḳānī Meḥmed Bey was funded by the Grand Vizier Cığalzāde Sinān Pāsha (1545–1605), who presented the work to Divān-ı Hümāyun. For additional information cf. Pala, İskender (ed.): *Hilye-i Saadet. Hakanî Mehmet Bey*. Istanbul: Melisa, 2013.

[42] Cf. the article by Tobias Heinzelmann in the present volume.

[43] Korn, Lorenz: "Footprints and Sandals as Relics and Symbols of Veneration in Islamic Cultures". In: *In the Footsteps of the Masters. Footprints, Feet and Shoes as Objects of Veneration in Asian, Islamic and Mediterranean Art* (Studies in Asian Art and Culture, 7). Ed. Julia A. B. Hegewald. Berlin 2020, pp. 727–764.

[44] Gruber 2009, p. 233.

[45] The *Dalāʾil al-khayrāt* is a compilation of blessings (*ṣalawā*t) to the Prophet Muḥammad, coupled with supplications (*duʿā'*) that the pious are able to address to themselves or to others. This collection was compiled by the Sufi scholar Imam al-Jazūlī (d. 1465), based in Fez (Morocco). It is considered the model for Ottoman variants, the modified *Dalāʾil al-khayrāt* and the *Enʿām-i Sherīf*.

[46] Istanbul, Topkapı Sarayı Library, EH 322; cf. Bain, Alexandra: "The late Ottoman *En'amı şerif*: Sacred text and images in an Islamic prayer book". [PhD dissertation] University of Victoria 1999, pp. 58–59.

From Figural Depiction to Abstraction in the Representation of Muḥammad

In Islamic art, portraits of Muḥammad from the 13th century onwards often show him in a 'naturalistic' way. Christiane Gruber has intensely studied the pictorial tradition and has classified diverse pictorial programmes of representations of the Prophet. She examines a repertoire of manuscripts, usually of Persian context and dated between the 13th and 16th century.[47] It was not unusual during that period to show the Prophet full length and with features according to the current style that was influenced by Far Eastern painterly traditions. Under the dynasties of the Ilkhanids (1256–1353), Timurids (1370–1506) and Safavids (1501–1722), book illustrations were the preferred pictorial output, so that images were mostly embedded the literary works. According to Gruber's categories, the images of the Prophet can be classified into "veristic," "inscribed" and "luminous" portraits. Gruber points out that borders between these categories are blurred and that pictorial traditions were not necessarily bound to a period or a place, also due to the migration of artists.[48]

The "veristic" portraits, common between 1250–1400, show the human form as bodily stature and a clearly visible face. These naturalistic pictures also show personal attributes and items. The Prophet Muhammad is normally shown as a seated monarch, often surrounded by a court. There are usually motifs of celestial association around the central scene with Muhammad as the main character.

From 1400 onward portraits were increasingly removed from this "veristic" type and split into two further groups. Muhammad was depicted either with a white veil or with a luminous aura that hide his face. Those portraits which Gruber terms "inscribed" have text added but not integrated. In these scenes the Prophet is usually hidden behind a white veil. Rather than the seeing the facial features of the Prophet, the viewer reads the salutations, such as *Yā Muḥammad*.[49] "In such representations, a written text serves to buttress a visual construct, while the declarative mode helps to realize the demonstrative mode."[50] The simultaneous view of picture and text, paired with practices of invocation and prayer (*duʿā'*) invoke a spiritual vision of the Prophet within the beholder. The so-called "luminous" portraits operate with metaphors of the prophetic light. The primordial, sacred and creative light that is associated with the Prophet is represented as a gilded aureole or flashing nimbus.

In later literary works which address the other-worldly properties of the Prophet in his perfection as well as the desire of the believer to approach the Prophet on

[47] Gruber 2009, p. 229.
[48] Ibid., p. 229.
[49] Ibid., p. 240.
[50] Ibid., p. 230.

an increased level of spiritual piety, Muhammad is increasingly shown in one of these hidden manners, with a veiled face or in a rather metaphorical construct like a celestial body with a light source.[51] According to Gruber, this highlights him "as a dual substance, or a combination of physical body and non-physical being."[52] Furthermore, it appears that visual depictions of the Prophet became rarer after 1700.

Obviously, the initial 'naturalistic' pictorial tradition was therefore gradually replaced by more abstract representations. It seems plausible that reasons for this development can be seen in devotional trends as visible in the Ottoman Empire, together with "philosophical concepts, mystical thought, sectarian debates."[53]

Provenance and Calligrapher of the Single-Leaf Panel

The Ḥilye-i Sherīf, the textual and graphic contents of which is organised in a special way, appeared first as a calligraphic panel in the second half of the 17th century. "Calligraphic panel" (*levḥa*) denotes a self-contained composition of the type that were frequently illuminated and framed to be hung on a wall. In the case of the Ḥilye-i Sherīf, the layout with its stereotypical forms in a particular aesthetic order can be traced back to the Ottoman master calligrapher Ḥāfiẓ ʿOṣmān b. ʿAlī (1642–1698), who worked in the scriptorium of the serail. In the mind of modern experts he also excelled in the art of illumination (*tadhhīb*).[54] There is no evidence on his single leaves to bear other signatures of illuminators, so it is likely that Ḥāfiẓ ʿOṣmān himself added the decorations.[55] In general, it was not unknown for artists to be active in a number of fields (such as illumination and bookbinding).

Like many calligraphers, Ḥāfiẓ ʿOṣmān was devoted to Sufi texts and mystic practice. He belonged to the Sünbül order in the Koca-Mustafa-Paşa district of Istanbul. Most of his life he spent in Istanbul, apart from pilgrimages to Mecca in 1672 and 1677 as well as regular visits to Bursa and Edirne.[56] We can therefore conclude that the main part of his works were created in Istanbul, as long as explicit signatures or dates connected to his journeys do not indicate otherwise.

[51] Gruber 2009, pp. 247–251.
[52] Ibid, p. 248.
[53] Gruber Christiane: "Images". In: *Muhammad in History, Thought, and Culture: An Encyclopedia of the Prophet of God*. (2 vols.). Ed. Coeli Fitzpatrick – Adam Walker. Santa Barbara: ABC-Clio 2014, pp. 286–294, here p. 292.
[54] Niewöhner-Eberhard, Elke: "Die Berliner Murakka von Hafiz Osman". *Jahrbuch der Berliner Museen* 31 (1989), pp. 41–59, here, p. 44, and Fn. 13 with a reference to personal communication by Filiz Çağman.
[55] There are two known gilders named Hāfiz Mehmed Çelebi and Ahdeb Hasan Çelebi, who generally did illuminations for Ḥāfiẓ ʿOṣmān's works. Cf. Niewöhner-Eberhard 1989, p. 44.
[56] Derman, Mustafa Uğur: "Hâfiz Osman". In: *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 15 (1997), pp. 98–100.

Fig. 1: Ḥāfiẓ ʿOṣmān, Ḥilye-i Sherīf, dated 1103/1691–92. Chester Beatty Library, Inv. No. CBL T 559.4, © The Trustees of the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin

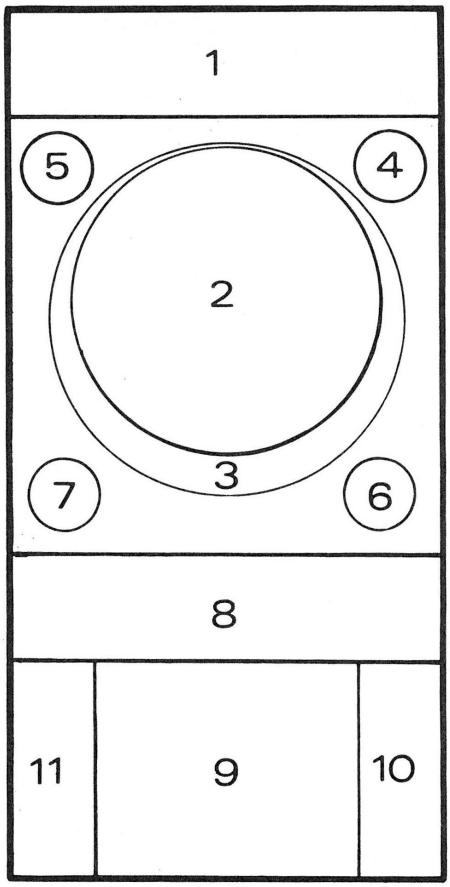

Fig. 2: Graphic scheme of the Ḥilye-i Sherīf (after Derman)

#1	baş makam	
#2	göbek	
#3	hilāl	
#4 – #7	cihār-yar	
#4		Abū Bakr
#5		ʿUmar
#6		ʿUṯmān
#7		ʿAlī
#8	āyāt	
#9	etek	
#10/11	koltuk	

Terminology of the graphic scheme

Calligraphic works of Ḥāfiẓ ʿOṣmān comprise a number of Qurʾāns (*muṣḥaf*), prayer books (*Dalāʾil al-khayrāt* / *Enʿām-ı Sherīf*) and calligraphic works such as practice sheets (*mashq*), compositions (*qiṭʿa*), leaves (*muraqqaʿ*) as well as several Ḥilye-i Sherīf. His output contains nearly exclusively Arabic texts.[57] We also know that the calligrapher developed short texts in Turkish describing the Prophet for non-Arabic speaking Muslims on ordinary paper. These were often carried in the breast pocket by the pious as a sign of respect and deep connection to the Prophet.[58]

The Shape of the Ḥilye-i Sherīf

The selected example shown in fig. 1, currently in the Chester Beatty Library in Dublin with the inventory number CBL T 559.4 1212, was calligraphed by Ḥāfiẓ ʿOṣmān in the year 1003/1691. The panel measures 47 × 34 cm in portrait mode. It represents a standardised classical form.

[57] Niewöhner-Eberhard 1989, p. 46.
[58] Derman, Mustafa Uğur: "Hilye – Hat". In: *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfi İslam Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 18, (1998), pp. 47–51, here p. 47.

Surrounded by framing elements that were applied later, three horizontal dividing lines within the inner mount create four separate zones. The upper rectangle (#1) contains the text of the *basmala*[59] in large cursive letters. The second zone underneath is almost square and contains a large circle in its middle (#2), filled with a text in a significantly smaller writing style. This text details the outer appearance and the character of the Prophet Muḥammad.

The circle is clasped around its lower circumference by a crescent moon (#3), brightly coloured in gold and resembling a light source. This synthesis of circle and crescent moon is surrounded by four smaller near-circular objects placed in the corners of the frame. The bubble-like outlines surround the names of the four rightly guided caliphs (#4, #5, #6, #7). Directly below the seemingly central space of the circular medaillon and tightly fitting crescent moon, surrounded by floral and textual accents and within a cloudy shape is another bold text (#8), framing the central motif together with (#1).

The fourth and lowest zone of the *ḥilye* consists of three rectangles, with a middle text box (#9), flanked by two richly decorated frames on the edges (#10, #11).

The description mainly emphasizes the zoned layout of the geometric forms and lines, which can be easily differentiated in the simplified plan. The graphic scheme, similar to a framed picture in conjunction with its frequent attribution to personal devotion, raises the question whether the beholder would have recognized a human form in this arrangement. Was there a form of the human body inherent in the Ḥilye-i Sherīf? In the following, I posit that the Ḥilye-i Sherīf is indeed a devotional picture. The close examination of the visual form will show how, under different aspects, evidence of corporeality can be approached.

Medial Dimensions of the Graphic Ḥilye-i Sherīf

Different levels of communication offered by the graphic Ḥilye-i Sherīf can be clarified using different medial dimensions. The textual, geometric, performative and conceptual levels are of importance here.

a) Textual level

Portions of the text as shown in the sample can be explained from a wider intertextual landscape that serves to elucidate some of the intended associations and meanings.

In the upper rectangle (#1) appears the *basmala*, here in a special style, which is of particular importance in prayer and in the life of the pious. Its shape, the

[59] Padwick, Constance E.: *Muslim Devotions. A Study of Prayer-Manuals in Common Use*. London: SPCK, 1961, repr. Oxford: Oneworld, 2011, p. 94: "This phrase, Bismi llahi r-rahmani r-rahim, usually translated into English by 'In the Name of God the Merciful the Compassionate', is forever on Muslim lips and pens."

basmala with the long drawn-out letter *sīn*, is also called *oklu besmele*, "the invocation formula with an arrow." This type acquired high symbolic power, as it was believed to indicate the way to paradise across the *sirāṭ* bridge. [60]

In the corners around the centre, the names of the four rightly guided caliphs can be read: #4 "Abū Bakr," #5 "'Umar," #6 "'Uthmān," and #7 "'Alī." In the second rectangle below (#8) is the Quranic verse (Q 21:107): "We have only sent you as a mercy for mankind."

The content of the central text in the circle (#2) reads:

> "[Transmitted] from 'Alī. When he described the Prophet — God bless him and grant him salvation — he used to say: He was neither excessively long nor very small, he was of medium height. He had neither curly and short, nor straight and long hair; his hair was between curly and straight. He had a round face, clear white complexion, large black eyes and long eyelashes. He was large-boned and wide-shouldered. There was no hair on his chest from the middle to the abdomen. The palms of his hands and soles of his feet were plump. When he walked, he walked in ease as inclined like descending a slope. When he wanted to look to his right or left, he used to rotate with his full body. Between his two shoulders was the seal of prophethood, as he was the last of the prophets."

In the lower rectangular field (#9), the text continues with an invocation:

> "O God! Bless the Prophet of mercy, the intercession of the community, Muḥammad and his family, the good and pure ones!", followed by the signature and the date: "This has been written by 'Oṣmān, known as the *ḥāfiẓ* of the Qur'ān, may God forgive him and his parents, and the one who looks at this. Amen, o Helper! In the year one thousand and one hundred and three after the *hijra* of the one to whom the power and the honour are due."

In many other *ḥilye*s, this continuation in the lower field (#9) runs as follows:

> "He was the most generous-hearted of men, the most straightforward, the most docile-tempered of them, and the most friendly of them. Those who saw him all of a sudden, got upset by his grandeur, but those who were present in his company, by knowing his superior qualifications, loved him more than anybody and anything else. Anyone who tried to make his superiorities and beauties known, would confess his insufficiency in praising him by stating, 'I have never seen anyone like him, even before or after him...,' may Allah bless him and grant him salvation."[61]

The description of the appearance of the Prophet, especially his bodily stature, begins with a pair of opposites stating that the Prophet was "neither too large nor too small." This is followed by a quite elastic exposition on how the Prophet styled his hair. In comparison, the shape of the face, the complexion, eyes and eyelashes

[60] Özönder, Hasan: *Ansiklopedik Hat ve Tezhip Sanatları – Deyimleri – Terimleri Sözlüğü*. Konya: Sebat, 2003, p. 154.
[61] Taşkale - Gündüz, *Hat Sanatında Hilye-i Şerîfe*, pp. 45–46.

are described clearly and precise in detail. Likewise, the descriptions of the shape of his body and body hair are concrete, even if without remarkable features.

As a contrast, the slightly stooped walk suggests the pious character, while the fact that the Prophet fully turned to those who approached him can be taken as a hint of sovereignty and approachability. The 'prophetic seal' was a feature that signaled authority and singularity. Other exemplary traits of the Prophet are enumerated in superlatives such as "magnanimous," "straightest" etc. which culminate in fame and perfection. According to Zakariya, "these artful descriptions make vivid impressions on the listener or reader. They are quite easy to memorize and played an important part in recalling beloved and respected figures."[62] It can be remarked that this "vivid impression" also drew on the absence of extremes, which made it easy for believers to animate their own imagination with familiar features. The form of *ḥadīth* that introduces ʿAlī as witness for the bodily features and character of the Prophet not only stands for authenticity but also underlines the personal experience behind the text.

b) Level of geometric shapes

The layout of the Ḥilye-i Sherīf contains simple and more complex geometric motifs such as horizontal lines, a number of rectangles, circle and crescent. These forms are usually bound by mathematical formulas, which are, however, never explicated so that the geometry of the *ḥilye* remains simple and opaque at the same time. Obviously, geometry was mirrored in all traditions of arts in the Ottoman Empire, functioning as a bridge between science and artistry.[63] As Hamdouni Alami puts it, "the science of harmonious proportions is central to the work of artists and craftsmen, for it is the basis of beauty,"[64] and further, "the science of proportions applies to all existing things and beings,"[65] which makes it clear that geometry was considered relevant for natural as well as for artistic creations. From the point of view of the Ḥilye-i Sherīf, whose main components (in addition to writing) are geometric forms, the connection with the human body is, however, not far-flung. According to Hamdouni Alami, as well as taking into account the statements of the famous philosopher-"Brothers" from Basra, it is said as follows:

[62] Zakariya 2003–2004, p. 15.
[63] The functional and contextual concerns of geometric forms has gained in importance with the increasing study of applied geometry (*ʿilm-i misāḥa*). Among the Ottoman mathematicians of the 16th century, geometry had advanced to a highly valued field of knowledge. Fourteen new and noteworthy treatises on geometry were written. Cf. Aslan, İrem: "16th century Ottoman Mathematics visible features". *Dörtöğe Felsefe ve Bilim Tarihi Yazıları Hakemli Dergisi*. 3.5 (May 2014), pp. 47–58.
[64] Hamdouni Alami, Mohammed: *The Origins of Visual Culture in the Islamic World. Aesthetics, Art and Architecture in Early Islam*. London, New York: I. B. Tauris, 2015, p. 86.
[65] Ibid., p. 42.

> "As the *Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'* say, the image of the human body, *Ṣūra al-'insān* is the greatest evidence of God [addressed] to his creatures, because it is the closest to them, its proofs are the clearest and its arguments the strongest."[66]

The perfect proportions can therefore be studied on the human body.

Circle (#2)

The circle (*dā'ira*) is at first glance a geometric figure, the area of which is described by a single curving line around a centre point. It is considered the perfect and most complete of all geometric figures due to this property. Simple and complex figures of the arts, which can be put together as an endless pattern, are also based on the circle, such as various polygons. According to some Islamic lore, the geometric circle on its own or within a complex braided pattern symbolizes the eternity of the universe. The ubiquitous concentric circles, rings or spheres can be found in the Islamic art form as countless metaphorical comparisons of heavenly bodies, although written evidence for this identification is rare.

Rectangle (#2 to #7)

A quadrangle is a geometric figure with four corner points which can vary in numerous ways. The quadrangle here — nearly square (*murabba'*) or a rectangle (*mustaṭīl*) — has two equal and two equidistant sides; both forms reflect the system of four. Quadrangle forms such as the square and the rectangle are associated with the earth and the four elements. The system of four can be found in a number of examples throughout beliefs of creation: the four natures, the four cardinal points, the four seasons, the four phases of the moon and many more. The number four therefore suggests the view of an ordered cosmos; it symbolizes the world of nature and manifestation.[67]

The two forms of circle and quadrangle in harmonious combination are indicative of the supernatural and natural world.

Crescent moon (#3)

A crescent-like circular shape (*hilālī*)[68] is also part of the geometric forms where the shape is synonymous with the name. There are many treatises and associations in which the Prophet Muhammad is compared with the moon (*badr*) or the narrow new moon (*hilāl*).[69] Literary comparisons of the moon or half moon with

[66] Ibid., p. 86.
[67] Schimmel, Annemarie: *Die Zeichen Gottes. Die religiöse Welt des Islam*. München: C.H. Beck, 1995, p. 113; Hamdouni Alami, *Origins of Visual Culture*, p. 60.
[68] El-Bizri, Nader (ed. and transl.): *On Arithmetic and Geometry: An Arabic Critical Edition and English Translation of Epistles 1 and 2* (Epistles of the Brethren of Purity, 6.), Oxford: Oxford University Press in association with The Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2012, p. 124.
[69] Gruber, Christiane (ed.): *The Moon: A Voyage Through Time*. Toronto, Ontario: Aga Khan Museum, 2019.

the person of Muhammad are countless. Above all, there are the symbolic equations of the heavenly bodies (sun or moon) with the human, but also unattainable godly beauty which shines above everything.[70] Especially the ideal of beauty of the time corresponding with similarities to the face of the moon are textually and visually processed in manuscript illumination, poetry and literature[71]. Numerous poets associated and enveloped the Prophet Muḥammad not only with light metaphors. Rather, he himself was the brightest and purest light from which all beings of creation emerged: "He also glows like the moon (*māh*), the sun (*āftāb*), or a candle (*sham'*), and his primordial luminescence gives birth to all things seen and unseen."[72] Last but not least, the shape of the crescent also alludes to the Qur'ānic miracle of Muhammad splitting the moon in Sūra 54:1 (*al-Qamar*).[73]

Other symbolic interpretations of the crescent moon are not excluded.[74] In sum, the group of geometric forms of the Ḥilye-i Sherīf seem to hint at a cosmic diagram in which the Prophet is symbolized by the moon or the crescent.

c) Performative level

The calligraphic panel also addresses the level of emotional experience through the senses. In an emotive way the person contemplating the Ḥilye-i Sherīf taps into a variety of possibilities to experience the Ḥilye-i Sherīf.

Seeing, remembering and reading

The variety of the early Ḥilye-i Sherīf — in form of wood panels, foldable sheets or single sheets which due to their size were usually hung on the wall — made them works to view and marvel at. Valerie Behiery reports that the early wooden panels evolved into the single leaves covered by glass due to woodworm infestations and soot from candles.[75] The use of candle light may have been for the ease of reading, but it is probably a sign of devotional practice, remembering the use of candles in the *mevlid* festivities.

One important question remains how the Ḥilye-i Sherīf panels were read. The first assumption is that the text was read from top to bottom, as postulated in the Niewöhner-Eberhard's study on a series of album leaves calligraphed by Ḥāfiẓ ʿOs̱mān. However we must also consider an alternating pattern.[76] Reading according to the size and ductus of the script would mean beginning at the top of

[70] Schimmel, *Zeichen Gottes*, pp. 39–40.
[71] Gruber, *Moon*, p. 180. Cf. also, Gruber 2009, p. 250 and Fn. 102.
[72] Gruber 2009, p. 249; cf. also pp. 247–252.
[73] Schimmel, *Muhammad Is His Messenger*, pp. 69–71.
[74] One might associate the curved boat-shape of a begging-bowl (*kashkūl*), of which one example is engraved with verses naming the Prophet Muḥammad as "the Prince of Two Worlds," cf. Gruber, *Moon*, p. 100.
[75] Behiery Valerie: "Hilya". In: Coeli Fitzpatrick – Adam Walker (eds.): *Muhammad in History, Thought, and Culture*, pp. 258–263, here p. 261.
[76] Niewöhner-Eberhard 1989, pp. 47.

the panel with the invocatio (*basmala*) (#1) and going on with the Qurʾān verse (#8). In this example both are written in the *thuluth* ductus, which ties them together even more closely, but there are also examples in which the *basmala* is executed in *muḥaqqaq*.[77]

In the same way the small scale *nashk* text is read beginning in the middle of the corpus (#2) and going on to the rectangular sequel (#9). This method is plausible for a number of reasons. Niewöhner-Eberhard reports on other calligraphed leaves (*qıṭʿa, muraqqaʿ*) of different layouts which, despite the divergent text fonts, always follow the same reading pattern. Consequently there is a textual connection within the large and small fonts, even if their relation in content is weak.[78] In the case of the Ḥilye-i Sherīf there seems to be a clear hierarchy between Qurʾān and tradition. Pronouncing the *basmala* along with a verse is similar to the rules of a prayer (*duʿāʾ*). The supplicating invocation of the Lord of the Worlds in combination with a verse (*āya*; also in the meaning of "miracle sign") which addresses the compassion for humanity makes the recipient into a supplicant. He who speaks the verse thinks inevitably of the existence of the Prophet Muḥammad.[79]

Reciting and listening

Recitations of the literary "Ḥilye-i Khāqānī" by Mehmet Bey (d. 1606) were held in public. Gündüz reports that the work was extremely popular and respected in the Ottoman society of the time and was read "for years during religious ceremonies on public places (*makam*) similar to the Mevlids."[80] It is unknown whether public readings were done with the single leaves.[81] If this was the case, the question remains in what way such meetings took place and what their etiquette was. Annemarie Schimmel reports that "the faithful believe that by composing or listening to such traditional legends one is able to establish a very personal relationship with the Prophet," and further "They are certain that though buried in Medina, he yet lives in God's presence and is able to be present everywhere."[82]

[77] E. g. the two examples signed by Ḥāfiẓ ʿOṣmān in the Topkapı Sarayı Museum Collection, G. Y. 1248 (dated 1099/1688) and in the Yıldız Holding Collection (1103/1691).
[78] Niewöhner-Eberhard 1989, p. 47.
[79] With regard to these considerations, it would be worthwhile to establish whether there is a *duʿāʾ* that refers directly to verse 21:107, and whether a related prophetic tradition can also be found.
[80] Taşkale – Gündüz, *Hat Sanatında Hilye-i Şerîfe*, pp. 31–32.
[81] There is also no evidence so far for meditative reading. However, the use of devotional books such as the *Dalāʾil* might perhaps offer an approach by analogy to practices with the Ḥilye-i Sherīf in private space.
[82] Schimmel, *Muhammad Is His Messenger*, p. 79.

Touching and feeling

As mentioned above, pious believers had the habit of carrying pieces of paper with written phrases or text sections on the Prophet traditions on their bodies. For daily use there were three-part foldable single leaves richly decorated, which were probably carried by their wealthy owners on pilgrimages or campaigns. This was not only an activity of respect and deep affection; pious Muslims hoped to receive the blessing (*baraka*) emanating from the textual content.

In Islamic tradition there are different ways of realising spiritual power and blessings.[83] Schimmel reports on the mystical ceremonies and acts in which the blessing power of the spirit of a holy man or of the Prophet may be received through touching an object that once belonged to them.[84] The tactile experience enabled or amplified the close emotional connection to the Prophet Muhammad and members of his family such as ʿAlī or his later descendants.[85] Without doubt, images such as figural bookpaintings in stories of the prophets, the depiction of relics, or other symbols helped the affective relation. It seems, however, that physical interaction beyond looking had a more important role. Thus, it is firmly believed that with visiting a holy burial place, a certain spot at which a noble person manifested, a spiritual connection through the ever-present soul is possible.[86]

According to pious literature, good characteristics, protection and blessing may be absorbed by rubbing or kissing a *ḥilye*.[87] "The visionary and curative potential of the *hilye* was not just expressed through its structural vocabulary; it was confirmed by the Prophet Muhammad." Accordingly, "the *hilye* was intended to represent the protective presence of the Prophet well after his death."[88]

The magnificent surviving examples of Ḥilye-i Sherīf show no surface abrasions at first glance. That may be because the single leaves — usually the larger and especially those made with costly materials — were framed behind glass and mounted on the wall. In similar materials — in a manuscript on a sketched *ḥilye* drawing — abrasions could be observed:[89] Within the central area of the aureole, which shows the name of the Prophet in red glyphs and therefore unequivocally assigned to him, there are noticeable smudges made by touching and stroking.

[83] Gruber, *A Pious Cure-All*, p. 133.
[84] Schimmel, *Mystische Dimensionen*, pp. 153, 331. Siehe auch Trimingham, J. Spencer: *The Sufi Orders in Islam*. With a new foreword by John O. Voll. New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998, p. 257.
[85] Schimmel, *Mystische Dimensionen,* pp. 126–127.
[86] Trimingham, *Sufi Orders,* p. 26.
[87] Gruber, *A Pious Cure-All*, pp. 132–133.
[88] Gruber, *A Pious Cure-All*, p. 132 with Fn. 78.
[89] Istanbul, Süleymaniye Library, MS Nuruosmaniye 02872: The chapter by Zülüflü Mustafa Teberdar el-Bosnevi (d. 1007/1599) titled *Tercümetü Ḥilyeti'n-Nebī ʿaleyhisselam* contains a graphic scheme with the names *Allāh*, *Muḥammad* and *ʿAlī* in an arrangement reminiscent of the central part of the Ḥilye-i Sherīf.

Obviously, the longing for physical closeness equated with spiritual approximation demanded more than viewing and contemplating.

d) Level of modern terms

The following terms, documented for the first time in the 1980s by Mustafa Uğur Derman, are taken from the contemporary schematic plan (see above).[90] They designate the obligatory parts of a classic Ḥilye-i Sherīf. While the ultimate source on which this terminology is based remains unknown, it is clear that their concept derives from the order in which elements are arranged in relation to each other, partly in analogy with the human body. This could possibly go back to the terms that were used among calligraphers in workshops, for which a linguistic tradition can be assumed that continued (with subtle changes) through teacher-student relationships over centuries. It may perhaps be possible to trace these terms in further Ottoman or Arabic sources.

#1 baş makam (head station)

The first part of the compound term *baş* means head. Next to the overriding meaning of the body part, head also means brains, eyes, nose, ears and mouth. The second part refers to the term *makam* (*maqām*), which describes aspects of staying, a resting point, and could be connected to many places.[91] The term is also used for sacred places on which prophets have dwelt in veneration before God.

#2 göbek (belly)

The term göbek stands for navel or belly. It also has meaning of centre, middle part or metaphorically, heart (of a city, etc.).[92]

#3 hilāl (crescent)

The term *hilal* describes the crescent, specifically the first visible crescent of the new moon.[93] Its appearance determines many aspects of the religious life of Muslims according to the meaning of the Islamic moon calendar.

[90] Confirmed by Uğur Derman in personal e-mail communication, January 2021. I am gratefully indebted to Professor Derman for his readiness to answer my questions. –Cf. Derman, Mustafa Uğur (ed.): *Türk Hat Sanatının Şâheserleri*. Istanbul: Kültür Bakanlığı, 1982 (no pagination; the design drawing with the terms appears in the explanatory notes to Hilye-i Şerif No. 49).
[91] "Makam". In: Devellioğlu, Ferit: *Osmanlıca-Türkçe Ansiklopedik Lûgat. Eski ve yeni harflerle*. Ankara: Aydın Kitabevi, 2015, pp. 661–662.
[92] "Göbek". In: Redhouse, James et al.: *Türkçe/Osmanlıca-Ingilizce Sözlük*. Istanbul: SEV Maatbacılık ve Yayıncılık, 2011, p. 405.
[93] "Hilāl". In: Redhouse, *Türkçe/Osmanlıca-Ingilizce Sözlük,* p. 484. "Hilāl". In: Devellioğlu, Ferit, *Osmanlıca-Türkçe Ansiklopedik Lûgat. Eski ve yeni harflerle*. Ankara: Aydın, 2015, p. 424.

#4, #5, #6, #7 (chihār-yār)

Chihār-yār literally means "four friends" and stands for the four rightly guided caliphs Abū Bakr, ʿUmar, ʿUthmān und ʿAlī. The term of friendly connection is preferentially used in the Sunni context. With these four names, the eulogy *raḍiya Allāhu ʿanhu* "May Allah be pleased with him" is commonly associated, as it appears also in the Ḥilye-i Sherīf.[94]

#8 āyat (verse)

An *āya* or verse is the smallest text section of the Qurʾān. They are also represented by those words that start and end a verse or contain a verse, thus forming the links of which the Sūras of the Qurʾān are made up. Here the meaning of the link is highlighted, similar to the term *kuşak* (ribbon).

#9 etek (skirt)

The term *etek* usually stands for a skirt, or lower seam, of a robe. *Etek* also may define the foot of a mountain.[95]

#10 and #11 koltuk (armpit; chair)

The two usually same-decorated and symmetrically arranged rectangles are called *koltuk* and are the same as the terms for armchairs or chairs, but also for shoulders and armpits.[96]

Conclusion: A Written Image of the Prophet

When Ḥāfıẓ ʿOs̱mān created the single-leaf Ḥilye-i Sherīf in a form that became so widely accepted that it is now considered canonical, he united in his design a variety of different, partly even contradictory currents of Islamic religion prevailing in the Ottoman capital. He articulated the religious intent in calligraphic forms that followed particular traditions and strict rules, which limited the creative possibilities but also opened up certain ways of expression which could be widely understood, e. g. in the arrangement and highlighting of certain parts.

In the Ottoman Empire and beyond, the veneration of the Prophet Muḥammad had developed to a part of Islamic religion that implied pious devotion, the reciting of poetic texts, mystic practices of immersion and absorption, and rituals of acquiring blessings on the verge of magic. The critical situation of state and society was apt to promote these tendencies in the Ottoman Empire, but the religious developments were not exclusive to the Ottoman world, and they had their roots

[94] "Cihâryâr". In: *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi*. TDV İslâm Araştırmaları Merkezi 2016–2021, URL: www.islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/ciharyar (last viewed 29.10.2020).
[95] "Etek". In: Redhouse, *Türkçe/Osmanlıca-Ingilizce Sözlük*, p. 351.
[96] "Koltuk". In: Redhouse, *Türkçe/Osmanlıca-Ingilizce Sözlük*, p. 672.

further back in Islamic history. The texts which ultimately became part of the *ḥilye* were based on much older traditions. Together with rituals of the veneration of Muḥammad such as the *mevlid*, these texts obviously appealed to widespread needs and tallied with the emotions of many believers. The physical aspect of the Prophet's existence, his outer appearance together with virtues of his character, were central to the text that constituted the *ḥilye*. In a mixture of precision and ambiguity, this text allowed the beholder to animate the image of the prophet in imagination, and to memorize the words. Coming close to the Prophet in physical terms promised authentic religious experience as well as immediate blessing. It can only be guessed to what extent this experience was sought through the touching of relics and the pilgrimage to some sites that preserved them. At any rate, this was not an available option for everybody; and some believers may have been preferred to perform Islam on a more spiritual level.

The manner in which bodily features were addressed in the *ḥilye* may have been so successful because it was less 'earthly' and left much for the beholder to envision. Therefore, the design of the *ḥilye* should probably be understood not so much as compensating for a lack of figural representation, because it would be unjust to label this as a 'deficiency.' Rather, it fitted neatly with a larger development in Ottoman art. For the general tendency to render figural paintings of the Prophet more 'abstract', be it through the motif of the veiled face, be it through the dominance of the radiating halo, also heightened the meaning of the personality the Prophet and gave more weight to inner devotion and imaginative power on the part of the beholder. In this context, the creation of a calligraphic design that represented the Prophet was certainly an appropriate way not only to arrange the venerated text, but also to foster the imagination of the beholder. The vague allusion to bodily features that can be detected in the circle, which could be taken as equivalent to a face, and in lower parts of the composition that can be understood as indicating a throne, made it possible to interpret the Ḥilye-i Sherīf as a metaphorical image of the enthroned figure of the Prophet. At the same time, these features were far from binding in their likeness with corporeal features and thus remained aloof from blunt representation. The image of the prophet was meant to arise in the heart of the believer, not before his physical eyes.

Building on a century-old tradition of calligraphic art, Ḥāfıẓ ʿOs̱mān followed established customs in the use of scripts in different sizes, the manner of arranging text elements in segments, of visually balancing letters, words and phrases. It was only fitting to decorate this written image with ornaments –in keeping with the customs of Ottoman calligraphy, according to which the illumination was an essential part of the artwork. Bold composition in large forms that can be easily recognized, harmonious rhythm and carefully weighed proportions made the whole an aesthetically satisfying experience. On various levels, by representation

and allusion, Ḥāfiẓ ʿOṣmān's composition united corporeal, textual and visual features to form an icon.

Sources of Illustrations

Fig. 1: Chester Beatty Library, Inv. No. CBL T 559.4, © The Trustees of the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin — Fig. 2: Derman, Mustafa Uğur (ed.): *Türk Hat Sanatının Şâheserleri*. İstanbul: Kültür Bakanlığı, 1982, #49.