

*Abstract*

To counteract theoretical and theological generalisations of an «Islamic iconoclasm» with the subtlety of practice, this article examines the models of images presented by certain Persian miniatures of the 15th and 16th century. Against the thesis that these miniatures have a secular character, this article demonstrates that their modes of depicting the ascension of Mohammed show parallels to a transition, as described in the illustrated text, from a spatial, material sphere to a non-spatial, immaterial sphere in the process of approaching God. The images stress their flatness as an ideal medium to transform a spatial and bodily illusion into a non-spatial and non-corporeal visibility.

The modalities of this transfer can also be detected in illustrations of pilgrimage to the Ka'ba. In this context it becomes obvious that the transition is not only depicted but also presented as a perspective for the pilgrim and hence for the reader and viewer. Certain parallels between the functions of the image and the Ka'ba further indicate that contemplation of the image could possibly be compared to a pilgrimage. Hence, these images present themselves as modes of religious visual practice, rather than being opposed to it.