

Original Research Article

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مطالعه بازنمایی انواع تقدس در نگاره‌های مکتب بغداد براساس هاله - موقعیت

## Investigating the Representation of Sanctity Types in the Paintings of the Baghdad School Based on Halo-Status\*

### Abstract

**Problem Definition:** When the Abbasids came to power, the capital was moved from Damascus to Baghdad (near Tisphon, the Sassanid capital), and due to the political support of the Iranians to the Abbasids and the geographical proximity of the two capitals, the characteristics of Iranian art influenced the Abbasid aesthetic views. On the other hand, the Islamic territory during the Abbasid era also included many Christian areas of the Eastern Church. With the arrival of the Christian politicians to the Abbasid court, the images of the Abbasid Caliphs appeared next to the Christian politicians in the royal palaces of the Abbasids. In this period, we witnessed the initial integration of Islam in the motifs of Islamic-Christian artworks. Regarding the emergence and manifestation of religious sanctity in the artworks of this period, a halo around the heads of individuals in the Baghdad School is prominent. The critical question of the current research is: «How did the artist assign a halo to people in the paintings and artworks of the Abbasid period, and with what approach did the artists design the halo around people?»

**Objective:** The present research aims to find a way of representing the halo and, accordingly, identifying the sanctity or political, religious, and business superiority among the Abbasid Caliphs.

**Research Method:** The current research is qualitative and based on the descriptive-analytical method. The method of collecting samples is based on the library data. The studied samples are selected from the illustrated books of the Baghdad School of the Abbasid period.

**Results:** The result of the present research, based on the studied samples, shows that although the halo around the head is reserved for people who hold positions and have political or religious power, by drawing the halo, the artist of the Abbasid period attempted to categorize people, including the ruler and classified them into scientific, religious, political, and social groups. Moreover, to highlight each of the prominent people in the mentioned fields, the artist has limited and illustrated them with a different halo. Accordingly, people have a halo due to their status, social position, and occupations.

### Keywords

Halo of light, Baghdad School, Abbasid Era, Painting, Sanctity of Occupations

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## **Introduction**

The discussion of the halo of light has been crucial in many philosophical theories from the Greek era to our days, and philosophers have had different views in explaining the nature of the visual function of the halo because many geographical, historical, etc., variables have influenced them. Although, throughout history, there have been many signs indicating the holy matter and various sanctifications, the role of the halo of light in the representation of sanctity, mainly religious-political, is undeniable. With the coming to power of the Abbasids, who had reached the throne with the support of one of the most powerful Iranian families, the capital was moved from Tisfon, one of the largest Sassanid capitals, to Baghdad, although the capital was Damascus in the Umayyad period. In this way, Iranian art influenced the views of Abbasid aesthetics, whose influence can be seen in the wall paintings of palaces and the art of writing calligraphy books in Baghdad, influenced by the art of the Manichaeans. On the other hand, the Islamic territory during the Abbasid era included many Christian areas of the Eastern Church. The people of these lands had outstanding artists who had unique characteristics and skills in creating their works of art in places such as churches. With the arrival of the Christian politician in the Abbasid court, the paintings of the Abbasid kings appeared next to the Christian politician in the royal palaces of the Abbasids, and in this period, we witness the initial integration of Islam in the motifs of Islamic-Christian works of art. In fact, it can be said that the period of the Abbasid caliphate is one of the periods that at the corners of the caliphate of the rulers and under the simultaneous influence of Iranian art and Christian art, witnessed the emergence and manifestation of religious sanctity in the works of art created by the artists of that period. The main goal of the current research is to achieve the halo-designing of the artist of this period to people by classifying the position of the people, and the working method is to first collect the works that match the subject of the research, and then by observing and studying the works, describe them visually based on the halo of light. Finally, by interpreting and matching the images, it has been tried to identify and introduce examples of the representation of this sanctification. The existence of the halo around the heads of people, its images and possible interpretations, has provided this opportunity for writers to investigate the representation of the types of sanctity among the Abbasid Caliphs through the study of the image of the halo and by studying the mainly pictorial artworks of the Baghdad School, seek answers to these questions: «How has sanctity been represented in the personality of some Abbasid men?» and «how has the artist helped to establish this sanctity through the visual use of the halo of light?»

## **Research Method**

From the Baghdad School, which was prevalent between 133 and 656 A.H., many works have been left, including various books illustrated in this period and in fields such as «Al-Tariaq», «Rasa'il al-Ikhwan al-Safa», «Aja'ib al-Makhluqat», «Qabus-Nama Manuscript», «Dioscorides», «Fi Marfat al-Khiyal Al-Handsiyeh», «Kalila and Demna» and «Maqamat Hariri». Also, one of the most influential artists of this period can be named «Abdullah bin Fazl», whose manuscript of the book «Khavas-e Aqaqir» is one of his works (Zekrgoo, 2007, 19). The book «Al-Aqani» also belongs to Northern Iraq in 595 A.H. and is based on Talbot Rice's narration (Rice, 2005, 116), which is considered part of the statistical community of the current research. The studied examples are 13 samples of the manuscripts of the Baghdad School during the Abbasid period, which were depicted by different artists in the borders of the Abbasid caliphate, namely Baghdad, Mosul, Wasit, and Kufa. It should

be mentioned that to access Arabic sources, one of the researchers tried to use Arabic books and magazines. The method of selecting samples is purposeful. The diversity of the selected samples in terms of ideas, overall composition, and technical imaging is such that it allows researchers to examine the visual performance of these samples to achieve the research goal.

### **Research Background**

By reviewing the sources and articles and searching in the book databases, it became clear that although there have been many studies about the halo and especially the halo of light, regarding the subject of the present research, which is the representation of political, religious, etc. sanctity in the image of the rulers of the Abbasid period, no specific work has been done. Among the conducted studies, one of the articles is related to the halo entitled «Recognition of the fundamental symbols effective in the formation of the halo of sanctity» by «Nikkhah and Pourmand» (2011), which investigated the halo of sanctity and its various manifestations such as sun, circle, light, and fire in history and especially in religions, and did not mention anything about the Abbasid period. The results of this research indicate that in religious art, the halo is a manifestation of divine light placed around the head or body of a holy person and shows his extraordinary power. In this regard, «Davoudi and Hosseinabadi» (2022) in an article titled «Symological analysis of the role of fire in pre-Islamic Iran with an emphasis on the works of the Median and Achaemenid periods» examined the sanctity of natural elements such as fire. Jobs have not spoken. Also, «Azhand» (2003), in an article entitled «Baghdad School of Painting», specifically studied the Baghdad School of Painting during the Jalayirids period, and it has no connection with Baghdad painting during the Abbasid period. The halo and its status are not mentioned in the above article. In an article entitled «Baghdad School of Painting with an emphasis on Shiite Themes», «Shayestehfar» (2009) explored the characteristics of the Baghdad School of Painting and its continuity in the Baghdad School of Painting in the Jalayirids period and the Ottoman period. The results of this research indicate that one of the characteristics of the manuscripts of the Baghdad School of Painting is the use of luminous halos around the heads of the Ahl al-Bayt and covering the face of the Prophet (PBUH). This article also does not deal with the artistic examples of the Abbasid period. «Samadi's» (2016) master's thesis entitled «The Evolution of the Sacred Halo in the Form of Fire and Light in Iranian Painting» also does not have a proper reference to the sanctity of the halo in the Baghdad School of the Abbasid period. In this thesis, the author has mentioned how the halo is formed and the similarities and differences in the shape and form of the halo in different periods. The article by «Bayramzadeh and Ahmadi Oliyaie» (2016) entitled «Continuity of the Presence of Halo of Light Motifs from Ancient Times to Christian and Islamic Arts», does not make any reference to the Abbasid period. The research findings show that although the first examples of the halo of light motif have been observed in the Egyptian and Indian civilizations, its origin cannot be definitively determined. The difference between the present research and the previous writings is that it emphasizes the Baghdad School of Painting in the Abbasid period. A subject that has not been addressed in any of the mentioned studies, as well as a specialized study of the position of occupations with regard to the representation of types of sanctity such as political, religious, social, etc., is in the image of Abbasid rulers and Caliphs.

### Theoretical Foundations

The halo around people's heads is one of the essential features of Islamic manuscripts paintings in the Abbasid era, and during this period, the halo appeared in many paintings. It seems that the purpose of drawing a halo around people's heads is to highlight the importance of the person whose head is drawn or it was to recognize the face, and sometimes it was for decoration. However, in this age, the use of a halo with a round or semi-round image developed, and its works appeared in Chinese and Indian arts as well (Hasan, 1935, 31). «The themes or concepts of Abbasid paintings are sometimes educational and sometimes psychological, social, or political, and above all, they have an educational meaning. The author shares it with any religious, literary, philosophical, or political idea he wants. Among the paintings found in Raqqah during the Abbasid period, there is a painting from the 6<sup>th</sup> century A.H., on a ceramic bowl, which shows a warrior on his horse, holding a sword and surrounded by a halo» (Fig 1) (Mubarak, 1975, 242). In the works of Samarra, the capital of the Abbasids (Fig 2), a halo-like image surrounds the human head on a decorated drinking vessel. This halo gives clarity, identity, and distinction to the Iraqi pottery archaeological works with local characteristics. Over time and in the paintings of neighboring civilizations, most pottery paintings and decorations include motifs that form backgrounds that are sometimes decorated with human and animal motifs or plant and geometric motifs (Al-Ameri, 2001, 94).



**Fig 1.** Ceramic vessel from Raqqah - underglaze painting. 6-7 A.H./ 12-13 A.D. Source: Hasan, 1935, 242.



**Fig 2.** Drinking vessel in the city of Samarra. Source: Hossein, 1999, 64.

### Geography of the Abbasid School of Baghdad

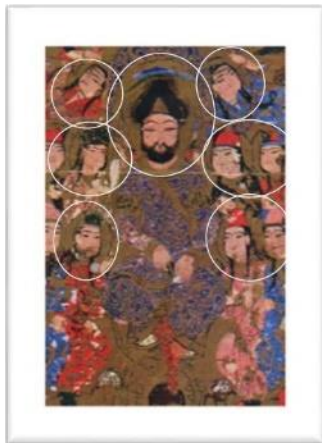
With the coming to power of the Abbasids (656-132 A.H.) and the support of the Iranians, Baghdad emerged as the first school of painting and illustration of books by the Abbasid Caliphs. The first illustration examples in post-Islamic books, which were primarily scientific and technical, appeared during this period. The tradition of painting in the Abbasid era was formed based on Sassanid art and Byzantine art, known as the Baghdad School, which had two styles of painting and book design. Because the painters of the Baghdad School came from other lands and the multi-nationality of the artists of the Baghdad School made the works of this period also called the «International Abbasid School». «Gray» writes in the book entitled «Iranian Painting»: «Actually, the study of Iranian painting art should be started with the manuscripts of the Abbasid period. The Abbasid School is an established title for all religious and illustrated manuscripts that were created during the rule of the Abbasid Caliphs in their capital, Baghdad (656-132 A.H.)» (Gray, 2006, 35). In explaining

the Abbasid School, «Pakbaz» writes: «The general title of the Abbasid School is used for different ways of illustrating books in the cities of Baghdad, Mosul, Kufa, and Wasit. Since books were rewritten and illustrated by Muslim (Arab and Iranian) and Christian (Nestorian and Ya'qubi) artists, the presence of incongruous visual elements and conventions in them is not strange» (Pakbaz, 2000, 54). According to the clear definition of the Abbasid School and the geography related to it, in the present study, the books entitled «Al-Tariaq», «Rasa'il al-Ikhwan al-Safa», «Aja'ib al-Makhlūqat», «Kalila and Demna», «Maqamat Hariri», and «Khavas-e Aqaqir», all are known to belong to the Baghdad School and have been cited as a statistical community. It should be noted that at the same time as the Baghdad School, there was another Art School in Iran that was contemporary with the Baghdad School, which, even in drawing characters with bright colors, embroidered clothes, and calm faces, was similar to the painting of the Baghdad School. In fact, the center of this school's work was not only in Baghdad or Iraq but also in the vast occupation of the Seljuqs. Both Arab and Iranian painters worked for the ruling class and Seljuk princes. Perhaps the most significant proof of the close connection of these Seljuk paintings with Iran is that their paintings are similar to the paintings found in Iranian ceramics (enamel), of which «Rey City» was the largest production center (Al-Jaf, 2003, 136-137). According to the authors, the Baghdad School or the Abbasid School cannot be called an Iranian School because, on the one hand, it was influenced by Byzantine art and, on the other hand, it was influenced by the Iranian art of the Sassanid period and, as mentioned, it is clearly different from the Seljuk School. Among the characteristics of Baghdad School paintings, the following can be mentioned: The desire for relative realism/straightforward, with a limited number of human figures/ flat colors with border lines/ patterned clothes/ a tree and a branch representing nature on paper/ the lack of separation of painting from written text/ direct influences of Manichean art in the form of a halo around the head/ the effects of Byzantine art with bright shadows on the face (Zekrgoo, 2003, 28).

### **Investigating Halo-Designed Paintings in the Illustrated Books of the Baghdad School**

Many paintings have been obtained from the Abbasid period, which includes some of the decorations of ancient buildings. It is mentioned in the book entitled «One Thousand and One Nights» that Caliph Harun al-Rashid built a hall in the garden of his palace in Baghdad and decorated it with motifs. In Samarra, watercolor paintings (Frescoes) drawn on plaster were discovered, dating back to the Abbasid era. The durability of Samarra's decorations is due to the fact that it was not inhabited except for a short time and was abandoned after the departure of the trusted Caliph in 276 A.H. (Hamid, 1982, 123). Among the paintings that were discovered in the excavations of Samarra, there are wall paintings in the Jawsaq al-Khaqani palace, the subjects of which are paintings of dancers, fighters, half-naked women, hunters, musicians, and human figures with birds. Animals, branches of plants, pictures of fish, birds, and paintings of priests (Dimand, 1982, 41). Among the most important of these images are images of two fully clothed dancers with a bowl of fruit between them, who appear to be dancing and holding two glasses into which wine is poured from two bowls that appear behind their heads, and two people are dancing, wearing earrings, pearls, belts, and long braids, and their hair looks long. After passing the preliminary stages that took its elements from other arts such as Sasanids, Hellenistic, Byzantine, etc., the style of Islamic painting in manuscripts has adapted and integrated these arts and changed into the style of the Baghdad school (Loncreek, 1985, 65). In the current research, the researchers' attention

is to examine the region's historical, political, social, and religious conditions during the long period of the Abbasid era. Undoubtedly, the performance of Abbasid Caliphs and princes in reflecting the situation of this period can be obtained from the written images illustrated by their direct orders or with the court's support. The long period of the caliphate in the Abbasid era, the variety of thinking of the Caliphs, and the effort to preserve religious beliefs are the characteristics of the Abbasid School. The Caliphs' interest in maintaining their political sovereignty and using religion to legitimize their actions has caused painters to express this importance by drawing a halo around the head of the Caliph or any other political character. In addition to this superiority, the interest of the Caliphs and their attention to science and scholars and, in some cases, to some occupations is also one of the issues that this research intends to analyze. In studying the halo element, many intellectual, cultural, and artistic dimensions can be achieved, whether in harmony with the thought of faith and religious sanctity or in expressing the demands of society and individual goals. One of the distinctions of the Abbasid School from other schools is the attention to daily jobs and occupations and sanctifying them, which will be explained from the point of view of illustrators. The following figures show examples of the studied images. For a better understanding of the subject, an attempt is made to provide brief explanations about each image so that, from this point of view, more detailed answers can be given to the research questions.



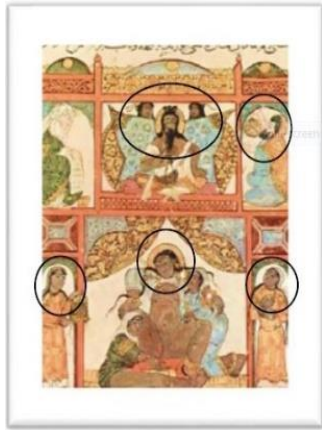
**Fig 3.** Coronation of the ruler/ 614 A.H./ 1218 A.D., taken from the book entitled «Alaqaani» - Mosul / Iraq. Location: Faizullah Effendi Collection - Istanbul, No. 1566, Library C. Source: <https://commons.wikimedia.org>



**Fig 4.** Caliph's meeting in the court/ 648 A.H./ 1250 A.D.. Taken from the book entitled «Al-Tariaq», Mosul/ Iraq, location: National Library-Vienna. Source: [Ottenhausen, 1974, 23.](#)



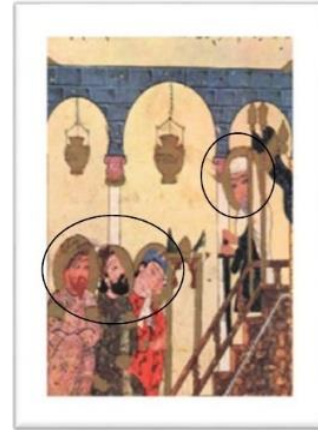
**Fig 5.** Passengers on the ship/ Time period: 620 A.H. / 1230 A.D./ Taken from: the book entitled «Characteristics of Trees or herbs (Hashashish)», Iraq/ Baghdad. Source: <https://pinterest.com/pin/>.



**Fig 6.** Birth of the Crown Prince/614 A.H./ 1218 A.D./ Location: Paris Library 5847 Arab/ Taken from: «Maqamat of al-Hariri»/ Source: [Ottenhausen, 1974, 23.](#)



**Fig 7.** Etiquette of attending the Caliph/1210/610/ Taken from: «Kalilah and Damneh» manuscript, location: State Library of Bavaria, Germany. Source: [James, 1979, 45.](#)



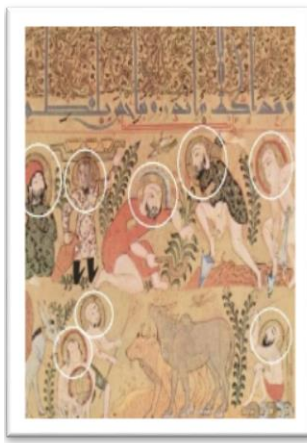
**Fig 8.** Judicial Council. Taken from: «Rasa'il al-Ikhwan al-Safa»/ 626 A.H./ 1225 A.D./ Source: Paris National Library.



**Fig 9.** Pharmacy/620 A.H./1224 A.D./ Source: «Khavas-e Aqaqir». Source: [Serwat, 1993, 85.](#)



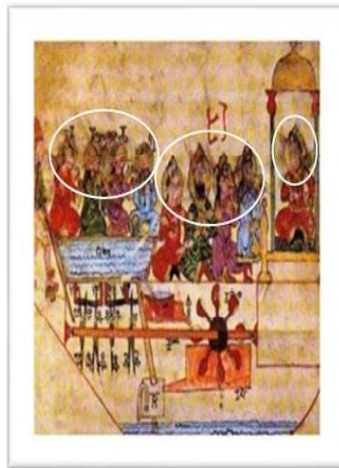
**Fig 10.** Medicine (properties of plants)/ 620 A.H./ 1224 A.D./ Taken from: Baghdad/ Iraq, Source: Metropolitan Museum, United States.



**Fig 11.** Planting medicinal herbs/ 595 A.H./ 1199 A.D./ Location: National Library of Paris, taken from: «Maqamat al-Hariri»/ Baghdadiya 13/ p. 35.



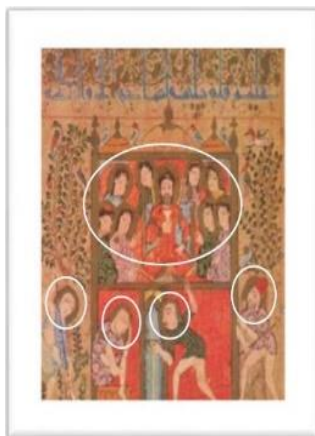
**Fig. 12.** Caliphs and Philosophers/ Taken from: «Rasa'il al-khwan al-safa» and «Khalan al-vafa», location: Sulaymaniyah Library - Istanbul. Ottenhausen, Richard: Painting among the Arabs (translated by Isa Salman), published by Al-Adeeb al-Baghdadi. Source: [Ottenhausen, 1974, 23.](#)



**Fig. 13.** Boat/ 593/ 1190, Location: Morgan Library, New York/ Taken from the book entitled «Al-mechanica». Source: [Serwat, 2007, 400.](#)



**Fig. 14.** Warrior and his horse/ Taken from: The book entitled «Al-Bitra», Iraq/Baghdad, location: Egypt Library. Source: [Serwat, 2007, 404.](#)



**Fig. 15.** Caliph in the court scene / 650 A.H./ 1260 A.D./ Taken from: «Al-Tariaq». Mosul/ Iraq, Source: [Ottenhausen, 1974, 85.](#)

**Figure 3:** In this image and the center of the painting, the Caliph with a round bearded face, surrounded by a halo, is sitting and holding a bow. His large body has distinguished him from the rest. The connection of the middle face with the character of the governor of Mosul city (Badr al-Din Lulu) is evident with the inscription of the text (clothing decorations) in the name of this ruler. It seems that this painting was done by order or for an important government figure. Two angels holding a canopy and protecting the ruler's head and forming a double halo; a symbol of the large scale used by the painter to highlight the central character is the focus on the fine details of the image, as well as the importance of the grandeur and significance of the character in reality. The painter has depicted the central



character by emphasizing the features. In this painting, color is used in a limited way, which is not more than six colors, and is distributed alternately between the two sides of the painting. The painter has used colors to highlight shadows and light. The characteristic of this approach was a sensitivity that has not appeared in the style of Islamic painting except in very few cases.

**Figure 4:** It contains several diverse scenes that are divided into three horizontal parts. The first one from the top represents a hunting and entertainment scene of warriors on horseback carrying their bows and weapons. The second row, in turn, is divided into three vertical sections, in which the middle section is distinguished by a square area that occupies a central position and contains four human figures, one of which is large, apparently a Caliph or ruler. The two lateral sections of the second row consist of four people on both sides, vertically distributed in a two-story building with a balcony. Its lower part represents a caravan of camels and horses with their owners and a scene of caravan conquests. In addition, servants who put bread and food have appeared in the very narrow strip between the first and second rows. Red-orange and golden colors dominate the motif, symbolizing the Caliphs. The artist's drawings of the ruler or the king show the tendency towards luxury and the royal atmosphere of the ruling class. In contrast, the middle of the scene is shown with a halo of luxury that surrounds the head of the king and the soldiers around him. It seems that the painter has combined two main themes; the first is the political theme represented in the ruler's character and the characters' location in the royal court. Second is a social issue defined in the public ways of life that the sample scenes contain.

**Figure 5:** This image shows a ship that is divided into eight squares, and in each square, a human is depicted, and everyone's head is covered with a halo. The ship's captain appeared in front with a black dress and a tiller (rudder) in his hand. Below the images, in the middle section, are two men carrying oars to guide the ship to safe land. Small flowering plants appear on the ground line, extending into the image surrounding the ship. There are some inscriptions above. The Muslim artist has depicted the scene between life and security. There are eleven people on the ship whose heads are surrounded by a halo of light in white. These figures are an explicit confirmation of the principle of brightness and sanctity, which is shown in the ship's characters, including the person who appears in front of the ship (the captain). The description of the painting tells about the sanctity of these characters; that is, this scene can be precisely interpreted in terms of Islamic thinking following the hadith of the Prophet (PBUH), who said: «Hussein is a beacon of guidance and a ship of salvation. Whoever rides on it is saved, and whoever leaves it is lost».

**Figure 6:** It shows the picture of a woman at the moment of the birth of the Crown Prince Caliph. The scenes related to this event are distributed in separate frames. The image is divided into six parts, with three domes facing the outside of the house at the top of the painting. On the upper floor, the Caliph is sitting on a throne with a halo surrounding his head, two people behind him and two men on either side of him, one holding an astrolabe or a clock in his hand and is anxious, and the other is an old man (scribe) who is writing on paper. The lower floor is divided into three parts, the middle part representing the scene of a woman giving birth, whose head is surrounded by a halo. It seems that she is the wife of the Caliph. A midwife is in front of a pregnant woman. Two maids are standing on the two side porches of this space; one is holding a bowl on the right side, and the other is holding a type of incense (fumigation) on the left side. Everyone is impatiently waiting for the arrival of the Crown Prince. In this scene, the Muslim artist points out the importance of the Caliphs and their essential role.

**Figure 7:** This image is divided into three parts. The upper part is a collection of inscriptions that may be hadiths, poetry, rules, or other things. In the second part, four human bodies are depicted in different states. The third part contains a collection of inscriptions with different meanings and words. Considering the arrangement of shapes and the presence of halos around the heads, the image is nothing more than an advertisement for one of the gatherings of the Abbasid Caliphs. Through the presence of the halo, the Abbasi artist has emphasized the role of sanctity and the importance of existence and formal distinction. From an epistemological point of view, the painting shows that these three people show the receiver of the work the meaning and concept of standing, talking, or surrendering to a character at the level of the Caliph's character while the character of the Caliph on the throne of government gives him the position of sovereignty, the power to make decisions, debate, and rules setting; because the importance of the caliphate and the role of the Caliph concerning the public and the private, both from the Shari'a dimension and the political dimension, indicate its sanctity.

**Figure 8:** In this image, three people with halos are standing and looking at the person in front of them who is sitting on the pulpit above the platform. In other words, the judge is sitting on the chair, and the people are standing before it. According to the visual reading, the painting conveys several interpretations about the nature and performance of people to the viewer. In this way, the artist wanted to address the importance and role of judgment in the social structure in the Abbasid era. Considering the effects of visual perception, the Abbasi artist has tried to create two different sides in the same painting, one of which has a higher status than the other. This person (the judge) has a sword in his hand and a flag around him. Due to the halo surrounding their heads, The three standing people have a privileged societal position. The halo around the judge's head shows the judiciary's role and the importance of its presence in society. In contrast, the halo that the artist places around the people's heads is a conventional halo whose purpose is distinction, and the interpretation of the halo in functional and cognitive roles is different between the people in the painting.

**Figure 9:** This image is divided into six rectangles. Three frames at the top and three at the bottom; its lower part includes two side balconies with tied curtains and altar-like decoration, in the middle of which we see the apothecary preparing medicine in a cauldron under a lighted fire. Someone is in front of him. The upper part of the painting contains three frames. The first frame from the right shows an apothecary mixing a drug in a jar. The middle frame shows the drug store, and the last frame shows the patient drinking medicine, with all the characters wearing halos. Such images spread during the Translation Movement during the Abbasid Caliphate. The Muslim artist seems to have abstracted the halo and its spiritual status in this painting. Through the distinction and importance of science, he has given the halo to the medic who helps save the patients' lives from death.

**Figure 10:** In this image, a dog bites the leg of one of the two men in the painting. Fear is evident on the faces of these two men. A man bitten by a dog holds a stick in his hand while another stands behind him with a sheathed sword. In the image, two trees with some flowers are shown in the meadow. A few sentences are written in Arabic at the top and bottom of the painting. The details of the image are directly related to the scientific explanations related to the symptoms that may affect a person in case of a dog bite. The Muslim artist linked science and sanctity, which the Abbasid Caliphs were interested in, and embodied his ideas in the image to be more realistic about the progress that occurred with the discovery of science and medicine. In fact, the artist is trying to represent the properties of medicinal plants to treat the problem by making the trees in the picture bigger.

**Figure 11:** It shows farmers who grow medicinal plants. The image consists of seven people engaged in agricultural work, and one carries food on his head to present to them. The halo in the image has appeared on the heads of all people. The artist shows people moving agricultural tools in the image. They plant trees on the land. The artist's narration in this scene is mixed with human, plant, and animal forms, as well as the use of Kufic script above the image. This painting shows the interest of the Abbasid Caliphs in planting medicinal plants. The ruling government's interest and respect for agriculture as a sacred and praiseworthy profession is evident. Almighty God also mentioned the importance of cultivation in the land in Surah Al-Baqarah verse 36 and Surah Al-A'raf verse 24. The hadith of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) also confirms this: «A person who has land should cultivate it, and if he is unable to, he should leave it to his Muslim brother and not take rent from him» (Elzein, 1971). It prompted the artist to reveal his ideas and draw a halo of distinction, attention, and respect around the farmer's head. Economic factors also played a role in completing this image. With his scientific materials and images, the artist has shown the owners of animals how to try to produce economic resources by domesticating them.

**Figure 12:** It shows a view of a two-story building. The first floor offers two wise men talking next to the Caliph. The Caliph is reclining, and behind him on the right is a boy waving a hand fan in the air, while a student is on the left holding a book to his chest. The second floor includes four balconies where only two people can be seen. On the right, a man is holding a book, as if dictating what to write to the man on the left. The second is writing on paper. This building includes narrow pillars and arches with knotted curtains. The image shows a meeting in which the Caliph and philosophers are present, just as it was held in schools and centers in Baghdad. In Baghdad, circles of scientific and intellectual, religious, scientific, and philosophical discussions were held under the supervision of the Caliph himself. Here, too, a book is open in front of the Caliph. All the people except the maid holding the hand-fan have halos because it seems that everyone except the maid is learning and having a philosophical conversation. The relationships between the images show a rotating conversation between people.

**Figure 13:** It shows a boat with eight people sitting in the center and looking at a man sitting on what looks like the throne of the Caliph. All people have a halo around their heads; however, the halo is different from what was shown in the previous samples and looks like a burning fire. At the end of the boat, a person directs the boat's movement with an oar in his hand. In other words, this image shows a scene of the Caliph's meetings with the viziers. It is inferred from the position of the Caliph, who sits on the throne, has a crown, a dome placed on top of it, and the viziers who look at the Caliph. This painting is a combination of human and mechanical forms, resulting from the development and flourishing of science in this period. Color variation is very evident. The sanctity of the Caliph is apparent with his centrality and the heads that move towards him in a directional movement.

**Figure 14:** It shows a warrior on a horse in different and contrasting colors. The artist has shown the warrior in red clothes and the horse in Ocher. The Muslim artist changed the color of the warrior's clothes to red to achieve the prestige and status of the Caliph. Throughout history, this color has acquired various meanings. It has become a symbol of courage, passion, joy, freedom, anger, rebellion, and a sense of dominance. The horse seems to be running on a green land with plants under its hooves. Also, at the bottom of the image, a set of words is shown in Naskh script, which is probably a verse of poetry, advice, or some reference to the character of a warrior. This scene is depicted on the cover of the book «Al-Bitra» with a yellow background. The painter's reference to the role of the Sultan, his

abilities and privileges, and the drawing of the halo around the head in this painting have made it possible to distinguish him from other people. The movement of the Caliph in holding the reins with both hands shows the extent of his power in controlling affairs, and such characteristics give him a privileged and unique character. The artist of the Baghdad School has deliberately given the halo to the Caliph for his worldly superiority at the same time as his spiritual superiority.

**Figure 15:** It shows the Caliph sitting on his throne in the middle of the scene and the upper part of the image; three women are on the left side, three are on the right side, and two are above him. There are domes above them. Above is an inscription in the Kufic script. The bottom of the scene is divided into two parts. In the first part, on the left side, a man is sitting holding his leg, showing that something has bitten him, and on the right side, the doctor is rushing towards him, and on the left side, there is a warrior with a spear in his hand. On the right side of the image is a man plowing the land, and above these two men are trees, and a halo surrounds the head of each person in the image. Abbasid era left a clear image in the fields of medicine, engineering, astronomy, art, and other sciences; an era that saved the world heritage from destruction and demolition by translating, preserving, and disseminating scientific works, and this pattern showed the influence of the intellectual and cognitive factors of the Abbasid society. Despite being behind the scenes, this image indicates that the Caliph attentively looks at all the members. All people have a halo, and the halo in this image is not specific to a group or a sect; rather, the Muslim artist wanted to place everyone in the same sanctity level and show that all people have the sanctity of this distinction, however, still the red dress of the Caliph and his centrality have made him distinct. The trees that appeared on both sides and the person holding a shovel and plowing the land reflect a clear image of the environment and agriculture. The inclusion of domes by the Muslim artist at the top of the painting draws attention to the architecture that the Caliphs used during the Abbasid period to build palaces or mosques. Table 1 shows the authors' analysis of the status of the halo, the position of people, and occupations with halo.

**Table 1.** Analysis and Interpretation of Halo Status in Paintings. Source: Authors.

Figure Number	Theme of Painting	People with halo	Representation of the halo in a person or subject	Kind of sanctity or superiority
3	Coronation of the ruler	All people	Ruler's magnificence. Two angels on the sides of the ruler. Governor of Mosul (Badr al-Din Lu'lu')	political-religious
4	Caliph's meeting in the court	All people	Showing the ruler's political position/ the ruler's power and conquests/ the ruler's populism	political-social
5	Passengers on the ship	All people	The allegory of Hussain (Caliph) is a lifeboat	religious-social
6	The birth of the Crown Prince	Woman and ruler	The status of the Caliph's Prince	political
7	Etiquette of attending the Caliph	All people	The status of the ruler and the way people sit	political-religious
8	Judicial Council	All people	People in line for arbitration Ruler justice/legitimacy	political-religious-social
9	Pharmacy Drug store	All people	Showing the process of drug production by the doctor and its consumption by the patient	scientific

# PAYKAREH

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Volume 12 Issue 33 Autumn 2023 Pages 68-82

80

Figure Number	Theme of Painting	People with halo	Representation of the halo in a person or subject	Kind of sanctity or superiority
10	Medicine	All people	Flaunting the pain and showing the tree and plant to cure it by drawing it big	scientific-agricultural
11	Planting medicinal herbs	All people	Abbasid Caliphs' interest in planting medicinal plants with clothes and a privileged status	scientific-agricultural
12	Caliphs and philosophers	All people except the one with the hand fan (Maid)	book display/dialogue-centered people / Caliph's attention to scientific discussions	Scientific-philosophical
13	Boat	All people	The centrality of the Caliph/ the color diversity of the people and its plurality/ the flaunting of boat technology	Scientific-political
14	Warrior and his horse	Ruler	The importance of the Caliph's status/ Holding the reins with both hands/ red color of the dress	social-individual
15	Caliph at court	All people	Simultaneous attention of the Caliph as a supervisor to people, medicine, architecture, battle, and agriculture	The sanctification of all classes and the supremacy of the Caliph over classes of people

## Conclusion

By analyzing the research images and samples, a series of results were obtained in determining some of the visual functions of the halo and its representation in the paintings of the Baghdad School in the Abbasid era. The studied samples show that by attributing the halo first to the ruler and then to each person or status, the artist has tried to send a message that a person or a status is of interest, either from the perspective of the Caliphs or other men or from the perspective of the painter, which of course is a reflection of the point of view of his supporter. In response to the research question regarding the method of assigning a halo to people in the images and works of the Abbasid period, it can be said that due to the variety of forms, themes, and styles of representation, the halo has entered the structure of Baghdadi painting with multiple meanings and functions; including functions which affirms sanctity by surrounding a particular part of the human body such as the head or all its parts according to its character and functional role (e.g., all studied samples). In response to this question, «With what approach has the artist made people own the halo?», it is necessary to mention the following: According to Table 1 and the analysis of the research findings, it can be said that the sanctity granted by the artist through assigning halo to people was not merely for the Caliphs, and other people, occupations and situations could also have halo due to their scientific, social, political, and religious status. On the other hand, the Caliph has tried to legitimize his religious, political, scientific, and social status by attending scientific and philosophical meetings and trying to maintain this superiority. Among the functions of the halo in the artworks of the Baghdad School of Painting, it emphasizes and differentiates the nature of work and daily activities of people such as doctors and pharmacists, philosophers, farmers, judges, architects, etc., which prompted Arab-Islamic painters to draw the halo not only from the principle of sanctity but also by recognizing the human role of these occupations in the structure of society and what good

results can be given to them (Figs 8, 9, 10, 11, 12). Among the themes of the Baghdad School painters was documenting some of the specific actions of the rulers and those who influenced their daily lives, whether it was about hunting or monitoring the workers and wages in agricultural lands, pleasure parties, or the judicial council (Figs 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 12, 13). The goal was to convey a clear picture of that ruler's personality, abilities, and government power to everyone. In the end, the painters of the Baghdad School achieved intellectual and cultural dimensions in distinguishing the Muslim artist in their environment and time, the type of vision, the requirements of life and age, and the public and private aesthetic taste, as can be observed in all samples.

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