



Inv. no. 14/2012 verso

CAT. 27. "THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD MEETS THE ANGEL WITH 10,000 WINGS AND THE ANGEL WITH FOUR HEADS," SIGNED BY SULTAN ALI. MINIATURE FROM A COPY OF AL-SARAI'S *NAHJ AL-FARADIS* (THE PATHS OF PARADISE)

IRAN, HERAT; C. 1465

THE LEAF H: 41.1; W: 29.9 CM

Al-Sarai's *Nahj al-faradis* gives a detailed account of Muhammad's mystical ascension to heaven: his journey first to Jerusalem and from there into heaven, right up to God, and then down into hell, with its many levels.

The archangel Gabriel accompanied him on his journey and on the painting the two have reached the seventh heaven. This is where they meet the Angel with 10,000 Wings in the dark sea. When it rises from the sea and shakes its many wings, new angels fall from them like drops. On the left is the Angel with four heads. The depiction of this angel seems to have been inspired by depictions of Christianity's symbols of the four Evangelists: Matthew (man/angel), Mark (lion), Luke (ox), and John (eagle).

The edition of *Nahj al-faradis* from which this leaf and cat. 28 (inv.no. 14/2014 verso) were taken was created in an eastern Iranian, cosmopolitan environment with contacts that spanned an entire continent, from China in the east to Byzantium in the west. Other depictions of figures in the manuscript were inspired by Buddhist iconography.