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# Nizami's Khamsah, 'The Quintet' comprising five Masnawi poems in Persian

North or Western India, late 15th century
On Indian unpolished tan coloured paper, 290 folios
each with 21 lines of a clear, consistent and wellformed nasta'liq, in black ink, rubrication in red or
blue naskh, in 4 columns within double red inner and
single blue outer rules. The manuscript opens (ff. 1v,
2r) with a double-page illuminated sarlouh after an illuminated shamsah (f.1r). 4 illuminated title pages, 39
miniatures, worming on many pages, loose without
binding
24.6 x 16 cm

One of the few surviving illustrated books from Sultanate period India, this manuscript contains 23 miniatures in a Sultanate style of painting that combines both Mamluk Egyptian and Persian features. It has been discussed and reproduced in E. Brac de la Perrière, L'art du livre dans l'Inde sultanats, Paris, 2008, pp. 62-65; pp. 118-119. The pages with miniatures were numbered at an early date in black ink and renumbered later with Hindi numerals. On the basis of these numerals the manuscript originally contained at least 69 miniatures of which at least 64 remained when they were renumbered in North India, possibly in the eighteenth century. Nothing is known about previous owners of the manuscript in India. A circular seal impression on f. 1r is now illegible as is part of another cut off by the repair of the outer margin. An owner's note on f.1v has been largely removed by the same marginal repair. Another on f. 271v in a casual nineteenth century hand records that the manuscript was owned by a certain Mulla Mohammed Idris Ibn Idris, who appears to have resided in Saharanpur north of Delhi. A further late inscription on f. 271v lists a variety of herbs together with prices or quantities. A bold and sprawling comment beneath the final verse of Layla wa Majnun bears some resemblance to the handwriting of the Emperor Jahangir within whose reign it falls but there is no evidence elsewhere that the manuscript has ever formed part of the Mughal royal library.

It reads 'On the date of the 4th Jumadi the second of the year 1031 (16th April 1621 AD) I commenced (it) on Saturday .....rahim [erased] Allah'.

A number of illustrated pages (now dispersed) were removed from the manuscript before 1965 when the concluding illustration to the Iqbalnama was published by the then owner (see Stuart Cary Welch and Milo Cleveland Beach, Gods, Thrones and Peacocks: Northern Indian Painting from two traditions: fifteenth to nineteenth centuries, Asia Society, New York 1965, pp. 57 and 115, no. 2). Following the sale of paintings from the collection of Cary Welch (Sotheby & Co., Catalogue of Fine Indian and Persian Miniatures and a Manuscript Selected from the wellknown collection of Cary Welch, London, 12th December, 1972, lots 178-181) a total of four miniatures became known of which two (179-180) entered the Keir Collection (B. W. Robinson, ed., Islamic Painting and the Arts of the Book, London, 1976, III. 205, 206, pp. 173-4, pl. 46) and one (lot 178) entered the Binney Collection (Indian Miniature Painting From the Collection of Edwin Binney, 3rd: The Mughal and Deccani Schools with some related Sultanate material, Portland Art Museum, Portland, Oregon, 1973, p. 20, no. 5). A fifth miniature was seen with R.E. Lewis of San Francisco in 1976. Four more pages appeared on the market in 1977 (Sotheby's, Fine Oriental Miniatures



Manuscripts and an important Qur'an, London, 20th July, 1977, lots 92-3, and Sotheby's Catalogue of Indian Miniatures, London, 7th December, 1977, lots 114-115). In 1978 a further miniature was sold by P. & D. Colnaghi (see Falk, T., Smart, E.S., Skelton, R., Indian Painting, Mughal and Rajput and a Sultanate Manuscript, P. & D. Colnaghi, London, 1978, no. 1) and entered a private collection from which it was sold in 1997 (Sotheby's Catalogue of Oriental Manuscripts and Miniatures, London, 23 April 1997, lot 1). Another illustrated folio was sold by P. & D. Colnaghi to the Victoria and Albert Museum (I.S. 31-198-0). For miniatures incorrectly ascribed to this manuscript, see Stanislaw Czuma, Indian Art from the George Bickford Collection, Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland, Ohio, 1975, no. 43, and Sotheby's catalogue Indian Himalayan South-East Asian Art and Indian Miniatures, New York, 21 September 1985, lot 447, where a page from the Benares Shahnama (M. Chandra, Studies in Early Indian Painting, London, 1970, pl. X) is also cited as being from this manuscript.

The manuscript containing these miniatures belongs to a small group of which the first and best known is a dispersed Khamsah of Amir Khusraw that came to light with an attribution to early fourteenth century Northern India in the Royal Academy's Persian Exhibition of 1931 (L. Binyon, J.V.S. Wilkinson & B. Gray, Persian Miniature Painting, Oxford, 1933, p. 43, no. 21). It was a particularly prescient attribution, made long before the existence of Sultanate painting became recognised, and it in fact conflicted with Binyon's view that the pre-Mughal Sultans were hostile to miniature painting. The illustration in question had previously been identified as Mongol by Migeon and there does appear to be some input from the fourteenth century Ilkhanid school of Shiraz under the Inju dynasty, but the main stylistic formulae adopted by the illustrators of the manuscript are those of Mamluk Egypt with which there were flourishing trading contacts

during the Sultanate period. There is now general agreement that the manuscript should be attributed to the mid-fifteenth century, with opinions regarding its place of production being largely divided between Delhi and Western India.

It has also been assumed that it was produced in a bourgeois rather than a courtly context, the text written in rather a careless and unsophisticated version of nasta'liq, which with one or two exceptions appears almost a century later in India than when it was first developed in Iran (circa 1400). The Indian sultans appear to have had difficulty in obtaining the services of the finest painters but judging from their monumental inscriptions skilled calligraphers appear to have been more readily available. Another feature of the manuscript which falls short of both Mamluk and Iranian standards is the decoration of the illuminated headings (G.D. Lowry, M.C. Beach, R. Marefat, W.M. Thackston, An Annotated and Illustrated Checklist of the Vever Collection, Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Washington, 1988, figs. 192, 196), which in some respects resemble those of unillustrated manuscripts produced in Jaunpur during the fifteenth century.

Also in all these respects it shares close affinities with an illustrated manuscript of Jalal al-Din Rumi's Masnawi that appeared on the Paris art market in 1988 (unpublished). If these two manuscripts are the earliest known examples of this Mamluk-influenced group, four pages from a Shahnama in the Bharat Kala Bhavan are probably not much later and exhibit scarcely any difference in style (Anand Krishna, 'An Early Ragamala Series' in Ars Orientalis, IV, 1961, figs. 37-9; K. Khandalavala & Moti Chandra, New Documents of Indian Painting – A Reappraisal, Bombay 1969, figs 127-8). By contrast with these, a manuscript of Nizami's Khamsah in the Biblioteca dell'Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, Rome (Eredita dell'Islam: Arte islamica in Italia, a cura di Giovanni Curatola, 1993, pp. 224-5, no.







224), is clearly from a more sophisticated atelier. Its text is written in a fine nasta'liq enclosed within carefully drawn gold rules and the published miniature continues the style of the two earlier manuscripts in a more refined and disciplined manner. Apart from the use of gold marginal rules these are qualities that it shares with the present manuscript. In the case of both, the employment of a scribe capable of writing in a neat, fully-developed nasta'liq hand indicates a date towards the close of the fifteenth century, when refined versions of that script became more available in India. In addition to the typically Iranian calligraphic style the illustrations of the present manuscript also show an increasing degree of Iranian influence. Although a quarter of the miniatures have the banded sky convention found in the three earlier Mamluk-influenced manuscripts, an equal number have the Chinese cloud motif found in Timurid painting. At their best, the miniatures have a freshness and expressiveness not seen in the earlier group but an even clearer indication of new and rising standards of book production is evidenced by the quality and character of the illuminated medallion, the frontispiece and headings, which all show clear affinities with contemporary Timurid manuscript illumination.

#### Illustration

So far 23 illustartions have been identified. These pages are as follows (the original numbers of the miniatures precede those of the later Hindi renumbering):

f. 1r. Illuminated shamsah f. 1v. Opening sarlouh and beginning of the Makhzan al-Asrar f. 2r. Opening sarlouh (left) 4/2 Faridun hunting

Beginning of Khusrau wa Shirin with illuminated 'unwan (heading)

14/12 Khusrau & Shirin feasting after hunting & playing polo

15/13 Farhad before Khusrau

16/14 Shirin at prayer

20/18 Khusrau holds court with Barbad

Beginning of Layla wa Majnun with illuminated 'unwan 26/24 Majnun & his father visit the Ka'ba 30.28 Majnun meets the hunter 32/30 Layla with Ibn Salam after their marriage 33?/? Majnun with the animals 34/31? Layla receives Majnun's letter

35/32 Salim visits Majnun

36/33 Layla visits Majnun in desert

38/35 Majnun in Layla's camp

39/36 The death of Layla

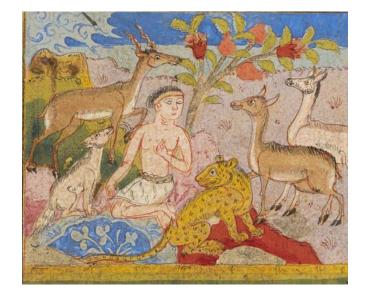
40/37 Majnun is told of Layla's death

41/38 Majnun mourns Layla's death at her tomb

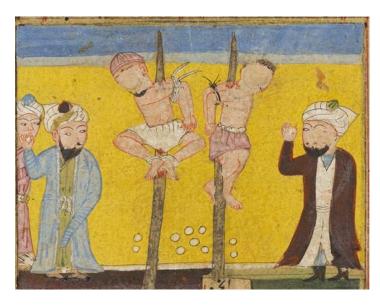
Haft Paykar (first page with 'unwan missing) 51/48 Bahram in the sandalwood pavilion of the Chinese princess

Beginning of the Sharaf Nama with illuminated 'unwan 56/53 Iskandar makes the mirror 57/54 Iskandar on Dara's throne 58/55 Dara's officers punished 66/61 Iskandar & Khizr at the spring

Beginning of the Iqbal Nama with illuminated 'unwan 68/63 Mariyeh & alchemists 67/62 Iskandar and the philosophers (this occurs later in the text despite the earlier numbering of the painting in relation to the preceding miniature)











# A Tethered Favourite Elephant with an Inscription naming Kanak Singh

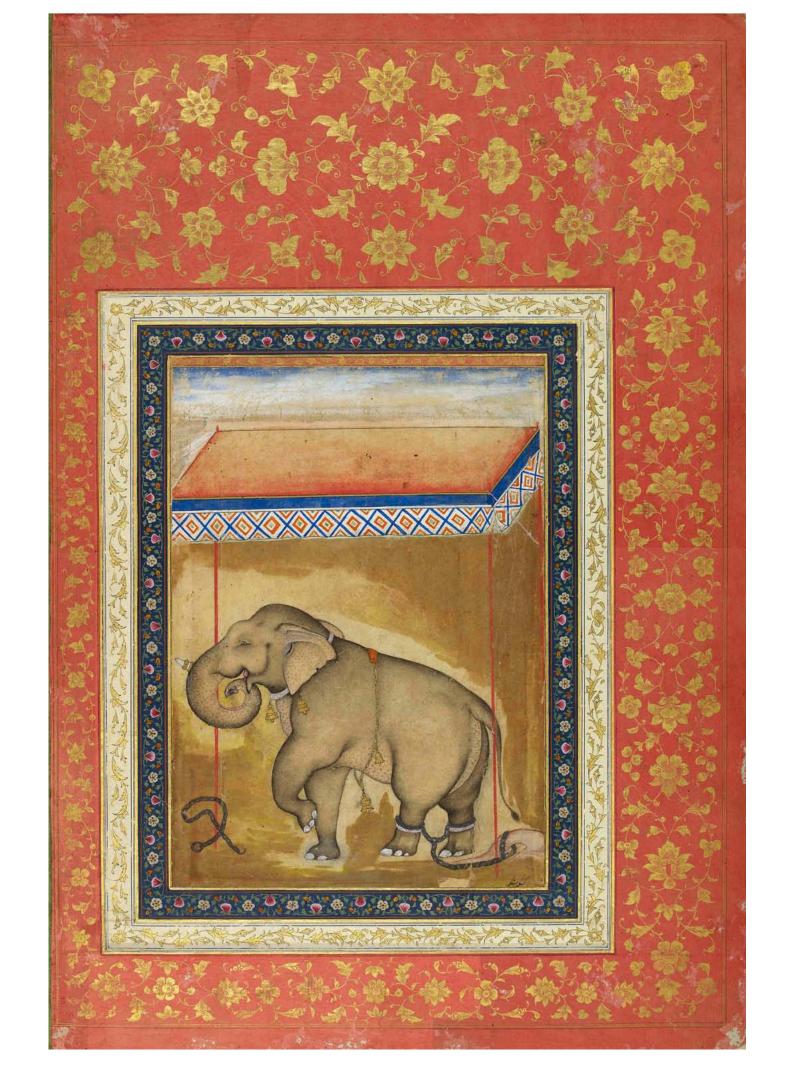
Mughal, 1590s Opaque pigments and gold on paper in an 18th century pink album border Painting: 23.8 x 16.5 cm Folio: 47.9 x 32 cm

A one-tusked elephant tethered by its hind legs to a boulder stands under an awning to shelter it from the sun. Its front fetters lie unused in front of it. A rope of twisted white cord fits tightly round its neck with golden bells attached, while a gold chain with attached bells is tied round its body. Four slender poles support the red awning, which has a fringe with a simple diaper pattern in blue, red and white. The elephant is clearly happy enjoying splashing water onto its front legs from its trunk. The background has been mostly filled in with ochre paint but leaving unpainted paper round some of the elephant's body. Elephants were of course among the most prized possessions of kings and emperors throughout Indian history and the Mughals were no exception. According to Abu'l Fazl, Akbar had 101 elephants for his personal use alone. Portraits of elephants are among the most delightful of all Mughal paintings and the artists who drew them clearly relished their task. Paintings of an elephant under a tree with keepers and mahouts trying to control it are a common feature of several early paintings. Farrukh Chela did several versions including one in the Freer Gallery Washington D.C. c. 1590 (Beach 2012, no. 20E), and two in the Gulshan Album in Tehran (Beach 1981, fig. 12, and Wilkinson and Gray 1935, pl. IIId). The last of these, showing an elephant lying down under a tree, is among the most naturalistic of all Mughal animal studies. Beach in 1981 drew attention to the close connection between Farrukh Chela and Kanak Singh and certainly Kanak Singh here imbues his elephant with as much naturalism as he can. We note the grinning face and cheerful eye, the pulled

back ears, the beautifully modelled trunk, face and body, and the darker grey spots on trunk, ears, belly and rump. But whereas Farrukh Chela's technique includes smooth, highly finished modelling, Kanak Singh here models his elephant with short dabbing strokes of the brush admirably suggestive of the wrinkled skin of his subject.

The form of the artistic attribution is slightly unusual in that it just includes the artist's name without an 'amal-I' ('work of'), but this may be a replacement for the original inscription apparently just to the left and now damaged. Kanak Singh is a rare artist about whose work we do not yet have much information. He is obviously an artist of considerable accomplishments, but his work is seldom seen. His earliest known work is one painting in the Timurnama in Patna from the early 1580s. His work does not appear again until the mid-1590s when he contributed a scene of great originality to the 1595-6 Khamsa of Nizami, showing Khizr washing Iskandar's horse in the water of life (Brend 1995, fig. 37). He may be the same as another rare artist whose name is transcribed Ganga Sen, who again contributed one painting to the 1602-03 Akbarnama (Losty and Roy 2012, fig.27). Verma in his study of Mughal artists and their works conflates the two (1994, p.

Despite Kanak Singh being a known Mughal artist, there is a certain Deccani quality about this painting that is immediately striking. One such feature is the lack of any landscape to fix the subject in space; instead there is an



overall background wash of ochre paint unevenly applied. This and the rendition of the awning recall the painting of the Sultan of Ahmadnagar reclining on a bed under a similar awning, in the Raza State Library, Rampur, which Zebrowski dates to c. 1575 (Zebrowski 1983, fig. 5). Our elephant also recalls the running elephant in a superb Ahmadnagar drawing of 1590-95 formerly in the S C Welch collection (ibid, fig. 16; Sotheby's 6 April 2011, lot. 98). It may be that the artist originally came from the Deccan or perhaps spent time in the Deccan in his missing years in the Mughal studio as later did Farrukh Beg.

This drawing of the one-tusked elephant is perhaps based on the actual likeness of an elephant in Akbar's imperial elephant stables. An account of one such elephant that was responsible for killing the rebel 'Ali Quli Khan in battle in 1567 is given in the Akbarnama: "At this point Batu, the rebel's commander, was brought in. When he was questioned, he said, "I saw him killed by an imperial elephant with one tusk." He described the elephant and its keeper. By imperial command all the elephants of the vanguard were brought in, and when he saw the one-tusked elephant, which was called Nainsukh, he said, "This is the elephant that killed Ali Quli." (vol. 2, p. 433). A painting in the Akbarnama in the V & A illustrates the death of the followers of 'Ali Quli in 1567 by being trampled to death by elephants (Das 1999, fig. 7)

This image can be compared to another painting on cloth of an elephant standing under a canopy in the Indian Museum, Calcutta. Another example of an elephant standing under a canopy is that of the white elephant in the Bharat Kala Bhavan, Varanasi. Both are illustrated in Asok Das's study of the elephant in Mughal painting (1999, figs. 11 and 14), but both paintings include landscape elements in the normal Akbari manner.

#### Literature

Beach, M.C., The Imperial Image: Paintings for the Mughal Court, revised and expanded edition, Freer/Sackler, Washington, Mapin Publishing, Ahmedebad, 2012 Beach, M.C., The Imperial Image, Freer Gallery of Art, Washington, 1981

Brend, B., The Emperor Akbar's Khamsa of Nizami, The British Library, London, 1995

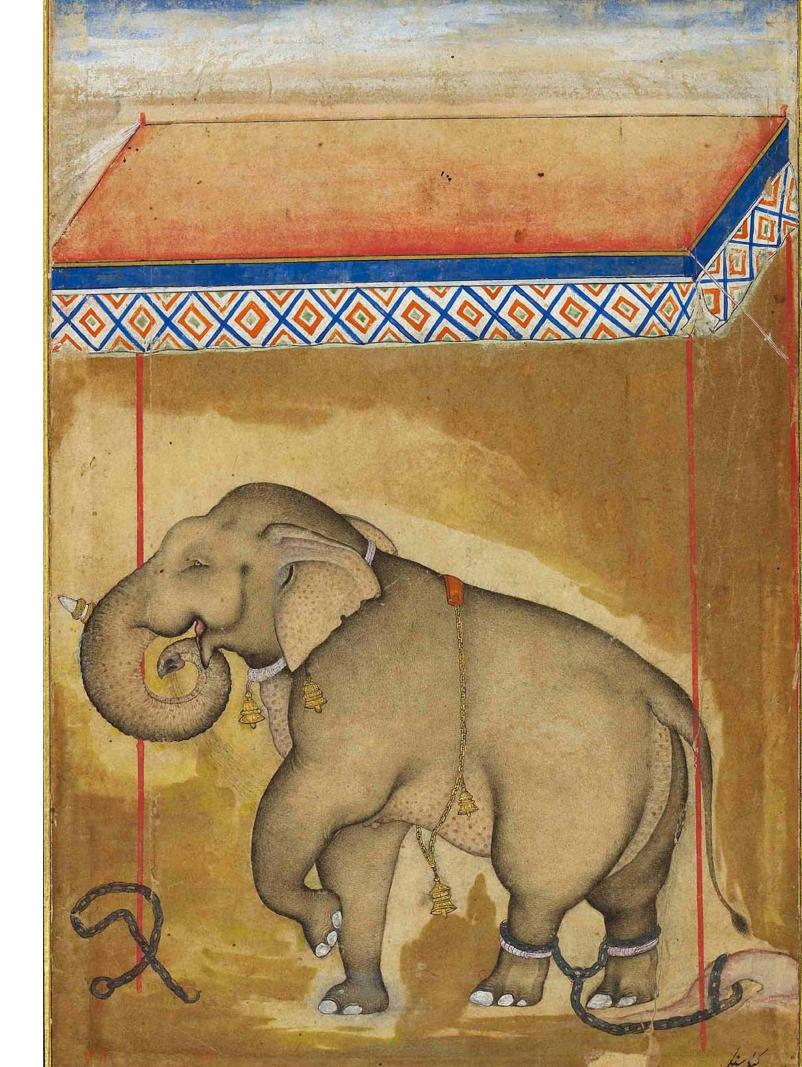
Das, A.K., 'The Elephant in Mughal Painting' in Verma, S.P., Flora and Fauna in Mughal Art, Marg, Bombay, 1999, pp. 36-54

Losty, J.P., and Roy, M., Mughal India: Art, Culture and Empire – Manuscripts and Paintings in the British Library, British Library, London, 201

Verma, S.P., Mughal Painters and their Work: a Biographical Survey and Comprehensive Catalogue, Oxford University Press, Delhi etc., 1994

Wilkinson, J.V.S., and Gray, B., 'Indian Paintings in a Persian Museum' in The Burlington Magazine, vol. 66, 1935, pp. 168-71

Zebrowski, M., Deccani Painting, Sotheby Publications, University of California Press, London and Los Angeles, 1983



# **Chukar Partridge**

India, Mughal, c. 1620 Opaque watercolour heightened with gold on paper, laid down on a beige album page with blue and pink borders

Painting: 12.8 x 8 cm Folio: 33.3 x 21.6 cm

The bird stands facing slightly back against a plain landscape with delightfully drawn flowers (iris, something that looks like nicotiana and another plant) at the bottom of the picture in a style typical of Jahangir period painting.

The Chukar partridge appears continually in paintings from both Iran and India being especially prominant during the 16th and early 17th century. The appearance of seamingly individualised animal studies such as this has long been taken as evidence of Mughal interest in the immediate observation of nature. In fact such illustrations were frequently derived from specific motifs in earlier painting - in our case the mid 16th century Mughal painting on cloth from the Vever Collection, now in the Freer Sackler Washington (S86.0413) published in Lowry &

Beach, 1988, 405, p334-5. Another 17th century Mughal miniature of a similar partridge also after the Vever model is published in Colnaghi 1978, no.26.

### Provenance

Spink & Son

# Literature

Colnaghi, P. & D., Persian and Indian Painting, exhibition catalogue, London, 1976

Lowry, G & Beach C. An Annotated and Illustrated Checlist of the Vever Collection 1988

Stchoukine, I., La peinture indienne à l'époque des Grands Moghols, Ernest Leroux, Paris 1929, pl. xxx1b



#### Haji Nasir Listening to a Prince Reading

By a Mughal artist c. 1650, with landscape added in Avadh in the 1770s Opaque watercolour heightened with gold and black ink on paper Painting: 17.2 x 12 cm; Folio: 49 x 34 cm

The aged divine sits on a terrace by a lake telling his beads with before him a prince who is reading from or studying a book placed on a bookstand in front of him. Haji Nasir has a bolster to support him but the prince to be more comfortable has slung his arm over the marble parapet behind them. Other books and scholarly apparatus lie between them. A durrie is carefully depicted covering the terrace.

Princes visiting divines had become something of a trope in Mughal paintings of the Shah Jahan period and after his death Dara Shikoh who was a disciple of both Mulla Shah and Lal Sahib Faqir became the favourite subject. Earlier they were simply genre scenes in which an artist could show off his command of calm and order. For a contemporary example see Ehnbom, no. 24, and Pal, no. 93, where Dara Shikoh sits with four sages.

The landscape has been reworked in accordance with the more naturalistic taste of the later eighteenth century. The lake is a limpid pale blue. The green hills are gently contoured with naturalistic clumps of trees while the artist is aware of aerial perspective in the way the distant hills have been coloured blue. A town with an Avadhi type of pavilion is also visible. Such landscapes have often been added to seventeenth century portraits which to eyes by then accustomed to looking at European art must have seemed deficient in their simplicity or indeed lack of background at all. The more naturalistic landscape made the portraiture more real. See Losty 2002 for further discussion of this topic.

Inscribed above on the album page in a cartouche: tasvir-I Haji Nasir u shahzada ('portrait of Haji Nasir and the prince').

On the verso is a Persian quatrain composed and written by Hafiz Nurullah. Manijeh Wolpert has kindly translated the verse and describes Hafiz Nurullah as a calligrapher whose dated work is of the early 1740s (Gulistan Palace Library) but who is stated to have been living in Lucknow in the reign of Asaf al-Daula (1775-97). Signed work by Indian calligraphers from the eighteenth century is rare: 'To be united with you, sought in any form is good To repeat your name, spoken in any language is good To see your face, from any points of view is good To wander in your path, in any form of steps is good The guilty servant of God – Hafiz Nurullah – may God forgive his sins – wrote it'

#### Provenance

Sir Elijah Impey

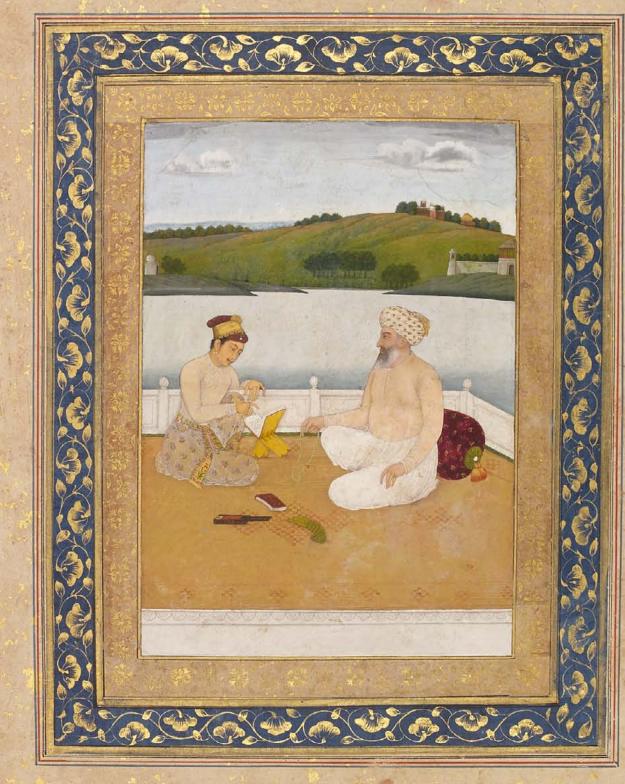
#### Literature

Ehnbom, D., Indian Miniatures: the Ehrenfeld Collection, American Federation of Arts, New York, 1985

Pal, P., and others, Romance of the Taj Mahal, Thames and Hudson, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, London and Los Angeles, 1989

Losty, J.P., 'Towards a New Naturalism: Portraiture in Murshidabad and Avadh 1750-80, in After the Great Mughals: Painting in Delhi and the Regional Courts in the 18th and 19th centuries, ed. B. Schmitz, Bombay, 2002







#### The Aged Aurangzeb Reading a Manuscript

Mughal, 1710-20 Opaque pigments with gold on paper, with a panel of calligraphy on the reverse dated 1145/1732-33 Painting: 17.3 x 11.7 cm

Folio: 35.3 x 24.9 cm

The aged and bent Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb (reg. 1658-1707) is sitting in a golden throne-seat placed on a terrace, looking down at a book or paper in his left hand while his right hand is raised in an interesting gesture showing the fourth and fifth fingers curled back, the rest extended. The hilt of a sword rests on his knees. The throne-seat has a pole with a pearl-fringed canopy attached. The austerity of the setting contrasts with the golden sky behind as well as the rolling tumultuous clouds above populated by putti singing and playing musical instruments - these include a trumpet, sarangi and a pair of tablas being beaten with sticks, while one of the putti proffers a sword.

Aurangzeb in this bent over position is normally associated with his reading from a Koran, as in another more decorative terrace portrait from the Polier Albums in Berlin (Hickmann and Enderlein 1979, no. 39), or as in a window portrait showing just head and shoulders bent over his Koran in the Johnson Collection in London (Losty and Roy 2012, fig. 101). A bust portrait in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, shows him reading the Koran and making the same gesture with his right hand (Hurel 2010, no. 93). Heavy rolling clouds such as these are more a feature of post-Aurangzeb painting as in Anup Rai Chattar's painting of two women on a terrace also in the Johnson Collection (Losty and Roy 2012., fig. 123). A portrait of Shah Jahan meeting Asaf Khan in the Freer/

Sackler Gallery shows musician angels and God the Father in the clouds above (Beach 2012. no. 21H), from which our artist may have derived his idea.

#### Provenance

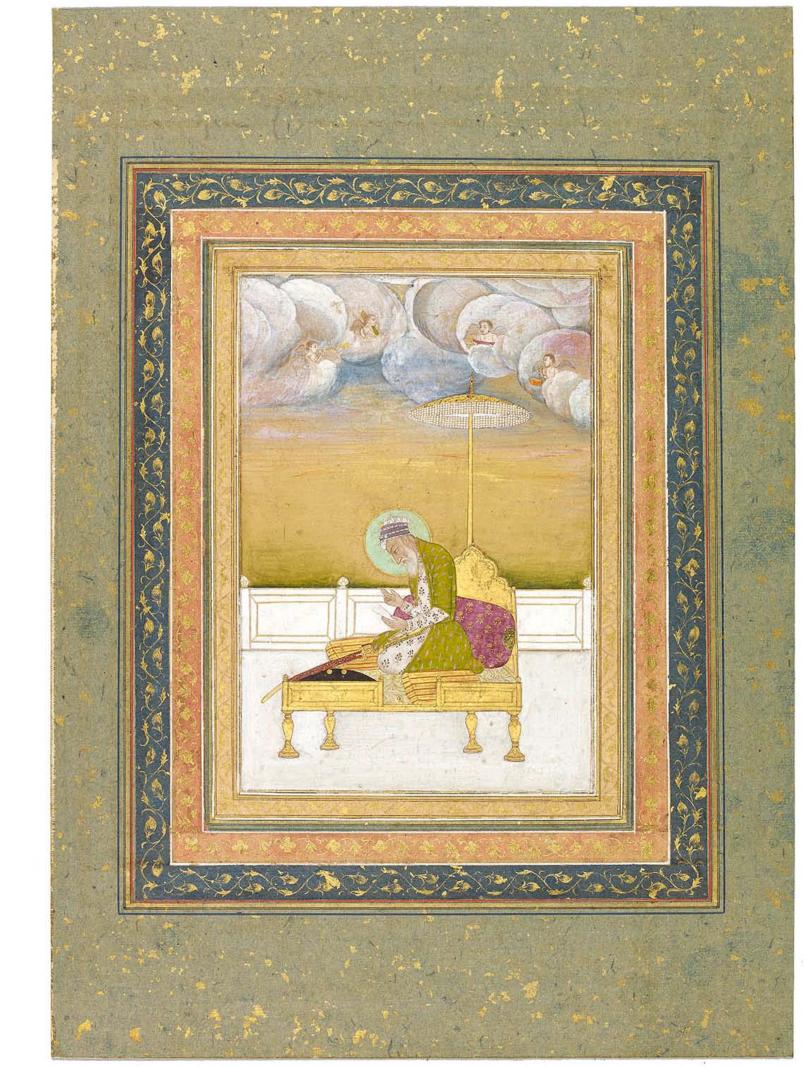
Spink & Son, London (Indian Miniatures, London, 1987, no. 11)

### Literature

Beach, M.C., The Imperial Image: Paintings for the Mughal Court, revised and expanded edition, Freer/Sackler, Washington, Mapin Publishing, Ahmedabad, 2012 Hickmann, R., and V. Enderlein, Indische Albumblätter, Miniaturen und Kalligraphien aus der Zeit der Moghul-Kaiser, Leipzig, 1979

Hurel, R., Miniatures et Peintures Indiennes, Editions BnF, Paris, Vol. I, 2010, Vol. II, 2011

Losty, J.P., and Roy, M., Mughal India: Art, Culture and Empire – Manuscripts and Paintings in the British Library, British Library, London, 2012



#### Two Ladies on a Terrace

By a Mughal artist, 1730-50 Opaque watercolour and gold on paper Painting: 28.2 x 17.6 cm Folio: 53.8 x 38.2 cm

Inscribed in Persian on the flyleaf: 'The picture of the Princess who repaired the rauza-i tajganj' And on the reverse: 'The picture of the Princess who presented rauza-i tajganj to the amir' On the reverse is a quatrain in Persian nasta'liq, copied by Muhammad Husayn in the capital Isfahan in [10]49 (1639-40).

Two ladies are seated at their ease on a terrace. They are seated on a light summer carpet and supported by bolsters while above them is a white canopy. The lady on the right is giving an ornament to the one on the left, who holds a fakir's crutch and also wears a high Chagtai headdress indicating her Mughal descent. A dish of sweetmeats is between them and attendants hold further edibles as well as chowries. In the foreground are four female musicians. Such scenes are some of the most characteristic of Mughal painting in the first half of the 18th century, and even the grandest of imperial albums such as the St Petersburg Muraqqa' contain some: see for example Welch, p. 349, pl. 1.

The scene is set at night by a lake with a full moon appearing between the clouds. The cold blank landscape punctuated by cypress trees suggests the effect caused by moonlight. In contrast candles in the foreground light the terrace scene, although not of course serving as internal light sources. The coldness of the landscape and the lack of interest in spatial recession in the background, not

normally found in Mughal paintings of this date, even in nocturnal scenes, suggest that this style was instrumental in the formation of the Hyderabad style of the mid-18th century as found in the Hyderabad Johnson Ragamala (Falk and Archer, no. 426).

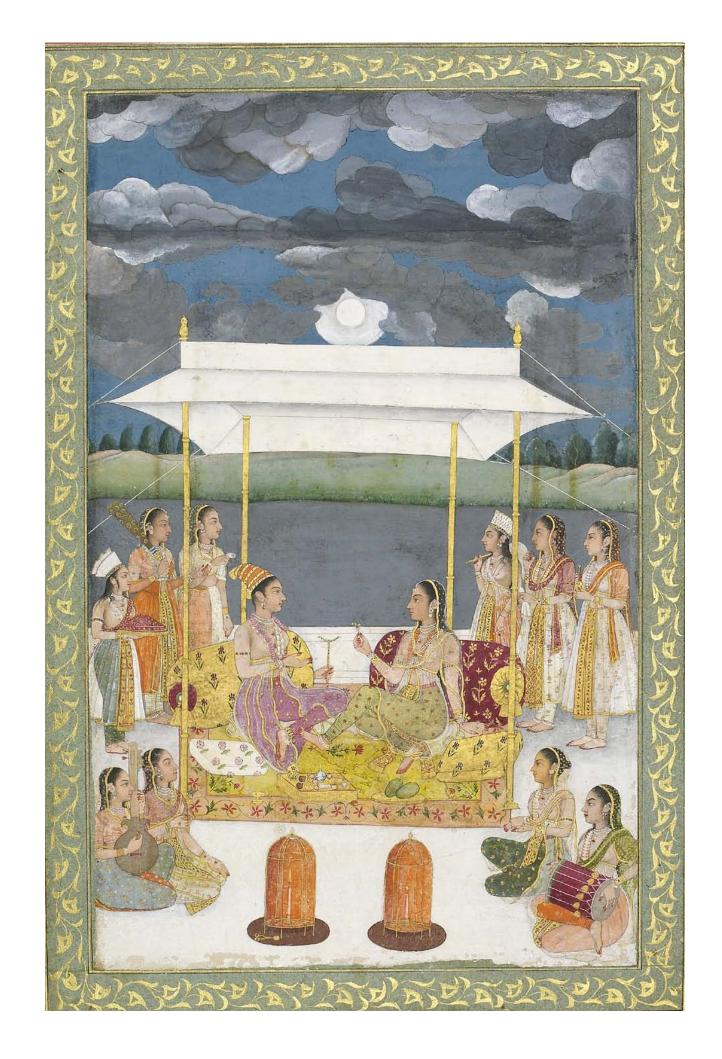
Tajganj is of course the name of the whole complex round the Taj Mahal in Agra, the tomb (rauza) of Mumtaz Mahal, built by the Emperor Shah Jahan. The inscription may be entirely fanciful; on the other hand it may be trying to say that the begum in the picture may have funded the repair of the Taj Mahal. Like any other Indian building, the Taj Mahal needed constant maintenance and repairs to keep it in good condition. It was practically the only great Mughal monument which was well taken care of in the decline of the Mughal empire, until its care was taken over by the East Indian Company in 1805.

#### **Provenance**

Private collection, Switzerland

#### Literature

Falk, T., and Archer, M., Indian Miniatures in the India Office Library, Sotheby Parke Bernet, London, 1981 Welch, S.C., et al., The St Petersburg Muraqqa, Leonardo Arte, Milan, 1996





#### A European Courtesan

Lucknow, c. 1770-1780

Opaque watercolour with gold on paper

Painting: 12.5 x 8.9 cm Folio: 19.7 x 15.2 cm

A bare-bosomed woman draped in a fur-edged cloak sits at her ease reclining against a bolster with a golden veil over her hair secured by a laurel wreath. She holds out her cup to a female attendant who is holding a little tray in one hand and a flask in the other with which to refill the lady's cup. The attendant is fully clothed with a dupatta round her head which is in three-quarter view as often in Avadhi painting. The scene is set within a European-inspired cartouche that was obviously judged suitable for such a European type of figure, who appears in several Avadh versions of the late 18th century.

This attractive little miniature has been the subject of several alterations in the 18th century. First of all set in the lobed cartouche consisting of columns, leaves and crowned face masks within an orange border, it was reset into a larger album format with blue border decorated with gold arabesques which involved adding an orange parapet below to turn the composition into a window or jharokha format with the whimsical addition of a lakeside palace above. This album page at a later stage was cut down into the present oval format.

Milo Beach first identified this figure in a folio of Jahangir's great album of the early 17th century, the Gulshan Album, in the Golestan palace Library, as being copied directly from the engraving by Cornelius Drebbel of Rhetoric or Poetry from the series of The Seven Liberal Arts after the drawings of Hendrik Goltzius (Beach 1965, figs. 11 and 11b). In the original engraving Rhetoric wears a golden veil over her hair secured by a laurel wreath and a fur edged cloak over her back that leaves her upper body and midriff totally exposed. She holds a caduceus in her left hand while her right arm rests on a bolster and she is waited upon by a hovering elderly male attendant. The artist of the Jahangiri miniature has the figure in mirror reverse and has her hold a small wine cup. The attendant has disappeared and a cloak of Indian stuff now covers her midriff and is draped around her. An unpublished Mughal version from around 1700 in the V & A Museum (IS 259-1952) is closely modelled on the Jahangiri version but puts the figure at a jharokha window. This is in turn the origin of the versions in the Johnson Collection in the British Library from Avadh c. 1770 (Falk and Archer 1981, no. 326) and in Paris from Avadh 1770-80 (Bibliothèque Nationale 1986, no. 116). All three are very close to the Jahangiri version even to the added flowers in her laurel wreath but two (the V & A and BL versions) are in mirror reverse (i.e. returned to the original orientation in the print).

Clearly Avadhi artists had access not only to charbas of earlier versions of the subject but possibly even to the print itself, since our version has returned the lady to her original fur lined cloak in the engraving by Drebbel and reintroduced the concept of an attendant. Of course in these transformations the whole point of the original engraving has been lost. One of the series of liberal arts that underpinned learning in the Middle Ages and Renaissance Europe, Rhetoric according to the inscription on the print gave grace to the tongue and swayed princes and leaders. She has become instead an exotic European woman displaying herself at a window as a courtesan.

#### **Provenance**

Konrad and Eva Seitz

#### Published

Seyller, J., and Seitz, K., Mughal and Deccani Paintings, Museum Rietberg, Zurich, 2010, no. 29

#### Literature

Beach, M.C., 'The Gulshan Album and its European Sources' in Bulletin of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston LXIII, no. 332 (1965), pp. 63-91
Bibliothèque Nationale, A la cour du Grand Mogol, Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, 1986
Falk, T., and Archer, M., Indian Miniatures in the India Office Library, Sotheby Parke Bernet, London, 1981
Seyller, J., and Seitz, K., Mughal and Deccani Paintings: Eva and Konrad Seitz Collection of Indian Miniatures, Museum Rietberg, Zurich, 2010



#### Ladies in an Interior

Avadh, 1780-90 Brush drawing with gold, wash and some colour Painting: 14.6 x 11.2 cm Folio: 44.8 x 28.5 cm

Two ladies are seated by a table in earnest conversation. One leans forward in her chair, her hand raised and pointing to emphasise the serious of her point, while her companion leans back listening in a more relaxed attitude. On the table are a book (with the beginning of an inscription 'alam ('work of'), and a tall lit candle. Four other ladies stand in attendance. The women all wear the traditional orhni over their heads but are otherwise wrapped up in robes and cloaks that seem to imitate earlier European drapery as interpreted by Mughal artists of the early 17th century. The scene is set in a room of European classical inspiration with a view through the middle of a triumphant arch out onto an extensive wooded landscape with a lake traversed by a bridge.

Elements derived from European architecture are not unknown in earlier Avadhi paintings. For instance in his version done for Col. Antoine Polier of Tilly Kettle's now lost Shuja ud Dawlah and his Ten Sons of 1774, Mihr Chand substitutes a European classical archway for Kettle's original late Mughal arcades (Roy 2010, fig. 27), a conceit which at that date must have been derived from a European print. Our artist goes further and incorporates an archway supported by subsidiary round-headed arcades separated by pilasters, as if emulating an actual building or a triumphal arch. Such examples of European architecture were being built in Lucknow in the reigns of Asaf al-Daula (reg. 1775-97) and Sa'adat 'Ali Khan (reg. 1798-1814), including the Residency building itself, which seems to have been under construction 1780-1800, mixing late Mughal styles with British neo-classical ones, and Claude Martin's

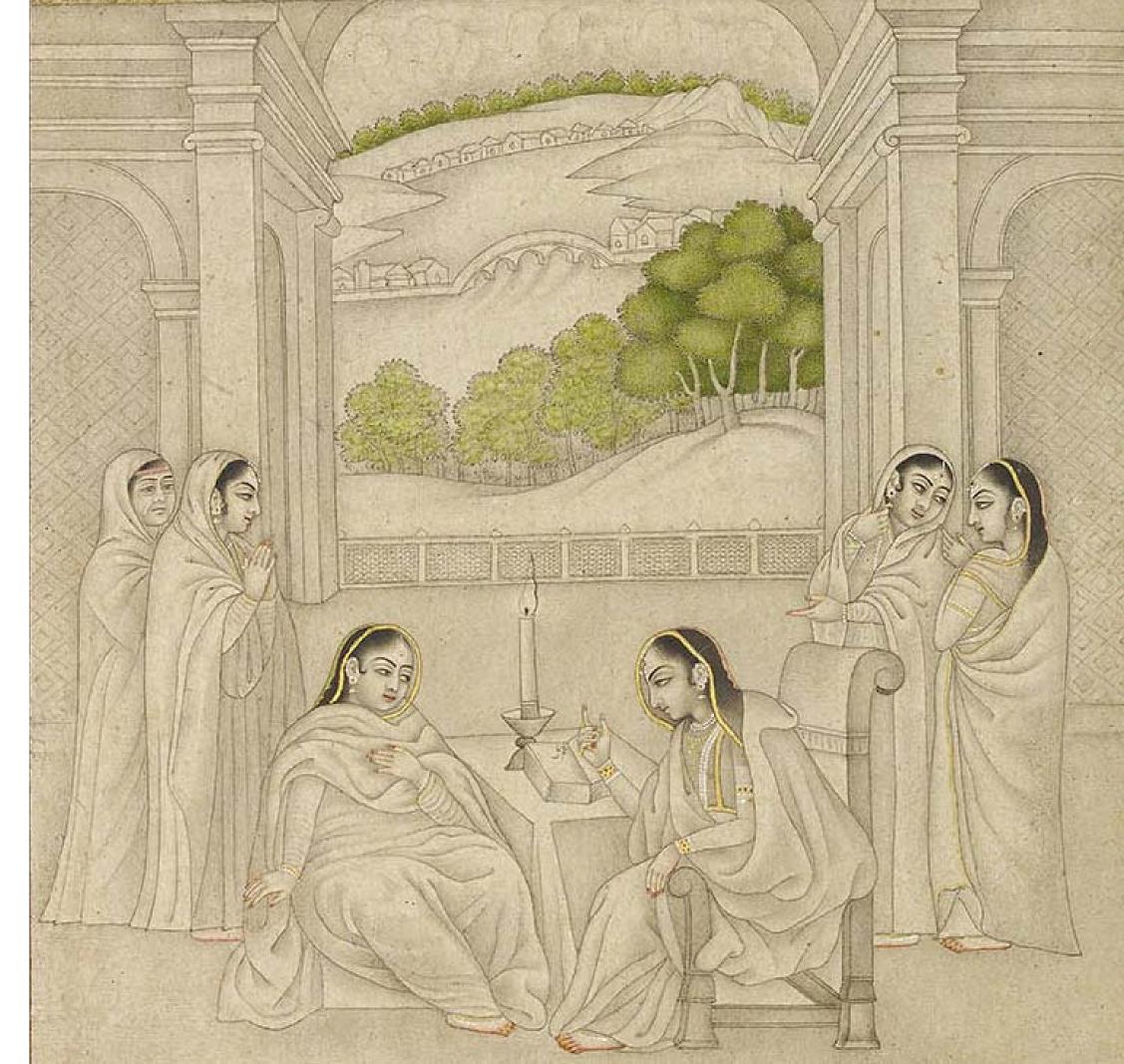
great house Constantia built in the same period. Our artist emulates Mihr Chand's arch in interposing an unnecessary architrave impeding our view of the top of the arch, perhaps like Mihr Chand being unsure how to render the interior of the archway in recession.

The landscape with its European arched bridge is typical of Avadhi work of the later 18th century (Roy 2010, fig. 18), but the technique of the wash drawing is somewhat unexpected. Nim galam had been a favoured technique for copying of or improvising on European prints in the late Akbar and Jahangiri periods, but was not much in favour thereafter in the Mughal studios. It was however revived in Lucknow for the commissions of Richard Johnson when in the city 1780-82, who wanted large numbers of ragamala paintings fairly speedily produced (see Falk and Archer 1981, illustrations pp. 448-62). Johnson's artists mostly worked in a technique with much use of washes and soft shadings to produce the illusion of three-dimensionality, whereas our artist favours a harder and more linear style that is only occasionally found in Johnson's series (e.g. ibid. p. 462).

#### Literature

Falk, T., and Archer, M., Indian Miniatures in the India Office Library, Sotheby Parke Bernet, London, 1981 Roy, Malini, 'Origins of the late Mughal Painting Tradition in Awadh' in Markel and Gude 2010, pp. 165-86





# Portrait of Prince 'Azam Shah with Bow and Arrow

Mughal, Delhi, early 19th century Opaque pigments and gold on paper, laid down in an album leaf with inner blue and outer buff borders with gilt floral scrolls, with a panel of 6 lines of nasta'liq calligraphy on the verso Painting  $18.4 \times 11 \text{ cm}$  Page  $34 \times 23.2 \text{ cm}$ 

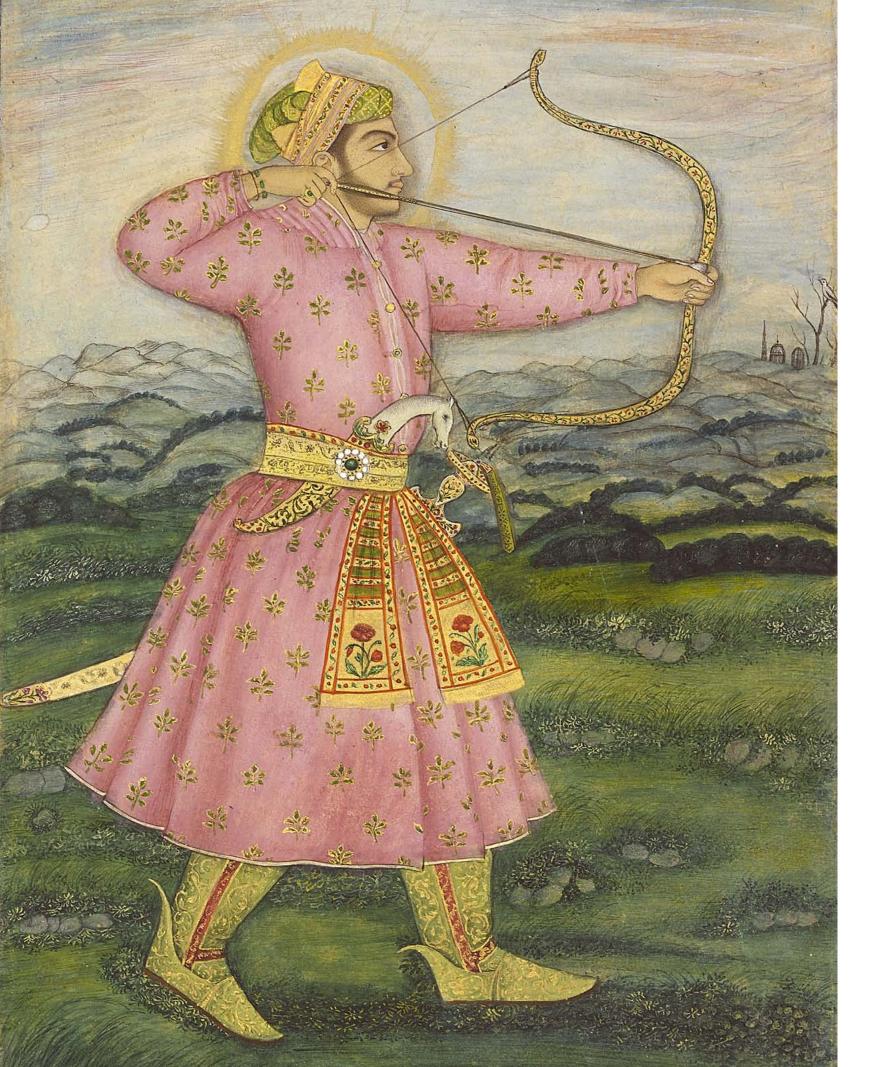
Inscribed above in Persian: shabih-i Shahzada Muhammad 'Azam Shah ('portrait of Prince Muhammad 'Azam Shah')

The prince 'Azam Shah wearing a lilac jama, green turban and much gold brocade stands in a green landscape with dimpled hills beyond aiming an arrow at something unseen. A tall tower and some domes on the horizon possibly are meant to represent the Qutb Minar and its mosque at Mehrauli 12 miles south of New Delhi. He wears 17th century costume and hence must be the Shahzada 'Azam Shah (1653-1707) who was the third surviving and favourite son of the Emperor Aurangzeb (reg. 1658-1707). In almost all his known portraits 'Azam Shah wears a beard confined to his jawline that is seen in two portraits in the Johnson Collection in the British Library from 1672 and 1690-1700 (see Losty and Roy 2012, figs. 96 and 98), although in the drawing in the Hodgkin collection showing him entering Ahmadabad in 1701 he has grown a full beard (Topsfield 2012, no. 31). The earlier of the two British Library portraits by Anup Chattar shows the prince at the age of 19 with a more advanced beard than is shown here, so that our portrait must be based on an original of a few years earlier. On Aurangzeb's death in 1707, 'Azam Shah claimed the throne but was defeated and killed at the battle of Jajau by his elder brother Mu'azzam Shah who ascended the throne as Bahadur Shah or Shah 'Alam I (reg. 1707-12).

The painting dates from the early 19th century renaissance of Mughal painting, as Delhi under the pax Britannica slowly recovered from the turbulent years of the last half of the previous century. Some studios specialised in copying old master Mughal paintings from the imperial albums as well as illustrating Mughal histories in a similar heavy style. William Fraser and his brother James Baillie, in addition to their commissioning of the album of naturalistic paintings for which they are most famous (see Archer and Falk 1989), also acquired a collection of these copies, most of which were dispersed at Sotheby's 14 October 1980, lots 183-211. Many of these new copies of earlier works were mounted into album pages with floral or arabesque borders reflecting those of the imperial albums of Shah Jahan. Both the Wantage Album in the V & A Museum (Clarke 1922) and the Kevorkian Album in the Metropolitan Museum and Freer Gallery (Welch et al. 1987, nos. 79-100) contain such 19th century copies as well as their original masterpieces.

Our artist has an interesting approach to landscape conventions, which are not of course found in the 17th century painting which he is copying. A receding landscape composed of successive lines of darker grasses, much like that in the 19th century copy of a portrait of 'Abdallah





Khan with the head of Khan Jahan Lodi now in the Kevorkian Album (ibid., no. 90, which our album page greatly resembles), gives way to a dramatic succession of dimpled hills rather like those found in Lucknow paintings of the later 18th century (Falk and Archer 1981, pp. 352-53 for example). Our artist has a good command of detail – the rather beautiful horse-headed jade hilt of his dagger, his gilt-embossed boots, and the fine decorations of his patka, sword hilt, scabbards and bow. The bare trees with a large bird sitting on a branch by the mosque domes adds an interesting touch.

#### **Exhibited**

Asian Art, A Collector's Choice, Herbert F. Johnson Museum, Cornell University, Oct 17-Nov 25, 1974 (No 73, illustrated)

#### Literature

Archer, M., and Falk, T., India Revealed: the Art and Adventures of James and William Fraser 1801-35, Cassell, London, 1989

Clarke, C. Stanley, Indian Drawings: ... the Wantage Bequest, London, 1922

Falk, T., and Archer, M., Indian Miniatures in the India Office Library, Sotheby Parke Bernet, London, 1981

Losty, J.P., and Roy, M., Mughal India: Art, Culture and Empire – Manuscripts and Paintings in the British Library, British Library, London, 2012

Topsfield, A., Visions of Mughal India: the Collection of Howard Hodgkin, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, 2012

Welch, S.C., Schimmel A., Swietochowski, M.L. & Thackston, W.M., The Emperor's Album: Images of Mughal India, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York 1987

# Ragamala Illustration: Kaphi Ragini

Sirohi, c. 1690 Opaque watercolour on paper Inscribed above in nagari: kaphi ragani rati 26 Painting: 22 x 15.1 cm Folio: 27.6 x 20.6 cm

A lady sits on a takht outside her house with two female attendants: one holds a flower wand, the other raises a hand to grasp the branch of the tree behind her. The inscription identifies the subject as Kaphi ragini, a subject which is unique to ragamalas from Sirohi. Four versions of this subject were known to Ebeling (pp, 93-94), but since Sirohi ragamala subjects do not have texts, he goes on to remark that the meaning of the iconography is quite obscure. A painting of this same ragini in the Fogg Art Museum, Harvard, apparently from the earliest Sirohi set c. 1675 (ibid, fig. 219), shows the architecture and figures in mirror reverse to ours.

Sirohi, a small state in southern Rajasthan between Mewar and Gujarat, seems to have produced various ragamala sets in the late seventeenth century, all in a brilliant style of its own, as well as using highly individual iconographies. See Ebeling pp. 92-94 for an analysis of Sirohi ragamalas. The lower parts of the compositions with their small terraces, steps and pots show the style's dependence on that of the school of Sahib Din in Mewar from the mid-century, but the distinct colour scheme of brilliant yellows and oranges is all of its own. For other pages from these Sirohi sets, see ibid, pl. C31-32, C41 (the latter appears to be from the

same set as our painting), nos. 220-221; Ehnbom 1985, no. 52; Bautze 1991, with further references; Mason 2001, no. 56; Ahluwalia 2008, fig. 16; and Losty 2010, no. 14.

#### Provenance

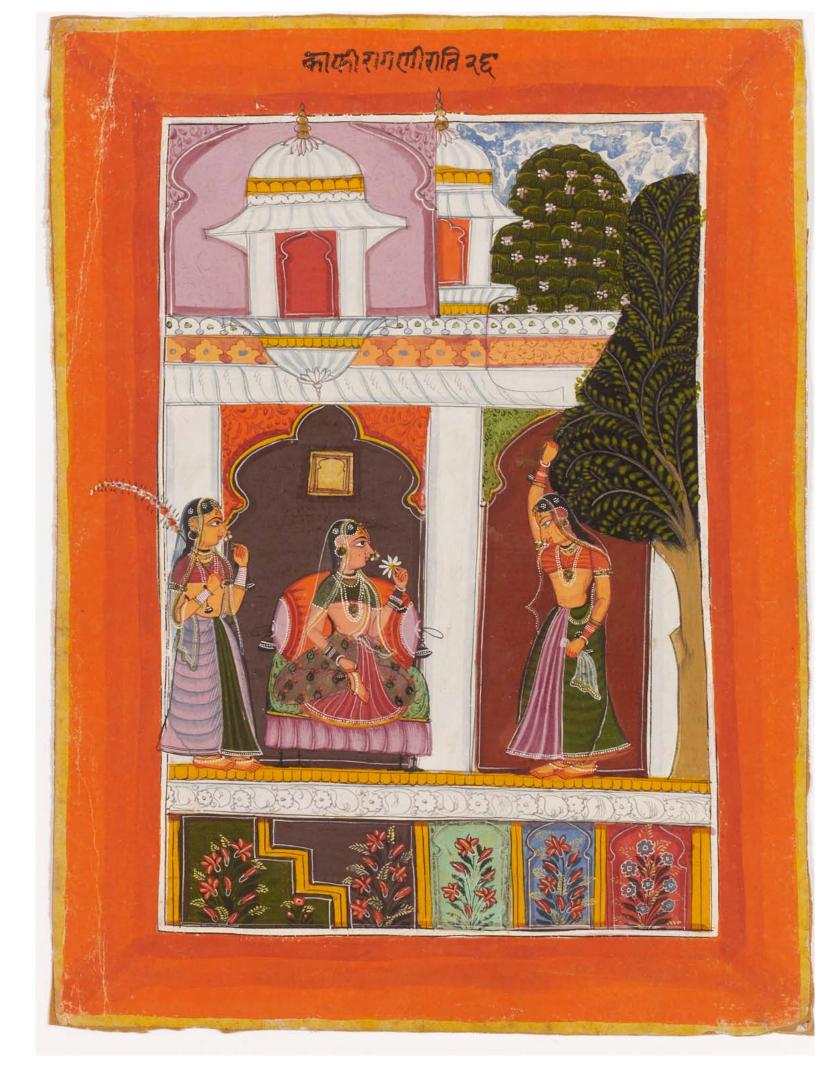
Konrad Seitz collection

#### Literature

Ahluwalia, R., Rajput Painting: Romantic, Divine and Courtly Love from India, British Museum Press, London, 2008

Bautze, J., Lotosmond and Lowenritt: Indische Miniaturmalerei, Linden Museum, Stuttgart, 1991 Ebeling, K., Ragamala Painting, Ravi Kumar, Basel, 1973 Ehnbom, D., Indian Miniatures: the Ehrenfeld Collection, American Federation of Arts, New York, 1985 Mason, D., Intimate Worlds: Indian Paintings from the Alvin O. Bellak Collection, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia, 2001

Losty, J.P., Indian Miniatures from the James Ivory Collection, Francesca Galloway, London, 2010



### Devagandhara ragini

Folio: 27.1 x 20.6 cm

Mewar, 1690-1700 Opaque pigments and gold on paper Inscribed above with three lines of a Hindi ragamala text of Devgandhara ragini numbered 19 Painting: 21.6 x 15.2 cm

An aged and bearded ascetic sits on a little stool fiddling with his long matted hair while his young pupil squats beside him and points to numerals on a squared takht or writing board. The ascetic sits outside a domed pavilion containing his bed and worldly belonging, with the eave ending in a makara—headed finial bearing a pennant, a trait inherited from 16th century Rajput painting. Pigeons and other birds strut on the roof and adorn the nearby plantain and other trees, while below is a lotus pond in which ducks sport happily.

According to Ebeling (1973, p. 66), Devagandhara ragini is described poetically as a woman who has wasted away so much in longing for her absent lover that she has turned into an emaciated ascetic. Artists approached this problem in several ways when illustrating this ragini: some just show an aged ascetic, others give him some female characteristics such as jewellery or beardlessness, while others introduce a disciple or pupil as here, although normally the disciple is female. The composition of our painting is very close to the interpretation of this ragini found in contemporary Bundi ragamalas, including the domed pavilion with the makara-headed and beflagged finial, except that they lack the pupil studying his numbers (Ebeling 1973, no. C21; Bautze 1991, no. 31).

It is possible that the prince Amar Singh, who had his own court and studio before his accession in 1698, may have attracted artists from his maternal home of Bundi (Topsfield 2002, p. 117)

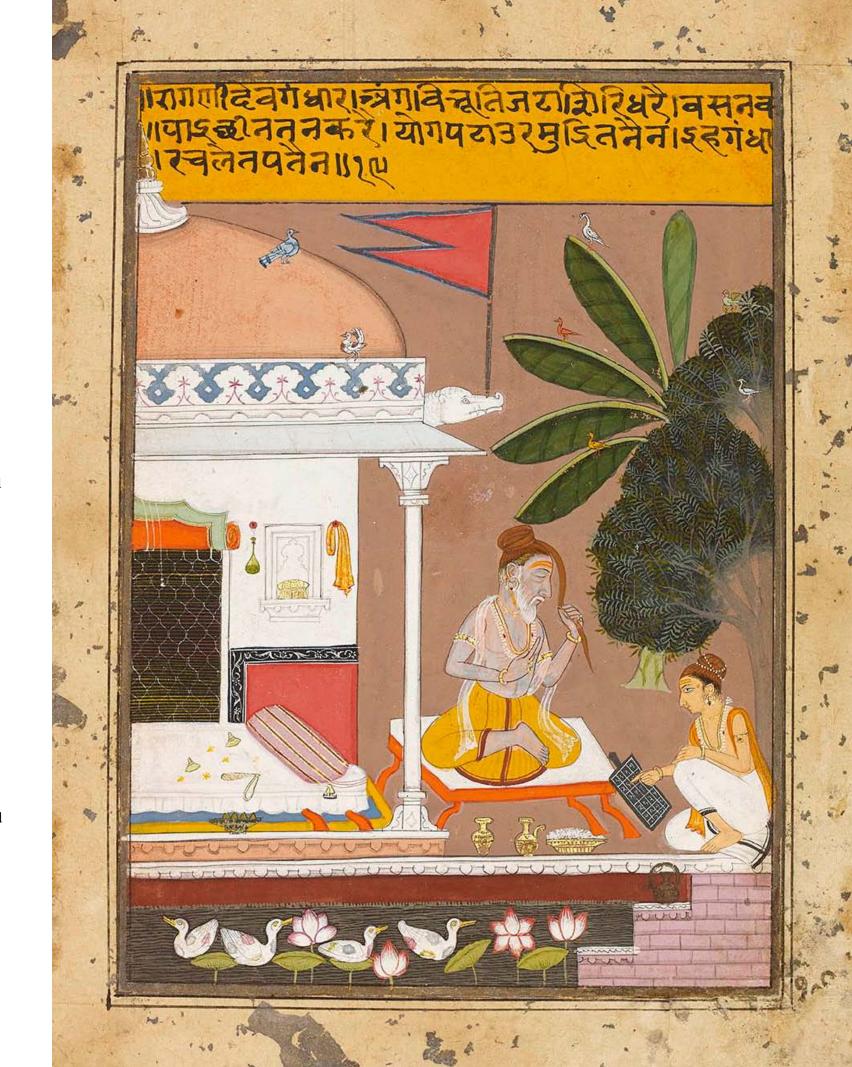
The painting is from a dispersed ragamala series of 42 pages once in the collection of Gopi Krishna Kanoria and listed and discussed in Ebeling 1973, p. 184. Others from the series are published in Colnaghi 1979, nos. 51-54; Topsfield 1986, no. 10, and Bautze 1991, no. 51, who also lists pages published in auction catalogues. The series is unusual for a Mewar series in that it lacks the normal red border but has instead an applied pale paper border sprinkled with silver.

#### **Provenance**

G K Kanoria collection

#### Literature

Bautze, J., Lotosmond and Löwenritt: Indische Miniaturmalerei, Linden Museum, Stuttgart, 1991
Colnaghi, P & D., Indian Painting: Mughal and Rajput and a Sultanate Manuscript, London, 1978
Ebeling, K., Ragamala Painting, Ravi Kumar, Basel, 1973
Topsfield, A., Paintings from the Rajput Courts, Indar Pasricha Fine Arts, London, 1986
Topsfield, A., Court Painting at Udaipur: Art under the Patronage of the Maharanas of Mewar, Artibus Asiae, Zurich, 2002





12. Detail

Pilgrimage Route Map for the River Alakananda depicting Fateh Shah of Garhwal (1684-1716) in his Palace at Srinagar

India, by a Rajasthani artist in Garhwal, early 18th century Opaque watercolour on cloth 39.5 x 280 cm

### Inscribed with numerous nagari inscriptions

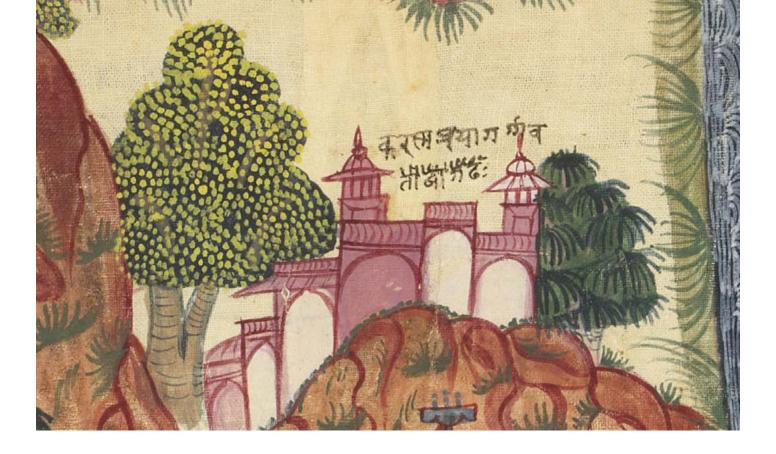
This long panel from a pilgrimage route map to Badrinath in Garhwal depicts the river Ganga and one of it's chief headwaters the Alakananda leading to the palace of raja Fateh Shah of Garhwal (1684-1716) in Srinagar. Fateh Shah controlled this pilgrimage route.

Local artistic tradition as recorded in Mukandi Lal's works mention Hindu artists coming with the Mughal prince, Sulaiman Shikoh to Garhwal in 1660 where the ancestors of the early Garhwal artists Mangat Ram and Mola Ram settled (Archer pp 102-03). Our scroll is very much in a Rajasthani style and may be indicative of another influx from the planes, as Archer notes an increasing prosperity due to a massive Rajput immigration in the reign of Fateh Shah (p 98). Certainly, there are other, later pilgrimage maps from Garhwal which very much reflect the interests of this one, although their style has been much modified to a more Kangra/Garhwali one (Lal, pls.46a-b attributed Mola Ram c1770 and pls 46b, 47a-b attrib.to his son, Jerala Ram). These maps are all inscribed like ours in nagari rather than takri characters.

The path is conspicuously painted yellow all the way along the scroll where travellers follow it up and down mountainsides and over the bridges across the rivers. The river and its tributaries are depicted in brilliant blue and white basket patterns, while the hillsides and mountains are in shades of mauve and brown set off by the brilliant depiction of the various trees in traditional Rajasthani style and by the numerous shrines.

Our panel begins at Deoprayag. The villages of Josigaon and Josimath are noted. There are temples to Thakur (Krishna), Laksmi, Narasimha and Mataji. Lots of dharamsalas (pilgrim hostels) are shown. The Narasimha temple is presumably the famous one at Josimath. Josimath is the winter headquarters of the Rawul and other priests from Badrinath who bring the deity and the treasures down before their temple is completely cut off by the snow for six months of the year.

Next comes Karnaprayag where the Karnaganga comes in, shown here coming in from the right but in fact from the left (now called the Pindar River). Pilgrims are bathing where the Karnaganga joins the Alakananda at a Siva

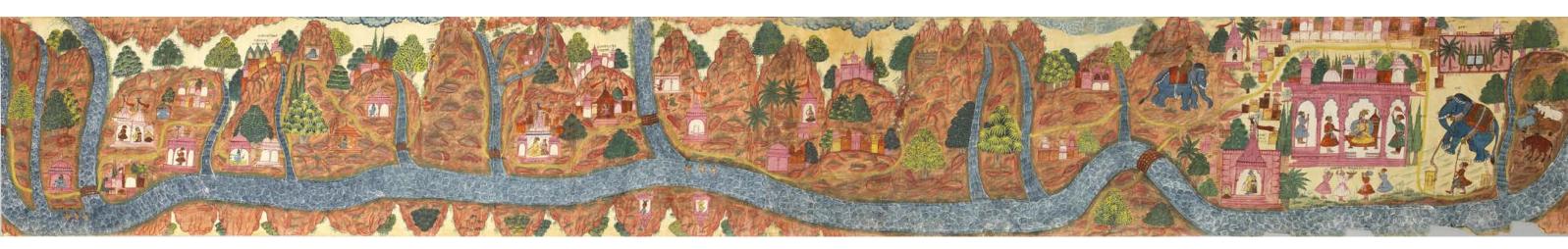


temple. Five peaks tower over the road where a sacred tank is dedicated like the mountains themselves to the five Pandava brothers, who spent time here in meditation according to the Mahabharata. They seem to represent the Pancakedara or five great Siva shrines round Kedarnath which tower above the road to Badrinath. The road off to Kedarnath leaves now before Srinagar.

We have now reached what must be Srinagar the old capital of Garhwal, since here is depicted the Raja's palace, but there is no inscription. Two elephants guard the outskirts of the palace and a Laksmi temple. Within the palace is seated Raja Fateh Shah. He is giving an audience to an official while outside his palace some men are awaiting a darshan or viewing of the Raja. Fateh Shah ruled the state of Garhwal 1684-1716 from his capital of Srinagar. Cows graze peacefully on a meadow while a bazaar is noted above the palace. For an apparently contemporary equestrian portrait of Fateh Shah see Lal 1951, p.39a.

#### Literature

Lal, M., 'Garhwal School of Painting' in Roopa-Lekha, Vol. XXII, no 2, 1951, pp. 27-41 Archer, W.G., Indian Painting from the Punjab Hills, Vol. 1, 1973, pp. 97-110



# Rawal Sri Lakhan Singh as a Bridegroom

Ascribed to Ustad Ahmad son of Pir Bakhsh, Bikaner, 1733-34

Opaque pigments on paper Painting: 14.1 x 10.9 cm Folio: 16.7 x 13.3 cm

Formerly inscribed on the verso: raval sri Lakhan Singhji ri sabi s 1790(?) kalam ustad ahmad pir baks re bete ri ('portrait of Rawal Lakhan Singh 1790?/1733-34? Work of Ustad Ahmad son of Pir Bakhsh') and with the erased stamp of the personal collection of the Maharaja of Bikaner

An immensely fat and ugly grey-haired Rajput chieftain sits surrounded by cushions to support his bulk. He is dressed as a bridegroom in saffron robes and turban, as well as the traditional sehwa or head-ornament, but as if to emphasize the absurdity of his position, flies are hovering round his mouth revelling in the stink. The emphasis in this painting is definitely satirical, a genre more readily associated with Kishangarh painting than with Bikaner (see Haidar 2000). Other immensely fat Rajput personages have been painted with equal candour but with less cruelty, as for instance Baba Bharath Singh of Shahpura in Mewar (Mason 2001, nos. 59-60) depicted clothed and unclothed, or an unknown Pahari nobleman by Nainsukh (Francesca Galloway 2012, no. 1).

The inscription on the verso has now vanished, but fortunately it has been published by Navina Haidar (as above, in Haidar 2000, p. 91) ascribing the painting to an Ustad Ahmad son of Pir Bakhsh and dated Samvat 1790/1733-34AD. A very similar version of this painting was ac-

cording to Haidar in a private collection on loan to the Harvard University Art Museums that is probably the one published by Sherman Lee as in a private collection (Lee 1960, p. 49), describing the subject as Trilokha Khatri as a bridegroom.

#### Provenance

Spink & Son Ltd

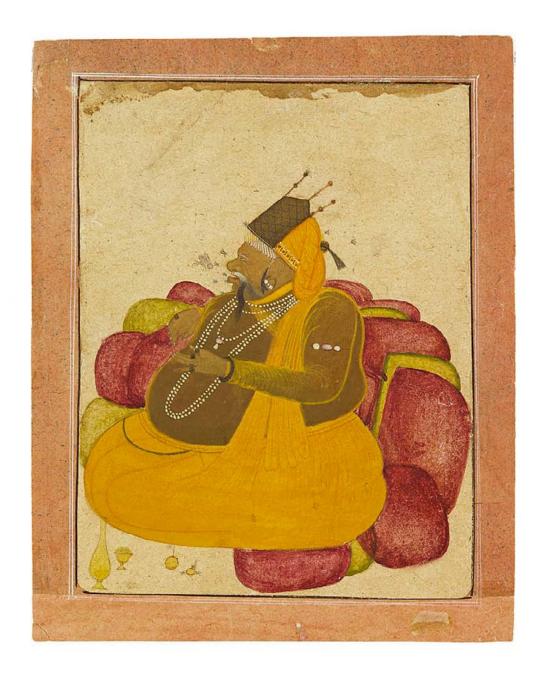
#### Published

Haidar, N., 'Satire and Humour in Kishangarh Painting' in Topsfield, A., ed., Court Painting in Rajasthan, Marg Publications, Bombay, 2000, pp. 78-91, fig. 10

#### Literature

Galloway, F., The Divine & the Profane: Gods, Kings & Merchants in Indian Art, Francesca Galloway sale catalogue, London, 2012

Krishna, N., 'The Umarani Usta Master-Painters of Bikaner and their Genealogy' in Court Painting in Rajasthan, ed. A. Topsfield, Marg, Bombay, 2000, pp. 57-64
Lee, Sherman, Rajput Painting, New York, 1960,
Mason, D., Intimate Worlds: Indian Paintings from the Alvin O. Bellak Collection, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia, 2001





# A Courtesan at a Balcony

Bikaner, late 17th century
Opaque pigments on paper
Inscribed on the reverse in nagari: Ustai Rukamdi
rai bete ri nazar kiyo ri an. 47 ('presented by the son
of Usta Ruknuddin no. 47') together with inventory
stamps and inscriptions from the personal collection
of the Maharaja of Bikaner.
Painting: 15.2 x 9.8 cm

Painting: 15.2 x 9.8 cm Folio: 19.7 x 15 cm

A woman is portrayed at a balcony, her gaze fixed on something off to her right. She represents a combination of Indian ideas of European courtesans and of the Virgin Mary. She wears a pink gown up to her neck and is swathed in a yellow transparent shawl that covers her head and shoulders and is wound round her body in a passable attempt to represent the Virgin's habitual clothing in art, but the transparency of her gown over her nipples and her amused and flirtatious face suggest the artist has another kind of woman in mind. The paint is applied in washes of watercolour without burnishing giving an almost European feel to the technique.

Appearing at the jharokha window, an iconography jealously guarded by Jahangir, had become by the later 17th century a commonplace of female portraiture. Whereas most such portrayals show the woman in hierarchical profile, showing the woman in three-quarter view would seem to suggest that the women were courtesans. This type of image was formulated in Golconda in the late 17th century as in images such as a courtesan at a balcony holding a bird on her finger( published Zebrowski 1983 fig. 179) and a seated courtesan dressed in European costume holding a bird (Falk and Archer 1981, no. 478).

Deccani influence on Bikaner traditions followed the participation of Raja Karan Singh (r. 1631-1669) and his son Anup Singh (1669-1698) as commanders in the Mughal campaign in the Deccan. As a result they were able to send back to Bikaner both Deccani artists and paintings, which had a profound influence on Bikaner painting. Our portrait seems directly modelled on an image such as the one published by Zebrowski substituting a flower for the bird and heavier European robes for the transparent veils swathing the Golconda figure. A bust portrait of a cour-

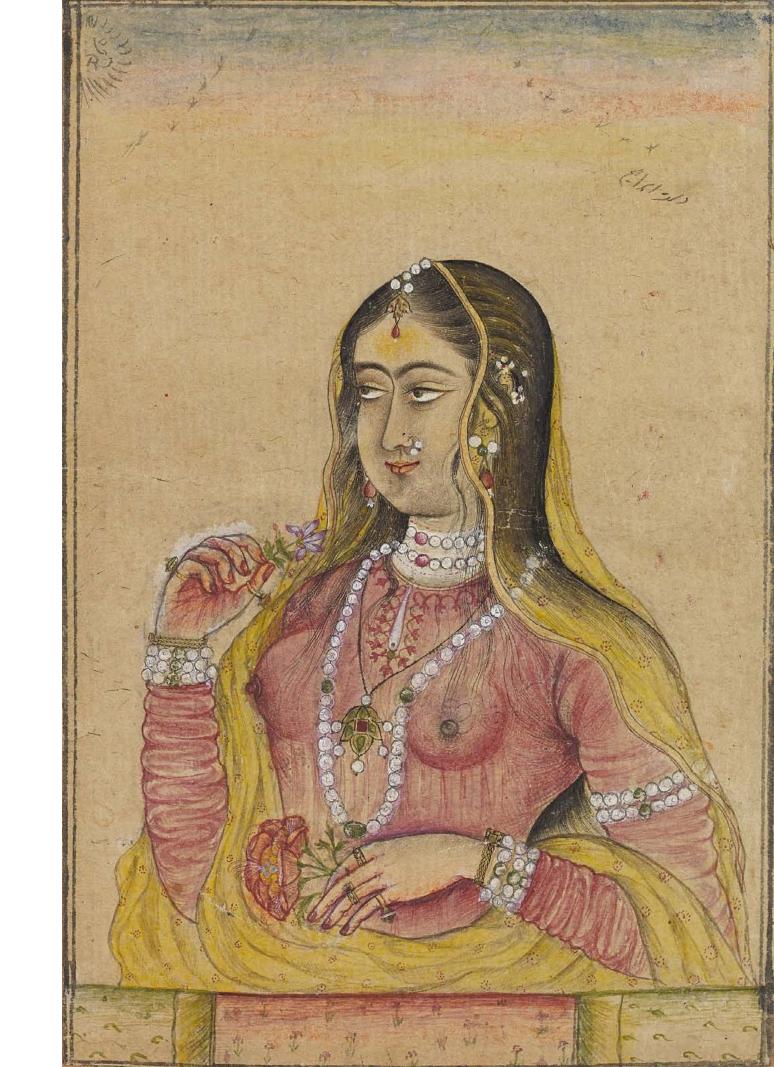
tesan was in the former Khajanchi collection (Khandalavala et al. 1960, fig. 71) painted by Hasan Reza son of 'Ali Reza, c. 1680. That woman looks out at us appraisingly and Hasan Reza gives her eyes, nose and mouth harder outlines than is the case with our artist, although there is a similar shadow behind the nose. Each hair of her head is individually depicted as is the case with our artist, although the effect is different in his wash technique than in Hasan Reza's miniaturist one.

The portrait was made a nazar, i.e. a present by an artist to the Maharaja of Bikaner on the occasion of a festival, but unfortunately the inscription does not have a date. It was however presented by a son of the great artist Usta Ruknuddin, of whom there were several who were worthy successors of Ruknuddin (listed in Krishna 2000, p. 62). Whether this is the work of the father or of a son is not clear. Certainly some of the passages of the drawing are exquisite – the woman's hands in particular holding a rose in one and iris in the other and her sharp-featured but beautifully modelled face.

#### Literature

Falk, T., and Archer, M., Indian Miniatures in the India Office Library, Sotheby Parke Bernet, London, 1981 Khandalavala, K., Chandra, M., and Chandra, P., Miniature Painting: a Catalogue of the Exhibition of the Sri Motichand Khajanchi Collection, Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi, 1960

Krishna, N., 'The Umarani Usta Master-Painters of Bikaner and their Genealogy' in Court Painting in Rajasthan, ed. A. Topsfield, Marg, Bombay, 2000, pp. 57-64 Zebrowski, M., Deccani Painting, Sotheby's, London and New York 1983



### Two Women in a Landscape

Bikaner, late 17th century
Opaque pigments on paper
Inscribed on the reverse with inventory numbers in
nagari: laghu an. 11 ('small [portfolio?] no. 11; (and
in a more modern hand) tasvir nam. 24 ('picture no.
24') together with more modern ones
Painting: 17.7 x 10.3 cm Folio: 21.7 x 16.2 cm approx.

Two women are standing in a landscape. One looking down and slightly thoughtful is holding a cup and bottle in her hands, the other in three-quarter profile is looking at her companion searchingly, leaning with one arm on her companion's shoulder and holding a poppy in her other hand. Both women wear the Rajput costume of bodice, skirt and transparent orhni tucked into folds at the waist and pulled up over the head and shoulders. The artist has had fun with the modelling of the pleats and folds of the orhnis and especially with the precise placing of the stylised designs on the further woman's orhni. The two are standing on a ground bedecked with flowers between two trees. Pearls in abundance decorate their heads, necks and bosoms, while the nearer lady also has a garland of poppies round her neck, which perhaps the other woman is planning to add to.

The colours are mostly applied as washes lending lightness to the composition, with many passages of blank paper. The painting shows some influence of Deccani styles of painting, particularly in the treatment of the large square heads and the eyes, which can be compared to contem-

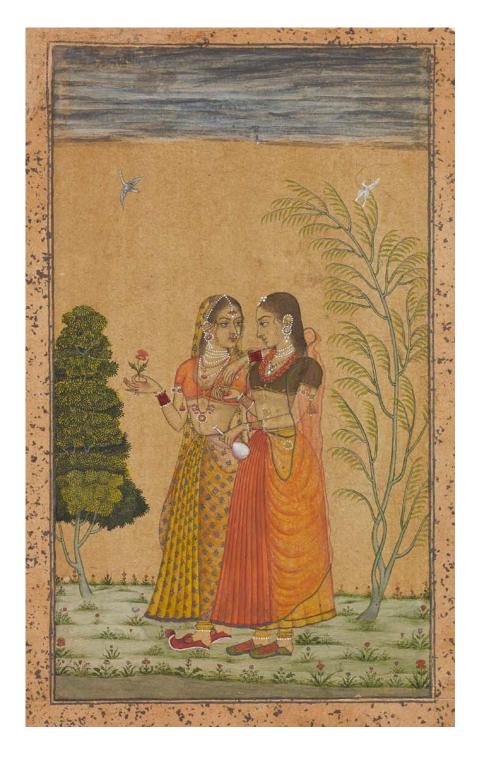
porary Golconda work (see e.g. Zebrowski 1983, fig. 177, and Leach 1995, fig. 9.644). Deccani influence on Bikaner traditions followed the participation of Raja Karan Singh (r. 1631-1669) and his son Anup Singh (1669-1698) as commanders in the Mughal campaign in the Deccan. As a result they were able to bring back both Deccani artists and paintings, which had a profound influence on Bikaner painting. For a slightly later pair of affectionate women playing with fireworks from Bikaner dated 1715, see Khandalavala et al. 1960, fig. 78.0

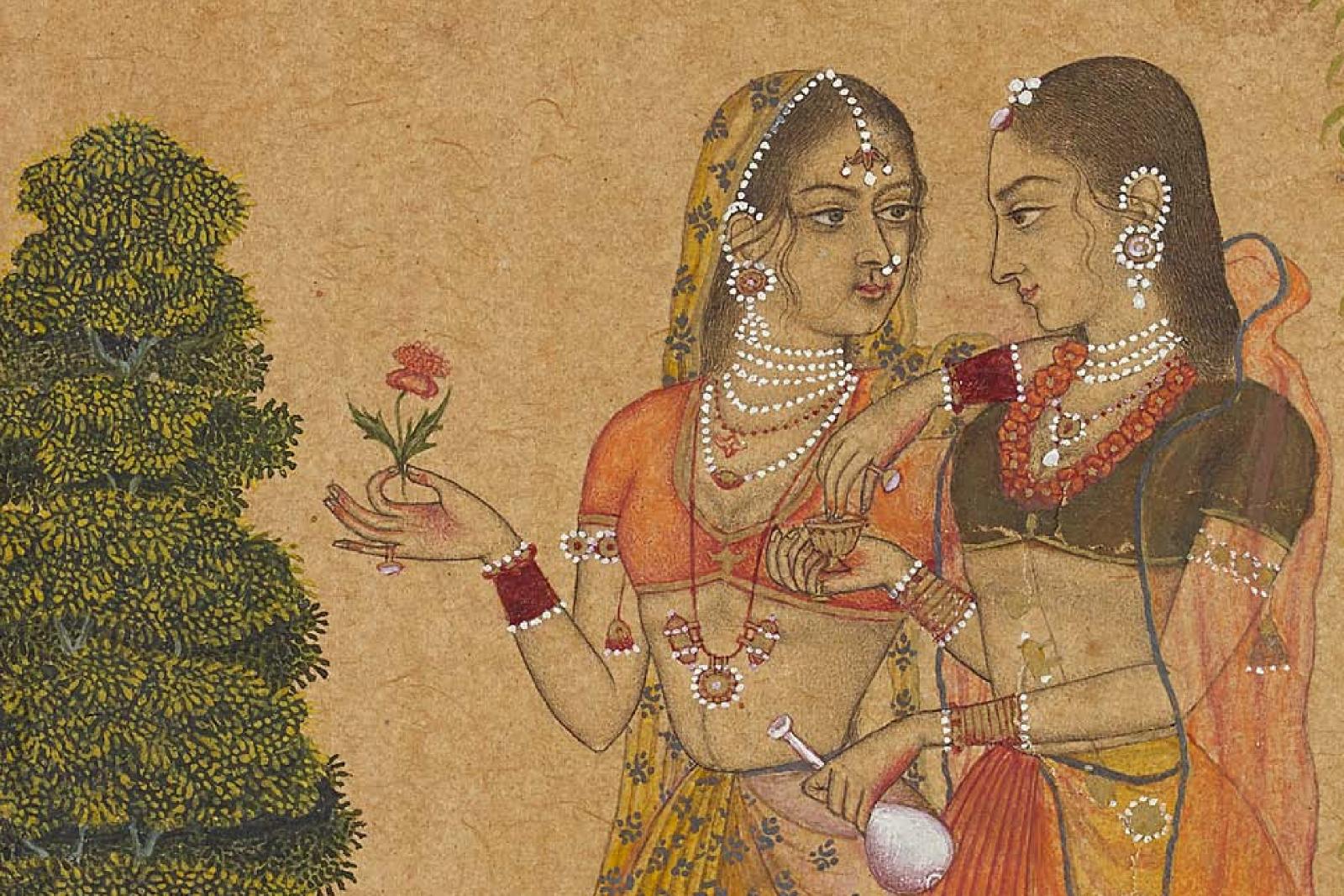
#### Literature

Khandalavala, K., Chandra, M., and Chandra, P., Miniature Painting: a Catalogue of the Exhibition of the Sri Motichand Khajanchi Collection, Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi, 1960

Leach, L.Y., Mughal and other Indian Paintings in the Chester Beatty Library, London, 1995

Zebrowski, M., Deccani Painting, Sotheby's, London and New York 1983





# The Night of Shab-barat - Ladies with Fireworks on a Terrace

By the artist Mola Bagas, Bikaner, late 18th century Opaque pigments heightened with gold on paper Inscribed on the reverse in Rajasthani in nagari: am jalas Abu [deleted] Mahamud re beta ri kivi chai // Mola Bagas pasai lini ('assembled by Abu son of Muhammad ... Mola Bagas (Muhammad Bakhsh) ??...') and the inventory marks of the Bikaner collection Painting: 19.6 x 12.4 cm Folio: 24.1 x 16.2 cm

On a terrace at night ladies are amusing themselves with fireworks. One lady stands, her arm round her friend, and holds a sparkler: she directs its glittering stream into a large basin. Another lady seated on the terrace, melancholy since her flask is empty of wine, is gazing fixedly at the basin. A standing attendant holds a morchhal while another lady on the roof of the pavilion also is holding two more sparklers. A double branched candelabra beside which two cats play is meant to illuminate the terrace, while along the parapet of the roof of the pavilion are arranged little oil lamps. Behind the terrace is a char bagh garden with formal parterres of flowers with a river beyond and a palace and city on a hillside illuminated. The stars sparkle and shooting stars enliven the scene.

Although at the Hindu court of Bikaner this scene might be thought to represent Diwali, it is more likely to be a representation of the Muslim feast of Shab-barat, since the artist is following a well-known iconography for this scene. This feast is held on the eve of the fourteenth day of the month of Shaban on which a vigil is observed with prayers, feastings and illuminations, and Muslims make offerings and oblations in the names of ancestors. On this night the lives and fortunes of mortals for the coming year are registered in heaven. A painting in the Johnson collec-

tion in the British Library from the 1730s and attributed to the artist Govardhan is a precursor of the iconography of our painting (J.20,2: see Falk and Archer 1981, no. 171; Losty and Leach 1998, no. 17).

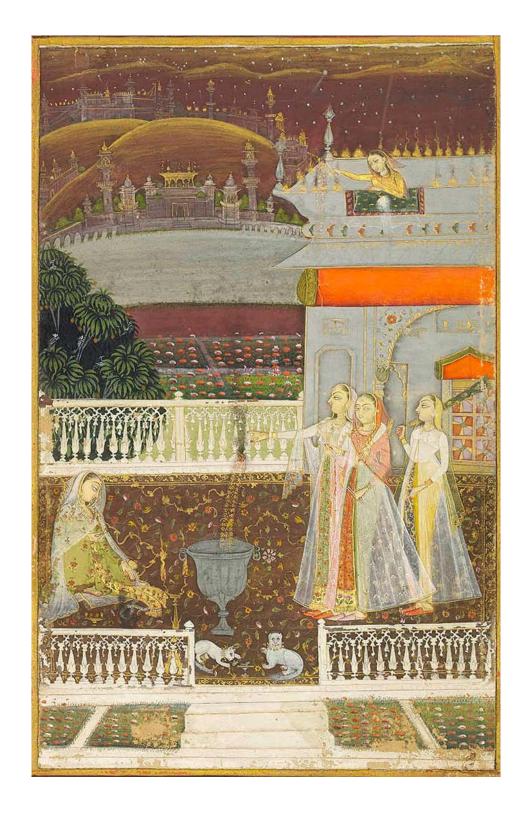
Mola Bagas or Muhammad Bakhsh is a known Bikaneri artist of the later 18th century, see Krishna 2000, pp. 62-3. The inscription is ambiguous as to the relationship between him and Abu or Abdullah son of Muhammad, an earlier Bikaneri artist.

#### Provenance

Maharajas of Bikaner Private collection USA

#### Literature

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# An enraged Elephant pursuing a Prince on Horseback

Kotah, c. 1730 Opaque pigments and gold on paper Painting: 16 x 21 cm Folio: 20 x 29.5 cm

An enraged elephant is chasing a mounted horseman, presumably a young prince from his costume. The elephant has nearly overwhelmed the horse as its front legs have caught up with the horse's rear ones as it flees in terror. Men try to control the elephant, including the mounted prince who turns back to thrust his spear into its forehead even as the elephant has its trunk wrapped round his leg prior to pulling him off his mount. The mahout has risen up balancing as best he can on the beast's neck as he raises his ankush high above his head preparatory to bringing it crashing down on its head. Other men rush around thrusting charkis (whirling firecrackers) and spears at the elephant's flanks and temples, while one goes flying as his turban falls off and unwinds.

The artist is a master of detail. One notes the horse's gaping mouth and rolling eyes and its outstretched legs; the energetic posturing of all the men; the elegance of the garments of the prince; the ropes and knots that secure the elephant's coverings; its ears flapping forward in its rage as they do; the bells at the end of tassels that ride up on both sides with the wind of its motion, likewise the chain broken from its moorings that stretches out behind. The Mughal type of short brocaded coat embroidered with flowers is somewhat unusual for Kotah, but something similar is worn by the second figure behind Rao Ram Singh pursuing a rhinoceros (Beach 2011, fig. 4).

Studies of elephants fighting and hunting are among the most impressive examples of the art of both Bundi and Kotah. It is elephants from Kotah that have drawn the most attention, see in particular for Kotah elephant fights Beach 1974 figs. 75 and 126, as well as Topsfield 2012 nos. 80 and 106, which are 17th century examples from the Howard Hodgkin collection. The theme continued in 18th century Kotah, see for instance Beach 2011 fig. 10 and

Welch and Masteller 2004, nos. 48 and 49. For an enraged elephant being chased by its keepers with charkis and slightly earlier than ours also in the Hodgkin collection, see Topsfield 2012, no. 81, which like ours has only the foreground painted in with streaks of green but most of the background blank. Our painting seems contemporary with the work attributed by Welch to Sheikh Taju, such as his chained elephant in the fighting pit (1997, no. 31). For horses charging at full tilt, legs extended in opposite directions, see Beach 2011, figs. 14 and 15, scenes from the battles in the Ramayana as Rama's and Ravana's chariots hurtle towards each other. But most relevant of all is the famous painting of Rao Ram Singh on an elephant chasing a rhinoceros in which the elephant wraps its trunk round the rhinoceros's neck (Beach 2011, fig. 4), which is of course somewhat earlier than our painting. It was, however, copied later as in a drawing now at Harvard from around 1730 (Welch and Masteller 2004, no. 47), which substitutes a young prince for the seasoned Ram Singh.

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### Krishna Hunting Black Buck

Bundi, c. 1770-75

Opaque watercolour heightened with gold on paper

Folio: 31.5 x 25 cm; painting: 24 x 19.5 cm

Inscription on the reverse in Hindi: sri Jaganath ji sakar khele ho ('Sri Jagannath [Krishna] is hunting').

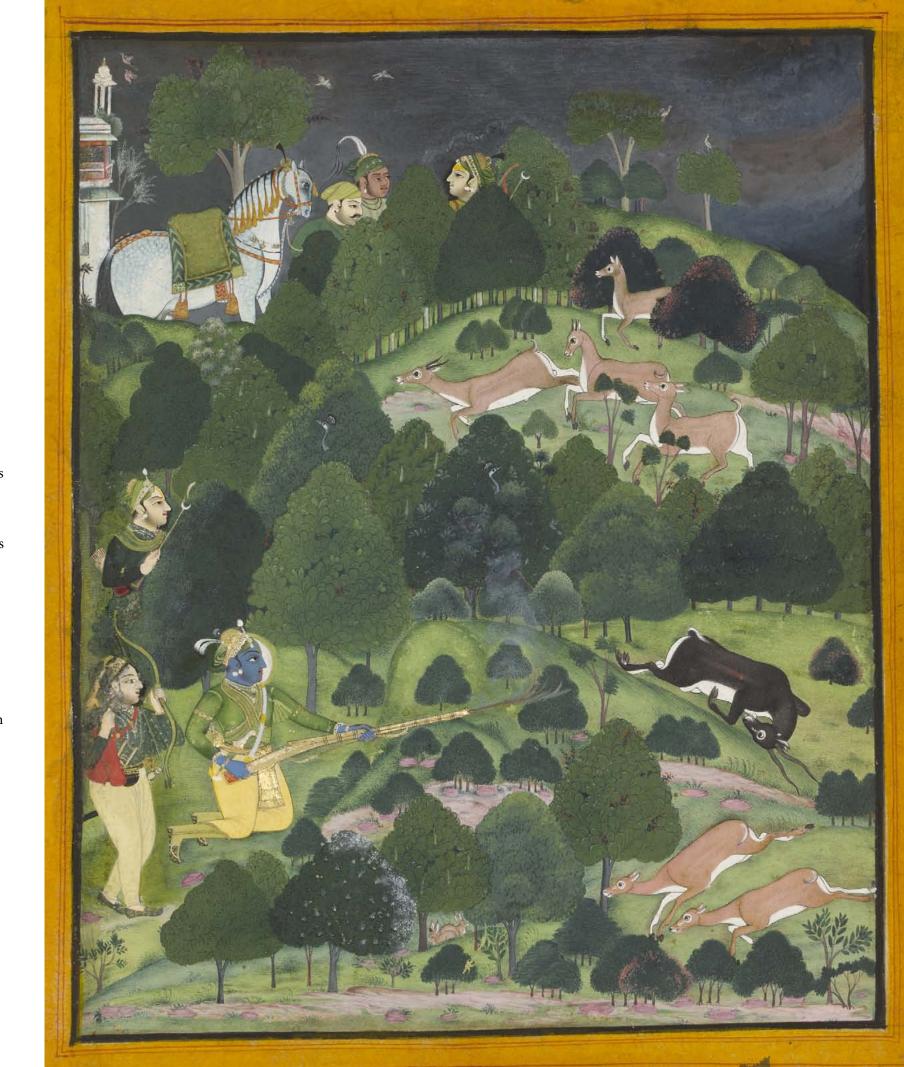
In this rich and very finely painted hunting scene Krishna is depicted dressed in green hunting camouflage with pantaloons and boots and firing a long-barrelled shot gun at a black buck. His supernatural powers are perhaps suggested by his ability to fire the long gun from the hip without resting its barrel on anything. An archer stands behind with bow and his loader beside him holds a quiver of arrows. The artist captures the buck, wounded in mid air, as he falls to the ground. The buck's two does run in terror from the scene. In the background is a second hunting party of three men, one of whom leads a richly caparisoned gray stallion. Four frightened doe prance nervously through the forest.

Rajasthani artists in general cared little for the realistic depiction of space and so the figures in this painting are depicted in the same size no matter where they are meant to be. They are linked together by an impressive panoply of trees that encircle on the one hand the stricken buck and his does and on the other the four does at the top of the painting. The trees are depicted as solid green modelled masses unlike contemporary landscape painting in Kotah where each tree is drawn individually.

The Bundi rulers like those of Kotah were ardent fol-

lowers of the Vallabha cult and just as the Kotah rulers had Krishna as Brijnathji as their state deity, so those of Bundi had Keshavraiji. Followers of Vallabhacarya believe that the images of Krishna that they worship are not just representations of the deity but contain his immanent presence. The images then can be treated as a living presence among them and dressed, bathed and kept amused as a real person. Similarly in their paintings Krishna can be represented as doing the things that the raja does whom he accompanies on hunting expeditions and other pleasurable excursions and with whom his image frequently overlaps. Here Krishna is called Jagannatha, the Lord of the World, who is most famously embodied in this form at the great temple at Puri in Orissa. Elsewhere in Rajasthan such as at Udaipur he is called Jagadisa with the same meaning.

Krishna as Brijnathji is depicted hunting or undertaking other activities in a series of Kotah paintings accompanied by the Kotah Maharao (Welch et al. 1997, figs. 19, 20, 29, 35). A striking parallel to our painting is provided by a Kotah painting of Brijnathji hunting deer accompanied by Maharao Durjan Sal (ibid., fig. 35) in similarly dense woodland. Durjan Sal is there depicted as a normal hunter without any regal accoutrements. The present painting belongs to the same series as a painting formerly in the Rudi von Leyden collection: The Evening Bath; Krishna Watch-



ing Radha, Bundi, c.1770 (Archer 1959, fig. 19; Losty 2011, no. 15) and so could just be a genre scene showing Krishna engaged in various activities. It is however also possible that the principal attendant on Krishna here is the young Bishen Singh who took over in 1773 when his father Umed Singh abdicated, and have a deeper meaning of merging the identity of the state deity and the state ruler, as Peabody remarks about the similar painting of Durjan Sal of Kotah (Welch et al. 1997, p. 146).

Hunting in the forested regions of Rajasthan was the favourite sport of noblemen and their ladies. Rajput rulers accepted as one of their responsibilities the protection of the people from wild animals. "The hunt was important to Indian rulers not only because it served as an excellent form of training for more martial pursuits but also because it demonstrated that the king's mastery extended beyond the social into the natural realm" (ibid., p. 146).

# Provenance

Private collection, USA

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# A Prince watching an Elephant Fight

Bundi, c. 1760-80 Opaque pigments and gold on paper Inscribed on the reverse with Tamil writing on a later backing paper Painting: 36 x 28 cm Folio: 38 x 28 cm

A prince on a high tower is watching a fight between two elephants as they thrust their tusks and forelegs at each other over a wall. One has just broken down the wall and arrived on its opponent's side. Their mahouts with their feet thrust into the elephants' neck-band hang on for dear life as they try to control the huge beasts. Other men down below rush around with charkis (flaming wheels) which seem more to inflame the elephants than keep them under control. A round-topped hillside acts as a backdrop to the action, with trees on one side balancing the prince on the other. He is presumably meant for one of the sons of Rao Umed Singh (reg. 1749-70), but in the well-known portrait of them with their father c. 1765 in the former S.C. Welch collection (Beach 1974, fig. 39), they all appear much alike.

Studies of elephants fighting and hunting are among the most impressive examples of the art of both Bundi and Kotah. It is elephants from Kotah that have drawn the most attention, see in particular for Kotah elephant fights Beach 1974 figs. 75 and 126, as well as Topsfield 2012 nos. 80 and 106, which are 17th century examples from the Howard Hodgkin collection. The theme continued in 18th century Kotah, see for instance Welch and Masteller 2004, nos. 48 and 49. But it is actually in Bundi that the earliest of the Rajput versions is found in a mural painting in the Badal Mahal from early in the 17th century (Welch 1997, p. 20, fig. 5; Bautze 2000, fig. 5). The theme of course is earlier still: an elephant fight by the woman artist Khurshid Banu from around 1600 is in the Howard Hodgkin collection (Topsfield 2012, no. 11) while slightly later is a Mughal drawing in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, in which composite elephants ridden by divs fight each other (Hurel 2010, no. 23). For an elephant fight contemporary with ours in the Jehangir

collection in Bombay, see Khandalavala et al 1960, fig. 80. Compared with the vigorous head-butting of the earlier examples, our elephants seem to be performing a stately minuet.

Our painting exemplifies the simplification of formerly lush background vegetation into flat arcs of landscape at this time in Bundi painting. For a very similar background landscape see the painting of Visnu and Laksmi on Garuda from c. 1770 in the V & A (Archer 1959, fig, 21).

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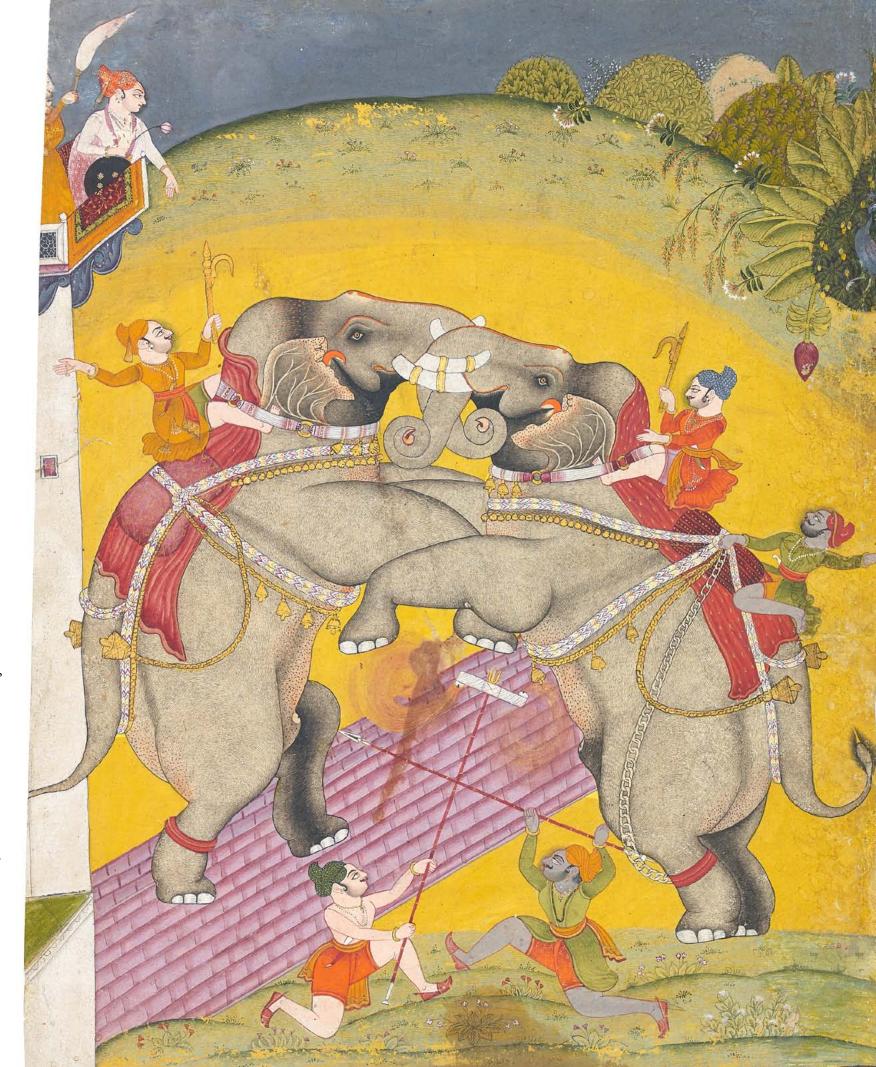
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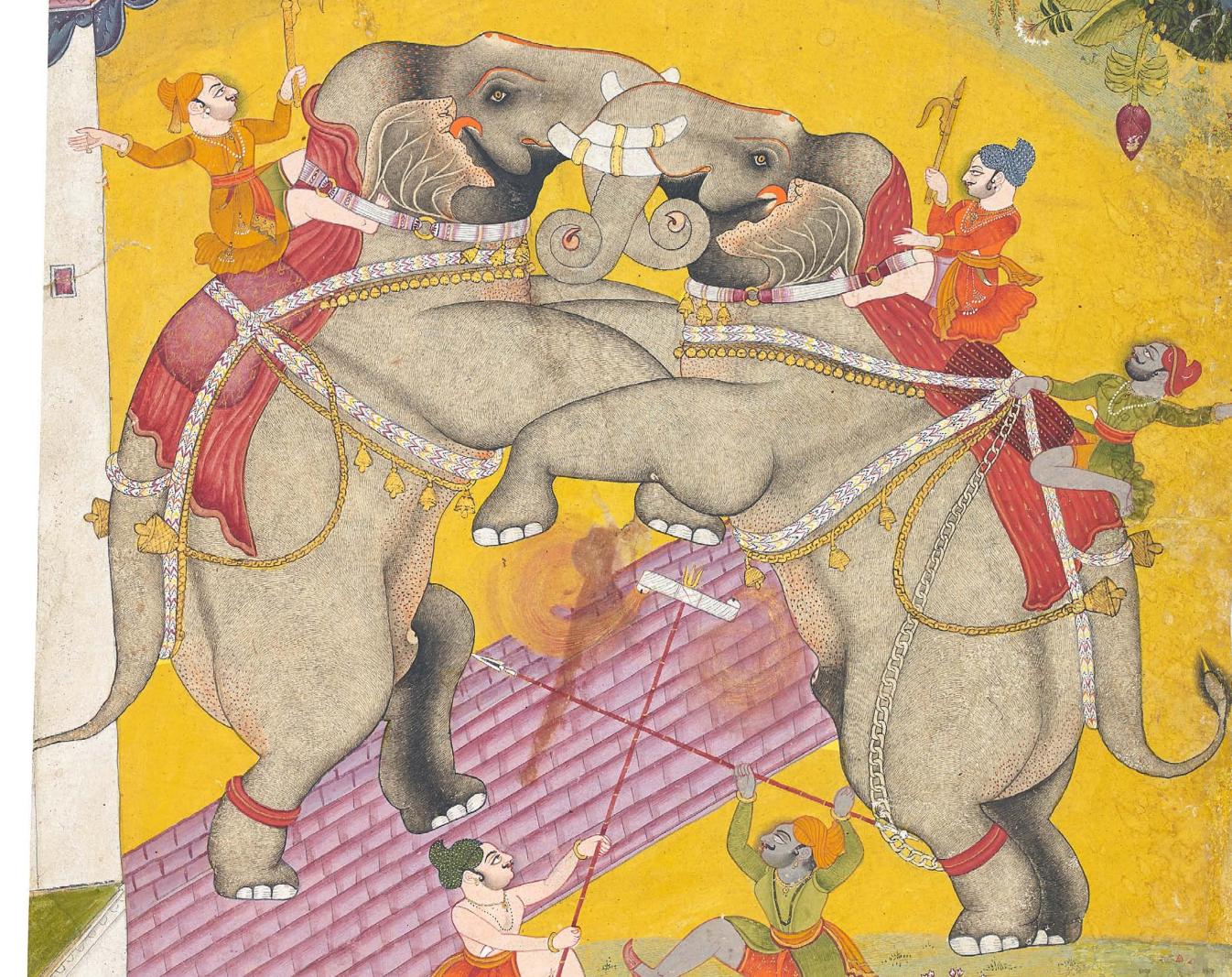
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# Krishna as Asavari Ragini

Devgarh, c.1815-20 Opaque pigments with gold on paper Painting: 17.4 x 10.5 cm

At first glance this is a late interpretation of the classic ragamala subject, Asavari Ragini, in which a dark female forest dweller plays with snakes. Closer inspection reveals that in fact Krishna has taken on this role. Whether deliberately or by accident, the ambiguity inherent in this role-playing is evident in the artist's handling of the theme. Krishna is dressed in a peacock feather skirt and sits on a little platform in a glade, holding an ankush or elephant goad in one hand (hardly a feminine accoutrement) and a snake in the other hand. His long hair is covered with a golden net and the ends caught up in a tight chignon, all female traits. The artist has started to depict a coli or bodice on his right upper arm, but not carried it through for the rest of the chest. This is definitely a male and not a female chest. While these ambiguous traits might be put down to artistic hesitation, the inclusion of a nimbus surely indicates that this must be Krishna. Other snakes advance towards him or are curled round the trunks of the strikingly beautiful and tall trees in the glade. Behind is a hillside and beyond that a steep conical mountain covered with pines illuminated by the rising sun that is also streaking with gold the clouds in the blue sky and shining through the upper foliage of the trees. Cranes sit on top of the trees and ducks swim in the lotus lake at Krishna's feet.

The figure of Krishna and much else in the painting seem consonant with the work of Chokha, who worked for ten years at Udaipur after his father, Bakta, but then returned in 1811 to Devgarh, where he seemed freer to explore newer subjects and techniques, especially heavy stippling and the effects of light. Krishna's form here seems based on that in an erotic scene done by Chokha soon after his return to Devgarh (Michell and Leach 1982, no. 160, col. pl. p. 88). Our Krishna has the same large head, heavy limbs, and large and slightly curving eye, but his body lacks most of the heavy modelling associated with Chokha, as seen for instance in his Hour of Cowdust in the V & A (Williams 2007, no. 43). Chokha seems to have returned to Udaipur around 1818 and his last works were done there.

In Devgarh Chokha was in turn succeeded by his son Baijnath. The two appear to have collaborated on a group of paintings centring on the Krishna-lila. A painting illustrating the Confusion of Krishna formerly in James Ivory's collection (Beach and Singh 2005, pl. 111, Losty 2010, no. 13) is one of the best of the group with its brilliant, saturated colours, heavy modelling and stippling. The tall and elegant trees with their overall blue tonality of our painting are found also there. Baijnath's independent work is more in the traditional vein of portraits of his patron and illustrations of his hunting prowess; he shows no interest in his father's technical innovations, painting in an increasingly flat manner (Beach and Singh 2005, pp. 94-106; Topsfield 2002, fig. 225).

Why Krishna should be depicted in the guise of Asavari Ragini is far from clear. The feminine traits are perhaps because he is role-playing, as he does when he exchanges clothes with Radha (see Kramrisch 1986, no. 54 for an example from Kotah c. 1790 where Krishna disguised as a female musician approaches Radha). There is however a striking correspondence between Chokha's version here and the earliest known Mewar version from Chawand now in the V & A and dated 1605 (Ebeling 1973, C46). This shows the ragini seated on the ground just like Krishna, with a rock hill behind and two tall trees on each side, as well as a lotus filled lake at the foot of the painting.

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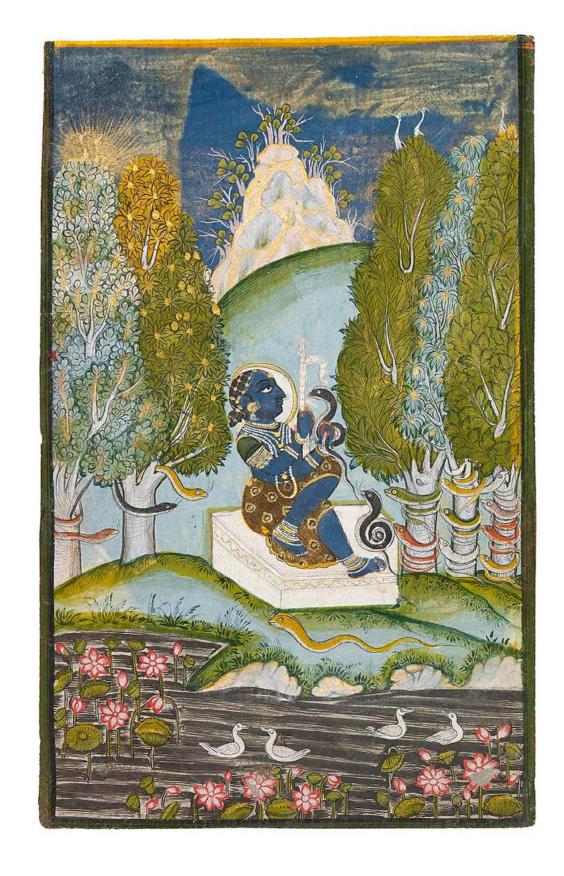
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#### Raja Jai Singh of Kulu (1731-1742) with Ladies

Pahari, Arki, c. 1730 Opaque watercolour on paper Painting: 16.5 x 15.5 cm Folio: 20.5 x 20.5 cm

Jai Singh of Kulu is seated against a bolster on a bed smoking a hookah and holding a betel-leaf while a seated lady converses with him. Two maids stand either side of the bed. A striking chocolate brown carpet with red and blue floral design covers the ground while the grey wall behind is decorated with jali screens and oblong and vertical niches enclosing mutli-coloured bottles and blue and white porcelain.

Although little has been recorded of Jai Singh's life and career and no paintings have so far come to light from his rule at Kulu, the three extant portraits of him (Paul Walter collection, Rietberg Museum ex Alice Boner collection and San Diego Museum ex Binney collection) were painted at Arki, sometimes in the company of Rana Mehr Chand of Arki and one portrait, in the Victoria & Albert Museum, was painted at Bilaspur. According to Pratapaditya Pal, Jai Singh ruled until 1742 when he fled to Lahore, escaping an internal revolt. There, the Muslim ruler's daughter was so enamoured of his beauty that she desired to marry him. Jai Singh, however, beat a hasty retreat and went on a pilgrimage. He is not known to have returned to Kulu (The Classical Tradition in Rajput Painting p 170).

The state of Baghal whose capital is Arki, was largely dependent on Bilaspur. According to W.G. Archer, Arki developed its own style of painting in the course of the 18th century which can be identified by a light, delicate hand, often with detailed observation of textiles and costume.

#### Provenance

G.K. Kanoria Collection

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### A Man with his Fingers in his Ears standing before a Gateway

Pahari, after Nainsukh, 1770-80 Brush drawing with colour washes Painting: 22.5 x 30 cm Folio: 20.5 x 25.8 cm

A man dressed simply in a long green jama over blue loose Literature trousers and a green turban is standing in a courtyard before an imposing gateway. His shawl and cummerbund together with his sheathed dagger (apparently a pentimento, for another drawn but not painted dagger lies parallel) lie discarded beside him while his slippers and a waterpot are behind him. His head is thrown back as he looks up aghast at the top of the gateway, his index fingers stuck in his ears as if to block out some deafening sound.

While the figure is very well drawn and has the hallmarks of Nainsukh's work (compare Goswamy and Fischer 1992, figs, 112, 118-20 etc.), some inconsistencies, such as the treatment of the architecture, suggest that it is not by the master himself. The stance and the apparent humour in his plugging his ears and his discarded items of dress suggest it is based on the master's work. What is less clear is the point of the drawing. The fingers in his ears suggest that he is deafened by something and his gaze suggests that it is coming from the top of the gateway.

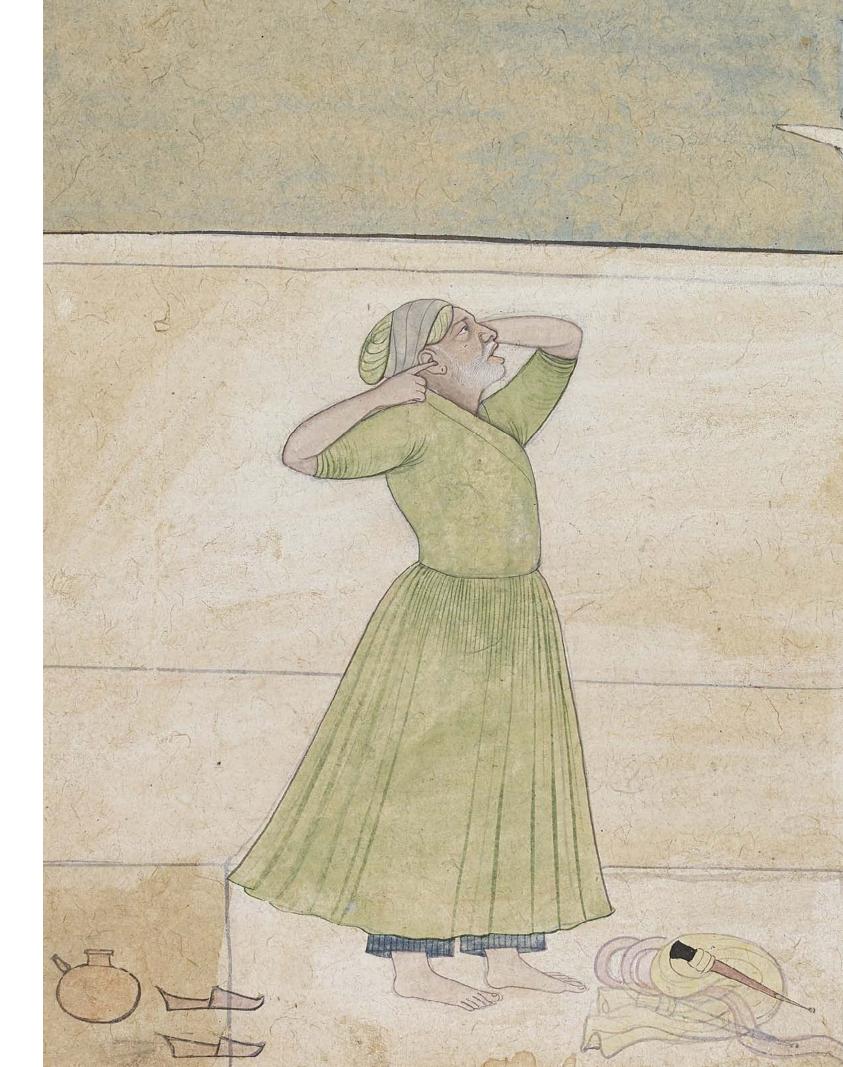
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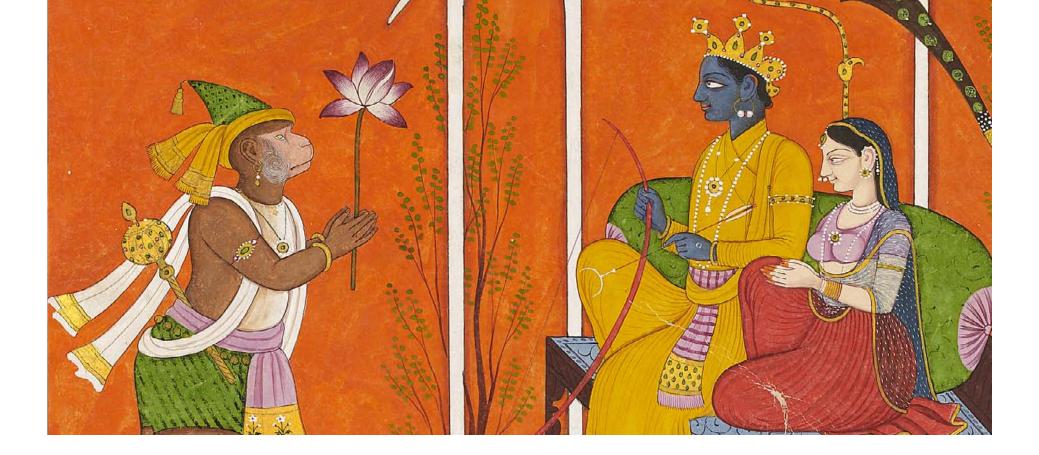
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## Rama and Sita enthroned with Laksmana and Hanuman

Chamba, c. 1790
Opaque pigments and gold on paper
Inscribed on the reverse with a takri inscription: sri 3
rave goduse ...???
Painting: 23 x 14.5 cm
Folio: 28.3 x 20 cm



The coronation of Rama in Ayodhya marks the culmination of the original Ramayana story, when all his allies who have aided him in his quest to recover Sita come to Ayodhya to witness his final triumph. The large compositions necessary to represent this scene (Archer 1973, Mandi no. 62 for example) were reduced in size as icons for more personal devotion, showing Rama enthroned with Sita beside him, the ever faithful Laksmana attending on his brother, and Hanuman the epitome of service to the divine bending reverently before the enthroned divinity. Examples of this iconography are found from many of the Pahari styles.

This is a particularly fine example of this classic scene. Rama still holds his bow and arrow, symbols of his quest, as he gazes seriously at the devoted Hanuman who comes bearing a lotus. Hanuman's mace is stuck through his cummerbund and his tail curls in his delight at seeing his master. Sita bends her gaze modestly downwards as befits a dutiful wife, smiling slightly at seeing Hanuman again who was the one who brought her news of Rama's coming to rescue her from the clutches of Ravana. The ever faithful Laksmana stands behind his brother holding the morchhal and cloth that signify Rama's kingly status. His head

is slightly tilted up as he gazes with devotion at his elder brother.

The receding platform on which the scene is placed contrasts with the flat background as if floating in space. The plane of colour as a background, here hot orange, contrasts vividly with the yellows, reds, blues and greens in which the central pair is depicted. Hanuman and Laksmana are more subdued in colour as befits their lesser status. Two earlier versions of this scene from Chamba around 1760 are illustrated in Archer 1973 (Chamba, nos. 30 and 33) which would seem to serve as prototypes for our painting, but with their early Chamba characteristics here refined by artists of the 'first generation after Nainsukh' as Goswamy and Fischer call them. This type of composition on a terrace is also found in several other slightly earlier Chamba paintings of the period 1765-70, such as a lady listening to music in the British Museum (Archer 1973, Chamba 35; Ahluwalia 2008, fig. 98, as Guler 1755-60), which has the same arched background as in our painting but in mustard yellow. Specifically the lack of interest in depicting space is a characteristic of some of the work of Nainsukh's son Nikka's work at Chamba, specifically his Rukmini-harana series (Ohri 1998, figs. 11-13), where he depicts his action

scenes against a large, curving, deep red hillside. Ohri dates this series 1775-80 while Goswamy and Fischer prefer a later date of c. 1790 (2011, p. 692). A particularly relevant painting here is Rama honoured by his father (Losty 2012, no. 13) almost certainly by Nikka himself about 1780, where Rama wears a very particular type of crown with a tailpiece over the back of his head that is the same as that worn by our Rama. The crown worn by Laksmana here lacks this tailpiece as do those of Laksmana and his brothers in the painting of Rama honoured by his father. The facial characteristics of our Rama, Laksmana and Sita with their high round foreheads match those seen in that same painting as well as two from a Sundara sringara series also attributed to Nikka at Chamba 1780-85 (ibid., nos. 14-15).

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#### The Heroine whose Lover returns to her

Page from a Rasika priya series Kangra, c. 1850

Opaque pigments with gold and silver on paper Inscribed above in Hindi: praudha agatapatika ('the mature heroine whose lord has just come back') and 168 (also on a cover sheet) and on the verso with the relevant verses from the Rasika priya of Keshav Das.

Painting: 22.3 x 16.2 cm Folio: 29.3 x 22.2 cm

Keshav Das classifies his heroines in his Rasika priya in various ways. Best known to artists are his eight main nayikas, but before this there are the ancient divisions in four types (padmini, citrini, sankhini and hastini), as well as another three divisions dependent on whom the nayika loves, and yet further subdivisions as their age and experience (mugdha, madhya and praudha – artless, adolescent and experienced. Our heroine is the mature heroine whose husband has just returned. This classification is not among the eight well-known nayikas, among which the Prositapatika Nayika (Bahadur 1972, pp. 117-18) or Prositapreyasi Nayika (Randhawa 1962, pp. 76-77) is the nearest, the heroine whose husband is away. According to Randhawa, however (p. 64), some rhetoricians add another three, including our Agatapatika Nayika, one whose husband has just returned and comes immediately to seek her.

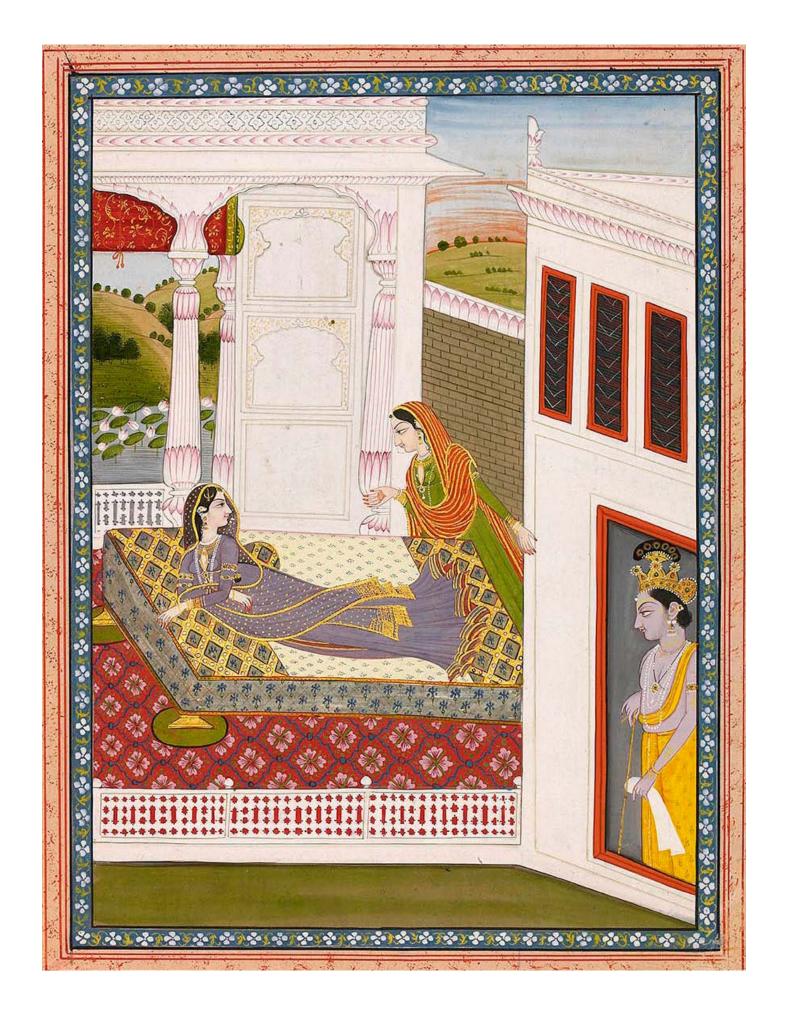
Here our heroine, who has been lying disconsolate on her bed, perks up and looks round expectantly when her confidante tells her that her lover has returned, gesturing towards the doorway where he has appeared. The lover is here represented as Krishna who has just returned and stands leaning on his cane listening at a doorway before going in. The scene is set on a terrace outside a pavilion with a landscape of lotus pond and hills beyond. The somewhat unnatural pose of the nayika and the mechanical folds of her gown are found in other late works in this style, such as Archer 1973, Kangra 71-75. The painting is obviously from a large series but little if anything has been published from it – the 'neglected heroine' of c. 1850 in the V & A (Archer 1973, Kangra no. 71) may be from this series.

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#### The Worship of Radha and Krishna

Kotah, c. 1820 Opaque pigments and gold and silver on paper Painting: 43.9 x 59.5 cm Folio: 49.2 x 64.4 cm

Radha and Krishna are depicted enthroned together in a pavilion with women attendants waving chowrie and handfan. They would seem to be within a palace temple or shrine with other chambers opening off the veranda on either side. It is night-time as indicated by the stars and moon above in the sky. Numerous lamps hang in chandeliers above the divine couple and along the arcade. Oil lamps are lit all along the outer perimeter wall and two men are holding aloft burning braziers to illuminate the scene. Walls surround the whole complex. The tall plants suggest that this might in fact be a marriage pavilion. In front is a confused mass of worshippers, musicians, hawkers and soldiers with a nimbate ruler who does not appear to be any of the relevant Maharaos of Kotah of the 19th century.

The occasion seems to be a great festival celebrating perhaps the marriage of the divine couple with armed guards controlling the entrance to the temple grounds, tents pitched on the left for the guards to sleep in and a pavilion containing musicians on the right. The artist envisages the divinities as a living human couple rather than as images.

The turbans reflect the usage of Kotah in the reign of Maharao Ram Singh (1827-66), likewise the sepoys in British-style uniforms of the period: cf. the marriage processions of Ram Singh at Jaisalmer and Udaipur (Welch 1997, no. 66; Topsfield 2012, no. 115); Ram Singh riding on a roof (Ehnbohm 1985, no. 64); and Ram Singh in an elephant procession in the V & A (Archer 1958, fig. 48). Several figures with their backs to us are found also in the Jaisalmer marriage procession. Particularly relevant here is a drawing c. 1850 in the V & A of Rao Umed Singh in a procession (Archer 1959, fig. 53) with crowds of men depicted much as they are here.

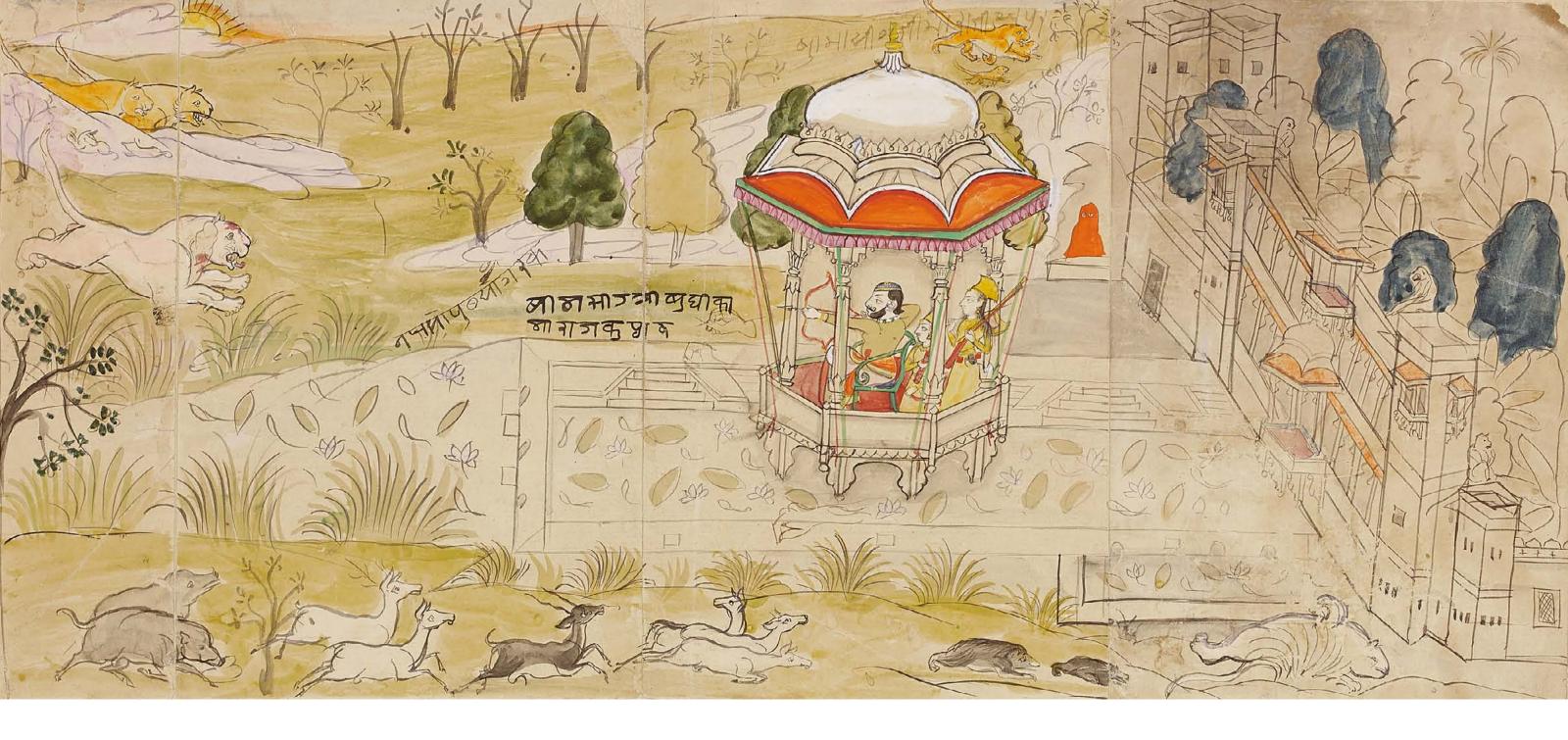
#### Literature

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Ehnbom, D., Indian Miniatures: the Ehrenfeld Collection, American Federation of Arts, New York, 1985 Topsfield, A., Visions of Mughal India: the Collection of Howard Hodgkin, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, 2012 Welch, S.C., et al., Gods, Kings and Tigers: the Art of Kotah, Prestel, Munich, New York, 1997







### A Raja hunting Lions outside a Palace

Kotah, mid-19th century
Brush drawing with some colour
Inscribed on the front: bim sigh sri budhi ka ma.raja
ku. pucch?('picture? of Bhim Singh Maharajakumara
of Bundi') and repeated above the pavilion
Painting: 43.5 x 19.6 cm

The prince is seated on a European type of chair in an ornate pavilion in a lotus pond outside a palace using a bow and arrows to hunt lions and other animals. Two ladies stand behind him with muskets. A lion is charging towards him as he takes aim. Other lions are in the background and terrified deer, blackbucks, boars and sloth bears run across the foreground where a dead lion is already splayed out with its paws in the air.

The raja bears a resemblance to Maharaja Ram Singh II of Jaipur, although the landscape and lively animals look as if done by a Kotah artist (e.g. Losty 2010, no. 22), but the inscription is little help. Bim or rather Bhim Singh prince of Bundi would seem to be a reference to Kunwar Bhim Singh a younger son of Maharao Chattar Sal of Bundi (1632-58),

whose grandson Anirudh Singh was adopted into the main line when sons failed. He succeeded in 1682. Ladies took part in the great hunts of lions in Rajasthan, as in the painting of ladies hunting lions from Kotah about 1810 in the Cleveland Museum (Leach 1986, no. 77). A sketch related to that painting is also in the Cleveland Museum (ibid, no. 78) that is very much in the same style as our drawing with lively animals and patches of colour. These seem to be artistic thoughts rather than preparatory drawings. No doubt the intention here is partly satirical as in many of these Kotah drawings of the 19th century (see Archer 1959, figs. 43, 50-52; Welch and Masteller 2004, nos. 54-60), poking fun at a raja who prefers to hunt from the comfort of his own palace rather than take to the jungle as in many earlier Kotah hunting scenes.

#### Literature

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Welch, S.C., and Masteller, K., From Mind, Heart and Hand: Persian, Turkish and Indian Drawings from the Stuart Cary Welch Collection, Yale University Press and Harvard University Art Museums, New Haven, etc., 2004



## Maharaja Takhat Singh of Jodhpur climbing onto a Swing with Attendants and Consorts

Jodhpur, c. 1845 Opaque pigments with gold and silver on paper laid down within an outer red border Inscribed above in nagari: Mahraja sri 108 sri Takht Singh ji

Painting: 31.5 x 46.9 cm Folio: 38.4 x 50.5 cm

In a magnificent grove of fig trees abounding with peacocks and parrots the young Maharaja Takhat Singh of Jodhpur (reg. 1843-73) is climbing onto a swing suspended from a bough while looking enticingly at the first of the four women who approach him bearing wine, flowers and fruit. The maharaja is attended by courtiers who carry flower wands. The women wear their hair with a lock pulled forward in front of their ear and curling as it descends. The picture has that swaggering vitality associated with Jodhpur work at this time with the hems of garments outrageously swirling upwards in rhythmic patterns.

A figure half over the left border is divorced from the proceedings since the tree trunk against which he is silhouetted grows on the viewer's side of the stream that runs along the bottom of the painting. The board he holds, a takhta, indicates additionally perhaps his status as the artist; it

also might be a pun on the Maharaja's name, Takhat Singh, the 'Throne-lion'.

Takhat Singh seems to have been one of the most pleasure-loving of 19th century maharajas and is often depicted with his women folk feasting or in a Ferris-wheel or just enjoying themselves in a garden (Crill 2000, figs. 139-45). Jodhpur painting at this time depends for its vitality on the repetition of various elements whether vegetal or architectural that sets up rectangular rhythmic patterns that the figures with their swirling garments play off against.

#### Literatur

Crill, R., Marwar Painting: a History of the Jodhpur Style, India Book House Ltd., Bombay, 2000



#### Rao Raja Bhairo Singh (1851-65) of Sikar in Sekhavati

By the Jaipur artist Baldev, 1865-66 Opaque pigments and gold on paper Inscribed above: sri Mharao Raja ji sri Bharu Syanghji bhadura / tagtha Sikar raja Sekhavat and below: // 1922// Baldev chatera ki mu kam Savai Jepur ko // Sam 1922 ('portrait of Maharao Raja Bhairo Singh Bahadur of Sikar in Sekhavati. The work of the artist Baldev from Sawai Jaipur in 1865/66') Painting: 21.8 x 16.1 cm

A half-length window portrait of Rao Raja Bhairo Singh of Sikar. He leans against a bolster and observes a bird perched on a tree, seated within a golden jharokha window. The golden jharokha not only projects from a wall covered with blue and white tiles, but gives the impression of having been painted directly over them. Bhairo Singh was born in 1834, posthumous son of Rao Raja Laksman Singh, and reined from 1851-65 in succession to his childless elder brother Rao Raja Ram Pratap Singh. This portrait was apparently done in the last year of the Raja's life when he would have been about 30.

Sekhavati, the northern part of the former Jaipur state, is famous for the painted decorations on the walls of its palaces and havelis, the large merchant houses of the Marwaris, many of whom moved the Bombay and Calcutta to found the great industrial dynasties of modern India. Sikar is the largest thikana in Sekhavati, along with Jhunjhunu, Nagaur and Churu. The palace was built by Rao Raja Pratap Singh (reg. 1834-50) and is noted for its attractive golden paintings, which is possibly what our golden jharokha is alluding to.

Bhairo Singh is portrayed as it were facing a bird that is actually in the garden beyond perching on a tall cypress tree. The bird appears to be a Red-vented bulbul (Pycnonotus cafer), easily recognised on account of its crest giving the head a squarish appearance, as well as the red patch on its

lower body. Such birds were often kept as pets in India, being carried around on ornamental little crutches, and also for fighting. Its significance here is not obvious unless it was the sitter's favourite pet. Baldev is inscribed as an artist from Jaipur. He is well known as an artist at Alwar, since he worked with Ghulam 'Ali Khan on the Gulistan done for Maharao Raja Binay Singh in the 1840s (Dalrymple and Sharma 2012, pp. 47-49) and his portrait of Binay Singh from around 1840 is in the British Library (Falk and Archer 1981, no. 534).

The portrait of Rao Raja Bhairon Singh is identical to two of an uninscribed Raja in the former James Ivory collection (Losty 2010, nos. 48-49), an equestrian portrait and a double portrait. This raja was identified by Losty as Maharao Raj Sheodan Singh of Alwar (reg. 1857-74) on the basis of one of the paintings containing a portrait of the British political agent in Alwar, Captain Eugene Impey (1830-94) sitting opposite the Maharao Raja as equals. The double portrait would seem to mark the handover of the state to the young Maharao when he attained his majority in 1863.

Our portrait inscribed as of Rao Raja Bhairo Singh seems a slightly older version of the same man as in the two former Ivory portraits and another in the Fondation Custodia, Paris (Gahlin 1991, no. 59), rendering the identification of all four open to question as well as the reliability of

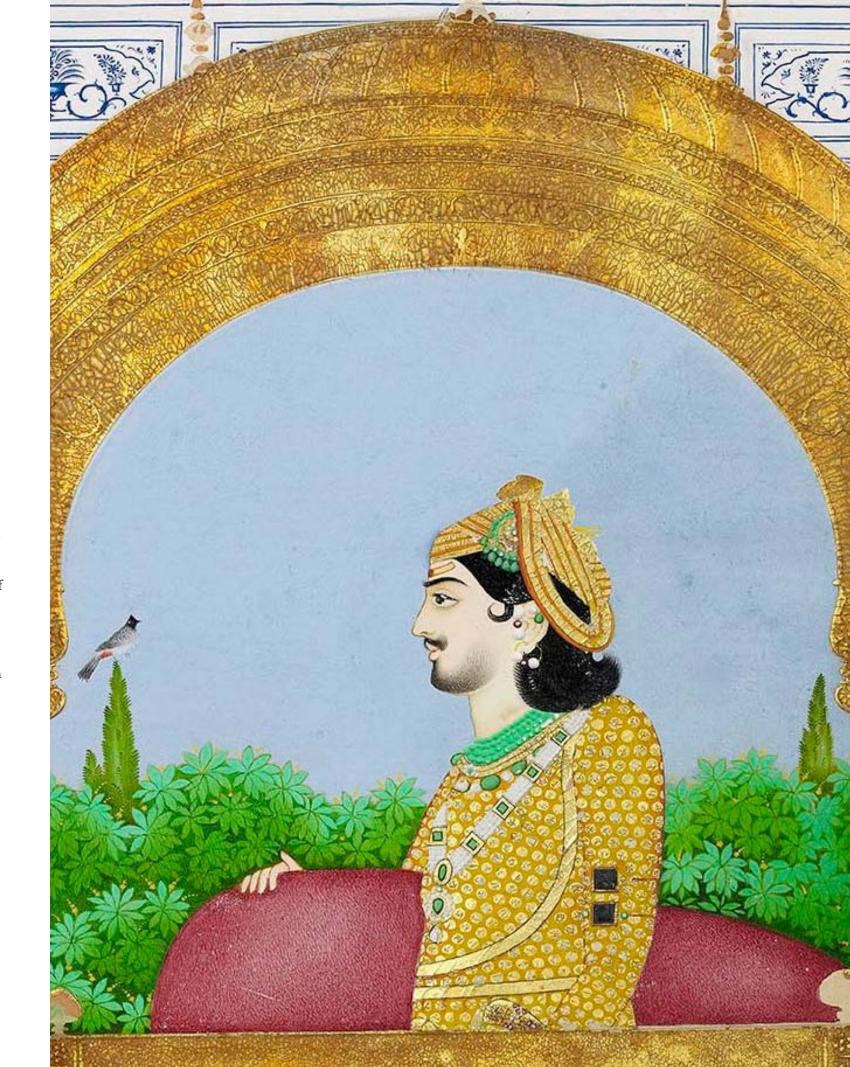


our inscription. There is no doubt of the identification of Eugene Impey. He served originally in the Bengal Army and only in 1858 transferred officially to the Indian Political Service, as did many promising officers, but for the two years before this he was active in Rajputana as Assistant to the Agent to the Governor General, who performed the duties of Resident at the western Rajput courts. He then moved to Alwar as Resident with full powers 1858-63. Only in this position could he have been portrayed on equal terms with a ruling prince. After Impey had handed over full powers to Sheodan Singh of Alwar in 1863, he served as Military Secretary to the Viceroy Lord Lawrence (1863-64), before moving to Jodhpur as Agent for Marwar (1865-68). While he could have passed through Sikar on the way to Jodhpur, taking the roads west of the Aravallis, it would have been most unusual since the direct route was via Jaipur and Ajmer. Even if he had gone via Sikar, there would have been no possibility of his being portrayed sitting as an equal with the Rao Raja, with whom he would have had no business since Sikar was feudatory to Jaipur which had its own Resident. Similarly, if we move the other portraits from Alwar and place them in Sikar during Impey's first tour of duty in Rajputana 1856-58 when Bhairo Singh was in his early 20s, the circumstances of an

equality of seating again become impossible to envisage. Baldev we now know was an artist from Jaipur and as with many Jaipur artists of the time, his skills were in demand throughout north-eastern Rajasthan. He certainly worked at Alwar in the 1840s and 1850s. The equestrian portrait of the young raja in the former Ivory collection has lavishly worked gold, which is done very similarly as in our painting, so that that one at least may be attributed to him. The conclusion seems inescapable that faced with a demand for a posthumous portrait of the young raja of Sikar whom he had never probably met, Baldev used his existing charbas of Sheodan Singh to produce it.

#### Literature

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#### Maharana Sarup Singh of Mewar meeting a Gosain

Mewar, c. 1860

Opaque pigments with gold and silver, with an outer border with silver floral meander; inscribed above the riders in Hindi: sri gusani ji gannadari janu ji ('Gosain Gannadari?) and sri Mharana Srupa Sighji ('Maharana Svarup Singh')
Painting: 46.7 x 31.2 cm

Folio: 48.5 x 33.5 cm

Maharana Sarup Singh of Mewar (reg. 1842-61) advances from the right clad in gilded armour, his right hand raised in greeting. His head is surrounded by a large nimbus emanating solar rays. His attendants carry the royal parasol and wave chowries. His horse is magnificently caparisoned. Riding to meet him is another nimbate figure on a similarly caparisoned horse, dressed almost as magnificently, with attendants with chowrie and parasol. A vivid green forms the landscape background with gently rippling hills in the distance and a sky suffused with orange and purple. This type of landscape was devised by the artist Tara in the mid-century for his equestrian portraits of Sarup Singh (e.g. Topsfield 1980, nos. 267-69).

The inscription indicates that the young rider on the left is a Gosain or Gosvami, who ought to be one of the Tilakayats or supreme pontiffs of the Vallabha cult at Nathdwara. The Tilakayats were descended from Vallabha's chief disciple Vitthalnathji. The Tilakayat contemporary with Sarup Singh was Girdharji (1843-1903) and it not impossible that this is what our poorly written inscription is trying

to say. The Tilakayats affected all the trappings of secular sovereignty, especially Girdharji: 'He exercised his authority in the manner of an absolute monarch and received his subjects while seated on the balcony of the Hava Mahal, dispensing justice to them from there. His judgements were immediate and his decisions final' (Ambalal 1987, p. 69). Although the Tilakayats were normally depicted dressed as priests and engaged in worshipping Srinathji, they sometimes appear dressed in secular regal fashion (e.g. ibid., pp. 135 and 140) and nimbate (ibid., pp. 127 and 135). The chief gosains of the sect were also known as Maharajas for good reason.

Srinathji was the most important image in Braj when, in order to escape the persecutions initiated by the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb (1658-1707), the pontiff of the sect decided in 1669 to move the sacred image from Mathura into Rajasthan. The rath or chariot of Srinathji kept on moving ahead confronting all hurdles, until two years later it finally stopped at Sinhada in Mewar, where it was given leave by Maharana Raj Singh of Mewar (1652-80) to

remain. A new haveli (mansion) was built over the image which became the great shrine of Nathdwara. Srinathji lives in havelis or mansions, not temples, where he is treated exactly like the child he is – awakened, dressed, fed, entertained, made to take naps, undressed and finally put to bed.

The Maharanas of Mewar gave the Tilakayats a great deal of autonomy in the running of the temple and the town but the relationship was often prickly, particularly in the 19th century. Sarup Singh disapproved of Girdharji's espousal of the rebels' cause in 1857 and withdrew the judicial and other powers granted by earlier Ranas, while the British authorities also took a dim view of his activities. He was forced out of Nathdwara in 1877 and was succeeded as Tilakayat by his 16 year old son Govardhanlalji.

#### Literature

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## Equestrian Portrait of Maharaja Sawai Ram Singh II of Jaipur (1834-1880) in the Photographic Style

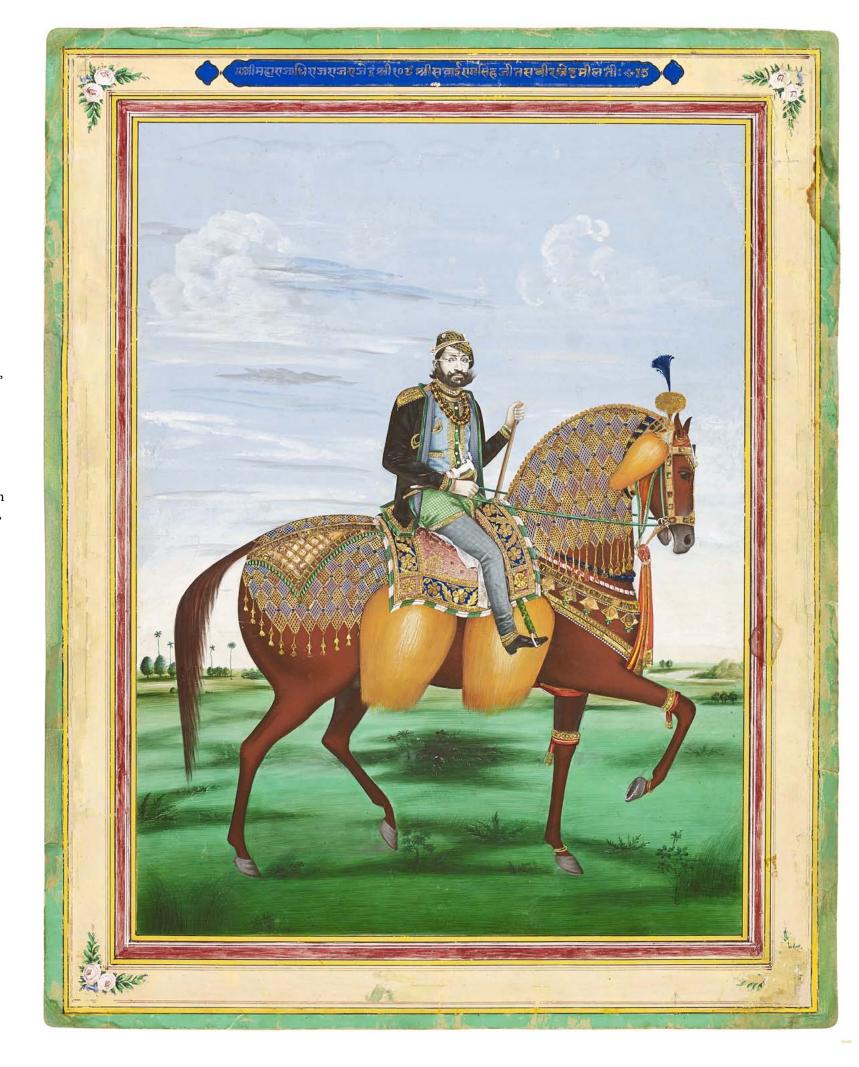
Jaipur, c. 1875 Opaque watercolour, gold and mica on card Painting: 51.3 x 40.8 cm

This grand equestrian portrait of the 'Photographer Prince' is painted in a style to simulate photography which was popular in Jaipur at the time. The bespectacled maharaja is dressed in an Anglo Indian outfit of tweed trousers and black velvet and gold embroidered short coat over a waist-coat. He is seated on a richly caparisoned chestnut stallion covered in gold and silver mail, the saddle heavily embroidered in gold over further horse regalia of plaques of mica and hanging green glass (or emerald) beads.

Maharaja Sawai Ram Singh II was considered one of the most enlightened of the Jaipur rulers and one of the most progressive Indian princes of his time. He modernised the state, under British influence, by improving the administration and the welfare of his people. He established the Jaipur Water Works, Gas Works, the Mayor Hospital, the

Ramniwas Gardens with the Museum, the School of Arts, the Public Library and other administrative buildings. Besides being an ardent devotee of Siva, Maharaja Sawai Ram Singh II pursued activities as diverse as ballroom dancing, polo, kite flying and photography. Known as the first Photographer Prince of India, he set up a formal course of photography at the Jaipur School of Arts, and hired a Calcutta based English photographer to assist him in recording the building activities in Jaipur, their people, the costume and culture.

Given this interest in photography, Jaipur painting at the time was strongly influenced by photography as can be seen in this flamboyant portrait.





#### A Maharaja with his two Children

Rajasthan, c. 1870-80 Opaque pigments heightened with gold and silver Painting: 56.2 x 41.5 cm

A maharaja is seated on a traditional throne or gaddi with a scalloped back holding on his lap two children, a boy and a girl. The maharaja is dressed all in white apart from his gold brocaded turban and cummerbund, the better to set off his magnificent emeralds worn in a sarpech on his turban, in his ears, on his arms and attached by long loops of gold to the top of his white jama. The boy wears an orange jama and a green cap and holds a pet parrot, while the girl wears a red gown and holds a pet peacock. These seem to be real birds and not toys as each child also holds a gold cup for the bird to dip its beak into. The throne is set upon a light coloured carpet viewed in plan, while from a decorated arch behind hang various kinds of lamps. The scene is placed within an oval cartouche of which the spandrels are decorated in a Victorian manner with roses and leaves.

Artists in Rajasthan in the second half of the 19th century had to compete with the growing popularity of photography which was slowly replacing the traditional portraits done by court artists. Some artists produced work in an almost totally western fashion as in the famous portrait of Maharaja Jaswant Singh of Jodhpur (Welch 1978, no. 66), in which the Maharaja is posed exactly as if it was a photograph. An attempt is made to do the same in a portrait of Maharana Sajjan Singh of Mewar still in Udaipur, but the artist was unable to bring it off completely successfully (Topsfield2002, fig. 255). Other artists compromised as

did our artist by retaining traditional elements such as the carpet seen in plan, the fictive arch, etc., but using a more naturalistic posture which contrasts with the traditional flatness of the planes of colour. Such a format is seen in a double portrait of Maharaja Dungar Singh of Bikaner and his father-in-law Maharao Pragmulji Saheb of Kutch formerly in the James Ivory collection (Losty 2010, no. 16). The oval cartouche, a format much used in Pahari painting round the turn of the century, was also becoming more popular elsewhere and its decoration was becoming Victorianised, as also seen in a portrait of a Sikh ruler formerly in the Paul Walter collection (Patnaik and Welch, 1985, no. 72).

#### Literature

Losty, J.P., Indian Miniatures from the James Ivory Collection, Francesca Galloway, London, 2010

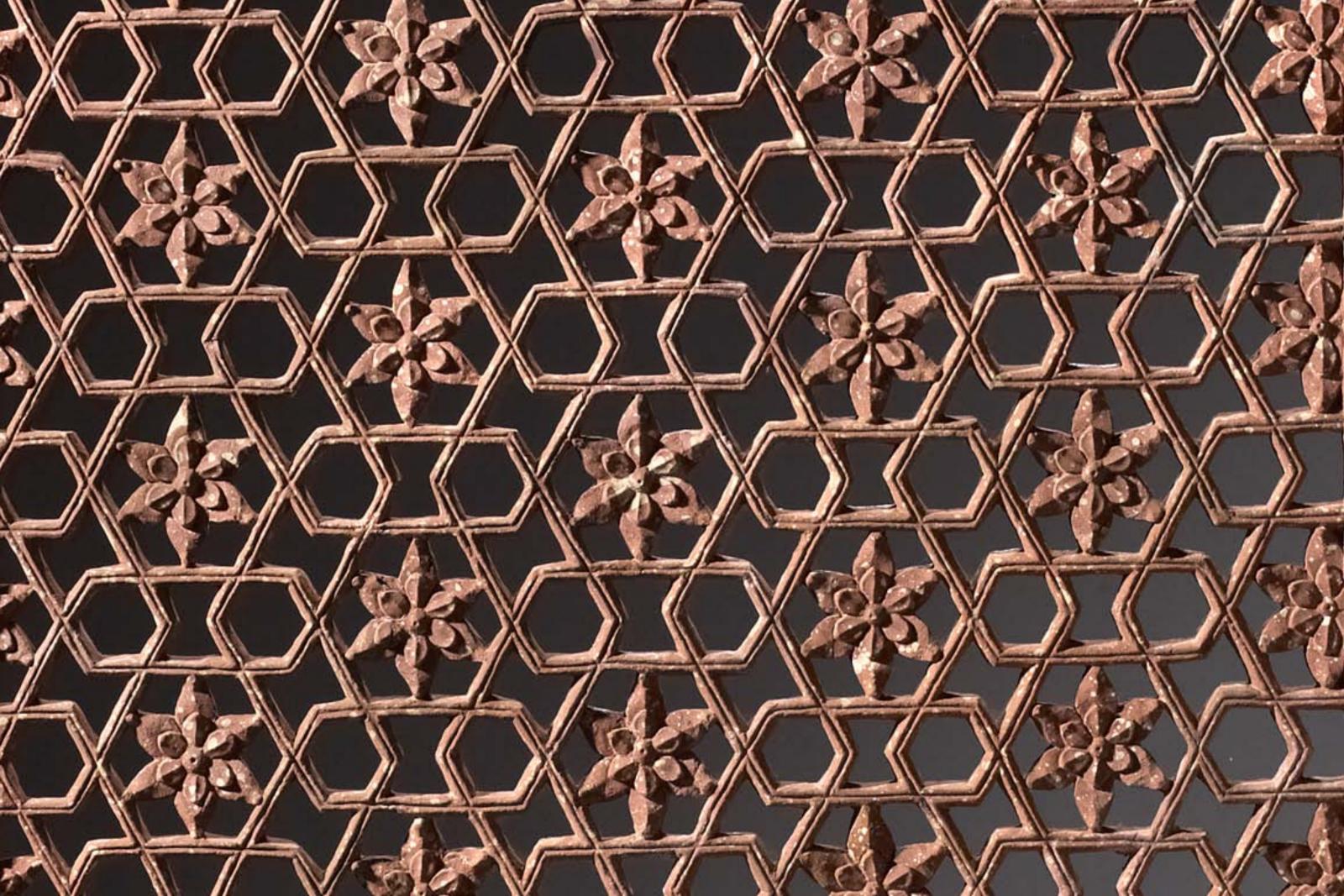
Patnaik, N., and Welch, S.C., A Second Paradise: Indian Courtly Life 1590-1947, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Doubleday, New York, 1985

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Welch, S.C., Room for Wonder: Indian painting during the British Period, American Federation of Arts, New York, 1978







## 32 & 33

The following two jalis come from Akbar and Jahangir-period Mughal architecture in the Agra/Fatehpur Sikri area and are fashioned from mottled red sandstone which was locally quarried. These jalis were originally built into the walls of palaces and tomb complexes. Their primary function was to achieve the effect of visual transparency by filtering daylight as well as allowing air to circulate. They also maintained a sense of privacy within the interior of the building which was extremely important to royal and courtly lifestyle. Jalis not only illustrate another aspect of Mughal decoration but their elegance and monumental structure appeal to a modern aesthetic.



# Jali with delicate design of pairs of Six-petalled Flowers within interlocking Hexagons

Mughal, late Fatehpur Sikri style – end of the Jahangir period (circa 1585-1627) 122 x 84 x 4 cm (H x W x D)

#### Literature

Michell, G. 'Red Stone – Indian Stone Carving from sultanate and Mughal India' Sam Fogg and Francesca Galloway, 2012, cat.2





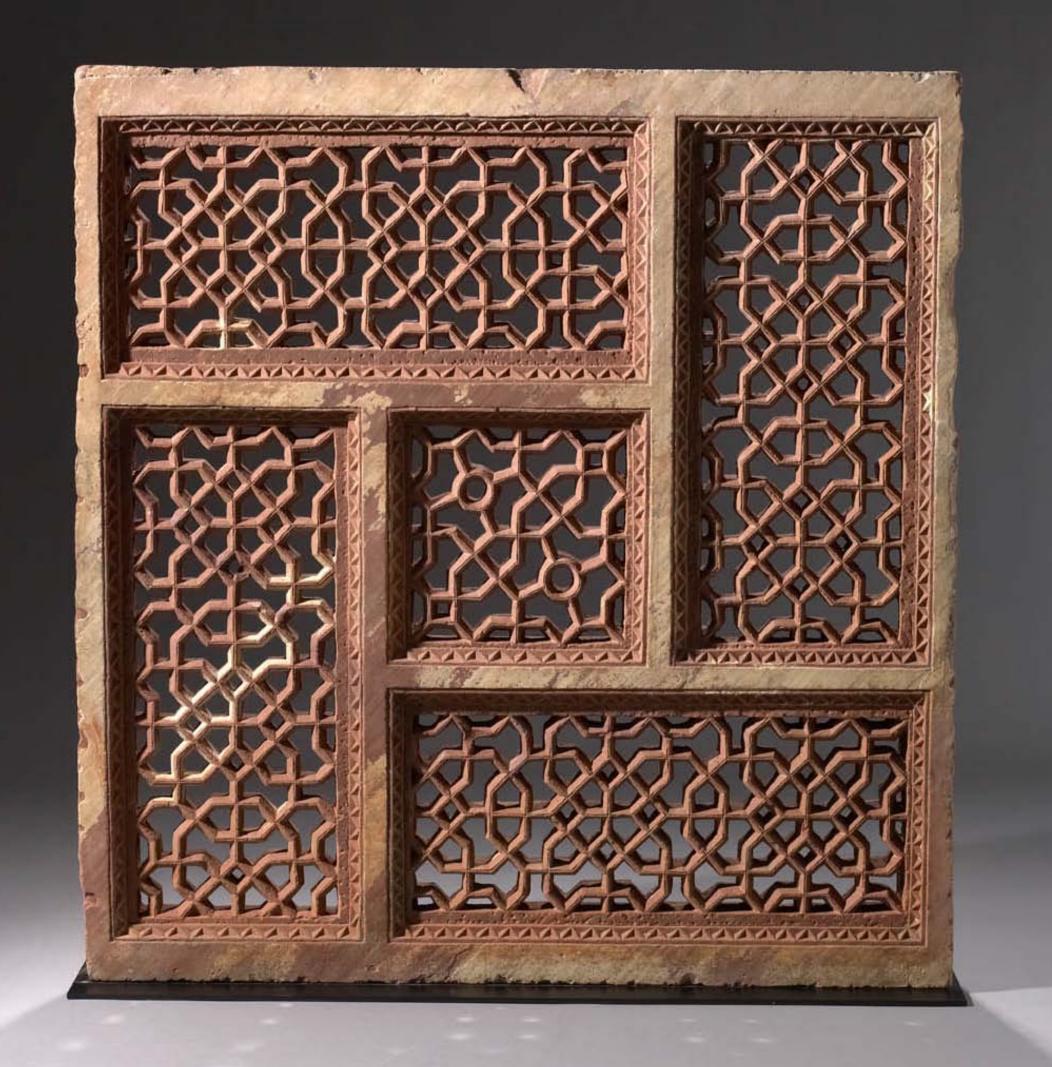
# Square Jali consisting of Four Rectangles rotating around a Central Square

Mughal, Jahangir period (circa 1605-27) 107 x 103 x 9.5 cm (H x W x D)

The overall geometric structure of this jali screen is comprised of four rectangles that rotate around a central square. This is a common motif in Islamic ornament and varieties of this design was used widely in diverse media throughout Persia, Transoxiana and Mughal India.

#### Literature

Michell, G. 'Red Stone – Indian Stone Carving from sultanate and Mughal India' Sam Fogg and Francesca Galloway, 2012, cat.10





## Ceremonial Dagger

South India, Nayaka, late 16th century Bronze Length: 20.5 cm

A refined and courtly ceremonial small bronze dagger with remains of gilding, with double-edged recurved blade, including a double-sided rampant yali where the blade joins the hilt which is shaped like a knuckleduster. Beautiful openwork scrolling frames the hilt with a bird's body with yali head along one side. A small long tailed bird rests on the top of the hilt.

Elements of the decoration relate to a pierced katar with three blades in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (No.36.25.1027), dated Nayaka early 17th century (Elgood, 2004, p.151) and a dagger also in the Met (no.36.25.1039) published in Elgood 2004, p.174.

#### Literatur

Elgood, R. 'Hindu Arms and Ritual – Arms and Armour from India 1400-1865' 2004







## Brass Ewer with engraved Fishscale pattern

Deccan, early 18th century Height: 32 cm

The ewer is inscribed with a Persian inscription which reads: 'Khairullah'. The dropped pear-shaped ewer has a sinuous spout and rounded handle, with everted top and lid. The body and lid are entirely decorated with an engraved overall feathered fish-scale pattern. This design also appears on Ottoman Iznik ceramics and metalwork. This ewer is unusual for its Persian inscription which probably refers to an early owner's name.

#### Published

Zebrowski, M., Gold, Silver and Bronze from Mughal India, London, 1997, cat. 232



## Fine, Circular Bidri Pandan

Deccan, second half 17th century Metal alloy inlaid with silver and brass Height: 9.5 cm Diameter: 16.2 cm

A pandan in brass and silver with concave walls supporting a gently domed lid and an overall scrolling design enclosing robust flowers, buds and leaves around both the body and the lid. It is probably from the same workshop as two pandans illustrated in Zebrowski (Zebrowski, 1997, p. 266, cats. 453 & 454).

### Literature

Zebrowski, M., Gold, Silver and Bronze from Mughal India, London, 1997





## A rare and large, cone-shaped portable Bidri Hookah

Deccan, early 19th century Metal alloy inlaid with silver Height: 28 cm

This hookah base is decorated with staggered rows of flowering plants bordered above and below with narrow horizontal bands enclosing single flowers and leaves. A hookah with a variation of this design is in the Khalili collection (Zebrowski, 1997, pl.407).

#### Literature

Zebrowski, M., Gold, Silver and Bronze from Mughal India, London, 1997

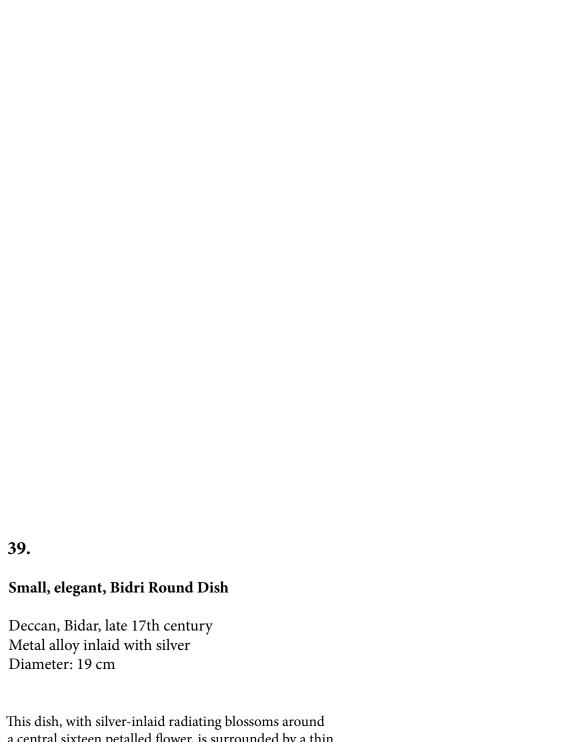




## A Bidri Ewer

Deccan, first half of the 19th century Metal alloy inlaid with silver Height: 26.5 cm

Ewer inlaid with silver, with melon shaped body, facetted spout and curved handle terminating in a scroll. The belly of the ewer is decorated with a row of flowering plants and horizontal borders of scrolling flowers on the shoulder and above the raised foot of the ewer.



This dish, with silver-inlaid radiating blossoms around a central sixteen petalled flower, is surrounded by a thin border of small petals.





## Bidri Hookah Base

Deccan, 17th century Metal alloy inlaid with silver Height: 19.5 cm

Hookah base decorated in the aftabi technique (sheet silver is applied to the bidri object from which the design is cut out in negative revealing the black bidri surface beneath). Some details are further embellished with thin strips of brass.

Large, flamboyant flowering plants are placed within arcade arches, a band of scrolling flowers around the shoulder and small flowering plants around the neck.



#### **Brass Betel Nut Cutters**

South India, possibly Mysore, first half 19th century Height: 15 cm

Nut cutters in the form of an amorous couple, the man of Tipuesque appearance and costume. Both figures are seated on scrolling leaf handles with lotus bud finials and parrots perched on the inside of the handles. The way both figures are portrayed relate to other examples published in Brownrigg (Brownrigg, 1991, nos. 73 & 76), both in the Samuel Eilenberg Collection. South Indian betel nut cutters tended to be figural in contrast to North Indian examples. The fineness of execution reflects the high quality of South Indian brass production.

#### Literature

Brownrigg, H., Betel Cutters from the Samuel Eilenberg Collection, London, 1991









Rare group of six mould-blown and gold painted square glass bottles, each bottle with cork stopper and silver-gilt finial

Probably Gujarat, West India, or Deccan, for the European market, 18th century
Height: c. 15 cm each (including cork stopper)

These bottles were blown in a two-part mould, as can be seen in the diagonal seam at the base. The glass is heavy, which might indicate Indian manufacture. The gold decoration consists of a stylized vase of flowers and fruit on a tray with birds flying amongst foliage above. On another side fanciful architecture is set alongside rock formations and boats on water - a style of decoration usually associated with the Deccan.



## 43 & 44

Two rare copper and brass huqqa bases in the shape of a yak's horn, from Skardo Baltistan, in the Karakoram mountains. According to Zebrowski, Count and Countess de Ujfalvy travelled to this area in the late 19th century where they discovered and later described this particular type of hookah base which had been in the possession of the royal family of Baltistan. According to Zebrowski and A.H. Morton one other example is dated AH 1201/1786-7 AD.

#### Left

A red brass hookah with fine openwork brass mounts with oblong compartments enclosing detailed flower and plant decoration similar to two other examples, one in the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (inv.no.M.82.225.1) published in Zebrowski, 1997, 417 & 418. A Persian inscription on the body of our example reads 'The architect of form spoke its date, the hookah of Ghulam Husayn is without peer'

Skardo, Baltistan, late 18th century. Height: 19 cm

#### Right

An unusual copper huqqa base with brass spout and brass fittings at top and bottom incised with vigorous openwork floral and foliate scrolling decoration. The plain copper body is slightly facetted.

Skardo, Baltistan, circa 1800 Height: 9.5 cm

#### Literature

Zebrowski, M. 'Gold, Silver and Bronze from Mughal India' London 1997



## Rare Mughal Tile with Saz Leaf

Mughal, 17th century Cuerda Seca 20.5 x 19 x 2 cm

A tile with a nile green saz leaf and flower buds on a sunflower yellow ground. To the left of the yellow field there is a green border in the same green as the saz leaf. This border is framed to either side with a narrow orange band. Within this green field there is a yellow scrolling flowering vine with an orange petaled flower and two purple flower heads.

Tiles such as ours would have been part of the decorative schemes of Mughal monuments during the reign of Shah Jahan. According to Venetia Porter, Mughal tiles were used on both stone and brick surfaces. She states that Mughal tiles show a strong Safavid influence in style and technique. The British Museum has a cuerda seca tile also featuring a green leaf. Porter links the leaf to Ottoman saz leaves, saying that the Mughals used a diversity of sources – both Indian and foreign (Porter, V., pp. 87-88).

A comparable tile to ours is in the Victoria & Albert Museum, who have a fine collection of Mughal tiles. The tile in their collection (IS.24-1887) is dated c. 1650, and has the same yellow field and green border as can be seen in ours.

#### Literature

Porter, V., 'Islamic Tiles', The British Museum Press, 1995



Armenian Liturgical Embroidery, Commissioned by the Armenian Community from Hassan Pasha District in Istanbul for the Monastery of Saint John the Baptist in 1763

Ottoman, Armenian commission executed in Istanbul, mid 18th century Fine cashmere wool embroidered in silk and metal thread in tambour or chain stitch 178 x 122 cm

Inscription in erkatagir script reads:

"This curtain (varakouyr) is in memory of the people of Hassan Pacha Khan who gave it to the Monastery (vank) of Saint John the Baptist (Surp Garabed) on the Armenian date 10 May 1212 (1763 AD)"

A rectangular hanging, like an Ottoman prayer rug but of secular floral design, consists of fine red wool richly embroidered in tambour stitch in silk and silver strips wound round a silk core. White silk is used to produce a silver effect and yellow silk to produce gold.

The central panel with deep cusped arch with serrated leafy surround encloses an image of Christ with staff, holding the severed head of St John the Baptist on one arm and a lamb on another. He is surrounded by an Armenian inscription and date (as above). Below this is a large spectacular flower surrounded by smaller flowers growing from an elaborate urn or vase. The style of flowers, particularly the way the tulips are depicted, relate to mid-18th century Ottoman decoration. The central panel is surrounded by a wide border with vases of identical flowers (jonquils and tulips etc.) within shaped cartouches framed either side with scrolling tulips and irises on a metal thread ground.

This exceptionally fine embroidery, in excellent condition, is an early example of a style of embroidery which is associated with professional workshops in Istanbul. This style continued into the 19th century. The quality of this embroidery also relates to work that was done at the palace workshop. It compares to a slightly later embroidery in the Topkapi Saray (TSM INV.No.31/30 - Tezcan, H & Okumura, S. 2007, no7). In addition, there is also a barber's robe of similar technique and quality, on a silk ground, also in the Topkapi Saray (TSM INV.No.31/1084 - Rogers, J.M., Tezcan, H. & Delibas, S. 1986, no 107). Other embroideries of this type, but of varying quality,

are in the Victoria & Albert Museum (Johnstone, P. 1985, cats.25-35).

A comparable 18th century embroidered altar curtain, also with a dedicary Armenian inscription above a vase of flowers, is in the Kalfayan Collection. (published in exhibition catalogue, 'Aspects of Armenian Art. The Kalfayan Collection', June-October 2010, Museum of Byzantine Culture, Thessaloniki, Greece, Athens, 2010, cat. 6, pp. 60-61). Yet another liturgical curtain, dating from 1763, is in the Museum of Catholicate in Etchmiadzine, Armenia ('Armenie - la magie de l'ecrit' Marseille 2007, no 4.92).

The monastery complex of Surp Garabed is near the village of Efkere (district of Kayseri). This pilgrimage site was an important spiritual centre for the Armenian people of the Ottoman empire and consisted of a school, a library and two churches, the Archangel and Surp Garabed, this last holding relics of St John the Baptist. The embroidery would have been executed in Istanbul and commissioned for this monastery by the Armenian people of the Hassan Pacha Khan district in Istanbul.

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#### Literature

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