ART IN BETWEEN EMPIRES: VISUAL CULTURE & ARTISTIC KNOWLEDGE IN LATE MUGHAL DELHI 1748-1857

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ABSTRACT

Art in between Empires:
Visual Culture & Artistic Knowledge in Late Mughal Delhi 1748 -1857

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This dissertation focuses on the artistic culture of late Mughal Delhi spanning the last century of Mughal rule and the administration of the English East India Company in North India, from the mid-eighteenth to the mid-nineteenth centuries. It brings a hitherto unrecognized period of artistic accomplishment to light and studies the transformations within painting culture in the multicultural Anglo-Mughal society of Delhi. Rather than being fixated on the continuum of Mughal painting over centuries, this dissertation suggests that the art of the late Mughal period should be studied on its own terms as a response to immense socio-political and cultural changes. At its core this study is concerned with dissolving the stylistic barriers between Mughal and Company painting in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. I take up the question of what the term ‘late Mughal painting’ entails and discuss how the term privileges the notion of a court centric culture of painting in an era when the Mughal court was only one of many venues of artistic expression. On the other hand, I highlight the inadequacy of the term ‘Company painting’ to address the variegated nature of works produced under East India Company patronage in this period. Thus, this dissertation attempts to view seemingly disparate works within a common
framework of visual analysis. Moreover, it seeks to highlight the agency of painters in creating this diffusion of artistic conventions at Delhi and charts transitions in their working methods.

In a period where the story of the Mughal empire appears as an appendage to the dominant historiography of the East India Company’s rise to power, this investigation of painting culture in Delhi (the spiritual and historical center of Mughal power) reveals how paintings were critical for either maintaining or upsetting the status quo between court and Company and how this critical balance of power between the two was negotiated in the visual sphere. The first chapter of this dissertation discusses the role of cartography as a means for projecting Mughal imperial identity in the face of a growing Company dominance. Using a body of previously unexplored maps and cartographic drawings I show how painters used topographic markers to illustrate Mughal presence using both European and local conventions of drawing. Such works, I argue, also initiated the creation of visual histories of later Mughal rule at Delhi, as they pictured events often discussed in private correspondence, such as the famous bazgasht or Return of Shah Alam II (r. 1759-1806) to Delhi that marked the re-establishment of the Mughal house Delhi in 1772. Paintings produced in the royal court of Shah Alam II reflected upon the historical legacy of Mughal ideas while referencing the emotive context of Indo-Persian and Braj bhasha poetics that constituted the wider expressive culture of this period. Composed by the Delhi painter Khairullah, court scenes played upon the metaphorical significance of the long lost Peacock Throne of Shah Jahan re-imagining it within the space of the later Mughal court – thus creating a formidable visual imperial identity for the veteran blinded emperor Shah Alam II. Furthermore, Khairullah’s younger colleague Ghulam Murtaza Khan took this legacy forward using the shared
knowledge of Western perspective and Mughal painterly hieratic to create court scenes for Akbar II (r.1806-1836). His works can also be read for their clever subversion of the Company’s attempts to conduct diplomatic meetings on an equal footing. The painter’s innovative format for Mughal court scenes was modeled on the picture plane of a one-point perspective, which he used to draw attention to the centrally placed and physically higher figure of the emperor. This, in turn, relegated the figure of the British Resident to a mere courtier rather than the new arbitrator of power in Anglo-Mughal Delhi. Ghulam Murtaza Khan’s paintings easily constitute the most substantial visual record of the Mughal court in the nineteenth century.

As this dissertation reveals, a large majority of paintings produced in courtly and non-courtly settings were, in fact, executed by the same group of painters belonging to the family atelier of the painter Ghulam Ali Khan (active 1790-1855). This dissertation offers a first look into the network of painters active in Delhi during this period and also offers a plausible genealogy of their family. Later chapters of this dissertation highlight how Ghulam Ali Khan worked in different conventions - of Mughal manuscript painting, architectural, and landscape drawing, and miniatures – showcasing his ability to skillfully modify his technique to suit a particular patron. His working method also indicates that artistic knowledge available to the painter reached him through discrete channels such as the court atelier or through his training in European architectural draftsmanship. However, the melding of artistic conventions in the nineteenth century was subject to the will of the artist and the marketplace. I provide an overview of Ghulam Ali Khan’s career spanning the breadth of his early work on architectural views of Delhi’s buildings to his work on portrait studies of Delhi’s residents for the newly powerful group of
Company officers, William Fraser (1784-1835) and Colonel James Skinner (1778-1841). The dissertation also suggests a connection between Ghulam Ali Khan and the British topographical painter Thomas Daniell (1749-1840) through a study of Daniell’s scraps (illustrated notes) from his private papers. Moreover, my research situates Ghulam Ali Khan as the driving force for painting at the Rajput court of Alwar and the Jat court of Jhajjar enabling us, for the first time, to create a near-complete picture of his career. This dissertation presents first time look into the pictorial archives at Alwar and uses new evidence to substantiate the painter’s pivotal role in shaping painting culture at Alwar in the nineteenth century.

The penultimate section of this dissertation presents facets of European patronage that link closely with the cultural and political conditions at Delhi. In particular, I examine the circumstances surrounding the commission of portraits of Delhi’s residents by the Company officer William Fraser that were part of the (now) world famous album compiled between the years 1810 and 1825. I draw attention to the pragmatic considerations surrounding land settlement that bore upon Fraser’s interest in creating a visual record of the Delhi countryside. Focusing on his professional role as the surveyor, I show how he was able to create an enduring model for land settlement that incorporated his personal and familial links with village residents in the region. This analysis provides the all important context for thinking about rural portraits in the Fraser Album, and their personal as well as professional appeal for Fraser. This dissertation also lays out a near complete picture of Fraser’s friend James Skinner’s professional life and his interest in creating a pictorial biography through commissions of albums and monumental paintings. Situating the paintings within the socio-political context of Skinner’s rise from an
adjunct Company officer to a decorated Mughal and Company servant, I discuss how Skinner’s search for permanent recognition shaped the content of Ghulam Ali Khan’s compositions. Finally, this dissertation charts the later years of painting at Delhi and its dilution into souvenir copies painted on ivory that I call, “Mughalerie”. William Fraser’s own interest in commissioning copies of popular paintings on ivory is noteworthy here, indicative of rise in the popular taste for European-styled miniatures based on Mughal ideas that fed into the emotional economy of Anglo-Indian residents of Delhi. Overall, this study of painting culture in Delhi aims at enriching the mainstream historiography of the modern period of Indian painting and offers a compelling reassessment of this transition period in Indian art history.
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NOTE

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DEDICATION

Late Shrimati Indira Sharma and Late Dr. Portukochi Gopal Sharma, PhD [Sastri]
INTRODUCTION

The Late Mughal Question

Most histories of Mughal painting start with Babur (r.1526-1530) and end with Aurangzeb (Alamgir I, r.1658-1707). The role of the later Mughals occurs almost as an appendage a summary of the political upheavals following Aurangzeb’s death, the brief efflorescence during Muhammad Shah’s (r.1719-1748) reign and then promptly to the pathos of the Mughal court of Bahadur Shah ‘Zafar’ (r.1837-57) with whose exile in 1858 the chapter of Mughal patronage closes forever. Moreover, the fate of Mughal painting is considered all but sealed following the fateful meeting between Muhammad Shah and the Afsharid Persian ruler, Nadir Shah in 1739, which is widely understood to have been a cultural and moral low point for the court. Nadir Shah’s invasion of Delhi, the widespread massacre of its residents by his army, and the tragic carting away of Mughal riches, especially the Mughal emperor Shah Jahan’s (r.1628-58) jewel encrusted ‘Peacock Throne’ that occupied pride of place in the Mughal palace at Delhi, are incidents that have shaped a narrative of cultural loss for this period. Hardly any paintings of Muhammad Shah that can be dated to between 1739 and 1748 exist from Delhi, the fate of the emperor in his last decade of rule is not clearly known, but painting culture at Delhi was not completely extinguished.¹

While it is widely known that painting flourished in the years after Muhammad’s Shah’s death in 1748, scholars have long been confronted by the multifaceted challenge of dealing with multiple

¹ A number of paintings from this period have received attention in William Dalrymple and Yuthika Sharma, Princes and Painters in Mughal Delhi, 1707-1857 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012).
stakeholders at play in the last century of Mughal rule in the Indian subcontinent. The widespread exodus of nobles and artists to the regional provinces of Awadh and Murshidabad has drawn the interest of art historians to these new centers of artistic and cultural activity. The role of Mughal ideas as a foil to the formation of artistic identities in these successor States has revealed the enduring visual legacy of Mughal court painting in the provinces. In particular, the term Provincial Mughal Painting has been used to address the first wave of artists who emigrated from the Mughal court to the provinces and shaped the visual culture of these polities.

However, the notion of the artist as a carrier of imperial Mughal style has furthered a long-standing bias about late Mughal painting itself being in crisis. With the impetus for cultural production shifting to the newly affluent successor States, the Mughal center, it was proposed, suffered a crisis of composition and style. This art historical corollary was no doubt based on the idea of the crisis of the Mughal State forwarded by political and fiscal historians of India, who were charting the course of the decentralization of the Mughal State in the eighteenth century. However, as recent studies have shown, culture did not always follow politics. The story of

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waning Mughal power is also the story of the rise of the East India Company to power and of the strengthening of regional polities surrounding Delhi. Thus, any analysis of the late Mughal period has to take into account the role of these different groups. The crisis of style then, I suggest, is very much the failure of present methodologies to deal with the conditions of a de-centralized framework of the artistic production in Mughal Delhi and the fragmented patronage network under which Delhi’s artists operated.

While the scholarship on later Mughal art remains piecemeal, the patronage of the British East India Company has received disproportionate attention. But there is a problem here. The subsuming categorization of most artistic production in the late 18th and 19th century under the rubric of Company School Painting deserves revision. The term, coined to address the variegated character of commissions by European officers of the French or British East India Company, has been used to address the vast body of European commissions in India painted by Indian artists, covering a range of subject matter - botanical illustrations, ethnographic studies, architectural and landscape painting. When Mildred Archer used the term to label her monumental catalogue of prints and drawings for the British Library and the Victoria and Albert Museum in the 1960s and 1970s, she noted that the term Company Painting was already in use. For many decades scholars have found the use of the term unproblematic, despite its greatly homogenizing tendency. Conventional understanding of the term is based on the idea of growing European interest in knowledge production about the Indian subcontinent. It is characterized by the use of perspective, cartography, and naturalistic portraiture, all viewed as the instruments of western epistemological enquiry. Moreover, the Indian artist is framed as a passive receptor of the mode of western
science, and at best, as an inadequate interlocutor of its methods. This is one of the central biases that this dissertation seeks to counter.

I propose that the term Company Painting is in itself meaningless, as it does not communicate the complex nature of patron-painter interactions that took place around this time. The shape of artistic knowledge therefore is something that concerns this dissertation directly. Why do pictures in this period look the way they do? What are elements of Mughal-ness that paintings exhibit in this period? How were paintings perceived in this period? As this dissertation tries to understand and highlight, Mughal painting in the last century of Mughal rule was not about an overarching imperial ideology or the projection of a singular vision; instead, it was about responding to immense change occurring in its midst. In this dissertation I suggest that Mughal ideas were no longer the sole domain of the Mughal ruler or the Mughal court. By the late eighteenth century, the idea of Mughal painting was something that could be practiced at will; whether the will of an artist or patron or that of the marketplace.

Methodologically, my dissertation addresses the relationship between court culture and colonial patronage in Delhi by viewing artistic production in the longue durée of later Mughal rule. I propose that the artistic sphere of Delhi from the mid-18th century onwards should be viewed from a tripartite perspective: In terms of a shift in the patronage base from Mughal rulers and nobles to subsidiary rulers and European officers; in terms of a shift in the status of the painter, no longer a master artist but a multi-talented illustrator and topographer; and finally, in terms of
the transformation of the status of the artwork itself – where paintings were created to evoke multiple references to their mixed cultural and aesthetic heritage.

The chapters in this dissertation are organized to reflect upon the chronological development of events from the late eighteenth century onwards but focus on a particular aspect of painting in the city. In Chapter 1, A Cartography of Power, I consider the role of cartographic representation and especially of the visual mapping of the Red Fort since the mid-eighteenth-century as a means of projecting imperial authority. I use this chapter to construct the political significance of the third to last Mughal emperor Shah Alam II’s (r.1759-1806) return to Delhi, and suggest that by the turn of the century, the architectural image of the Red Fort operated as a powerful as a marker of Mughal identity at Delhi. The renewed impetus for architectural painting in the city, I argue, was fostered through the persona of the Mughal emperor in Indo-European imagination.

In Chapter 2, The Peacock Throne, I highlight the role of lesser-known Delhi painters such as Khairullah, who have not received attention, and their role in visually crafting a new Mughal presence at Delhi. By analyzing the metaphorical content of court paintings of Shah Alam I suggest that the visual legacy of Shah Jahan’s Peacock Throne provided the synthetic structure for creating court paintings in this period, while Shah Alam’s own literary and musical training illuminated their metaphorical content. Chapter 3, Staking Territory is in two parts. The first section of this chapter, on Court Painting under Akbar II, is concerned with the politics of visuality that played out in court paintings of diplomatic meetings between the Mughal emperor Akbar II (r.1806-1837) and the British Resident at Delhi. The chapter brings into discussion the
use of compositional hierarchies, perspective, and the outward gaze to create a new balance of power that privileged Mughal interests over British ones. In the second section, I consider the role of the Mughal procession as a means of claiming the Mughal right to a city largely under British administration.

In the next chapter, **A Painter for all Occasions**, I offer the first full-length study of the career of the painter Ghulam Ali Khan (active 1815-55). I bring forth new evidence of a link between the work of the British topographical painter Thomas Daniell (1749-1840) and Ghulam Ali Khan to suggest greater fluidity between Western and Indian painting than previously assumed. Chapters 5, 6, and 7 present various aspects of Ghulam Ali Khan’s career – his status as a royal painter for the Mughal court, his employment under East India Company patrons such as William Fraser and James Skinner, and his work for regional rulers at Jhajjar and Alwar. I show how Ghulam Ali Khan was able to transcend any limitations within so-called genres of painting and devise a new visual vocabulary for Delhi painting. Chapter 5, **Objective Visions**, provides a selective focus on the context of the creation of the Fraser Album, one of the most extensive compilations of portraits by Indian artists in the nineteenth-century. My aim in this chapter is to unearth William Fraser’s personal as well as professional motivations for commissioning rural portraits in the Album in order to shed greater light on the larger political forces governing the creation of the album. Chapter 6, **James Skinner at Hansi**, sheds light on a number of albums and paintings created for Skinner, a dear friend of Fraser and also a prolific patron of Delhi artists. The paintings commissioned by Skinner show the range of literary and artistic ideas that Delhi painters such as Ghulam Ali Khan were working with. Moreover, these works constitute the most
active years of the painter’s career and also provide a crucial link to their bearing upon the parallel production of royal commissions at the Mughal court.

The final chapter, **Mughal Delhi in my pocket**, looks at the transition of Mughal painting from being a diplomatic gift to becoming a market commodity after the end of Mughal rule in 1857. By looking at the narratives of Anglo-Indian consumption surrounding Mughal themes, I suggest that the idea of Mughal painting in a post-Mughal world picked up on the fascination with minuteness, resulting in commissions that were portable or could be worn on one’s person. In the closing decades of the nineteenth century, souvenirs became an active part of the emotional economy of Anglo-Indians in India and Britain.
I.

A Cartography of Power

Shah Alam’s *Bazgasht* to Delhi (1771-1806)6

*Both my heart and Delhi are desolate*

*Yet I find comfort in this deserted city*7

In January 1772 the reigning Mughal emperor Shah Alam II entered Delhi with much pomp and splendor.8 In 1759 following his father’s death, Shah Alam had ascended the *masnad* (throne) as the new emperor but had stayed away from Delhi to garner support to counter the monopoly of the minister Ghaziuddin who effectively controlled the Mughal court under his father Alamgir II (r.1754-1759). Yet, the desire to return to his ancestral home and reassert his supremacy from the *dar-al-khilafat*, the traditional seat of empire at Shahjahanabad, remained ever present. Following the Battle of Buxar in 1764, Mughal geographical dominance had steadily diminished - its major

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territories were now in the hands of the British East India Company. By the last quarter of the eighteenth century only the limits of the Mughal city of Shahjahanabad and the local environs of Delhi constituted the bulk of Shah Alam’s political as well as geographical dominion, evoking the popular saying, “From Delhi to Palam – the reign of Shah Alam.”

Against the backdrop of Shah Alam’s return to Delhi, this chapter looks at the pictorial modes of imagining Delhi and its environs from the late eighteenth to the early nineteenth century, when the Mughal house re-established itself in the city. This chapter studies the enmeshed nature of art, politics, and artistic agency manifested in the imagery of the Qila i-Mualla (the Exalted Fort) at Delhi within the Indo-European imagination, proposing that the pictorial representation of Shahjahanabad and its environs was synonymous with the projection of later-Mughal sovereignty. The visual stronghold of fort imagery, that referenced the vocabulary of Mughal miniature painting as well as European topographical techniques of representation, offers a unique insight into the constitutive role of these conventions in the development of the Delhi school of painting under Shah Alam II and his successors. In this context, we look at the significance of works produced within a cross-cultural artistic climate, under patrons such as Jean-Baptiste Gentil in Awadh and Antoine Louis Henri Polier in Delhi in the last quarter of the eighteenth century. Gentil’s commission of the Recueil de toutes sortes de Dessins sur les Usages et coutumes des Peuples de l'indoustan ou Empire Mogol (1774) and Polier’s own experience of the Mughal court at Delhi (c.1776) were, as we will see, significant for building a topographical

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9 In 1764 after losing the battle of Buxar against the British East India Company Shah Alam had signed a treaty handing over the diwani of Bihar, Bengal, and Orissa to them, and moved to Allahabad where he was to remain for another seven years. Later, Shah Alam conceded other territories in the Doab to Maratha chiefs in exchange for a safe passage to Delhi.
vocabulary for Shah Alam’s imperial image through various modes of visualizing Shahjahanabad. In this context, an early painting of the Red Fort dated to 1750 by the Mughal court artist Nidha Mal (fl. 1735-750) is considered for its repercussions on later cartographic drawings commissioned by Gentil and Polier. Nidha Mal’s own migration from Delhi to Awadh is a significant subtext for this analysis, in the wake of successive attacks on Delhi by the Afghan ruler Ahmad Shah Abdali, and other rival political groups. As Delhi artists found reemployment in the provincial courts, they were also absorbed into the emerging information network of European surveys of Indian territories. The agency of these local artists in this process of topographical translation was paramount, as they were able to re-imagine Mughal kingship largely in terms of its architectural and geographical symbolism.

Situating Delhi

Delhi continued to enjoy the unique position of being an intellectual, spiritual, and cultural center of the Mughal Empire and this was reflected in its prominence as a regional stronghold as well as urban center under Mughal rule.  

Eighteenth-century topographical and statistical records reiterate the delineation of Delhi both as a suba (province) and as a sarkar (division) following the initial guidelines laid out in the A’in i-Akbari compiled by Abu’l Fazl (1551-1602) at the end of the sixteenth century. As a suba, the Delhi province enjoyed revenues from numerous

10 Delhi was a site of ritual significance and imperial hunts prior to the construction of Shahjahanabad. See Ebba Koch, “Shah Jahan’s visits to Delhi prior to 1648: New evidence of ritual movement in urban Mughal India” in Mughal Architecture: Pomp and Ceremonies, Environmental Design 1-2 (1991), 18-29.

11 The manual served as an important model for later terrestrial and revenue records created under Aurangzeb (1658-1707) and the later Mughals. For example, see the initial comparison offered by
divisions and sub-divisions while Delhi *sarkar* contained the vast historical footprint of older fortifications and cities ruled by numerous powers for over a millennium.\(^{12}\) The *sarkar* accounted for three *mahals* (sub-divisions) - the *Haveli-i Qadimi* (old buildings), the *Haveli-i Jadid* (new buildings), and the capital city of Dihli, referring to the Mughal city of Shahjahanabad built under Shah Jahan.\(^{13}\) Later topographical accounts such as the *Khulasat-ut-Tawarikh* by Sujan Rai Bhandari (1695) and the *Chahar Gulshan* by Rai Chatirman (ca.1720/1759) celebrate the primacy of Delhi as an important socio-cultural locus of the Mughal Empire.\(^{14}\) It is noteworthy that the *Khulasat*, also translated in 1728 for the Mughal emperor Muhammad Shah at Delhi, takes a somewhat unconventional recourse into verse when describing Shahajahanabad, assuming the format of a literary urban ethnography. This intersection between idealized and observed forms of city description was common to the large body of Indo-Persian ethnographies of Delhi that utilized the literary tropes of *shahr ashub* to comment on the vitality of the city.\(^{15}\) A detailed

Jadunath Sarkar, *The India of Aurangzib (Topography, Statistics, and Roads) compared with the India of Akbar. With extracts from the Khulasatu-t-Tawarikh and the Chahar Gulshan* (Calcutta, 1901).

\(^{12}\) For an analysis of Delhi’s greater economic potential compared with Agra see, K.K Trivedi, “The Emergence of Agra as a Capital and a City: A Note on Its Spatial and Historical Background during the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries” *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, Vol. 37, No. 2 (1994), pp. 147-170.

\(^{13}\) Alongside the Western and Eastern tracts of the Jamuna were also accounted for in early administrative tabulations for the *suba*. After 1648, following the construction of Shahjahanabad the nomenclature for Delhi shifted to ‘Shahjahanabad’ or ‘Jahanabad’, and by the eighteenth century, Shahjahanabad seems to have been used to refer to the entire *suba*. Irfan Habib, *An atlas of the Mughal Empire* (1982).

\(^{14}\) *Khulasat-ut-Tawrikh*, ed. Zafar Hasan (Delhi, 1918).

\(^{15}\) “The shahr ashub was originally an appellation for a beautiful beloved in a lyric poem, but also a short bawdy lyric addressed to a young boy who is engaged in a trade or craft and coquettishly offers his wares to the love-struck poet.” Sunil Sharma, ‘City of Beauties in the Indo-Persian Poetic Landscape.’ *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 24, no. 2 (2004): 73-81. See also Carla
exploration of the intersecting notions of space and territoriality in the literary and visual realms lies outside the immediate scope of this chapter. However, it is worth noting that such literary forms that projected ideas of an inscribed space also underwent a simultaneous process of routinization and serialization in part due to the influence of maps and census taking practices in this period. Mid-century pictorial mappings of Delhi embody the conceptual logic of statistical and literary mappings of the city continuing to represent Delhi as the locus of imperial power in the face of political upheaval.

Mapping Delhi, Depicting Shahjahanabad

Two surviving maps depicting Shahjahanabad allow us to understand the city, as it would have been locally imagined, serving as important visual documents conveying topographical information. These maps coincide with the completion of Chahar Gulshan by Rai Chaturman in


16 For a conceptual exploration of this idea, see Sunil Sharma, “Representation of Social Groups in Mughal art and literature: Ethnography or Tropé?” in Karen Leonard and Alka Patel, Eds. Indo-Muslim Cultures in Transition (Leiden: Brill Publications, 2011), 17-36. Also see chapter “James Skinner at Hansi” for a discussion of two illustrated literary works produced for James Skinner that lend themselves to an ethnographic modality.

1759 in Delhi for the puppet emperor Shah Jahan III (r.1759).\textsuperscript{18} Although much of its statistical content reflects the conditions of the Mughal State ca.1720 the text, along with other extant topographical manuals, would have likely provided the source material for these two maps.\textsuperscript{19} The first of these is a pair of scrolls approximately 0.2 by 20 meters and 0.2 by 12 meters long, which are route maps from Shahjahanabad to Kandahar datable to between 1770 and 1780 (Figure 1.0: “Shahjahanabad to Kandahar” Detail, British Library, London). The scroll is compositionally centered along the central stretch of a road that traverses the main outposts of cities such as Qandahar, Kabul, Lahore, and Shahjahanabad.\textsuperscript{20} The final destination of Shahjahanabad is depicted through its main elements – the main gateways leading into the fortified city, \textit{Nahr-i-bahisht} and \textit{sarais}, and a minimalist planimetric view of the Red Fort. This convention for depicting the fort highlights its visual emphasis in red and blue identifying the main palace structures along the eastern length of the fort, its adjacent fortifications, the Jami Mosque, the Faiz canal, Chandni Chowk, and the various gateways that form the outposts of the fortified city.\textsuperscript{21} Residences are shown as square plans with rooms organized around a central

\textsuperscript{18} Sarkar’s translation of the inscription may be slightly incorrect as he names the emperor as Shah Jahan II, but his transliteration points out that the \textit{Chahar Gulshan} was prepared as dynastic history for the emperor “who increased the splendor of the throne in the year 1173 A.H. (AD 1759) with the help of the Wazir of the Empire Ghazi-ud-din Khan alias Shahab ud-din Khan at the time of the second invasion of Ahmed Shah Abdali.” See Sarkar (1901), xv-xvi.

\textsuperscript{19} The \textit{Khulasat} would have likely formed a basis for the compilation of base material for the \textit{Chahar Gulshan}. Both texts, as Sarkar points out, were in large part based on the \textit{Ain-i Akbari}. Ibid, Sarkar, (1901).

\textsuperscript{20} The inscription notes that the map was made by Maulvi Qulam Qadir who was in Kandahar with Mountstuart Elphintsone in 1814. However, Susan Gole has shown on the basis of internal evidence that the maps can be dated to the period after the 1760s.

\textsuperscript{21} Susan Gole, \textit{Indian maps and plans: from the earliest times to the advent of European surveys} (Manohar: Delhi, 1989), pp.94-103.
courtyard while important shrines are marked by views of tombstones and mosques are identified by their plans with the major minarets shown in elevation. Landscape features, too, are fairly standardized with the depiction of various types of gardens as either walled or those lying along the main road or a river. The route largely conforms to the main topographical features and roadways described in the Chahar Gulshan, however the map is a detailed rendering of the religious, cultural, and urban centers along the route.

A second twelve-meter long topographical map from ca.1760, tracing the path of the monumental water-works of the Nahr-i-bahisht canal undertaken by Shah Jahan’s engineer Ali Mardan Khan, follows the logic of the earlier route map but with greater naturalistic detail. (Figure 1.1: Detail “Ali Mardan Canal” Andhra Pradesh State Museum, India). The Nahr-i-bahisht (Paradise Canal), as it was officially known, was laid out at the time of the building of Shahjahanabad in 1630 and only functioned intermittently in the mid eighteenth century. The map’s distinctive topographic palette details distances, measurements, and techniques of water harnessing along the length of the canal charting its formal transition from a sinuous watercourse to a rectilinear waterway. The section of the map dealing with urban Delhi follows the visual convention of a

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24 Ali Mardan Khan was largely responsible for extending the Canal from Hansi and Hisar to the northwestern suburbs of the city that spanned a distance of seventy-eight miles. Susan Gole, Indian maps and plans (1989), pp.104-109.

25 Stephen Blake, Shahjahanabad: The sovereign city in Mughal India 1639-1739. (Cambridge, 1993), 64.
planimetric layout with buildings in elevation. More importantly, even as the map fixates on the idea of the water-bearing canal as a technological achievement, it evokes its beneficence as a canal of Paradise that imparts heavenly fervor to Delhi’s landscape. This beneficence is sanctioned by spiritual means too, for we find that the shrine of the Sufi saint Bu ‘Ali Qalandar, illuminated in gold, figures conspicuously in the very first section of the canal’s inauguration in the village of Benawas.26

Mughal mapping and survey practices also provided crucial base material for the development of European cartography in the Indian subcontinent in the eighteenth century.27 In addition to providing the core information for geographic and cadastral maps prepared by missionaries and surveyors, the preparation of such surveys was highly dependent on local informants, surveyors, and agents whose ability to transcribe information, visually or in written form, was indispensable to this process.28 The demand for accurate information by missions of the Dutch, French, and British East India Companies had led to a number of disparate efforts to produce cartographic

26 The view of the shrine is not architecturally accurate nor does Bu ‘Ali’s shrine lie in such close proximity to the canal. Nineteenth-century depictions show Bu ‘Ali’s shrine within an enclosed courtyard. Ibid, Blake, Shahjahanabad (1993), 64.

27 For instance Jesuit missionaries such as Joseph Tieffenthaler (1710-1785) were engaged in recording these prevailing systems of land survey and also involved in producing topographical images and maps of regions in India. See La Géographie de l’Indoustan, écrite en Latin, dans le pays même, par le Pere [sic] Joseph Tieffenthaler Jésuite & Missionnaire apostolique dans l’Inde. Vol. I in Jean Bernoulli, ed. Description historique et géographique de l’Inde, 3 volumes (Berlin: Pierre Bordeaux, 1786-8). For an overview of modern mapping in the subcontinent see Kapil Raj, Relocating Modern Science: Circulation and the Construction of Knowledge in South Asia and Europe, 1650–1900, (Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 60-82.

information on various regions of India since the beginning of the eighteenth century.29 Simultaneously, early modern European techniques of mapping also filtered into mainstream Mughal artistic culture and featured quite prominently within visual practices of the Mughal imperial atelier. The visual projection of the terrestrial globe in paintings for the Mughal emperors Jahangir (r. 1605-1627) and later Shah Jahan (r. 1628-1658) was a means to reconstruct and even alter the globe’s spatial logic in the service of fashioning the imperial Self.30

The absorption of European spatial practices into Mughal painting at Delhi can be seen in the later work of the Mughal court artist Nidha Mal, who was active from the second quarter of the eighteenth century. A plan of the Red Fort signed “Amal-i Nidha Mal” and inscribed with a date of 1750, rendered in the traditional technique of gouache and watercolor, may well be the earliest example of a cartographic depiction of the Red Fort and its environs at Delhi by a Mughal artist incorporating elements of European conventions (Figure 1.2: Map of the Red Fort, British Library, London). The fort plan contains multiple labels in Persian identifying key mosques, settlements, and gardens (e.g. Angur-i Bagh) outside the fort, the gateways and bastions (e.g.

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29 Thus, missionaries and antiquarians such as Tieffenbacher and Anquetil-Duperron (1731-1805) relied heavily upon local scribes, guides, engineers, draftsmen and artists for their topographical surveys. Tieffenbacher, La Géographie de l’Indoustan; Des Recherches historiques and chronologiques sur l’Inde, & la Description du Cours du ange & du Gagra, avec une très grande Carte, par M. Anquetil Du Perron de l’Acad. Des Insc, & B.L. & Interpréte du Roi pour les langues orientales, à Paris’ in Bernoulli, op. cit. Vols. I and II.

30 The terrestrial globe often functioned as a cartographic artifact within early modern Mughal painting - as an “…imperial prerogative par excellence, and joins the ranks of such exclusive signifiers of imperial sovereignty such as the crown, the plume or turban ornament, the precious gem, the falcon, and the ceremonial robe of honor” situated on the ““…the Emperor’s person as an embodiment of Empire,” and in this case, …the world itself,” Sumathi Ramaswamy. "Conceit of the Globe in Mughal Visual Practice." Comparative Studies in Society and History 49, no. 4 (2007): 751-82, 771. Also see, John F. Richards, Kingship and Authority in South Asia (1998), p.128.
Dilli Darwaza and Hathia Pol), and the main buildings and apartments of the Mughal palace within the Fort complex. Since the map is extensively repaired with gauze it is very difficult to ascertain the quality of the paper used to prepare this work. Nidha Mal’s signature provides a guide for orienting the plan such that the map is oriented along its East-West axis, thus giving prominence to the eastern façade of the fort that contains the royal buildings such as the Diwan-i Am, Diwan-i Khas and the Shah Burj.

The Red Fort is shown in a square planar format with its fortifications, gateways, buildings, and vegetation in elevation. But most noticeably the center of the fort is left empty as if to emphasize its focus on the fortification and its immediate environs. This feature anticipates the conventions for fort renderings in the two route maps discussed earlier, but more importantly recalls elements of European engineering drawings, especially the format of an isometric perspective or perspective cavalière – that privileged a two dimensional view of the building. Military perspectives such as these were used extensively to illustrate the design of fortifications in seventeenth and eighteenth-century Europe, and can be seen in the seminal treatises by the Frenchman Monsieur de Vauban and the Dutch engineer Menno Baron van Coehoorn.31 The main emphasis in these illustrations was on the frontiers of a fort that brought into prominence its

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bastions and outer-works whose designs were being constantly worked upon by fort engineers. The artistic convention of the military perspective dispensed with any details of the interior of the fort, which were considered extraneous to the purpose of delineation. Thus, the blank center of the Fort complex reinforced the idea of the fort as a defensible establishment. The sole choice of populating this landscape with horses in stables, cannons, and soldiers in the inner forecourt of the Delhi Gate, and the proliferation of labels identifying the outer bastions and environs of the fort further enhances the military character of this painting.

Complementing this pragmatic rendering of the Red Fort is the elevated view of the emperor’s palace delineated through the use of red canopies commonly used to demarcate imperial presence in Mughal painting. The backdrop of the eastern face of the palace complex at the Red Fort became increasingly popular in paintings from Muhammad Shah’s reign and is carried forward here in Nidha Mal’s map of the Red Fort. Nidha Mal’s penchant for detailing architectural and landscape elements can be observed in his large-scaled paintings for Muhammad Shah (r.1719-1748) (MFA, Boston 14.686 and Figure 1.3: “Muhammad Shah enthroned on a terrace” San Diego Museum of Art). In the first brush drawing painted ca. 1725 Muhammad Shah and his courtiers are seen in the midst of a verdant garden landscape rendered with botanical clarity. The

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32 Horst. Remarks on a new system of fortification, proposed by M. le Comte de Saxe, in his memoirs on the art of war. Trans. Charles Theodore D’ Asti (Edinburgh, 1787). By the late eighteenth century, there were significant revisions in the designs of fortifications advanced by Vauban and Coehoorn. The author puts forward M. le Comte de Saxe’s revisions on the earlier treatises putting greater emphasis on the development of the outer-works of fortifications, a greater scope for technical improvement and therefore of greater defensibility.

33 This element is also seen in the work of Bhupal Singh and Hunhar. For an overview of paintings produced in Muhammad Shah’s atelier, see Terence McNerney. "Mughal Painting During the Reign of Muhammad Shah." In Barbara Schmitz, ed. After the Great Mughals: Painting in Delhi and the Regional Courts in the 18th and 19th Centuries, Marg 53, no. 4 (2002), pp.13-33.
foreground and background are merged into the common pictorial space organized along the quadripartite sections of the chaharbagh (four-part garden). In the second painting from the same period, the figures of the emperor and his courtiers are positioned on a garden terrace set against the brightly canopied structure of the Hall of Special Audience. In keeping with the overall formality of this evening conference, Nidha Mal has constrained the vegetation to the sides, leaving the garden space fairly plain in order to draw the focus to the central figures.

In both paintings, the palace buildings with their distinctive canopies sit above eye-level and are placed above the emperor’s physical position. The placement of the figures is more in keeping with the spatial hierarchy of a geometric picture plane rather than the conventions of Mughal imperial court paintings, where the emperor’s physical placement was usually higher than his subordinates. Nidha Mal’s court paintings were very much in accordance with the ongoing experimentation of Mughal artists with European volume and pictorial space while trying to balance the hierarchy of traditional ceremonial scenes. The rendering of the landscape, observed from the eye-level of the onlooker rather than a higher viewpoint in paintings for Muhammad Shah, forms a significant precedent for the experiments with light, spatial depth, and volume that artists in the provincial courts of Murshidabad, Patna, and Awadh began to undertake, setting their subjects within a geometrically devised setting based on European perspective.  

map of 1750 painted after the death of Muhammad Shah, Nidha Mal retains his characteristic treatment of vegetation, cluster planting and palace buildings while working with the planar vocabulary of a cartographic map. Furthermore, he employs visual correctives to guide the viewer’s eye to the imperial buildings in the palace by aligning the Shah Burj in the Khas Mahal with the main entrance, the Lahore Gate.

A Provincial view to Shah Alam II’s Shahjahanabad

Nidha Mal’s migration to Awadh after 1750 offers an important context for situating the re-employment of miniature painters as topographical artists in the last quarter of the eighteenth century. His move to Awadh was recorded in a letter dated 18th September 1772 by a clerk named Sankaraja Satyadeva to Nana Fadnavis, the Maratha Peshwa Madho Rao Narayan’s minister at Delhi. Satyadeva, who was ambassador to Fadnavis in Delhi stated that paintings were hard to obtain since the Hindu nobility had left Delhi and fine artists were starving to death and mentions Nidha Mal’s migration to Lucknow in this context.35 Awadh played host to the Mughal emperor Shah Alam II for a number of years, and the emperor’s presence spurred a number of topographical commissions that provide crucial art historical context for Shah Alam’s movements prior to his return to Delhi. Moreover, these commissions reflect how diverse painting genres, especially those lying outside the purview of court painting in the provinces,

35 Satyadeva also mentions Nidha Mal’s subsequent death there. Itihasa Sangraha Aitihasik Tipane, pt. 1, no. 11 (September, 1908). First published in Falk and Archer, Indian Miniatures of the India Office Library, p.122. The ambassador also reported that both of Nidha Mal’s sons were reported to be working in Lucknow but that one of them was said to be useless and the other mediocre. See, Patricia Bahree Baryiski "Paining in Awadh in the 18th Century", Islam and Indian Regions, eds. A.L Dallapiccola and S.Z.-A. Lallemand, (Stuttgart 1993), vol. 1, pp. 351-66, vol. 2 pls. 31-40.
engaged directly with Mughal history and imperial narrative towards the end of the eighteenth century. The province’s European residents such as Jean-Baptiste Gentil (1764-1775), the official agent of the French King Louis XVI to the court of Nawab Shuja al-Daula (1732-1775), and Antoine Louis Henri Polier, the Nawab’s official engineer and architect, were individuals whose involvement with the itinerant Mughal court under Shah Alam warrants greater examination in this respect.³⁶

Gentil is perhaps best known for his endeavor to synthesize topographical information about the subcontinent from local and European manuals into a geographical atlas titled, *Empire Mogol divisé en 21 soubahs ou Gouvernements tiré de differens ecrivains du païs a Faisabad MDCCLXX* (1771).³⁷ The forty-two folios of the atlas are a remarkable exercise in topographical representation following the logic of older texts such as the *A’in i-Akbari* (1595) but blending them with the existing state of European information on the subcontinent in a comprehensive visual format.³⁸ The atlas is divided into folios representing each *suba*, then illustrated in cadastral detail showing the routes and connections between various towns, the cities within, and the geographical features of the region such as mountain ranges, forests, rivers, and at times lakes.


³⁷ Susan Gole, Introduction, *Maps of Mughal India* (1988). Other examples of Mughal sources that compile geographical and administrative information include Yusuf Mirak’s *Mazhar-i Shahjahani* (1634) for Sind, Nainsi’s *Vigat* (c.1664) for Marwar, Ali Muhammad Khan's *Mir’at i-Ahmadi* supplement (1761) for Gujarat. See also, Irfan Habib, (1982).

³⁸ It has been suggested that Gentil’s atlas largely drew upon the coastline of Jean Baptiste Bourguignon d’Anville *Carte de l’Inde* made in 1752 and published in 1771. See also Susan Gole, (1988), Introduction.
and smaller water bodies. The remarkable addition to each map are miniatures of genre and mythological scenes that appear to function as ethnographic and cultural vignettes that are meant to provide a visual supplement to the cartographic views of each suba. In addition to devising a visual vocabulary for annotating architecture and landscape that provided each suba with its distinctive characteristic, the use of delicate colors grays, pink, mauve, pale yellow and green in the atlas represents the “…first adjustments to European tastes and interests…(these) subjects which were later to become the stock-in-trade of ‘Company’ painters were already present in miniature form.”

In the first folio illustrating the suba of Shahjahanabad (Chadjeanabad) Gentil provides a compelling view into the current state of Mughal rule (Figure 1.4: “Chadjeanabad,” Gentil’s atlas). The map of Shahjahanabad contains very few figures unlike the maps of other subas, where genre and mythological scenes set the context for the cartographic mappings. As if to emphasize the Mughal emperor Shah Alam’s absence from the city, the accompanying miniatures on the map show royal and courtly accoutrements such as standards, parasols, howdahs, a tent, a reproduction of the peacock throne of Shah Jahan, and musical instruments – all objects constituting royal paraphernalia. However, in the absence of the emperor’s figure they seem

39 Gentil’s survey of the caves used by Anquetil Duperron was one of many essential surveys to be compiled. Similarly, the view of the famous fort at the suba of Allahabad is likely a copy of the fort provided to Gentil by Tieffenthaler. Gole (1988) Introduction; Lafont, Chitra (2001), p. 9.

40 Ibid, Gole (1988). Jean-Marie Lafont has used the term ‘farenghi art’ to define this early phase of European patronage. Lafont, Chitra (2001), 11.

41 This practice is noticeably different from the nomenclature of the Ain, where the sarkar (capital) of Delhi is based within the suba of Sirhind. See Abu’l Fazl, Ain-i Akbari, trans. H. Blochman (1927, reprint 1965). See Irfan Habib, Ibid (1982), 10.
somewhat displaced, static, and noticeably lacking in vigor, especially as they occur in the first
folio of the atlas. In contrast, the description of the province of Awadh shows a vignette of
Nawab Shuja al-Daula and Gentil on elephant-back engaged in a lion hunt flanked by an army of
soldiers. Using the quintessential idea of the hunt as a means of projecting royal authority, the
atlas situates Awadh as the new outpost of Mughal culture.42 The choice of illustrations showing
fakirs, mythological scenes, flora, and fauna reflects Gentil’s own interests as a manuscript
collector and these vignettes are distinctly related to the paintings he commissioned during his
stay at Awadh.43

In a second compendium commissioned by Gentil a few years later following Shah Alam’s return
to Delhi, the structure of Mughal imperial authority is consciously resurrected. In the album
Recueil de toutes sortes de Dessins sur les Usages et coutumes des Peuples de l'indoustan ou
Empire Mogol d'après plusiers peintres Indiens, Nevasilal, Mounsingue & c. au service du
Nabab visir Soudjaatdaula Gouverner general des provinces d' Eléabad et d' Avad. Lequel
recueil a été fait par les soins du Sr Gentil, Colonel d'Infanterie; en 1774 à Faisabad (1774),
Gentil emphasizes Shah Alam’s recently restored status at Delhi in a more direct fashion,
dedicating the first section of the album to the activities of the Mughal emperor and his court. In
the very first illustrated folio, the courtly accessories that appeared in the atlas to depict Shah

42 On the imperial significance of the Mughal Hunt see, Ebba Koch, Dara Shikoh Shooting Nilgais: Hunt
and Landscape in Mughal Painting (Occasional papers Freer Gallery of Art, 1998).

43 In addition to mythological scenes from the Mahabharata and the Ramayana, pictures of yogis, festivals,
acrobat, birds and animals seen in this page are also reminiscent of Gentil’s own interests. See selections
Alam’s absentia from Delhi were now given a proper context - forming an array of the material accoutrements of the Mughal court shown in session. Shah Alam is seated on a takht (throne) in the topmost row surrounded by his main courtiers, standards, thrones, and musical instruments. The second folio is one of the only known pictures that celebrate Shah Alam’s accession to the throne of Delhi, referring to the twelfth year of his reign, which was also when new coinage was struck in celebration of this milestone.

In the Recueil, Gentil’s biography of Shah Alam is interspersed along with the illustrated account of his own life in Shuja al-Daula’s court. In 1772 Gentil had married into a family with ancestral connections with the Mughal domestic sphere. Gentil married Therese Velho, the daughter of Lucia Mendece, the great-niece of one Juliana, who had been entrusted with the education of the Mughal emperor Alamgir I’s son Bahadur Shah (later Shah Alam I). This historical consciousness is palpable in Gentil’s attempt to interweave the historical narrative of the Mughal court with his own experience at Awadh. Gentil’s use of personal anecdotes detailing his interaction with the current Mughal emperor exemplifies this. After recounting the instance of Shah Alam’s asylum with Shuja al-Daula, Gentil mentions the emperor’s eagerness to meet him and also employ him, and his consequent unwillingness to join the emperor’s service. Later in the context of Shuja al-Daula’s efforts to annex the vacated fortress of Allahabad, Gentil

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44 Juliana’s name was made out as a hereditary title passed down through six generations and Therese was the last ‘Juliana’ in this lineage. Shah Alam I was known to have given Juliana Dara Shikoh’s palace in Delhi, which was in her family’s possession and taken by Safdar Jang, Shuja al-Daula’s father and then Wazir of Delhi. Jean-Marie Lafont, Chitra (2001), p.11.

45 Recueil, f.15 (a) -f.16 (a).
mentions Shah Alam’s departure for Delhi, which seems to offer a turning point in the narrative.\textsuperscript{46} The \textit{Recueil} is a rare instance of the visualization of Mughal sovereignty in the late eighteenth century, when Mughal power was politically at its weakest. It is in the \textit{Recueil} that we first recognize an attempt to visually narrate the history of Shah Alam’s rule. The number of folios dedicated to Shah Alam’s court and leisure activities in the \textit{Recueil} point to the importance of the emperor’s return to the Mughal capital, the sole act that reinstated him as the Mughal sovereign in the eyes of the general public. This event for Gentil is no doubt also the definitive moment marking Shah Alam’s reign – he annotates a scene showing Shah Alam II hunting in the garden at Faizabad as “\textit{Chasse dans le parc du Faisabad faite par l’Empereur Cha alem aujourd'hui regnant/} A hunt in the park at Faizabad by the \textbf{reigning} Emperor Shah Alam.” (Figure 1.5: Detail, from Gentil’s \textit{Recueil})

Topographical experiments in the \textit{Recueil} prepared in 1774 draw upon some of the earlier ideas of the atlas. Ranging from vignettes of military and diplomatic encounters, leisure activities such as the hunt, court activities, and religious, and ethnographic scenes, the \textit{Recueil} functions as a historical document while being oriented from the particular perspective of Gentil’s interests. Gentil’s dedication in the \textit{Recueil} naming the artists Nevasi Lal and Mohan Singh highlights the intersecting realms of court patronage in Awadh under the Nawab Shuja al-Daula and an emergent class of European patrons.\textsuperscript{47} Nevasi Lal emerges as a figure of multiple talents – as a

\textsuperscript{46} \textit{Recueil}, f.20 (a).

copyist in miniature of oil-portraits of Shuja al-Daula painted by the western artist Tilly Kettle in Faizabad c.1771, as well as a topographer who illustrated the *Receuil* and other albums for Gentil. 48 Mohan Singh, who is extolled by Gentil for his work on the *Receuil*, was the son of Govardhan II who had worked at the court of Mohammad Shah at Delhi. 49 The multiple correspondences between the miniatures in the atlas and the *Receuil* point to the existence of stock sets of popular images that were available to artists within a commercial set-up that allowed for their easy replication and use in various contexts. For example the drawings in Gentil’s atlas can be attributed to a number of artists such as Sital Das, Gobind Singh and Ghulam Reza who, like Mohan Singh, worked for the assistant to the British Resident at Lucknow Richard Johnson between 1780-82. Sital Das’s paintings of Vedic sacrifices (Album 5) for Johnson are those that appear in the map of *Khandesh* in Gentil’s atlas. 50

**From Awadh to Delhi: Polier and the Mughal court of Shah Alam**

As we have seen Shah Alam’s return to Delhi in 1772 offered much artistic impetus to the visualization of the emperor’s reinstatement in the historic seat of empire at Delhi. Where large-

48 Nevasi Lal’s expertise as a copyist of oil portraits is recounted in Gentil’s memoirs where he mentions how Shuja al-Daulah was particularly taken by Nevasi Lal’s copy of an oil portrait by Kettle, and wanted to keep it for him. Gentil’s playful objection resulted in the Nawab giving him Kettle’s portrait in exchange of the copy. Recounted in *Mémoires sur l’indoustan ou Empire Mogol*. Cited in Mildred Archer, *Company Paintings* (1992), p.118. See also Archer, ‘Tilly Kettle and the Court of Oude (1772-1778)’ in *Apollo*, Feb 1972, pp.96-106.


scale migration of artists from Delhi to Awadh had become commonplace a few decades earlier, the emperor’s move to Delhi attracted Awadh officials, who brought artists along with them for a small but significant period of time. The tenure of Antoine Louis Henri Polier, the engineer and architect to the Awadh Nawab, is one such important instance that raises a number of possibilities for reassessing the artistic climate of Delhi in this period and the role of topographical imagery within it.

By 1767, Polier had gained a reputation as a fort engineer because of his designs, improvements, and field advice for Fort William at Calcutta and later for the fort of Chunar near Benaras. As a military engineer Polier was involved in the commissioning of measured drawings and preliminary cartographic works, which ultimately became part of such topographical surveys. Polier’s appointment as the Chief surveyor of Awadh in April 1773 was expected to yield a detailed map of the area to be used for the Surveyor-General James Rennell’s initial survey reports on Awadh and the northern territories. However, Polier’s involvement with a rival Mughal cause involving the siege of Agra led to his discharge from Awadh and eventual departure to Shah Alam’s court at Delhi. After being chastised for overstepping his role as a surveyor by imparting military intelligence and strategic advice to Najaf Khan, Shah Alam’s Mir

51 Polier was a close contact of both Teifenthaler and Duperron, and shared visual information on fortifications and towns with them.

52 After 1776, Rennell having completed his map of Bihar and Bengal extended it up to Delhi finally publishing his map of India in 1782. Rosie Llewellyn-Jones, *A very ingenious man: Claude Martin in early colonial India* (Oxford: Delhi, 1992), pp.55-56. Llewellyn-Jones points out that though Polier did send the reports he had promised Hastings and Rennell, there was ‘great room for improvement’ which was more a ‘skeleton’ rather than a finished map of Awadh. Also see, Matthew H. Edney, *Mapping an Empire*, (Chicago, 1990).
Bakshi (Commander in Chief), Polier finally resigned in October 1775 and accepted a short-term employment with Shah Alam II at Delhi.\footnote{A.L.H. Polier, *Shah Alam II and his court*. Ed. Pratul C. Gupta (1989), pp. 7-9.}

This phase of Polier’s career in Delhi remains to be explored for the sum of possibilities that it offers. In February 1776, Polier wrote to the Emperor requesting an audience:

“I have been honored with a special *shuqqa* from you which I received together with the letter of Nawab Majd-al-Daula. It has been my long standing desire to be in your service and to do something to set right the management of the Empire and reinforce the law and order. I have given up the Company job and have arrived in Akbarabad with the intention to come to the court and meet you. I hope that I will soon be honored by meeting you and by being ordered to be in your service forever.


Following Shuja al-Daula’s death in 1775, Polier saw his alternative employment with Shah Alam as a way to tackle his ambiguous status in India. His recognition of Shah Alam’s sovereignty and status after his ascension to the throne of Delhi in 1772 is further re-affirmed in Polier’s biography of the emperor’s reign from 1771 through 1779.\footnote{Polier, *Shah Alam II and his court*. (1989).} But as his personal correspondence shows, he was also keen to have royal support for settling a number of outstanding property disputes with Najaf Khan, Shah Alam’s primary aide. Well aware of the ongoing political uncertainties in the Mughal court, Polier saw himself as a military advisor and...
aide to Shah Alam who would “…set right the management of the Empire.” On 18 March 1776, Polier finally gained an audience with the emperor and joined his service. Despite his newfound employment, Polier’s letters communicate his impatience with the state of affairs in Delhi and the difficulty in securing a diwan and other handymen to assist him. He was equally anxious to manage his household affairs and impart correct direction to painters in his service there. Generally dissatisfied with the lack of supervision of his painters in Awadh, Polier found it necessary to call the painters to Delhi:

“The painters are doing nothing these days. As a matter of fact, in the absence of the masters it is difficult to get things done properly by the servants. I therefore want these artists to be sent here.”

“I gather that the artists are not doing good work after I left. Since I have been ordered to stay here in Shahjahanabad it is necessary they join me here.”

In this context, we are made aware of the all-important instance of Polier directing his chef d’atelier Mihr Chand to join him in Delhi. In a letter dated 27 March 1776, Polier asks Mihr Chand to, “… reach here along with two other painters and one naqqash [decorator] who should be a good person, skillful and keen to accompany you…

56 The pargana of Khalilganj was assigned to Polier, which Najib Khan refused to release to him. Polier was very anxious to recover the revenue from Khalilganj and had solicited the help of Shah Alam to this effect. His frustration over the unresolved matter of the jagir’s ownership is expressed throughout in his correspondence. Alam and Alavi, *A European Experience of the Mughal Orient* (Delhi, 2001).

57 “…I need a Bengali here to take care of my work at the court. Find out about one and send him to me…This place is full of Kashmiris. However to me there is no distinction between a Bengali and a Kashmiri. Look for someone capable of managing my work here efficiently.” 5 Safar Tuesday, Folio 368b. To Diwan Manik Ram. Alam and Alavi, *A European Experience of the Mughal Orient* (Delhi, 2001), pp. 322-23.

58 Folio 391b. Letter to Manik Ram, Alam and Alavi. Ibid (Delhi, 2001), 343.

59 F. 396b, Alam and Alavi. Ibid (Delhi, 2001), 347.

Polier further instructs Mihr Chand to:

“…Keep all the albums and qit’as in one box carefully so that they are safe from the dust and do not get damaged in transit. Load them together with the boxes for the Persian books and fix them there (tightly). Also fix the cartage rates and arrive here with them without delay.”61

Polier’s personal correspondence confirms that Mihr Chand did arrive in Delhi and carried with him a number of drawings and albums. On 26 June 1776, Polier wrote to his diwan Manik Ram acknowledging the painter’s arrival,

“Mehrchand gave me your letter of 15 Rabi’ II here on 6 Jumada I, together with two chaupalas full of boxes of velvet, books and paintings, a bundle (ganth) of clothes and locked boxes (pitaris) with goods from Faizabad…”62

The arrival of Awadh artists in Delhi ca.1776 would have likely caused a stir in the artistic circles at Delhi, however, there is no further written evidence in Polier’s correspondence to suggest that Mihr Chand or any other artists from Awadh were received at the Mughal court or commissioned to work for local patrons in Delhi. However, it is not difficult to imagine the warm reception Mihr Chand would have received especially since he had painted Shah Alam soon after his accession to the throne in 1759 when the emperor was residing in the eastern provinces. Mihr Chand’s portrait of Shah Alam titled, “Abu’l Muzaffar Jalal al-din Shah Alam Badshah Ghazi,” (ca.1760-65) confirms in its use of the emperor’s formal titles, his regal status to the fullest.63 The presence of the chatr (parasol), the Koran in the emperor’s hands as well as the use of the side

61 Folio. 397b. To Mehrchand, Alam and Alavi (2001), 348.


profile reinforces the formality of the composition. (Figure 1.6: Shah Alam II by Mihr Chand, Berlin, Polier Album I.4594, fol. 32r). By 1765, a number of European collectors in addition to Polier owned such portraits that were painted in cities where Shah Alam had resided.

A likely candidate for the unknown contents of Mihr Chand’s box of paintings brought to Delhi is a set of five drawings of large-scaled plans of Delhi currently held in the collection of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Curiously enough, three of these five drawings are maps of the city of Shahjahanabad, executed on hand-scaled paper in watercolor in a light wash, drawn on long scrolls such that all three parts could be laid out to form a single composition. At the head of this tripartite composition is a plan of the Red Fort followed by two large-scaled plans of the main streets in Shahjahanabad - one depicting Chandni Chowk (140 x 31cm) and the other, Faiz Bazaar (135x31cm). The drawings are labeled in Persian with transliteration in English and Latin labels. The labels fall roughly into three types – the well-known buildings such as mosques, baths and public squares, the havelis and residences of nobles, and finally, the names of trades carried on in various localities. The other two drawings, executed on hand-squared paper clearly belong to another master album of architectural drawings commissioned by Gentil in

64 Losty’s suggests that Mihr Chand likely left Delhi at the same time as Shah Alam’s departure to the east in 1758. Ibid, Losty (2002), p. 45. For Mihr Chand’s employment with Polier see Malini Roy, “Some Unexpected Sources for Paintings by the Artist Mihr Chand (fl. c. 1759-86), Son of Ganga Ram.” South Asian Studies 26, No. 1, (March 2010): 21-29.

65 For another portrait of Shah Alam II painted in Murshidabad inscribed, “This picture given me by Hugh Acland 1764 F. T. H. (?)” see Simon Ray Indian & Islamic Works of Art, Cat. no. 24, (November 2009), pp. 84-85.

Faizabad in 1774 titled, *Palais indiens recueilles par M. Le Gentil*, now held in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.\(^67\) The presence of the city maps with the architectural drawings may initially indicate that the maps were commissioned for Gentil. However, as further examination will show Polier emerges as a more likely candidate for commissioning street maps of Delhi. Polier and Gentil were in the habit of sharing drawings and paintings and often commissioned copies of a particular work by the same artist.\(^68\) Thus it is not surprising to find drawings from the *Palais Indiens* in this set.\(^69\) The three maps of Shahjahanabad would have been an appropriate means of projecting Polier’s authority as a surveyor, fort engineer, and military strategist to Shah Alam at Delhi and it is more likely that the maps were made for him.

It is remarkable that the three maps of Shahjahanabad are obvious copies from a master version, one of which is the plan of the Red Fort by Nidha Mal discussed earlier in this chapter (*Figure 1.7, 1.8: Later Copies, Map of the Red Fort, Street plan of Chandni Chowk, V&A Museum*). Susan Gole’s thorough study of the V&A maps suggests that they were made between

\(^67\) Two drawings, Dara Shikoh’s palace in Agra (*Façade du Palais de Dara Cheka du côte du Djemna à Agra 1774*) and the plan of the Emperor’s Garden and Seraglio, Delhi (*Sérail et jardin du palais du grand Mughal à Dely*) are undoubtedly contemporaneous with *Palais Indiens* and were probably dispersed from the original set before Gentil compiled the album. There is also a third drawing presumably of the Jami Mosque of Delhi, which is unlisted in the museum catalogue. For a fuller exposition of the album, see Chanchal Dadlani, “The ‘Palais Indiens’ collection of 1774,” Representing Mughal Architecture in Late-Eighteenth Century India” in *Ars Orientalis*, 39, Globalizing Cultures: Art and Mobility in the Eighteenth Century (2010): 175-97.

\(^68\) On Thursday December 15, 1774 Polier wrote to one of his painters, possibly Nevasi Lal: “The portrait of the Nawab [Shuja al-Daulah] that you had sent for me has been held back by Monsieur Gentil for himself. Make a similar portrait and keep it for me. You shall be generously rewarded when I reach Faizabad if you do my work with due care and attention.” See Folio 37a. Alam and Alavi (2001), 117.

\(^69\) For instance, the drawings are listed in Gentil’s inventory. Dadlani, ‘Palais Indiens’ collection of 1774,’ *Ars Orientalis*, 39, 175-97.
1751 and 1757, around the time of the raid of Delhi by Ahmad Shah Abdali. Her analysis is based on the latest building illustrated in the map, which was the mosque of Javed Khan Nawab Bahadur built in 1751. The maps also name important public places such as the bath of Sa’adullah Khan, mosques, the Kotwali, and the gate to the Begum’s garden. It is self-evident that the dating is closer to the signed map by Nidha Mal, which also raises the important question of not one but three paintings originally executed successively by Nidha Mal in the 1750s forming the basis of the later V&A set. The oblique reference to Nidha Mal’s death before 1772 in Maratha correspondence, which is discussed earlier, is further evidence that the signed Red Fort map was done as a precedent to the later copies. While we have no record of whether Nidha Mal worked on any maps during the last decade of his career, his signature appears on a number of later paintings from Awadh. The English inscription accompanying his signature “jurisdiction of

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70 Susan Gole, ‘Three maps of Shahjahanabad,’ *South Asian Studies*, 1988, pp.13-27. Also see Susan Gole, ‘Plans of Indian Towns’ in Ehlers and Krafft, eds. *Shahjahanabad/Old Delhi, Tradition and Colonial Change*, (Manohar, 2003), 128. Gole suggests that the street plans they seem to have been drawn at eye level by someone walking along the centre of each street.


72 The dating is further substantiated by the painting’s provenance. It was part of the collection of Robert Orme and acquired by India Office after his death in 1801. Since Orme left India for England in 1758 he must have acquired this painting before. It is inscribed incorrectly on reverse: ‘Orme. Fort’ (‘Palace’) at Agra, MS; numbered ‘39’; and: ‘No.21, Agra fort.’ See British Library Add.Or.1790. For the life and career of Orme, see Sinharaja Tammita Delgoda “Nabob, Historian and Orientalist” Robert Orme: The Life and Career of an East India Company Servant (1728-1801) *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, Third Series, Vol. 2, No. 3 (Nov., 1992), pp. 363-376. The drawing is not mentioned in Hill (1916), which does pose an interesting possibility that it was added to the collection at a later date.

Nuddha Mull,” was most likely added to the painting after it was brought into Awadh between 1760 and 1770.74

Polier’s own experience in Delhi reveals much about his interest in the city’s built environment. Polier occupied the haveli of wazir Safdar Jang (father of Shuja al-Daula) upon his arrival in Delhi, one of the largest mansions originally part of Dara Shikoh’s haveli.75 Polier writes:

“At present I am living in the haveli of late Nawab Safdar Jang. I am honored to be in the service of the Emperor.”

5 Safar Tuesday (25 March 1776).

He soon vacated Safdar Jang’s haveli to move to Itimad al-Daula’s (Qamar al-Din Khan’s) haveli in Delhi.76 This move allowed Polier to inhabit one of the most prestigious havelis in the city. This was the haveli of Muhammad Shah’s wazir Qamar al-Din Khan (wazir from 1724-48), who was titled Itimad al-Daula II. Polier was struck by the irony of his residing in this mansion, while Qamar al-Din’s surviving son was living in a ‘wretched dwelling on the outside of this house,


76 Safdar Jang’s mansion had been the center of much political intrigue. It was also the site of the murder of Javed Khan, the court eunuch, in 1752. The masjid of Nawab Bahadur built by Javed Khan in 1751 forms the anchor point for dating the map by Susan Gole. Gole also points out that the house of Javed Khan near Delhi Gate next to the city wall, labeled in the map, was used by the Marathas to break into the city in 1760. As quoted in Sarkar, (1932-50) Vol. II, p.253.
which, in the time of his father, one of his servants would have disdained to live in.'

However, Polier’s description of it as a lackluster building in disrepair points to the contrast that he must have experienced from his dwellings in Faizabad that he had taken pains to furnish and decorate. This impression of new residence in Shahjahanabad was largely reflective of his disappointment with the city itself, which in Polier’s opinion possessed only a few noteworthy features. The only structures that impressed Polier were the Jami Mosque and the ‘regular’ street of Chandni Chowk, which compared well to a French or English avenue. It is possible that the two street plans of Chandni Chowk and Faiz Bazaar would have appealed to Polier precisely because they were planned as rectilinear streets. These, along with the square plan of the Red Fort appear to recast the city’s layout as if derived from a trigonometric survey, well before one was begun for Delhi in the last decade of the eighteenth century. Polier’s commissions of aerial views of the Red Fort recasting it within a rectilinear format, privileging axial views into the palace grounds from the main entrance. A view of the Red Fort from an album that Polier compiled for Lady Coote, widow of General Eyre Coote (d.1783), Commander in Chief under Warren Hastings ca.1785, shows the general life in the Fort in isometric views. In the foreground the foreshortened figure of Shah Alam is shown entering the Diwan-i-Khas while to the left

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80 For a later map of Shahjahanabad that also conforms to a geometric layout see, “Trigonometrical Survey of the Environs of Delhy or Shah Jehanabad, 1808” OIOC Cat. No. E. VII. 20, size 71 x 84 cm. Another map titled ‘Plan of Dehly Reduced from a large Hindostanny Map of that City, 1800?’ also shows the city wall as a square plan.
female figures occupy the grounds of the *Rang Mahal* and other buildings alongside. In the near distance soldiers walk in ranks and people mill about their daily tasks. The view is oriented from the eastern face of the Red Fort, with the *Shah Burj* and the *Naqqar Khana* in virtual alignment (Figure 1.9: View of the Red Fort, Add. Or. 948).\(^8^1\)

**Concluding a Journey: *Bazgasht* imagery and the Red Fort**

In the prelude to Shah Alam’s return to Delhi, the Mughal fortress became the center of much discussion and political intrigue. Shah Alam II’s ‘Royal resolution,’ to march from Allahabad towards Shahjahanabad, was a source of much consternation to the British East India Company and their allies in Awadh and Bihar.\(^8^2\) As William Francklin wrote, “…even from the moment of his settlement at Allahabad, “ he “sighed in secret for the pleasures of the capital, and was ambitious of re-ascending the throne of his ancestors.”\(^8^3\) Entreaties from the Company’s Commander-in-Chief General Robert Barker were laid to the wayside, as the Mughal emperor confirmed his alliance with Maratha chiefs who had promised the deliverance of the Delhi fort to him. For the British, this return implied a ‘hazardous undertaking’ that would find them

\(^8^1\) This drawing measuring 28.2 x 41.7 cm is executed in ink, transparent and opaque watercolor, and gold and is mounted on to an ornamental border also in the same medium. Achenbach Foundation for Graphic Arts, Fine Arts Museum of San Francisco (FAMSF), 1982.2.70.9. Another copy of this view in the British Library lacks the trellis framing the view, and indicates the production of multiple copies of this image. See Add. Or. 948. Another copy of this album retained by Polier is in the Museum of Islamic Art, Berlin. For a discussion of the album see, J. Bautze, *Interaction of Cultures: Indian and Western Painting, 1780-1910*. (Virginia, 1998), pp. 252-54.


confronting the Marathas who posed an immediate threat to their own territorial ambitions.\textsuperscript{84} Moreover, the ‘movement of the royal standard towards the capital’ would leave the occupation of the Allahabad fort open to Wazir Shuja al-Daula’s designs on it, and cause further ambiguity in terms of its ownership.\textsuperscript{85}

These discussions based on Shah Alam’s resolve to move to Delhi form the subtext of two processional scenes painted by Awadh artists showing instances from the return journey that the Mughal court and household undertook from Allahabad to Delhi. In the first procession set along the banks of a river, Shah Alam is shown seated on his elephant howdah surrounded by his standard bearers and his retinue of soldiers approaching a fort to the left (Shah Alam en route to Delhi, V&A Museum). The documentary content of the procession scene allows us to place it to a period earlier than 1771, depicting a site lying en route from Allahabad to Delhi. The second painting, an all-encompassing view of Shah Alam’s procession approaching the fortifications of Shahjahanabad, provides an insight into the moment of arrival at Delhi embodying the penultimate phase of the ‘Royal resolution’. Painted in the last quarter of the eighteenth century the painting highlights in both spatial and temporal terms, the symbolic importance of the royal procession’s arrival at Delhi (\textbf{Figure 1.10: Shah Alam’s Return to Delhi, c.1776, V&A}). The unfolding of the winding movement of the royal cortege along the banks of the river Jamuna, which ultimately leads to the eastern length of the fort of Shahjahanabad, indicates its

\textsuperscript{84} \textit{Persian Correspondence}, April 22, 1771.

\textsuperscript{85} Ibid, \textit{Persian Correspondence}, Vol. III.
progression over time. In the immediate foreground the presence of the East India Company soldiers, escorting the covered palanquins and howdahs of ladies of the royal household, suggests that the painting was possibly made to highlight the Company’s facilitation of the Mughal emperor’s move to Delhi.\(^6\) The significance of Shah Alam’s move to Delhi in the space of this painting becomes solely attributable to the Company’s alliance with him, obliterating any signs of his collusion with the Marathas.

The main significance of this painting is that it stands as the sole historical record of Shah Alam’s *bazgasht* (return) to Delhi. It is also the most visible endorsement of the topographical genre in the service of imperial identity. On closer inspection we find that the imperial procession is headed towards the Red Fort of Shahjahanabad whose skyline looms in the distance. The Fort buildings along the astern front of the Jamuna are carefully delineated and marked with numbers that speak of the explicit documentary interest of the patron. This panoramic view of the fort city and its environs as the desired destination of the emperor situates both the ruler and his city on equal terms. The buildings are rendered to portray a panoramic view of Delhi from the riverfront showing the Qutub Minar to the extreme left and Salimgarh Fort on the right. The royal enclosures and audience halls rendered in three dimensions are shown within the walls of the Red Fort, with the prominent gilded dome of the Shah Burj within the imperial apartments prominently in view of the approaching cavalcade. The intentional numbering of the buildings along the fort wall situatess this painting as a commemorative commission that reinforces the

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\(^6\) Shah Alam sent a *shuqqa* asking General Barker for a force to accompany his procession to Delhi, a request that was obliged. Dec 14, 1770. *Persian Correspondence*, Vol. III.
Architectural drawings of Delhi and Agra

The gradual rise of topographical painting surrounding Delhi and the Mughal court offers a valuable insight into the nature of eighteenth–century visual practices lying on the margins of the mainstream culture of painting in Delhi and the provinces. By the late eighteenth century, Delhi and Agra were home to a well-established culture of architectural documentation of their historical buildings. Many such drawings employ an aerial perspective or a bird’s eye-view point in an attempt to capture the entirety of the fortified city. Two versions of the overhead view of the Agra fort (re-built in 1573 under the Mughal emperor Akbar’s reign) convey the sense of experimentation by artists in devising a planimetric view of the complex. For example, in a colored rendering of the view of the Red Fort, Agra (naqshah-i qal’ah-i akbarabad and other buildings labeled in this manner) when rendering the verticals, the artist, foregoing the rules of western perspective, at times flattens the walls and fortifications and also tilts the walls to create a clear viewpoint into the inner sections of the fort. This colored version, datable to before 1803, depicts three British officers, a mahout, a princely figure with a horse, and a gardener with an assistant in the maidan or forecourt of the fort complex (Figure 1.11 Panorama of the Red Fort, ca. 1810, Royal Asiatic Society; Figure 1.12 view of the Red Fort Agra). The drawing is colored in a combination of opaque and light washes of colors, with the distinctive bright red of

87 Mildred Archer has suggested that this painting is very similar to those in the Recueil made for Gentil in Faizabad in 1774. See Archer, Company Paintings, 1992, 124. This supports the possibility that the two paintings were created by the same group of painters who worked on the Recueil.
the fortifications contrasting with the white marble structures of the buildings within. This version is clearly a later one derived from a largely monochromatic, ink and wash, drawing of the Fort datable to the end of the eighteenth-century. Other pairs of drawings, of the Taj Mahal (begun 1632) and of Akbar’s Tomb at Sikandra (completed 1612-1614) in the same style indicate that there was a series of aerial views of Agra buildings prepared by Indian artists before the occupation of Delhi by the British East India Company. Following Company rule in Delhi, the bulk of the measured drawings were by Indian draftsman to aid restoration work by British engineers responsible for the upkeep of Mughal buildings. This is certainly visible in a set of detailed drawings owned by Colonel Pownell Phipps (1780-1858), the Inspector of Public Buildings in Calcutta, now in the Victoria & Albert Museum. Archer suggests that the artists responsible for the Phipps collection were “Delhi artists working in Calcutta for Colonel Phipps…” pointing to the demand for skilled draftsmen in other cities too. By the first quarter of the nineteenth-century, the architectural subject acquired its own aesthetic appeal, commanding large formats up to a meter long, such as the series of details of *pietra dura* inlay work on the Taj Mahal (V&A Museum, IM 177-1920) or a smaller formats such as post-cards.

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89 This version was in the collection of Francesca Galloway, 2000, Cat. No. 49b. Mildred Archer suggested the presence of an earlier version, but did not seem to know about this picture from Galloway’s collection.

90 The pair of views of the Taj Mahal is shared between the Freer and Sackler Gallery, Washington, D.C. (S2001.6) and erstwhile collection of Francesca Galloway, 2000, Cat. No. 49c. One drawing, of the tomb of Akbar at Sikandra is in the Galloway, 2000, Cat. No. 49a.

91 Archer, *Company Paintings*, 130-134.

92 Ibid., 133.
which could circulate easily.\textsuperscript{93}

**Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have laid out a conceptual framework for considering the role of cartographic imagery as a mainstream artistic practice that subscribed actively to the identity politics of Mughal rule in this period. At the outset, this chapter establishes the pre-eminent position that Delhi holds in the artistic imagination and sketches how the presence of the Mughal ruler in the city palace animates the visual portrayal of urban Delhi and its environs. Moreover, it aims at highlighting the complex nature of artistic practice in this period, when artists working with conventional manuscript painting and in the miniature technique diversified their working methods to include architectural draftsmanship and map-making into their repertoire. The redeployment of manuscript and miniature painters as mapmakers and topographers allows us to recast artists as innovators of the spatial frameworks within which such topographical visuals were conceptualized. As the various topographical drawings based on Indo-European accounts of the period demonstrate, the projection of Shahjahanabad as a site of imperial significance was often the result of the “…artist’s layering of motifs from heterogeneous pictorial traditions…to legitimate the site as a locus of power both sacred and secular.”\textsuperscript{94} In such pictorial depictions cartographic techniques also worked to alter the logic of the town plan or city, which could be

\textsuperscript{93} Ibid., 147. Qutub Minar, V&A Museum, IM 42-1923.

\textsuperscript{94} Debra Diamond “The Cartography of Power: Mapping genres in Jodhpur Painting” in *Arts of Mughal India*. (Victoria & Albert Museum, Mapin, 2004), 278-285; 280-282. In a parallel scenario, Diamond has shown how the representation of new towns around Jodhpur such as Mahamandir (ca. 1803) often borrowed visual conventions from existing devotional painting, pilgrimage maps, and town plans.
now negotiated by relative placement, labeling, and by the hierarchical sizing of elements within it. Thus, these visual conventions of pictorial topographical genres were very much guided by the politics and power dynamics that informed them.

As this chapter sketches out, the pictorial view of Shah Alam’s return to Shahjahanabad in 1772 can be viewed as the definitive endorsement of the Red Fort as the seat of the later-Mughal Empire in India. In a sense, the *bazgasht* and the Fort operate as interchangeable concepts ultimately signifying the persistence of a symbolic idea of Mughal sovereignty in a fragmented political domain. Conventional wisdom has attributed to the British occupation of Delhi the renaissance of all artistic activity. By 1803, the British, under General Gerard Lake, after defeating the Maratha army at Laswari established control as the effective administrators of Delhi. Topographical painting in Delhi, too, is primarily understood with respect to the rise of the school of Company painters, who worked for British Residents and officials such as David Ochterlony, William Fraser, and James Skinner. The piecemeal scholarship on painters employed by the later Mughal court at Delhi has discouraged a constitutive view of painting culture resulting from the interplay of Indian and European ideas. Thus the eighteenth-century pictorial topographical genre, as it appeared in Delhi, was ultimately based on both local and European conventions of cartography as well as the agency of local artists as interpreters of these conventions. Revisiting Shah Alam’s Delhi, therefore, allows us to appreciate how the pre-

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95 See Mildred Archer, *Company Drawings in the India Office Library* (London: H.M. Stationery Office 1972). The topographical school of painting is seen to have matured full-scale in 1815, fueled in part by the earlier visit of painters such as Thomas and William Daniell (in Delhi 1788-89) and a synonymous interest in architectural conservation. See eremiah P. Losty, ‘The Delhi Palace in 1846; A Panoramic view by Mazhar Ali Khan’ in Crill, Topsfiled, Stronge, Eds. *Arts of Mughal India, Studies in Honour of Robert Skelton* (V&A, Mapin, 2004), 286-301.
figuration of the topographical genre in creating a visual vocabulary of the emperor’s return to Delhi inflected the nature of later artistic developments in the Delhi region. It is to the personal vision of the artist in Shah Alam’s court after his re-settlement at Delhi, to which we turn in the following chapter.
II.
The Peacock Throne:

Excavating meaning in Khairullah’s Darbar paintings of Shah Alam II

It is all very well to be generous and charitable,
The question is whether the king can afford this?
When he himself is living, hand to mouth
And pangs of hunger have reduced him to a skeleton.⁹⁶

Darbar scenes created during the reign of Shah Alam II offer a compelling view into the fledgling atelier at work in Delhi at the turn of the eighteenth century. These darbar scenes are few but significant and have not been studied previously. In this chapter I ask, how do these court scenes capture the dynamic nature of Mughal self-representation? How did paintings from Shah Alam’s reign at Delhi engage with their Mughal lineage, and to what extent was this engagement central to their visual identity at the turn of the eighteenth century? Are these paintings indicative of shifts within artistic practice, and if so, how?

While there is little doubt that the circle of court painters and literati surrounding Shah Alam was a small one, scribal evidence shows that the Mughal house under Shah Alam remained the hub of diplomatic liaisons between various political factions, such as the Marathas and the Bangash Afghans.⁹⁷ A number of poetic references to Shah Alam exist, but they offer both

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praise and criticism of his regal status or lack thereof, at Delhi. As Ishrat Haque has examined, some of the most evocative and selectively critical commentary on Shah Alam’s reign came from the poet Mirza Sauda (1713-1781). Haque points to the possibility that Sauda’s criticism of Shah Alam’s reign could have been a reflection of his own loyalties to patrons based outside the royal court, and would have also been a way of channeling his earlier patron Ghaziuddin Imadulmulk’s animosity towards the emperor.\textsuperscript{98} For example, Sauda writes:

\begin{quote}
A ruler who is vainly proud of his crown  
Is like a cock with a crest, pretending to be a king of the world.\textsuperscript{99}
\end{quote}

Sauda’s critical reflection on Shah Alam is in fact useful for looking at the nature of court painting depicting Shah Alam. Of particular interest here is the use of the phrase, “pretending to be a king of the world” which implies both failure in terms of assuming the duties of a Padshah as well as a comparison with Shah Jahan, the Mughal ruler and founder of Shahjahanabad.\textsuperscript{100} Whether Shah Alam’s court painters also channeled this sense of disenchantment with their emperor is up for discussion, and I will attempt to unravel this idea in my discussion below. In order to consider the larger questions surrounding the cultural identity of Mughal rule in this period my three-pronged approach will draw upon architecture & painting, literary analysis, and music theory. I will begin with a detailed analysis of two

\textsuperscript{98} Ghaziuddin is discussed in the beginning of the first chapter. Also see Ishrat Haque, \textit{Glimpses of Mughal Society and Culture}, 56.

\textsuperscript{99} Sauda, Kulliyat I, 101. Haque, \textit{Glimpses of Mughal Society}, 55. However, Haque points out that Sauda’s eulogizing style remains within the panegyric convention of a \textit{qasida}, used by Persian and Urdu poets in Mughal Delhi.

\textsuperscript{100} A literal translation of Shah Jahan is ‘King of the World’. For other titles see, Susan Stronge, “Mughal titles from the reign of Shah Jahan” in \textit{Arts of Asia} (2011) 41:6, 133-136.
court portraits painted by Khairullah (fl. 1800) and then deconstruct their iconography through an extensive formal analysis. My main focus is on the reconstructed Peacock Throne, which appears as a leitmotif in later Mughal court portraiture. The circumstances of the loss of Shah Jahan’s Peacock Throne following Nadir Shah Afshar’s (r.1736-47) invasion of Delhi in 1739 are discussed later in this chapter as I focus on the Throne’s recreation in painting and the symbolic, spiritual and formal links it forges with the Indic and Indo-Persianate world. Using the Peacock as a metaphor of analysis, I offer an in-depth study of the significance of the bird as an intertextual and interdisciplinary figure for later Mughal court painting. This chapter further explores Shah Alam’s own literary training and the expressive culture of musical pictures (ragamala paintings and music theory) and poetry as creative forces shaping the iconography and metaphorical meaning in court portraits.

I begin by examining the Delhi artist Khairullah’s contribution to painting at Delhi, to study his approach to court painting under Shah Alam II. I will offer a detailed iconographic study of the painting, The Emperor Shah Alam on the Peacock Throne (Los Angeles County Museum of Art M.77.78, hereafter the LACMA Shah Alam) and situate it as a landmark court portrait by Khairullah that engages with questions of Indic and Persian literature, history and tradition, as it attempts to carve a new visual response to Mughal identity at the turn of the century. I also study the painting in relation to The blind Emperor Shah Alam II with his son and attendants (Victoria and Albert Museum, IS 114-1986, hereafter the V&A Shah Alam). The latter, as I will discuss, is undoubtedly a succession portrait, a visual testament to the public transmission of authority from Shah Alam to his son Muinuddin, who ruled as Akbar II, but
also one that offers a visual continuity of forms and ideas that shaped later Mughal court portraiture in the nineteenth-century.

**Khairullah and the Peacock Throne**

A small but significant number of court paintings during Shah Alam’s reign are available to us, most works being by a painter who names himself ‘Khairullah’ or ‘the one sheltered by God.’ The painter emerges as a central figure during Shah Alam’s reign whose presence and stylistic authority can also be detected in the early paintings from Akbar Shah’s reign. Khairullah likely accompanied Shah Alam’s coterie to Delhi in 1771 and would have been part of his retinue during his stay in Allahabad and Awadh. No clear genealogical relationship can be established between Khairullah and painters at Awadh, but it is possible that Khairullah was a descendant of the painter Faqirullah (active 1720-1770), or Muhammad Faqirullah Khan, who was part of the Mughal atelier under Muhammad Shah (reigned 1719-1748). It is known that Faqirullah found alternative patronage after the emperor’s death in 1748 and began work on a *ragamala* series with the painter Fateh Chand, a few dispersed leaves from which are available to us today. If Khairullah was a direct descendant of Faqirullah, as their names might indicate, his datable works from Shah Alam’s reign suggest that he was a generation or two removed from

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101 Faqirullah’s tenure in the Mughal court of Muhammad Shah and his work *ragamala* series are discussed through examples in W. Dalrymple and Y. Sharma, *Princes and Painters* (2012), Cat. No. 6, p. 76 and Cat. No. 20, p. 92.

102 For example, Faqirullah, “Bhairavi Ragini: Lady visting a Shaivite shrine,” Asia and Pacific Collections, British Library, J.17.3, and Fat(e)h Chand, Kakubha Ragini, Add.Or. 485; For another version of “Bhairavi Ragini” by Faqirullah see, see Freer Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C., F.1924.9.
him. Faqirullah’s collaboration with Fateh Chand, whose later work conforms to the stylistic idiom prevalent at Lucknow, suggests that Faqirullah too, would have moved to Awadh.\footnote{\textsuperscript{103}} It is possible that a later artist Faizallah active in Faizabad, the earlier capital of Awadh, from the 1760s was a direct relation of Faqirullah and an older relative of Khairullah. While the similarities in their names is striking suggesting a possible familial link, the evidence for the connections between the three painters can only be partially supported and remains circumstantial. A more compelling picture of the painter’s practice can be sketched from his signed works, which indicate that Khairullah was in the employ of the Mughal court of Shah Alam II and later worked for the Maratha chief Daulat Rao Sindhia (r. 1794-1827). Khairullah’s signature appears on most paintings depicting Shah Alam offering a clue to his status as the prime painter at Delhi who made up the intimate circle of artists and literati in Shah Alam’s court.

In \textbf{The Emperor Shah Alam on the Peacock Throne} (LACMA M.77.78) (\textbf{Figure 2.0}), or the LACMA Shah Alam signed by Khairullah, the only figures in the painting are the Emperor and his son, who are both dressed in white \textit{jama}s or tunics. The painting is inscribed Khairullah mussavir or ‘the painter Khairullah.’\footnote{\textsuperscript{104}} In the scene, Shah Alam seems to be communicating spiritual merit to his son in a private moment of interaction. Shah Alam is seated cross-legged

\footnote{\textsuperscript{103} For a painting from the \textit{ragamala} by Fateh Chand produced in Awadh, see V&A Museum, IS.42-1996.}

\footnote{\textsuperscript{104} Khairullah Musavvir, \textit{Emperor Shah Alam II on the Peacock Throne}, 1801, Painting; Watercolor, Opaque watercolor, gold, and ink on paper, 13 3/4 x 9 1/8 in. (34.9 x 23.2 cm) Indian Art Special Purpose Fund (M.77.78) South and Southeast Asian Art Department, Los Angeles County Museum of Art.}
on a golden throne with his right arm draped over a bolster, his blinded eyes shown closed, and his head leaning slightly toward the young Muinuddin, seen standing with his hands folded in a gesture of obeisance. The prince’s white jama reaches down just above his ankles to reveal that he is barefoot in his father’s presence, his patka (sash) features a minimal gold border, the only decorative element of dress being the half length open coat embroidered with blue flowers. Shah Alam’s emerald green halo rimmed with gold border and gold rays, his gold patka, bejeweled red and gold gospec turban with a prominent sarpech (turban jewel) and feather project him as a figure with a significant measure of authority. The figures are somewhat abstracted, their postures sketched with fluid outlines, and their faces bearing a moon-like roundedness seen typically in paintings from Awadh in the eighteenth-century.

Khairullah’s major contribution to later court painting can be appreciated even further on a closer examination of the throne canopy set on a marble terrace against the blue backdrop of the open sky. The ‘jeweled throne,’ later called the peacock throne or takht i taus was one of the most expensive commissions in seventeenth-century Mughal India, completed for the emperor Shah Jahan on 12 March, 1635. Commissioned to showcase the superb collection of jewels as well as the art of jewel encrusting and inlay, the throne was built out of gold reserves of the imperial treasury. Abdul Hamid Lahauri, the court annalist to Shah Jahan, further notes that the base was 3¼ yards in length by 2 ½ yards in width, and 5 yards in

height.\textsuperscript{106} Though a specific mention of the shape of the roof is not made, contemporaneous paintings such as one titled, “Shah Jahan in audience with Dara Shikoh” dated to about 1670, from the reign of Aurangzeb in the Bibliothèque nationale, show us that the roof was, as the gemstone trader Jean-Baptiste Tavernier writing in 1665 from the court of Aurangzeb in Jahanabad described, a quadrangular (dome) shape with a stepped canopy upheld by slim columns.\textsuperscript{107} Though Lahauri suggests that the canopy was to be upheld by twelve emerald columns, according to Tavernier, it was more like a ‘camp bed’, six feet long and four feet wide with a twenty-five inches high base supported by four ‘bars’ (columns).\textsuperscript{108} The standard


\textsuperscript{107} Roselyne Hurel, \textit{Miniatures & Peintures Indiennes}, Biblioteque nationale de France, 2010, plate 51, 79. This shape is supported by another 19\textsuperscript{th} century copy (ca.1800) of a lost original from the seventeenth century showing Shah Jahan seated on a throne, bequeathed by Lady Wantage. V&A Museum, IM.113-1921.

\textsuperscript{108} Ball, Crooke, eds. Tavernier, \textit{Travels in India}, 303.

Another account of a roughly similar throne built much earlier for Jahangir appears in the letters of the French merchant jeweler, Austin Bordeaux who explains his design: “The throne is supported by four lions weighing 150 quintals of silver covered with beaten gold leaf, and the canopy is supported by 12 columns in which there are 12 thousand ounces of enameled gold. The canopy which is in the form of a dome has been covered by me [Bourdeaux] with 4 thousand of my artificial stones, but the genuine stones corresponding to these are of inestimable value, for the King [Jahangir] has a great number of pearls and it is also certain that he has more large diamonds and large rubies than all the princes of the universe. On the ascent which has four steps I made 4 ‘Suises’ like those which are at the gate of the Louvre, with halbards in their hands but no wine in their stomachs. There is a strange thing I have done here with diamonds, which the diamond cutters of Goa can not believe, nor those here unless they have heard the King say it, namely that I have cut in ten diamonds a diamond of 100 carats which they would ask ten months to cut…”

From Lahore, 27 April, 1625.

Later, on 9 March, 1632 Bordeaux mentions his other commission for a throne for Shah Jahan at Agra: “… I had employed these two years at Agra I making plans for a new throne which the King had ordered before he left Agra for the Deccan. The King had required that two hundred times a hundred thousand livres should be spent on this throne in gold, diamonds, rubies, pearls, and emeralds. But I do not think he will ever have the benefit of it.

Augustine Houaroud” (Hunarmand or “inventor of arts” as Bordeaux explains in his letters)
The format of four slim columns seems to have prevailed, with each column mounted with a bejeweled peacock. Once again, Lahauri’s account of the proposal for the original design is slightly different suggesting that each column supporting the canopy was to be mounted with two peacocks made out of jewels, with a tree in between set with rubies, diamonds, emeralds, and pearls. The ascent to the throne was to consist of three steps with jewels of fine water.

The Emperor’s seat was to be surrounded by eleven latticed panels forming the railing of the throne seat. The central railing panel situated directly behind the emperor on which he was to rest his arm was to be the most ornate, encrusted with a ruby that had been first given to Jahangir as a gift sent by the Persian ruler Shah Abbas I, and later inscribed with the names of rulers of the line of Timur up to Shah Jahan. On the inside of the throne was carved a laudatory masnawi by the poet Haji Muhammad Jan Qudsi (active 1635), in twenty couplets inscribed in green enamel, the final verse containing a chronogram extolling the emperor. Some of the verses are worth replicating here, for they given an idea of the material as well as symbolic


One possible reference to the peacocks on the peacock throne at Delhi is suggested in Bernier: “…deux Paons couvert de pierreries et perles, q’ui son de l’artifice d’un François nommé … qui etoit un merveilleux Ouvrier et qui, après avoir trompé plusiers Princes d’Europe par ces Doublets qu’il savoir faire à merveille, se refugia dans cette Cour ou il fit fortune.” “Four Letters of Austin of Bordeaux,” Reprint by Fuat Sezgin, et. al. in *Islamic World in Foreign Travel Accounts*, Vol. 77 (1997).

The inside of this canopy we are told, was to be heavily encrusted with gems such as rubies and garnets on an enameled base in comparison to the outside of the canopy which was to be only lightly encrusted with gems. Lahauri, *Padshahnama*, trans. Elliot, H.M., 48-49.


value of the throne:

Of what use are jewels and gold but to embellish this throne? 
The sea and the mine create for this purpose.

The crown-jewels and the jeweler’s art that form its base have been on the qui vive a whole lifetime.

The lustrous rubies and pearls (of the throne) can provide the dark night a hundred skies with stars.113

Contrasted with such an obvious extolling of material wealth and grandeur are the later couplets, which laud the emperor as the patron of the throne:

Not because of its gems but because it kisses the feet of Shah Jahan has the value of the throne ascended to heaven.

Till the world exists Shah Jahan (the King of the world) shall retain his seat on the throne.

A throne like this is his proper seat: the tribute of the Seven Climes lies at his feet.

When the tongue wanted to express chronogram, the mind suggested: Awrang-i-Shahinshahi-adil (the throne of the just emperor).114

The loss of the Peacock Throne less than a hundred years later, then, appends the tragic history of the loss of Mughal prestige that occurred in 1739 when the Afsharid ruler Nadir Shah ransacked Delhi. Contemporaneous accounts from Muhammad Shah’s reign tell us that the bejeweled Peacock Throne was part of an extensive tribute paid to Nadir Shah to counter his threat of taking over the bulk of Mughal territories. The contemporaneous correspondence

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surrounding Nadir Shah’s invasion and the massacre of Delhi residents presents contrasting views of Nadir Shah’s role in this momentous event of late Mughal history and creates a controversy about the obligatory bonds between the ruler and the ruled but stays silent on the cultural impact of this event.\footnote{115} No doubt, the loss of the Throne and of the Koh-i noor diamond (one of the largest known diamonds of the period) to Nadir Shah along with a number of manuscripts and treasures signaled a “sharp drop in prestige as the accumulated cultural wealth of over three hundred years changed hands in a fleeting moment.”\footnote{116}

\section*{A Throne of Architectural Proportions}

The question of whether Shah Alam II and his successors recreated the throne at Delhi becomes less important than the object’s enduring legacy as a pictorial device for evoking ideas of history and continuity. The majority of court paintings from this period feature a gold and jeweled throne canopy mounted with peacocks and pearls that functions as the seat of the Mughal emperor. However, existing evidence of a recreated throne canopy is not sufficient to assume the actual presence of a later reconstruction of the Peacock Throne. In Company correspondence from this period, a mention of a peacock throne is made on the occasion of the


visit of the Governor General Lord Amherst to Delhi in 1827.\textsuperscript{117} The most convincing evidence is also provided by a surviving watercolor sketch in miniature on ivory painted circa 1860,\textsuperscript{118} which is nearly the same as Khairullah’s painted throne canopy from ca. 1800, suggesting the existence of a model throne constructed at the turn of the eighteenth-century, though later versions of the throne in paintings from Delhi are slightly different.\textsuperscript{119} (Figure 2.5: Ivory miniature of the Peacock Throne) More important, my focus on the painted record enables us to fully deconstruct the throne canopy in terms of its architectural form and style. Whether Khairullah’s painted throne canopy provided an inspiration for the built version or was painted from an existing model, his painterly innovations re-ascribed the weight of imperial ideology to the Peacock Throne, an object that became synonymous with later Mughal court prestige in painting.

\textsuperscript{117} “His Lordship [Amherst] proceeded to the palace on the morning of 17\textsuperscript{th} March, 1827 to visit His Majesty. When the Governor General’s sawaree reached the inner gate called Naqqarkhana, the Resident and several gentlemen of his Lordship’s suite alighted from their elephants according to custom and proceeded on foot while the Governor General was carried in his Tonjohn to the steps of the Diwan-i khas. The King [Akbar II] came into the Darbar-i Amm from the Toshakhana at the same moment that the Governor General entered on the opposite side, and meeting His Lordship in front of the throne embraced and welcomed him in the most cordial manner. His Majesty then ascended the Peacock Throne and the Governor General took his chair in front of it on the right and sat at right angles to His Majesty, the Resident and other officers present as well as the chief personages of the Court, all standing. …On the 24\textsuperscript{th} the Empeor paid a return visit to the Residency. There he took his seat on the Peacock Throne which had previously been placed in the principal room of the Residency for the purpose and the Governor-General sat on a state chair to the right, every other person standing.” Records of the Delhi Residency and Agency, Chapter 10, 337. See also, Catalogue of the Loan Exhibition of Antiquities, 1911, C.227, plate lxix, for a sketch of the peacock throne, the sitter possibly Akbar II, and a suggestion that the throne was taken over to the Governor General for his use in 1827.

\textsuperscript{118} The ivory watercolor was surely done after 1857, probably around 1860 when the demand for such miniatures increased. Hence, I am re-dating this set to the late 1860s.

\textsuperscript{119} V&A Museum, 03557(IS), The Peacock Throne, one of 16 views of monuments from Delhi, Agra and Amritsar.
A formal analysis of the reconstructed throne in Khairullah’s painting reveals that the painter transposed architectural elements of the imperial throne described in Lahauri’s account to lend a distinctive identity to this late Mughal throne canopy but also relied on architectural examples close at hand to give the structure a uniquely identifiable form. That the Mughal throne appears as an idealized version of Shah Jahan’s jeweled throne as may have been initially conceived, is only one part of program of visual reconstruction of the throne in Khairullah’s painting. In the painted versions, the canopy of the golden throne is supported by twelve, not four, columns in line with Lahauri’s contemporaneous account. (Figure 2.1: Detail, LACMA Shah Alam) The central railing directly behind the emperor is a solid panel in contrast with the others lining the sides of the throne base, which appear to be latticed. Khairullah’s canopy is framed by a semicircular arched opening flanked by two pointed arched openings supported on baluster columns on either side – this design is mirrored in the arched panels decorating the throne’s base below. The throne is set on a square platform and raised to waist height by inverted bell-shaped feet emerging from a tri-foliate drape. Two peacocks are perched on the slanting edges of the domed canopy in line with the two columns that support each eave, with their wings in full span, presumably mirrored on the rear but hidden.


from view. The centrally placed plant with seven flowers is set on an inverted base of leaves is placed at the apex of the throne canopy, creating visual continuity along the vertical axis leading up from the central decorative arched panel of the vertical face of the throne base, to the seated figure of the emperor, up to the arch of the canopy and the plant above. Two peacocks in profile with a string of pearls in their beaks flank the central plant on the canopy. The entire structure is sheltered by a rectangular tent-hanging or qanat supported on four elongated poles their splayed feet more plainly modeled than the bases of the baluster columns supporting the throne canopy.

The formal characteristics of the painted throne unravel to reveal greater meaning when it is viewed in relation to the style of the marble “jharokha-i-khas-o-amm” or jharokha-throne completed in AD 1648 for Shah Jahan, situated in the audience hall Diwan-i Khas of the Red Fort. (Figure 2.2: Marble Jharokha Throne, Red Fort) While there is no enclosed architectural setting used by Khairullah to situate the enthroned emperor, it is quite clear that the painter has modeled the golden ‘peacock throne’ in his painting on the marble jharokha-throne constructed in-situ in the Diwan-i Am. Ebba Koch’s detailed analysis of the marble jharokha-throne of the Red Fort, its symbolic meaning and stylistic vocabulary are useful here as a framework for contextualizing formal ideas extant in the painted throne. Providing a formal frame for the ritual of the emperor’s daily appearances, the jharokha-throne conflated the typology of the jharokha-i darshan, the royal canopy used by Mughal rulers for making public appearances, with the imperial projection of Shah Jahan’s marble throne pedestal in the
Diwan-i Khas invoking the symbolism of the throne of Solomon. Koch suggests that the Delhi “jharokha-i-khas-o-amm” was an innovation on the traditional architectural setting of the Mughal jharokha – composed of the raised baldachined seat for the emperor projecting from a raised gallery such as an arched niche that allowed the emperor to be viewed from a privileged position. The stylistic changes, more prominent, fused “…Timurid and East Indian (Bengali) forms with counterparts from European engravings” resulting in a novel repertoire of styles marked by the acanthus decorated baluster column, the semi-circular arch lined with a molding ending in leaf buds, and the bangla – roof and vault shape – which altogether embodied a new organic concept of architecture. Building further on this new organic model, also practiced in the jharoka (viewing gallery) of the two-storied projecting baldachin of the Machchhi Bhawan at Agra Fort completed in 1637, the Delhi jharokha incorporated the curved form of the bangla-i darshan, the semicircular arched throne bench, with the throne bench inserted between the baldachin and raised pedestal, to arrive at this distinctive vocabulary for the Mughal throne.

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123 “Its (the Delhi jharokha-throne’s) actual design, however, embodies a decisive break from the post-and-lintel system of the older jharokha form which is composed on the additive principle, with thin, faceted columns supporting the bracketed architraves and the pyramidal roof, the whole resting on corbels like an oriel. This type survives as a counterpart of the Delhi jharokha in the palace of the Lahore Fort.” Ebba Koch, “Shah Jahan and Orpheus”, 2000, 68.


Khairullah’s painted throne utilizes the familiar vocabulary of the four-post *bangla* styled domed roof supported on baluster columns, but also extends the architectural volume of the painted throne to give it the appearance of a *jharokha* or viewing balcony. While on the one hand, Khairullah uses the central curved arch derived from the *bangla* roof to spatially identify the throne seat or *takht* for Shah Alam, he enhances the structure by adding cusped arches on either side. The triple-arched form of the painted throne canopy, with a central rounded arch flanked by two cusped arches supported on baluster columns, appears in the East facing window of the Delhi Fort’s *Diwan-i Khas* and would have functioned as a frame to the throne pedestal kept there (Figure 2.3: East facing window of the Diwan-i Khas). The tripartite arched format of the window is clearly seen in Agra and directly references the façade elevation of the upper gallery of the baldachin of the Machchhi Bhawan at Agra (Figure 2.4: View of the Machchhi Bhawan, Agra Fort) in style thus emerging as a novel synthesis of seventeenth-century examples of viewing galleries and throne seats from both Agra and Delhi.

The painted *jharokha*-throne thus combines the idea of the triple-arched viewing balcony or *jharokha*, the *bangla* roof, and the throne pedestal as imperial seat – and reasserting its symbolic function as a *jharokha-i darshan* choreographing the visual appearance of the emperor for the general public. In Khairullah’s painted reconstruction, the visuality of the *takht* is greater than the emperor’s and is one that evokes the grandeur, both material and moral, associated with Shah Alam’s ancestor Shah Jahan. There is little doubt that Khairullah is building on the idea, of the *jharokha*-throne as imperial-divine seat of power, in his inventive
reconstruction of the throne canopy that frames Shah Alam. With a preference for the emperor’s face in profile, encircled by a nimbus, his figure set within a jharokha-throne, and by establishing a hierarchical distance between father and son, Khairullah constructs at the turn of the eighteenth-century, a stylistic derivative of the seventeenth-century “jharokha image” popularized during Jahangir’s and standardized during Shah Jahan’s reign.126

From Iran to Delhi: Abstracting Poetry

Cypresses and Peacocks

Even more remarkable is the painter’s apparent effort to maintain a pictorial program that elaborates upon the aesthetic make-up of the painting. Here, the painter visibly borrows from the stylized forms of intrado and pietre dure decorations in the Delhi fort to articulate the gilded design of interlocking arabesques on the marble floor upon which the throne is set. But it is in the landscape backdrop that Khairullah’s predilection for the metaphorical comes to light. The backdrop of the sinuous lines of the flowering tree trunks silhouetted against the open sky, their red flowers brightly staged against the billowing clouds near the tall peaks of the cypress trees bracketing the outdoor scene is a motif that was used in Mughal architecture in Agra, in particular the pietre dure panel in the tomb of Itimad-al-Daula at Agra completed in 1626-27.127 (Figures 2.6: Comparison of Detail from LACMA Shah Alam and Stone Inlay


The panel’s decoration is built up with formal peaks of three cypresses with the sinuous and curvy vines of flowering plants set within an arched cartouche. The cypress tree with its origins in Persian poetry implies a reference to God and is present along with wine vessels and fruits on the upper storey of the tomb complex at Agra. Intertwined branches on the cypress has origins in Persian poetry – where the tree and the branch signify a lover’s embrace, a motif that was commonly used in Safavid art, and can be found on a number of examples of painting and ceramic ware from the early modern period. In Itimaduddaula’s tomb complex, the cypress and the flowering tree are seen ‘visual devices’ that evoke a paradisiacal and mystical theme in the absence of literary inscriptions from the Quran and reinforce the exalted passage of the deceased into the heavenly abode. The overall decorative scheme of the tomb complex, therefore, is funereal, evoking the luxury from Safavid Iran, the decorative program of the tomb complex is considered in part to have been inspired by Safavid sources. Moreover, the decorative program features an inlay of semi-precious stones in marble, predating some of the elements found in the Red fort at Delhi.


The motif dates back to medieval Damascus and Iran, and seen most popularly in paintings, pottery, and textiles of Safavid Iran and in the arts of Ottoman Turkey. For an example of an Iznik tile featuring a cypress and hyacinth motif, see V&A Museum, C.6-1953, Iznik, Turkey, ca. 1520-1550; for an example of the cypress motif in Iranian art see, “Bottle with landscape decoration” Musée du Louvre, gift of Louis Devillier de Mons, 1930, Stonepaste, painted decoration under a transparent, colorless glaze, Iran, late 17th to early 18th century; A ‘Kubachi’ ware plate, V&A Museum, 561-1905, Isfahan, Iran, ca. 1600-1650.

For an example of a Mughal page featuring cypresses and a flowering tree and the flower spray motif, see “Prince Offering Wine to His Beloved: Page from the Diwan of Mir Ali Shir Nawa’i” by Manohar, ca. 1606, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, SL.17.2011.13.5, Lent by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. For a Safavid example, see “Zal Expounds the Mysteries of the Magi”, Folio from Firdausi’s Shahnama (Book of Kings) of Shah Tahmasp, by Qadimi, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1970.301.14, Tabriz, Iran, ca. 1525. For a discussion of decorative motifs including the cypress tree in Persian painting, see Barabra Brend, Perspectives on Persian Painting: Illustrations to Amir Khusrau’s Khamsa. Routledge Curzon, (New York, 2003). Especially see her discussion on Anthology, Yazd, 1430 and its similarities with Amir Khusrau’s Khamsa, 54-55.
anticipated in paradise. The wide-ranging application of decorative motifs, such as the single flowering plant, in Mughal painting, architecture and arts has been well established especially from the later part of the reign of Jahangir, a phenomenon more clearly seen in the unification of style under Shah Jahan, and thus is also seen widely used in the Red Fort at Delhi.

The use of another ‘visual device,’ the confronted peacocks (their elevated tails fanned out) on either side of the canopy and on top of the roof (in profile with lowered tails) holding a string of pearls in their beaks offering blessing as they stand on either side of the central flowering plant, raises the question of the expanded visual field of this painting that references Iranian as well as Indic metaphors. It has been suggested that the peacock bird functioned as a visual metaphor in classical Persian literature, and was also associated with the sun and therefore

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133 The iconography of the peacock and other birds in Sassanian imagery is discussed in Sylvia Auld, “Birds and Blessings” in Bernard O’Kane. Ed. The iconography of Islamic art (Edinburgh, 2005). See also, essay by Anna Contadini in the volume. Auld discusses how bird imagery was divided into solar and lunar groups, and the peacock was essentially part of the sun group. Daneshvari suggests that in medieval Persian literature on occasion, the sun is referred to as, tawus atish parr, peacock with wings of fire. “See the peacock with wings of fire in the azure heavens, from whose fanning the world has turned into a golden ornament.” Auld, Birds and Blessings, 3, citing Daneshvari (1986)’s quote from Khaqani, Divan, ed. A. Abdul Rasuli (1978), 188.
was associated with royal imagery in the Safavid period. Peacocks, especially in Safavid art and architecture, were employed for their importance as celestial birds of paradise serving as augurs to the journey to heaven. The motif of confronting peacocks can be traced back to decorative panels in Safavid architecture, ceramics, as well as textiles. They appear on tile revetments of the Harun-i Vilayat mausoleum in Isfahan (1512) as well as the Congregational Mosque at Kirman, Iran, restored and redecorated in 1550. (Figure 2.7, 2.8: Tile panel from the Mausoleum of Harun-i Vilayat, Examples of Tiles with peacock and cypress decorations) Another tile, which relates closely to the mosque at Kimran, features two confronting peacocks placed on either side of a vase with stems emerging from within. In

134 Makariou suggests, for example, that the peacock was used as a common theme in classical Iranian poetry of Rudaki and Attar. Its imagery was also associated with the sun, thus “by extension of a theme associated with royalty.” Marakiou, Three Empires of Islam, 247.

135 Schuyler Cammann. “The Interplay of Art, Literature, and Religion in Safavid Symbolism.” Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland, No. 2 (1978): 124-136. Also, see Auld’s discussion of the paradise symbolism of the peacock with the example of Farid al Din Attar’s Mantiq al-Tayr, written in the second half of the twelfth century, where the bird is introduced as “once of paradise/who let the venomous, smooth snake entice [his] instincts to his master’s evil way/ and suffered exile to that fateful day’ referring to the role of the peacock in seducing Adam and Eve into eating the forbidden fruit. Farid al Din Attar, The conference of the birds, tr. Afkham Darbandi and Dick Davis (1984) as cited by Auld, Birds and Blessings, 7.


other examples, from ceramics such as in a sixteenth-century Fritware bottle with blue and black underglaze from the V&A Museum, the peacocks are joined at the base of their necks and at the tips of their upturned tails.¹³⁹

The use of peacocks as solar motifs on Mughal thrones has also been studied for its evocation of the idea that the seat of the emperor was the “Embodied Sun”.¹⁴⁰ Malecka’s discussion of the significance of solar symbolism within Mughal imperial propaganda highlights how celestial and solar imagery permeated every sphere of Mughal imperial ceremonial life, from the Mughal belief in their divine origins, to their public self-fashioning through the concept of nur-e illahi (the divine light), and was especially heightened during accessions and enthronements. The Mughal throne, in particular, in its endorsement of the status of the ruler as sun invoked the throne of Jamshid, featuring in its design the shamsa or sunburst pattern on backrests, canopies, and parasols, jewels of solar significance such as rubies, and the heightened use of gold in materials and imagery. As Ebba Koch has pointed out, the solar significance of the Mughal throne was evermore pronounced during the reign of Shah Jahan, with the use of Solomonic imagery at the newly built imperial capital, Shahjahanabad.¹⁴¹ Koch finds that the identification of Muslim princes with Solomon as an exemplary ruler was a prominent theme in their arts and literature. Citing examples from Achaemenid, Ghaznavid,

and early Timurid architecture the author identifies two enduring motifs originating from the Solomonic throne – the jeweled tree, with or without mechanical birds, and the motif of birds and/or lions under a throne.\footnote{142}

More compelling is the author’s view that Muslim rulers, as ‘second Solomons’ were especially interested in the embodiment of the literary concept of the Solomonic throne in real throne architecture as well as within pictorial representations of thrones. Koch cites the example of Kanbo’s description of the prophet-king Solomon’s throne to underscore Shahjahanbad’s importance as the ideal abode of the “God-chosen king” (Shah Jahan):

“What is comparable in meaning has been related in the Book concerning his Lordship Solomon... that this sovereign sits in the assembly of order and law-giving on a golden throne ornamented with rare jewels. On its legs and on its sides frightening animals of the tiger-lion (shan) variety with strong bodies and fierce claws have been given an utterly dreadful shape, a [courteous] expression in their face, and an appearance true [to their nature]. Therefore, by some kind of mathematically worked out devices, they are operated with a small gesture… In the same manner, on top of the throne, huge bodied birds of silver and gold have been installed. Whenever these birds, according to the said technique, spread their wings, various kinds of perfumes are scattered on the head of his Lordship.”\footnote{143}

Koch points out that the Book in the passage refers not to the Quran, but to the “complex body of Arab-Jewish legends that had developed around the figure of the prophet-king”, the legends in turn being a result of assimilated literary traditions of India and Iran. Koch notes that an earlier literary text, the eleventh century text Ara-is al-majlis: Qisas al-anbiya, offers the precedent for Kanbo’s description. The reference to peacocks in the author’s translated passage is below:

\footnote{142} “Shah Jahan and Orpheus,” 110-112.

\footnote{143} Kanbo, Amal-i Salih, III, 18-19, as cited by Koch, “Shah Jahan and Orpheus,” 105.
“Therefore they made for him (Solomon) a throne of ivory and set it in yqut and pearls, chrysolite and gems, and surrounded it with four golden palm trees, the branches of which were red yqut and green emerald; on top of two of the palm trees sat two golden peacocks, and on top of the two others, two golden eagles, opposite each other…above the palm trees were fixed vines of red gold, the grapes of red and yellow yqut, so that a bower of vines and palm trees gave shade to the throne…”144

The fervor for reconstructing a lost Peacock Throne in painting, thus, clearly seeks to recreate the Throne in Shah Jahan’s time. In Khairullah’s painting, the peacocks’ placement on the golden throne and the use of the tree motif, then, is no accident of historical translation on the part of the painter. Instead, the painting highlights the continuing pre-eminence of literary ideas, both pre-Quranic, Quranic, and Indic, for guiding the pictorial content of painting well into the later Mughal period leading up to the first half of the nineteenth-century.145 Khairullah’s use of the Peacock Throne is a visible attempt to link with the legacy of Shah Jahan’s patronage. In addition, by situating not two but four peacocks on the throne, Khairullah is able to create a crescendo of sun imagery, evoking not only Shah Alam’s regal status but also through a play on his nom de plume ‘Aftab’ or Sun. In Mughal painting, peacocks are seen in folios of the Akbarnama and in paintings from the reign of Jahangir,146 either in pairs of male-female composites or alone perched atop a parapet or a gateway of the royal quarters. Khairullah’s depiction of the peacocks is more abstracted - as ornamental decorations through the use of vibrant colors which are used to detail their indigo blue breasts, brown-golden backs,

144 “Shah Jahan and Orpheus” 105-06.

145 The use of Indic literary metaphors will be discussed in greater detail further in this chapter.

and greenish-brown feathers marked with the distinctive teardrop pattern – all this according a certain amount of vitality to the birds, allowing the viewer to imagine them as animate creatures, just as they would have been seen by Solomon’s audience. Moreover, each bird is shown with a pearl rosary in its beak granting *barakat*, the rosary here indicating a pious persona of the emperor, echoing with Shah Alam’s final years when he was often depicted as a saintly figure than a powerful ruler.

**Transmission of Authority**

In *Shah Alam II, The blind Mughal emperor seated on a Golden Throne*, (Figure 2.9) or the V&A Shah Alam, the emperor is seated in profile, his overall figure crouched and somewhat smaller than the figure of his son Muinuddin seated to his left on an octagonal throne seat. Here, Khairullah makes use of the visual vocabulary of imperial presence he had so carefully devised in the LACMA portrait. Utilizing the basic frame of the gilded jharokha-throne, the painter presents an intimate meeting between Shah Alam, his son Muinuddin and two trusted courtiers from his inner circle. Two courtiers leaning on staffs stand on Shah Alam’s right with their heads raised to look at him. On preliminary examination the older figure in his distinctive turban and white beard standing closer to Shah Alam appears to be Hajji Khwass, who became Akbar II’s primary aide (see discussion in following section). The other figure appears to be a young Tarbiyat Khan also known as Imam Baksh Khan, who Khairullah sketched a few years later, but the two portraits are quite dissimilar in their facial features. ¹⁴⁷ The emperor’s position is relatively higher than his subordinates’ but only barely

¹⁴⁷ Mirza Salim Bahadur and Tarbiyat Khan, Khairullah, ca. 1806–1811, San Diego Museum of Art,
so. Muinuddin’s seated figure appears alert and vital; his outstretched right hand holds a *sarpech* (turban ornament), indicating his receipt of this marker of transmission of authority and dynastic succession from the emperor. This scene, therefore, suggests the investiture of Muinuddin as Akbar II. Thus, the artist has provided us with the first visual record of a succession portrait indicating the transfer of authority from Shah Alam II to Akbar II.\textsuperscript{148}

Shah Alam, on the other hand, seems to have turned away not only from the issue of succession and the prince-in-waiting, but also from the world around him. The Emperor’s closed eyes mask his blindness, but also reinforce his meditative stance, as he appears to be twirling the pearls of his rosary through his fingers. By virtue of depicting the blind emperor, the scene recalls the historical circumstance of the Maratha reinstatement of Shah Alam to the Delhi throne following the humiliating blinding of the emperor at the hands of the Rohilla chief Ghulam Qadir in 1788. At that time, Shah Alam had appealed to Madhav Rao Sindhia, the Maratha ruler, the Lucknow Nawab Asaf al-Daula and the East India Company for help in an eloquent elegy.\textsuperscript{149}

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\textsuperscript{148} Also see W. Dalrymple and Y. Sharma, *Princes and Painters*, 2012, cat. 25 and 98.

\textsuperscript{149} Thee too O Sindhia, illustrious chief  
Who once didst promise to afford relief  
Thee I invoke, exert thy generous aid,  
And ye, O faithful pillars of my state  
By friendship bound, and by my power elate  
Hasten, O Asaf and ye English chiefs  
Nor blush to soothe an injured monarch’s griefs  
But stay my soul, unworthy rage disown
Here, Shah Alam’s closed eyes and his relative remoteness from the vibrant setting of the official meeting is contrasted with the bright halo encircling him that continues to highlight his preeminence as a superior presence. The halo shines akin to the sun or Aftab, creating a visual play on Shah Alam’s nom de plume.\textsuperscript{150} As in the previous painting, Akbar II is seen looking up to his father, in this case, embodying his relatively humble nom de plume, Su’a or Ray by appearing as an extension of the Sun, and therefore the worthy holder of the sarpech.\textsuperscript{151} (Figure 2.10: The sarpech and the rosary, detail from the V&A Shah Alam)

The rosary and the sarpech, therefore, appear as contradictory symbols of passive disengagement and active power within the later Mughal court, suggesting that the transmission of authority from Shah Alam to Akbar Shah had taken place well before the formal investiture of the latter. That Akbar Shah had already begun to conduct activities on

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Learn to sustain the loss of sight and throne
Learn that imperial pride and star clad power
Are but the fleeting pageants of an hour.

\textsuperscript{150} For example, see \textit{Manzum-i aqdas} ‘The most Holy Poem’ completed in 1786. Annemarie Schimmel, “Classical Urdu literature from the beginning to Iqbal,” in Jan Gonda, Ed. \textit{A History of Indian Literature}, Vol. 8, \textit{Modern Indo-Aryan Literatures}, (1975), 162-63. Also see Garcin de Tassy, \textit{Histoire de la littérature hindouie et hindoustanie}, Volume I, 32.

\textsuperscript{151} Akbar II’s nom de plume was Su’a or Ray. Schimmel, “Classical Urdu literature from the beginning to Iqbal,” 1975, 162. Also see, Frances W. Pritchett, \textit{Nets of Awareness: Urdu Poetry and its Critics}, (Berkeley: University of California Press,1994), 3-5.
behalf of the Mughal court is shown by a firman issuing grants for land and horses as well as titles dated to dated to 15 Jumaida II in the 34th year of Shah Alam, 1792 AD.\textsuperscript{152}

In the V&A Shah Alam, the emperor is seen holding a pearl rosary signifying his willing withdrawal from the political realm, a gesture that is anticipated in the LACMA Shah Alam too. However, as with the abundant use of peacocks and cypress trees, in addition to the standard motifs of the single flowering plant and the baluster column, the depiction of pearls in the painting offer a compelling view into the relevance of literary metaphors as visual devices in Khairullah’s paintings for Shah Alam. The significance of pearls in Perso-Arabic literary culture as well as Buddhist and Indic writings has been surveyed by Robin Donkin, where the author highlights the appearance of pearl-imagery not only in passages of the Quran, but also in the poetry and historical accounts from the fourteenth to the sixteenth-centuries.\textsuperscript{153} Of interest here is Dunkin’s suggestion of the pearl linked with the well-chosen word, especially in poetry and prose, where passages or verses were often compared to threads or necklaces of pearls. The author, citing examples from both Persian prose and Vedic scriptures explains how pearls or rosaries of pearls were often used as metaphors to convey the idea of connected

\textsuperscript{152} The grant stated that the prince was conducting these activities on behalf of his father. \textit{Catalogue of the Loan Exhibition of Antiquities, 1911}, plate xxii. A. 284, 54. This document bears the seal of Akbar Shah and was lent by heir apparent of Bhopal to the Delhi exhibition.

\textsuperscript{153} For example, the author states that in the Quran and early Islamic writings, Paradise is paved with pearls, and there were “pavilions of hollow pearls” and “golden [bodied] trees, whose fruits were pearls and emeralds”. G. Sale, \textit{Preliminary Discourse} in Wherry, (1882-1886), as cited by R. A. Donkin, Chapter 5, “The Arabo-Persian World: Seventh to Fifteenth Centuries.” \textit{Beyond Price: Pearls and Pearl-Fishing, Origins to the Age of Discovery}, (American Philosophical Society, 1998), 115-17.
narratives, which could acquire the significance of a dynastic or family history. Indeed, the appearance of pearls is significant in Khairullah’s paintings of Shah Alam – they appear as necklaces in the beaks of peacocks, on the tassels of the rectangular *shamiana* canopy above the golden throne, and in the hand of Shah Alam in the V&A Shah Alam.

The use of pearls as well as peacocks was by no means a novelty in Mughal painting being present in paintings from Akbar’s reign (1556-1605), but what was their significance for paintings of Shah Alam’s court at Delhi? Pearl tasseled canopies and parasols are present in Mughal paintings, but in a remarkable manner, acquire a greater visual cachet in Mughal paintings from the eighteenth-century. In a coronation portrait of the ruler Azimushshan (reigned 1712) in the collection of the Bibliothèque nationale, Paris, the prince is seen seated on a golden throne, which along with its four-post tent canopy, is adorned with numerous pearls. In later Mughal portraits, some from the reign of Alamgir I (Aurangzeb), and others of the late Mughal emperors such as Bahadur Shah I, Farrukhsiyar, and Muhammad Shah, pearl tassels appear in almost all tent canopies and parasols either covering the throne or sheltering the emperor. The precedents for Mughal rulers holding rosaries exist, but it is

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compelling to see how Shah Alam’s pious stance holding a pearl rosary in Khairullah’s V&A court portrait may be viewed in terms of a glorification of the emperor by his son Muinuddin, later Akbar II. This portrait is very much in the vein of Shah Alam’s ancestor Akbar’s, possibly posthumous, standing portrait that forms part of the Late Shah Jahan Album, where the aged emperor stands in an open landscape holding a string of emeralds and pearls.\textsuperscript{157} This begs the overall question: is Khairullah portraying Shah Alam posthumously? There is no exact way to determine if this is so, but the overwhelming emphasis on celestial and paradisiacal imagery might suggest that these paintings were actually painted in the early part of Akbar II’s reign as a way to legitimize the ruler’s own status in the chain of Mughal dynastic succession, an idea which is also conveyed in part by the visual metaphor of the rosary of pearls. In this scenario, the pearl rosary appears as a transitional object between the material and celestial worlds as well as a symbol of dynastic succession.

Khairullah cleverly dispelled the air of relative isolation of the emperor and of his diminutive court by creating a sense of intimacy in the darbar scenes. By framing the resplendent gold peacock throne against the backdrop of billowing white cotton like clouds in an azure sky, and thereby moving the darbar to the outdoors, the painter is able to dispense with the need to show a darbar in full state. Instead, the darbar appears as a space for private reflection, in contrast to later court scenes for Shah Alam’s successor Akbar II where darbar scenes depicted a court in

\textsuperscript{157} The Glorification of Akbar: Leaf from the Shah Jahan Album, Mughal, Jahangir period (1605–27); Attributed to Govardhan, 38.7 x 25.7 cm. Purchase Rogers Fund and The Kevorkian Foundation Gift, 1955, Metropolitan Museum of Art 55.121.10.22.
Khairullah’s chosen setting is likely the outdoor platform leading out from the *tasbih khana* of the Red Fort. Shah Alam’s court scenes are not of the embellished interiors of the palace accented with textiles and *kanats*. This purposeful absence of imperial splendor is also a means of visually eliminating the impact of Ghulam Qadir’s pillage of the Mughal imperial treasury and palace.

Instead, Khairullah diverts the eye to selected elements or visual devices - the bright gold of the remodeled peacock throne, the prince’s throne seat, and five carefully positioned Chinese porcelain vases. The symbolism of five carefully positioned porcelain vases with flowers in the center of the darbar scene is reminiscent of the work of the early eighteenth-century painter, Bhawani Das (active 1707-1720 in Delhi). In two late-Mughal dynastic portraits, *The Mughal Dynasty from Timur to Aurangzeb* (ca. 1707-1712, Nasser D. Khalili Collection, MSS 874) (Fig. 6.6) and *A Gathering of Princes* (ca. 1710, SDMA, 1990:365) Bhawani Das used two Chinese porcelain vases with roses and irises positioned below eye level on a low table placed in the center of the painting. Linda Leach has suggested that the emphasis on the decorative arts in the picture, “expresses the painter’s view of the dynasty and all its rarefied privileges far more potently than the portrait of Akbar…”\(^{159}\) and other portraits in the scene. However, the V&A Shah Alam portrait seems to draw not only upon Bhawani Das’ innovative use of the vases, but more specifically on the idea of dynastic succession in the painting. It is very probable that the painting executed at the end of Aurangzeb’s reign was part of the collection

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\(^{158}\) See chapter three for a discussion of Akbar II’s court portraits.

\(^{159}\) Linda Leach, *Paintings from India* (1998), Plate 40.
of the imperial atelier up until Nadir Shah’s sack of Delhi in 1739, if not later, or perhaps transmitted through preparatory sketches as other earlier Mughal paintings were. In Khairullah’s painting the vases build upon the idea of succession engaging with the idea of Akbar II as the chosen successor to Shah Alam II. Their design illustrates the Safavid period penchant for Chinese styles in ceramics.\textsuperscript{160} In Khairullah’s paintings the latticed styled and mille fleur carpets make an appearance, giving us valuable clues about the nature of textile trade in early nineteenth-century Delhi. The carpet on the floor and an overhead canopy with gold accents are both variations on a mille fleur latticed style carpet design that was produced in Kashmir in the eighteenth-century and Kashmiri textiles seem to have been very popular at the later Mughal Delhi court.\textsuperscript{161} While Bhawani Das’s painting plays upon the image of the Mughal in terms of its bedazzling opulence, in Khairullah’s composition these qualities are carefully re-evoked in the service of creating a scene conveying dynastic succession.

\textbf{Painting through Shah Alam’s literary frame}

\textbf{The Peacock and the Bulbul:}

Was Khairullah devising a visual vocabulary for later Mughal court portraiture at Delhi? Two main ideas emerge from our discussion thus far. The first one has to do with the use of visual metaphors in poetry and painting. Whether through their inspiration from Ottoman, Safavid, or


\textsuperscript{161} For an example of a late eighteenth-century latticed and flower carpets and a late eighteenth-century mille fleur carpet, see Daniel Walker, \textit{Flowers Underfoot, Indian Carpets of the Mughal era} (London: Thames & Hudson, 1998) fig. 114; fig. 125.
Mughal arts and architecture or through the painterly conception of literary metaphors from classical poetry, the emblematic function of Khairullah’s paintings emerges as a strong theme. Given the heterogeneous origins of Mughal painting itself, it is not surprising that decorative themes from Safavid art and architecture, or those that privilege Persian literary themes should appear in later Mughal court painting it is more important to query why these themes would make such a specific appearance in Delhi painting at the end of the eighteenth century. Since the time of Akbar, Persian had functioned officially as the ‘language of Empire’ and continued to be the language of diplomatic correspondence between the British and the later Mughals in nineteenth-century India.\(^\text{162}\) Moreover, as Alam has shown, the Indian diction in Persian poetry popular since the time of Amir Khusraw (1253-1325) held a somewhat uncertain status at the Mughal court even though, by the eighteenth-century, Mughal princes were actively composing poetry in Hindavi.\(^\text{163}\) Thus, as Alam shows, on the one hand poets such as Nasir Ali Sirhindi (d. 1696) chose to maintain the difference between Persian and Hindavi:

‘The Iranian nightingale possessed little [similar] to the grandeur of the Indian peacock’\(^\text{164}\)

And others, such as the poet Mirza Abdul Qadir Bedi (d. 1712), accepted the popular form of Hindavi in Persian writing:

*If my fantasies radiate the vision of the fresh-speakers*


The pages of the divans become [colorful like] the wings of the peacock.\footnote{165}{“Bafikr-i taza-gayang ar khayalamp artanda par-i taasg ardad, ja dwal-i aurq-id i wanja.” As cited from Bedil, \textit{Kulliyat} (Kabul, 1341), 81 in Alam, \textit{Pursuit of Persian}, 340.}

A detailed consideration of the use of peacock imagery in Sanskrit and Brajbhasha poetics and its relationship with late Mughal painting awaits a longer future project. However, the peacock’s representative role as a referent to the corpus of Indic poetics is important, not just solely with respect to Khairullah’s paintings for Shah Alam but also because of Shah Alam’s own interest in music and poetry. With its roots in classical Sanskrit literature, the peacock often figured as an intermediary when conveying the idea of separation (\textit{viraha}), and was also associated with desire and longing for a loved one.\footnote{166}{For example in Keshavdas’s (fl.1600) \textit{Kavipriya} (1601), the peacock appears in to 4.14, 4.22, 6.46, 7.10-11, 7.14-15, 7.31-32, 7.55. For example, take couplet 7.14 "ath baag varnan" where the poet Keshavdas describes the enticing qualities of the garden as that which has "hanging vines, beautiful trees and flowers, the sweet cooing of cuckoos and peacocks, the bees buzzing all around…" Allison Busch, \textit{Poetry of Kings: The Classical Mughal Literature of Mughal India} (Oxford University Press, 2011), 72. For Kavipriya see, Vishwanath Prasad Mishra \textit{Keshav Granthavali}, (Allahabad: Hindustani Academy, 1954). I thank Allison Busch for these references and for her copy of the \textit{Kavipriya} text. Also see, Allison Busch, "Literary Responses to the Mughal Imperium: the Historical Poems of Kesavdas." \textit{South Asia Research} 25(1) (2005): 31-54. In Sanskrit literature, the peacock appears in Kalidasa’s \textit{Meghduta}. See M. R. Kale, \textit{The Meghaduta of Kalidasa}: text with Sanskrit commentary of Mallinātha, English translation, notes, appendices and a map. (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass), 1974.} Its appearance in ragamala paintings, a ‘garlanded’ series of illustrations relating to musical modes or ragas, is part of a visual vocabulary that scholars have traced back to pre-modern Indic painting.\footnote{167}{For a history of the early forms of ragas and the various classifications of the raga system, see Richard Widdess, \textit{The ragas of early Indian music}, (Oxford, 1995).} The musicological background of ragamala illustrations refers to the personification of ragas through various \textit{dhyanas}, the latter constituting a religious contemplative poem or invocation to a deity – thus
identified with the expressive function or iconic content of a raga.\textsuperscript{168} Therefore, it is worth considering the peacock’s significance to music theory from the time of the Natyashastra (ca. 5th century AD?) as a fundamental unit of the tonal system ‘grama’ of musical sound, “in which every note was associated with a particular form of existence (god, demon, human being, animal), a phenomenon (time, color, pitch, poetical meter), topography (world, country), psychology (sentiment) and physiology (parts of the human body).”\textsuperscript{169} Here, the peacock features as part of the basic scale of the \textit{sadja-grama}, with its presiding deity Agni, fire, as well as Brahma, the scale itself being associated with the sentiment of heroism and for invoking divine acts.\textsuperscript{170}

This place of the peacock at the intersection of Indo-Persian and Indic poetics is significant in the context of Shah Alam’s own interest in poetry set to the composition of ragas in his \textit{Nadirat-i Shahi}, a semi-autobiographical literary work composed in Khari boli (the precursor to modern Hindi) and Braj, and written in Nastaliq and Nagari scripts, completed in AD 1797 (AH 1212).\textsuperscript{171} The text represents a remarkable instance of a literary work composed in a language more popular in the Braj bhasha speaking regions of North India rather than the


\textsuperscript{170} See Table II, Nijenhuis, \textit{Sangitasirohani}, 6.

largely Urdu speaking sphere of Delhi. The text, printed in the Rampur Raza Library, has yet to be translated into English and remains to be fully mined for its semantic as well as historical content. Here, I provide an initial analysis of the text. A cursory glance at the organization of the work – ghazal-i rekhta [Rekhta poetry]; seethanein [songs of wit and sarcasm in Panjabi]; stuti piran (dohra, kabit, ghazal) [Odes to the (Sufi) Pir]; mubarakbad-i jashne (nauroz vagairah) [Celebratory poetry for nauroz etc.]; ghazal va vaitae(?) farsi [poetry in Farsi]; hori, kavitt va dohra vagairah [poetry for the festival of Holi]; mihdiyaeh gaus-ul-azam [Ode to (Sufi Pir) Gauz ul-Azam]; kabat va dohra: nayakibheda [Poetry in Nayikabheda]; taranein [Tarana] – tells us that the work was a conglomerate of genres such as devotional odes to Sufi saints, celebratory poems for festivals, exercises in popular vernacular forms of poetry and wit, as well as themes such as the nayikabheda, referring to the different moods of the hero or nayaka, which formed an essential component of Indic poetic themes such as the barahmasa (twelve months). It is possible to see how the Nadirat-i Shahi can also be considered a work of riti literature, given the admixture of classical traditions of nayikabheda, vernacular poetry

172 Shah Alam is known to have composed three diwans in Persian, Urdu and Khari Boli each, the last of these has survived in the collections of the Rampur Raza Library. Arshi, 1944, Introduction.

173 Abdal Qadir Gilani (Gaus ul-Azam) and Khwaja Muinuddin Chisti were, according to Arshi, the two most revered saints by Shah Alam’s. Their urz was celebrated with great pomp, involving the application of henna, lighting of lamps, fireworks, dance and the charitable distribution of food and alms. Arshi, Nadirat-i Shahi, Introduction.

174 There are also examples of the reverse. See, for example, Sunil Sharma, Persian Poetry at the Indian Frontier: Massud Sad Salman of Lahore (Delhi: Permanent Black, 2000), 116-17. Here the author mentions the use of the barahmasa as an organizing logic for Mas’ud Sa’ad’s poetry. See also Francesca Orsini, “Barahmasas in Hindi and Urdu” in Orsini, ed. Before the Divide: Hindi and Urdu Literary Culture (Delhi: Orient Blackswan, 2010) 142-177. Also see the discussion of Karnama-i ishq of Anand Rai Mukhlis in Muhammad Shah’s court in Malini Roy, “The Revival of the Mughal Painting Tradition during the Reign of Muhammad Shah” in W. Dalrymple and Y. Sharma, Princes and Painters, (2012), 17-24.
and satire, devotional themes, and historical poetry. However, its unique use of ragas as an organizing logic sets it apart from other riti texts of this period. In many places in the *Nadirat-i shahi* Shah Alam is uniquely aware of the reception of his authorial identity, choosing to invoke himself as Shah Alam and not *Aftab*. The significance of the work lies not only in the fact that it is composed almost entirely in Brajbhasha, but also that it is a window into the full extent to which Indic poetics, such as the *nayikabheda*, had entered the corpus of literary etiquette for royals of the later Mughal house.

For our purpose it is significant that Shah Alam’s poems and verses are set to various ragas/raginis/ragaputras or musical modes, each with its specified *taala* or rhythm and *bandish*,

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176 Take for example his verse, which I have provided a simplistic translation for:

*maangat yahi rasul suno tum, nek nigah ite kar lije!*

“*shahe alam*” *nayab rao rohe, ab ji ki murad save bhar dije!*

Listen O divine messenger, please cast your glance my way! Shah Alam sings a new raga, so his heart’s desire is fulfilled!

“Stuti Piran, dohra 2,“ *Nadirat-i Shahi* (1944), 60.


178 The Mirza was also expected to have full knowledge of music, but was asked to “…confine himself to the knowledge of the harmony and musical tones, words and their meanings, which cannot be regarded as disgraceful. He should under no circumstances indulge himself in singing, but leave this rather to the professional musicians.” As cited from the British Museum/Asiatic Society of Bengal *Mirzamana*, ca. 1660 or 1739 by Ahmad, “The British Museum *Mirzamana*” (1975), 10.
arrangement. Take for example, Kakubh raga composed to a single meter, or ektala.

_Dekhata hi yaha roop sakhi, lagi jiya kun choth_
_Natta ki si gata le gayi, pata ghunghata ki oth_

_O friend, my heart was impaled by the sight of her beauty_  
_Hiding in her veil she raced away in the manner of an acrobat_

The choice of using raga Kakubh, which features as part of the earliest known system of sixteen grama-ragas or parent ragas, suggests that the emperor was subscribing to older Sanskritic systems of raga classification prior to the sixteenth-century ragamala classifications that popularized derivatives of these six main ragas in the form of raginis (female raga), ragaputras (sons), and ragaputris (daughter-in-laws) as well as other popular systems such as the Hanuman system of ragamalas, based on the seventeenth-century treatise Sangitadarpana by Damodara. A temporary digression into the relationship between the raga and its

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179 There is no indication that these ragas were performed by Shah Alam, rather, we can conclude they would have certainly have been performed for him.

180 The name appears as Kakubh and not Kakubha, suggesting that its male version is being referred to.


182 The translation is my own and should be treated as preliminary. A fuller exposition as well as a refined translation of the *Nadirat-i Shahi* and its artistic ramifications is underway. I would like to thank Allison Busch for clarifying a portion of this translation.

183 The Kakubh raga features as a parent raga from which the earliest systems such as the Hanuman and Brahma were derived. It appears as one of four main ragas of _gana elas_, or song style in Matanga’s _Brhaddeši_ written at end of first millennium. See for example, Lewis Rowell, “The Songs of Medieval India: The "prabandhas" as described in Mataṅga's "Br̥haddeśi".” _Music Theory Spectrum_, Vol. 9 (Spring, 1987): 136-172. In the early fifteenth-century Kumbha’s Sangitaraj acknowledges the Kakubh as a parent raga listed by Matanga, but does not use it further. The Hanuman system too, does not feature the Kakubh. The Kakubha features as a _ragini_ in Mesakarna’s ragamala of 1570. See, Klaus Ebeling, _Ragamala painting_. (Basel, Ravi Kumar c1973), 124. See also, Vidya Dehejia, _The Body Adorned: Dissolving boundaries between sacred and profane_ (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009) for a discussion of the constituent role of music theory and poetry in the creation of the pre-
iconographic visualization is essential at this point to illustrate how the peacock is used as both poetic metaphor and an *alamkara* in painting.

In terms of an illustrated counterpart of the musical mode Kakubh, its female *ragini* Kakubha is a popular subject in ragamala paintings. Here, a pair of peacocks flanking a *nayika* or heroine forms the central composition.¹⁸⁴ Let us consider an early ragamala painting of the Kakubha ragini from Amber, ca. 1610, from the Manley ragamala in the British Museum. *(Figure 2.11: Kakubha Ragini from the Manley Ragamala)* The Sanskrit verse accompanying the painting runs thus:

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pitam vasana vasanama sukesi I
vane rudanti pikanaddina viloka-II
-yanti kukubha’ tibhita I
’murtripradashta kakubh spaseyama II 28 II ¹⁸⁵
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kakubh raga

Traditionally, the *dhyana* accompanying the Kakubha *ragini* personifies a young lady who is weeping in the forest. The verse tells us about a desire filled *nayika* searching for her lover as she wanders fearfully in a forest dwelling of birds, her lament like the sound of the cuckoo,

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¹⁸⁴ It has not been possible to find an illustration of the Kabukh as a parent (male) raga. As seen in the illustrated ragamalas, Kakubha Ragini seems to have become popular as the wife of the male raga Megha Mallar from the sixteenth-century.

¹⁸⁵ My preliminary transliteration is an attempt to juxtapose the text from the illustrated ragamala scene with Shah Alam’s poetry set to the Kakubh raga.
offering a wreath of eight *champaka* flowers.\(^{186}\)

In this early example of an illustrated popular Mughal/Amber ragamala, the presence of peacocks is central to the iconographic make-up of the painting even though it is the cuckoo, not the peacock, which is mentioned in the *dhyana*.\(^{187}\) In the painting, a female *nayika* stands at the base of a hill in a field flanked by thickets of trees. She is surrounded with birds on either side; of these the peacocks are most in number and easily the main focus of the painting. At the top of the hill, a peacock stands with his splayed wings in a grand display. To the nayika’s either side peacocks are seen in profile - perched on trees and on the ground - facing the *nayika*. A peahen strolls nearby. Other birds such as a pheasant, parrots, a hoopoe, and a solitary cuckoo amongst the thicket of trees complete the picture. It is possible to see how the composition of the Manley Kakubha *ragini* exemplifies the way Amber painters capitalized on the close connections with the practice of the Mughal atelier given the close political and familial alliance between their patrons,\(^{188}\) incorporating some of the basic ideas from Persian and Mughal painting.\(^{189}\) While the painting’s intended function is that of a personified *ragini* from a ragamala set, its composition and content also recall a Timurid and early Safavid

\(^{186}\) This verse’s translation is preliminary.

\(^{187}\) Both the peacock and the cuckoo are associated with love.


\(^{189}\) The close relationship between the Mughal and Amber ateliers, and the question of an Amber atelier has been discussed in Catherine Glynn, “Evidence of Royal Painting for the Amber Court,” *Artibus Asiae*, Vol. 56, No. 1/2 (1996): 67-93.
source, in this case the illustration titled, “the Conference of the Birds” from the twelfth century poet Farid al Din Attar’s well-known allegorical work on Sufism, *Mantiq al-Tayr*, or *Language of the Birds*.\(^{190}\) (Figure 2.12) The story revolves around a conference of birds gathered to select a king. It is based on a central character, the hoopoe, who preaches a sermon to the birds convincing them to undertake a quest to Mount Qaf to see the Simurgh (Persian mythical bird), his choice of a worthy king.\(^{191}\) As discussed earlier, Sylvia Auld has suggested that the peacock best fits the idea of the Simurgh in the *Mantiq al-Tayr*, a point that the illustration from the Timurid manuscript also reiterates. The figure of the peacock with its splayed wings in display atop a mountain is remarkably similar to the central peacock on a mount in the Kakubha *ragini* picture from the Manley Ragamala. And if it were not for the nayika, the page would have well served as a popular Mughal version of the *Mantiq al-Tayr*, with the hoopoe prominently placed among the other birds. However, it is clear how the painter bestowed a certain aura of Indic poetics to the scene. The addition of the cuckoo imparts the qualitative feel of the *dhyana*. With the distinctively rendered nayika centered between the birds,\(^{192}\) the central peacock figure atop the hill serves as a projection of the absent nayaka-

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\(^{190}\) The illustrated manuscript was begun in 1487 and completed at the end of the sixteenth century for the Safavid court of Shah Abbas (r. 1587-1629). The Conference of the Birds: Page from a manuscript of the *Mantiq al-Tayr* (The Language of the Birds) of Farid al-Din Attar, ca. 1600, Safavid Iran (Isfahan) Opaque watercolor, ink, silver, gold on paper, 10 x 4 1/2 in. (25.4 x 11.4 cm) Fletcher Fund, 1963 (63.210.11), The Metropolitan Museum of Art. For a Mughal example, see “The assembly of birds” by Husayn(?) British Library, Oriental Manuscripts and Printed Books, Add. 18579, f. 201b, 123x72mm.


\(^{192}\) For example, the style of the female figure in sixteenth-century paintings such as the *Tuti-nama* has been analyzed in Anand Krishna, “A Reassessment of the "Tuti-Nama" Illustrations in the Cleveland Museum of Art (And Related Problems on Earliest Mughal Paintings and Painters) *Artibus Asiae*, 1973,
king as well as a metaphor for separation from him. Moreover, the peacock’s defining role as a presiding tonal type within early grama-ragas, especially its associative qualities of heroism supports the reigning peacock as nayaka, and the basic function of the page as an iconographic expression of music. The placement of additional peacocks in two tiers accentuates these ideas – the nayika is nearly garlanded by the peacocks; she thus becomes part of the metaphorical mood of the painting.

It should also be pointed out that the depiction of the Kakubha ragini in one of the earliest surviving ragamalas, the Bharat Kala Bhavan (Banaras) ragamala is tellingly devoid of the peacocks; the nayika is only shown holding spears of *champaka* flowers in each hand (Plate 33) (Figure 2.13). Instead, it is the Vibhasa (Plate 27) and Malasri ragini (Plate 28) that feature a stricter format of a central nayaka/nayika flanked by two peacocks. In the former raga Vibhasa, the iconography of the peacock is strikingly similar to the Persianate model of the peacocks holding flowers in their beaks with their feathers splayed, bestowing *barakat* or blessings, as discussed earlier, and may have even been inspired by it. In the latter ragini Malasri, which conforms to a greater extent to seventeenth and eighteenth-century illustrations of the Kakubha ragini, the nayika is flanked by two peacocks in profile, their faces looking up to the nayika (Figure 2.14). Mining the reason for this iconographic shift is a subject of

35(3):241-268. Although an older precedent, it is possible to see how the *Tuti-nama* female figure served as a precedent for our nayika in the Kukubha ragini of the Manley ragamala.

discussion by itself; however, our discussion allows for a fuller exposition of the extent to which visual metaphors, from Indic as well as Persian sources, were part of the iconographic make-up ragamala paintings from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Thus, in ragamala paintings such as the Kakubha ragini the iconographic format of a peacock with a nayaka/nayika can be considered for its multiple meanings – as visual referents to the poetic idea of viyog or viraha, as personification of the departed lover, as a basal tonal form for music (sadjagram), as well as its association with fire/agni, a direct reference to Shah Alam’s nom de plume Aftab – all themes that are dealt with in the poetry of the Nadirat-i Shahi. Furthermore, a closer look at the other ragas in the Nadirat-i Shahi reveals that the text functioned akin to a textual ragamala, albeit one that was variant from popular systems, and had been suitably altered to reflect on the emperor’s cultural self-positioning in late Mughal society. Thus, it is not surprising to find relatively arcane ragas such as the Kakubh, a greater regional variation to include Panjabi vernacular poetry, as well as early modern ragas that originated in Mughal court culture such as the Shahana (and Shahana Kannada, the latter practiced in the South), and a greater emphasis on poems composed to raga-putras, sons of parent ragas, which were first listed in the sixteenth-century in a number of musical treatises such as Kshemakarna’s ragamala (ca. 1570) in the Nadirat-i Shahi.

At present, we do not know of an illustrated ragamala set or raga-citras evoking the themes in the Nadirat-i Shahi.

See Nadirat-i Shahi for these various examples. My findings are preliminary, but it is possible to identify the making of distinctive vernacular ragamala system more attuned to the Panjab gharana in the Nadirat-i Shahi. Given also the preference for the 84 raga-ragini system to the Adi Granth, the book of Sikh teachings, the proclivity towards raga-putras in the Nadirat-i Shahi further supports the

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Through this discussion, we can further extrapolate about how the peacock bird was a metaphor for Indo-Persian as well as Hindi or Braj bhasha poetry and was used as a creative gesture in Khairullah’s two court paintings. I suggest that Shah Alam’s own literary training in Persian, Urdu, and Brajbhasha formed an important subtext for Khairullah’s paintings. The Iranian origins of the peacock motif may have held sway for creating a late Mughal painting at Delhi, but equally palpable are the undercurrents of Sanskritic/Braj poetics and music theory that undoubtedly had a defining role to play in the visual imagery of the court, given Shah Alam’s own literary interests. The peacocks then lie at the intersection of an inter-textual Indic-Persian literary realm, one that had become “Indian styled Persian” or “Indo-Persian” in its sensibility. Is it not possible then that Khairullah’s painting was channeling the literary consciousness of the eighteenth-century Indian Style of Persian of “sabk-e hindi,” the direct precursor to Delhi Urdu in practice in Shah Alam’s Mughal Delhi? As S. R. Faruqi has explored, sabk-e hindi was largely characterized by its play on the ontological idea or literary theme, mazmun, behind a poem or ghazal, the creation of which was driven by the all important use of metaphors. Here, the author makes a case for inter-textuality as a legitimate inclination towards Panjabi vernacular. Gurbachan Singh Talib, et. al. Sri Guru Granth Sahib in English translation, (Patiala : Punjabi University, 1984).


literary device – the idea, for example, that “Poems were made from other poems, or were founded upon other poems.” Faruqi further notes: “Incessantly challenged, imitated, and improved upon, each poem became a notional paradigm. Wordplay became the most important weapon in meaning creation because one could insert two or more possibilities into the poem for the price of one word.”

Faruqi explores the development of the style of sabk-e hindi, citing instances of cross-lingual fertilization between Sanskrit and Persian as a key factor. The author cites Abhinavagupta’s concept of the sahridaya reader, one with a knowing temperament equally competent as the poet, “to see, to hear, to feel, to participate, to experience”. While Faruqi’s discussion is exploratory in nature, his discussion creates much room for comparing mazmun with the Sanskrit slesa. As Yigal Bronner has shown, the poetic device slesa implied the act of bi-textual punning through simultaneous narration. Bronner’s acceptance of a parallel trend of visual punning, especially with regard to Michael Rabe’s analysis of the great relief at Mamallapuram, is especially noteworthy here for it allows for greater cross-flows between the idea of textual and visual meaning in Indian art.

In late Mughal Delhi, for an emperor whose cultural identity was bequeathed from a multi-lingual

the purpose of the argument in this dissertation, the term sabk-i hindi encapsulates the sum of inventive content and the analogical qualities of the literature in practice in this period.

198 Faruqi, Sabk-i Hindi, 32.

199 Kapoor and Ratnam (1999), 44. As cited by Faruqi, 34.


literary domain, the use of *slesa* or parallel narration would have been no difficult task.

Thus, we can return to Khairullah’s paintings and to the question that was posed in the beginning of this discussion: Was Shah Alam’s pretending to be the King of the World? To a popular audience, Khairullah’s court paintings with the reconstructed peacock throne would have had their place in the narrative of opulence and glory associated with the idea of the Shah Jahan’s *takht-i taus* and its pillage by Nadir Shah in 1738/39, associated with Delhi’s troubled past in the eighteenth century, and the loss of Mughal imperial wealth as well as cultural prestige. A discerning viewer, however, would recognize Khairullah’s peacock throne not only as a recreated idea of imperial glory, but a renewed sense of cultural belonging. The peacock throne then was as much about the peacock (Indianized Persian and Indic poetics), its place in Indo-Persian literary consciousness, as about the throne – the seat of power. When viewed through the lens of poetics and Shah Alam’s own literary positioning, the painting serves as a formal exercise of insignia making through the creation of metaphorical meaning (*mazmun* and *slesa*) – an attempt to restore the moral, if not material, esteem associated with the Mughal court.

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202 One of the earliest reconstructions of the *takht* in painting is available to us from the late eighteenth-century, in the illustrated album, *Recueil des Toutes Sortes...* (see Chapter 1) commissioned in 1774 by the French agent to Shuja al-Daula’s court in Faizabad, Jean Baptiste Gentil. See V&A Museum IS.25:3-1980.
POST-SCRIPT: Khairullah after Shah Alam II

Khairullah’s paintings are also the sole visual commentary available to us on the transitional period of Shah Alam’s reign at Delhi from 1771 till 1803, when the control of Mughal Delhi vacillated between Marathas, Rohillas, and the British. The stylistic vocabulary devised by Khairullah held sway over the later Mughal court for a good decade after Shah Alam’s death, after which no signed Mughal darbar portraits by the artist are available to us.²⁰³ As a senior painter in Akbar Shah’s court, Khairullah seems to have understood and reinforced the subtle relationships between Shah Alam’s trusted confidants who had now assumed powerful positions in Akbar Shah’s court.

In a compelling portrait Mirza Salim Bahadur and Tarbiyat Khan (Figure 2.15) (ca. 1806–11, The San Diego Museum of Art, Edwin Binney 3rd Collection, 1990.393) Khairullah has created an extraordinarily sensitive portrayal of Akbar Shah’s favorite son Mirza Salim, who is shown here as a boy of roughly twelve years of age.²⁰⁴ Salim is given the lofty title “the son of the spiritual guide to the regions of the world.”²⁰⁵ Tarbiyat Khan, Akbar Shah’s trusted aide, is seen holding a morchhal (fly whisk) suggesting his key role in the prince’s upbringing. Salim’s

²⁰³ After 1815, Khairullah appears to have worked for the Maratha chief Daulat Rao Sindhia of Gwalior (reigned 1794-1827) as his signature appears on a group portrait showing Daulat Rao and his courtiers seated under a canopy in an outdoor encampment. See the discussion below.

²⁰⁴ For another copy of this painting see, Christie’s, Sale 5560, Indian and Islamic Works of Art, 29 April 2005, Lot No. 570. In this version, there are three vases with flowers placed on the carpet. In light of our discussion, this work can now also be dated earlier than 1820 to between 1806-11).

delicate features convey the naïve personality of a child, who was always a favorite of Akbar II’s and his choice as a successor following the death of Akbar II’s other son, Mirza Jahangir. The use of gold highlights for textiles and clothing in the painting as well as the characteristic latticed mille fleur carpet and the billowing white cotton clouds are elements seen in the artist’s paintings for Shah Alam II. Khairullah signature “amal-i khairullah”/the work of Khairullah is present on the lower step beneath the low latticed railings.

Following this portrait of Mirza Salim, Khairullah’s trajectory seems to have taken on a divergent path. The presence of his signature on a group portrait showing the Maratha ruler Daulat Rao Sindhia (reigned 1794-1827), who succeeded Madhav Rao Sindhia to the throne of Gwalior in Central India, is intriguing. The Maratha presence at Delhi in the closing decades of the eighteenth-century, as discussed earlier in Chapter 1, was crucial to the sustenance of Shah Alam’s claim to the Delhi Fort as *dar-al khilafat*. The painter’s signature appears on a picture showing Daulat Rao Sindhia seated with his attendants under a tent canopy. The painting bears the inscription, *shabih-i maharaja alijah daulat rao sindhia bahadur amal-i khairullah*\(^\text{206}\) and is dated to circa 1825 this scene is depicts the ruler and many of the attendants in three-quarter profile and is markedly different in its treatment of figures than the painter’s earlier work. Daulat Rao Sindhia, dressed in yellow, is seen seated on a rug with bolsters holding a scabbard while his sword is laid out prominently before him. To his right, a number of subsidiary officers sit cross-legged, their shields and swords before them. To his left are a retinue of attendants and

\(^{206}\) V&A Museum, 03526 (IS). Another copy of this painting is in the Chester Beatty Library, Ms.69. 15. Archer, *Company Paintings*, 1992, 163.
subsidiaries either seated or standing nearby. The gathering takes place under a flat shamiana tent supported on four poles and is apparently sequestered from the outside through an enclosure made from a white tent fabric with a distinctive red patterned border. From the treatment of figures and the application of color, it is clear that the style of this work is markedly different from Khairullah’s paintings for Shah Alam – it appears to have a certain documentary value as a record of Daulat Rao’s camp and its itinerant nature.

Daulat Rao and many of his courtiers are shown in three-quarter profile, some with their backs to the viewer. The application of color is flat, with very little modulation of the tone and the faces of the men are characterized by dark outlines that bring out their eyes and hair.

Daulat Rao’s alliance with Shah Alam and his role as the chief minister or wazir of the Mughal court is evident in Daulat Rao’s administrative seal, issued under the auspices of the Mughal emperor. In the inscription, dated to AH 1210 (AD 1795) Daulat Rao is equated to the status of a son, one who was an “…important warlord, an independent governor… a supreme commander… one who risks his life for the warrior king Shah Alam.”

By 1797, Daulat Rao appears to have had the authority to approve all transactions of the Mughal court, especially with

207 Though Daulat Rao inherited the throne of Gwalior, he was constantly engaged in battles, first for the control of the Doab region that included Delhi and later the Bundelkhand corridor. For Daulat Rao see Randolf G. S. Cooper, The Anglo-Maratha Campaigns and the Contest for India: The Struggle for Control of the South Asian Military Economy, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.


respect to the collection of revenue. For example, a *sanad* of 1797 AD issued by Shah Alam II noting the grant of a village Shaikhopura to a Nawab Gulsher Khan of Kunjpura for the maintenance and upkeep of the shrine of Bu Ali Qalandar, the document bears the approval of Daulat Rao Sindhia, as well as the signature of a British official who later inspected the *sanad* in 1817.\(^{210}\) Bu Ali, as discussed in Chapter 1, was the patron saint of the later Mughals including Shah Alam II, and while the emperor certainly exercised a prerogative for maintaining his spiritual merit by disbursing grants of villages, these activities had to be sanctioned by Daulat Rao. Though there is not enough evidence to assume that Khairullah’s later years were spent in Gwalior or under the auspices of Daulat Rao, however, given the close administrative relationship between the Mughal and Maratha courts Delhi painters would have freely circulated between the two camps. This painting clearly adapts to a regional aesthetic and its current dating to 1825 suggests that it was executed towards the end of Daulat Rao’s rule in 1827. However before his death in 1827, Daulat Rao had been re-established on the throne of Gwalior with the British having taken over full control of the administrative affairs of the Mughal house ruled under Akbar II at Delhi. Therefore, an outdoor setting of a camp scene seems anachronistic for a painting of Daulat Rao dated to 1825, which would have likely shown him seated in a formal darbar in his Gwalior palace. Instead, we can safely ascribe this painting and its copies to the period when Daulat Rao was itinerant garnering Mughal support and fending off the British administration. Moreover, given the use of his Mughal titles – *ali jah* – and the relatively informal setting of the gathering under a canopy, both indicate that the painting, at the very latest, was executed towards the end of Shah Alam’s reign in 1806 or sometime around the East India

\(^{210}\) The name of the Saint is too sacred to be mentioned and a blank space is left and the name written on top. *Catalogue of the Loan Exhibition of Antiquities, 1911*, Plate xxiii, A.285, 60.
Company’s victory over the Maratha forces in 1803. This revised dating also helps situate Khairullah’s practice from the 1760s to about 1815, a few years into the reign of Shah Alam’s son and successor Akbar Shah.

**Conclusion**

This chapter began with a hypothetical question posed in the vein of poetic satire by the poet Sauda. What did Shah Alam II’s court have to do with its historical past, especially the court of the renowned Shah Jahan? Was the loss of the Peacock Throne to Nadir Shah in 1739 not an indicator of the loss of Mughal prestige and artistic vigor? These questions are central to our cause because it is under Shah Alam II that we come across the first attempts to re-create Mughal presence at Delhi through court painting. These court scenes painted by Khairullah use the specific visual language of objects and elements that bear an inexorable connection to Shah Jahan’s patronage. My detailed formal analysis has aimed at recovering the texture of court paintings in this period and the process through which visual meaning making would have occurred. As the chapter elaborates, the artistic re-creation of the Peacock Throne was an attempt to surpass its seventeenth century original in opulence and was a highly metaphorically charged creation that projected the literary consciousness of its patron, Shah Alam ‘Aftab’. Khairullah’s court scenes, therefore, are here seen as an exercise in semantics that refer to the theoretical ideas in poetry and music and use simultaneous narration bringing together the iconic and metaphorical content in literature, poetry, and art within a common visual field of representation. Thus, it is in these paintings that we first encounter a purposeful move to revision Mughal identity for this period, the paintings themselves functioning as markers of a new cultural sensibility of the later Mughal court.
Akbar Shah assumed the throne of Delhi at a time when Mughal imperial power was eroded and the emperor’s territorial purview was more reduced than his predecessor Shah Alam’s. It was joked that Shah Alam’s Delhi only extended to Palam; Akbar Shah’s Delhi was even smaller – it existed in pockets of royal holdings of *nazul* and *taiul* lands, of which only the Delhi palace and grounds fell under Akbar Shah’s direct jurisdiction. Following the Anglo-Maratha war of 1803, the official take over of Mughal political affairs by the British East India Company was designed to curtail the administrative purview of the Mughal emperor’s authority within Delhi, making him a stipendiary of the British government. The Company decided to pay Akbar II rupees one lakh (Rs. 100,000) out of which Rs. 7000 was assigned to the heir apparent. The Emperor’s personal allowance was Rs. 82,200 inclusive of Rs. 3,000 commuted against his lands in the Doab. Referred to, in Company correspondence, as the King of Delhi Akbar Shah operated in a paradoxical political climate where the Mughal court’s financial dependence on the Company sustained the impression of the Company’s benign role in upholding Mughal power.

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211 For an overview of the terms of the British settlement with the Mughal house, see K.N Pannikar, *British Diplomacy in North India* (Delhi: Associated Publishing House, 1968), 5-19.

212 This was the agreed amount ca. 1809 as proposed by Lord Minto. *British Diplomacy in North India*, 118. However, this did not include the augmentation of revenue from the Emperor’s jagirs (private land holdings).

213 *British Diplomacy in North India*, 118.
Delhi painters such as Ghulam Murtaza Khan subscribed to a close-knit stylistic network of figure drawings and decorative design, which was first formulated by Khairullah. Yet their approach to upholding Akbar Shah’s pre-eminence within the Mughal darbar was complicated by a figure whose addition within the purview of Mughal court painting was prominent and lasting – the British Resident. An explicit visual acknowledgement of the British Resident, the sole representative of the East India Company at Delhi and the administrator of stipends to the Mughal court, would have posed a challenge to late Mughal court painters, and bore upon the diplomatic relations between the late Mughals and the British. This chapter looks at how this diplomatic relationship between the Mughal emperor and the British Resident played out in the artistic sphere - as evidenced in court paintings by the painter Ghulam Murtaza Khan, and the processional panoramas of late Mughal Delhi.

*Akhbarats as visual information*

The larger context of this Anglo-Mughal diplomatic relationship at Delhi is provided by a number of news sources, which form an important subtext to the study of court portraits and court scenes during the reign of Akbar Shah. Prominent among these are the records of the correspondence between the Court and the Company, which broadly fall into two streams. The first of these are missives between the British Resident’s office at Delhi and the Company’s administrative center at Fort William, Calcutta, which have long been considered the ‘official’
record of Anglo-Mughal interactions at Delhi. But more often they present a one-sided view of the emperor’s court - as a nominal entity without any sovereign power visualizing the view of Company officials. A second form of correspondence, of news reporting is the *akhbarat* produced for the Mughal court for the British Resident and the Mughal emperor. ‘Akhbarat’ or journals from Delhi follow the formal structure of Mughal court correspondence – they are written in Persian, in the epistolary format of earlier court journals from the sixteenth century onwards. As Michael Fisher has shown, the genre of the court *akhbarat* represented two overlapping types of news reporting by the *akhbar nawis/new writer*. Titled, “akhbar-i darbar-i mualla,” the news of the exalted court, the news writing could border on the highly prescriptive etiquette as well as a more free-flowing form of reportage where the writer’s voice was, at times, discernible. In their analysis of three *akhbarats* from 1810 and 1825 (written for the British Resident at Delhi) and 1830 (written for the Mughal emperor Akbar II) Margrit Pernau and Yunus Jaffrey have studied the evolution of the genre of news writing to suggest a greater fluidity between the spheres of British and Indian production of knowledge. This pattern of “cross-

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214 K. N. Pannikar’s study of British Diplomacy at the later Mughal court of Delhi, though many decades old, remains the sole study of its kind to date. I have supplemented his analysis with a study of other supporting correspondence that was sent from Delhi to Fort William. See Pannikar, *British Diplomacy in North India* (Delhi: Associated Publishing House, 1968).

215 A compelling study and translation of three *akhbarats* from 1810, 1825 and 1830 is offered in Pernau and Jaffrey, *Information and the Public Sphere*, 2009.


influencing” as termed by the authors, goes beyond a notion of ‘happy hybridity’ but emerges as a form of cultural adaptation in the construction of knowledge in the Anglo-Mughal social sphere.

These two forms of correspondence from the Resident’s office to the Company headquarters in Fort William, Calcutta and the official journal of the Resident recording the activities of the Mughal court at Delhi, provide the context for my analysis of two painting types that flourished under Mughal emperor, Akbar II - the Darbar portrait of Akbar Shah and the panoramic scroll featuring the emperor’s bi-annual procession. While the written records are an invaluable insight into the ongoing diplomatic negotiations between the court and the Company, I suggest that this negotiation for the visual assertion of Mughal sovereignty was not “done in the vain hope of asserting the emperor’s superiority”, rather paintings existed as an active means of creating a sphere of resistance and alternative knowledge about the Mughal court through the means in the ‘visual’ sphere.

A number of observations can be drawn from the daily news correspondence of Akbar II’s court – that the emperor held court in the diwan-i khas, the court was attended by a number of courtiers, and that he presided over legal, familial, as well as political matters relating to the throne of Delhi and the crown lands. It is also evident that the court was in session every day and


219 Leach. Paintings from India (1998), 258.
that it was, in the majority of instances, attended by news reporters or representatives from the surrounding courts such as Jaipur, Alwar, Bharatpur, Jhajjar, Sardhana, and others. The British Resident’s presence in the *akhbarats* is consistent. These daily news reports form written counterpart to a number of court paintings from this period offering a window into the everyday occurrences within Akbar Shah’s court.

In the first section of this chapter on court portraits of Akbar II, I consider how the late Mughal court portrait under Akbar Shah was a means of producing visual information about the Mughal court at Delhi. I ask if the court and procession scenes can be considered counterparts to the examples of ‘cultural adaptations’ seen in the literary and information spheres, as well as in pictorial terms and if so, how? How do these court paintings generate information - are they visual journals of Court and Company interactions? How do artists depict the political and diplomatic relationship between the Mughal court and the East India Company? How are these scenes part of the broader project of knowledge production in late Mughal and British Delhi, and what relationship do they bear to the idea of fact or reality, which is claimed by the written news reports? This chapter takes up the discussion of court portraits during Akbar Shah’s rule through the example of scenes crafted by the painter Ghulam Murtaza Khan to consider the transitions and innovations within the genre of the *darbar* portrait as it evolved in the nineteenth-century.

We begin with the analysis of two paintings by the painter Ghulam Murtaza Khan made within a year of each other, which exemplify the pictorial characteristics of early court paintings of Akbar Shah. The first painting, “Akbar II in Darbar” showing Akbar Shah with two of his sons in court,
is signed by the painter Ghulam Murtaza Khan and dated to the 4th year of his reign, showing the physical process of Ghulam Murtaza’s working style. The second painting, firmly attributed to Ghulam Murtaza on the basis of style, is the earliest view of the Mughal emperor in court in the presence of the British Resident (Charles Metcalfe) and marks the formulation of a format of court painting that was to be replicated for decades to come.

Both paintings, I will argue, exhibit the key compositional ideas seen in Khairullah’s practice. However, their singularity is in their attempt to map the real space of the court on to the pictorial space of painting through (i) the use of linear perspective and (ii) through adopting a confrontational gaze that seeks to draw the observer into the pictorial space of the court scene. In addition, I show how the depiction of courtly etiquette in the paintings offers a stylistic counterpoint of sorts, engaging with questions of historicity and tradition.

Section I: Darbar Paintings

Under the Open Sky: The Court of Akbar II from 1807-1815

Regarding the application of Ghulam Murtaza, the artist, he (the emperor Akbar Shah) told the nazir and the overseer of the royal wardrobe to give him a shawl.

Events of Wednesday, 13 June 1810/9, Jamadi ul Awwal, 4th year of accession.

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220 In the published version, the artist is mentioned as Mustafa, but based on the condition of the manuscript and the poorly written shikasta script the name could well be Murtaza. Margrit Pernau, Personal Correspondence, June 9, 2012.

221 Margrit Pernau and Yunus Jaffrey. Information and the Public Sphere: Persian Newsletters from Mughal Delhi, Oxford University Press, 2009, 60.
A number of court paintings showing Muinuddin Muhammad Akbar Shah (reigned 1806-1837) in court or in procession are available to us, yet their place in the continuum of later Mughal painting or within painting culture at Delhi remains only partially understood. The early phase of court painting from Akbar Shah’s period is dominated by the work of the painter Ghulam Murtaza Khan (active 1800-1830), who appears to be a close follower of Khairullah, or even his direct relation - both painters overlapping till at least the end of the first decade of the nineteenth-century.\(^\text{222}\)

Ghulam Murtaza Khan’s name appears in the *akhbarat* from the fourth year of the emperor’s reign dated from 1810 (cited at the beginning of this chapter) where the artist submitted an application for a possible payment in lieu of a commissioned painting to Akbar Shah. Ghulam Murtaza Khan’s painting “*Akbar II in darbar*” (*Figure 3.0*) from the Nasser D. Khalili Collection of Islamic Art (MSS.981), henceforth “*Khalili Akbar II*” dated from the fourth year of Akbar Shah’s reign coinciding with the Christian year 1809/10 (AH 1224), is a strong candidate for the artist’s petition, especially since it is his earliest known signed work. The painting is inscribed, “*shabih-i mubarak-i shahi jamjah Abul Nasr Muin al-Din Muhammad Akbar Shah padshah ghazi khallada Allah mulkahu wa sultanatahu arba julus vala*” / the blessed likeness of the king who ranks with Jamshid Abul Nasr Muin al-Din Muhammad Akbar Shah

\(^{222}\) The similarities in the working style of Ghulam Murtaza Khan and Khairullah are noticed in Linda Leach, *Paintings from India: Nasser D. Khalili Collection of Islamic Art*, vol. VIII, (1998), plate. 44.
Padshah Ghazi, may God make his reign eternal in the 4th year since the exalted accession” and signed “amal-i bandah Ghulam Murtada” / “the work of the servant Ghulam Murtaza.”

Here Akbar Shah, his eldest son Abu Zafar and the young Mirza Salim are seen seated kneeling in profile, facing right. Akbar Shah, distinguished with a thick gold rimmed nimbus, kneels on a red and gold woven carpet rug dressed in a black and gold striped coat, and is seen wearing a fitted cap with a bejeweled turban band or goshpech made popular in the late eighteenth-century court at Lucknow. The gold brocades of his gown, the bolsters and the rug underneath him silhouette his regal figure against the modestly repetitive patterns of the floor carpet.

In the painting, Mirza Salim’s seated portrait is nearly identical to the one painted by Khairullah in the Binney collection titled, Mirza Salim Shahzadeh and Tarbiyat Khan, discussed earlier, a further testament to the close-knit working style of the two painters. Furthermore, Ghulam

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223 Leach, *Paintings from India*, 258. Translations of the inscriptions are provided by Leach. The author also cites Mildred Archer’s suggestion that Ghulam Murtaza Khan signs himself elsewhere as the son of a khanazad or palace-born. However, it has not been possible to find such a painting. Murtaza Khan’s use of the term “bandah” or servant may indicate that he could have been in hereditary employment of the Mughal emperor. Upon reviewing Archer’s text it also appears that her assessment of the artist was based on anecdotal evidence and testaments provided by the painter’s descendants. As I have also been able to access some of these testaments from the group of descendants, a slightly different picture emerges, which is collated and included in the appendix at the end of this document. Archer’s wide dating of Murtaza Khan’s active dates from ca. 1760-1840 have been revised by me to a shorter span from ca. 1800-1830, based on my review of the sources. See also, Mildred and W.G. Archer, *Indian Painting for the British, 1770-1880* (Oxford University Press, 1955), 69-71; Archer (1972), 207.

224 Rosemary Crill, “Textiles and Dress in Lucknow in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries,” in Markel ed. *India’s Fabled City* (2010), 238-239.

225 See also Y. Sharma, “In the Company of the Mughal Court,” in Dalrymple and Sharma, Eds. *Princes and Painters* (2012), 41-51.
Murtaza cleverly channels Akbar Shah’s preference for the younger Salim rather than Abu Zafar as his successor through subtle gestures.\textsuperscript{226} For example the young Salim is positioned directly below the emperor such that he occupies the central position in the painting. Furthermore, by matching the headgears of the father and son, Ghulam Murtaza reinforces this visual connection between Akbar II and Salim casting the latter as his natural successor. Abu Zafar’s relatively plain clad figure, though situated closer to Akbar II, seems relatively displaced and thereby appears as less important to the occasion. The crown prince’s portrait is based on a study done by Ghulam Murtaza almost certainly preceding this court grouping of father and sons.\textsuperscript{227}

There is little doubt that Ghulam Murtaza Khan closely studied Khairullah’s work, re-using the painter’s portrait study of Mirza Salim to create the prince’s portrait in the “Khalili Akbar II” darbar scene.\textsuperscript{228} As one of the earliest views of Akbar II in courtly setting available to us, Ghulam Murtaza Khan’s painted court session does not take place within the architectural space of the hall of special audience, the diwan-i khas.\textsuperscript{229} Rather, the setting of the court is close in spirit to the stylistic vocabulary of the outdoor court scene set against the backdrop of an open terrace.

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item[226] Akbar II’s preference for Mirza Salim as his successor is discussed later in this chapter.
\item[228] Linda Leach, in her analysis of this painting, states that this is the artist’s largest, most sensitive work indicating that all the 39 portraits appearing in the court grouping were done from careful observation, but displays no knowledge of the early portrait of Mirza Salim from the Binney collection. Instead, Leach compares the portrait of Mirza Salim with another later one from the India Office Collection of the British Library. Leach, (1998), 258.
\item[229] The court scenes placed indoors come a few years later.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
devised by Khairullah. This significant difference between the news record and the painted court scene suggests the continued visual pre-eminence of Khairullah’s pictorial vocabulary for Mughal court scenes at least until 1815, after which almost all court scenes are situated within the architectural setting of the *diwan-i khas*. Ghulam Murtaza Khan consciously subscribes to Khairullah’s overall compositional parameters, sans the peacock throne, for the court scene – the court takes place on an open terrace with Akbar Shah seated in profile under a tent canopy, the entire floor covered by a dark mille fleur latticed carpet.

A Meaningful Perspective

In the painting “Khalili Akbar II”, Ghulam Murtaza Khan balances the established conventions of hierarchy of imperial Mughal portraiture with the orthographic conventions of western linear perspective.\(^{230}\) By structuring the picture along a pyramidal arrangement with a foreshortened canopy above the emperor’s head, the painting exhibits Ghulam Murtaza’s initial experimental use of the linear perspective for structuring the late Mughal imperial image, which by 1815, appears to have become a standard compositional device in court painting at Delhi. Through a look at the first series of paintings by Ghulam Murtaza we get the sense that his approach to devising this standardized compositional format of the formal Mughal court scene was gradual and often selective. Where Khairullah had preferred a flatness of composition and iconographical expression, Ghulam Murtaza’s two most significant contributions took a noticeable departure towards the articulation of spatial depth. The painter’s approach can be identified through (i) the

\(^{230}\) Here, I again concur with Aitken that Indian painters were using European perspective selectively, as a paratactic rather than in a purely mimetic sense. Aitken, “Parataxis” (2010). See also my discussion on the incorporation of perspective within painting in Chapter 1.
creation of depth and the all-confronting gaze and (ii) through a visual reification of courtly etiquette. The following sections of the chapter will take up a discussion of these ideas.

The “Khalili Akbar II” is an early picture that shows Ghulam Murtaza Khan’s variations on the one-point perspective. When superposed within a geometric picture plane the painter’s specific adjustments to the compositional model of the linear perspective are easily discernable. It is clear that Ghulam Murtaza prioritized the creation of a physical hierarchy within the constraints of central perspective – one that still privileged the seated figure of the emperor in relation to his sons and the courtiers standing nearby. The painter achieves this by tilting the plane of the rug, thus raising the emperor’s seated figure higher in relation to his sons who are seated outside the demarcated space of the royal rug and distinguished by a clear separation of space between the courtiers and the royals. The emperor’s figure appears raised above the horizon line and is placed under a foreshortened overhead canopy, so that the vanishing point roughly culminates in the blank space next to Akbar II’s face in profile. Akbar Shah is shown in pure profile, as are his sons, recalling Shah Jahan’s preference for side-views where the act of turning away from the beholder put “a visual distance between the figure and the audience and emphasize(d) his affiliation with the court.”

Scholars have tended to view the lower physical position of the emperor and his sons (seated under a tent canopy in relation to the surrounding courtiers) with little acknowledgement of the

painting’s use of linear perspective as a structuring device for the picture. For example, Linda Leach interpreted the lower position of the emperor’s figure as symbolizing the loss of imperial glory, noting that “although haloed traditionally, he (Akbar Shah) merely kneels amongst cushions on a small carpet and, rather than having his entire person elevated as in 17th century pictures, his head is lower than those of his standing courtiers. Both he and the two princes are attired simply.”232 The author’s insistence on viewing the lower position of the emperor in relation to his subordinates as a mark of diminished status is problematic. In her discussion Leach accords a kind of de-facto position to the use of linear perspective privileging the naturalism in the painting as a sign of the ‘real’ state of affairs. Leach’s view would not have been unreasonable had painters not taken the burden of representation of royal presence so seriously and honed it through two centuries of design and experimentation. Examples of lower seated positions of emperors are many, most compelling being the darbar scene showing Alamgir I seated on a throne platform (Museum of Islamic Art, Doha, MS.54-2007) in which his advisors stand very near him and are positioned taller than the emperor.

**Positioning the Observer**

“His Majesty, the Shadow of God, took rest. …Afterwards, he graced the *diwan-e khas* by his presence. Nazim ud Daula, Mr. Seton Bahadur, presented Rs. 500 together with the invitation to the celebration of the birthday anniversary of the King of England, of the glory of Jamshed. He submitted that he expected that the next day, His Majesty, together with the princes of exalted origin and the officers of high rank would come to his humble abode on the occasion of these festivities….”

News of the exalted court.

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232 Leach (1998), 258.
The events of Monday, 4 June 1810/ 30 rabi’ us sani, 4th year of accession.\textsuperscript{233}

In a second painting, in which Ghulam Murtaza raises the physical position of the emperor on the Peacock throne in relation to the standing figures, and creates a greater sense of three-dimensional depth within the darbar space. The painting, firmly attributable to Ghulam Murtaza Khan on the basis of style, shows \textit{Akbar II in formal darbar with the British Resident Charles Metcalfe in attendance}, and is in the collection of the Cincinnati Art Museum (The William T. and Louise Taft Semple Collection, 1962.458, henceforth “\textit{Cincinnati Akbar II}”) (Figure 3.1). This is the first formal portrayal of Anglo-Mughal courtly interaction from Akbar Shah’s Delhi and is datable to between 1811-15 based on the age of Akbar II’s sons and the first tenure of Charles Metcalfe as Resident of Delhi, which ended in 1818. In the painting, Akbar II is seen seated on a recreated version of the Peacock Throne under a bangla-roof shaped canopy placed under a four-poster tent set against the backdrop of an open terrace with billowing clouds. The ensemble of the tented foreshortened throne canopy set on an outdoor pavilion is based, both in design and composition, on Khairullah’s court scenes showing Shah Alam II. Even as these key points coincide, the similarities between the two painters’ approach end here. Ghulam Murtaza Khan’s court portrait bears none of the exclusive and intimate air of Khairullah’s portraits. Instead, it is an extrovert presentation of court ritual including a large number of courtiers and is executed on a relatively large sized paper. Painted in the fourth year of Akbar II’s accession and dated to between 1809-1810, this darbar scene is remarkable for its size – at 70.7 cm by 51.3 cm representing the earliest shift to a large canvas darbar painting at Delhi. As the

\textsuperscript{233} Ibid, 42-43.
first instance of a large court painting showing the British Resident in attendance, Ghulam Murtaza’s approach sets an enduring precedent for the portrayal of successive Residents attending Akbar II’s darbar.

‘Cincinnati Akbar II’ is roughly modeled from the point of view of a single observer situated at eye-level with the picture. The composition is more discretely bilateral, the standing figures forming a roughly pyramidal assembly with the Mughal emperor seated on a throne seat at its apex. In principle, the painting more firmly adopts the formal arrangement derived from linear perspective, while keeping the relative hierarchical placement of figures within the scene intact. The noticeable foreshortening of the overhead canopy set against the blue sky suggests a sense of depth, which is picked up in the light shading of the arches of the golden throne – a feature first observable in Shah Alam’s court images by Khairullah. Additionally, the diminishing size of the decorative cartouches on the floor carpet accentuates depth in keeping with the optical geometry of the perspectival view such that the visual lines emerging from the ground line on the painting converge on the figure of the emperor.²³⁴

It is the imaginary viewer’s position, directly at eye level with the seated figure of the emperor, which is a direct reference to the use of central perspective as the principal organizing logic of the painting. The central portion of the painting is left unoccupied, allowing an uninterrupted visual

²³⁴ Here I am referring to the Renaissance ideal of linear perspective practiced by Brunelleschi and Alberti that used the receding parallel lines of the checkerboard pattern of the pavement to represent the visual rays connecting the spectator’s eye to the object. For example, see the discussion of Alberti’s *Della Pittura* in Jack M. Greenstein, “On Alberti’s "Sign": Vision and Composition in Quattrocento Painting” *The Art Bulletin*, Vol. 79, 4 (Dec. 1997), 669-698.
access to the seated figure of the emperor. Whereas painters had selectively adopted the representational forms of linear perspective in Mughal painting since the sixteenth century, the works of Ghulam Murtaza Khan signal a decisively operative approach to the use of central perspective for crafting the late-Mughal court scene. In *Cincinnati Akbar II* Ghulam Murtaza’s utilizes central perspective to accord a greater three dimensionality to the court space but also to position the viewer squarely in line with the emperor and his sons. This enables him to show the entire retinue of the court in attendance, with the proximity of individuals to the throne clearly demarcated, even as their physical sizes remain unchanged. The courtiers are grouped in importance along the receding planes of vision and through stepped tiers, which are distinguished by a change in color from the neutral print of the carpet to a bright ornate red (solely reserved for the emperor’s young son Salim). They occupy the painting’s fore and middle grounds and are divided into distinct, roughly symmetrical flanks on either side of the emperor. The inner flank is made up of Akbar Shah’s sons, the British Resident Charles Metcalfe, a senior courtier and finally, the prominent figure of the *arz begi*, the petition officer dressed in a long yellow jama and a red embroidered shawl who is placed at the viewer’s left (of the center) directly below Metcalfe’s starkly clad figure.

In suggesting Ghulam Murtaza’s use of central perspective I do not mean that painters took a mimetic approach towards using perspective in painting. Instead, my effort is to invoke the painter’s agency in crafting the court image of Akbar II in order to accord it a particularly hegemonic sensibility. Linear perspective was widely used in Italian art from the Quattrocento given the facility of the model for representing three-dimensional space on a two-dimensional
The popularity of the central or one point perspective was in its ability to create an illusion of reality by situating the observer at the eye-level from which the picture was drawn – that is the picture’s vanishing point would coincide with the eye level of the viewer. Two things happened in this scenario – first, the painting claimed to be a stand-in for the real scene when viewed from eye-level, and second, the painting was imparted with an iconic quality because it drew the viewer’s focus to the central figure or monument in the painting.

The use of linear perspective in Mughal painting has not been accorded a dedicated discussion, but is often viewed in terms of a larger cultural borrowing of, or experimentation with, European models of painting as a result of the increased interaction of Mughal painters with European


236 The painting conveyed an ‘optical reality’ recording “…the multivalent information the single eye would receive when placed at the apex of the visual pyramid” Ernst Gombrich ‘Mirror and Map: Theories of Pictorial Representation’, The Image and the Eye, Further Studies in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation Oxford: Phaidon 1982, 172-214. In Edo period Japan (ca. 1799), for example, Timon Screech has shown how artists considered the use of a perspective picture to be a complex procedure, where “western pictures” were to be viewed standing “full-square in front”. The artists wrote: “The Western picture will always show the division between sky and ground [the horizon line]; be sure to position this exactly at eye level, which, generally speaking, will entail viewing from a distance of five or six shaku [ca. 180cm]. If you observe these rules, things shown near at hand and things shown far off – the foreground and the rearground – will be clearly distinguished and the picture will appear no different than reality itself.” Timon Screech, “The Meaning of Western Perspective in Edo Popular Culture” Archives of Asian Art 47 (1994), 58-69.
pictures introduced by Jesuit missionaries and Protestant visitors to the Mughal court. As Akbar’s court historian Abu’l Fazl noted, “…painters, especially those from Europe, succeed in drawing figures expressive of the conceptions which the artist has of any of the mental states, so much so, that people may mistake a picture for a reality”. Here, Fazl is referring to the idea of ‘real space’ and indeed, of the claim of reality inherent the pictorial construction of the perspective. Furthermore, his insights highlight the contingent position of linear perspective as “…one of the many available tactics for representing space… a compositional device, or even a stylistic gesture” within Mughal painting.


The use of perspective, in the spirit of a stylistic appreciation rather than as an attempt to conform to the mathematical exactitude of constructing it, calls to attention the incapacity of the technique to cater to the needs of the hierarchical positioning of figures in Mughal painting. In particular, distance related foreshortening would have been at odds with the relative positioning of figures within the hieratic of the Mughal imperial image, where a physically higher and larger position of the subject was a mark of superior status. Take for example, a painting of Muhammad Shah with an attendant meeting an officer (V&A, IM.238-1921, ca. 1740). Here, Muhammad Shah is seen seated on a low throne seat holding a falcon in his outstretched right hand giving audience to an officer. The figures are placed on a white terrace overlooking a river, rendered in grey, with its receding undulating bank in the distance. The fan bearer and the officer are intentionally shown smaller than Muhammad Shah and appear to be contracted to a common rear plane rather than in the same space as the emperor, which would have made them appear taller than his seated figure. Pictures like these enable an insight into the ambivalent relationship that Delhi painters bore to linear perspective.

Yet, the optical experience decidedly preoccupied painters - as is evident in a passage by Abu’l Fazl. In the *Ain-i Akbari* Fazl praises the written word over the art of painting, which in Fazl’s opinion was of greater aesthetic value. Uncannily enough, his description of the primarily visual perception of the written word resonates with the procedural clarity of the optics of the formation of the retinal image articulated through the use of literary metaphors:

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240 The term “world-reflecting cup” alludes to the cup of Jamshid with its magical qualities of reflecting the external world. For greater context see, Meera Khare, “The Wine-Cup in Mughal Court Culture—from Hedonism to Kingship” *The Medieval History Journal* 8:1 (2005): 143-188.
“And indeed, in the eyes of the friends of true beauty, a letter is the source from which the light confined within it beams forth; and in the opinion of the far-sighted, it is the “world-reflecting cup” in the abstract. The letter, a magical power, is spiritual geometry emanating from the pen of invention; a heavenly writ from the hand of fate; it contains the secret of the word, and is the tongue of the hand. …When a ray of God's knowledge falls on man's soul, it is carried by the mind to the realm of thought, which is the intermediate station between that which is conscious of individual existence (mujarrad) and that which is material (maddi). The result is a concrete thing mixed with the absolute, or an absolute thing mixed with that which is concrete. This compound steps forward on man's tongue, and enters, with the assistance of the conveying air, into the windows of the ears of others. It then drops the burden of its concrete component, and returns as a single ray, to its old place, the realm of thought.”

We may infer then that painters’ interest in the phenomenological possibilities of mapping visual and human experience was greater than the concern to approach these ideas solely through the representation of optical perspective. It appears that painters were also interested in creating pictorial formats that did not rely on the central positioning of the observer – the hierarchical supremacy of imperial presence could remain consistent regardless of the viewer’s level of visual literacy. Through a selective scaling of figures painters ignored foreshortening and modulated hierarchies of status by manipulating the relational size of figures. They also positioned these figures within the ‘real’ space (here, the terrace, river, and the receding bank) of linear perspective thus melding the illusion of perspective into their format of painting. In that context, the “Cincinnati Akbar II”, does with an unequivocal measure what Abu’l Fazl saw as the duplicitous quality of European pictures – it emphatically presents itself as a representation of reality.

241 It is possible that Abul Fazl was reading Alhazen and the latter’s study of optics would make for a fascinating comparison with Fazl’s text, but this lies outside the scope of the current discussion.

242 For example, The Dying Inayat Khan. Attributed to Hashim, Mughal, ca. 1618-1619 in Mughal and Rajput Painting, 110.
Facing Front:

In a break with convention followed since the reign of the Mughal emperor Shah Jahan, Akbar Shah’s court paintings feature the emperor in three-quarter profile and a confronting gaze. The “Cincinnati Akbar II” is one of the earliest known paintings where the emperor is entered in a direct visual relationship with the viewer that situates him as a knowing participant in the painting; his placement at the vanishing point of the painting and his outward gaze creates a direct visual response to gaze of the painting’s beholder. In this section I will consider the shifts within Mughal portraiture in nineteenth-century Delhi – the frontal posture and the confronting gaze – to situate these within the cultural framework of Anglo-Mughal visual practices.

The innovative use of the three-quarter profile has been most recently discussed with respect to a painting by Ghulam Murtaza Khan executed a few years after the Cincinnati court scene in the collection of the British Library. Here, the emperor is shown seated on a low platform flanked by his closest aides Hajji Khwass on the right and his four sons – Mirza Salim, Mirza Jahangir, Mirza Abu Zafar, and a fourth unidentified prince – sitting in a cross legged lotus pose (British Library Add.Or.342) (Figure 3.2). Writing about the painting, Losty notes that it marks an important departure from the established convention of representing the Mughal emperor in profile as it “…opened up the formal structure of Mughal portraiture by subtle incorporation of techniques learnt from Europe.”243 Following from an earlier convention of the naturalistic

portrait in practice from the sixteenth-century since Akbar’s reign the three-quarter view was seen up until Jahangir’s reign but disappeared from imperial paintings during the reign of Shah Jahan. Losty states: “No Mughal emperor had been depicted almost full face since the sixteenth century, nor had his cares of state played so clearly upon his features.” Losty makes an important observation noting that the painting keeps to a-

“…traditional high viewpoint leaving the position of the artist and the viewer unexplained, so that the eye of the viewer focuses straight onto the central portrait… the carpet is depicted as traditionally from above, without any attempt at a view in perspective. Why? Perhaps to show that a fully naturalistic representational painting was not the artist’s prime concern. Indeed, a carpet drawn in perspective would make the painting altogether too realistic and would indeed have offended a Muslim artist or a patron.”

We may agree with this assessment of the painting in so far as the painter’s selective approach to full-face portraiture is concerned, but the author’s suggestion that painters such as Ghulam Murtaza Khan averred from perspective’s claim of a realistic portrayal may be revised, especially when taking into account the painter’s body of work spanning over a decade where his growing partiality towards the use of perspective becomes evident. The roughly contemporaneous dating of Cincinnati Akbar II (it is suggested here that the painting was created a few years earlier) show that Ghulam Murtaza Khan had decided to adopt the full-face portrait slightly earlier. Losty’s

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244 For an overview see, Susan Stronge, ‘Portraiture at the Mughal court’ in Rosemary Crill and Kapil Jariwala, eds. The Indian Portrait 1560-1860 (London: National Portrait Gallery, 2010), 23-32.


246 Ibid, Losty, “The place of Company Painting in Indian art”, 24. Moreover, Losty’s view about the aversion of a Muslim artist or patron to realistic portrayal is a concept that largely draws upon the prevailing Orientalists’ viewpoint towards Islamic art in general. For a historical overview of the place of realism in Islamic art see, See R. Ettinghausen, ‘Early Realism in Islamic Art’, Studi orientalistici in onore di Giorgio Levi della Vida 1 (Rome, 1956), 259-62. For a more recent discussion, see Jamal J. Elias, Aisha’s Cushion: Religious Art, Perception, and Practice in Islam, Harvard University Press, 2012.
suggestion that the full-face portrait of Akbar Shah appears to mirror the emperor’s emotions is compelling. If Ghulam Murtaza was able to convey the emperor’s troubled disposition through his furrowed brow, was the painter not making a greater claim to reality than that which the space of the carpet three-dimensional perspective would have allowed him to?

What appears to be at stake in this discussion is easy association of full-face portraiture with what Laura Parodi has termed as the relative “humanization” of the Mughal emperor. According to Parodi, the lofty and distant positioning of Shah Jahan in court paintings undergoes a significant change in the later Mughal period, where court scenes become more intimate and private. Parodi observes:

“...the distance between the ruler and his courtiers, which historically began to build up in Akbar’s time appears, conversely, vastly reduced by the nineteenth century. Both Akbar II’s and Bahadur Shah II’s darbārs present us with a deeply human image of the ruler, regardless of his being enthroned above standing courtiers. It would be simplistic to interpret this “humanization” as a mechanical outcome of the rulers’ increasing dispossession at the hands of the British, although the transition from a profile view surrounded by a halo to an old character whose face is unceremoniously offered to the viewer’s eyes is quite striking and makes one wonder whether the suppression of imperial authority did not indeed play a part in this.”

Both Losty and Parodi to an extent subscribe to the ‘real’ and emotive aspects of naturalistic portraiture and its illusionism. But a remarkable contrast to this view is offered by Akbar Shah’s own sensibility towards full-face portraiture that suggests that the ‘humanization’ of the emperor,

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247 In her essay, Parodi has sketched the transformation of the late-Mughal court painting after Shah Jahan in terms of directionality, audience, and imperial authority, suggesting that a left to right orientation of late Mughal court scenes, is indicative of non-Arabic literate group of painters and patrons who were comfortable with the directionality of the Devanagari script. Parodi, “Darbārs in transition: the many facets of the Mughal imperial image after Shah Jahan as seen in the ex-Binney collection in the San Diego Museum of Art” in Alka Patel and Karen Leonard, eds. Indo Muslim cultures in Transition (Brill, Leiden, 2012).
indicated at times by an absence of the halo, may have had less to do with suppressed imperial 
authority and more with prevailing taste. Take, for example, Akbar Shah’s admonition of the 
Delhi painter Raja Jivan Ram who was widely known for his expertise in painting oil and 
watercolor portraits of European officers and Indian nobility in a distinctively Western realist 
style. The British officer William Sleeman recorded the encounter between the painter and Akbar 
II:

“Raja Jivan Ram, an excellent portrait painter, and a very honest and agreeable person, was lately 
employed to take the Emperor's portrait. After the first few sittings, the portrait was taken into the 
seraglio to the ladies. The next time he came, the Emperor requested him to remove the great 
blotch from under the nose. 'May it please your majesty, it is impossible to draw any person 
without a shadow; and I hope many millions will long continue to repose under that of your 
majesty.' 'True, Raja,' said his majesty, 'men must have shadows; but there is surely no necessity 
for placing them immediately under their noses. The ladies will not allow mine to be put there; 
they say it looks as if I had been taking snuff all my life, and it certainly has a most filthy 
appearance; besides, it is all awry, as I told you when you began upon it.' The Raja was obliged to 
remove from under the imperial, and certainly very noble, nose, the shadow which he had 
thought worth all the rest of the picture. Queen Elizabeth is said, by an edict, to have commanded 
all artists who should paint her likeness, 'to place her in a garden with a full light upon her, and 
the painter to put any shadow in her face at his peril'.

If we believe Sleeman, Akbar Shah’s displeasure for Jivan Ram’s portrait sketch centers on the 
‘awry’ nature of the portrait and its use of shadows. A strong candidate for this picture is a sketch 
portrait of the emperor ascribed to Jivan Ram by the traveler Thomas Vigne (Figure 3.3). The 
portrait contains a descriptive inscription in Nastaliq script, and is ascribed, “amal-i jivan ram” or

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248 We know that Jivan Ram was a Delhi-based painter based on an Urdu inscription on the back of a 
miniature painting on ivory: “This picture [is the] work of Jivan Ram son of Bafalji resident of 
Shahjahananbad dated month February year 1824 the place Akbarabad”. Oliver Forge and Brendan Lynch, 
*Indian Painting 1600-1870*, 2012, Cat. No. 24, 52-53.

249 William H. Sleeman, *Rambles and Recollections of an Indian Official*, London, 1844. See also, Y. 
Sharma, “Portrait of the Mughal Emperor Akbar II” in Dalrymple and Sharma, eds. *Princes and Painters*, 
plate 36, 114-15.
the “work of Jivan Ram” and also contains an English label possibly in Vigne’s hand, “India, by Juan Ram” (British Library, Add. Or. 3167).\textsuperscript{250} This sketch gives us an excellent idea about the painter’s attempts at sketching Akbar Shah, and how his front-facing portrait based on a three-quarter profile would have been sketched from an oblique angle, creating an imbalanced effect between the sides of the face, playing up the shadows on it to accord it a life-like quality.

Akbar Shah’s insistence on having an un-shadowed appearance was very much in line with the long-established convention of Mughal portraiture, which his namesake predecessor had written about in the sixteenth century. Writing about Akbar’s view of the ‘magical art’ of “tasvir” or figural representation the court historian Abul Fazl explains, “the real motive of the painting is not to purport reality but to approach the realization of the superlative creative powers of the real god (Allah) \textit{al-musawwir} or the fashioner of forms. Fazl quotes Akbar’s personal view of the purpose of painting:

“We have many that hate painting; but such men I dislike. It appears to me as if a painter had quite peculiar means of recognizing God; for a painter in sketching anything that has life, and in devising its limbs, one after the other, must come to feel that he cannot bestow individuality upon his work, and is thus forced to think of God, the Giver of life, and will thus increase in knowledge.”\textsuperscript{251}

\textsuperscript{250} For an illustration, see Y. Sharma, “Portrait of the Mughal Emperor Akbar II” in \textit{Princes and Painters}, plate 36, 114-15.

\textsuperscript{251} \textit{Ain-i Akbari}, 107. There is a fascinating example of the application of the idea of fashioning the self (as someone else) that played out in Safavid court politics. Flores and Subrahmanyam cite the case of a \textit{qalandar} (renouncer) named Mussawar, who appeared in 1580, claiming to be the recently deceased monarch Shah Ismail II. The overall theme of the paper deals with exiled princes and wandering pilgrims as rival claimants to power and the idea of impostors in early modern history. Jorge Flores and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, “The Shadow Sultan: Succession and Imposture in the Mughal Empire, 1628-1640” \textit{Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient}, Vol. 47, No. 1 (2004): 80-121.
Abu’l Fazl measured the art of *tasvir* or figural representation against two standards - the unique art of the Timurid and Safavid painter Kamal al-Din Bihzad and the “magic-making” of the Europeans [*farangi* or Franks].\(^{252}\) It was this magical quality of portraiture or figural representation, to appear as reality that appealed to painters who often chose to position themselves as fashioners of the idealized portrait rather than as illusionists competing with the divine creative powers of God. Underlying these two very different perspectives on portraiture was the training of the majority of Hindu artists, who dominated the make-up of the sixteenth century *tasvir khana* under Akbar – this complex lineage of the Mughal imperial portrait undergoing several iterations over the centuries in keeping with the taste of the ruling Mughal emperor.

Where the three-quarter profile had been used intermittently in Mughal painting until a complete reversal to the formality of the side profile under Shah Jahan (r. 1628-58), Jivan Ram’s sketch portrait of Akbar Shah demonstrates the extent to which the front facing/three-quarter portrait was fast becoming the norm rather than the exception. Akbar Shah’s exchange with Jivan Ram is likely to have occurred in the backdrop of the increasing vogue for front facing portraiture that had taken hold of Delhi society by the 1820s, especially after Delhi painters were involved in the production of illustrations for the Fraser Album completed between 1815-1820 and later when a number of commissions in line with European taste were created to mark the visit of the Governor General Lord Amherst in 1827 (See later chapters).

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\(^{252}\) Susan Stronge, ‘Portraiture at the Mughal Court’ (2010), 23-32.
Returning the Gaze:

Akbar Shah’s court paintings offer a remarkable instance of the creation of a counter-narrative of Mughal authority against increasing Company dominance. The ocular politics of these court portraits has yet to be mined by scholars. The use of central perspective in Akbar Shah’s court scene fixes not only the physical position of the viewer but also positions them at eye–level with the emperor who faces front, allowing the viewer liberal visual access to the emperor and his court. In theory, the virtue of seeing the court and the emperor at eye level (and of the geometric organization of central perspective) raises the possibility of the viewer claiming a position of equivalence. However, it is through the use of the emperor’s confronting gaze that Ghulam Murtaza eliminates this possibility altogether. At the pivotal moment of being observed, Akbar Shah’s eyes lock with the viewer in a conspicuously self-conscious way to return the gaze.

Tracing the historical trajectory of the outward gazing figure in Mughal painting, Gregory Minissale compares it to a festaiuolo, “…a character in Italian theatre whose role was to urge the audience on by addressing it directly… the purpose of this figure in both theatre and painting was to act as a mediator between audience and actors, or, in painting between the viewer and the image.”253 The outward gaze, according to Minissale, “marks a new cognitive development…an illusionary but nevertheless reflexive action that reverses the direction of the gaze of the viewer

253 Gregory Minissale, ‘Seeing Eye-To-Eye With Mughal Miniatures: Some Observations on the Outward Gazing Figure in Mughal Art’, Marg, vol.58, no.3 (March, 2007): 40-49. Minissale cites Alberti’s treatise On Painting highlighting his recommendation of the festaiuolo as an important figure, which “admonishes and instructs us about what is happening in the picture”.
appearing momentarily to turn him or her from viewing subject into the object of the gaze.”

By engaging with the act of reciprocal seeing, of seeing and being seen, Akbar Shah’s confronting gaze functions within the scopic framework of darshan but also exceeds its benevolent implications by a large measure. It creates an illusion leading the viewer to acknowledge their own position vis-à-vis the painting, while, in theory also being instructed by the emperor about their role in diplomatic hierarchy of the later Mughal court.

By placing Akbar Shah’s court within the geometric space of the central perspective, Ghulam Murtaza attempts a conscious merger of the scopic hierarchies of religious beholding, western linear perspective and Mughal imperial portraiture. Scholars have focused on the ocular politics of the seventeenth-century Mughal court by studying how architecture, painting, and court ritual worked in ways to frame the monarch’s official public image, servicing the idea of the patrimonial bureaucratic state with the monarch at its political apex. At Shahjahanabad (Delhi) the emperor Shah Jahan’s active control of the planning of the fort complex where the layout reinforces its axial geometry and symmetry, and the frontal approach of its audience halls, is considered as a physical extension of the centrality of the Mughal emperor in court ceremonial.

Shah Jahan is largely recognized for his codification of the hierarchical asymmetry between the emperor’s persona and the viewer’s gaze through a careful choreography that situated him at the

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center of and physically higher than his subordinates - continuing the concept of the divine illumined kingship popularized under Akbar, Shah Jahan used the optical experience of *darshan*, reciprocal seeing, to structure his daily rituals of public appearance through the frame of the *jharokha-i darshan*, or viewing balcony. But, as Necipoğlu and Koch note in their separate essays, the schema of the painted miniature where the emperor was represented in side-profile was marked by clear dissonance between the emperor’s gaze and that of his beholder. The averted gaze of the emperor denied the audience any eye contact with the emperor. Thus, Shah Jahan’s side profile sought to project the emperor as a remote iconic and exalted presence. In court scenes of Shah Jahan, which are explicitly designed to portray the ascendancy of the ruler, the use of the averted gaze creates distance between the emperor and his subordinates even where physical proximity is unavoidable. This is especially seen in the seventeenth-century illustrated manuscript of Abdal Hamid Lahauri’s Padshahnama (completed in 1657-8) in the collection of the royal library at Windsor Castle. (Figure 3.4) Here, the social hierarchy within the painting is reinforced through a network of gazes, which create an abstract pictorial order in the painting while also serving to integrate and establish continuity between two separate pages in the

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258 For example, scenes of the annual weighing of the emperor (Fol. 70B-71A, by Bhola, ca. 1635) or the emperor receiving dignitaries (Fol. 98B, ‘Kashmiri Painter’ ca. 1633) represent a clustering approach to figural placements creating a physical proximity between the emperor and his subordinates.

Of particular interest is Necipoğlu’s suggestion that the “…theatrical display culture of early-modern [Ottoman, Safavid, and Mughal] courts assigned a central role to the gaze in articulating the social hierarchies built into the discourse of absolutism”.261 The model of a patrimonial bureaucratic empire, which has long served to distinguish the Mughal state as an administrative unit with the figurehead of the Mughal emperor serving as its head, has received much favor in the recent past. Authors have sought to present a finer understanding of the Mughal Empire as a bureaucratic leviathan, suggesting its dual relationship to ancient patrimonial polity as well as the modern bureaucratic empire, working this idea into the analysis of urban form of Mughal cities and their societal structure.262 However, the art history and historiography of the eighteenth and nineteenth-century, as discussed earlier, presents a fractured analysis of the cultural achievements of the eighteenth-century precisely because of the enduring idea of the Mughal sovereign as the fountainhead of cultural patronage leading art historians to map the idea of the political crisis of the Mughal State on to eighteenth and nineteenth-century art – thus viewing the cultural accomplishments at the Mughal center as an extension of the sovereign’s persona.263 As this


263 See Introduction.
chapter suggests, the visual construction of Mughal authority was formulated by Delhi painters who utilized a complimentary set of pictorial techniques to experiment with hierarchies of placement and ultimately the balance of power between the court and the Company.

**Moving In: The Ritual of the Court Portrait in the Diwan-i Khas**

“After His Majesty, the Shadow of God, had taken rest, he got up at three pahr and graced the *diwan-e khas* with his presence. The *mujrais* (courtiers) were admitted to his presence to pay their respect. The nazir brought to notice the sealed letters of Mirza Khuda Baksh, Mirza Haidar, Mirza Makkhu, and Mirza Jahangir Bakht, known as Mirza Bhajju. The nazir asked, whether His Majesty gave the permission for their being sent.”

News of the exalted court.
The events of Saturday, 2 June 1810/ 28 rabi’ us sani, 4th year of accession. 264

From a nineteenth-century perspective, where the idea of Mughal monarchy had taken over a greater symbolic than political function265 the optical hierarchies within Akbar Shah’s court paintings recall the formality of the stepped gaze in Shah Jahan’s court paintings skipping over a nearly century of imperial painting culture of the later Mughals from Aurangzeb to Muhammad Shah. This historicist nod to the high culture of the Shah Jahani era, as it played out within the pictorial frame of nineteenth-century court painting, cannot be simply written of as a form of uncritical emulation of Shah Jahani period art. I want to suggest here that the historical presence of Shahjahanabad and of the Red Fort, which was built for Shah Jahan and used by him as his new capital city and now inhabited by Akbar II was a catalyst for the painter’s imagination. The

264 Pernau and Jaffrey, *Information and the Public Sphere*, 37.

seventeenth-century architectural framework of the palace complex created a validating condition for the display of Shah Jahani court ritual and the imagery associated with it. Darbar portraits of Akbar Shah after 1815 mark an important transition – they move from the outdoor terrace to the indoor setting of the Diwan-i Khas of the Red Fort.

Whereas early akhbarats ca. 1810 tell us that the Diwan-i Khas had been in use for conducting the daily proceedings of court, why is it that painters took so long to move the scene indoors? This may well be explained through the historical records of court and Company interaction. Studies on the diplomatic interaction between the Company and Mughal court have suggested that the Company followed a Janus faced policy of “…submission and obeisance inside the palace, where the Emperor held mock court, and virtual non-recognition outside.”266 Maintaining this delicate apparatus of the Mughal way of courtly life allowed the British to run their own affairs in a discreet and effective manner, yet they found the “regal pretensions” of the royal family to be irksome and superfluous.267 More often than not, the Company’s acceptance of rituals often inadvertently allowed the Mughal King to circumvent its authority, resulting in a series of counter-measures by the British to contain the outcome.268 At other times the Company

266 *British Diplomacy in North India*, 29-30.

267 The Bengal Government was highly critical of Akbar Shah’s “regal pretensions” and his attempts to supersede the authority of the Company. IOR/F/4/308/7065 Aug 1808-Sep 1809.

268 Despite the restrictions imposed on Akbar Shah II, he was found to have been making land grants and often circumventing the authority of the Resident, which was a constant source of grief for Fort William. In one instance a request for restoring a jagir at Sonepat was communicated to the Governor General by Zeb ul-Nisa Begum, the famous Begum Samru, rather the Resident. IOR/F/4/303/6993 Jun 1808-Jan 1809; In an earlier instance Archibald Seton was asked to annul the grant of land by Akbar II to George Dyce, the husband of Begum Samru’s grand-daughter. IOR/F/4/371/9241 and for the grant of the land in question, see IOR/F/4/251/5623.
cautiously vetoed claims for Mughal recognition by rulers from neighboring states. In 1808-09, the Bengal Government declined support for the application of Man Singh, Raja of Jodhpur, to Akbar Shah for the conferment of a 'Tika'. This was a special mark of distinction of the forehead, the anointment of which was the privilege of a superior who bestowed authority on a ruler at his installation, the official recognition of which would have implied an overt acceptance of the Mughal King’s authority as supreme power as well as serve to validate the authority of Man Singh.

The artistic language of the indoor darbar portrait of Akbar Shah suggests a move that is self-reflexive – it seeks to assert Mughal authority through invoking the high etiquette associated with Shah Jahani court ritual but also uses this format to downplay the authority of the British East India Company and more specifically, of its representative the British Resident at Delhi. According to Michael Fisher, “The Indian Ruler, his courtiers, the British Resident, and his Indian munshi, each had a hand in scripting the formal interactions between that court and the Company's representative. On occasion, the various authors held lengthy private meetings prior to reaching a consensus on the choreography of the ritual.”

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269 IOR/F/4/247/5574. For details see, Bengal Pol. 6 Feb 1833, draft 17/1833, E/4/736 p. 723.


were transformed at the hands of its actors. The presentation of quarterly nazar, a daily visit by the Resident to the Mughal court, and the Resident’s attendance for formal and religious gatherings were some of the etiquettes expected of the Resident, and allowed for the sustenance of, what may be termed as, an iconic ritual structure of Mughal rule. At the forefront of these rituals was the nazar – literally, implying the act of gratification through seeing the emperor – that involved a token gift, usually of gold coins, to the Mughal emperor. This was traditionally a gesture of political obeisance and a tacit acknowledgement of the symbolic power of the Mughal sovereign.

Gradually, wariness towards court ceremonial ensued. The refusal of some British residents to adhere to court ceremonial was a diplomatic rebuff that led Akbar Shah to lodge a formal complaint with the East India Company’s Governor General Lord Amherst. A few years later, the Company soundly rejected the King’s request for decommissioning the pre-decided heir

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272 The role of the Munshi as an expert in the Persian protocol of civil ritual and art of the science of diplomacy, thus, was very crucial to maintain an ongoing status quo between the Resident and the Ruler, and the Company and the Indian rulers at large. “For the British utterly to abolish or even significantly to diminish the symbolic role of the Indian Ruler as the sovereign of his state would …strike at the very principle of indirect rule which the Resident embodied.” Fisher, “The Resident in court ritual”.

273 Akbar Shah sent his envoy Babu Praun Kishen on a secret mission to the Governor General [Lord Minto] to complain about the conduct of the Resident Archibald Seton. The King of Delhi’s refusal to acquiesce in his state of total dependence on the Company was also discussed. IOR/F/4/393/10009 Aug 1810-Sep 1812. Then later in 1830, Akbar II lodged another complaint about the disrespectful behavior of Francis Hawkins, the officiating Resident and the Company decided to reinstate Thomas Metcalfe to supervise the Royal Family. IOR/F/4/1343/53414 Jan-Oct 1830. For a discussion of this matter, see also Fisher, “The Resident in court ritual” (1990), 420.
apparent Abu Zafar in favor of his younger son, Mirza Salim. The conferment of titles and investitures or *khilats* to the members of the Royal Family was stopped and, in addition, the Bengal Government annulled many titles granted to nobles in neighboring regions of Delhi. In 1827 after a meeting with Akbar Shah, Amherst ordered the discontinuance of the practice whereby the Resident at Delhi presented the King with a *nazar* four times a year. This was to be followed by a decree disallowing the conferment of titles on British officers. Finally, by the end of Akbar Shah II’s reign, the Royal Family now operated under a series of restrictions that not only limited their political and administrative authority but also their physical mobility to the virtual domain of the city of Delhi.

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274 After Mirza Jahangir’s death in 1821, Akbar Shah II took up the cause of Mirza Salim as heir apparent, to which the British were decidedly opposed. February 1833, IOR/F/4/1602/64665 Mar 1834 -May 1836. India Pol. 20 Sep 1837, draft 437/1837, E/4/752 pp. 757-62.

275 In another instance the King was barred from sending a *khilat* of condolence upon the death of the Nawab Amir Khan of Tonk. IOR/F/4/1603/64666.

276 IOR/F/4/1179/30741 Sep 1826-Jul 1828. Bishop Reginald Heber on his visit to the court of Akbar Shah II also mentions the restrictions imposed by the Government on Europeans barring them from accepting nazars, and in some cases offering to provide an exchange of money. Additionally, as the Bishop noted, the nazars were now provided by the British government at their own expense. See Heber, *Narrative of a Journey* (London, 1851), 303-304.

277 India Pol. 20 Sep 1837, draft 437/1837, E/4/752, 757-62.

278 The Bengal Government had begun to impose a series of restrictions limiting the political and judicial authority of the King and his family. A prominent reminder of this was the virtual incarceration of the royal family within the bounds of the Exalted Fort Qila i-Mualla and the curtailment of the jurisdiction of the King of Delhi solely to the affairs of the palace. For example, Masati Begam, the King’s sister had to apply for the Government’s permission to conduct a pilgrimage to Lucknow. Bengal Pol 12 Feb 1834, draft 55/1834, E/4/740 p 464. See also, IOR/F/4/1375/54903 Oct 1830-Mar 1831.
The architectural realm of the court, therefore, served as an important spatial marker of Mughal authority, and the pictorial language of the court portrait devised by Ghulam Murtaza served as a benchmark for later *darbar* scenes that followed. The painting “Akbar Shah and the British Resident David Ochterlony” (henceforth ‘British Library Akbar II,’) (Figure 3.5) painted at least five years later than the Cincinnati Akbar II” (British Library Add.Or.3079) for example, is set in the interior of the Diwan-i Khas, following in this new trend for Akbar Shah’s court paintings.\(^{279}\)

In a repeat of earlier formats Akbar Shah is seated on a golden peacock throne under a four-post canopy, with the royal princes standing on either side followed by court officials and the British Resident, David Ochterlony. The painting is dated to ca. 1820 based on the presence of Ochterlony (in a red uniformed tail coat) as well as Mirza Jahangir (Standing closest to Akbar Shah’s left) who died in 1821. This later court scene is a remarkable example of the standardization of elements of court painting devised by Khairullah and Ghulam Murtaza Khan.

Painted by an anonymous artist, the ‘British Library Akbar II’ is a reification of central perspective’s geometric structure, as well as a reinstatement of Akbar Shah’s political position on the issue of royal succession. Whereas the ‘Cincinnati Akbar II’ creates the condition for viewing based on the optics of central perspective, the ‘British Library Akbar II’ firmly adheres this optical hierarchy within the interior of the Diwan-i Khas, greatly foreshortening the depth of field of the painting by contracting the widely placed marble columns of the Hall of Special Audience within the narrow space of the court scene. The figures in attendance intractably align along three lines of sight culminating at Akbar Shah’s nimbate head. A subtle distinction of status of

\(^{279}\) The painting is illustrated in Dalrymple and Sharma, *Princes and Painters* (2012), Cat. 35, 113.
individuals exists – the publicly significant figures of Allah Yar Khan (inscribed mustaufi allah yar khan)\textsuperscript{280}, the examiner of accounts, Khwaja Fariduddin Khan (inscribed khwaja farid khan), the \textit{wazir} to Akbar II and Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan’s maternal grandfather\textsuperscript{281} and David Ochterlony (inscribed Jarnail Akhtarluni Sahab)\textsuperscript{282} are part of the innermost tier of figures to the emperor’s right, while the Mughal princes Abu Zafar and Mirza Salim also to the emperor’s right, are closest to him. On closer examination the placement of individuals in the public assembly of Akbar Shah’s court appears to be driven by close relationships forged in the Mughal court and Delhi society. Khwaja Fariduddin (the \textit{wazir} to Akbar Shah) and David Ochterlony who were close friends are shown standing together; the latter’s powerful political position as the British Resident hardly discernible as he blends in with the crowd of courtiers in attendance.\textsuperscript{283} 

\textsuperscript{280} Allah Yar Khan was no doubt a well-known figure in Delhi circles. His portrait was painted by Ghulam Ali Khan for the Skinner Album. British Library, Add. Or. 1258. Illustrated in Dalrymple and Sharma, \textit{Princes and Painters}, cat. 63, 152-3. Here the English inscription “Soofee Allah Yar Khan Sahib” is very obviously a misinterpretation of Allah Yar Khan’s title “Mustaufi”, or examiner of accounts.

\textsuperscript{281} For details see G.F.I Graham, \textit{The Life and Work of Syed Ahmed Khan}, C.S.I, 1885.

\textsuperscript{282} The British Library records misinterpret Ochterlony’s title as ‘Karnal’ (Colonel), which has been corrected here.

\textsuperscript{283} Sayyid Ahmed Khan was one of the leading intellectuals of Mughal Delhi. He was the author of \textit{Asar al Sanadid} (1847) a history of the architectural monuments of Delhi. Writing in 1885 the biographer Graham wrote that Sayyid Ahmad Khan was in the possession of a photograph of a court painting showing Ochterlony and Fariduddin standing beside each other, the original being in the possession of the artist’s descendants in Delhi. He wrote: “In this [the painting], amongst the crowd of princes and nobles who are represented standing in two lines in front of the Emperor, are the figures of General Ochterlony and the Prime Minister [Khwaja Fariduddin] side by side. The General is in full dress, cocked-hat on head, leaning on the \textit{jarib}, or "staff of honour," given him by the Emperor. The Prime Minister has also the \textit{jarib} in his hand. The scene is the famous Diwan-i-Aam or general audience-hall in the palace at Delhi, and the Emperor is depicted seated in state on the celebrated peacock throne.” Graham, \textit{The Life and Work of Syed Ahmed Khan} (1885), 3-4. The description would strongly indicate that the painting in question is the British Library Akbar II, despite some variations from Graham’s account. Graham probably got the setting of the Diwan-i Am mixed up with the Diwan-i Khas, the latter being the sole venue for all known indoor court portraits of Akbar Shah. It is also easy to misread the flanks of courtiers as two instead of three. Finally, the most
This is in contrast to Charles Metcalfe’s ominous figure in the Cincinnati Akbar II, where he is consciously disengaged from the crowd of courtiers.

In a dissenting gesture, Akbar Shah is seen handing what looks like a coin to the now grown Mirza Salim, who stands closest to Akbar Shah on his right. As discussed earlier, Mirza Salim was Akbar Shah’s chosen successor. The British administration who preferred Abu Zafar spared no effort to express their displeasure on this matter. Yet, in ‘British Library Akbar II’ Akbar Shah is seen confident and purposeful as he hands an object into Mirza Salim’s outstretched hand. Abu Zafar is shown standing next to Salim to Akbar Shah’s right but decidedly distanced from him. Akbar Shah’s averted gaze, in this case, is in stark contrast to the gazes of the majority of courtiers who appear to look out from the painting to the viewer. They seem to be entirely conscious of the importance of Salim’s position in the hierarchy of court placements.

In Akbar Shah’s court paintings, the artists played upon the overall effect of high ceremony, displaying the panoply of darbar in full state – we see the darbar more populated than in earlier paintings comprising courtiers, newsagents and representatives from the surrounding regional courts, the royal princes and the British Resident. A number of individuals are seen leaning on staffs. This gesture, which was written about as a milestone of courtly demeanor by Shah Jahan’s chroniclers, is also used in the painting to subvert British authority at the Mughal court.

284 Bishoe Reginald Heber when paying a visit to Akbar II noted that a number of elderly men carried large gold headed canes, which was “…the usual ensign of office here.” See Heber, Narrative of a Journey, Third Edition, London 1851.
As Ebba Koch has discussed, the formal atmosphere of a court session in the Diwan i-Am was such that no one was allowed to talk or move unless asked by the emperor to do so. The courtiers were arranged by their rank, with the senior mansab holders closest to the emperor. The entire function could take up to 4 or 5 ghari, (1 ghari = 25 minutes) or 2 hours, which could be a very trying experience, especially for the aged courtiers. They were allowed to lean on ceremonial staffs. By virtue of being imbued with a Mughal “staff of honor” the British Resident at the Mughal court is implicitly rendered into the hierarchical structure of the painted darbar scene - as yet another courtier indentured to the attenuated ceremonial of the Mughal court and to the emperor’s will.

Stylistic precedents: The Padshahnama

Court scenes of Akbar Shah show a distinctive affinity with the paintings of the Padshahnama. They follow a pyramidal arrangement adhering to a central perspective and the aura of high etiquette seen in Shah Jahan’s court scenes. Overall, the artistic concern of balancing the representational strategies of perspective, distance, scale, and symbolism seen in the court

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286 A parallel form of this practice can be observed in paintings illustrating the ceremonial meetings of the British Resident and the Mewar rulers. As Barbara Ramusack notes, until the 1830s, the British Resident regularly sat on the floor while the Indian ruler was seated above on a gaddi. This practice gradually changed to show the Resident standing or seated on Western-styled chairs. Example, Maharana Bhim Singh of Mewar receiving British officers in the Mor Chowk, Possibly Chokha, Udaipur, c.1826, Maharana of Mewar Charitable Foundation. Barbara N. Ramusack, ‘Kingship in India,’ in *Maharaja: The Splendor of India’s Royal Courts*, V&A Museum, 2009.
paintings of Ghulam Murtaza Khan suggests that the Padshahnama manuscript probably played an important part in the painter’s career.

Later copies of the Padshahnama as well as other illustrated histories of Shah Jahan’s reign produced in nineteenth-century Delhi show a distinct melding of conventions, with topographical illustrations becoming a central feature of the composition. Other illustrations from the period set within copies of Shah Jahan’s historical chronicles written by Muhammad Salih Kanbo were especially popular during Akbar Shah’s reign. Two presentation volumes of the Padshahnama, later copies of texts by Muhammad Qazvini and Muhammad Salih Kanbo ordered by Akbar Shah for the Magistrate of Allahabad in 1815 offer some clues about the illustrative format of historical works reproduced in the 19th century. The colophon of the Allahabad presentation copy (the manuscript is based on Kanbu’s text) states:

J. T Roberdean
Presented by the King of Dehli, through the Prince Mirza Jihangur, his son, the latter being under the official control of the Magistrate of that District and accepted by permission of the Right Honorable The Governor General October 1815. 287

While none of the illustrations in the two volumes are directly based on the Windsor Padshahnama they refer to its subject matter. 288

Another example of a later copy is a double-page

287 The copy was made to appease the magistrate at Allahabad under whose supervision Akbar Shah’s favored son Mirza Jahangir (d. 1821) was to stay to comply with his sentence of political exile.

288 The first volume based on Qazvini’s text chronicled the first 10 years of Shah Jahan’s reign while the second based on Kanbu’s text chronicled the history of Shah Jahan’s reign from the eleventh year of his accession to his death as a deposed emperor. See especially, f.370, Diwan-i Am (public audience hall); f.371, The palace of Shahjahan where Shahjahan is seen in the foreground with Jami Masjid in the distance. British Library, Add. 20734 & Add. 20735. The two volumes are catalogued in Jeremiah P.
folio from an extant illustrated copy of Lahauri’s Padshahnama ca. 1830-50 that shows the celebration of Shah Jahan’s accession. However, the painted folio tends to use generic figures and a bare landscape background (Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Balch Collection, M.45.3.452 a,b). 289

This would lead us to a question of the actual exposure Delhi painters might have had to the manuscript in the nineteenth-century. To what extent were the illustrations of the Windsor Padshahnama available to Akbar Shah’s painters in late-Mughal Delhi? The historical trajectory of the Padshahnama manuscript is available to us only in part. The colophon on the last page of the Windsor Padshahnama dates the completion of the copying of Abdul-Hamid Lahauri’s text to AD 1657-8 by the scribe Muhammad-Amin of Mashhad. 290 From the table of his movements, we learn that Shah Jahan was based in Delhi between 8 January 1655 and 28 October 1657, 291 a few months before he was imprisoned at Agra. A strong possibility thus is raised that the writing of the manuscript was begun in Delhi and completed there too, the entire work remaining in the imperial library which came under the control of Shah Jahan’s son Aurangzeb, who ruled as Alamgir I from 1658 until 1707. Though we cannot accurately account for the manuscripts’


289 Bonta, “Late or Faux Mughal Painting, A Question of Intent” Barbara Schmidt, ed. After the Great Mughals (2002): 150-165. The illustrations are in a style much later than 1800, which is the date accorded to the album in the LACMA database, and correspond with a number of other folios made between 1815-30.


291 Beach and Koch, King of the World: The Padshahnama, 11.
whereabouts in the first half of the eighteenth-century, a number of tantalizing clues point to the continued visual pre-eminence of Padshahnama folios for later Mughal rulers such as Muhammad Shah (r. 1719-1748) and Shah Alam II (r. 1759-1806). By the first quarter of the eighteenth-century, other scenes showing Shah Jahan followed the pyramidal arrangement of the courtiers surmounted by the figure of the emperor (“Shah Jahan in Audience” Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Gift of Neil Kreitman, AC1992.94.1). A direct correlation between the illustrations of the Padshahnama and painting under Muhammad Shah is offered by an extant Padshahnama folio (ca. 1639, Metropolitan Museum of Art, Dick, Bell, Pfeiffer, and Dodge Funds, 1989.135) and a Guler copy of a lost original painted at Delhi, which shows Muhammad Shah watching an elephant fight from a jharoka window (Attributed to Nainsukh, ca. 1730-40, The Cleveland Museum of Art, John L. Severance Fund, 2005.1.a). The former picture represents the daily public appearance of Shah Jahan (seen in profile) offering darshan to the public. Framed within a Bangla roofed tripartite window (probably referring to the golden pavilion of the Khas Mahal at Agra), the scene depicts the emperor’s choicest courtiers on a terrace beneath the jharoka while another group of courtiers stand on a lower level parapet. In the foreground two elephants locked in combat capture an alternate spirit – that of royal pastime and pleasure. Remarkably, the later copy of this scene painted showing Muhammad Shah ‘Rangila’ reflects solely upon the idea of royal pleasure, by focusing solely on the elephant fight.292

292 A longer discussion of this painting is in the Introduction. For another example of a Muhammad Shah painting partly based on the Windsor Padshahnama, see “Muhammad Shah watching the celebration of Holi” ca. 1725-50, 27 x 16.5 cm, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Gift of Paul F. Walter, M.76.149.2. For a published illustration and brief discussion of the painting, see Robert J. Del Bonta, “Late or Faux Mughal Painting, A Question of Intent” Barbara Schmidt, ed. After the Great Mughals: Painting in Delhi and the Regional Courts in the 18th and 19th Centuries, MARG 53, no. 4 (2002): 150-165.
We know from Beach and Koch that the manuscript was in the library of Lucknow’s ruler, the Nawab Asaf al-Daula (r.1775–1797), before it was presented to King George III in 1799.\(^{293}\) It is likely that the manuscript reached Awadh around the time of the widespread migration of artists to the province following the political instability after Muhammad Shah’s death and successive raids on Delhi in the 1760s.\(^{294}\) There is also the alternative possibility that the manuscript survived in the Mughal imperial library and was only brought into Lucknow in the 1770s when a significant number of imperial manuscripts entered into the possession of the Awadh Nawab as well as into the hands of agents who acquired such manuscripts through surreptitious channels.\(^{295}\) In a letter written to William Palmer on 21\(^{st}\) November 1790 from Agra the Governor General Warren Hastings states:

“I applied to the Shah [Alam] in your name for permission to transcribe his copy of the Mahabharrut, and was assured that it would have been most cheerfully granted if the book had been in his possession, but his library had been totally plundered and destroyed by that villain Ghullam Khauder Khan [Ghulam Qadir], and he added, not without some degree of indignation, that part of the books had been purchased at Lucknow, that is by the Vizier; & upon enquiry find this to be the case, for his Excellency produced some of them to the English Gentlemen, boasting that they were the ‘King’s’. Amongst them were two volumes beautifully painted & illuminated for which he gave 10,000 Rs. These I hope are the books you want, but as the Vizier is on his annual hunting excursion, no access can be had to his books, nor indeed to his house and gardens…”\(^{296}\)

\(^{293}\) It was for Rupees 12,000 or 1500 Pounds Stirling. Milo Beach, “Introduction” in Beach and Koch, *King of the World: The Padshahnama*, 1997.

\(^{294}\) For the political scenario in the 1760s see chapter 1.

\(^{295}\) This process is discussed in the Chapter “A Painter for all Occasions.”

\(^{296}\) I thank William Dalrymple for this reference. Hastings’ Papers BL Add MSS 29138-93 passim,184.
Indeed, the Padshahnama may have followed a similar trajectory as the other manuscripts from the Mughal imperial library. The preference for the formal Mughal portrait in profile can be seen throughout the eighteenth century and especially in the courts of Muhammad Shah and Shah Alam II. But, also significant is a series of views showing court ceremonials with Shah Alam II presiding in court, prepared for Jean Baptiste Gentil titled *Recueil des toutes sortes*...(1774), where at least two folios represent a theme seen in the Padshahnama illustrations.297

The visual impact of the Padshahnama or its variants at Delhi notwithstanding, painters such as Ghulam Murtaza Khan balanced the hierarchical principles of Shah Jahani portraiture standardized in the seventeenth-century with a renewed interest in re-organizing pictorial space according to the three-dimensional principles of spatial geometry. Akbar Shah’s court paintings exhibit the use of the geometric picture plane as an organizing device, but painters did not fully subscribe to its optical correctives such as figural foreshortening preferring to portray the emperor’s figure unchanged. In a break with recent conventions of Mughal portraiture, Ghulam Murtaza Khan displays Akbar Shah facing front, with a confronting gaze. The emperor’s confronting gaze created a meaningful reciprocity between the viewer and the subject, resisting the objectification of the court ritual as a “pretension for pre-eminence in the Court of Delhi” or [portraying] the “fiction of the Mughal Government”.298 Even as Company officials sought to discourage the Emperor from assuming imperial authority the court paintings portray the emperor as a politically active and resilient individual. The confronting gaze can be understood then, in

297 Jean Baptiste’s *Recueil* is discussed in Chapter 1.

298 Hastings’ Private Journal, i, 55 & 79. As cited in *British Diplomacy in North India*, 137-38.
terms of a ‘culturally adapted vision’ that spoke to multiple audiences of Delhi society, and maintained the status quo between the court and the Company. As the following section will show, the court paintings were only one of the venues for maintaining this status quo. The procession of Akbar II was another powerful means of negotiating the balance of power between the Mughal house and the British Resident.

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299 Sketching the history of a vision-centric European cultural consciousness, Martin Jay has offered a critique of the primacy of vision in enlightenment thought and its place within the phenomenological discourse surrounding visual ideas in the twentieth century. It is Jay’s description of the permeability of the boundary between “natural” and “cultural” vision that forms a useful marker for our discussion on Akbar Shah’s court portraiture. The nature of “visuality” - “…the distinct manifestations of visual experience in all its possible modes”, as Jay explains, can be understood as a phenomenon contingent on cultural variables. Similarly observation implies observing the “tacit cultural rules of different scopic regimes.” Martin Jay, *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth Century French Thought* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), Introduction, 9. For a distinction between vision and visuality Jay cites Foster. Hal Foster, *Vision and Visuality* (Seattle, 1998), editor’s preface.
Section 2: Staking Territory, Processions

Performance of Place-making and the Processional Panorama of Akbar II

31 August 1810

“I am attending the King and Royal Family on a religious procession to the tomb of a saint, and the confusion, noise, multitude and tumult necessarily following such a procession is distracting in the extreme, particularly to me as in charge of the whole and in constant fear of troubles or affray occurring where so many people of all descriptions are assembled. Seton the Resident being sick this annoying duty has fallen to my lot and tho’ everything as yet goes well – the night is just begun, and I shall have an anxious time until the morning. It calls me away from more necessary duties in the city and affords not the satisfaction they do in giving relief to daily petitioners and unfortunates craving redress of the British from former oppressions and nuisances.”

William Fraser, Assistant to the British Resident Archibald Seton. 300

Multiple panoramic scrolls featuring Akbar II in procession are available to us today, yet their context has received little attention. This section of the chapter provides a brief overview of the production, circulation and socio-cultural context of the processional panorama of Akbar Shah. In this section, I begin by sketching the socio-political context of the procession of Akbar II. It demonstrates how the panorama can be understood in relation to the ongoing politics of territoriality and place making in Late Mughal Delhi by engaging with contemporaneous correspondence between the Mughal house and the East India Company. I propose that the visual encapsulation of the royal procession into panoramas masks narratives of both spectacle and spatial intervention – the painted procession capturing the moment of the celebration of the Mughal right to the city.

The Procession of Akbar II

The ritual exercise of the bi-annual procession of the Mughal emperor featured prominently within the gamut of Anglo-Mughal interactions. Under British administration, royal processions by the Mughal emperor were undertaken on numbered occasions but were closely monitored as they mobilized the entire royal household and retinue of the Delhi region. The emperor’s procession for the celebration of Id at the end of Ramadan was easily the biggest public event, usually constituting a grand cortege from the palace grounds to Idgah on the outskirts of the walled city. Other processions were taken out during yearly festivities to commemorate the accession the emperor (Julus), his birthday, or nauroz or on the occasion of the migration of the royal household to the summer palace in Mehrauli, near the grounds of the Qutub Minar.

The pre-eminence of the royal body politic as a form of kingship in Indian court culture has been well established.301 The royal procession functioned as an integral part of the rituals associated with the public display of kingship along with the royal hunt and the bestowal of honors and enveloped layers of visual symbolism.302


302 Joanne Waghorne, “The Power of Public Splendor” in Jackson and Jaffer, eds. Maharaja: The
Painted scrolls depicting Akbar Shah in procession focus solely on the procession and its visual effect. The narrow width of the scroll usually dispenses with the background altogether, drawing the viewer’s attention to the somewhat tilted middle ground of the painting, where the procession takes place. At about 16.3 cm in width and nearly 2 meters in length, the scroll encompasses nearly half a mile of the procession. The earliest known painted panorama of Akbar Shah’s procession from around 1811 shows the British Resident Archibald Seton accompanying the Mughal emperor (from now on, Procession of Akbar II and Archibald Seton) (Figure 3.6) amidst a scene populated by a panoply of figures - messengers (harkaras), standard bearers on elephant and foot carrying various ensigns (fish, sun, serpent and others), mounted riders of Skinner’s Horse\(^{303}\), footmen and guards, royal princes, ladies of the court in palanquins, along with the prominent figures of Akbar Shah and Company officers riding on elephant howdahs.\(^{304}\)

The main participants of the procession portraits comprising a host of officials and courtiers who were associated with the Mughal house can be identified based on their portraits. For example, the central group features the emperor elephant-mounted figures of Akbar II with two unidentified princes holding a morchhal, followed by the prince-in waiting Abu Zafar. Another group of Company officials and Mughal courtiers follows on an open howdah, led by the British Resident Archibald Seton and his assistant William Fraser, and the latter’s friend Nawab Ahmad Baksh Khan.

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\(^{303}\) See discussion of Skinner’s Horse in the following chapters.

\(^{304}\) Collection of Francesca Galloway, 2011. A detailed description of the processional panorama is provided by J.P Losty in the annual catalogue of 2011.
Unfolding the Processional Panorama

The directionality of the panorama offers some clues about its viewership. The procession draws the eye along the flow of its movement from right to left informed by the habitual directionality of Persian and Urdu readership, which is also reflected in the use of the script to identify the figures in the procession scene. This is complementary to the left-to-right action of unfolding the scroll out of its metal casing. These complementary directionalities, of painting and viewership, were very much part of the diffused nature of artistic patronage marked by the rise in the commissions of Mughal scenes featuring European participants. The majority of panoramic scrolls of Akbar Shah’s procession are made on European paper but are visibly rendered in the hand of local artists who use a combination of opaque watercolor and light washes for painting. The portability of the scroll in its metal casing also suggests that such procession scenes could easily be circulated as gifts or special missives within and outside Delhi. The format of the Procession of Akbar II and Archibald Seton is visible in subsequent procession scenes of Akbar II, each featuring a different British Resident and set of Company officials.\(^{305}\) Their similar size and format focusing on the procession against a plain backdrop, and their European provenance also indicates that British expatriates brought back a number of such scrolls. But longer versions

\[^{305}\text{As listed by Losty, a version showing Sir David Ochterlony as Resident (1803-06, 1819-22) is in the Victoria Memorial, Calcutta. The British Library contains two versions. The first, with Sir Charles Metcalfe (Resident 1812-19, and again 1825-27) which is illustrated in Archer (1972), no. 168, pl. 58. A similar processional scroll showing Charles Metcalfe is in the collection of Cynthia Polsky, published in Dalrymple and Sharma, Eds. Princes and Painters, (2012), cat. 33, pp. 110-11. The second one dates from the 1840s and shows Metcalfe’s brother, Sir Thomas Theophilus Metcalfe, and is in the Metcalfe Album published in M. M. Kaye’s The Golden Calm: An English Lady’s Life in Mughal Delhi: Reminiscences by Emily, Lady Clive Bayley, and by her father, Sir Thomas Metcalfe, 1980, pp. 150-159. A fourth version showing Sir Edward Colebrooke as Resident (1827-29), was sold at Sotheby’s on 25 May 2005. Another version is in the collection of Aman Nath, Delhi.}\]
of processional panorama in collections in India and abroad suggest that two-meter scrolls of the Mughal procession may have been specifically made as *aide mémoires* while other longer versions were created at leisure.

Two unfinished sets depicting the procession of Akbar II in the collection of the British Library (Add. Or. 211-304) indicate that painters built up individual parts of the procession scene to arrive at the final version. The sets are remarkable in that they appear to be looser portrait studies of individual participants of the procession with individuals identified through labels in Persian script. The first set consisting of 22 drawings has a combined length of over 9 meters while the other consisting of 72 drawings would result in a scroll over 22 meters in length. Both sets are missing the main figures of the Emperor and his family as well as Company officials and would have been longer in their original state. That painters worked on individual subjects of the procession is also proven by individual “finished” studies of animals, footmen, and *harkaras* in the collection of the Victoria and Albert Museum. (Figure 3.7a, 3.7b) For example, a vignette dated to 1827 showing Akbar II on elephant back with Mirza Salim holding a peacock feather fan over him, is clearly extracted from a procession scene. The painting, which has a watermark of 1821 was acquired by Lord Amherst, Governor-General of Fort William (1823-1828) and his wife during their visit to Delhi in 1827. The painting offers telling clues about the way these paintings upheld the emperor’s political views on imperial succession. Mirza Salim, Akbar Shah’s favorite son is shown seated on the *khawasi* (rear seat of the elephant) in a telling retort to the Company’s insistence on appointing Abu Zafar (later Bahadur Shah) as the *Wali ‘ahd* (heir apparent).
The Processional Panorama After Akbar II

The process of creating sectional studies of processions continued into Bahadur Shah’s reign, as demonstrated by a six-part set of the procession possibly painted by the Delhi artist Mazhar Ali Khan (fl. 1830-50) between 1840 and 1850. The painter’s Mughal procession scene largely kept the format of Akbar II’s procession but updated the figures of the main participants – the emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar (r. 1837-57) and the Company officer Thomas Theophilus Metcalfe (1795-1853). It was inserted in a topographical album of Delhi, which Metcalfe wrote in the form of a diary that described the main sites of historical and cultural significance and was titled, Reminiscences of Imperial Delhie.

A larger version based on the established format of Akbar II’s procession has survived in the private collection of the Maharaja of Alwar. It was likely created between 1840-45 when the Delhi painter Ghulam Ali Khan (fl. 1817-1855) was employed at the Alwar court. In the painting, a grand and formal sawari or state procession is seen proceeding from the eastern front of the Yamuna River towards the southern environs of the city. The subject is likely the celebration of Id as the procession’s trajectory leads to the fifteenth-century mosque Iddgah on the outskirts of the walled city.


307 A longer discussion of the album is provided in chapter 4.

308 The panorama is in the collection of the Alwar Government Museum. No visible accession number was found.
The procession scene bears the distinctive stamp of Ghulam Ali Khan’s method, especially his fondness for combining architectural scenes with figures. The rendering of the attenuated figures follows the painter’s style. The composition of the Alwar panorama is clearly built from two components – the procession, which is based on earlier models painted by Delhi artists and the view of the eastern face of the Red Fort, which Ghulam Ali Khan had made as part of a set of architectural drawings around 1824. (Figure 3.8) The Eastern Front of the Red Fort painted in 1824 is a foreshortened view from across the bank of the Yamuna River looking towards the riverfront façade of the Red Fort. The painting is an informal view of the everyday activities of the Mughal household and has a kind of “back of the house” air. A number of tents dot the riverbank. Royal elephants are seen frolicking in the river while people mill about their tasks. The scene does not play up the arrival of the royal cortege to the right of the painting, drawing the viewer to engage with the painting as a whole. The cortege is itself a much smaller group comprising the emperor and his companions with an un-mounted royal steed and elephant as well as footmen. Nearby, a boat anchored to the riverbank waits to carry the group to the palace shore.

In the Alwar panorama of the procession of Akbar II, there is a noticeable increase in scale from earlier processional scrolls. It measures roughly three quarters of a meter almost doubling its height, while its length is somewhat consistent with earlier models at nearly two meters. The

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309 For a detailed overview of the career of Ghulam Ali Khan and his tenure at Alwar see the following chapter. Also see, Yuthika Sharma, “In the Company of the Mughal Court” in Dalrymple and Sharma, Eds. Princes and Painters, (2012).

architectural façade of the eastern face of the Red Fort serves as a contextual backdrop for the royal procession. As discussed in chapter 1, the appearance of the riverfront architectural panorama of the Red Fort dates back to the mid to late eighteenth century, when Indian artists began to depict the façade of fort buildings in elevation. In the Alwar panorama the royal palace buildings and the ritual procession serve to reinforce Delhi’s identity as *dar-al khilafat* or seat of empire.\(^{311}\)

The Alwar panorama is likely to have been brought to Alwar in the years 1840-45 when Ghulam Ali Khan was in residence there. A number of elements allow us to date the procession more firmly. Had the panorama been made at Alwar in the 1840s, it would have likely shown the updated figure of Bahadur Shah Zafar leading the procession as other processions painted in this period did. The figures of the British Residents seated on open howdahs included towards the rear of the procession offer another clue. The portraits of Charles Metcalfe in a tricorn hat and of James Skinner in his plumed helmet can be easily identified, pushing the date to the years between 1825-27, when Charles Metcalfe was in office for a second term. The dates coincide with Ghulam Ali Khan’s employment with James Skinner between 1825-28, which also ties in with Skinner’s presence in the procession. The panorama must have been painted around the time when Ghulam Ali painted a view of Skinner’s regiment, as the similarities between Skinner’s portraits in the two scenes would indicate. Furthermore, the soldiers leading Akbar Shah’s

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\(^{311}\) The other prominently visible landmarks are the Jami Mosque and Delhi Gate after which the backdrop disappears into a thicket of vegetation leading towards the southern ruins of the city. As I have discussed earlier, the architectural view of the Red Fort became synonymous with Mughal imperial identity during the reign of Akbar Shah’s father, Shah Alam II (r.1759-1806). See Chapter 1.
The combination of the Mughal procession and the architecture of the Red Fort along with the multiple portraits of British Residents highlight the painting’s role as a commemorative picture of Anglo-Mughal Delhi.\textsuperscript{313}

There is also evidence that this commemorative scene devised by Ghulam Ali Khan was copied by Alwar artists. A copy by an Alwar draftsman, Uday Ram, was prepared at the Pustakshala at Alwar a few years later. The painting has the following title, “Uday Ram Draftsman (navis) son of Mangal Ram, Mulazim (employee) of Pustuksala State Ulwur”. (Figure 3.9) The samvat date of the painting is fairly smudged and its hijri date also seems erroneous, but its creation at the premises of the royal library at Alwar indicates a thriving practice of producing copies of Mughal themes.

**Performing the Procession**

The painted panoramas of Akbar Shah’s procession show how it was designed as a grand public pageant that played upon the display of wealth and power, functioning as a spectacular event that aimed at creating a lasting impression of visual splendor.\textsuperscript{314} The operative dimension of the


\textsuperscript{313} For a discussion of Mughal souvenirs see Chapter 7.

\textsuperscript{314} For the idea of the spectacular procession, see the discussion on Tamasha paintings in Andrew Topsfield, *Court painting at Udaipur: art under the patronage of the Maharanas of Mewar*, Zurich: Artibus Asiae Publishers, 2001.
spectacle of the procession becomes more evident when we take the socio-political context of the late Mughal procession into account. The power of spectacle and splendor aside, the procession allowed for the sustenance of the rituals of kingship where the physical movement of the emperor was subject to strict Company surveillance. The procession was one event that took place in the public domain – it thus created opportunities for greater interaction between the court and the public enabling the emperor to engage in rituals that were perceived as threats to the Company’s authority. Persian court records from the year 1825 tell us that notables residing along the route of the royal procession to the tomb of Qutub Sahib located in the southern environs of the walled city, offered nazar and peshkash to welcome the emperor:

6 February 1825

“…Yesterday, Akbar Shah, the King was at Qutub Sahib. At his order, the open howdah was taken out. He took his seat on the elephant while the sons of Mirza Salim and Babur sat with him on the khawasi. Thus he proceeded towards Chatturpur. On the way Bakshi Mahmud, Raja Jai Singh Ray, and Kedar Nath etc. paid their nazr near their houses. When the procession came near Chattarpur, the zamindars of that place presented a jar of curd as peshkash. [His Majesty] hunted hares and partridges, returned and entered the palace at Qutub Sahib. It was reported that Wali-‘ahd\textsuperscript{315} has arrived from the city…”

The Mughal procession served as a means of topographically mapping the emperor’s domain, his personal visits to various sites serving to revitalize local and provincial loyalties to the Mughal house, and ensuring the remittance of revenue from local zamindars.

\textsuperscript{315} The prince –in-waiting, Mirza Abu Zafar, who ruled later as Bahadur Shah II ‘Zafar.’
Records also indicate that the emperor’s procession often exceeded its prescribed purview. Often, such processions served to facilitate activities such as hunting (see above) or were undertaken for the purpose of seeing off pilgrimages to shrines outside Delhi. The latter point is significant because Mughal processions to pilgrimage sites outside Mughal Delhi generated a huge amount of controversy in Company circles. Processions outside Delhi were less amenable to Company surveillance, and so journeys that involved visiting sites outside Delhi were categorically refused permission. A number of letters exchanged between the British Resident at Delhi and the Company headquarters in Fort William, Calcutta, indicate that religious excursions were looked upon as a serious threat to the Company’s political interests. The case of Akbar Shah’s proposed visit to the shrine of Bu’ Ali Qalandar in Panipat offers a telling insight into the deeper anxieties that underlay the Company’s position regarding the movement of the royal household beyond Delhi. On 28th December 1807, Seton sent a letter of concern regarding Akbar Shah’s impending visit to Panipat:

"I do not think it improbable that during the course of the present cold season the King may renew his desire to visit the Dargah of Boo Alli Kalandar at Panipat. That Akbar Shah would consider this a meritorious act - that he was acting to quell a superstition about disinterring a consecrated lock of hair, which Shah Alam had carried him to Panipat for. The King would undertake this journey to quell a superstition - to go to the very spot to consecrate a lock of hair to the Saint's memory. The distance from Delhi to Panipat was 55 miles. For such an excursion to be made possible, Seton would have to despatch an escort of troops for the protection of the King. Such a journey because of its "occasion" would attract the greater population to Panipat. And this would proportionally weaken the Garrison at Delhi or at Rewaree."

316 Akbar Shah’s court records indicate that on the previous occasion he also saw the midani (pilgrimage) off to Ajmer.

It was also thought that to facilitate such a journey would “…allow the King to get accustomed to travel,” and instead, he was restricted to travel within Delhi.\(^{318}\) The Governor General’s office responded favorably to this note asking Seton to convey how such an endeavor was to be discouraged due to

"...objections arising from the distance of the place, the expense of attending such an excursion, the inconvenience of employing a body of troops so considerable as that which it would be necessary to detach for the purpose of escorting is Majesty, the interruption which it would occasion to the Duties of the Public Office, the disorder likely to ensue from the concourse of the peoples which such an excursion would attract and the public speculations and remarks which the extraordinary circumstance of His Majesty quitting his Capital would naturally occasion.”\(^{319}\)

Akbar Shah’s planned pilgrimage to Panipat was in the tradition of several generations of Mughal pilgrimage to Chistiya shrines outside Delhi as part of the extended spiritual purview of the sacred geography of the imperial capital.\(^{320}\) Pilgrimages allowed for the overlaps of saintly and political geographies creating “…a territorial vision of cultural, political and spiritual contiguity” that wove the geographies of the Mughal center with Deccan and Central Asia.\(^{321}\) Sainthood too, was “…deeply entwined with such private notions of regional identity and family heritage, stretching the allegiances of given families to the saintly protectors of their ancestors generations

\(^{318}\) For example, on 6\(^{th}\) April 1825 as Akbar Shah ordered preparations to be made for a journey to the neighboring region of Bhattia, the doorkeeper to the Fort, Sohan Lal, returned with news of the Resident had denied permission on grounds of “harsh summer conditions that might adversely affect the King’s health.” Jaffrey and Pernau, 144.

\(^{319}\) Seton was asked to tell the King to wait on a reply from the Governor General if all other motivation failed. Ibid, 423.


after their migration into new areas.”

As one of the few royal prerogatives remaining with Akbar Shah, the royal procession was one ritual that could take place outside the boundary walls of the Red Fort and the walled city. At a theoretical level, the procession directly engaged with the question of the sustenance of Mughal spiritual purview under British administration. The impossibility of the physical act of traversing beyond the city limits accords a special significance to the Mughal procession of Akbar Shah. It may be argued that the procession, when it did occur, was akin to a collective act of ‘tactical’ intervention that flustered the panoptical gaze of Company administrators at Delhi. Furthermore, Company officials who monitored the Mughal procession were drawn into its ‘confusion, noise, multitude and tumult’ as unwilling participants.

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323 I am referring here to the rhetoric of walking that de Certeau equates to a “speech-act,” which he terms as a “form of appropriation of the topographical system on the part of the pedestrian,” or a sort of “spatial acting out of the place.” Michel De Certeau, “Walking in the city” in The Practice of Everyday Life, Berkeley; University of California Press, 1984. Though de Certeau is interested in the way city inhabitants respond towards the totalizing structures of urban planning, his conceptualization of the physical act of walking as a way of manipulating or transgressing the formal codes of city space is especially useful. I suggest that Akbar Shah’s pilgrimage processions transgressed the codes of civil behavior and civic space for British administered Delhi. A program of civic reform had been underway since 1803, after the instatement of the British Resident at Delhi. Initial policies focused on the conversion of private properties into commercial and public spaces and the establishment of a kotwali or policing establishment for monitoring social behavior in the city. See Narayani Gupta. Delhi between Two Empires, 1803-1931: Society, Government and Urban Growth. 1981. The ritual of the procession countered the new normative structure of colonial rule in the city by mapping its own path on to Delhi’s cityscape.

324 See quotation by William Fraser, Assistant to the British Resident Archibald Seton, 1810, at the beginning of this section.
Even with reduced strength of numbers in service of the Mughal house, the Mughal procession of Akbar Shah played upon the power of royal splendor. As Joanne Waghorne has suggested, the magnificently turned out figure of the ruler was publicly accessed through the act of seeing and beholding (darshan), which allowed the public to participate in the display of royal power. The Delhi processions may not have been quite the acts of largesse that they appeared to be in the panoramas, however, as I have suggested, they were tactically performed to uphold the ideal of Mughal sovereignty.

**Conclusion: Staking Territory through Paintings and Processions**

The discussion of court and procession paintings under the common heading of ‘staking territory’ demonstrates the operative role of paintings in maintaining the balance of power between the Mughal house and the East India Company at Delhi. The ubiquitous presence of the British Resident in a large majority of paintings created for Akbar Shah affirm his importance as an arbitrator of all Mughal affairs; yet, these paintings do not project a vision of shared power. Instead, the visual field appears as an arena for the reconfiguration of Mughal authority and the subversion of British dominance at Delhi. Akbar Shah’s court paintings present an example of how perspective’s visuality was harnessed by Delhi painters such as Ghulam Murtaza Khan who created new rules for its apprehension. This is achieved through a careful adaptation of central perspective to the norms of Mughal pictorial hierarchy where the Mughal ruler’s self awareness and his conscious ownership of authority are made evident through his front facing gesture that engages into direct eye contact with the viewer. While engaging with the politics of their present the court paintings keep the ritual structure of the Mughal court intact, realigning the diplomatic
encounters between Akbar Shah and the Resident within a historicist framework ordained by Mughal etiquette. To that end, the paintings themselves stand as self-conscious projections into a past associated with the artistic legacy of the Mughal emperor Shah Jahan as a patron of the Red Fort and the Mughal city of Shahjahanabad (Delhi). Delhi painters chart the all important move of the Mughal court to the palace interior indicating a renewed sense of confidence in its status. Later court paintings showing Akbar Shah in darbar are set within the Hall of Special Audience/ diwan-i khas, with the emperor seated on the recreated Peacock Throne imparting royal darshan, his reciprocal gaze creating a radical moment of self-awareness of the act. As if to reiterate their pictorial heritage, they also subscribe to the stylistic and compositional elements of Shah Jahan era paintings. Given the symbolic prominence of the Red Fort as the sole bastion of Mughal power in the nineteenth-century, this invocation of the Shah Jahani-past assumes greater meaning as an act of re-appropriation of the city itself. Thus, Late Mughal court painting embodies a self-reflexive practice - the whole exercise of court painting being about making art that looks back at its own art history.325

Paintings featuring the bi-annual procession of the Mughal house, too, echo the conscious projection of authority that is crafted within court paintings of this period. As the second section shows, the Mughal procession was a palpable effort to claim the right to the city. The procession not only raised a diplomatic controversy about the spatial purview of Mughal power at Delhi but also functioned as a celebration of courtly vitality. The materiality of the panorama and its complementary modes of painting (right to left) and viewership (left to right) allow us to

recognize the complex cultural environment to which painters were responding. The painted panoramas not only served to perpetuate the idea of Delhi as a Mughal city into public memory, they were in many ways testaments to the counter-assertion of Mughal authority outside the bounds of the Mughal court. For a Mughal house that was subject to Company laws and whose movements were restricted to the palace grounds of the Red Fort, this was no small achievement.
IV.

A Painter for all Occasions:

Ghulam Ali Khan, Resident of the Seat of the Caliphate, Shahjahanabad

Ghulam Ali Khan’s practice broadly overlaps with five decades of British East India Company rule in Mughal Delhi from 1806 to 1857. This chapter offers a study of the historical trajectory of the artist’s career over this five-decade period. In this chapter, I highlight how Ghulam Ali Khan’s career was shaped by the enmeshed nature of patronage circles of the Court and the Company in Anglo-Mughal Delhi. Though much is known about Ghulam Ali Khan through his work for the William Fraser (1783-1835) (assistant to the British Resident at Delhi Archibald Seton and later the Commissioner of Delhi) and the Anglo-Indian cavalry officer James Skinner (1778-1841), this chapter will focus on lesser-known aspects of the painter’s career such as his tenure at the Mughal court of Akbar Shah II and Bahadur Shah Zafar (r. 1837-1857). The second part of this chapter will take up the discussion of Ghulam Ali Khan’s appointment in the satellite courts of Alwar and Jhajjar outside Delhi. Through a first time look at the pictorial archive at Alwar, this chapter presents a view into the hitherto unknown holdings of paintings that bear the imprint of Ghulam Ali Khan’s work at the Rajput court. The archival study also enables us to understand the circulation of ideas within Delhi and its satellite courts, especially the themes seen within the album commissioned by William Fraser at Delhi from 1815-20 (see Chapter 5). This

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326 Recently, I have published a short essay Ghulam Ali Khan, which draws on some of the conclusions in this chapter. This chapter offers greater context and also forwards new recommendations for understanding the shifts within the painter’s career that are not picked up in the published essay. See Yuthika Sharma, “In the Company of the Mughal Court: The Delhi painter Ghulam Ali Khan” in W. Dalrymple and Y. Sharma, Eds. Princes and Painters (2012).
chapter will serve as a monograph on the painter, combining the current state of our knowledge with new evidence.

**A Question of Origins**

Ghulam Ali Khan’s rise within artistic circles in Delhi is uncharted until about the 1820s when the artist created an impressive number of commissions within the space of a few years. For over three decades scholars have considered that Ghulam Ali Khan’s style emerged fully formed in 1817, a view forwarded on the basis of a painting of the Diwan-i Khas (Hall of Special Audience) of the Red Fort bearing the painter’s signature. (Figure 4.0) The painting’s inscription “*amal-i ghulam ‘ali khan musawir fidvi-i muhammad akbar shah padshah ghazi san 11 panjum mah-i shavval*” (the work of Ghulam Ali Khan the painter, in the 11th year of Akbar Shah, 5th day in the month of Shavval) is the earliest date of a signed work by the artist leading scholars to place this painting as the artist’s earliest work. Moreover, Ghulam Ali Khan’s signature that includes Akbar II’s regnal year suggests the possibility that this was a royal commission.

The painting is an architectural view depicting a partial top view of the Audience Hall and adjacent palace buildings. It plays up the contrast of the white color of an ornately rendered marble colonnade along the Hall’s entrance with the red of the cloth *shamiana* (awning) on wooden poles. The vibrant red awnings create a dramatic effect with the white and gold backdrop of the building as they highlight the royal significance of the building.\[^{327}\] The presence of courtly

\[^{327}\] The use of red awnings to accentuate the lived quality of the palace apartments and halls in the Red Fort was by no means a new introduction and followed from earlier depictions of the Diwan-i Khas by
figures in the foreground lends further purpose to the imperial setting as the site of ongoing courtly activity. This is the first time that we come across Ghulam Ali Khan’s use of an architectural view set within its cultural environment “…introducing active participants into this work.” The scene suggests a flurry of activity after the emperor Akbar Shah II’s departure into the palace. The presence of the palanquin bearers, the royal mount, a beautifully caparisoned horse, attendants and soldiers implies that the emperor had been present at the scene, though he is not depicted in the picture.

It may come as a surprise that an older version of Ghulam Ali Khan’s view of the Diwan-i khas lies hidden in the private papers of the British topographical artist Thomas Daniell (1749-1840). (Figure 4.1) A partially colored sketch no bigger than four by six inches made on parchment, this smaller drawing dates from well before 1815, since Thomas Daniell returned to England from India in 1795. This raises questions about the authorship of the painting. The question arises: Does the presence of this earlier version suggest a definitive connection between Thomas Daniell artists such as Nidha Mal and Chitarman practicing in the second half of the eighteenth century. For a larger context of the study of the representation of the Red Fort buildings see Chapter 1.

Losty suggests that rather than using the flattening effects of linear perspective of the Agra style that was solely focused on architectural draftsmanship, Ghulam Ali Khan worked in the inherited Mughal tradition to set the building into its physical and cultural environment. Losty, ‘The Delhi Palace in 1846; A Panoramic view by Mazhar Ali Khan’ in Crill, et. al, eds. *Arts of Mughal India* (V&A, Mapin, 2004), 286-301.

and Ghulam Ali Khan? To explore this further we must dwell on the brief period that Thomas Daniell was present in Delhi.

As one of the first European artists to tour India between 1786-93 Thomas and William Daniell’s (1769-1837) travels followed in the footsteps of other artists such as William Hodges (1744-97), Johann Zoffany (1733-1810) and Arthur William Devis (1762-1822) who tapped into the patronage of East India Company officers and the social elite made up of Indian nobility and regional rulers. After spending two years in Calcutta from 1786-88 the Daniells undertook a tour of northern India that lasted from August 1788 to November 1791.\[^{330}\] Traveling with a retinue of assistants, tents, and equipment, they sketched landscapes, architecture and sculpture along the scenic route, often making the use of the *camera obscura* to ‘record’ a particular scene of interest. Their route was primarily along the Ganga River leading up to Kanpur after which they travelled overland to Delhi via a visit to the Taj Mahal at Agra.\[^{331}\]

During their tour of Delhi between August 1788 and March 1789, the Daniells produced a number of drawings of sites in the city. These included views of Firoz Shah Kotla (dated 20 February 1789), the Qutub Minar, the Jami Mosque, the Qudsia Bagh, and the exterior of the Red Fort as well as a number of small studies of architectural details such as doorways, carved


\[^{331}\] Ibid, RIBA, 64.
columns, capitals, decorative motifs and patterns. These detailed studies were part of numerous preliminary study sketches made from rubbings and tracings acquired on site, which served as a ready source material for watercolor and oil paintings after the pair returned to England in 1794-5. Thomas Daniell’s 144 aquatints that were based on such sketches and base drawings became part of *Oriental Scenery* (1795-1808), a compilation of six volumes of aquatints of topographical views of India, which achieved much commercial success in England costing £210 per set.\(^{332}\)

Thomas Daniell’s employment and dependence on Indian artists and draftsmen is important for placing the early years of Ghulam Ali Khan’s career.\(^{333}\) The paper scrap with the view of the Diwan-i Khas is part of a collection of working sketches in the Daniell RIBA papers, mostly comprising measured drawings of the decorative panels of the buildings in Agra. All these drawings carry annotations in Thomas Daniell’s hand attributing them to anonymous Indian artists/draftsmen. For example, on a paper scrap containing a detail of the decorative inlay of Akbar’s tomb in Sikandra, Agra, post dated to March 13\(^{\text{th}}\) 1816, Thomas Daniell’s annotation reads: “*The tomb of the Emperor ----- plant in the center of the Mausoleum at Agra. Prep’d from a drawing done by a Native of Hindustan.*”\(^{334}\) There are also various annotations in Daniell’s hand detailing the colors and shades for rendering the intricate inlay work in the marble facades.

\(^{332}\) Archer, *Indian Architecture and the British*, RIBA (1968), p.11. In 1810 the Daniells published *A Picturesque Voyage to India by way of China*, and they also produced plates for publications such as the Oriental Annual of 1834 to 1839. Their watercolors and oils were displayed every year between 1795 and 1838 at the Royal Academy and the British Institution.

\(^{333}\) Much is now known about the role of Indian draftsmen such as Gangaram Tambat in Western India who drew upon European and local conventions of painting and draftsmanship. Holly Shaffer, *Adapting the eye, An archive of the British in India, 1770-1830*, Yale Center for British Art, New Haven, CT, 2011.

\(^{334}\) SD 31/1, nos. 130 to 133, RIBA.
of the tomb complex, which testify to the painter’s collaboration with native draftsmen for creating a visual record of monuments during his trip to Agra.

The inter-relationship between Agra and Delhi draftsmen, discussed briefly in Chapter 1, can also be substantiated based on a series of early European collections that contain views of Mughal buildings from Delhi as well as Agra.\textsuperscript{335} Delhi and Agra draftsmen were much in demand often supplying drawings that served as models for later versions.\textsuperscript{336} There is also little doubt that Indian artists and draftsmen also learnt the conventions of planimetric drawing from European officers and draftsmen. The involvement of European architectural draftsmen in Delhi is substantiated by the collection of drawings commissioned by Lt. Col. William Francklin now housed in the Royal Asiatic Society, London.\textsuperscript{337} An architectural rendering in watercolor of the Jami Mosque in Delhi drawn by Charles O’ Halloran bears an inscribed note and is initialed “W.F.” This view of the Jami Mosque is similar to other views of the Mosque that were commissioned solely to highlight the architectural character of the building. It is evident that this must be a view after Francklin’s own sketch or impression of the monument, as there are several shortcomings in the watercolor view. While the overall depiction of the Mosque broadly

\textsuperscript{335} A closer look at the provenance of most architectural drawing sets in collections such as the British Library, The Royal Asiatic Society, the Royal Institute of British Architects, and the Victoria & Albert Museum suggests that draftsmen were normally commissioned to produce combined sets of views of Mughal buildings from the two cities. For example, see the discussion of the collection of Colonel Pownell Phipps (1780-1858), in the Victoria & Albert Museum, in chapter 1. Also see Archer (1992), 130, 133-134.

\textsuperscript{336} This was the case with drawings from Delhi that served as the base for a number of drawings commissioned by Colonel Phipps at Calcutta. Ibid, Archer(1992), 133.

conforms to the original site, the depiction of calligraphy and ornamentation on the facade of the buildings is clearly a fanciful approximation. Since Francklin only visited Delhi in the 1780s, an account of which he published in 1798,\(^{338}\) we can assume that he would have carried rough sketches back with him to London.\(^{339}\) Francklin also possessed copies of drawings made by other draftsmen in India and chose to illustrate his narrative with architectural themes that were already popular with East India Company officers. His preference for themes favored by Major Matthews (1765-1820), a former Fort adjutant at Agra in 1804, indicates the prevalence of a well-established culture of architectural documentation of Mughal buildings both at Delhi and Agra.

We can turn back to Daniell’s scraps in the knowledge that the collaboration between local artists, draftsmen, and European painters at Delhi began well before the establishment of British administration in the city in 1803, a fact that has been glossed over in early commentaries on architectural drawings by Indian draftsmen.\(^{340}\) Daniell’s annotations reveal that local draftsmen were employed to create a physical record of each architectural site by taking rubbings and tracings of floor patterns, wall carvings, and studies of other decorative details – their skill would


\(^{339}\) The ink inscription bears the date A.D. 1811, but the watermark of the paper is dated to 1816 and as a result I propose a new date of 1818.

\(^{340}\) For example, Mildred Archer in her initial survey on the Daniells in India makes only a marginal reference to the collaboration of European and Indian artists and focusing on the period after 1803.
have been indispensable to Daniell’s cause given the rapid but intense nature of the artist’s travel in the subcontinent.

The *Diwan-i Khas* sketch in Daniell’s papers is noticeably incomplete but remarkably similar to the 1817 view painted by Ghulam Ali Khan - complete with the stretched *qanats* of the canopy at the entrance, and the raised leg of the caparisoned horse being restricted by grooms.\(^{341}\) Unlike the solid effect of gouache visible in Ghulam Ali Khan’s version, Daniell’s sketch is marked by the use of light color washes – red for the canopy and gold for the domes, with only the figures of the horse and attendants in sketch. The similarity between Daniell’s view and Ghulam Ali Khan’s version implies a close association between the two artists, but the latter would have been very young, a boy of no more than fifteen or sixteen years of age at the most given that his career ran up to 1855.\(^{342}\) It is also likely that Ghulam Ali Khan was first apprenticed with Daniell during his visit to Delhi in 1787 and that he worked as Daniell’s assistant draftsman, creating measured drawings and taking rubbings of various buildings in Delhi. This would also explain how Ghulam Ali Khan emerged as an adept topographical painter in 1817 when he constructed his earliest known signed painting of the Diwan-i Khas.

\(^{341}\) SB119/2(4) Royal Institute of British Architects, London.

\(^{342}\) If indeed Ghulam Ali Khan was an active during the period of Thomas and William Daniell’s visit, his age would have more likely in late teens. The last known work by the artist is dated to 1852-4 and this would imply a career span of over 60 years, which is very probable. One of the last commissions, a dynastic album prepared for the last Mughal emperor Zafar dated AD 1852 would indicate a life-span of 75-80 years for the artist. This is also somewhat corroborated, though tenuously so, by the genealogy provided by the late Frioz-ud-Din, who claimed descent from the artist. More recently, a set of 31 drawings of topographical views of Delhi and royal portraits of Zafar and his sons has emerged on the market. Two paintings out of this set are dated to November 1852. See Bonham’s, Islamic and Indian Art, London, Lot No. 352, 23 April 2013.
If we consider the alternative possibility that Ghulam Ali Khan’s 1817 version was a finished copy based on a sketch by Daniell, it raises the question of the Delhi painter’s access to Daniell’s drawings. A number of unmarked watercolors and sketches by Indian artists based on the Delhi drawings of Thomas and William Daniell are available to us today but it is difficult to draw a definite connection. For example, a watercolor of Qudsia Bagh in the collection of the British Library dating to ca.1820 is based on the watercolor view by Thomas Daniell titled, “North East View of the Cotsea Bhaug on the River Jumna, Delhi” (Part 1, Plate 3), May 1795. (Figure 4.2) At 263 by 366 mm the copy is much smaller than the Daniell aquatint, which is about 431x598 mm. It is outlined with a black border with a label in Nastaliq script but no other supporting information. A number of such examples allow us to suggest that local copies of Thomas and William Daniell’s drawings were in circulation in Delhi well into the early decades of the nineteenth century.\(^{343}\)

**After Daniell: Ghulam Ali Khan’s *Oriental Scenery***

In order to suggest that Ghulam Ali Khan had unprecedented access to drawings by Thomas Daniell, I would like to present two hitherto unknown copies of Thomas Daniell’s aquatints of Delhi views, of the Jami Mosque and the Qutub Minar, which are signed and inscribed by the painter. Both paintings appear to be directly based on Daniell’s aquatints. They fall within the median size of aquatints in *Oriental Scenery* at 439x637 mm and are finished in opaque

\(^{343}\) See BL Add Or. 3119 (South East View of the Red Fort, Delhi, from across the Jumna); ‘Jami Masjid,’ 1820-25 British Library Add. Or. 548. See *Princes and Painters*, 2012, Cat. 68 and 69, 160-61.
watercolor. The first painting, of the Jami Mosque, is a superb copy of Daniell’s view (The ‘Jummah Musjed, Delhi,’ Part 1, Plate 23, 1797) and closely follows the aquatint in its composition, color, and the general positioning of figures. In its use of opaque watercolor, it appears as a more vibrant copy than the aquatint, picking up the light and shade and graduations of color that were lost in the process of printing Oriental Scenery even as the figural modeling and chiaroscuro are differently treated than in the aquatint’s.

The second painting, an expansive view of the Quwwat-ul Islam complex showing the Qutub Minar (built 1192 AD onwards) and its surroundings from the Wellcome Library is more remarkable in that it exceeds Daniell’s aquatint in scale as well as detail. (Figure 4.4) The composition is a later copy of the view of the Qutub complex printed in the fifth set of Oriental Scenery titled, ‘Antiquities of India’ (Plate 24 from Fifth set, British Library Asia and Pacific collections, X(432)5/24). It can be dated to the first quarter of the nineteenth century given the absence of the top section of the tower made up of two upper stories crowned by a cupola, which was damaged in an earthquake in 1803. Daniell’s aquatint of the Minar is considered the sole visual record of the complete tower as it survived up until the 1790s. Ghulam Ali Khan’s expansive view of the complex adopts the same physical viewpoint as Daniell’s print, but updates the view to reflect the absence of the top storey and the cupola. Ghulam Ali Khan positions the observer slightly closer to the complex, inviting them to engage with the various buildings

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344 British Library, Asia and Pacific Collections, P933.

345 Wellcome Library, London, no. 579943i.
making up the mosque complex.\textsuperscript{346} The painting is signed, “amal-i ghulam ali khan mussawir mulazam huzur-i vala,” The work of the painter Ghulam Ali Khan, employee of the exalted presence” leaving us to conjecture what the nature of the commission might have been. The term “huzur-i vala” does not appear in any other notations by Ghulam Ali Khan or other painters in this period and the reference to an exalted presence could imply either the Mughal emperor or, given the subject matter, the Sufi saint of the Chisti order, Khwaja Qutubuddin Bakhtiyar Kaki (1173-1235) who was influential in establishing the order at Delhi and was also the site of the tombs of later Mughal emperors including Shah Alam II. In addition to the reference to an exalted presence, Ghulam Ali Khan’s explicit labeling of the Khwaja’s tomb (“Naqsha ve minar ve [dargah] hazrat khwaja pir qutab al din… bakhtiyar kaki”/ A view of the minar and [tomb] of Qutubuddin Khwaja Bakhtiyar Kaki) supports the idea that the artist created this scene to highlight its spiritual significance.

Ghulam Ali Khan’s painting is the earliest known version of Daniell’s view using the South West prospect of the Qutub Minar and near-identical viewpoint as Daniell’s print. Despite other records of European and Indian artists visiting Delhi, Thomas Daniell’s view of the Qutub Minar stands as the most enduring view of the site used widely by later topographical painters at Delhi in the nineteenth century. Curiously enough, Sita Ram (active 1810-22) a prolific topographical painter who accompanied Lord Moira (Governor General of Bengal and Commander-in-chief Marquess of Hastings, r.1813-23) on his tour to the North Western India and Delhi between 1814-15 preferred to paint the Qutub minar and its surroundings from different angles and

\textsuperscript{346} Other sections of the complex are also named, such as the main iwan, Imam Zamin’s tomb near the Alai Darwaza, and the general countryside of Lado Sarai (greater Mehrauli).
viewpoints.\footnote{\textcolor{red}{347} For example, see Add.Or. 4832, 4833, 4831, 4815 and others of the Mehruali area in 'Views by Seeta Ram from Delhi to Tughlikabad Vol. VII' British Library, Asia and Pacific Collections. It must be mentioned here that there are similarities between Daniell’s view of the “Eastern Gate of the Jumma Masjid at Delhi” [ BL P911] and Sita Ram’s view of the Masjid Gate [BL Add.Or. 4809], but the latter’s view is a distant prospect with the entire mosque complex visible behind, while Daniell’s is solely restricted to showcasing the monumentality of the grand gateway with its stepped exterior.} (\textbf{Figure 4.5 View of the Qutub by Sita Ram}) By 1815, Daniell’s drawings were in circulation in Delhi and it is possible that by then, most travelers from England to the Indian subcontinent would have known the contents of \textit{Oriental Scenery}. Thus, while we have evidence of other sketches and copies from \textit{Oriental Scenery} in circulation the signed and labeled versions by Ghulam Ali Khan can easily be attested as primary versions, which spawned these subsidiary copies.

\section*{Other Topographical Works}

By 1824, Ghulam Ali Khan readied a set of topographical views of Delhi and its environs of which there are two extant folios. The first painting depicting the shrine of the saint Bu Ali Qalandar at Panipat (dated 1822) is a similarly sized folio executed in light watercolor wash but with a view into the main courtyard of the complex.\footnote{\textcolor{red}{348} BL Add Or. 4693.Inscribed beneath in ink in Urdu and Nagari: 'naqsha-i dargah-i hazrat Shah Sharaf Bu 'Ali Qalandar kasbai Panipat'; and in English: 'A View of the Durgau, Shau Shurruf Bohullee Kullundur, Dhur Paneeput drawn in the year A.D. 1822. By Golaum Allee Khan.'} The second folio is a southeast view of the Red Fort across the river Jamuna dated to 1824.\footnote{\textcolor{red}{349} Collection of William Dalrymple.} Both views are labeled in a cursive Urdu, Devnagari, and English probably in the hand of the buyer/patron, attributing the painting to Ghulam Ali Khan. It is not surprising that Ghulam Ali Khan’s own signature is omitted in these folios. There are a wide number of topographical drawings of buildings of Delhi executed on a large-scaled format similar to the Panipat shrine and Red Fort views that depict the ‘lived’ aspect...
of these buildings and their visual experience in 19th century Delhi. These were all unmistakably produced in the style of Ghulam Ali Khan who seems to have been the sole interlocutor of topographical painting in Delhi in the first quarter of the nineteenth century.

Through numerous topographical paintings created in Delhi between 1820 and 1825, we can assume that Ghulam Ali worked with a retainer of artists that primarily consisted of his son, Mazhar Ali Khan (active 1825-40) and nephew, Mirza Shah Rukh Beg (active 1840s). The compositions of the various paintings allow us to infer that supporting artists were responsible for drawing the basic frame and details of the architectural monument, while Ghulam Ali Khan added details of figures and general interest to the picture. This process also explains the consistent use of a standard architectural view in all topographical works by the painter, with subtle changes in the surroundings. Two versions of the Mausoleum of Safdar Jang, the Nawab wazir of Muhammad Shah between 1719-1748, exemplify this process in greater detail. The first view painted between 1820-25 depicts the mausoleum as a hub of activity for local visitors.\(^\text{350}\) (Figure 4.6) The surrounding area of the mausoleum is made up of impeccably manicured lawns that are being worked on by Indian gardeners. In addition, the working fountains in the central tank along the access to the mausoleum and the presence of local tourists in the picture - all indicating an ongoing maintenance of the site. A group of British soldiers along the base of the picture act as the intermediaries directing the view of the mausoleum as an object of antiquarian interest.

\(^{350}\) BL Add.Or.1810. See below.
A close copy of this view, also likely to have been prepared under Ghulam Ali Khan’s guidance, shows a similar sweeping perspective of the front façade of the mausoleum of Safdar Jang but this time around with a slightly modified exterior setting.\textsuperscript{351} (Figure 4.7) The architectural detail of the building remains consistent, but the front lawn now appears as a furrowed grassy patch lined with overgrown bushes on either side and the central tank is missing its fountains. The planting is irregular and the garden site seems to be in use for commercial planting as indicated by the banana plantation to the extreme left of the picture.\textsuperscript{352} A few gardeners can be spotted at work and others carrying bales of cut grass; however, the primary figures in the view are made up of a group of local soldiers and residents.

Both views of the mausoleum convey the degree to which Ghulam Ali Khan had adapted the conventions of European landscape painting to create interest in an architectural view, by populating the building with figures and modifying its context. Ghulam Ali Khan’s appreciation of the sensibility of topographical painting draws upon the picturesque mode of visual representation as it became popular in Britain in the 18\textsuperscript{th} century. Even as the movement took a pragmatic concern with land and rural life and molded it into a romantic vision centered on the individual’s engagement with nature, its most visually compelling aspects focused on the creation of a historical narrative vis-à-vis landscape painting, where the depiction of ruins in nature

\textsuperscript{351} SB92/6, RIBA, London. Illustrated in Princes and Painters, (2012) Cat. 68 and 67, 158.

\textsuperscript{352} I have explored the multiple use of Mughal gardens, as recreational grounds and commercial plantations in the 19th century elsewhere. See Yuthika Sharma, From Land to Landscape: Strategies of landscape planning in imperial Delhi, 1860-1911. Unpublished thesis, Harvard University Graduate School of Design, 2005.
elicited both pleasure and rumination. By reconfiguring the exterior surroundings of historical buildings through modulating its surrounding landscape, Ghulam Ali Khan’s paintings cater to the antiquarian and historical interest of the city’s local and European residents. The painter’s early topographical work is distinctive in his experimentation with light washes of color, loose brush strokes in keeping with Western painting trends.

From City to Court: His Majesty’s Painter

Ghulam Ali Khan’s familial link with Ghulam Murtaza Khan has been presented here largely on the basis of anecdotal evidence and a number of paintings that situate him in the circle of courtly production in the second quarter of the nineteenth century. It is possible that the painter was Ghulam Murtaza Khan’s son and was also trained at the Mughal court under his father’s watchful eye. While Ghulam Murtaza Khan can be credited with humanizing the Mughal emperor with an air of calculated formality, Ghulam Ali Khan’s royal portraits collapsed the air of formal distance, enabling the viewer to visually engage with the Mughal imperial portrait.


354 Much of this genealogical link is suggested by a verification of the family tree provided to me by Firoz Bhai (Firzo-udDin) who claimed descent from the family of Mansur, the famous wild-life painter in the court of Jahangir. Firoz Bhai’s genealogy is also used by experts in the British Library and the V&A as a research tool. Throughout his life, Firoz Bhai tried to contact the BL and the V&A through letters stating his position as a miniaturist descended from the Delhi school of artists. His unflagging determination about his own status and his role in miniature painting necessitate more than a tacit acknowledgement.
A pair of portraits painted on ivory showing Akbar II and Prince Mirza Salim offers a good example of Ghulam Ali’s approach to Mughal portraiture. (Figure 4.8: Portrait pair of Akbar II and Mirza Salim) In February-March 1827 Delhi was abuzz with the visit of William Pitt, the 1st Earl Amherst of Aracan, the Governor General of Fort William, Calcutta from 1823-1828.\footnote{See Archer, \textit{Company Drawings in the India Office Library} (1972), 205.}

As the highest representative of British authority in India, Lord and Lady Amherst’s visit seems to have generated a number of significant commissions at Delhi ranging from jewelry, to shawls, other decorative objects as well as miniature paintings. That Ghulam Ali Khan was asked to paint miniature portraits of the Mughal emperor Akbar II and his son for Lord Amherst is an indication of the artist’s prominence and prestige within the Mughal court. A record of Ghulam Ali Khan’s signature “His Majesty’s Painter” on the frames of the watercolor miniatures indicates that by 1827 the painter had been given a royal status.\footnote{The original frames, which contained the Persian signature of Ghulam Ali Khan are now lost. In my personal communication with Jerry Losty, he notes that the ivories were bought by the BL in 1998 after the objects had been on loan and were missing their frames. He tried to trace them through private papers of Lord Amherst, but was unable to do so. We only have Mildred Archer’s word about the Persian inscription by the painter and William Pitt’s appended note.}

\begin{quote}
The Portrait of the Lord of the World and its Inhabitants, the Prince of the Universe & all that it contains, Mirza Mahommed Selim Shah Behadoor. The 22nd Year of the accession. 

By Gholam Ali Khan, His Majesty's Painter. 

A very good likeness of Prince Selim (one of the sons of the King of Delhi or Great Mogul) as I saw him at Delhi and elsewhere in 1827. A.’ [The records of the Persian inscriptions by the artist were translated in Amherst’s hand.]
\end{quote}
This glimpse into Ghulam Ali Khan’s employment at the Mughal court adds further insight into the artist’s multidimensional career. The two ivory portraits depict the Mughal emperor and his son seated on ornamental chairs looking out at the viewer, a rare occurrence for an imperial portrait. Akbar Shah’s portrait is the first instance when a Mughal emperor was portrayed on a European-styled throne chair with a *huqqa* snake in his hand fully facing the viewer. As we have discussed in previous chapters, the front face profile had become the new norm for Mughal portraiture at Delhi. However, this portrait of the emperor on ivory is without the explicit format of imperial portraits from previous generations where a strict spatial and formal distance was maintained between the emperor and his subjects. The realism of the emperor’s portrait, seated on a chair making full eye contact with the viewer was a remarkable extension of earlier conventions of imperial portraiture. Ghulam Ali Khan also conveys a sense of discomfort in the emperor’s posture, as his large bulkily clothed frame seems to precariously balance itself on the slim frame of the chair. This awkwardness in the rendered figure is further enhanced by the somewhat vacuous look on the emperor’s face and the rather overpowering girth of the fur trimmed coat that nearly covers all of the Regency styled decorative chair underneath. Akbar II holds a *huqqa* in his left hand, his feet resting together on a fabric footstool and a folder with a

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357. A prominent example of a seated imperial portrait on a European-styled can be traced back to the reign of Jahangir (r. 1605-1635). Bonham’s Indian and Islamic Sale, April 5, 2011. The *huqqa* first appeared as an imperial accessory within a formal portrait from the reign of Muhammad Shah (r. 1719-1748). For example, see the window (*jharoka*) portrait of Muhammad Shah holding an emerald and the mouthpiece of a *huqqa*, San Diego Museum of Art, Edwin Binney 3rd Collection, 1990:376. For profile portrait of Jahangir seated on a chair see, Crill and Jariwala, ed. *The Indian Portrait, 1560-1880* (National Portrait Gallery, 2010), plate 14.

picture of a Mughal building lying beside him. In a later copy of this portrait done on ivory now in the collection of the Royal Ontario Museum which was possibly also done by Ghulam Ali Khan, there are signs of correction as the artist has blotted out the bulky outline of Akbar II’s shoulders to balance the figural proportions. (Figure 4.9) Thus, where formal structure and polite detachment had been the norm for imperial portraiture till the eighteenth-century, this seated portrait of Akbar Shah breached formal distance creating a sense of uneasy familiarity. The nimbus around the emperor’s head ensures his quasi-divine status the space between royal figure and the viewer seems to collapse, enabling the portrait to function as a benign marker of familiarity.359

Mirza Salim, Akbar II’s younger son, is also portrayed on a companion ivory plaque, with a huqqa snake in his right hand. It is difficult to assess the number of works Ghulam Ali Khan executed for the Mughal emperor Akbar II during his reign from 1806-1836. As the two watercolor ivory portraits show, the artist was comfortable with the use of full-face portraiture to depict Mughal royalty. First conceptualized by Ghulam Murtaza Khan, the portrait pair of Akbar II and Mirza Salim was replete with political overtones. Despite the general consensus for Abu Zafar Akbar II’s eldest son as Wali ‘ahd, the heir apparent, the emperor continued to publicly endorse Mirza Salim as his favorite successor.360 Thus Ghulam Ali Khan’s pairing of Akbar II with Mirza Salim was clearly reflective of the mood of the Mughal court, and, indeed, of the


360 See Chapter 3.
emperor himself. The portraits were clearly aimed at disclosing the wish of the emperor to the Governor General and were a tacit rejection of Abu Zafar’s future claim to the throne of Delhi.

**At Zafar’s Court: Inscribing a History of the Throne of Delhi**

Since his accession to the Mughal throne following the death of Akbar II in 1837, Abu Zafar who ruled as Bahadur Shah II appears as an ambitious ruler who sought to articulate Mughal imperial identity during a period when British paymasters controlled Mughal affairs. Zafar’s role as a patron, an Urdu poet, and as the historically tragic figure of the last Mughal ruler who died in exile, has received much attention in recent years. In this section, I focus on Ghulam Ali Khan’s association with Zafar’s court to offer another perspective into the ruler’s patronage of painters and his quest to inscribe Mughal history into popular memory.

Ghulam Ali Khan’s instrumental portrayal of Abu Zafar as Bahadur Shah II carries a sense of urgency in the face of depleting Mughal authority at Delhi. Bahadur Shah II’s *jashan* or accession portrait carries his title, *Abu Zafar Siraj al-Din Muhammad Bahadur Shah Padshah Ghazi* is a remarkably intimate group portrait of Zafar and his sons that positions the viewer within physical proximity of the emperor. (Figure 4.10) Three known versions of the accession painting exist, though only one bears Ghulam Ali Khan’s signature. The emperor is positioned

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on a throne seat in the makeshift location of the Tasbih Khana of the Red Fort, against the marble screen directly below the motif of the Scales of Justice. This unconventional location in the palace, which encloses the marble walkway of the Audience Hall with its central spine of the water channel *nahr-i bahisht*, seems to have been selected for its gilt marble screen with the motif of the Scales of Justice.\(^{363}\) The importance of the motif of the Scales of Justice as a symbol of Mughal authority was long standing; it was used in seventeenth century paintings of Jahangir and Shah Jahan to highlight the emperor’s persona as a just king.\(^{364}\) In the painting, Bahadur Shah’s sons Mirza Fakhruddin and Mirza Fakhrundah flank him on either side. In keeping with a new convention devised for the ivory portrait of Akbar II from 1827, Bahadur Shah is also seen holding a *huqqa* snake in his right hand.\(^{365}\) Nearby an attendant Mirza Mughal-Beg Khan Bahadur fans the emperor with a *morchhal*. Bahadur Shah’s preference to see Fakhruddin as his heir apparent is amplified by the absence of the eldest son Mirza Dara Bakht, the rightful heir, who is omitted in this group portrait.\(^{366}\) Thus, Ghulam Ali Khan’s accession portrait of Zafar projects both imperial authority and his personal vision for the dynastic continuation of the line of Timur.\(^{367}\)

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\(^{363}\) The painter Mazhar Ali Khan’s depiction of the Tasbih Khana dating to 1840-44 seems to suggest that this location was regularly used as a throne platform. See British Library, Add.Or.5475, f.30.


\(^{365}\) See Chapter 3, Staking Territory.

\(^{366}\) Mirza Dara Bakht, the eldest son of Bahadur Shah Zafar was recognized as the official heir until his death in 1849 and a few years later in 1852, according to rumor, Mirza Fakhruddin died of poisoning. See Leach (1998), plate no.45.

\(^{367}\) As Jerry Losty suggests, the painting is both about imperial splendor and dynastic inheritance. See Losty (2010), plate 58.
Ghulam Ali Khan’s work for Zafar highlights the ruler’s deep interest in illustrated dynastic histories of the Mughals. In 1850, Bahadur Shah Zafar commissioned the renowned Urdu poet of Delhi Mirza Asadullah Khan Ghalib to write a history of the Mughal dynasty. As Hali, Ghalib’s friend and author of the book *Memoir of Ghalib* tells us, the work titled *Partawistan* (The Land of Radiance) and divided into two volumes. The first section beginning with the creation of the world up till the reign of Humayun (i.e.1556) was titled *Mihr i Nimroz* (The Sun at Midday) and published in 1854. The second volume, which has remained unpublished and probably left incomplete was to begin with the reign of Akbar up till the reign of Bahadur Shah Zafar with the title *Mah i Nimmah* (the Moon at Mid-month). 

Ghalib’s second volume may have remained incomplete, but there is evidence that Zafar also commissioned a number of illustrated dynastic histories through his trusted minister Hakim Ahsanullah Khan. A good example is a Persian manuscript illustrated by Ghulam Ali Khan titled, *Mir’at-al-ashbah-i-salatin asman-jah* (roughly translated as the *Portraits of exalted emperors*) from A.H 1267 (A.D. 1851) containing lithographs of chronological tables of the Mughal dynasty starting from Timur (BM Or.182, Fol. 57; 9 in by 51/4, 13 lines, lithographed in

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369 There are many extant examples of illustrated volumes of dynastic tables in public and private collections across the US and Europe. A bound volume containing versified chronograms, tables, and large portraits of Mughal rulers commissioned by Hakim Ahsanullah Khan is the most complete example of a royal commission of an illustrated dynastic history. San Diego Museum of Art 1990:405.
plain ‘nasta’liq’).\textsuperscript{370} The tables list the dates and places of the ruler’s birth and death as well as their portraits and representations of their tombs and are authored by one Muhammad Fakhruddin Husain Beg.\textsuperscript{371} Archival records indicate that this list was compiled with the assistance of Hakim Muhammad Ahsanullah Khan and illustrated by the painters Ghulam Ali Khan and Babar Ali Khan. The paintings are stated as being faithful reproductions of ‘original paintings’ indicating an earlier set of dynastic portraits that served as the base for the lithographed version.\textsuperscript{372} Spread over seven folios, the tables also contain versified chronograms by Lala Saman Lal, the poetical name of Farhat.\textsuperscript{373} More important, this manuscript also includes the names and portraits of non-Mughal rulers of Delhi serving as a more focused history of Delhi, rather than of the Mughal dynasty. For example, the inclusion of Sher Shah and his son Salim Shah, Tahmasp Safavi, Nadir Shah, Ahmad Shah Durrani and his son Timur Shah bar this from being a purist history of the Mughal dynasty – instead, it seems to be an attempt to recreate the history of the occupation of the throne of Delhi.

\textsuperscript{370} My translation is preliminary.


\textsuperscript{372} Rieu, \textit{Catalogue of Persian Manuscripts} (1888), 285.

\textsuperscript{373} It is not clear whether this individual Farhat is Mirza Talim Beg Farhat (d. unknown), a friend of the renowned poet Brindaban Das Khwushgu or Maulavi Muhammad Miran Farhat (d.1725) or another poet active during the reign of Bahadur Shah II. This is an aspect I am still researching. However, if the poet is any one of the two known Farhats from the 18th century, then at least some of the chronograms would not be composed by Farhat. See Nabi Hadi, \textit{Dictionary of Indo-Persian Literature} (Delhi: IGNCA, 1994), 173.
The precedent for a history of the throne of Delhi is provided by a similar list compiled earlier in 1839 by Sayyid Ahmad Khan titled *Jam-i Jam* (Jamshed’s Cup), lithographed at Agra in 1840, which listed both Pathan and Mughal rulers of Delhi.\(^{374}\) According to Rieu, the table starts with Timur and is immediately followed by Nusrat Shah Lodi who ascended the throne of Delhi in A.H 801 (A.D. 1399) going on to list the Pathan rulers of Delhi up till Ibrahim Lodi (d. 1526). This is followed by a list of Mughal rulers beginning with Babur (No.14, reigned 1526-30) and ending with the Bahadur Shah II.\(^{375}\) Sayyid Ahmad Khan’s history draws upon Delhi’s urban heritage to create a topographical history of Delhi. It elevates the importance of place over dynastic history popularizing the city’s role as an imperial capital over centuries. A few years later in 1847, Sayyid Ahmad Khan’s notable publication *Asar-al Sanadid* was a more detailed ethnography of Delhi that followed in the tradition of European commissions such as the *Sair-ul-Manazil* (An Excursion Through the Dwellings) by Mirza Sangin Beg (active 19\(^{th}\) century)\(^{376}\) and

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\(^{376}\) Hadi (1994) 543. C. M. Naim, ‘Syed Ahmad and His Two Books Called ‘Asar-al-Sanadid’’ *Modern Asian Studies*, 2010, 1-40. Naim sahib dates this manuscript to just after the death of the Prince Mirza Jahangir in 1821 based on the colophon. Two copies of the manuscript are known - one dedicated to Charles Metcalfe, the British Resident of Delhi and the other dedicated to William Fraser (British Library, Or.1762). Also see in pages 19-22, his analysis of Zainul Abidin Shirwani’s *Bustan-al-Siyahat* (‘Garden of Voyaging’) written in Persia in 1833-4 and Maulavi Abdul Qadir’s (1780–1849) *Waqa‘-i-Abdul Qadir Khani* (1831) which also contained a description of Delhi.
brought together the genealogical history of Delhi’s occupation (*Jam-i Jam*) with an interest in urban ethnography creating a new format for the perception of the city.\(^{377}\)

**Into a culture of Print: Ghulam Ali Khan’s family atelier**

The illustrations of the *Asar al-Sanadid* exemplify the visual culture surrounding topographical painting in nineteenth century Delhi, and the added onus of architectural documentation that painters also dealt with as their works were entered into ‘official’ histories of Delhi’s urban landscape.\(^{378}\) Ghulam Ali Khan’s topographical works had a central part to play in the transition of painters into illustrators in the 1840s, when local presses began to flourish in Delhi.\(^{379}\) The *Asar al-Sanadid* was one of the most extensively illustrated lithographed publications with a hundred and thirty woodcut illustrations.\(^{380}\) (Figure 4.11) The illustrations were derived from

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\(^{378}\) As Sayyid Ahmad Khan wrote in his preface, his aim was to provide a true account of Delhi and its surroundings. Presumably Thomas Metcalfe in his new role President of the newly formed Delhi Archaeological Society saw himself as a steward of Delhi’s architectural heritage. The journal of the Delhi College headed by Dr. Aloys Sprenger, remarked ‘This book is excellent and is of great importance to the Society that has been founded at Delhi for the furtherance of researches into the old buildings of the past’. As cited in Troll (1972), 135. Cited by Naim, ‘Syed Ahmad and His Two Books,’ (2010), 14.

\(^{379}\) For an overview of the publishing network surrounding the earliest presses in Delhi such as the Delhi Gazette (ca. 1833) and the Delhi Urdu Akhbar (ca. 1840) see Margrit Pernau, “The *Dehli Urdu Akhbar*: Between Persian Akhbarat and English Newspapers” in *The Annual of Urdu Studies*, 105-131.

\(^{380}\) Som Prakash Verma, “Delhi Cityscapes: 19th-Century Lithographs from Urdu Books,” *MARG* 56 No. 3 (2005): 46-55. The British Library records note that the illustrations were printed through woodcut but most historians including Naim and Verma note that the illustrations were lithographed.
paintings by Mirza Shahrukh Beg and Faiz Ali Khan who were both part of Ghulam Ali Khan’s family.\textsuperscript{381} An inscription on a nineteenth century portrait of Raja Ishwari Sen of Mandi by Mirza Shahrukh Beg tells us that the painter was Ghulam Ali Khan’s nephew.\textsuperscript{382} Faiz Ali Khan’s relationship with Ghulam Ali Khan is less substantiated, but the painter was most likely Ghulam Ali Khan’s brother.\textsuperscript{383} From what we know about the illustrations, it is likely that both painters were also hired as printmakers for the 130 illustrations since the task of transcribing painting onto tablets would have required an equally skillful hand.\textsuperscript{384} The third important painter who was undoubtedly influential in the illustrative program of the \textit{Asar al-Sanadid} was the family artist, Mazhar Ali Khan (active 1840s), whose work on an illustrated compendium of Delhi’s urban and cultural life authored by the British Resident Thomas Metcalfe (r.1835-53), titled \textit{Reminiscences of Imperial Delhie} (completed 1843), has received much attention.\textsuperscript{385} Furthermore, it is possible to suggest with confidence that Mazhar Ali Khan’s own topographical expertise was shaped by his apprenticeship with Ghulam Ali Khan as a number of paintings in Metcalfe’s \textit{Delhie} book

\textsuperscript{381} See Appendix.

\textsuperscript{382} San Diego Museum of Art, Edwin Binney 3rd Collection, 1990:408. Here the painter signs himself as the nephew of Ghulam Ali Khan.

\textsuperscript{383} Here, I refer to Firoz Bhai’s genealogy of Delhi painters that was also used by archivists in the British Library in the 1960s. The oldest records of this association exist in the handwritten archival records of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

\textsuperscript{384} A parallel process existed with paper manuscripts, where calligraphers and copyists were regularly hired to transcribe lithographs, thus reabsorbing these individuals into the process of printmaking. Naim (2010), 11.

and elsewhere reveal. A good example is a view of the shrine of the saint Bu Ali Qalandar at Panipat (BL Add.Or.4669), which is based on a much larger view of the shrine painted by Ghulam Ali Khan in 1823 (BL Add.Or.554). Mazhar Ali Khan’s view largely replicates the latter’s painting with minor modifications. Mirza Shahrukh Beg and Faiz Ali Khan’s illustrations in the Asar al-Sanadid produced a mere four years later than Metcalfe’s Delhi book also draw upon the shared legacy of topographical paintings created in Ghulam Ali Khan’s studio, but are also a nod to Mazhar Ali Khan’s contemporary fashioning of urban sites of Delhi in the Delhi book. Sayyid Ahmad Khan’s dedication of the 1847 book to Metcalfe is lavished in four pages, and no doubt the author was conscious of the visual impact of his books in light of Metcalfe’s Delhi book.

Recent research suggests that since Sayyid Ahmad Khan only arrived in Delhi in February 1846, he probably compiled the majority of the manuscript while serving as a Munsif in Fatehpur Sikri at Agra. He published the manuscript of the Asar al-Sanadid in three phases through his family press in 1847, which would have left him with very little time to conduct field research with the

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386 For example, “St. James Church” c. 140-44, British Library, Add. Or. 5475, f.8, is based on a view of the church dated to 1827-8, ascribed to Ghulam Ali Khan. J.P. Losty, in his analysis of Mazhar Ali Khan, acknowledges that many drawings “…use the same compositional views as, and are clearly based on, drawings from earlier sets associated with Gulam Ali Khan…” J.P. Losty, Delhi 360°, 2012, 28.

387 In Mazhar Ali Khan’s version, the painting is rendered in a darker tone, the shrine’s forecourt has a sandstone paving and the grouping of figures is different.

388 In the 1847 version, Sayyid Ahmad Khan’s dedication to Thomas Metcalfe in Urdu prose and Persian verse ran four pages long. See Naim sahib’s suggestion of the possible motivations guiding Sayyid Ahmad Khan’s dedication to Metcalfe in Naim, ‘Syed Ahmad and His Two Books’ (2010), 4, 15.

two painters in his retinue. I want to suggest here that the process of illustrating *Asar al-Sanadid* was not in any way a leisurely one. On the contrary, I suggest that the illustrations bear all the signs of an expediently executed commission and borrowed freely from the topographical models initially adapted by Ghulam Ali Khan.

As an example, I want to bring back into discussion the iconic view of the Qutub Minar painted by Ghulam Ali Khan based on Daniell’s aquatint (Figure 4.4). Faiz Ali Khan’s drawing of the Qutub in the *Asar al-Sanadid* uses the familiar southwest prospect to construct the view, therefore, making use of a pre-existing visual model of the site. In its composition it also closely follows an earlier sketch by Mazhar Ali Khan in the *Delhie* book where the focus falls more squarely on the Minar. Faiz Ali Khan’s view also incorporates adjustments made to the site in the early 1840s. (Figure 4.12: View of the Qutub, Faiz Ali Khan) It records the removal of a redesigned cupola from atop the Minar in the early 1840s to a nearby hillock where it was popularly referred to as Smith’s Folly. The calligraphic panels placed over the painted surface detailing the inscriptions on the Minar surface also seem like an overthought, more likely to have been the work of a calligrapher than the artist. So while Mazhar Ali Khan’s view of the Minar

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390 The cupola designed by Robert Smith was placed on the Minar by 1829 and the removed to a hillock near the tower in the 1840s, in the face of public criticism. It was commonly referred to as ‘Smith’s Folly.’ Ghulam Ali Khan’s view of the Qutub Minar excluded the cupola, which was damaged by an earthquake in 1803. Mazhar Ali Khan’s 1843 view of the Qutub Minar maintains the southwest orientation brought the view up to date to depict a newly designed cupola by Robert Smith. The tentative instatement and then dismantling of a cupola with an “…octagonal top of sisso-wood supporting a flag staff…” atop the Minar was one an instance of an intervention in the site that was much publicly debated. The erection of a flag staff was considered inconsistent with the plan of the conservation of the site, and “…appeared altogether to be an innovation, which, when viewed as a matter of taste, or with reference to the feelings of the Mahomedan Court and population of Dehli, has little to recommend it.” The Delhi Archaeological Society was allowed to “…entertain a small establishment at an expense of 25 Rs. per mensem, for the care of the Minar and adjacent grounds.” *Journal of the Archaeological Society of Delhi*, 1849-1850.
was made prior to the removal of the cupola, Faiz Ali Khan’s view clearly aimed at being the most recent depiction of the site. (Figure 4.13 Mazhar Ali Khan’s View of the Qutub in the Delhie Book) However, it relies on the visuality of a much older composition continuing the legacy of paintings into print.

Ghulam Ali Khan continued to serve as court artist for Bahadur Shah Zafar as late as 1852 but his presence at the Mughal court was fairly intermittent. Court artists and poets at Delhi were paid an annual tankhwa (salary) and expected to produce paintings throughout the year to coincide with the festivals such as Id and Nauroz, as well as the annual accession celebration of the Mughal emperor.\(^{391}\) Owing to the poor state of the treasury royal retainers had dwindled to such an extent that artists and poets often had to petition for their salaries. In the backdrop of a financially constrained Mughal court, Ghulam Ali Khan’s decision to work in the surrounding regions of Delhi yielded some of the most remarkable commissions at the regional courts of Alwar and Jhajjar.

IV. B

Ghulam Ali Khan outside Delhi: The Alwar and Jhajjar Connection

This section of the chapter is focused on the later part of Ghulam Ali Khan’s career in the regional outposts of Alwar and Jhajjar. Through a first-time investigation into paintings at the princely archives at Alwar, it presents a look into the hitherto unknown works that were undoubtedly produced as a result of Ghulam Ali Khan’s tenure at the Rajput court. The circumstances under which Ghulam Ali Khan was invited to work at Alwar are not known as such, but it is possible to recreate a sense of the cultural aspirations of the Alwar court in the nineteenth century, which made it possible for him to be welcomed there.

Until 1775, when Pratap Singh Naruka formed Alwar as an autonomous state, Alwar had been a part of Jaipur. Though it is not possible to assess the extent to which Jaipur artists continued to impact the breakaway group of artists at Alwar, it is plausible to assume that Alwar artists continued to interact with court artists at Jaipur. Mughal ideas and aesthetics had always been practiced in the Rajput courts ever since the Mughal alliance with Amber in 1562, but were particularly prominent in the Rajput schools of painting such as Jaipur, Bikaner and Kota. For example, at Mewar certain works produced from the eighteenth century onwards came to be

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392 Pratap Singh’s representatives continued to hold important posts in the Jaipur court even after Alwar’s formal secession from Jaipur. There is precious little written about the connection between the Alwar and Jaipur courts especially in terms of their arts. For an overview of the formation of the Rajputana State of Alwar see Edward S. Haynes, ‘Imperial Impact on Rajputana: The Case of Alwar, 1775-1850’ Modern Asian Studies, Vol. 12, No. 3 (1978): 419-453.
classified as the “Dilli Kalam” referring to a distinctive sensibility of Delhi painters.\(^{393}\) A detailed examination of this interaction lies outside the immediate scope of this dissertation; however, the internal politics of the Rajputana States and the late Mughal court provide an important subtext for this study.

Alwar’s continuing efforts to annex Jaipur, while portraying an outward allegiance to the Mughal court of Shah Alam II, is largely indicative of its desire to assert itself as an autonomous entity.\(^ {394}\) In theory it became a protectorate \textit{jagir} of the flailing Mughal court but this symbolic imperial sanction enabled Pratap Singh to buttress his independent power as ‘Rao Raja’ of Alwar.\(^ {395}\) In the nineteenth century Alwar was subject to a territorial contestation led by the rival factions under Banni Singh (r.1815-26(disputed); 1826-57) and Balwant Singh (r. 1815-26).\(^ {396}\) By 1845, Banni Singh emerged as the sole ruler of the Alwar region following Balwant Singh’s demise and yet again found favor with the British. He is known have initiated a widespread political and economic restructuring based on the model in practice at the British Residency at Delhi and even

\(^{393}\) Molly Emma Aitken, \textit{The intelligence of tradition in Rajput court painting}, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 50, 71. Aitken illustrates how the idea of a “kalam” could be considered the closest approximation to the English word “style”. A \textit{dilli kalam} referred not only to paintings acquired from Delhi but also to the Delhi brush or Delhi way of painting, in large part, signifying an approach towards painting practiced in the imperial Mughal court that was noticeably distinct from the paintings prepared in the courts of Rajasthan.

\(^{394}\) James Tod, \textit{Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan}, 3: 1362-3; Jadunath Sarkar, \textit{Fall of the Mughal Empire}, 3: 120-1.


\(^{396}\) Haynes (1978), 451.
acquired officials based in Delhi to work in the Alwar court. This process of administrative assimilation of the Delhi system possibly signaled a larger epistemological mimesis on the part of the Alwar court and its effort to legitimize itself through the lens of a Perso-European intellectual sphere. It was probably in this spirit that Banni Singh invited Delhi artists and calligraphers to work on a copy of Sa’di’s *Gulistan*. (Figure 4.14 Folio from the Alwar Gulistan).

The Alwar *Gulistan*

By 1840 Ghulam Ali Khan, now a senior artist probably in his late sixties had been lured to the regional court of Alwar under the patronage of Maharaja Banni Singh of Alwar (1806-57) where he worked on a monumental commission of a copy of the *Gulistan* of Sa’di. This was to become one of the most significant commissions of his career, which was consequential for the transmission of Perso-European artistic culture as practiced in Delhi, into the surrounding regional courts such as Alwar and Jhajjar. The Gulistan took all of twelve years to be written by Agha Mirza, the principal calligrapher for the project who worked at a pace of fifteen days per page. Delhi based artists such as Natha Shah Punjabi and Karim Abdul Rehman were responsible for the design and painting of decorative medallions, the intricacy of the work requiring two-four days for the completion of each medallion in the text. Karim Abdul Rehman was also responsible

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397 For example, Banni Singh imported Amin Ullah Khan, who was the former *sheristadar* of the Delhi Sessions Court, employing him to implement a Delhi Residency-styled restructuring of the judicial, army and revenue collecting sectors.

398 No. 2078, Government Museum, Alwar, Rajasthan.

for the binding of the book. For the illustrations, Ghulam Ali Khan worked along with the Alwar artist Baldev to create seventeen colored illustrations in the two hundred and eighty-seven page document.\textsuperscript{400} Despite some of the artists being hired as casual labor, the task would have involved a long-term association of artists with the project. Though Ghulam Ali Khan worked closely on the Alwar \textit{Gulistan} between 1840 and 1849, it is difficult to identify his distinctive stamp in the illustrations suggesting that he would have been itinerant in Alwar and the neighboring states during this period.\textsuperscript{401} However, certain folios of the \textit{Gulistan} can be most assuredly attributed to him based on pictorial evidence from other paintings in the Alwar collection. A case in point is the incorporation of topographical settings drawing upon actual architectural sites that form the backdrop of folios in the \textit{Gulistan}. As I have discussed elsewhere in greater detail, the fourteenth illustration appended to the story “Of Love and Youth” is set against the \textit{baoli} or stepwell at the shrine complex of the Sufi saint Nizamuddin Auliya. The architectural view of the \textit{baoli} is clearly derived from a set of topographical drawings prepared by Ghulam Ali Khan at Alwar.\textsuperscript{402} A further testament to his skill as a topographical painter is the commission of a large scale view of the Alwar \textit{gaddi} (palace) by Banni Singh which can be provisionally dated to 1840-45 \textsuperscript{403} and a corresponding view of the back of the palace which is present in another private collection in Germany.


\textsuperscript{402} For copyright reasons it is not possible to display this image. For a further discussion of the Alwar \textit{Gulistan} see, Yuthika Sharma, “In the Company of the Mughal Court: Delhi Painter Ghulam Ali Khan” in Dalrymple and Sharma, eds. \textit{Princes and Painters} (2012), 41-51, especially 48-49.

\textsuperscript{403} Yuthika Sharma, “In the Company of the Mughal Court” (2012), p. 48.
Alwar copies of the Fraser Album

My investigation of the Alwar archive reveals that Alwar artists had access to Ghulam Ali Khan’s repertoire of paintings and especially those works which that featured in albums made for William Fraser and James Skinner almost two decades earlier at Delhi. Ranging from group portraits of holy men and fakirs to individual studies of religious dignitaries, nineteenth-century Alwar artists ostensibly internalized Ghulam Ali Khan’s techniques of portraiture and topographical painting. It is possible to suggest that these Alwar copies of Fraser album folios were first in circulation at Alwar court prior to the 1840s brought over to Alwar by the Nawab Ahmad Baksh Khan, a close business associate of William Fraser. The important stature of Ahmad Baksh Khan’s as the agent to the Alwar Raja Bakhtawar Singh (r.1791-1815) is crucial here. As the Alwar agent to the Mughal court at Delhi, the Nawab worked to support the cause of Balwant Singh, the rival claimant to the gaddi seat of Alwar. As an inexorable part of the Mughal court at Delhi in the first quarter of the nineteenth century, Ahmad Baksh Khan’s tenure at Delhi coincided with William Fraser’s when the latter was settlement officer and later British Resident at Delhi (See Appendix D). Fraser’s commission of portraits and genre scenes involving Delhi residents and popular personalities is one of the most significant bodies of works prepared for an East India company servant in India. These commissions lie at the center of a crucial phase in the development of the qualitative attributes of the form of Perso-European painting practiced in Delhi in the first half of the 19th century.

404 See my discussion of Nawab Ahmed Baksh Khan and William Fraser in Chapter 5.

405 See Chapter 5 for further details on the Fraser Album.
Our evidence of an earlier phase of interaction between Delhi and Alwar painters suggests that Alwar artists began to experiment with the dispersed copies of William Fraser’s collection as early as 1815 such that the process of the making of paintings at Delhi and Alwar was roughly contemporaneous. This raises exciting possibilities for considering the role Alwar might have played in shaping the content of the Fraser Album, but my research on this aspect is ongoing. In the first instance, let us look at an Alwar copy of a painting created at Delhi. This is a group portrait of ‘Seven ascetics and an attendant’ comprising figural portraits of the mendicant Sardhaj from Brindaban, Mathura attributed to Faiz Ali Khan. The Alwar copy displays close observation and assimilation on the part of the anonymous Alwar artist (Figure 4.15). The portrait group comprises of Sardhaj with his follower Ram Dhani, who is seen holding a parasol and seven other religious figures nearby. The ascetic on the far left is shown in profile holding a book. He is standing next to a seated figure accompanied by five monkeys and three dogs. Behind him stands an ascetic wearing a large turban and is dressed in a long saffron colored tunic, with a tripundra, three-striped tilak on his forehead holding a staff. The central frame of the painting is occupied by a group of three ascetics, who form the subject of another group study by Alwar painters (Figure 4.16) perhaps with a view to practice and perfect the larger group composition. Within the present painting, the middle group comprises of an ascetic with a

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407 The forehead mark here consists of three white parallel lines applied horizontally. These are further embellished with a dot of ashes placed in the center and another dot of red vermillion “sindura” placed below it. The same devotee (Size 9.5 x 7.5 cm) appears in a solitary portrait painted between 1815-1820 in the Ehrenfeld Collection. See Joachim Bautze, Interaction of Cultures: Indian and Western Painting 1780-1910, (Virginia, 1998), plate. 5, p.60.

408 For copyright reasons, it is not possible to display this painting.
white beard wearing a long tassled top holding a stick; he is flanked by another figure with a turban and a large waistband with tassels on one side and another man playing a *bina* (blow pipe) while balancing a large *potli* sack on his left shoulder. Even more remarkable is the presence in the Alwar archives of a finished version of a group portrait of Sardhaj, the Chaube Brahman, and his followers Ram Dhani and Gopal or “Silu” which was originally commissioned by William Fraser. Here, the trio is rendered within a naturalistic setting – a feature present in a number of portraits commissioned by Fraser.

In replicating the V&A ‘original’ the artist has oversimplified its essential structure in the Alwar copy. The copy exaggerates a number of features which can be associated with the work of the Fraser artists while also utilizing key features employed by Alwar painters. Fraser artists tended to attenuate the figures making them seem disproportionately taller for achieving an appropriate perspectival placement on the paper - a technique that is amplified in the Alwar copy. The delicate modeling of the figures by Fraser artists, which was achieved through a combination of base shade and stippling, was taken on board at Alwar through the use of a lighter base tone. This imparted a sense of plasticity to the modeled figure making it stand apart from its naturalistic surroundings. Alwar artists also tended to thinly outline facial details as did Jaipur painters in the late 18th and early 19th century. The culture of producing copies, thus, was very much oriented with a view to assimilating the work of Fraser artists including that of the painter Ghulam Ali

409 I use the term ‘original’ here to refer to the V&A version, which is clearly earlier than its Alwar counterpart.
Khan, but was inevitably modeled through an aesthetic framework of painting traditions at Alwar. 410

The Jhajjar years

We can now appreciate Ghulam Ali Khan’s capacity to take on multiple private commissions even as he continued to work for the Mughal court. A number of signed paintings indicate that the majority of the last decade of Ghulam Ali Khan’s long-spanning career was spent in Jhajjar, a town not far away from Delhi ruled by a Pathan chief, Nawab Abd-al Rahman Khan (reigned 1845-57). It is possible that the painter was resident in Jhajjar a good three years before the Alwar Gulistan was formally presented to Raja Banni Singh in early 1849. Now a senior artist of over seventy years of age Ghulam Ali Khan seems to have achieved yet another level of recognition as a master artist and as an honorary of the Jhajjar court. 411 It is not clear how the artist came to Jhajjar though a number of factors may have facilitated his employment there. Jhajjar was a British assigned jagir following Lord Lake’s victory over the Marathas in 1803 and since then had been ruled by the descendants of Nijabat Khan, a Pathan of the Bariach tribe. Ghulam Ali Khan’s visit to Jhajjar occurred just a few years after the assumption of rule by the young Nawab Abd-al Rahman Khan (r.1845-1857). 412 The painting depicts a court session and is titled, “Shabih Mubarak Huzur Asad al-Daula Mumtaz al-Mulk Navab Muhammad ‘Abd al-Rahman Khan Bahadur Hazbar Jang Bariach Vali-yi Jhajjar” and signed by the artist as ‘amal

410 A longer exposition of the connection between Delhi and Alwar painting is forthcoming.
411 Personal correspondence, Firoz Bhai, Delhi, January 2010.
412 There is some evidence of a succession dispute preceding Abd-al Rahman’s rule. See IOR/F/4/1455/57345, April 1825-Dec1832. See also India Pol. 21 Jan 1835, draft 12/1835, E/4/742, 795.
Painting the Nawab in darbar in 1849 Ghulam Ali Khan is able to create an aura of restful assuredness about the Nawab seating him on a chair with an elaborately carved and encrusted huqqa snake in his right hand, his right foot resting on a footstool. Through a masterful articulation of form and color, the figure of the Nawab is brought to immediate attention through the use of an oversized huqqa stand situated on a brightly colored geometric patterned cloth base, which draws the eye to the center of the painting and along the length of the huqqa snake to the figure of the Nawab attired in a warm rust colored jama with large flaring pants. The arrangement of the courtiers as well as the musicians and their instruments is diagonally oriented to reinforce the viewer’s gaze towards the off-centered seated figure of the Nawab. Ghulam Ali Khan has clearly derived this arrangement from his earlier Darbar painting for James Skinner completed in 1827-28, using a much standardized format for depicting his court officials. The use of sashes draped over the right shoulder and running along the length of the bust of the courtiers seem to be a new addition to the repertoire of court attire, which recalls the use of sashes in the summer uniforms of the cavalrmen of Skinner’s Horse. The decorative borders of the painting made up of purple cartouches filled in with turquoise, white and gold elements are very reminiscent of the borders of the Alwar Gulistan indicating the strong possibility that the artist probably brought along the decorator, Karim Abdul Rehman, to paint this commission.

413 Dated to Rajab 1265/May-June 1849. See BL Add. Or. 4680.
A companion portrait of the Nawab signed and dated to 1852 conveys a more intimate yet candid insight into the ruler’s life. Abd-al Rahman is seen surrounded by his two sons, some courtiers and attendants with a European officer standing nearby. The presence of the officer, probably in the political service at Jhajjar, amidst this spare group is a telling vignette of the proxy British governance of territories such as Jhajjar ruled by a new emerging class of landed nobility in alliance with the British. Ghulam Ali Khan’s final court portrait of Abd-al Rahman Khan dates to A.D. 1855 showing the significantly older Nawab seated against a bolster smoking a *huqqa* surrounded by his aide-de-camp Mir Bahadur Ali, a flywhisk bearer and his *huqqa*-bearer Sundah.  

(Figure 4.18: Jhajjar Nawab in Court, Ghulam Ali Khan, 1855, Sotheby’s New York, 20-9-2002.)

Ghulam Ali Khan’s aesthetic versatility is exemplified in two portraits of the Jhajjar Nawab that utilize the traditional vocabulary of the hunt but with radically different results. In the first painting Abd-al Rahman on horseback is seen engaged in a tiger hunt in the penultimate moment of triumph, as he gores a long spear into the belly of a snarling tiger. (Figure 4.19: The Nawab of Jhajjar on a Tiger Hunt, V&A Museum IS 03531) In terms of its content the painting plays upon the idea of the Mughal hunt, portraying the Nawab partaking of a privileged pursuit that, as

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414 These figure are identified in the earlier group court portraits of the Nawab now in the British Library. Sotheby Indian Miniatures Sale, Lot 58, June 17, 1999.
Ebba Koch has discussed, had both political and ideological ramifications.\(^\text{415}\) (For example, see Akbar slays a tigress that attacked the Royal enclosure, a leaf from the Akbarnama by Basawan, IS.2:17-1896) Surrounded by a coterie of courtiers on horseback and an outer ring of mahawat-ridden elephants, the tiger hunt expresses Abd-al Rahman’s formidability as an adversary as well as his importance as an ally. Ghulam Ali Khan’s dynamic use of colors, movement, and portraiture modeled through a naturalistic palette imparts immediacy to its viewer making it readily accessible to the European eye.

While the Nawab partakes of the hunt, Ghulam Ali Khan invariably renders him as part the spectacle that unfolds around him. The sheer puissance of the Nawab in tackling the tiger alone and the spatial vacuum around him only seeks to further alienate the participants of the painting as mere spectators. A good decade earlier, Isabella Fane, the daughter of the Commander in Chief Brigadier General Henry Fane, was particularly taken by the hunt at Jhajjar while passing though with her father on her way to Delhi on November 27, 1837:

“Mon 27th. This morning myself, Churchills & c went out Cheetah hunting with the Raja of Jhuggier's cheetahs, we saw one very pretty chase…This day was devoted to the sport of the field for in the evening, we all went coursing, & caught a hare…”\(^\text{416}\)

Fane is referring to a form of hunting in which domesticated cheetahs and dogs were advanced to assist the royal hunt, but what stands out in this description is the innocuous connection between


\(^{416}\) Diary of Isabella Fane, 1 FANE 6/7/1, f. 77-78, 1836-1838, Lincolnshire archives, UK. Fane’s memoirs largely communicate her anxiety of being in India and in this instance, the Jhajjar hunt seems to have buoyed her spirits.
the Nawab and his cheetahs – a neatly packaged image of the cheetah-owning Nawab that fits into the recreational program of the European tourist in the Indian countryside.

A similar sentiment is conveyed in another portrait of the Nawab riding a tame tiger in his garden with a few attendants. (Figure 4.20: The Nawab of Jhajjar with his pet tiger, Collection of Cynthia Polsky) The stiff formality and reticence of the attendant figures does little to alleviate the Nawab’s performance of royal privilege and power – the uncharacteristic setting of the Europeanized residence and garden lending an equally blasé air to the Nawab’s figure astride a tiger. Ghulam Ali Khan creates a final flourish by mirroring the three-quarter profiles of the tiger and the Nawab, presenting the latter in terms of the metaphorical qualities of the former. The gaze of the animal and of the Nawab looking directly at the viewer communicates an underlying sense of menace, which is meant to rivet the viewer with awe and wonder alike. In the painting, Abd-al Rahman Khan’s figure riding on his pet tiger reinforces the metaphorical association of the tiger with the Indian subcontinent at large. Through multiple resonances of the tiger - as the mount of the goddess Kali in Hindu mythology, as a symbol of royal valor, or even as the emblem of the 18th century Mysore king Tipu Sultan, Ghulam Ali Khan is able to reinvent the visual vocabulary surrounding the tiger securing it firmly as an emblematic portrayal of the House of Jhajjar. This painting of the Jhajjar Nawab on a tiger hunt became a popular subject, and was replicated often, most noticeably by Ghulam Ali’s son Ghulam Hussain for the Roorkee

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417 For the incorporation of the tiger emblem into the royal imagery of Tipu Sultan see Susan Stronge, *Tipu’s Tigers* (V&A Publications, 2010).
Agricultural exhibition in 1868.\footnote{Baden-Powell, B. H. \textit{Handbook of the Manufactures and Arts of the Punjab}. Lahore, 1868, 350.}

**Conclusion**

Ghulam Ali Khan’s multifaceted career offers an unprecedented insight into the visual culture of Delhi society in the nineteenth century. The painter’s ability to work with multiple conventions and diverse modes of expression – portraits, architectural views, genre scenes or manuscript illustrations – is indicative of the larger shifts within painting practices at Delhi. Ghulam Ali Khan was able to adapt himself to these shifts with relative ease since his view of painting was not one-dimensional (as a given set of conventions that had a specific cultural or idiomatic resonance as a Mughal or a European work of art). Instead, the painter was able to dilute these conventions and employ them out of their traditional context at will. A case in point is the use of topographical views in the backdrop of the \textit{Gulistan} folios at Alwar. The painter’s early years as a topographical painter assume great importance for our discussion and this chapter lays out a compelling case for thinking about the painter’s association with the British topographical painter Thomas Daniell. I raise the possibility that Ghulam Ali Khan’s view of the Red Fort was important for Daniell’s conception of Delhi’s urban landscape. In turn Ghulam Ali Khan’s interpretation of Daniell’s view of the Qutub Minar demonstrates the long lasting visual legacy of the southern prospect of the Qutub, which continued to be used for formulating views of the site in successive years by painters of his family. As an example, I show the leap from paper to print in the nineteenth-century while comparing three views of the Qutub that were a few years apart. The discussion also reiterates the importance of Ghulam Ali Khan’s family of painters as print-
makers. The analysis of the book *Asar-al Sanadid* deserves a much longer and dedicated venue of discussion; nonetheless it is important to note that the lithographed book comprised of over a hundred illustrations that drew upon Ghulam Ali Khan’s formulation of topographical views of Delhi.

Ghulam Ali Khan’s work in the Mughal court of Akbar Shah and Bahadur Shah Zafar marks an important phase in painter’s career when he worked on royal portraits. Unlike the formal approach of his predecessors Khairullah and Ghulam Murtaza Khan where the Mughal ruler was portrayed within a framework of ritual etiquette, Ghulam Ali Khan’s portraits carry an underlying sense of informality. Capitalizing on the front facing portrait devised by Ghulam Murtaza Khan, Ghulam Ali took royal portraiture another step further by including the full figure of the sitter and also placing them in a relatively casual setting - on a throne chair or in a makeshift setting within the palace. Gone is the overpowering presence of the recreated Peacock Throne or the ceremonial setting of the darbar. Instead, the Mughal ruler appears as an approachable individual with a discernible persona who is privy to the modes of circulation of the portrait.

Finally, the painter’s role in illustrating dynastic histories is central for appreciating how later Mughal rulers viewed their own legacy. As a number of examples show, the modified illustrated histories of the Mughal house focused on the occupation of Delhi over centuries by Mughal and non-Mughal rulers. This emphasis on crafting a history of the throne of Delhi rather than the house of Timur conveys the importance of the city as the all-important bastion of Mughal rule in this period. Ghulam Ali Khan’s preference for signing himself as a “resident of Shahjahanabad” (*sakin-e shahjahanabad*) is another validation of the power that place held in public imagination.
V.

Objective Visions?

Portraits of Rural Delhi in James and William Fraser’s Portfolio of Native Drawings

“I have just received from William, a Portfolio of native Drawings, some old and valuable as being illustrative of native costume and feature; groups of Goorkhas, Sikhs, Patans (Pathans), and Affghans (Afghans), Bhtuttes, Mewattees (Mewatis), Jats and Googers (Gujjars). Now these will illustrate anything I have to show of these countries, and how valuable are these to me as studies of costume, from which to fill in figures in my drawings.”

James Baillie Fraser. 419

On 7 July and 9 December, 1980 the London and New York centers of Sotheby’s auctioned a significant number of loose drawings and album folios commissioned by the Scotsman William Fraser and his brother James Baillie Fraser (1783-1856) in Delhi between 1815 and 1820. 420 Some mounted in an album and others with thin cover papers, the pictures comprised over a hundred portraits of people from Delhi and its suburbs. The Fraser pictures provide an invaluable insight into the socio-political context of Delhi’s artistic culture in the first quarter of the nineteenth century. Mildred Archer and Toby Falk’s pioneering work on the private papers of the Fraser brothers created a useful platform for viewing the paintings together with the private correspondence of William and James Fraser, which was unearthed in 1979.


420 Archer and Falk, India Revealed, (London, 1989), Appendix, 137.
The Fraser brothers began commissioning individual portraits in 1815, after their return from a campaign in the Garwhal Hills in the foothills of the Himalayas, where William had been responsible for overseeing the new land settlement of Garwhal.\footnote{Archer and Falk, *India Revealed*, 27-35.} According to a notation in his diary, James may have been occasionally tutored by Indian painters hired by William during his tour of the Hills, to facilitate the rendering of figures in his landscape views. According to Archer and Falk, the earliest recorded commission of portraits by Indian painters is from August 8, 1815 during the brothers’ journey to the plains from the Hills, when a number of portraits of Gurkha soldiers and assistants were commissioned. James wrote: “…. I am not satisfied with it [my sketch of Gungotree] but will not do more toil till I have the advantage of seeing some watercolour drawing which I may take a lesson from – I have sent for the native artist my brother has hired to take the likeness of several of the servants and Ghorkhas which will assist me much in several of my undertakings.”\footnote{James’ diary. Fraser Papers, vol.8. As cited in *India Revealed*, 45, 59.} Elaborating on the process of creating portraits, James wrote: “Whenever I meet with a subject that requires too much of my own time, I take the lines and general Idea myself, and then send the native to take the detail.”\footnote{Fraser Papers, vol. 58, Ibid, 1989, 43.} Thus, James’ aesthetic eye and his own personal curiosity was an essential impetus for the compilation of this fascinatingly diverse set of portraits. After reaching Delhi, the brothers’ earliest recorded commissions were the portraits of Delhi nautch (dancing) girls, by the Indian painters Lallji and his son Hulas Lal (both active 1790-1820). One such dancer, Piari Jan, is known to us through a remarkable portrait drawn by either Lallji or his son. (\textbf{Figure 5.0}) The portrait exemplifies qualities that are seen in
all the portraits in the Fraser Album – the sitters are marked by their frank gazes engaging in full eye contact with the viewer. The portrait sets mark another radical shift – they are the first known full length portraits of female sitters. Piari Jan is seen dressed up in her diaphanous clothing, standing with one hand resting on her hip. Her informal attire indicates that she has been painted in her home, though the portrait is painted against a stark background giving us no clue about her surroundings.

Before his return to Calcutta in June 1816, James Fraser left William to commission other figure subjects in his ‘Memo of Native Drawings wished for’ that included a number of horsemen, officers, camels and fakirs in addition to details of the supplementary views of the Qutub Minar complex. By 1819, William Fraser had sent another “…40 paintings of figures, etc.” to his brother James in Calcutta, which James described in a letter to his father in November 1819. James saw commercial potential in these Drawings of Costume intending to display them in an exhibition and also publishing them to generate income. His aim was to dazzle the English public with a never before seen panoply of costumes from the royal Mughal court as well as “the inhabitants of all the districts near Dihlee – say the Sikhs, the Mewattees & Goojurs, etc & inhabitants of Hureeana with an endless variety of Mughals, Pathans, Candraharies, & Cashmereanee, Ghorkas, etc. etc.” (Fig 5.1: Afghan Horse Merchants, Fraser Album).

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424 Fraser papers, B429. Archer and Falk, India Revealed, 39-40.

425 See first quotation above and footnote no. 403. Also, Letter written from Rohtuk, 26 August 1819, Fraser Papers B14. As cited in Archer and Falk, India Revealed, 40; 59.

426 Fraser Papers, vol. 58. As cited by Archer and Falk, India Revealed, 1989, 43.
Though we know much about James Fraser’s motivations for commissioning the Fraser portraits, relatively little is known and understood about William’s personal and professional motivations. In this chapter I focus on themes and subjects from Delhi’s rural hinterland that were part of William Fraser’s life. My selective emphasis is driven by two considerations. The rural scenes in the Fraser Album index an important shift within painting culture in Mughal Delhi by introducing new subject matter into mainstream painting. Where polite distance, etiquette and courtly subjects had been the distinguishing characteristics of paintings at Delhi, the rural scenes fall within the group of paintings commissioned by the Fraser brothers that broke class barriers in Anglo-Mughal Delhi, giving visual prominence to individuals from varied social backgrounds – entertainers, pastoralists, landowners, mystics, and soldiers, to name a few. The prominence of rural subjects was an integral part of this growing trend within portraiture practiced by Indian painters in early nineteenth century Delhi. Moreover, the shift towards delineating the everyday social sphere of suburban Delhi happened against the backdrop of considerable changes in the political economy of Mughal Delhi, as the utilitarian strategies of British colonial policy makers collided and, at times, also converged with customary laws of local rulers and landowners from the greater Delhi region. I propose that Fraser’s own role as a settlement officer contributed to a new mode of visuality – one that took land ownership as its primary mode of interpretation. Through the study of interactions that William Fraser had with landowners in the Delhi region, this chapter investigates the relationship between the political acts of land ownership and their projection in the Fraser pictures.
A Gentlemen Settler for Delhi

The Delhi region had become the hotbed of political contestation even as the British East India Company gained administrative and legal proprietorship in 1803, where the frequent exchange and transfer of jagir, whether as gratuitous commodity or diplomatic act, had rendered it a domain of physical and figurative contestation.\(^\text{427}\) There was considerable ambiguity of discernible boundaries in a newly occupied Delhi where regional powers and smaller landowning clans over time, assumed autonomous control of their respective purviews. In 1806, the British Resident Archibald Seton proposed the revenue settlement of British administered regions in and around Delhi with “…the actual occupants of the several villages (whatever their denomination might be) [my emphasis] as a preferable measure to let the lands in farm.”\(^\text{428}\) The benefits from such an arrangement Seton proposed were to assess the “…real capability and resources of the country and the removal of abuses, the former of which, under the farming system it is ever the interest of the renter to conceal…” More importantly from the Company’s perspective a hands-on revenue settlement process was meant to create inroads for the Company’s expansion as well as its acceptance within its newly acquired territories. Seton proposed that “…by bringing European gentlemen into direct and immediate intercourse with those of our new subjects who were yet unacquainted with our character, their minds would be conciliated and a groundwork laid for the

\(^{427}\) Jagir was “landed property” which was largely inalienable and bound by specific rights, and therefore different from the concept of private property in England. See the modalities of jagir exchange discussed in Muzaffar Alam, *The Crisis of Empire in Mughal North India: Awadh and the Punjab, 1707-1748*, Oxford University Press, 1986.

introduction of our financial and judicial system [my emphasis]. Seton argued that the personal presence of a Superintendent of the Assigned territory and an escort who would ensure compliance on the part of various landowners who were “obstinate” and “perverse” to the cause of measurement of their cultivated estates. Seton proposed that such procedures could be concluded within “…one, two or three years” also would result in the reduction of the number of overall land managers and husbandmen (muccadams) who claimed right to various villages.

William Fraser’s role as the assistant to the Resident Archibald Seton in 1806 in the capacity of a settlement officer and deputy collector was very much in the mould of the soft diplomacy employed by the East India Company as it endeavored to create a revenue-based administrative system in much of North India. In this role Fraser was responsible for settling revenue in the numerous villages and holdings part of the greater paragon or District of Delhi and was to fast gain prominence as the primary arbitrator of land owning rights in the greater Delhi region. At Delhi William Fraser formed deep ties with the city. For him the city was replete with

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429 The new land based taxing system had been instituted through the Permanent Settlement in 1793, which was the turning point for the introduction of British political economy into India. Regulation I of 1793, under the administration of Lord Cornwallis, not only signified a break from prevailing agrarian policies of the East India Company in Bengal but also introduced the right of private property in land, through the settlement of land in favor of local landowners (zamindars). Both these aspects were meant to fix in perpetuity, the obligation on the part of the landed proprietor, to pay a minimum fixed sum of revenue. The settlement also accorded hereditary rights of ownership to landowners, thereby in effect laying the foundations of a native landed aristocracy. The settlement was to improve communications between English revenue officers and their native assistants, who had held a monopoly over local or traditional forms of estate accounting and agricultural practice. This would, it was hoped, ultimately help to forge a link between colonial administrators and native landowners so as to settle into permanence the question of revenue assessment. For details, see Ranajit Guha, A rule of property for Bengal: an essay on the idea of the Permanent Settlement (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1982).

geographical and urban vigor with its “… walls and stone hills, ruins, trees, climate, and loving northern people…” Writing from Hansi over a 100 kilometers away from Delhi, Fraser described Delhi as “…one of the liveliest and most frequented and most civilized stations, having a large society within its own limits…” With a modest income from his job and a generous supplement from his perks, he was able to maintain an arguably well-off status in Delhi, equal to if not greater than any medium sized jagirdar. On 12 October 1813, William’s brother James wrote in a letter to his mother sent from Calcutta:

“…The truth is that William tho under the name of 1st Assistant to the Resident at Delhi is in fact the Collector of the District. He resides with I understand very large allowances… Brown supposed he must have from 3 to 4,000 rupees per month, that his monthly tent and travelling allowances must have been very large, greater than I can suppose is the case.”

Forming Boundaries

Fraser’s job as a collector and surveyor could not have been more appropriately timed. But the idea of Delhi and what constituted its purview was itself in flux as Fraser was to discover. Systematic surveys of Delhi had become popular at the turn of the century and a number of mappings and counter-mappings emerged as distinctive attempts to visually re-conceptualize the Delhi region in the face of political transitions. Thus, Fraser’s revenue based mappings of the Delhi region were to serve as one of the first revenue assessments of Delhi under its new system.

431 Fraser Papers, volume 29. Letter from Hansi, 23 September 1819. More importantly, Fraser’s job description included the establishment of rights of land ownership and granting of leases for mansion building to other European officials at Delhi. Fraser’s own house, a neo-Classical derivative, was sited on top of the Delhi Ridge next to a Tughluq hunting pavilion from the 14th century. In addition to being outside of the Mughal city walls, the house demonstrated a visual propriety over the surrounding countryside emphasizing his role as the primary survey and revenue settlement officer for Delhi.

432 Fraser Papers, B34, as cited in India Revealed, 21.
of British administration. When his own administrative purview was extended into the Northern Division well beyond the Delhi district into parts of Rajasthan, Fraser wrote about the confusion that arose from a lack of available information about boundaries and maps in the region. Writing to his superiors Fraser complained

“…that this circumstance has arisen from the Government not having been aware of the assumed limits of the Divisions, limits which, I had never been aware of, for which no official document, as I understand, is known to exist, which were drawn, I believe, with reference to the duties of the police only.” “The nature of the present arrangement, will be best elucidated by a detail of the Divisions, and by reference to the Map.”

The challenges of establishing these revenue-based divisions within the greater Delhi region would have been complex, requiring William Fraser to tour the Delhi countryside extensively and meet with individual landowners and chieftains. This process is made vivid in “Tax Collectors and Village Elders,” a rare grouping of village headmen seated along with Fraser’s personal munshi and diwan. The cover sheet accompanying this watercolor drawing gives the all-important context in Fraser’s own handwriting as “An assemblage of Zumeendars in Cutcherry with my Moonshee and Deewan. The Munshee Fuzl Uzeem of Khairabad near Lucknow—a moosulman. The Deewan Mohan Lal a Kayuth of Dehlee with spectacles on nose,” followed by a list of all the attendees, who “are mostly headmen and elders of villages.” The village elders and headmen belong to various districts spanning the Punjab such as Sonepat, Sona, Rewaree, and Panipat and are identified as such. Clearly, this is a gathering in the informal

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434 Collection of Mrs. Edith Welch (ex-Stuart Cary Welch collection). I am very grateful to Edith and Jude Ahern for facilitating my research in the Welch collection.
format of the *cutcherry*  

or civil court held with the aim of reviewing settlement procedures and tax structures for districts falling under Fraser’s direct supervision.

The portraits of the individual village heads and Fraser’s munshi and diwan are remarkably sensitive and clearly the hand of a master portraitist working for William Fraser. Set against the bare cream-white backdrop of the paper, the starkness of figures clad in simple white tunics and *dhotos* seem almost as solemn as the official purpose for which this drawing was created. Each figure is numbered and corresponds to a key on the cover page. The indispensability of scribes and diwans as local informants is also powerfully communicated in this drawing. Mohan Lal (seen balancing a pince-nez) and Fuzl Uzeem (probably Fazluddin), William Fraser’s scribes, are seen here seated to the right of the painting surrounding by logbooks and bundles of papers and pen boxes that also function as markers of their profession. Despite the highly official tone of the painting, the intensity of the portraits is remarkable as the sitters display an unusual self-awareness of the process of being recorded, as if awaiting a final judgment on the assessments of their respective purviews.

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435 A Cutcherry (kachari) could be described as a hall of justice where petty claims regarding zamindari affairs were sorted out. Usually affiliated with a head zamindar’s estate, it has been described as an “office from where revenue collection s were made and general administrations were conducted.” See Sirajul Islam. *The Permanent Settlement in Bengal: a study of its operation 1790-1819*, Dacca: Bangla Academy, 1979.

436 For another portrait of Mohan Lal, see Asian Art Museum, San Francisco, from the collection of William K. Ehrenfeld, 2005.64.59.

437 For a detailed analysis see Y. Sharma, Cat. Nos. 41 and 42, Dalrymple and Sharma, eds. *Princes and Painters*, 120-122.
Though we do not know how Fraser actually conducted his evaluation of cities and towns, in all probability he would have been working in collaboration with other officials in Delhi and would have relied upon the initial reports of the Great Trigonometric Survey introduced in 1800.\textsuperscript{438} His specific contribution to the creation of revenue maps for the greater Delhi region that emerged in the 1820s cannot be underestimated.\textsuperscript{439} Even so, it is clear that Fraser’s revenue survey was shaped to a large extent by his personal impressions of the villages and any scientific assessment was subject to complex cultural contingencies.\textsuperscript{440} For example, in a number of renderings of villages in and around Rania in Haryana, Fraser was dealing with a pastoral population that was not bounded by norms of single ownership of land. A number of village scenes of the village Rania in the district of Haryana showing Pachhada clansmen and women,\textsuperscript{441} visually exemplify the complex habitation of non-agricultural communities. The Pachhada men and women were known to live in a closed network of family groups and raised cattle together. They were thus

\textsuperscript{438} The Great Trigonometric Survey was started in 1800-02 under William Lambton with a baseline in South India and reached the Upper Provinces in 1835 when the actual height of the mountains was ascertained. See Edney. \textit{Mapping an Empire: The Geographical Construction of British India, 1765-1843}. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997.

\textsuperscript{439} For example, see “Map of the villages in the Province of Dihlee with general statistical tables of villages” surveyed by Captain T. Oliver 1823-24 (National Archives of India, Delhi, F.1/22-35) and the final revenue reports of T. Fortescue in \textit{Records of the Delhi Residency}, 1820-25. My comparison of the maps and the report reveals a strong input from William Fraser. However, this is a separate topic that I plan to address elsewhere.

\textsuperscript{440} This is made abundantly clear in the First Assistant Charles T. Metcalfe’s correspondence with the Resident A. Seton where he asked for repeated clarifications on various procedures for settling villages in and around Delhi. Letter from Metcalfe to Seton and Seton’s reply, December 1807, \textit{Records of the Delhi Residency and Agency}, 1911, 12-30.

\textsuperscript{441} The Pachhada were Rajputs from the Hisar region who survived on agriculture and cattle rearing. Rose, \textit{Glossary of the Tribes and Castes of the Punjab}, vol. 2, 191.
different from a routine landholding community and were subject to unconventional methods of revenue assessment. In the painting, “The village of Jeewah Moocuddum near Rania: William Fraser’s circle of village folk, his white stallion, and progeny” (Figure 5.3) the Fraser artist depicts a vignette of everyday life in Rania village in the Hisar district of Haryana. In an accompanying list the description is given as:

“What the Fraser artist gives us here is a picture that would have been inspired by William Fraser’s personal and professional attachment to Rania. At a personal level, Rania was home to Fraser’s Indian mistress or bibi, Amiban and his children. In this watercolor presumably painted by an artist in the circle of Ghulam Ali Khan, the scene is one of the humdrum of everyday village life. The painter shows us the broader context of Jewah the chief muccadam’s (husbandman) village, Rania. The painted landscape of mud houses and hearths is a carefully crafted backdrop against which Jewah and his family and friends are seen going about their daily tasks. It is possible that the white stallion in the picture belonged to Fraser, who was also an avid horse trader. In the near distance a lady resembling Amiban is seen carrying a child on her arm


443 From the Fraser Album, Rania, Haryana, ca. 1810–20, Watercolor on paper, H. 12 1/8 x W. 16 7/16 in. (30.9 x 41.8 cm). Collection of Edith Welch.

444 The original caption to this painting was offered by Stuart Cary Welch, where he proposed that the white stallion belonged to Fraser. My revised caption to the painting keeps his suggestion, but also reflects the more pragmatic nature of the commission in the first place.
as she balances a set of water pitchers on her head. Other men are seated with nonchalance as they lounge casually, some smoking huqqa pipes.

From a professional standpoint, the painter is clearly following a brief laid out by Fraser, which is to depict the essential character of the village as a pastoral settlement. The drawing assumes even greater meaning when viewed against the rules of the four-part or chubacha tenure system laid out for the Pachhada clans in Hisar. Here the Company followed a “four kinds of division” system to divide the produce of the land based on the following criteria:

i) Per House, every chula or fireplace was looked upon as a house . . . because people used to burn village-jungle firewood.
ii) Per every head of cattle, because they grazed in the village pasturage land.
iii) Per Pagri, or per every individual above twelve years of age. . . . At times, boys under the age of twelve were also included if they cut grass.
iv) Per Land—under this was included only that portion which during the harvest was cultivated.

Not surprisingly, each element of this taxation system can be found in painting in its depiction of fireplaces, chimneys, cattle, and young and old men in the village. Moreover, we are faced with the question of the choice of Rania as a subject for Fraser’s Album. The village of Rania featured prominently in the drawings commissioned by Fraser. In addition to another similar village scene (British Library Add.Or. 4057) with Amiban in the near distance, Fraser also commissioned

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445 The portrayal of Amiban and her relationship with Fraser is well documented. Amiban is described as “A favorite lady of Mr. Fraser.” See Sotheby, Park, Bernet, December 7, 1977, lot 30; Welch, Emperors’ Album, no. 50; Mildred Archer, “Artists and Patrons in Residency Delhi,” in Frykenberg, Delhi through the Ages. Amiban is likely to have been a corruption of the name Hiban in Persian. Amiban’s daughter Shaman is also pictured in another group portrait in the Fraser Album. Falk and Archer, India Revealed, plate 75, p. 101.

individual and group portraits of other women, villagers and headmen of Rania. They are mostly zamindars (landowners), mukaddam (village headmen), or lambardars and are identified on the basis of their ethnic backgrounds and castes and their occupations. For example the painting “Six villagers standing on a hillside” (Figure 5.4) is a visual encapsulation of village men of the Bhatti clan in Rania who seem to have been intimately involved in the process of collecting tax and fixing revenue in Rania and other villages in the Hisar district. Among these individuals, the prominence of Jewah, the village headman and Nijabat Khan, the main tax collector and Fraser’s liaison for Rania, can be gleaned by the way the accompanying inscriptions on the cover page refer to them repeatedly.

447 Jeewah (Mewah), a Rajput from Mundewal, also appears in the Fraser Album along with his son Shamoo. “Six Villagers Standing on a Hillside” Rania, Haryana, ca. 1816, Private Collection. Other group portraits of village men from Rania are Cat. 71 “Three Villagers in a Landscape”, British Library, Add. Or. 4058; “Salabat Bhatti and villagers at Rania” Cat. 75, India Revealed, 101; “Seven Villagers” Haryana, ca. 1816, Sotheby (London), 20 November 1986, lot 14, Private collection, Cat. 80, in Archer and Falk, India Revealed, 103. For copy of the latter painting see “Khan Bahadur Khan with men of his clan” Rania, 1816, The San Diego Museum of Art, Edwin Binney 3rd Collection, 1990.396. Illustrated in Dalrymple and Sharma, Princes and Painters, cat. 46, 130.

448 A lambardar was defined as a “cultivator who, either on his own account or as the representative of other members of the village, pays the Government dues and is registered in the Collector’s Roll according to his number; as the representative of the rest he may hold the office by descent or by election.” Rose, Glossary of the Tribes and Castes of the Punjab, vol. 2, p. 191. As cited in Bautze, Interaction of Cultures, 92.

449 For an illustration see Y. Sharma, cat. No. 43, in Dalrymple and Sharma, Princes and Painters, 124-5

450 Numerals along the bottom correspond to the names of the figures that are identified on the cover paper in inscriptions in Nastaliq script and English. The English transliteration reads:
Salim, Rajpoot, Bechadhe Zemindar of Ranneah
Hazir Khan, brother of Soojah [Muja], Rajpoot
Soojah [Muja], Rajpoot Bhutee son of Nijabut Khan [Lambardar, resident of] Ranneah
Khajo o alle [Bhatee] Lumburdar, commonly called Soha
Mojumee [resident] of Ranneeah
Mewah [Jeewah], Rajpoot, Mundewal [resident of Rania], Related to Nijabat Khan [Lambardar]
Shamoo, son of Jeewa [Jeewah] Mucuddum of Mundewal
The intricate relationship between painting and the written record can also be gleaned in “Two women and a male buffalo in the village of Rania”\(^{451}\) and “Herdsman and a buffalo outside a village (Rania)”\(^{452}\) (Figure 5.5, 5.6) where both pictures show men and women with a male buffalo. As an exploration of figural portraiture the painter’s attention to the physiognomy of the buffalo speaks not only to the aesthetic interest in drawing from life, but also his awareness of the intricate social structure of Rania village where the ownership of cattle was a form of entitlement and livelihood. Like other rural scenes in the Fraser Album, these portraits were also visual counterpart to the Map and the written records that Fraser generated for the Hisar region, sealing Rania’s place in the territorial purview of the greater Delhi region. Thus these portraits occupied the shared space of aesthetics and economics, serving as visual corroboration of the *chaubacha* system of assessment where cattle owners were equally responsible for taxes as those who cultivated land.

Given the number of paintings dedicated to recording the identities, lives and activities of Rania residents, it is worth considering Fraser’s specific interest in Rania village beyond its personal

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\(^{451}\) From the Fraser Album, Rania, Haryana, ca. 1816, Watercolor on paper, H. 11 5/16 x W. 16 3/16 in. (28.8 x 41.1 cm), Victoria and Albert Museum, Purchased with assistance from the friends of Robert Skelton, to commemorate his 60th birthday, IS.13-1989. Described on E. S. Fraser’s list: “A male Buffalo—two large human figures—w. small do— cattle, probably of Ranneah.” Y. Sharma, Cat. No. 48, *Princes and Painters*, 132-33.

\(^{452}\) Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Adolph D. and Wilkins C. Williams Fund, 97.117a/b.
significance for him as an extension of his familial links in India. Moreover, Fraser’s official correspondence contains a number of references to Rania. In 1819 as Fraser prepared his near final revenue map and table reflecting the settlements in the greater Delhi region he wrote:

“…the wide extent of Country, to the West of Hansee, has scarcely any of its numerous villages put down; that is throughout, and, in particular, the Districts of Hissar and Toosham, thickly studded with well inhabited villages.” “The accompanying Table and Map will shew, at a glance, the position of the matters; my observation and reflection points at once, to an amended arrangement…”[453] “…It will be absolutely necessary for the Officer Superintending the present Northern Division to be in the same year at Karnaul, the extreme N.E corner of the District, at Ranneea, the extreme N.W. Corner, Buhil or Sewannee, bordering on Jeypore and Shekhowat the S.W angle of the District at Mandauthee and Beree, the S.E corner along the banks of the Jumna, and traversing the centre of the District. The Superintending Officer cannot expect to remain at Hansee, the most critical(?) situation, more than a Month in the hot, and a Month in the cold season of the year. …To Elucidate the matter better, I have marked, on the Map, the subdivisions of the three portions of the Territory, as they now stand, and as I propose they should stand. …”[454] [my emphasis]

There is little doubt that his strong personal connection with Rania played a strong part in his choice for creating numerous illustrations of the village. Moreover, Rania’s prominent inclusion into the territorial purview of the Northern Division is also significant because of its status as a border village of the northwestern extremity of the Northern Division. On the one hand, it appears that Rania’s place in greater Delhi was secure only because William was, on the ground, the primary executor of territorial delineations within the Northern Division. The question then arises if Fraser deliberately created a mapping of the Division to include Rania into greater Delhi rather than the bordering area of Rajasthan, which lay outside his purview.


This point is important because Fraser was also dealing with growing criticism of his off-hand manner of settling revenue, as there was a growing suspicion on the part of the Company about his personal dealings. Take, for example Fraser’s resolution of territorial disputes in the fort town of Bikaner in the Haryana division in the western part of Delhi. Of particular note is the accusation by the Raja of Bikaner against Mr. Dundas, the principal Adjutant, to have acted under Mr. Fraser’s orders and “… established new villages in Lands forming a part of the Bikaner territory, and of also having taken the possession of and collected rent from others established by the Rajah.” Such claims could only be countered by employing expert surveyors such as William Fraser as arbitrators whose findings would be considered final. From the records we learn that Fraser deemed the report unsatisfactory and instead accused the Raja of Bikaner of wrongfully acquiring certain parts of the pargana in 1803/4. A final resolution was reached when it was concluded that “…it was not apparent whether Mr. Fraser claimed the entire pergana of Bikaner, including the Fort (which he stated the Rajah of Bikaner acquired wrongfully in 1803/4) or on the whole pargunnah, exclusive of it, or certain villages only to the Eastward of the Fort.” This deliberate ambiguity on Fraser’s part frustrated the aspirations of officials such as Mr. Dundas, the Company as well as the Raja of Bikaner.

455 1st September 1825, Extract of political letter from Bengal. IOR/F/4.

456 IOR/F/4; November 1823-26.

457 Fraser often used his discretion to negotiate terms of land leases and ownership rights in the Delhi hinterland. The inconsistencies of Fraser’s activities pertaining to jagir assignments received the notice of the Company headquarters at Fort William, Calcutta. Adam to Metcalfe, Mss Eur F259/4, 1818.
Conclusion:

The aim of this chapter was to highlight the greater context for the creation of rural portraits for the Fraser Album. It is tempting to consider that these portraits operated as a form of “pictorial ethnography” of rural Delhi where individuals were identified on the basis of their caste, village, clan, and social status. However, the Fraser portraits were painted well before colonial surveys of caste and tribes were undertaken by British officers from the late 1860s, and well before the rise of anthropological surveys in Britain and India.458

I would like to suggest here that William was practicing a sort of empiricism of the heart – he saw his role as a highly personal one, where as an individual he could create meaning and order where none existed. He wrote:

“I…worked and toiled (like) the pioneer through a wilderness of danger, and intricacy, opening, smoothing, and widening the way, reducing the ruggedness of nature, surmounting the opposition, taming the ferocity, overcoming the antipathies of its inhabitants…” 459


The portraits form one of the most evocative archive of a survey modality in pictures. The numerous portraits of the Fraser Album encapsulate the centrality of vision as a means of gathering ideas, his knowledge being primarily derived through observation and experience.\textsuperscript{460} Certainly, the portraits provided a “visual” complement to the highly complicated process of surveying and assessing the multiple villages around Delhi – bringing the character of each place to light to help build a sense of exclusivity for each region in an otherwise indeterminable terrain.\textsuperscript{461} This is not to simply suggest that these portraits were \textit{aide mémoires} – their sheer vitality and individualism testifies to the hand of a master portraitist at work, and to William Fraser’s personal connection with many of the sitters in the paintings.

By 1819, a couple of years after his tenure in Hisar and Rania, Fraser was tiring of his role in the countryside and was prepared to portion out his duties to other officers in the Company. He wrote:

“It may be supposed, perhaps, that the duty of superintending the City of Dehlee and its environs, is more important than the duty of superintending the Northern Division, as it now stands.”

Instead, he proposed the formation of new divisions– “…the western to be formed of the Hurreenah tracts, as they were superintended by the Honorable Mr. Gardener, with the addition of Mandouthee (?) and Assouduh(?)” keeping the Northern Division including the part of the Territory North of Dihlee, East of Hurreeanah, and the environs of the city, under his


\textsuperscript{461} As Matthew Edney has pointed out, observations for mappings and surveys in British India were at best imperfect approximations of the land, conforming to a later conception of geographic space. Edney, Matthew H. \textit{Mapping an Empire: The Geographical Construction of British India, 1765-1843}. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997.
Here, Fraser makes a case for stationing himself in Delhi by citing the dangers of the road to Hansee, which ran through the Raja of Jeend’s territories and were fraught with danger. He concluded that

“…from Dehlee, with occasional starts into the country to the West and East of Sooniput, it will be practicable to manage the Revenue duty and the Judicial and Police duty can be superintended much better from Dihlee than from Hansee; I have said before, the people would be happier and better pleased to be Governed from Dehlee, than from Hansee.”

Fraser’s return to Delhi, the administrative center, marked the end of his itinerant lifestyle and also bookends the completion of the rural portraits in the Fraser Album. In a few years time, Fraser built his mansion in Delhi within the walls of Shahjahanabad over the cellar of the palace of the seventeenth century noble Ali Mardan Khan (d.1657), to the north of the Mughal palace beyond the fortifications of the Salim Garh (built 1546 AD).

Fraser’s relinquishing of administrative control of Hansi and his subsequent retreat to Delhi is hardly the end of artistic activity in Delhi. Around this time, Fraser’s friend Col. James Skinner acquired greater rights to reside and run his establishment of cavalrymen at Hansi and likely absorbed the painters working for Fraser into his own cohort. Thus began one of the most intense and active years of Ghulam Ali Khan’s career. It is to Skinner’s story that we turn now.

462 “Administrative Problems of the Dehlee District”, 83.

463 “Administrative Problems”, 83-4.

464 In a letter to his family, Fraser’s brother Alick wrote about the desirability of William Fraser’s acquired residence: “…I am sitting by a fine fire in our house, on the bank of the branch of the Jumna. The main branch is within sight of the windows; and beyond it stretch the plains of the Doab. A little down the river or rather this little branch of it, lies the great palace of Shah Jehan…” See Fraser papers (1823), Letter from Alick Fraser to his family, as cited by William Dalrymple, City of Djinns, 121. Also see Sylvia Shorto, British Houses in Delhi, Unpublished dissertation (2003).
VI.

James Skinner at Hansi

“William has sent to Painter as yet to take the drawings of my men so you better write him again on this subject.” 465

James Skinner to James Baillie Fraser,
Letter dated 25 February 1821.

James Skinner’s rise as a patron of the arts in the nineteenth century is also the remarkable story of the Delhi painter Ghulam Ali Khan’s rise to fame. Ghulam Ali Khan was likely sent to work for Skinner by his friend William Fraser, upon Skinner’s request.466 A number of paintings made for Skinner’s Album *Tashrih al-Aqvam* indicate that he was probably in Skinner’s employ from 1822. Skinner exemplified the profile of the nouveau riche patron in Delhi society, who was ever conscious of maintaining his elite status through his patronage of the arts – music, dance, literature and painting. In particular, Skinner saw the value of paintings not only as visual record but also as a way of forging his identity in the Anglo-Mughal community at Delhi as well as in military and diplomatic circles in Britain. This paper will shed light on James Skinner’s patronage of select paintings and albums in an attempt to unravel the socio-political context behind their creation. My source materials for this chapter in addition to a number of paintings are Skinner’s private papers and letters, and an incomplete manuscript that he dictated to a scribe,


466 See Skinner’s note to James Baillie Fraser above. Also see Yuthika Sharma, “In the Company of the Mughal Court” in Dalrymple and Sharma, Eds. *Princes and Painters*, 2012.
which became the basis of his posthumous biography written by none other than James Baillie Fraser, William’s brother. Put together from Skinner’s own personal journal and his correspondence with the East India Company office in Fort William, Calcutta, the memoir provides remarkable insight into Skinner’s personality as a cavalryman and his interest in a documentary record of his activities.

Image of an irregular cavalryman

James Skinner was born in 1778 to a Scottish father and a Rajput mother who, as Skinner dictated to his scribe, “…grew to be a woman of proud principles and strength of character.” He was always aware of his status as a ‘half-caste,’ which during the course of his career largely precluded him from being confirmed as an officer in the direct commissioned service of the British Crown. He began his military career in the Maratha cavalry fighting under French generals such as De Boigne and Perron in Mahadji Sindhia’s army, where he learnt valuable skills of Maratha horsemanship. These involved various techniques for using the sword, lance, pistol, and musket from the saddle. In 1803, when Perron’s army was defeated by Lord Lake’s, Skinner was offered a charge of horse which became greater in number after some eight hundred Maratha men deserted to the British. This was to form the basic component of the Irregular Cavalry Corps or Local Horse (later Skinner’s Horse), an adjunct cavalry force to be called upon by the British army as and when needed.

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467 Concerning James Skinner (1778-1841) and his manuscript dictated to a scribe between September 1823 and January 1824. Unpublished and undated manuscript in Persian and Urdu hand. NAM. 1952-05-19-1, National Army Museum, London.

468 Concerning James Skinner (1778-1841) and his manuscript dictated to a scribe, NAM London.
However, it was the “irregular” nature of his own birth that often came into conflict with his ambitions of being recognized as a ranked British officer. The circumstances of his being a half-native seemed to make him expendable at the Company’s discretion, often resulting in sharp reductions or additions to the numbers of recruits under his charge. His cavalry were mostly used as adjuncts to aid wars, but more often than not, it was in the interim periods of “peace” that Skinner’s Horse was at its most useful. The services of the irregular cavalry were mostly restricted to local affairs such as the reduction of refractory Zamindars “...and such duty as arises in the settlement districts brought into order the first time.”

In straddling two worlds - as an auxiliary officer of the East India Company and a native “Burrah Secundar” (Great Alexander) Skinner’s attempts at gaining recognition through Ranked commission were often met with frustration. In reconciling the disadvantages of his half-Indian heritage with his ambitions in the British army, we get the sense that Skinner felt mired in an ambiguity that he sought to overcome throughout his career. In his characteristic lament, he wrote:

“I imagined myself to be serving a people who had no prejudices against caste or colour. But I found myself mistaken. All I desired was justice. If I was not to share in all the privileges of a British subject, let me be regarded as a native and treated as such. If I was to be regarded as a British subject, did the hard labour and ready service of twenty years merit no more than a pension of 300 rupees per month; without either rank or station? ...I have served with Europeans, no one can ever upbraid me with dishonouring the steel, or “being faithless to my salt”; that finally, though I have failed in gaining what I desired and deserved, - that is, rank, - I have proved


to the world that I was worthy of it; by serving my king and my country as zealously and loyally as any Briton in India.”

**Out of the bounds of irregularity**

Skinner’s own fractured sense of identity was, I suggest, the catalyst for his commissions of a series of manuscripts and paintings. He was motivated by an inherent desire to be recognized for his contribution to the military successes of the Company in north India, but also to communicate a sense of his own pride as a commander of his Indian troops. At the close of the year 1819, when almost one-third of his troops were paid off and Skinner returned to his operating base in Hansi, his desire to seek recognition was at its height. Skinner approached the Company to write a memoir of his corps, which he ultimately wanted to publish. In December 1819, he received a response from Major General John Malcolm, a noted statesman, diplomatic envoy to Persia, and scholar of books on Indian and Persian history:

“…I am glad you propose to give a short memoir of your corps. If written, as I have no doubt that it will be, with the same clear conciseness, and in the same spirit of modesty and truth, which it no doubt will be, that marks your letter to the Calcutta journal, it will be a most valuable document.”\

It is very likely that the memoir of the corps mentioned in this letter is the one which survives in two manuscript commissioned by Skinner and executed in a scribe’s hand.\(^{472}\) The first manuscript was commissioned by Skinner in Mhow, 23rd Dec. 1819. *Military Memoir of Lieut-Col James Skinner C.B.* London, 1851.


\(^{472}\) I have since been informed that the Persian version is in the collection of the Fraser family descendants in Inverness. In 1821, just after Skinner had requested William Fraser to send a painter in his service, he suffered the sudden loss of his brother Robert. Robert was a Major in Skinner’s Horse and his death seems to have brought the writing of his Persian journal to an abrupt end, although Skinner did go on to dictate two other technical manuscripts. James Fraser, when publishing the English translation of Skinner’s journal, had to supplement its content between 1823 and 1843. Skinner, however, did commission two other Persian and Urdu manuscript between 1823-24 detailing the maneuvers of his cavalry and a treatise on training with weapons.
manuscript, “Translation of the book of cavalry maneuvers” is a Persian translation dictated by
Skinner to a scribe Badri Tahdidat (name unclear) containing detailed instructions on the various
maneuvers of cavalry. These instructions are clearly aimed at officers listing the orders to be
given at each maneuver. In some cases, orders such as “Eyes left”, “Advance”, “Right Wheel”
are directly transliterated from the English language. This part of the manuscript is illustrated
with about thirty diagrams prepared without doubt by an artist who was retained by Skinner when
residing at Hansi. The manuscript that was dictated by Skinner ends with the words “…brought
to a blessed conclusion, on the 11th of September of the year (18) 23 in Hansi. Fin-Fin-Fin-
Finished!”

The second document is a bi-lingual manuscript in Persian and Urdu and is a précis of Skinner’s
own experience in training with weapons, while employed with the Marathas and other native
troops. It is titled “The Book of rules for the maneuvers of the Hindustani Musket Cavalry formed
by Colonel James Skinner Sahib Bahadur for the instruction for the cavalrymen serving in the
regiment of the Glorious English Company Bahadur (may its fortune endure for ever!) in their
own localities, set down in the month of January of the year of the Christian era 1824 in Hansi

474 I am grateful to the unsigned author of the preliminary translations of these manuscripts for their useful
summary of the manuscripts’ contents. The author also tells us that the maneuvers are divided into two
“Aghaze” or stages – the first taking up 13 chapters and the second taking up 19 chapters. The manuscript
is in Nastaliq script in ink with red used to highlight headings and chapter endings. The manuscript in
itself, in trying to link its text to visuals alongside, uses highlighted phrases such as “in this way” on the
text and the word “advance!” on the diagrams to direct the viewer. There is an air of precision in the way
that the text seems to be structured, aiming at guiding the officers on the orders they should give at a
certain maneuver, which in turn corresponds exactly with the diagrams. I am grateful to Pip Dodd, curator
of prints and drawings at the National Army Museum, London for making this material available to me.
“Cantonment.” It is in the hand of the same scribe as above, who signs off as “Completed by the Order of His Excellency colonel James Skinner, Sahib Bahadur (i.e. the brave)... in the hand of the scribe Al-Ibad Badri... December, the year [18]23”

Each section of this second part contains a description of the technique of weapon wielding and use along with a miniature painting that illustrates the maneuver in question. The accompanying paintings bear the signature of an artist Naseeradeem (Nasir-al-din?).

The manuscripts above were written between September 1823 and January 1824 during a period that was relatively uneventful in Skinner’s military career, when he was based at Hansi Cantonment in Haryana on the outskirts of Delhi. Between 1822 and 1824 Skinner’s corps were employed “…merely to silence trouble-maker zamindars in the Bhuttee country” and driving away troublesome freebooters. In this interim it is likely that Skinner first retained a scribe and a local artist in his retinue, a practice that he seems to have continued till the later part of his life.

**Skinner’s Persian Album: The Tashrih al-Aqvam**

In the period between 1819 and 1824 Skinner commissioned multiple copies of the Tashrih al-Aqvam (An account of origins and occupations of some of the sects, castes and tribes of India), a

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476 Translated by Ishmail Desai warder at NAM. Acc No: 7707-10-1, 2 and 3.

477 In particular “Soorjah” a Rajput chieftain was considered to be a major adversary that Skinner’s Horse helped overcome. See Military Memoir of Lieut-Col James Skinner C.B. London, 1851, Chapter 15.
full copy of which is held in the British Library.\textsuperscript{478} (Figure 6.0) Since these copies are inscribed for 1825, there can be little doubt that Skinner commissioned them in the years when he was stationed at Hansi Cantonment. The \textit{Tashrih} in the British Library is a Persian text that contains detailed ethnographic information about the castes and sects of north India and is accompanied by individual portraits of the subjects.\textsuperscript{479} Skinner explains in his introduction:

“I translated in summary from the Sanskrit books of the Vedas and Shastras into a clear and simple Persian style devoid of the rhetoric of reality of the origins of the peoples along with the situation of the worship, ways, peculiarities, food, clothing, and occupations, etc., of every community, along with providing illustrations of each group with their situation, clothing, and occupation.”\textsuperscript{480}

The work is divided into three sections - the first section is an un-illustrated section on the House of Timur, the second section deals largely with Hindu castes and sects, while the third is based on Muslim families and tribes and the Kings of Awadh.\textsuperscript{481} None of the other copies of the album contain the original number of 122 illustrations as the British Library \textit{Tashrih}, which suggests that Skinner commissioned copies of the text but had a number of painters working on the

\textsuperscript{478} In this discussion, I will primarily be dealing with the \textit{Tashrih al-Aqvam} in the collection of the British Library. See. Add.Or.27255. This copy hereafter will be referred to as the BL \textit{Tashrih}.

\textsuperscript{479} Another copy, bound with 113 illustrations along with an inscribed dedication to Sir John Malcolm passed through the Sotheby’s sale’s room in New York. Sotheby’s, Indian and Southeast Asian Art, New York, March 2001. This copy was accompanied by a companion volume of 66 pages in the same binding, providing an abbreviated translation of the Persian text, hand written by W. H. Wathen, entitled "Explanation of the Persian Book entitled Tashri-ul-Akwam or a description of the different Castes of Hindustan". A third copy was sold by Christie's, London, April 23, 1981, lot 155 which contained 103 illustrations.

\textsuperscript{480} Sunil Sharma, ‘James Skinner and the Poetic Climate of Late Mughal Delhi,’ in Dalrymple and Sharma, Eds. \textit{Princes and Painters}, 2012, 35-36.

numerous illustrations. As a result, multiple hands of different quality can alone be identified in the BL Tashrih.

In its immediate scope, the BL Tashrih functions as a descriptive account of the urban everyday. As the title suggests, the album is meant to be a description of different castes of Hindustan but Skinner’s approach in compiling this album is one that amalgamates ethnography and literary history. The subject tentatively resonates with European enquiries into the Indian “picturesque” which implied a certain distancing of the subject matter from its narrator. Indian castes and tribes held a longtime fascination for European travelers and residents in India, who compiled sketches and observations from life. The earliest sets of castes and occupation illustrations were being produced by the Moochy (mochi) caste in Tanjore, South India as early as 1770 to cater to the emergent taste for such subjects. But equally compelling is an album compiled by Monsieur Jean Baptiste Gentil in 1774 titled, “Recueil de toutes sortes...” when stationed at the court of the Nawab Shuja al-Daula between 1763 and 1775 in Faizabad, Oudh who employed the services of various Indian artists. While the Tanjore album comes closer in thematic to the ethnographic portrait, the Gentil Album is more focused on the delineation of the activities that its subjects

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Many facing pages have empty borders suggesting that they were meant to carry illustrations. Losty, (1982), 152.

Losty suggests that there are five discernible hands at work in the BL Tashrih. One of them is likely to be Ghulam Ali Khan. Ibid, Losty (1982), p.152.

See Victoria & Albert Museum, AL 9128 (1-36). The paintings are mounted on an album which has a watermark J. Ruse 1799 and a bookplate bearing the name of Joseph Whately and the Latin motto Pelle Timorem (banish fear). See Archer (1992), 45.

Two artists Nevasi Lal and Mohan Singh are named in the dedication written by Gentil. See Archer (1992), 117.
European drawings and sketches of Indian festivals, religions, and its various castes and tribes, compiled into albums in the 1780s made their way back into India as engravings in the early 19th century. In Murshidabad too, paintings of dress habits, religious processions, and urban personalities drawn by Indian artists had acquired currency around 1795. This trend was popular in virtually all centers of European settlement in addition to the ones mentioned including Patna, Calcutta and later, Benaras and Puri. By the first quarter of the 19th century, ethnographic portrayals of castes and occupations would have been part of most albums collected by British and European officers in India, and in wide circulation.

Alongside the stock paintings mentioned above are portraits of personalities that were undoubtedly known to Skinner from his travels to various regions of the Punjab. When commissioning illustrations of certain occupations and sub-castes, Skinner found it useful to refer to “real” personalities in Hansi and its neighboring regions who would have been known to him directly or through friends. For example, Miyan Himmat Khan ‘Bandijan’ or Kalavant’ (male

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486 See my discussion in Chapter 1.

487 One of the paintings in the Tanjore style showing a beggar and his wife and children in the 1770s was later reproduced by Captain Charles Gold in his Oriental Drawings. It was annotated “drawn by the Mooch of Tanjore” with a further note “The Moochys or artists of India usually paint in the style represented in the present drawing, but in body color, and sometimes finish their pictures in the delicate and labored manner of a miniature.” Ibid, Archer (1992) 44.
singer) was likely part of Skinner’s troupe of musicians. Similarly, other portraits of ascetics such as Mangal Das from Jaipur and Bhajan Das Vairagi (Figure 6.1) are sketched from life. These figures, as Losty has pointed out, were sufficiently famous to have their names inscribed alongside their portraits.

The BL *Tashrih* is quite remarkable in the way it incorporates elements of ethnographic portraiture, but also serves as an urban ethnography of Hansi. As a *muraqqa* (album) of the town of Hansi, the BL *Tashrih* may be viewed as a 19th century derivative of long-standing conventions of Indo-Persian literary topoi such as the *Shahr ashub* and the *Shahrangiz* (city disturber) styles of verse and prose but in a more pared down style. The BL *Tashrih*, according to Sunil Sharma, uses the ‘catalog device,’ a descriptive convention in both Persian and Indo-Persian *shahr ashub* writings, to provide the reader with a biographical insight into Hansi. As early as the sixteenth century, Indo-Persian versions of *shahr ashub* poetry developed variations on the original that would allow them to communicate not only the socio-historical value of the city but also rework rhetorical verse to reflect upon conditions in the royal courts and the urban

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488 Skinner commissioned portraits of other musicians in his troupe. See Faquir Khan sitar player (Add.Or.1279), Jangi Khan sitar player (Add.Or.1280), and Amir Baksh drummer (Add.Or.1281). Also see Archer (1972), 201.

489 This mendicant is also represented in a folio belonging to the Fraser Album but is identified as the mendicant Lakshman Das. In E.S Fraser’s hand: *Lutchmun Das, a Brahmin, and a religious mendicant of the Hindoo cast called Byragee*. Archer and Falk (1989), 123.

490 Losty (1982), 152.

landscape around. A telling aspect of early Indo-Persian shahr ashub writings was the incorporation of classical trends such as the Saqinamah (Book of the Cup Bearer), where the poet would use the figures of saqi (the cup bearer) and the mutrib (minstrel) to comment on issues of Iranian Kingship and courtly life. In the hands of Zuhuri (d.1616), a poet active in the Adil Shahi courts at Ahmadnagar and Bijapur, the separate genres of the shahr ashub and the saqinamah were combined to produce a verbal panorama of the city. The tour began with the private spaces of assembly (majlis) and tavern (maykhanah) then onto public sites such as forts, baths, gardens and bazaars – from here the tone became more descriptive explicating the various trades and professions, such as the kamangar (archer), bazzaz (grocer), sabbagh (dyer), ‘attar (druggist), talagar (goldsmith), javahirfurush (jeweler), and sarraf (money changer). There are specific trades that evoke a ‘Persianate’ shahr ashub such as a stylized depiction of 'Kalal', a Hindu caste of distillers and tavern keepers and 'Ahangar' blacksmith in a forge, and others such as rismansaz (rope maker) or zargar (goldsmith). Such poetic means of extolling commerce in the city, according to Sunil Sharma, allowed for the bridging of verse and prose in Indo-Persian texts. By its choice of subjects, the Tashrih al Aqvam displays characteristics of

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494 Sharma, “City of beauties,” 74.

495 Persian term for the 'Lohar' caste of blacksmiths.

496 As Sharma has pointed out, many Persian words are used in this text such as rismansaz (rope maker), khishtpaz (brick maker), and zargar (goldsmith), along with Indic ones such as bhangi (sweeper), kumhar (potter), and baid (physician). See Sharma (2004), 77.
Indo-Persian urban ethnography that are explicitly descriptive in their intent, serving “…as an indirect precursor to the ethnographic surveys of the colonial period that mapped out the complex fabric of Indian society into a detailed typology according to castes and communities.” Overall the Tashrih can be viewed as an important text that maintained a structural connection with Indo-Persian ethnographic literature, the text itself providing a “panorama of the social fabric of India under the ruling polity, here the late Mughals.”

The Takzirat al-Umara: A Historical Notice on the Princely Families

If the Tashrih al-Aqvam was an encapsulation of Skinner’s local world, the Takzirat al-Umara was a means of self-positioning himself in the larger political world of Indian nobility and royalty. This world was made up of polities surrounding Hansi that made up the decentralized provinces, some of which still eluded Company rule. That the Takzirat al-Umara was specifically prepared as a presentation copy and dedicated to “Jarnail Malcum Sahib” Major General John Malcolm is highly significant. Malcolm, Governor of Bombay between 1827 and 1831, was a special envoy to various Indian princely courts, especially those in northern and central India in the process of being indentured to the Company. Skinner’s Horse was an intimate ally of the Company’s military involved in this endeavor, and Skinner was well acquainted with

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497 Sunil Sharma, “City of beauties,” 76.

498 Sunil Sharma, “‘If there is a paradise on earth, it is here’ Urban Ethnography in Indo-Persian Poetic and Historical Texts” in Sheldon Pollock, ed. Forms of Knowledge in Early Modern Asia: Explorations in the Intellectual History of India and Tibet, 1500-1800 (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2011), 240-256, 250.

499 For instance, after Ranjit Singh’s death in 1839, Punjab fell into disarray and following successive wars, was annexed by the British in 1849.
Malcolm because of his involvement in the Maratha and Pindari wars. To Skinner, being in favor with John Malcolm was a step closer to achieving his desire for permanence especially since Malcolm held the correct political clout required for influencing royal opinion. Malcolm appears to be aware of Skinner’s ingratiation. In this letter to Skinner he states:

“Yours (the corps) are the best I have seen...though I believe some of the Rohilla corps are very good; but yours have had great advantages, and have made admirable use of them. I do not mean to flatter, when I say you are as good an Englishman as I know; but you are also a native irregular, half born and fully bred; you armed them, understand their characters, enter into their prejudices; can encourage them, without spoiling them; you know what they can, and what is more important, what they cannot do. The superiorities of your corps rests upon a foundation that no others have. Your rissaldars are men, generally speaking, not only of character, but of family; those under them are not only their military, but their natural dependants. These are links which it is difficult for the mere European officers to keep up. They too often go upon smart men; promote, perhaps, a man of low family and indifferent character among themselves for some gallant actions; and then ascribe to envy, jealousy, and all unworthy motives, the deficiency in respect and obedience of those under him; forgetting the great distinction between regular and irregular corps in this point....that every horseman of your corps considers, whether his duty requires him to act against the enemy, or to protect the inhabitants, that he has “Sekunder Sahib Ke-Alroo (Abroo) in his keeping....To conclude with my opinion upon irregular horse. ...they are our light troops; and as such have their distinctive place: to take them out of that is their ruin. You know my opinion; that you have gone to the very verge of making bad regulars of admirable irregulars. – Yours, ever sincerely, John Malcolm”.500

Skinner’s desire for an official recognition was only fulfilled toward the later part of his career. Subsequently, he was awarded the Companion of the Order of the Bath at the behest of Lord Comberemere, who he had befriended since the war of Bharatpur. Later Skinner had made a special journey to Calcutta in 1829 to see Comberemere off as he sailed for England, and in a

500 Mhow, 23rd Dec. 1819. Memoir of Lieut-Col James Skinner C.B. (London, 1851). John Malcolm was to later write “This state of a country requires a great vigilance and the employment of troops of all descriptions. Irregular corps and local horse are often found not only the cheapest but the best armies for this purpose, because they are usually in such countries, composed of men who, if not employed in defending the peace, would be its disturbers.” Major General Sir John Malcom, The Government of India, (London, 1833), 191.
benevolent gesture the latter gave Skinner his own Cross as a token of the one he was awaiting to receive by post. The Companionship of the Bath was the definitive recognition that Skinner had hoped to achieve in the eyes of the British Crown. He commissioned both Indian and European artists to paint his portrait where he is seen wearing the cross with much pride.\textsuperscript{501}

Skinner was equally anxious to receive an equivalent honor from the Mughal court, mindful of the symbolic significance of gaining recognition amongst his Indian peers. Well-known within the social circles of the Mughal families, he kept the company of Mirza Salim who had become his close acquaintance and the two often went fishing or attended mujrais. The interaction between the young princes of the Mughal court and the European gentry in Delhi speaks to the fluidity of patronage within Delhi’s cultural milieu. It points to the strategic social and cultural links that were maintained by both parties despite the ideological differences between the two. Skinner was in the service of the East India Company and responsible for aiding the settlement of those very territories that had once belonged to Mirza Salim’s ancestors.\textsuperscript{502} Skinner and Mirza Salim shared the company of the same group of dancing girls and kalawants and engaged the same artists in their service.

\textsuperscript{501} Two large oil portraits of Skinner show him in full uniform displaying the Cross. The first, painted by William Melville, is dated to around 1835 and is in the collection of the National Army Museum. The second, which is most likely a copy of Melville’s painting is painted by Ghulam Hussain Khan and is in the British Library, Asia and Pacific Collection BL F9.

\textsuperscript{502} In fact, the second but youngest son of Akbar II, Mirza Babar Bakht was known to affect “…the manners and habits of Europeans and is constantly betraying his absurdity by want of reflection. For instance when he set up an English coach he insisted that the coachman should not sit above himself. He wears an European cut coat with stars on both breasts top boots and a thick walking stick are his rage.” Major Archer, \textit{Tours in Upper India…Vol. I} (London, 1833) 382-383. He is later known to have ordered a European styled house built for him in the palace grounds. See also Pernau and Jaffrey, \textit{Information and Public Sphere} (2009).
The Tazkira’s Frontispiece: Skinner’s Mughal Titles

Skinner must have approached Mirza Salim the youngest son of Akbar II, to request an award of Mughal titles on his behalf. On 3rd May 1830, Akbar II awarded to Skinner the title of *Nasir ud Daula James Skinner Sahib Bahadur Ghalib e-Jang* and honored him accordingly.\(^{503}\) (Figure 6.2 Firman of Akbar II) This recognition was granted Mughal sanction by the issuance of a *firman*, a court directive proclaiming his titles embellished with the seal of the Mughal emperor. This award of a Mughal title by Akbar II and the grant of the Companionship of the Bath were both important symbolic milestones for Skinner, which he was quick to commemorate through commissions for portraits. Within a month of receiving his Mughal title Skinner called upon the services of the veteran court painter Ghulam Murtaza Khan\(^{504}\) to paint his portrait in miniature, which was then placed beside Skinner’s dedication to Malcolm in the *Tazkirat al-Umara* dated 10 June 1830. (Figure 6.3: Frontispiece of Tazkirat al-Umara) Here, Skinner is shown seated on a European chair made out of ebony with a gold inlay. He is seated in full profile wearing a helmet of black fur plume and white feathers. His helmet’s tiger spot lining bears part of the German inscription *ICH DIE(N)*.\(^{505}\) On his left breast hangs the cross of the Bath.\(^{506}\) His sword

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\(^{503}\) Pernau and Jaffrey, *Information and Public Sphere* (2009), 247. The honor likely included a the grant of a khilat or dress of honor and at times gems or jewelry.

\(^{504}\) Mildred Archer first mentions Ghulam Murtaza Khan as the artist for Skinner’s portrait in the *Tazkirat al-Umara*. She also mentions that Skinner wrote to the artist calling him the Bihzad and the Mani of the period. However, thus far, there is no physical link to prove this and I have not been able to find this letter. See Mildred Archer, *Indian painting for the British, 1770-1880: an essay.* (Oxford University Press, 1955).

\(^{505}\) The entire motto would have read, *TRIA IUNCTA IN UNO ICH DIE(N)*.

\(^{506}\) It is quite likely that the insignia worn for this portrait was actually the one gifted to Skinner by Lord Combermere. Skinner’s own insignia did not arrive until later. J.B. Fraser, *Military Memoir*, 193-4.
rests near his left arm, which is casually draped over the arm of the chair. Most noticeably the cartouche of the newly awarded title *Nasir ud Daula James Skinner Sahib Bahadur Ghalib e-Jang* is set along the base of the portrait. The draft version of this picture in Delhi Red Fort Museum collection has the newly awarded titles in cursive hand running along the left side of the portrait indicating that Ghulam Murtaza Khan must have prepared a rough version of the picture in response to an urgent commission.\(^{507}\)

The *Tazkirat al-Umara* is written by a scribe, who is unnamed but is likely painted as part of Skinner’s entourage in a painting of Skinner’s durbar discussed below. Like the *Tashrih al-Aqvam*, the *Tazkirat al-Umara* does not seem to be a sole commission but intended as a presentation album, with the text prepared beforehand and the illustrations added later.\(^{508}\) As is evident from the dedication, Skinner intended this album as a gift of remembrance.\(^{509}\) The album is divided into four parts or *Tabakah*. The first part in 4 chapters is based on Rajput families starting with the Sisodiya house of Udaipur followed by rulers of Jodhpur and their relatives in Kishangarh and Bikaner, the Kacchwahas of Jaipur and their 15 feudatory chiefs, and the rulers of Rewari and Sonepat. The second part deals with the 12 ruling families of the Punjab beginning with Ranjit Singh who ruled from Lahore. The third section describes the four Muslim princely families based at Farrukhnagar, Dujana, Rania, and Bhawalpur. The fourth part goes on to

\(^{507}\) No current documentation for this sketch is available.

\(^{508}\) Another illustrated copy of the album is in the Chester Beatty collection (Ind.Ms.33) and an un-illustrated version in the British Library. BL Add.24051. See Losty (1982), 152-153.

\(^{509}\) See *Tazkirat al-Umara*, British Library Add.Or.27254, Dedication.
describe Haryana and its chief towns of Hisar and Hansi, the latter being the town where Skinner and his cavalry Skinner’s Horse was stationed.\textsuperscript{510}

**An Indian Identity**

The layout of the *Tazkirat al-Umara* speaks to Skinner’s own self-positioning in the larger political sphere of the subcontinent. Skinner self-insertion into the historical narrative of the album occurs at two levels. At a personal level, Skinner is able legitimize his own presence in this album on Indian nobility by emphasizing his Rajput lineage from his mother’s side. Skinner’s portrait appears physically next to a portrait of the Javan Singh (r.1828-38) titled, “*Javan Singh Udaipurwala*” the ruler of Udaipur of the Sisodiya clan, and is likely executed by an artist in the circle of Ghulam Ali Khan.\textsuperscript{511} By aligning himself with a purist Rajput lineage of familial ties that traced their origins to the Hindu deity Rama, Skinner is able to integrate himself into the mythic history of the Sisodiya Rajputs. The section on Rajput ruling families detailing their alliances occupies a greater portion of the album and is spread in four chapters.

The second section on the ruling families of the Punjab highlights another aspect of Skinner’s involvement with the political and military negotiations in that region. In 1831, Skinner accompanied Lord William Bentinck, the Governor General, to Rooper town for a ceremonial show of arms and diplomatic exchange with Ranjit Singh, the Sikh chief ruling from Lahore.\textsuperscript{512}

\textsuperscript{510} Parts of this description are drawn upon from Losty (1982), 152.

\textsuperscript{511} I agree with Losty’s suggestion that this portrait is the hand of Ghulam Ali Khan.

This was a gathering of great diplomatic significance in that it was attended by a large contingent of Ranjit Singh’s army and, presumably, by a number of Trans-Sutlej chiefs who are the subjects of portraits in the second *tabakah* (section) of the *Tazkirat al-Umara*. More importantly this meeting was made up of a ceremonial show of cavalry skill, which made Skinner’s involvement in this event more significant. Skinner’s Horse is known to have engaged in competitive maneuvers against the French officer Monsieur Allard’s Dragoons, who were part of Ranjit Singh’s cavalry retinue. Though Ranjit Singh’s portrait in the *Tazkirat al-Umara* is likely to have been painted around this time we actually don’t have enough evidence of the interaction between artists accompanying Skinner and Bentinck with those in Ranjit Singh’s retinue for this meeting. (Figure 6.4) However, the fact that artists in Skinner’s retinue had access to charbas (tracings) of portraits of the Punjab chiefs is evident from the portrait of Ranjit Singh in the album. Seated on a version of the Golden throne in a standardized interior of a palace, Ranjit Singh is shown relatively younger than he would have appeared in 1831. Neither the setting nor Ranjit Singh’s portrait conform to Skinner’s account of the meeting, which further supports the possibility of portraits being prepared from stock tracings. Furthermore, since John Malcolm is likely to have carried a finished copy of the *Tazkirat* with him on his return to Britain in 1831, it

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513 Ibid, Fraser (1851), 207-17.

514 Losty has suggested that it is possible that artists took portraits of Ranjit Singh and other chiefs at the meeting at Rooper in 1831 and of Rajput chiefs on another occasion at the signing of the treaty of Ajmer in 1832. This, however, does not fit into the chronology of events. Losty (1982), 152.

515 For example, Skinner mentions the grandeur of Ranjit Singh’s encampment in detail especially the elaborate textiles – tents and carpets, and men and machinery that was mobilized which created a dazzling spectacle in itself. Skinner also mentions Ranjit wearing the Kohinoor diamond on his left arm and a large retinue of 100 women with turbans bejeweled and dressed singing in the encampment. Ibid, Fraser (1851), 207-17.
is possible that most portraits in the album are stylized or from *charbas* and were an expedient artistic exercise.

The final sections of the *Tazkirat al-Umara* that deal with Mughal princely families in smaller districts of the Punjab followed by a detailed account of Hisar and Hansi once again bring the focus back to those geographical environs that comprised Skinner’s vicinity. Most portraits in these two sections can be attributed to the circle of Ghulam Ali Khan or to an artist who was following him. Not all the portraits are contemporaneous since many are drawn from older copies and a number of them recall the compositional and stylistic attributes of paintings collected by William Fraser between 1806 and 1819. The three-quarter profile portraits of Indian rulers in the *Tazkirat* with a shield and sword tucked beside them are reminiscent of the group portraits of the ruling chiefs and courtiers from Jodhpur, which are in the style of Ghulam Ali Khan. Most portraits are probably from tracings and the varying quality of the portraits suggests that there were multiple artists working on this album.

**Celebrating the Self: Three Monumental Paintings for Skinner by Ghulam Ali Khan**

The most monumental paintings for Skinner were created in 1827 following news that he had been awarded of the Companionship of the Bath. This was a recognition that Skinner had striven to achieve for the greater part of his career. Ghulam Ali Khan’s paintings for him channel the sense of immense pride that Skinner must have felt.
From 1827-28 Ghulam Ali Khan produced three paintings for James Skinner that exemplify the artist’s move to working on large-scaled drawings and constitute the most active years of the painter’s practice. The first of these three paintings shows **James Skinner in regimental Darbar** surrounded by his choicest cavalrmen and associates.\(^{516}\) The painting is captioned “‘amal-i ghulam 'ali khan musavvir sakin-i dar al khilafat shahjahanabad dar sanah 1827 'isavi t(ai)yar shud’/ The work of Ghulam 'Ali Khan the painter, resident of the Seat of the Caliphate Shahjahanabad, (it) was completed in the Christian year 1827.”\(^{517}\) (Figure 6.5, 6.5a, Detail) In a composition measuring about 100x120 cm, Skinner (**Shabih-i Karnal James Skinner Sahib Bahadur/ Likeness of Colonel James Skinner Sahib Bahadur**) and his son James (**Shabih-I Ajtan James Skinner Sahib/Likeness of Adjutant James Skinner**) who was also an adjutant in Skinner’s Horse, are positioned above eye level in the center of a scene that resonates with the strict formality of an official gathering. Skinner’s assistant is seen holding a *morchhal* while another one behind James stands with his hands clasped underneath the long sleeves of his *jama*.

The composition is based on a triangular arrangement reminiscent of the high ceremonial of Mughal dynastic and court portraits with Skinner and his son at the apex flanked on either side by his choicest *rissaldars* and cavalrmen who are seated on the floor, according to their rank with their legs folded underneath them (Figure 6.6. *The Mughal Dynasty from Timur to Aurangzeb, attributed to Bhawai Das 1707-12, Nasser D. Khalili Collection Mss 874*). The

\(^{516}\) This is amply clear from James Fraser’s memoirs of Skinner career. See, J.B Fraser in *Military Memoir of Lieut. Col. James Skinner C.B.* (1851).

\(^{517}\) I am grateful to Robert Skelton for confirming this translation. The current catalogue of the National Army Museum has been updated to reflect my inputs regarding these paintings by Ghulam Ali Khan.
painting provides a remarkable insight into the socially heterogeneous composition of Skinner’s regiment comprising local chiefs and soldiers from the Sikh, Rohilla, and Maratha camps. The overall arrangement is architectural in character, taking its cue from a large overhead canopy raised to create a sense of inclusiveness, which defines the spatial parameters of the gathering.

The painting is an encapsulation of Skinner’s military world focusing on the identity of his regiment as a cavalry division. This is immediately apparent in the activity ensuing in the foreground, which is that of a new recruit and his horse being inspected in anticipation for being entered into Skinner’s service. In the centre, a sowar or cavalryman stands with his back towards us facing Skinner, while a groom/syce measures the height of the horse (on which the horseman is mounted) with a long stick-like instrument. Ghulam Ali Khan’s keen eye for detail describes the instrument made up of a tall staff attached to a metal plate, which is shown being graded to measure the horse’s height. We can assume that the subject of the painting is not only to depict the regimental Darbar session but also to communicate the high standard of Skinner’s cavalry recruits – men as well as horses.

The painting brings together individual studies of Skinner’s associates, attendants and rissaldars of Skinner’s Horse painted by Ghulam Ali Khan for Skinner that were compiled in an album. However, the artist is careful to delineate the effects of age and status on the rissaldars, five years on. The artist’s intimate knowledge of the hierarchy of Skinner’s camp is evident in the relative placements of the officers and assistants shown in the darbar scene. Shadull Khan, a senior

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rissaldar who was one of the most trustworthy associates of James Skinner who had saved his son’s life, is seated closest to Skinner. Other figures such as Jalal Khan, Ghulam Hussain, and Haider Ali now look significantly older and bear the scars of battles.

A second large-scale painting measuring 71.5 x125 cm, Naqshah - i shahr va qil'a yi hansi va chhaoni-yi sawaran-i rajimant Picture of the town and fort of Hansi, and of the cantonment of the cavalry regiment or “View of the Cantonment at Hansi” (Figure 6.7) features James Skinner and William Fraser returning to the Hansi fort and cantonment with a large regimentsal contingent of Skinner’s Local Horse in tow. Completed in August 1828, the painting shows long files of Skinner’s cavalry occupying the left portion of the painting, some riding with yellow banners containing the motto Himmat –i Mardan, Madad-i Khuda (The Strength of Man, The Help of God). To the right, Skinner’s trusted rissaldars are shown engaging in various cavalry maneuvers which are clearly derived from the illustrations of the cavalry maneuvers and weaponry manuals produced in 1823. William Fraser and James Skinner’s collaboration over a period of more than two decades is reinforced in their combined equestrian portraits in the center of the composition. William Fraser held a casual commission as Major in Skinner’s Local Horse division and is also known to have supplied many recruits to Skinner’s Horse over time.

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519 J.B Fraser, Military Memoir, 173.

520 The current catalogue of the National Army Museum has been updated to reflect my translation. I am grateful to Robert Skelton for confirming the accuracy of the translation and the dates associated with this painting. For a detailed discussion of this painting see Yuthika Sharma, Cat. No. 59 in Dalrymple and Sharma, eds. Princes and Painters, 2012, 146.

The View of Skinner’s Estate

Ghulam Ali Khan’s final monumental painting is the depiction of James Skinner in his estate at Dhana, near Hansi. Skinner’s ownership of Dhana shows how he considered the permanent ownership of landed property, in addition to his British title, as an essential means of gaining recognition for his service to the East India Company. This turned out to be a controversial claim, reaching the heart of a political and moral debate in 18th century Britain that saw the individual’s ownership of land as solely a capitalist enterprise not one that was bound by the limitations of perpetual tenure. If British administrators were to consider Skinner as a British officer he would be ineligible for any gift of a landed estate. If allowed to hold perpetual tenure Skinner would have to be considered an Indian officer because of his endorsement of Mughal customary law. Thus, the two worlds of India and Britain that Skinner straddled as an Anglo-Indian were to a large extent now his folly. How Skinner negotiated out of this conundrum was a diplomatic feat in itself. In 1818, a small jagir near Aligarh was granted in perpetuity to Skinner by the Governor General Lord Hastings “...desiring, by this public mark of favour, to acknowledge and to remunerate your distinguished merits and firm attachment to the British Government...”

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524 Also the grant to his brother Robert Skinner was also made perpetual for a small jagir in Aligarh. Fort William, 26th Sept, Sept.1818. See *Military Memoir of Lieut-Col James Skinner C.B.* Vol. II.
decade later, Skinner established his cavalry base at Hansi, moving en-masse to his new estate at Dhana. 525

Ghulam Ali Khan was very much the creator of Skinner’s permanence in Indian and British society. Skinner’s self-fashioned persona as a capitalist landowner and the head of the regiment Local Horse are celebrated in two paintings completed by Ghulam Ali Khan in 1828. The painting **Skinner on his farm at Dhana**, (Figure 6.8 and 6.8a) modeled on an agrarian theme most commonly seen in eighteenth-century landscape painting, is a remarkable example of Ghulam Ali Khan’s ingenuity in combining topographical drawing with genre portraits. The painting shows Skinner riding in an open carriage through the grounds of his Dhana estate followed by an escort of sawars (cavalrymen). In the distance the fortifications, of presumably Hansi fort, form a continuous skyline of dark grey that makes up the outline of the outdoors scene rendered in a palette of tawny hues. The expanse of a pale blue sky that occupies two-thirds of the vertical space of the painting immediately orients the view to focus on the farm scene. Various herdsmen and villagers stand next to cattle herds and mounds of hay amongst a sprinkle hutments and trees in the backdrop.

As in the painting of Skinner’s Darbar, Ghulam Ali Khan is able to use individual portrait studies to provide the figural content for this landscape. The most noticeable transpositions are the genre portraits of three men standing to the lower right of the picture, who also appear as individual

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525 It is not clear to what extent Skinner owned property in Hansi but it is clear from his memoirs and biography that he was settled there as the primary owner.
studies in the Skinner and Fraser albums. Sawunt (Sawant), Kehar (Kihar), and Hurdut (Haridutt), who were originally drawn in a combined portrait for William Fraser, were recorded in his hand to be a cavalryman, herdsman, and trooper respectively. In the copy of this group portrait in the Skinner Album their professions and names, presumably in the hand of Skinner, are somewhat different. While Sawant (written as Sanwat/Saamut) is now a jemadar, a low ranking employee in Skinner’s cavalry, Kihar is now a milkman (gwala), while Haridutt (Bardat, Burdut) is listed as a cultivator. Whether Kihar and Haridutt’s transition of roles was fact or fiction is beside the point. Their appearance as ‘themselves’ to suit an agrarian theme is facilitated by Skinner’s revised ascriptions to the figures and by Ghulam Ali Khan’s re-visualization of the individual portraits of Kihar and Haridutt in his painting of the Dhana Farm. It is amply clear that Ghulam Ali Khan had prepared a vast archive of stock figures to be used selectively in his paintings for Skinner at Hansi. This is especially apparent in the four riding figures of cavalrymen accompanying Skinner’s carriage, which are derived from individual equestrian studies of rissaldars. Ghulam Ali Khan also relied on other artists’ visualization of technical subjects the illustration of complex maneuvers of cavalry officers, originally meant to supplement a detailed exposition of maneuvers and weaponry prepared by

526 Archer and Falk have pointed to one such correspondence, but in the light of the drawings of the Skinner Album and the less-known cavalry drawings that he commissioned, this correspondence reflects a larger instance of Ghulam Ali Khan’s working method.

527 BL Add.Or. 1271 and 1277, Skinner Album (Archer, 1972, no. 169). For the earlier version in the Fraser Album see, Plate 65, pp.94-95.

528 Please also note that William Fraser explains the use of the pitchfork of wood and hoe in Haridutt’s hands as a device for cutting thorns, while Skinner just labels them as an axe and a fork.

529 This argument is summarized from Yuthika Sharma “In the Company of the Mughal Court” in Princes and Painters, 2012, 41-51.
Skinner, that were used in the *View of the Cantonment at Hansi* that Ghulam Ali Khan did for Skinner in 1828.\(^{530}\)

**Conclusion**

This chapter has focused on the artistic patronage of the East India Company officer James Skinner and the central role that paintings played in the process of his self-determination in Delhi society. Skinner’s long term quest to gain official recognition from the British crown and the Mughal court spurred a number of commissions that reflect the breadth of innovations within painting culture that occurred in Delhi during this time. Skinner’s personal identity as an Anglo-Indian and his desire to be recognized in European and Mughal circles has been viewed in terms of a fractured identity but the paintings themselves offer us an opportunity to think beyond the mere “Anglo-Indian” appeal of the works. Instead, these commissions allow us to appreciate how artistic agency was central to formulating a social identity for Skinner. For example, Ghulam Ali Khan’s monumental paintings for Skinner re-characterize him as the land-owning, military elite of Delhi society at par with the city’s nobility. Moreover, the pictorial language of these three paintings is built from an even larger exercise undertaken by Ghulam Ali Khan – that of recording the notables of Skinner’s cavalry regiment. The work’s primary focus on portraiture is noteworthy here as the years 1825-30 can be seen to mark another important juncture in the practice of this multifaceted artist. On the other hand, Skinner’s straddling of the European and

\(^{530}\) The cavalry manuals are discussed earlier in this chapter. For a similar figure see, “An officer of Skinner’s Horse,” Chester Beatty Library MS 6916; also see two versions of Cavalrymen firing at each other 1977-07-10-2, National Army Museum attributed to “Naziradim”; and another unsigned copy in BL Add. Or. 1263.
Mughal worlds (to use Mildred Archer’s phrase) allows us to appreciate the motivations for designing two albums specifically for the statesman and diplomat Sir John Malcolm. The *Tazkirat al-Umara* and the *Tashrih al-Aqvam* both begin with copious elegies to Malcolm and were designed as presentation albums. As discussed in this chapter, Skinner desired to find favor with high ranking officials in England through Malcolm with the specific aim of receiving an official military recognition from the British Crown. The receipt of the Companion of the Order of the Bath was quickly followed by the bestowal of Mughal titles at the court of Akbar Shah. Having previously prepared a cavalry manual outlining the uniqueness of Skinner’s Horse as a cavalry regiment especially suited to fighting in the subcontinent, Skinner now turned to the commission of works where he could assert authorship as a valid noble of Delhi society. The *Tazkirat’s* main accomplishment is Skinner’s ability to insert himself in the litany of rulers in North India and of his proximate physical placement alongside the ruler of Udaipur in a bid to reiterate his Rajput ancestry. Similarly his commission of the *Tashrih* is from the perspective of an elite intellectual, someone who is intimately familiar and capable of commanding the knowledge of India’s peoples and its ethnic and religious communities.\(^531\) Overall, Skinner’s patronage allows us an unprecedented insight into the textures of painting culture at Delhi, the socio-political climate that informed it, and the instrumental role of local artists in shaping the visual identity of Delhi’s rising nouveau riche.

\(^{531}\) I am grateful to Sunil Sharma for sharing a preliminary translation of the opening section of the *Tashrih* where Skinner writes: “After praise and thanksgiving to God the world-creator, I, Col. James Skinner, declare that for a long time my weak mind was suggesting that I write a description of the reality of the origins of the peoples of every group of Indians (hunud), especially the lower communities who have not been written about by historians since old times and nor have the subject crossed the mind of anyone among the nobility, high ranking rulers, and grandees.” Sunil Sharma, personal correspondence, February 20, 2011.
VII

Mughal Delhi in my Pocket:

Miniatures, *Mughalerie*, and the Souvenir Market in Delhi 1827-1880

When Herman Jackson Warner of Boston bought two miniature ivory portraits of the famous Mughal emperor Shah Jahan and his wife Mumtaz Mahal in Delhi in the 1880s, he assumed that he was buying souvenirs of a bygone Mughal age. *(Figure 7.0)* In nineteenth-century India the Mughal emperor Shah Jahan was well remembered as the patron of the Taj Mahal at Agra, a grand marble mausoleum built to commemorate his beloved queen, Arjuman Banu Begum popularly known as Mumtaz Mahal. At Delhi, Shah Jahan’s memory lived on in the white marble and red sandstone palace citadel of Shahjahanabad, the erstwhile Mughal seat of power that was home to his successors and the last Mughal emperor, Bahadur Shah ‘Zafar’. The ivory miniature portraits of Shah Jahan and his wife Mumtaz Mahal were then ideal souvenirs for Warner not only because they symbolized romantic longing and commemorative zeal for a departed love, but also because these portraits were, for all practical purposes, *Mughal* miniatures. That Warner had the ivories set within ornate metal frames densely inset with ruby colored stones further suggests the vital perception of later miniatures featuring Mughal themes – as *objets d’art* invested with

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532 The term *Mughalerie* is here is employed in a similar sense to Ebba Koch’s use of the term to denote an interest in collecting Mughal subject matter – the objects themselves and their emotional appeal to the users is different in the context of Delhi in the nineteenth century. See Ebba Koch, “The ‘Moghuleries’ of the Millionenzimmer, Schonbrunn Palace, Vienna” in Crill, et.al. Eds. *Arts of Mughal Indi* (V&A, Mapin, 2004), 152-167.

533 Special Collection, Herman Jackson Warner Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, MA.
the artistic labor, technical skill, and an unwavering attention to detail that were considered fundamental to the creation of Mughal miniatures for generations. Moreover, the incorporation of ivory miniatures into decorative and wearable settings such as richly carved furniture panels, portable frames, lockets, jewelry and even clothing accessories such as buttons and lapel pins, had propelled the Delhi ivory miniature into the domain of luxury and therefore, of commerce. Within Delhi’s flourishing curio market the distinction between Mughal and Mughalerie had, for all practical purposes, sufficiently blurred.

This chapter addresses the contemporaneous reception of the Mughal miniature within and outside Mughal court culture in nineteenth-century Delhi (1827-1880), the city that served as the home of the last three Mughal emperors as well as the key diplomatic outpost of British governance in India. It provides a context for understanding the role of painted miniatures within courtly and popular practices in nineteenth century Anglo-Mughal Delhi. Finally it addresses the concepts, of a demise of quality and workmanship, inherent in perception of the absorption of miniature painting into the marketplace.

As explained by Abul Fazl, Akbar’s court historian: “The minuteness of detail, the general finish, the boldness of execution… now observed in the pictures are incomparable…” Thus, the role of the miniature’s materiality – the use of natural pigments, jewel colors, precious metallic hues, microscopic renderings of figures and landscapes, and unbounded detail – has been considered as a crucial marker of quality and superlative artistic skill of Mughal painting. Such exacting standards of production begot appreciation from imperial connoisseurs such as Jahangir who were known for their ability to recognize the work of various hands within a single work. Also see David Roxburgh, Micrographia: Toward a Visual Logic of Persianate Painting, RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics, No. 43, Islamic Arts (Spring, 2003), 12-30.

The Last Mughal Souvenir: Mughal subversion of the Colonial image-gift

The painted portrait miniature was a popular element of the gift-economy of the early modern Mughal court from the period of Mughal rule under Akbar (reigned 1556-1605). With the rise of foreign political interests in the subcontinent in the eighteenth century, painted miniatures featured prominently in the gift economy of the later Mughal and regional courts especially as traditional notions of gifting - both nazr, tribute offered by subordinates, and khilat, the bestowal of the honorary robe – were questioned and pre-empted by British policymakers in India.\(^{536}\)

Khilats were often awarded as a reminder of the subsidiary status of the recipient in relation to the donor, and served to maintain the hierarchical structure of Mughal imperial rule.\(^{537}\) This tangible association between gifting and the body was considered as a means of ensuring political allegiance such that “the recipient was incorporated through the medium of the clothing into the body of the donor.”\(^{538}\) Other rituals entailed the gifting of portrait miniatures as part of a ceremonial of devotional allegiance to the sun known as the shast wa shabah. The ceremonial, devised to initiate disciples in the emperor’s service, involved a full prostration at the ruler’s feet, followed by the disciple receiving a turban ornament, a medallion embossed with a sunburst,

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pearl earrings, and a miniature portrait of the ruler to be worn on the turban. Gifts of the imperial seal or ring along with the imperial likeness functioned as important markers of royal discipleship and were limited to a select few in the court and those closest to the emperor’s circle of trust. Miniature portraits on paper also functioned as diplomatic ploys for Jesuit and English emissaries to obtain religious and trade rights in the subcontinent, while also harboring an underlying sense of artistic competition between the two painting traditions. Such gestures were part of the orchestrated civility that formed the foundation of early modern Mughal court culture.

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539 John F. Richards, *The Mughal Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 45. Sixteenth century accounts from the Mughal emperor Akbar’s reign (r. 1556-1605) provide an insight into the gifting of portrait miniatures as part of the *shast wa shabah*.

540 Richards (1996), p.105. The use of portraits on presentation or *nazrana* coins too, reiterate the global outreach of miniature portraits not only as markers of power and patronage but more conventionally, as the symbolic elements of commemorative value, diplomatic, and monetary exchange. Jahangir (r. 1605-1627) carried forward this convention, projecting the idea of the sun-infused monarch capable of greater knowledge than ordinary men, adopting the honorific *Nur ud-Din* or the “Light of Faith.” See David Collection, gold *mohur* with portrait of Jahangir, regnal year 1611 AD. For another *nazrana* coin from Jahangir’s reign featuring Akbar’s portrait see, CM 1930-6-7-1 (Gift of the National Art Collections Fund and H. Van den Bergh), British Museum.


However, Europeans viewed Mughal courtly rituals in terms of a narrative of despotic governance – one that embroiled the British East India Company employees into practices of bribery, coercion, and favoritism, inducing a ban on the practice. This restriction, as Natasha Eaton has shown, encouraged hybrid notions of the colonial tribute-gift to emerge, exemplified in the notion of the ‘image-gift.’ Promoted by Governor General Warren Hastings (1773-1785), the image-gift interpreted both European and Indian ideas of gifting and was largely formulated to counter or subvert the Indian gifting patterns of nazr and khilat, at times eliminating the obligation for reciprocal gifting altogether. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, the politics of the image-gift formed the undercurrent for most Anglo-Mughal interactions. After 1803, Delhi had become the home of the Mughal family who were under the East India Company’s strict political and financial cynosure. After assuming administrative control of Mughal territories from emperor Shah Alam (r. 1759-1806), Company officials sought to manage the public perception of Mughal authority. In particular, the Mughal emperor’s regal demeanor was viewed as an attempt at reasserting Mughal sovereignty, creating the perception of a superior status of the Mughal House over its British overlords. The continuing prerogative for disbursing khilats and receiving nazars was in effect considered a powerful symbolic assertion of this

543 The corruption emerging from the overall abuse of the Mughal gift by Company officials was first addressed through the Regulation act of 1773 that banned the acceptance of land, money, and jewels from Indians.

544 Natasha Eaton, ‘Between Mimesis and Alterity,’ 2004, 831. For an analysis of the artistic exchange, and in particular, the practice of portrait-giving as nazar or diplomatic gift, see Natasha Eaton, ‘The Art of Colonial Despotism: Portraits, Politics, and Empire in South India, 1750–1795,’ Cultural Critique 70, Fall 2008, Regents of the University of Minnesota, 63-93.

545 K.N Pannikar, British Diplomacy in North India, Delhi, 1968.
ideal. Khilats and nazars entailed an endowment of servility and subservience demanding an outward admission of the emperor’s superiority. Thus, Anglo-Mughal diplomatic encounters became greatly strained until they were reinstated on the Company’s condition of diplomatic ‘equality’.

In this context, the colonial image-gift re-emerged for a final time, amongst political negotiations between the Mughal court and the East India Company during the first quarter of the nineteenth century. The very last meeting to occur between a Governor General and a Mughal emperor was an exercise willfully conducted on an “equal footing” marked by an absence of nazr and khilat rituals and an inconspicuous gifting of portrait miniatures. On February 15, 1827, the Mughal court of Akbar Shah II (r.1806-1837) became the venue for a high-profile visit of the Governor General Lord Amherst, William Pitt, to Delhi en route on a tour of the Northern provinces. Responding to a formal invitation by the emperor, Amherst’s decision to meet Akbar Shah was conditional on the projection of a balance of shared power between the British administrator and the Mughal king of Delhi. The orchestrated meeting too, was reflective of the modified nature of Mughal court ceremonial. Amherst was received by the emperor’s sons Mirza Abu Zafar and Mirza Salim at the Lahore Gate and led to his private chambers.

“…Lord Amherst paid the Emperor a visit: he was received by him in the hall of audience, which both parties entered at the same moment, and, after an embrace, the Emperor ascended the peacock throne, and the Governor General sat down in a state chair on his right hand. After an

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546 For instance, see the case of Shah Haji, Akbar II’s close aide to along with Raja Sher Mal to Calcutta in 1808. The khilats, which were sent by the Mughal family, were refused and returned by the Governor General. See Pannikar (1968) pp.31-35.

547 Lord Bentinck and later Lord Auckland were both unable to agree on the terms of the meeting with the Mughal emperor. Panikkar, 1968, 144-45.
interchange of compliments, and the usual form of presenting attar had been gone through, Lord Amherst took leave and was conducted by the Emperor to the door of the hall. On a subsequent day, the Emperor returned the visit with similar ceremonies.  

While this meeting set an important precedent for diplomatic equality between the court and the Company, it was followed by other debilitating injunctions against ceremonial and courtly conventions. These involved the abolition of presentation of nazr by lower ranked Company officers to the emperor, the disallowance of conferment of titles to them, and the revision of the epistolary format for royal address. This flagrant denial of the traditional right of the Mughal emperor to assert his superior status as the symbolic superior of state was also designed to discourage the nominal fealty to the Mughal court that successor states such as Awadh and Hyderabad continued to adhere to.

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549 This display of equal footing, devoid of the principal nazr and entailing the emperor’s return visit, set a status quo that remained in place for succeeding administrators, with neither the Mughal house nor the British government agreeing on the terms of greater or ‘perfect’ equality for future meetings. Macnaughten to Thomas Metcalfe, January 26, 1838 (May 2, 1838), No. 22. Cited in Pannikar (1968), p. 144.

550 IOR/F/4/1179/30741 Sep 1826-Jul 1828. Heber on his visit to the court of Akbar Shah II also mentions the restrictions imposed by the Government on Europeans barring them from accepting nazrs, and in some cases offering to provide an exchange of money. See Heber, *Narrative of a Journey*, pp. 303-304.


552 Most noticeably, Amherst revised the epistolary format of the arzee/petition for addressing the emperor to exclude any expressions of vassalage. Instead, letters now followed the style of a wasikah/treaties, beginning with an invocation of prosperity and were now classified as ‘illustrious epistles.’ Pannikar, 147.

553 At Lucknow the tactical debasement of Mughal power at Delhi acted as a catalyst for the Nawab Wazir Ghazi ud-din Haider’s political self-fashioning as the King of Oude in 1819. This symbolic declaration of independence prompted a flurry of ‘coronation’ commissions – of paintings, furniture, and decorative objects chiefly designed by the English artist Robert Home, the chief painter to Ghazi ud-din. For a summary description of this event see, Major Archer, *Tours in Upper Indian and the Himalaya*
During his visit to the court, Amherst acquired a pair of portraits on ivory, of Akbar II and his favorite son, Mirza Salim. (For illustrations, see Figure 4.8) Amherst’s inscriptions on both miniatures, comprising the traditional titular invocation of Akbar II and his son Mirza Salim, translates the Persian writing on the miniatures frames:

"The auspicious Portrait of His Majesty, exalted as Jemshid, whose attendants are like angels, the shadow of the Almighty, the Asylum of the Mahomedan faith, the promoter of the true religion, the glory of Islam, the ornament & representative of the house of Timour, the mighty Emperor, the renowned Sovereign, the Patron of 'the arts, my Lord & Master, Aboo Nasser, Moyeen ood Deen, Mahommed Akber Shah Padshah, Ghazi, may the Almighty grant him long life & prosperity, & continue to Mankind the benefits of his grace & favor. Dated the 22nd year of His Majesty's reign. By His Majesty's devoted faithful servant Gholam Ali Khan Painter. (A very good likeness of the Great Moghul as I saw him at Delhi in February 1827. A.)"\(^{554}\)

Akbar Shah and Mirza Salim’s miniature portraits on ivory presented an altogether new format of imperial portraiture, one that deceptively invoked the perception of Anglo-Mughal equality. However, it can be argued that Akbar Shah’s relatively inconspicuous gifting of Mughal portrait miniatures to Amherst was a deliberate act to re-establish the lost donor-recipient relationship between the emperor and the Governor General that invoked aspects of the *shast wa sabah*.

Ghulam Ali Khan painted these portraits to commemorate Lord Amherst’s visit to the Mughal court in 1827. The principal outcome of this visit was an order for the discontinuance of the

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\(^{554}\) The frames are now lost, and untraceable in the archives, but records of their inscriptions exist.

practice whereby the Resident at Delhi presented the King with a \textit{nazar} four times a year.\footnote{IOR/F/4/1179/30741 Sep 1826-Jul 1828. Bishop Reginald Heber on his visit to the court of Akbar Shah II also mentions the restrictions imposed by the Government on Europeans barring them from accepting \textit{nazars}, and in some cases offering to provide an exchange of money. Additionally, as the Bishop noted, the nazars were now provided by the British government at their own expense. See Heber, \textit{Narrative of a Journey} (London, 1828), pp. 303-304.} This was to be followed by a decree disallowing the conferment of titles on British officers.\footnote{India Pol. 20 Sep 1837, draft 437/1837, E/4/752, 757-62.} It is ironic that the pragmatic objectives of Lord Amherst’s visit to the Mughal court were at odds with his collecting practices. An exchange of portraits and presents, and portraits as presents had become a diplomatic norm by the 18\textsuperscript{th} century especially in interactions of European officers with Indian rulers.\footnote{For an analysis of the artistic exchange, and in particular, the practice of portrait-giving as \textit{nazar} or diplomatic gift, see Natasha Eaton, ‘The Art of Colonial Despotism: Portraits, Politics, and Empire in South India, 1750–1795,’ \textit{Cultural Critique} 70, Fall 2008, Regents of the University of Minnesota, pp.63-93.} Though portraits had been exchanged as diplomatic gifts or \textit{nazars} since the time of Akbar and Jahangir the 18\textsuperscript{th} century saw the politics of the ‘image-gift’ as court ritual evolve to acquire tactical connotations that allowed the sustaining of a status quo between Britain and India.\footnote{Ibid, Eaton, 2008, 90-93.} The very act of acquiring the Mughal emperor’s miniature ivory portrait was an implicit recognition of the value of the Mughal imperial portrait not just as a souvenir, but to a certain extent also of Pitt’s own complicity in a long-established diplomatic ritual that he now wanted to abolish.

Akbar Shah’s use of the colonial format of the image-gift conveys the diplomatic subtlety employed by the emperor to assert his long-standing views on royal succession. With his portrait
paired with Mirza Salim’s, the emperor was able to reinforce his preference for Salim as his successor defying the Company’s choice of his eldest son Abu Zafar as prince-in-waiting. Thus not only was Akbar Shah able to exercise his prerogative for wishing Salim into the Mughal line of succession but, by very act of the acceptance of portrait miniatures, Amherst too was drawn into this complicity. Moreover, the gifting of portraits engaged with questions of loyalty while also carrying the conceptual weight of the *shast wa shabah*. While the miniatures communicated the idea of likeness as presence and served, in principle, the function of the substitutive image-gift, they also drew Amherst into the material and contractual obligations accompanying their exchange. Furthermore, Amherst’s English annotations to the Persian inscriptions on the frames of the miniatures actually invoked the very epistolary format that Amherst sought to eradicate.

**From Connoisseur to Consumer:**

**Mughal miniatures on ivory in Anglo-Indian Delhi**

Painted miniatures on ivory saw a surge in demand in the first quarter of the nineteenth century. As souvenirs of the Mughal court they were essentially commemorative devices that carried with them the weight of cultural meaning. At the time of Amherst’s visit to Delhi in 1827, Delhi painters had begun to explore the commercial potential of miniatures featuring a range of subject matter, spanning portraiture, architectural views, and scenes from Mughal courtly life. In particular, Mughal-themed ivory miniatures reflected the altered sensibility of later Mughal court painting at Delhi that brought together conventions of the Mughal imperial style and those introduced by the city’s European patrons. Painted ivories utilized the established technique of

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gouache, the opaque application of water based color, through a minor modification of the pigments and their technique of application, and yielded a “...soft, rich, and effective...” result on ivory.\textsuperscript{560} Two-toned paintings that brought out the subject in mere light and shade were made solely in Indian ink and were also popular. Images were drawn on a palm-sized or smaller ivory sheet, mostly oval in shape, which could be mounted onto a decorative base. The mount for these ivories varied in size and shape – from a frame for holding portraits (as in the case of Warner’s ivories), a mount within a leather book cover, a piece of furniture such as a writing table or a casket in carved ebony or sandalwood, a piece of jewelry such as bracelet or a clothing accessory such as stud, button or lapel pin to be worn on one’s person.\textsuperscript{561}

The transposition of Mughal scenes from paper to ivory in large part suggests that ivories had become a commercial means of the Mughal miniature’s perpetuation into the wider commercial sphere. Take for instance, an ivory plaque painted with a court scene, showing Akbar II in darbar with the British Resident David Ochterlony in attendance.\textsuperscript{562} From the extant versions of this composition on paper and ivory ca. 1830 it is evident that this view was replicated by different painters at Delhi.\textsuperscript{563} (Figure 7.1) While on the one hand, such compositions were designed to highlight the experience of Mughal pageantry and ceremonial, they were part of a series of

\textsuperscript{560} Baden Powell, \textit{Handbook of the manufactures & arts of the Punjab} (1872), 350.

\textsuperscript{561} See also Baden Powell’s description of the varying uses of the ivory paintings. Baden Powell, \textit{Handbook}, 350.

\textsuperscript{562} Christie’s, Indian and Southeast Asian Art, 23\textsuperscript{rd} September 2004, Sale 1409.

\textsuperscript{563} See British Library Add. Or 3079; Christie’s Sale 5560, Indian and Islamic Works of Art, South Kensington, April 29, 2005.
paintings of Mughal court activities which were essential to maintaining the outward projection of Mughal authority at Delhi. These images marked important events such as the accession anniversary of the emperor, religious festivals, and the bi-annual movement of the Mughal court to the Delhi suburbs, all of which were part of courtly and cultural demeanor.\textsuperscript{564}

The fashion for Mughal courtly images onto furniture and jewelry provides another dimension to understanding the outreach of images into the popular sphere. The imperial procession of Akbar II, adapted as a decorative backdrop for a writing cabinet as well as a diamond brooch shows how Mughal courtly images had a visual stronghold for European travelers to India.\textsuperscript{565} The visual transmission of Akbar Shah’s sawari from the medium of paper to material objects denotes yet another point of engagement of Mughal ritual with public memory. By the end of the nineteenth-century, ivory cameos featuring the vignette of the sawari had proliferated in the market. The procession could now be mounted on a leather book cover, a piece of furniture such as a writing table or a casket, or a piece of jewelry or a clothing accessory.\textsuperscript{566} (Figure 7.2: Diamond Brooch with Akbar II’s Procession; Figure 7.3: Cabinet with Procession Scene) An important aspect of this transition was the relative ubiquity of the processional panorama, which was now no

\textsuperscript{564} For an overview of important courtly activities during Akbar Shah’s reign see Pernau, \textit{Information and the Public Sphere} (2010).

\textsuperscript{565} See Writing Cabinet with ivory plaque of Akbar Shah’s procession, Christie’s, Islamic and Indian Works of Art, 18 October 2001, London, ivory panel 14 x 20 cm; Diamond brooch with ivory inset of Akbar II’s procession, Christie’s, Islamic and Indian Works of Art, 20 April, 2007, London, 5cm diameter.

\textsuperscript{566} See also Baden Powell’s description of the varying uses of the ivory paintings detailed earlier. Baden Powell, \textit{Handbook}, 350.
longer confined to private channels of circulation. The emergence of the procession as a decorative object played upon the idea of Mughal pageantry and ceremonial as a rarefied privilege associated with the image of the Grand Mughals.

The image, when painted on ivory, was infinitely adaptable to suit the varying needs of collectors, travelers, and tourists alike.\textsuperscript{567} Indian ivory miniatures by virtue of being portable could travel cross-continental distances embedded within picture frames or lockets as the bearers of sentimental and commemorative value for European travelers in India. The parallel production of portrait miniatures offers a view into the familial and social links that miniatures forged within Anglo-Indian society. In 1813 James Casamaijor commissioned a copy of a miniature of his late daughter Jane by George Chinnery as a memorial gift for his son-in-law Henry Russell, which travelled from Madras to Hyderabad via Calcutta.\textsuperscript{568}

Delhi painters too, were often commissioned to make copies of existing portraits that functioned as familial mementos. Emily Eden, on February 20, 1839 had a number of her sister’s and her own paintings copied onto ivory by Delhi artists that also included a likeness of her father.\textsuperscript{569}

Other painters, such as Raja Jivan Ram who worked in Delhi and Meerut, were skilled at drawing

\textsuperscript{567} The distinction between a traveler and a tourist in the case of Japan, is further problematized in Christine Guth, \textit{Longfellow's Tattoos: Tourism, Collecting, and Japan}. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2004.


\textsuperscript{569} "F. (Fanny) has had your likeness of my father copied." \textit{Emily Eden, Up the Country, Letters written to her sister}, 1867, pp. 263-64.
miniatures from life and thus were highly sought after by British officers and their families. A year earlier on February 19, 1838, Emily wrote,

“I treated myself to such a beautiful miniature of W.O. There is a native here, Juan Ram, who draws beautifully sometimes and sometimes utterly fails, but his picture of William is quite perfect. Nobody can suggest an alteration, and as a work of art it is a very pretty possession. It was so admired that F. got a sketch of G. on cardboard, which is also an excellent likeness; it is a great pity there is no time for sitting for our pictures for you…” ⁵⁷⁰

In the Indian context, the gift and exchange of ivory miniatures was an important means of sustaining the emotional economy of Anglo-Indian society “…by which Anglo-Indian men and women established and maintained social and political relations across distance and time in the Romantic era.” ⁵⁷²

**Contextualizing Mughalerie**

In January 1818, James Baillie Fraser sent a number of miniatures on ivory back to Scotland:

The ivory miniatures are of a better sort – and they are really facsimiles from old native pictures of the persons they represent. I have seen a great many and all are alike – the natives are famous for copying and altho’ the Drawing be very bad, the execution is wonderfully good, particularly the cloaths and jewells and considering the cost but 4 Rupees each.

The paintings of the women were done at my particular request – they represent the ladys of rank, Moosulmans and Hindoos in their proper costumes – the former in their ugly trousers, tight above and loose below and the really graceful Do-putta or wrapping cloth above the head and shoulders which the shawl is made to imitate. The Hindoos are also attired above with the Doputta or Saree, and below with a dress very much, indeed wholly resembling a petticoat, of which I forget the name – The drawing of these is very bad as you will remark, but the painting particularly of

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⁵⁷⁰ Eden, *Up the Country*, 1867, p. 94.

⁵⁷¹ The use of the word Anglo-Indian is used in the sense that Finn applies it, to refer to a community of Britons residing in India. See below.

**the cloaths and jewellery is very fine.** The Hindoostanee features are well expressed – they are very like these women.573

Fraser’s letter contains revealing insights into the production of ivory miniatures for Europeans in Delhi in the first quarter of the 19th century. The commonly held perception of miniatures on ivory was that it was an inauthentic portrayal of ‘original’ Mughal work on paper. Was the painted ivory a degenerate copy, lacking in overall sophistication, only successful in the rendering of colors and details? It is useful to consider that as copies of ‘originals’, ivory miniatures existed within a healthy tradition of copying and the circulation of visual ideas within Indian court culture. Whether physically supported by the circulation of tracings or the travel of artists to different regions of the subcontinent, replication and copying had been a standard practice that aimed at upholding stylistic norms and painterly standards within the profession. Copies were a means of revering the original while imbuing the version with historical meaning.574 Moreover, the re-evocation of formal or thematic ideas of earlier Mughal works had been practiced by generations of Mughal painters.575 The important question then is to do with the classification of paintings on ivory, which followed in the well-established tradition of emulating Mughal ‘originals.’

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574 With the primary format in place, the later versions of a masterpiece were often viewed as part of the continuum of the evolving interpretation of the original. The replication of *ragamala* paintings in Rajasthani and Pahari courts dealt with the overall re-assertion of established iconographic and formal conventions of the genre. See Vishaka Desai, ‘Reflections of the Past in the Present: Copying Processes in Indian Painting’ in Asher and Metcalf, Eds. *Perceptions of South Asia’s Visual Past*, 1994, pp.135-148.

575 See as an example, the case of a picnic with Shah Abbas’s ambassador. Rosemary Crill, “A Lost Mughal miniature rediscovered” in V&A Album 4, pp. 330-336.
While the view of ivory miniatures within a continuum of later Mughal painting supports the idea of continuity within Mughal artistic culture, the contrary view, of ivory miniatures as Mughalerie, presents a scenario of discontinuity. Let us consider the ramifications of the latter term. Mughalerie is employed here as a way of classifying objects that were containers for carrying or alternative media for the dispersal of Mughal painting. While these were designed to represent Mughal ideas, they were temporally, thematically, and historically removed from the circuits of Mughal art and patronage, thus existing within a quasi-Mughal field. A case in point is Fraser’s commission of Mughal paintings on paper and of quasi-Mughal subjects on ivory. As collectors of Mughal manuscript folios, James Fraser and his brother William were also part of a parallel circuit of the production of copies of seventeenth-century Mughal paintings on paper, that were created to embellish reconstituted albums. So, while Fraser collected nineteenth-century paintings in the partial knowledge of them as Mughal copies or fakes, he commissioned ivory miniatures as a deft means to encapsulate the detail and intricacy of Mughal painting onto a suitably portable media, one that was to embark on a cross-continental journey to Scotland.

As Desai points out, the 19th century phenomenon of copying 17th century Mughal manuscripts at times, with the specific intention of replacing a 17th century work in a bound album, partakes of the idea of conscious replication rather than selective adaptation. In the case of Mughal copies, the intentionality of the patrons as well as the artists is in creating these reproductions to be mistaken for the original. See Welch, *The Emperor's Album* (1987), pp. 26-29. For some later copies of Persian manuscript works in the collection of James Fraser see, Royal Asiatic Society, RAS 081.003 “A Persian youth seated holding a wine cup…” in Raymond Head, *Catalogue of Paintings, Drawings, Engravings & Busts in the collection of the Royal Asiatic Society* (1991) 185; 199.
The subject matter, too, of Mughal emperors and their wives, was largely invented. Many extant examples of Mughal imperial portrait pairs commissioned in the nineteenth century show that the portraits of Mughal ladies of rank were, in fact, based on conventionalized models. Most female figures were derived from a stock set of images, used interchangeably, for rendering Mughal noblewomen. This trend, of compiling genealogical portraits of Mughal emperors, served as an important means of visually accessing Mughal history within Anglo-Mughal society.\(^{577}\) While most royal commissions of genealogical portraits were prepared in an album format on paper and largely restricted to male portraits, ivory portraits of Mughal couples were more popular with other patrons.\(^{578}\)

These ivories of Mughal subjects were exchanged as gifts and souvenirs reflecting the sphere of the donor’s influence that extended to the Mughals. This is seen in the set of ivory miniature portraits mounted on silver shields gifted to Honoria Lawrence, the wife of the political agent at Lahore, Henry Lawrence, in the 1840s, presumably by Gulab Singh, the ruler of Kashmir.\(^{579}\) The pairing of Sikh, Kashmiri, and Afghan rulers alongside the last Mughal emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar, his wife, and other ladies of the court, completed the gamut of relationships that described

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\(^{577}\) For late Mughal genealogical albums featuring portraits of emperors see, SDMA Edwin Binney 3\(^{rd}\) Collection, 1990:405, *An Album of Mughal Dynastic Genealogy*, ca. 1850; also see Bonhams Sale no. 17823, Islamic and Indian Art, 15 April 2010 “Album leaf from Dynastic Mughal album, ca. 1850”. For an album of genealogical portraits made for a European patron see, Society of Antiquaries, London, SAL 697.

\(^{578}\) A number of ivory portraits of emperors and their wives exist. Some examples are V&A, IS 03577 to 03588 and IS 257-1955.

\(^{579}\) See National Army Museum, London, records 1960-07-197-1 through 7. The inscription “Presented by him (Ranjit Singh) to Honoria Lawrence” is definitely erroneous since Ranjit Singh died in 1839 and Lawrence did not assume office in the Northwestern Provinces until a few years later.
the Indian political sphere. (Figure 7.4) However, by virtue of including portraits of noblewomen, the ivories forged an empathy with the intended female recipient of the gift. Twenty years later in 1864, the civil service officer William Herschel purchased a similar set of ivories encrusted in a gold bracelet as a wedding present for his sister.\textsuperscript{580} This time however, the female figure had been renamed as Nur Jahan, the wife of the emperor Jahangir. Some decades later, Herman Warner while traveling through the streets of Delhi bought a similar pairing of Shah Jahan and his wife, which featured the conventionalized portrait of the Mughal noblewoman as Mumtaz Mahal.

The After Life: The Delhi ivory miniature in the Marketplace

By the time Warner arrived in Delhi in the 1880s, Mughal rule in India had been extinguished so that the erstwhile Mughal capital of Delhi was now part of the Indian territories ruled by the British Crown. Following the British response to the Indian Uprising of 1857 - the British Siege of Delhi - the Mughal city had been barricaded, a 500-yard radius of bare expanse created around the Mughal palace complex, the Red Fort, to discourage incendiary action on the part of its residents. The demolition project also extended to the interior of the Delhi palace where many buildings and pavilions were torn down to create military barracks.\textsuperscript{581} The last Mughal emperor Bahadur Shah II had passed on too, having died in exile in Rangoon in 1862. Where the British

\textsuperscript{580} British Library, APAC, Add. Or. 2603.

\textsuperscript{581} For an overview of the urban changes in British Delhi, see Narayani Gupta. *Delhi between Two Empires, 1803-1931: Society, Government and Urban Growth*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1981.
administration had initiated plans to renovate and conserve the dilapidated environs of the Red Fort, the complex now functioned as part of the tourist circuit for visitors to Delhi.\footnote{582}

The Delhi ivory miniature by the end of the nineteenth century has become the inexorable object of public consumption indicated by its steep rise in price to Rs. 50 from Rs. 4 per miniature just a few decades earlier.\footnote{583} Delhi emerged as a powerful city of merchants and middlemen, having become an important center for the production as well as the distribution of the decorative arts.\footnote{584} Amongst the most known dealers of souvenirs in Delhi was the workshop of Lala Faqir Chand, who ran a prominent shop in the Dariba Bazaar Delhi. Faqir Chand is known to have employed a number of craftsmen who worked at the premises while also contracting other artisans to produce ivory wares for him.\footnote{585} (Figure 7.5: Ivory Casket from Faqir Chand’s Workshop) There is ample evidence that a number of painters employed with the Mughal court now began to work

\footnote{582}{The Archaeological Society of Delhi was active from 1849 in planning the conservation of pre-modern and Mughal structures in the city. The Society regularly published their recommendations and findings in a journal. After 1870 Henry Hardy Cole, the first Surveyor General of the newly instated body, the Archaeological Survey of India, produced a complete dossier on the full conservation of a historical site titled, The Architecture of Ancient Delhi, Especially the Buildings around the Kutb Minar (1872) with detailed photographic documentation of the conservation efforts. See also, Journal of the Archaeological Society of Delhi, 1849-1850 and the discussion in chapter 4.}

\footnote{583}{See Baden Powell’s note on price below.}

\footnote{584}{The city’s merchants also acted as middlemen for buying and selling decorative arts from all over India. Areas such as Benares, Lucknow, Bareilly, Moradabad, and Saharanpur had thriving centers of ivory carving, but their main market was at Delhi. Trade and merchandising of ivory objects seems to have become especially popular with a vast majority of ivory objects oriented towards European buyers and tourism. Monograph on Ivory carving, 11.}

independently or for dealers in Delhi who emerged as the new faces of Delhi’s curio market. There is little doubt that Ghulam Ali Khan’s descendants Ghulam Hussain and Ismail Khan were part of the shrinking number of independent painters in this period.  

Faqir Chand’s workshop was probably established before the uprising of 1857, and was noted to be the dominant purveyor of ivory carvings in Delhi, whose sphere of influence encompassed the majority of ivory carving workshops in Delhi. Faqir Chand’s workshop was described thus:

“The workers are congregated in a small room along with the wood-carvers and the miniature painters; some sit on the balcony, some on the stairs, some by open doors and lattices, wherever they can obtain sufficient light to work by, surrounded by their primitive implements, the whole forming a scene of the Indian artist at work, the surroundings in which his work is done containing everything to make it difficult, yet the result is exquisite.”

While on the one hand such emphasis on the ‘primitive’ working methods of artisans was very much part of the narrative of a rampant traditionalism which British officials were trying to promote in the arts of India, the continued production of the quasi-Mughal miniature in a post-Mughal environment allows us to address its reformulation within the commercial sphere of Delhi’s curio market. The absorption of painters into the production process of retail houses points to the process of the distillation of a popular taste for Mughal painting in nineteenth century Delhi. This was a demand for Mughalerie, characterized by works that were made in miniature, and could testify to an overt attention to detail.

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586 Baden Powell wrote, “The best painters in Delhi at the time are I am writing, are Ismail Khan and Ghulam Hosain.” Handbook of the manufactures & arts of the Punjab (1872), 350.

Such a narrative, of the essentialization of the miniature in terms of its technique, did not remain completely unfazed by the absorption of photography into the working methods of painters. In 1872, Baden-Powell wrote:

“As regards portraits, the most usual are pictures of kings and of the beauties of the courts of the Mogul Emperors: modern portraits are however copied from photographs often with surprising fidelity. Even by transmitting an uncolored photograph, accompanied by a sufficiently careful description, a miniature may be obtained in about a month’s time. A single figure is usually charged at 50 Rs.”

These latter are often pleasing, especially in the landscape subjects, for then the very conventional treatment of the trees and sky becomes less prominent than in the colored ones. They use gilding freely along with color. The earlier paintings of interiors and buildings, minutely finished as they were, had generally such impossible perspective that the whole effect was destroyed. This has been to a great extent remedied by the introduction of photography. As all these miniatures are copied from photographs of the buildings, the right perspective is copied undesignedly and without knowledge. These works exhibit absolutely no originality, nor can any improvement, other than the introduction of photography just alluded to and the supply of better colors from Europe account for, be traced.\textsuperscript{588}

Qualitative judgments often perceived the role of photography as a paralyzing influence on ivory painting even as ivory miniatures continued to feature prominently within exhibitions of arts and manufactures in India. Even so, the versatility of the ivory miniature in terms of scale and its setting was seen as a positive attribute that showcased the technical skill of the miniaturists.

Baden Powell describes the range of such objects:

“The pictures are executed in all sizes, from a tiny miniature, to be set in a stud, button or bracelet, to the larger size which is occasionally seen set in silver and mounted on a casket of carved ebony or sandal-wood.”\textsuperscript{589} Portraits of emperors, architectural scenes of Delhi, bracelets,

\textsuperscript{588} Baden-Powell, \textit{Handbook of the manufactures & arts of the Punjab} (1872), 350.

\textsuperscript{589} Baden-Powell, \textit{Handbook} (1872); Examples of ivory miniatures exhibited in the exhibition were architectural scenes of Delhi and Agra by Ismail Khan (947), sketches for settings in bracelets (948), twelve studs and sleeve links (949), Portraits of Mughal emperors, Mumtaz Mahal and Nur Jahan by Ismail Khan and Ghulam Hussain Khan (951-10929).
studs, and sleeve links featuring painted ivory inserts, all treated as hallmarks of the Delhi school of artists, whose Mughal lineage had become an indivisible part of a recognizable regional identity. For example, the works produced in Faqir Chand and Raghunath Dass’s workshops afforded a special mention in the catalogue of the Delhi Darbar Exhibition of 1903, alongside miniature paintings on ivory by the Delhi artist Muhammad Husain Khan.590

The Delhi ivory miniature therefore had now come to be associated with the skill of miniaturization and the art of eccentricity.

Conclusion

This chapter lays out the conditions for considering the after-life of paintings at Delhi when the modes and media for producing images had begun to greatly diversify. It considers the specific case of paintings on ivory based on Mughal themes and their place within the emotional economy of Anglo-Indians and local elites as well as travelers and tourists who desired to carry away a memory of Delhi with them. The underlying factor that seems to define works on ivory in this period is their dependence on works on paper created in the near past by painters of Ghulam Ali Khan’s circle at Delhi. As this chapter explores, such ‘copies’ of painted works aimed at recreating a Mughal memory of Delhi and were especially sought after for their miniaturist attention to detail. The association of detail with Mughal painting, thus, is also one of the qualities that appears to have contributed to the enhanced appeal of ivory paintings for its consumers in this period. It is worth asking then if the idea of Mughal painting in a post-Mughal world can itself be debated. It is useful to consider how impressions of Mughal painting and its

590 George Watt, Indian Art at Delhi, 1903, 459. It is very likely that Muhammad Hussain Khan was Ghulam Hussain Khan’s son or relative, and ultimately a descendant of the Delhi school of painters under Shah Alam II and Akbar Shah II.
replication into ivory in the second half of the nineteenth century do not adhere to wider critiques of the impact of technology and mass production on painting. According to Walter Benjamin, an original work of art was defined by its aura - its presence in a unique time and space and the historical inflections that it underwent. These qualities imbued the original work with a distance that removed it from the realm of consumerist consumption.\(^{591}\) While the process of replication as Benjamin understood it was central to the idea of perpetuation of art, it was the mechanical means of reproducibility, which led to a loss of ‘aura’ and degeneration of quality. Within later Mughal painting the place of replication sits within an uneasy space delineated by pre-commercial and post-commercial spheres of artistic production – the former viewed as an acceptable practice and latter seen to generate a market-oriented degenerate copy or faux Mughal painting. However, the idea that replication was a claim towards artistic virtuosity within Mughal painting, to a large extent, frustrates Benjamin’s analysis which largely considers the sphere of authenticity of art as inert and invested in individual enterprise. Within the context of a broadening of the patronage base from elite to everyman, the increased pace of replication embodied in ivory miniatures deems a different view. Thus, the proposition for understanding ivory miniatures as a means for repackaging the ‘aura’ of Mughal paintings allows for a deeper insight into the continued cachet of these works as ‘authentic’ means of accessing Mughal ideas.

As we have seen, ivory miniatures operated within different registers of the gift and emotional economies of Delhi’s residents. Rather than viewing them solely as a critique of capitalist

production, it is useful to consider how ivory miniatures allowed for a selective continuity of Mughal ideas into a post-Mughal era. In doing so, they formulated a visual narrative of Mughal history that entered into popular memory. The Delhi ivory miniature then was very much a multivalent entity – invoking ideas of history, continuity, materiality and artistic change in the nineteenth century. Thus, what Herman Jackson Warner was actually buying into was very much a constructed narrative of Mughal India, a potent memory of Shah Jahan’s Delhi re-evoked through multiple ivory miniatures produced in this erstwhile seat of Mughal power. With Mughal lineage and power now a distant memory, the romance of the Mughal city was largely conveyed through the continuing production of painted ivories into the closing decades of the nineteenth century.
CONCLUSION

Writing the Art History of a Crisis

This dissertation has aimed at writing the art history of a transition period, which was marked by the rapid decentralization of the Mughal political state and the rise of the English East India Company to power. At the outset it seeks to revisit the idea of a crisis in the arts of the late Mughal period; instead, it takes up the study of this period on its own terms and suggests a textured approach to questions of patronage, artistic agency, and the socio-cultural status of artworks. The idea of ‘in-between-ness’ of artistic production here is not dealt with in terms of lack of fixedness of artistic vision, but viewed as an opportunity to devise methodologies for artistic analysis that go beyond questions of style and painterly conventions. What emerges is a clearer picture of the processes through which social and political identities were crafted in the visual realm and the part played by Delhi painters in facilitating this. Delhi merits a special focus – it is a common theme of reference in all the painted works in question and the last bastion of Mughal power. As this dissertation shows, the re-establishment of the Mughal house from 1772 in parallel with the administrative arm of the English East India Company made the city a politically charged site of cultural interaction.

In charting the shifts in patronage and artistic practice in Delhi in this period, the shifting status of the artwork occurs as an underlying theme. This dissertation demonstrates how paintings in this period were created in a multi-disciplinary and multi-sensorial framework linking ideas of the past and present and pushing the normative boundaries of drawing conventions. Thus, court
painters such as Nidha Mal diversified their practice to work on cartographic commissions, devising an architectural vocabulary for depicting Mughal pre-eminence in Delhi’s urban landscape. The shift from court portraiture to cartography, as the first chapter shows, allows us to appreciate the creation of an artistic episteme that partook freely of the empirical modes of thinking about urban space. The standardization of the panorama of the eastern face of the Red Fort of Delhi as a marker of Mughal presence is a key example of the way spatial thinking became integrated into visual thought.

At a larger level this dissertation is concerned with the epistemological function of paintings. The second chapter lays out the intellectual motivations behind the formulation of the Mughal court portrait of Shah Alam II. The discussion is focused on the iconographic and metaphorical resonances in the pictorial depiction of the Peacock Throne – an enduring visual paradigm that had been tied into the assumption of the loss of cultural vigor following Nadir Shah’s invasion of Delhi in 1739. The reappearance of the resplendent frame of the recreated Peacock Throne in court paintings is one of the most significant moves in Delhi painting. Yet, the Throne is not simply a regenerated historic relic; rather, it represents a model exercise in meaning making – and served as a visual encapsulation of late Mughal Delhi’s expressive culture. Thus, in channeling the literary consciousness of their patrons Delhi painters experimented with the simultaneous expression of metaphorical and the literal elements of poetry, music, and art. This multi-referential approach suggests that painting practices existed within a shared sensibility of an expressive culture that consciously evoked its engagement with the city. The discussion moves on to the role of vision and movement in asserting identity by highlighting the role of paintings in
maintaining the status-quo between the court and the Company. The venue is the court of Shah Alam’s successor Akbar Shah and the scene is now set within the interior of the palace. The placement of the Peacock Throne in the interior of the palace at the Red Fort can be read as a significant move that reiterates the sense of Mughal prerogative of place and a defiance of Company authority. The chapter ‘Staking Territory’ demonstrates how Ghulam Murtaza Khan devised a visual response to the ubiquitous presence of the British Resident in the Mughal court of Akbar Shah. The painter’s darbar scenes highlight the ocular politics of the gaze and the clever use of mathematical perspective to maintain the ritual hierarchies of the Mughal court. The procession paintings of Akbar Shah also function as a response to the territorial limits set upon the Mughal house by the East India Company. As argued in the chapter, the pictorial procession harbors the physicality of movement from the Red Fort to the suburbs and is a visual performance of the Mughal right to the city well beyond the limits set by the Company.

A main focus of this dissertation has been on the practice of Delhi painters and their work for multiple patrons in Delhi and beyond. A focus on the career of Ghulam Ali Khan in this dissertation is meant to highlight the multifaceted practice of painters and their ability to tackle a wide range of subject matter. Ghulam Ali Khan’s practice is a remarkable example of the dilution of painterly conventions and the collapsing of distance between the subject and the observer. The topographical works of the painter are a telling synthesis of his early exposure to the works of the British painters Thomas and William Daniell. However, as the chapter discusses, Ghulam Ali Khan could have well served as a draftsman and an informant to Daniell, which also explain why his own works at times far exceed the detail in Daniell’s versions. We may ask what Ghulam Ali
Khan’s relationship with Daniell offers to the study of painting culture as a whole? A telling clue to this answer lies in the inscriptions that Ghulam Ali Khan adds to his early topographical works. His labeling of monuments, shrines, and landscapes is from the informed perspective of a resident of Delhi (sakin-e Shahjahanabad) and one who subscribes the religious and cultural fervor of these sites. As a mulazim huzur-i vala, or servant of a higher presence, working on a view of the Qutub complex Ghulam Ali Khan’s spiritual and personal investment is clearly distinct from the homogenizing eye of a painter of picturesque views of Delhi. The painter’s work for the Mughal court royal provides a view into his recasting of the royal image as an informal portrait dispensing with the scopic regimes of viewership adopted by earlier painters. Moreover, his physical movement between the Mughal and satellite courts of Alwar and Jhajjar allows us to rethink the center-periphery divide between Delhi and the regional courts. Instead, it is possible to appreciate how ideas were in constant flow between these regions. The case of Alwar copies of the Fraser Album is an important one as it undoubtedly invigorated the painting culture at the Rajput court. Alwar painters proceeded to replicate many pages from the Album and also devised their own portraits of local grandees elaborating on its themes.

The analysis of works created for William Fraser and James Skinner shifts our attention to the nature of Company patronage in Delhi. The Fraser Album was undoubtedly one of the most important commissions of portraits in early nineteenth century Delhi. But, the wider significance of the album was in its ability to capture the individualities of a host of rural and urban residents of the Delhi districts and according to them the kind of attention that had been previously reserved for royal and elite subjects. This transition within subject matter from elite to everyman
cannot simply be written off as an ethnographic approach to painting, but it does raise interesting possibilities for thinking about the Album’s relevance to ethnographic surveys that emerged subsequently. As the chapter 5 elaborates, Fraser’s personal connections and dealings with various individuals in the rural outposts of Haryana formed the underlying basis for the selection and portrayal of rural subjects. A full-length study of other sections of the Album and on the concept of portraiture in this period is forthcoming.

This dissertation also provides a basis for rethinking how the artistic patronage of the East India Company was, to a large extent, shaped by an ongoing concern for political legitimization. The Company patron was hardly a figure devoid of cares as he sought to ingratiate himself into Delhi’s polite society. Having the weight of the Crown’s backing was not entirely enough for Company officials to endear themselves to the Mughal court and the local population; paintings played an important part in substantiating their role as patrons and administrators. As we have seen, paintings were also a crucial means to gain social acceptability for individuals such as James Skinner who relied on the skills of the painter Ghulam Ali Khan to situate himself as part of a cross-cultural network of elites.

The final section of the dissertation concerns itself with the question of the legacy of these artistic transitions in the period after the official end of Mughal rule in 1857, which was marked by an increasing diversification of the painted image onto other media such as ivory. The idea of replication of the image from paper to ivory is an important conceptual bind for thinking about notions of quality and perpetuation of visual ideas in nineteenth century Delhi. As discussed, the
post-Mughal ivory miniature created yet another novel frame of reference for looking at Mughal painting historically – ‘Mughalerie’ privileged the idea of minuteness and detail as a central feature building upon the Victorian idea of sentimental attachment to objects thus feeding into the emotional economy of the city’s Anglo-Indian residents.

The dilution of drawing conventions and the multi-referential interpretation of earlier visual ideas as well as the creation of new vocabularies of painting are consistent themes throughout the chapters. Artists adopted a new way of seeing the image creating a visual experience that effectively dealt with the different contingencies on cultural variables. It is clear that the visuality of such works was different from simply the act of creating the image. This implicated the observer urging them to view the image within “tacit cultural rules of different scopic regimes” working in a distinctively ‘modern’ mode of viewership. The shifting status of the work of art, as we see, was defined by the paradoxical view of its relationship with its past – sometimes rendering it as a progressive sign and at other times subverting it as a conservative marker of a bygone age. However, present scholarship has viewed Mughal painting a weak precursor to modernist ideas, by that same virtue; its art has been excluded from art history of modern South Asian painting which has been long fixated on the dialogue between nationalist ideas and modernist thought. I suggest that the politics of interpretation and the representation of history, the two main concerns driving the ongoing formulation of modern thought in the arts, were

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anticipated in the works of artists of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Overall, this dissertation seeks to render the boundaries between existing categories of art historical analysis unstable, arguing for a richer and multidimensional study of this period. It aims at creating a foothold for the long eighteenth century as a phase of extraordinary creativity in the face of political change, laying out the study of the later Mughal period as an open ended call to the modern.

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593 Geeta Kapur, “When was modernism in Indian Art?” in Geeta Kapur, Ed. When was Modernism: Essays on Contemporary cultural practice in India (Tulika Press, 2000), 295-324.

594 A fascinating case of the multidimensional role of objects as mediators of cross-cultural encounter in the context of medieval South Asia is examined in Finbarr Barry Flood, Objects of Translation: Material Culture and Medieval Hindu-Muslim Encounter (Princeton University Press, 2009).
GLOSSARY OF TERMS

akhbarat News, news reports
bagh Garden.
barahmasa Romantic poetry based on the twelve months of the year.
begam (begum) An honorific title conferred upon women of rank.
bibi A wife or lady, frequently used to refer to female companions of European men. Also used as an honorific.
chattri Dome-shaped pavilion.
darbar Court of a ruler.
diwan A collection of poetical works usually by one poet.
diwan Scribe.
Diwan-i Am Hall of Public Audience.
Diwan-i Khas Hall of Private or Audience.
fakir A wanderer, pilgrim. Also refers to a Sufi ascetic.
gaddi A royal seat or cushion. Usually refers to the throne of a ruler.
ghazal A short lyric poem written in couplets that deals with themes of love or praise.
hammam A public or private bathhouse.
haveli Private mansion, usually with a central courtyard.
huqqa (huqqah or hookah) An instrument made up of a water pipe used for smoking where the smoke is cooled and filtered through water, usually contained within a glass or metal base.
jagir An assignment of land sometimes made for a lifetime.
jama A long robe, usually with a full skirt that is tied to one side of the chest and waist.
jharoka-i darshan A covered balcony, often part of a palace complex and used by rulers for making public appearances.
kalawant Male musician.
khilat A robe of honor, or a ceremonial bestowal of honors that includes garments.
Mirza An honorific title for a distinguished male, or a high-ranking person; a cultured gentleman.
morchhal Fly whisk.
munshi (munshi) A well-educated gentleman. Usually refers to a secretary or a writer who is well versed in languages, accounts, and legal issues.
mushaira (mushā'ira) Poetic gathering.
nagari The script in which Sanskrit and Hindi are usually written.
nastaliq A fluid, elegant script style developed in Persia in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.
nautch Literally natch or “dance.” Also refers to a specific kind of dance performed by women in courtly and social circles in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century India.
nim-qalam A type of grisaille drawing that sometimes uses partial coloration.
pathan A large group of people who were from present-day Afghanistan and northern Pakistan.
pietra dura The technique of creating images and patterns by fitting together cut and polished colored stones.

595 Derived from Dalrymple and Sharma, Princes and Painters, 2012.
qanat  A textile hanging that was used to line or divide a tent, or to form an enclosure around a tent or camp.
Resident  In India, the representative of the East India Company who took up residence in a city or region administered by the Company.
Ragamala  An anthology or a ‘garland’ of musical modes in the Indian classical music cannon.
rissaldars  Men of mid-level rank in the cavalry and armored units of the Indian army.
Rohilla  The Indo-Afghan population of Rohilkhand, a region lying to the east of the Delhi region.
sabk-i Hindi  A form of poetry also referred to as “Indian style” that was developed by Indian and Iranian poets from the sixteenth century onwards. It features metaphoricity, intertextuality, wordplay, and separation of theme and meaning. The poet uses the same theme for multiple meanings.
Safavid  A Persian dynasty of Shia Muslims who ruled over greater Iran from 1502 until 1736.
sanyasis (sanyāsīs)  Hindu ascetics.
sarpech  A jewel encircled by a band of pearls and secured to the front of a turban.
sepoy  A soldier.
shahrashob (shahrāshob)  An Urdu poem lamenting the ruin or decline of a city and its inhabitants.
shamiana  A decorative outdoor party tent.
Sufi  An adherent of the inner, mystical dimension of Islam who seeks union with the divine.
Takhallus  A pen name.
tasbih khana  “Chamber of telling beads.” The set of three rooms in the Red Fort, Delhi that faces the Diwan-i-Khas and were used for private worship by the emperor.
tazkira  Biographical dictionary.
Timurid  The Turko-Mongol dynasty established by Timur (1370–1405), the ancestor of the first Mughal emperor, Babur.
wazir (vizier)  A high-ranking political advisor, a chief minister.
yogi (jogi)  Hindu mendicant or ascetic; one who practices yoga.
zenana  Women’s quarters of a house.
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APPENDIX A

Chronology of selected works by the painter Ghulam Ali Khan:

1794-1800: Young artist in-training.

1806: Mughal copies probably with his family circle of painters.


1817: Signed work, The view of the Diwan-i-Khas

1820: Topographical paintings of Delhi buildings

1815-1820: Signed works, Two copies of Daniell’s Aquatints, The Jami Mosque and The View of the Qutub.

1822: Ascribed work: The view of Bu Ali Qalandar’s Shrine at Panipat

1824: Ascribed work: the view of the Red Fort from the Jamuna, Private collection, India.

1825-1827: Worked in the coterie of Skinner preparing study sketches for his memoirs, known informally as the Skinner Album at the British Library.

February 1827: Ivory portraits of Akbar II and Mirza Salim gifted to Lord Amherst.

February 1827: Paints portrait of Ishwari Sen of Mandi, bought by Lord Amherst.

1827: Skinner receives news of his companionship to the Order of the Bath.

1827: Completed the grand painting of Skinner’s Darbar

August 1828: Completed “Picture of the town and fort of Hansi and the cantonment of the Cavalry regiment.”

10th June 1830: Completed Skinner’s portrait on the frontispiece of *Tazkirat al-Umara*; portrait of Jawan Bakht of Udaipur and Nawab Zabita Khan.

1832: Worked on the *Tashrih al-Aqvam* for James Skinner, especially on portraits derived from the Fraser Album.

1837: Completed copies of the coronation portrait of Bahadur Shah II ‘Zafar’

1840-49: Was based at Alwar at the court of the Raja Banni Singh of Alwar.


1840-42: Interior View of the Alwar Gaddi, Private Collection, Germany.

May-June 1849: Nawab 'Abd al-Rahman in his court in hot weather with various musicians and courtiers.

October 1849 to January 1850: Mughal Dynastic Album.

January-February 1852: Nawab 'Abd al-Rahman in his court in cool weather with his two young sons, a British officer of the Political Service and various courtiers and attendants.


1855: Nawab Abd al-Rahman Khan of Jhajjar seated against a bolster smoking an elaborate hookah, with Mir Bahadur Ali, Sundah and a third courtier in attendance, Company School.
Suggested Genealogy of Delhi School of Painters
(I only refer in part to Firozuddin’s genealogy here. My suggestions are largely based on information gathered from extant paintings)

Family 1
Muhammad Faqirullah Khan (active 1720-70)

→ Faizullah? (active in Faizabad, 1750-75)

→ → Khairullah (active 1790-1815)

Family 2
Ghulam Murtaza Khan (active 1800-30)


→ → Mazhar Ali Khan (active 1840s)

→ → → Ismail Khan (active 1850-80)

→ → Ghulam Hussain Khan (active 1840-70)

GAK’s Nephew: Mirza Shah Rukh Beg (1840-55)

Key:

→ Son
→ → Grandson
APPENDIX C

Simplified List of Mughal Rulers\textsuperscript{596}

BABUR b. 1483, r.1526-1530
HUMAYUN b. 1508, r.1530-1539 and 1555-1556
AKBAR b. 1542, r. 1556-1605
JAHANGIR b. 1569, r.1605-1627
SHAH JAHAN b. 1592-1666, r.1627-1658
AURANGZEB, ALAMGIR I b. 1618, r.1658-1707
SHAH ALAM BAHDUR SHAH I b. 1643, r.1707-1712
AZIM US-SHAN b. 1664-1712, r.1712
JAHANDAR SHAH b. 1661, r.1712-1713
FARRUKHSIYAR b. 1683, r.1713-1719
RAFI UD-DARAJAT b. 1699-1719, r.1719
SHAH JAHAN II b. 1696-1747, r.1719
MUHAMMAD SHAH b. 1702, r.1719-1748
AHMAD SHAH b. 1727-1774, r.1748-1754
ALAMGIR II b. 1699, r.1754-1759
SHAH ALAM II b. 1728, r.1759-1806
AKBAR SHAH I b. 1760, r.1806-1837
BAHDUR SHAH II b.1775-1862, r.1837-1858

\textsuperscript{596} For further details see Genealogy in Yuthika Sharma, Genealogy, Dalrymple and Sharma, Eds. Princes and Painters (2012), 200.
APPENDIX D

British Residents in Delhi\textsuperscript{597}

1803–April 1806  David Ochterlony (first time)
April 1806–1810  Archibald Seton
February 25, 1811–1818  Charles Metcalfe (first time)
1818–1822  David Ochterlony (second time)
May 1822–1823  A. Ross
1823  William Fraser (first time)
1823–October 1825  C. Elliott
August 26 1825–August 1827  Charles Metcalfe (second time)
1827–1828  Edward Colebrooke
1828  William Fraser (2nd time, for six weeks)
1828–November 1830  Francis Hawkins
November 1830–1832  B. Martin
1832–March 1835  William Fraser (third time)
1835–1853  Thomas Metcalfe
November 1853–November 5 1857  Simon Fraser

APPENDIX E

Abbreviations

AHTDC The Art and History Trust Collection, The Smithsonian Museum, Washington DC, USA.
ACP The Alkazi Collection of Photography, Delhi, India.
AGM Alwar Government Museum, Rajasthan, India.
APSM Andhra Pradesh State Museum, Hyderabad, India.
BKB Bharat Kala Bhawan, Varanasi, India.
BL The British Library, St Pancras, London, UK.
BM The British Museum, London, UK.
CMA The Cleveland Museum of Art, OH, USA.
CAM The Cincinnati Museum of Art, OH, USA.
DSA Delhi State Archives, Delhi, India.
FSDC The Freer Collection, The Smithsonian Museum, Washington, DC, USA.
LACMA The Los Angeles County Museum of Art, CA, USA.
MFA The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.
MHS The Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, MA, USA.
MMA The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY, USA.
NAI The National Archives, Delhi, India.
Priv. Private Collection
RAS The Royal Asiatic Society, London, UK.
RIBA The Royal Institute of British Architects, London, UK.
ROM The Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto, Canada.
Sackler HU The Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA, USA.
SDMA EB The San Diego Museum of Art, Edwin Binney 3rd Collection, San Diego, CA, USA.
V&A The Victoria & Albert Museum, London, UK.
VAMFA The Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, VA, USA.
Welch The Stuart Cary Welch Collection (ex).
ILLUSTRATIONS

NOTE

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