RARE

INDIAN ART FOR COURT AND TRADE

FRANCESCA GALLOWAY

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This publication accompanies our exhibition at Frieze Masters in October where we will show South Asian paintings, works of art and textiles to both familiar audiences and those discovering these works for the first time. Each work is accompanied by a scholarly text.

We are pleased to present a folio from a dispersed *Ragamala* series, from north Deccan, probably painted at Ahmadnagar, c. 1575 (cat. 1). Our folio, with its wonderful composition and its central heroine, is part of a series that is known as one of the most beautiful, interesting and enigmatic of all early Deccani painting. Our folio from the St Petersburg Album (cat. 12) combines two paintings by masters of the Mughal atelier, Abu'l Hasan and Manohar and simultaneously bears witness to the turbulent times in Indian and Persian history. The large mother-of-pearl charger is an exceptional survivor of early 17th century trade between Gujarat and Europe (cat. 6). The group of Company School painting (cats. 28–37) is another focus of this catalogue, highlighting the patrons' interest and curiosity in Indian fauna and life.

We would like to express our gratitude to John Seyller for his research and write-up for many of the paintings featured in this publication. We are grateful to Will Kwiatkowski for his description of our calligraphic leaf and his translations, to Richard David Williams for his text on the Mysore musical instrument and to Richard J. Cohen for his translations. Furthermore we would like to thank Ceren Aktaş, Sibel Alpaslan, Usha Bhatia, Ralf Britz, Jessica Burgess, Rupert Collins, John Cross, Martina D'Amato, Pedro de Moura Carvalho, Titi Halle, Mitchell Abdul Karim Crites, Jonathan Katz, Helen Loveday, Diana Luber, Allyn Miner, Keith Mitchell, Simon Peers, Prudence Cuming Associates, Sonya Rhie Mace, Malini Roy, Timothy Schroder, Andrew Topsfield, Richard Valentia and Charlotte Wytema for their help and contributions with aspects of this publication.

Misha Anikst has performed his magic once again, and at breakneck speed, always with elegance, optimism and eternal patience. I want to thank Thea Buen for her important contribution, Danielle Beilby for her ideas and her reliability and, above all, Christine Ramphal for collaborating with us in a myriad of ways in putting this publication together.

Francesca Galloway, August 2025

1

Dhanasri Ragini
From a Dispersed *Ragamala* Series
North Deccan, probably Ahmadnagar, c. 1575
Opaque pigments, ink, gold, and silver on paper
25 × 18.5 cm

Sanskrit inscription on recto in Devanagari:
'Fair complexioned like the moon's rays, with her lotus face smiling, grieved by separation she is drawing (a portrait) of her beloved. Her cheeks, pale by the tears of her eyes, her firm breasts washed by grief (attain) beauty. Dressed in variegated robes she is seated on the floor of the room. Her bodice is embraced by the long ends of her locks; she is attractive by her plump (?) form. She is being encouraged by sympathetic companions.'

Persian inscriptions on recto:
In the upper margin, in *naskh* '*Dhanasri*'

Below the Sanskrit text, in *nasta'liq*:
'It is a woman, she is pale faced. She has become thin on account of grief from separation from her beloved and is writing the letter of her grief to send to her beloved. And she is crying in such a way that tears flow from her eyes and fall on her breast. She is dressed in red and sits on the ground. Mīm'
N. B. A final *mīm* is often used as a full stop in Persian orthography, especially in India.

Above the peacock, in *nasta'liq*, suggested reading:
The first note, *sharaj* [*shadaj*]
The *graha* is the initial note in a raga, and *shadaj*, spelled here *sharaj*, means the tonic note of the scale. *Shadaj* is said to resemble the cry of the peacock.

On verso is the stamp of the Maharaja of Bikaner along with inventory information of 1963; and the signature of Khet Singh, the royal librarian of Bikaner.

Provenance
Private collection, New York
Private collection, London
Francesca Galloway
Formerly in the Bikaner Palace collection

Published
Archer, W.G., *Indian Miniatures*, 1960, pl. 14
Dahmen-Dallapiccola, A. L., *Râgamâlâ-Miniaturen von 1475 bis 1700*, 1975, pl. 20.6, p. 253
Ebeling, K., *Ragamala Painting*, 1973, p. 156
Gangoly, O.C., *Ragas and Raginis*, 2 vols. 1935, pl. M
Goetz, H., *The Art and Architecture of Bikaner State*, 1950, pl. IV
Haidar, N. and Sardar, M. (eds.), *Sultans of Deccan India: Opulence and Fantasy*, 2015, cat. 12
Schofield, K., 'Music, Art and Power in 'Adil Shahi Bijapur, c. 1570–1630' in Singh, K. (ed.), *Scent upon a Southern Breeze*, 2018, pp. 68–87, fig. 1, p. 68
Zebrowski, M., *Deccani Painting*, 1983, fig. 29, p. 46

The iconography of *Dhanasri Ragini*, a traditional scene in a *Ragamala* series, or garland of musical modes, enjoys widespread appeal because of the poignancy of its subject: a *nayika* or heroine staring with brooding eyes at the portrait she has fashioned of her lover as a memento to sustain her in his absence. Most *Ragamala* texts specify that her handiwork appears on a drawing-board, but the narrow, flexible shape of the painted form indicates the artist has substituted for the wooden tablet a manuscript in the oblong *safina* format. With brush in hand and a small white vessel for ink or colours at her side, the *nayika* continues to embellish her lover's likeness. One standing attendant amplifies the scene by waving a long cloth to cool her mistress. Her motionless counterpart seated on the left

balances the composition, which shows the three women on a rooftop terrace against a teal blue field ornamented with a regular pattern of small decorative tufts. Below them is a section of assertive orange tilework framing three tall arches, the outer two blocked off by a dense geometric gridwork in lavender, and the plain central one occupied by a peacock with wings spread and tail feathers in glorious display. That creature, a familiar symbol of lovelorn longing, further enhances the emotional tenor of the scene and sets off the work's vibrant palette.

This painting belongs to a much-heralded and dispersed *Ragamala* series[1] that scholars have long assigned to the north Deccan in the late 16th century, primarily on the basis of its many points of resemblance to the 1565 *Tarif-i Husayn Shahi* made for Husayn Shah (r. 1553–1565) of Ahmadnagar.[2] Amongst these are the highly attenuated proportions of the wasp-waisted women, the rhythmic flow of flaring sashes and *patka*s, the rather pert if formulaic faces, and the bulging bun of hair beneath a translucent veil. The predilection for a surfeit of geometric patterns is also evident in the earlier manuscript.

Nearly all paintings in this *Ragamala* series have one or more Sanskrit verses written in blank space above the painting field. This example is unusual in the presence of a two-line Persian inscription squeezed into the top panel as well. Most specimens have short identifying Persian captions written in the upper border; this one pairs the caption *Dhanasri* in Arabic script with a faint equivalent one in Devanagari script on the left. Like many pages in this *Ragamala* series, this one once belonged to the Bikaner Royal Collection, which had presumably acquired the series as loot carried off by Rajput rulers serving in the Mughal army during the time of the imperial conquest of Ahmadnagar and Bijapur in 1600 and the late 1680s.

JS

1. For several pages and a comprehensive list of other folios from this series, see Haidar and Sardar 2015, cats. 10–13, pp. 60-63; Ebeling presents valuable information on the series as well (Eberling 1973, pp. 155-158). A previously unknown page, *Gundakari Ragini*, has recently surfaced in the Mehrangarh Museum, Jodhpur (inv. RJS2141-1).
2. The *Tarif-i Husayn Shahi* is published by Aftabi and edited by Kukarni and Mate 1987; and Zebrowski 1983, pp. 17–18, figs. 1, 2, and pl. 1.

2 & 3

Two Folios from a Dispersed *Ragamala* Series, North Deccan, 1630–50

This enigmatic series of *Ragamala* paintings has only recently been the subject of research. It has a rectangular upright format with poorly written *nagari* inscription of the requisite *raga* verse above and a love of multicoloured textiles and fantastical landscapes. The provenance of our series in the northern Deccan in the first half of the 17th century seems certain, but the convulsed history of that region at that time in the struggles between the Mughals and the remnant of the Ahmadnagar state (see Eaton 2015, pp. 7–8, for a concise summary) makes assigning a precise provenance or date impossible. But since additionally the architecture found in Popular Mughal and early Rajasthani painting has entered into the style of our series, it would seem to have had a Hindu patron with links to the Rajput elements in the Mughal armies, who were initially based at Burhanpur for the assault on Ahmadnagar and then at Aurangabad for that on Bijapur. A patron based in this latter place seems the most plausible provenance at the moment, who would presumably be one of the Rajput commanders. It is possible that the predominant *raga* type, with small moustache and wispy beard, could be a representation of him.

The set immediately dazzles the viewer on account of its spectacular use of colour. This can be seen in the clothes worn by the participants and the textiles of the furnishings in their houses. Women wear a skirt with *patka*, bodice and diaphanous *dupatta*, as found elsewhere in northern Deccan paintings and in Rajasthan. Colour extends from such manufactures into the natural world as found applied to the piled-up rocks which dot the Deccan plateau and to the animals and birds that inhabit them. The action of the painting takes place against a bright monochrome ground with a band of sky across the top filled with jumbled up white clouds. Buildings whether viewed from outside or within conform to Popular Mughal and Rajasthani conventions introduced from the north.

The series uses the *Ragamala* system established by Kshemakarna, the court poet of Rewa in Bundelkhand, where he wrote his *Ragamala* in 1570. In his system each of the six *ragas* has (normally) five wives and eight sons (for other folios from this series see Fogg 1999, nos. 29–31; Glynn et al 2011, no. 16; and Losty 2022, cats. 13a-n).

J. P. Losty (1945–2021)

2

Gambhira*, Fourth Son of *Sri Raga
From a Dispersed *Ragamala* Series
North Deccan, 1630–50
Opaque pigments and gold on paper
Folio 33 × 27 cm; painting 29 × 22.2 cm

Inscription on recto at very top:
'*Of Shri Raga, 4*'

Inscription in Devanagari script on recto describing the painting and the characteristics of *Gambhir Raga*:
'Gambhir Raga the fourth son, 4. In the hand a lotus, on his neck a necklace the colour of pearls, fond of amorous sport, conveyed on a makara (sea monster), 4'

Inscription on verso in Persian in *nasta'liq*:
'Gambhira Ragaputra of Sri Raga. Fourth'

Rarely depicted, *Gambhira* (*Gambhir Raga*) is usually identified by riding a sea monster, as is the case here.

3

Āsāvari Rāgini*, Fourth Wife of *Megha Raga
From a Dispersed *Ragamala* Series
North Deccan, 1630–50
Opaque pigments and gold on paper
Folio 32.5 × 27 cm; painting 29 × 22.5 cm

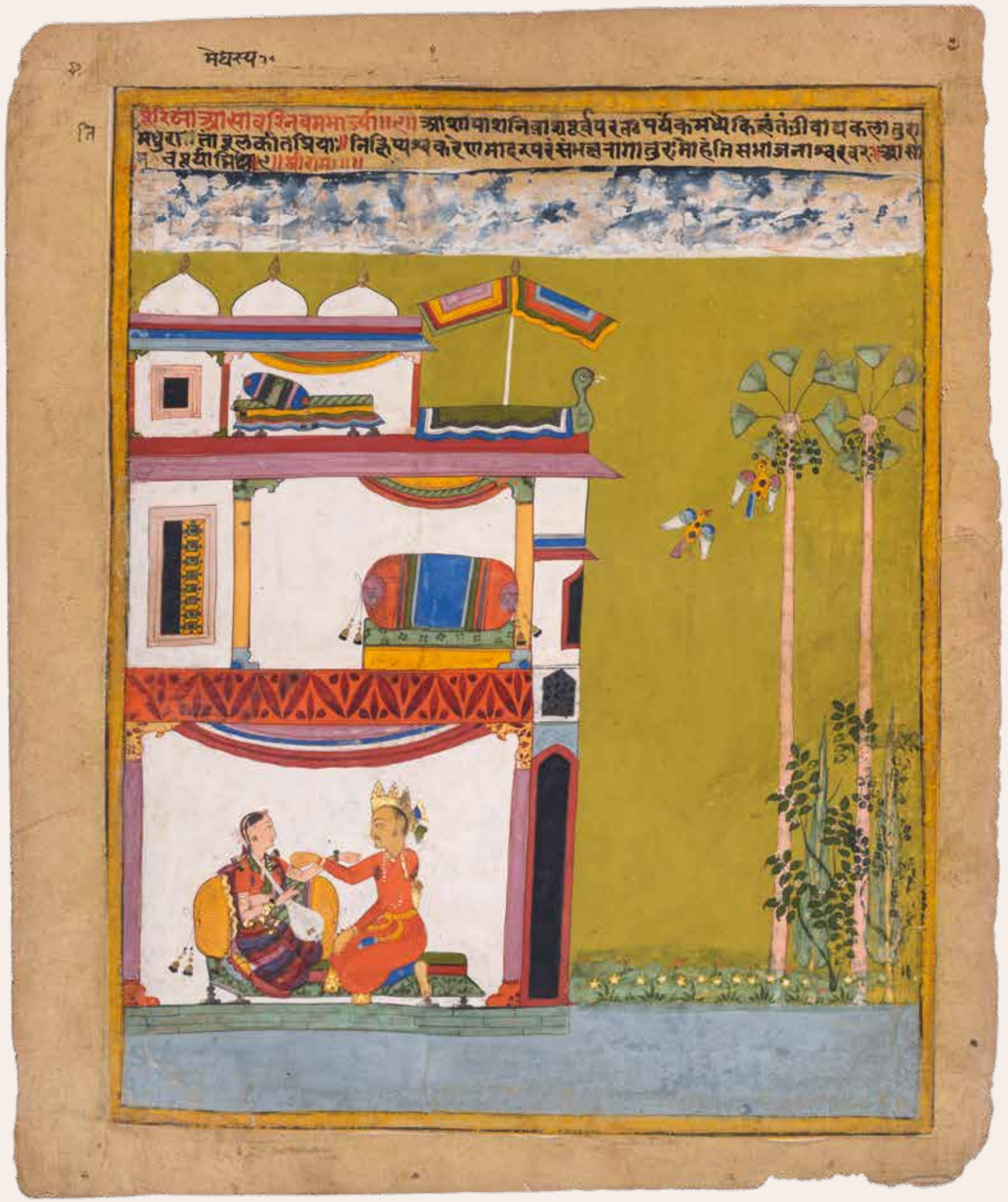
Inscription on recto at very top:
Meghasya [belongs to *Megha Rāga*]

The inscription in Devanagari script on recto is difficult to read, according to Richard J. Cohen and other scholars. It describes the painting and the characteristics of *Āsāvari*, the ninth wife [of *Megha Raga*]: ...'*While kneeling, indeed, charming and excellent in the art of playing the lute, fond of the pleasing betel nut, offering it with her hand...*'
The very last line appears to have been damaged and then corrected. The inscription ends with the line: '*Shri Rāma*'. The number '9' appears twice in the inscription, confirming that it is Āsāvari Ragini, the ninth wife of Megha Rāga.

Richard David Williams explains that there are only five wives in Kshemakarna's system and, again, the line of text doesn't match with what can be read in the Kshemakarna text. He suggests that we are looking at an idiosyncratic *Ragamala*, based on Kshemakarna but ultimately departing from it substantially. This is in line with J. P. Losty's overall assessment of this series (see introduction on p. 8).

On the verso, beneath a Devanagari inscription, in Urdu/Persian:
Asavari, ninth wife of Megha

In the upper right corner, in Urdu/Persian:
The wife Asavari



4

Zebra
Imperial Mughal, attributed to Murar, c. 1625–30
Opaque pigments and gold on paper
13.8 × 19.7 cm

Amongst the individual royal animals celebrated visually in paintings produced at the Mughal court – notably, elephants, horses, blackbucks, and falcons – the zebra was undoubtedly the most exotic. Obtained by trade from Ethiopia and brought as a gift to Jahangir on the occasion of the New Year festival in March 1621 by some Turks in the company of Mir Ja'far, the Mughal governor of Surat and Cambay, the appearance of the dramatically striped zebra played perfectly to the emperor's longstanding fascination with natural phenomena. In his memoirs Jahangir described the creature as both a wild ass and a kind of mule:

> *It was exceedingly strange, for it was for all the world exactly like a tiger. Tigers have black and yellow stripes, but this one was black and white. There were black stripes, large and small in proportion to where they were, from the tip of its nose to the end of its tail and from the tip of its ear to the top of its hoof. Around its eyes were black stripes of great fineness—you'd say the painter of destiny had produced a tour de force on the canvas of time with his wonder-working brush. It was so strange that some thought it might have been painted but it was clear that that was how God had made it.*[1]

Though Jahangir soon gifted the rare creature to his geopolitical and cultural rival Shah 'Abbas of Iran, who also maintained a royal menagerie, he first directed Mansur, the preeminent natural history painter at the Mughal court, to depict for posterity this curious bit of divine handiwork. Jahangir personally intervened by adding an informative inscription along the lateral edge of the zebra painting; it provides the circumstances of the zebra's arrival, the date of 1621, and the name Mansur along with his epithet, *Nadir al-'Asr* (Wonder of the Age) (fig. 1).[2] By all accounts, the consummate skill with which Mansur captured the proportions, markings and coarse hair of the zebra set the highwater mark for contemporary Mughal artists as they attempted to make exact likenesses of even absolutely unfamiliar creatures or objects. Attributed to Mansur, too, is a second image of the zebra, this time with the animal facing in the opposite direction and without an accompanying inscription.[3] In both versions, which entered their respective institutions more than a hundred years ago, the tethered zebra is framed tightly within the composition, which otherwise consists of only a plain biscuit-coloured background.

Considered to be the third zebra painting of the period, the present work is widely associated with an artist other than Mansur. The proportions of the zebra's body differ slightly from those of its counterparts, with the flank more elongated and the rump a bit enlarged. Its markings, too, are similar but not identical to those of the previous versions, and the texture of the mane and fur is less convincingly palpable. Given the dearth of literary mentions of the arrival of a second zebra at court, these discrepancies suggest that the previously unidentified artist neither had the opportunity to study the animal firsthand nor was fastidious about replicating the exact arrangement of markings from one of Mansur's paintings. Zebra stripes are distinctive enough in their coverage of the body, density, and definition that they enable one individual zebra to recognise another. The general characteristics of the markings also vary by subspecies. In this case they extend all the way to the hooves and do not alternate with light brown shadow stripes. These features identify the specimen depicted here as a Grant's zebra (*equus quagga boehmi*), named after the Scottish explorer James Augustus Grant (1827–92), rather than as a Burchell's zebra, as has recently been proposed.[4] The absence of shadow stripes is particularly apparent amongst the horizontal markings on the rump and on the wedgelike markings on the belly that are articulated only by outline. There has been some retouching of the face, though not enough to obscure the sensitively recorded detail of whiskers on the animal's lips.

The elaboration of the zebra's trappings and background signals a shift away from the purely documentary approach of the two zebra paintings of 1621 and towards a more

Fig. 1
Zebra
Mughal, Mansur, 1621,
Victoria & Albert Museum
(inv. IM.23–1925)

generalised, somewhat grander presentation of the creature. A thin red halter again drapes across the zebra's neck, but now the harness proper has been rendered in gold, a royal plume adorns the head, and the animal stands placidly without the restraint of a rope tether. The compositional frame has been loosened considerably, allowing for more space around the creature in every direction. The artist fills the upper reaches of the flat green background with a strip of hazy sky. More importantly, he now strews clumps of flowers across the entire foreground, complementing them with thin washes of a darker green to provide a semblance of a ground line. But it is the very rendering of the plants that holds the key to the identity of the artist responsible for this painting. Strikingly, the leaves here are drawn in a kind of sketchy, skeletal manner with edges tipped in dark green. This, it turns out, is an unusual shorthand way of rendering flowers. The various blossoms are also executed in an abbreviated manner. Amongst the imperial Mughal painters of the 1620s and 1630s who include flowers in a similar position in their works, only Murar regularly depicts flowers in this manner. He is known primarily from his work during Shahjahan's reign (1627–58), mostly dating to 1635–40. These include several illustrations in the Royal Library *Padshahnama*,[5] the repainted and expanded sections of three illustrations from a Gulistan of c. 1610 that were set into a mirror case,[6] and a Kevorkian Album portrait of Khan Dawran Bahadur Nusrat Jang inscribed by Shahjahan.[7] An earlier phase of Murar's work is represented by a discreetly signed portrait of Shahjahan executed on a small patch of paper affixed over the original figure of Jahangir in *Shahjahan Riding with His Son*, along with a cluster of flowers in the lower left; circumstances suggest that this propagandistic artistic alteration was carried out in 1628, when the newly accessioned Shahjahan saw fit to direct his artists to revise personal and political history in a few paintings.[8] The closest match of flower styles seen here however, occurs in a Kevorkian Album portrait of *Jamal Khan Qarawul*, which is ascribed to Murar by Jahangir himself, a fact that necessarily dates the painting no later than 1627 (fig. 2).[9] Finally, Murar's venture into animal studies apparently did not begin or end with this zebra, for two paintings in Berlin depicting a small group of domesticated antelopes are reportedly ascribed with his name.[10] Both paintings display a similarly sensitive rendering of the heads, bodies and fur of the animals but also convey lively movement as they scratch and frolic in a courtyard with patches of wispy grass. This historically important natural history painting thus can be attributed to Murar in the early years of his career.

JS

Acquired by a private collector

1. *The Jahangirnama: Memoirs of Jahangir, Emperor of India*, translated, edited, and annotated by Thackston 1999, p. 360.
2. Victoria and Albert Museum (inv. IM. 23–1925).
3. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (inv. 14.659).
4. Das 2012, p. 86.
5. Royal Library RCIN 1005025, ff. 49a, 122b, 144a, 194b, published in Beach, Koch, Thackston 1997, pls. 9, 23, 31, and 38. In his signature on f. 194b, Murar self-effacingly proclaims himself to be 'the helpless pupil of Nadir al-Zaman', i.e., Abu'l Hasan.
6. The David Collection 1/2009, published in Seyller 2010, figs. 1-2. 6-7. 9-10.
7. The Metropolitan Museum of Art 55.121.10.31v, published in Welch et al. 1987, no. 71.
8. Victoria and Albert Museum IM. 12–1925, published in Stronge 2002, pl. 95. Murar also signed the trailing figure of Prince Dara Shikoh, who was formerly Prince Shahjahan (or Khurram) in the original formulation.
9. The Metropolitan Museum of Art 55.121.10.29r, published in Welch et al. 1987, no. 26.
10. `Museum für Islamische Kunst, Berlin I.4599, fols.11r and 17r.

Fig. 2

Four Portraits: (upper left) A Raja (Perhaps Raja Sarang Rao), by Balchand; (upper right) 'Inayat Khan, by Daulat; (lower left) 'Abd al-Khaliq, probably by Balchand; lower right Jamal Khan Qaravul, by Murad, Folio from the Shah Jahan Album; recto c. 1610–15, verso 1541; Metropolitan Museum of Art (inv. 55.121.10.29)

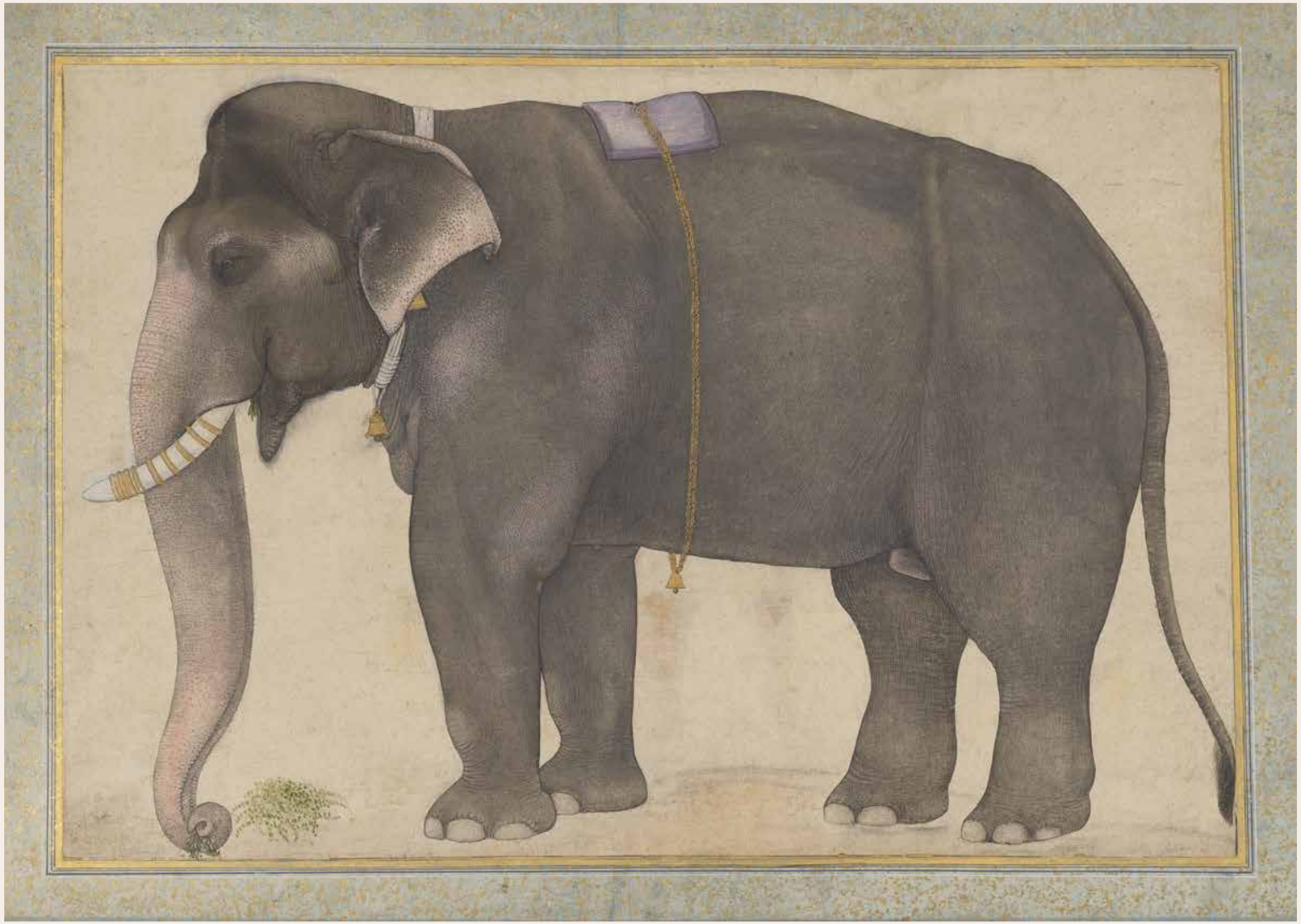
Fig 2a

Detail of fig.2

5

Elephant
Mughal, attributed to Dawlat, c. 1635
Opaque pigments and gold on paper laid down on an album leaf
Folio 31.5 × 47 cm; painting 25.5 × 38 cm

Provenance
Private collection, France
Hôtel Drouot, 20th March 1961, lot 97
Sevadjian collection, Paris



Indian artists are unrivalled in the world for their insightful and empathetic images of elephants, creatures traditionally prized as both potent weapons of war and regal symbols. Whilst Mughal artists were occasionally asked to depict elephants in the wild, more often they painted domesticated creatures as ancillary elements in grand imperial activities, typically bearing royalty in howdahs in panoramic scenes of battle, procession, or the hunt. Another type of image focused less on the elephant's movement and behaviour than on its physical attributes, showcasing an individual creature as the mount for a particular prince or, in partial views, as a presentation gift in the foreground of a ceremonial darbar scene. Such images are nothing less than true elephant portraits, in which the artist painstakingly describes such physical features as the shape and condition of the elephant's ear, the colouration of his head and trunk, and the length of his tusks. In some cases, these nuanced physical distinctions are accompanied by an inscription that records on the painting itself both the name of the particular beast and its contemporary valuation, which routinely reached the astronomical sum of 100,000 rupees.[1] Creatures of such innate impressiveness and contemporary renown were habitually made resplendent by the addition of lavish regalia; standard among them were an embroidered velvet saddle cloth (jhul), gilt chains around the neck festooned with jangling bells (*chaurasi*), and a yak tail tassel hung from the top of the ear (*jhumar*).

The artist who created this exquisite likeness of a massive bull elephant forgoes the pretence of a courtly rider and the splendour of luxurious trappings. Instead, he achieves a different sort of grandeur by offering a monumental portrait of the unnamed elephant in a decidedly unostentatious state: standing alone, immobile and untethered, placidly munching on a small pile of grasses, some of which remain in his mouth still unchewed. The regalia are strikingly minimal, consisting of only the ubiquitous golden *kalap* (tusk protector) and *bangri* (metal rings) on the untrimmed tusk, the eight-finger-wide twisted guide rope (*kilawa*) around the neck hung with two jangling bells, and the complementary chain and larger bell (*pitakchh*) girding his midsection. The artist carefully renders with muted colouring and easily overlooked three-dimensionality the small pad placed on the elephant's back to protect against chafing by that chain, a mundane feature included in only one comparable image, an unfinished drawing of Dara Shikoh's elephant Madhgar by Hashim.[2]

Although several highly accomplished drawings of Mughal elephants of this period have survived, they are often unfinished and somewhat damaged, with only the elephant's head and trunk brought nearly to completion.[3] By contrast, this superb work, which is in impeccable condition, is remarkably detailed in every passage, a quality truly appreciated only under sustained first-hand examination of the painting or through prolonged scrutiny of high-resolution photographs. The artist's dispassionate approach is apparent throughout the work, beginning with a careful recording of the irregular bumps of the elephant's spine in lieu of the much-simplified sweeping curve seen in other elephant portraits. It continues in the sophisticated definition of the structure of the large and rounded socket surrounding the small golden eye and includes even such a minuscule detail as eyelashes whilst not lapsing into anthropomorphised embellishments. Areas around the eye, down the upper portion of the trunk, and along the lower edge of the ear are wonderfully variegated as the artist exploits the interplay of underlying pink skin with dense speckles of brown pigmentation. He demonstrates a keen sensitivity to the prominence and directional quality of the scraggly hair sprouting from the top of the

head, along the lower lip, and within the ear. He is equally attuned to the grain of the one visible tusk, which is indicated by the faintly drawn lines running the tusk's length and then later deftly tempered by a thin layer of white paint. Likewise, he assiduously describes the muscle running vertically above the rear leg, a feature omitted in other elephant portraits. Most amazingly, the artist works to create a tight web of textures by applying marks of varying directions and darkness across the leathery skin of the entire body, including the tail, neither defaulting to a predictable system of elementary crosshatching nor leaving any area of skin altogether unarticulated. An additional layer of brown paint applied sporadically makes for a still more complex surface. Discreet suggestions of a low groundline near the elephant's feet establish a minimal and unobtrusive environment.

Which artist made this magnificent elephant portrait? Two elephant drawings of similar quality are ascribed or attributed to Hashim, but those examples exhibit a much sharper linear definition and less all-over texturing than this painting.[4] The same can be said of a slightly earlier portrait of an elephant named Pawan Gaj ascribed to Nanha,[5] as well as the excellent painting of Dara Shikoh's pink elephant firmly attributed to Bichitr.[6] Finally, a painting of the African elephant Dariya attributed to Govardhan has pronounced but soft contours and preternaturally smooth surfaces that differ from the corresponding features here.[7] In short, although several of the most accomplished Mughal painters active during the reigns of Jahangir and Shahjahan ventured independent elephant portraits, none of those ascribed or attributed examples provide a close stylistic match to this one.

An invaluable source for comparable depictions of elephants is the Royal Library *Padshahnama*, whose forty-four illustrations are practically an encyclopaedia of the work of Shahjahan-period Mughal artists. Amongst the dozen or so paintings that feature elephants in one role or another, one particular illustration exhibits an exceptional kinship in the representation of elephants: Shahjahan hunting lions at Burhanpur, a painting of c. 1635 attributed to Dawlat.[8] Close comparison of the rendering of the area around the elephant's eye, as well as in the subtly muted colouring of his trunk, ear, and forelegs, points strongly to Dawlat, a master active from c. 1595-1635 and the probable supervisor of the major phase of production of the Jahangir Album.[9] Even from the outset of his career, Dawlat habitually strives to achieve an acute if understated sense of volume in his figures and forms, often manipulating the degree of colour saturation within a given body or object to enhance the impression of volume. This effect, seen here in the protective pad on the elephant's back, is evident in a slightly exaggerated form in his 1596–97 Beatty *Akbarnama* illustrations, but in a fully mature expression in his famous marginal portraits of his fellow painters in the Jahangir Album, as well as in a dervish and a musician of c. 1610.[10]

JS

Acquired by a private collector

1. Dara Shikoh Mounted on the Elephant Mahabir Dev, Victoria and Albert Museum (inv. IM.23–1928).
2. The Fitzwilliam Museum (inv. PD. 84–1948).
3. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (inv. 17.2654).
4. The Fitzwilliam Museum inv. PD. 84–1948, and The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York inv. 2010.255.
5. Location unknown, published in Das 1999, fig. 12, p. 48..
6. Beach 1978, no. 33.
7. Private collection, published in Ehnbom 1985, no. 22.
8. *Padshahnama*, f. 220b, published in Beach, Koch, and Thackston 1997, pl. 46.
9. The most comprehensive account of this artist's career is in Beach 2011 pp. 305–320.
10. Beach 1997, figs. 3, 4a–b, 7, and 10.

6

An Impressive Mother-of-Pearl Charger with European Silver-Gilt Mounts
Gujarat, early 17th century
Silver-gilt mounts, probably English but unmarked, c. 1625–1650
Dia. 45 cm; H. 7.5 cm

Provenance
Zilkha Collection
S. J. Phillips Ltd

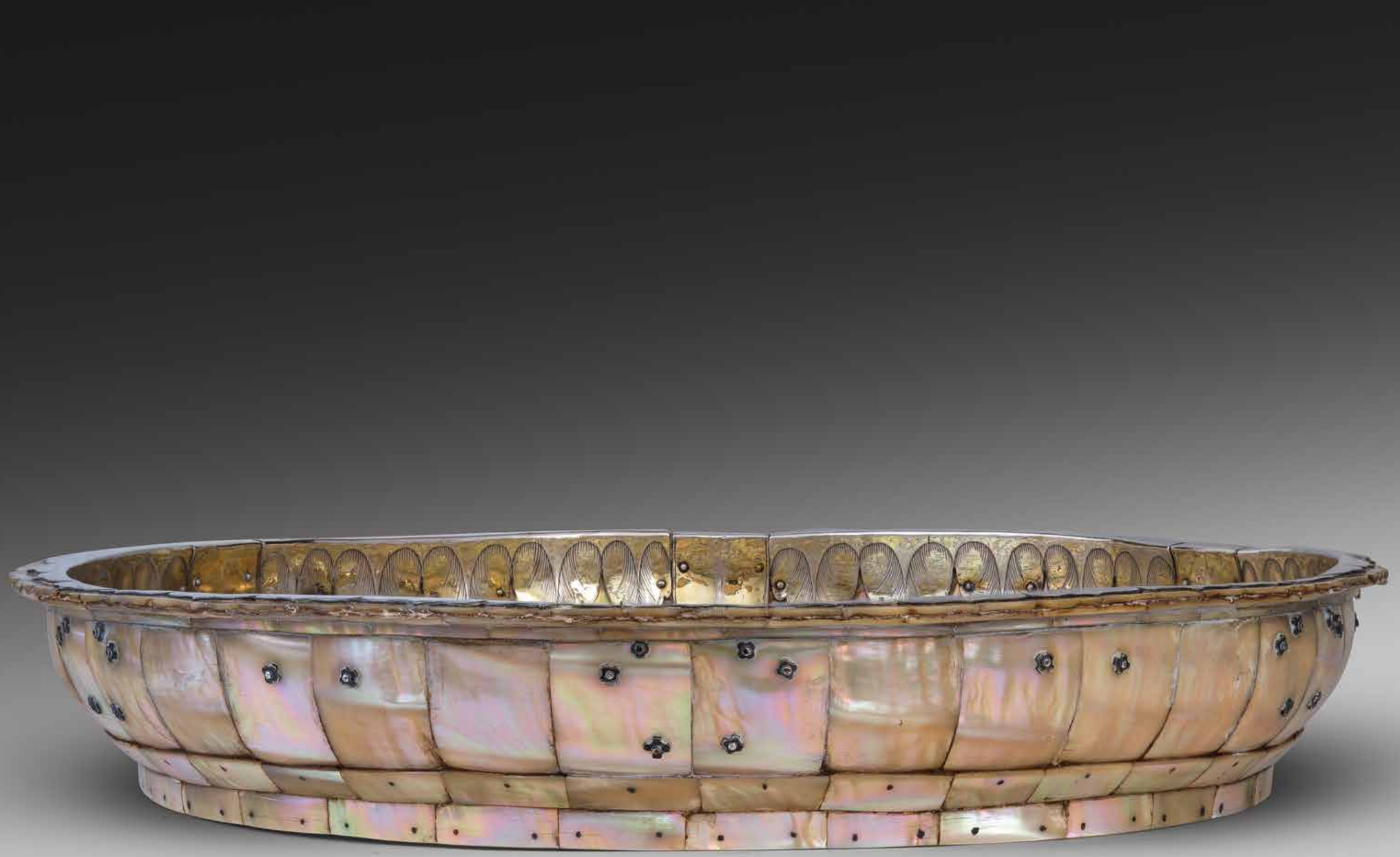
Published
Schroder, T., *Renaissance and Baroque – Silver, Mounted Porcelain and Ruby Glass from the Zilkha Collection*, 2012, no 26

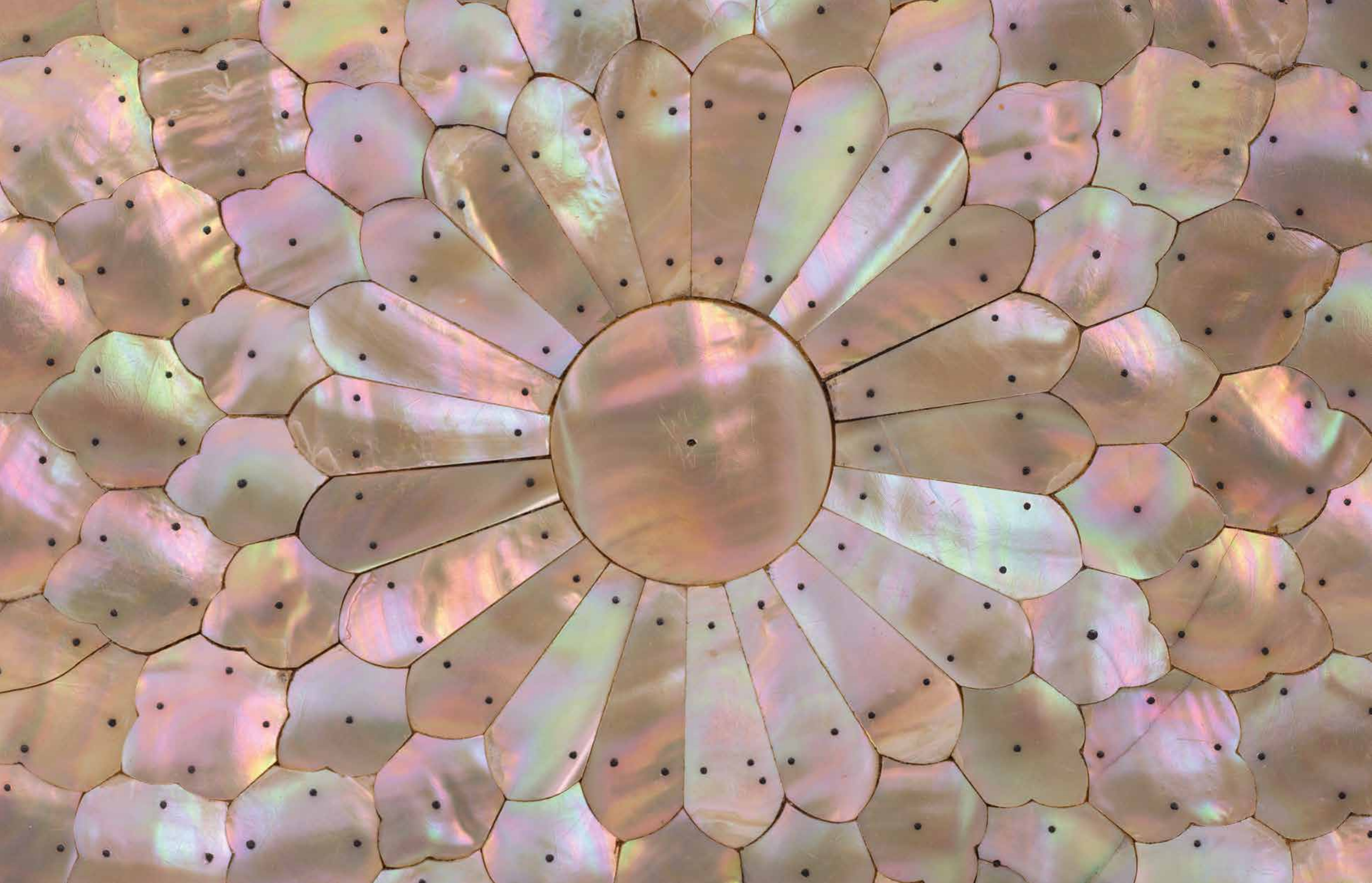
This magnificent mother-of-pearl charger is of exceptional size. The body is entirely constructed of small, individually shaped mother-of-pearl plaques. What is unusual is that there is no metal or wooden core; instead, the inside and outside of the dish are entirely made of mother-of-pearl, except for a metal rim around the edge of the base and another supporting the foliated rim. A series of graduating scalloped mother-of-pearl plaques radiate from a central flower with twenty-two petals and are kept in place with minute metal pins. A small bowl and cover in the Victoria and Albert Museum (inv. M.18&A-1968, published in Jaffer 2002, no 14) is similarly made of two layers of mother-of-pearl plaques, again with no wooden core. The inner rim of our charger is mounted with a European, probably English, silver-gilt band, shaped in harmony with the foliated rim and engraved inside the charger with stylised leaves. The unmarked silver-gilt mounts are held in place with pins on the inside and rivets on the outside. Timothy Schroder recently suggested the mounts are English and date from the second quarter of the 17th century.

The form of our charger with its scalloped rim emulates the shape of late Yuan and early Ming Imperial blue and white porcelain dishes. These objects made their way to India early on, and a blue and white dish with a typically scalloped rim (dia. 38.5 cm), dated to the late 14th century, excavated from a Tughlaq Palace in Delhi (de Moura Carvalho 1997, p. 58, illust. XV) attests to this. Gujarati craftsmen working with mother-of-pearl copied these blue and white porcelain prototypes, which continued to be highly prized and kept in treasuries by both Mughal and Iranian patrons. A large dish, of similar shape and size, from Jingdezhen, Jiangxi province, c. 1400–25, now in Wallington Hall (National Trust, inv. 581660), once belonged to Emperor Shah Jahan (engraved with Shah Jahan's titles, dated AH 1037, regnal year 1 (12 September 1627 – 30 August 1628), see Brosch 2024, pp. 268 and 269.

Europeans first mentioned Gujarat as a centre for mother-of-pearl work in 1502 when the Sultan of Melinde in East Africa presented Vasco da Gama, on his second voyage, with 'a bedstead of Cambay, wrought with gold and mother-of-pearl, a very beautiful thing' (Correa 1858, p.287; Digby 1982, p. 215; and Jaffer 2002, p. 22). The fashion for Gujarati mother-of-pearl soon spread via Portuguese traders and by the late Renaissance and early Baroque, European courts and aristocratic families acquired garnitures which they would enhance by setting the vessels with elaborate mounts by famous European goldsmiths. The casket belonging to François I, now in the Louvre, is richly embellished with mounts by the French court goldsmith Pierre Mangot hallmarked 1532–33, making it one of the earliest documented Gujarati mother-of-pearl objects known in Europe. Another outstanding example is the mother-of-pearl basin and ewer set with goldsmith's work from Antwerp or Nuremberg around 1540 (Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, Grünes Gewölbe, inv. IV181).

By the close of the 16th century, Europeans, including the English, Dutch and French, were commissioning Gujarati mother-of-pearl craftsmen to produce objects to their western taste – garnitures of vessels, plates and tankards for display only. To this group of objects belongs the early 17th century group at Chicheley Hall, Buckinghamshire (Jaffer 2004, pp. 252 and 253), as well as our charger.





7

Imaginary Flower Made for Raja Jaswant Singh I of Jodhpur
Northern Deccan, Aurangabad, dated VS (Vikram Samvat) 1726 (1669 CE)
Opaque pigments and gold on paper
Folio 31.1 × 18.6 cm; painting 19.6 × 11.1 cm

Published
Indian Miniatures and Works of Art, Francesca Galloway, 2000, pp. 60–61, no. 28
Haidar, N. and Sardar, M. (eds.), *Sultans of Deccan India: Opulence and Fantasy,* 2015, pp. 292–93, no. 169c

This painting of an imaginary flower arouses in most modern viewers an immediate sensation of unalloyed delight, thanks in large part to its amazingly strong decorative values. The stark abstraction of the leaves, stalks, and blossoms, the powerful symmetry of the compact composition, and the contrast of brilliant colours against a shimmering gold background – all these make for an aesthetic experience that somehow rivals or even transcends the familiar beauty of the mundane imperfections, tempered palette, and all-encompassing space of flowers in their natural environment. It is a surprise, too, that the painters responsible for this work and others from the same manuscript veered so dramatically away from the highly naturalistic qualities that prior Mughal artists had sought to emulate after they were exposed to European florilegia around 1620.

There are other intriguing aspects of this series of flower paintings as well. The most unexpected of these is that these spare, unabashedly decorative images of flowers, some elaborated with a pair of flying insects fluttering above, are embedded in a Sanskrit philosophical text written in Devanagari and identified as *Siddantha-sara*, *Siddantha-bodha* and *Aporaksha-siddantha* in an extraordinarily informative colophon (figs. 2–3). It mentions the text's author and patron, Jaswant Singh I of Jodhpur (fig. 1), who succeeded to the throne as a ten-year-old, ruled 1638–1678, and received the distinguished title of Maharaja on 6 January 1654 from Emperor Shahjahan. The scribe is named as Vyasa Madhava, and the provenance is listed as Aurangabad, the Mughal administrative centre in the northern Deccan from which Aurangzeb (and from 1658, as the newly accessioned Emperor 'Alamgir) and others spearheaded a long campaign of conquest in the Deccan. Completing the colophon's windfall of information is the date of completion: the 5th of the bright half of the month of Kartik in the year Vikram Samvat 1726, corresponding to Tuesday, 19 October 1669. The seeming improbability of this Rajasthani chieftain composing a Sanskrit text and sponsoring a manuscript illustrated with a series of unrelated images in a rather elegant Islamicising style is explained in part by Maharaja Jaswant Singh's two military stints in the region, one in 1662–1664 and the other 1667–1670. Aurangabad served as a particularly cosmopolitan meeting ground of nobles and artists from many parts of India, and their encounters frequently bore artistic fruit both at Aurangabad and at various centres in Rajasthan. That said, this variety of cultural hybridity has no exact parallel in the annals of Indian painting. Some illustrated folios have fifteen lines of text on the reverse, as one might expect of a philosophical text, but others – including this example – defy all precedent and feature an identical image of the flower on the reverse. The discreet borders feature an Ottoman-inspired *chintamani* (wish-fulfilling jewel) motif set within an open trellis design.

Other folios from this manuscript are published in Haidar and Sardar 2015, pp. 292 – 93, and Leach 1998, pp. 230 – 31.

JS

Fig. 1
Portrait of Maharaja Jaswant Singh I of Jodhpur
Rajasthan, Jodhpur, c. 1660–1670

Figs. 2 and 3
Double-sided folio with identifying colophon and date
Musée Guimet – Musée National des Arts Asiatiques

8

Calligraphic Composition in *Ta'liq*
North India, Mughal, c. 1650-1700
Nine lines of Persian in black *ta'liq* on brown and cream marbled paper,
with narrow brown paper surround
22 × 14.7 cm

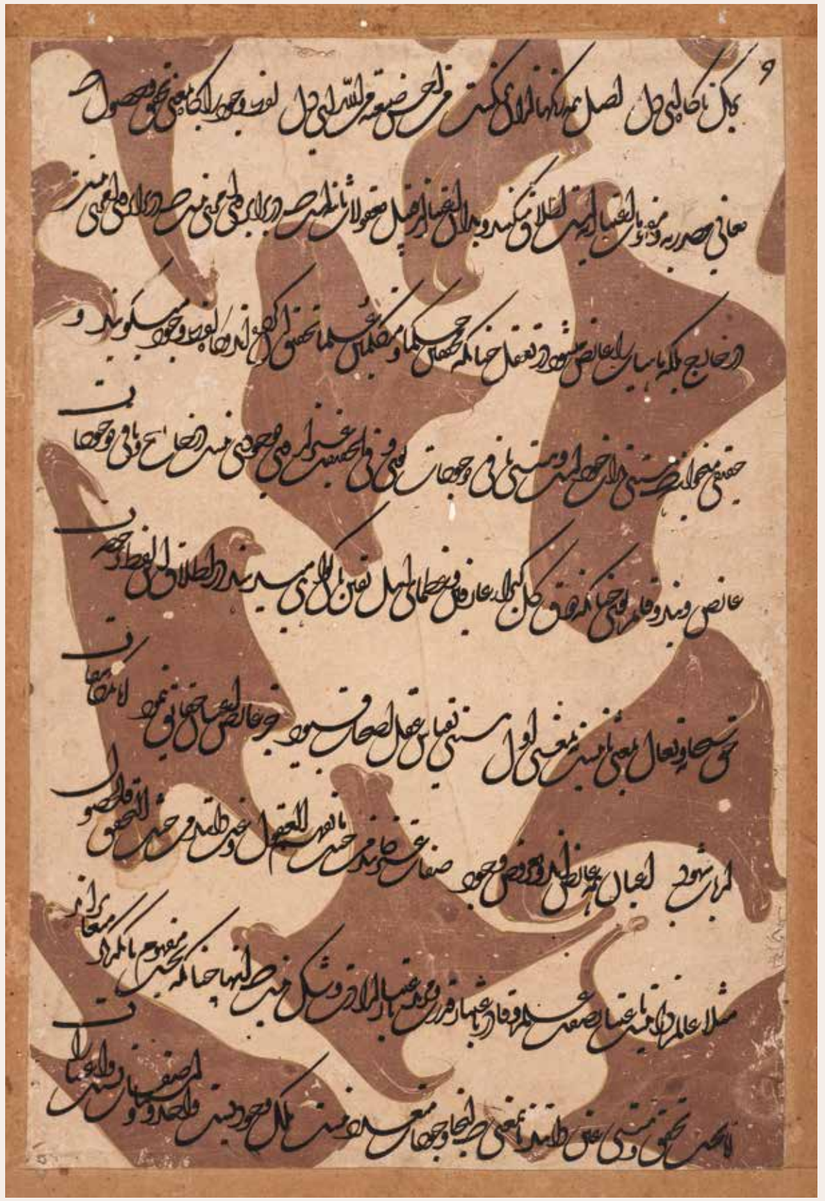
This calligraphic leaf on marbled paper consists of a section from the *Lawa'ih* ('Flashes') of the poet Nur al-Din 'Abd al-Rahman Jami. Written in Persian prose and poetry, the work is composed of a number of 'flashes', each of which explains a Sufi tenet. The sections found here include the end of a section concerning the nature of God/the Truth (*Haqq*) as well as most of another one on the nature of existence (*wujud*) (Jami 1906, pp. 28-29).

The leaf is written in an elegant *ta'liq*, a chancery style that had become the predominant administrative hand in the eastern Islamic lands by the 15th century (Blair 2006, p. 274). Though *ta'liq* was eventually eclipsed by other bureaucratic hands, particularly the related *shikasta* style, it continued to be practiced by calligraphic connoisseurs for the production of calligraphic album pages. In the Mughal empire, the most famous exponents of *ta'liq* were Muhammad Ja'far Kifayat Khan (d. 1684), a scribe employed in Shah Jahan's administration, and his son Dirayat Khan, who was said to have surpassed even his famous father in skill in *ta'liq* and *nasta'liq* (Dihlavi 1910, pp. 105-6).

Comparable calligraphic pieces in *ta'liq*, including one by Kifayat Khan, are among the specimens included in the albums compiled for the Swiss engineer and architect Antoine Polier (1741–1795) in Awadh (University of Manchester, John Rylands Library, Persian MS 10, fol. 12v, see Benson 2025, p. 277; Victoria and Albert Museum, National Art Library, MSL/1858/4765, f. 23 [no. 22], see Stronge & Atighi Moghaddam 2018, p. 213 and fig. 11). A composition in a dense and highly stylised *ta'liq* on a bold marble ground, attributed to the 18th century calligrapher Nawab Murid Khan Tabataba'i, is included in another album made for Polier, now in the Museum für Islamische Kunst, Berlin (I. 4595, f. 13v, see Kwiatkowski 2025, p. 301, n. 64).

The leaf is said to have come from an album of calligraphic pages on marbled paper consisting of extracts from the Arabic *Munajat* ('Supplications') attributed to Imam 'Ali, copied by the calligrapher Muhammad Ashraf Razavi in Kashmir in December 1658 (Fraser and Kwiatkowski 2006, pp. 124–5). Since this leaf differs in style and content from the other leaves in the album and nothing is known of Muhammad Ashraf Razavi's life or his proficiency in hands other than *nasta'liq*, its relation to them is uncertain. Furthermore, the plain, bold marbled patterning on this leaf contrasts with the variegated designs on the other leaves, which would also suggest that it was not originally conceived as part of the same project as them. Marbled papers were popular in Mughal India and the Deccan from the last quarter of the 16th century onwards, where the technique was probably introduced from Iran (Benson 2015, pp. 157–69).

WK



9

Cambay Embroidery from Ashburnham Place
Gujarat, Cambay, for the English market, c. 1690-1700
Cotton embroidered with silk
148 × 261 cm

Provenance
Private collection, USA
Francesca Galloway, 1995
Christopher Gibbs (1938-2018)
Sotheby's auction Ashburnham Place, 7th July 1953 (possibly part of lot 478 or 479)

This finely embroidered panel comes from the Ashburnham Place group of embroideries, long considered the finest of their type. Our large and rare wall hanging (or bed curtain) consists of a repeat vertical design of lush foliage and exotic flowers, love birds, flying squirrels, plunging birds of paradise and monkeys. The design is contained within elegant columnar borders of diagonal serrated leaves and scrolling small flowers. The polychrome silk chain-stitch embroidery executed on a very fine cotton twill ground is whimsical; the lush vegetation with its imaginary flowers appears gigantic against the playful depiction of the much smaller animals. The silk threads are dyed in a variety of vibrant colours and have a natural sheen, giving the embroidery an elegant finish. The embroideries from Ashburnham Place, including ours, blend Chinese, Indian and European artistic influences. The artists were given these foreign design references, and their interpretation resulted in a unique hybrid style (Cohen and Crill 2021, pp. 166–67).

European travellers as early as Marco Polo were aware of the exceptional quality of embroidery produced in Gujarat. The technique of chain-stitch embroidery, which involves the use of a hooked implement (*ari*) as well as a needle, first emerged among the Mochi community, who were professional embroiderers and shoemakers originally working directly on leather, before transitioning to working on cloth. These chain-stitch embroideries were probably produced in various centres across the region but were particularly associated with Cambay – the port from which they embarked on their sea voyage to Europe (Crill 1999, pp. 7 – 8). From its foundation in 1600, the British East India Company targeted these 'Cambay quilts' as lucrative export goods. In the early 18th century, Alexander Hamilton declared that 'they [the people of Cambay] embroider these best of any people in India, and perhaps in the world' (*ibid.*, p. 8).

Our example and other comparable embroideries, together with matching chintzes, were found and perhaps made for Ashburnham Place in Sussex. They appeared on the market in 1953, when the contents of Ashburnham Place were sold at Sotheby's. The chintzes and embroidered panels from the Ashburnham Place sale are now mostly divided among five museums: the Victoria and Albert Museum (chintz: IS.156–1953, embroideries: IS.152–1953–IS.155–1953; IS.154–1953 has an undecipherable embroidered inscription at the base of the panel); Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum, New York (chintz: 1953-123-1, embroidered bedcover or *palampore*: 1953–123–2); Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (chintz: 53.2201, embroidery: 54.28 and 53.2202); Calico Museum of Textiles, Ahmedabad (chintz: 324, embroidery: 323, 325) and the Metropolitan Museum of Art (embroidery: 54.21). Closely related pieces are also found in the Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto and the Museum für angewandte Kunst, Vienna.

Acquired by The David Collection, Copenhagen

10

Circular *Bidri* Tray
Deccan, Bidar, 17th century
Cast zinc alloy, incised and inlaid with silver and brass
Dia. 32.2 cm

Provenance
Private collection, England

This elegant tray is made of a cast zinc alloy base, which, unlike steel, is soft and warm to the touch. The alloy's dark colour provides the perfect base for the design that is incised and subsequently inlaid with silver and brass to form a flush surface. Our dish has a stylised flower at its centre, which is enclosed by brass leaves and silver flower heads. A band of petals and leaves surrounds this centre. The tray's main field consists of stylised lily-like flowerheads which fan out from the centre in two rows. The flower heads are outlined in a delicate brass wire and filled out in silver sheet. The floral field is interspersed by small brass Chinese cloud bands, which add movement to the design. A spectacular 17th century hookah base appears to feature the same type of cloud bands (see catalogue no. 502 in Zebrowski 1997, now in the Cleveland Museum of Art, inv. 2020.207), which are otherwise not often seen in *bidri* ware. The tray finishes in a rim that has a band of floral sinuous tendrils in silver and brass.

Plant motifs and flowers were a favoured decorative theme for *bidri* ware from Bidar, the Bahmani capital historically associated with this craft. This tray stands out from other 17th century examples owing to its large, stylised flowerheads, which create a simple, but bold arrangement. More typical for this type of object are either small, all-over floral designs (see catalogue numbers 425, 429 and 430 in Zebrowski 1997) or large flowering plants radiating from a central medallion (see catalogue numbers 422, 423 and 427 in Zebrowski 1997).

The Portuguese introduced tobacco to the Deccan in the late 16th century. Within several decades, smoking the huqqa had become the favourite pastime among the aristocracy, long before the fashion spread to the courts of North India (Alderman 2015, p. 180). It can be assumed, that our tray was once part of a huqqa set, which would have consisted of a *huqqa* and its ring, a *chillam* and a tray. The demand for such *huqqa* sets would have had a multiplying effect on production, nevertheless, no complete set from this period survives (Zebrowski 1997, 247).

An array of trays is illustrated in Zebrowski's seminal book *Gold Silver & Bronze from Mughal India*, and apart from a few outliers, the trays all measure between 29 to 36 cm, with the majority measuring around 32 cm.

11

Sandstone Panel Depicting a Flowering Lily Plant
Mughal, late 17th-early 18th century
Carved sandstone
H: 167 × W: 71 × D: 7 cm

This large sandstone panel has a naturalistic carved image of a multi-stemmed lily plant with large flowerheads all in deep, three-dimensional relief. The plant, growing out of a pot which appears to be made of inverted leaves, completely and gracefully inhabits the panel. A comparable, albeit slightly smaller panel is in the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston (inv. 2015.67).

The verso of ours shows part of a classical water chute (*jharna*). According to Mitchell Abdul Karim Crites this was probably never completed. The stone slab was cut and the recto used to carve our floral panel. Both carvings are from the same period, albeit our flower was done slightly later. This mottled red sandstone, quarried in the Mathura region near Agra for centuries, was favoured by both Akbar (r. 1556–1605) and Shah Jahan (r. 1628–1658).

Our panel was probably part of a façade framing the outer perimeters of a grand haveli or small palace in the region of Agra. The prototype of these tall floral panels can be seen on the river façade of the terrace below the Taj Mahal (fig. 1) (Koch 2006, pp. 146-47, figs. 208 and 209). Another precursor are the smaller sandstone panels, which decorate the dado in the Mosque within the Taj Mahal perimeters (Michell 2007, pp. 170-71). In Delhi, the late 17th century tomb complex of Ghaziuddin, a high-ranking officer in the service of Aurangzeb (1658–1707), features a sandstone *jali* screen. The screen consists of a multitude of different flowering plants, which stylistically compare to the carving in our panel (Haidar 2023, pp. 168–69, figs. 17 and 18).

Architecture was important to the Mughal emperors, because it was the most public display of their imperial status, their taste and their might. The great builders were Akbar and Shah Jahan. Under Shah Jahan architecture and its decorative language became more standardised and is today viewed as the quintessential Mughal architecture. According to Ebba Koch, important were symmetry and uniformity of shapes, governed by hierarchical accents (Koch 1991, p. 93). In contrast to this strict synthesis of form, is the exuberant and luscious use of botanical decoration, which was ubiquitous to all the decorative arts during his reign. Such was the success of this period of Mughal architecture and decoration, that it not only continued during the reign of his son Aurangzeb (r. 1658–1707) but, in the long run, it became the norm for the whole of Indian architecture (Koch 1991, p. 125).

Fig. 1
Detail of the right -hand end of the river façade of the terrace below the Taj Mahal
(Koch 2006, fig. 208, p. 146)

12

A Folio from the St Petersburg Album Combining the Work of Two Great Mughal Artists

Recto: Reclining European Woman and a Peri Holding a Book
Attributed to Abu'l Hasan and Manohar
Imperial Mughal, c. 1602–04 and c. 1605–10; assembled in Iran, c. 1750–58
Border decoration c. 1900
Verso: Three Specimens of Calligraphy Signed by 'Imad al-Hasani
All calligraphies together (inside the red border) 24 × 15.2 cm
Blue borders signed by Muhammad Hadi and dated AH 1171/1757–58 CE

Opaque pigments, ink, and gold on paper laid down on an album page
Folio 46.55 × 33.8 cm; painting 26.8 × 18 cm

Provenance
Private collection, Germany, since at least the 1970s
Imperial Library (Tehran), to around 1905
The two Mughal paintings were in the Imperial Mughal Treasury, until 1739

Published
Bonhams, London, November 2024, lot 155

The St Petersburg Album – A Brief Summary
This folio comes from a seminal album now known as the St Petersburg Album, a landmark of Indian and Persian painting. The album was put together in Iran in the mid-18th century and was once part of the Shah's library. One hundred folios were purchased by Tsar Nicholas II of Russia in 1910, during the upheavals of the Persian Constitutional Revolution (1905–11). A further 26–30 folios, including ours, were once part of this album and removed before the album was sold to Russia.

In 1738–39 the Persian conqueror Nadir Shah (1688–1747) invaded the Mughal empire, devastated its capital Delhi and raided the Imperial Mughal treasury. He and his army carted off the Mughal spoils, including paintings, manuscripts, calligraphies, jewels, and the famous Peacock Throne. Some of the paintings and calligraphies, including ours, were shortly to be incorporated into the St Petersburg Album.

The album is thought to have been assembled under the auspices of Mirza Khan Astarabadi, minister to Nadir Shah. There are dates ranging from AH 1160/1747–48 CE to AH 1172/1758–59 CE in the border decorations. The paintings are mainly Mughal (16th to 18th century), but there are also about 20 Persian paintings, mostly of the late 17th century. 'The Mughal paintings cover the full gamut of the usual themes and subjects of Mughal art, including standing portraits, princes hunting and conversing with holy men, and scenes derived from Christian iconography. Of especial note are the several extremely fine early- to mid-17th-century Mughal paintings, some of which were clearly intended to be included in copies of the *Jahangirnama* and *Padshahnama*'.[1] A few of these are now in the National Museum of Asian Art, Washington, DC.[2] 'The folios were all given new borders in Iran and almost all the folios are backed by panels of calligraphy by the Persian calligrapher Mir Imad (d. AH 1024/AD 1615) a follower of Mir Ali whose work, like that of the latter, was held in high esteem and avidly collected by both the Mughals and the Safavids'.[3]

A Folio from the St Petersburg Album
Our arresting painting presents two intriguing figures in an enigmatic situation. On the left of the scene, a nimbate, bare-chested European woman with tousled flaxen hair and an orange cap, presumably intended to evoke the Madonna, stares off to her right as she reclines directly on the ground of a verdant headland. A muscular forearm pokes out from the sleeve of her ample, loose-fitting blue robe and falls lightly on her right thigh. She completes the relaxed pose by resting a fully exposed left arm on a plump bolster laid diagonally across the arms and seat of a narrow, high-backed chair.

If this physically imposing and quasi-religious figure is derived from a particular but still unidentified allegorical or religious source in European art,[4] her counterpart, positioned a few paces away to the right, comes unmistakably from an otherworldly realm. She is a female *peri*, a kind of Islamic angel, identified as such by her oversized pair of wings, discreet breasts, and exotic headgear. She is, however, an unusual variant of these familiar celestial beings. Taller and more substantial in physique than the willowy *peri*s turning up frequently in Mughal, Deccani, and Persian art, and endowed with unusually smooth, aerodynamic wings, she wears not the tunics and full-length robes typical of such creatures but is nude save for a voluminous leafy skirt bunched round her waist. The remainder of her body is minimally sensuous, being sheathed subtly in a sort of feathery body suit that is tinged a mossy green. This *peri* also is uncharacteristically bookish, for she grips a heavy tome even as she offers a sprig of leaves to an attendant mongoose, an animal rarely seen in Mughal painting. Microscopic examination of the painting has recently revealed that the leafy tendril that wraps peculiarly round the *peri*'s neck and intrusively over her breasts was rendered with feathery touches of the brush, a sophisticated technique in keeping with the one used for the remainder of that figure. This observation revises initial reports that placed this feature in the Iranian phase of the work.

It is tempting to try to find in this improbable pairing of figures and their animal mascot some coherent European model such as the Annunciation, in which the angel Gabriel informs Mary that she will give birth to the son of God. Yet the figures' positions and iconography deviate from any known European model of that theme, with the woman here being neither fully dressed, nor seated upright, nor engrossed in prayer, and the *peri* not raising a hand in salutation. Moreover, the mongoose is obviously unknown in putative Renaissance models.

Instead, these two beguiling figures come together by mere chance of post-production design. They are, in fact, the subjects of two separate existing paintings being physically pieced together. Whilst this pictorial aggregation of two works related by a common interest in an exotic Europeanising theme exemplifies a phenomenon seen often in Mughal albums of the early 17th century, the fusion and expansion of these paintings took place in Iran in the mid-18th century.[5] At that time either an anonymous Persian compiler or an émigré Indian-trained artist such as Muhammad Riza-i Hindi was charged with incorporating specimens from a cache of Mughal paintings looted by Nadir Shah during the sack of Delhi in 1739 to form aesthetically pleasing compositions that fit the larger physical dimensions of the new album.[6] Straight-line crackling along the join between the paintings is irrefutable physical evidence of that process. Careful examination of the painting's surface reveals that the two works meet just to the right of the chair; the original painting on the left ends below at a horizontal line that proceeds leftward from that vertical join through the middle of the row of rocks exactly where they line the shore. Similarly, the upper edge of the *peri* painting passes just above the skein of birds directly above the *peri*'s proper left wing. The original painting terminates even more obviously below at a point between the two medium-sized boulders directly below the mongoose. Once the two Mughal paintings were attached to one another, the later artist did his best to obscure the abrupt joins between them as well as those to the newly created extensions above and below by overpainting them with some distracting details, most notably, the slender sapling alongside the chair. Slight changes in colouration within the landscape and sky – especially the murky sward below the woman's blue robe – are also clues to this additive process.

Stylistic differences within the painting are further signs of the later expansion. For example, the exaggeratedly precise foliate clusters of the tall tree rising behind the woman and the line of amorphous stippled trees along the horizon would be anomalous features in any early 17th-century Mughal painting. It is practically certain, too, that the Queen Anne-style chair is a later interpolation into the original Mughal painting; this addition would explain the incongruous mismatch between the scale of woman and that of the adjacent furniture.

The two original parts of this painting are attributed here to different masters: Abu'l Hasan (active 1600–30) and Manohar (active 1582–1624), two of the most esteemed Mughal artists of the late 16th and early 17th century.[7] Raised in the imperial painting workshop, each flourished under the tutelage of his father, Aqa Riza and Basawan, respectively, and worked for Prince Salim at his Allahabad court from 1600–04. Abu'l Hasan was nothing less than an outright prodigy, beginning his career in 1600 at age 13 with an extraordinary drawing made

after the figure of St John in Dürer's *Crucifixion*.[8] By far the closest comparisons to the reclining woman here are two other European-themed works still in the St Petersburg Album itself in Russia. One, signed by the young Abu'l Hasan and made explicitly for Prince (or Sultan) Salim, is painted directly over a monochromatic print of Timiditas, a female allegorical figure from the series *The Four Temperaments* by Johann Sadeler I after the Flemish artist Maarten de Vos.[9] Abu'l Hasan enlists the same colourising process in his image of Dialectica, another allegorical figure, which also has a monumental woman at its centre.[10] They share with the European woman in the present painting a richly opaque colouring with midtone – not black – shadows and black outlining within the folds of the voluminous robes, and a relatively dry surface; the latter differs from the softer, more fluid colour transitions in a nearly contemporary painting attributed to Manohar, *Madonna and Child with a white cat*, dated to about 1598.[11] Likewise, the facial features of this woman have the same sculpted, even masklike quality, particularly around the eyes, as Abu'l Hasan's other allegorical females. Finally, the muscles of the European original remain pronounced, a feature especially evident in the forearms and hands. In short, this figure belongs to Abu'l Hasan's teenage years when he made several close copies or colourised versions of European prints, an experience that enabled him to break radically with his father's more traditional Persianate style.[12]

The amiable *peri* is attributed here to Manohar, a prolific and well-documented artist. Several distinctive features of this gentle celestial creature support the attribution. *Peri*s assume many forms, but only Manohar renders them with their bodies covered in a thin layer of tiny feathers.[13] And the *peri*'s garb of an extraordinarily thick and naturalistic leafy lower garment has only one known counterpart, that worn by a cherubic figure in a painting attributed to Manohar, *Tobias and the angel*.[14] The gentle landscape, which features a soft, weathered side of a sloping area and a delicate rocky ridge near the mongoose, is consistent with the rendering of analogous passages in the terrain in an attributed illustration in the Walters Art Museum *Khamsa* of Amir Khusraw.[15] All this points to the work being produced at a time within a few years of Jahangir's accession in 1605.

On the reverse of the folio is a customary page of calligraphy, in this case, an arrangement of three specimens, two signed by the eminent Persian calligrapher 'Imad al-Hasani, whose full name was Mir 'Imad ibn Ibrahim al-Hasani al-Saifi al-Qazvini (AH 961/1553–54 CE – AH 1024/1615 CE). The top panel in this calligraphic composition features parts of a *munajat* (confidential talks of 'Ali) attributed to Khwaja 'Abdullah Ansari (d. AH 481/1088 CE):

... in fault I came to the threshold.
O God! You are not a tyrant about whom I say 'Beware!', nor do I have any right over you that I should say 'Bring me [such and such]!'. Just as you raised [us] up at the beginning, do not neglect [us] at the end, O Forgiver!
O God! ...

In the panel to the right are couplets from a *ghazal* of 'Abd al-Rahman Jami (d. AH 898/1492 CE) and the signature of 'Imad al-Hasani, the only named calligrapher with calligraphic exercises and specimens in the St Petersburg Album.

Praise be to God! For my beloved has returned from his travels,
Thanks to his arrival the light has been restored to my sight.
From the moisture of the eyes of those possessed of insight whose gaze is turned to the meadow,

Its (i.e., the meadow's) tulips and hyacinths are again fresh and succulent.
When that dear one departed, like tears, from my vision,
Through grief my liver was drowned in blood until he appeared again.
I tie on with my life the waistband of servitude to him, since out of kindness
He has returned prepared to shed my blood.
The poor, wretched, sinful 'Imad al-Hasani, may [God] forgive his sins ... 10 ...

In the calligraphic piece on the right side are a heading, an Arabic *qasida* attributed to Imam ʻAli, a signature, and a date:

[He] is the Mighty

If a man lives sixty years
Half of his life is erased by night,
Half of a half goes he doesn't know where
Thanks to his ignorance of right from left.
A third goes on hopes and desires
And striving for income and family,
And the remainder of life on sickness and old age
Which are by way of departure and passage.
Man's endeavour throughout his life is ignorance,
Such is his nature.

The poor, wretched, sinful ʻImad al-Hasani, may God forgive his sins and conceal his faults, in Dar al-Saltana Qazvin. AH *1016/1607–08* CE.

In the months of the year one thousand and sixteen.[16]

A notoriously sharp-tongued person, Mir ʻImad had nearly as many detractors as admirers. Yet his work, particularly in the *nastaʻliq* script, was held in such high regard that he was considered the equal of Mir ʻAli, another calligrapher whose work was avidly sought for Mughal albums. Mir ʻImad had a strikingly peripatetic life, bouncing between Qazvin, his place of birth, and Tabriz, Herat, the Hejaz, Aleppo, and Isfahan; he returned frequently to Qazvin.[17] The crowning achievement of his career came when he was made one of the personal calligraphers of Shah ʻAbbas II. Yet that honour also inculcated sins of arrogance in him and sparked ruinous professional jealousies amongst his peers, ultimately causing Mir ʻImad to fall out of favour with the shah, who at one point became so aggravated by the calligrapher that he wished aloud that someone would kill him. To the shah's belated chagrin, that nefarious deed was carried out on AH 30 Rajab 1024/25 August 1615 CE.

Border decorations on the calligraphic side of the folio invariably consist of small golden flowers in looping foliate frames on a deep blue field. This example is signed minutely at the intersection of the inner and lower borders by the illuminator and dated AH 1171/1757–58 CE; the formulaic signature reads 'written by the humblest of slaves, Muhammad Hadi'. Together with Muhammad Baqir and Muhammad Sadiq, Muhammad Hadi was responsible for most decorative borders in the St Petersburg Album and was solely responsible for those around calligraphic specimens.[18] His contributions to the Album itself range in date from AH 1160/1747 CE to AH 1172/1758–59 CE, but his known work has a still greater chronological span, that is, from AH 1148/1735–36 CE to AH 1230/1814 CE, remarkably long career corroborated by eyewitness accounts of an extremely aged artist by that name still living in Shiraz in 1821.[19]

Description of our folio by John Seyller
Translation and description of calligraphy by Will Kwiatkowski

1. Wright 2008, p. 474.
2. National Museum of Asian Art, Washington, DC. inv. S1986.421, F1931.20, F1942.16a, F1942.18a, F1942.17a, F1942.15a and F1994.4.
3. Wright 2008, p. 474.
4. The closest may be a print of Venus by Jan Saenredam, c. 1595, after Hendrick Goltzius, which shows a woman reclining in the right direction, but it is not identical (British Museum, inv. 1910,0208.18).
5. See, for example, ff. 6b and 13a of the Jahangir Album in the Staatsbibliothek Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin (Ms. A117), published in Beach 1992, figs. 59–60.
6. Marcus Fraser has suggested that Muhammad Riza-i Hindi, who apparently trained in the Mughal atelier in the 1720s and 1730s, probably arrived in Iran as early as 1742 and as late as 1747. There, he contributed to St Petersburg Album, especially in 'finishing' pages and adapting existing Mughal paintings to the album, then underway under the auspices of Mirza Khan Astarabadi (d. AH 1173/1759–60 CE), the chief minister of Nadir Shah. See Fraser 2021, pp. 178–229, especially pp. 182, 201-02.
7. For the most recent study of Abu'l Hasan's work and career, see Beach 2011, vol. 1, pp. 211-30. For a comprehensive study of Manohar, see Seyller 2011, vol. 1, pp. 135-52.
8. Ashmolean Museum inv. EA2978.2597, published in Beach 2011, fig. 8.
9. Russian Academy of Sciences, Institute of Oriental Manuscripts, St Petersburg, Ms. E-14, f. 44a, published in Beach 2011, fig. 10; and Kostiukovitch ed. 1996, pl. 60.
10. Russian Academy of Sciences, Institute of Oriental Manuscripts, St Petersburg, Ms. E-14, f. 46a, published in Kostiukovitch ed. 1996, pl. 61.
11. San Diego Museum of Art (inv. 1990.293).
12. See *Neptune, lord of the seas*, after an engraving by J. Sadler after a 1587 original by the Dutch artist Dirk Barendsz (1534-92). The signed painting is dated AH 1101, a transposed rendering of AH 1011/1602-03 CE, and is published in Goswamy 1999, no. 42; and *The Holy Family with St John the Baptist and angels*, c. 1600-04, British Museum inv. 2006,0422,0.1, published in Beach 2011, fig. 9.
13. See for example, an ascribed illustration on a detached folio from the 1597-98 Walters Art Museum *Khamsa* of Amir Khusraw (The Metropolitan Museum of Art inv. 13.228.33), published in Seyller 2001, pl. XXVII. An attributed *nim qalam* scene entitled *Holy Family with angels* with the same downy skin is published in Gahlin 1991, no. 16, pl. 12. Another work attributed here to Manohar has a similar *peri* with a feathery body and European-style hair; the work is published in Sotheby's, London, 26 April 1994, lot 2, and is now in a private collection.
14. The painting was offered at Sotheby's, London, 6 October 2015, lot 19.
15. Walters Art Museum (inv. W.624, f. 188a).
16. This description of the texts and the accompanying translations have been kindly provided by Will Kwiatkowski.
17. For the work of the calligrapher ʻImad al-Hasani, see Akimushkin 1996, pp. 40-46.
18. Akimushkin 1996, p. 26.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 27.

13

Khwaja Khizr with an Orb
Mughal, Delhi, possibly by Ganga Ram, c. 1740
Opaque pigments and gold on paper, gold background added later
Folio 23.7 × 14.2 cm; painting 16.2 × 9.2 cm

Provenance
Private collection, New York

Published
Beach, M.C., Koch, E., Thackston, W., *Kings of the World – The Padshahnama*, 1997, p. 205, fig. 125

This solemn portrait of a religious figure holding an orb depicts Khwaja Khizr (or Khidr), a legendary saint who is described but not named in the Qur'an (*Surah al-Kahf* 18:65-82). Known in Islamic lore by the name Khizr from the 10th century onward, and sometimes conflated with the prophet Ilyas, he came to be regarded as a wise figure who watched over travellers on the subcontinent's rivers and seas.[1] At the mystical and folk level, he was revered as an immortal spirit by both Hindus and Muslims. His cult was especially strong in Sindh, a region in southern Pakistan where the Indus River flows into the Arabian Sea. His defining attribute is his green robes, whose colour draws upon the general association of green with prophets in Islam,[2] alludes to Khizr's vivifying and immortalising experience with the fountain of the Water of Life, and evokes the Arabic word for green (*akhzar*), which has an etymological kinship with his name.[3]

Here, Khizr stands in the midst of an arching body of grey water on the back of a large fish, by all appearances a red-finned mahseer, a type of carp that inhabits the rivers of the Indian subcontinent. This unusual piscine attribute, of course, speaks to Khizr's role as guardian of the sea. In this instance the venerable saint is not exalted pictorially with a nimbus, though the expanse of solid gold apparently added after the painting was otherwise complete imparts an even stronger radiant effect to the figure and painting. Khizr extends his arms to proffer a golden orb, a symbol adapted by Mughal artists from European art in the early 17th century onward to convey the spiritual endorsement of imperial Mughal rule. The saint, shown without his customary fish, presents the same orb in two 17th-century Mughal depictions: once less dramatically in a lightly outlined mural shown directly below Emperor Jahangir in an audience scene, and again on the battlefield opposite the mounted Emperor Shahjahan.[4] In a third 17th-century example, Khizr is shown alone on a fish and tendering a rosary,[5] and in a fourth painting he attends an enthroned 'Azim al-Shan with a jewelled sword and dagger placed on a tray.[6]

Although the painting has previously been published as dating to c. 1640, several traits point instead to a mid-18th-century date when several Mughal artists routinely emulated or even copied the work of their historical predecessors. The painter applies irregular texturing marks across the saint's face, with particularly pronounced highlights on the nose, and articulates his snowy white beard with striated growth patterns. He also meticulously describes the physical deformity of the figure's cauliflower ear, an innovative feature added to the saint's imagery. More tellingly, the very nuanced volumetric and colouristic rendering of Khizr's blue-green outer garment, especially on the shoulder and upper arm, appears alongside the stiff, high-contrast manner used to execute the pleats of the inner green robe and sections of the sash draped over the saint's shoulder. This distinctive treatment of cloth, which is generally characteristic of 18th century painting, differs markedly from the soft modelling of the unstructured garment worn by Khizr in the c. 1656 *Padshahnama*, f. 205b, published in Beach et al 1997, pl. 51.

Although various permutations of such harder effects occur in the work of Mihr Chand (active mid 1740s–1786), it usually does so in conjunction with the artist's penchant for shadows, especially in his work of the 1770s.[7] Instead, the overall effect of the face, hands, and robes most closely resembles the best work of Mihr Chand's little-known father, Ganga Ram, whose oeuvre is documented by two signed paintings and dates to c. 1740, see fig. 1.[8]

Two ancillary details are worth noting. The first is that the rectangular strip of paper above the gold background is a separate piece of paper. The second is a pair of numbers scrawled informally on the reverse in Devanagari script. These are an inventory number 2 and an undated valuation of 20 [rupees].

JS

1. For this background, see Bhatia 2007, chapter 13.
2. Beach, Koch, and Thackston 1997, p. 205, n. 14.
3. Beach, Koch, and Thackston 1997, pp. 204–05, and n. 3.
4. *Padshahnama*, ff. 192a and 206a, published, respectively, in Beach, Koch, and Thackston 1997, pls. 37 and 41. Beach, p. 199, n. 12, and p. 204, notes that both figures were previously identified by Robert Skelton as Mu'in al-Din Chishti, a figure with whom Khwaja Khizr is often confused in landlocked depictions.
5. Victoria and Albert Museum inv. IS.48/12/A-1956.
6. Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Mss. Or. Smith-Lesouëf 249, pièce 6557.
7. For example, a portrait in the Polier album signed by Mihr Chand, son of Ganga Ram, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Museum für Islamische Kunst, inv. I. 4594, fol. 16b.
8. Rijksmuseum inv. RP-T-1993-173, published in Seyller 2025, fig. 13.19; and Chester Beatty Library inv. In 42.3, published in Leach 1995, no. 4.25. These and other works newly attributed to Ganga Ram are discussed in Seyller 2025, pp. 337-339, and notes 56–61.

Fig. 1 detail

Mughal Officer ascribed to Ganga Ram
(father of Mihr Chand) beneath feet c. 1740
21.2 × 10.8 cm
Published in Leach 1995, no. 4.23
and Roy 2009, fig. 77

14

The Gods and Sages Eulogise Krishna, Who is Unborn in Devaki's Womb
Folio from the 'Palam' *Bhagavata Purana*
North India, probably Delhi-Agra or Mewar region, attributed to Painter A, c. 1520–30
Opaque pigments on paper
16.6 × 23.1 cm

Inscribed on recto in Devanagrai script from left to right:
Vasudeva (Krishna's father), garbhastuti (praise of the womb), Devakī (Krishna's mother), Brahmā, Mahādeva (Shiva), Yandrah (sic Indra), Nārada (an important sage), and Sarvasvata (the rest of wise men and celestials).
Inscribed on verso with 19 lines of Sanskrit text of the *Bhagavata Purana* X.2:25-41

Provenance
Doris Wiener, New York
Spink & Son, 1983

Published
Spink & Son, Octagon 19, 1983, no. 9
Ehnbom, D., *An Analysis and Reconstruction of the Dispersed Bhagavata Purana from the Caurapancasika Group*, 1984, pp. 121–23

Vasudeva and Devaki, Krishna's mortal parents, sit together in a simple red chamber appointed with a narrow oval carpet and topped by a *bangala*-style thatch roof. Filling the area immediately below them is a much larger carpet with a visually compelling design – a mirror-reverse trefoil motif in red and green. Meanwhile, assorted gods approach to venerate Krishna, the couple's future divine offspring, who has yet to emerge from Devaki's womb; this action is identified by the yellow inscription between husband and wife, which reads *garbhastuti* ('hymn in praise of the embryo'). Leading the deities is Brahma, who is labelled above but also identified iconographically by his four bearded heads. Behind him is a slightly smaller Shiva, labelled as Mahadeva and endowed with his canonical attributes of a third eye, high matted locks, a snake garland, and a tiger skin pelt draped about his waist. The third member of the entourage is the crowned Indra, labelled *yandrah*, his arms marked physically with thousand eye-shaped forms, the sanitised version of a once-salacious stigma imposed upon him by a sage as part of a curse occasioned by a previous offence. Fourth in line and still shorter in stature is the divine sage Narada, predictably labelled, his hair gathered up in the rudimentary manner of an ascetic and his customary *vina* in hand. Rounding out the retinue are three unspecified deities, appropriately labelled *sabisvarah* ('all the gods') and given only generic hairstyles and gestures of devotion. Written in a different hand from the labels on the painting field is the number 13, which matches the numeration supplied in the lower right corner of the margin on the reverse, and which has been taken as evidence that this folio is the thirteenth in the original series. Written in black in the upper right border is the enigmatic phrase *Sa. Mitharama*, which occurs on many folios from the series and has generally been interpreted to be the name of one of two erstwhile owners.

The painting has been attributed to an artist whom Daniel Ehnbom has designated Painter A, the foremost of the ten painters identified in the series. He appears to have been responsible for the initial group of illustrations in the series. In this case, the painter creates a composition that cascades from the curving roof to the stepped arrangement of the abstract red and green rectangular blocks behind the two groups of worshippers. He further enhances this design through his use of a progressively smaller figure scale for Vasudeva and Devaki and the assembled gods, a black sky animated by an undulating band of white, and a lone tree with an ovoid foliate mass.

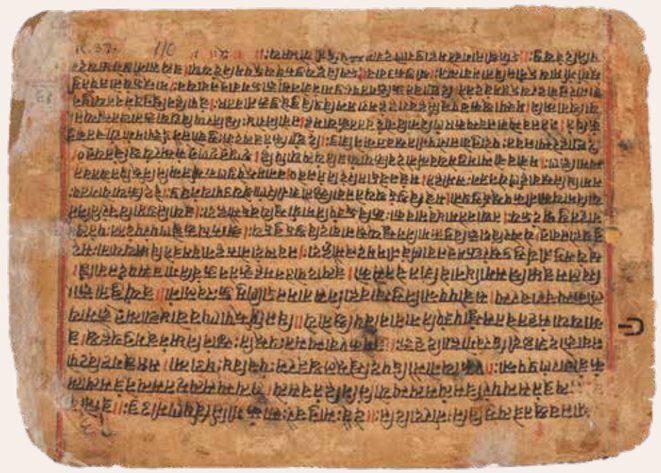
This painting belongs to a renowned *Bhagavata Purana* series that is a landmark in the history of early Indian painting. Widely known as the 'Palam' *Bhagavata* after a site near Delhi mentioned in a closely related style and distinguished by the large, full-page

compositions, the series is lauded as the most creative expression of a north Indian style known as the *Chaurapanchasika* style, a nomenclature that comes from the eponymous series of paintings now in the Lalbhai Dalpatbhai Museum in Ahmedabad, and is anchored regionally and chronologically by the *Aranyaka Parva* painted in a similar style at Kacchauva in 1516, and the *Mahapurana* painted in 1540 at Palam, near Delhi.[1] Moreover, both the reference to Palam in the *Mahapurana* manuscript and the rumored mention of Palam on one of the *Bhagavata* pages have led some scholars to refer to this series as the 'Palam' *Bhagavata*, a misnomer current in much academic literature.[2] While the provenance and date of this series have been argued for decades, present scholarly thought has favoured the Delhi-Agra area, alternatively proposing the Vaishnava centre of Mathura or Chitor, the capital of the Maharanas of Mewar, as logical places of production.[3] Most scholars date the series between 1520 and 1540.[4]

This *Bhagavata Purana* series is remarkable for the impressive scope and dense rate of illustration, with estimates of the number of illustrations ranging from 200 to 360 paintings, a total based primarily on internal painting numbers. As more illustrations of this series have emerged, a still greater total becomes more likely. The series has become widely dispersed, with folios now in most museums with major holdings of Indian paintings, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Victoria and Albert Museum, the British Museum, the Museum Rietberg, and the Jagdish and Kamla Mittal Museum of Indian Art, Hyderabad.

JS

1. Three paintings now in the Philadelphia Museum of Art are published by Seyller 2001, nos. 7–9. An overview of the series and representative selection of eight pages now in the Museum Rietberg are published in Seitz 2022, pp. 101-123, who in a still contrarian view assigns the series to the court of Gwalior and dates it to c. 1460-80. Pages from the *Aranyaka Parvan* and *Mahapurana* are reproduced as figs. 24-25 in the same publication. The most comprehensive published study of the *Bhagavata Purana* is in Ehnbom 2011, pp. 77-88.
2. Khandalavala and Mittal 1974, p. 29, state that one painting bore the inscription '*Palam nagar madhye*', which is translated as 'in the city of Palam'. There is no known photographic documentation of this page.
3. Topsfield 2002, ch. 2.
4. Seitz 2022, p. 125, includes a convenient chart of various scholarly opinions on these matters.



15

The Mughal Emperor Bahadur Shah I Seated at a Balcony
Rajasthan, Sawar, c. 1710
Opaque pigments and gold on paper
30.7 × 25.7 cm

Inscribed on the verso in Devanagari: *Portrait of Pateshah (i.e., Padshah) Bahadur Shah*

This Rajasthani portrait of a bejewelled ruler seated on a balcony with a nosegay in hand depicts the Mughal emperor Bahadur Shah I, sometimes known as Shah ʻAlam. Born Muhammad Muʻazzam (1643–1712), the prince, the second son of Emperor ʻAlamgir (r. 1658–1707), became the eighth Mughal emperor upon the demise of his elderly father, whose long rule had survived numerous rash attempts by various offspring – including Muʻazzam himself – to supplant him. Having outmanoeuvred rival claimants to the throne, Bahadur Shah managed to rule just five years (1707–1712). During his brief reign, he reimposed Mughal sovereignty over several Rajput states – notably Jodhpur, Amber, and Udaipur – that had asserted their independence in the immediate aftermath of ʻAlamgir's death. He also personally converted to Shi'a Islam.

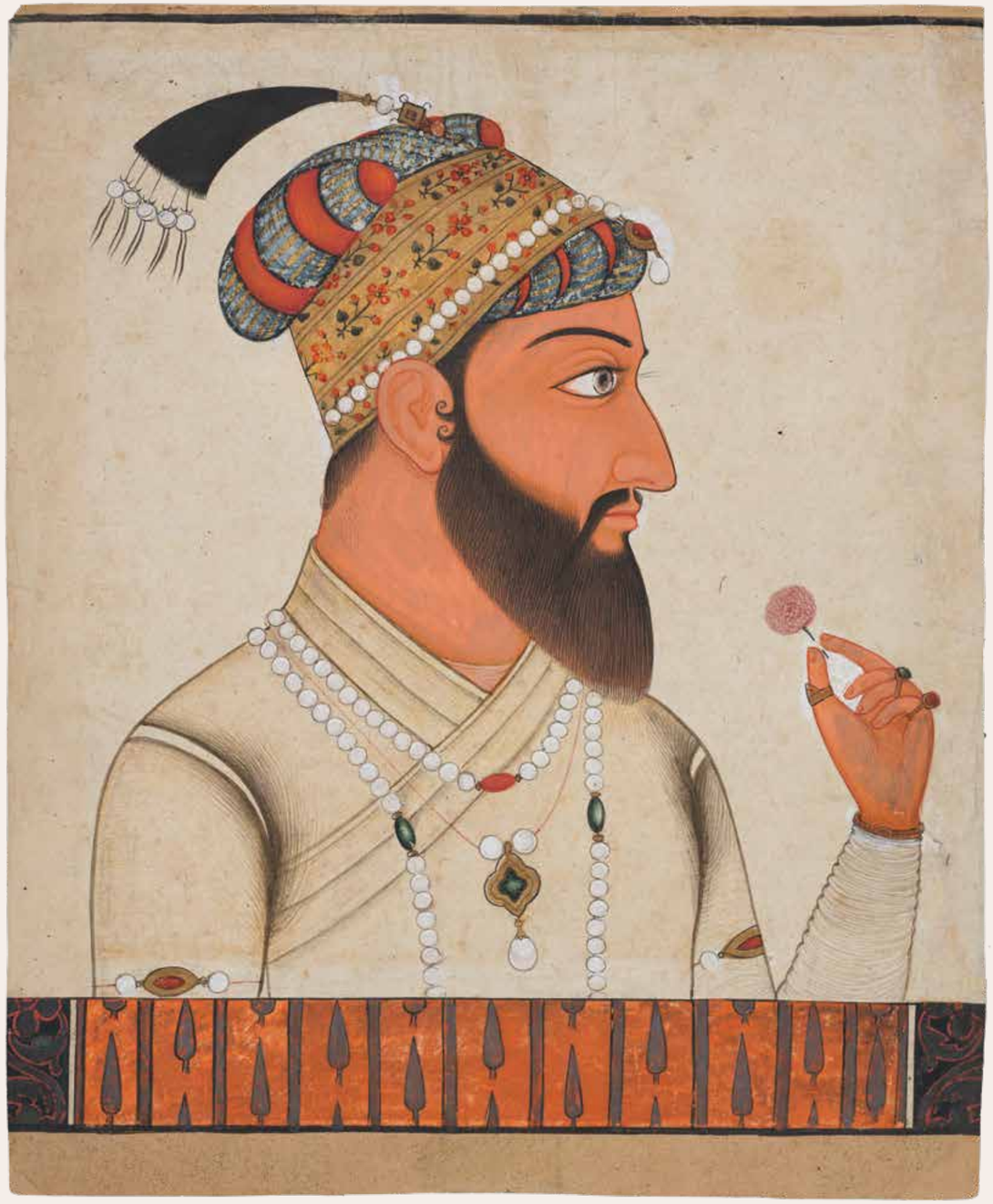
Despite the inevitable political tension between the Mughal crown and Rajput feudal states, it was not uncommon for Rajput rulers to direct their artists to offer nominal pictorial gestures of fealty to the Mughal emperor. Two contemporary Mewari formulations, for example, show the white-bearded Emperor Bahadur Shah in grander settings, once seated beneath a canopy with four of his sons, and another time at the head of a royal skiff visiting a Hindu holy man in an expansive environment imaginatively filled discrete scenes of Vishnu's incarnations.[1]

This example comes from Sawar, a small *thikana* in Ajmer district in south-central Rajasthan that was created by Emperor Shahjahan (r. 1627–1658) and gifted to Gokul Das (1585-1650) as a reward for his service.[2] Here, the Sisodia Rajput homage to the Mughal overlord is more direct. It takes the form of a conventional bust-length *jharoka* portrait that displays the large and lofty subject seated behind a low balcony wall overhung with a fancy textile with a repeating cypress-tree design. Though the emperor was at least 65 years old at the time, he is syncophantically endowed with all the vigour and coiffed black beard of an idealised ruler less than half that age. His complexion is ruddy, his skin taut. His eyes, which have a golden iris, a schematic eye socket, and conspicuously delicate eyelashes, are fixed in a majestically aloof gaze.

Bahadur Shah's plain *jama* is ivory-coloured and tight-fitting, with only narrow daubs of dark and fragrant musk around the armpits providing a modicum of volume. Thanks in part to the painting's uncoloured background, a trait seen often in Sawar painting, a compelling sense of flat abstract shapes pervades the composition, so much so that one becomes sensitised to even discreet deviations from it, as, for example, in passages where the artist hints at the roundness of the neatly outlined pearls of the necklace and turban by applying curling strokes of paint in two shades of white with differing degrees of opacity. Likewise, the painter deftly complements the pale and understated palette of the work with judicious bursts of colour. The most forceful of these is the emperor's luxurious turban that juxtaposes the colour and directional flow of the silver and red turban cloth with the wide golden turban band adorned with a strand of pearls. The whole ensemble is topped off by a dramatic black aigrette.

JS

1. National Museum of Asian Art (inv. F1986.13) and Christie's, London, 26 April 2018, lot 137.
2. For the seminal study of painting at Sawar, see Pasricha 1982, pp 257–69, no. 3.



16

Brahma Pays Homage to Krishna
Folio 22 from a Dispersed
Bhagavata Purana
Bikaner, attributed to Ruknuddin, c. 1690–95
Opaque pigments and gold on paper
Folio 30 × 38 cm; painting 22.1 × 30.3 cm

Provenance
Doris Wiener, New York, 1974

The narrative conciseness, compositional balance, exquisite detailing, and evocative palette and sky of this handsome painting combine to create one of the strongest illustrations from a well-known dispersed *Bhagavata Purana* series from Bikaner. The subject is identified in two Rajasthani inscriptions written in Devanagari on the reverse of the folio. The upper one, truncated slightly by a preceding erasure, appears on a separate strip of paper joined to the body of the folio. The line refers to the 13th and 14th chapters of Book 10 of the *Bhagavata Purana* in which Brahma, an important deity in the Hindu pantheon, struggles to reconcile his conscious perception of the world as the 'real world' with what this part of the text asserts: that that perception is actually an illusion (*maya*) and that what he perceives is actually Krishna, the One, the Universal Soul.[1]

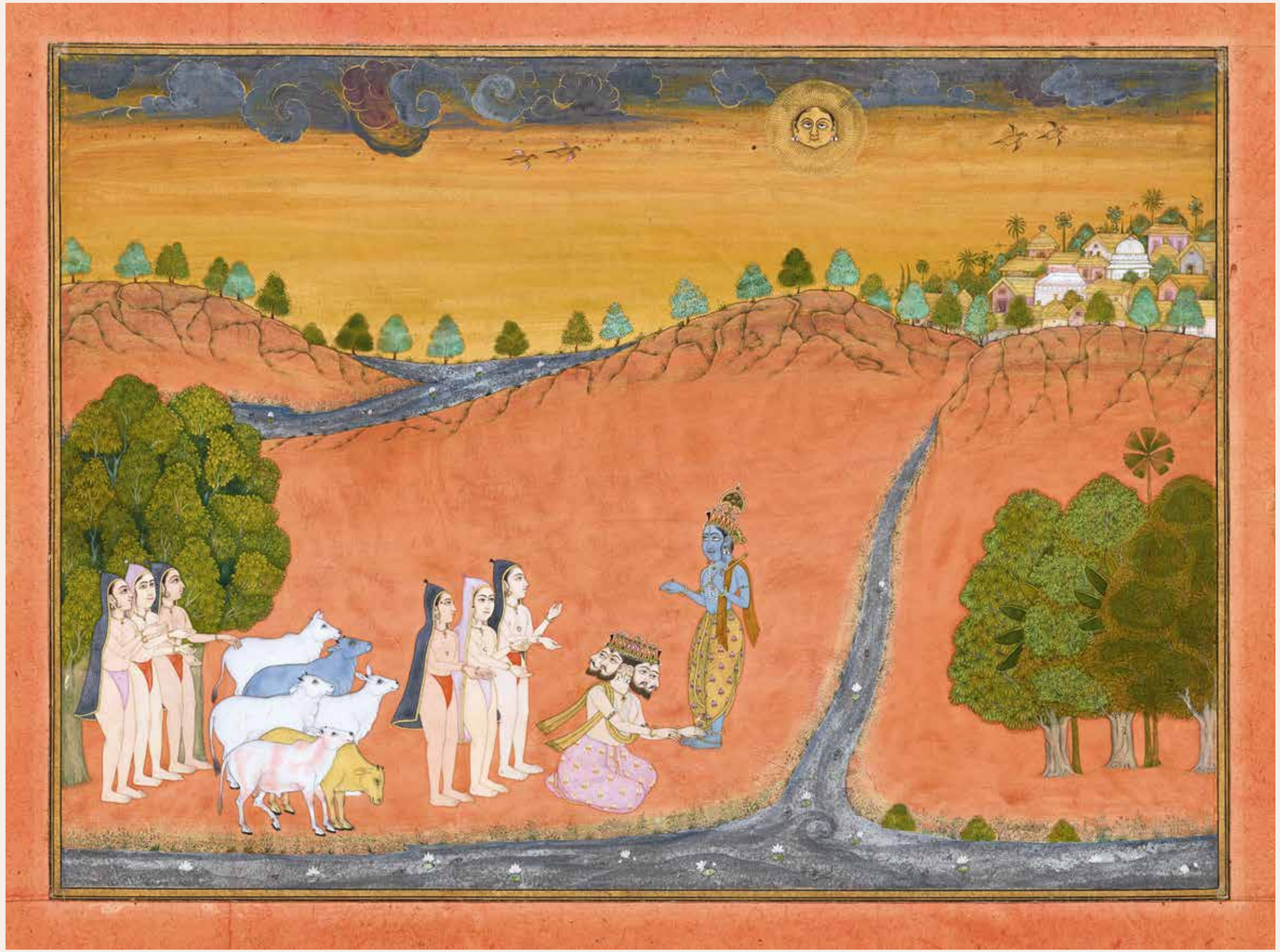
The lower of the two inscriptions reads:

> *Brahmaji was astonished upon seeing the cowherds and calves in Brindavan. Recognising the cowherds and calves (manifestations of the Creator), weeping, Brahma grasped the anklet of the Lord. He brought [himself] into the presence of the manifest Lord and touched his feet.*[2]

Beneath the inscription are the numerals 57 in red and 22 (the folio number) in black; the stamp of the Maharaja of Bikaner along with inventory information of 1963; and the signature of Khet Singh, the royal librarian of Bikaner.

Brahma's acknowledgement of Krishna's limitless existence is the culmination of a series of tests that he devises to assess Krishna's power. In this final ruse, Brahma uses magic to spirit away a group of cowherds and their cattle and hide them in a cave near Brindavan. When Krishna notices that his *gopa* companions have gone missing, the omniscient deity instantly discerns Brahma's stratagem and negates it by making a duplicate set of cowherds and calves who are even more endearing than before. Krishna's display of supremacy leaves Brahma

Fig. 1
Krishna killing Dhenuka, the ass-demon – from a dispersed *Bhagavata Purana*
Formerly in the Khajanchi collection



flabbergasted and humbled, and restoring the abducted cowherds and kine to their families, he immediately prostrates himself before the blue-skinned Lord.

The artist reduces this episodic narrative to its conclusion: the four-headed, crowned Brahma kneeling before the lithe central figure of Krishna and touching his feet in a gesture of obeisance. Wearing his own distinctive peacock-feather-plumed *mukuta* (crown) and a golden *dhoti* decorated with floral motifs, Krishna holds his ubiquitous flute in one hand and extends the other in a gesture of benediction. Opposite him stand the cowherds, each outfitted in only a basic loincloth and rudimentary rain cloak. Between two trios of human onlookers, each with the middle figure seen in three-quarter view, is a corresponding cluster of six calves, whose staggered positions and subtly varied colouring make for a secondary vertical rhythm that complements the primary horizontal one. Together, they and the two divine protagonists form the lowermost of the composition's three registers, which is bracketed at either end by a grove of trees with dense and inventively varied foliate clusters. It is also split diagonally by a narrow, lotus-studded stream that flows down from a high ridge and swirls outward in both directions to define the lower edge of the painting.

Meanwhile, the artist clears ample space behind the relatively small-scale figures, an astute design decision that allows the lovely salmon colour of the broad zone behind them to become an assertive element in the painting. Yet he tempers the flatness of that zone both by bounding the river with strips of faintly sketched but intricate vegetation and by topping the undulating ridge with a fringelike network of square-topped crevices and a series of cheery, uniformly sized trees rendered in various shades of green. There is no indication of the cave in which the original group of cowherds was hidden. Instead, nestled in the upper right is the village of Brindavan, a settlement consisting mostly of simple thatched-roof dwellings but at least one larger whitewashed domed structure. The golden, sunset-streaked sky is at once luminous and brooding, and is punctuated dramatically by a radiant, anthropomorphic sun, two pairs of swooping birds, several skeins of minute birds, and a dark band of richly coloured pinwheeling clouds.

Scholarly consensus holds that this widely dispersed *Bhagavata Purana* series was produced in fits and starts, probably over a period of more than 50 years, a view first formulated by Hermann Goetz in 1950, who studied the series before its dispersal from the royal Bikaner collection.[3] Goetz further maintained that the project began in Bikaner under Maharaja Anup Singh (r. 1669-98) but lapsed after only a few illustrations were completed. That early group from the late 17th century was estimated by Terence McInerney to comprise approximately 15 paintings – including this one – which are rightly the most prized illustrations from the series.[4] Goetz disparages the style in which work resumed under Maharaja Sujan Singh (r. 1700–35) as pretty and overly ornamented, and contends that by 1735 hardly a quarter of the estimated 87 paintings of the series had been executed.[5] He also posits that the remainder were done by subsequent generations of artists.[6]

Building on this scenario of an unconventionally long production period is the analysis of Pramod Chandra, who refers to his unpublished catalogue of paintings in the Birla Academy of Art and Culture in his mention of the discovery of two ascribed and one firmly attributed painting in the *Bhagavata Purana* series; these identify three known Bikaneri artists – Kayam (or Qayam); Abu, son of Kayam; and Ahmad, son of Murad – whose other work bears dates ranging from 1722 to 1749 and 1752.[7] Chandra breaks with other scholars by taking this new evidence to move up the date of the entire series, which he estimates to comprise more than 100 paintings, from c. 1690-1750 to c. 1725-50, an argument rejected here because of the obviously early date of the first group.[8] He does, however, suggest that some paintings may have been replacements. We emend this notion to propose that what has been widely regarded as one long-duration *Bhagavata* series made at Bikaner is actually two distinct series, a possibility raised by a preliminary reconstruction of the series and apparently two sets of folio numbers. One relevant anomaly that supports this hypothesis is the existence of another scene that depicts Krishna and five *gopa*s trailing a herd of cattle back towards Brindavan in one register and the cave-dwelling Brahma overlooking the cows and their stupefied herders in another.[9] This fine illustration, which is done in a fussier and later style than the present one, should logically precede it in the series, but is numbered 51, or well after the folio number (22) used here. Another is the preservation of two scenes of Krishna slaying Bakasura, the crane demon,

Fig. 2
Radha comes to Krishna with her vina
Bikaner, Ruknuddin, 1685
San Diego Museum of Art (inv. 1990.786)

with practically identical imagery in two different styles.[10] Suffice to say, the many illustrations of these linked *Bhagavata Purana* series were not produced in simple narrative order.

The painter responsible for this highly sophisticated work is Ruknuddin, a highly accomplished and prolific master active at the court of Bikaner from 1664 to 1697. He headed the large royal workshop there 1680–97, a role whose supervisory duties entailed collaborating with junior artists on occasion.[11] This new and somewhat surprising attribution to Ruknuddin is bolstered by two other illustrations from the first phase of the *Bhagavata* project that are unmistakably by the same artist. The first is an unpublished scene of Krishna killing Dhenuka, the ass-demon, formerly in the Khajanchi collection (fig. 1). The second depicts Krishna slaying Bakasura.[12] Apart from their fine detailing, the three paintings have many elements in common, including a figure scale considerably larger than those used in the second and third phases of the *Bhagavata* series, the elegant treatment of the ridge rim, the use of a streaky golden sky to create a beautifully expressive atmosphere, and the bold band of coiled clouds. These connections surpass the many nominal similarities that exist from the two related *Bhagavata Purana* series (or one phase of the series to another).

Seen together, the three works exhibit a strong resemblance to two paintings ascribed to Ruknuddin from a large *Rasikapriya* series dated 1685, particularly in the refined draughtsmanship of the village dwellings and Krishna's *dhoti*, the soft contours of the *gopas*' bodies and faces, the slightly mannered appearance of the visages in three-quarter view, and the nuanced blending of colours (fig. 2).[13] They also represent Ruknuddin's most ambitious efforts in the 1690s, the last decade of his long career.

JS

1. Richard Cohen, private communication.
2. Richard Cohen, private communication.
3. Goetz 1950, pp. 112–113. The most recent list of dispersed pages appears in Sotheby's, New York, 20 March 2025, lot 55. Amongst the many institutions and collections with pages are the National Museum of India, the Bharat Kala Bhavan, the Birla Academy of Art and Culture, the Goenka Collection, the Royal Library, Windsor, the British Museum, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and the National Museum of Asian Art, Washington, D.C.
4. McInerney 2016, no. 25, p. 100.
5. Goetz 1950, p. 113.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 113.
7. Chandra 2006, nos. 97–98. Another late painting of the *Bhagavata* series, *Krishna Swallowing the Forest Fire*, now in a private collection, is also ascribed to Ustad Abu, son of Kayam and numbered 26.
8. Chandra 2006, p. 143.
9. Polsky collection, published in Topsfield 2004, no. 60.
10. McInerney, Kossak, and Haidar 2016, no. 25; and Christie's, New York, 10 November 2022, lot 193.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 96, summarising the research of Naval Krishna.
12. In the Kronos collection and published in McInerney, Kossak, and Haidar 2016, no. 25.
13. San Diego Museum of Art (inv. 1990.786 and 1990.787, the latter is published in Hurel and Okada 2002, no. 32).

17

Four Studies of Elephants
Kota, early 19th century
Ink on paper
35.2 × 50 cm

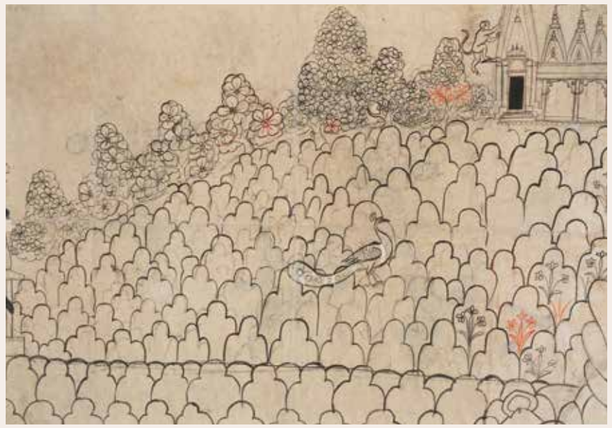
Verso
A peacock perched on a hillside whilst a monkey clambers up a temple.

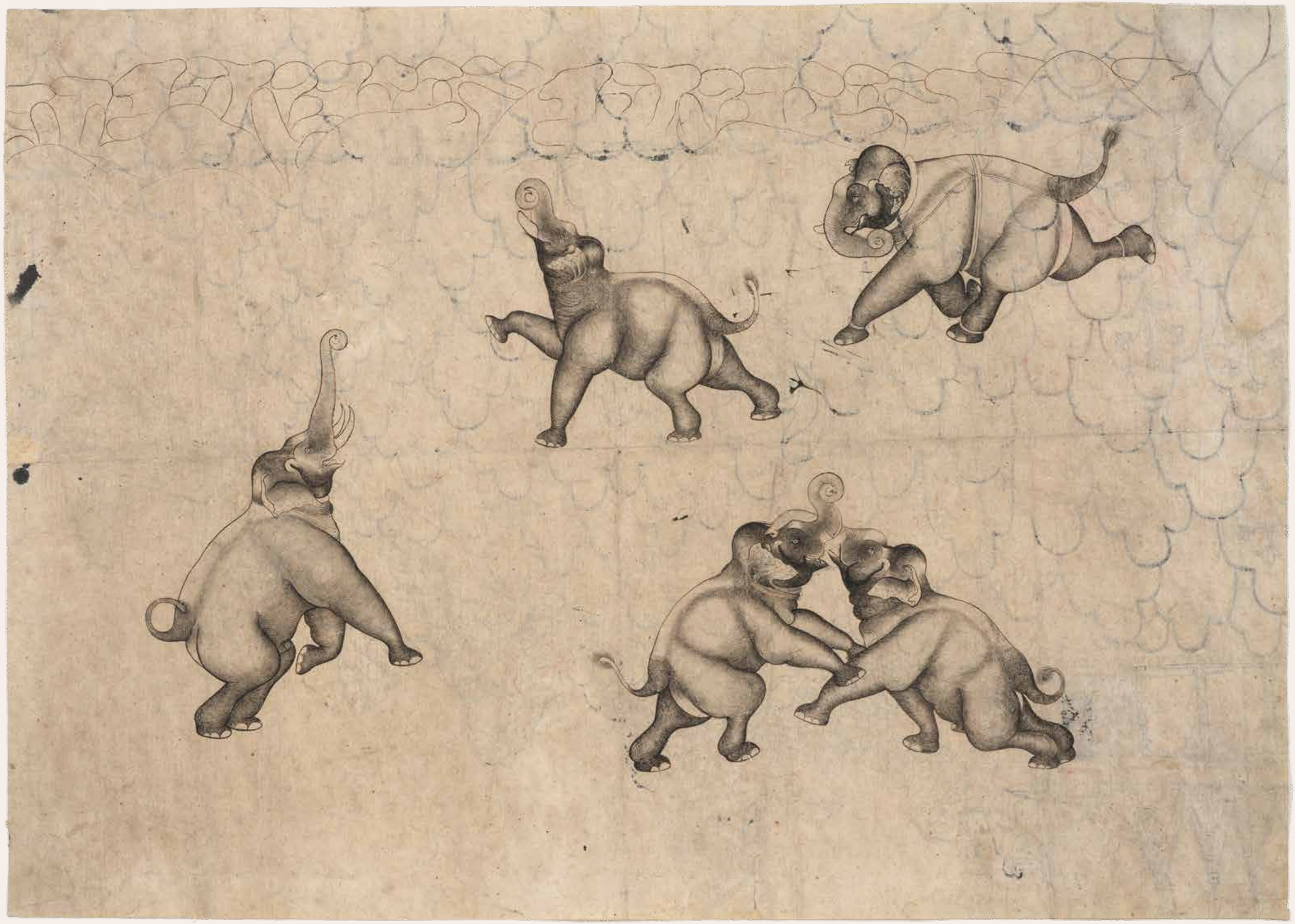
Provenance
Peter Adler, London

This sheet of four lively studies of male elephants in various poses and activities is a late expression of Kota artists' special and enduring fascination with this majestic creature. The drawing is unlike the usual collection of rapidly executed, graphically rhythmic sketches common in Kota painting. Rather, the artist works up each of the individual studies into solid, thoroughly modelled versions of motifs to be incorporated into later compositions. He makes a nod to their collective appearance on the sheet by keeping their scale consistent and relatively small and leaves ample space amongst them. He has placed a row of kidney-shaped rocks at the top of the page, to suggest the crest of a rocky hillside, a familiar topographical element in Kota painting.

On the verso is a much different kind of preliminary sketch. Here, a peacock is perched on a hillside that consists of a repeated pattern of flat and schematic trilobed rocks, several of which enclose a single flower. A row of trees along the arching ridge culminates in a small temple, where a monkey playfully clambers up its truncated tower. The edge of another temple in the lower left indicates that the sheet was cropped a bit at some stage.

JS





18–21

Four Folios from the 'Shangri' *Ramayana*

The *Ramayana* is one of the two great Sanskrit epics, the other being the *Mahabharata*. The *Ramayana* is attributed to the ancient sage Valmiki and tells the story of Rama, the seventh avatar of Vishnu, incarnated to save the world from the demon that is Ravana. Born in the household of King Dasaratha of Ayodhya along with three brothers who are also partial avatars of Vishnu, Rama was especially favoured by the gods and beloved by men. His stepmother contrived his banishment for 14 years in order to put her own son on the throne, and Rama, the incarnation of *dharma* or duty, dutifully obeyed his parents and departed to the forest with his wife Sita and brother Lakshmana. After many years passed in exile, the surpassing beauty of Sita came to the notice of Ravana, the demon king of Lanka, and he contrived to abduct her. Rama made allies with the monkeys and the bears to attack Lanka and recover Sita and having slain Ravana and his brother Kumbhakarna, he returned triumphantly to Ayodhya to usher in a reign of peace and prosperity for all mankind.

Our four folios come from the so-called 'Shangri' *Ramayana*. This series is considered to be one of the outstanding early Pahari pictorial sets, and yet also remains one of the most puzzling. W.G. Archer was the first to describe this series in total in 1973, calling them the 'Shangri' *Ramayana* because a titular ruler of the small principality of Shangri owned a large section of the series and claimed to have inherited the paintings that had been in his family for generations. The rulers of Shangri are from a branch of the royal family of the larger erstwhile kingdom of Kulu. According to Archer, two hundred and seventy fully painted folios were in the Shangri royal collection until 1962. He divided the series into four parts (Styles I to IV) on the basis of their style, but recent research by Sonya Rhie Mace, Cleveland Museum of Art, shows that there were many more paintings in the series and more than four styles. Multiple workshops contributed to its production.

Archer considered his Styles I and II to date from the last decades of the 17th century. They are 'styles of wild and exhilarating exoticism, where people are portrayed with strange wedge-shaped heads, thick necks and staring eyes, clothed in barbaric spendour and placed against conceptual backgrounds in which little regard is given to spatial consistency' (Losty 2017, p. 88). Most of the known paintings from Style I have been attributed to the First Bahu Master (active c. 1680–1695) at Bahu (Jammu or Kulu) and appear to illustrate episodes from the Ayodhya Kanda of the 'Shangri' *Ramayana*' (Kossak 2011, pp. 491–500).

We are indebted to Sonya Rhie Mace for identifying all our folios. Her exhibition *Epic of the Northwest Himalayas: Pahari Paintings from the 'Shangri' Ramayana* will be on view at the Cleveland Museum of Art from 19 April to 9 August 2026.

18

Dasaratha Listens Attentively
Folio from the 'Shangri' *Ramayana*, Style I
Bahu (Jammu or Kulu), c. 1680–1700
Opaque pigments and gold on paper
21.5 × 30.5 cm, including red border

Provenance
Carol Summers collection (1925-2016), acquired in 1971

This painting ascribed to the rare style I is from Book 2 (*Ayodhya Kāṇḍa*) chapter 31, approximately folio 40. In the preceding scene king Dasaratha faints, circa folio 39 (Kossak 2011, fig. 4, Portland Museum of Art, inv. 70.13). In our painting he has regained consciousness, and the scene depicts the two protagonists, Rama and Lakshmana, accompanied by the charioteer in white, addressing king Dasaratha. It is the charioteer who had urged Dasaratha to hear what Rama and Lakshmana had to say. Rama and Lakshmana speak to him at length about how they are happy to go into exile in the forest and Dasaratha tries to send them with comforts of the palace, but they refuse.

The layout of our folio is both startling and aesthetically pleasing. Consisting of three horizontal registers, the four seated figures are depicted in a line at the top of the painting, while the king's two standing attendants straddle the top and middle register. A balustrade separates the middle from the bottom register where diagonal steps lead up onto the terrace. Blocks of strong colours, a wide variety of decorative motifs, combined with the main action at the very top, make for a dramatic composition.

Rhie Mace relates the style of our painting to a folio from this series in the British Museum (Ahluwalia 2008, no 87, p. 132 and 133), depicting the departure of Rama, Sita and Lakshmana.

The three following folios (cats. 19-21) are ascribed to Style III and depict scenes from Book 4 (*Kiṣkindhā Kāṇḍa*). They stand out for their stark composition (cat. 20), their wild colour combination and their animistic qualities.

19

Sugriva Brings Rama, Lakshmana, and his Monkey Allies to the Gates of Kishkindha
Folio from the 'Shangri' *Ramayana*, Style III
Bahu (Jammu or Kulu), c. 1700-10
Opaque pigments and gold on paper
22 × 35.3 cm, including red border

Inscribed on verso in Devanagari or Takri, in upper left corner: *35*
In Devanagari: *25*

Provenance
Private collection, Germany
Mandi Royal Library, until 1969

Sugriva needs Rama to shoot his brother Vali; he did not do so previously, because, in a fight, he is unable to tell one brother apart from another. Rama asked Lakshmana to make a garland of elephant flowers for Sugriva to wear, so he can identify who is who.

> *'Now, like the newly risen sun, Sugriva, who moved like a proud lion, looked at Rama, skillful in action, and spoke these words: 'We have reached Vali's city Kishkindha, with its gateway of pure gold, surrounded by a monkey snare and bristling with banners and engines of war. Just as the proper season arrives to make the vine bear fruit, so should you, warrior, make good at once your earlier promise to kill Vali.'*
>
> *'Addressed in this way by Sugriva, righteous Raghava, destroyer of his enemies, then said these words to Sugriva: 'Wearing those flowers called gajapuṣpī (elephant blossoms), you are now easy to recognize: you look like some extraordinary sun up in the heavens within a garland of stars. By losing a single arrow in battle, monkey, I shall today deliver you from fear and from Vali's enmity. Just show me that enemy in the guise of a brother, Sugriva.'*
> *Kiṣkindhā Kāṇḍa*, Sarga 14, 4–9 (Goldman and Goldman 2021, p. 366)

20

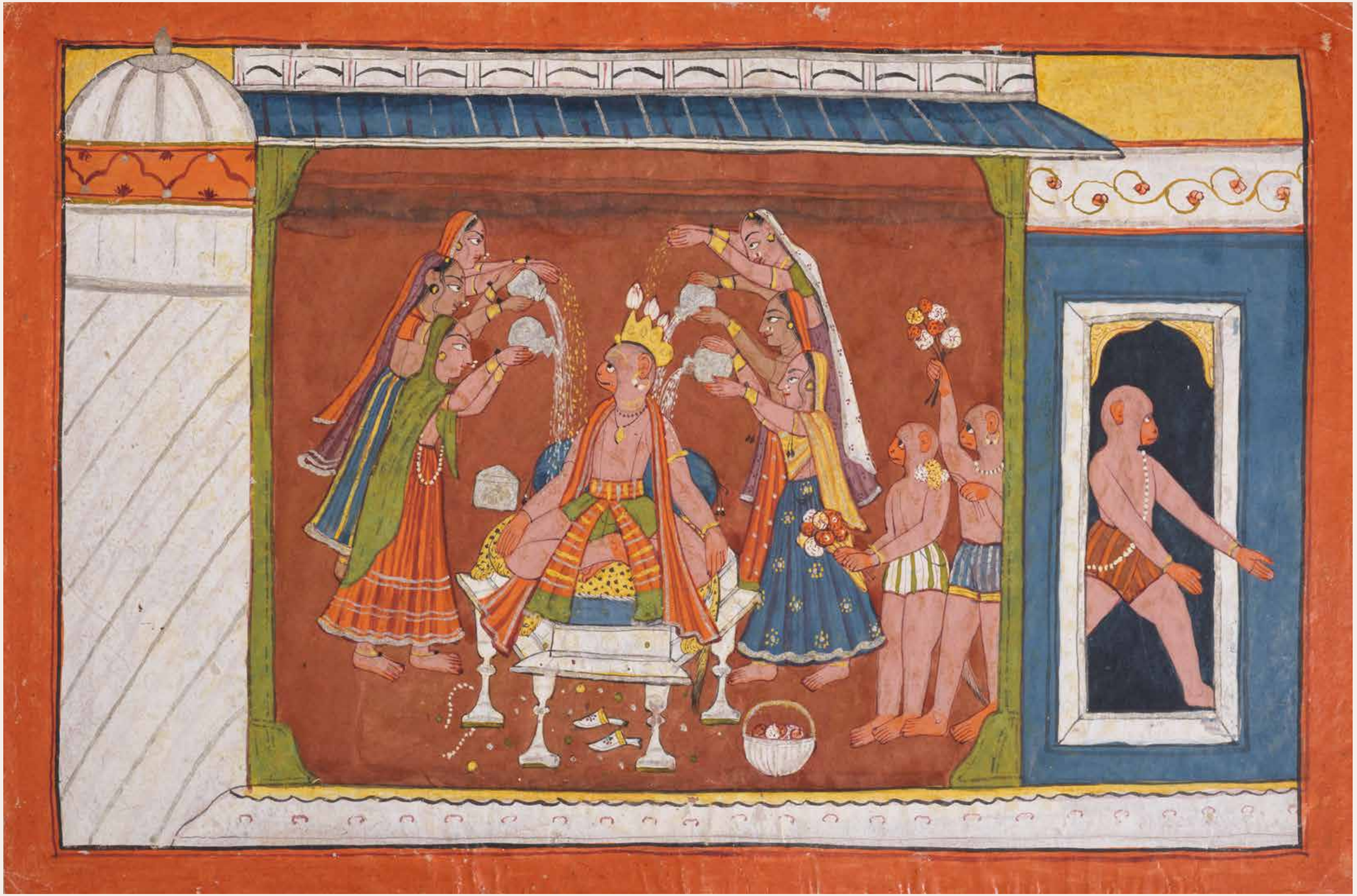
Lustration of Sugriva
Folio 105 from the 'Shangri' *Ramayana*, Style III
Bahu (Jammu or Kulu), c. 1700–10
Opaque pigments and gold on paper
20.5 × 31.7 cm, including red/orange border

Inscribed on verso in Devanagari: *105 kiṣkiṃdhā*
In Takri: *105*

Provenance
Private collection, Germany
Mandi Royal Library, until 1969

Vali has died, having been shot by Rama, and Sugriva is to be crowned the new king.

> *'After addressing all his subjects and making them rise, Sugriva, vigorous and mighty, entered the lovely women's quarters, which had been his brother's. When he had gone in there and come out again, his friends consecrated Sugriva, bull among monkeys, as the immortals consecrated thousand-eyed Indra. They brought him the gold-adorned , white umbrella and the two gold-handled white yak-tail fly whisks, which confer glory, as well as all kinds of jewels and every kind of seed and herb, shoots and blossoms of succulent trees, white garments, white unguent, and very fragrant garlands of flowers that grow on dry ground and in water. And they also brought the finest sandalwood and many kinds of fragrant things, and gold-colored unhusked grain, priyaṅgu honey and clarified butter, curds, a tiger skin, and boar-skin sandals. And sixteen beautiful, joyous maidens came there bringing yellow and red unguents.'*
> *Kiṣkindhā Kāṇḍa*, Sarga 25, 19–25 (Goldman and Goldman 2021, p. 380)



21

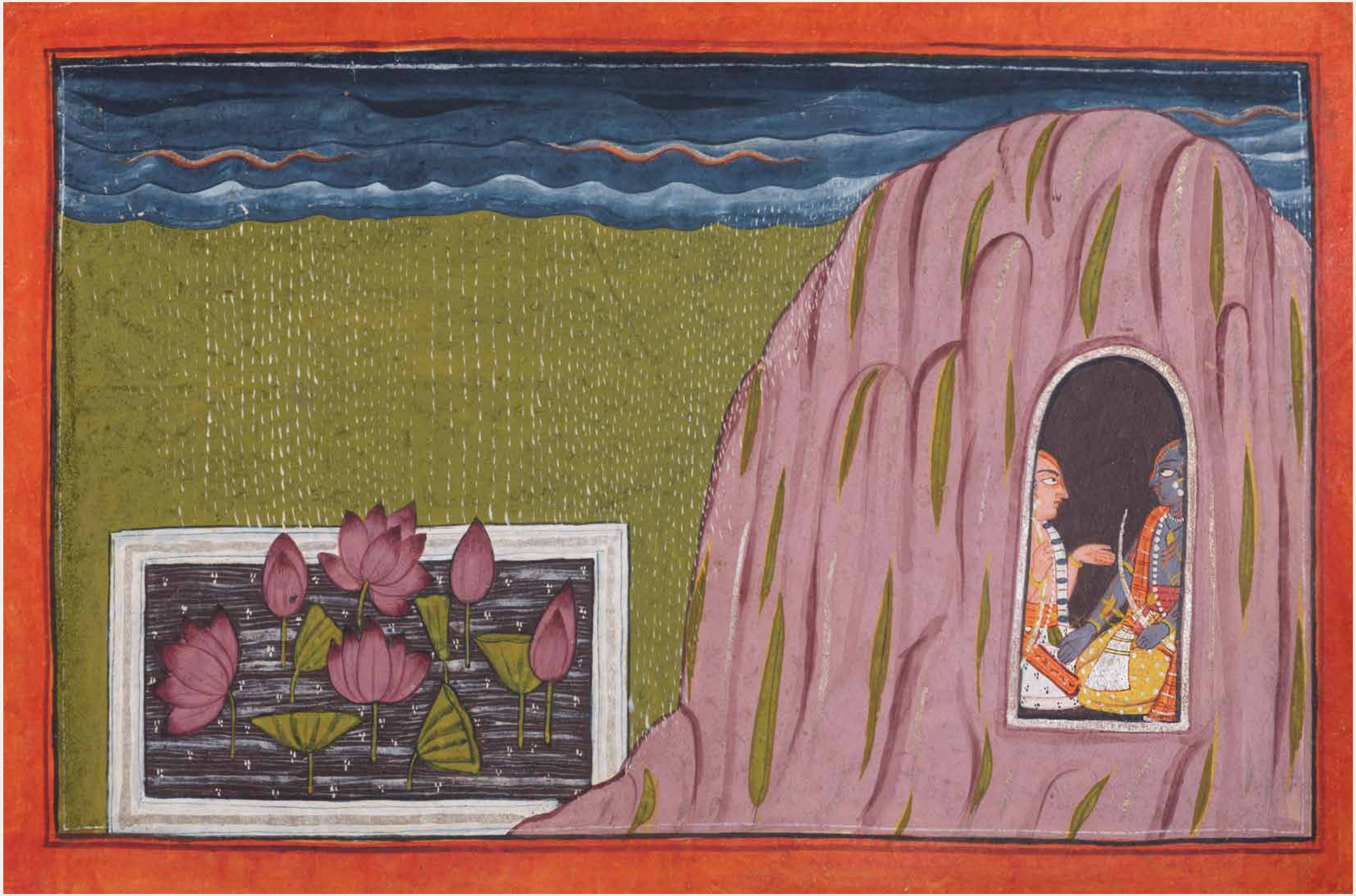
Rama and Lakshmana Spend the Monsoon in a Cave on Mount Prasravana
Folio 115 from the 'Shangri' *Ramayana*, Style III
Bahu (Jammu or Kulu), c. 1700–10
Opaque pigments and gold on paper
21.4 × 34 cm, including red/orange border

Inscribed on verso in Devanagari: *115 kiṣkiṃdhā*
In Takri: *115*

Provenance
Private collection, Germany
Mandi Royal Library, until 1969

Sugriva has just been crowned king, but the rains have come, and Rama must wait until they have stopped before he can invade Lanka and rescue Sita. Rama and Lakshmana spend the rainy season in a mountain cave near Sugriva's capital city of Kishkindha.

> *'...Raghava spoke these warm affectionate words: 'You have said what should be said by someone devoted, affectionate, helpful, and truly valiant, Lakshmana. Here, I have forsaken my grief, which makes all undertakings fail. I shall call forth my irresistible fierceness in deeds of valor. But the rainy season is now at hand, and I must wait for autumn. Then I shall destroy that demon together with his kingdom and his troops.'*
>
> *'Lakshmana Saumitri, delight of his friends, was overjoyed to hear Rama's words, and he spoke once again: 'The words you have just spoken are worthy of you, slaughterer of your enemies. Now, Kakuststha, you have returned to your own nature. Recognizing your own heroism, you must be true to it. This speech is worthy of you and your renowned family. Therefore, Raghava, tiger among men, pass the rainy season at hand thinking about the defeat of your enemy. Hold back your anger and await the autumn. Endure these four months with me. Live on this mountain, haunt of the king of the beasts, passing the time and preparing to destroy your enemy.'*
> *Kiṣkindhā Kāṇḍa*, Sarga 26, 15–23 and Sarga 27, 5–6 and 11–12 (Goldman and Goldman 2021, pp. 381–82)



22

Suhavi Ragini* of *Megha
From a Dispersed *Ragamala* Series
Bahu (Kulu or Jammu), c. 1700–10
Opaque pigments on paper, within mustard yellow margins, laid down on stout paper
21 × 21 cm

Inscribed above in Takri script:
Suhavi ragini meghadi bharaja ('Suhavi ragini wife of Megha')

Provenance
Sven Gahlin (1934–2017), acquired in 1967
Maggs Bros. Ltd., London
Ananda K. Coomaraswamy (1877–1947)

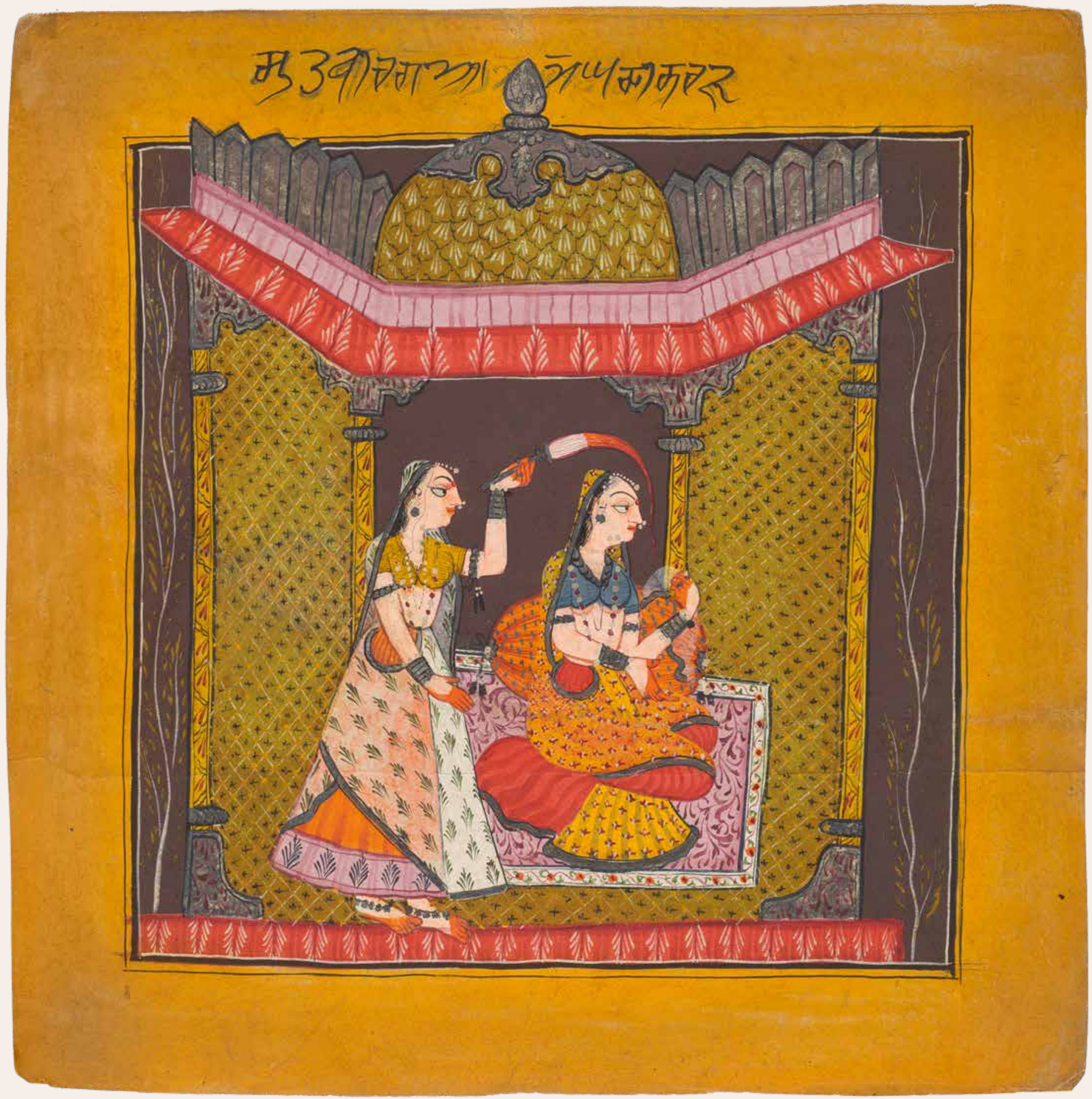
Artists in the Punjab Hills followed mostly the system of Kshemakarna with its 86 *ragas*, their wives or *raginis*, and their sons or *ragaputras*. *Suhavi* is one of the wives of *Megha raga* according to Kshemakarna's system.

This *Ragamala* illustration is from an important and well-known series produced in the early years of the 18th century. Thirty-two illustrations are in the Victoria and Albert Museum, six in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, and further examples in private and other institutional collections. The V&A examples were published by W.G. Archer as from Kulu in the eastern Pahari region (Archer 1973, Kulu 13i-xxxii). A large part of the extant group (including the present miniature) were brought to the West by Ananda K. Coomaraswamy in about 1920. It was said of some of them that while Coomaraswamy was staying with friends in north-west England he befriended their gardener and gave him several miniatures on his departure (see Sotheby's, 29 April 1992, lot 16).

According to J. P. Losty the style of the series is related, but slightly later than the 'Shangri' *Ramayana* Style II. It is certainly somewhat looser in execution that the *Ramayana* series, as can be seen here in the farouche juxtapositions of colours - oranges, reds, lime green, yellows and dull blues. More than one artist was involved in this series. The two paintings from the series published by Goswamy and Fischer in 1992 (nos. 34–35) are more precise in execution and therefore point to a different hand. Steve Kossak distinguishes between the artist dubbed by him 'the First Bahu Master' and other masters painting in a closely related style a few years later (Kossak 2011, pp. 491–500).

For illustrations of many of the examples in the Victoria and Albert Museum (described under the Kulu school) see Archer 1973, Kulu13i-13xxxii. For other pages from the same set, see Coomaraswamy 1926, pp. 96-99, nos. lxvii-lxxii, pls. XXXII -XXXIII; Binney and Archer 1968, no. 59; Kramrisch 1986, no. 100; Goswamy and Fischer 1992, nos. 34–35; Topsfield ed. 2004, no. 168; Sotheby's, London, 7 December 1971, lot 185; 15 October 1984, lots 120-1; 29 April 1992 (Bachofen von Echt Collection), lot 16; Sotheby's, New York, 26 March 1998, lot 15.

Ananda K. Coomaraswamy (1877-1947) was an art historian of enormous importance in introducing Indian art to the West and promoting its appreciation and study. Born in Colombo in 1877, he moved to England in 1879, before returning to Colombo in 1902. Within a few years he returned to England fully engaged in his new artistic career. He moved to the United States in 1917 to take up the post of the first Keeper of Indian Art at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. He wrote many books on Indian art, philosophy and aesthetics.



23

Krishna and Balarama Decimate the Army of Jarasandha and Capture Him, but Decide to Release the Humiliated King
Folio from the 'Large' Guler-Basohli *Bhagavata Purana*
Guler-Basohli, attributed to Fattu, c. 1760–65
Opaque pigments and gold on paper
30.3 × 40.6 cm

Provenance
Mrs. F.K. Smith; Sotheby's, London, 3 February 1960, lot 37

At first, the sight of a pair of chariots – one bearing the blue-skinned Krishna – overlooking heaps of bloodied and dismembered soldiers and mounts seems to illustrate a generic battle scene. However, once one realises that no actual fighting is transpiring and notices the four figures footslogging away from Krishna across the centre of a field littered with corpses, the narrative moment becomes clear. This is the aftermath of the defeat of the evil king Jarasandha of Magadha by Krishna and Balarama. Krishna has magnanimously ordered the release of the captive Jarasandha, reasoning that having to endure such an ignominious defeat so publicly would be punishment enough for his defeated adversary. His brother Balarama, the crowned, fair-complected figure with his canonical attributes of a *hada* (plough) and *gada* (mace) in hand, obliges and then strides to the left to rejoin his brother.

This narrative identification is corroborated by four inscriptions on the reverse in Gurmukhi script. The first merely indicates that the illustration comes from the 50th chapter of the *Bhagavata Purana*, the second provides the numeral 167 and the short statement that Jarasandha flees before Krishna, and the third, written to the left of main inscription, supplies both the painting number (168) and chapter (50).[1] The fourth, the longest and most formally written of the inscriptions, reads:

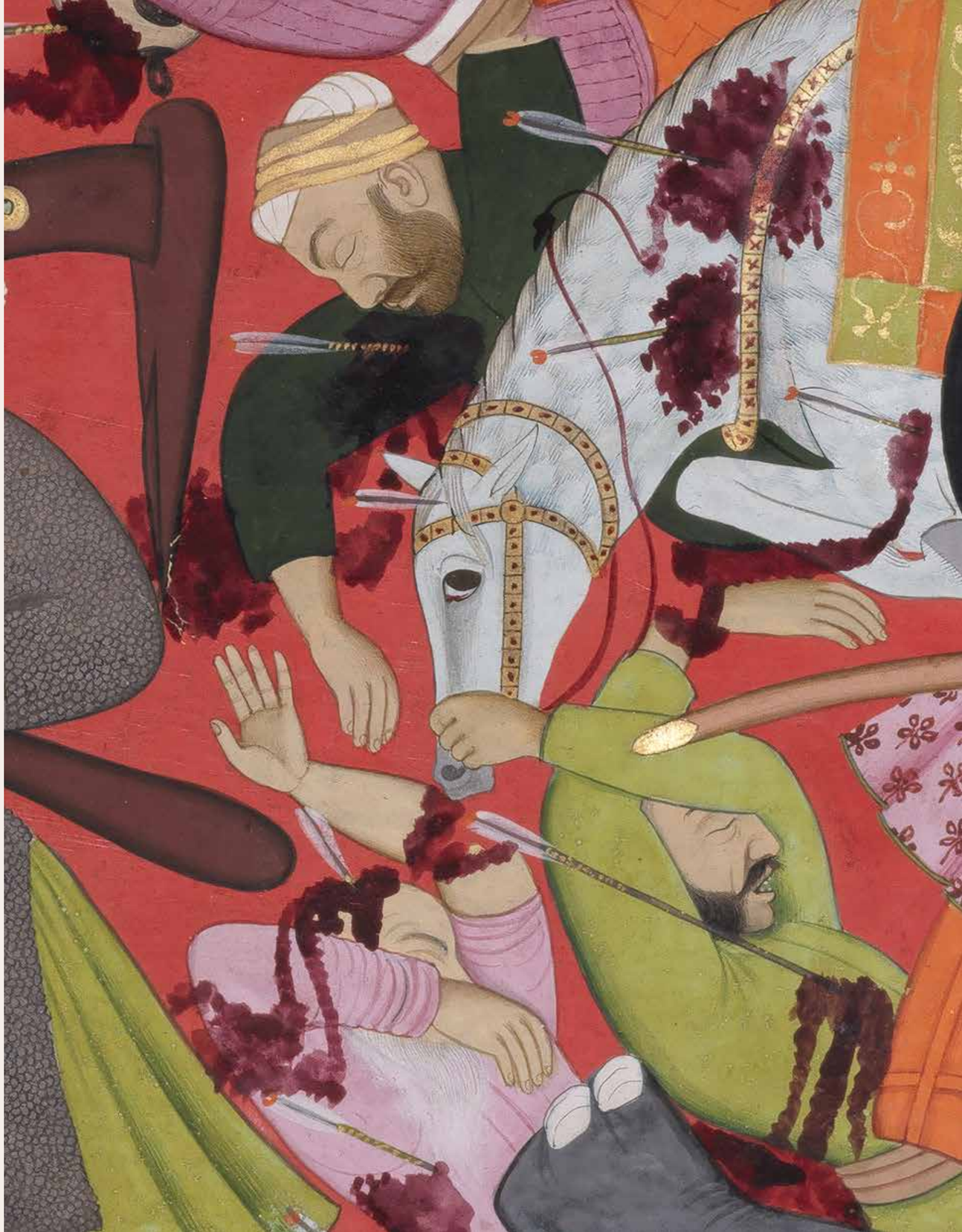
> *Addressed by [both] Lords of the Earth, the ashamed (Jarasandha) left along with his [remaining] warriors. Thus, in the latter half of the Bhagavata Purana, the 10th book, the release of the defeated Jarasandha.*

The artist, Fattu (c. 1725–85), the elder son of the renowned master Manaku (c. 1700-60) and nephew of Nainsukh (c. 1710–1778), emphasises the antagonist through several means. Positioning the figure of the defeated Jarasandha just right of centre, he endows him with a crown, grey hair and flamboyant moustache, a portly physique, a mail tunic, and a prominently decorated shield. Fattu also isolates Jarasandha's head clearly against the red field, making him the only figure other than Krishna and Balarama to enjoy that visual privilege. He also cleverly uses the figure behind Jarasandha, whose frontal face and sidelong glance backward establish him as a compositional pivot point, to manipulate the flow of the composition. Fattu's handiwork is evident in other features in the painting as well. Foremost amongst these are the sculpted heads of Krishna and Balarama, which are strongly reminiscent of Manaku's style. So, too, are the rendering of the balloon-like teams of horses and boxy elephant corpse, the predilection for flattened forms within a shallow pictorial space, the mannered motif of spiderlike trickles of blood issuing from discrete maroon blotches, and the arching red field below an atmospheric strip of sky.

Fattu, a native of Guler whose name and patrimony are known from a 1778 entry in the pilgrimage records at Haridwar, [2] has long been considered the determinative artist of the well-known 'Large' Guler-Basohli *Bhagavata Purana*, an expansive – sometimes estimated to have more than 150 illustrations – and widely dispersed series usually dated c. 1760-65.[3] Basohli is sometimes mentioned as an alternative place of production because Nainsukh, whose personal participation in the series is hypothesised occasionally, worked at that court for Raja Amrit Pal after 1763. No matter the precise date or provenance, the series is regarded as a touchstone in the development of Pahari painting because it blends both the conservative and naturalistic strains of painting promulgated by the descendants of Manaku and Nainsukh and augurs many different directions in Pahari painting.

JS

1. This information and the following translation have been provided by Richard Cohen, personal communication.
2. Jain-Neubauer 1998, p. 82. She usefully publishes a series of twelve drawings for the Sat Sai of Bihari, one of which bears a rare signature by Fattu, and discusses his career.
3. Other pages of the 'Large' Guler-Basohli or 'Fifth' Basohli *Bhagavata Purana* (a nomenclature formulated by W.G. Archer) are listed and published in Archer 1973, Basohli nos. 22 (i-xiv); Leach 1995, pp. 1048-1053, especially p. 1051, n. 3; Goswamy and Smith 2005, nos. 92-83; and Goswamy and Fischer 2011, pp. 687-718, especially pp. 689, 697-699. Additional folios sold at auction more recently are listed in the entry for Bonhams, New York, 20 March 2024, lot 798.



24

A Scene from the *Yuddha-Kanda* Depicting Angada Fighting with the Demon Vajradamstra
Folio from the Second Part of the 'Second Guler' *Ramayana*
Guler, 1790–1810
Opaque pigments and gold and silver on paper, within a blue margin with gold and silver floral arabesque and a pink outer border with a red rule
Folio 25.7 × 35.8 cm; painting 20.2 × 29.8 cm

Provenance
Private collection, Germany; acquired by the previous owner's mother from a dealer in Brussels in the early 1970s.

A lush green valley with grassy slopes is the central focus of this painting. In the top right-hand corner, atop a green hill, part of Ravana's golden palace is visible, indicating that we are on Lanka. Just visible within the frame, the king sits on a golden throne, attended by three demons. In an adjoining courtyard, demons are seated in various states of dress.

In the centre-left foreground, on the opposing hill flank Rama, Lakshmana and Vibhishana calmly observe as the monkey and bear allies launch an assault on the demons' army. In this energetically depicted battle scene, the distinctive white Angada, Bali's son, is seen three times. In the foreground he is engaged in a close body combat with the demon Vajradamstra, one of the generals of Ravana's army, in the middle ground he is seen beheading another demon and in a third vignette he smashes in the head of a third demon. Just making it into the frame, Ravana is seen for a second time on his resplendent chariot entering the battlefield. The scene is one of frantic activity, but concisely and beautifully painted and appears in Valmiki's *Ramayana – Yuddha-kanda* in *Sarga* 54; *Slokas* 16–28.

The 'Second Guler' *Ramayana* (the first being that of Pandit Seu 1720–30) was begun by artists from Guler 1770–75 just after the other two great manuscripts, the *Gitagovinda* and the *Bhagavata Purana*. These three great series are widely attributed to various sons of Manaku and Nainsukh at this time. The *Ramayana* was prepared in two campaigns. Our painting belongs to the second campaign and involves Books V and VI, the *Sundara-* and *Yuddha-kandas*, which were completed somewhat later, and apparently over a longer period 1790–1810. Not all of the paintings from the second campaign are of the same high quality as ours.

The series is widely dispersed. For other folios from this second part of the series, for which some drawings are also known, see Mittal and Seyller 2014, pp. 283–284; Britschgi and Fischer 2008, nos. 54 (a drawing), 56, 58 and 78; Goswamy and Fischer 2011, figs. 14–15; and Valmiki 2011, vols. iv-vi, *passim*.

25

A Set of Nine Small Military Figurines
Vizagapatam, c. 1795
Original cast by Adimurti, Virachandracharlu and Viracharlu
Cast brass alloy

25a
Lancer wearing a dagger in his belt
Retaining its original lead weight in its base
H 19.5 cm

This set of nine brass soldiers are part of a famous group made in Vizagapatam (modern-day Visakhapatnam) on the east coast of India around the end of the 18th century. The toy soldiers in this set are related to a large group of such figurines cast for Timma Jagapati IV, the Raja of Peddapuram. According to Edgar Thurston, CIE (1855–1935), British Superintendent at the Madras Government Museum, the aforementioned Raja of Peddapuram commissioned a set of brass-cast toy soldiers on the advice of his court astrologer, allowing him to review his army every day. In his 1913 study, *Illustrations of Metal Work in Brass and Copper: Mostly South Indian*, Thurston cites that the set of toy soldiers made at Vizagapatam by an artist identified as Adimurti, and two craftsmen, probably brothers, Virachandracharlu and Viracharlu.

Though Edgar Thurston referred to only one set of soldiers, the surviving toy figurines suggest that a number of different sets were cast in and around Vizagapatam at the end of the 18th century, probably for local rulers. Our group of brass figurines include a marching Indian soldier with a lance; an African carabineer; two infantrymen, two cavalrymen; a camel carrying rockets; and a camel mounted by an armed rider. The distinctive elements that characterise each individual toy soldier show that careful attention was given to distinguishing each figure in the toy army. For example, the lancer carries his weapon in his right hand, while a thick rope attached to the base of the spear is worn diagonally across his body and in front of his waist. He wears a turban on his head, a *chillanum* dagger tucked into his belt, and sandals on his feet. It is the only one that retains its lead weight inside its base (cat. 25a).

The figurines were cast and modelled to reflect the soldiers who would have formed the army of a regional ruler in South India in the late 18th century. During this period and earlier, African soldiers, mainly from East and Southeast Africa, were employed in many Indian armies, including those of the Deccan Sultanate (cat. 25b). Furthermore, the different costumes, including headgear, denote soldiers from varying regions. Slight variations in the style and facture of the toy soldiers suggest that they were made in multiple sets, for different patrons. The differences in alloy composition and finish between the different figurines in our group suggest that they are from different 'Vizagapatam' sets, which were assembled by a European collector at a later date.

The attribution to Vizagapatam and the date of 1795 is based on information from Edgar Thurston in his 1913 publication and confirmed by the presence of a stamped date and location on the elephant in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford (see fig. 1 and details). The presence of these identifying inscriptions has allowed scholars to date and localise the larger group of toy soldiers known today.

The scholarly consensus of the late 20th century was that the toy soldiers were designed and produced by European artists working at the East India trading post of Vizagapatam (see Topsfield and Harle 1987). However, the tradition cited by Edgar Thurston, alongside more recent art historical and material enquiry, together supports a different conclusion. Based on the material and historical record, there is no evidence to support the presence of a European craftsman. It is far more likely that the sets were produced by Indian artists, including the ones cited above. What's more, the toy soldiers do not closely recall any European typological precedents nor is there sufficient evidence of cast toy soldiers or figurines produced in Europe until the Napoleonic period. In contrast, there is a long-standing tradition of lost-wax casting in India, from ancient times through to the modern period, which resulted in the production of many bronze figural objects ranging widely in scale and quality. Furthermore, brass-cast toy soldiers were also produced in other parts of India such as Central India and Rajasthan (see inv. IS.221-1960 in the Victoria and Albert Museum).

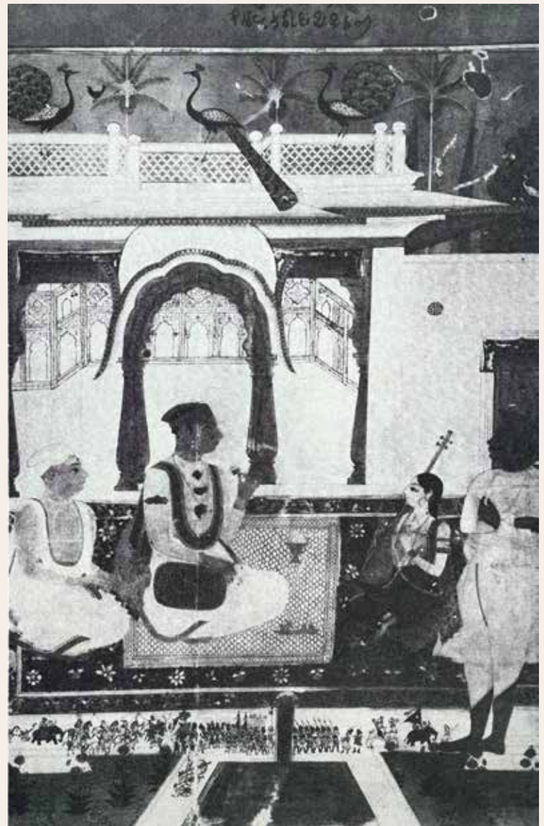
Some mystery remains around the actual use of these toy armies. A clue can be glimpsed from an early 19th century provincial painting from the Deccan depicting Raja Satji Prithvi Das (fig. 2). It shows the young Raja smelling a flower and listening to music, whilst in the foreground, at the feet of an attendant, a large toy army is on display. Many of the figurines relate to pieces in our set. It is a charming and eccentric view of life at a small provincial court (Zebrowski 1983, cat. 258, p. 276).

Many figurines later made their way into European collections from the East India Company trading post at Vizagapatam. Today a small corpus of sets of toy soldiers made in

Fig. 1 and details
Toy elephant with soldier and driver
Vizagapatam, 1795
Ashmolean Museum, Oxford (inv. EA1969.44.a)

Vizagapatam have survived. Apart from the set in the Chennai Museum (formerly known as the Madras Museum), there are 11 figurines in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford. There is a set of 11 toy soldiers in the Royal Collection Trust, which were presented to Edward VII, then Prince of Wales, during his tour of India in 1875–76. These figurines were part of the larger set reputedly commissioned by the Raja of Peddapuram, Timma Razu (d. 1796), now in the Chennai Museum. This set includes a camel with rockets and an African soldier closely relatable to ours (cats. 25b and 25c). There is a set of two elephants with riders in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London. The National Army Museum, London has 26 figurines. They note that although cast in around 1795 the European and Indian uniforms date from several decades earlier. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, has also recently acquired a set of Vizagapatam toy soldiers.

Fig. 2
Raja Satji Prithvi Das
Provincial Deccani centre, early 19th century
Telangana State Archaeology Museum, formerly known as State Museum, Hyderabad



25b
African carabinier on horseback
H 12.8 cm

25c
Camel carrying four bundles of ten rockets
H 19.8 cm

25d
Infantryman with turban holding a musket
H 7.5 cm

25e
Mustachioed cavalryman with musket and shamshir
H 13.5 cm

25f
Bearded cavalryman holding with musket and *shamshir*
H 13.3. cm

25g
European cavalryman wearing a tricorne hat holding a flintlock carbine (the upper part is missing)
H 9.4 cm

25h
Infantryman holding a musket with fixed bayonet and a tulwar wearing a Mysore-style turban
H 7.7 cm

25i
Camel rider holding a long rifle, with his shield strapped to his back, and a bow and quiver of arrows
H 18 cm

26

Commemorative Instrument
Probably made in Mysore, early 19th century
Chased Brass
97 × 23.5 × 19 cm

Although this enigmatic instrument is mysterious in certain aspects, it sheds significant light on the musical and cultural life of the royal court of Mysore.

This is a brass variant of a lute, most likely a tanpura (or tambura). The south Indian tanpura grew out of Persianate tanburs, fretted long-necked lutes, which can ultimately be traced back to fifth-century Arabia. This instrument became part of the standard repertoire of ensembles performing in early modern Indian courts. At the same time, southern India already had its own tradition of long, narrow-necked lutes, which can be seen in temple reliefs going back to the tenth century. These two streams of instrument making coalesced in the tanpura, which is usually constructed out of wood and the dried shell of a gourd, covered with a thin soundboard. Conventionally, the tanpura is unfretted and has around four metal strings, although this varied over time. The tanpura is primarily considered a drone instrument and provides a wash of ambient sound, a backdrop and point of reference for singers. Depending on their size, tanpuras could be played standing up, by cupping the gourd in one hand, or with the musician sat on the floor, cradling the gourd in their lap and extending the long neck over one shoulder.

As a material, brass was a surprising choice: by design, the quality of the drone emerges from the resonance of wood and gourd shell. Because of this, it is tempting to imagine that this was a decorative object and not intended for performance. Yet, the peg box at the top of the neck accommodated six strings with working tuning pegs (three of which remain), and an upper bridge remains intact. It is unclear if there was a lower, main bridge too, or of what kind. The soundboard is pinpricked with patterns of acoustic vents, suggesting that the luthier had tried to fashion a playable instrument, despite the unorthodox material. Small holes of this variety are routinely found on central Asian tanburi. There is also a larger hole in the upper left-hand part of the resonating chamber, which may also have had an acoustic function, perhaps to control the vibratory frequency. This recalls the use of similar holes in the resonators of kamancheh and ghichack fiddles, or even in the calabash resonators of vinas (stick-zithers). All this suggests that this unorthodox instrument was technically playable, even if it was not intended for extended performance.

The quality of the instrument's decoration and ornamentation suggests that it was primarily intended for display and visual appreciation. The bent-back peg box is crowned by a detailed *yali* (dragon) head: a trace of brilliant red paint still flashes from his nostrils and his gaping mouth, framed by his fangs. Below, Saraswati, the goddess of music, plays a vina with two of her four hands (fig. 1). The pegs, scroll base, and neck of the instrument are all embellished with floral patterns. The soundboard is embossed with a prominent *gandabherunda*, a giant, two-headed bird, snatching elephants in its beaks and claws. This was the primary emblem of the Keladi kings (1499–1763), one of largest successor states of the Vijayanagara empire, and a major political rival of the Wodeyar dynasty. With the decline of the Keladis, the Wodeyars adopted the *gandabherunda* as their own, and deployed it extensively as their official insignia in the 19th century, especially from 1881 onwards.

The Wodeyars of Mysore are remembered as significant patrons and connoisseurs of music. They had risen to prominence in the 15th century as feudatory kings of southern parts of the Vijayanagara empire, with their capital at Srirangapatna. As a successor state, a line of kings cultivated their reputations in the arts and music, as well as their patronage of festivals, especially Mahanavami. It was universally understood that music had the power to elevate the space of the court and make the king's authority audible. When Chikkadevaraya Wodeyar (1673–1704), who was famed for his expertise in music, sent an embassy to Aurangzeb in 1699, the Mughal emperor sent a return gift of a naubat: an ensemble of trumpets and drums that loudly broadcast the ruler's presence and power.

Fig. 1
Saraswati
Mysore, c. 1830–40
Victoria and Albert Museum
(inv. IS.11–1980)

Fig. 2

Fig. 2
Shiva dances as the demon king Banasura plays music and prays to him – Folio 72v from the Great Mysore *Bhagavata Purana*
Mysore, c. 1825–40
San Diego Museum of Art (inv. 1990.1402)

Fig. 3

Fig. 3
Detail of Krishna storms the citadel of Narakasura – Folio 53r from the Great Mysore *Bhagavata Purana*
Mysore, c. 1825–40
San Diego Museum of Art (inv. 1990.1402)

The Mysore court deployed musicians across a range of daily activities, from ritual worship to intimate entertainments (figs. 2 and 3). Music was vital for celebrations (*utsava*), birthdays (*vardhanti*), sacred thread ceremonies (*upanayanam*), weddings, and coronations (*pattabhisheka*), as well as larger annual festivities. In time, the Wodeyars employed artists specialising in south Indian art music and dance, Hindustani music, and Western band music. The kings had reputations as connoisseurs, and musicians would expect their patrons to question them on the intricacies of musicology and debate with the court's music scholars (*vidwans*). Some musicians were attached to the court as hereditary service providers, such as the family of Chikka Lakshminaranappa, who were appointed to perform music for the daily ritual services (*seva*) of the palace's own Prasanna Krishnaswami temple. Other musicians were invited to perform as celebrity guests, and could be rewarded with gifts of housing, land grants, villages, pensions, palanquins, shawls, jewellery – and highly ornate instruments.

The custom of honouring celebrated musicians with an ornamental instrument, made of an unusual material, was known as *birudu* ('award') in Telugu. The oldest examples of this type were made of ivory, such as the Deccani sarinda in the British Museum (c. 1700), or an ivory violin gifted to the celebrated Tanjore Vadivelu by Maharaja Swati Tirunal of Travancore (1813–1846). Nineteenth-century instruments made of metal include a tanpura—now part of the S.M. Tagore collection in the Indian Museum, Kolkata–and a small, playable sitar in the Government Museum, Alwar.

In Mysore, gifts of this kind became legendary: it is said that Vina Venkatasubbiah, the palace's music director (*bakshi*), was rewarded by Krishnaraja Wodeyar III (1799–1868) with a golden vina. The custom continued into the 20th century. Gifted instruments were often intended to be innovative and experimental: Nalwadi Krishnaraja Wodeyar (1895–1940) gave the blind violinist Sivarudrappa a novel kind of violin with an adjustable,

amplification horn, and another with seven strings. The court also commissioned a decorative, extremely fragile mridangam drum made of glass, now housed in the Chennai Government Museum.

In terms of design, the brass tanpura's ornamental features recall features of early-modern southern metalwork, of the kind seen in arms manufacture. However, given its shape and prominent *gandabherunda*, this instrument is most likely from the 19th century, perhaps from the reign of Krishnaraja Wodeyar III. This king, in particular, cultivated a reputation as a musician and composer, and authored two books on music and dance theory (*Sara Samgraha Bharata* and *Svara Cudamani*). He also wrote songs under the pen name Chamundi or Chamundeshvari, dedicating his creative works to the Goddess, and commissioned the *Sritattvanidhi*, a large Sanskrit treatise that includes an extensive *ragamala* (a visual and poetic meditation on musical forms). His investment in music, culture, and devotional piety was significant in the political context of his reign: appointed king in the wake of Tipu Sultan's defeat, Krishnaraja's authority was entangled with British interests and power. Fashioning himself as a musical and pious ruler was integral to his project of defining the terms of limited sovereignty. Historian Janaki Nair argues that he developed an aesthetic that was both modernising and overtly historical, inventing traditions that reclaimed the legacies of earlier dynasties. We can see this balance in the instrument itself, in its novel design features on the one hand and its elaborate decoration, that was intended to recall the 17th century, on the other. Nair also stresses the importance of the gift in the political economy of his court: the 'theology of gift giving, which combined elements of the material and the spiritual, seriously disrupted the new economic rationality of the colonial regime' (Nair 2011, p. 9).While East India Company officials saw his excessive gifting as signs of decadence or corruption, within the ideology of the court, largesse and patronage of the arts were vital aspects of the 'monarchical modern'.

As such, while this is a remarkable and slightly eccentric instrument, it speaks volumes about the musical life of Mysore, fashioned between old and new, and courtly and colonial political cultures.

RDW

27

Palampore
Coastal South-East India, for export to Europe, c. 1775–90
Cotton, hand-drawn, mordant-dyed, resist-dyed
290 × 222 cm

Circular French custom stamp on verso: *DOUANIERRAMA* around a central fleur-de-lys

The design consists of a tree of life growing from a rocky mound but, in this instance, the 'tree of life' is formed by a cluster of four bamboo stems, which fan out symmetrically with their fantastical leaves resembling Chinese fan palms and flowers including tulips, roses, peonies, and carnations filling the central field. Four smaller trunks sprout from the mound: two thicker stems with varieties of flowers and two groups of stems with serrated and fanning foliage. This is surrounded by a wide floral border of meandering leafy bamboo vines with red flowers. From a distance our *palampore* would appear to have a monochrome palette interrupted by flowers in vivid red (from chay root). On closer examination shades of indigo blue, aubergine, rust red, yellow, and olive green (created from layering the indigo and yellow) are visible. The entire design is outlined in what appears to be black, likely an iron mordant reaction with myrobalan. The extraordinary aspect of this textile is its pristine condition, including its original glaze. It does not appear to have been used.

Such chintz decorated the walls of luxurious rooms including bedrooms in palaces and stately homes all over Europe, since the mid-17 century (Irwing and Brett 1970, p. 25). Today only a handful of rooms with these chintz wall hangings and bed hangings from the last quarter of the 18th century have survived. The chintz bedroom at Chateau Borely, near Marseille (1775–1780), the chintz panelled room at the Chateau of Hluboká, in the Czech Republic (Jacqué and Nicolas 2009, p. 117), and finally the Garrick bed (c. 1774) now in the Victoria and Albert Museum (inv. 18–1906) should be mentioned in this context.

In terms of design, the closest comparisons to ours are the *palampores* in the Charleston Museum in South Carolina (inv. ID HT 4841), and at the Chateau of Hluboká, both of which feature a 'tree' of the same shape, with four symmetrical bamboo trunks. The meandering vine border of the Charleston Museum example is also remarkably similar to the border of our *palampore*.

The presence of bamboo as well as the more attenuated foliate and floral forms reflect the influence from Chinese painted wallpaper, which was as fashionable as Indian chintz during this period. Quite often Chinese wallpaper and Indian textiles inhabited the same space. For instance, in 1772, Mary Palmer, Lady Beauchamp-Proctor described the private quarters at Osterley Park as having been 'furnished with the finest Chintzes, painted Taffatys, India paper, and decker work [Dhaka embroidery], and profusion of rich China and Japan [porcelain], that I could almost fancy myself in Peking' (Cora Ginsburg LLC 2021, p. 68).

28–31

Four Folios Depicting Bengal Coastal and Estuarine Fishes From an Album Associated with Lord Valentia
Calcutta artist, c. 1800–1806
Opaque pigments and pulverised silver on Whatman paper

Provenance
Private collection, New York
Acquired from Niall Hobhouse in the 1980s
From an album once belonging to Lord Valentia (on account of the album's library binding)

This group of folios depict fishes that inhabit the Bengal coastline where various rivers, including the Hooghly, flow into the sea. They don't appear to have been grouped by taxonomy but rather placed on the page to enhance the composition. They were clearly painted from life because the colours are vibrant, and fish lose their colouring soon after they die. Dr. Francis Buchanan-Hamilton (1762–1829) was the first ichthyologist (study of fish) to commission accurate paintings of fish while they were still alive in the water. Once the fish had been put to paper in colour, the artist put a subtle wash of pulverised silver on top to capture their iridescent quality. This is something that can also be observed in Haludar's work for Buchanan (see Roy 2020, p. 106). Buchanan (later known as Hamilton) was an eminent naturalist, equally skilled in botany and zoology, especially ichthyology. He came to India in 1794 as a surgeon working with the East India Company and eventually left in 1816. He is perhaps best remembered for his 'Gangetic Fishes' (freshwater fishes of the River Ganges) painted by Haludar, which he published in England in 1822 and has recently been reprinted in colour and with explanatory text (Britz 2019).

Our four folios are associated with the gentleman travel writer, George Annesley, 2nd Earl of Mountnorris (1793–1844) known as Lord Valentia, who was an enthusiast of natural history paintings. Two fish paintings of identical dimensions, watermarks and comparable style are published by Niall Hobhouse as 'from an original album in Lord Valentia's Library binding' (Hobhouse 2001, cats. 10 and 11). Hobhouse has confirmed that the present paintings are from the same provenance.

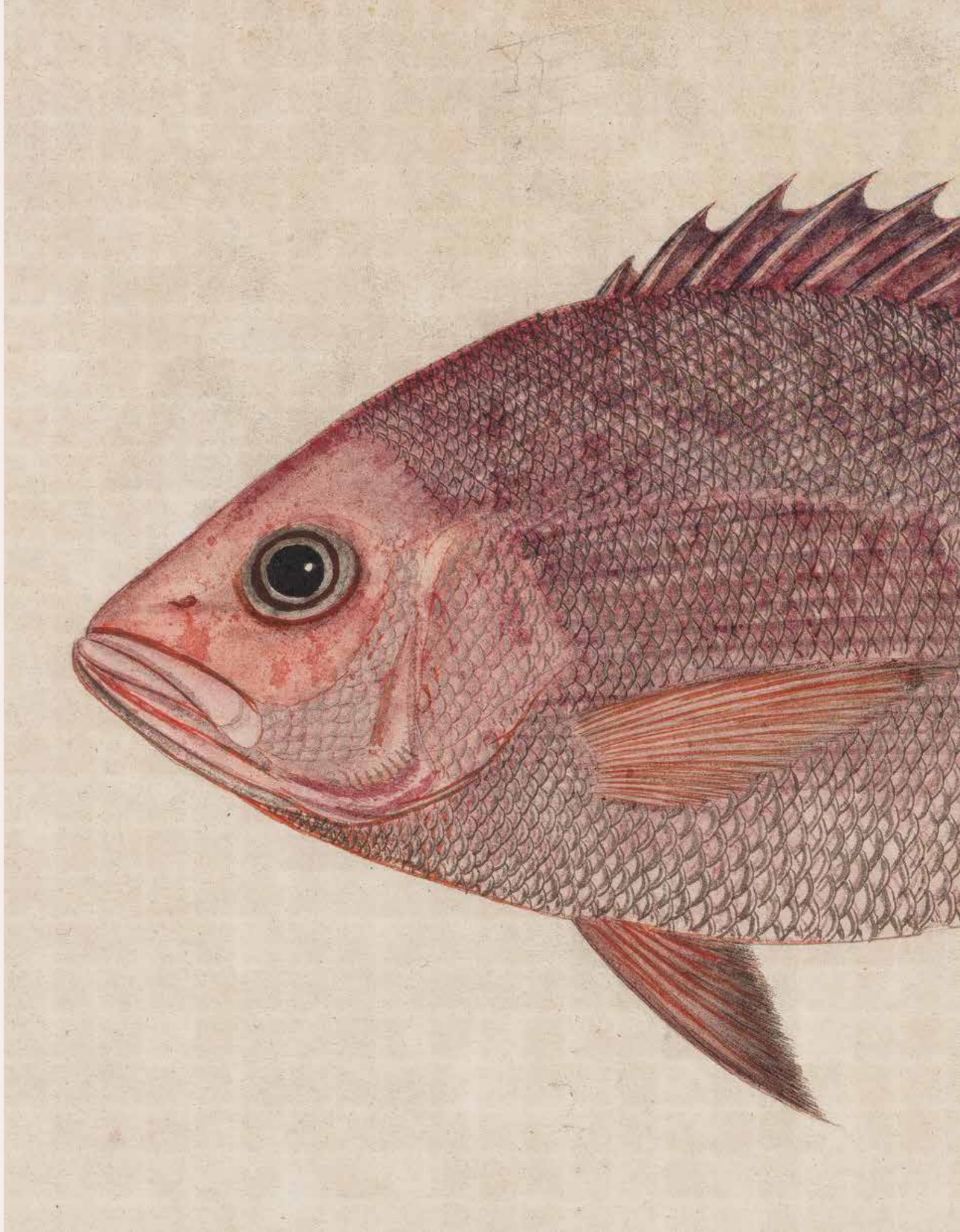
Lord Valentia wrote an informative, detailed and entertaining account of his travels *Lord Valentia's Voyage and Travels to India, Ceylon, the Red Sea, Abyssinia and Egypt in the years 1802–1806* which was published in 1809. His travels in India from January 1804–06, with his secretary and draftsman Henry Salt, describe the local landscape, architecture and customs, floral and fauna and the people he met.

Lord Valentia discusses the places he visits and the people he meets but does not really touch on his commissioning or acquiring of paintings in these travel journals. Whilst in Lucknow he mentions that *the artists brought specimens of their works* but that is it. And yet we know that he commissioned a series of natural history studies whilst in India, the finest of the group probably being painted in Calcutta and the majority, but not all, bearing Valentia's Persian seal (for example see the outstanding painting of *A kite and kestrel*, now in the Chester Beatty Library, inv. 74.1, does not heave the Valentia seal). Two, now in the British Library, were originally a gift to Viscount Wellesley (Leach 1995, p. 762). We presume that these natural history paintings were therefore purely of personal interest to Valentia.

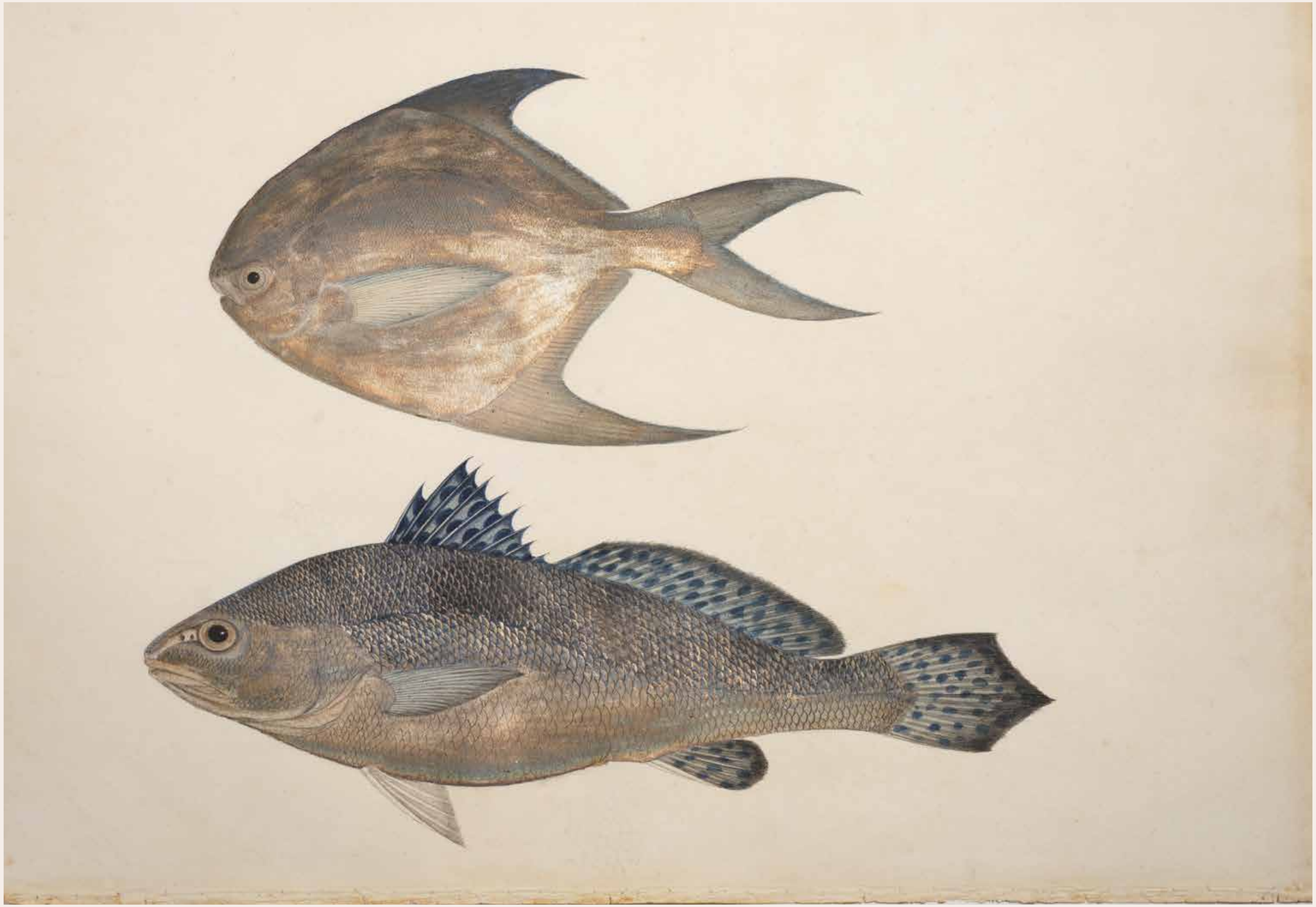
Of his fascination with fish and his powers of observation we read, as he first approaches the shores of Bengal in mid-January 1803: *We ran along the shore with a pleasant breeze the whole evening and saw immense quantities of jelly-fish. They were small and adhered to each other, so as to form the appearance of a snake; when taken out of the sea they separated, and moved about with great velocity.*

Social connections were extremely important at the time. During his travels in India, Valentia was always under Wellesley's implicit protection and guidance. Whilst in Calcutta, he stays at Mr Graham's residence in Chouringee and together they visit Barrackpore, Lord Wellesley's country residence where he kept a menagerie and aviary. Valentia's account of their visit to the Botanic Gardens under the stewardship of Dr Roxburgh reveals his deep interest and remarkable knowledge of trees and plants but also his admiration at what he saw: [The Botanic Gardens] *affords a wonderful display of the vegetable world, infinitely superior to anything I have ever before beheld.*

With many thanks to Rupert Collins (Natural History Museum, London) and Ralf Britz (Senckenberg Naturhistorische Sammlungen Dresden).

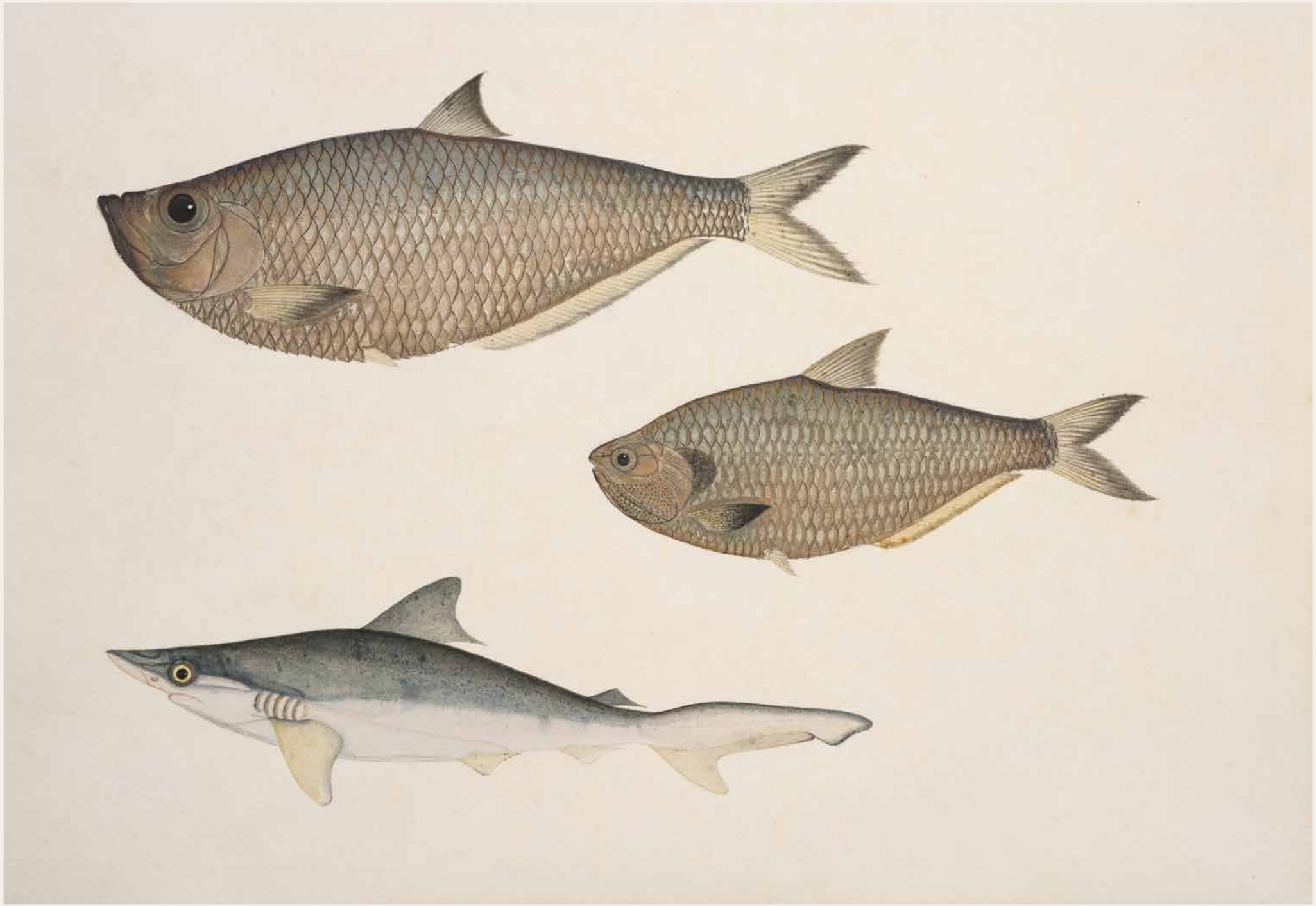


28
Lutjanus erythropteus (crimson snapper) [top]
Sillago sihama (silver sillago) [centre]
Johnius amblycephalus (bearded croaker) [bottom]
33 × 48 cm
Watermark: *JW 1794*



29
Pampus argenteus (silver pomfret) [top]
Protonibea diacanthus (blackspotted croaker) [bottom]
36 × 52.5 cm

30
Pampus chinensis
(Chinese silver pomfret) [top]
Epphipus orbis (orbfish) [centre]
Mystus gulio (long whiskers catfish)
[bottom]
36 × 52.5 cm



31
Ilisha megaloptera (bigeye ilisha) [top]
Thryssa malabarica (Malabar thryssa) [centre]
Rhizoprionodon acutus (milk shark) [bottom]
35.5 × 52 cm

32–35

Four Paintings by Sevak Ram Depicting Festivals and Ceremonies From the Caledon Album
Patna, c. 1800–1810
Opaque pigments and gold on Indian paper laid down on paper watermarked J. Whatman 1813

Provenance
Private collection, New York, USA
Eyre and Hobhouse, June 1982, cats. 6, 10, 11 and 17
Sotheby's 29th March 1982, lot 67 (1, 5, 6 and 12); *sold by order of the trustees of the Caledon family settlements*
2nd Earl of Caledon, thence by descent

Published
Sotheby's 29th March 1982, lot 67 (1, 5, 6 and 12)
Company Painting, Eyre and Hobhouse, June 1982, cats. 6, 10, 11 and 17
Rousselet, L., *India of Rajahs*, 1985, pp. 110–11, 118–19, 130–31 and 147–49

Patna had appeared briefly on the Indian artistic horizon in the early 1760s, but nothing else is known to have been done there until the 1790s with a series of festival scenes and interiors done for E. E. Pote, now in the British Library (Archer 1972, no. 65i–viii). They follow late Mughal conventions for compositions but are done in plain watercolour, confirming these were Murshidabad artists who had migrated to Patna to work for British patrons (Archer 1972, p. 102).

In the first years of the 19th century, Company School painting in Patna changed. Sevak Ram, the artist who created this new Patna style, added gouache or bodycolour to his technical repertoire to achieve a more brilliant finish. He painted different series of large festival scenes for various British patrons. He had obviously studied closely the works of the various British artists as they went up and down the river over the previous 30 years. He lowered his viewpoint down to the normal spectator level thereby demonstrating his mastery of crowd scenes and enlivened his paintings by including individualised figure studies in the foreground, as can be seen in our paintings.

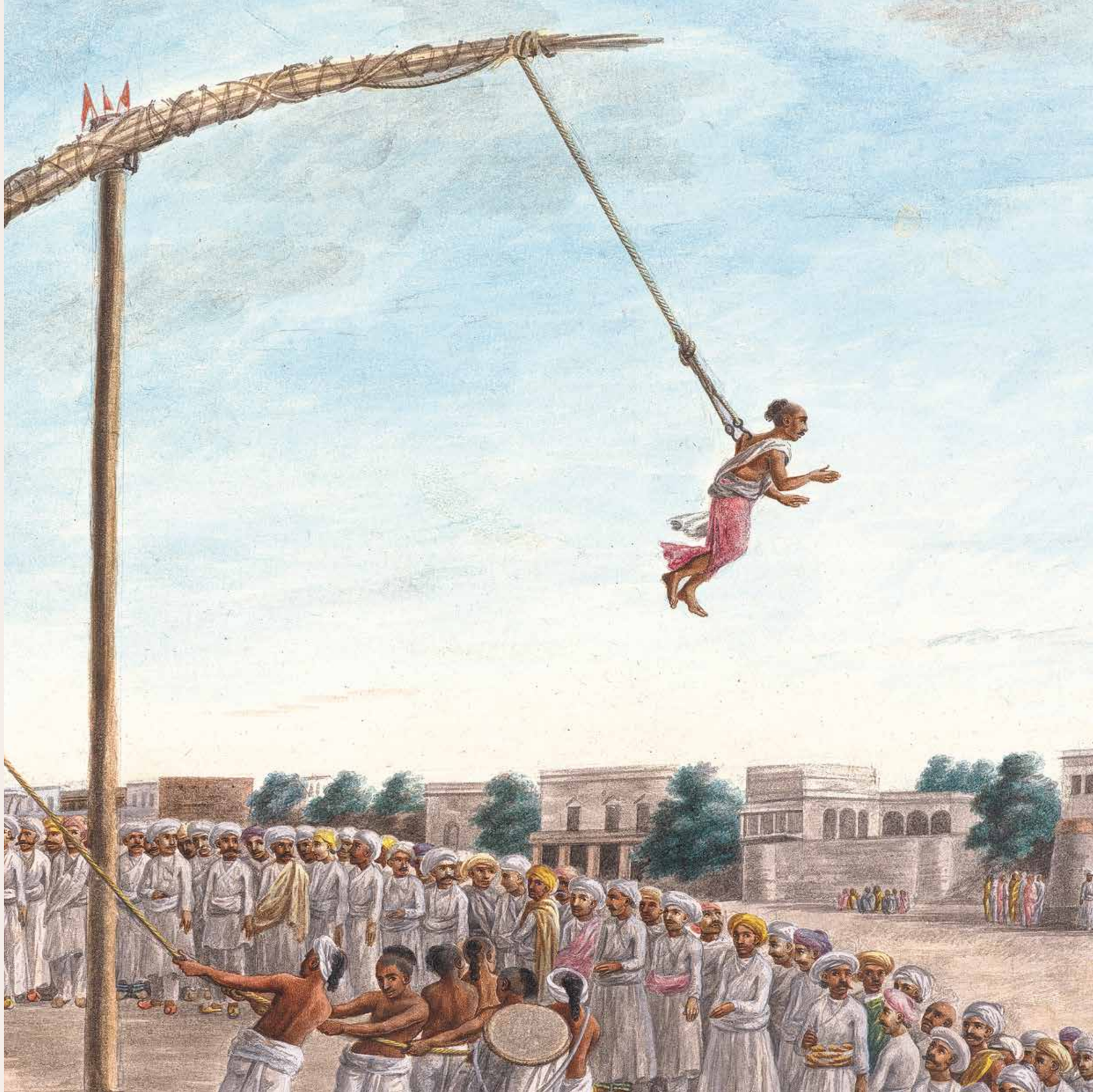
Sevak Ram's most important album is that associated with the first Earl of Minto, Governor-General of Fort William 1807–1813. It is now dispersed between the British Library (five folios), the Victoria and Albert Museum (one folio) and the Chester Beatty Library (two folios). What makes this album so important is that two paintings, one in the British Library (inv. Add. Or. 18) and one Victoria and Albert Museum (inv. IS 74–1954) are both signed Sheiwak Ram, and dated 1807. Two further paintings in the British Library bear the date of 1809 (inv. Add. Or. 15 and Add. Or. 19). We do not know of any other paintings that have been signed by the artist.

Our four paintings, all in remarkably fresh condition, are stylistically identical to the Minto Album and have always been ascribed to Sevak Ram. They come from an album of 14 drawings depicting predominately Hindu festivals and ceremonies. They were painted on unmarked Indian paper and subsequently mounted on paper containing watermarks J. Whatman 1813.

Other paintings from this set are in the Art Institute of Chicago (*Joloyogee Breakfast*, Galloway AWNY 2012), The British Library (inv. Add.Or.4300), and in a private collection (Losty and Galloway 2007, cat. 38). The paintings from the present set are somewhat larger than the Minto set and appear to be slightly earlier according to JP Losty (Losty 2007, cat. 38, p. 110).

Further paintings are ascribed to Sevak Ram, including one in the Victoria and Albert Museum (Folio from Lady Amherst, inv. IS 63–1964), one in a private collection, Canada (previously in the Ehrenfeld collection; Bautze 1998, cat. 65) and folios formerly in the collection of Lady Nugent (1771–1834) now dispersed.

A set of nine Patna paintings on a grand scale produced in Sevak Ram's studio or by followers of Sevak Ram, were published in *The Allure of India*, 2017.



The first Earl of Caledon was born plain James Alexander (1730–1802), Madras Civil Service 1752–63, and Bengal Civil Service 1767–71. He was Chief at Patna in 1770, and at Murshidabad in 1771, and returned home by 1773, where he was created Baron in 1790 and Earl of Caledon in 1800. His son the second Earl, Du Pré Alexander, was Governor of the Cape of Good Hope 1806–11. He is associated with this album, although it appears that he never went to India. However, he was professionally known to Lord Minto and during the Napoleonic wars he detached 2000 infantry from South Africa to aid Lord Minto in his campaigns whilst Governor-General of India (1807–1813). The Earl writes '*...in a letter from Lord Minto upon that occasion, he acknowledges the public service I rendered, not only as relating to the fall of the Mauritius, but adds that it was to the co-operation I afforded he was indebted for the means of moving against Java*. ...' (Summary of the Caledon Papers, Public Record Office of Northern Ireland, A. P. W. Malcomson). This correspondence points to a warm or at least collegiate relationship between the 2nd Earl of Caledon and the 1st Earl of Minto, owner of the Minto Album by Sevak Ram.

32
A Marriage Procession
40 × 61 cm
Inscribed on verso in a 19th century hand: *Sahdee – Marriage*

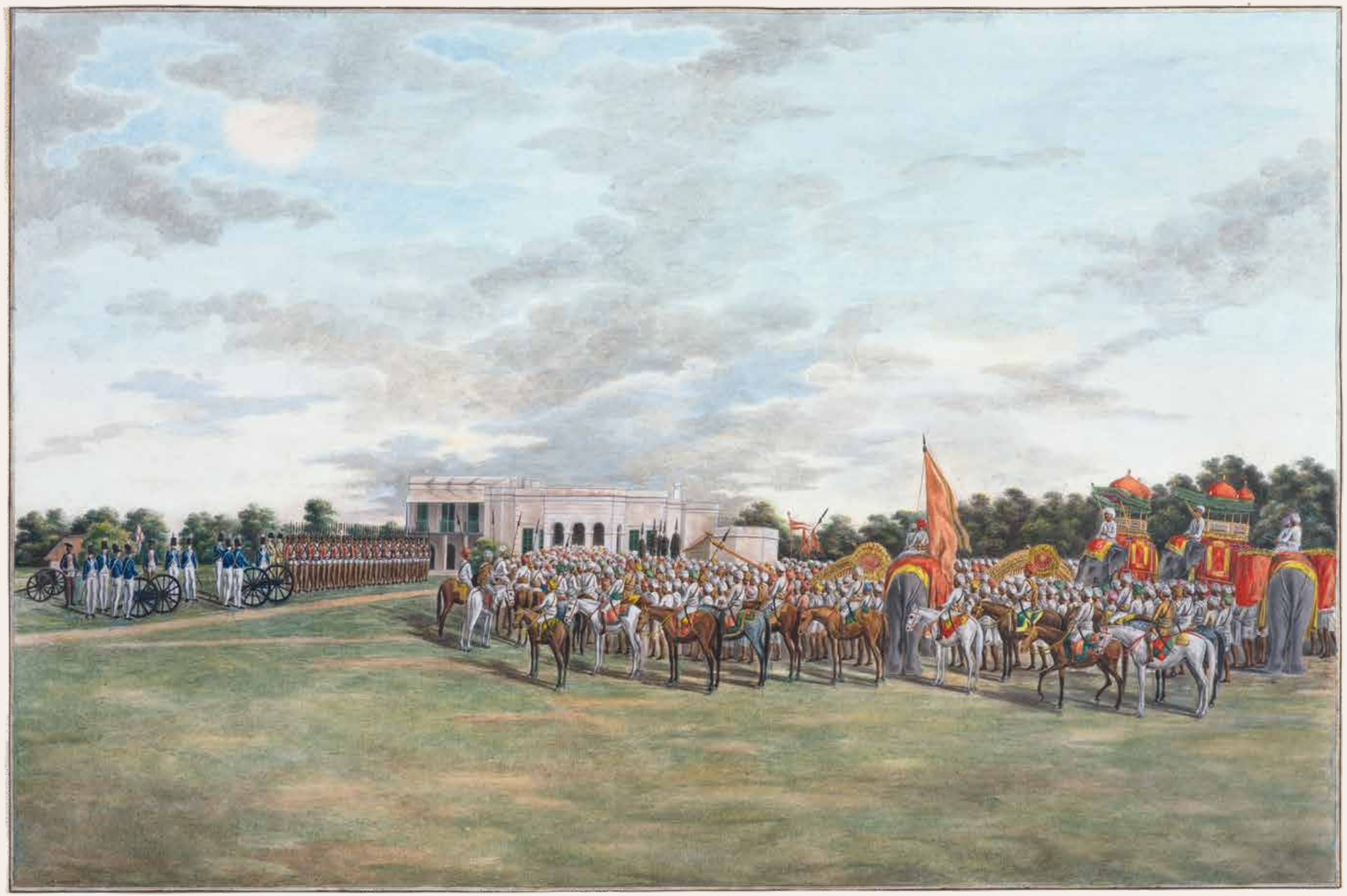
The scene depicts a wedding procession led by an elephant and his grooms. The bridegroom is sitting in an elaborate palanquin, musicians and singers are being carried on a canopied, transportable stage and female spectators are watching the proceedings from a balcony above. Bautze writes that 'another marriage procession in daylight demonstrates the extent to which Sevak Ram used the houses of the Patna streets like scenes for a stage' (Bautze 1998, p. 259).

33
A Hindu Procession, possibly in Puri
41 × 60.5 cm
Inscribed on verso in a 19th century hand:
Rhutt Sattre – a procession of drawing the Duani Cart

The painting depicts a scene of the Ratha Yatra of Puri festival. A group of men are preparing to pull the chariot carrying the three deities (one of which is hidden) Jagannath, Balabhadra and Subhadra, led by the baby Krishna. The scene is set in the countryside, and appears to show the beginning of the procession.
This festival is considered the oldest and largest Hindu chariot festival celebrated annually in June–July in Puri.

34
The Visit Moolaquata to the Commander in Chief
39.5 × 60.5 cm
Inscribed on verso in a 19th century hand:
Moolaquata / Moolaquater (?) – *The Visit*

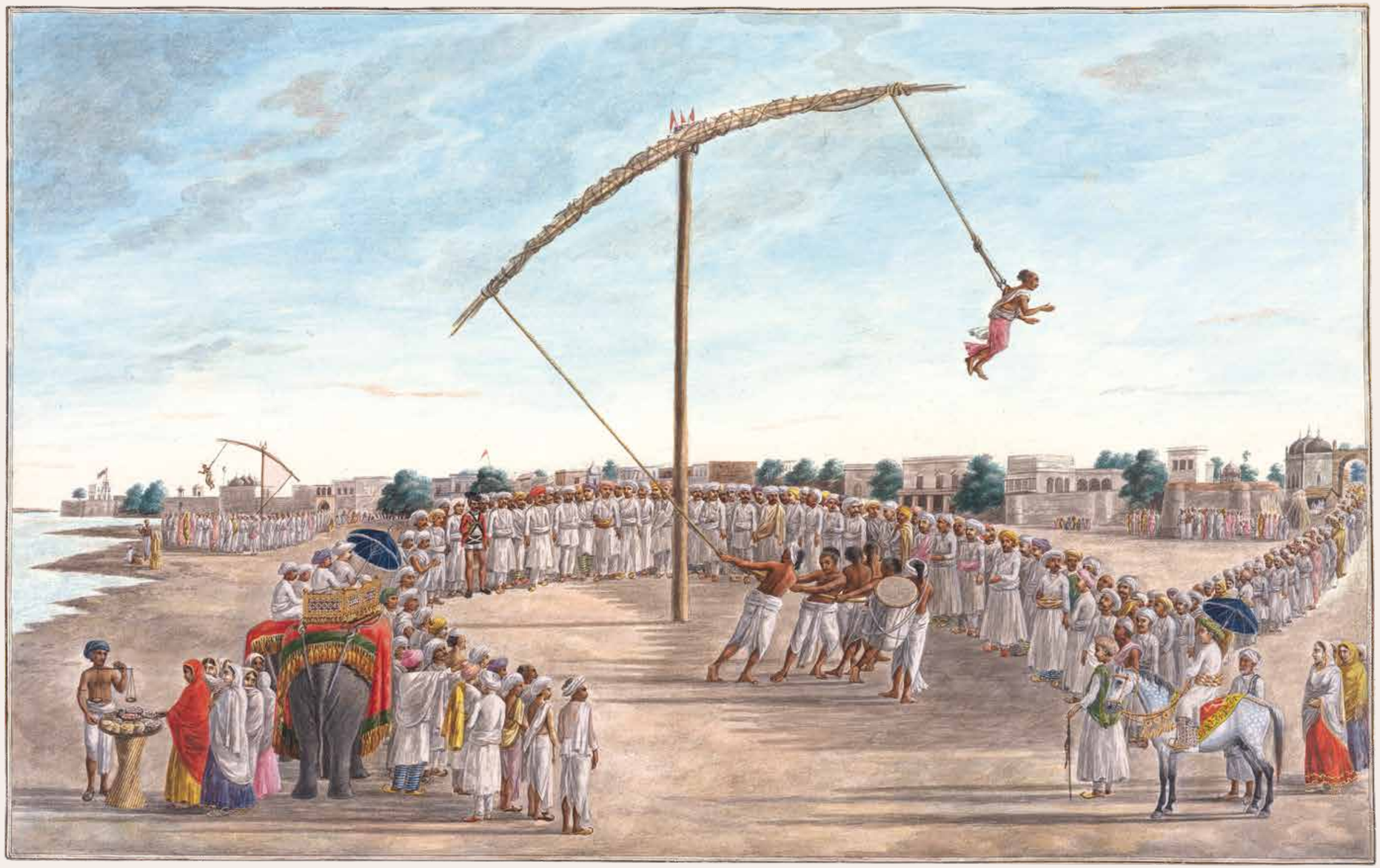
In front of a colonial residence British gunners with a guard of honour formed by Indian Sepoys face a large crowd of attendants, who have accompanied the dignitaries visiting the Commander in Chief. Elephants with empty howdahs and elaborate palanquins resting on the ground suggest that the visitors are inside the residence for the *Moolaquata* (*Mulakat* means an interview or conference in Urdu).



35
The Hook-Swinging Festival
39.5 × 61 cm
Inscribed on verso in a 19th century hand:
Charik / Charak (?) Pooja – Penance

This dramatic scene set on the banks of a river (probably the Ganges), depicts the hook-swinging festival *Charak Pooja*, where two men are suspended, one in the foreground, from poles by a hook thrust through the muscles of their backs. Crowds form a semi-circle around them and more people are queuing to witness the spectacle. Amongst the spectators are dignitaries on horseback and elephant, while a street vendor sells food.

Among the many remarkable religious sights of late 18th and early 19th century India was the practice of what the British called 'hook-swinging', in which a penitent or devotee was suspended by a hook from a crane which was revolved by the efforts of those on the ground to make the penitent swing in a wheel shape. This rite was often performed on the occasion of big festivals. Undertaken as penance in its own right for the supplicant to gain religious merit, it was widely abused by the wealthy having the less fortunate undertake the penance on their behalf so that the merit accrued to them.



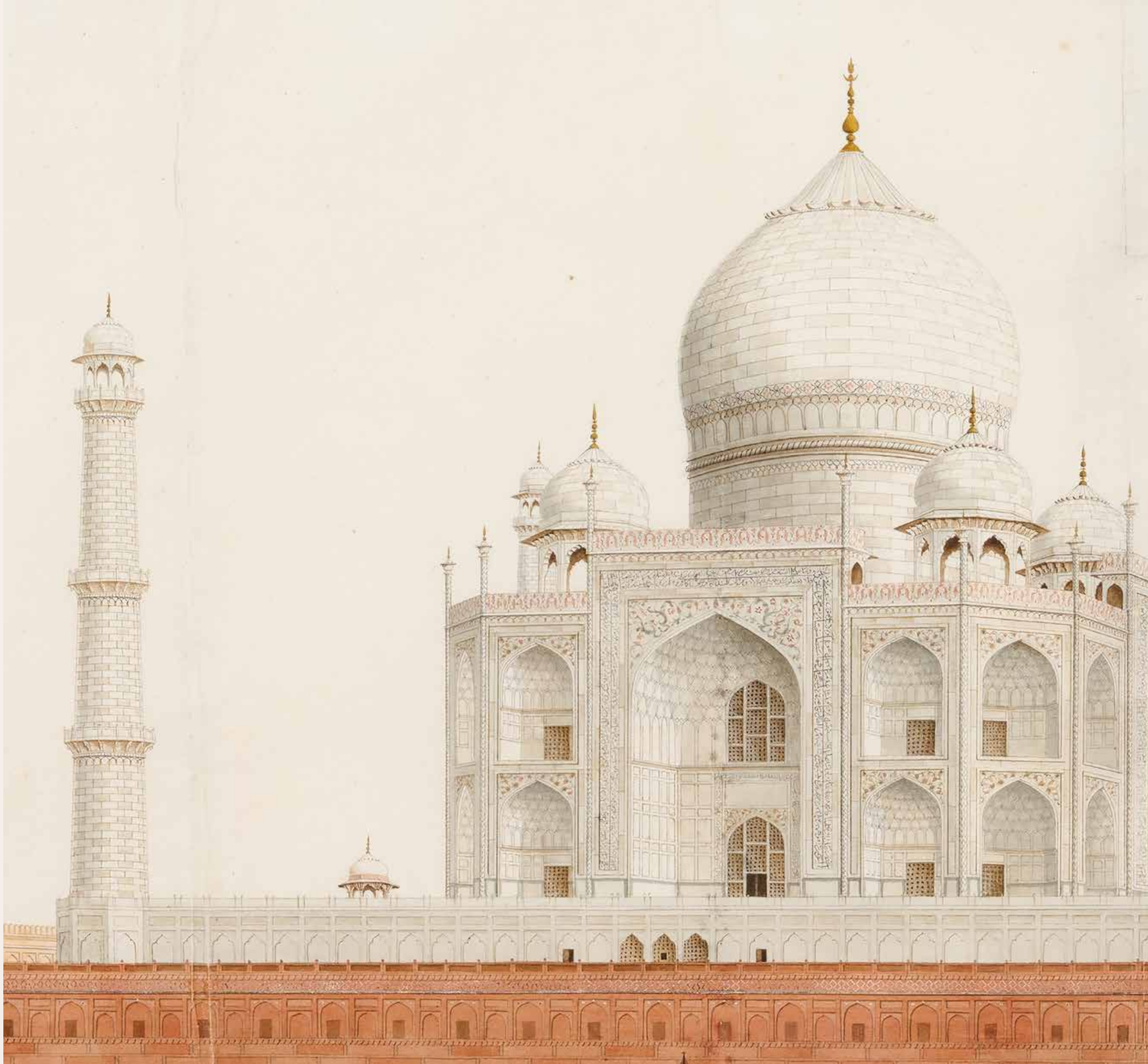
36

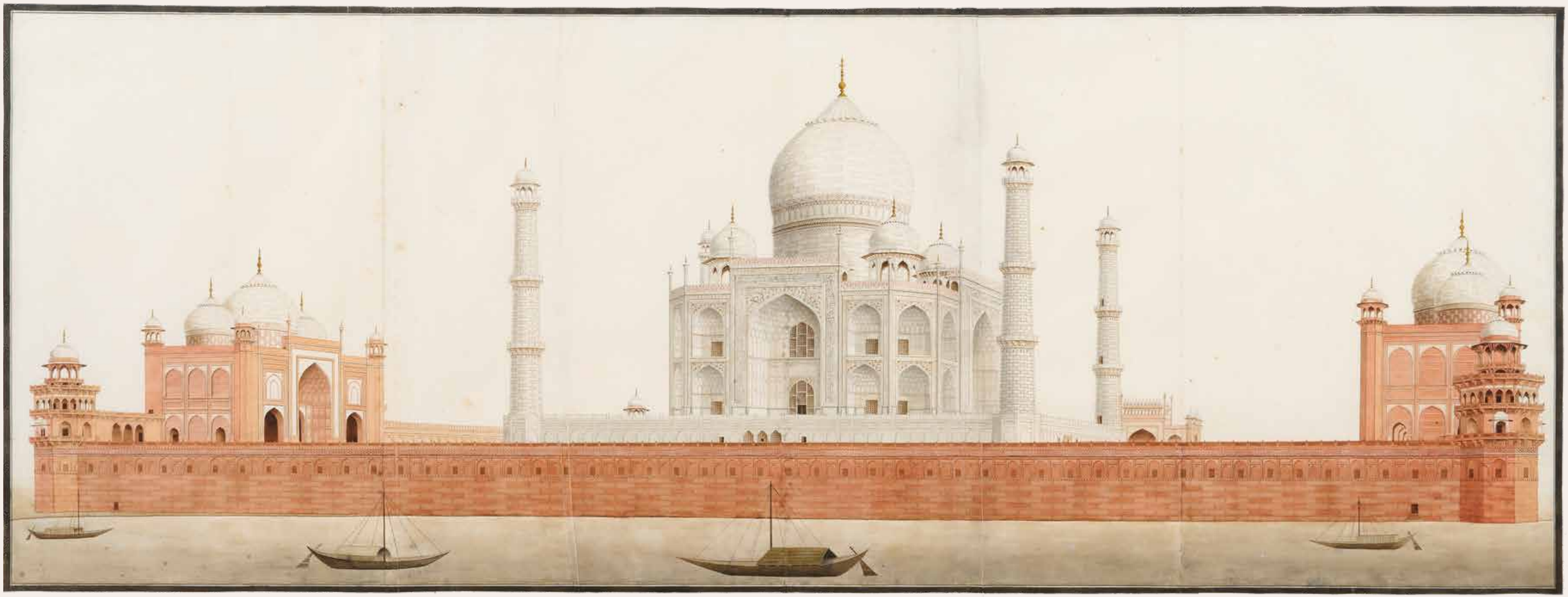
Northern View of the Taj Mahal from the River Jumna
Agra, c. 1810–15
Watercolour on paper within black painted frames, now remargined
Watermark: S. Wise and Patch dated 1809
42 × 108.5 cm

The Taj Mahal was readily accessible to foreign visitors from 1803, after the Marathas expulsion and when the city came under British control. There was huge interest amongst the British in Mughal architecture. The Taj Mahal formed the centrepiece of various albums of large drawings of the Mughal monuments for a period spanning 20 years. Sometimes a whole volume was devoted to the beauties of the Taj Mahal alone.

Our example stands out from other depictions of this monument, for its unusually large size, its view from across the river and the inclusion of small boats on the water, which infuses the painting with life. The artist is also concerned with the play of light and shadows. Large Taj Mahal studies are rare and for a similar drawing from the same viewpoint in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, see Hurel 2010, pp. 224–25. Two more centralised views are in the British Library, see Dalrymple 2019, pp. 148–49, and the Victoria and Albert Museum, see Archer 1992, p. 138.

Colonel Joseph Taylor (1790–1835) early in his career worked with George Steell as assistant engineer at Agra from 1809, when he is recorded as effecting repairs to the Taj Mahal and Akbar's tomb, and despite occasional forays into theatres of war and a five year period in Bengal 1825–30, remained there until his death in 1835, being promoted to successively more senior positions in the Engineers.





37

Portrait of a Handsome White Stallion
Calcutta, signed by Shaykh Muhammad Amir, c. 1845
Opaque pigments on card
41.2 × 54.5 cm

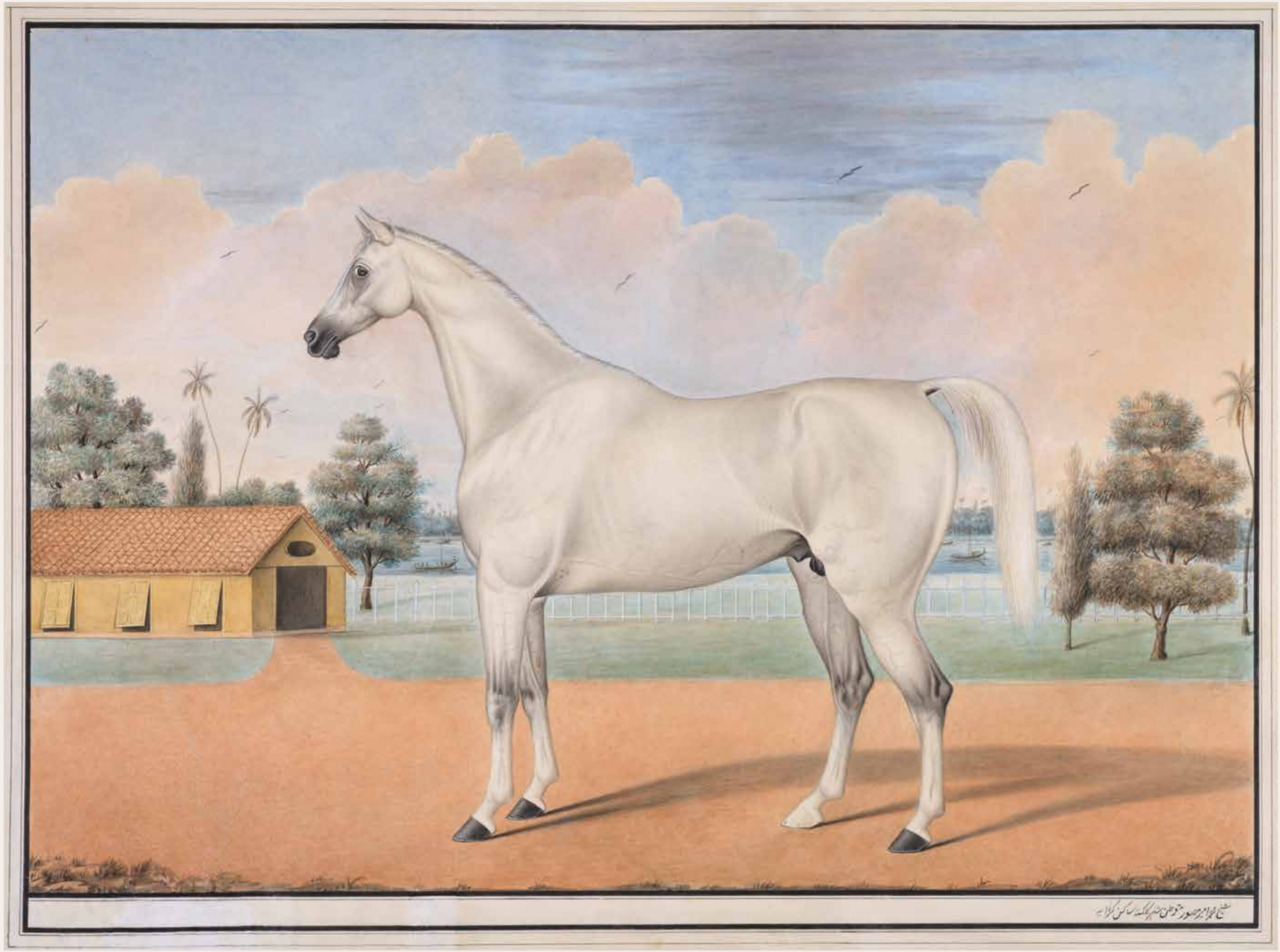
Inscribed on recto:
Shaykh muhammad amir musawwir mutawattin-i shahr-i kalkata sakin-i karraya
'Shaykh Muhammad Amir Musawwir (painter), inhabitant of the city of Calcutta, resident of Karraya'

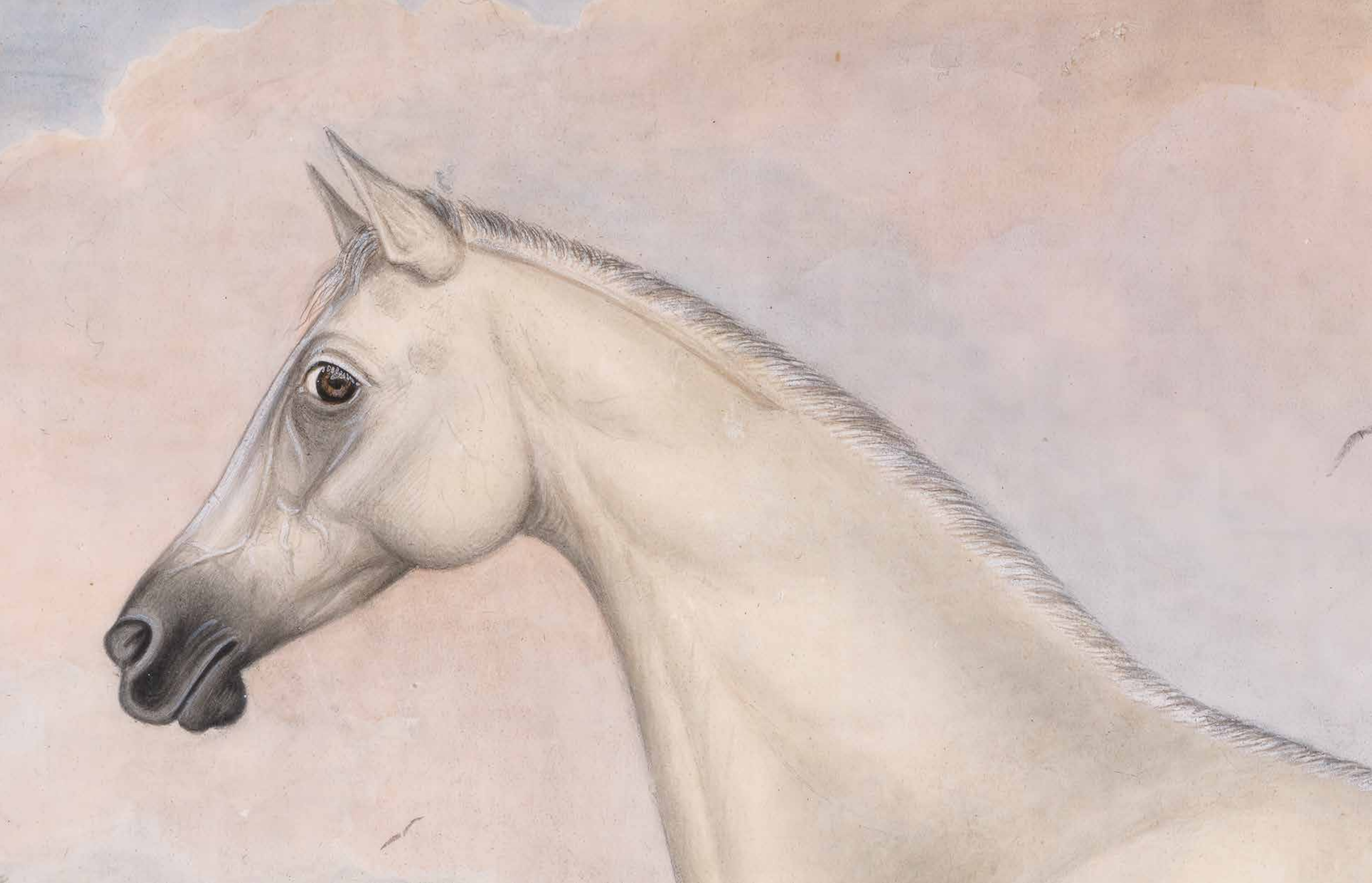
Provenance
Private collection, New York
Christie's 10th October 1989, lot 99A
The Elliot Family collection

Published
Pal, P., 'Indian Artists and British Patrons in Calcutta' in Pal, P. (ed.), *Changing Visons, Lasting Images CALCUTTA through 300 years*, Marg, 1990, fig.13, p.135

This elegant white stallion with his taught muscles and his alert eye staring out at the viewer, is portrayed centre stage. He is depicted against a park-like landscape, with the stables to the left and a long white fence across the painting. Beyond, is the Hooghly river with a number of small boats. The pink tinged clouds in the sky are suggestive of dusk. The dating of c. 1845 is based on another portrait of a 'Bay Horse with Groom' by Shaykh Muhammad Amir of Karraya which is apparently dated 1842 (illustrated in Harris 2019, no' 68, p. 128).

In the 1840s, colonial life in Calcutta, the City of Palaces and capital of the British Raj, was very affluent, with a tight social pecking order. The city had become a magnet for local Indian artists seeking patronage from an English clientele. For generations in England the ruling classes had commemorated their racehorses and hunters, commissioning artists like George Stubbs (1724–1806), John Frederick Herring (1795–1865) and John Ferneley (1782–1860). These animals were much loved by their owners, and this tradition was adopted by British patrons in India. The most distinguished artist of horse painting at this time was Shaykh Muhammad Amir of Karraya (a suburb of Calcutta). His talents lay in his elegant style, his acute observation and his focus on the personality of his subject. Above all, his mastery lay in his ability to capture the rural idyl of the English upper middle classes transposed into a Bengal setting. His prolific output included commissions for painting the houses of his clientele, their household servants, their modes of transport and their pets.





38

***Entari* (Woman's Robe)**
Ottoman Empire, c. 1800
Silk taffeta, silk embroidery, gilt trimming (*harç*), cotton
From shoulder to hem 147 cm; sleeve length from shoulder 109 cm

Provenance
French collection

This *entari*, made of fine cream silk taffeta, has been embroidered with a chain and knot stitch using pastel polychrome silk, creating an all-over design of sinuous, flowering sprigs held together by bows. The robe has a low neckline and is fitted around the shoulders and bust, with a more voluminous skirt. The centre front is open and small ball-shaped passementerie buttons allow the robe to be fastened from the top to the lower waist. The seamed fitted sleeves turn into long hanging sleeves from halfway down the forearm, revealing the same embroidery as used for the robe. The robe is lined with an undyed cotton. The hem, along each side of the centre front opening and the neckline are additionally lined with a wide strip of light pink silk taffeta. This was probably done, as these might have been areas that, although on the inside of the robe, could become visible. The neckline, centre-front opening, hem and hanging section of the sleeves are edged with a gilt ornamental trimming (*harç*). Hidden in the side seams are two deep pockets.

The deep neckline and overall cut are characteristic of 18th-century Ottoman *entaris*. The embroidered textile with its delicate, stylised floral design indicates a French influence; in fact, the latter half of the 18th century is often referred to as Turkish Rococo.

Our *entari* is comparable in cut, decoration and textile to a vivid yellow example in the Sadeberk Hanım Museum (inv. 12494–K.625). The gilt ornamental trimming in both *entaris* appears wider along the centre front down to approximately the hip level, then narrows as it continues toward the hem and around the hemline.

This robe would have belonged to a middle- or upper-class woman and would have been worn on special occasions. Underneath the robe, she would don a fine cotton *gömlek* (chemise) and a pair of loose-fitting *şalvar* (trousers). A belt would have been used to tie the ensemble in at the waist.

39

***Lamba Akotifahana* (Silk Mantle)**
Madagascar, 2006–2007
Silk
236 × 193 cm

This silk cloth (*lamba*) is from a group of highly complex silk textiles (*lamba*) produced by a group of master weavers in Antananarivo, Madagascar. For over 30 years, they have been at the forefront of a resurgence in the craft of classical Malagasy silk weaving. This unique art form is renowned for its striking visual appeal and intricate technical complexity.

Our textile is a warp faced weave distinguished by broad and narrow stripes running vertically along the cloth. These are mixed with supplementary weft brocaded patterns and supplementary warp patterns. The textile also incorporates bands of ikat weave, a technique known in Madagascar as *Lamaisaka*.

Although the seamless design suggests it is a single woven fabric, the textile is in fact assembled from seven handwoven lengths. Each of these passages is the product of an individual artist. The composition presents a rich profusion of colour and pattern that produces an aesthetically unique unity.

The warp threads left after cutting and removing the textile from the loom are plaited and knotted. This method is very distinctive and harks back to the 19th century examples. In addition, patterned borders are woven separately in a warp-faced technique and stitched to the two top and bottom border edges.

The artists from Lamba SARL Studio who created these textiles drew inspiration from extensive studies of rare historical examples. Our textile incorporates many of the techniques and patterns used in the grandest 19th century textiles from the highlands of Madagascar, worn by the elites of the Imerina Kingdom (c. 1540–1897), whose royals also gave them as diplomatic gifts.

Other comparable textiles from this group of master weavers are in important institutions, such as the Metropolitan Museum of Art (inv. 2013.23 and 1999.102), Cleveland Museum of Art (inv. 2021.167), National Museum of African Art (inv. 2001-2-1), The British Museum (inv. Af1993,14.1), and The Art Institute of Chicago (inv. 1998.84).

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