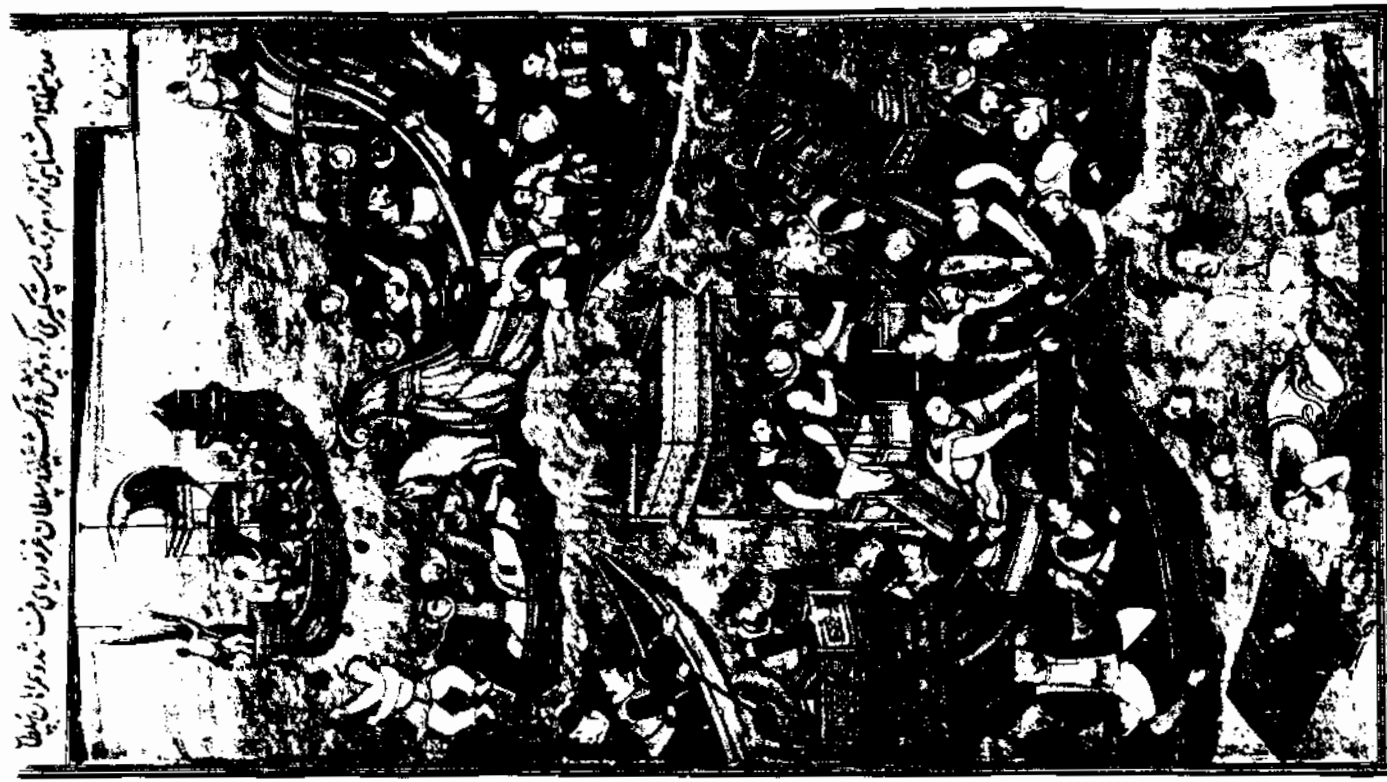


In 1526, Babur, a central Asian prince of mixed Turkish and Mongol (Mughal) descent, won by force of arms the throne of Delhi, and he and his son Humayun brought a renewal of Persian cultural influence in India. The latter's son Akbar (reigned 1556-1605), an immensely talented and energetic man, firmly established his family's hold on the throne, and then proceeded to the conquest of the rest of northern and central India. Akbar set up an immense manuscript studio, employing calligraphers, painters, illuminators, binders and all the other craftsmen necessary for the production of illustrated manuscripts of the finest quality.

The earliest work produced shows that painters from several different Indian provincial styles were already present in the studio. Under the guidance of two Iranian masters, first Mir Sayyid 'Ali and then 'Abd as-Samad, who had both earlier entered Akbar's father's employ, the early Mughal style was formed, combining Persian skill at draughtsmanship and composition with Indian colouring and naturalism. To this was added a realism derived from European painting, gained from contact with the Portuguese in Goa - resulting, particularly, in the beginning of portraiture in India.

At first used in the illustrating of adventure stories and books of fables - perhaps reflecting the youthful Akbar's taste in literature - the mature style was used in the 1580s for illustrating great manuscripts of histories and of Persian translations from the Sanskrit. Only towards the end of the 1580s and during the 1590s did the studio produce the illustrated manuscripts of the Persian poetic classics which were the staple of the Iranian studios.



Bahadur of C
Mughal, about 1
[10498. Or. 12988. f.
(239 x 127 mm).]

The Portuguese
in India in 1499.
ships dominated
Ocean throughout
century, controll
lucrative sea-bor
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Daman and Diu
of Gujarat. In 15
Bahadur (reigned
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La'l was an art
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Less idiosyncratic
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Akbari style at its

Bahadur of Gujarat.

Mughal, about 1604. By La'l.

London. Or. 12988, f. 66a
(239 × 127 mm.)

The Portuguese had arrived in India in 1499, and their ships dominated the Indian Ocean throughout the 16th century, controlling the lucrative sea-borne trade of the littoral states from such strongholds as Goa and Daman and Diu on the coast of Gujarat. In 1537, Sultan Bahadur (reigned 1526-37) took refuge from the victorious armies of the Mughal Humayan in the Portuguese fort at Diu.

During the negotiations with the Governor on board ship, the Portuguese tried to capture him. Bahadur jumped into the sea with some followers, and according to the *Akbarnama*, from which the miniature comes, was drowned. Our artist here appears to be following a different Persian history which relates that the Sultan was killed by Portuguese soldiers while attempting to swim to safety, and even shows the Portuguese Governor of the Indies, Nuno da Cunha, directing the operation from the small boat in front.

La'l was an artist entrusted with a great deal of the design work of the major Mughal manuscripts from the 1580s. Less idiosyncratic than many of his colleagues, his work perhaps typifies the mature Akbari style at its finest.



Though Mughal artists were not noted for topographical accuracy until the 19th century, Dhanraj has produced an instantly recognisable version of this famous fort, even including the (now vanished) stone elephant on the bastion outside the main gate which gave the latter the name of Hathipol, or Elephant Gate. Perhaps the greatest delight in this picture, however, is provided by the depiction at the bottom of the page of Indian village life carrying on, untroubled by the passing of kings or the conquest of fortresses.





watching the young
Akbar shooting.
Mughal, about 1604. By
Govardhan.

[Oxap. Or. 12988, f. 158a
(239 × 128 mm).]

The powerful Bairam Khan
acted as tutor and mentor to
the young Akbar, until the
young monarch grew tired of
his tutelage and asserted his
independence in 1560.

This strange painting is the
earliest known work of one of
the greatest 17th century
Mughal painters, Govardhan,
who was at his finest perhaps
when depicting ascetics and
sages. In this early painting,
the effect is somewhat
undisciplined, as Govardhan
has not coordinated the boy's
aim with the spectators' gaze.

15 The elephant spares
the man who desisted
from slaying her calf.
Mughal, 1605.

[LW 100. Or. 1362, 1694 (210 x 118 mm.)]

In this strange story from a book of hagiography of Muslim saints and mystics, a she-elephant savages the band of men who had dismembered her calf, save only for the one man of the group who had not, whom she takes to safety. A pair of jackals watch the scene from across the little river. The painting is executed in the *nim-qalam* or 'grisaille' style, like many others from the early years of the 17th century, in which imitations of European techniques became common. The purpose seems to have been to imitate the effect of the European print, but always the Mughal versions the greys or browns are enlivened with pale washes of pink or blue, with some effects in full colour.





**16 The monkey leads
the bears into the
desert.**

Mughal, 1600, from
Ahmedabad.

[OMP. Or. 6317, f. 124b
(100 x 113 mm).]

Into a pitiless landscape of burning sand, the horizon obscured by haze, the cunning monkey leads the bears who have invaded the territory of his tribe.

In this stark painting, the unknown artist has gone to the heart of the tale and stripped away all of the inessentials from the Mughal style to produce an almost terrifyingly realistic study of animals in distress. With their lolling tongues and gesticulating hands, they reel across the painting in a nightmare vision. This superb painting comes from a manuscript of a fable-book produced for the governor of the province of Gujarat in 1600.

15 The elephant spares the man who desisted from slaying her calf.

Mughal, 1605.

[OMPA. (C). 1. 1612, 1. 1622 (210 x 118 mm.)]

In this strange story from a book of hagiography of Muslim saints and mystics, a she-elephant savages the band of men who had dismembered her calf, save only for the one man of the group who had not, whom she takes to safety. A pair of jackals watch the scene from across the little river. The painting is executed in the *nim-qalam* or 'grissalé' style, like many others from the early years of the 17th century, in which imitations of European techniques became common. The purpose seems to have been to imitate the effect of the European print, but always in the Mughal versions the greys or browns are enlivened with pale washes of pink or blue, with some effects in full colour.



دست و پای می ماند و دست نکشتم تا سر نکشتم پس بنویسمی آنکه در اولی که کوفتا
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مومن فرایند و در آن کوفت که کوفت که کوفت که کوفت که کوفت که کوفت که کوفت
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17 Akbar resting during a hunt.

Mughal, about 1590.

[Olar, Johnson Album 8, no. 4
(366 x 185 mm).]

Hunting animals was not only a pastime for the Mughals but a necessity, for much of their time was spent in travelling. Here a *gamaarha*, in which the beaters enclose the animals in a ring where they can be slaughtered, is illustrated. Akbar grew sick of this practice while out hunting one day in 1578; this painting showing him sitting under a fig tree pensively gazing at a slaughtered mountain-goat may actually illustrate the incident. The ring of heaters is in place and the goats are crowded on to crags awaiting their fate, while Akbar is beseeched to give the signal to commence the slaughter.

18 Washermen at work.

Mughal, about 1575-80.

[Olar, Or. 4615, f. 4a (333 x 192 mm).]

The Indian *dhobi*, the washer-man who brings clothes down to the river and pounds them against the rocks, has always been a noteworthy feature of Indian life, and in this, the earliest known study of this ubiquitous phenomenon, the artist's fascination in his theme is obvious. The concentration on the work in hand, the sense that these men are individuals, not types, make this one of the most remarkable of early Mughal paintings, the charm of which is increased by the animals all around.



22 Europeans in an antique scene.

Mughal, about 1590.

[100 R., Johnson Album 16, no. 6
(264 x 175 mm).]

From about 1570, Mughal artists were exposed to European paintings and prints, brought originally to the Portuguese city of Goa and sent from there as presents to the Mughal Emperor. Akbar valued highly European pictorial realism, and hoped to instill this into his own artists, both through copying European originals and also (as here) getting them to paint 'conceits' in a European style. Of course to the modern eye, the confusion of theme, religious imagery mixed with late 16th-century costume, is faintly ridiculous; but the figures, especially the attendant pouring wine, have an intentness of purpose and solidity within the landscape (even if the chief figure's chair does not bear too close an inspection) that is a new and exciting development in Mughal painting and one which was to yield great results in the next reign.





23 A shepherd o
flowers to an asc
Mughal, about 158
Basavan.

[101.8. Johnson Album 22
(185 x 127 mm)]

Ascetics have alway
both venerated and
in Indian society. T
exposure of Indian
the 16th century to
drawings and carica
such masters as Du
resulted in a long-c
exploitation of the l
Here a shepherd sh
proffers a flower to
bloating ascetic who
marches on his way
him. The disciple b
gazing devotedly at
master, provides th
it is food for his rit
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The dog worrying t
perhaps suggests a
that his masters wo
satisfactory!

Mughal composit
at its finest is an un
compromise betwe
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made excellent use
European techniqu
pencil drawing and
to impart volume a
dimensionality to h
at the same time as
the Indo-Persian tr
bodies having to be
almost frontally - e
though, as here, sid
would better accord
faces in profile.

flowers to an ascetic.
Mughal, about 1585-90. By
Basavan.

[101.8, Johnson Album 22, no. 13,
(185 x 127 mm).]

Ascetics have always been both venerated and ridiculed in Indian society. The exposure of Indian artists in the 16th century to European drawings and caricatures by such masters as Dürer resulted in a long-continued exploitation of the latter.

Here a shepherd shyly proffers a flower to the bloated ascetic who proudly marches on his way, ignoring him. The disciple behind, gazing devotedly at his master, provides the reason - it is food for his ritual-pot that they want, not flowers. The dog worrying the sheep perhaps suggests a way out that his masters would find satisfactory!

Mughal composition even at its finest is an uneasy compromise between European and Indian views of the world. Our artist has made excellent use of European techniques of pencil drawing and shading to impart volume and three-dimensionality to his figures, at the same time as retaining of the Indo-Persian tradition of bodies having to be viewed almost frontally - even though, as here, side views would better accord with the faces in profile.

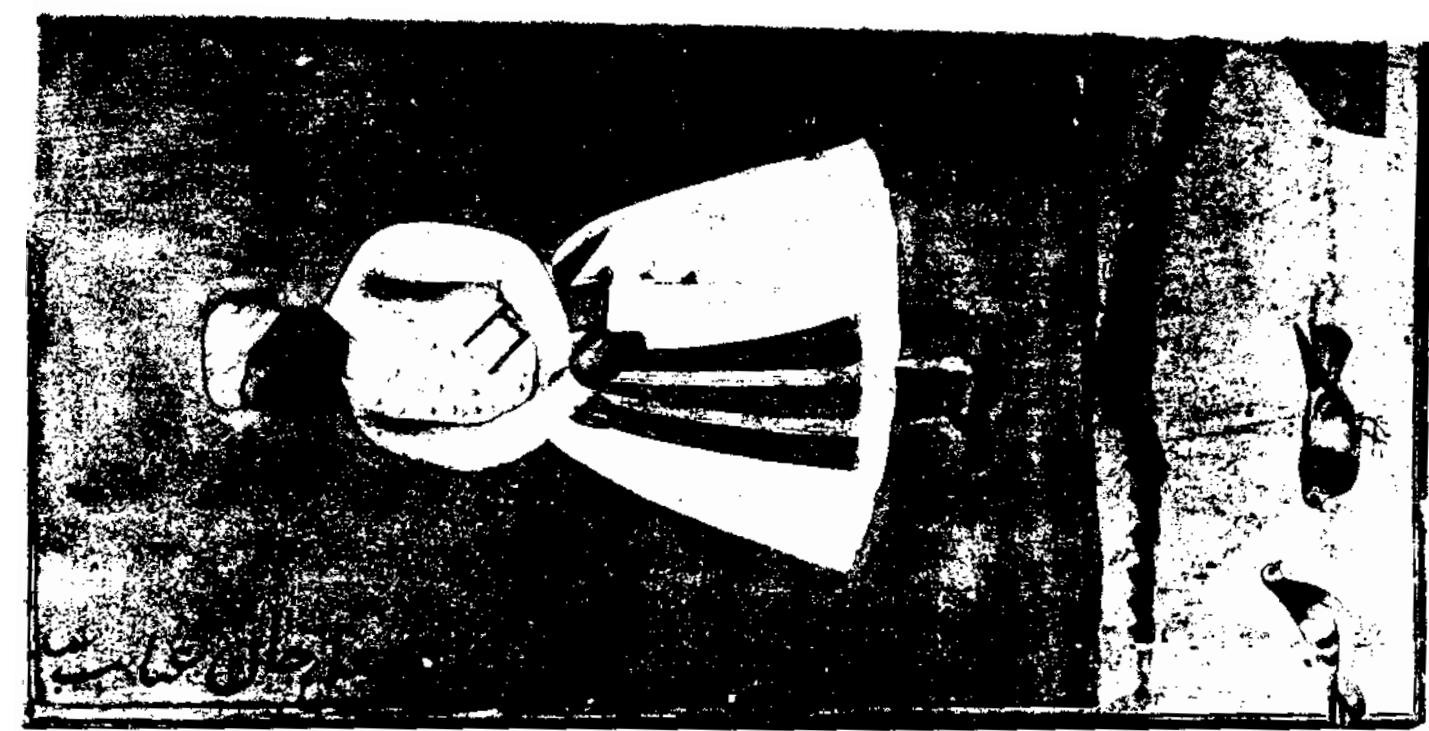


24 زاهدی انجمن انجمن
Mughal, about 1595. By
'Inayat.

[101.8, Johnson Album 18, no. 18,
(102 x 69 mm).]

Zain Khan was the son of Akbar's nurse Pichah Jan, and hence Akbar's foster-brother, *koka*. He died a few years before Akbar, in 1601. Akbar's biographer, Abu'l Fazl, tells us that towards the end of his life Akbar 'sat for his likeness and also ordered to have the likenesses taken of all the grantees of the realm. An immense album was thus formed: those that have passed away have received a new life, and those who are still alive have immortality promised them'.

Many of the portraits which have survived from this album bear the same characteristics of exquisitely modelled and detailed figures standing against a plain green ground, with Jahangir's characteristic scrawl identifying the subject and the artist. Originally they were mounted four to a page.



25 Celebrations at the birth of Timur.

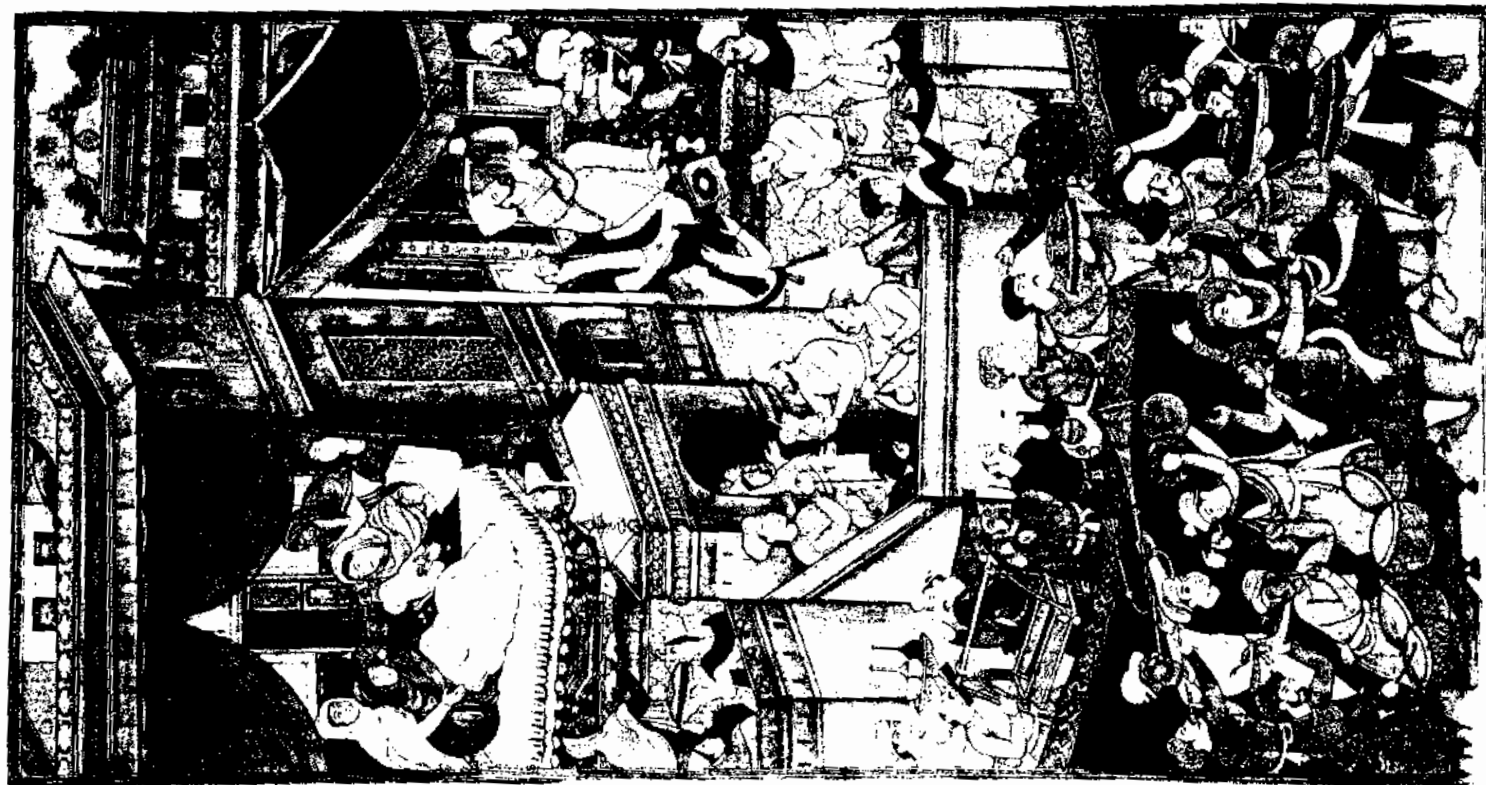
Mughal, about 1604. By S. Das Gujarati.

[Owens Or. 12988, f. 34b (236 x 122 mm).]

The spectator's bird's-eye view allows us a most privileged glimpse behind the walls of a harem at the moment when Timur the Lame, conqueror of half Asia and ancestor of the Mughals, was born in 1369. Drums, cymbals and bla-

horns greet the birth, with food, drink and a cradle brought in. The eye is screened up the picture through the screens and walls to where astrologers are busy casting the baby's horoscope and finally to the birth-chamber itself.

Sur Das would have no access to royal Mughal women, so his treatment of Timur's mother and her relatives is somewhat contrasting with his biographies of the musicians and bearers at the bottom of the picture. Here, we feel real people, the actual attendants at the Mughal court, maybe the very musicians whose noise announced the dawn of imperial entrances in the palace.



25 Celebrations at the birth of Timur.

Mughal, about 1604. By Sur Das Gujarati.

[OARF. Or. 12988, f. 34b
(236 × 122 mm).]

The spectator's bird's-eye view allows us a most privileged glimpse behind the walls of a harem at the moment when Timur the Lame, conqueror of half of Asia and ancestor of the Mughals, was born in 1336. Drums, cymbals and blaring horns greet the birth, while food, drink and a cradle are brought in. The eye is subtly led up the picture through the screens and walls to where astrologers are busy casting the baby's horoscope and finally to the birth-chamber itself.

Sur Das would have had no access to royal Mughal women, so his treatment of Timur's mother and female relatives is somewhat vapid, contrasting with his brilliant studies of the musicians and bearers at the bottom of the picture. Here, we feel, are real people, the actual attendants at the Mughal court, maybe the very musicians whose noise announced the dawn and all imperial entrances into the palace.



26 Darab and his beloved Tahrusiyya entertained by 'Umar.

Mughal, about 1575-80. By Nanha.

[OARF. Or. 4615, f. 24a
(321 × 295 mm).]

Darab is the hero of a complicated romance in the Persian epic tradition, in which he eventually establishes his claim to the Persian throne. In the early part of the story, he is befriended by Tahrusiyya. The details need not concern us, any more than they did the artist Nanha, a Hindu artist, probably from the Deccan, who uses the subject of the feast in the tent to display his mastery in the depiction of the working man, the cook intent on his job, and the hunchback waiter.

Mughal artists were still experimenting with formats at this stage in the development of the style. Whereas a Persian artist would have been content with extending his subject into the left margin and perhaps with protrusions above, Nanha has boldly utilised the whole page. This has the effect of floating the text panels in front of the painting, and obviated the necessity to provide linkage between foreground and background where the Mughal style was still, at this stage, technically deficient.



Guide to further reading

For a general overview of Indian painting, the best book remains D. Barrett and B. Gray, *Indian Painting* (Geneva, 1963). Manuscript illustration has been surveyed by J. P. Losty in *The Art of the Book in India* (London, 1982). Few definitive studies of individual schools have been published, but among the best are W. G. Archer, *Indian Painting from the Punjab Hills* (London, 1973); M. Zebrowski, *Deccani Painting* (London, 1982); M. C. Beach, *Rajput Painting at Bundi and Kotah* (Ascona 1974); A. Topsfield, *Paintings from Rajasthan in the Collection of the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne* (1980). For Mughal painting, no one has yet produced a definitive modern history, so that exhibition or collection catalogues remain for the present the most useful books on the subject. These include: *The Library of A. Chester Beatty: a catalogue of the Indian miniatures*, by Sir Thomas W. Arnold, ed. J. V. S. Wilkinson (London, 1936); *The Grand Mogul* (Williamstown, 1978), and *The Imperial Image* (Washington, 1982), both by M. C. Beach; *The Art of Mughal India*, by S. C. Welch (New York, 1963); and *Indian Miniatures in the India Office Library* (London, 1981), by T. Falk and M. Archer. The pioneering work by F. R. Martin, *The miniature paintings and painters of Persia, India, and Turkey* (London, 1912) is still useful, as are the slightly later *Indian painting under the Mughals* (Oxford, 1924), by P. Brown, and *La peinture indienne à l'époque des grands moghols* (Paris, 1929), by I. Stichoukine.



70 (Above): Sa'di and the boastful young man.

Mughal, 1605-10.

LOBBE. (D. 5302, 1103a (203 x 175 mm).)

The poet and moralist Sa'di tells the story of how he had set off through a wild region in the company of a well-armed young man, who had boasted of his skill at arms. On being attacked, however, the man was the first to beg the robbers to spare his life.

Sa'di ruefully declares that one should not put trust in boasters.

This is one of the most

successful Mughal attempts at depicting a receding landscape, which, combined with the three-dimensional studies of the robbers and their victims, makes it also one of the most naturalistic. The type of faces and stances suggests an attribution to Sur Das Gujarati (see 25).



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