AKBAR'S INDIA:
Art from the Mughal City of Victory
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BY MICHAEL BRAND AND GLENN D. LOWRY

The Asia Society Galleries
New York
Akbar's India: Art from the Mughal City of Victory is the catalogue of an exhibition organized by The Asia Society in celebration of the Festival of India 1985-86.

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FRONTISPICE:

*Akbar Presiding over Discussions in the Udadakhana*, detail (Akbarnama, ca. 1604).

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FOREWORD

This year marks the twenty-fifth anniversary of The Asia Society Galleries. Among the many roles that the Galleries has played over this quarter century, one of the most important has been the encouragement of scholarly study of Asian art. This role is particularly evident in the area of Mughal painting, beginning with the 1964 exhibition The Art of Mughal India, organized by Stuart Cary Welch of Harvard University. Thanks to the work of such scholars and their exhibitions, the study of Asian art has matured in America.

This exhibition is a very special one, not only because of the spectacular beauty of the artworks, which have been lent by very generous and cooperative individuals and institutions both in this country and abroad, but also because it marks a new generation of scholarship and a strong conceptual approach to the making of an exhibition.

Our curators, Michael Brand of the Rhode Island School of Design, and Glenn D. Lowry of the Freer Gallery of Art, have been intensely involved in the comprehensive examination of Mughal art. The five years of research that they devoted to this task led to this exhibition and to their recent publication, Fatehpur-Sikri: A Sourcebook, in addition to the organization of an international conference to take place during the period of the exhibition.

This exhibition and book focus on a specific moment and place in the history of Mughal art, the brief period when Akbar's capital was the city of Fatehpur-Sikri. The treasures that have been gathered from that time and setting can bring Akbar's world vividly to our imagination. Visitors to the impressive and majestic buildings of Fatehpur-Sikri, so well-preserved after four hundred years, must wonder what the city was like when Akbar ruled.

This exhibition provides a detailed view of that remarkable place and time. Looking at the images gathered here, we can realize just how spectacular that court must have appeared. From the text, we can learn how exciting it must have been for artists and their patrons.

This research has a broader significance, for it also documents how the intelligence and personality of a powerful individual can direct the development of art forms. This is a key motivation in the creation of art and deserves close attention. This text also reveals the spiritual and philosophical depth of these beautiful images and Akbar's comprehensive, almost mystical view of the world.

We are very grateful to Michael Brand and Glenn D. Lowry for their work and cooperation, and to Stuart Cary Welch for his efforts on behalf of the exhibition. I also want to acknowledge the dedication and skill of the Galleries' staff most intimately involved with the project, Osa Brown, who produced the book, and Jean Milich, who coordinated the loans.

This exhibition and book have been made possible through a splendid combination of private and public support. We are deeply grateful to the Andrée and Bella Meyer Foundation, The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, The Robert Lehman Foundation, Inc., the Friends of The Asia Society Galleries, the Indo-U.S. Subcommission for Education and Culture and Air India. We are also indebted to the National Endowment for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Humanities, Washington, D.C., both of which provided major grants for this project.

Andrew Perakis
Director, The Asia Society Galleries
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This exhibition would not have been possible without the enthusiastic support of Stuart Cary Welch, whom we have long been fortunate to have as a teacher and a friend. His pioneering work in the field of Mughal art has been a constant source of inspiration for our own studies. We hope our work also reflects the generosity of Oleg Grabar and Milo Beach in sharing their insights on Islamic and Indian art with us. At The Asia Society, Andrew Pekarik provided us with endless support and encouragement, while Osa Brown, and her assistant Onaghi Church, worked with great dedication on the production of the catalogue, and Jean Millich deftly handled the considerable logistics problems for a show composed entirely of borrowed objects. Peter Oldenburg's skillful design of the catalogue gave outward form to our research and we are grateful for his sensitive interpretation of the material. We will always be extremely grateful to Allen Wardwell, the former Director of The Asia Society Galleries, for his initial support of this project. Special thanks are due to Edward Egan for his constructive editing of our book, and to the Freer Gallery's Pat Bragdon for her initial help in preparing the manuscript. Our research in the United States, Europe, and India was generously supported by grants from the Friends of The Asia Society Galleries and the Indo-U.S. Subcommission on Education and Culture. We are also very grateful for the assistance of Air India, and we are especially indebted to Pallavi Shah of the New York office.

Ted Tamer, American Executive Director of the Subcommission, and Nirajan Desai, Minister for Culture at the Indian Embassy in Washington, were tireless in their efforts on our behalf. This year's nationwide Festival of India is a tribute to their dedication. On the Indian side of the Festival, we are deeply appreciative of the courtesies extended to us by Papu Jayakari, S. K. Misra, Mantral Singh, Vijay Singh, and Kapila Vatsyayan. Our research in India was aided by the Archaeological Survey of India, especially by M. S. Nagaraja Rao, M. D. Khare and M. C. Joshi in Delhi, and H. K. Nairn in Agra. Father John Correia-Afonso of the Heras Institute in Bombay provided us with many invaluable suggestions, and Archbishop Cecil D'us of Agra graciously permitted us to borrow an extremely rare Akbari document in the possession of his archdiocesan archives.

Without the private collectors (including a member who wish to remain anonymous), the curators and trustees of the institutions who so willingly lent works from their collections, this exhibition could never have attained its desired form. Their generosity is especially appreciated in the context of the increased demands and frequently conflicting schedules occasioned by the Festival of India. Indeed, it is not possible to mention each instance separately, but we are sure that all those named below realize how much we appreciate their individual acts of assistance and hospitality.

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In Europe, we would like to thank Simon Digby, Royal Asiatic Society, London; H. O. Fierten and Dieter George, Staatliche Preussische Kulturbesitz, West Berlin; Roger Goeppe and Ulrich Wiessner, Museum für Ostasiatische Kunst, Cologne; Howard Hodgkin; David James, The Chester Beatty Library, Dublin; Jeremiah P. Losty and Yasir Safadi, The British Library, London; Claire Miles and Pauline Robati, India Office Library, London; Michael Rogers, The British Museum, London; Prince Saluddin Aga Khan; David Scarfe, The Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge University; and Robert Skelton, The Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Zainuddin A. Shafee kindly translated the Akbari formus for us. As ever, Arturo Pernicioli of the Islamic Environmental Design Research Centre in Rome, was extremely generous in allowing us to publish his magnificent plans of Fatehpur-Siki.

Finally, we would like to thank Susan, Nicholas, and Alexis Lowry for putting up with last weekends and endless late night telephone calls up and down the East Coast as we struggled to complete our work.

Michael Brand
Rhode Island School of Design

Glenn D. Lowry
Freer Gallery of Art
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MICHAEL BRAND
Rhode Island School of Design
GLEN D. LOWRY
Freer Gallery of Art

AKBAR'S INDIA:
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INTRODUCTION

Although Fatehpur-Sikri, the Mughal City of Victory, served as Akbar’s residence for only fourteen years— from 1571 until 1585—it developed into one of the most extraordinary cities in all of India. Its red sandstone buildings with their bold façades and graceful lines were the setting for a court where the arts were as powerful and original as the politics were daring.

The aim of this exhibition and catalogue is to investigate Akbar’s personality and the Mughal culture into which he was born by focusing on the critical years he spent at Fatehpur-Sikri. In doing so we have illustrated our ideas with paintings, textiles, manuscripts, woodwork, and metalware of the period. Throughout, our concern has been the relationship between the architectural and social environment created at Fatehpur-Sikri and the development of new artistic forms and images. Because of the rather broad nature of these we have not concerned ourselves with the attribution of paintings, or objects, to the hands of individual artists and only rarely have we ventured to suggest new dates for the material under consideration. It is only the extensive work of Stuart Cary Welch, Milo Cleveland Beach, and Robert Skelton in these critical areas that has allowed us, however, the luxury of exploring an expanded range of cultural issues within a narrowly defined chronological framework.

While the exhibition and catalogue concentrate on Akbar’s years at his new city, the objects we have selected are not limited to the 1570s and 1580s. Many of them have been chosen to show how themes initiated at Fatehpur-Sikri were interpreted and elaborated upon during the rest of the emperor’s reign. In order to better understand the dynamics of these years we have tried to interpret the material according to the Mughals’ own categories and terminology as found in contemporary Iranian and Mughal sources. This approach provides an exciting glimpse into the actual organization of artistic production at Fatehpur-Sikri and the intellectual criteria that guided the development of the visual arts under Akbar’s patronage. The catalogue begins with a historical introduction to Akbar as a patron and statesman and then proceeds to a discussion of the topography and history of Fatehpur-Sikri, the formation and function of the emperor’s library (khanqah), both as a center of production and collection, and the imperial workshops (karkhanas), and concludes with an analysis of Akbar’s use of images.

Two key issues emerge from this examination of Akbar’s response to his native Mughal culture and the new possibilities brought forth by the social and political experiments that were undertaken at Fatehpur-Sikri. The first is the emperor’s great interest in his family’s past. He traced his ancestry back to Chingiz Khan (Genghis Khan) as well as to Timur (Tamerlane) and was preoccupied with living up to the expectations of this dual legacy. The second is Akbar’s adherence to traditional Islamic concepts of kingship despite his interest in Indian and European culture and religions. He was particularly concerned with the dichotomy between the realms of the physical or material world (surat) and the spiritual world of inner meaning (manam) on both the practical and theoretical level. This polarity, we believe, provides the basis for understanding and approaching the emperor’s character and his often grandiose ambitions. Just as Fatehpur-Sikri usurped to some degree the roles of both Agra (the old political capital) and Ajmer (the former spiritual center of the empire), Akbar sought to combine within himself political and spiritual authority.

It was at this new City of Victory that the emperor realized the full potential of focusing upon himself the sovereignty of the material and spiritual worlds. It was also there that Akbar sought to create a new artistic language of visual forms that would allow him to explore, and reveal, the finer distinctions of inner meaning. The exquisite illustrated manuscripts, bold carpets and dramatic objects created for Akbar are as dazzling to the eye as they are indicative of the emperor’s struggle to define his—and ultimately the Mughals’—vision of the world.
CHAPTER I

AKBAR AND THE FORMATION OF MUGHAL ART

In 1573, Jalal ad-Din Akbar (r. 1556–1605), the third Mughal ruler of India, began the construction of Fatehpur-Sikri thirty-eight kilometers (twenty-four miles) to the west of Agra. When Akbar issued the order for work to commence at Fatehpur-Sikri, he was twenty-nine years old but had ruled the most important throne of northern India since the age of fourteen. By the time of his death in 1605, Akbar had extended his kingdom to include virtually all of the Indian subcontinent. The emperor’s political and military feats, however, were matched by his patronage of the arts and his years at Fatehpur-Sikri were among the most productive in this respect. The buildings of Fatehpur-Sikri, and the various works of art that were created there between 1571 and 1585, reflect the emperor’s vision of his world.

Akbar (whose name means “The Great”) was a man of tremendous energy and power. According to Father Monserrat, a member of the Jesuit mission that resided at the Mughal court during the early 1600s, the emperor was...

...of good stature, sturdy body, arms and legs, broad-shouldered. The configuration of his face is ordinary, and does not reflect the grandeur and dignity of the person because, besides being Chinese-like as the Mughals usually are, it is lean, spare of beard, wrinkled and not very fair. The eyes are small but extremely vivid and when he looks at you it seems as if they hurt you with their brightness, and thus nothing escapes his notice, be it a person or something trivial, and they also reveal sharpness of mind and keenness of intellect. And so he is very much feared by his subjects. To his people he displays a certain amount of cheerfulness which in no way detracts from his imperial bearing. He dresses plainly.

Akbar inherited an empire in 1556 that was fragmented and unstable. Against incredible odds he expanded his territory and brought the Hindu and Muslim factions at his court into a strong and lasting union. Through a series of social and administrative reforms he also changed the very structure of Indian life. It is this combination of dynamism and political skill that makes Akbar such a fascinating figure.

The emperor was born on October 15, 1542 at Unarkot, a small desert town in western India (now Pakistan). At that time the Mughal empire existed in name only. Akbar’s father, Nasir ad-Din Muhammad Humayun (r. 1530–1540; 1555–56), was in the process of fleeing India for the safety of Qazvin, the capital of Safavid Iran. Although intellectually gifted, Humayun was militarily inept. He was unable to consolidate the fragile kingdom left to him by his father, Zahir ad-Din Babur (r. 1526–30), the founder of the dynasty.

By 1575, Gujarat on the western coast of India had become independent and Bengal on the opposite side of the subcontinent was in revolt. With brilliant tactics, Sher Shah Sur, a Muslim of Afghan descent, succeeded in defeating Humayun in a series of battles. Finally, in 1540, after a disastrous encounter at Khanauj, Sher Shah forced Humayun to abandon the imperial cities of Agra and Delhi for Lahore in the north. Several attempts at peace failed and Sher Shah continued to pursue Humayun, who retreated first down the Indus to Sind and then back to Rajasthan, in the hope of mustering new forces. When these never materialized, Humayun and his ever diminishing group of followers were compelled to seek asylum outside of India. Akbar was left behind with several servants in
the care of his uncle, while Humayun went to Iran in search of aid.

In Iran the emperor’s fortunes began to improve. Shah Tahmasp, the Safavid ruler (r. 1524–76), greeted him warmly and eventually gave him an army of twelve thousand horsemen that enabled him to regain his kingdom. By 1544, Qandahar and Kabul had been taken, and the emperor was reunited with his son. Ten years later, Humayun, aided by the rapid disintegration of the dynasty founded by Sher Shah, recovered India. His victory over Sher Shah’s descendants, though, was short-lived. On January 20, 1556, the emperor slipped on the stairs of his library as he tried to bow his head in response to the muezzin’s call to prayer. He suffered severe head injuries in the ensuing fall and four days later he was dead.

While it is easy to imagine the hardships that Humayun must have endured as he sought safety for his family and the alliances necessary to rebuild his forces, it is more difficult to gauge the impact these years had on Akbar. According to several of the emperor’s biographers, Akbar spent a great deal of time at his father’s side as the latter tried to expand his base of operations from Kabul. He also visited several major Central Asian cities such as Balkh and Ghazni, where he saw many of the great architectural monuments of the preceding centuries. Much of his time, though, was spent hunting and playing. A miniature in the Akbarnama (The History of Akbar) depicts the young prince wrestling with his slightly older cousin, Ibrāhīm Mīrzā, outside Kabul in 1544 (No. 1). Akbar’s surprising victory was seen as an omen of Humayun’s rising fortunes.

At the age of four, Akbar began his formal education under the tutelage of Muḥtadī Ḍīn Ibrāhīm and Mawlawī Bayazīd. 2 Although he never learned to read or write, Akbar developed a keen interest in classical Persian and Indian literature. 3 A painting by Abū al-Samad, an Iranian artist who joined Humayun’s court in Kabul in 1544, depicts another aspect of the young prince’s education: the development of an artistic awareness. 4 Akbar is shown presenting a miniature painting to his father. The emperor and his son are seated in an elaborate garden pavilion surrounded by servants and musicians. One senses immediately the refinement of Humayun’s court and the pride the emperor would have felt in his son’s developing awareness of the arts. For Humayun, despite the arduousness of incessant campaigns, remained an extremely cultured man who was interested in literature and the arts as well as astrology and metaphysics, and who imparted all of these concerns to his young son. In his love for literature Humayun resembled his father, who was not only a skilled poet but a man of great artistic sensibility and refinement and an accomplished writer, whose memoirs, known as the Badshahnama (The History of Babur), are as entertaining as they are informative.

In art as well as in politics Babur, Humayun and Akbar saw themselves first and foremost as princes of the house of Timur (1316–1405), who conquered vast tracts of territory in Central Asia and even sacked Delhi in 1526. The Mughals, however, traced their ancestry even further back to the Mongol warrior Chingiz (Genghis) Khan (1167–1227). Upon the death of Chingiz Khan, his empire was divided among his four sons, a crucial event later illustrated by Akbar’s artists (No. 35). Mughal historians (including the western Tarīm Basin and Kashgar) and Transoxiana were bestowed on his second son Chaghātay Khan (d. 1244). When these two wings of the dominion were split up late in the thirteenth century, Transoxiana in the west became the scene of mass conversion to Islam and a great deal of intermarriage with Turkic tribespeople before it eventually fell to Timur, a Barlas Turk. Though not a Mongol himself, Timur sought to enhance the legitimacy of his rule by assuming the mantle of the line of Chaghātay Khan, with whom he claimed kinship. He did this by adopting the title of Gūrkan (son-in-law) in reference to his marriage to Tukul Khuram, whose father was directly related to Chaghātay Khan. Timur’s descendants ruled Transoxiana until they succumbed to the forces of the Shaybanids in 1589.

The most revealing source of Akbar’s ancestry is the official history of his reign written by his close companion, Abu Fazl. The opening chapters of the Akbarnama, though riddled with inconsistencies and exaggerated claims, delineate the emperor’s family history as he wanted it to be seen. Abu Fazl traces Akbar’s lineage back to the semi-mythical Mongol chieftain Alanquwa (No. 2) who, after having been widowed, “was reposing on her bed one night when a glorious light cast a ray into the tent and entered the mouth and throat of that flame of spiritual knowledge and glory. The cupola of chastity became pregnant by that light in the same way as did her Majesty…Maryam [the Virgin Mary].” 5 It was this divine light that is said to have initiated the line of rulers whose glory passed through Chingiz Khan and Timur to Akbar:

1. The Infant Akbar Wrestling with Ibrāhīm Mīrzā (Akbarnama, ca. 1606.)
the care of his uncle, while Humayun went to Iran in search of aid.
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While it is easy to imagine the hardships that Humayun must have endured as he sought safety for his family and the allies necessary to rebuild his forces, it is more difficult to gauge the impact these years had on Akbar. According to several of the emperor's biographers, Akbar spent a great deal of time at his father's side as the latter tried to expand his base of operations from Kabul. He also visited several major Central Asian cities such as Balkh and Ghazni, where he saw many of the great architectural monuments of the preceding centuries. Much of his time, though, was spent hunting and playing. A miniature in the Akbarnama (The History of Akbar) depicts the young prince wrestling with his slightly older cousin, Ibrahim Mirza, outside Kabul in 1545 (NO. 1). Akbar's surprising victory was seen as an omen of Humayun's rising fortunes.

At the age of four, Akbar began his formal education under the tutelage of Mulla Asam ad-Din Ibrahim and Mawlana Bayazid. Although he never learned to read or write, Akbar developed a keen interest in classical Persian and Indian literature. A painting by Abd al-Samad, an Iranian artist who joined Humayun's court in Kabul in 1545, depicts another aspect of the young prince's education: the development of an artistic awareness. Akbar is shown presenting a miniature painting to his father. The emperor and his son are seated in an elaborate garden pavilion surrounded by servants and musicians. One senses immediately the refinement of Humayun's court and the pride the emperor would have felt in his son's developing awareness of the arts. For Humayun, despite the adoration of incessant campaigns, remained an extremely cultured man who was interested in literature and the arts as well as astrology and metaphysics, and who imparted all of these concerns to his young son. In his love for literature Humayun resembled his father, who was not only a skilled poet but a man of great artistic sensibility and refinement and an accomplished writer, whose memoirs, known as the Bahramnama (The History of Babur), are as entertaining as they are informative.

In art as well as in politics Babur, Humayun and Akbar saw themselves first and foremost as princes of the house of Timur (1116–1405), who conquered vast tracts of territory in Central Asia and even sacked Delhi in 1398. The Mughals, however, traced their ancestry even further back to the Mongol warrior Chingiz (Genghis) Khan (1167–1227). Upon the death of Chingiz Khan, his empire was divided among his four sons, a crucial event later illustrated by Akbar's artists (NO. 35). Mughalistan (including the western Tarim Basin and Kashgar) and Transoxiana were bestowed on his second son Chaghhatay Khan (d. 1243). When these two wings of the dominion were split up later in the thirteenth century, Transoxiana in the west became the scene of mass conversion to Islam and a great deal of intermarriage with Turkic tribespeople before it eventually fell to Timur, a Barlas Turk. Though not a Mongol himself, Timur sought to enhance the legitimacy of his rule by assuming the mantle of the line of Chaghhatay Khan, with whom he claimed kinship. He did this by adopting the title of Gurkan (son-in-law) in reference to his marriage to Tukul Khanum, whose father was directly related to Chaghhatay Khan. Timur's descendants ruled Transoxiana until they succumbed to the forces of the Shaybanid Uzbeks in 1508–09.

The most revealing source of Akbar's ancestry is the official history of his reign written by his close companion, Abu Fazl. The opening chapters of the Akbarnama, though riddled with inconsistencies and exaggerated claims, delineate the emperor's family history as he wanted it to be seen. Abu Fazl traces Akbar's lineage back to the semi-mythical Mongol queen Alanqawa (NO. 2) who, after having been widowed, "was reposing on her bed one night when a glorious light cast a ray into the tent and entered the mouth and throat of that fount of spiritual knowledge and glory. The cupola of chastity became pregnant by that light in the same way as did her Majesty... Miriam [the Virgin Mary]." It was this divine light that is said to have initiated the line of rulers whose glory passed through Chingiz Khan and Timur to Akbar:

1. The Infant Akbar Wrestling with Ibrahim Mirza
(Akbarnama, ca. 1604.)
That day (i.e., of Alaouqua’s conception) was the beginning
of the manifestation of his Majesty, the king of kings
[Akbars], who after passing through divers stages was re
vealed to the world from the holy womb of her Majesty
Maryam-nâmakîn for the accomplishment of things visible
and invisible. 8

It is no coincidence that Alaouqua also figures
prominently in the genealogy of Timur given on the
jade sarcophagus of his tomb in Samaqand, where he is
claimed to be a descendant of Ali (and thus a Shiite
Muslim). Describing Timur’s last paternal ancestor, the
inscription says: “And no father was known to this
glorious (man), but his mother (was) Alaouqua. It is
said that her character was righteous and chaste, and
that she was not an adulteress. She conceived him
through a light which came into her from an upper
part of a door and assumed for her the likeness of a
perfect man (Koran 19:17).” 9 Since the reference to the
Koran concerning the story of the Virgin Mary
suggests an early Christian influence on Timurid
idealogy, an extra dimension is added to Akbar’s
circumstance with Alaouqua and the Virgin Mary, after
whose name he devised titles for both his mother
(Maryam Makânî), and wife (Maryam az-Zamani).

Akbars father, Umar Shaykh, was the ruler of Fer
ghana, one of the petty Timurid courts of the
Chaghatai Khaneate in Transoxiana, while his mother,
Qutlug Nigar Khatun, was the daughter of Yansu
Khan, also a direct descendant of Chaghatai Khan.
In these courts, Persian literature was patronized along
side work in the native Chaghatai Turkish, the lan
guage in which Akbar wrote his memoirs. Chaghatai
Turkish was, in fact, the mother tongue of Babur and
Humayun as well as Akbar, but it was succeeded
during the second half of the sixteenth century in
India by Persian.

Akbars was thus brought up at the very moment when
Persian was replacing Chaghatai Turkish as the
Mughals’ preferred language. Nevertheless, Abul Fazl
firmly states that because of the connection through
Timur to Chaghatai Khan, Akbar’s “noble line” came to
be named “Chaghatai.” “Mughal” (a Persian varia
tion of the word “Mongol”) is therefore somewhat of
a misnomer for Babur’s dynasty, although the term
was commonly used by the Mughals to distinguish
themselves racially from other Muslims in India such as
the Afghans. More importantly, Babur did not see
himself as the founder of an entirely new dynasty in
India. Instead he viewed himself as the prince who
finally revived the Timurid cause and procured a thrones for the illustrious and ancient ruling house that
had lost power. He explained his position in a moving
speech to the members of his council shortly before
setting off to conquer India:

Strangers and ancient foes, such as Shaibaq [Shaybani]
Khan and the A킹s, are in possession of all the countries
once held by Timur Beg’s descendants; even where Turks
and Chaghatais survive in corners and border-lands, they
have all joined the Aiking, willingly or with aversion; one
remains, I myself, in Kabul, the foe mightily strong, I very
weak, with no means of making terms, no strength to op
pose, that, in the presence of such power and potency, we
had to think of some place for ourselves and, at this crisis
and in the crack of time there was, to put a wider space be
tween us and the strong foe; such choice lay between Bus
akhiyans and Hindustan [India] and that decision must
now be made. 10

The importance of Babur for the revival of Timurid
fortunes was even recognized by the great calligrapher
Mir Ali, who honored him with the following verse:
My head is the dust of the door of the Lord of the kingdom
of letters.
The pride of the kings of kingdoms, the honor of Timur’s
family.
The sovereign of the virtuous, the sea of generosity, the
mine of kindness.
The leader of the talents, Shah Muhammad Babur. 11

For the Mughals, because of their family back
ground, Timurid art and architecture represented the
epiphany of civilization and culture. Herat and Samar
qand, Timur’s capital, were particularly revered and
both Babur and Humayun spent a great deal of time
admiring the monuments that inspired their own
buildings. Timurid objects, whether lavish illus
trated manuscripts or small jade vessels, were also
greatly revered. Many of these objects found their way
into the collections of Babur and Humayun, such as
the copy of Firdausi’s Shahnama (Book of Kings)
made for Timur’s grandson Muhammad Juki (ca.
1440). In addition to bearing the seals of all of the
Mughals, this manuscript also has autograph inscriptions
by Jahangir (r. 1605–27) and Shah Jahan (r. 1628–58),
Akbars son and grandson, suggesting that it was among
the Mughals most prized dynastic possessions (see
below, p. 21 and fig. 10).

Akbars saw himself as a Timurid. His response to
his heritage, however, differed from that of Babur and
Humayun. Unlike either of them, he was born in India
and clearly thought of the subcontinent as his home
—even while he was in exile in Kabul with his father. 2

2. Alaouqua and Her Three Sons (Chingiznama,
1486–96).
Where Babur found fault with everything from the climate and the people of Hindustan to the poor quality of Indian mosques,\textsuperscript{2} Akbar remained unbothered by these "defects." Indeed he admired them. This vital change in attitude is evident in the way Abul Fazl, who arrived at court in 1564, describes India and its inhabitants:

> Shall I portray the beauty that charms the heart or sing of purity untailed? Shall I tell of heroic valor or weave romances of their virility of intellect and their lore? The inhabitants of this land are religious, affectionate, hospitable, genial and frank. They are fond of scientific pursuits, inclined to austerity of life, seekers after justice, contented, industrious, capable in affairs, loyal, truthful and constant.

The soil of India is for the most part arable and of such productive power that the same land is sown each year and in many places three harvests and more are taken in a single twelve-month and the vine bears fruit in its first year.\textsuperscript{23}

Under Bayram Khan, who had been appointed Akbar’s guardian by Humayun shortly before his death, the Mughal armies moved quickly to consolidate their power (no. 3). Thus when Akbar succeeded his father to the throne in 1556, he did not see his nascent empire as inferior to Timurid Iran and Central Asia—as his ancestor had—but as equal to them. On November 16, 1556, Hemu, a Hindu who had seized Delhi from the Mughals, was defeated at Panipat, the site of Babur’s victory over Sultan Ibrahim Lodhi of Delhi thirty years earlier. After retaking Delhi, Akbar moved to the Panjab in order to subdue Sikandar Shah, one of the last of the Sultans with any claim to power. In 1557, he too was defeated in battle. Shortly after that, Adil Shah, another rival, was killed fighting in Bengal. The result of this was that, within a year and a half of assuming power, Akbar had transformed his fragile inheritance into a relatively secure kingdom.

Bayram Khan played a crucial role in shaping these early victories. Nonetheless, Akbar began to distance himself from his guardian. By 1556 he no longer felt the need for Bayram Khan’s services and dismissed him from his post as chief minister. Now fully independent, Akbar quickly demonstrated his abilities as a soldier by annexing Malwa in (central India) in 1561,\textsuperscript{24} Gondwana (in eastern India) in 1564 and the Rajput centers of Chittorgarh and Ranthambhor (to the southwest of Delhi) in 1567-8 and 1569. The siege of Chittorgarh was a particularly savage affair. The fortress, located on top of a plateau protected by steep cliffs, was defended by Jaimal, a young Rajput warrior who easily resisted Akbar’s initial advances. After much debate, the emperor decided to mine the hill but some of the explosives were accidentally detonated and several hundred Mughals and Rajputs lost their lives in the subsequent disaster. In a miniature from the Akbar nama depicting this event, bodies fly skyward in an explosion burst suggesting both the intensity of the battle and the horror of the fighting (no. 4). When the fort finally succumbed to the Mughals, no mercy was shown to the defenders:

> There were 8,000 fighting Rajputs collected in the fortress, but there were more than 40,000 peasants who took part in watching and serving. When the standards entered the fort some of the garrison squeezed themselves into the temples, thinking that they were holy places and that the adils would help them, and awaited the sacrificing of their lives. Others waited their doom in their own houses. From early dawn till midday the bodies of these ill-starred men were consumed by the mastery of the great warrior. Nearly 10,000 men were killed.\textsuperscript{25}

While such conquests secured the flanks of the empire and significantly enriched Akbar’s treasuries, they were also means of keeping the vast imperial armies occupied. The risks of an idle force—restlessness, disenchchantment, even rebellion—were many. Akbar expressed his own thoughts on this subject bluntly: "A monarch should be ever intent on conquest, otherwise his neighbours rise in arms against him. The army should be exercised in warfare, lest from want of training they become self-indulgent."\textsuperscript{26}

The strength of Akbar’s empire, however, did not rest on his military achievements alone. In 1562 he married the daughter of the Raja of Amber, head of one of the most powerful Rajput clans. He gave her the name Maryam az-Zamani (Mary of the Age). The marriage at once sealed an important political alliance and brought the benefits of Rajput military skill, administrative abilities, and prestige to the Mughal court. Akbar’s union with a Hindu princess also signaled his emerging policy of religious tolerance. Two years after his marriage to Maryam az-Zamani (who eventually provided Akbar with his first son and heir), Akbar revoked the jizya, a discriminatory poll tax imposed on those outside the Islamic faith. In doing so he incurred the enmity of orthodox Muslims at his court and laid the seeds of a rift between conservative and liberal Muslims that became an intrinsic part of the political climate of the Mughal empire. At the same time, though, the abolition of the jizya created a feeling of conciliation among the Hindus and encouraged Hindu artists, musicians and civil servants to enter the imperial service. In a paradoxical statement attributed to Akbar by Abul Fazl, the emperor clearly shows his willingness to regulate in favor of his Hindu

3. Battle Scene (unidentified ms., ca. 1580).
subjects and even intentionally provoke his Muslim courtiers: “Formerly I persecuted men into conformity with faith and deemed it Islam. As I grew in knowledge, I was overwhelmed with shame. Not being a Muslim myself, it was unmeet to force others to become such. What constancy is to be expected from proselytes on compulsion?”

Akbar’s quest for religious understanding and interest in defining the range and limitations of his own personality led to the foundation of a House of Worship in 1573 at Fatehpur-Sikri and a Declaration of Infallibility in 1579. Akbar so enjoyed exploring the kinds of religious, metaphysical, and philosophical issues that were examined at the House of Worship that he complained: “Discourses on philosophy have such a charm for me that they distract me from all else, and I forcibly restrain myself from listening to them, lest the necessary duties of the hour be neglected.”

The ulama (a group of religious scholars often appointed to judiciary positions) was upset both by the Declaration of Infallibility, which gave the emperor the authority to decide religious as well as political questions, and by the unorthodox nature of the conversations that occurred at the House of Worship. Abd al-Qadir Badauni, another of Akbar’s biographers and an orthodox Muslim, gives a sense of the ulama’s dismay at the emperor’s usurping its rights, and his religious openness:

No sooner had His Majesty obtained this legal document, than the road of deciding any religious question was open; the superiority of the intellect of the Imam was established, and opposition was rendered impossible. All orders regarding things which our law allows or disallows were abolished, and the superiority of the intellect of the Imam became law. They called Islam a travesty.

With the promulgation of the Declaration of Infallibility, Akbar gained full control over the temporal as well as the spiritual realms of his empire. Although the powers he now held were unprecedented, they were in keeping with the Timurid concepts of kingship that the emperor inherited from his father and grandfather. This involved a strong centrally controlled bureaucracy, a large army that served at the personal command of the emperor, powerful but subordinate provincial governments, and frequent intervention in religious affairs. Under Timur, control of the ulama was accomplished through the nadi, a scholar appointed by the ruler to oversee land grants and gifts to the ulama and other religious groups. Akbar’s decision to transfer that power to himself, and thus centralize his authority over the ulama, can therefore be seen as an innovation to enhance his absolute control over all aspects of his domains. “A monarch,” in Akbar’s own words, “is a pre-eminent cause of good. Upon his conduct depends the efficiency of any course of action. His gratitude to his Lord, therefore, should be shown in just government and due recognition of merit; that of his people, in obedience and praise.”

Akbar’s reforms (many of which were based on ideas developed by Sher Shah and earlier Muslim rulers in India) were not limited to religious matters. Efforts were made to regulate gambling, ban child marriages, restrict prostitution to carefully controlled quarters and to do away with sati or the self-immolation of Hindu widows on their husbands’ funeral pyres. Akbar’s thoughts on sati are particularly revealing:

It is an ancient custom in Hindustan for a woman to burn herself however unwilling she may be, on her husband’s death, and to give her priceless life with a cheerful countenance, conceiving it to be a means of her husband’s salvation. It is a strange commentary on the magnanimity of men that they should seek their deliverance through the self-sacrifice of their wives.

In addition to the various administrative, social, and political reforms of the 1560s and 1570s, Akbar also undertook a series of major architectural projects. Besides the creation of Fatehpur-Sikri, the three most important of these were the construction of Humayun’s tomb at Delhi in 1562–63, the building of a fort at Agra in 1576, and the repairing and enlarging of the fort at Ajmer in 1577. Akbar’s decision to build in Delhi, Agra and Ajmer—the three principal cities of the Mughal empire—was part of his overall attempt to construct his empire in stone as well as in statute. Muhammad Arsuci Qandhari, another of the emperor’s chroniclers, indicates the importance of architecture in establishing imperial power:

It will not be hidden from the mind of the perfect incommutable architects of blessed monuments and clever unequaled artists of sweet works that a good name for kings is achieved by means of lofty buildings, just as they have said, “the builder is long-lived’…” In other words the name of kings lasts long on account of their works—From this… it is clear that the advantages of building cannot be expressed.

The third volume of the Akbarnamah, known as the Ain-i Akbari (The Institutes of Akbar), records in detail the emperor’s regulations for governing his vast kingdom. There are chapters on such diverse topics as the arsenal and the imperial stables as well as the royal 4. Akbar Attacking the Forteau at Chittoorgarh (Akbarnamah, ca. 1590).
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On the day that he halted at the stage of Karoba he calmly mounted the elephant Rana Sangar, whom experienced men would not approach on account of its being violently most [around]. That noon, one submitted to the might of his majesty's fortune, and the spectators were filled with astonishment ... but the forethought and clear of heart rejoiced in accordance with their knowledge. Some learnt one of the thousand laudable qualities of his Majesty, and some emerged from the ravine of denial and entered the rose-garden of devotion. Wonderful acts were always oozing forth from that great man. 24

Although this passage can be interpreted simply as standard praise for a bold king, it also suggests that in the eyes of his followers the emperor had superhuman qualities. That Akbar was graced by divine power is made clear in the A'in-i Akbari where Abul Fazl, in a debt reference to the radiances of Alansuva's divine impregnation, writes that:

Royalty is a light emanating from God, and a ray from the sun, the illuminator of the universe, the argument of the book of perfection, the receptacle of all virtues. Modern language calls this light faris-i-tai (the divine light) and the tongue of antiquity called it lisan ilman (the sublime halo). It is communicated by God to kings without the intermediate assistance of anyone, and men in the presence of it bend the forehead of praise towards the ground of submission. 25

Akbar himself states that "The very sight of kings has been held to be a part of divine worship. They have been styled conventionally the shadow of God, and indeed to behold them is a means of calling to mind the Creator, and suggests the protection of the Almighty." 26 In order to demonstrate the emperor's unique spiritual powers, Abul Fazl presents him as the "perfect man" around whom the world revolves. The extent to which Akbar was thought to have divine powers can be seen in his teaching of disciples—an act usually reserved for holy men and spiritual guides:

At the above-mentioned time of everlasting auspiciousness, the novice with his turban in his hands, puts his head on the feet of his majesty ... His majesty the chosen one of God, then stretches out his hand of favour, raises the suppliant, and replaces the turban on his head, meaning by these symbolic actions that he has raised up a man of pure intention ... who has now entered into real life. 27

Fayzi, Abul Fazl's brother and one of Akbar's greatest poets, is even more explicit about the emperor's divinity. He states that, "If you wish to see the path of guidance as I have done, you will never see it without seeing the king." In an even bolder statement he writes "Thy old fashioned prostration is of no advantage to thee--see Akbar and you see God." 28

By emphasizing Akbar's divinity, Abul Fazl and Fayzi articulate the emperor's attempts to focus upon himself all the forces of his empire. Badauni, who saw this happening, noted with some dismay that:

In this year [1569] the Emperor was anxious to unite in his person the spiritual as well as the secular headsships, for he held it to be an insupportable burden to subordinate to anyone, as he had heard that the Prophet (God be gracious to him, and give him peace!) and his lawful successors, and some of the most powerful kings, as Amir Timur Chabibgir and Mizrul Ulugh Beg-i-Gurgan, and several others had themselves read the A'in-i Akbari (the Friday sermon), he resolved to do the same, apparently in order to imitate their example. 29

While it is difficult to know the degree to which Akbar was truly perceived as divine by all of his followers, the attention given this question by his principal biographers indicates that it was a major issue at his court. Moreover, by even raising the question of the emperor's sanctity, Abul Fazl (and by extension Akbar himself) makes an extremely important political point. He suggests that Akbar, and Akbar alone, is the rightful ruler of India, for only he possesses unique spiritual powers. In so doing he immediately distinguishes the emperor from all possible rivals and places him above any worldly scrutiny.

Metaphysics and philosophy were not abstract questions at Akbar's court, but very real pursuits that were examined and discussed in detail. The emperor seems to have been particularly interested in the relationship between inward and outward form or, more precisely, between the spiritual and material worlds. Given Akbar's vision of himself as the bridge between these two realms—he is even called in the Akbarnamah "Lord of the world, depicter of the external, revealer of the internal," 30 —this is not surprising. The manifestation of form posed a critical question for the emperor and he was preoccupied with trying to understand the role of the imagination in apprehending
fraternity, building regulations, the imperial harem and the roles for mounting guard. Abu Fazl’s enumeration of Akbar’s administrative and military policies, though, is much more than just an account of courtly life. It is also a detailed description of civilization as it should be fostered by an ideal ruler.59 Seen in conjunction with the first two volumes of the Akbarnamā, which record past deeds as they “ought to have happened,” the Ai-i Akhbari provides us with a portrait of Akbar as both the ideal worldly king and symbol of God. Almost every action of the emperor’s is invested with the symbol of God. Akbar’s actions can be seen in Abu Fazl’s description of the emperor’s taming of a wild elephant:

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“This in your [176] the Emperor was anxious to unite in his person the spiritual as well as the secular headships, for he held it to be an insufferable burden to be subordinate to anyone, as he had heard that the Prophet (God be gracious to him, and give him peace!) and his lawful successors, and some of the most powerful kings, as Amir Timur, Tahirih Qutb, and Mirza Ullah Beg-i-Gorgan, and several others had themselves read the kohlasa (the Friday sermon), he resolved to do the same, apparently in order to imitate their example.”

While it is difficult to know the degree to which Akbar was truly perceived as divine by all of his followers, the attention given this question by his principal biographers indicates that it was a major issue at his court. Moreover, by even raising the question of the emperor’s sanctity, Abu Fazl (and by extension Akbar himself) makes an extremely important relational point. He suggests that Akbar, and Akbar alone, is the rightful ruler of India, for only he possesses unique spiritual powers. In so doing he immediately distinguishes the emperor from all possible rivals and places him above any past ahead of praise towards the ground of submission.

Akbar himself states that “The very sight of kings has been held to be a part of divine worship. They have been styled conventionally the shadow of God, and indeed to behold them is a means of calling to mind the Creator, and suggests the protection of the Almighty.” In order to demonstrate the emperor’s unique spiritual powers, Abu Fazl presents him as the “perfect man” around whom the world revolves. The extent to which Akbar was thought to have divine powers can be seen in his teaching of discipies—an act usually reserved for holy men and spiritual guides:

“The king undressed, and ordered his clothes to be washed, and in the meanwhile he wore his dressing gown; while thus sitting, a beautiful bird flew into the tent, the doves of which were immediately closed, and the bird caught. His Majesty then took a pair of scissors and cut some of the feathers of the animal; he then sent for a painter, and had a picture taken of the bird, and afterwards ordered it to be released.”

Unfortunately no paintings survive from this period, nor do we know if Humayun’s father had time to establish a workshop in India prior to his death in 1556. Babur, however, did collect books, many of which were profusely illustrated, such as the Muhammed Juki Shulammā (fig. 10) and the 1647-68 Zafarnama (no. 57).67 The paintings in both of these manuscripts are seen in unique characters and exquisite colors, are of extraordinary quality and represent the finest achievements of Timurid Iran. The balanced compositions, minute details and subtle metre of these miniatures contrast sharply with contemporary Indian paintings which rely, for their effect, on simple, compartmentalized scenes, large flat areas of strong color, and a small repertoire of stylized figures.

The Indian masters who came to India brought with them the ideals of Shah Tahmāsp’s court where most of them had been trained. There exists, fortunately, a large enough body of material—either signed and dated or attributable to the 1570s—to give us a good idea about what painting was like under Humāyun. Among the most important of these works of art are:

“A Young Musician and Painter in a Garden,” from the Gulshan Album, by Abd as-Sanādī, dated 1552-53.

“Akhbar Presenting a Miniature to his Father,” from the Gulshan Album, by Abd as-Sanādī, dated 1552-53.

“A Young and a Musician,” (no. 5) c. 1550-55.

“A Young Musician,” (no. 6) c. 1550-55.

“The Court of Humayun,” attributable to Dust Museum, c. 1550-55.


“A Prince Hunting,” (no. 7), now in the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, c. 1550-55.

“A Feast in a Garden Pavilion” (also known as the “House of Timur”), c. 1550-55.

“A Khamsa of Nizami,” now in the Lashkāri collection, c. 1550-55.

“Shah Abu al-Ma‘lā,” (no. 81)1 by Dust Museum, c. 1550-55.

“A Horse and Groom,” from the Gulshan Album by Abd as-Sanādī, dated 1557-58.

These miniatures share, for the most part, many characteristics. They are all executed in a manner closely resembling mid-sixteenth-century Persian painting, their colors tend to be bright and bold, though the quality of the lineaments is often poor, and many of the figures wear an elaborate, high-peaked turban generally associated with Humayun. The miniature of “A Youth and a Musician” (no. 5), is typical of these paintings. Its attenuated bodies, long necks, minute hand and narrow almond-shaped eyes are almost identical to the work of such Safavid artists as Mirza Ali. Indeed, except for the painting’s thin, sketchy pigments and the carefully observed interaction between the figures, it could be mistaken for a product of Shah Tahmāsp’s court.
The two most important artists to join Humayun’s court were Mir Sayyid Ali and Abd al-Samad. In 1522, in a letter to Rashid Khan, the ruler of Kashgar, that accompanied a gift of assorted works of art, Humayun describes their brilliance:

From among those matchless artists who had presented themselves before me in Iraq and Khurasan and were generously rewarded, a group came and joined my service in Shawwal A.H. 939 [September-October 1522]. One of them is the painter Mir Sayyid Ali, the naqsh al-hayr, who is matchless in painting (nashr). He has painted on a grain of rice a polo scene—two horsemen stand within the field, a third comes galloping from one corner, while a fourth horseman stands at one end receiving a mallet from a foostman; at each end of the field are two goal posts...

Another is the painter Maulana Abd al-Samad, the unique one of the time (farid al-dawr), the shirin-qalam, who has surpassed his contemporaries. He has made on a grain of rice a large field on which a group is playing polo.**

Although both artists were obviously extremely talented and technically accomplished, Mir Sayyid Ali was the more innovative of the two. His title, “Rarity of the Realm,” reflects Humayun’s interest in his work.

In such paintings as “Nomadic Encampment” from a Khamas of Nizami made for Shah Tahmasp between 1539 and 1543, one can immediately see what attracted the emperor to Mir Sayyid Ali’s paintings.* Each figure is rendered with extraordinary accuracy. Textiles, trees, cooking utensils, and animals are scrutinized for their every form and texture. The precision with which Mir Sayyid Ali depicts each object in his paintings shows the same kind of concern for nature expressed by Humayun in his examination of the bird that flew into his tent.

“A Young Scribe” (no. 6), painted sometime between Mir Sayyid Ali’s arrival in Kabul in 1549** and Humayun’s death in 1556, elaborates on the themes of the paintings from the Khamas of Nizami. Seated on a boldly patterned carpet, the scribe leans forward contemplating his work. A finely detailed bookstand rests to his left and several sheets of paper and an inkpot and pen lie on the ground to his right. The careful study of the scribe’s face and gestures—the tilt of his head and the twist of his hands, for instance, and the sensitive drawing of the wildflowers that surround his carpet—suggest that this is a portrait of a very real person possibly done from life. Only the gold of the sky and the slightly skewed perspective of the bookstand are at variance with the naturalism of the scene.

Mir Sayyid Ali’s work, despite its heightened sense of observation and interest in nature, still operates within the established norms of Safavid painting. His miniatures share the same vocabulary of forms and handling of space as the more conservative paintings of the other Iranian artists who worked for Humayun. The lack of depth in the miniature of the “Young Scribe” as well as the figure’s shadowless (and consequently volumeless) body are identical to the shallow space and almost weightless figures of Abd al-Samad’s “Akbar Presenting a Miniature to His Father” or Dast Muhammad’s “Court of Humayun.”

A noticeable shift away from the standard conventions and interests of sixteenth-century Persian painting can, however, be detected in some of the works painted for Humayun. In “A Feast in a Garden Pavilion” or in several of the miniatures in the Labbāy Khams of Nizami, there is an emphasis on the naturalism of the setting and the interaction of the

5. A Youth and a Musician (ca. 1555-60).
The two most important artists to join Humayun's court were Mir Sayyid Ali and Abd al-Samad. In 1532, in a letter to Rashid Khan, the ruler of Kashggar, that accompanied a gift of assorted works of art, Humayun describes their brilliance:

From among those matchless artists who had presented themselves before me in Iraq and Khorasan and were generously rewarded, a group came and joined my service in Shawaal A.H. 997 [September-October 1532]. One of them is the painter Mir Sayyid Ali, the nader al-dar, who is matchless in painting (tawzi'). He has painted on a grain of rice a polo scene—two horsemen stand within the field, a third comes galloping from one corner, while a fourth horseman stands at one end receiving a mallet from a footman; at each end of the field are two goal posts.

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Although both artists were obviously extremely talented and technically accomplished, Mir Sayyid Ali was the more innovative of the two. His title, "Harayn of the Realm," reflects Humayun's interest in his work. In such paintings as "Nomadic Encampment" from a Khamsa of Nizami made for Shah Tahmasp between 1530 and 1540, one can immediately see what attracted the emperor to Mir Sayyid Ali's paintings.66 Each figure is rendered with extraordinary accuracy. Textiles, trees, cooking utensils, and animals are scrutinized for every form and texture. The precision with which Mir Sayyid Ali depicts each object in his paintings shows the same kind of concern for nature expressed by Humayun in his examination of the bird that flew into his tent.

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5. A Youth and a Musician (ca. 1530-40).

6. A Young Scribe (ca. 1550).
figures that differs markedly from the more stylized compositions of Safavid Iran. Moreover the diversity of the Lahibhi manuscript's illustrations—some are done in a Persian manner resembling Bukhara work of the 1520-50s, others are executed in the imperial tradition of Shah Tahmasp's court, and a last group are clearly painted in the provincial manner of several of the Islamic courts of India—reflect a lack of visual unity that is antithetical to Persian ideals and anticipates the eclectic nature of the 

*Tutinama* (Tales of a Parrot), one of the first manuscripts illustrated for Akbar.

The most remarkable of these early paintings is the Foxwilliam's "A Prince Hunting" (no. 7). It almost certainly depicts the young Akbar and is thus one of only three portraits that we have of the prince prior to his assumption of power. However, unlike the other two portraits discussed earlier (both of which are by Abd as-Samad), this one may depict a historical event of 1553 that was later recorded in the *Abbarnama*:

> On this day and while on the march His Majesty the Shahshah struck a nilagaw [an antelope]... with his sword and took it as a prey so that the huntsmen were surprised, while the acute obtained a sign of his capturing the booty of sublime intention and were made glad.

Many aspects of "A Prince Hunting" are awkward, such as the way Akbar rides his horse, and the thickness of the paint; however, the artist has made a real effort to create a plausible landscape and to infuse the prince with a sense of vitality and action. The extent to which the artist has altered his palette, articulated Akbar's limbs, and emphasized the fullness of the rocks behind him distinguishes this painting immediately from similar Persian miniatures.

It is against the conventions and background of "A Prince Hunting" and the work of artists like Mir Sayyid Ali and Abd as-Samad, that Akbar's impact on Indian art must be seen. During his reign the artistic tendencies that first evolved under Humayun coalesced into a coherent, consistent, and dynamic mode of representation. Four manuscripts made within a decade of Akbar's ascension to power show how radically painting under Akbar departed from earlier norms. These are the *Tutinama*, ca. 1560-65; the *Humnana*, ca. 1562-1577; the *Tilami and Verdiss*, ca. 1565; and the *Ahkam* of Amir Khwaja Dhihi of 1567-68 (also known as the *Daud Rani Kitab Khan*), the earliest dated Mughal manuscript, made within a decade of Akbar's accession to power.

The *Tutinama* (nos. 8, 9, 10) is to a large extent a summation of pre-Akbari Indian painting. At least four different kinds of miniatures can be observed in the manuscript: those based on what can be called the Caurapancasika and the Canadaya styles (both derived from fifteenth-century western Indian painting), those related to various fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Islamic schools of Indian painting, and those in an altogether new idiom. Two aspects of this manuscript are especially fascinating. The first is the fact that so many different traditions are mixed together. While the varied nature of the Lahibhi *Khaman* of Nizami provides a formal precedent for this, the *Tutinama* differs from that manuscript in that Islamic as well as Hindu traditions are represented. One senses immediately in this mingling of forms the diversity of the artists—both Hindu and Muslim—who were at Akbar's court. The second aspect is that in several instances the integrity of the individual artists' traditions has been violated so that it is difficult to determine in which tradition they had originally been
trained. One can see, in the flat colors of some backgrounds and in the profiling of some faces, suggestions of western Indian painting, while in the articulation of other areas there is a more naturalistic and expressive quality that reflects an attempt to come to grips with the new standards of Mughal painting.

In the most exciting of the *Tuti nama*’s miniatures, such as “The Parrot Mother Cautions Her Young” (no. 8), “A Donkey in a Tiger’s Skin” (no. 9), and “A Storm at Sea” (no. 10), there is a completely new manner of representation that is distinct from both its Indian and Persian sources. The main features of this novel style are its full-bodied figures, well developed three-dimensional landscape, carefully observed trees and vegetation, bold and thickly applied colors, and highly animated forms that are charged with an intensity of action that is almost electric.

The most startling aspect of these paintings is the way in which figures and personalities come alive. Each person in “A Storm at Sea,” for example, is a study in terror. Eyes bulge and mouths gape as passengers grab desperately for one another. The artist’s treatment of the figures as individuals (as opposed to standard types) and his emphasis on their relationship to each other (through their gestures as well as facial expressions) heighten the drama of the scene.

What makes these images so exciting is not their inherent action but the fact that the artists have infused them with a sense of drama. The degree to which these paintings depart from their Indian and Persian antecedents is evident when one compares the turbulent waves of “A Storm at Sea” with the staid and stylized forms of such Iranian paintings as those in the *Shahnama* (fig. 10)."
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Shahnama (fig. 10). Despite the success of several of the 

Tutsinama's miniatures, it is nevertheless a somewhat awkward manuscript. The various manners of representation that coexist are often incompatible and prevent the manuscript from appearing visually coherent. Also, even the finest paintings in the manuscript have a rough quality to them that suggests that Akbar was less interested in their finish than he was in their attempt to articulate his ideas about art.

The two paintings of the Ashiyas of Amir Khusraw and the numerous illustrations in the 

Tilsim and Zodiac manuscript (fig. 1) are far more unified than those in the 

Tutsinama. While they share the same basic

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The most startling aspect of these paintings is the way in which figures and personalities come alive. Each person in "A Storm at Sea," for example, is a
approach to painting found in the most experimental works of the TusiNameh, their compositions are generally more complex and sophisticated. "A Prince Enthroned" from the Ahsiga, for instance, is made up of a series of interrelated events in both the foreground and background, as opposed to the paintings of the TusiNameh, which invariably focus on a single event and plane of action. What distinctions do exist in the miniatures of the Ahsiga and TusiNameh and Zodiac are due more to the skill and personality of the individual artists than to their original training. The speed at which the innovations of the TusiNameh were assimilated into a well developed manner of representation is remarkable, for less than a decade separates it from the TusiNameh and Zodiac and the Ahsiga of Amur Khan of 1667-1669. The rapidity of this transformation is a direct product of Akbar's dynamism and ability to move quickly on a number of fronts - military, political and artistic, among others. The excitement about the arts that must have permeated Akbar's court can be sensed in one of the most famous passages of the Ain-i-Akbari:

"Drawing the likeness (makar) of anything is called sawur (painting, pictorializing). Since it is an excellent source, both of study and entertainment, His Majesty, from the time he came to an awareness of things (i.e. his childhood), has taken a deep interest in painting and sought its spread and development. Consequently this magical art has gained in beauty. A very large number of painters has been set to work. Each week the several dargas and bukheche submit before the king the work done by each artist, and His Majesty gives a reward and increases the monthly salaries according to the excellence displayed." Akbar's involvement with the production of paintings, as Abu Fazl clearly indicates, was intense and personal. By reviewing the work of the various artists in the Itihahna (the imperial library discussed at length in Chapter III) on a regular basis and by promoting those artists who responded to his ideas, the emperor was able to directly influence both the formation and development of a Mughal ideology. Akbar's impact on Mughal painting was not limited to his "control" of the various artists who worked for him but extended to his selection of manuscripts to be illustrated. Thus in choosing the TusiNameh, Ahsiga of Amur Khan, TusiNameh and Zodiac and Humayunama as some of the first works to be illustrated by his artists, Akbar made an extremely pointed decision, for at least three of these manuscripts have specifically Indian connections. The TusiNameh is a loose Persian translation of a Sanskrit classic, the Ahsiga of Amur Khan was written by one of India's greatest Muslim poets, and the recension used for the Humayunama was freshly composed at the Mughal court. At the same time none of the four manuscripts (including the TusiNameh and Zodiac) had lengthy traditions of illustration. The implications of this are twofold. On the one hand, Akbar affirmed his interest in Indian culture - both Hindu and Islamic - and the richness of Indian history. On the other hand, by choosing manuscripts for which there was no clearly established tradition of illustration the emperor freed his artists from the rigid iconographic conventions connected with such standard works as the Khamsa of Nizami. In doing so he allowed his artists to experiment with new manners of representation without being hindered by models that imposed predetermined responses. Of all of these manuscripts, the Humayunama (The Story of Humayun) is undoubtedly the most extraordinary (nos. 11, 12). It originally consisted of fourteen volumes, each having one hundred large illustrations (approximately 67 by 11 cms., 27 by 20.5 in.) on cloth, of which only about a tenth have survived. According to Basawan, it took fifteen years to complete the manuscript, 103 and recent scholarship has shown that its production probably lasted from 1562 to 1577. By 1604 enough of the manuscript's text existed that Akbar could be entertained by its recitation:

"When the world was bringing sun had sate on the throne of the horizons, H. M. the Shahrinah with the desired prey in his net and the cup of success at his lip sate on that auspicious throne and graciously ordered his courtiers to be seated. Then for the sake of delight and pleasure he listened for some time to Darbar Khan's recital of the story of Amir Hameed." Mir Sayyid Ali was in charge of organizing the illustration of the manuscript until his departure in 1627 for Mecca, after which Adab-e-Samad took over its supervision. Mir Ali ad-Dawla, who was at Akbar's court during the 1660s, has left us with a vivid account of the making of the Humayunama:

"It is now seven years that the Mir (Sayyid Ali) has been busy in the royal bureau of books (Itihah naamsa), as commanded by His Majesty (Itihah naamsa), in the decoration and painting of the large compositions (sawur-e-maqabi), of the story of Amir Hameed (gams-e-amir hameed), and strives to finish that wondrous book which is one of the astonishing novelities that His Majesty has conceived of... The amazing descriptions and the strange events of that story are being drawn on the sheets for illustrations in minuscule detail and not the slightest requirement of the art of painting goes unfilled... Opposite each illustration, the events and incidents relative to it, put into contemporary language, have

11. Amir and a Fallen Stranger outside the Castle of Fulead (Humayunama, en. 1562-77).
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Drawing the likeness (nabeh) of anything is called tawar (painting, pictorializing). Since it is an excellent source, both of study and entertainment, His Majesty, from the time he came to an awareness of things (i.e. his childhood), has taken a deep interest in painting and sought its spread and development. Consequently this magical art has gained in beauty. A very large number of painters has been set to work. Each week the several darpanah and khatizheh submit before the king the work done by each artist, and His Majesty gives a reward and increases the monthly salaries according to the excellence displayed. 49

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Akbar's impact on Mughal painting was not limited to his "control" of the various artists who worked for him but extended to his selection of manuscripts to be illustrated. Thus in choosing the Tutiama, Ashtap of Amir Khusrau, Tutiama and Zodia and Hanumanama as some of the first works to be illustrated by his artists, Akbar made an extremely pointed decision, for at least three of these manuscripts have specifically Indian connections. The Tutiama is a loose Persian translation of a Sanskrit classic, the Ashtap of Amir Khusrau was written by one of India's greatest Muslim poets, and the recension used for the Hanumanama was freshly composed at the Mughal court. 54 At the same time none of the four manuscripts (including the Tutiama and Zodia) had lengthy traditions of illustration. The implications of this are twofold. On the one hand, Akbar affirmed his interest in Indian culture—both Hindu and Islamic—and the richness of Indian history. On the other hand, by choosing manuscripts for which there was no clearly established tradition of illustration he enabled his artists to experiment with new forms of representation without being hindered by models to which they had been accustomed. Of all of these manuscripts, the Hamaama (The Story of Himava) is undoubtedly the most extraordinary (nos. 11, 12). It originally consisted of fourteen volumes, each having one hundred large illustrations (approximately 65 by 31 cm., 37 by 20.5 in.); on cloth, of which only about a seventh have survived. According to Badami, it took fifteen years to complete the manuscript, 53 and recent scholarship has shown that its production probably lasted from 1562 to 1577. 54 By 1564 enough of the manuscript's text existed that Akbar could be entertained by its recitation.

When the world-warming sun had set on the throne of the horizons, H. M. the Shahabshah with the desired prey in his net and the cup of success at his lip sate on that aspirant throne and graciously ordered his courtiers to be seated. Then for the sake of delight and pleasure he listened for some time to Darbar Khan's recital of the story of Amir Hamza. 57

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It is now seven years that the Mir [Sayyid Ali] has been busy in the royal bureau of books [khilat khana-i alai], as commanded by His Majesty [ibnaram-i sara], in the decoration and painting of the large compositions (tawar-i maghribi), of the story of Amir Hamza (gusa-i umar-bana), and strives to finish that wondrous book which is one of the astounding novels that His Majesty has concerned of. . . . The amazing descriptions and the strange events of that story are being drawn on the sheets for illustrations in minuscule detail and not the slightest requirement of the art of painting goes unfulfilled. Opposite each illustration, the events and incidents relative to it, put into contemporary language, have
been written down in a delightful style. The composition of these tales, which are full of delight and whet your fancy, is being accomplished by Khwaja Ataullah, the master prose stylist (multahi) from Qazvin.  

While the *Hamzanama*’s paintings share many formal features with those of the *Tutinama* and the *Ashra* of Amir Khusrau, they differ in several important ways. In the first place, because of their large size and dramatic subject matter—the adventurous and often wild tales of Harsha, the Prophet Muhammad’s uncle—they are for the most part far more daring and innovative. In the second place, many of the *Hamzanama*’s images, particularly those that have been preserved in Volumes X and XI (when the manuscript was under Abd al-Samad’s direction), are more refined: lines are crisper and cleaner, pigments finer, and details are rendered with greater precision. The boldly modelled figures in “Muzmahil Treating the Sorcerers” (no. 12), with their expressive gestures and lively faces, are typical of the manuscript’s best miniatures.

Through their immediate impact and engaging stories, the *Hamzanama*’s paintings are meant to be both visually arresting and self-explanatory. They reflect an attempt to establish an imagery that can be quickly perceived and understood without having to be explained by elaborate textual references. The dynamic action of these miniatures provide an almost exact visual metaphor for Akbar’s tremendous energy during the years when he was defining the scope of his empire. The directness of the *Hamzanama*’s stories reflect the emperor’s youthful enthusiasm and it is easy to see why he would have liked them. To the more sophisticated and traditional tastes of someone like Babar, these stories were not only repugnant but “one long, far-fetched lie, opposed to sense and nature.”

In many ways these paintings represent the culmination of the experiments begun in the *Tutinama*. The conventions established in the earlier manuscript have become the norm and are used consistently and with ease. They represent a new visual language. To a large extent the formal history of Mughal painting for the remainder of the sixteenth century and throughout the seventeenth century can be seen as an exploration of the elasticity and range of this idiom as artists sought to express in ever more subtle ways the ideas and interests of their imperial patrons.

The *Hamzanama* also represents a crucial turning point in the history of Akbar’s reign. It was begun at a time when the empire was fragile. When the manuscript was completed fifteen years later, Akbar’s lands were politically as well as militarily secure and the capital had been moved to Fatehpur-Sikri. The move to the new capital occurred almost exactly in the middle of the making of the *Hamzanama*. Thus both in its subject matter and mode of presentation the *Hamzanama* straddles the moment when the directions of the first years of Akbar’s rule gave way to the innovations and developments of his years at Fatehpur-Sikri.

been written down in a delightful style. The composition of these tales, which are full of delight and whet your fancy, is being accomplished by Khwaja Azaullah, the master prose stylist (mu'addib) from Qarwan."

While the *Hamzanama*’s paintings share many formal features with those of the *Tuznama* and the *Ashiya* of Amir Khusraw, they differ in several important ways. In the first place, because of their large size and dramatic subject matter—the adventurous and often wild tales of Hamza, the Prophet Muhammad’s uncle—they are for the most part far more daring and innovative. In the second place, many of the *Hamzanama*’s images, particularly those that have been preserved in Volumes X and XI (when the manuscript was under Abul As-Samad’s direction), are more refined: lines are crisper and cleaner, pigments finer, and details are rendered with greater precision. The boldly modelled figures in “Muzmahil Treating the Sorcerers” (Fig. 12), with their expressive gestures and lively faces, are typical of the manuscript’s best miniatures.

Through their immediate impact and engaging stories, the *Hamzanama*’s paintings are meant to be both visually arresting and self-explanatory. They reflect an attempt to establish an imagery that can be quickly perceived and understood without having to be explained by elaborate textual references. The dynamic action of these miniatures provide an almost exact visual metaphor for Akbar’s tremendous energy during the years when he was defining the scope of his empire. The directness of the *Hamzanama*’s stories reflects the emperor’s youthful enthusiasm and it is easy to see why he would have liked them. To the more sophisticated and traditional tastes of someone like Babur, these stories were not only repugnant but “one long, far-fetched lie, opposed to sense and nature”.

In many ways these paintings represent the culmination of the experiments begun in the *Tuznama*. The conventions established in the earlier manuscript have become the norm and are used consistently and with ease. They represent a new visual language. To a large extent the formal history of Mughal painting for the remainder of the sixteenth century and throughout the seventeenth century can be seen as an exploration of the elasticity and range of this idiom as artists sought to express in ever more subtle ways the ideas and interests of their imperial patrons.

The *Hamzanama* also represents a crucial turning point in the history of Akbar’s reign. It was begun at a time when the empire was fragile. When the manuscript was completed fifteen years later, Akbar’s lands were politically as well as militarily secure and the capital had been moved to Fatehpur-Sikri. The move to the new capital occurred almost exactly in the middle of the making of the *Hamzanama*. Thus both in its subject matter and mode of presentation the *Hamzanama* straddles the moment when the directions of the first years of Akbar’s rule gave way to the innovations and developments of his years at Fatehpur-Sikri.