the miniature assigned to Bishan Das in a contemporary inscription on the lower border (the work of Bishan Das who accompanied Khan Alum to Iran), identifications of the main figures written on the painted surface, background slightly filled in places, album folio number 24 inserted in right gold margin, calligraphy on the reverse signed by Mir 'Ali al-Husaini al-Kashi, written in fine matching ink with the illustrations adorned with flowers and birds in colours on a gold ground, outer margins of both sides of the leaf decorated with flowers in gold on a lightly pink-tinted background.

Provenance: sold in these rooms 17 October, 1983, lot 64.


When the Persian ambassador to the Mughal court, Vazghar 'Ali, was returning to Iran in 1615, the emperor Jahangir chose Khan 'Alam to accompany him as Mughal ambassador to the court of Shah 'Abbas I. Such embassies were not unusual in Persia, where the Shah had already received ambassadors from Spain, Muscovy, and Golkonda. Jahangir recorded in his memoirs how he gave lavish presents to Vazghar 'Ali and a jewelled dagger to Khan 'Alam. The presents sent to Shah 'Abbas were on a grand scale, including ten elephants, but the mission is noted in art circles for the fact that Jahangir also sent an artist to Persia with Khan 'Alam: ‘At the time when I sent Khan 'Alam to Persia, I had sent with him a painter of the name of Bishan Das, who was unequalled in his age for taking likenesses. He was to judge of the portraits of the Shah and the chief men of his State, and bring them. He had drawn the likenesses of most of them, and especially he had taken that of my brother the Shah exceedingly well, so that when I showed it to any of his servants, they said it was exceedingly well drawn.’ (Jahangir, II, 116–117).

This picture of the meeting of Khan 'Alam with Shah 'Abbas, painted by Bishan Das, is one of the direct results of the embassy and Jahangir’s order. When Khan 'Alam returned to India late in 1616, Jahangir was impatient to see him and see what he had brought: ‘When the news of the speedy arrival of Khan 'Alam reached the Court, every day I sent one of my servants to meet him... On Thursday, the 3rd (Bahman), at the garden of Kalanv, Khan 'Alam was honoured by fetching the threshold... Zambl Beg, the ambassador of my brother Shah 'Abbas, was following him with the royal letter and the rarities of that country (Persia), which he had brought as presents.’ (Jahangir, II, 114–115).

Jahangir goes on to record the costly things Khan 'Alam had brought, including the portraits of the Shah and his courtiers, and a painting by Bishan Das. Jahangir is so pleased with Bishan Das that he gives him an elephant. Of the diplomatic success of the embassy Jahangir says less, though it is made clear that Khan 'Alam got on well with Shah 'Abbas. They had hunted together and become good friends, which explains why Shah 'Abbas was so well aware of Khan 'Alam’s addiction to tobacco as recounted by Jahangir:

‘In consequence of the disturbance that tobacco brings about in most temperaments and constitutions, I had ordered that no one should smoke it. My brother Shah 'Abbas has also become aware of the mischief arising from it, and had ordered that in Iran no one should venture to smoke. As Khan 'Alam was without control in continual smoking of tobacco, he frequently practised it. Vazghar 'Ali Sultan, ambassador of the ruler of Iran, representative of Shah 'Abbas that Khan 'Alam could never be a moment without tobacco, and he (Shah 'Abbas) wrote this couplet in answer:- The friend’s errant wishes to exhibit tobacco. With fidelity’s lamp I light up the tobacco-market’.

Khan 'Alam in answer wrote and sent this verse- ‘T, poor wretch, was miserable at the tobacco notice. By the just Shah’s favour the tobacco-market became brisk.’ (Jahangir, I, 370–371).

Bishan Das evidently painted both single portraits and more complex group pictures while he was in Persia. In addition to the present group composition he also painted a related scene of the meeting, with fewer courtiers, known from his signed picture in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (no.14.665, Gooraramawami, 1930, nos.I.5, V.XXXX). Aside from Bishan Das’s works, the contemporary Persian artist Rizai ‘Abassi also executed portraits of Khan ‘Alam and the Shah. Subsequently, a number of derivative versions of both the Mughal and Persian originals were made by later artists in Persia and India.

Of the known versions of the present composition, this is the earliest and is presumably the original as presented to Jahangir by Bishan Das. The composition was previously known only from later versions and copies (a copy of c.1860 is in the Victoria and Albert Museum, I.S.219-1951: Grill, 1985, Fig.3), and until the appearance of this picture in 1983 it had been surmised that this original by Bishan Das must have existed but was probably lost. The story of Khan ‘Alam’s embassy to Persia, and Bishan Das’s portraits arising out of it, has been published more than once (Kühnel, 1942; Robinson, 1972). More recently, after this picture was recognised as the key prototype for later versions (Grill, 1985), a full list of both the Mughal and Persian portraits was published (Grube and Sims, 1995).

For details of the career of Bishan Das, a nephew of the artist Nihang, and for list of his other works, see Beach, 1978, 107-111; Das, 1978, 192-195 and as indexed; Verma, 1994, 110–115.

The calligraphy on the reverse of the page, written by Mir ‘Ali of Herat (see above), is from a ghazal by the fourteenth-century poet Hafiz:

The cup-bearer was offering me a cup of wine in the sound of my eye. I went on with this order, as I was drinking the wine until dawn.

The image of your face Was what I was hearing on the workshop of my sleepless eyes.

My eyes on the cup-bearer, and my ear on the sound of the bale.

Were reading the omen in this.

Written by Mir ‘Ali al-Husayni, the script.

The smaller calligraphy on either side is in Chaghanyi Turkish. This page of calligraphy and its decoration has been copied faithfully on the reverse of the copy of the miniature of c.1860 (Victoria and Albert Museum, I.S.219-1951: Grill, 1985, Fig.5, where a poetic translation of the above verse is given).

£50,000-40,000
Christ enthroned holding and orb and giving a sign of blessing, by Murad; the reverse with a page of calligraphy by Mir'Ali, the borders decorated with a variety of flowers. Mughal, c.1630-40

The miniature assigned to Murad is a contemporary inscription in the lower border, background slightly flaked and discoloured, album folio number 10 inscribed in right gold margins, calligraphy on the reverse signed by Mir 'Ali al-Katib al-Sulhli, written in fine nastaliq on blue paper, the interspaces decorated with flowers in colours and gold, two small corner miniatures of a white goose and a chetah pouncing on a gazelle, outer margins of both sides of the leaf decorated with flowers in colours and gold, remnants of red cloth guard at inner edge, outer edges with applied trim of gold paper now splitting away in places.

Provenance: sold in these rooms 16 April, 1984, lot 88.

The model for this picture of Christ enthroned has not been traced, though it clearly originates from a European source, probably an engraving. The artist Murad reached the height of his career during the reign of Shah Jahan. His illustrations for the manuscripts of the Padshahnama (collection of His Majesty the Queen, Royal Library, Windsor Castle) constitute a major achievement on which his present-day reputation is largely founded. Although his early works may date from the Jahangir period, most of his known works are from the time of Shah Jahan. He seems to have specialised in portraiture, though his participation in the Padshahnama suggests his painting skills were appreciated by Shah Jahan in a wider context. His signature has been variously read (Mirar, Marar, Murar etc.) as discussed by Verma, 1994, 274ff., where eighteen of his works are listed, not including this one. His works are noted by Besch, 1978 (indexed under Murad), and his Padshahnama illustrations are published by Begley, 1990, nos.4, 6, and 13.

A later version of this picture, painted in Delhi about the beginning of the nineteenth century, was probably copied from this original and was in the collection of James and William Fraser (sale in these rooms 14 October, 1986, lot 298). William Fraser resided in Delhi and its vicinity from 1806, and the Fraser versions of Shah Jahan period pictures are by the same group of Delhi artists who painted the later pictures of the Kevorkian and Wantage albums. It appears that these Shah Jahan albums were in Delhi at the time and were augmented with extra pages by late Mughal artists, perhaps specifically for the British in whose hands the albums were brought to Europe. For a discussion of these later additions to Shah Jahan albums see Welch et al., 1987, 26-29.

The page of poetic calligraphy on the reverse is written by Mir'Ali (see above) and translates: Oh cup-bearer, give me wine; since a white cloud has risen from the West.
The cup has become cold, and the hundred leaves a white tent.
Give me wine in a crystal cup, if you are giving me wine;
But wine goes well in a white cup.
I watched the book of the free;
I was given paper entirely white.
It was written by Mir'Ali, the royal scribe.

A page of calligraphy with decoration very similar to this one, also featuring a chetah pouncing on a gazelle, is in the Kevorkian Album, illustrated in Welch et al., 1987, no.39.

£15,000-20,000
The European model for this picture has not been traced but like the previous picture was probably an engraving. The artist Manohar was one of the most highly ranked painters at the Mughal court. A full account of his life and works is given by McInerney (1991). He was born circa 1565-70, a son of the great artist Basawan. His earliest masterpieces were illustrations for manuscripts of the late Akbar period, in which he displayed extraordinary skill and polish. Under Jahangir he was prized as a portrait painter, but throughout his career his output was large and the range of subjects wide. Like other artists of his generation he absorbed a measure of the European pictorial outlook by adapting or copying European engravings. Probably the most complex European composition he worked on was with the artist Nanha, a Last Judgment scene on folio 5b of a manuscript of Mir Ali Shih Nava'i's Khamsa, now in the collection of Her Majesty the Queen, Windsor Castle (Lozoy, 1982, pl.LXXI). Miniatures by Manohar are published in many books on Indian painting; accounts of him are given by Beach, 1978, 130-137; Das, 1978, 188-192; McInerney, 1991; Verma, 1994, 248-259.

As with the picture of Christ of the previous lot, an early nineteenth century Delhi artist made a copy of this miniature which was in the collection of Janies and William Fraser, sold in these rooms 14 October, 1980, lot 297.

The page of poetic calligraphy on the reverse is written by Mir 'Ali (see above) and translates:

*The In the name of God, The Compassionate, The Merciful*

Is the prayer at the table of the generous,

The divine bounty, prepared for the table [that inspires] eloquence.

He lifted a veil from the old fable

The cry of the scratching of the magician’s reed pen arose:

*In the name of God! Hail!*

Nourishing words emerged,

Savour them.

The noble Mir 'Ali, the scribe.

£15,000-20,000

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**8**

King David seated playing an angel-headed harp, by Manohar; the reverse with a page of calligraphy by Mir 'Ali al-Katib, the borders decorated with a variety of flowers. Mughal, c.1630-40

The miniature assigned to Manohar in a contemporary inscription 'mano-ha manohar' at the base of David’s harp, background slightly worn and divided, album folio number 6 inscribed in right gold margin, calligraphy on the reverse signed by Mir 'Ali al-Katib, written in eight lines of fine masht in black and gold, the surround finely decorated with flowers on a gold ground, outer margins of both sides of the leaf decorated with flowers in colours and gold, remains of red cloth guard at inner edge, outer edges with applied trim of gold paper, splitting away at corners

Miniature 21 by 13.2cm., calligraphy 21.6 by 12.6cm., page 38.5 by 26.3cm.

Provenance: sold in these rooms 16 April, 1984, lot 87.
9 Portrait of prince Aurangzeb holding a sword and sarpech, by Bichitr; the reverse with a page of calligraphy by Mir Ali, with illumination signed by Daulat; the outer borders decorated with a variety of flowers. Mughal, c. 1640

Inscribed at right edge in Shah Jahan’s hand with the identification of Aurangzeb and an ascription in Bichitr: ‘Shahab ud n. Aurangzeb, amal ud Bichitr’ (during his princelyhood Aurangzeb was usually referred to as ‘Mohammad Aurangzeb’ so the created word would probably have been Muhammad), inner calligraphic border with background of flowers on a gold ground signed at the bottom by Daulat, folio number 25 written in right hand margin, outer margin of flowering plants in colours and gold, four lines of calligraphy on reverse signed by Mir ‘Ali, two partials written diagonally in black nasta’liq within a border of smaller calligraphy, the interspaces decorated with flowers on a gold ground signed in the bottom right corner by Daulat, outer margin of blue paper decorated with flowering plants in gold

Miniature 13.3 by 8.7cm., calligraphy 18.8 by 10.4cm., leaf 30.8 by 20.5cm.

Provenance: sold in these rooms 17 October, 1983, lot 65.

Separate portraits of Aurangzeb (1618-1707) as a prince are uncommon, for he was the third son of Shah Jahan and hence not expected to succeed to the throne. His elder brother Dara Shikoh (1615-59) as crown prince was depicted more often than his younger brothers. As events turned out, Aurangzeb, with his superior military experience gained in the Deccani campaign and with a store of mistrust of his father and elder brother, was the victor in the debacle of 1658. Other portraits of the young Aurangzeb are to be found in the court scenes of the Padshahnama manuscript in the collection of Her Majesty the Queen (Bechley, 1990, Pts.8, 9, 23, 24). From the dates of these likenesses it would appear that Aurangzeb grew his beard shortly before 1640, the approximate date of the present portrait when he would have been in his early twenties.

The artist Bichitr virtually specialised in portraiture at which he excelled. He was skilled at both the formal or royal portrait, and the informal character portrait. A number of his finest portraits are contained in the Shah Jahan Albums while some of his allegorical compositions, such as the famous picture of Jahangir seated on an hour-glass preferring a Sufi shaykh to kings (Freer Gallery, Washington), are among the greatest icons of Mughal art. For studies of the works of Bichitr see Beach, 1978, 101-105; Beach, 1981, 108-109 and as indexed; Okada, 1992, 164-173; Verma, 1994, 104-109.

The artist Daulat, who has signed on both sides of this page as the painter of the flower background of the calligraphy and the inner border of the miniature, made a speciality of this type of decoration. His signature appears as painter of similar decoration on a page of calligraphy in the Keworkian Album, published in Welch et al., 1987, no.27, on the basis of which other pages in the album have been attributed to him. Other marginalia of the Shah Jahan period are also signed by him: Colugh, 1976, no.101; Leach, 1995, nos.3.20 and 3.21. For accounts of Daulat and lists of his known works see Beach, 1978, pp.113-116; Das, 1991; Verma, 1994, pp.126-131. Beach (p.114) mentions the lack of visual link between Daulat’s border decorations of the Shah Jahan period and his earlier margin and figurative works. Possibly in older age he made a speciality of floral decoration, but Das takes the view that there were two artists of the same name (Das, 1991, 103-104). Bearing in mind that this page would have been decorated as late as c.1640, and that none of Daulat’s signed figurative works are known after c.1615, the possibility of separate identity cannot be ruled out. The poetic calligraphy on the reverse is by Mir ‘Ali (see above). In the margins are lines from a ghazal lamenting separation and desiring union with the beloved one. The central verses translate:

Oh You whose speech is the exaltation of God,
Your grace, always the blessing of God.
The words Mir ‘Ali

£15,000-25,000
Manuscript of the Khamsa (Five Poems) by Nizami, copied by the scribe Mustafa, with illumination and seventeen illustrations. Mughal, c.1629-30

Persian manuscript on gilt-sprinkled paper, 354 leaves, written in neat nasta’i, 4 columns of 21 lines to the page, headings in red, rules in gold and colours, six headpieces illuminated in colours and gold, remarqued, gold decoration in margins of the openings with headpieces, bound in 18th-century Indian black leather, the covers with large panels of applied composite gilt floral onlay, red leather doublures, paper label on spine with Khamsa titles in Persian, Indian horned tag

29.2 by 18cm., text area 18 by 10cm.

Provenance: From the library of Nathaniel Middleton (Agent at Lucknow, c.1780), where Middleton probably acquired the manuscript, with his engraved bookplate bearing his titles in Persian (Nathaniel Middleton Ruh-Al-Dawa Makkhar Al-Mahmoudi Nacc Jang Bakshas) and the date A.H.1191 (A.D.1777).

The booksellers Payne and Foss. Loosely inserted in the manuscript is a letter of 13 January 1810 to Payne from Sir Gore Ouseley, giving his opinion that ‘it is worth at least 45 to 50 Guineas’.

Robert Lang (1750-1828): his sale, Evans, 17 November 1829, lot 1948 (the number still labelled on the spine).

Sir Thomas Phillips Br. (1792-1872), MS.3665; sale in these rooms 27 November 1974, lot 659.

The Khamsa is the most popular collection of narrative poems by Nizami (c.1149-1202), ranked with the best of Persian poetry. It consists of five separate works: the ‘Storehouse of Mysteries’, ‘Khurasan and Shirin’, ‘Layla and Majnun’, the ‘Seven Images’, and the ‘Book of Alexander’. The manuscript is illustrated with seventeen miniatures executed in a sub-imperial Mughal style of c.1629-30. Manuscripts illustrated in this style have not been well documented to date but it has been suggested they were produced at Agra. Separate pages from stylistically related manuscripts of the Shahnameh are in the San Diego Museum, formerly in the Binney Collection (Binney, 1973, nos.37 and 39).

The subjects of the miniatures are as follows:

1. Khurasan sees Shirin bathing in a stream (11 by 9.8cm.)
2. Khurasan embroiled with ladies and courtesans (10 by 9.8cm.)
3. Shirin visits her lover Farhad on Mount Behistun (14.3 by 9.8cm.)
4. Layla on a terrace with ladies (8.2 by 9.8cm., 18th century)
5. The Battle of the Clans (11.6 by 9.8cm.)
6. Majnun seated in the wilderness with his animals (10.7 by 9.8cm.)
7. Bahram Gur hunting with his mistress and displaying his prowess (9.9 by 9.8cm.)
8. The slave girl Fima carrying the fully grown calf to the roof (14.3 by 9.8cm.)
9. Bahram Gur with the Indian princess in the Black Pavilion (7.3 by 9.8cm.)
10. Bahram Gur with the Tartar princess in the Green Pavilion (9.9 by 9.8cm.)
11. Bahram Gur with the Tartar princess in the Red Pavilion (9.9 by 9.8cm.)
12. Bahram Gur with the Slav princess in the Red Pavilion (9.2 by 9.8cm.)
13. Bahram Gur with the princess of Khosrow in the Blue Pavilion (10.2 by 9.8cm.)
14. Bahram Gur with the Chinese princess in the Sandalwood Pavilion (8.4 by 9.8cm.)
15. Bahram Gur with the Greek princess in the White Pavilion (7.6 by 9.8cm.)
16. The battle between the Greeks and the Persians (16 by 9.6cm.)
17. Alexander presented with a slave girl by the Emperor of China (17.7 by 9.7cm.)

£12,000-15,000