A leaf from a Mughal Shahnama: Ardashir ordering the execution of Arslan, riding his white horse and gesturing towards Arslan who is left before him on horseback with his hands tied, Ardashir’s cavalry still riding around with drawn swords. By Kamal, Mughal, c.1660

Manuscript leaf with illustration in colours and gold, on gilt-sprinkled paper, text in 4 columns of 25 lines of nasta’liq, outer margin of illustrated side overlaid with a gold-decorated margin from an early 17th-century Mughal manuscript of the Firdawsi Shahnameh, the same Kamal and the number 34 (or 31?) discernable beneath, margin rule split, in manuscript, dimensions 113 by 190mm, text area 243 by 133mm, page 366 by 243mm.

From an early Mughal manuscript of the Shahnameh of which six leaves from the Brunet Collection were sold in these rooms 18th July, 1971, lots 138-140 and 7th December, 1971, lots 54-56. The manuscript illustrations bear the names of each respective artist neatly written in a contemporary hand in the outer margin and accompanied by the number of the illustration as originally placed in the manuscript. A feature of the illustrations is the participation of Mughal-trained artists alongside others who were painting in a more Persian style.

One of the Brunet leaves is now in the Keir Collection (R.W. Robinson, Islamic Painting and the Arts of the Book, London, 1976, no.354, where it is catalogued as early 17th-century Bukhara (with supporting discussion). Kamal, son of Khurshid, was an artist of the late Akbar period who worked on the manuscripts for the library of Akbar’s first minister, Abd al-Rahim Khan-i-Khanan, raising the possibility that this manuscript was also made for him. For a list of Kamal’s works see S.P. Verma, Mughal Painters and their Work, Delhi, 1994, pp.197-98.

Other artists who illustrated this Shahnameh were Dawud, Mirza Ghulam, Dasrak Kashiniri, Muhammad Pandat and Haidar Kashiniri. The present leaf was sold at Christie’s, 23rd April, 1981, lot 67, and another leaf was sold in these rooms 1st July, 1969, lot 101.

$3,000-5,000

An illustration from an Akbar-period historical manuscript: a ruler, probably the emperor Timur, presiding over a darbar where ministers and courtiers are engaged in discussion, others being covered dishes, horses wait by the gateway in the foreground. Mughal, late sixteenth century

gouache with gold on paper, text panel painted over to match wall in foreground, other small areas of retouching and horizontal crease, on an 18th-century album leaf with coloured borders, subject identified as Amir Timur on reverse, a decorated page of nasta’liq calligraphy on reverse signed by Iqbal Naushab Khanja Muwain Khan, outer border trimmed, miniature 220 by 191mm, calligraphy 246 by 133mm, page 336 by 223mm.

Formerly in the Hague Kovorkian Collection, sold in these rooms 23rd April 1979, lot 192.

$5,000-7,000

Zuleikha sleeping with her maidservants crouched around her bed, lamps and candles burning, palace buildings towering above beneath a night sky. By Muhammad Nadir Samarakandi, Mughal (Kashmir), c.1635-40

gouache with gold, surface slightly abraded, signed and dated 1015 on a piece of the palace building, on an album page with gold-decorated borders, 252 by 148mm, page 357 by 254mm.

From an interesting series of illustrations to the story of Yusuf and Zuleikha. The majority of known pages from the series are in the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin (L.V. Leach, Mughal and other Indian Paintings from the Chester Beatty Library, London, 1995, II, 957-965, p.130-133), and Muhammad Nadir Samarakandi’s inscriptions on some of those pages state that he was working in ‘Kashmir, which is like paradise’. The inscriptions on the present page are written in the same meticulous manner on the architecture, in black rather than white pigment. The date, however, clear and un-altered though it is, is puzzling: the style of the pictures makes it hard to believe that 1015 should be interpreted according to the Hijri system as A.D.1606-7. Possibly it should be read according to the solar calendar, rarely used yet translating as A.D.1636. This date accords well with the style and may therefore be acceptable in preference to the c.1650 dating of the series hitherto.

In addition to the five Beatty Library illustrations a few are known in other collections: India Office Library (Falk and Archer, Indian Miniatures in the India Office Library, London, 1981, no.90); San Diego Museum of Art (E. Briney, Indian Miniature Painting, The Mughal and Deccani schools, Portland, 1973, no.63); the St. Petersburg Museum (A. Ivanova et al, Altın indihiyle formatihni miniatur, Moscowl, 1962, pl.11); and the St. Louis Museum. See also L.V. Leach, ’Painting in Kashmir from 1600 to 1650’, Facists of Indian Art, London, 1986, 124-131.

$4,000-6,000
A LEAF FROM A ROYAL MUGHAL ALBUM OF SHAH JAHAN WITH A PORTRAIT BY RAM DAS

An illuminated album leaf with a portrait of Mahdī Quli Khan standing in court costume in a landscape, identified and attributed in Shah Jahan's hand and set within a border with further related portraits of courtiers; the reverse with a page of sixteenth-century calligraphy by Mir 'Ali set within a floral border. The portrait by Ram Das, Mughal, c.1655

the miniature finely executed in colours and gold, a vertical cartouche reserved from the green of the sky contains a Persian inscription in the hand of the emperor Shah Jahan identifying Mahdī Quli Khan who came over to the Mughals at the fortress of Baw (see below) and naming the artist Ram Das; inner pink and blue borders with floral arabesques in gold, outer margin with portraits of court princes, three standing bearing dishes and four seated with presentation daggers and other gifts, the uncoloured background paper of the margin decorated with gold flowers, the reverse with two complete verses to vāstūlag signed by the calligrapher Mir 'Ali, the background and corners illuminated in colours and gold, within pink and blue borders decorated with gold floral arabesques, outer margin with a bold scrolling floral arabesque design in colours and gold on an uncoloured background, with guard strip intact. Miniature 197 by 112mm, decorated page 381 by 251mm, including guard strip 381 by 274mm, calligraphy 165 by 8.3cm.

This is an important leaf from one of the greatest Mughal royal albums and of historical significance in the political associations of the subject, Mahdī Quli Khan.

PROVENANCE
1. The portrait was painted circa 1658-59 by Ram Das, soon after Mahdī Quli Khan defected to the Mughal cause in 1658.
2. Inscribed by the emperor Shah Jahan (reigned 1628-1657) and included in his royal album, now referred to as the ‘Late Shah Jahan Album’ (Beach, pp.71-77), assembled towards the end of his reign circa 1665.
3. The album would have remained in the royal Mughal library until Nafir Shah's sack of Delhi in 1739 when it entered the Iranian imperial collection.
4. In 1809 was brought to Paris, apparently via Russia, at which time it contained about a hundred leaves which were 'at once absorbed by the collectors' (Martin, I, p.85; for the most recently published list of known pages of the album see Leach, I, p.427).
5. Formerly in the Bagot Kevoriskian Collection, sold in these rooms 23rd April 1975, lot 126.

MADDĪ QULI KHAN
Maddī Quli Sultan (later titled Khan) was an officer of Shāh Abbas II of Persia, by whom he was posted to the Qandahar region where he became governor of the fortress of Baw. There, in May-June 1653, his forces were assaulted by the Mughal army and he was forced to surrender to Rustam Khan (whose portrait was also in this album, Leach, I, pp.435-438) and offer his allegiance to the Mughals as recounted in the Shah Jahan Nama; accordingly, on the 4th Rajab 1063 (31st May 1653), Rustam Khan and his confreres arrived outside the fortress...and the flames of war blazed high on both sides by the discharge of cannon, artillery pieces and matchlocks. When the heavy guns came up from the rear, the Baw governor Maddī Quli Sultan realized that the fortifications could not withstand its fire. Therefore, on the 10th day of the siege (9 June 1653), he resigned his post and sued for mercy. After procuring a written agreement, Maddī Quli proceeded to an interview with Rustam Khan Kadar accompanied by others of the Baw garrison’ (Bogley and Desai, p.486; see also Suhreta, p.335)

continued
By September of 1653 Mahdi Quli Khan was in Delhi, where he was received graciously by Shah Jahan. On the 5th of Zil’Qada 1063 (27 September 1653) Mahdi Quli Khan, who previous to his arrival at court had been favoured with a manuscript of 1,500 and the title of Khan, now had the good fortune of paying his respects. Moreover, his utmost hopes were realized by the gift of a robe of honour, a jewelled dagger and turban ornament, and 10,000 rubies in addition to the same sum that he had already received at Qandahar (Begley and Desai, p. 496).

As regards the present album page, the knowledge of Mahdi Quli Khan’s newly elevated position and the gifts made to him by the emperor were evidently uppermost in the minds of those who assembled the album. The figures seated at the top and bottom of the outer margin are in charge of, even gesturing towards, precious items recently given to this illustrious turncoat: jewelled daggers, a sword, turban ornaments and pearls. Indeed, Mahdi Quli Khan is probably depicted wearing the very robe of honour and turban ornament given him by Shah Jahan on 27th September, 1653. This reflection of the central portrait subject by the artist who painted the border is a distinctive feature of Shah Jahan’s later album pages.

THE CALLIGRAPHER
The calligrapher Mir ‘Ali, a sample of whose writing is on the reverse of this album leaf, was one of the great practitioners of the art of nasta’liq calligraphy. He was born towards the end of the fifteenth century at Herat. There he followed the example of the great calligrapher Sultan ‘Ali al-Mashhadi on whose work he modelled his hand. After the death of the patron Sultan Husayn Baghara, Herat went through unsettled times. About 1550 Mir ‘Ali was taken along with other calligraphers and painters, to Bukhara and into the employment of the Uzbek ruler ‘Ubaydullah Khan. It is from his Bukhara period that Mir ‘Ali’s calligraphies in Shah Jahan’s album must date. His calligraphy was greatly admired by the Mughal emperors and his works were avidly collected by them. An account of the life of Mir ‘Ali, and discussion of the predominance of his calligraphy in Mughal albums, is given by Schimmel in Welch, 1964, pp. 32-36.

LITERATURE

84 A princess and her ladies tending pigeons on a garden sarca, the princess smoking a hookah as some of the birds emerge from a golden dovecote, musicians performing. Oudh, late 18th century gnume with gold, on an album page with gold-decorated borders, framed, Persian description from canvas paper preserved on back of frame, 333 by 230 mm.

The keeping and breeding of pigeons was a popular courtly pastime in Mughal India from the sixteenth century onwards. The Mughal chronicler Abu ‘l-Fazl described the various breeds of pigeon kept at the Mughal court, and how the emperor Akbar himself delighted in the sport of flying pigeons: ‘the amusement which His Majesty derives from the tumbling and flying of pigeons reminds of the ecstasy and transport of enthusiastic divines’ (Abu ‘l-Fazl, The Ainsu Awaiz, H. Blochmann trs., Calcutta, 1875-94, I, pp. 310-315). £25,000-35,000

85 An elopement at night where a princely lover climbs to the upper window of a fortified palace to rendezvous with his mistress who lies waiting. Rohet, mid-nineteenth century gnume with gold, green and red borders, framed, 315 by 210 mm.

This is an elaborated version of the eighteenth-century elopement scenes by Buni and Roth. An example from the collection of the British Rail Pension Fund was sold in these rooms 26th April 1994, lot 14. £1,500-2,500
guache with gold on cotton, the numerals 2 and 6 inscribed in Persian on red text fill in foreground, mounted as an album leaf with paper margins ruled in black and colours and an outer gold-sprinkled border, inscribed in lower border with caption in nasta’liq (mostly trimmed away), applied label at left margin inscribed in blue ‘Mas’078’, some areas of retouching including figures and subjacent areas; verso with 19 lines of text in elegant nasta’liq script in black, on paper laid onto the cotton, the paper broadly splashed with gold prior to the writing of the text, in good condition but for slight smudging, orange and pale blue inner margins, outer gold-sprinkled borders with traces of blue marbling, mounted in lower left corner, in a nineteenth-century double-sided frame (former’s blind hall in lower margin of verso), 680 by 515mm., text 695 by 528mm., leaf 740 by 573mm.

A LEAF FROM THE VAST QSSAI AMIR HAMZA OR HAMZA NAMA PANTED FOR THE EMPEROR AKBAR THE GREAT, who inherited the Mughal throne at the age of 13 in 1556 and in a reign of nearly fifty years conquered Rajputana (1558), Multan (1580), Gujerat (1573), Bengal (1576), Kashmir (1586), Southern Sind (1590), Orissa (1592), Bahilistan and Makran (1594) and Basser (1596), finally conquering Ahmadnagar in the Deccan in 1600. He died in 1605, leaving to his son Jahanang a vast royal empire of breathtaking splendour and culture.

Akbar was a supreme patron of the arts, architecture, philosophy, literature, music and multi-cultural religion. The commissioning of the Hamza Nama was the first great artistic undertaking of his reign. The Hamza Nama is the principle cornerstone of early Mughal painting and one of the most innovative of all oriental manuscripts. Its enormous size and startling compositions were quite without precedent and were never attempted again. The manuscript is a romance of the mythical adventures of Amir Hamza, the uncle of the Prophet Muhammad, who is transformed by the talismans of a chivalric hero who travels the world fighting infidels and disbelievers. Although the legends of the Amir Hamza go back at least to the eleventh century, Akbar’s Hamza Nama represents a unique form of the text, derived as it was from an oral tradition. In this version it was possibly never finished and remains unpublished. Work on the manuscript had almost certainly begun by 1564, since the chronicler Abu’l-Fazl describes parts of the text being read out to Akbar during an elephant hunt near Naurin in that year (Abu’l-Fazl, 1587-99, ii, p.545). The Hamza Nama is said to have taken fifteen years to complete. It was described as being in twelve vast uneven volumes, painted on cotton, with a total of some four hundred paintings with text on their verso, probably (though scholarly opinion is divided on this point) so that they could be held up by the court reader before Akbar and recited from the back. Fifty artists are said to have worked on its illustrations. Akbar’s father Humayun had summoned to India the greatest book illuminators of Persia, including Mir Sayyid ‘Ali and ‘Abd al-Samad, who had both worked on the Shihabnama of Shah Tahmasp (the ‘Houghton Shahnama’, of which four leaves were sold in these rooms, 25 April this year, lots 11-14), and both artists were employed to supervise the Hamza Nama project. Mir Sayyid ‘Ali was in turn succeeded as director of the work by ‘Abd al-Samad (later master of the imperial mint).

The Hamza Nama was a very personal commission from the emperor and was one which he followed extremely closely. The chronicler Abu’l-Fazl describes how each week the superintendents (da‘gas) and clerks (hidâgjas) would bring to Akbar the paintings completed and that the emperor would reward and increase the artists’ salaries according to the work shown to him (Abu’l-Fazl, 1587-99, i, p.115). “The Hamza Nama profusely impressed the young Akbar... It is in fact probable that the story gave him a loose model for plans he was already starting to formulate about imperial acquisition. Throughout his life Akbar thought in sweeping terms, and the fictitious adventures of Hamza, who supposedly conquered far-flung territories populated by unbelievers, provided a mythical prototype for accession on a vast scale... The Hamza Nama seems to have been both an inspiration for Akbar’s ambition and a record of its dynamism” (Leach, 1995, pp.17-18). “This was indeed a worthy project for a heroic ruler with an inventive mind” (Pal, 1993, p.175). “When we read in Bad’uni that... Akbar had his audience chambers decorated with stuffs, including incomparable paintings, it might well be that some of the Hamza illustrations were displayed” (Barrett and Gray, p.78). The Hamza Nama seems to have no other manuscript ever seen before, and it had a profound effect on Akbar’s contemporaries. “Verily” (wrote Mir Ali al-Din’Ali Qazwini) “it is a book the like of which no connoisseur has ever seen since the aureate sheets of the heavens were decorated with brilliant stars” (Chundra, p.190).
Stylistically the *Huma Nama* already shows the extraordinary fusion of Indian and Persian art which characterises Mughal art for two centuries, with influences from Europe and the Far East. These form a graphic reflection of Akbar's own fascination with the civilisations of all nations, and the *Huma Nama* has been described as the quintessential Indian work of art in its setting and adaptation. "The style of the *Huma Nama* is broadly Iranian... Yet the Indian architectural details... are immediately striking. Broad swaths of brilliant crimson sometimes cut across the composition, a feature of indigenous traditions translated into the new style. The vibrancy of the paintings... gives them a character all of their own. The liveliness of the scenes compensates for the sometimes crudely applied paint, which contrasts with the delicacy and precision of the arabesque and geometric decoration on walls and floors, textiles and armour" (Gay and Swallow, pp.67-9). "The *Huma Nama* pages... startle us with Dionysiac turbulence, broad handling, and vivid expressive colour" (Welch, 1985, p.24). "Their surging vitality, dramatic impact, and detailed handling underscore Akbar's pre-eminence as a patron. Like his empire, they represent a new synthesis of elements from far and wide" (Welch, 1985, p.151). "The scenes abound with adventure and drama... in a sombre palette of colours which was to characterise painting for Akbar almost till the end of his reign. The effect is often achieved by combining Persian compositions with the dark, muted painting of pre-Islamic India" (Rogers, p.45).

The present leaf is complete, preserving intact the text on its verso. From this we learn the story shown here. The incident at night in the camp of the infidel Muruzq (Muzaffar Shah, king of the 'Franks'), who is shown stretched out sleeping in his tent at the upper right. His attendants wear European caps, to represent the fact that Muruzq is presumably Christian. Muruzq has captured Khiwja Umar (literally 'Master Umar'), the closest companion of Hamza and his master spy, and has conveyed him to his death. During the night, however, his guard, Zankara, strikes a deal with the prisoner, and offers to set him free if he will return to the emperor to implicate Zankara's behof and ask for forgiveness. This is taking place at the lower right, where Zankara removes the gold chains from the arms of Umar. To the event, Khiwja Umar does indeed reach his own camp, and while the emperor's companions are wondering if this is a trick, the drums of war are heard from Muruzq's encampment. Muruzq wakes up and demands that Zankara should hand over the prisoner on pain of death. Zankara himself then flees to the emperor's camp and throws himself at the emperor's mercy. The scene here is set in the desert at night as indicated by the two blaring torches. Camels peer over the dunes. Most of the camp is asleep and still. Muruzq's ornamental tent-enclosure is set with decorated and illuminated canopies and around him are the trappings of wealth - a golden candlesick, wine-flask and hound, and a silver lamp-holder. An attendant at the entrance to Muruzq's tent is tending a torch, but no one notices the furtive conversation of Zankara and his prisoner crouched in their own tent in the foreground. On a stool are clothes for the proposed journey, and horses are standing ready for his escape. The details of the tents and military equipment convey a vivid image of an army encampment from the age of Akbar himself. Two comparable camp *Huma Nama* scenes are in the Museum of Art and Industry, Vienna (Huma Nama, I, 1984, p.37 and 40).

The *Huma Nama* is discussed in every major hook on Indian and Mughal art. "There is nothing quite like the *Huma Nama* in the entire history of Indian painting; certainly nothing else in Mughal painting matches it either in scale or energy... easily the most ambitious of imperial painting projects" (Goswamy and Fischer, pp.36 and 194). "In the grandeur of its conception, the dynamic forcefulness of its composition, the unbounded energy of its sweeping outlines and the expressiveness of its dramatic tension, the *Huma Nama* paintings remain truly unmatched... The creation of the *Huma Nama* can only be compared with a musical extravaganza" (Pal 1983, pp.34 and 15). "It was an enterprise unparalleled in magnitude by painters of the Islamic world" (Leach, 1995, p.18). "The *Huma Nama* is unquestionably one of the most remarkable manuscripts ever commissioned by a Muslim ruler; it can even be said that it has no true parallel anywhere" (Grube, p.252).

The *Huma Nama* was described as being in the library of Akbar at the end of his life, and it was inherited by Jahangir (1605-1628) and Shah Jahan (1628-1660). It probably contained intact in the royal palace at Delhi until the Mughal collections were looted during Nadir Shah's sack of the city in 1739 when many leaves of the book were taken back to Persia and almost all the scenes depicted in the *Huma Nama* were deliberately smudged. Other leaves from the great book remained in the ruined palace of Delhi, which was sacked by Ahmad Shah Abdal in 1757 and captured by the British in 1803 and 1857. Some remaining leaves of the *Huma Nama* were evidently still in India, and some were found in the late nineteenth century coming out of the windows of a tea shop in Kashmir (Clarke, p.6). Of the fourteen hundred paintings said to have been made, about a hundred and fifty are still extant, mostly in the Austrian Museum of Art and Industry in Vienna.
(Glock, 1925, and Home-Numa, 1974) and in the Victoria and Albert Museum (Home-Numa, 1982). Others are divided among the Chester Beatty Library, the Fogg Art Museum, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, the Brooklyn Museum, and elsewhere. Many are more-or-less defaced, some are only fragments of pages. The last two leaves sold at auction were in these rooms, 15 April 1985, lot 478, and at Christie's in New York, 3 October 1990, lot 28. The present leaf was acquired in the nineteenth century by a Maj. Fitzroy, who served in the British army in India, and it bears his name written in blue on the label at the left of the picture.

Literature:
C.S. Clarke, Twelve Mogul Paintings ... Illustrating the Romance of Amir Hamzah, 1921.
H. Gluck, Die Indischen Miniaturen des Hauses Romans, 1925.
E.J. Gebe, Islamic Paintings. The Krass Collection, n.d.
L.V. Leach, Mogul and Other Indian Paintings from the Chester Beatty Library, 1995.
P. Pal, Indian Painting, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1983.
P. Pal, Court Paintings of India, 1983.
£30,000-50,000

87 Shah Jahan at the jharoka of the Hall of Public Audience with his four sons Dara Shikoh, Sultan Shuja', Aurangzeb and Murad Baksh, the minister Asaf Khan standing beneath. Mughal, c.1635
drawing on paper with touches of pink, central tear repaired, in mount, 183 by 137mm.
The subject of this drawing, judging from the age of the princes as depicted, must date from about the time of Dara Shikoh's marriage in 1633. It could well be a preparatory drawing for a projected scene for a history of Shah Jahan's reigns. Comparison can be made with the completed scenes as found in the Windsor Castle Padshah Nama manuscript (W.E.Begley and Z.A.Desai, The Shah Jahan Nama of Imam Khan, Delhi, 1990). For other preparatory drawings of this type see E.Bruney, Indian Miniature Painting. The Mogul and Deccani Schools, Portland, 1973, no.64: S.Gahlin, The Courts of India (Fondation Custodia), Paris, 1991, pl.35.
£1,000-1,200

88 A prince in discussion with learned companions before a pavilion, court servants attending and bringing food. Mughal, c.1600
gesso with gold, slight retouching, perhaps originally an illustration to a poetical manuscript, mounted with gold-decorated border, card mount, 265 by 113mm.
£1,000-1,200