The Meeting Place
of British Middle East Studies:
Emerging Scholars, Emergent Research
& Approaches

Edited by

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# Table of Contents

Acknowledgements ........................................................................................................... vii

A Note on Transliteration ................................................................................................. ix

Foreword ........................................................................................................................... xi

Professor Robert Gleave, University of Exeter

Introduction ....................................................................................................................... 1

British Middle East Studies as Meeting Place: Emerging Scholars, Emergent Research and Approaches: Selected Papers from the 2007 British Society for Middle Eastern Studies Graduate Conference

Amanda Phillips and Richard Ratcliffe, University of Oxford

Astrology in Literature: From Prohibited to Permissible in the Poetry of the Medieval Period ................................................................. 18

Abeer A. al-Abansi, University of Leeds

The Angels’ Roles in Death and Judgement: al- Suyuti’s Approach to Hadith ......................................................................................................................... 40

S. R. Burge, University of Edinburgh, Institute of Ismaili Studies

An A to Z of Sufi Metaphysics: Ibn ‘Arabi’s Mu‘ashsharat ........................................... 60

Denis E. McAuley, University of Oxford

Treasuries, Tombs and Reliquaries: A Group of Ottoman Qur’an Boxes of Architectural Form ........................................................................................................... 78

Margaret S. Graves, University of Edinburgh

Jahangir Heroically Killing Poverty: Pictorial Sources and Pictorial Tradition in Mughal Allegory and Portraiture ......................................................... 99

Jasper C. van Putten, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, Harvard University

Dramatizing a Turkish “Hero”: Sinan’s Life in Fiction ................................................. 119

Ahmet Sezgin, University of Manchester, ÇEKÜL Foundation
vi  

Table of Contents

Prostitution in Colonial Cairo at the Beginning of the 20th Century: Hierarchies of Race and Class ................................................................. Francesca Biancani, London School of Economics

1

Studying Female Islamic Leaders: Continuity, Change and Contemporary Scholarship ................................................................. Hilary Kalmbach, University of Oxford

1

Before, With and Against the Law: Palestinian Arab Oral Narratives about Law in Israeli Society .................................................. Stefan Soehnchen, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London

1

Migration Agreements between Italy and Libya: A Critical Analysis of “East-West” in the 21st-century Mediterranean ................................. 2
Emanuela Paoletti, University of Oxford

2

Bibliography .................................................................................................................................................................................. 2

Index .......................................................................................................................................................................................... 2
JAHANGIR HEROICALLY KILLING POVERTY: PICTORIAL SOURCES AND PICTORIAL TRADITION IN MUGHAL ALLEGORY AND PORTRAITURE’

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Mughal art developed as an amalgam of different artistic traditions right from its initial formation; its very essence can be said to result from the intermingling of Persian, Indian, and European traditions. The question what ideological purpose this mixing of styles might have served has largely escaped rigorous scrutiny. This is one of the questions that I try to address in the present paper. Although here applied to the genres of portraiture and allegory, Mughal artistic borrowings also have ramifications for the development of the Mughal style in general, since, as noted, it is characterized by eclecticism. On a broader level the developments traced here are very fruitful examples of cultural exchange apparently not defined by the simple imitation of a powerful culture’s products by a weaker culture, as many scholars regard the cultural borrowings of relatively newly established dynasties. Rather the cultural appropriations are part of a conscious process of adaptation of foreign artistic techniques and motifs to local needs informed by indigenous traditions, by a highly self-confident culture; the result was works of art of great originality that both reinforced and renewed the Mughal tradition itself. In a world that is today increasingly the site of conflict between East

*I thank Walter Denny for his help in the realization of this paper.

322 Michael Meister for instance explains the hybrid style of the Adhāl-dīn-kā- Jhomprā mosque at Ajmer that was built by the first Muslim Sultanate in India, the Ghulam or Slave dynasty, upon conquering the Hindu Cāhamāna kingdom using this paradigm. Michael W. Meister, “The Two-and-a-Half Mosque”, Oriental Art 18 (1972), pp. 57-63.
and West and where cultural isolationism is often proposed as the only way to preserve and strengthen cultural identity, the development of Mughal art can serve as an inspiring counter-example. In 1526 the Mughal Empire was founded in Northern India by Babur (1483-1530), a distant descendant of Timur, the Turkic-Mongol conqueror (d. 1405). The first phase of court art in Mughal India that we can assess from a significant body of works is traditionally Persian in style and subject matter and resulted from the exile of Babur’s successor Humayun (r. 1530-40, and 1555-56) in Safavid Persia in 1544. However, the Mughal school of painting that developed under Emperors Akbar (r. 1556-1605), who is regarded as the real creator of the Mughal empire, and his son Jahangir (r. 1605-1627) would ultimately be very distinct from Persian art. The introduction of European techniques of modelling and atmospheric perspective lend depth to Mughal paintings; this is a break with the colourful flat landscapes filled with figures that characterize the Persian style. Hindu epics such as the Ramayana were added to the traditional Persian repertoire and genres such as portraiture, allegory, and

321 Appeals for the preservation of cultural identity through cultural isolationism are made by politicians in many European countries such as Denmark and the Netherlands. Politicians from Middle Eastern countries such as the Moroccan Minister for Moroccan Communities Abroad, Mohammed Ameur, and the Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan have also voiced a similar sentiment. Leila Zerrou, “Le Gouvernement Adopre un Plan pour les MRE”, Aujourd’hui le Maroc http://www.aujourd'hui.ma/couverture-details59823.html; Cengiz Akar, “The Prime Minister’s Expedition to Germany”, Turkish Daily News http://www.turkishdailynews.com.tr/article.php?enewsid=96714
322 In the given space I can only concentrate on a limited number of sources and motifs and I will focus on the genres of portraiture and allegory. For future inquiries I suggest that similar research to that which Ebba Koch has conducted on the baluster column in Mughal architecture should be applied to European motifs in Mughal painting. Koch, “The Baluster Column: A European Motif in Mughal Architecture and its Meaning”, Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes 45 (1982), pp. 251-62.
323 Taking with him the celebrated Persian painters Mir Sayyid Ali and Abd al-Amad, Humayun founded the Mughal school of painting based on the Safavid style. The influence of the subsequent waves of Safavid painters on the imperial Mughal atelier has been the subject of a thorough investigation by Abolala Soudavar. Soudavar, “Between the Safavids and the Mughals: Art and Artists in Transition”, Iran 37 (1999), pp. 49-66.
allegorical portraiture were developed under European influence. These latter developments are the subject of this paper. The adaptation of these genres in Mughal art is not presented here as a one-way influence of Europe on Mughal India; the subject is rather how European examples of allegory and portraiture were received and incorporated within the Mughal imperial style and, subsequently, how new original allegorical portraits—distinct from European equivalents—were developed.

John Seyller’s finding that the Cleveland Tutinama (c. 1570) was an unfinished manuscript in the Candiyana style that was completed and overpainted in the imperial Mughal style in the court atelier of Akbar, completely unsettled the previous account of the formation of the Mughal imperial style.328 This discovery revealed Mughal eclecticism was more centrally controlled and planned and less a matter of artists of a variegated training and background than previously thought. To the renewed question of how the Mughal imperial style came into being, Seyller proposed a tentative answer:

I am inclined to believe that the turning point was not the assimilation of a few artists trained in indigenous Indian traditions, but the galvanizing exposure of most of the imperial atelier to European art. However few their numbers were at the Mughal court in the 1560s, European prints alone possessed the formal qualities that distinguish the early Mughal style from contemporary Persian art.329

Though Seyller was first to propose its seminal nature, the influence of European prints, portrait miniatures, and devotional paintings on Mughal art has been often noted. The greatest initial sources of European art were the Jesuit mission in India and European diplomatic envoys at the Mughal court. Gauvin Alexander Bailey has analyzed the Mughal reception of European art brought by Jesuit missionaries, most notably the influence of European devotional paintings on Mughal imperial mural painting.330 Mughal miniature paintings which were produced for manuscripts, albums

and as individual works also show the influence of European art. The character of this mixing of European elements with indigenous and Persian stylistic conventions, however, has less frequently been the subject of thorough research.

Jahangir Shooting Poverty: Portraiture, Allegory, and the Development of Allegorical Portraiture

The Los Angeles County Museum of Art holds an enigmatic Mughal painting (fig. 1) from c. 1620 that is attributed to Abu al-Hasan (b. 1588/89–active c. 1635). The painting shows the Emperor Jahangir standing on a lion who sits peacefully next to a lamb on a globe. The globe rests in turn on an old man who points to a scroll while lying on top of a fish (fig. 2). Jahangir has shot another old man, this one rather dark and emaciated, in the left eye and stretches his bow for another shot, while a putto hands him more arrows. The emperor has an enormous halo and is being crowned by two more putti, while a fourth putto in the upper left corner holds up a chain with bells and fringes, the other end of which is attached to a building-like object. It is of course clear that this is not a depiction of a real situation but an allegorical portrait. The inscription above Jahangir identifies the subject as Jahangir Shooting Poverty:

The auspicious portrait of his exalted majesty, who by the arrow of generosity eradicated the trace of Daliddar [the very personification of poverty] from the world and laid the foundation of a new world with his justice and munificence.

Since allegorical portraiture is foreign to the pre-Mughal Islamic painting traditions and abundant in European prints and paintings, it is generally

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331 Scholars have cited European sources for various motifs in many Mughal miniatures and the adaptation of European techniques such as sfumato, modelling, and stereoscopic perspective have been the subject of research. Minissale, ‘The Synthesis’.

332 A recent investigation is Ashok Kumar Srivastava, Mughal Painting: an Interplay of Indigenous and Foreign Traditions (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 2000).


334 Pal, Indian Painting.
accepted that the genre originated in European sources. Two other aspects have received less attention: on the one hand, the ways in which European pictorial sources were interpreted by Mughal painters; and how they incorporated the notion of allegorical portraiture within their own pictorial tradition. These aspects are the focus of this paper: how did European pictorial sources influence and mix with the established pictorial tradition of Mughal India? Another question regards the motivation for this kind of painting: what imperial ideology was expressed by these allegorical portraits of the Emperor?

Candidates for the initial impetus of the Mughal vogue for allegorical portraiture are the frontispieces of the Polyglot Bible (Christopher Plantin: Antwerp, 1569-72) which Jesuit missionaries presented to the Mughal emperor Akbar in 1580. We learn from the Jesuit Montserrat’s written Commentary that “the priest, at the King’s command, unrolled the books and seizing the opportunity, explained the pictures.” Among these pictures were the frontispieces made by Pieter van der Borch. The first of these is Pietatis Concordiae, or Peace Among the Animals (fig. 3) showing an ox, a lion, a sheep, and a wolf peacefully together, a rather literal illustration of Isaiah 11: 6-9. This image was influential for Mughal iconography, as combinations of the animals are depicted in numerous Mughal paintings where they represent peace (figs. 2, 4-6). The image could be easily understood by Mughal viewers as it was related to similar depictions of animals in Mughal art and literature.

The second frontispiece (fig. 7), called Piaetas Regia, represents regal piety in the form of a bare-breasted woman with a book in her left hand who leans on a shield with the coat of arms of Philip II of Spain, while

337 Maclagan, The Jesuits and the Great Mogul, pp. 4-5. We will discuss for instance the animals living peacefully together with Majnun in the Khamsa of Nizami below.
being crowned with laurels by a putto.338 This image was most probably the source of inspiration for the bare-breasted allegorical figure by the Mughal painter Basawan (d. 1605) in the Musée Guimet in Paris.339 Ebba Koch thinks that it also provided the source for allegorical portraiture.340 Although we cannot underestimate the importance of the illustrations in the Polyglot Bible as pictorial sources for Mughal painting and while it may well be that their overall composition influenced Mughal allegorical portraits somewhat, these are not allegorical portraits as such. The development of Mughal allegory, I will argue, occurred more gradually than Koch suggests. Mughal painters incorporated allegorical portraiture as genre only after gradually understanding pictorial allegory and thoroughly adapting western realism and portraiture. I argue that allegory and portraiture entered Mughal painting about the same time and followed a similar trajectory of copying, imitating, and finally inventing, and that this process culminated in the combination of the two genres: allegorical portraiture.

These allegorical portraits appear to represent the most advanced stage both in the Mughal understanding of allegory and in the gradual incorporation of foreign pictorial motifs into their tradition. Earlier stages, seen in Mughal copies and interpretations of European allegories, are characterized by execution without knowledge of the original allegorical meaning. In the later allegorical portraits, the working of allegory is fully understood and is employed to create wishful fantasies of imperial power. European sources are artfully combined with motifs and themes from the Persian and Hindu traditions. I will first look at the Mughal reception of European portraiture. Then I will analyze how Mughal painters interpreted European allegories in two case studies. Finally I will investigate how the mixing of European influences with the indigenous tradition played out in Mughal allegorical portraits, concentrating on Jahangir Shooting Poverty by Abu al-Hasan. The painter Abu al-Hasan, who specialized in allegorical portraits, was one of Jahangir’s two favourite painters and the Emperor had an intimate involvement in his training. I will tentatively suggest that Jahangir also had a hand in the development of Mughal imperial allegorical portraiture, a genre that was perfectly suited to represent the Emperor’s wishes and dreams.

338 The last frontispiece, the Authority of the Pentateuch, shows the story of the reception of the tablets of the Law by Moses in continuous narration in a landscape.
Mughal Adaptations of Portraiture and Realism

First of all it must be noted that the figure of Jahangir in allegories such as Jahangir Shooting Poverty is a recognizable portrait and that true portraiture is foreign to the Persian and pre-Mughal painting tradition, and was certainly derivated from the West. During Jahangir’s reign portraiture grew from a minor genre into a major one. There is evidence that European art, especially in the form of prints and portrait miniatures, was the source of this trend. From 1615 to 1619 Sir Thomas Roe, the envoy of James I of England at the East India Company stayed at the court of Jahangir. He brought with him prints with secular themes, among which were portraits of English noblemen and women; these were subsequently copied by Mughal painters. The Mughals were so keen on his portraits that Roe even relates in his memoirs that in 1616 artists took away a precious portrait miniature of a lady for copying, producing five almost indistinguishable versions of it.

Mughal albums (murqqqas) of paintings, calligraphy, and prints also show evidence of the influence of European portraiture and the way in which this genre exemplifies a broader interest in greater naturalism and physical likeness. The Victoria and Albert Museum owns a leaf from an 18th-century Mughal album in which is mounted a portrait miniature made by the famous British artist Isaac Oliver (c. 1556-1617), complete with Mughal embellishments painted around it. A Mughal painting of a woman with a broad white lace collar from this period is evidently made after a European portrait miniature (fig. 8) as it actually depicts the miniature

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343 Srivastava, Mughal Painting, p. 80.
345 Stronge, Painting, p. 138.
itself in the manner of a European trompe l’œil painting. The artist has depicted the oval miniature as if it were pasted on a rectangular paper or parchment that is in turn pasted or hung on a wall. A protective hanging is temporarily rolled up. This painting is informative regarding the use of European miniatures at the Mughal court, as it shows a European miniature complete with Mughal framing and hanging of the work. The format might also show the influence of European trompe l’œil paintings (paintings that intend to deceive the eye with shadows and modelling in order to convince the viewer he was seeing an object rather than a depiction of one).

Since Akbar and Jahangir were connoisseurs and lovers of art, it seems fitting that they would have loved a deceivingly realistic painting such as this. Indeed, realism was appreciated by all of the Mughal emperors from Akbar to Shah Jahan, as the history of Mughal painting attests. Upon Jahangir’s accession he promoted “an unprecedented outburst of naturalism” of which portraiture is the most characteristic expression. Jahangir expected an exacting truthfulness from portraiture and thought realistic portrayals an important means of assessing the sitter’s character. When Jahangir sent an envoy to Persia in 1613, he recorded in his memoirs: “I had sent with him a painter of the name of Bishn Das, who was unequalled in his age for taking likenesses, to take the portraits of the Shah and the chief men of his State, and bring them.” Jahangir had never met the Shah and needed a portrait to get to know him. Jahangir Shooting Poverty, as I will argue below, shows how, through the combination of portraiture with allegory, majestic and godlike virtues were attached to the faithfully represented portrait of Jahangir himself. The development of this new and foreign genre could only succeed, however, once allegory as a means to convey subtle and layered meanings was thoroughly understood in Mughal India.


Stronge, Painting, p. 192; Okada, Indian Miniatures of the Mughal Court, p. 239.

Akbar reportedly refuted religious resistance to realism, stating, “It seems to me that a painter is better than most in gaining knowledge of God. Each time he draws a living being he must draw each and every limb of it, but seeing that he cannot bring it to life must perforce give thought to the miracle wrought by the Creator and thus obtain a knowledge of Him.” Cited by: Pal, Indian Painting, p. 179.

Seyller, Workshop and Patron in Mughal India, p. 22.

Cited by: Pal, Indian Painting, p. 183.

Ibid.
Mughal Interpretations of European Allegorical Prints

Like portraiture, the use of allegory was derived from European sources and came to full fruition during Jahangir’s reign. This period, however, was also marked by a reinvigorated taste for Persian subjects and styles especially spurred by Persian émigré artists. This leads to the questions of how much of the original meaning was retained in Mughal allegorical paintings based on European allegories and how they related to the traditional Persian and Islamic iconographic and pictorial traditions. This question is pertinent to our inquiry into the Mughal adaptation of allegory, since simply copying allegorical prints does not necessarily depend on an understanding of the underlying concept.

Important sources for the Mughal reception of European prints during Jahangir’s reign are two albums that he compiled. Besides Mughal and Persian paintings, these albums contain original European engravings as well as Mughal copies and interpretations of prints. The earlier and more magnificent of these albums, containing paintings dated 1607 at the latest, is in the Gulshan Library in Teheran. In the margin of one of its pages appears a copy after Auditus (fig. 9) which is inscribed as such in the copy, from the series of the Five Senses by the German artist Georg Pencz. The inscription in the Gulshan copy appears, like the figure, in mirror image, suggesting the use of a pounce (an instrument with which the contours of a print or drawing were transferred to make a copy). The fact, moreover, that in the PG monogram the reversal is not consistent, as the P is in reverse while the G is not, shows that the painter did not “read” the letters, something that he most certainly was not able to. The words therefore may be merely Occidentalizing elements without a specific meaning in relation to the image. The artist probably copied the painting without understanding its allegorical meaning. The figure is painted in the margin of the album page, without any understandable connection to the content of the page or the other marginal illustrations, which are also copied from European prints.

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352 Seyller, Workshop and Patron in Mughal India, p. 22.
354 Auditus appears on page 77 of the album as currently numbered. One of the other marginal decorations on this page is an interpretation of Georg Pencz’s Geometria from is series of Liberal Arts. This scene is transformed by the Mughal painter into an image of a painter inspecting a panel of a crucifixion. Copies after European prints appear on other pages as well. Ibid, p. 76.
Much more freedom in invention, but not necessarily comprehension of the allegorical subject, is expressed in a painting of the personification of *dialectica* (ca. 1604-1627) in the Saint Petersburg Album (fig. 10), a spectacular album compiled in the early 17th century but containing many earlier paintings and prints. The Mughal *Dialectica* is an interpretation of one of seven engravings representing the seven classical liberal arts by Johannes Sadeler I (1550-1600) after Maarten de Vos (1532-1603) (fig. 11). The Mughal artist has changed the composition and several details. The most important change is the creation of a landscape setting through the replacement of the colonnaded building on the left by a tree and the horizontal expansion of the landscape with two villages, probably after other European prints. *Dialectica* is shown in Sadeler’s print with her traditional attributes: the snake that stands for convolution is curled around her right arm; the books behind her and the figure in toga in the background stand for learning. The frogs at her feet and the bird on her head, all seen as garrulous creatures, represent the verbal aspect of *dialectica*. Her hand-gesture represents the grasping of a problem. The Mughal painter did not include the frogs but added a dog, a cat, a hedgehog and also an owl, all animals that do not belong to the traditional iconography of *dialectica* and are not known much for their chattering. Even though the specific meaning of the original attributes was thus evidently unknown to the Mughal painter, the figure in the miniature is still labelled *Dialectica*. It is probable that the painter, like the copyist of the *Auditus*, copied the title without cognizance of its meaning.

The St. Petersburg *Dialectica* shares an album page with another scene of four scholars or wise men in a landscape (fig. 10). Two of the men are talking over a meal, while the others are watching. This painting may provide the key to the meaning of the Mughal interpretation of Sadeler’s *Dialectica* on the same page. Although this painting is more traditionally Islamic in tone, both scenes are essentially similar, in that they both show people in long robes in a landscape. The philosopher in the right background

358 Beach, “The Gulshan Album and its European Sources”.
of *Dialectica* clearly has its counterpart in the older man in the right side of painting above it. *Dialectica*’s gesture, symbolising the grasping of a problem, is echoed (with the hands somewhat further apart) in the hands of the scholar on the left in the painting above, now representing talking and discussion. This seems to indicate that the Mughal *Dialectica* represents a discussion between two scholars. The fact that the books were retained despite the setting in nature reinforces this interpretation. The theme of learned men discussing in nature is a traditional one in Mughal painting that appears again and again in various forms (fig. 12). 359 Mughal India was filled with followers of religious sects from Dervishes, Hindu ascetics, to Sufis and debates between representatives of these sects were depicted in various paintings. 360

The second lens through which the Mughals interpreted the *Dialectica* was the pictorial and iconographic tradition, adopted from Persian painting of Majnun and the animals in the desert (fig. 13). This is suggested by the addition of the many animals besides the ones already present in the original engraving. The old Arabic story of Laila and Majnun, well-known in Mughal India from Nizami’s Persian-language *Khamsa* (1192) was a very popular subject for illustrations. Majnun, frustrated by the impossibility of his love for Laila, wanders off in the wilderness where he lived among the animals. 361 Animals living together with human recluses enter Mughal representations of other hermits, scholars and ascetics as well.

A Mughal painting by Farrukh Beg (c. 1545-c. 1615) of a scholar drowsing with many animals is based on the engraving *Dolor* by Raphael Sadeler I (1560-1632) after Maarten de Vos. Sadeler’s engraving from the series the *Four Ages of Man* represents the bitterness and sorrow of old age: a drowsing old man in his study is contrasted by the mean world outside, including a woman burying his riches behind his back. Farrukh

Beg has reduced the scene to a solitary sleeping old man, which he contrasts with the liveliness of the animals. Again the range of animals is much expanded with an extra cat, a sheep and a goat suckling their young. The interior, neatly separated from the outside world in Sadeler’s print, is now intruded upon by nature in a manner similar to the expansion of the landscape in *Dialectica*. These paintings of recluses and scholars together with animals suggest that Mughal painters associated European images of scholars with Indian hermits living in nature together with animals; this is also found in *Laila and Majnum*, which provided both a rationale for the Mughal interpretation of Sadeler’s *Dialectica* as scholar or hermit a well as a reason to expand both the landscape and the variety of animals already present in the original. The result in the case of *Dialectica*, however, is strangely hybrid. No convincing meaning can be established either in the tradition of the original image or in the Mughal/Persian tradition: on the one hand the personification of *Dialectica* in the European sense is distorted by the accumulation of animals beyond the traditional attributes and, on the other hand, the image’s association with scholarly learning and asceticism in the Mughal tradition is obscured by the feminine physique of the personification and the absence of signs of asceticism.

## Abu Al-Hasan’s Imperial Allegorical Portraits of Jahangir

A more thorough understanding of the working of allegory is exhibited by the Mughal imperial allegorical portraits, a genre that was introduced during Jahangir’s reign which combines the popular traits of both portraiture and allegory. Abu al-Hasan, the painter of *Jahangir Shooting Poverty* seems to have specialized in this genre. With Mansur, Abu al-Hasan was Jahangir’s favourite painter, as the Emperor wrote his diaries:

> At the present time he [Abu al-Hasan] has no rival or equal. [...] His father, Aqa Riza’i, of Herat, at the time when I was a Prince, joined my service. He [Abu al-Hasan] was a khanzad of my Court [that is, he was born at my Court]. There is, however, no comparison between his work and that of his father. One cannot put them into the same category. My connection was based on my having reared him. From his earliest years up

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364 The only animals present in the engraving are a cat and a dog.  
365 Skelton, “Imperial Symbolism in Mughal Painting”, p. 79.
to the present time I have always looked after him, till his art has arrived at
this rank. Truly he has become Nadira-i-zaman [“the wonder of the
age”].

In this passage Jahangir expresses his admiration for Abu al-Hasan and
mentions his own intense involvement in the upbringing and training of
his favourite painter. That part of this training consisted of copying
European prints is evident from the exquisitely drawn copy of the figure of
Saint John the Evangelist, originally found in Albrecht Dürer’s engraving
of the Crucifixion from the Engraved Passion series now in the Ashmolean
Museum in Oxford. The inscription on the drawing states that Hasan made
it when he was only twelve years old.

Abu al-Hasan’s training shows his immersion in European art, as is
also evidenced by the allegorical portraits and their sources. In these
mature allegories, however, he moves well beyond copying or interpreting
his sources. Not only have the meanings of the personifications and
attributes changed, they are also expanded and combined with completely
new inventions, often originating in Persian and indigenous Indian
traditions, ultimately creating paintings with novel allegorical meanings as
well as unique appearances. The most obvious European motifs are of
course the putti and the halo which were derived from religious prints and
paintings. The crowning of Jahangir by putti (fig. 1) was probably based
on the second frontispiece of the Polyglot Bible (fig. 7), but the laurel
wreath was replaced by Timur’s imperial crown as a claim to Timurid
ancestry. The depiction of a king or queen standing on a globe (figs. 1,
4) which appears in most of the allegorical portraits also occurs in
European royal portraiture, such as in the famous Ditchley portrait of
Queen Elizabeth I by Marcus Gheeraerts the Younger in the National
Portrait Gallery in London. Jahangir, whose name means world-seizer,
must have liked this symbol of royal power.

The political implications of such allegorical images were made more
precise in the Mughal paintings by the inclusion of other symbols such as
the lion and the sheep, from the first frontispiece of the Polyglot Bible,
that represent peace. In the case of Jahangir’s Dream (fig. 4), another
allegorical portrait by Abu al-Hasan that shows Jahangir embracing

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568 Other possible sources are religious images representing the coronation of the
Virgin.
Safavid Emperor Shah Abbas of Persia, the animals symbolize both emperors’ relative power, if optimistically on the part of the Mughals: Shah Abbas stands on a lamb and Jahangir on a lion. This wishful thinking did not conform to the political reality, however, since the Safavids recaptured Qandahar in 1622, which had been held by the Mughals since 1591. In yet another allegorical portrait by Abu al-Hasan, Jahangir is represented as the queller of rebellion (fig. 5). The emperor is portrayed holding an imperial globe with the circular pedigree of Jahangir’s lineage on it (fig. 6). In the background we see Mughal troops in battle conquering rebellious troops of Prince Khurram, Jahangir’s rebellious son, later Emperor Shah Jahan. On the globe lions, goats and sheep are peacefully together, contrasting markedly with the violence in the background. These allegories clearly represent an ideal world that was at odds with reality; it has been argued that Jahangir turned his fears and disappointments into these powerful images to exorcize them. Indeed Jahangir’s love for painting has all of the characteristics of escapism. Jahangir was addicted to opium and alcohol which naturally impeded this ability to rule. Prince Khurram and Jahangir’s generals fought most of his battles and his wife Nur Jahan assumed many of the imperial duties, leaving Jahangir time to indulge in art and other pleasures.

In contrast to the propagandistic European imperial allegorical prints, the Mughal allegorical portraits were album paintings of a more private nature; they would have been admired first by the emperor and then by the more intimate circles of the court. On the other hand, artists made copies and adaptations of the paintings that entered the bazaars and were circulated to different clients. The content of the paintings seems to reflect this twofold public—originally the imperial court and then the broader market. The original content is first characterized by the Emperor’s personal dreams and wishes; these have a precise meaning which sometimes alludes to actual events from the Emperor’s life, but

372 Beach, _The Imperial Image_, p. 185.
374 Pal, _Indian Painting_, p. 180.
375 I thank Milo Cleveland Beach for this characterization of the different audiencees in Mughal art.
which also may project imperial virtues eventually intended for a broader audience.\footnote{See Skelton, “Imperial Symbolism in Mughal Painting” for the personal meanings of the paintings.}

_ Jahangir Shooting Poverty_ has no known meaning in terms of Jahangir’s biography, but the personal import of the image can nevertheless be gauged. A possible context for the representation of the eradication of poverty is provided by an ongoing famine that plagued Mughal India in the fifty years before Jahangir’s reign and another just after, in 1630-31.\footnote{Disney, Anthony, “Portuguese Goa and the Great Indian Famine of 1630-31”, in Nayeen M. A. Kulakari and Tantiling R. De Souza (eds.) Mediaeval Deccan History: Commemoration Volume in Honour of P.M. Joshi (Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1996), pp. 135-55.} The idea of peace conveyed by the animals is now expanded by the inclusion of the figure of an old man pointing to a scroll while lying on a fish (fig. 2). He has been identified by Robert Skelton as Manu, the Hindu lawgiver whose attribute is the fish because he was saved from a flood by Vishnu in his first incarnation as a fish.\footnote{The cobra hood behind Manu’s head was based on those of Jain _Tirthankara_ saints or Hindu gods. Skelton, “Imperial Symbolism in Mughal Painting”, p. 185.} The chain in the background has been identified as the chain of justice that hung from a window at the palace at Agra and that every subject who felt denied justice in regular court could pull. Its connection to the heavens moreover denotes heavenly justice.\footnote{Pal, Indian Painting, p. 262.} Thus the meaning of the allegory is clearly to convey that Jahangir’s rule brings peace and justice among his subjects regardless of their religion.

Totally new elements are the idea of shooting and the old emaciated man. The latter is clearly identified as Daliddar, or poverty, in the inscription over Jahangir’s head. Pictorially, however, he stems from traditional depictions of ascetics that we have discussed (fig. 12). Daliddar, depicted with a very dark skin and contrasting white hair, constitutes the negative image of the highly venerated Hindu ascetics who were generally portrayed with a white skin and black hair.\footnote{The much respected positive version appears as Manu under Jahangir.} This is an interesting inversion of the iconography of a well-known motif; ascetics were venerated religious men with whom Jahangir portrayed himself in several paintings and this turns the positive connotation of poverty of the respected Hindu ascetic into something bad.\footnote{Schimmel and Waghmar, The Empire of the Great Mughals, pp. 274-6.} Jahangir especially admired the Hindu ascetic Jadrun whom he met several times. Meetings between the two are recorded in miniatures. One example is now
pictorial tradition shows that the Mughal painters thoroughly understood the working of allegory, although the inscription indicates that the meaning of the image might have had to be provided for the intended audience.\textsuperscript{382} A royal person shooting with a bow is not found in European pictorial sources, but is found again in Jahangir Shooting the Head of Malik 'Ambar (c. 1617), also by Abu al-Hasan.\textsuperscript{383} Here the Emperor shoots a head representing Malik 'Ambar, an officer in the service of the Nizámsháli rulers of Ahmadnagar. Like the other allegorical portraits, this painting represents a fantasy rather than a reality. After the Mughal invasion of the little kingdom of Ahmadnagar at the end of Akbar's reign, 'Ambar successfully fought back; instead of being killed, he died of old age in 1624.\textsuperscript{384} Pictorial and iconographic sources for the act of shooting might be found in illustrations of the Ramayana (fig. 14). This ancient text which relates the heroic quest to rid the world of the evil spirit of Ravana, undertaken by Vishnu in his human incarnation of the prince Rama, was based on the Vedic oral tradition and set down soon after c. 500 BCE by the poet Valmiki.\textsuperscript{385}

preserved in the Fogg Art museum, reproduced in: Krishna B. Iyer, \textit{Art and Thought, Issued in Honour of Dr. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy on the Occasion of his 70th Birthday} (London: Luzac, 1947), plate 18, fig. 8. Another painting from the Jahangirnama is now in the Musée Guimet. See Wheeler M. Wheeler (trans., ed.) \textit{The Jahangirnama: Memoirs of Jahangir, Emperor of India} (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 312. On Jahangir's admiration for Jadrup see: Shireen Moosvi, “The Mughal Encounter with Vedanta: Recovering the Biography of 'Jadrup'”, \textit{Social Scientist} 30, no. 7-8 (2002), pp. 13-23.\textsuperscript{382} The qalandar, a figure also associated with poverty, though not with pestilence or famine, was also depicted with black skin. \textsuperscript{383} \textit{Jahangir Shooting the Head of Malik 'Ambar} is in the Chester Beatty Library in Dublin, Ireland (MS 7, no. 15). It is reproduced in Skelton, “Imperial Symbolism in Mughal Painting”, fig. 2. A probably unrelated precedent for a portrait of an Emperor shown shooting can be found in the Portrait of Selim II Shooting an Arrow (c. 1570) by the Ottoman painter Nigari. See Günsel Renda, “Traditional Turkish Painting and the Beginnings of Western Trends”, in Selim Pinar (ed.), \textit{A History of Turkish Painting} (Istanbul: Palasar Sa, 1987), p. 40.\textsuperscript{384} Robert Skelton has explained the fact that 'Ambar is shown being shot—despite his natural death of old age—by relating it to an autobiographic event occurring before a battle against the armies of 'Ambar, when Jahangir’s son Shah Jahan shot a bird with a gun. Even so it remains a wishful dream. Skelton, “Imperial Symbolism in Mughal Painting”, pp. 179-80.\textsuperscript{385} Menon, Ramesh (trans, intr.), \textit{The Ramayana} (New York: North Point Press, 2003).
The *Ramayana* was (and still is) venerated by Hindus but was also much respected at the Islamic Mughal court. Akbar commissioned his own copy of the manuscript translated into Persian in 1584, a task that was finished in 1588-9. The inscription in a lavishly illustrated copy of another Mughal *Ramayana* manuscript made for the aristocratic patron Khan Khanan Abd al-Rahin, dated (1587-8), reads:

This book, known as the *Rāmāyana*, is among the venerated books of India. It is an account of Ram Chand, who was one of the most respected rulers of India, in the past. His virtues and his universal popularity were held up as an example, they being the manifestation of the virtues of God himself.

Illustrations from the Mughal manuscript now in the Freer Gallery, show Rama and his brother Lakshman wearing crowns, carrying bows and arrows, and shooting many monsters (fig. 14). The position of Jahangir’s upper body in the two allegories that show him shooting, seems to have been taken from these or similar illustrations although, unlike Rama, Jahangir is not shown walking or running. The symmetric composition with Jahangir and Daliddar on opposite sides of the frame is also very similar to the compositions of the *Ramayana* illustrations. Daliddar also takes on the submissive pose of most of the monsters that we see being shot in the illustrations of the *Ramayana*: staring at their shooter and holding their arms up. He thus represents the evil spirit or “monster” of poverty. To enhance the evil connotation even more, Daliddar is dark and has a black halo, as the opposite of the Emperor himself with his light-emitting halo. It seems, therefore, that Jahangir, in having himself depicted while shooting an evil spirit comparable to those in the *Ramayana*, himself takes on the God-given virtues that were attributed to Rama.

Robert Skelton has shown that Jahangir, one of whose titles was *Nūr al-Dīn*, or “light of the faith” was familiar with the religious connotations of light and used this symbolism in his allegorical portraits. This symbolism that renders the Emperor almost divine and Daliddar the epitome of evil is in keeping with the connotations of the *Ramayana*:

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386 This unpublished manuscript is now in the City Palace Museum in Jaipur. Beach, *The Imperial Image: Paintings for the Mughal Court*, p. 132.
In its final form, the received text of the Rāmāyaṇa reflects the basic mytho-theology in which good men can be elevated to deity and in which God can come to earth in human form to defeat sin and evil.\textsuperscript{390}

This is just what is portrayed in the allegorical portrait: Jahangir is elevated to a godlike status, through the halo, the chain of justice which connects him with the heavens and through the association with Rama. Daliddar, on the other hand, is debased to an abstract evil through the black halo and his association with the monsters from the Ramayana. Finally, it has been suggested that Abu al-Hasan made this image for Jahangir on the occasion of Diwali, the Hindu festival which celebrates the triumph of light over darkness when the goddess Lakshmi, or good fortune, drives away poverty.\textsuperscript{391} Such an occasion is certainly in keeping with the light symbolism and the subject matter of the painting and would further reinforce Jahangir’s appropriation of the virtues of Hindu gods.

**Final Considerations and Conclusions**

Looking back to the copy of Georg Pencz’s *Auditus* in the Gulshan Album and the Mughal interpretation of Sadeleer’s *Dialectica* in the St Petersburg Album, we can clearly see a development in the Mughal use of European sources. The earliest stage, exemplified by the *Auditus* is characterized by copying without cognizance of or interest in the original meaning of the image. The image appears in the margin of the album and does not relate in an understandable way to the content of the text of the manuscript. In the second phase, exemplified by the *Dialectica*, the image is transformed in order to make it comprehensible within the context of the Persian iconographic and pictorial traditions. The figure is placed in nature and more animals are included, so that the personification of *dialectica* can be understood as a hermit/scholar in discussion with another scholar.

This amalgamation of sources and traditions finds its apex in the third phase in a series of allegorical portraits of Emperor Jahangir, in which sources as diverse as the animals from the Polyglot Bible and European imperial portraiture, are artfully combined with motifs and themes from the Persian and Hindu traditions. This mixture results in a truly unique series of portraits of immense originality and iconographic complexity, revealing both an advanced understanding of allegory and a clever message to the emperor’s subjects regardless of their various religions.


\textsuperscript{391} Pal, *Indian Painting*, p. 265.
European representations of power as seen in the portraits of Queen Elizabeth were very probably of influence on Jahangir’s allegorical portraits but were given a much more specific meaning in relation to the Indian political and social context. Unlike European prints, Jahangir’s album paintings had a very small initial audience at the imperial court. However, as both artist and patron might have expected copies to enter the bazaar and reach other patrons, their more general message of imperial power and justice might have been attuned to this larger audience. Like the other allegorical portraits, *Jahangir Shooting Poverty* represents a dreamlike wish, in this case to eradicate poverty. The pictorial motif of the Hindu ascetic was used in an allegorical way to represent the evil of poverty. Jahangir himself takes on the bow and the shooting pose of Rama as depicted in numerous illustrations of the *Ramayana*. Allegory is thus used to elevate the Emperor to a godlike level, a divinely inspired hero of mythical proportions, or even a god on earth, bringing peace and justice among people of all religions and eradicating vices and evils from the world.

The adaptation of European portraiture by Mughal painters during Jahangir’s reign followed along the same lines as the development of allegory that is sketched above and seems to reveal a clear element of training through copying: copies of portraits of people unknown to the Mughals were made in all likelihood to learn the principles of portraiture. The drawing after Dürer by the youthful Abu al-Hasan, the most celebrated inventor of allegorical portraits and the first to excel in this genre at the Mughal court, suggests that the development from copying via interpreting to inventing was indeed paralleled in the training of Mughal painters. Jahangir’s intense involvement in Hasan’s training, “From his earliest years up to the present time […] till his art has arrived at this rank”, 392 as well as the highly personal wishful dreams that the allegories represent, in addition, implies a strong involvement of the Emperor in the Mughal adaptation of allegorical portraiture. Is it possible that Jahangir, impressed by the ideas of power, justice, and rulership that he recognized in European allegories, set out, first to have his favourite court painter acquire a high degree of European realism in his work through the copying of European prints, and then to adapt the foreign genre of allegorical portraiture to Mughal imperial purposes in order to express the Emperor’s personal dreams in paint?

392 *Tazuk* 2: 20, cited by Beach, *The Imperial Image*, p. 27.
List of Figures

van Putten Figure 1. Abu al-Hasan, *The Emperor Jahangir Standing on a Globe Shooting Poverty*, c. 1620.

van Putten Figure 2. Detail of fig 1.

van Putten Figure 3. Pieter van der Borcht, *Pietatis Concordiae*, from the Polyglot Bible, 1569-72

van Putten Figure 4. Abu al-Hasan, *The Dream of Jahangir [Jahangir embracing Shah Abbas of Persia]*, c. 1618-20

van Putten Figure 5. Abu al-Hasan, *Jahangir as a Queller of Rebellion*, c. 1623.

van Putten Figure 6. Detail of fig. 5.

van Putten Figure 7. Pieter van der Borcht, *Pietatis Regia*, from the Polyglot Bible, 1569-72

van Putten Figure 8. Anonymous Mughal painter, *European Woman*, 1605-1627

van Putten Figure 9. Anonymous Mughal painter, *Auditus*, from the *Galshan Album*, early 17th century

van Putten Figure 10. *Dialectica*, and Scholars in a Landscape, from *St Petersburg Album*, early 17th century.

van Putten Figure 11. Johannes Sadeler after Maarten de Vos, *Dialectica*, late 16th century

van Putten Figure 12. *Scholars in a Landscape*, from the St Petersburg album, early 17th century.

van Putten Figure 13. Attributed to Mirza Ghulam, *Two Men Visiting Majnun in the Desert*, from the Diwan of Amir Hasan Dihlavi, 1602-3.

van Putten Figure 14. *Rama and Lakshman Battle the Demon Rakshasas*, 1587-98.

[Jasper van Putten’s images to follow here with full captions]
Figure 1. Abu al-Hasan, *The Emperor Jahangir Standing on a Globe Shooting Poverty*, c. 1620, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, M.75.4.28. From the Nasli and Alice Heeramanck Collection, Museum Associates Purchase. Credits: Photo© 2007 Museum Associates/LACMA
Figure 2. Detail of fig 1.
Figure 3. Pieter van der Borcht, *Pietatis Concordiae*, from volume 1 of the *Polyglot Bible* (Christopher Plantin: Antwerp, 1569-72), Amherst College Library, Amherst, MA.
Figure 4. Abu al-Hasan, *The Dream of Jahangir (Jahangir embracing Shah Abbas of Persia)*, c. 1618-20, from the St. Petersburg Album, Freer Gallery of Art, Washington DC, F1945.9a.

Credits: Photo© Smithsonian Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery
Figure 5. Abu al-Hasan, *Jahangir as a Queller of Rebellion*, ca 1623, Freer Gallery of Art, Washington DC, F1948.28.
Credits: Photo© Smithsonian Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery
Figure 6. Detail of Figure 5.
Figure 7. Pieter van der Borcht, *Pietatis Regia*, from volume 1 of the *Polyglot Bible* (Christopher Plantin: Antwerp, 1569-72), Amherst College Library, Amherst, MA.
Figure 8. Anonymous, *European Woman*, 1605-1627, Bodleian Library, Oxford, UK

Credits: After Stchoukine, Ivan. *La Peinture Indienne à l’Époque des Grands Moghols*. 
Figure 9. Anonymous, *Auditus*, early 17th century, from the Gulshan Album, Gulistan Palace Library, Teheran, GPL, no. 1663, p. 77.
Figure 10. Anonymous, *Dialectica*, and *Scholars in a Landscape*, early 17th century, from St Petersburg Album, St Petersburg Institute of Oriental Studies. Credits: After Ivanov et al. *Al’bom indiâskikh i persidskikh miniatyr XV-XVII vv.*
Credits: Photo© Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco
Figure 12. Anonymous, *Scholars in a Landscape*, early 17th century, from St Petersburg album, St Petersburg Institute of Oriental Studies.

Credits: After Ivanov et al. *Al’bom indiiskikh i persiiskikh miniatyur XV-XVII vv.*
Credits: Photo© The Walters Art Museum, Baltimore