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# *King of the World*

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THE PADSHAHNAMA

AN IMPERIAL MUGHAL MANUSCRIPT FROM THE  
ROYAL LIBRARY, WINDSOR CASTLE

MILO CLEVELAND BEACH & EBBA KOCH  
WITH NEW TRANSLATIONS BY WHEELER THACKSTON

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*Jahangir receives  
Prince Khurram on his return from the  
Mewar campaign*

AJMER, DIWAN-I 'AMM, 20 FEBRUARY 1615.  
FOLIO 43B PAINTED BY BALCHAND, CIRCA 1635

To help consolidate their power, the Mughal emperors sought continually to defeat the rulers of the various independent Rajput kingdoms that controlled important territories in northwestern India. The senior and most prestigious of these Hindu rulers was the Rana of Mewar, against whom Prince Khurram (the future Shah-Jahan) was sent to fight in 1614. One of several illustrations that describe Khurram's activities before his accession as emperor, this painting is placed to correspond with text describing the departure of Khurram for the Mewar campaign, but it actually shows the Prince's triumphant return to the court established at Ajmer by his father, the Emperor Jahangir, following the Rana's defeat. As the *Padshahnama* relates in a later passage on the events of 19 February 1615:

THE IMPERIAL RETINUE camped outside of Ajmer, and by imperial command all the amirs went out to greet [the Prince]. The next day, Sunday ... [Prince Khurram] attained the felicity of paying homage to his mighty father. His Imperial Majesty was so kind and appreciative that he took him in an embrace. His Highness the Prince offered a thousand *mubrs* [*mohur*, a coin] in fulfillment of his vow, another thousand as alms, a crystal chest made by the artisans of [?] filled with precious gems, along with the Rana's famous large ruby, which gem connoisseurs have evaluated at 60,000 rupees, the Rana's best elephant, Alam-Guman,<sup>2</sup> along with the other elephants belonging to him and his followers that had fallen to the imperial troops during this campaign. The Emperor presented the Prince with an imperial goldspun robe with a gold-embroidered collar on which were placed flowers of gems, a bejeweled dagger, a bejeweled sword, two horses from the royal stables, one with a bejeweled saddle and the other with a golden saddle, an elephant from the royal stables named Bijai Kunjar with silver trappings, and a female elephant.<sup>3</sup>

The scene depicted here, however, corresponds to a specific incident during this welcoming ceremony as described in far more personal terms in the *Jahangirnama*, the memoirs of Jahangir:

ON SATURDAY the 10th of the month [19 February 1615], the successful Prince stopped on the outskirts of Deorani, which is near the city of Ajmer, and an order was given for all the amirs to go out to greet him and present gifts, each according to his rank and station. The next day, which would be Sunday the 11th, the Prince was to attain the felicity of being received. Upon the morrow, the Prince entered the Hall of Public and Private Audience with all splendor and magnificence, surrounded by all the victorious soldiers who had been assigned to him on this campaign. Two watches and two *gharis* [a measure of time equivalent to 24 minutes] had elapsed of the day when the hours of reception came and he had the fortune to perform *körünüş* [formal, 'kowitz'] prostrations, and salutes. He gave a thousand *asbrafis* [a coin] and a thousand rupees in fulfillment of his vow and another thousand *mohurs* and a thousand rupees as alms. I summoned my son forward, embraced him, and kissed his head and face, singling him out for particular affection and kindness. When he had finished the rites of service, he had his vow and alms displayed and said that if it was ordered, Karan should be allowed to prostrate himself and perform *körünüş*. I ordered him brought in. The *bakhsbis* [military officials] brought him in with the usual ceremonials.<sup>4</sup>

Karan Singh, the dark-skinned man in the yellow robe, was the eldest son of Rana Amar Singh. Sent to court as a mark of the Rana's capitulation to the imperialists, he is shown being greeted 'with the usual ceremonials' by imperial officials.



Sir Thomas Roe, the first English ambassador to the Mughal court, wrote of a *darbar* [official audience] which he attended at Ajmer the following year, on 10 January 1616:

...I WENT TO COURT at 4 in the euening to the *Durbar*, which is the Place wher the Mogull sitts out daylie, to entertayne strangers, to receiue petitions and presents, to giue Commandes, to see, and to bee seene ... The Place is a great Court, whither resort all sorts of people. The king sitts in a little Gallery ouer head; Ambassidors, the great men and strangers of qualey within the inmost rayle vnder him, rayseed from the ground, Couered with Canopyes of veluet and silke, vnder foote layd with good Carpetts; the Meaner men representing gentry within the first rayle, the people without in a base Court, but soe that all may see the king. This sitting out hath soe much affinitye with a Theatre – the manner of the king in his gallery; The great men lifted on a stage as actors; the vulgar below gazing on ...<sup>5</sup>

Later that same year, on 15 March, Roe attended a *darbar* where Karan Singh was also present:

AT EUENING I WENT to the *Norose* [New Year's celebrations] and demanded of Asaph Chan a place. He bad me Choose; so I went within the rayle, and stood on the right hand of the kynge upon the rising of the Throne; the Prince and young Ranna [Karan Singh] on the other syde. So that I sawe what was to be seene, Presents, Elephants, horses, and many whoores.<sup>6</sup>

1. The word may be a mistake for *firang* (Frank, Europe). WT
2. For a painting of Alam-Guman, see S.C. Welch 1963, no.36.
3. *Padshahnama*, 1/1, pp.174ff.; translated by Wheeler Thackston.
4. *Jahangirnama*, fols 107b–108a; translated by Wheeler Thackston.
5. Roe 1967, pp.106ff.
6. Roe 1967, pp.149–50.