

*Edited by*  
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# Content and Context of Visual Arts in the Islamic World

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# Imperial Symbolism in Mughal Painting

Robert Skelton

**I**N early 1961, when I was preparing a lecture entitled "The Grand Mogul," Richard Ettinghausen generously sent me photographs and part of his draft text from a volume he was due to publish later that year<sup>1</sup> concerning a remarkable series of allegorical paintings in the Freer Gallery of Art. One of the Freer paintings (fig. 1) was very relevant to another allegorical painting (fig. 2) in the Chester Beatty Library, which had previously been discussed by Sir Thomas Arnold<sup>2</sup> and which I considered at length in my lecture.

In both paintings, the Emperor Jahāngīr stands upon the globe (appropriately, in view of his title "World Seizer"), although in the Freer Gallery's painting he shares it with Shāh ʿAbbās I of Iran, who, according to a verse written on the painting, had come to Jahāngīr in a dream. Each of the kings stands on a symbolic animal. It is interesting to note that the body of the lion on which Jahāngīr stands not only covers, rather generously, the extent of his ancestor Tīmūr's empire, but that its head also extends over most of the territory, whose label "Iran" appears beneath its paws. The sheep supporting Shāh ʿAbbās, edged westward, just manages to maintain its head above the label of the former Safavid capital, Tabriz. This placement of the animals perhaps hints at a certain Mughal nostalgia for former dynastic boundaries.

Whether or not this is so, it is certainly clear, as Ettinghausen pointed out, that "the symbolic animals on which the sovereigns stand indicate Jahāngīr's wishful thinking about their relative strength"; Ettinghausen goes on to say that "at the same time, the peaceful association of lion and sheep shows that the Messianic age has arrived in the world."<sup>3</sup> This image of the divinely appointed emperor standing on the globe or on a map of his territory is one that can be found in several other examples of Mughal painting.<sup>4</sup> It is also not unfamiliar in contemporary Europe.

Thus the globe is near at hand in Queen Elizabeth of England's famous "sieve portrait," now in Siena,<sup>5</sup> and we find her standing on it, silhouetted like Jahāngīr against the heavens, in the great Ditchley portrait in the National Portrait Gallery, London. The inscription to the right of this picture is partly missing, but in view of the brightness emanating from the queen as she stands against a background of stormy darkness, it is not surprising that the verses begin by calling her "the prince of light" and then equate her with the sun and with the glory of heaven.<sup>6</sup> (The emphasis placed on solar symbolism by Jahāngīr is also apparent in both Mughal pictures and will be considered further, below.) One of the many places where the Ditchley portrait is reproduced is the cover of Frances Yates's book *Astrea*, subtitled *The Imperial Theme in the Sixteenth Century*.<sup>7</sup> In her book, Yates shows how the prophecy made by Virgil in his fourth Eclogue was taken over by the apologists of European imperialism from the time of Constantine onward and reached its greatest elaboration under Charles V and those who emulated his imperial propaganda. One need hardly repeat the opening words of this pastoral poem:

We have reached the last era in Sibylline song. Time has conceived and the great sequence of Ages starts afresh. Justice, the Virgin [i.e., Astrea], comes back to dwell with us, and the rule of Saturn is restored. The Firstborn of the New Age is already on his way from high heaven down to earth.<sup>8</sup>

Then, in describing the fruits of this golden age, the poet continues:

The goats, unshepherded, will make for home with udders full of milk, and the ox will not be frightened of the lion, for all his might. Your very cradle will adorn itself with blossoms to caress you. The snake will come to grief, and poison lurk no more in the weed.<sup>9</sup>

As we already know from Ettinghausen's description of the dream picture, this type of symbolism can be demonstrated in Mughal painting by the peaceful association of lion and sheep, but in the Chester Beatty painting (fig. 2) every single one of the creatures mentioned by Virgil is depicted. We find them all—the ox, the lion, the goat, and the snake—at which point it may be suspected that their inclusion only goes to prove the popularity of Virgil's works at the Mughal court! It would be overcautious, in view of Jahāngīr's many conversations with educated Europeans, to suppose that they never satisfied his curiosity about contemporary European regal symbolism, but there is certainly no need to postulate his acquaintance with Virgil. It is well known that Virgil's imagery is closely paralleled in that famous passage from the eleventh book of Isaiah, in which we are told of the Messiah's coming, when

the wolf also shall dwell with the lamb; and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them.

If we want to bring this ancient motif nearer to the Islamic world—and indeed locate it in the Imperial Library built up by Jahāngīr's father—we need only turn to that indispensable compendium of royal legend, Firdawsī's *Shāh-nāmā*.<sup>10</sup> Nizāmī 'Arūḍī draws our attention to the appropriate verse in his discourse on the poetic art:

Maḥmūd, the Great King, who such order doth keep,  
That in peace from one pool drink the wolf and the sheep.<sup>11</sup>

Whether or not such imagery was reinforced in Jahāngīr's mind during his many discourses with the Jesuits and others, I shall not speculate, nor shall I suggest that the very idea of allegorical paintings was necessarily stimulated by the many emblematic prints that Europeans brought to the court, although copies of these in the borders of Jahāngīr's picture album and elsewhere are, to say the least, provocative.<sup>12</sup>

Instead of pursuing this tempting but perhaps chimerical topic of European parallels, let us turn to the most elaborate of all Jahāngīr's allegorical paintings, which was only mentioned in passing by Ettinghausen in his writings on this subject.<sup>13</sup> As in the case of the two paintings of Jahāngīr with Shāh ʿAbbās in the Freer Gallery,<sup>14</sup> this painting (fig. 2) reflects Jahāngīr's attitude toward a difficult neighbor, but this time his feelings are much less ambivalent. Malik ʿAmbar, whose portrait was also copied by Jahāngīr's artist Hashim,<sup>15</sup> was an Abyssinian officer in the service of the Nizāmshāhī rulers of Ahmadnagar. After the Mughal invasion of this kingdom at the end of Akbar's reign, ʿAmbar successfully fought back, and in acquiring the Mughals' grudging respect he also earned their hatred.

The complicated allegory of Jahāngīr's hoped-for vengeance on Malik ʿAmbar is by Abū al-Ḥasan, who also painted the dream picture for Jahāngīr and was evidently a specialist in such subjects. Like the dream picture, it is also covered with minute inscriptions; fortunately these have been carefully studied by Sir Thomas Arnold in the catalogue of the Indian miniatures in the Chester Beatty Library.<sup>16</sup> With their aid, one can unravel a great deal of the program of the picture, which is concerned with Jahāngīr's pretensions as a universal sovereign. However, before its symbolism is considered, it must be asked how the picture came to be painted in the first place. Why does it commemorate Jahāngīr's destruction of Malik ʿAmbar, when in fact the Abyssinian died of old age in 1626, just five months before Jahāngīr himself?

Sir Thomas Arnold concluded that this work celebrated either the bitterness of Jahāngīr's hatred or else Malik ʿAmbar's actual death. In Ashok Das's book *Mughal Painting in Jahāngīr's Time*, published in 1978—some forty years after Arnold's catalogue—Das took a similar view, suggesting two possible occasions when it might have been painted. The first, in 1621, was when news was brought of Prince Shāh Jahān's victory over the Deccani sultanate; the second, following Arnold, was the occasion of ʿAmbar's death.<sup>17</sup> Apart from these two suggestions I am not aware of any attempt at solving this problem,<sup>18</sup> but in fact the answer is quite simple. What we have here is not merely an example of wish fulfillment but—surprisingly—the representation of an actual event. It occurred on the evening of 29 October 1616, when the royal camp was at Ajmer. On this day, as an illustration in Shāh Jahān's own regnal history shows,<sup>19</sup> the emperor's favorite son bade farewell to his father and left Ajmer with a vast army to crush Malik ʿAmbar. Hopes that night were running high, and while the emperor was sitting with his companions, an owl came and perched on a terrace above the palace. In the darkness it was hardly visible, but the emperor wrote in his memoirs:

I sent for a gun and took aim and fired in the direction that they pointed out to me. The gun, like the decree of Heaven, fell on that ill-omened bird and blew it to pieces.<sup>20</sup>

The dead owl and the gun are both shown in the picture—the owl transfixed by the spear and the gun resting against it—but why, apart from the departure that day of the royal army, was the owl connected with ʿAmbar? The answer lies in the color of ʿAmbar's complexion. Elsewhere in his memoirs, Jahāngīr refers to ʿAmbar's army as "those owlsh ones" and "the army of darkness."<sup>21</sup> A verse inscribed nearby reads: "The arrow that lays the enemy low, sent out of the world ʿAmbar, the owl, who fled from the light."<sup>22</sup> The fact that ʿAmbar is shown being

dispatched by an arrow would appear to contradict his equation with the owl shot at Ajmer with the gun, but this change is necessary to the symbolism of the verse. "Ambar, the owl, "fled from the light," and this, as Sir Thomas Arnold points out, is clearly a play on the name Nūr al-Dīn ("Light of the Faith") that the emperor adopted on his accession. This epithet is explained by Jahāngīr in his memoirs, as follows:

When I became king it occurred to me to change my name because this [i.e., Salīm] resembled that of the Emperor of Rūm. An inspiration from the hidden world brought it into my mind that insomuch as the business of kings is the controlling of the world, I should give myself the name of Jahāngīr (World Seizer) and make my title of honor (*laqab*) Nūr ud-Dīn, insomuch as my sitting on the throne coincided with the rising and shining on earth of the great light [the Sun].<sup>23</sup>

This, of course, resembles the conceit of Queen Elizabeth as "the prince of light," but in Jahāngīr's case the concept was carried to extremes, as shown by the immense halos remarked upon by Ettinghausen in his studies of the allegorical paintings.<sup>24</sup>

Was Jahāngīr's identification of himself with the light of the sun just an idea that he had on his accession, as he claimed, or does it have a longer history? According to the thirteenth-century author of the *Ṭabaqāt-i Nāṣirī*, writing of the first Sultans of Delhi, the court was like heaven, with the Sultan as the Sun,<sup>25</sup> and, of course, this notion goes back to Sasanian times. In the case of Jahāngīr's immediate ancestors, such solar symbolism became an obsession. We are informed in several sources that his grandfather, Humāyūn, who dabbled in occult sciences, had pavilions and tents constructed on astrological principles to imitate the heavens.<sup>26</sup> Also, like the eighth-century heretic al-Muqanna', who veiled himself to spare his followers the dazzling and insupportable effulgence of his countenance,<sup>27</sup> Humāyūn used to put a veil over his crown and then raise it to the acclaim of his courtiers, who would cry out "Light has shined forth."<sup>28</sup> Badā'unī tells us that this once earned Humāyūn the rebuke of a pilgrim in the sacred enclosure at Mashhad, who whispered in his ear, "So, you are again laying claims to omnipotence."<sup>29</sup> The practice also elicited the severe criticism of Shāh Tahmasp, in a letter said to have been written to Sulaymān I:

Humāyān, one of the greatest kings in the world, had 500,000 troops and 12,000 war elephants. Then Satan sowed the seeds of sedition in his brain and he became so vain as to claim divine powers. His occasional appearance to the people was described as divine effulgence!<sup>30</sup>

If Jahāngīr's grandfather dabbled somewhat foolishly in this type of thing, his father, Akbar, also took solar symbolism very seriously. Thus it was claimed on Akbar's behalf that, like certain Rajput princes, he was actually descended from the sun. To demonstrate this, Abū al-Faḍl recounts Akbar's genealogy, laying great stress on the Mongol line from Ālānqūwā, daughter of the king of Mughulistan. One night, he tells us,

a glorious light cast a ray into the tent and entered the mouth and throat of that fount of spiritual knowledge and glory. The cupola of chastity became pregnant by that light as did her Majesty (*Hazrat*) Mariyam.<sup>31</sup>

Her three sons, who are pictured with her in Akbar's copy of the *Chingīz-nāmāh*,<sup>32</sup> were called *Nayrūn* ("light produced"), and it was from this line that Chingīz Khān descended.

In the case of Akbar, Abū al-Faḍl says:

that divine light, after passing without human instrumentality, through many eminent saints and sovereigns, displayed itself gloriously in the external world. That day of Ālanquwā's conception was the beginning of the manifestation of his Majesty, the King of Kings [Akbar] who after passing through divers stages was revealed to the world from the holy womb of her Majesty Miryam Makānī for the accomplishment of things visible and invisible.<sup>33</sup>

Akbar's personal devotion to the sun and to fire is, of course, well documented and has caused some controversy among modern writers.<sup>34</sup> Abū al-Faḍl justifies it—his view is that

royalty is a light emanating from God, and a ray from the sun, the illuminator of the universe. . . . It is communicated by God to kings without the intermediate assistance of anyone and men, in the presence of it, bend the forehead of praise towards the ground of submission.<sup>35</sup>

This justification of *sijdah* in the royal presence supports a practice under Humāyūn, Akbar, and Jahāngīr that caused much offense among the orthodox. In a later passage of the *A'in-i Akbarī*, where he describes Akbar's devotions, Abū al-Faḍl denies that Akbar deified the sun or practiced fire worship, and he explains that the reason Akbar venerated fire and paid reverence to lamps was that

we should show gratitude for the blessings we receive from the sun . . . this is especially the duty of kings, upon whom the sovereign of the heavens sheds an immediate light.<sup>36</sup>

I could go on with more evidence of this kind, but I think that enough has been said to show that there is ample precedent in Jahāngīr's immediate background to explain his adoption of solar symbolism even though there is no evidence that he seriously believed in it as an element of personal faith. Given these circumstances, the main theme of the picture is clearly the opposition between divine light—as represented by Jahāngīr—and the evil of darkness, appropriately symbolized by that owl, *Ambar*.

This duality is, of course, a Zoroastrian concept, but I do not have to cite Akbar's contacts with the Parsees to explain it here.<sup>37</sup> Similar ideas turn up, for example, in the famous "strife poems" of Firdawsī's contemporary, Asadī, of which one deals with the opposition of night and day in the form of a conversation between the two. In this poem, we find that owl mentioned as the representative of darkness and the night is described as a "dusky negro."<sup>38</sup> Jahāngīr's equation of *Ambar* with the owl does not, therefore, betray much original thought.

To return to the question of the gun versus the arrow, it is quite clear that—by whatever means the notion was transmitted—it stems from the ancient Near Eastern belief that the Sun God discharges shafts of light from his bow in order to drive away darkness.<sup>39</sup> But, if the picture mythologizes an actual event in order to glorify Jahāngīr as a divine ruler, it also attempts to influence fate by sympathetic magic. Besides the dead owl pierced by the spear, there is another one, very much alive, perched on Malik *Ambar*'s head. The inscription has been read as "The face of the rebel has become the abode of the owl."<sup>40</sup>

This old idea that the owl destroys the person above whom it sits was certainly known to



Jahāngīr, since it occurs in Book I of Saʿdī's *Gulistān*, of which at least one illustrated copy was made for him.<sup>41</sup> As Ettinghausen pointed out, Jahāngīr was particularly devoted to Saʿdī and quotes extensively from the *Gulistān* in his memoirs.<sup>42</sup> At a later date we learn from the Venetian traveler Manucci that Jahāngīr's grandson, Dārā Shikūh, promoted an officer who killed an owl that perched above the prince's room.<sup>43</sup>

Having now considered the basic theme of the picture, I will turn to other details, which magnify its main protagonist. The sword proffered by a *putto* in the sky is a familiar emblem of the just king, and lower down the scales of justice appear, hanging from a chain of bells. The just king is always accessible to the petitions of his subjects and for this reason Jahāngīr, after his accession, arranged for a chain of sixty golden bells to hang from his private apartments near the Shah Burj of Agra fort and to be attached to a stone post sited on the bank of the river. Although Jahāngīr tacitly gives the impression that this was his own idea,<sup>44</sup> it was actually attributed by Nizām al-Mulk in the *Siyāsat-nāmah* to the Sasanian king Anūshīrvān, who wanted to make sure that people would not be prevented by officials from gaining access to his ear.<sup>45</sup>

We see this chain in a miniature from the *Tūzuk-i Jahāngīri*,<sup>46</sup> in which Jahāngīr is making one of his sunrise appearances at the *Jharokha*, high above those who have assembled to catch a glimpse of him as the sun rises. Apart from the obvious solar symbolism of these daily appearances, the Sasanian kings (we are further informed by Nizām al-Mulk in the *Siyāsat-nāmah*) used to look down from a high platform in order to be sure of seeing all those who came for the redress of grievances.<sup>47</sup> Unfortunately, as one sees from a detail near the bottom of the chain, Jahāngīr's concern for his subjects' welfare was more symbolic than real, since men with rods were stationed to prevent petitioners from disturbing the "Exalted Presence."

If this miniature from the memoirs shows the ugly truth, the allegorical painting is more complacent. Beneath the scales of justice hanging from the chain is a verse that reads:

Through the justice of Shāh Nūr ud-Dīn Jahāngīr,  
The lion has sipped milk from the teat of the goat.<sup>48</sup>

Looking carefully at the globe, we find that in the center the lion actually takes milk from the udder of a cow. And since, as I have already noted, this represents the golden age, the beasts mentioned by Virgil and Isaiah appear, together with others such as the cat who sits in peace with some mice. To the left, the snake is shown with its traditional enemy the goat,<sup>49</sup> a hawk flies together with a dove, and the lion and goat lie down in each other's company.

A lower inscription that suggests the king's Messianic role:

By the good fortune of the coming of the shadow of God  
The earth has become firmly placed on the back of the fish.<sup>50</sup>

This seems rather audacious because Farīd al-Dīn ʿAṭṭār in his praise of the creator that opens the *Mantiq al-Tayr* makes it clear that the fixing of the earth in place is one of the mysteries of God's creative power. ʿAṭṭār writes:

At the beginning of the centuries God used the mountains as nails to fix the earth; and washed Earth's face with the waters of Ocean. Then he placed the Earth on the back of a bull, the bull on a fish, and the fish on the air.<sup>51</sup>

Not wishing to venture further in that direction, I will now turn to the regal symbols to the right of the picture, which balance the spear in a way that is curiously reminiscent of the pillars of Hercules in an engraving of Elizabeth I by Crispin van de Passe.<sup>52</sup> In the case of Crispin's engraving, there are shields bearing the emblems of the royal houses surmounted by crowns on which symbolic birds perch. In Jahāngīr's picture, the symbolic bird is the *Humā* (bird of paradise) and the head over which it flies is destined to wear the royal crown shown beneath it. This is clearly an auspicious pendant to the inauspicious bird and head depicted opposite it.

Beneath the crown is found the series of inscribed discs that appeared above Jahāngīr's head in one of the Freer pictures studied by Ettinghausen.<sup>53</sup> Arranged together in this form, they resemble his accession seal on which, as here, the names of his ancestors back to Tīmūr are recorded.<sup>54</sup> This then is the imperial crown of Tīmūr, which the conqueror holds in some Mughal miniatures and which is passed down through the first five members of the Mughal family in a pair of well-known miniatures from an album of Shāh Jahān now divided between the Chester Beatty Library and the Victoria and Albert Museum.<sup>55</sup>

The remarkable miniature to which I have devoted so much attention exemplifies almost every aspect of Mughal imperial symbolism. A concern for dynastic legitimacy is indicated by the genealogical seal and the imperial crown. Many other Mughal allegorical pictures provide us with variations of these motifs. In some of these pictures, such as the two album pages just mentioned, the message relates only to temporal succession; but two other paintings in the same album in the Chester Beatty Library give this question of succession a different slant.<sup>56</sup> When viewed together (figs. 3 and 4), they show a bearded shaykh passing the Timurid crown to Jahāngīr, but this time the crown sits on the globe. At the top of the globe is an escutcheon plate surmounted by a key. The globe is inscribed, and Sir Thomas Arnold has read the inscription as "The key of the Victory over the two worlds is entrusted to thy hand."<sup>57</sup> In my view, this translation takes no account of what the key symbolizes: a key is for opening locks and, although the word *fath* does mean "victory," its primary meaning is "opening." We have a parallel use of the word by seventeenth-century Quakers, when they refer to divine revelation as "openings of the spirit." *Fath* is, of course, an Arabic word, but its Persian equivalent, *gushādan*, has a similar range of meaning and is exploited in a punning verse on a Safavid inkwell cited by A. S. Melikian-Chirvani.<sup>58</sup>

In the facing picture, a resplendent Jahāngīr stands holding the globe, but this time the crown is missing and the key that was perched on top of the escutcheon plate is now inserted in the lock. Clearly Jahāngīr has unlocked the secrets of the visible and invisible worlds, since, as the Regent of God, he shares his Creator's omniscience. As the Koran says:

With him [i.e., God] are the keys of the secret things; none knoweth them besides himself: he knoweth that which is on the dry land, and in the sea; there falleth no leaf but he knoweth it. (6:59)<sup>59</sup>

This time the succession is spiritual rather than temporal and raises the question: Who is this mysterious shaykh able to pass on this precious key? The portrait is an impressive one, for the features are individualistic and yet at the same time appropriate for one able to pass on both worldly shrewdness and otherworldly wisdom. Can we find him among the contemporary shaykhs of India recorded elsewhere by Mughal artists? Sir Thomas Arnold thought he could: in the Chester Beatty catalogue you will find his name given as Shāh Dawlat,<sup>60</sup> patron saint of the rat-eared children, who lived at Gujerat near Lahore—although this identification is in fact negated by the inscribed portrait of Shāh Dawlat in the same collection,<sup>61</sup> which has a quite different face. In any case there is no reason why Shāh Dawlat should occupy such an exalted role.

The haloed figure is clearly much more important and, although the portrait is so convincingly lifelike, it would be a waste of time to seek him among Jahāngīr's contemporaries. To find his name one only need look at the third sentence of Jahāngīr's memoirs, where the emperor speaks of his own birth. It is well known that prince Salīm (the future Jahāngīr) was born following the prophecy of Shaykh Salīm Chishtī, but it is not to Shaykh Salīm that Jahāngīr attributes the miracle that ended Akbar's search for a successor. In Akbar's view this blessing was conferred on him by India's most famous saint, who lived four centuries earlier, at the time when Muslim power was first being established by the invading Ghurids. He is, of course, Khwājah Mu'īn al-Dīn Chishtī.

Once this is recognized, any number of inscribed portraits can be identified that distort Bichitr's brilliantly convincing portrayal, exemplified in the Chester Beatty album, into a conventional mask of sainthood.<sup>62</sup> Even in Shāh Jahān's great manuscript of the *Pādshāh-nāmāh*, the face of Mu'īn<sup>63</sup> completely lacks the profundity of Bichitr's original, although there are details that prove the identification. Shāh Jahān is shown visiting the town of Ajmer, where the *Dargāh-i Sharīf* of Mu'īn al-Dīn is clearly depicted. This, therefore, is the appropriate setting for the saint to proffer the globe marked with continents and thus confer temporal sovereignty upon the emperor; Shāh Jahān was evidently too orthodox to claim more than this.

In view of the importance that the Safavids placed upon their spiritual succession from Shāh Sāfi' to bolster dynastic legitimacy,<sup>64</sup> it is hardly surprising that the Mughals appropriated Shaykh Mu'īn in order to play the same game. Just as the Safavids frequently paid visits to the sacred precinct at Ardebil and showered pious donations upon it, so at Ajmer today one can still find the candlestick and drums given by Akbar on one of his visits and the cauldrons presented by both Jahāngīr and Shāh Jahān. After Prince Salīm's birth, Akbar fulfilled his vow by making a pilgrimage on foot to the *dargāh*, just as Shāh 'Abbās on a later occasion proceeded on foot to Mashhad.<sup>65</sup>

Jahāngīr, as might be supposed, was a frequent visitor to the shrine, and between 1613 and 1616 his court was stationed at Ajmer and he visited the *dargāh* nine times.<sup>66</sup> During this period he fell seriously ill and he attributed his recovery to Mu'īn's intervention. In gratitude he had his ears pierced in order to show that outwardly as well as inwardly he was the Khwājah's earmarked slave.<sup>67</sup>

Although Jahāngīr was particularly devoted to Khwājah Mu'īn al-Dīn, it is apparent from the visit of Shāh Jahān to Ajmer that the idea of the saint conferring legitimacy upon the Mughals was still current in Shāh Jahān's reign. An additional example of this is the existence of the painting from the *Pādshāh-nāmāh* already mentioned, in which Prince Khurram, the future Shāh Jahān, takes leave of his father before going off to fight Malik 'Ambar. Under the throne balcony in the painting, one sees a mural of the saint, offering the globe to the monarch above, and there above his head are two angels, whose presence signifies divine approbation of an act that theoretically, at least, fulfills the destiny of mankind. In this picture, the features of the saint are a little different from those standardized by Bichitr, but since the painting refers to an event of Jahāngīr's reign at Ajmer itself, there seems little difficulty about the identification.

There is, however, another separate miniature of Shāh Jahān's reign<sup>68</sup> that shows a variation of the concept, in which the emperor stands upon the globe receiving a cup from an old gentleman of respectable appearance. In the border above are winged figures bearing a canopy—a motif that E. Whelan refers to in her essay in this volume (page 219) discussing the Cleveland Ewer. But this cupbearer has nothing to do with the iconography of the servant. It is, in fact, Khwājah Khidr offering Shāh Jahān the Elixir of Life.

In other illustrations from the *Pādshāh-nāmāh*—such as Bichitr's picture of Shāh Jahān receiving his sons<sup>69</sup>—a mural depicting men of religion is also painted on the wall below the throne

balcony. I suspect that they simply represent the *'ulamā'* conferring their spiritual endorsement upon the just and orthodox emperor—his justice, like that of his father, symbolized by the chain of golden bells tied to the post by the Jumna, and the sheep unafraid of two carnivores.

One last example of a painting beneath the throne in an illustration from the same manuscript introduces a new problem.<sup>70</sup> In this illustration Jahāngīr is receiving the victorious prince, who has now been given, a little prematurely, the title "Shāh Jahān" on returning from the Deccan war. Here painted beneath the throne is a mural that, in the context of royal justice, seems rather strange. A self-satisfied and corpulent *mullā* is offered a bag of gold by an obsequious court official. Below this group another member of royal officialdom drives away starving supplicants with a long staff. I have already mentioned the similar treatment accorded those who approached the chain of bells too closely. Yet according to the *Pādshāh-nāmāh* illustrations, Jahāngīr, the Just King, was commemorating such injustice as part of the imperial propaganda, beneath the very throne itself where the fat man and the beggar should be able to lie down in safety together. What does the emperor have to say for himself? Right at the end of his reign in 1624, he remarks in his memoirs that he had given orders for the sick, the blind, etc., to be kept away from his sight.<sup>71</sup>

In this case, Jahāngīr does not say that it was his own idea, and since we know he was very familiar with the works of Hāfīz, it seems very likely that he had the opening *bayt* of one of the *ghazals* in mind:

Who will carry this petition to the attendants of the king, That, in gratitude for kingship, "Drive not the beggar from sight."<sup>72</sup>

Clearly, for the king to see such people was thought to be inauspicious; perhaps their contagious misfortune would jeopardize the very prosperity of the realm.

This brings us to the last allegorical picture for discussion here (fig. 5).<sup>73</sup> It is clearly modeled on the earlier picture by Abū al-Hasan (fig. 2) in its general conception, but in this instance there is a new enemy—equally black—to be overcome by Shāh Nūr al-Dīn's victorious bow. If the banishment of the poor seemed unjust, the banishment of a personification of poverty is not. The emperor again stands on the animals of the Golden Age and under his just rule the earth is firmly established on the back of the fish. The ox is gone; instead a little old man appears like some sibyl to read the prophecy of the Golden Age. But who is this apparent prophet and where does he fit into the scheme of Islamic legend? The answer is that he has nothing whatever to do with Islam, but he does have very much to do with both kingship and justice. He is in fact Manu, the legendary Hindu lawgiver (bearing the *Mānavadharmashāstra*, on which the whole functioning of Hindu society is firmly based) who was saved from the great flood by the god Vishnu in his first incarnation as Matsya, the fish. Under the Just King, then, even Hindu laws are respected; to confirm this, the now-familiar testimony of a chain of bells is found, alternating with the old Mongol emblems of horsehair. This time, however, it descends to the pillar, not from the walls of the Agra fort, but from Heaven itself. Beneath the *putti* bearing a thoroughly European crown is inscribed:

The auspicious likeness of his Exalted Majesty, who casts economic sickness [meaning the man of penury] from the universe with his beneficent arrow and refashions the world with his Justice and Equity.

The optimism of these sentiments was unfortunately not borne out by subsequent Mughal history, but we cannot fail to be interested in the fact of their expression and the circumstances in which Near Eastern, Western, and Indian images were amalgamated in this allegory. Richard Ettinghausen saw the genesis of Jahāngīr's dream picture in the emperor's anxieties about tensions between India and Iran over Qandahar (fig. 1). In the present case, an economic historian may provide a clue to the cause of imperial doubts or pride. A tantalizing question will then remain. In exactly what intellectual hothouse among the coteries of the imperial court were such exotic hybrids brought to flower?

## NOTES

1. R. Ettinghausen, *Paintings of the Sultans and Emperors of India in American Collections*, New Delhi, 1961, pls. 11-14 (hereafter, Ettinghausen, *Paintings*); see also R. Ettinghausen, "The Emperor's Choice," *De Artibus Opuscula XL: Essays in Honor of Erwin Panofsky*, Millard Meiss, ed., New York, 1961, 98-120 (hereafter, Ettinghausen, "Emperor's Choice").
2. T. W. Arnold and J. V. S. Wilkinson, *The Library of A. Chester Beatty: A Catalogue of the Indian Miniatures*, London, 1936, I, 31-32, III, pl. 62 (hereafter, Arnold and Wilkinson).
3. Ettinghausen, *Paintings*, pl. 12.
4. Arnold and Wilkinson, III, pls. 63, 86.
5. R. Strong, *The English Icon: Elizabethan & Jacobean Portraiture*, London, 1969, 157, no. 105.
6. *Ibid.*, 289, no. 285.
7. F. Yates, *Astrea: The Imperial Theme in the Sixteenth Century*, London, 1975 (illustrated cover of undated Penguin edition).
8. Virgil, *The Pastoral Poems*, trans. E. V. Rieu, London, 1954, 53.
9. *Ibid.*, 53-54.
10. Akbar's copy of the *Shāh-nāmah*, mentioned by Abū'l-Faẓl 'Allāmī, *The A'in-i Akbarī*, trans. H. Blochmann, I, Calcutta, 1873, 103 (hereafter, Abū'l-Faẓl, *A'in-i Akbarī*), appears not to have survived.
11. Nidhāmī-i 'Arūḏī-i-Samarqandī, *Chahār Maqāla*, trans. E. G. Browne, London, 1921, 49.
12. M. C. Beach, "The Gulshan Album and Its European Sources," *Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Bulletin*, LXIII, 332, 1965, 76-77. Since this paper was written, E. Koch published a valuable contribution: "The Influence of the Jesuit Mission on Symbolic Representations of the Mughal Emperors," *Islam in India*, ed. C. W. Troll, New Delhi, 1982, 14-29.
13. Ettinghausen, "Emperor's Choice," 117.
14. Ettinghausen, *Paintings*, pls. 12 and 13.
15. I. Stchoukine, *La peinture indienne à l'époque des grand Moghols*, Paris, 1929, pl. XXIX, and Victoria and Albert Museum, I.M.21-1925.
16. Arnold and Wilkinson, I, 31-32.
17. A. K. Das, *Mughal Painting during Jahangir's Time*, Calcutta, 1978, 221.
18. Since my paper was written, it has been suggested that the painting can be connected with an event of March 1616—seven months earlier than that proposed here. See M. C. Beach, *The Imperial Image: Paintings for the Mughal Court*, Washington, D.C., 1982, 185.
19. Royal Library, Windsor, *Pādshāh-nāmah*, fol. 191v.
20. (Jahāngīr), *The Tūzuk-i Jahāngīrī* trans. A. Rogers, I, London, 1909, 337-38 (hereafter, [Jahāngīr]).
21. *Ibid.*, 313-14.
22. Arnold and Wilkinson, I, 31.
23. (Jahāngīr), I, 2-3.
24. Ettinghausen, *Paintings*, pl. 14; Ettinghausen, "Emperor's Choice," 100-101.
25. Juzjānī, *Ṭabaqāt-i-Nāṣirī*, trans. H. G. Raverty, Calcutta, 1873-81, II, 858.
26. Gul-badan Begum, *Humāyūn-nāma*, trans. A. S. Beveridge, London, 1902, 118; Abū'l-Faẓl, *The Akbar-nāma*, trans. H. Beveridge, Calcutta, 1907, I, 649-50 (hereafter, Abū'l-Faẓl, *Akbar-nāma*).
27. E. G. Browne, *A Literary History of Persia*, I, London, 1902, 319.
28. Al-Badaoni, *Muntakhabu-t-tawarikh*, trans. G. S. A. Ranking, I, Calcutta, 1898, 573.
29. *Ibid.*, 573.
30. Riazul Islām, *Indo-Persian Relations*, Tehran, 1970, 35-36.

31. Abū'l-Faẓl, *Akbar-nāma*, I, 179.
32. *The Arts of India and Nepal: The Nasli and Alice Heeramaneck Collection*, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 1966, fig. 202b.
33. Abū'l-Faẓl, *Akbar-nāma*, I, 180.
34. A. A. Rizvi, *Religious and Intellectual History of the Muslims in Akbar's Reign*, New Delhi, 1975, 388-89.
35. Abū'l-Faẓl, *A'in-i Akbarī*, I, author's preface, iii.
36. *Ibid.*, I, 155.
37. B. P. Ambashthya, *Contributions on Akbar and the Parsees*, Patna, 1976.
38. A. J. Arberry, *Persian Poems*, London, 1954, 98.
39. In the case of the Indian sun god, Surya, the darkness is driven away by Ūshā and Pratyūshā with bows and arrows.
40. Arnold and Wilkinson, I, 31.
41. Sa'ādī, *The Gulistan or Rose Garden*, trans. E. Rehatsek, ed. W. G. Archer, London, 1964, 102 (bk. I, story 26).
42. Ettinghausen, "Emperor's Choice," 114.
43. N. Manucci, *Storia do Mogor*, trans. W. Irvine, London, 1906, I, 227.
44. (*Jahāngīr*), I, 7.
45. Nizām al-Mulk, *The Siyar al-Mulūk or Siyāsat-nāma (The Book of Government or Rules for Kings)*, trans. H. Darke, London, 1960, 40 (hereafter, Nizām al-Mulk, *Siyāsat-nāma*).
46. A. Welch and S. C. Welch, *Arts of the Islamic Book*, Ithaca and London, 1982, 208-12.
47. Nizām al-Mulk, *Siyāsat-nāma*, 14.
48. Arnold and Wilkinson, I, 31.
49. R. Ettinghausen; "The Snake-eating Stag in the East," *Late Classical and Medieval Studies in Honor of Albert Mathias Friend, Jr.*, ed. K. Weitzmann, Princeton, 1955, 272-86.
50. Arnold and Wilkinson, I, 32.
51. Farid ud-din Attar, *Mantiq Ut-tair*, trans. C. S. Nott, London, 1954, 3.
52. R. Strong, *Portraits of Queen Elizabeth I*, Oxford, 1963; no. E.23.
53. Ettinghausen, *Paintings*, pl. 13.
54. See B. N. Goswamy and J. S. Grewal, *The Mughals and the Jogs of Jakhbar*, Simla, 1967, 87, n. 1, 94-97, also S. C. Clarke, *Thirty Mogul Paintings of the School of Jahāngīr*, London, 1922, pl. 23.
55. R. Skelton et al., *The Indian Heritage: Court Life and Arts under Mughal Rule*, Victoria and Albert Museum, 21 April-22 August 1982, London, 1982, nos. 52, 53 (hereafter, Skelton, *The Indian Heritage*); Arnold and Wilkinson, III, pl. 65.
56. Arnold and Wilkinson, III, pl. 57, and I, frontispiece.
57. *Ibid.*, I, 28.
58. A. S. Melikian-Chirvani, *Islamic Metalwork from the Iranian World*, London, 1982, no. 119.
59. *The Koran*, trans. G. Sale, London, 1836, 105.
60. Arnold and Wilkinson, I, 30.
61. *Ibid.*, III, pl. 68.
62. E.g., the Large Clive Album, Victoria and Albert Museum, (I.S. 133-1965), fol. 86r.
63. *Pādshah-nāmah*, fol. 205r.
64. See R. Savory, "The Safavid State and Polity," *Iranian Studies*, VII, nos. 1-2, pt. 1, 183-84, 186ff.
65. Abū'l-Faẓl, *Akbar-nāma*, II, 510-11; Savory, 197.
66. (*Jahāngīr*), I, 249-340.
67. *Ibid.*, I, 267.
68. London, Sotheby, 1 December 1969 sale, lot 151.
69. *Pādshāh-nāmah*, fol. 50v; see B. Gascoigne, *The Great Moghuls*, London, 1971, 145.
70. *Pādshāh-nāmah*, fol. 49r.
71. (*Jahāngīr*), II, 294.
72. Hāfīz, *Dīwān*, ed. N. Aḥmad and S. M. Riḍā Jalālī Na'īnī, Tehran, 1976, 4.
73. Los Angeles County Museum of Art, M.75.4.28 (from the Nasli and Alice Heeramaneck Collection); Skelton, *The Indian Heritage*, 20, no. 48. For a diluted version of the subject of the painting, see Sotheby's *Catalogue of Fine Oriental Miniatures*, Manuscripts, Qajar Paintings and Lacquer, 24 April 1979, lot 29 (illustrated).



FIG. 1. Jahāngīr embracing Shāh ʿAbbās in his dream. By Abū al-Ḥasan, c. 1618–22. Washington, D.C., Freer Gallery of Art, no. 45.9. Courtesy Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution



FIG. 2. Jahāngīr shoots the severed head of Malik ‘Ambar. By Abū al-Ḥasan, c. 1617. Dublin, Chester Beatty Library, MS 7, no. 15. Courtesy The Trustees of the Chester Beatty Library



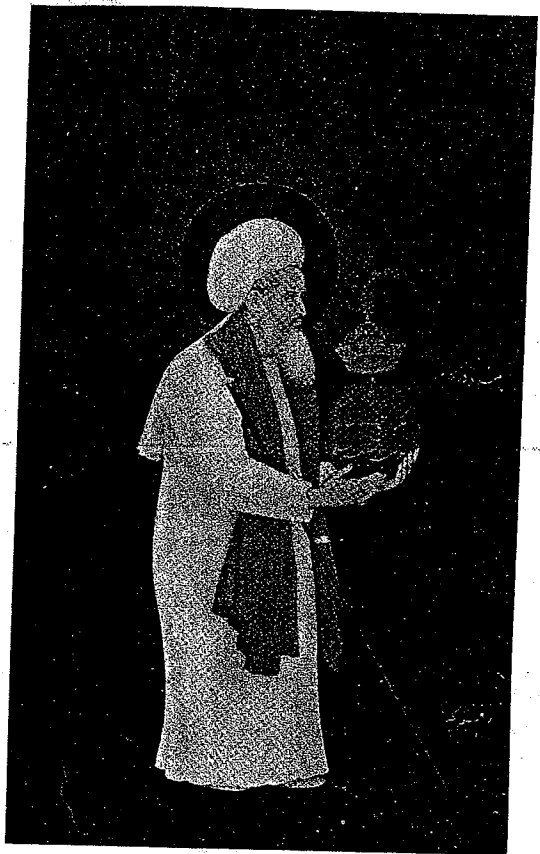


FIG. 3. Khwājah Muḥīn al-Dīn Chishtī offers the Timurid crown and globe. By Bichitr, c. 1620. Dublin, Chester Beatty Library, MS 7, no. 14. Courtesy The Trustees of the Chester Beatty Library

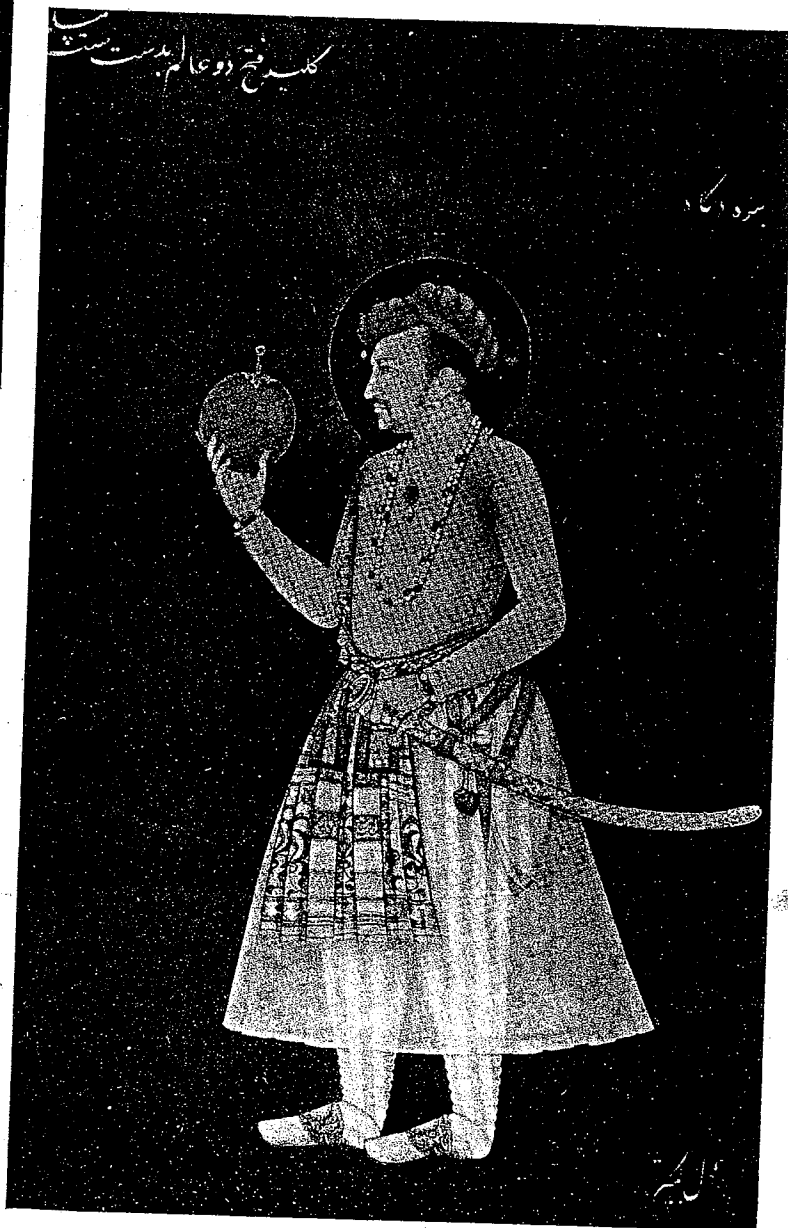


FIG. 4. Jahāngīr holding the globe. By Bichitr, c. 1620. Dublin, Chester Beatty Library, MS 7, no. 5. Courtesy The Trustees of the Chester Beatty Library



FIG. 5. Jahāngīr shoots poverty. Probably by Abū al-Ḥasan, c. 1625. Los Angeles County Museum of Art, M.75.4.29, from the Nasili and Alice Heeramanek Collection. Courtesy Los Angeles County Museum of Art