Laura E. Parodi: Tracing the rise of portraiture in the Timurid aftermath: the early steps of the Mughal school under Humayun (r. 1530-56 CE).

The early steps of the Mughal school of painting are elusive, yet distinctive. Works produced in the court atelier of Humayun around 1545-55 present considerable similarities with coeval Safavid or Shaybanid painting, yet could hardly be confused with them. This seems especially true of the approach to the human subject. No definitive assessment of the rise of portraiture in the Timurid aftermath has been attempted, yet at the turn of sixteenth century there are signs of greater individualization in Persianate painting. The works commissioned by Humayun would seem to display a greater interest in accurate likenesses than coeval Iranian or Central Asian paintings. Although the overpainting Humayuni works were often subject to in the seventeenth century recommends caution, it is worth considering the possible reasons behind this apparent move away from strict Persianate conventions and towards greater “realism” - given that it was to become one of the hallmarks of the mature Mughal style.


The paper will focus on some early seventeenth century album pages remounted in an album that was later put together for Asaf ud daula Nawab of Awadh. A preliminary attempt will be made to assess the choice of portraits compared with the strategy underlying the selection and presentation of paintings in what has been previously recognised as the 'Salim album'. Some brief comments will also be made about the general role of the portraits at the Mughal court and three later albums made for heirs apparent one of which appears to have been misnamed.

Asok Kumar Das: Views from the Mughal Zenana: Portraits of Mughal Princesses

Stefano Pellò: The poet, the painter, the portrait: mortal doubles and living illusions in Indo-Persian literary culture

The role of the portrait in Persian “classical” literature (12th-15th centuries), both as a narrative device and as an occasion to reflect on the nature of images, has been addressed several times, sometimes in fundamental studies such as those by Priscilla Soucek and Yives Porter. However, notwithstanding the self-evident increase in the artistic, cultural and political weight of portraiture in Mughal India (as part of a much wider Eurasian process), almost nothing have been said on its poetical textualization in later Indo-Persian literary culture. In this paper I’ll try to show some plausible interpretative paths to explore and analyse the complex lives of portraits in some literary works, both in poetry and prose, by major Indo-Persian authors such as Nasir ‘Ali Sirhindi (1638-1696) and Mirza ‘Abdulqadir Bidil (1644-1721). This will lead us to a reconsideration of the multiple and variable layers of interaction between the later Mughal poetical space on one side and the practice of portraiture and its (cosmopolitan and inclusive) theoretical and philosophical frameworks on the other, showing a range of possible hermeneutical connections going from the Hellenistic textual
milleu to the Shiite theological school of Isfahan to the Persian rewritings of Sanskrit devotional treatises.

**Ebba Koch:** *Jahangir as Publius Scipio Maior? Some Thoughts about the Mughal Full Length Portrait.*

Portraiture was a major theme of Mughal painting under the patronage of Jahangir (1605-1627) and Shah Jahan (1628-58). In the first half of the seventeenth century Mughal artists created portraits which stand out with regard to the naturalistic rendering of an individual human being, the grasp of his (and occasionally also her) psychology, state of mind, age, social status and ethnicity. Neither in Safavid Iran nor in the Ottoman Empire do we get to know the protagonist of history as closely as in Mughal India, and we have to look to Northern Europe to find comparable representations. We can identify distinct Mughal portrait types. In my lecture I draw attention to a specific type of standing portrait before the background of a distant landscape filled with troops and discuss whether and how it can be related to a potential Flemish model. This raises generally the question of genealogy or analogy.

**Keelan Overton:** *The Politics of Likeness (shabih): Bijapuri portraits in Jahangir’s muraqqa’*

One of the greatest repositories of Indo-Persian painting of the early modern period is an album, or *muraqqa’*, assembled by the Mughal emperor Jahangir in the opening decades of the seventeenth century. This paper considers a distinct corpus of imagery in Jahangir’s album: paintings produced in the Deccani city of Bijapur. In some cases, the aesthetic value of Bijapuri painting warranted its inclusion in the Mughal ruler’s beloved album. In others, Jahangir selected politically-latent images that commented upon his relationship with his Bijapuri rival, and at times ally, Ibrahim Adil Shah II (r. 1580-1627). This latter group includes two portraits of Ibrahim, which the Bijapuri khan carefully crafted as diplomatic gifts for the far more powerful Mughal padeshah. Jahangir, in turn, offered his portrait to Ibrahim. This example of reciprocal gift exchange presents a rare opportunity to explore the politics of likeness (shabih) for early seventeenth century Indo-Persian rulers. What was the function of the gifted portrait, and how did it communicate meaning between its sender and intended recipient? Ultimately, this paper positions the portrait as a dynamic tool of diplomatic encounter, as a message board upon which political hierarchies and messages were cemented and exchanged.

**Vincent Lefevre:** *‘Portrait’ or ‘image’? Some terminological and literary perspectives on portraiture in ancient and mediaeval India*

Contrary to a common, but misleading, idea, portraiture does not appear in South Asia with the Mughal rule: though not an artistic genre per se (which, incidentally, would be a Western viewpoint), portraits were popular artifacts in ancient and mediaeval (that is, Buddhist and Hindu) India. As a matter of fact, when one looks at it carefully, one can find numerous examples which show that portraiture played an important role in the development of Indian art. Next to many sculptures and a few paintings, literature and epigraphy testify of this phenomenon. The aim of this paper is twofold. On the one hand, it will seek, through a study of vocabulary from literary and normative texts, to highlight the specificity (or the lack of specificity) of ‘portraits’, compared to ‘images’ in general. On the other hand, it will present a rapid survey of narratives on the (mythical) origin of images which show that portraiture occupied a central position in the process.
Crispin Branfoot: Visual genealogies and the place of the past: temple portraiture in Nayaka Tamilnadu

Portraiture in early modern South Asia was not solely concerned with the production and circulation of Mughal, Rajput and Deccani court paintings. Long before large, sculpted portraits of royalty, viceroyos and governors were introduced to the public spaces of British India, life-sized portrait sculptures of royal temple donors were placed in the Hindu temples of Nayaka-period Tamilnadu. As the last great south Indian empire of Vijayanagara started to fragment after the disastrous sack of the capital in 1565, its regional governors or Nayakas in the Tamil country began to assert their political autonomy by acting as royal patrons to religious institutions. The foundation and renovation of Hindu temples across the Tamil country in the later 16th and 17th centuries coincided with the development of new forms of temple sculpture, notably the proliferation of life-sized portrait images. Many of these are of individual figures or groups of two or three, a visual reminder of past benefaction to a deity and its temple residence. In this paper I will discuss two groups of portrait images in temples at Srimushnam and Madurai, dating to c.1580 and 1630, that form visual genealogies of two lineages of Nayakas. Both portrait groups visually emphasise the Nayakas’ connection with the past, both the height of Vijayanagara authority in the early 16th century as opposed to the weakening political stature of the contemporary emperor and, in the Madurai example, the longer mythic and dynastic pasts of the Pandyans.

Catherine Glynn: Becoming the Hero: Metamorphosis of the Raja

When did the generic hero, the Nayaka, take on the real face of the ruler/patron in Indian painting and why? Rajput appreciation of Mughal portraiture led to the appearance of recognizable faces in paintings which formerly depended on stylized forms. This paper will trace the development and transition from "myth to man" in Rajasthan and Pahari paintings of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Molly Emma Aitken: A Rajput Court Painter, Chotu, Reformulates Royal Portraiture in the Colonial Era

This talk focuses on the mid to late 19th-century Bikaner artist Chotu’s portrait of his patron Maharaja Sardar Singh of Bikaner now at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. The talk argues that the use of portraits as gifts [e.g. nazar and inam], from the 17th through the 19th centuries, meant that portrait conventions had to be legible among—and familiar to—givers and recipients linked by political relationships of loyalty and allegiance. Portrait conventions and iconographies therefore shifted over time to accommodate changing political relationships and hence changing audiences. The British challenge to Rajput portraiture was not so much the imposition of new ways of thinking about portraiture, because British and North Indian attitudes to and uses of portraits were remarkably similar, it was the imposition of foreign portrait conventions into the North Indian political sphere. I will suggest that Chotu’s portrait of Sardar Singh was an attempt to resolve the undesired schism that subsequently arose between two stylistically very different portrait traditions (the North Indian and British) to permit the royal portrait once again to function as a medium of political connection capable of binding painters, patrons, their courtiers and allies in a single, seamless continuum. To accomplish what I perceive to have been his goal, Chotu merged aspects of religious icons with traditional Rajput techniques, elements from photography and British portrait conventions. The portrait of his patron that resulted is recognizably Rajput and colonial, a thoroughly modern hybrid for its times that may have constituted a bid for the painter’s own relevance in a rapidly changing court culture. Certainly
there is little question that it was an important portrait: I will present multiple versions, as well as preparatory drawings of the work, and will look at other drawings by Chotu and his father Rahim to explore the pair’s attitudes towards different portrait styles.

**Ainsley Cameron: The Development of the Devgarh Style: Princely Portraits of Anop Singh**

The very concept of family portraiture and the visual recording of lineage, while common in the main Rajasthani courts, would have been considered quite novel to the Devgarh Rawats, patrons of a budding sub–style of Mewar painting. While they were copying the metropolitan Udaipur models in their court etiquette, it was a new departure to have the opportunity to employ an Udaipur–trained court artist and the workshop, in its infancy (c. 1766), was exploring different themes. Most likely as a demonstration of their standing in the Mewar hierarchy, and especially at a time when the balance of political power was in flux, the existence of portraiture seems to signify assertive patronage. Compounded with this, the prevalence of paintings depicting the subsidiary rulers at the Devgarh court is unusual, and deserves to be addressed. Not only does it demonstrate the ruling family’s interest in portraiture, it also leads one to infer that the lead painter of this workshop, Bakhta (fl. 1756–1814), was actively searching for alternative patronage within the court.

**Natasha Eaton: Mimicry and the Double: Portraits, ethnography and 'deception' in colonial India.**

This paper explores the agency of portraits as forensic evidence and as mechanisms of objectivity in relation to the construction of identity in colonial India. Taking the case of a man accused by the colonial state of impersonating Pratap Chand, 'long dead' heir to the Burdwan estate, Bengal, as a centripetal device, I consider the limits of likenesses as legal and ethnographic evidence. The paper also examines how Company School painters mimicked to subvert the portrait/ethnographic type' strategies of colonial artists with spectacular effect. In what ways does mimicry become a subversive tactic, a vernacular resource or a disabling means for comprehending northern and eastern Indian portraiture?

**Christopher Pinney: What’s new about photographic portraiture?**