

SIMON DIGBY MEMORIAL CONFERENCE (9-11 JUNE 2014)

## Abstracts

**Sâqib Bâburî**  
SOAS

Remembering the Golden Age: Paintings  
of Dārāshukoh's *Bārāt* After 'Ālamgīr

The eldest son and heir designate of Emperor Shāhjahān, Prince Dārāshukoh enjoyed unprecedented favours and honours during his father's three decade-long reign. The differentials of power between him and his three younger brothers were dramatically exposed as intractable divisions during the wars of succession that followed their father's critical illness.

Only Shāhjahān's third eldest son, Prince Aurangzeb, emerged out of these tumultuous years unscathed. Under a new regnal title, 'Ālamgīr pursued Dārāshukoh and his eventual execution signified a supreme triumph. However, the emperor's passion for personalising his fraternal rivalry did not end here.

Evidence that this animosity did not appear simultaneously can be seen in 'Ālamgīr's official chronicle and other contemporary sources that continue the spirit of battle in words. Therefore, Dārāshukoh's name and reputation were additionally subjected to systematic vilification and defamation. Expressed in rhetorical propaganda, the imperial attitude also has significant implications for the study of painting.

This paper studies the problem through a specific compositional type that reoccurs frequently in the century that followed 'Ālamgīr's reign, showing Dārāshukoh leading his *bārāt* (the party of guests accompanying the groom's matrimonial procession). Exploring the conditions for a lasting rehabilitation of the much-maligned prince's reputation, this paper additionally asks whether such paintings represent a more generalised commemoration of the past, reformulated and re-imagined as an imperial 'golden age.' Considered in the light of ongoing research on the 'Windsor Castle' *Pādshāhnāmāh* manuscript, this paper highlights later trends in South Asian painting, at court and beyond.

**John Deyell**

Independent Scholar

**A Qunduz Token Coin and the Horse Trade  
Between Delhi and Central Asia**

In the decade before the Mongol irruption into Central Asia and Northwest India, the Khwarizm Shah issued an immense and eclectic series of coinages. These reflected the tremendous prosperity of his realm that lay astride not only the silk road between China and Iran, but also the horse trade between Central Asia and the Delhi Sultanate. One of the most intriguing was the issue of a distinctive large copper token coin by the mint of the city of Qunduz (northern Afghanistan). This paper will decipher the coin fully for the first time, and situate it in the economy of the India-bound horse trade.

Khwarizmian and Indian cities derived considerable revenue from tolls and customs duties paid by 'international' traders active in the horse trade, which was levied in full-value coinage or bullion. But they raised taxes by other means as well, such as agricultural revenue and taxes on local markets that provisioned the cities themselves.

While the through trade was the basis of prosperity of most of the cities involved, it also posed a challenge to the municipal economies: how to maintain a local exchange medium in the face of the transit movement of a considerable volume of precious metals. In other words, how to keep your local money supply from being sucked into the vortex of long-distance trade or tribute. This paper explores the possibility that in Qunduz, this coin was created as a token or fiat coinage locally accepted and circulated, but which (being over-valued) would not pass current elsewhere. If so, by this ingenious means, city authorities would be able to collect land revenue and maintain a vibrant local market exchange within the larger sphere of long-distance commerce.

**Roy Fischel**

SOAS

**Historiography, Sufis, and the Question of Deccani Identity**

The complex socio-political environment of the Deccan Sultanates presents unique methodological challenges to modern day historians. Official writings, from court histories to diplomatic correspondence, were produced in Persian. Unlike the Mughal case, in the Deccan Sultanates Persian was associated with one elite group, known as the Foreigners. Other elite actors, including local Muslim elites (Deccanis), did not usually participate in the same kind of literary production. As a result, the views of the Deccanis on state and society of which they were an important part remain a major lacuna in our understanding of the early modern Deccan.

A possible solution for this inherent problem of Deccani historiography might be found in Simon Digby's work on Sufis in the South Asian environment. Of particular important is his contribution to our understanding of the political role played by Sufis in South Asia, and his utilisation of Sufi narratives as a source for the political and military history of the region. Based on this contribution, in this paper I suggest the possibility of Sufi narratives as a source to explore unknown aspects of Deccani elite society and identity. Following previous works by Richard Eaton and others, I suggest that Sufi narratives, combined with royally commissioned narrative poems (*mathnavis*) and devotional texts in Dakhni, may provide a rare glimpse into Deccani ideas and consciousness in a literary environment that was heavily Persianised.

**Walter N. Hakala**

University of Buffalo

Two New Kinds of Fire: Syphilis and  
Capsicum in Early Hindvi Vocabularies

Hindvi-Persian vocabularies produced before and especially after the advent of Mughal-Timurid rule in South Asia document changes to the material culture of South Asia in the aftermath of European explorations of the New World—including the spread of syphilis and capsicum. While one pre-Columbian vocabulary identifies the Persian *atishak* (literally denoting a ‘little fire’) as the firefly or glow worm, texts from the turn of the sixteenth century begin using the phrase *atishak-i farangi* (‘Little Fire of the Franks’) to describe the symptoms of syphilis. With the introduction of New World chilies, the semantic range of Arabic-Persian *filfil*, like its English cognate *pepper*, expands to include the fruit of three plants—the long, round, and chili peppers—despite being derived from the Sanskrit *pippali*, denoting the *Piper longum* alone.

This paper will examine the ways in which these and other New World objects were re-situated as they were absorbed into, and glossed in, pre-existing linguistic, medical, and material cultures. I will evaluate the manner in which various texts share and adapt semantic, lexical, and macrostructural elements, drawing evidence from the *Khaliq Bari* (widely attributed to Amir Khusrau of Delhi), the *Qasidah dar Lughat-i Hindi* of Yusuf bin Muhammad Yusuf Khurasani (physician for Emperor Babur), the *Ajay Cand Namah* (completed in 1552-3), and later works like the *Risalah-i Jan Pahcan* and a glossary of double entendres, the ‘*Ajib al-Lata’if*. Unlike more obviously literary works whose aesthetic framing of conventional literary themes (*mazamin*) often occlude direct views of underlying material *realia*, multilingual vocabularies provided a space in which unfamiliar terms denoting real things could be semantically equated—more often through functional analogues than genetic homologues—with other, more familiar, objects and terms.

**Ebba Koch**

University of Vienna

Bagh-i Safa: The Garden of Princess Jahanara  
on the Manasbal Lake at Kashmir

Considering Simon Digby’s interest in Kashmir, which he pursued in his work on metalwork, Sufism and travellers of the valley, I thought to present in my paper some of my research on Kashmir, namely a first discussion of a garden known today as Jharoka Bagh. It is situated on the northern bank of the Manasbal Lake and, since I saw it first in 1986, has been turned into a small park by the Floricultural Department of Kashmir. Tourists hire boats there for excursions on the Manasbal Lake. The real identity of the garden is however not known.

I shall show that it was the Bagh-i Safa, one of several older Mughal gardens which had been given by Shah Jahan to his favourite daughter Princess Jahanara, entitled Begam Sahib. A study of the textual sources sheds light on the history of the garden and how it was visited and appreciated by the Mughal emperors until Jahanara renovated it and turned it in a favourite excursion spot for Shah Jahan.

It seems to belong to those “lofty buildings, spirit-increasing dwellings and pleasant recreation places,” which Mulla Shah Badakhshi, the spiritual guide of Jahanara, created with her and Prince Dara Shukoh at Kashmir.

**Scott Kugle**

Emory University

## Simon Digby's Attachment to Zia Nakhshabi

Zia al-Din Nakhshabi is a Sufi author who is little known today. Yet Simon Digby took pains to preserve manuscripts of his books. This presentation will explain who Zia Nakhshabi was, how he was important, and why Simon Digby collected his works.

Zia Nakhshabi (died 1350 CE in Badaun) was a Sufi in the Chishti Order, who died in relative obscurity and even those who admire the Chishtis seldom mention him. Yet Nakhshabi was a prolific author, in the first generation of Chishti Sufis who wrote their own texts; and he gives evidence of having a wide cosmopolitan knowledge of literature, music, philosophy and mysticism.

Nakhshabi followed the example of Amir Khusrau by combining Sufi spirituality with literary eloquence, and he produced charming lyrics in Persian. He translated Indian folk-tales into Persian and Islamic literary idioms. His *Tuti-Nama* or "The Parrot's Tale" transposes into Persian the Sanskrit tale of a parrot telling narratives of love and amorous adventure. His astounding work, *Juz'iyat o Kulliyat*, "The Parts and the Wholes," explores the human body by combining medical knowledge with Sufi insights. His epic poem, *Gulriz*, "A Scattering of Roses," narrates the affairs of princely lovers, and his *Ladhdhat al-Nisa'*, "Sensual Delights of Women" is a Persian translation of the Sanskrit erotic manual, the *Koka Shastra* (cousin to the more famous *Kama Sutra*).

His masterwork, *Silk al-Suluk* or "String of Pearls on the Spiritual Path," is a collection of mystical sayings of Sufi masters about spiritual issues like "love," "time," and "ecstasy." Bruce Lawrence has recognized the importance of this treatise, and modern Indian Sufis valued it enough to translate into Urdu. But Western scholars, by and large, have ignored it—with the exception of Simon Digby, who collected several manuscripts of it. This presentation will provide some English translation of other parts of *Silk al-Suluk*, to supplement the work that Bruce Lawrence did and to further Simon Digby's efforts to preserve the legacy of this Sufi litterateur.

**Sunil Kumar**

University of Delhi

Historicising the South Asian Chishtiyya: Contextualising Gesu Daraz's  
*Jawami' al-Kalim* and the Making of Sufi Fraternities

My paper will look at the *Jawami' al-Kalim* of Sayyid Muhammad Akbar Husaini, a text in the *malfuzat* genre narrating the discourses of the Sufi saint, Sayyid Gesu Daraz, d. 1422. This was a text that was of considerable interest to Prof. Digby, although his many interesting papers on the subject are still unpublished. I want to take a look at the nature of the text within an evolving Sufi *malfuzat* tradition to see how this might help to historicise the Chishtis somewhat more precisely than at present.

Some initial work was done along these lines by Prof. Digby's old friend, the late Prof. Riazul Islam. But unlike Prof. Islam's endeavour, I am not interested in discussing how key Sufi ideas and practices—*futuh*, *kasab*, politics and ethics—might have been presented in the teachings of different Sufi preceptors. My paper instead focuses on the idea of nostalgia that permeates the *Jawami' al-Kalim*—a subject of considerable interest to Prof. Digby—to uncover its deployment in the construction of a Chishti praxis by a Sufi teacher who was forced to preemptorily vacate his settlement in Delhi at the end of the fourteenth century. The recourse to memory, I argue, was critical in the

making of a Chishti consciousness by a teacher keen on retaining the coherence of his fraternity, even as he sought new adherents and powerful patrons in new lands.

Through a comparison with the earlier Chishti *malfuzat*, and with the context provided by the fourteenth century Persian chronicles, I bring out the continuities and departures in the ways in which the *Jawami' al-Kalim* discusses relationships and attachments to people, spaces and events. Together with the *Siyar al-Auliya'*, the *Jawami' al-Kalim* was critical in textualising a history of the South Asian Chishtiyya, but in ways possible only at the end of the fourteenth century.

**Rosie Llewellyn-Jones**

Independent Scholar

### A Hanoverian Nabob on the March

'Dear Rosie' the undated postcard read, 'Some day before I lapse into senility I hope that my work on Marsack around Lucknow may get into shape. With best wishes Simon Digby.'

*Kawa'if al-sayr* is a travel diary written by a young Sunni clerk who accompanied Major Charles Marsack on a journey from Lucknow to Delhi and back again, in 1780. This was a period outside Simon's main fields of study, being post-Mughal, but he came across the manuscript and could not resist translating it. It is written in 'Indo-Persian,' which is described by Persian speakers as *sabk-e-Hindi*, that is, in the Indian style.

Charles Marsack is perhaps the only figure to have escaped the scrutiny of historians fascinated by that fertile period between 1770 and 1800 when Europeans were employed by the rich and powerful nawabs of Awadh. Major General Claude Martin is the best known, but Major Antoine-Louis Polier follows closely behind. Letters from these two Frenchmen, both working for the English East India Company and the nawabs, have been published within the last decade. Both mention Marsack, who seems to have preferred this spelling of his name, to that of his mother, the Comtesse de Marsac.

In his introduction to *Kawa'if al-sayr*, which Simon sent to me in June 2006, he says 'This biographical sketch [of Marsack] leaves many unanswered questions. Subsequent archival research may provide the answers, but at present we can only guess at them.'

The intention of this short paper is to answer some of the questions that arise from the travel diary and to provide the background to Marsack's journey to meet Najaf Khan in Delhi, then the most powerful figure in northern India. It was a time in the eighteenth century when everything seemed in a state of flux—the power of the Mughal emperors seriously compromised—the Mahrattas flexing their muscles, the Sikhs growing noisy in the Punjab, and who knew what was going on in Bengal?

Marsack's hitherto mysterious English companion has been identified. We now know why Marsack diverted on his journey to his jagir at Farruckabad, granted by the nawab Asaf-ud-daula in return for a substantial loan from Marsack.

The paper will trace Marsack's route from Lucknow to Delhi and back. It will consider why Najaf Khan was the target of this mission, and the events that followed from it. It will put Marsack, a hitherto unknown figure, into context and will look briefly at his parentage (he was an illegitimate half brother to King George III), and his retirement to Caversham Park in Oxfordshire.

This paper is a tribute to Simon Digby, someone who was always around during my university life at SOAS. I want to say to him *aram farma' iye, ab mihnat ap ki puri hu' i* (pray rest peacefully now that your labours are complete).

**James Mallinson**  
SOAS

### Yogi Insignia in Mughal Painting and Avadhi Romances

In this paper, I shall correlate descriptions of Gorakhnāthī yogis in sixteenth-century Avadhi *Premākhyān* romances with their depictions in Mughal painting. Particular attention will be paid to verse 106 of the *Mrigāvatī*, which gives the longest list of yogic insignia in such texts. These insignia, which include both sect markers and items used in yogic practice, will be contextualised historically, as well as being identified in Mughal painting. Some of the items are still in use among Indian yogis today and I shall show photographs of them and material examples that I have collected. Sources consulted besides the texts and paintings themselves will include other texts from the period, both vernacular and Sanskrit, travellers' reports, later depictions of yogis, Sudhākara Dvivedī's early twentieth-century *Sudhākaracandrikā* commentary on the *Padmāvatī*, and ethnography of today's yogis. In conclusion I shall show how depictions of yogis in Mughal painting are more naturalistic than the generic descriptions found in the *Premākhyāns*.

**Barbara Metcalf**  
University of California, Davis

### Portraits of a Colonial Queen

The reign of Sikandar Begum (r. 1847-1868) over the princely state of colonial Bhopal fell later than the period that Simon Digby made his focus of study, but we can speculate that there would have been aspects of the career of this formidable figure that he may have found of interest. Sikandar Begum was an Indo-Afghan, like other historical figures who caught Simon's interest early on, and, like them, she was an enthusiastic horse[wo]man and military figure. In Sikandar's case, she deployed these skills on the British side in the Mutiny and thus secured her future and the future of her state. Sikandar was also a participant—as the British themselves tried to be—in the “afterlife” of the Mughals. Sikandar presented herself and her state as heir of the Mughals. This position notably contrasts with that of Hyderabad, the most important “Mohammedan” state and a former Mughal province. Sikandar named her only child after a Mughal emperor; she constructed a Moti Masjid that echoed Shah Jahan's Jami' Masjid; and, in the aftermath of the Crown settlement that secured her rule, she undertook versions of a royal progress, including tours within India and (as no ruler earlier would have dared to do) even a pilgrimage to Mecca. To act like a “neo-Mughal” was to be part of the present, not to resuscitate the past. Above all, in so doing, Sikandar was claiming a place within the colonially-demarcated “India,” a very differently imagined context from that of a struggling warrior polity within the regional politics of Malwa.

The emblem of this modernity is Sikandar's use of a month-long colonial photo-shoot carried out by an army photographer, James Waterhouse. His goal was to document “tribes and castes.” Sikandar saw a different opportunity afforded by the camera, and she used it for a display of her power in staging her subjects and in presenting herself in different guises. Some among the portraits in fact display her crowned and swathed in elegance in a “Mogul” style. As a colonial “prince,” Sikandar Begum was an unusual woman, but, unusual or not, her behaviour illuminates not only important themes in colonial political culture and elite gender roles, but also in material culture—from architecture to photographs to costumes. This last is perhaps the dimension of her history that best fits an occasion inspired by the work of Simon Digby.

**Farina Mir**

University of Michigan

Urdu *Akhlaq* Literature in Nineteenth-Century India

In the spirit of the conference proposal and its call to concentrate on a single subject, my paper will focus on the genre of *akhlaq* literature. The paper will seek to define the genre as appropriate to the production and circulation of Urdu *akhlaq* texts in India. While the genre itself is germane to the Sultanate and Mughal periods on which Digby worked, my paper will focus on late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century printed texts. It will seek to contextualize the genre both in history and historiography, focusing in particular on its role in broader intellectual and social histories.

**Azfar Moin**

Southern Methodist University

## The Practice of Magic in Mughal India

Magic was rife in the Mughal court. Not only Humayun (d. 1556), who had a special predilection for the occult sciences (*'ulum-i ghariba*) but also Akbar (d. 1605) was a major patron of the magical arts associated with Hermes Trismegistus (*Hirmis al-muthalath bi'l-hikma*), identified in Islam with the Quranic prophet Idris. While Hermetical traditions have received an inordinate amount of attention in the study of Renaissance Europe, the fact remains that magic and other occult arts remained a subculture in Christendom, where they were circumscribed by the church and could not flourish in public and political spheres.

By contrast, in Mughal India and its contemporary empires in Iran and Central Asia, the Hermetical arts were foundational for kingship and were openly used in court ceremonies and rituals. For instance, solar veneration, a practice central to Mughal kingship—in the veneration (*darshan*) ceremony, in the initiation of imperial disciples (*murids*), and even in the ritual routine of the military chief (*sipah salar*)—was attributed in the *Akbarnama* to the teachings of Hermes. This was not unusual since most Persian works on magic, astrology, and alchemy begin with a tribute to Hermes as one of the founding fathers of the magical arts.

One such manuscript from the Mughal court that awaits study is the *Hidayat al-Raml* (Guide to Geomancy). It was presented to Akbar twice, once in 1555, just before his accession to the throne, and again in 1592, at the moment of the Hijri millennium, after Akbar had declared himself to the spiritual guide of humanity in a controversial episode associated with his so-called Divine Religion (*Din-i Ilahi*). This paper will analyze the relevance of this text for understanding Mughal sovereignty within the larger context of the place of Hermetic arts in the court and shrine cultures of the milieu.

**Michael Nazir-Ali**

OxTRAD

Iqbal and Rumi: Personal Idealism  
and the Reinterpretation of Sufism

I am hoping to reprise some of my discussions with Simon about 'Allama Iqbal's reinterpretation of the Sufi tradition in the light of his encounter with Western Personal Idealism, as shown in the philosophy of, for example, John McTaggart, James Ward, Bergson, etc.

In doing this, I hope to focus on Iqbal's treatment of Maulana Jalaluddin Rumi in respect of a number of topics, such as determinism and freewill, the self and God, annihilation and survival in God (*fana wa baqa*), love, mystical experience, etc.

Iqbal's reinterpretation is significant in its attempt to turn Sufi-minded Muslims away from pantheistic and fatalistic attitudes towards greater activism, struggle, and a renewed interest in the sources of Islam and the roots of *tasawwuf* in them. It can also be important for inter-faith and inter-cultural dialogue.

### Francesca Orsini

SOAS

From Sultanate Province to Mughal Centre:

A Hindavi Sufi Tale in Persian Garb

One of Simon Digby's many interests was in tales and their circulation (*Wonder Tales of South Asia*), and he enjoyed both their qualities of wonder and the historical and social traces they bore. This paper focuses on one of the many retellings of Hindavi tales in Persian made in Mughal India; a tale full of wonder that also holds back information about itself in a way that Simon would have found intriguing.

The version of the *Mirigāvatī* story, known as the *Rāj Kunvar*, that was composed and illustrated for Salim in the *dar al-saltanat* of Iahabad in 1603-4, and is held in the Chester Beatty Library in Dublin, has so far attracted the attention of art historians. With 137 heavily illustrated folios, it is a substantial book, but from the perspective of a literary historian it presents several puzzles.

The only notation of authorship is on the last page, but was "the poor Burhan" its copyist or the author, and who was he? Though produced for a royal atelier, the composition (in prose) focuses more on the narrative than on literary ornamentation. The result is a considerably *lesser* literary work than Shaykh Qutban's 'original' *Mirigāvatī* (1503) in Hindavi.

The paradox of a less sophisticated Persian garb produced for a Mughal court patron, compared to a more glittering 'vernacular' one composed for a Sultan in exile, is intriguing and suggests that this was perhaps a looser *dāstān* version (rather than *masnavī*) of the rather tighter Hindavi tale in *chaupai-doha* stanzas.

Significantly earlier than other Persian Mughal versions of Hindavi romances such as Jayasi's *Padmāvat*, and geographically close to the area of the *Mirigāvatī*'s original composition and probable circulation, the *Rāj Kunvar* also suggests how these Hindavi tales may have found their way into Mughal literary circles. Though, Jahangir is later known to have been more interested in poetry than in tales, unlike his father.

By attending closely to the ways in which the Hindavi tale was rendered into Persian (making use of motifs and genres from the Indic as well as Arabic traditions, as Aditya Behl has recently shown), this paper will seek, if not to solve the paradox, at least to formulate it better.

### Barbara Schmitz

Independent Scholar

Painting in Kashmir in the Eighteenth Century:

A Review and an Important Painter Identified

My first job after completing my dissertation at the Institute of Fine Arts, New York University was to write a catalogue of Islamic manuscripts in The New York Public Library, including primarily illustrated manuscripts from the Library's Spencer

Collection.<sup>1</sup> The most difficult section of this assignment was the cataloguing of some twenty-five “Indo-Persian” manuscripts of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, an area of research little published at that time. Most fortunately, Simon Digby was the main reviewer of this section of the book; he read it carefully and made important historical and linguistic contributions that were incorporated into the text. It was at this time, facing an over-sized first-volume of the *Shahnama* with 122 miniatures (Spencer, Pers. Ms. 62) and a small volume of Jami’s *Yusuf va Zulakha* (Spencer, Indo-Pers. Ms. 21) with 41 stylistically related paintings, that my interest in eighteenth-century Kashmiri painting began.

In previous publications I have put these two manuscripts and others in related styles that were found in European and American collections and libraries in an ever expanding historical chronology. In this short article I will bring together my various ideas about eighteenth-century Kashmir book illustration as a whole, and include photographs from the various illustrated manuscripts that I have cited. I am also now able to introduce the album paintings of a major Kashmiri painter of the first quarter of the eighteenth century, Muhammad Faruq Kashmiri, whose style was then adopted by the book illustrators of the first half of the eighteenth century.

**John Seyller**

University of Vermont

#### A Dispersed Mughal *Khamisa* of Nizami

A little-known Mughal manuscript of the *Khamisa* of Nizami, now largely divided among the Victoria Art Gallery in Bath, the Bodleian Library, the School of Oriental and African Studies, and the Museum Rietberg, emerges as an intriguing document of the waning years of Akbar’s reign. Written in the late sixteenth century and impressed with a seal dated 1563, it once contained at least forty-seven illustrations that can be dated to about 1598. Its roster of artists includes such esteemed masters as Dharmdas and Surdas as well as such journeymen as Lohanga Chela, Bahan, and Shyam. The involvement of artists representing these distinct tiers speaks both to the levelling mechanisms of the workshop and to the transitional state of the institution. With Akbar’s patronage in precipitous decline, the imperial atelier’s greatest talents had already begun to drift into the orbit of Prince Salim or were soon to accompany him to his satellite court in Allahabad; at the same time, lesser members of the atelier were leaving to join the service of other patrons at court or beyond.

The manuscript’s most unusual feature is surely the many scribal notes written on unpainted sections of the painting field. Most often these notes prescribe the subject of the illustration, occasionally in great detail, but in at least one instance they record the date by which the individual artist was to complete his work. A reconstruction of the manuscript and a careful explication of these notes will enhance our understanding of this key transitional moment in Mughal art.

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<sup>1</sup>Barbara Schmitz, with contributions by Lastif Khayyat, Svatek Soucek and Massoud Pourfarrokhi, *Islamic Manuscripts in The New York Public Library* (New York, Oxford University Press and The New York Public Library, 1992).

**Christopher Shackle**

SOAS

## Beauty on the Brink of Death

The story of Beauty and the Buffalo-herd, called Sohni and Mahinval in Punjabi or Suhini and Mehar in Sindhi, is one of the great romantic legends of the Indus valley. It culminates with Beauty standing on the bank of a raging river as she prepares to swim across to her lover on the far bank in spite of knowing that this must result in her death. Besides inspiring a variety of pictorial representations, it was a favourite topic for poets in both languages throughout the late pre-modern period.

The paper concentrates on a comparative study of the most interesting of these literary treatments with the aim of showing some of the broader issues which they suggest. These include: ways in which the legend fits as part of a larger imaginary system with the other great love-stories of the region, like those of Hir and Ranjha or Sassi and Punnun; lessons to be drawn from looking at Punjabi and Sindhi poems side by side rather than from the usual monolingual critical perspectives; and characteristic contrasts between run-of-the-mill verse narratives of the whole story and the intense focus of the major Sufi poets on the lyrical evocation of the climax as Beauty stands on the brink of her death.

**Robert Skelton**

Victoria and Albert Museum

## Maharaja Man Singh Tomar's Patronage of Early Rajput Painting

When the late Basil Gray argued in favour of a pre-Mughal date for N. C. Mehta's *Chaurapanchasika* illustrations at the Royal India & Pakistan Society's Oxford Summer School, in July 1951, neither W. G. Archer, nor the writer of this abstract, agreed with him. Instead we were persuaded by Karl Khandalavala's arguments, in 'Leaves from Rajasthan' in *MARG* (vol. IV, no. 3, 1950). However, a vindication of Gray's position resulted from the discovery of the *Ni'matnama* of Ghiyasuddin Shah of Malwa in the India Office Library, in January 1956, when it became clear that a synthesis of medieval Indian and Iranian painting styles had already occurred a century before the date of *circa* 1610, on which Khandalava had been insistent, and that the style of figural representation in the *Chaurapanchasikha* was closely mirrored in the paintings of that Sultanate period manuscript.

An examination of the political and cultural relations between Rajput and Sultanate kingdoms in Central and Western India, prior to the publication of the *Ni'matnama* illustrations in *MARG* (vol. XII, no. 2, 1959), suggested that Maharaja Man Singh Tomar was likely to have been a patron of mural painting. Thus, a first visit outside Delhi together with Simon Digby in 1962 was to Gwalior. The remains of paintings that we discovered in the dome of a *chhatri*, near the entrance to the Man Mandir Palace, will be the subject of this paper.

**Andrew Topsfield**

Ashmolean Museum

## Simon Digby as Collector: Illustrated Manuscripts and Paintings

The purpose of this conference in honour of Simon Digby is well expressed by its organisers: "We seek to celebrate ... his unique mix of lapidary attention to objects and

ideas with an intense awareness of the larger historical patterns that produced them....” Simon’s acute perception and profound understanding of Indian artefacts of many kinds owed greatly to his life-long activity as a collector of Indian metalwork, sculpture, manuscripts and paintings. This highly developed collector’s instinct, allied with a keen aesthetic sense, deeply informed his broader understanding of Indian culture and history. He lived surrounded by Indian objects in their hundreds. Not for nothing was his 1970s Oxford house known as the ‘Little Ashmolean.’

In this paper I shall briefly survey Simon’s collecting in general. More particularly, I shall introduce his wide-ranging collection of Indian illustrated manuscripts and paintings, many of them in mainstream or variant Jain, Rajput and folk styles of Western India, which are now preserved in the Ashmolean Museum. It presents a rich, unusual and scholarly corpus of works of a kind often ignored by private collectors or institutions.

### **Bruce Wannell**

Independent Scholar

#### Progress Report on an Annotated Translation of the *Jawahir Nama*

The *Jawahir Nama* is an undated anonymous text on which Simon Digby was working, together with Bruce Wannell, in the latter years of his life. Originally published in the *Lahore College Magazine* on the basis of a defective manuscript, it is nevertheless an important text giving a picture of the trade in precious stones and substances at a time when the Timurid inheritance was still vital (e.g. some prices fixed by Shah Rukh); when trade prices were largely quoted in Florins, when diamonds were still being exported from India for faceting in the West by European craftsmen before being re-imported into India, and when the first Columbian emeralds were reaching the Indian subcontinent as a strictly guarded Iberian monopoly.

These and other elements led Simon to place the composition of the text provisionally in Kabul in the first third of the sixteenth century. The text has a remarkably rich vocabulary of words for describing the colour and quality of stones and pearls, some of which correspond more closely to Iranian rather than Afghan Persian usage. It also gives a detailed account of the preparation of Badakhshan lapis lazuli pigment, as well as of Kashan cobalt for pottery slips and glazes. Thanks to the late Alexander ‘Sandy’ Morton, Bruce was able to check a related manuscript in Cambridge, which has improved some of the doubtful readings and allowed a complete re-translation of the text.

It remains to evaluate how much of the text is recycled from earlier lapidarists’ material, and how much represents trading conditions current in the sixteenth century. Technical information has also been provided by specialists in antique jewellery, notably Derek Content. It is hoped that the work will be published in the coming year, with full illustrations.

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#### From Venice to Goa and Back

In August 1671, Ambrosio Bembo, a twenty-year-old Venetian nobleman of distinguished family, set out on a journey that would take him as far as the western coast of India. His uncle Marco had been appointed Venetian consul in Aleppo, and Ambrosio stayed with him there for seventeen months, until he became bored and

decided to travel to India with two Franciscan missionaries. To our good fortune Bembo was a skilled writer, and he kept notes on his travels that he turned into polished prose after his return to Venice.

The maritime journey through the Persian Gulf and the Arabian Sea was long, difficult, and dangerous, but he eventually reached the Portuguese fortresses of Diu and Daman. He describes Daman's fortifications in detail, notes that there were 6,000 Portuguese troops and four active missionary orders: Dominicans, Reformed, Augustinians, and Jesuits. Bembo met the Mughal ambassador as well as the ambassador from Shivaji, the "king of the neighboring kingdom" who is "young, handsomely tall, and almost black in color, lively and ready with words, richly dressed in clothing of silk and gold."

Subsequently, Bembo traveled to Surat, where he was impressed by the number of mosques and synagogues, by the wealth of the city and the intensity of its commerce among merchants arriving from Europe, the Middle East, Iran, Bengal, China, and southeast Asia. From Surat he traveled to Bassein, Mumbai, and Goa. Bembo's journey home took him to Bandar-i Kong, and then overland to Shiraz, Persepolis, Isfahan, and Baghdad. In April 1675 he saw once more the campanile of San Marco. The trip of his lifetime was over, but he left us a text of enormous value for the study of seventeenth century India and its encounter with the Portuguese.