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The Mughals – descendants of Timur and Genghiz Khan with strong cultural ties to the Persian world – seized political power in north India in 1526 and became the most important artistically active Muslim dynasty on the subcontinent. In this richly illustrated book, Dr Milo Beach shows how, between 1555 and 1630 in particular, Mughal patronage of the arts was incessant and radically innovative for the Indian context. The Mughals also profoundly altered the character of painting in the Hindu areas of north India over which they ruled. These initially independent territories belonged to Rajputs, Hindus of the warrior caste. The author reveals how Mughal painting was defined by the styles and subjects popular at the imperial court, whereas Rajput painting consisted of many local court styles, corresponding to the various Hindu kingdoms, each with different tastes and artistic inspirations. Deeply rooted in Indian artistic traditions, Rajput paintings were also closely allied to imagery popular with Indian villagers and to works made for temple use throughout the subcontinent.

By reproducing nearly 200 examples in this study, Milo Beach traces the interplay of the traditions of Mughal and Rajput painting from the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries. He demonstrates the tolerance each showed towards outside influence and change and thus helps to define a uniquely Indian attitude towards the arts. The author also expands his narrative by listing, in an appendix, important dated manuscripts and related publications.

Mughal and Rajput Painting makes a major contribution to the study of north Indian painting. This work will be widely read by students and specialists of art history, Indian history and South Asian studies as well as by anyone interested in Indian art.

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THE NEW CAMBRIDGE HISTORY
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THE NEW CAMBRIDGE HISTORY OF INDIA

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- I The Mughals and their Contemporaries.
- II Indian States and the Transition to Colonialism.
- III The Indian Empire and the Beginnings of Modern Society.
- IV The Evolution of Contemporary South Asia.

A list of individual titles already published and in preparation will be found at the end of the volume.



i. A Manuscript Atelier (detail). From an *Akhlāq-i-Nasiri* manuscript, Mughal, ca. 1590–1595

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THE NEW
CAMBRIDGE
HISTORY OF
INDIA

I : 3

Mughal and Rajput Painting

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GENERAL EDITOR'S PREFACE

The New Cambridge History of India covers the period from the beginning of the sixteenth century. In some respects it marks a radical change in the style of Cambridge Histories, but in others the editors feel that they are working firmly within an established academic tradition.

During the summer of 1896, F. W. Maitland and Lord Acton between them evolved the idea for a comprehensive modern history. By the end of the year the Syndics of the University Press had committed themselves to the *Cambridge Modern History*, and Lord Acton had been put in charge of it. It was hoped that publication would begin in 1899 and be completed by 1904, but the first volume in fact came out in 1902 and the last in 1910, with additional volumes of tables and maps in 1911 and 1912.

The *History* was a great success, and it was followed by a whole series of distinctive Cambridge histories covering English Literature, the Ancient World, India, British Foreign Policy, Economic History, Medieval History, the British Empire, Africa, China and Latin America; and even now other new series are being prepared. Indeed, the various Histories have given the Press notable strength in the publication of general reference books in the arts and social sciences.

What has made the Cambridge Histories so distinctive is that they have never been simply dictionaries or encyclopedias. The Histories have, in H. A. L. Fisher's words, always been 'written by an army of specialists concentrating the latest results of special study'. Yet as Acton agreed with the Syndics in 1896, they have not been mere compilations of existing material but original works. Undoubtedly many of the Histories are uneven in quality, some have become out of date very rapidly, but their virtue has been that they have consistently done more than simply record an existing state of knowledge: they have tended to focus interest on research and they have provided a massive stimulus to further work. This has made their publication doubly worthwhile and has distinguished them intellectually from other sorts of reference book. The editors of the *New Cambridge History of India* have acknowledged this in their work.

The original *Cambridge History of India* was published between 1922 and 1937. It was planned in six volumes, but of these, volume 2 dealing with the period between the first century A.D. and the Muslim invasion of India never appeared. Some of the material is still of value, but in many respects it is now

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GENERAL EDITOR'S PREFACE

out of date. The last fifty years have seen a great deal of new research on India, and a striking feature of recent work has been to cast doubt on the validity of the quite arbitrary chronological and categorical way in which Indian history has been conventionally divided.

The editors decided that it would not be academically desirable to prepare a new *History of India* using the traditional format. The selective nature of research on Indian history over the past half-century would doom such a project from the start and the whole of India history could not be covered in an even or comprehensive manner. They concluded that the best scheme would be to have a *History* divided into four overlapping chronological volumes, each containing about eight short books on individual themes or subjects. Although in extent the work will therefore be equivalent to a dozen massive tomes of the traditional sort, in form the *New Cambridge History of India* will appear as a shelf full of separate but complementary parts. Accordingly, the main divisions are between I. *The Mughals and their Contemporaries*, II. *Indian States and the Transition to Colonialism*, III. *The Indian Empire and the Beginnings of Modern Society*, and IV. *The Evolution of Contemporary South Asia*.

Just as the books within these volumes are complementary so too do they intersect with each other, both thematically and chronologically. As the books appear they are intended to give a view of the subject as it now stands and to act as a stimulus to further research. We do not expect the *New Cambridge History of India* to be the last word on the subject but an essential voice in the continuing debate about it.

PREFACE

The majority of recent book-length studies of Indian painting have been exhibition catalogues, and the works discussed and illustrated have inevitably been examples of particular subjects or styles chosen for their distinctiveness. This study, in contrast, has more frequently decided to examine works that closely relate to other works. Its interest is not in singularity, but in inter-relationships. Nor is the text encyclopedic; it cannot be, given its length. It seeks instead to provide a continuous narrative that can be expanded by additional, more specific readings cited in the bibliographic essay. The author is greatly indebted to all the scholars, volumes, and articles listed there, although he takes full responsibility for the text of this volume.

Two artistic systems are investigated in this study. The first concerns artists working for the Hindu Rajput rulers of north India, while the second centers on painters working for the Rajputs' overlords the Mughal emperors (who were Muslim). Of these, Mughal painting has been more frequently studied, and is the tradition better understood by European and American viewers. Mughal images reached Europe at least as early as Sir Thomas Roe's return to London in 1619, and four decades later they were copied and made known by Rembrandt. Mughal painting in turn was influenced in important ways by European art, and seems to use familiar and traditionally European visual techniques – figures are modelled with light and shade, for example, and space often seems (in some fashion) to recede. The central period, the century beginning about 1550, can also be discussed using the established methods of European art history. For example, the determination of dates for specific pictures and the arrangement of chronological sequences is important to the understanding of Mughal works, since changes in style show a consistent evolution and development of artistic thought. The identification and comparison of the distinctive styles of different artists is equally significant, for it reveals a respect for artistic individuality familiar to modern viewers.

Rajput works, the products of many different courts, are far more abundant than Mughal paintings in public and private collections in India and elsewhere. First introduced to Europe and America in 1923 through Ananda Coomaraswamy's great study *Rajput Painting*, these works have proved immensely popular but more difficult to discuss. The traditional Rajput patron seldom recognized the expressive contribution possible through an artist's personal style, and – as will be discussed in the text – styles seldom developed

PREFACE

in meaningful linear sequences. Changes of style in Rajput paintings seem more often to be the result of circumstance than of conscious decision, and traditional European art historical methodologies have seldom produced meaningful information. It is then necessary to ask, of course, whether the European or American scholar's search for dates and attributions has skewed understanding of Mughal traditions by concentrating on those aspects most easily dealt with and discussed, albeit through the imposition of methodologies established for quite different works.

More than any single person, Stuart Cary Welch has inspired a generation of students, scholars, and collectors; in fact, many of the private collections that have been formed in America and Europe during the last three decades have been directly affected by his enthusiasm. The exhibitions he has assembled, and his published and unpublished studies of various aspects of the arts of India have provided a firm foundation for contemporary scholarship. This book is heavily indebted to his previous work, although he has nothing to do with its inadequacies. I am grateful also to Professor John Richards for his comments and support. His own scholarship continually sheds light on aspects of Indian paintings too frequently ignored by art historians.