

Gifts of the Sultan

The Arts of Giving at the Islamic Courts



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بمشان سپاری میدون توازون کبش دپت و چندین مبا و ایشمانی آید سپر بمسار و غل و بخاری برزند مرآن نامداران پرانج و تاب ازیشان برنج و تنگ خوی کشید جهانی در آور و زیرین بدینار و ادون در اندر کشاد	پسر و کنیاری ایشان کردند سپاری نزاری برآند سوش کنون بند بخت را با تا جور بفرمودشان با سپاری برزند بیروند از پیشان او سپاریاب بپش دپشان ری و کشید	شیت جایی که با ابو د نمکدارشان سوئمندان کنم نه زید که شک بر سپاری تباہ نه چید از رای آن نامور نکبان کردن که گزیش جهان زیر اسپان شکر گشت	کز قار کشتن و ابو د باشان یکی خانه زندان کنم جوشی شمشان سنجاه جوشید کھار او تاج و ر بدین کار غزیت آمد پیش جو این کرده شپساز گشت از افس پاد ما بران زمین کلاه یکمانی سپر بر نهاد
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Gift Giving in the Iranian Tradition

MICHAEL MORONY

The giving and receiving of gifts played an essential role in pre-modern Iranian society, especially as a political practice, one that extended from ancient times into the Islamic period. Circumstances and the gifts themselves changed with time, but the underlying motivation of gift exchange and its generally asymmetrical nature remained as a constant. Gift giving in the Iranian tradition involves such ideals and concepts of ritual exchange as the equal or greater value of the counter-gift, honoring a guest or a host, the display of gifts, and regifting. The longevity of gift giving in Iran carried over from antiquity into the period covered by this catalogue. Indeed, these ancient and indigenous practices in Iran are evident in the Zoroastrian sacred text, the *Avesta*, wherein the poet-sacrificer engages in a system of gift exchange with Ahura Mazda, a deity of the Old Iranian religion. This system is actually Indo-Iranian because in the Vedas (the earliest Hindu sacred writings) sacrifice and its divine reward are also seen as an exchange of gifts.¹ Indo-Iranian sacrifice involved a three-way gift exchange between the priest, deity, and patron. The poetry of the priest invited the gods to descend to enjoy the sacrifice. The gods were considered guests, who brought gifts of hospitality to bestow on their host, the patron, who was obliged to reward the priest for his services.²

In the *Avesta* the universe was created and organized by Ahura Mazda in a divine sacrifice. Since he gave the ingredients of sacrifice to people in the first place, every sacrifice by humans is a repayment that returns to Ahura Mazda that which he gave the world to use. Thus the ingredients of the sacrifice go back and forth between the divine and human realms as gifts and counter-gifts. By the rules governing gift exchange, the poet-sacrificer and Ahura Mazda become mutually indebted, and Ahura Mazda, as both friend and host, is obliged to make a counter-gift that matches or surpasses



Opposite: Fig. 26 (cat. no. 145). *Afrasiyab on the Iranian Throne*, folio from the *Shahnama* of Shah Tahmasp, Iran, Tabriz, 1525–35. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (1970.301.16).

Above: Fig. 27. *The Delegation of Lydians*, located on the southern flight of the eastern staircase of the Apadana at Persepolis, Iran, 5th century BC.

in value the gift of his friends, the poet-sacrificer and his community. Failure to do so would cancel the relationship and let chaos replace order. Thus a continuous process of gift and counter-gift is established. The poet-sacrificer repays his debt to the god with sacrifices and praises that confer fame and the royal command on Ahura Mazda, who must then repay this new debt to the world by using his command to regenerate it.³

It is reasonable to suppose that what went on between the poet-sacrificer and Ahura Mazda is a reflection of expectations in ancient Iranian society, particularly in terms of mutual obligations, guest-friend relations, and the equal or greater





This page and opposite: Fig. 28 (cat. no. 38). *Battle between Gushtasp and Arjasp*, double-folio composition from a manuscript of the *Shahnama*, probably Afghanistan, c. 1440. The Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland, London (MS. 239).



Fig. 29 (cat. no. 21). *Tiraz* (detail), Egypt, AH 371/981. Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Madina Collection of Islamic Art, gift of Camilla Chandler Frost (M.2002.1.30).

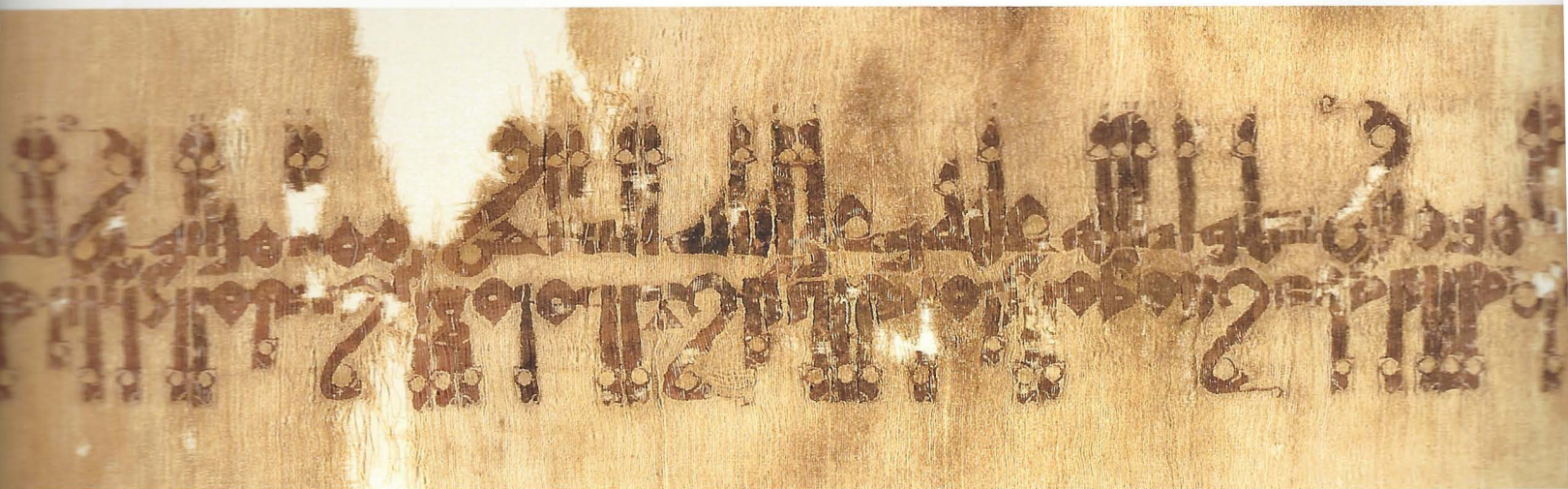
value of the counter-gift. There is clearly the political significance and the need for good rulers to be strengthened by the praise and gratitude of their subjects and to reward them in turn by preserving their well-being.⁴ Such expectations, illustrated for instance in the famous processional reliefs at Persepolis (fig. 27),⁵ have survived among Zoroastrians ever since.

By the Sasanian period (224–651) royal traditions of gift exchange had been institutionalized. Gifts were offered to the king at the festivals of Nawruz (the vernal equinox, which was the start of their new year) and Mihrajan (the autumnal equinox).⁶ According to an anonymous ninth-century Arabic text called the *Book of the Crown*, which purports to record Sasanian usages, on those days people brought the king what the giver loved the most. Members of the upper class gave musk, amber, cloth, and luxurious clothing. A cavalryman gave a horse, lance, or sword; an archer gave arrows. The rich gave gold or silver; a poet gave verses; an orator gave a speech; a close friend gave a precious object or rarity.⁷ If a gift was worth ten thousand dirhams, it was registered in the court *diwan*, and then, when a son of the giver was married, or a daughter conducted to her husband, the *diwan* was consulted. If his gift had been worth ten thousand dirhams, he was given double that amount.⁸

It is also said that the Sasanian rulers Ardashir I (r. 224–41), Bahram V (r. 420–438/9), and Khusraw I

(531–79) gave out all the clothing in their treasuries at Nawruz and Mihrajan to their courtiers and favorites first and then to other people according to their rank. At Mihrajan the Persian king gave away his summer clothing because he did not need it anymore, and likewise at Nawruz he gave his winter clothing away. In the Islamic period, the **only** one who is said to have followed the example of the Persian kings in this matter (at least by the ninth century) was ‘Abdallah ibn Tahir, the Muslim governor of Khurasan (r. 828–45), who distributed clothing at Nawruz and Mihrajan until there was none left in his treasury.⁹

Poetic praise functioned as part of the gift-exchange system. The custom of bestowing a robe of honor (*khil’a*) upon poets to reward them for their verses was already established among pre-Islamic Arabs. Gift-exchange theory has been applied to the analysis of two events in which panegyric verse served as valuable commodities. In one of them ‘Alqamah, a poet famous for receiving the robes of kings, was presented with a gift of ransomed prisoners by the Ghassanid king al-Harith ibn Jabala (r. about 529–69) in return for his poem.¹⁰ The other is the famous occasion when the poet Ka’b ibn Zuhayr converted to Islam by presenting a poem to Muhammad, and the Prophet gave Ka’b his own mantle (*burda*) in return. The poem functioned as a symbolic gift in a ritual of allegiance while the mantle became the symbolic counter-gift,¹¹ but this



would have been in the pattern of contemporary rulers. It is said that Muhammad never refused a gift from anyone and that he gave rewards in return.¹²

Otherwise, Persians themselves introduced Muslim Arabs to Iranian gift-giving customs during and after their conquest of Iran. In 642 a Persian notable called Dinar was taken captive at the city of Nihavand by Simak ibn 'Ubayd al-'Absi. Dinar offered Simak anything he might ask in return for sparing his life, and after his request was granted, he brought Simak gifts.¹³ There was some ambivalence among Muslim Arabs about Iranian gift-giving traditions at first. At Balkh, in 652, al-Ahnaf ibn Qays had appointed his nephew, Asid ibn al-Mutashammis, to collect the tribute. While he was doing so, the festival of Mihrajan came around and the people of Balkh gave Asid gifts of gold and silver vessels, dinars and dirhams, furniture, and garments. When he asked them if that was part of the tribute, they answered, "No, this is rather something that we do on this day for our ruler in order to conciliate him." He asked them what day it was; they told him "Mihrajan," and he said, "I don't know what that is." But he hated to refuse the gifts, because they might rightfully be his, so he took them, put them aside, and told al-Ahnaf about it when he arrived. The people of Balkh told al-Ahnaf the same thing, so he took the gifts to his commander, Ibn 'Amir, and told him about them. Ibn 'Amir told al-Ahnaf they

were his and he should keep them. When al-Ahnaf responded, "I have no need of them," Ibn 'Amir said, "Take them for yourself."¹⁴ The caliph 'Ali (r. 657–61) is said to have refused to accept the gifts brought to him by the Persian landlords (*dahaqin*; singular, *dihqan*) of al-Mada'in prior to the Battle of Siffin in 657. When they asked him why, he told them, "We are more wealthy than you; in truth, it is more fitting for us to pour out [our wealth] upon you."¹⁵

Al-Hajjaj ibn Yusuf (r. 694–714), governor of Iraq and the Islamic lands east of it, is said to have started the practice among Muslims of offering gifts on Nawruz. The Umayyad caliph 'Umar II (r. 717–20) abolished the Nawruz and Mihrajan gifts, but these were restored by Yazid II (r. 720–24).¹⁶ By then the Arab governors in the east had it figured out and adopted Persian gift-giving customs as an added source of income. There is a detailed description of the gifts presented to Asad ibn 'Abdallah al-Qasri when he attended the feast of Mihrajan at Balkh in the fall of 738. Asad sat on a raised seat with the notables of Khurasan arranged on chairs, while the amirs and *dahaqin* brought him presents. Among them were Ibrahim ibn 'Abd al-Rahman al-Hanafi, Asad's governor of Herat and Khurasan, and the (unnamed) *dihqan* of Herat, who came forward together and presented their joint gift to him. They set down a "fortress of silver and a fortress of gold" (scale models) on the cloth spread out in front of





Fig. 30 (cat. no. 178). Akbar
Receives the Badakhshanis,
double-folio from a manuscript
of the Akbarnama, India,
c. 1603–5. © Trustees of the
Chester Beatty Library, Dublin
(In 03.53b and In 03.54a).



Asad. Behind them they put gold and silver pitchers, then large gold and silver dishes and silk garments until the cloth was filled. The entire gift was worth one million dirhams. The *dihqan* also gave Asad a ball of gold and delivered a speech on the qualities of rulers. When he was finished, Asad told him he was the best *dihqan* in Khurasan and the most excellent in giving and gave him an apple he was holding, whereupon the *dihqan* of Herat prostrated himself before Asad. Asad then looked at the gifts silently and then ordered someone to carry off the gold fortress and someone else to take the silver fortress away. He told first one and then another to take a pitcher and gave away all the large dishes and the silken garments to lesser officials and to those whose performance in war had been outstanding until he had given away everything that was on the cloth spread on the ground.¹⁷

The first remarkable thing about this account is its description of the public display of the gifts. Anthony Cutler has pointed out that rulers often exhibited gifts in public before redistributing them, thus turning symbols of submission into signs of grandeur.¹⁸ The public display of gifts exchanged between rulers was an important aspect of diplomacy (e.g., see fig. 6).

The second thing that is significant about this account is that it is an example of regifting. It was, and is, common for presents to be regiven to third parties. When the Byzantine governor of Egypt, *al-Muqawqis*, sent Muhammad four slave girls, a mule, a donkey, a horse, a thousand *mithqals* of gold, twenty pieces of Egyptian linen, honey, and an Alexandrian basket, Muhammad is said to have regifted three of the slave girls and gave the money as alms.¹⁹ When Mu'awiya (r. 661–80) gave 'A'isha a gold pyxis containing precious gems worth a hundred thousand dirhams, she distributed them among the other widows of the Prophet.²⁰ In this tradition, presents can continue to go from one person to another, and Cutler uses this to revise Mauss's seminal hypothesis that objects have a spiritual impulse to return to their owners.²¹

By the early Abbasid period both Nawruz and *Mihrajan* were occasions for exchanging gifts in Muslim society.²² Caliphs and viziers at Baghdad and Samarra sat in their chambers to receive



Opposite, top: Fig. 31 (cat. no. 17). *Bowl*. Iran, c. 1029–49. Los Angeles County Museum of Art, the Nasli M. Heeramaneck Collection, gift of Joan Palevsky (M.73.5.149).

Opposite, bottom: Fig. 32 (cat. no. 19). *Footed Bowl*. Iran, 13th–14th century. The David Collection, Copenhagen (47/1979).

Above: Fig. 33 (cat. no. 18). *Flask*. Iran, late 11th–early 12th century. The State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg (S 504).



Fig. 34 (cat. no. 14) *Dinar*, Caliph al-Musta'sim (r. 1242–58), Iraq, Baghdad, AH 642/1244–45. Omar Haroon Collection, Los Angeles.



Fig. 35 (cat. no. 15) *Dinar*, Sultan Baybars (r. 1260–77), Egypt, Cairo, probably AH 665/1266–67. Omar Haroon Collection, Los Angeles.

Opposite: Fig. 36 (cat. no. 23). *Akbar Gives a Robe of Honor in 1560*, folio from a manuscript of the *Akbarnama*, Govardhan, India, c. 1603–5. ● Trustees of the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin (In 03.49b).

presents from people of all ranks. High-ranking officials and wealthy people offered perfumes, jewels, and pearls. Merchants presented carpets, clothing, or slave girls. Poets offered their poems, and common people brought gifts of flowers or fruit. The caliphs gave their visitors valuable gifts in return.²³ For instance, the caliph al-Mutawakkil (r. 847–61) sat in his chamber from morning until noon worship on Nawruz to receive the presents offered to him by his high officials,²⁴ while his concubines celebrated Mihrajan by presenting him with precious gifts.²⁵

These customs were observed by the Abbasid caliphs at least until the early tenth century and then survived among the rulers of the successor states to the Islamic Empire. Bayhaqi, the renowned Persian historian, recorded how gifts were brought to the Ghaznavid court on Nawruz and Mihrajan from outlying parts of the kingdom in eastern Iran and Afghanistan in the 1030s as *pishkash* (a present from someone of inferior status). Such gifts to the ruler and his officials were transformed into taxes or dues as irregular levies began to increase under the late Saljuqs and Khwarazmshahs during the twelfth century and then proliferated under the Mongol Ilkhans. By the fifteenth century *pishkash* had come also to mean a due or tribute owed to the ruler or his officials.²⁶

Important political events were also occasions for giving gifts. When the caliph appointed his heir apparent, poets were rewarded with robes of honor for their formal expressions of praise for the

soon-to-be-departing present ruler.²⁷ On the day of the new caliph's accession, when he received the oath of allegiance (*bay'a*), he distributed gifts and robes of honor to the high dignitaries.²⁸ At victory celebrations the caliph also gave his generals robes of honor.²⁹ Viziers gave presents to the visitors who congratulated them on their appointments.³⁰ Gifts normally accompanied diplomatic negotiations with other rulers for treaties, armistices, alliances, prisoner exchanges, or commercial rights.³¹

In general gifts were given on all sorts of special occasions, both public and private: blood-letting for medical purposes, childbirth, circumcisions, graduations, hospitality, journeys, religious holidays, and weddings.³² We hear most about these things when they involve the ruling class. Muslims gave each other presents on 'Id al-Adha (the Feast of the Sacrifice, which ends the annual Pilgrimage and is one of the two major Muslim holidays),³³ while the Christian secretary of al-Mutawakkil's mother sent the caliph Lenten food in precious vessels at an expense of three thousand dinars.³⁴ Weddings usually involved giving presents from the royal groom to the guests, but there is evidence of a gift to the bride from either the groom or the new father-in-law.³⁵ On the famous occasion of the marriage of the caliph al-Ma'mun (r. 813–33) to Buran, the daughter of his vizier, al-Hasan ibn Sahl, in 825, on the day the marriage contract was signed the bride's father showered the guests with balls of ambergris containing slips of paper upon which the designations of gifts were written. A king of India

و فریون طغایی میسر از سید حکیم با جمعت و روان و سپاسی بسیار بنا بر چیست و ستم سهرورد ماه الهی موفیق
دو شنبه نهم ذی الحجه شریف بساط بوس سرفراز شد و مشمول تربیت شانشناسی گردید و منصب عالی و کالاس
و شرف خطاب خانانانی خلعت افتخار در بر کرد

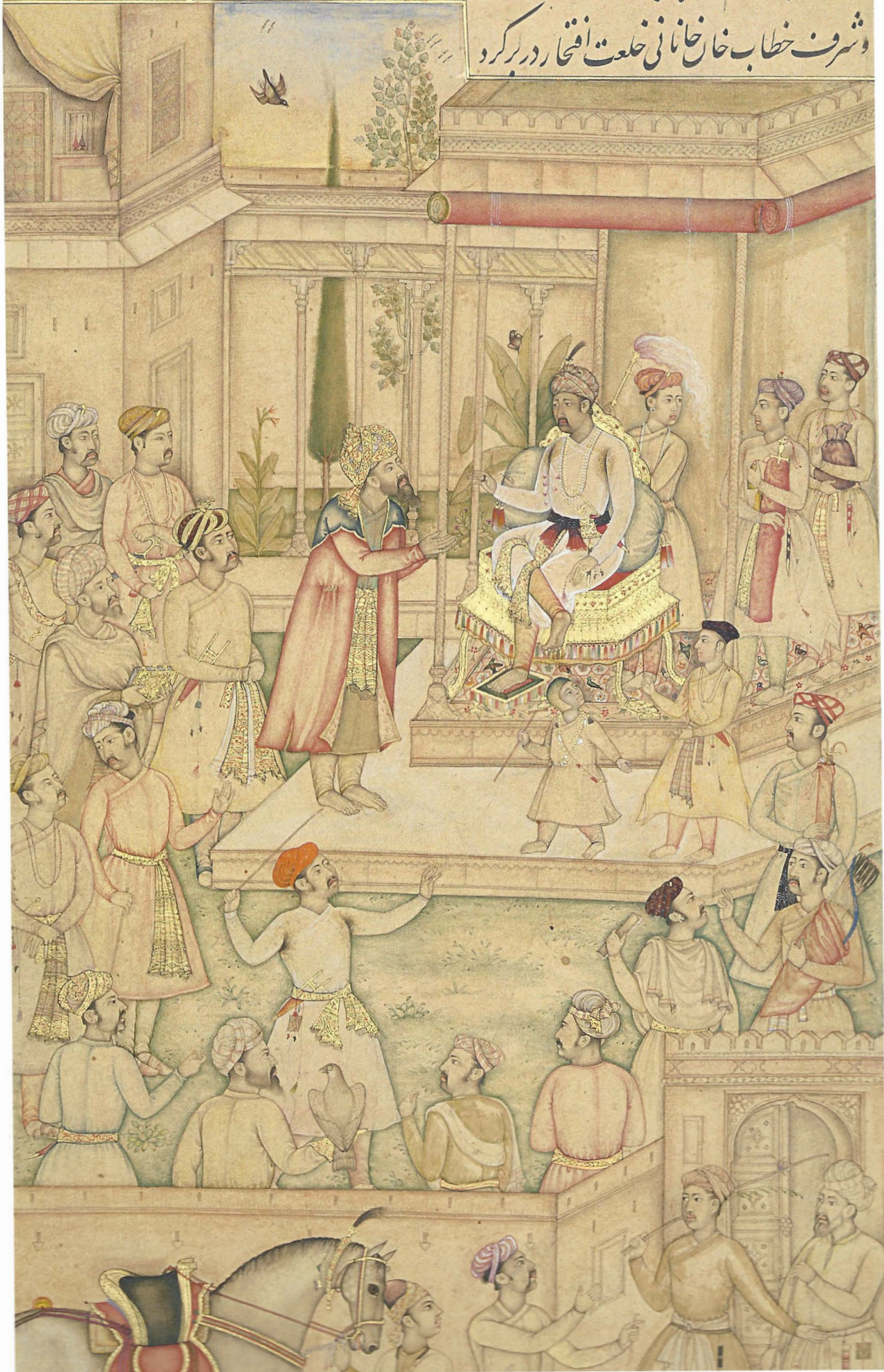




Fig. 37 (cat. no. 68). *Yataghan and Scabbard*, Mustafa ibn Kemal al-Akshehri, Turkey, c. 1500. Museum of Islamic Art, Doha (AA.6).





Left: Fig. 38 (cat. no. 214). *Young Woman in Blue*, Turkey, late 16th century. Los Angeles County Museum of Art, the Edwin Binney 3rd Collection of Turkish Art (M.85.237.30).

Right: Fig. 39 (cat. no. 215). *Woman with a Lute*, Iran, Isfahan, c. 1600–1610. Los Angeles County Museum of Art, the Nasli M. Heeramaneck Collection, gift of Joan Palevsky (M.73.5.457).

sent gifts to the father of the bride, al-Hasan, and, when al-Ma'mun consummated his marriage with Buran, he gave her father ten million dirhams, or one million dinars, which al-Hasan promptly gave away to al-Ma'mun's officers and entourage. Al-Ma'mun also gave Buran's brother one million dirhams and a land grant worth eighty thousand dinars. All of the guests got robes of honor.³⁶

The birth of a child in the caliph's household was an occasion for the caliph and members of his family to give valuable presents to everyone, both rich and poor, while poets and dignitaries got the usual robes of honor.³⁷ There are also cases of the father giving presents to the mother and of an outsider sending valuable gifts to the father.³⁸ The circumcision of a caliph's son was a major event. At the banquet held by al-Mutawakkil (r. 847–61) for the circumcision of his son al-Mu'tazz (r. 866–69) the guests received a considerable amount of dinars and dirhams, and each of them got three robes of honor. Al-Mutawakkil freed a thousand slaves and gave each of them a hundred dirhams and three

pieces of cloth. The female singer and the dancers in the courtyard got one million dirhams, while dirhams were showered on the barber, slaves, bodyguards, household managers, and servants. The barber received more than eighty thousand dinars plus jewelry, property, and other gifts.³⁹ At the banquet that celebrated the circumcision of the son of the caliph al-Muktafi (r. 902–8) in 907, the guests were given robes of honor with slips of paper in the pockets that assigned them an inner garment, while the vizier gave each guest a bouquet of roses.⁴⁰ In 914, when the caliph al-Muqtadir (r. 908–32) had his five sons circumcised on the same day, he showered five thousand dinars and a hundred thousand dirhams on them. Prior to that, he had had a group of orphans circumcised and distributed dirhams and clothing among them.⁴¹ Gifts were also given to the guests at the celebration when a son of the caliph had mastered the entire Qur'an. Al-Mutawakkil showered precious gems on the tutor, generals, officers, and other dignitaries for his son, al-Mu'tazz, on that occasion.⁴²

In the context of hospitality to a ruler, gifts conferred honor on the giver as well as the recipient.⁴³ When the caliph Sulayman (r. 715–17) arrived in Medina in 716 on his pilgrimage to Mecca, Kharijah ibn Zayd ibn Thabit gave him a present of a thousand bunches of bananas, a thousand gourds filled with white honey, a thousand sheep, a hundred geese, a thousand chickens, and a hundred camels for slaughtering. Kharijah told him it was a meal for a guest. But Sulayman regarded it as a gift and settled Kharijah's debts of twenty-five thousand dinars and gave him ten thousand dinars.⁴⁴ A traveler returning from a journey might also be met with presents.⁴⁵

In general, apart from diplomacy, gift giving in the Iranian tradition has been tied to annual events and momentous personal occasions. When rulers were involved, it was most often the celebrant who gave the gifts and the guests who received them. As this catalogue and the exhibition it accompanies demonstrate, this long-standing practice of gift giving led to the creation or repurposing of many spectacular works of art, while the circulation of such objects, especially as diplomatic gifts, helped to extend the cultural influence of Iran far beyond its borders.

Notes

1 Keith, *Religion and Philosophy of the Veda and Upanishads*, vol. 1, 259.

2 Hintze, "Do ut des," 27, 29.

3 Skjærvø, "Tahadi," 493–520.

4 *Ibid.*, 519.

5 On the reliefs with gift bearers, see Schmidt, *Persepolis*, vol. 1, 84–90.

6 Pellat, trans., *Le livre de la couronne*, 165; Qaddumi, trans., *Book of Gifts and Rarities*, 62.

7 Pellat, trans., *Le livre de la couronne*, 165–66.

8 *Ibid.*, 167.

9 *Ibid.*, 168–69.

10 Stetkevych, "Pre-Islamic Panegyric," 1, 3–4, 16, 42.

11 *Ibid.*, 2, 42.

12 Qaddumi, trans., *Book of Gifts and Rarities*, 64.

13 Baladhuri, *Futuh al-buldan*, 306.

14 Tabari, *Ta'rikh al-rusul wa-l-muluk*, vol. 1, 2903–4; Tabari, *Crisis of the Early Caliphate*, 106–7.

15 Ya'qubi, *Ta'rikh*, vol. 2, 218.

16 Muhammad Ahsan, *Social Life under the Abbasids*, 287; Qaddumi, trans., *Book of Gifts and Rarities*, 250–51.

17 Tabari, *Ta'rikh al-rusul wa-l-muluk*, vol. 2, 1635–38.

18 Cutler, "Significant Gifts," 91–93. See also texts by Anthony Cutler and Avinoam Shalem in this volume.

19 Qaddumi, trans., *Book of Gifts and Rarities*, 63–64.

20 *Ibid.*, 66.

21 Cutler, "Significant Gifts," 90.

22 Qaddumi, trans., *Book of Gifts and Rarities*, 250–51.

23 Ahsan, *Social Life under the Abbasids*, 288, 290.

24 *Ibid.*, 287.

25 Qaddumi, trans., *Book of Gifts and Rarities*, 78.

26 Lambton, "Pishkash," 145, 147.

27 Ahsan, *Social Life under the Abbasids*, 295.

28 *Ibid.*, 294–95.

29 *Ibid.*, 296.

30 *Ibid.*, 295.

31 Qaddumi, trans., *Book of Gifts and Rarities*, 61, 109; Cutler, "Significant Gifts," 81, 83–84, 87, 88.

32 Lambton, "Pishkash," 145–46.

33 Ahsan, *Social Life under the Abbasids*, 283.

34 Qaddumi, trans., *Book of Gifts and Rarities*, 78–79.

35 *Ibid.*, 62–63, 121, 123.

36 Ahsan, *Social Life under the Abbasids*, 293–94; Qaddumi, trans., *Book of Gifts and Rarities*, 80, 126–27.

37 Ahsan, *Social Life under the Abbasids*, 292.

38 Qaddumi, trans., *Book of Gifts and Rarities*, 79–90.

39 *Ibid.*, 137–38, 140.

40 *Ibid.*, 143–44.

41 Ahsan, *Social Life under the Abbasids*, 293; Qaddumi, trans., *Book of Gifts and Rarities*, 144.

42 Ahsan, *Social Life under the Abbasids*, 296; Qaddumi, trans., *Book of Gifts and Rarities*, 141.

43 Lambton, "Pishkash," 149.

44 Qaddumi, trans., *Book of Gifts and Rarities*, 66.

45 *Ibid.*, 79–80.



Left: Fig. 40 (cat. no. 30). *Large Dish*, inscribed with the name of Shah Jahan (r. 1628–57) and dated AH 1064/1653–54, China, Yuan dynasty, c. 1350–1400. Asia Society, New York; Mr. and Mrs. John D. Rockefeller 3rd Collection (1979.151).

Opposite: Fig. 41 (cat. no. 230). *Horse and Groom*, India, Bijapur, c. 1590. Victoria and Albert Museum, London (S.88-1965).

Ta'rikh-i Bayhaqi Excerpt

This text, written in the eleventh century by the famous Persian historian Bayhaqi, refers to a large gift sent by the governor of Khurasan, 'Ali b. 'Isa, to the caliph Harun al-Rashid (r. 786–809) in Baghdad.

"The gifts were brought into the field. There were a thousand Turkish slaves, each carrying two multicolored robes of various brocades and other stuffs. The slaves stood with these robes. After them came a thousand Turkish maids, each carrying a golden or silver bowl full of musk, camphor, ambergris, and other perfumes and delicacies from various places. There were a hundred Indian slaves and a hundred extremely beautiful Indian maids wearing expensive muslin. The slaves had Indian blades of the finest sort, and the maids had gossamer muslins in baskets finer than linen. With them they brought five male and two female elephants, the males with gold- and silver-brocade

trappings and the females with golden howdahs with straps and trappings studded with rubies and turquoise. There were horses from Gilan, two hundred horses from Khurasan with brocade saddlecloths. They also brought twenty eagles, twenty hawks, and a thousand camels, two hundred outfitted with silk brocade saddlecloths and halters and loaded with highly ornamented saddlecloths and sacks, and three hundred camels with howdahs worked with gold. There were five hundred thousand three hundred pieces of crystal of every type, one hundred pairs of oxen, twenty necklaces of very valuable pearls, three hundred thousand pearls, and two hundred pieces of Chinese porcelain—plates, bowls, etc.—each of which was finer than anything that had ever been seen in any ruler's possession. There were another three hundred pieces of porcelain, chargers and large bowls, large and small Chinese wine vats, and other sorts. There were three hundred canopies, two hundred carpets,

and two hundred *mahfüris*. When these items of bounty arrived at the caliphal assembly in the field, a cry of *Allāhu akbar* arose from the soldiers, and they sounded the drums and horns such that no one remembered ever hearing or reading of such a thing. Harun al-Rashid turned to Yahya Barmaki and said, "Where were all these things during the time of your son Fadl?"

"Long live the Commander of the Faithful!" replied Yahya. "During the time of my son's ascendancy these things were in the houses of their owners in the cities of Iraq and Khurasan."

Harun al-Rashid was so taken aback by this answer that the gifts soured for him. He frowned, stood up, and left the meadow. All the items were removed from the assembly and field."

Translated by Wheeler Thackston from *Ta'rikh-i Bayhaqi*, ed. Manuchihr Danishpazhu, 631–32.



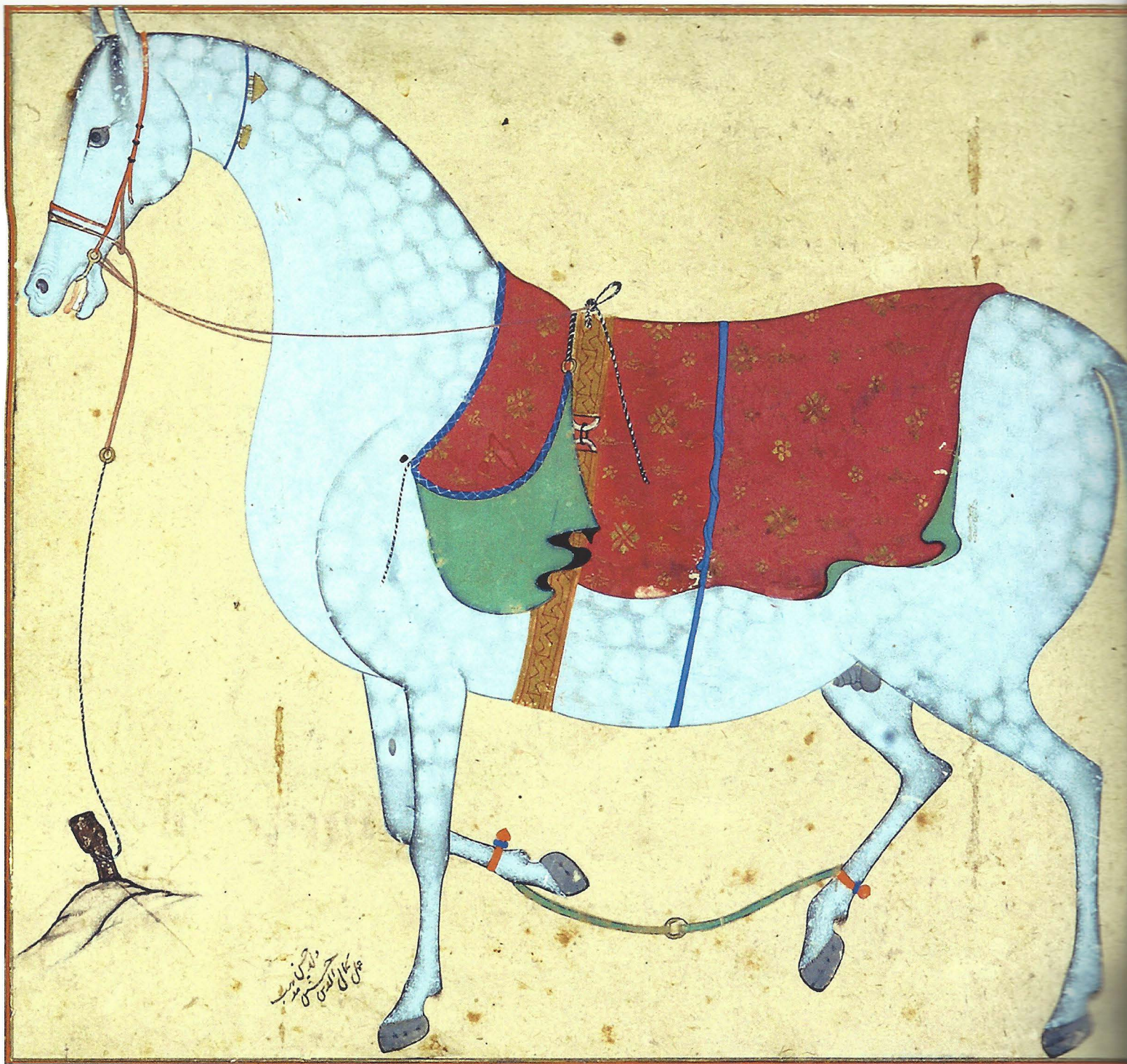


Fig. 104 (cat. no. 229). *A Royal Stallion*, Kamal al-Din Husayn ibn Hasan, Iran, Tabriz, mid-16th century. Museum of Islamic Art, Doha (MS 652.2008).

Gift Exchange between Iran, Central Asia, and China under the Ming Dynasty, 1368–1644

RALPH KAUZ

The journey of the Chinese envoy Zhang Qian to the Yuezhi in Central Asia in 138 BC to persuade them to become allies is commonly thought to mark the beginning of exchanges along the Silk Road. Though this adventurous mission was unsuccessful, China became at that time acquainted with countries far in the west and consequently expanded its political influence into Central Asia. Their rule over the “Western Regions,” as this area was called in Chinese texts, persisted only during some periods of Chinese history, but commercial and political relations with Central and Western Asia have never entirely ceased up to the present day.

The last period of intensive inter-Asian relations developed under Mongol Yuan rule and culminated during the first half of the Ming dynasty, which coincided with the rule of the Timurids (1370–1507), a Central and Western Asian Turko-Mongol dynasty with strong Persian cultural influences with its capitals first in Samarqand and then Herat. In succeeding periods, east and west long-distance overland trade gradually collapsed, and the Europeans established dominance by sea. This final heyday (late fourteenth to the end of the fifteenth century) forms the focus of our considerations here to search for the products carried along this famous route either as commercial commodities or as gifts for the emperors and sultans.

Under the Yuan dynasty (1279–1368), China was to a much greater extent incorporated into the wider Asian empire of the Mongols than it had been during the preceding periods. Though this integration gave way to a competition between the four Mongolian *uluses* (domains) and a fragmentation of the empire from the turn of the thirteenth to the fourteenth century, due to the common kinship of their respective founders, the brothers Hülegü and Khubilai, especially close relations between the

Yuan dynasty and the Ilkhanids (1256–1335) in Iran persisted well into the fourteenth century.

The Ming dynasty (1368–1644) inherited this outward orientation and pursued during the first decades of its rule a distinctive expansionist and activist policy that included various campaigns against the Mongols in the steppes north of China, missions to Central and Western Asia, temporary occupation of Vietnam, expeditions to the western parts of the Indian Ocean, and a general encouragement of foreign relations and missions. China was thus incorporated into a huge international network of foreign relations in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries that encompassed both land and sea routes. These relations continued after this period, and the Europeans started to participate in them from the early sixteenth century onward, but China became increasingly passive in the course of the fifteenth century and relied rather on the reception of often unwelcome embassies rather than sending its own embassies abroad to promote foreign relations and trade. It must be stressed that China at this time was probably the most technologically advanced country in the world and a major vehicle for international exchange and commerce in the Asian world.

We will consider here in some detail the exchange of gifts with Central and Western Asia under Timur and his successors, bearing in mind that the sea trade was at least equally important as and often intermingled with land-based exchanges. The sea and land routes intertwined at least in the Persian Gulf area, where envoys departed Hormuz by sea and nearby Kirman by land.

The reception of such embassies in China, both actual foreign diplomatic missions or those whose primary aim was trade, was strictly regulated by laws controlling exchange with other countries, enforcing the so-called tribute system. According to



Fig. 105 (cat. no. 227)
Handscroll Depicting Tribute Bearers, Ren Bowen (Ren Renfa), China. Yuan dynasty, c. 1320–68. The Asian Art Museum, Avery Brundage Collection, San Francisco (B60D100).

this system embassies could enter China only when they were sent by foreign rulers and carried with them corresponding letters or when they could produce passports given to them in the course of earlier embassies to China. Other sorts of barter with foreign countries were in theory strictly forbidden except for the exchange of tea for horses at some specially selected border posts. For merchants who wanted to make a profit from Chinese products such as silk and porcelain, both in high demand, there was no other way but to travel under the guise of envoys or as “servants” of genuine envoys. Regardless, they all had to offer gifts or, as the Chinese government preferred to call it, tribute to the Chinese court; in exchange, they received some gifts and could afterward trade with Chinese merchants at the state guesthouses where they were obliged to stay during their sojourn in China. Because of these strict rules it is today often difficult to distinguish between “genuine,” that is, politically motivated, embassies and commercial enterprises that had to be disguised as official embassies in order to exchange their products for Chinese silks. The fact that these two types of embassies were often intermingled further complicates the distinction between gifts and commercial commodities.

A vivid report of such an embassy was handed down by the Persian painter Ghiyath al-Din Naqqash, who traveled with a huge Timurid embassy to the Chinese court in 1419–22 and who described the

journey from the borders of China to the capital Beijing and its reception there in great detail.¹ One may wonder what sort of tribute such embassies presented to the Chinese emperor and may be disappointed to learn that the most welcome gift from the west to China was merely horses. Most entries in the “Veritable Records” (*Ming shilu*) record the tribute items of these embassies as simply “horses and local products.” Thus the gifts to the Chinese court can basically be divided into animals and animal products on the one hand and manufactured goods or raw materials on the other. Furthermore, the envoys (and merchants) were eager to barter various goods in the guesthouses with local merchants after the official ceremonies had been concluded. The envoys, however, often regarded the gifts for the emperor as mere merchandise and expected specific remuneration for their tribute and additional presents given to them and their sovereigns.

Due to the general inferiority of Chinese horses and their overall scarcity, horses from Central Asia and elsewhere had been the most desirous acquisition of Chinese dynasties long before the Ming ascended the throne (see fig. 105). Horses were imported not only overland but also on ships, though obviously in smaller quantities. Their varying quality and the respective compensation for them in different silks were recorded exactly in the Veritable Records: for example, a high grade



arghumagh horse² was exchanged for four sets of colored satin and eight rolls of cheap silk.³ When the Timurids commenced diplomatic relations with Ming China they obviously wanted to gain their favor and promote relations and trade by presenting comparatively high numbers of horses to the Ming court. Fifteen horses and two camels—another animal that was important as a gift, though not nearly as sought after as horses—were driven to China in 1387, with three hundred horses and two camels in 1388, and probably with another embassy in 1389 an additional two hundred five horses, while the largest such gift was six hundred seventy horses in 1390.⁴ This last embassy, however, wanted to sell its horses at the border but was ordered by imperial decree to bring them to the Chinese capital instead—another indication of the intertwining of commercial and official embassies. These horses were either driven all the way from the Central Asian heartlands of the Timurids or were acquired along the way before the envoys reached the Chinese borders. One must remember that the trading of horses for tea was an important activity at the Chinese borders, and the Mongols and other people of the steppes were eager to acquire Chinese goods in this way.⁵

Besides these exchanges, it was obviously also the custom of the Timurid princes and governors to present the Chinese emperors with exceptional horses, which were regarded as excellent tribute

items and had personal connotations, because the sender's name was always mentioned. We find several examples of such superb horses in Chinese and Timurid texts. Governor Sayyid Ahmad Tarkhan presented a sorrel horse (*asb-i buri*) to Emperor Zhudi, who found this gift so praiseworthy that he sent back not only many expressions of gratitude but also an excellent painting of the horse to the Timurid governor.⁶ This painting has not survived but may have been similar to a Chinese painting mounted in a Persian album (fig. 107). This was not the only painting of a tribute horse sent from the Timurid Empire, because the Ming Annals also mention a black horse, with a white head and white fetlocks, named "Auspicious Piebald" and accordingly portrayed.⁷ Timur's grandson Ulugh Beg, governor of Samarkand in the first half of the fifteenth century, had also presented to Emperor Zhudi a horse with white fetlocks that was also highly admired and even ridden by the emperor himself.⁸ Such imperial favors, however, could turn sour, as when the same emperor was tossed by a horse sent by the Timurid ruler Shahrukh (r. 1405–47) and hurt his foot. This incident had the potential to become extremely dangerous for the envoys because they could easily have been held responsible for it, but fortunately due to the intervention of Chinese officials, who might themselves have been ambassadors to Herat, the situation was peacefully resolved and the Timurid envoys were

瑞鳳麒麟等

聖帝陛下

文祖高皇帝洪基德化流行協和萬邦三光耀華

聖靈敷日長嗣庶之嘉慶天甘露降濟濟

聖德昭著

聖人下三三德通于神明則解解其言

聖德昭著

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麒麟圖

永樂十二年歲次甲午秋九月榜葛刺國進貢

華亭沈氏寫

Fig. 106 (cat. no. 220). Giraffe with Attendant, China, Ming dynasty (1403-34). Philadelphia Museum of Art, gift of John T. Dorrance, 1977 (1977-42-1).

released. The main argument of these officials was that the ambassadors themselves could not be held responsible for the behavior of horses sent with them as tribute presents by their sovereigns.⁹

As we have already seen, horses were not the only tribute animals brought to China, but also camels and donkeys are mentioned in Chinese texts. In addition to such “useful” animals, lions, leopards, and lynxes were also presented.¹⁰ Such gifts were obviously intended to stock the imperial gardens, together with elephants, rhinoceroses, ostriches, and giraffes—a veritable zoo seems to have existed in the Ming palace (see fig. 106).¹¹

Such beasts, however, were not always welcome; their import provided officials who opposed foreign embassies and the expenditures involved in supplying and entertaining them with arguments against the numerous missions. They complained especially about the amount of food these animals were said to consume at great expense. One lion would need one or two sheep per day,¹² two jugs of vinegar, some bitter wine, and even honey with cream.¹³ In fact, a lion in captivity needs to eat a maximum of ten kilograms of meat (bones included) each day and thereafter should fast one or two days per week. On a diet of one or two sheep, the lion would be significantly overfed; while wine, vinegar, and honey were not suitable at all. Given this curious mixture of food components, it rather seems likely that the keepers of the lions, who often came from Central Asia, took their “share” of the animals’ provisions. At the beginning of the Ming dynasty such beasts were obviously more welcome at court, but in later years the emperors adopted the negative attitude of their officials toward such gifts, and already Xuanzong regarded a giraffe brought by a mixed embassy to the court in 1433 with a pragmatic eye and no longer considered the animal an auspicious symbol.¹⁴ The same may have been true for lions brought from Central Asia. Apart from the live beasts, their skins were also presented to the emperors, but obviously not in very great numbers. The animal tribute can thus be divided into rather practical gifts such as horses, camels, donkeys, and skins, which were in high demand in China, and more ceremonial gifts such as wild beasts and first-rate horses designated for the emperors’ personal use.



Fig. 107. *Horse and Chinese Grooms*, Ming dynasty, China, 15th century, double-page painting from the Bahram Mirza Album. Topkapı Sarayı Museum Library, Istanbul (H.2154, fols. 33a-34a).

Besides animals, the Timurids had other things to offer that were summarily labeled as “local products.” The administrative handbook of the Ming, the *Da Ming huidian*, enumerates the following tribute brought from Samarqand, the main hub of the Silk Road during that period (for the sake of completeness the animals already mentioned shall also be listed): horses, camels, jade stones, different kinds of pearls, precious stones, crystal bowls, foreign bowls, coral boughs, wood oil, woolens (suf), glassware, swords and files made of fine steel, sal ammoniac, lapis lazuli [?], mirrors, horns of antelopes, and furs of ermine and of an unknown animal.¹⁵ Some of these products were obviously not native to Samarqand, coral or jade for example, but were imported from other places or acquired elsewhere. Raw materials prevail, and none of these gifts were precious enough to be given to the emperor.

In the latter part of the dynasty, jade seems to have become the principal tribute item, if the Jesuit monk Benedict Goës, who traveled from India to China in the first years of the seventeenth century, is to be believed.¹⁶ Jade is also reported in the *Veritable Records* as an important gift from Central Asia. Here it should be noted that it was only acquired en route in the Tarim Basin, because its main source was the area around Khotan; it could also be conveniently



Above: Fig. 108 (cat. no. 235) *Textile Fragment*, China, late 13th–early 14th century. The State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg (LT-449).

Opposite: Fig. 109 (cat. no. 236) *Textile Fragment*, China, Central Asia, or Egypt, early 14th century. The State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg (EG-905).



exchanged for other, more necessary goods in that area. Poor-quality jade gave Chinese officials reason to complain about the visiting embassies.

But what were the return gifts of the Chinese emperors to the ambassadors and their sovereigns? The answer can be succinctly given: silks, in all possible grades. German geographer Ferdinand von Richthofen named the Silk Road not without reason—silk attained at least partially the status of a currency. The *Da Ming huidian* lists the following kinds of silks given to embassies of Samarqand: fine silk, gauze, woolen silk, white-washed cloth, taffeta, and satin (it also lists vermilion lacquered bowls).¹⁷ Other textiles of linen and cotton were occasionally also given as presents. In earlier times the envoys often received paper money, which had to be spent in China; this sort of reward was certainly not much esteemed, but rather they must have preferred silver, which was often a return gift. Dragon robes with four-clawed beasts (five were reserved for the Chinese emperor) were a very rare gift, one probably not granted to Timurid rulers.¹⁸

None of the gift items exchanged between the Ming emperors and the Timurid sultans have survived to the present day. The reason was probably the ephemeral nature of most of these gifts. Highly elaborated manufactures were not on the gift lists.

Notes

- 1 See Maitra, trans., *Persian Embassy to China*.
- 2 Bretschneider, *Mediaeval Researches*, vol. 2, 264n1071.
- 3 *Ming shilu*, *Yingzong*, j. 264, 5623.
- 4 *Ming shilu*, *Taizu*, j. 185, 2779–80, j. 193, 2904, j. 197, 2962, j. 199, 2983.
- 5 Rossabi, "Tea and Horse Trade," 144.
- 6 Hafiz-i Abru, *Zubdat at-tawarikh*, vol. 2, 665–66.
- 7 *Ming shi*, j. 332, 8599.
- 8 Maitra, trans., *Persian Embassy to China*, 106.
- 9 *Ibid.*, 102–5.
- 10 A lynx of the caracal variety was also portrayed in a painting but not for the purpose of pleasing an emperor. The local commander of the borders ordered that the painting be made and sent to the court so officials there could determine whether this beast should be sent on. See Bretschneider, *Mediaeval Researches*, vol. 2, 266.
- 11 Church, "Giraffe of Bengal," 3.
- 12 *Ming shi*, j. 332, 8600–8601, 8626–27.
- 13 *Ibid.*, j. 332, 8600.
- 14 *Ming shilu*, *Xuanzong*, j. 105, 2341.
- 15 Li Dongyang et al., *Da Ming huidian*, j. 107, 1609.
- 16 Yule and Cordier, trans. and ed., *Cathay and the Way Thither*, vol. 4, 218–19.
- 17 Li Dongyang et al., *Da Ming huidian*, j. 112, 1656.
- 18 Cammann, "Presentation of Dragon Robes."



Top: Fig. 110 (cat. no. 29). *Dish*, inscribed with the name of Jahangir (r. 1605–27) and dated AH 1021/1612, China, Hongzhi mark and period (1488–1505). Victoria and Albert Museum, London (551–1878).

Bottom: Fig. 111 (cat. no. 31). *Dish*, inscribed with the name of Shah Jahan (r. 1628–57), China, Yuan dynasty, c. 1350–1400. Asia Society, New York: Mr. and Mrs. John D. Rockefeller 3rd Collection (1979.150).

**From Chapter 15 of the
Khataynama (Book on Khatay),
Presented to the Ottoman
Court in 1520**

**About the Peoples Coming
from All Directions of the World**

The peoples coming by land, from the realms of Islam, are only allowed to come as envoys to the Chinese. Coming from villages or impressive cities, chieftains or mighty shahs, lords or slaves, all are the same, because they do not accept a city and a pasture in the world except of their kingdom.

The gifts which the people who come by land bring are wares such as horses, diamonds, woolens, woolen cloaks, namely broad cloth, jasper, myrtle, coral, ermines, coral, lions, leopards, and lynxes—all these are at the gate of this region.

They accept all pack horses, and hand them over to the frontier guards. They send the good horses along with the master of the horse to the shah, and they give twelve attendants to each of them from one post station to the next, altogether one hundred post stations.

Six of these twelve persons walk with colored lanterns on speckled sticks in the front, the back, left, and right of this horse, and of the six other attendants, three are in his front and three at his back.

A lion gets ten times as much cortège and rations as a horse, and a leopard and a lynx get half of the amount for a lion and rations. The hundred post stations are all the same in this respect.

The presents that they give for a lion are: thirty chests of goods, and in each chest are a thousand pieces of cloth as satin, damasks, stockings, iron bands for saddles, Chinese coverings for saddles, scissors, knives, and even needles, of each sort one piece, altogether one thousand pieces in one box—for a lion thirty boxes, for a leopard and a lynx fifteen boxes, and

for a horse one tenth of a lion. They give to each man of the entourage eight webs of satin with an armful of coarse silk, three webs of colored satin to wrap around the head; one web would be enough to clothe two persons.

There is a muslin garment that measures one fathom, for stockings and other things. All these mentioned presents are given regardless of the price. All these are presents and gifts of the emperor of China to each of the Muslims to whom God the Supreme has now given the faith, and the belief to peace has been brought to him, though his ancestors had ruled several thousand years in unbelief.

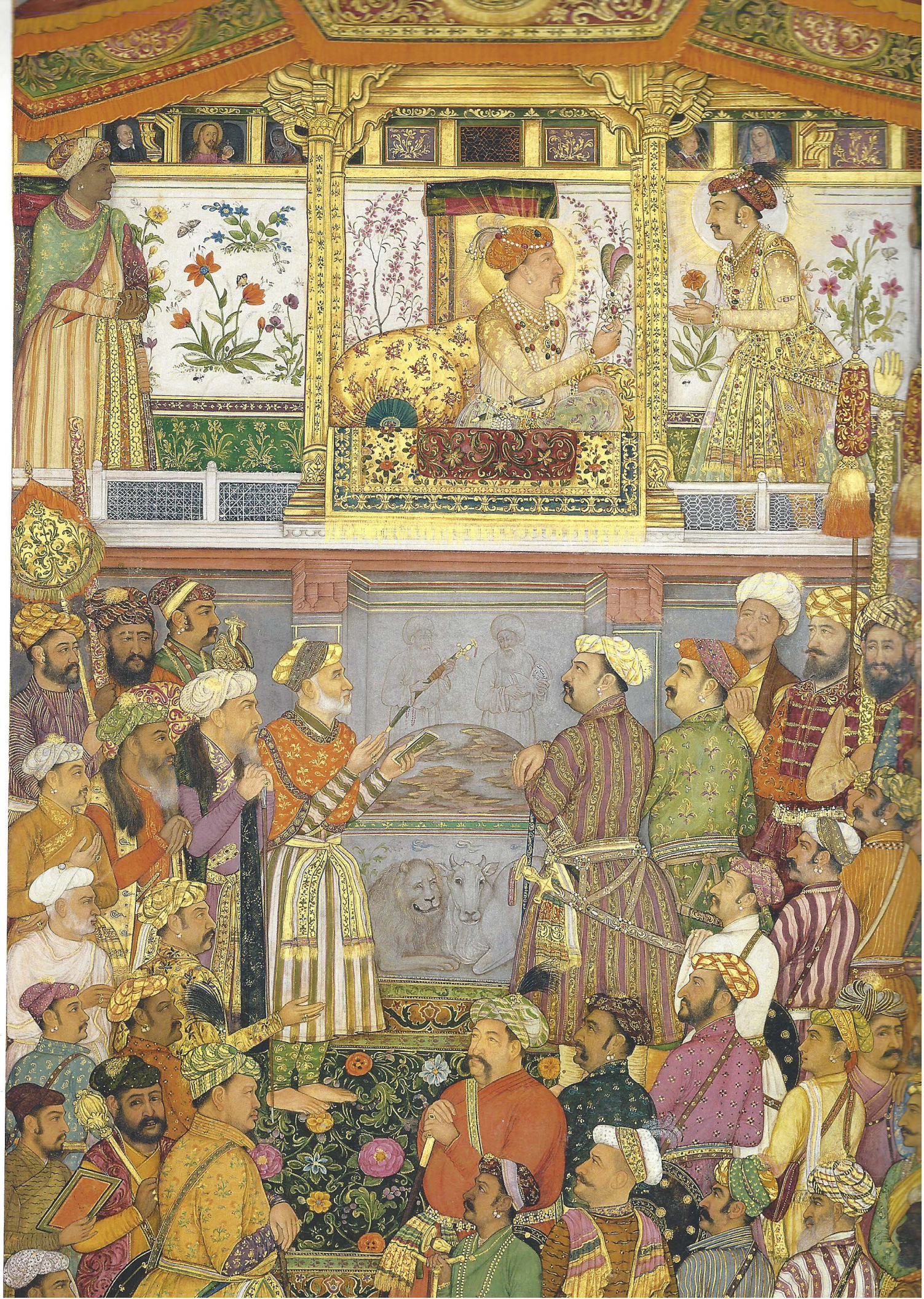
Translated by Ralph Kauz from Khata'i, *Khataynama*, ed. Iraj Afshar, 143–44.

**From the *Ming shilu*, *Xiaozong*
(Veritable Records of the Ming
Dynasty)**

On June 25, 1490 (third year of the Hongzhi reign, sixth month, *jichou*) Han Ding, vice supervising secretary of the office for scrutiny of the rites, sent a memorial to the throne: "When the people of the four barbarians came to pay tribute, they could see the benefits of the Imperial Government. As the strange things were not esteemed, they could even more see the abundance of the imperial virtues. Recently, the place Samarqand brought lions and other beasts as tribute. Inside, they have no beauty for the palace, outside, they have no use in military matters. Moreover when they come they disturb in a hundred matters, and when they arrive the provisions are innumerable. The inexhaustible provisions are provided with the blood and the fat of the humble folk. What is the use of this? I ask for an imperial decree that the barbarian people who bring tribute from this day forward are not allowed to select strange beasts, scheming to their advantage. Thus let the people from afar know that our emperor does not esteem strange things, that he wants nothing without use." It was decreed that all offices should know this.

Translated by Ralph Kauz from the *Ming shilu*, *Xiaozong*, j. 39, 823–24.

巳丑，禮科左給事中韓鼎上疏曰『四夷朝貢，固足以見聖治之盛。不貴異物，尤足以見聖德之隆。邇者撒馬兒罕地面貢獅子等獸，內非殿廷美，外非軍旅切用。況來則騷擾百端，至則糜費無算，以小民之膏血供無窮之糜費。果何益之有哉？乞勅，番人今後進貢，不許覓取奇獸，規圖厚利。庶使遠人知我皇上不貴異物，不作無益出於尋常萬萬也』命所司知之。



Imperial Gifts at the Court of Hindustan

SUSAN STRONGE

As the reign of the Mughal ruler 'Alamgir (r. 1658–1707; see fig. 160) entered its fourth year in April 1661, the Iranian ambassador Budaq Beg arrived in the empire.¹ He brought a letter from Shah 'Abbas II belatedly congratulating 'Alamgir on his accession to the throne while tactfully avoiding any allusion to the emperor's father, Shah Jahan, whom he had ousted in 1657, or to the subsequent War of Succession. Shah Jahan was now imprisoned in the palace at Agra and the former Prince Awrangzib's brothers either had been killed on his orders or soon would be. Mughal Hindustan was calm, revenues once again were being collected, and most of the usual court rituals and festivities had resumed.² The terseness of contemporary historians conceals the fact that in the first years of the reign of an emperor usually remembered for his pious austerity, these continued with customary splendor. In all of the celebrations, the exchange of gifts played a central role.

The Iranian was the most important ambassador yet to be received by 'Alamgir, and careful preparations had been made for his visit, which coincided with the coronation anniversary. As soon as Budaq Beg reached the Mughal province of Multan, he was welcomed by the regional governor, generously entertained, and given nine pieces of precious Hindustani cloth as well as five thousand rupees for immediate expenses.³ The governor of the neighboring province then took the ambassador and his entourage to Lahore, where Budaq Beg received twenty thousand rupees, a sword and dagger with enameled fittings (*saz*), and seven pieces of cloth. Hundreds of dishes of food were also provided before the Iranians left for Delhi.

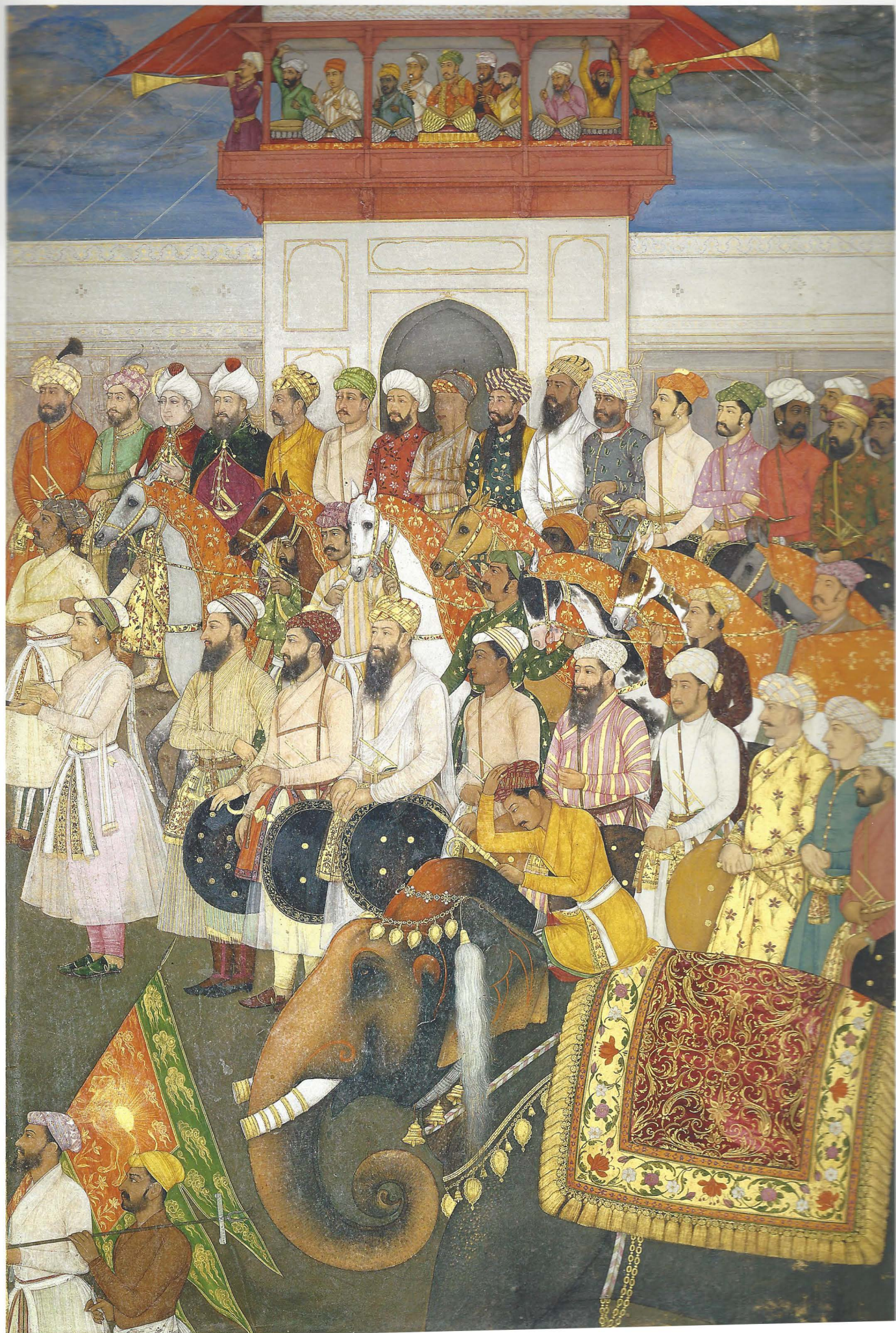
François Bernier, a French physician and philosopher who had been living at court since 1659, saw them arrive at Shahjahanabad, the city built in Delhi by 'Alamgir's father between 1639 and 1648. Senior Mughal grandees rode out with musicians

to escort Budaq Beg toward the fortified palace through streets lined with cavalry and bazaars decorated in his honor.⁴ He met the emperor in the white marble Hall of Public Audience, presented the shah's letter, and revealed the gifts he had brought.⁵ Mughal accounts mention sixty-six Arabian horses, unspecified numbers of Bactrian camels, and a single, perfectly round pearl with a beautiful luster weighing thirty-seven carats. The total value, meticulously recorded according to standard practice, was 422,000 rupees, a sum that would have paid for the construction of the finest mansion in Shahjahanabad two decades earlier.⁶ The immense pearl worth sixty thousand rupees must have been remarkable, though the author of the *'Alamgirnama* struggled to find a suitable metaphor:

In truth, the sperm of this kind of gem rarely comes down from the loins of the Nisan [month] cloud into the oyster of possibility, and rarely does a pearl of this kind and hue emerge on the shores of the Ocean of Creation.⁷

Bernier provides details of other Iranian gifts not specified in the official histories, which refer only to "precious things from Iran" (*nafa'is-i Iran*).⁸ The camels were large racing animals, while the horses with embroidered brocade caparisons were the most beautiful he had ever seen.⁹ There were also five or six extremely fine Iranian carpets of prodigious size and lengths of Iranian silk brocade, which he was later allowed to examine, probably through his friendship with the high-ranking noble Daneshmand Khan. Bernier doubted if such delicate floral designs could have been woven in Europe. The ambassador, he added, also presented four damascened swords and daggers with jeweled hilts, horse harnesses embroidered with small pearls and beautiful turquoises, several cases filled with





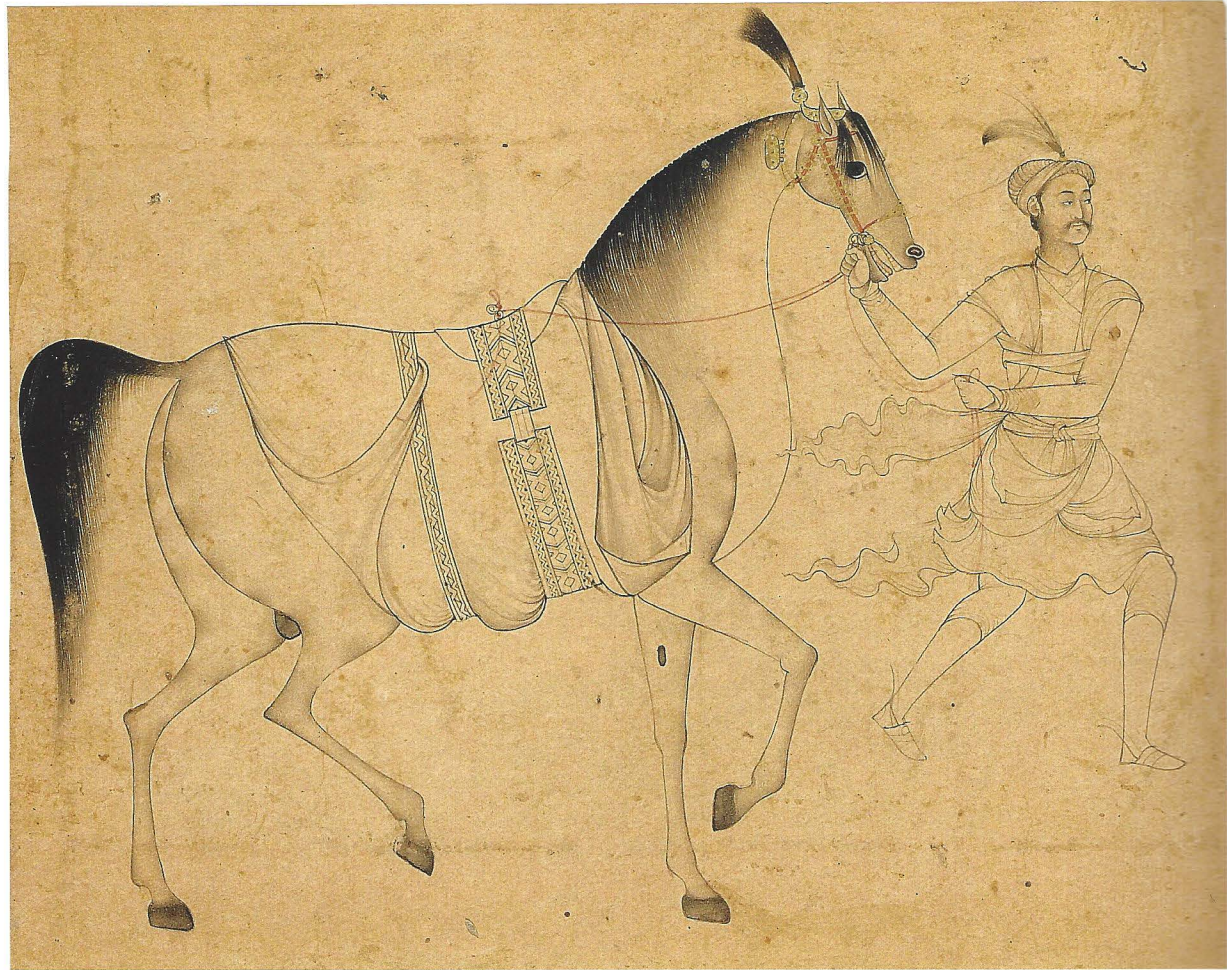


Fig. 155 (cat. no. 231). *Horse and Groom*, attributed to 'Abd al-Samad, India, c. 1580–85. Musée Guimet, Paris (3619 L A).

containers of Iran's renowned rose water, and other cases containing distilled water, which he called "beidmichk." This transcribes the Persian *bidmishk*, which Borhan Tabrizi, a lexicographer writing in AH 1062/December 14, 1651–November 3, 1652, glosses as a liquor ('*araq*) made from the blossoms of this strongly scented variety of willow tree.¹⁰ The emperor then bestowed on Budaq Beg robes of honor (*khila'*), which, Bernier wrote, consisted of a brocade jacket, a turban, shawl, and a sash with gold and silver ends, all of which the ambassador put on in 'Alamgir's presence.

Other gifts mentioned by the court historians reflect the political importance of Iran to the Mughals at a time of rapprochement following earlier military conflicts over the province of Qandahar, now under

Safavid control. 'Alamgir gave Budaq Beg a jeweled turban aigrette (*jigha-i murassa'*) (see fig. 153), an ornament which at that time could be worn only by rulers and princes or their representatives.¹¹ The envoy also received a jeweled dagger (*khanjar-i murassa'*), an honor typically given to princes, high-ranking individuals within the Mughal system, or important visitors.¹² Some items were traditionally presented to distinguished individuals at times of celebration: a covered gold cup with matching salver contained the solid perfume called *argaja* or *argacha* (*argacha-yi jashn ba piyala wa khwancha-yi talia*) and a gold casket (*pandan*) contained small pouches made from edible leaves wrapped around chopped nuts and spices (*pan*). When the Iranian ambassador Muhammad 'Ali Beg arrived at Shah Jahan's court

in 1631, for instance, he too had been given caskets containing *pan* and “festive *argaja*.”¹³ (See figs. 1, 250.)

Budaq Beg spent the next weeks in the fine *haveli*, or mansion, of a recently deceased member of the court whose estate, like that of many wealthy subjects, had been claimed by the emperor and was now specially furnished with carpets and other items from the imperial storehouse.¹⁴ When he left Hindustan on AH 10 Dhu'l-Hijja 1071/July 27, 1661,¹⁵ the Iranian received another *khil'a*, an enameled dagger with a pearl strap, a horse with a gold saddle and harness, and an elephant with a gold howdah and gold and silver trappings.¹⁶ The court chronicles report that, in total, 535,000 rupees had been expended on the envoy and his entourage during their stay in Mughal Hindustan.

None of these histories, however, suggest what any of the gifts exchanged might have looked like. In previous reigns, paintings illustrate with careful attention to detail the sumptuous jewelry and jeweled artifacts, textiles, and weapons of the court that have mostly disappeared (see figs. 1, 168). Under 'Alamgir painting seems to have fallen out of favor, and depictions of his assemblies are rare. Foreign observers, to whom everything was new and intriguing, occasionally provided more information.

At the highest levels of the court, gifts of richly caparisoned horses were often exchanged (see fig. 155). Contemporary Mughal historians mention only that their trappings (*saz*) were gold, silver, or enameled. The French jewel merchant Jean-Baptiste Tavernier is more precise. The bridles he saw on his sixth visit to the Mughal Empire in 1665 were “very narrow, and for the most part enriched with diamonds, rubies, emeralds, and pearls, while some have only small gold coins. Each horse has upon its head, between the ears, a bunch of beautiful feathers, and a small cushion on the back with the surcingle, the whole embroidered with gold; and suspended from the neck there is a fine jewel, a diamond, a ruby, or an emerald.”¹⁷ The similarity of this description to harnesses shown in paintings of Shah Jahan's reign suggests that little had changed.¹⁸

Within the annual cycle of court ceremonies, 'Alamgir made his coronation anniversary the major



A



B



C



D

A. Fig. 156 (cat. no. 46). *Mohur*, Jahangir (r. 1605–27), India. Ajmer. AH 1023/1614. The British Museum, London (1854.0529.111).

B. Fig. 157 (cat. no. 47). *Mohur*, Jahangir (r. 1605–27), India. Agra. AH 1028/1618. The British Museum, London (1871.1201.2).

C. Fig. 158 (cat. no. 48). *Mohur*, 'Alamgir (r. 1658–1707), India. Multan, n.d. Omar Haroon Collection, Los Angeles.

D. Fig. 159 (cat. no. 49). *Mohur*, 'Alamgir (r. 1658–1707), India. AH 1113/1701. Omar Haroon Collection, Los Angeles.

festivity. His first coronation had taken place hurriedly in Delhi in June 1658 during a pause in the War of Succession. A second coronation was held on July 21, 1659, coins were struck in his name (see figs. 158–59), and his names and title were read as part of the Friday sermon (*khutba*). It was arguably the most splendid Mughal coronation ever held because ‘Alamgir sat on the extraordinary jeweled and enameled throne commissioned by Shah Jahan after his accession.¹⁹ It had taken seven years to complete and was set with the greatest stones in the imperial treasury and in Shah Jahan’s personal collection. From this legendary Jeweled Throne (*takht-i murassa’*), with its gold canopy surmounted by two peacocks that inspired its later name, the “Peacock Throne,” ‘Alamgir showered presents on the court. The chroniclers again provide little detail, simply referring to “suitable rewards and gifts,” but adding that “the doors of the imperial treasuries were opened to all people; and the expectations of all, young and old, were fulfilled.”²⁰ The presence of the Jeweled Throne demonstrates that ‘Alamgir had seized Shah Jahan’s treasury, which held the most precious artifacts created for this extravagant patron as well as his vast store of precious stones.

The regulations governing the royal household and its administration had been formulated in the reign of ‘Alamgir’s great-grandfather Akbar (r. 1556–1605). As Akbar’s territorial control expanded, the empire’s wealth rapidly increased. Revenues were efficiently collected, gifts and tribute received, and the treasuries of vanquished enemies seized. By the late sixteenth century, all this was stored in twelve treasuries including one reserved exclusively for precious stones and another for artifacts made of precious materials.²¹

An English merchant, William Hawkins, describes Jahangir’s treasury at the beginning of his reign.²² He wrote that the contents included twenty-two hundred swords with jeweled hilts, two thousand similarly jeweled daggers, five hundred gold saddle drums set with precious stones, a thousand saddles with jeweled fittings, and hundreds of jeweled vases and drinking cups (including some made from a single ruby or emerald). Some of these items would have been acquired as gifts or tribute, but most would have been made in the court

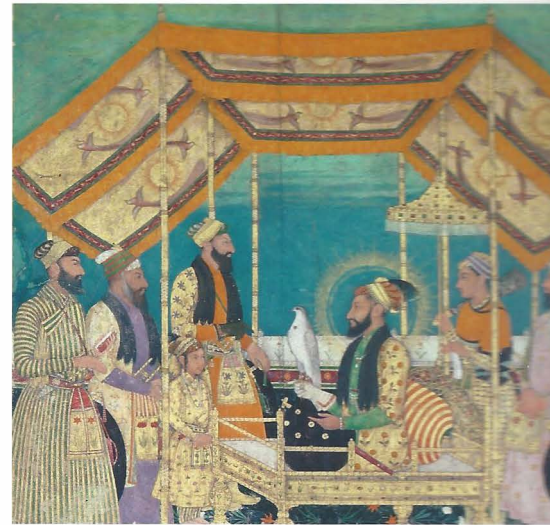


Fig. 160. *The Darbar of Emperor 'Alamgir*, India, c.1660. Museum of Islamic Art, Doha (MS.54.2007).

workshops, to be drawn on as necessary whenever court ritual required presentations to others. Similar items were in ‘Alamgir’s treasury, as shown by the gifts mentioned throughout his reign.²³

‘Alamgir’s first coronation had taken place in Ramadan, and after the second coronation he decreed that each regnal year should be dated from the first day of that month. The anniversary was celebrated in the final days of Ramadan, culminating on the ‘Id al-Fitr, and replaced in importance the Iranian New Year (Nawruz) festivities celebrated with enthusiastic extravagance ever since Akbar adopted the Iranian calendar in 1584.²⁴

At first, ‘Alamgir retained the other major ceremony established by Akbar. The public weighing of the ruler on his birthday was borrowed from Hindu kingship tradition. The Mughal emperor was weighed on his lunar birthday according to the conventional Muslim calendar and on his solar birthday according to the Iranian calendar. Until ‘Alamgir abolished the ceremony in 1668, it was held with customary splendor.²⁵ Like his predecessors, he was weighed in a huge jewel-encrusted gold balance against gold, silver, and other precious commodities that were later distributed to those in need. He then moved to the Jeweled Throne to receive the gifts of the court. His dress was slightly more subdued than that of Jahangir or Shah Jahan on similar occasions, though when Bernier saw him in 1659 ‘Alamgir wore white satin embroidered in

gold with small flowers and a necklace of large pearls so long that it reached his stomach. His turban aigrette was set with enormous diamonds and a single, dazzling topaz that the learned Frenchman said shone with the brilliance of a small sun.²⁶

The leading court figures were obliged to give presents whose value was commensurate with their rank in the precisely codified Mughal hierarchy and included gold vessels encrusted with precious stones as well as unmounted diamonds, pearls, rubies, or emeralds.²⁷ When Tavernier witnessed the ceremony in 1665, 'Alamgir still sat on the Jeweled Throne to scrutinize the gifts presented over five days.²⁸ In the preceding weeks, Tavernier states that stones of superlative quality had been released from the imperial treasury so that the court elite could purchase them to present to the emperor. In this way, 'Alamgir not only received the income from the sale but also got his stones back. Tavernier reckoned that "in diamonds, rubies, emeralds, pearls, gold, and silver, as well as rich carpets, brocades of gold and silver, and other stuffs, elephants, camels, and horses, the emperor receives presents on this day to the value of more than 30,000,000 livres."²⁹

As a prince, 'Alamgir had grown up in a court where such extravagance marked all the major celebrations. His wedding and those of his brothers followed an almost identical pattern, with similar gifts made to all of them (see fig. 168).³⁰ The wedding of 'Alamgir's son Muhammad A'zam continued along the same lines. On January 2, 1668, the emperor gave him a special robe, fine Arabian and West Iranian (Iraqi) horses, two elephants with gold trappings, a jeweled sword worth twenty thousand rupees, a turban worth sixty thousand rupees (therefore presumably set with jeweled ornaments), and the stupendous sum of 1.2 million rupees in cash. Some days later, 'Alamgir walked from the fort to his son's mansion across a path covered with "cloth of gold, silver, and plain cloth." The prince had provided a gold throne from where 'Alamgir ordered robes of honor to be distributed to the grandees of the empire from the *khil'a* store (*khil'at khana*). He then received jewels and cloth valued at five hundred thousand rupees from Muhammad A'zam before returning to his own apartments.³¹



Fig. 161 (cat. no. 59). *Lady of the Harem, Possibly Nur Jahan, Holding a Death Homage of Jahangir*, attributed to Bishan Das. India. c. 1527. Catherine and Ralph Benkaim Collection. Los Angeles.



Above: Fig. 162 (cat. no. 213 a–b). *Drinking Cups*, India, 16th–17th century (mounts 19th-century Europe). Aga Khan Museum Collection, Geneva (AKM 00813).



Opposite: Fig. 163 (cat. no. 26). *Wine Cup*, inscribed for Jahangir (r. 1605–27), India, dated AH 1016/1607–8. Brooklyn Museum, Anonymous Loan (L78.22).

As in previous reigns, promotions were accompanied by the presentation of robes of honor and cash, jeweled weapons, or richly caparisoned horses or elephants, depending on the nature of the office and the rank of the recipient. Holders of the highest positions received emblems of office when they took up their appointments. When Bernier's friend Daneshmand Khan was made Mir Bakhshi in 1667, he received a jeweled pen case (*qalamdan-i murassa'*) in addition to a *khil'a*, as Mir Bakhshis had under Jahangir and Shah Jahan. Similarly, when Asad Khan was made vizier in 1671, he received a jeweled inkwell (*davat-i murassa'*) and *khil'a* together worth five thousand rupees.³²

Foreign merchants quickly discovered that it was impossible to do business at court if gifts were not judiciously distributed. Tavernier's presents to 'Alamgir on September 12, 1665, were worthy of a royal ambassador.³³ His star item had originally been commissioned by Louis XIII's powerful prime minister Cardinal de Richelieu: the gilt bronze shield was decorated with a scene depicting the legend of Curtius, whose self-sacrificing bravery saved the city

of Rome from peril. It was, Tavernier wrote, "the masterpiece of one of the most excellent workmen in France" and had cost 4,378 livres to make, the gold alone being worth 1,800 livres.³⁴ The merchant also presented a rock-crystal mace inlaid with rubies and emeralds that was probably more to Mughal taste as it could be used as an emblem of office by court functionaries. His gifts concluded with a Turkish saddle embroidered with small rubies, pearls, and emeralds (see fig. 96) and another saddle embroidered in gold and silver.

The experienced Tavernier was fully aware that other key figures had to receive suitable gifts—without them, mysterious impediments would prevent any business from taking place. The emperor's influential uncle, Ja'far Khan, was provided with a table and nineteen separate pieces of Florentine *pietra dura* from which a cabinet could be assembled, and a ring set with a perfect ruby. The court treasurer received a watch with emerald-encrusted gold case, cash payments were made to treasury officials, and the emperor's sister was given another watch with a painted case. In total, Tavernier's presents had

cost him 12,119 livres—but neither this European (“Firangi”) nor his exotic gifts were deemed worthy of mention in the official histories.

Particular gifts made to the Mughal emperor, or tribute sent to him, occasionally modified court fashions. Jade as a raw material is first mentioned in Mughal sources as a gift made to Akbar by Khwaja Mu‘in, a visitor from Kashghar in 1562, who brought it from China.³⁵ No artifacts have so far been convincingly dated to Akbar’s reign, but this new material would have presented few difficulties to his lapidaries, who were accustomed to working with other hardstones, notably rock crystal (see fig. 205), and would have used the same tools for jade. By the beginning of Jahangir’s reign, as Hawkins’s account makes clear, the treasury contained jade cups as well as one *batman* (probably about fifty-five pounds) of uncut jade.³⁶

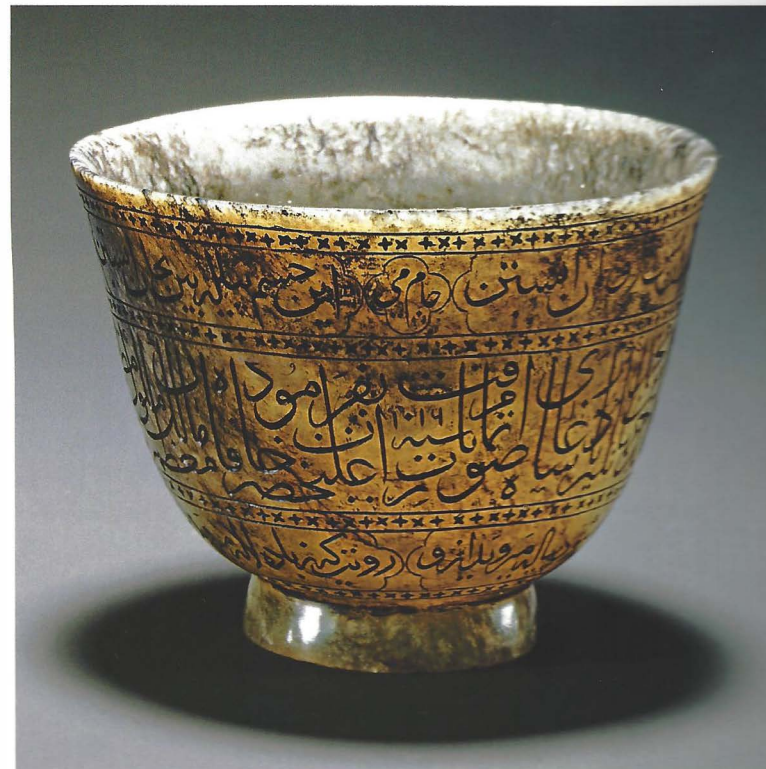
The presence of the craftsman Sa‘ida-yi Gilani in Jahangir’s service seems to have stimulated the use of nephrite jade, still an extremely rare material, for royal vessels.³⁷ The multitalented Iranian master was the superintendent of the royal goldsmiths but also a renowned specialist in hardstones who made jade wine cups for the emperor. In Shah Jahan’s reign some of the greatest Mughal jades were made by other, anonymous craftsmen, but references to jade artifacts in the histories of either reign are infrequent.

In contrast, ‘Alamgir’s historians regularly cite the presentation of jade-hilted daggers, turban jewels, rings made of jade (see fig. 167), and jade vessels (see fig. 164). Rock-crystal artifacts are also mentioned with greater frequency.

In part, this apparent escalation of production may be due to substantial supplies of the raw materials having been sent as tribute. In 1665, the emperor made the only visit of his reign to the mountainous province of Kashmir. Bernier went too, in the company of Daneshmand Khan, and wrote detailed letters about the trip. In one, he noted that the ruler of the high mountain country north of Kashmir he calls “Little Tibet” (i.e., Ladakh) heard of the arrival of the huge Mughal encampment and the army that guarded it and feared ‘Alamgir was about to invade his kingdom, as Shah Jahan had done in 1638. The valuable tribute sent to propitiate

the emperor included rock crystal, yaks’ tails, musk, and “a stone called *jachen* [*yeshim*, the Turki pronunciation of Persian *yashm*, i.e., jade], which is very valuable because it is of extraordinary size. This *jachen* is a greenish stone with white veins that is so hard it can only be worked using diamond powder, and is highly esteemed at the Mughal court.” Bernier added that it was used to make cups and other vessels and that he himself had one, set with precious stones.³⁸

A substantial new supply of jade and rock crystal was therefore available to the royal workshops, but there was a more significant conclusion to the expedition to Kashmir. A treaty was signed with the ruler of Ladakh allowing the *khutba* to be read and coins struck in ‘Alamgir’s name and a mosque to be built. Annual tribute was also to be sent to the Mughal court, though Bernier added that no one believed this part of the treaty would be honored once the Mughal army had left Kashmir. However, the new relations meant that direct access to Chinese jade was renewed for the first time since Shah Jahan’s reign. Bernier explained that caravans went every year from Kashmir across the mountains through Tibet to “*Katay*,” returning with musk,





Left: Fig. 164 (cat. no. 133). *Lidless Jar or Pot*, India, 17th century. Topkapi Saray Museum, Istanbul (2/3796).

rhubarb, and other merchandise, as well as rock crystal and jade (which he mistakenly thought came from Little Tibet).³⁹ After Shah Jahan's attack, all traffic from Kashmir had been banned from the mountainous kingdom, thus blocking a major trade route leading to the Mughal Empire.

The reopening of the border after 1665 perhaps explains the new emphasis on jade and rock-crystal artifacts among the gifts of 'Alamgir's reign. In 1671, when Amanat Khan was made *daftardar* of crown lands, he received a rock-crystal inkpot, and when Muhammad Amin Khan was installed as governor of Kabul in the same year, his presents included a jade dagger with a jeweled hilt and pearl fastening (*khanjar-i yashm-i murrasa' ba 'alagha-yi marvarid*) (see fig. 222).⁴⁰ In the following years, turban aigrettes (*jigha*), spittoons (*uguldan*), inkwells (*davat*), rings (*arsi*), sticks (*'asa*) of jade, and daggers with hilts of jade or jeweled jade were all given to the elite of the empire and to visiting dignitaries. Significant numbers of these have

survived, unlike their equivalents in gold, which would have been melted down.⁴¹

Eventually, 'Alamgir moved the court from Delhi to Rajasthan and then to the Deccan to conduct protracted military campaigns. Those in the Deccan, where he remained until his death in 1707, were ultimately successful. Victories generated treasure plundered from defeated rulers, which contributed to the costs of war, but essential reductions in expenditures brought a more restrained character to court ceremonials. At the same time, they reflected the emperor's increasing personal austerity.⁴² The great festivals were reduced in splendor and then abolished: the weighing ceremony stopped in 1668, and the decorating of the court for the emperor's birthday was suspended in 1670. 'Alamgir abolished the coronation festival in 1677 and began to spend the month of Ramadan in prayer.⁴³

Nevertheless, rich gifts continued to be made throughout his reign. The princes were given robes, jewelry, and cash when they married. Royal babies



Above, left: Fig. 165 (cat. no. 64). *Mughal Powder Horn*, India, c. 1650–1700. Musée du Louvre, Paris (R 437), Bequest of Baronne Salomon de Rothschild, 1922.

Above, right: Fig. 166 (cat. no. 65). *Mughal Powder Horn*, India, c. 1650–1700. Musée du Louvre, Paris (R 436), Bequest of Baronne Salomon de Rothschild, 1922.

Left: Fig. 167 (cat. no. 67). *Archer's Ring*, India, 17th century. Victoria and Albert Museum, London (IS 02522).

were typically sent jeweled caps and their mothers valuable pearl necklaces and other jewels.⁴⁴ When his grandson Kam Bakhsh finished memorizing the Qur'an in 1676, 'Alamgir rewarded him with a robe, two horses with gold trappings, a jeweled turban ornament (*sarpich*), a pearl necklace, and a shield with jeweled mounts.⁴⁵ A specimen of calligraphy written by another grandson in 1683 was deemed worthy of a turban jewel set with a fine spinel.⁴⁶ Ambassadors and envoys were treated as generously as ever. The most frequently mentioned gifts, including robes of honor or special clothes for the rainy season, jewelry, richly caparisoned animals, and cash, were all bestowed on generals, including 'Alamgir's sons, as they departed on military campaigns or returned from battle.

The emperor's remoteness from these luxurious gifts that were an essential part of the rituals of the Mughal court is suggested by a remark he made toward the end of his long life. In 1704, he awarded Mir Khan the hereditary title of Amir Khan held by the noble's father before him. In return, Mir Khan gave 'Alamgir a Qur'an copied by the great calligrapher Yaqut. The emperor told him, "You have made a present which exceeds the world and its contents in price."⁴⁷

Notes

1 Muhammad Saqi, *Ma'asir-i 'Alamgiri*, 35; Sarkar, trans., *Ma'asir-i 'Alamgiri*, 21.

2 See Richards, *Mughal Empire*, 158–64, for the war and its aftermath.

3 Muhammad Qasim, *'Alamgirnama*, 615.

4 Tinguely, ed., *Libertin dans l'Inde Moghole*, 156.

5 Islam, *Calendar of Documents*, vol. 1, 442.

6 Muhammad Saqi, *Ma'asir-i 'Alamgiri*, 36; Sarkar, trans., *Ma'asir-i 'Alamgiri*, 22–23. Dara Shikoh's mansion in Shahjahanabad constructed between 1639 and 1643 had cost four hundred thousand rupees (Blake, *Shahjahanabad*, 75–76). The dwellings of other amirs and princes at the same time cost between a hundred thousand and two million rupees.

7 Muhammad Qasim, *'Alamgirnama*, 620. I am extremely grateful to A. S. Melikian-Chirvani for his translation of the Persian text. The French jewel merchant Jean-Baptiste Tavernier may have seen the same pearl in 1665: he described an exceptional round pearl weighing fifty-six *ratis* that he said, perhaps making a slight mistake, had been sent to the Mughal emperor by Shah 'Abbas I (Tavernier, *Six voyages*, 279; this passage in the 1676–77 French edition is not in the English translation made by Ball, revised by Crooke). On weights of stones, see Ball and Crooke, *Travels in India*, vol. 1, 332–33, and vol. 2, 336.

8 Muhammad Qasim, *'Alamgirnama*, 622.

9 Tinguely, ed., *Libe tin dans l'Inde Mog ole*, 156.

10 Muhammad 'Abbasi, *Burhan-i Qati'*, 221. I am very grateful to A. S. Melikian-Chirvani for this reference and explanation.

11 Melikian-Chirvani, "Jewelled Objects," 13–14, for the role played by such jeweled items at the Mughal court from the reign of Akbar to that of 'Alamgir.

12 Muhammad Saqi, *Ma'asir-i 'Alamgiri*, 35; Sarkar, trans., *Ma'asir-i 'Alamgiri*, 21–22; Muhammad Qasim, *'Alamgirnama*, 621. For the Mughal ranking system, see Ali, *Apparatus of Empire*.

13 See Stronge, *Made for Mughal Emperors*, 51. *Pan* (pronounced "paan") was widely consumed as a digestif but was also offered to formal audiences as a polite token of dismissal.

14 Muhammad Qasim, *'Alamgirnama*, 621; see Moreland, *From Akbar to Aurangzeb*, 277–80, for a discussion of the custom by which the emperor took over the estates of the nobility.

15 Dates given by Islam, *Calendar of Documents*, vol. 1, 442.

16 Muhammad Saqi, *Ma'asir-i 'Alamgiri*, 36; Sarkar, trans., *Ma'asir-i 'Alamgiri*, 22.

17 Tavernier, *Six voyages*, vol. 2, 271; Ball and Crooke, *Travels in India*, vol. 1, 306–7.

18 Welch et al., *Emperors' Album*, cat. no. 59, 202–3, for an equestrian portrait of Shah Jahan, c. 1627; and Stronge, *Painting for the Mughal Emperor*, pls. 116–17, for horses of Shah Jahan and his sons in paintings of c. 1635.

19 For accounts of the throne, see Aziz, *Thrones, Tents, and Their Furniture*, and Stronge, "Sublime Thrones," 62–65, and figs. 10–14.

20 Muhammad Saqi, *Ma'asir-i 'Alamgiri*, 23; Sarkar, trans., *Ma'asir-i 'Alamgiri*, 13.

21 Moreland, *From Akbar to Aurangzeb*, 280–82, summarized the income of the court: "Apart from the land revenue, the Imperial budget, if such a document was drawn up, contained on the receipt side four ordinary heads, Customs, Mint, Inheritance, and Presents." For the treasury, see Aziz, *Imperial Treasury*, and for a discussion of the treasuries of precious stones and jeweled artifacts, see Stronge, *Made for Mughal Emperors*, 162–77.

22 Foster, ed., *Early Travels in India*, 102–3.

23 For remarks on 'Alamgir's treasury, see Aziz, *Imperial Treasury*, 542–53. See also Richards, *Mughal Empire*, 185, for comments on the continuing wealth of his empire.

24 Muhammad Saqi, *Ma'asir-i 'Alamgiri*, 25; Sarkar, trans., *Ma'asir-i 'Alamgiri*, 14. See Stronge, *Made for Mughal Emperors*, 46–51, for Nawruz gifts exchanged at the Mughal court under Akbar, Jahangir, and Shah Jahan.

25 Muhammad Saqi, *Ma'asir-i 'Alamgiri*, 75; Sarkar, trans., *Ma'asir-i 'Alamgiri*, 48.

26 Tinguely, *Libertin dans l'Inde Moghole*, 264–65.

27 *Ibid.*, 268.

28 Tavernier, *Six voyages*, vol. 2, 271.

29 Three livres seem to have been worth two rupees. See the complicated information given in Ball and Crooke, *Travels in India*, vol. 1, 327–28.

30 See Stronge, *Made for Mughal Emperors*, 57–60.

31 Muhammad Qasim, *'Alamgirnama*, 49.

32 Muhammad Saqi, *Ma'asir-i 'Alamgiri*, 64, and Sarkar, trans., *Ma'asir-i 'Alamgiri*, 43, for Daneshmand Khan's appointment;

Muhammad Saqi, *Ma'asir-i 'Alamgiri*, 152, and Sarkar, trans., *Ma'asir-i 'Alamgiri*, 93, for that of Asad Khan. For the presentation of pen cases or the combined pen case and inkpot (*davat va qalam-i murassa'*) to new office holders during the reigns of Jahangir and Shah Jahan, see Melikian-Chirvani, "Jewelled Objects," 13.

33 Tavernier, *Six voyages*, vol. 2, 96–97; Ball and Crooke, *Travels in India*, vol. 1, 114–15.

34 Tavernier, *Six voyages*, vol. 2, 96–97. Surrounding the central design on the shield were scenes of the 1628 siege of La Rochelle masterminded by the cardinal, when royalist forces starved the city's Huguenot inhabitants into submission.

35 Abu'l-Fazl, *Akbarnama*, trans. Beveridge, vol. 2, 301–3; see also Markel, "Fit for an Emperor," 23.

36 Foster, ed., *Early Travels in India*, 102. Foster notes that Hawkins used the *batman*, a Turkish weight, as the equivalent of the Indian "maund," i.e., *man*, and gives the equivalent as eighty-eight and a half pounds. However, Moreland, *From Akbar to Aurangzeb*, 334, gives it as about fifty-five pounds, while pointing out that the *man* differed at different times and in different places.

37 See Melikian-Chirvani, "Sa'ida-ye Gilani," for a review of jade in Iran and Hindustan, the facts known about the master's life, and works attributed to him.

38 Tinguely, *Libertin dans l'Inde Moghole*, 427; Constable, *Travels in the Mogul Empire*, 422–23.

39 Tinguely, *Libertin dans l'Inde Moghole*, 429–30; Constable, *Travels in the Mogul Empire*, 425–27.

40 Muhammad Saqi, *Ma'asir-i 'Alamgiri*, 111; Sarkar, trans., *Ma'asir-i 'Alamgiri*, 69.

41 The major collections of Mughal jade are in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, and the National Palace Museum, Taipei. For the Taipei collection, see Teng Shup'ing, *Hindustan Jade and Exquisite Beauty*. The V&A collection lacks a catalogue, but the key pieces have been published by Skelton, ed. (entries in *Indian Heritage*). See also Stronge, "Colonel Guthrie's Collection," for a brief overview of the collector to whom most of the V&A's hard stones belonged. There is as yet no monograph on Mughal rock crystal of the seventeenth century or catalogue of the important collection also in the V&A. For jades of 'Alamgir's reign, see particularly Markel, "Inception and Maturation," 58–63.

42 Richards, *Mughal Empire*, chapter 8 for the expansion of Mughal territories. See also Majumdar, ed., *Mughul Empire*, 233–36, for his character.

43 See Muhammad Saqi, *Ma'asir-i 'Alamgiri*, 75, 97, 162; Sarkar, trans., *Ma'asir-i 'Alamgiri*, 48, 60, 100.

44 See, for example, the jeweled gifts bestowed by 'Alamgir on Muhammad Sultan when the prince married the daughter of Murad Baksh in 1672. The emperor personally put jewels on the prince's head and then took him to the mosque (Muhammad Saqi, *Ma'asir-i 'Alamgiri*, 127; Sarkar, trans., *Ma'asir-i 'Alamgiri*, 77).

45 Muhammad Saqi, *Ma'asir-i 'Alamgiri*, 158; Sarkar, trans., *Ma'asir-i 'Alamgiri*, 98.

46 Muhammad Saqi, *Ma'asir-i 'Alamgiri*, 228; Sarkar, trans., *Ma'asir-i 'Alamgiri*, 141 (mistranslating *la'l* as a "ruby" *sarpich*). *Sarpich* at this period referred to a jeweled band encircling the turban, sometimes but not always associated with an aigrette (*jigha*).

47 Sarkar, trans., *Ma'asir-i 'Alamgiri*, 290.

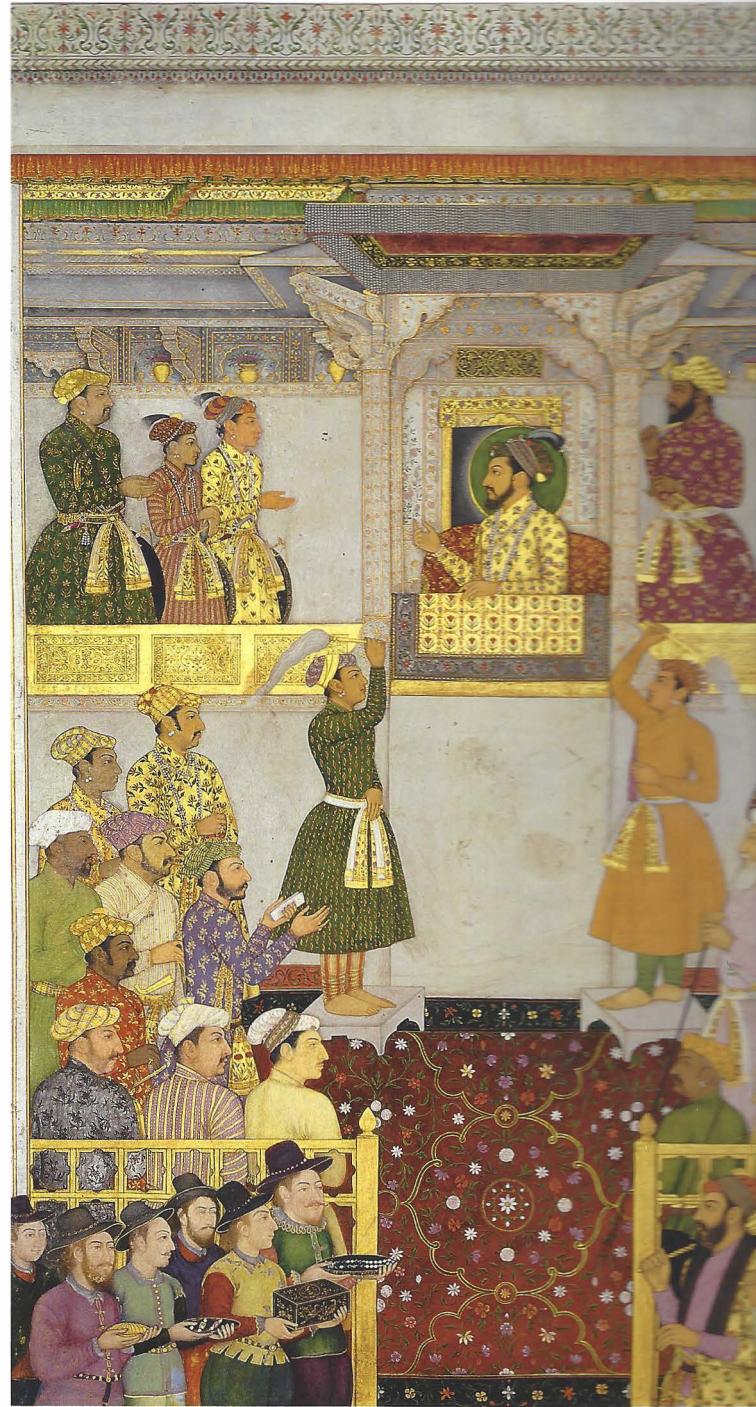


Fig. 168 (cat. no. 179). *Europeans Bring Gifts to Shah Jahan*, folio from the Windsor *Padshahnama*, India, c. 1650. The Royal Collection, Windsor (RCIN 1005025).

Shah Tahmasp's Edict to the Governor of Khurasan

What follows is the text of an edict sent out by the Safavid ruler Shah Tahmasp for the reception of the Mughal Humayun, who had been driven out of India and was on his way to see the Iranian shah in 1544 to ask for reinforcements to regain his kingdom. For a related text describing the same reception, see page 187.

Royal Edict hereby issued to Muhammad Khan Sharafuddinoghli Tākālū, Tutor to our Dear Son, Governor of Herat, Chief of Administration, and recipient of limitless Regal Favor.

Be it known that his letter conveyed to this court by Kamaluddin Shahqulī Beg, brother of Amir Qara Sultan Shamlu, has been received on the twelfth of Dhu'l-Hijja 949 [March 19, 1543], and the contents have been learned from beginning to end.

With regard to the coming of... His Majesty Nasiruddin Muhammad Humayun Padishah—*Glad tidings, O zephyr harbinger, of the approach of the beloved. May your news be true, you who are privy to the beloved in every place. May I sit one day in the banquet of union with him, attaining my heart's desire at the beloved's side*—consider the approach of that exalted monarch an opportunity not to be missed, and know that as a reward for that welcome news we have awarded the affairs of the province of Sabzavar to you from the beginning of Aries in the Year of the Rabbit. Send your overseer and vizier thither; take control of tax collection and administrative imposts from the beginning of the current year and disburse them as is necessary on the army; [207] and follow instructions in accordance with the stipulations contained in this edict to the letter with no deviation.

Let the governor appoint five hundred intelligent, experienced men who possess extra horses, pack animals, and travel gear to go to greet the emperor. Let him select the one hundred horses with golden saddles that have been sent from the royal stable for His Highness and six horses

of steady gait and good color suitable for the emperor to ride, and provide them with painted blue saddles and gold-spun and gold-embroidered saddlecloths appropriate to the above-mentioned horses for the emperor to ride. Put two persons of your retinue in charge of each of the horses. Also, the bejeweled royal dagger that we inherited from His Majesty the late shah my father, the one that is studded with precious gems, has been sent with a golden, jewel-studded sword as a sign of victory and triumph for that mighty monarch. The equivalent of four hundred suits of velvet and European and Yazdi brocade has been sent, of which one hundred twenty suits are for the personal use of the emperor; the rest are for the members of his imperial retinue. A double-piled velvet carpet woven with gold, a woolen bolster cover with brocade lining, three pairs of twelve-cubit carpets, and twelve red, green, and white tents have been sent. Deliver them as soon as possible.

Every day let the governor have delicious beverages with white bread kneaded with oil and milk and containing caraway seeds and poppy seeds delivered to the emperor. Also let him send same to each and every one of the members of the retinue and to the servants of his court. Also let him order that fine white and colored tents, velvet and brocade canopies, a tack tent, kitchen, and all necessary workshops be set up in every way station the day before they arrive. When they dismount, serve sherbet prepared with lemon syrup and chilled with ice and snow. After the sherbet serve marmalades of Mashhad apples, watermelon, grapes, etc. with white bread made in accordance with prior instructions, and try to have all beverages passed before the emperor's sight, and have them mixed with rose water and the finest ambergris. Serve five hundred dishes of various foods with beverages every day.

Let the governor send his sons Qazaq Sultan and Amir Ja'far Sultan and his clan—[208] up to a thousand persons—to greet the emperor three days after the five hundred persons have gone. On those three days let him

inspect the aforementioned soldiers and amirs one by one, and let him provide his retinue with fine Turcoman and Arabian horses such that the trappings of no soldier be better than his own. Let the robes of those thousand persons also be colorful and clean.

Order that, when the above-mentioned amirs arrive with their soldiers to pay homage to the emperor, they kiss the ground politely and perform an obeisance one by one. It is forbidden, while riding or otherwise, for there to be any conversation with the emperor's attendants. By no means will there be any annoyance of the servants of that exalted family. While riding and marching, the amirs' soldiers will stand in service in their ranks from afar; and when on duty, each of the aforementioned amirs who is there will perform an obeisance in the closest place assigned, and holding his staff of office he will serve, as though serving his own monarch, with the utmost attention to detail.

In every province reached, this order will be conveyed to the governor, who will perform service and act as host in the manner prescribed, with no less than one thousand five hundred plates of foods, sweets, and beverages, and accompany the emperor until he reaches Holy Mashhad. When the amirs join the retinue, let one thousand two hundred dishes of various food worthy of a king's table be served every day at an assembly held for the emperor, and let each of the above-mentioned amirs, on the day he is host, present nine horses, three of which be worthy for the emperor's personal use. Let one be presented to the exalted Amir Muhammad Bayram Khan Bahadur and the other five to his elite amirs, whoever is worthy. Let nine horses in all be presented for the emperor's inspection, and let it be mentioned which one is from His Majesty. Let it be decided beforehand which amir is to escort which amir, and let them say that no matter how bad things look, they will not turn out badly. In any manner possible let them cheer the retainers of that mighty *padishah*, and let them show them the utmost of sympathy and accord, and let them

console them for what they have suffered from cruel fate. At such times it will be appropriate and good to cheer them up. Let them observe these things until they come to our majesty. After that what is seemly will be done by us.

After the meal, have served halva and puddings made of refined and crystalline sugar [209] and various pleasing marmalades and special Chinese noodles scented with rose water, musk, and ambergris. After the entertainment and aforementioned services, let the governor of the province assure the emperor of the safety of his province, and let no one who serves as escort to Herat fail in any aspect of service or respect. When they are within twelve leagues of the capital, let the governor assign one of his experienced and intelligent tribes to the service of our dear son to guard the city and him, and let the rest of the royal army from the city, province, and borders, Hazaras, Negüdâris, and others, up to thirty thousand riders, confirmed in number by the governor, accompany him to greet the emperor. Let him take along tents, canopies, and necessities such as camels and pack horses to present an orderly camp to the view of the emperor.

When paying homage to the emperor, before anything else let the governor offer the very best wishes on our behalf. On the day the governor is honored to pay homage, let him have the army dismount in an orderly manner. Request permission from the emperor to hold an entertainment, and remain at that stopping place for three days. On the first day award to all his soldiers fine robes of honor made of Yazdi velvet and fabrics from Mashhad and Khwaf, all with over-robos of velvet. Give each of the soldiers and attendants two Tabrizi *tümâns* as a daily allotment, and serve various fine foods in the manner previously described. Give such a regal banquet that all tongues will praise it.

After recording the names of all the soldiers, send them to the royal court. Take the amount of two thousand five hundred Tabrizi *tümâns* from the royal estates of Herat and expend them on necessary items, and go out of your



Fig. 169 (cat. no. 32). *Pilgrim's Flask*, inscribed with the name of 'Alamgir (r. 1658-1707) and dated AH 1070/1659-60, China, Ming dynasty, early 15th century. The British Museum, London (1968-4.22.32).

way to serve the emperor. The journey from the above-mentioned stopping place to the city should take four days. Hold an entertainment every day with food as on the first day. At every entertainment the governor's sons should stand ready to serve like servants and perform all the requisite etiquette of homage. Let them express their gratitude that such a monarch, who is a gift from God, is our guest, and the more they show their willingness and eagerness to sacrifice themselves to His Majesty, the more pleasing it will be.

The day before he is to enter the city, have set up in the Idgah Garden on the Avenue tents with scarlet brocade inside, body of Tabas canvas, and tops of the Isfahani carpets that have recently been completed and sent. [210] Make certain the emperor is happy with the site and that the air is fine and pleasant. Stand before him with your hand politely over your breast, go forward, and say on our royal behalf that the camp, the soldiers, and all paraphernalia are our gifts.

While on the march, constantly divert the emperor with conversation that is of the utmost seriousness. The day before the emperor is to enter the city, request permission at the above-mentioned stopping place to go to our son, and the next morning take our beloved son from his quarters to greet the emperor. Clothe him in the robe we sent him on New Year's day last year. Station a trusted elder of the Tākālū tribe in the city, and mount our son on a horse. When you go to the city, assign Qazaq Sultan to the emperor, and let him offer tents, camels, and horses so that when the emperor mounts the next day and the camp sets forth on the march, the aforementioned Qazaq Sultan may serve as escort. When our son comes out of the city, let a herald proclaim that all soldiers mount in array and go to greet the emperor. In approaching the emperor, when the distance between you is one arrow shot, let the governor go forward and beg that the emperor not dismount. If he agrees, immediately go back, take our son from his horse, hasten forward, kiss the emperor's stirrup, and show him

all deference and esteem possible. If the emperor does not agree and dismounts, first take our son from his horse and have him bow to the emperor. Let the emperor mount first, then kiss his hand, and then take our son to get back on his horse and set out for his camp and quarters. Let the governor remain ever close to our son's side while he pays his respects to the emperor so that if the emperor asks our son a question and he is too bashful to give a proper reply, the governor can give an appropriate response. Let our son host an entertainment for the emperor at the above-mentioned stopping place as follows: when a halt is observed at midmorning, immediately have three hundred platters of ready food brought in to the assembly, and at midafternoon have twelve hundred platters of various foods placed on the table in charger plates known as Muhammadkhani and on other plates of china, gold, and silver with gold and silver covers. [211] Serve all marmalades possible with halva and pudding. After that, present seven fine young horses from our son's stables and provide them with saddlecloths of velvet and brocade. Place linen-weave silk saddle straps on the multicolored brocade saddlecloths, white straps on the red velvet saddlecloths, and black straps on the green velvet saddlecloths.

Hafiz Sabir Qaqa, Mawlana Qasim the dulcimer player, Shah-Mahmud the flutist, Hafiz Dost-Muhammad Khafi, Master Yusuf Mawdud, and other famous singers and musicians who are in the city should always be present to perform and entertain the emperor whenever he desires. Let everyone who is worthy of the assembly stand in service, far and near, in order to be ready when summoned. Do everything possible to ensure that the emperor has a good time. Provide hawks and falcons from our son's estate and those of the governor's sons, and let their attendants wear silk robes of every type of brocade and every color with gold-thread buttons and woven with gold as befits each person.

When the emperor retires to his quarters, conduct his attendants to our

son, and let him receive them with the good manners that are hereditary from our fathers and ancestors. Let him present to each of them a robe and horse, gratuities of not more than three *tümāns*, twelve *doquzes* of silk fabric, brocades, European and Yazdi velvets, Damascene taffeta, etc., all of which should be extremely fine. Let these fabrics be presented together with three hundred *tümāns* in gold in thirty sacks. To each of the soldiers three Tabrizi *tümāns*, which is equivalent to three hundred *shahis*, should be given.

Let the emperor tour the Avenue and Karezgah for three days. During these three days have the craftsmen's and tradesmen's guilds set up attractive pavilions from the gate of the city garden, which is a regal residence, to the end of the Avenue, where the gate to the Idgah Garden is located. Let every one of the above-mentioned amirs join one of the craftsmen so that they may compete in producing whatever craft object the amir knows. It would be most appropriate, when the emperor honors that region with his presence, upon first entering that city, which is the delight of everyone in the world, that he should be entertained by casting his regal glance at the good-natured people of diverting speech who are in the city.

On the third day, when he has completed his tour of the pavilions and the Avenue, have heralds proclaim throughout the city, its suburbs, [212] and the surrounding countryside and villages that all men and women will gather on the morning of the fourth day on the Avenue. In every shop and market, which will have been festively decorated and spread with carpets and rugs, the ladies and gentlemen will sit, and, as is the custom of the city, the ladies will flirt and engage in delightful conversation with passersby. Let singers come from every quarter and street, for in all the world there is nothing like them, and have all these people greet the emperor.

After that, politely request that the emperor place his regal foot in the stirrup of fortune and mount. Let our son ride with him, ensuring that the emperor's horse's head and neck are

ahead, and let the governor ride close behind so that if he asks anything about the buildings, houses, or gardens, an informed answer may be given.

When he enters the city let him inspect the garden, and then have him dismount in the small garden that was refurbished for residence, sleeping, reading, and study when we lived in that city. Have the Chaharbagh bathhouse and the other bathhouses whitewashed and cleaned, and perfume them with rose water and musk so that they may serve for bodily relaxation whenever the emperor is so inclined.

On the first day have our son host a large-scale meal, and when he goes to sleep the governor himself should serve as host in the manner that has been mentioned. The day the emperor enters the city it should be requested that he proceed to the court. It is ordered that Mu'izzuddin Husayn, the sheriff of Herat and a knowledgeable calligrapher, should be assigned to keep a daily record from the day the five hundred persons go to greet the emperor until he enters the city. That record will be sealed by the governor, and it will include all incidents good and bad that take place at any assembly. It will be handed to trusted men and sent to court so that our royal person may be informed of everything.

Let the governor's entertainment be as follows: food, halva, molasses, and fruit: three thousand plates are to be offered. Equipment for traveling is to be as follows: first, fifty tents, twenty canopies, and a large paisley tent for the emperor's personal use with twelve pairs of twelve-cubit, ten-cubit, and seven-cubit carpets, seven pairs of five-cubit carpets, nine loads of yeast, two hundred fifty large and small porcelain plates, [213] and other platters and kettles with lids, all well-cleaned and tinned, and two strings of nine camels shall be presented at the governor's entertainment.

The above-mentioned amirs have been commanded to host entertainments as follows: one thousand five hundred plates of food, sweets, and pudding. Let them present three horses, one camel, and one pack horse that have first been inspected and

approved by the governor. Let the governor of Ghurian, Fushanj, and Kusu host an entertainment in his territory. Let the governor of Khwaf, Turshiz, Zava, and environs host an entertainment in Saray-i-Farhad, which is five leagues from Mashhad. Finis.

Translated by Wheeler Thackston from Abu'l-Fazl, *Akbarnama*, ed. Agha Ahmad Ali, vol. 1, 206–13.

Abu'l-Fazl's Effulgence over Gifts from Shah Tahmasp

The Mughal chronicler of the *Akbarnama* describes the reception given Humayun by Shah Tahmasp in July 1544, when they met between Sultaniyya and Abhar.

Princely celebrations were held for several days. Every day the shah himself saw to the preparations and held unforgettable assemblies, and day by day his sincerity and affection increased. How can one describe an assembly that such a king undertakes himself? How many gold-spun, velvet, and silk canopies were set up? How many decorated pavilions and lofty tents were pitched? There were silken rugs and valuable carpets spread on the ground as far as the eye could see. How can one explain how the shah himself saw to all the details of the presentation of gifts and presents, which is an obligatory ritual? The finest Persian horses with gilt saddles studded with jewels and exquisite saddle covers, pack animals from Barda elaborated, decorated, and caparisoned, male and female camels with marvelous bodies and expensive coverings, so many swords and daggers studded with jewels, coins, precious textiles, furs of sable, red fox, ermine, and squirrel, clothing of all varieties of gold brocade, velvet, silk, satin, figured fabrics from Europe, Yazd, and Kashan, so many gold and silver kettles, ewers, and candlesticks studded with rubies and pearls, and so many gold and silver plates, decorated tents, fabulous carpets—all so grand, beautiful, and rare. All this paraphernalia of regality was passed before the imperial view, all the members of the imperial retinue received cash and goods separately, and the customs of imperial etiquette were observed on both sides.

Translated by Wheeler Thackston from Abu'l-Fazl, *Akbarnama*, ed. Agha Ahmad Ali, vol. 1, 217.