Transporting India:
The *Gentil Album* and Mughal Manuscript Culture
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The eighteenth century witnessed the circulation of images, ideas, and individuals throughout the Mughal empire and beyond Mughal South Asia to Europe. Although art histories of encounter have emphasized the British presence in South Asia, there was, in the late 1700s, a period of vibrant exchange between Indian and French artists, patrons, and collectors.[1] This essay explores these connections by focusing on the *Gentil Album* (Faizabad, India, 1774), an object that embodies the intersection of systems of artistic production and epistemologies, including the manuscript culture of the later Mughal empire and the networks of early French Orientalism.[2] Comprising fifty-eight paintings by Indian artists, many of them annotated and accompanied by a text composed in French, the album visualizes an array of subjects, from the trappings and procedures of Mughal court ceremonial to major eighteenth-century political events to the central tenets of Hinduism.

Until now, the object has been generically cast as a 'customs and manners' album, a recording of people, objects, and rituals observed by its patron, Jean-Baptiste Gentil (1726–99), an officer of the French East India Company (*Compagnie des Indes Orientales*). This description emphasizes Gentil as the album's primary maker, obscuring connections between the album and Mughal manuscript culture, that is, the artists, writers, translators, and patrons who were the collective makers of objects, as well as the practices of copying and collecting that were intrinsic to the making and circulation of these objects. In this essay, I undertake a deeper exploration of the album that takes these individuals and the artistic practices current in Mughal India into account. In so doing, I move the album beyond its current generic classification, viewing it as a local production. In framing the *Gentil Album* in this manner, I revise histories of global encounter that have emphasized the authorial primacy of European patrons, instead stressing the role played by local networks of artists and visual traditions in shaping an object both born of global mobility and itself globally mobile.

I begin by arguing that the album is not solely the product of an eighteenth-century Frenchman's observations, but is profoundly influenced by a major Mughal historical work, the *A'in-i Akbari* (*Institutes of Akbar*), dating from the 1590s. I then interpret the album in relation to established Mughal painting practices of the time, considering the agency of an interregional mobile community of artists and the impact of art objects and texts that circulated in late eighteenth-century India. Finally, I link the album to Gentil's broader collection and his self-representation as an authority on India, considering the movement of album and patron to France.

**Detail from Hashim, *Portrait of Khan Dawran*, from the *Late Shah Jahan Album*, c. 1650 (*plate 6*).**

The *Gentil Album* and the *A'in-i Akbari*

The album measures 37 × 53.5 cm, and features fifty-eight paintings rendered in opaque watercolour on paper. The subject matter ranges considerably, including depictions of the Mughal court and imperial ceremonies, royal hunts, Gentil's military and diplomatic dealings in Awadh, miscellaneous sports and entertainments, and the ritual practices and belief systems of Islam and Hinduism. About two-thirds of the paintings are paired with text, with all images on recto and text on the facing verso. At times the images are annotated with labels, some of them extensive.

At least three individuals, all based in Faizabad, in the northeastern Indian province of Awadh, collaborated to produce the album: Gentil and the artists Mohan Singh (fl. *c*. 1763–82) and Nevasi Lal (fl. *c*. 1760–75). Besides his affiliation with the French government, Gentil was a special adviser to Shuja' al-Daula (r. 1753–75), the governor (*nawab*) of Awadh and the prime vizier of the Mughal Empire.[3] Unfinished paintings suggest that Gentil divided the folios into sections and noted the subjects to be painted. He also penned the French labels and much of the explanatory text that accompanies several of the paintings.[4] Mohan Singh and Nevasi Lal were active both at the court of Shuja' al-Daula and in the studio of painters that Gentil supported during his tenure in Faizabad. Both were trained in the techniques of Mughal painting – Mohan Singh was the son of Govardhan II, a Mughal artist from Delhi – but were also known for experimenting with new art forms in Faizabad that stemmed from diplomatic and artistic exchanges with Europe.[5] Nevasi Lal, for instance, famously copied a portrait of the nawab by the British painter Tilly Kettle.[6]

While the album's paintings do not follow a uniform format, they tend to be diagrammatic: figures are arranged in rows and columns, objects are neatly displayed, and narrative scenes unfold in a clearly organized, easily annotated

1 Unknown artist, *The Mughal Court*, from the *Gentil Album*, 1774. Watercolour on paper, 37 × 53.5 cm. London: Victoria and Albert Museum (IS 25–1980 (1)). Photo: © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.
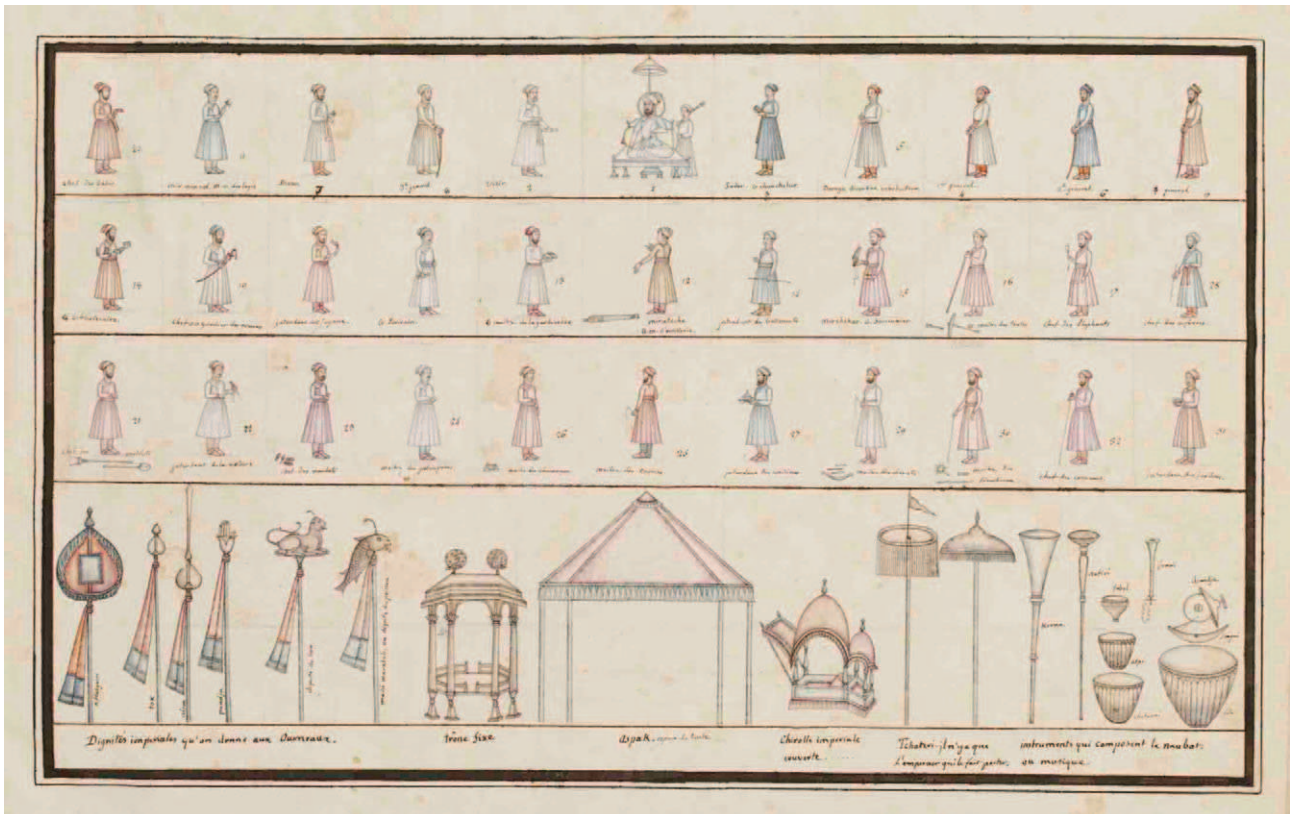
fashion. Take, for instance, a court scene (*plate 1*). The Mughal emperor is centrally positioned, enthroned and shown with a halo and *chatri* (parasol), standard iconographic attributes that signal imperial status. Court attendants and ceremonial objects are carefully organized, with a premium placed on regularity, legibility and systematic comprehension. French labels accompany the image, identifying, for example, the high-ranking nobles – such as the prime vizier and head generals – represented in the upper level. Below them are important palace officials, including the head of the artillery, the chief secretary, and the imperial librarian. In the third register are the palace keepers, from the keeper of the palanquins to the head gardener. Finally, in the lowest register there are resplendent ceremonial objects, including the standards of honour given to select nobles, a fixed throne, an imperial tent, a portable throne, the imperial *chatri,* and the drums and horns of the ceremonial band. Additionally, numerical labels in the image correspond to a more extensive commentary on the facing page in which Gentil provides supplementary information, such as the explanation that the ceremonial band can only play in the presence of the emperor.

The folio manifests a clear impulse to collect, catalogue, and describe. It might easily be interpreted as a product of European Enlightenment practices, and connected to an eighteenth-century French preoccupation with encyclopaedism.[7] However, to seize upon Enlightenment classification as the object's mode of operation is to reify Gentil as the primary author and to insist upon a dominant French epistemology, despite evidence that this album was the product of several minds and hands collaborating in a transcultural context. I argue that the legacies of Mughal classificatory and descriptive practices, in particular those exemplified by the *A'in-i Akbari*, or *Institutes of Akbar*, are equally significant and shed light both on the album's production and on its life as a globally mobile object with the capacity to effect cultural mediation.

In the late sixteenth century, when the Mughal empire had successfully expanded into the Indian subcontinent under the emperor Akbar (r. 1556–1605), his prime vizier Abu'l-Fazl compiled the *A'in-i Akbari*, a multi-volume encyclopaedic text with statistical and narrative descriptions of India that covered topics from geography to the ritual practices of the Hindus.[8] Abu'l-Fazl then built upon the information he had collected by detailing the administrative apparatus and customs of the Mughal court.

The *A'in-i Akbari* comprises five books covering a dizzying array of topics. The first book focuses on the imperial palace and institutions, including the harem, mint, kitchen, stables, arsenal, and storerooms. Each of these topics is described exhaustively and eclectically: the chapter on the mint leads to several chapters dedicated to coinage and currency, the chapter on the imperial kitchen prefaces a series of recipes and a note on bread, and the chapter on the imperial stables is followed by chapters on the feeding and care of elephants, camels, and other animals. Book two covers the army and such varied topics as taxation, marriage, hunting, and pigeon flying. Book three provides overviews of the twelve provinces (*subahs*) of the Mughal empire. Book four contains descriptions of Hindu belief systems and religious practices, with further miscellany embedded throughout. Finally, book five consists of the 'Sayings of Akbar'.

In its diversity of subject matter, inclusion of miscellanea, and combined historical and documentary approach, the *Gentil Album* strongly recalls the *A'in-i Akbari*, with the latter likely serving as a template or point of departure. Scholars have briefly noted Gentil's use of the *A'in-i Akbari* as a source for the sections of the album related to Hinduism, a conclusion likely based on a citation Gentil himself made on one of

2 Unknown artist, *Map of Awadh*, from an atlas of the Mughal empire, 1770. Watercolour on paper, 34 × 48 cm. London: British Library (Add. Or. 4039, f.19). Photo: © The British Library Board.

the folios in this section.[9] Going further, I contend that the *A'in-i Akbari*, as text and concept, permeates the *Gentil Album* as a totality.

That the *A'in-i Akbari* played such an important role in the *Gentil Album* is likely given its significance for Gentil's broader collection. As Susan Gole has demonstrated, Gentil had earlier commissioned an atlas of the Mughal empire (1770) based on Book Two of the *A'in-i Akbari*.[10] In it, individual provinces are rendered cartographically, and the maps are surrounded by pictorial tableaux related to the myth or history of the province (*plate* 2). The toponymic, topographical, historical, and mythological details are derived from the *A'in-i Akbari*, which Gentil had partially translated, with illustrations, in 1769.[11] Gentil produced another partial, unillustrated translation of the text in 1773, speaking to his sustained interest in it.[12]

Returning to the album, a deeper consideration of the image of the Mughal court discussed earlier (see *plate* 1) reveals that many of the official posts visualized in the painting are discussed in the *A'in-i Akbari*.[13] Also mentioned are the objects – thrones, tents, standards, and musical instruments – that are integral to court ceremonial and are represented on the Gentil folio.[14] The striking parallels between the *Gentil Album* and the *A'in-i Akbari* continue throughout the album, and indeed numerous folios that have previously been understood as documenting Gentil's personal observations and experiences are, I contend, instead illustrations that draw on the *A'in-i Akbari*. In the section on royal hunts is a folio that depicts methods for hunting tigers and elephants; the strategies visualized on the page are the same ones detailed in the *A'in-i Akbari*.[15] Similarly, a folio showing equestrian sports recalls descriptions of polo from the text; a folio of games and pastimes takes its cues from descriptions of *chaupar* (pachisi) and cards; and a folio with acrobats evokes the text's descriptions of types of performers.[16]

There is, in addition, a folio depicting jewellery that has been interpreted as a catalogue of Gentil's own collection, but the images correspond to a section of the *A'in-i Akbari* containing a descriptive catalogue of Indian jewellery (*plate* 3).[17] Moreover, this folio is adjacent to those that address Hinduism, just as the parallel passage in the *A'in-i Akbari* is likewise embedded in the section on Hinduism.[18]

This is not to say that the *Gentil Album* is a complete and faithful translation of the *A'in-i Akbari*. Some of the subjects it depicts are not addressed in the *A'in-i Akbari*, such as a folio dedicated to the famed Peacock Throne of the emperor Shah Jahan (r. 1627–58). A small number of folios portray topics, such as the weighing of the emperor against gold, that are discussed both in the *A'in-i Akbari* and in other sources.[19] Finally, some folios depict contemporary individuals and events from the 1760s and 1770s (discussed below). The salient point is that the *Gentil Album* uses the *A'in-i Akbari* as a framework, absorbing select topics and passages, and introducing new subjects, such as the philosophies and practices of Islam, that resonate with the content, scope, and organization of the original Persian text. An example is the folio of the album showing Muslim prayer and the orientation of the body towards Mecca (*plate* 4). This topic is not discussed in the *A'in-i Akbari*, but it is strikingly similar in nature to the discussion of Hindu ritual practice found in the text.

The ethnographic impulse discernible in the *Gentil Album* can thus be traced as far back as the sixteenth century and the imperial expansion of the early Mughals. Interestingly, while the album's use of the *A'in-i Akbari* links it to an earlier Mughal manuscript tradition, this deployment also signals a break from that tradition, since it casts the text as a major source; in the intervening period, the *A'in-i Akbari* was not of much interest to Akbar's Mughal successors. The text was copied and preserved, and the information on land revenue and taxation continued to have practical value

3 Unknown artist, *Indian Jewelry,* **from the** *Gentil Album,* **1774. Watercolour on paper, 37 × 53.3 cm. London: Victoria and Albert Museum (IS 25–1980 (48)). Photo: © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.**
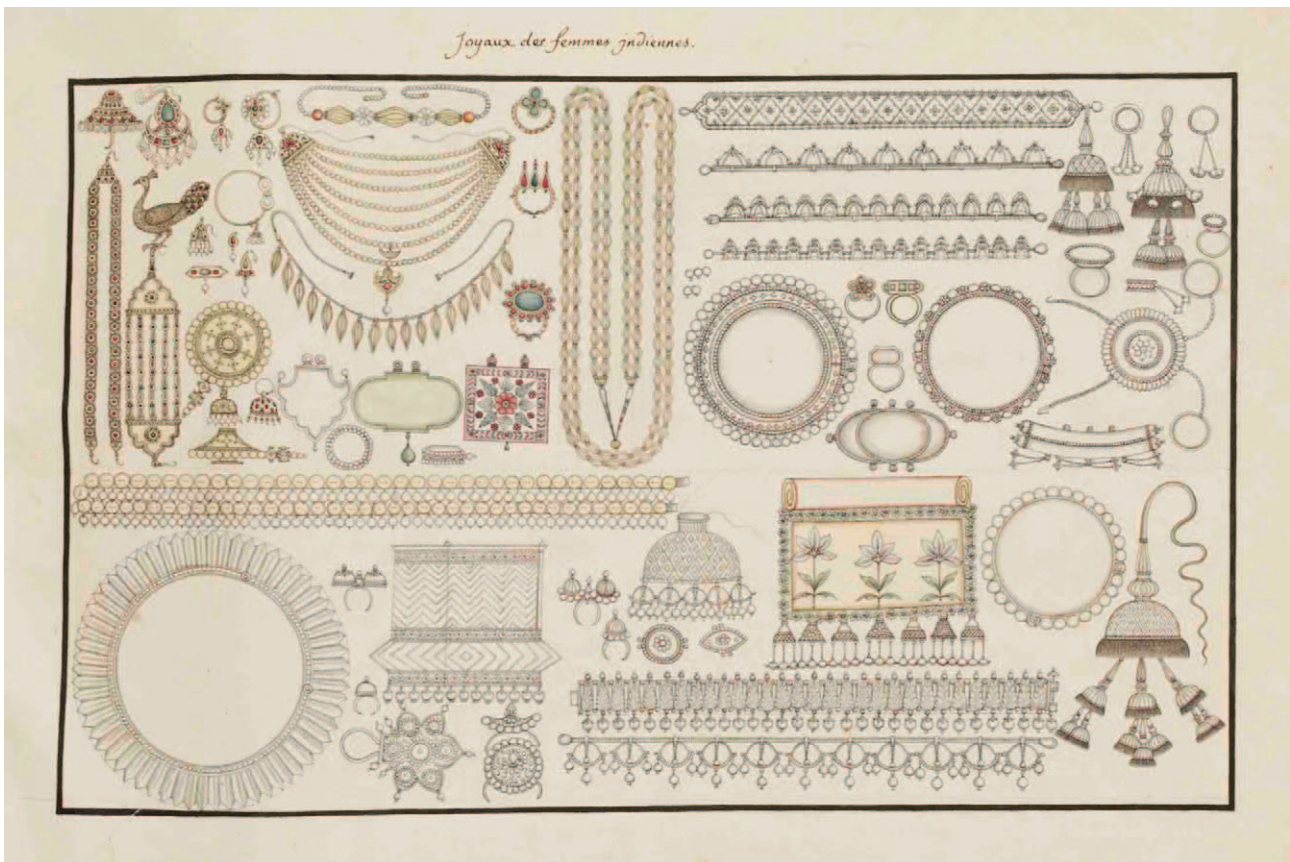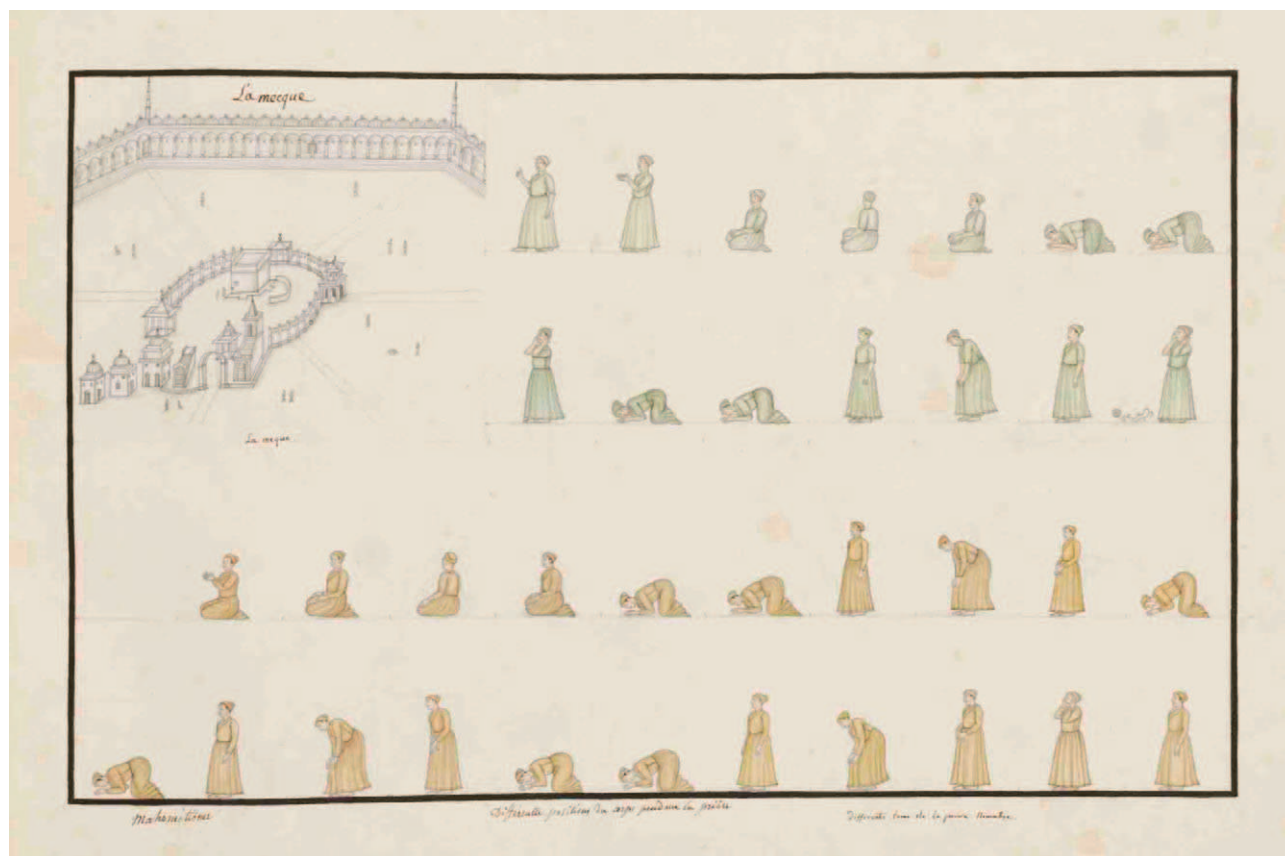
4 Unknown artist, *View of Mecca and Muslim Prayer*, from the *Gentil Album*, 1774. Watercolour on paper, 37 × 53.5 cm. London: Victoria and Albert Museum (IS 25–1980 (26)). Photo: © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

for administration. But it was hardly a celebrated text, and it was not illustrated by the later Mughals. It was in the late eighteenth century that the status of the *A'in-i Akbari* began to shift. Soon after the Gentil translations, the English scholar Francis Gladwin produced a complete English translation, sponsored by the Governor-General Warren Hastings and the English East India Company.[20] Evidence has not yet been found linking the Gentil and Gladwin translations, but the two could have been connected through contemporary intellectual networks in India, centred on *munshis*, or 'scholar-scribes', who acted as language teachers for many Europeans.[21]

The *A'in-i Akbari* would subsequently be considered the administrative manual par excellence for the British in Mughal India, with revised English translations produced between 1873 and 1896 by Henry Blochmann and H. S. Jarrett.[22] Given the scope and content of the text, it is not surprising that two centuries after its composition, it drew the interest of European scholars, translators, and collectors affiliated with the French and English East India companies. But the *Gentil Album*, which stands out because it predates British translations of the *A'in-i Akbari* and because it employs images extensively, has not been incorporated into the longer history of European encounters with this text. Folding the album into this history disrupts a linear narrative of a singular 'discovery' of this text.

The Artists of the *Gentil Album*

Although the influence of the *A'in-i Akbari* partially reveals the local sources for the album, the role played by its artists also deserves examination. The most common paradigm for analyzing collaborations between European patrons and Indian artists remains that associated with so-called 'Company painting', originally defined as 'a special type of Indian painting which was produced for Europeans and was heavily

influenced by European taste'.[23] The *Gentil Album* has been considered as a forerunner of Company painting, a designation that ultimately obscures connections to Mughal painting precedents and practices.

Artists in late eighteenth-century Awadh were perfectly poised to engage with and adapt Mughal painting conventions. Mohan Singh and Nevasi Lal were among the artists who had migrated to the region in the wake of political losses at the imperial centre of Delhi and the subsequent breakdown of the imperial Mughal atelier. Besides attracting accomplished artists, the nawab also added to his collection of manuscripts and albums, facilitating a heightened circulation of Mughal texts and paintings.

At first glance, the album might not seem to owe a debt to Mughal artistic precedents. The image of the Mughal court discussed earlier, for instance, appears to

5 Bichitr, *Shah-Jahan receives his three eldest sons and Asaf Khan during his accession ceremonies*, from the *Padshahama*, c. 1630–1657. Opaque watercolour and gold on paper, 58.6 × 45.2 cm. Windsor: The Royal Library (RCIN 1005025k). Photo: Royal Collection Trust/© Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.

depart from the conventions of Mughal painting, seen in a comparison with a folio from the *Padshahnama* (*plate* 5). This seventeenth-century Mughal manuscript, which was brought from Delhi to Awadh in the late eighteenth century, set conventions for court scenes that were standardized and observed well into the nineteenth century.[24] Whereas the figures and objects in the Gentil folio are separated into discrete squares, in the *Padshahnama*, they occupy the same representational space.

Yet the *Padshahnama* paintings signified a shift in compositional strategies. Whereas earlier Mughal historical manuscripts were characterized by a visual dynamism, in the *Padshahnama* paintings a particular formula emerged characterized by figures that are neatly compartmentalized into distinct horizontal and vertical zones.[25] The emperor and royal family were usually positioned in the uppermost level; below them appeared 'rank-holders' (*mansabdars*) of high position, and in the lowest register were those who fell outside of the mansabdar system altogether. There were also three vertical zones: the emperor inhabited the central area, with most other individuals confined to the left and right sides of the painting. Figures were depicted statically and important individuals were identified with small annotations, not unlike the *Gentil Album*. This compositional scheme is replicated in over a dozen folios from the *Padshahnama*.

We might then think of the Gentil folio as being connected to an established compositional mode, expressed in the *Padshahnama* and preserved in subsequent court painting, which compartmentalized representational space and the individuals who inhabited it. In Mughal India, painters had a historically rooted relationship to tradition with innovation defined through precedent, constantly looking to past examples as the foundations for artistic knowledge.[26] This was no different for artists in late eighteenth-century Awadh. The specific setting of courtly Faizabad exposed artists to Mughal masterpieces, housed in both Gentil's personal, ever-growing library as well as that of the nawab Shuja' al-Daula. The *Padshahnama*, for instance, belonged to Awadh until 1799, when it was given as a diplomatic gift to King George III. In addition, Mohan Singh was the son of Govardhan II, a painter active at the court of the Mughal emperor Muhammad Shah (r. 1719–48). These circumstances, namely the exposure to rich historical collections and the passing down of artistic techniques to apprentices, were made possible by the mobility of artists and objects; in turn, the same circumstances were also the catalyst of the historically-situated painting practice embodied by the *Gentil Album*.

There were other types of paintings in circulation at the time, such as the single-figure portraits of emperors, princes, and nobles that were bound into albums (*muraqqa'*), which enjoyed as much of an audience as the illustrated histories.[27] Typical of this is a portrait of a Mughal general, Khan Dawran, painted against a monochromatic background, that is, isolated from any recognizable setting (*plate* 6). The depiction of Khan Dawran is itself surrounded by a sizeable border featuring smaller likenesses of court officials. Though these figures are rendered in a naturalistic style characteristic of the late seventeenth-century Mughal context, the placement of the individual depictions across the border of the folio offers a striking comparison with the Gentil image of the Mughal court, while also speaking to the creative use of single-figure depictions in Mughal painting.[28] Read in relation to this visual tradition, the Gentil folio could just as easily be an amalgamation of single-figure paintings, and the *Gentil Album* as a whole as an extension of the Mughal *muraqqa'* tradition.

These comparisons are not intended to determine an original source for the *Gentil Album*. Rather, they emphasize the ways in which the networks of mobility

within India, through which artists and art objects travelled from the royal library of Delhi to the growing collections and ateliers of Awadh, shaped what has heretofore been interpreted as a 'European' album. Examining the *Gentil Album* in relation to these Mughal predecessors reveals the significant extent to which it engaged Mughal painting traditions, rather than merely responded to European desires. For an eighteenth-century audience familiar with Mughal visuality and representational systems, the album mediates between old and new painting practices. Yet the images could also be read by those unfamiliar with Mughal visual codes, positioning the album for its voyage to France and its reception by scholarly, elite, and royal circles.

The *Gentil Album* between Patron and Audience

Gentil returned to France in 1778, taking with him his entire collection, including the album. There, the work operated on multiple registers, demonstrating a capacity to speak to various audiences, including a circle of early Orientalist scholars; an elite French audience interested in print culture and representations of India; and royal audiences in France and India alike. The Gentil collection ultimately became part of the Royal Library in France; the library's present-day incarnation, the Bibliothèque nationale in Paris, holds almost 150 objects from the Gentil collection across several departments, attesting to Gentil's central role in the eighteenth-century movement of texts and images from India to France.[29] These objects comprised new works sponsored and completed by Gentil, like the album, as well as at least 133 older manuscripts in Arabic, Bengali, Marathi, Persian, Sanskrit, and Tamil, including a copy of the *A'in-i Akbari* in the original Persian.[30]

Abraham Anquetil-Duperron (1731–1805) was one of the Orientalist scholars with whom Gentil associated. Anquetil-Duperron is best known for his translations of ancient Iranian and Indian sacred texts such as the Zoroastrian *Zend Avesta* and the Sanskrit *Upanishads*. Gentil regularly obtained manuscripts for him, including a copy of the *Sirr-i Akbari* (The Great Mystery), the Persian translation of the Hindu *Upanishads*.[31] Anquetil-Duperron subsequently translated the Persian into French and Latin, a watershed in the history of Western Indology, one to which Gentil was inextricably linked.[32] Louis-Mathieu Langlès, the keeper of Oriental manuscripts at the Royal Library, acknowledged the value of the objects Gentil had acquired, commending the expertise with which Gentil had selected them.[33] Scholars like Anquetil-Duperron and Langlès were equipped to perceive the influence of the *A'in-i Akbari* on the *Gentil Album* and Gentil's role in accessing the text. If they were unfamiliar with the work, they were able to read the copy of the original text that Gentil had brought back from India.

Gentil also acquired a reputation beyond this specialized circle of French Orientalists due to his illustrated works. For a wider audience, the 'muraqqa' quality' of the album was significant; just as the *muraqqa'* in the Indo-Persian world functioned as a repository of visual ideas for artists to draw upon, so too could the *Gentil Album* serve a similar purpose in France.[34] For instance, when preparations were underway to receive Tipu Sultan's ambassadors at Versailles in 1788, the creators of a custom-made Sèvres porcelain service made to be presented as a gift consulted Gentil and his collection for design ideas.[35] Moreover, the album had the potential to speak to a print audience that had been enthralled by depictions of customs and objects of distant people, exemplified by Bernard Picart's *Religious Ceremonies and Customs of All the Peoples of the World* (1723–43).[36]

With this album and related works, Gentil was also positioned to appeal to the French court. He received two audiences with Louis XVI, during which he presented several of his translated and newly authored works to the royal library. Besides the

translations of the *A'in-i Akbari* discussed earlier, Gentil also completed a history of the kings of India based on the sixteenth-century writings of the Indo-Persian historian Firishta (1560–1620), a history of numismatics, and an introduction to Hindu deities.[37] In his writings, Gentil repeatedly praises Abu'l-Fazl for his services as a court historian and minister to Akbar, exemplified by the writing of the *A'in-i Akbari*. In bringing similar objects to France, and positing the *A'in-i Akbari* as a foundational Indian source, Gentil invoked and likened his service to that of the Indian historian.

Moreover, the album highlights the important role that Gentil played in Awadhi politics, his close relationship with the nawab-vizier, and his access to the Mughal emperor. Folios on these themes include representations of Gentil aiding Shuja' al-Daula during negotiations with the English, as well as depictions of him meeting the Mughal emperor Shah Alam.[38] The paintings act as visual testimony to his status as a special adviser to the ruler, for which he earned the lofty Persianate title *Rafi' al-daula, nizam-i jang, bahadur, tadbir al-muluk* ('Uplifter of the State, Leader in War, the Valiant, and the Counsel of Kings').[39] Gentil's close relationship to Shuja' al-Daula is further conveyed by personalized portrayals of the nawab hunting, campaigning, hosting the Mughal emperor, celebrating his son's wedding, and participating in a religious procession during the Shi'i holy days of Muharram.[40] Overall, the folios in this work feature the mediation enacted by Gentil, either as an interpreter, providing textual glosses for a French-reading audience, or as a political mediator on the ground.

In this manner, the album complements Gentil's correspondence and written works, in which his integration into the upper echelons of Awadhi and Mughal society is a consistent theme. His memoirs are dedicated to Shuja' al-Daula and highlight Gentil's friendship with the vizier. Beyond this political alliance, Gentil emphasizes his personal connection to the Mughal dynasty through his marriage to a Portuguese-Indian woman, Thérèse Velho. His memoirs and one of his illustrated histories includes sections on 'Renowned Women of India', in which he discusses Velho's Goan great-aunt Juliana, noting that she had been entrusted with the education of the Mughal emperor Bahadur Shah I (r. 1707–12) in the early 1700s and later provided him with political counsel.[41] By including this information in his biography, Gentil integrates his wife, and by extension, himself, into the very fabric of Mughal history.

Through the album and his memoirs, Gentil appears as someone who ably occupied and moved between multiple spaces, capable of serving both Shuja' al-Daula and Louis XVI as the Abu'l-Fazl of his day. The album's capacity to transit and translate was thus closely related to its patron's capability to do the same; the two operations were inseparable. In both India and France, then, Gentil shifted the album from the terrain of a temporally removed historical or ethnographic narrative and drew it into a broader, contemporary project of self-representation and self-fashioning.

An object that resulted from local and global mobilities, and that became a mobile object itself, the *Gentil Album* is richly multilingual and multivalent – expressed in the languages of text and image, engaging established and emerging modes of visuality, rooted in a specific Mughal text, and presenting as a general history-ethnography. It also exemplifies its patron's closely interrelated interests in artistic production, textual translations, and the project of history writing. Gentil's mode of collection building was intricately tied to the particular mobilities that brought artists, translators, objects, and texts to Awadh in the 1760s and 1770s, and then took him back to France in 1777. Gentil's unique position, interacting with artists, scholars, and patrons between the courts of both Shuja' al-Daula and Louis XVI, allowed him to fashion and acquire an object that travelled exceptionally well, its artistic and textual genealogy enabling it to project and be invested with multiple meanings.

Notes
I thank the Getty Research Institute and National Endowment for the Humanities for their support of this project.

1   Studies on the French in India include Muzaffar Alam and Seema Alavi, *A European Experience of the Mughal Orient: The I'jāz-i Arsalānī (Persian Letters 1773–1779) of Antoine-Louis Henri Polier*, New Delhi and New York, 2001; Chanchal Dadlani, 'The "Palais Indiens" collection of 1774: Representing Mughal architecture in eighteenth-century India', *Ars Orientalis*, 39, 2011, 175–97; Lucian Harris, 'The exploration of Nawabi culture by European collectors in 18th-century Lucknow', in Rosie Llewellyn-Jones, ed., *Lucknow: Then and Now*, Mumbai, 2003, 104–17; Maya Jasanoff, *Edge of Empire: Conquest and Collecting in the East, 1750–1850*, London, 2006; Jean-Marie Lafont, *Indika: Essays in Indo-French Relations, 1630–1976*, New Delhi, 2000; Lafont, *Chitra: Cities and Monuments of Eighteenth-Century India from French Archives*, Delhi, 2000; Kate Marsh, *India in the French Imagination: Peripheral Voices, 1754–1815*, London, 2009; S. P. Sen, *The French in India: 1763–1816*, Calcutta, 1958; and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, 'The career of Colonel Polier and late eighteenth-century Orientalism', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 10: 1, April 2000, 43–60.

2   Victoria & Albert Museum, London (hereafter V&A), IS 25-1980.

3   Although the French were forced to withdraw military forces from India in 1763 as part of the Treaty of Paris with the British, Anglo-French rivalry remained strong and residents like Gentil were active on the ground. Jasanoff, *Edge of Empire*; Marsh, 'Territorial loss and the construction of French colonial identities, 1763–1962', in Nicola Frith and Kate Marsh, eds, *France's Lost Empires: Fragmentation, Nostalgia, and la fracture coloniale*, Lanham, MD, 2010, 1–13; Marsh, *India in the French Imagination*; Marsh, 'France in Asia', in Lars Jensen, Rajeev Patke and Prem Poddar, eds, *A Historical Companion to Postcolonial Literatures: Continental Europe and its Empires*, Edinburgh, 2007, 130–4; Robert Tombs and Isabella Tombs, *That Sweet Enemy: The French and the British from the Sun King to the Present*, New York, 2007; and Robert Travers, 'Imperial revolutions and global repercussions: South Asia and the world, c. 1750–1850', in David Armitage and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, eds, *The Age of Revolutions in Global Context*, London, 2010, 144–66.

4   Some of the text appears to have been written in a different hand and was likely added at a later date, possibly by Gentil's son, who posthumously edited and published Gentil's memoirs. See Susan Gole, *Maps of Mughal India*, London and New York, 1988, 5.

5   Malini Roy, 'Origins of the late Mughal painting tradition in Awadh', in Tushara Bindu Gude and Stephen Markel, eds, *India's Fabled City: The Art of Courtly Lucknow*, Los Angeles, CA and Munich, 2010, 165–85. Govardhan II had been active at the Delhi court of the Mughal emperor Muhammad Shah (r. 1719–48). Terrence McInerney, 'Mughal painting during the reign of Muhammad Shah', in Barbara Schmitz, ed., *After the Great Mughals: Painting in Delhi and the Regional Courts in the 18th and 19th Centuries*, Mumbai, 2002, 12–33.

6   Awadh, formerly a regional capital, grew into a cultural centre in the eighteenth century. Gude and Markel, *India's Fabled City*; Malini Roy, 'Some unexpected sources for paintings by the artist Mihr Chand, son of Ganga Ram', *South Asian Studies*, 26: 1, 2010: 21–30. On the Nevasi Lal copy of the Tilly Kettle portrait, see Mildred Archer, *Company Paintings: Indian Paintings of the British Period*, London, 1992, 118.

7   This interest was most evident in Denis Diderot and Jean le Rond d'Alembert's *Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers, par une Société des Gens de lettres*, 1751–1772. Daniel Brewer and Julie Candler Hayes, eds, *Using the* Encyclopédie: *Ways of Knowing, Ways of Reading*, Oxford, 2002.

8   The first full English translation was published by Francis Gladwin, *Ayeen Akbery*, London, 1800. Subsequent English translations were completed between 1873 and 1896 by Heinrich Blochmann and H. S. Jarrett, and were revised and published by P. C. Phillott and Jadunath Sarkar as the *A'in-i Akbari by Abu'l Fazl Allami*, Blochmann and Phillott, trans., Vol. I, Calcutta, 1927, and Jarrett and Sarkar, Vols II and III, Calcutta, 1948–9. A Persian edition was published by Blochmann, ed., *A'in-i Akbari*, Calcutta, 1867.

9   That the folios on Hinduism are based at least in part on the *A'in-i Akbari* is acknowledged by Archer in her description of fol. 35 in

10   British Library, Or. 4039, reproduced in Gole, *Atlas*.

11   Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris (hereafter BnF), fr. 12217.

12   BnF, fr. 9091.

13   The titles and positions are mentioned across various chapters of the text. See Blochmann and Phillott, 5–7, 133.

14   Blochmann and Phillott, 52–3.

15   Blochmann and Phillott, 292–7.

16   Blochmann and Phillott, 309–10, 315–21; Jarrett and Sarkar, Vol. III, 272.

17   The folio is said to document eighteenth-century jewellery in J. C. Harle, Nima Smith and Susan Stronge, *A Golden Treasury: Jewellery from the Indian Subcontinent*, London, 1988, 29; Topsfield, 'Two early Company albums,' 59; and Victoria & Albert Museum, *The Indian Heritage: Court Life and Arts under Mughal Rule*, London, 1982, 50.

18   Jarrett and Sarkar, Vol. III, 343–5.

19   The weighing of the emperor against gold is recorded in the chronicles of Akbar's successors, including Jahangir and Shah Jahan.

20   Gladwin, trans., *Ayeen*.

21   The role of Gentil's language teachers and co-translators awaits further study. On Mughal munshis, see Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Writing the Mughal World, Studies on Culture and Politics*, New York, 2012, 311–38, 396–428; and Rajeev Kinra, 'Master and Munshī: A Brahman secretary's guide to Mughal governance', *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, 47: 4, 2010, 527–61. On the related topic of Tamil scribal culture and the English East India Company in South India, see Bhavani Raman, *Document Raj: Writing and Scribes in Early Colonial South India*, Chicago, IL, 2012.

22   Blochmann, Jarrett, Phillott, and Sarkar, trans., *A'in-i Akbari*.

23   Archer, *Company Paintings*, 11.

24   Ebba Koch has extensively analyzed the compositional techniques of the *Padshahnama*. See Koch, 'The hierarchical principles of Shah-Jahani painting', in Milo Cleveland Beach, Ebba Koch and Wheeler Thackston, eds, *King of the World: The Padshahnama: An Imperial Mughal Manuscript from the Royal Library, Windsor Castle*, London, 1997, 131–43. On the nineteenth-century uses of this convention, see William Dalrymple and Yuthika Sharma, *Princes and Painters in Mughal Delhi, 1707–1857*, New Haven, 2012, cats 32 and 35. The manuscript's transfer postdated the production of the *Gentil Album*, but is still representative of a wider late eighteenth-century circulation of luxury manuscripts across north India.

25   Koch, 'Hierarchical principles'.

26   In the Indo-Persian world, the notion of a historically rooted painting practice that closely linked tradition and innovation had its beginnings as early as the painting ateliers of the Timurid empire, and was also paralleled in the literary arts. The currency of historical precedent was also relevant in Rajput painting practice. See Molly Aitken, *The Intelligence of Tradition in Rajput Court Painting*, New Haven, 2011; Paul Losensky, *Welcoming Fighānī: Imitation and Poetic Individuality in the Safavid-Mughal Ghazal*, Costa Mesa, CA, 1998, especially 12, 107–14; and David Roxburgh, *The Persian Album, 1400–1600: From Dispersal to Collection*, New Haven, 2005, especially 137–44.

27   Elaine Wright, ed., *Muraqqa': Imperial Mughal Albums from the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin*, Alexandria, VA, 2008.

28   On the borders of this album, see Wright, *Muraqqa'*, 106–39.

29   Gentil, *Mémoires*, 421–2; Francois Richard, 'Jean-Baptiste Gentil collectionneur de manuscrits persans', *Dix-huitième siècle*, 28, 1996.

30   Jean-Baptiste Gentil, *Mémoires sur l'Indoustan, ou empire mogol*, Paris, 1822, 421; and Richard, 'Jean-Baptiste Gentil', 105.

31   Richard, 'Jean-Baptiste Gentil', 94.

32   The French translation was not published, but the Latin was published as Duperron, *Oupnek'hat, id est, secretum tegendum: opus ipsa in India rarissimum, continens antiquam et arcanam, seu theologicam et philosophicam, doctrinam, è quatuor sacris Indorum libris*, Strasbourg, 1801.

33   Gentil, *Mémoires*, 421.

34   David Roxburgh, 'Persian drawing, ca. 1400–1450: Materials and creative procedures', *Muqarnas*, 19, 2002, 44–77.

35   Archives nationales de France, C/2 174, ff. 107–10. For more on this exchange, see Meredith Martin, 'Tipu Sultan's ambassadors at Saint-Cloud: Indomania and Anglophobia in pre-Revolutionary Paris', *West 86th: A Journal of Decorative Arts, Design History, and Material Culture*, 2014, 50–1.

Company Paintings, 121, and by Andrew Topsfield, 'Two early Company albums', *V&A Album*, 2, 1983, 59.

36 Lynn Hunt, Margaret Jacob and Wijnand Mijnhardt, *The Book that Changed Europe: Picart and Bernard's Religious Ceremonies of the World*, Cambridge, 2010; and Hunt, Jacob and Wijnand, eds, *Bernard Picart and the First Global Vision of Religion*, Los Angeles, CA, 2010.

37 In order, these were *Abrégé historique des souverains de l'Indoustan*, 1772, BnF, fr. 24219; *Histoire des pieces de monnayes qui ont été frappes dans l'Indoustan*, 1773, BnF, fr. 25287; and *Divinités des Indoustans, tirées des Pourans ou Livres historiques ou Samscretam*, 1774, BnF, fr. 24,220. The history by Firishta was commissioned by the Deccani ruler Ibrahim Shah II in 1593, and is known as the *Gulshan-i Ibrahim* or *Tarikh-i Ferishta* of 1598. Jonathan Scott, trans., *Ferishta's History of Dekkan from the first Mahummedan Conquests*, London, 1794, reprint Cambridge, 2013.

38 V&A, IS 25-1980, fols. 16, 20. On the negotiations with the English, see Gentil, *Mémoires*, 240–1.

39 Gentil earned this title after he assisted Shuja' al-Daula in treaty negotiations with the English. Gentil, *Mémoires*, 244.

40 V&A, IS 25-1980, fols. 9, 10, 19, 20, 30, and 32. Muharram is the first month of the Islamic calendar. During this period, Shi'i Muslims commemoratively mourn the death of Hussein, the son of Ali and grandson of Muhammad, who was killed in the Battle of Karbala (680).

41 Gentil, *Mémoires*, 356–381, and BnF, Fr 25,287, fols. 115–22. See also Dadlani, 'The "Palais Indiens"', 175–97; Lafont, *Chitra*; and Taymiya Zaman, 'Visions of Juliana: A Portuguese woman at the court of the Mughals', *Journal of World History*, 23: 4, 2012, 761–91.