

IN THE SHADOW OF THE GOLDEN AGE

ART AND IDENTITY IN ASIA FROM
GANDHARA TO THE MODERN AGE



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JULIA A. B. HEGEWALD

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in a Tibetan Buddhist context.

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Chapter 12

Indian ‘Company School’ Art from 1780 to 1820: Collecting Versus Documenting

Jennifer Howes

In India during the eighteenth century and during the nineteenth centuries, Europeans increasingly would commission and buy pictures by Indian artists. Many of these Europeans were British East India Company officials, and for that reason, these pictures are generally described as ‘Company School’ art. Loosely defined, ‘Company School’ art is a hybrid Indian-European style of depiction that developed in eighteenth and nineteenth-century India through this new form of patronage. If we rely on this definition, then ‘Company School’ art was the result of two factors. The first was style, and the second was patronage. This paper will examine a small selection of ‘Company School’ paintings and drawings that were commissioned by known European collectors between 1780 and 1820. Style will be taken into account when examining these pictures, but patronage will be the focus here. By looking at the background of the officials who commissioned the pictures, I will consider how the output of Indian artists varied in response to the requirements of the Europeans they worked for.

Over the last four decades, the art and architecture of India’s colonial period has become an increasingly popular field of study. The term, ‘Company School’ has become a recognised facet of South Asian art history since 1972, when Mildred Archer published her seminal catalogue, *Company Painting in the India Office Library*. More recent scholarship has avoided the use of the term ‘Company School’ for a number of reasons. In particular, the term is often considered too vague, or the artist-patron relationship that defines it is considered too uncomfortably linked with race. Recent studies and exhibitions on the art and architecture of the colonial period have taken an increasing interest in ‘Company School’ art. It signifies a compelling period in South Asian history, when two cultures simultaneously came into conflict, and also came into confluence. It is a source of fascination that Colonialism could give rise to a cultural phenomenon such as ‘Company School’ art.

STYLE

Classification of 'Company School' art has traditionally been done according to the style in which the artist worked. The geographical region where the artists were trained is reflected in the painting and drawing styles they used, and often (but not always) mirrors a pre-colonial artistic tradition. Works created by north Indian artists are easily differentiated by those produced in the south, and localised variations of style can often be further discerned. I will look here at paintings that were created in both the north and the south of India. The first person to write extensively about Company Paintings was Mildred Archer. She categorised pictures by the artist's geographical origins and training. This geographical mode of stylistic classification, tempered to meet the needs of European patrons, formed the backbone of her scholarship (Archer 1972). Style is, by far, the most pragmatic way to classify 'Company School' art, but at the same time, it is the most subjective determinant that we find when identifying what is a 'Company School' picture, and what is not. In particular, how does one classify a picture by an Indian artist that defies the stylistic classifications put forward by Archer?¹

PATRONAGE

In this paper, I will classify paintings by Indian artists through the motivations of their patrons. I will look at how four particular men served the East India Company, and how collecting pictures by Indian artists fit in with the agendas these individuals aimed to serve. By looking at patronage, I hope to show how these paintings expressed an Indian view of the world, but also related to new informational directions, as per the instructions of colonial officials. Broadly speaking, patrons had two different kinds of motivation, which I will here call 'collecting' and 'information gathering'. The first motivation, to 'collect' drawings, was not the direct result of a colonial agenda, but rather, it was a hobby or pastime. The other motivation was to gather information that would illustrate, through drawings, some facet of a broader colonial documentation project that related to the patron's work in India.

Moving in chronological order, I will begin by looking at two prolific 'collectors' of Indian painting from the 1780s: Antoine Polier and David Simpson. I will then look at Company Paintings produced in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries that were connected with two 'information gatherers'. These were Colin Mackenzie and Francis Buchanan, who both conducted surveys

¹ See the table of contents at the beginning of Archer (1972).

for the British East India Company. I will then ask how these pictures, created by Indians and collected by Europeans, reflect the British pursuit of gathering knowledge in South Asia, and how the focus of these colonial practices varied in these four examples. In many ways, the 'collectors' and the 'information gatherers' represent opposite ends of a spectrum, when looking at these early 'Company School' pictures. For the 'collectors', we find Indian artists working in a predominantly indigenous style. By contrast, the 'information gatherers' often demanded that artists should work fluently in both an indigenous style and a Europeanised style.

The material considered here, commissioned by Polier, Simpson, Mackenzie and Buchanan, only provides a partial account of 'Company School' painting and drawing. Most 'Company' art was not directly commissioned by Europeans. Instead, Indian artists anticipated what Europeans were interested in collecting, and produced drawings and paintings with the European market in mind. There were also pictures in 'Company School' styles that were commissioned by wealthy Indian patrons.² For the sake of this short paper, I am deliberately focusing on four Europeans who directly commissioned art works by Indians between 1780 and 1820. A more nuanced study of 'Company School' painting and drawing still needs to be written.

My decision to focus on patronage, and in particular, to consider these four particular patrons, is partially inspired by Bernard Cohn's ideas about colonial knowledge, and in particular, its categorisation into 'investigative modalities'. Roughly defined, 'investigative modalities' are bodies of information or procedures through which information was gathered, in order to transform it into tangible reports, histories, and other types of depictions (Cohn 1996). Whilst the categories Cohn plots out do not directly work when applied to a general analysis of 'Company Style' art, his work does give some helpful ideas about how to look at material produced under these circumstances of patronage during the colonial period. His central idea is that Empire was a cultural phenomenon, and that the evidence of this phenomenon was the British need to codify information. This idea is sometimes, but not always, incredibly relevant to the study of Company Painting.

It is my intention to show that some drawings connect with a broad colonial agenda to codify information, whilst others do not. Moving back to the two main motivations that compelled Europeans to commission pictures by Indian artists, I will consider the two categories that I have just set out above: 'collecting'

² For example, see the natural history drawings in the Raja Serfojee of Tanjore Collection in the British Library (NHD7).

and ‘information gathering’. Collecting was a pastime pursued by learned individuals who wanted to cultivate their private understanding of the people they lived amongst. By contrast, information gathering was about assembling visual records that connected to a much broader documentation project, and which, by extension, could have contributed to an ‘investigative modality’.³

COLLECTORS: POLIER AND SIMPSON

Antoine-Louis Polier was a French-Swiss adventurer who came to India in 1758. In 1772 he went to Faizabad as the British East India Company’s Chief Engineer and Architect to the Nawab of Avadh, Shuja ud-Daula. Through this role, which brought him into contact with courtly life at Avadh, Polier was able to gather news about political developments within the court’s inner circle, which he would then pass on to the East India Company. He also cultivated his position within Avadh society, and by doing so, was able to amass a fortune through private trade. Although he provided the Company with useful information and helped to facilitate trade between the Company and Avadh, he fell out of favour with Company officers, possibly because the British perceived him as a foreigner. In 1775 Polier resigned from the East India Company’s service, but he remained in Avadh until 1788.

During the period that Polier was stationed at Avadh, the kingdom was a flourishing cultural centre. In 1775, the year that Polier resigned from the East India Company’s service, the Nawab, Shuja ud-Daula, moved the capital from Faizabad to Lucknow. Beautiful new buildings, including palaces and mosques, were constructed at Lucknow to befit its new role as an imperial city. It would have been an interesting and profitable time to be the Nawab’s chief engineer and architect. Polier took on the lifestyle of a courtier and adopted the practices of the wealthy and connected at the new capital. He was fluent in Persian (the court language of Avadh), and he authored a huge body of Persian letters, which give insight into his courtly interactions (Alam & Alavi 2001). He also employed artists to produce albums of paintings for him. At least twelve artists who worked for Polier are known by name today.⁴

³ From this point onwards, I will no longer place the terms, ‘Company School’, ‘collector’, ‘information gatherer’ and ‘investigative modality’ in quotation marks. Any occurrence of these terms should connect with the definitions discussed in this paper so far.

⁴ Research on Indian artists in late eighteenth-century Avadh is the topic of a PhD thesis completed in 2009 by Malini Roy, “Idiosyncrasies in the late Mughal painting tradition of Awadh: The artist Mihr Chand, son of Ganga Ram (fl. 1759–86)”, SOAS University of London. Also, see Roy (2010: 176).

Polier was not the only European who was commissioning paintings at Lucknow. His contemporary, Richard Johnson, commissioned many paintings and illustrated manuscripts by Lucknow artists in the 1780s.⁵ Today, Richard Johnson's collection of paintings and manuscripts, which is now kept in the British Library, is better known for its rare, unique Imperial Mughal paintings, dating from the sixteenth century onwards.⁶ In the 1780s, India's Mughal nobility were selling off their collections of manuscripts and miniature paintings. Dealers moved around northern India, looking for prospective buyers for these royal collections, so it was an opportunistic time to collect Indian paintings and manuscripts. About three quarters of Johnson's two thousand strong miniature painting collection predate his arrival in India. The other quarter of the Johnson Collection, roughly five hundred paintings altogether, were made in Lucknow while Johnson was there, so they were most likely commissions. Considering that Johnson knew Polier, and that there were increased opportunities to collect pre-existing miniature paintings and manuscripts in northern India at this time, it is curious that Polier chose to only commission new paintings, and not to collect older ones. Perhaps the commissioning of paintings was a significant act within Avadh's courtly society, which helped Polier establish his status.

Stylistically, the Polier paintings stand out as representing the provincial Mughal style found at Lucknow during the late eighteenth century. Their subject matter is unrelated to Polier's work at Lucknow as an engineer and architect, so these pictures come across as visual representations of subjects Polier might have personally encountered, or that he learned about in Indian literature. The two examples reproduced here are folios from two different albums of paintings commissioned by Polier. The first shows Vishnu as Narasimha, disemboweling the demon king, Hiranyakashipu (Plate 12.1). The rest of the folios in this album illustrate the other *avatars* of Vishnu, as well as some characters from the *Puranas*, and some Shaivite figures. The second example considered here shows a Brahmin making an offering to an image of the goddess (Plate 12.2). Most of the other folios in this album represent minor forms of Hindu gods and goddesses, but towards the end of the album, where this folio is found, there are pictures of different ascetics and holy men. Although these two examples came out of different albums of drawings (Plates 12.1 and 12.2), they are bound and formatted in the same way, using blue vegetal borders that were typical of Polier's commissions. Both paintings are by anonymous artists, but the names of some artists who worked for Polier have been identified (Roy 2009). Being

⁵ For example, in the British Library's collections, see Johnson albums 27, 45 and 51.

⁶ For a synopsis of Richard Johnson's work and collection habits in India, see Falk and Archer (1981: 14–29).



Plate 12.1 Vishnu as Narasimha, disembowelling the demon king, Hiranyakashipu, by an unidentified Lucknow artist. From an album of paintings commissioned by Antoine Louis Polier at Lucknow, c. 1780. British Library, Oriental Ms 4769, folio 12.



Plate 12.2 A seated Brahmin making an offering to an image of a goddess, surrounded by implements of worship, by an unidentified Lucknow artist. From an album of paintings commissioned by Antoine Louis Polier at Lucknow, c.1780. British Library, Oriental Ms 4770, folio 27.

in a position to commission such albums of paintings tells us something about Polier's social circumstances. He was wealthy, and was surrounded by the right people and resources. However, the subject matter of the paintings had nothing to do with Polier's professional role in Avadh as an architect, engineer and businessman.

The other collector to be considered here is David Simpson, a medical doctor who was based at Madurai in 1780, and who was transferred to Tiruchirapalli, where he stayed until 1786 (Crawford 1930: 265). Aside from the dates of his medical career from 1768 to 1786, and the items we know he collected in India, we know virtually nothing about Simpson. He commissioned a number of unique albums of paintings, and also collected objects. In 1792, just over five years after his return to Europe, his collection was sold at Christie's.⁷ Some remnants of Simpson's collection can be traced today to the British Museum, the British Library and the Bodleian Library.

There were a relatively small number of Europeans living in the inland Tamil region in the early 1780s. Most Europeans residing in the south were based at Madras, or at adjacent coastal settlements such as Pondicherry or Masulipatam. These settlements were on the shipping route to Calcutta, so they were obvious places for Europeans to congregate. The Europeans that found themselves in the inland parts of the Tamil region, such as Madurai, Tiruchirapalli and Thanjavur, were clearly in communication with each other. Some of them would have also commissioned works by local artists, just like Simpson. One such person was Adam Blackader, another physician who was based at Madurai some time between 1782 and 1789 (Crawford 1930: 267; Blackader 1792: 449–459). Both Simpson and Blackader commissioned material by Tamil artists that illustrated the images within Madurai's Minakshi Sundareshvara Temple.⁸

The paintings from Simpson's collection to be considered here come from a manuscript in the British Library, showing copies of murals inside the Minakshi Sundareshvara Temple at Madurai. Simpson referred to the temple in question as the 'Chauki-Linga' temple.⁹ This was obviously the working name for the Minakshi Sundareshvara Temple in the 1780s, because Blackader referred to it by the same name in a letter he wrote in 1789 (Blackader 1792: 451–452). The paintings in the Simpson manuscript considered here (Plates 12.3 and 12.4) are painted onto a long panel of stiffened cloth, which is folded into fifteen sections in an accordion format, and painted on both sides, giving it thirty panels of

⁷ Christie's, 26. May 1792, lot 49, bought by Marsh for £16/16.

⁸ The Blackader material is today held in the V&A and in the Bodleian. See Guy (1990: 207–213).

⁹ British Library, Add.15504 B.

paintings. The manuscript's format exactly recalls the way narrative paintings are shown inside Tamil temples, in registers that are read from left to right, in a comparable manner to a modern comic strip.

The first picture considered here is a standing image of Vishnu that resembles a bronze sculpture attired for worship (Plate 12.3). A blue canopy appears over the god's head. This painting is the manuscript's first panel, and according to the documentation that accompanies the manuscript, it shows the main form of Vishnu in the 'Chauki Linga' Temple at Madurai.¹⁰ The other picture considered here shows a goddess, described here as 'Aditi',¹¹ surrounded by devotees (Plate 12.4). The bold use of lines and colours, and the use of size to indicate the most important character in this panel, are all characteristics associated with south Indian temple painting. Without a doubt, these two pictures, and the other twenty-eight in this manuscript, are copied from paintings inside the Minakshi Sundareshvara Temple at Madurai in the 1780s. No doubt, an artist who painted murals inside of the temple was responsible for painting these pictures in this portable format, using different materials.

Like Polier, Simpson was based in a single region in the 1780s, and he commissioned works that reflected the region's indigenous painting style. However, Simpson's collection habits arose out of quieter circumstances. He did not play a role within a complex courtly culture, and he probably had limited opportunities to interact with Europeans and Europeanised Indians. The individuals who he did interact with would have been a relatively small group, compared to the volume of people who would have processed through the court at Avadh. Given these quieter circumstances, Simpson did what might have come naturally to any curious, educated individual who found himself in another part of the world. He occupied himself by gathering objects and paintings relating to the people he lived amongst.

The main similarity between Simpson and Polier was that they commissioned paintings as collectors. For both of them, commissioning such art works was a leisure activity that helped to cultivate their understanding of their surroundings. The paintings they commissioned did not in any way relate to the professional roles they fulfilled in India. Simpson's collections had nothing to do with medicine, and Polier's did not relate to architecture. Let us now consider Company School art works commissioned in a more professional capacity, by information gatherers.

¹⁰ British Library, Add.15504 B.

¹¹ British Library, Add.15504 B.



Plate 12.3 A standing image of Vishnu, described as the main form of Vishnu in the 'Chauki-Linga' temple (the main Minakshi Sundareshvara Temple) at Madurai, by an unidentified Tamil temple artist. Collected by David Simpson, surgeon at Tiruchchirapalli, in the 1780s. British Library, Add Ms 15504, panel 1.

INFORMATION GATHERERS: MACKENZIE AND BUCHANAN

In this section, the focus will be on Company School pictures that were commissioned by Colin Mackenzie and Francis Buchanan. Both men worked for the East India Company as surveyors, and they even worked together briefly, during the Survey of Mysore in the early 1800s. For both men, their most prolific



Plate 12.4 A seated goddess surrounded by devotees, described as 'Aditi' the mother of the Vedas. By an unidentified Tamil temple artist. Collected by David Simpson, surgeon at Tiruchchirapalli, in the 1780s. British Library, Add Ms 15504, panel 11.

output was in the early nineteenth century, when they were both respectively in the midst of collating data from major survey investigations.

Mackenzie arrived in India in 1783. He began his career in the Madras Engineers, and by 1816, he was appointed India's first Surveyor General. He began collecting drawings as soon as he arrived in the south of India.¹² The

¹² British Library, WD641 (a view of the hill fort at Dindigal by Colin Mackenzie), is dated 1783.

Mackenzie Collections are a set of four maps dated 1788.¹³ The first of these maps (Plate 12.5) is labelled, "Harcara Sketch of Guntoor obtained or observed by one of my Harcaras [...] on march to take possession of Guntoor Circar Ongole Aug 1788."¹⁴ This map, and the three others, document the position of fortresses, tanks, roads, gates and other structures. They clearly relate to Mackenzie's agenda as a military surveyor, and show a hybrid style of mapping and drawing, involving collaboration between Indians and Europeans. But this picture is not in a recognised, Company School style.

Mackenzie's survey work also extended into areas that were not under East India Company control, but were considered potentially valuable to the Company. One such area was Tirupati, which today is still the location of India's best-known, and most heavily endowed pilgrimage site, the temple of Sri Venkateshvara. Interest in this site's wealth is evident from a report compiled by the British Collector at Chittoor on the Sri Venkateshvara Temple's main sources of revenue, which found its way into the Mackenzie manuscripts.¹⁵ Mackenzie sent one of his Brahmin assistants, Subha Rao, to the Sri Venkatesvara Temple in 1804, where he produced a report on the "Foreign Nations, Tribes & people who annually resort to Tripetty on pilgrimage", along with accounts of the hills, roads and buildings at the site.¹⁶ Perhaps to supplement this account, Mackenzie collected a drawing by an anonymous Tamil artist of the Sri Venkatesvara Temple, and the surrounding area (Plate 12.6). This picture is produced in a typical, south Indian, Company School style, showing the artist's use of multiple point perspective, so that all the important factors of the temple and its surrounding landscape, as they would be viewed by a pilgrim visiting the site, were taken into account, including the steep stairs that the pilgrims travelled along, and the forests surrounding the site, teeming with wild animals. Because Tirupati was such a sacred, Brahmin-controlled site, it was probably impossible for Mackenzie to send a survey team to take drawings. This picture might have been the closest Mackenzie could get to surveying the site. The Tirupati drawing is part of an album that Mackenzie presented to his colleague, Sir Thomas Strange, the Chief Justice at Madras from 1801 to 1817.¹⁷

When Mackenzie started his new post as the Surveyor General of India, he had to move to new premises in Calcutta, and he needed to recruit clerks, translators, draftsmen and copyists. To accommodate them, in 1817 Mackenzie

¹³ British Library, WD2673 to 2676.

¹⁴ British Library, WD2673.

¹⁵ British Library, Mss Eur Mackenzie General 45, folios 261–269.

¹⁶ British Library, Mss Eur Mackenzie General 16, folios 490a–500.

¹⁷ British Library, Add Ms 29324.



Plate 12.6 The sacred site at Tirupati, showing buildings, temples and the surrounding landscape, by an unidentified Tamil or Telugu artist. Commissioned by Colin Mackenzie and given to Sir Thomas Strange, the Chief Justice at Madras, in around 1815. British Library, Add Ms 29324, f. 54.

moved the Surveyor's office into a larger building, at 8 Russell Street (Hodgson 1840: 79). One of the copyists who Mackenzie hired to work in the Calcutta Surveyor General's office was Shaikh Abdullah. We know nothing about him, beyond the circumstances of his employment. He was working with Mackenzie by January 1819,¹⁸ and in 1824, three years after Mackenzie's death, he was still employed as a draftsman in the Surveyor's Office. His rate of pay in 1824 was seventy rupees per month, which was on par with that of European draftsmen employed in the same office at that time, and higher than the pay received by most Indian draftsmen. Nothing is known about Shaikh Abdullah's training, but he was most likely a trained artist before he started his employment at the

¹⁸ This date is given on the earliest known drawing by Shaikh Abdullah in the Mackenzie Collection. British Library WD589, inscribed "Copd by Shaik Abdullah. Janry 1819."



Plate 12.7 Watercolour drawing of a temple at Jajpur, Orissa. Made in 1819, by Shaikh Abdullah, a draftsman and copyist employed by Mackenzie at Calcutta. British Library, WD682.

Surveyor General's office. He would have received further training in European style draftsman-ship once his employment under Mackenzie began.

Shaikh Abdullah was able to adjust his style of drawing, depending on what he was required to do. For example, he produced watercolour pictures of monuments and landscapes (Plate 12.7). The picture shown here is a fair copy by Shaikh Abdullah, painted in March 1819, based on a sketch from a survey conducted in 1815, along the Orissa coastline, showing a temple at Jajpur, Orissa. The treatment of foliage and shadows in this picture is indicative of a Calcutta, Company Style painting, showing that when Shaikh Abdullah's employment began at the Surveyor General's office, he was already a trained artist. Another drawing, dated 13. July 1819, tells a different story. It demonstrates that Shaikh Abdullah was also fully trained to produce drawings in the same style as a European draftsman (Plate 12.8). This drawing shows one of the intricately carved limestone drum slabs from Amaravati Stupa that was excavated and removed by a survey team under Mackenzie's direction in 1816 to 1817. This drawing is bound into an album of eighty-five drawings relating to the Amaravati



Plate 12.8 Drawing of a sculpted limestone slab from Amaravati Stupa. Dated July, 1819, by Shaikh Abdullah, a draftsman employed by Mackenzie at Calcutta. British Library, WD1061, f. 69.

survey. Most of the drawings in this album are of Amaravati sculptures, are signed by European draftsmen, and are drawn in an identical style to the folio by Shaikh Abdullah.

Although Mackenzie commissioned hundreds of drawings by Indian draftsmen, copyists and artists, Company School pictures are not the strength of the Mackenzie collection. The bulk of the two thousand drawings gathered by Mackenzie were by European draftsmen. Of these two thousand drawings, by men who were mainly European, but also of mixed race or Indian descent, most of the drawings related to Mackenzie's professional role as a surveyor gathering information about territories under East India Company control. Some of the drawings relate more to Mackenzie's personal interests, and to the interests of his European colleagues who were based in Madras and Calcutta. For example, the drawing of Tirupati (Plate 12.6) is from an album of drawings that Mackenzie gave to Sir Thomas Strange, the Chief Justice at Madras. Although there is a documented reason within the Mackenzie Collection why Mackenzie would have gathered a picture illustrating Tirupati and its surrounding area, there is no apparent reason why Strange would have wanted this information, aside from antiquarian interest. This variance between Company paintings illustrating an aspect of Mackenzie's vocation in India, and being items collected out of antiquarian interest, in the manner of Polier and Simpson, does not come across in the Company drawings commissioned by the next patron.

Francis Buchanan (1762–1829) was a medical doctor and a natural historian who arrived in India in 1794, in the East India Company's medical service. From 1799 to 1803 he assisted Mackenzie during the Survey of Mysore and it is said that Buchanan's way of gathering information was shaped by his interactions with Mackenzie. Buchanan later published a book that documented some of his research during the Mysore Survey (Buchanan 1807). In 1803 he became the surgeon to Lord Wellesley, the Governor General of India, and was appointed by Wellesley as the head of the 'Institution for Promoting the Natural History of India' at Barrackpore. From 1807 to 1814 he moved back to survey work, conducting detailed surveys of Bengal and Bihar. The drawings to be considered here are part of a set of six hundred and sixty drawings, documenting the surveys of Bengal and Bihar. Buchanan personally conveyed these drawings to the UK and deposited them at the East India House Library in 1816. Unlike Mackenzie, it appears that Buchanan mainly employed Indian draftsmen.

The first picture from the Buchanan collection to be considered is a large watercolour of a wealthy merchant's home (Plate 12.9).¹⁹ The name of the artist

¹⁹ Published as an illustration in Martin (1838, vol. 2, opposite p. 927).



Plate 12.9 Plan of a merchant's house by an unidentified Bengali artist, received by Buchanan on 27. August 1813. British Library, Private Papers, Mss Eur G25, ff.29v–30.

is not known, but we do know from an inscription that it was by 'a native artist', and stylistically, it resembles the work of an Indian artist. In particular, the picture uses multiple point perspective. It is clearly a plan of a set of buildings inside of a walled compound. The artist gives a full frontal view of each structure inside the compound, from the perspective of a person walking amidst the buildings, while standing in front of each structure. The largest structure inside the compound is a Bengali style brick temple, which is shown as the largest building probably because of its importance rather than its physical size. This picture embodies some of the basic qualities one would associate with a Company Style drawing of Bengali buildings.

The Indian artists employed by Buchanan were also capable of preparing drawings in a more generic draftsman's style (Plate 12.10). The next picture, prepared by an artist named 'Vaikunth', depicts the tomb of Sultan Ghyas ud-din, in Dinajpur, and was drawn some time between 1807 and 1808.²⁰ It gives the

²⁰ Published as an illustration in Martin (1838, vol. 2, opposite p. 648).

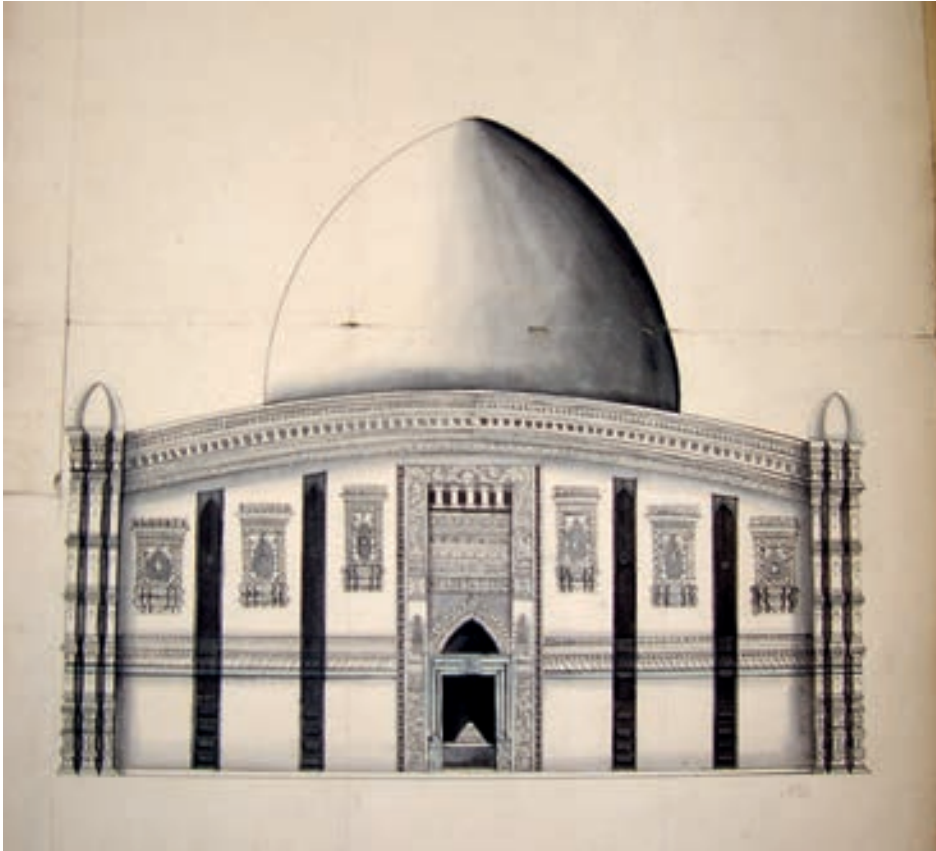


Plate 12.10 Tomb of Sultan Ghyas ud-Din by Vaikunth. Commissioned by Francis Buchanan as part of the Survey of Dinajpur, 1807–1808. British Library, Mss Eur G25, f. 6.

appearance of a Company Style drawing through its attention to fine detail and the shading on the tomb's dome, but it also stands out as stylistically different from the plan of the merchant's house. Just like the two pictures by Shaikh Abdullah that were discussed earlier, these two pictures show that Buchanan's Indian draftsmen could operate in at least two distinct styles of draftsman-ship. Unlike Mackenzie, who during the same period mainly employed European draftsmen, Buchanan mainly employed Indian draftsmen. Although the reason for this is unclear, Buchanan's finances were probably the main motivation; it was generally cheaper to employ Indian artists than it was to employ European draftsmen.

It is also possible that the Indian artists who worked for Buchanan from 1804 to 1807, when he was in charge of the Botanical Gardens at Barrackpore (or



Plate 12.11 A sugar mill operated by oxen. Commissioned by Francis Buchanan during the Survey of Dinajpur, 1807–1808. British Library Private Papers, Mss Eur G25, f. 25.

perhaps Indian draftsmen connected with them), composed Buchanan's staff of draftsmen during the survey of Bengal and Bihar from 1807 to 1814. Buchanan employed at least four different artists to create natural history drawings.²¹ And it is possible that the artists he commissioned to do this work were also involved with the drawings made during the Dinajpur Survey in 1807 and 1808. One of these drawings (Plate 12.11) conveys information that was central to the survey of Dinajpur regarding agriculture, alongside Buchanan's interest in botany, by showing how sugar cane was processed, using a mill operated by oxen.²² The sugar cane was placed between a heavy pole and a point located on the oxen's yoke. The sugar cane was pressed down, and the resulting liquid poured down a wooden pipe, to where it was collected. The drawing shows all parts of the mill, and gives close-up pictures of some parts of the mechanism. The sugar cane is clearly indicated by its bright green colour.

The two information gatherers considered here, Mackenzie and Buchanan, worked in quite different ways, even though they had worked together for a short time during the Mysore Survey. Mackenzie deliberately collected material to contribute to other notable antiquarian projects, while Buchanan was more interested in developing projects on his own. Mackenzie probably had more funding at his disposal than Buchanan as well. However, at the root of both their collections, was a compulsion to serve the East India Company, by using these drawings to illustrate the various surveys the Company employed them to undertake. The drawings are easily connected with their respective employments in India. Their work in India took place over several decades. The period under examination here, 1780 to 1820, was a time of imperial expansion in India, and this expansion is reflected in the changing roles that these two men took on.

CONCLUSION

Indian artists who produced Company Paintings operated in many unique styles. As discussed at the beginning of this paper, the artist usually had an underlying training in an indigenous painting style, and would then adjust this style to meet the needs of European patrons. The level of this adjusting varied tremendously in reaction to the patron's agenda. This is the case with the four patrons examined in this paper, who have deliberately been selected to emphasise the range of styles that Indian artists worked in, and how the levels of adjustment they

²¹ British Library, NHD2. Many of the ninety-nine natural history drawings in this set are signed by Haludar, Bishnu Prasad, Mahangu Lal and Guru Dayal.

²² Published as an illustration in Martin (1838, vol. 2, opposite p. 859).

adopted corresponded with whether the patrons they worked for were collectors or information gatherers.

The collectors, Antoine Polier and David Simpson, were based in completely different geographical areas, and performed completely different roles in India, but they collected for similar reasons. They wanted to gather art works as part of a gentleman's pastime. In the case of Polier, he lived within the courtly structures of the Kingdom of Avadh, and collecting albums of paintings was part of his courtly lifestyle. The most striking adjustment that appears in Polier Collection paintings is the blue floral borders that frame them, and the subject matter, which may have been prescribed by the patron. As for Simpson, the pictures looked at here were painted in an identical style to Tamil temple murals, but they were painted onto a new medium that could be folded up into a book-sized object. These art works all more or less represent existing indigenous styles of painting from two different parts of India in the 1780s.

By contrast, the artists working for the information gatherers were sometimes (but not always) expected to completely subsume their regional training in favour of Western style draftsman-ship. This is the case for the patrons who were information gatherers, Mackenzie and Buchanan. These men knew each other, and were both engaged in survey work in India in around 1800, but they operated in significantly different ways. Mackenzie, the more senior of the two, had access to more resources, and was connected with a much broader web of associates in India. Mackenzie regularly shared and copied out information from his collections for distribution amongst his peers. Buchanan possibly had fewer resources available to him when he conducted fieldwork, which might explain why the drawings he gathered in the field are almost exclusively by Indian artists. Although Buchanan also shared information with his colleagues (including Mackenzie), it appears that he did not disseminate the same quantity of drawings to his European colleagues as Mackenzie did. Mackenzie's drawings often reflected the research interests of his colleagues, while Buchanan's drawings exclusively connected with the colonial documentation projects he was specifically working on. Generally speaking, when gathering information through drawings, Buchanan comes across as more focused than Mackenzie.

Between 1780 and 1820, the time frame considered in this paper, the East India Company became larger and more complex. As a result of this imperial expansion, and the resulting expansion of government, Europeans served the Company in increasingly varied roles. This is certainly the case for the patrons considered in this paper. Three of them were in India in the 1780s (Polier, Simpson and Mackenzie) and one arrived in 1794 (Buchanan). Polier and Simpson both left India in the 1780s, and their work did not develop into a

complicated imperial exercise. By contrast, Mackenzie and Buchanan stayed on for several decades, and the nature of their employment in India became increasingly varied. The East India Company created new roles in response to this expansion, and both Mackenzie and Buchanan were appointed to two of these newly invented roles. In Buchanan's case, he became the first director of the Botanical Gardens at Barrackpore, and in Mackenzie's case, he became the first Surveyor General of India. The output of the Indian artists who worked for these information gatherers was far more varied than the output of the Indian artists who worked for Simpson and Polier as collectors.

Company School art is a difficult topic to define. It was created over a broad period, it was influenced by many different indigenous styles of art, and it was influenced by broad reaching social and economic factors. In many ways, it defies classification, so it is no wonder that most scholars either approach Company School art from either a stylistic perspective, or ignore the term altogether. However, the patronage side of Company School art deserves scholarly attention alongside recent research on Colonialism, especially if one is going to understand Empire as a cultural phenomenon. All Company Style art can be viewed as proof of this phenomenon, as it could have only developed because of Colonialism in South Asia. However, to say that all Company School art is a visualisation of this phenomenon is an aggressive assumption. Instead, it is more appropriate to say that some pictures are clearly linked to gathering official information about India for the East India Company, while others are not. This division can be explained by two different kinds of motivation, which were initiated by the patron. These were 'information gathering' and 'collecting'. These different motivations are reflected in the styles adopted by the Indian artists who worked for these differently motivated patrons.

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