

## JAHANGIR, COLLECTOR: SEIZING THE WORLD

*Mughal Emperor Jahangir (r. 1605-1627) was an avid collector of many things: art, animals, and natural wonders. By tracing his acquisition habits, including networks of trade and types of acquisitions, this article reveals how the emperor constructed his self-concept by way of his collection. Jahangir collected prestige objects to reinforce his own wealth, but also desired to know and possess the most fantastic animals, plants, stones, or other natural oddities. By allowing him to place his mark on such a wide range of objects, Jahangir's collection justified his regnal title: Jahangir, World-Seizer.*

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**Cover Image: Figure 2, Mansur. Zebra. 1620-21.**  
Opaque watercolor and ink on paper. 18.3 x 24cm.  
London, Victoria and Albert Museum.

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9 mules very fayre and lardg, 7 Camells laden with veluett, two Sutes of ... Venetian hanginges of veluett with gould...two Chestes of Persian Cloth of gould, 8 Carpettes of silke, 2 Rubyes ballast, 21 Cammelles of wyne of the Grape, 14 Camelles of distilld sweet waters, 7 of rose waters, 7 daggers sett with stones, 5 swordes sett with stones, 7 Venetian looking glasses, but these so fame, so rich that I was ashamed of the relation.<sup>1</sup>

The above passage was recorded by Sir Thomas Roe, English emissary to the court of Mughal emperor Jahangir, upon seeing a convoy of finery acquired by the emperor. Roe is palpably stunned by the vast show of wealth; not only could Jahangir acquire innumerable objects of the highest quality and rarity, but he could source them from far reaches of the world, from Persia to Venice. Jahangir had a famous penchant for collecting objects like these: rare, fine, unique, and stunning. Over the twenty-two years of his rule, he amassed a collection of objects, animals, and natural rarities that spoke both to his universal power as emperor and his own personal tastes. This paper investigates that collection and the ways in which the emperor assembled it, tracing the motivations and ideological meanings behind each of the pieces in the collection.

Jahangir's collection contained the best and most interesting things his world had to offer him, bringing together "the marvels of nature and the masters of human ingenuity...at once a means and an expression of the monarch's universal grasp".<sup>2</sup> Natural oddities and rarities, including those Jahangir found on his journeys and those brought to him from afar, feature prominently in his memoirs: narwhal teeth, bezoar stones, and other striking naturalia.<sup>3</sup> Rare and striking animals were a large part of Jahangir's collection, both in portraits and in live animals kept at court (especially royal elephants, such as his much-loved pet Nur Bahkt).<sup>4</sup> As in many other imperial collections, things of great value were a crucial ingredient in Jahangir's collection: costly gemstones, decorative weaponry, and prestige textiles from around the world are enumerated countless times in the *Jahangirnama*. These valuables were quite clearly meant to amaze and impress, adding to Jahangir's image of power. In collecting the best and rarest objects possible from across his world, Jahangir lived up to the full meaning of his regnal title *Shah-i-Jahangir*: World-Seizing Monarch.<sup>5</sup>

Jahangir's collection and collecting habits are not well studied, and I was unable to identify any full-length studies that address them in their entirety. However, I have identified a few key, related avenues of research through which we can begin to construct an image of Jahangir as a collector. In focusing on Jahangir's acquisition habits, self-conception as seizer of the world, and attitudes as artistic and scientific naturalist, I argue that Jahangir collected and acquired objects not only to possess them in the most literal sense of the word, but also to frame himself as

possessor of the world. This sense of universal possession is heavily associated with Jahangir's conceptions of self and empire.

*Jahangir, Collector: Jahangir's Acquisition Networks*

Any discussion of a collection, especially a personal collection, must include a pragmatic line of questioning: Where did the collector acquire these objects? What do the acquisition networks used reveal about the collector's values and principles? This is where I begin my research, identifying the most common ways in which Jahangir came across valuables and rarities for his collection. There seem to be four main ways in which he made acquisitions: gifts of rare plants and animals, natural phenomena he encountered firsthand on his travels, gifts and trade of valuables with Safavid Iran, and trade of valuables with the Portuguese at Goa. The former two systems are of vital importance for my later discussions of Jahangir's self-concept as world-seizer and as naturalist. In the sections that follow, I will discuss in detail the latter two networks, gifts and trade with Safavid Iran and trade with the Portuguese at Goa.

The Mughals self-identified as a sibling empire to the Safavids, via their shared Timurid lineage. Jahangir emphasized and utilized this kinship in many ways, including a consistent relationship of gift-giving and trade of valuables between himself and Safavid emperor Shah 'Abbas. The *Jahangirnama* outlines many examples of Jahangir acquiring rarities for his royal treasury as gifts from the Safavid emperor. One foreign observer, Iskandar Beg, describes one gift envoy from Iran:

One thousand five hundred pieces of precious fabrics, velvets, gold- and silver-shot textiles, beautiful gold and silver brocades, European and Chinese silk brocades and velvets, as well as goods and textiles from Yazd and Kashan, and all sorts of gifts and presents worthy of the rank of both giver and recipient that would take too long to enumerate [sic].<sup>6</sup>

In acquiring such vast amounts of prestige goods and wealth as gifts from Shah 'Abbas, not only was Jahangir elevating his own status as owner of valuables, but he was solidifying, strengthening, and reaffirming his close relationship with the large, powerful Safavid empire. Affirming their familial relationship, in fact, seems to be one of Jahangir's primary concerns in his acquisitions from the Safavid emperor. Jahangir describes in his memoirs a gift sent from Shah 'Abbas, a fifty-thousand-rupee turban ornament holding a sizable ruby. He coveted the ruby not only for its monetary value, but also because it was inscribed with the names of their shared ancestors, Ulughbeg, Mirza Shahrukh Bahadur, and Amir Temur Kuragan (Timur). Jahangir had his goldsmiths inscribe his own name on the ruby as well, permanently associating himself with the Safavid's Timurid heritage and documenting it on an object of high value and prestige.<sup>7</sup> Similar incidents recur throughout the

*Jahangirnama*. In one, Jahangir describes a particularly lavish envoy of gifts sent by “my brother Shah ‘Abbas”, including “fine horses, textiles, and suitable rarities of every description”—as well as a lengthy letter, copied verbatim in the memoirs, affirming the emperors’ familial relationship.<sup>8</sup> In another anecdote, Jahangir requests high quality bitumen and turquoise from Shah ‘Abbas, and the Shah’s response reveals the lengths to which he would go to maintain the two emperors’ trade relationship: “these two things can’t be bought, but I will send them to him.”<sup>9</sup> In regularly acquiring objects from Safavid Iran that were of high symbolic and monetary value, Jahangir continually affirmed his place as conceptual and material inheritor of Safavid lineage.<sup>10</sup>

The Safavid empire was not Jahangir’s only valuables acquisition network; the Mughals maintained a profitable, sometimes tense relationship with the Portuguese traders at Goa, through which Jahangir acquired many rarities and valuables from around the world. Mughal contact with the Portuguese came after Akbar, Jahangir’s father, conquered nearby Gujarat in 1572-73.<sup>11</sup> The two empires had a somewhat tense trade relationship under Akbar, with underlying mistrust periodically boiling into outright hostility. During Akbar’s rule, at the plea of the Mughal court, the Portuguese authorities granted one annual opportunity for the Mughals to cross the Red Sea, purportedly to worship at the tomb of Mohammad. The Mughals took high advantage of this concession, loading a fleet of ships once a year with traders and valuables, and returning with ships full of goods traded in the West.<sup>12</sup> Clearly, this was not simply a religious journey—the Mughals exhibited not only a shrewd ability to manipulate their Portuguese neighbors, but also an overriding concern with trade networks and acquisition of finery from across the globe. Some of this underlying tension would become overt, such as a brief and sporadic war in 1613-15. However, relations between the Mughals and Portuguese never soured enough to permanently damage their trading relationship until after Aurangzeb’s rule.<sup>13</sup>

Akbar was interested in any exotic commodities he could acquire from the Portuguese, especially wine and clothes from Portugal. Akbar tells us in his memoirs that he sent one Hajji Habibullah Kashi to Goa to retrieve European curiosities, accompanied by Mughal craftsmen tasked with studying their art. Upon their return Akbar was

. . . attended by a large number of persons dressed up as Christians and playing European drums and clarions. [They displayed] the choice articles of that territory. Craftsmen who had gone to acquire skill displayed the arts which they had learnt and received praises . . . the musicians of that territory breathed fascination with the instruments of that country, especially with the organ. Ear and eye was delighted, and so was the mind.<sup>14</sup>

Akbar displays here a fascination with exotic European goods and habits. Not only did he desire to see and own the goods of Europe, but he had the living craft and performed art of the far-off West brought directly to his court. He translated exotic arts into his own familiar context, and used Portuguese Goa to bring the world to him.

This trade relationship with the Portuguese was actively maintained by Jahangir. He regularly tasked courtiers with retrieving the most impressive and interesting rarities from Portuguese Goa.<sup>15</sup> Most famously, Muqarrab Khan (described in the *Jahangirnama* as “one of the most important and long-serving Jahangirid servants”), was a consistent liaison between Portuguese and Mughals.<sup>16</sup> Muqarrab Khan was knowledgeable in the jewel trade, and sent rarities and exceptional jewels to the imperial court quite regularly.<sup>17</sup> Jahangir used him to satiate his often forceful desire for exotic goods from Goa; on diplomatic visits to the Portuguese vice-rei, Muqarrab Khan was authorized “to purchase any rarities he could get hold of there for the royal treasury . . . without consideration for cost, he paid any price the Franks [Europeans] asked for whatever rarities he could locate.”<sup>18</sup> As this selection illustrates, though visits to Goa may have been partially political, one of their primary purposes was to acquire goods for the imperial collection. In his study of Mughal-Portuguese interaction, Jorge Flores refers to one unpublished Jesuit chronicle. It tells us that in 1611, Muqarrab Khan traveled to Goa with 300 companions. There, after a brief diplomatic meeting with the vice-rei, he failed to acquire a rare piece of furniture valued at 30,000 *cruzados*. Jahangir was incensed at this failure, and harshly criticized his advisor and friend.<sup>19</sup> Jahangir continued a relationship with the Portuguese at Goa expressly to acquire goods through their vast trade networks.

Though the Mughals strongly desired to benefit from the vast trade networks of the Portuguese, theirs was not a simple relationship of desire for Western things and dependence on European trade resources. Their relationship was unequal: though Portuguese sources are generally very concerned with the doings of the Mughals, Europeans are hardly mentioned in many Mughal sources. Europeans are not mentioned in the *Jahangirnama*, not even Thomas Roe’s diplomatic expedition that was so important an event for the English.<sup>20</sup> The overwhelming majority of documentary evidence comes from Portuguese sources, indicating that “the Portuguese needed Mughal Gujarat much more than the Mughals needed them.”<sup>21</sup> Safavid Iran and Portuguese Goa provided two fruitful routes by which Jahangir could acquire valuables for his collection. Through these, he could continuously affirm a kinship with the wealthy Safavid empire, and a lucrative affinity with Portuguese Goa, for both him and his empire.

*Jahangir, Naturalist: Artistic & Scientific Fascination*

The main modes of acquisition which I have not yet discussed—presentation as gifts or personal acquisition on travels—pertain mainly to natural phenomena and rarities, perhaps the most frequent and significant additions to Jahangir’s collection. The frequency with which the emperor sought such goods, and the great attention he paid them, indicates the high esteem in which he held them. I have identified two major themes in Jahangir’s interactions with naturalia in his collection: an association with artistic naturalism, representing the natural world accurately as it appeared to the human eye; and a preoccupation with measuring and quantifying the natural world in a quasi-scientific mode of inquiry. I argue that Jahangir used both as means to assert his ownership over his collection.

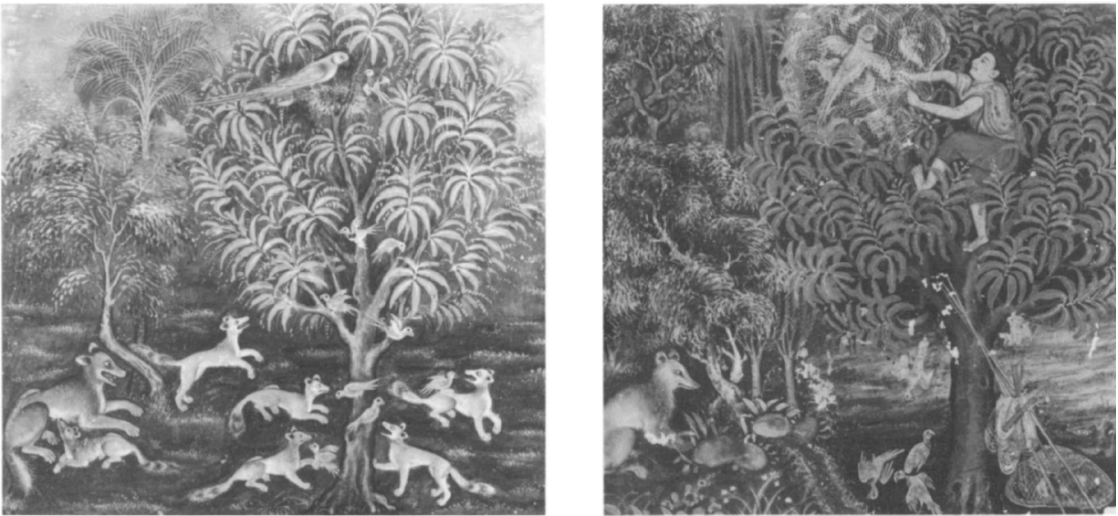


Figure 1. (Right): Daswanth. *The Parrot Mother Cautions Her Young*. Ca. 1560. Opaque watercolor and ink on paper. Cleveland, Cleveland Museum of Art. (Left): Basawan. *The Hunter Throws Away the Baby Parrots*. Ca. 1560. Opaque watercolor and ink on paper. Cleveland, Cleveland Museum of Art.

By the time Jahangir took the throne and began collecting, naturalistic, detailed painting was already in vogue. In a painting commissioned by Akbar, the fantastic and otherworldly coexisted with the natural. As an example, in the parable paintings *The Parrot Mother Cautions her Young* and *The Hunter Throws Away the Baby Parrots* [Fig. 1], fanciful subjects are depicted with a treatment so detailed as to appear lifelike.<sup>22</sup> Naturalism was most prominently shown through the work of Akbari painter Basawan, who favored clear compositions with detailed subjects and perceivable depth, and shied away from the more fantastical subjects and styles favored by his contemporaries.<sup>23</sup> Basawan created paintings that were intimately tied to Akbar’s personal desires and life experiences, “virtually extensions of his own life” and with a strong dependence on reality. Though there was a strong current of otherworldly subjects and fanciful, elaborate treatments under Akbar’s reign, Akbar patronized artists that painted in a naturalistic style, depicting the world he ruled with almost scientific detail.

Jahangir too commissioned naturalistic, extremely detailed artworks—but the works he commissioned served his collection in a completely different way. Where most Akbari paintings tended toward the richly decorated, fantastic, and mythological, most Jahangiri paintings (with the exception of the allegorical paintings I discuss later) tended toward the un-patterned, detailed, and natural. Analysis of the paintings he commissioned reveals a preference for “quieter works with fewer figures and less action . . . fine craftsmanship, control, individual character exploration . . . aspects present but of secondary importance in Akbari works”.<sup>24</sup> The following paragraphs will discuss how Jahangir’s painters used naturalism to incorporate much-loved animal portraits into the emperor’s collection, and the possibility of their drawing inspiration from European painters of nature.

The emperor was quite fond of memorializing his encounters with unusual flora and fauna by commissioning paintings of them. The *Jahangirnama* is replete with similar episodes, in which Jahangir sees, or is brought as a gift, an unusual specimen—most often an animal—and after a detailed description, Jahangir commissions a portrait of it. The following passage relates one such instance:

Around this time a dervish came from Ceylon bringing an unusual animal called a *devang* [slender lori]. Its face looks like that of a large bat, and overall the body is similar to a monkey’s but has no tail. Its movements are like those of the black ape called *ban manus* [orangutan] in Hindi. The body was the size of a baby monkey two or three month old. Since it had been with the dervish for five years, it was obvious it was not going to get any bigger. It drinks milk and eats bananas. Since it looked extremely strange, I showed it to the artists and ordered them to make a likeness of it with its various movements. It is really horrible looking.<sup>25</sup>

Because the lori belonged to the dervish and could not, in this case, remain at court with Jahangir, he ordered a portrait of it, one that captured the movements that made the animal so strange. He immortalized his encounter with the lori and turned it into an object that he himself owned. The painting was the permanent, tangible, ownable simulacrum for the experience. Similar encounters repeat throughout the memoirs. Some animals were brought to Jahangir’s court, such as the famous and often-studied zebra [Fig. 2] and turkey [Fig. 3], brought to him from Goa.<sup>26</sup> Some Jahangir encountered while he and his company were traveling, such as the mottled polecat.<sup>27</sup> Each of these prompted not only a detailed, carefully observed verbal description in the memoirs, but also a commissioned artistic likeness so that Jahangir could incorporate the rarity of the animal into his collection.



Figure 3. Mansur. *North American Turkey*. Ca. 1612. Opaque watercolor on paper, 22.5 x 15.5cm. London, Victoria and Albert Museum.

Naturalistic, detailed portraits enhanced the animals' strangeness. As previously mentioned, his court artists operated in a highly detailed mode that required careful observation and attention to detail. Jahangir explains that he utilized their skills not only because they could memorialize his encounters with the animals, but because they could do so accurately and in such a way that captured their true essence and personality: "Since these animals looked so extremely strange to me, I both wrote of them and ordered the artists to draw their likenesses so that the astonishment one has at hearing of them would increase by seeing them".<sup>28</sup> Even the marginalia of many Jahangiri manuscripts contain accurate miniature paintings and drawings of animals, most so accurate that contemporary scientists and art historians can note the exact species based on their physical attributes.<sup>29</sup> Jahangir sought not only to document his encounter with strange animals and plants, but to capture the essence of what made them special, from their most minute physical details to their personalities and characters.



Many scholars have identified European painting as a possible source of inspiration for naturalistic Jahangiri depictions of flora and fauna. Milo Cleveland Beach demonstrates that Abu'l Hasan, famed painter of Jahangir's allegories, studied and copied works of the European Renaissance, sometimes incorporating design elements into his own works.<sup>30</sup> Ebba Koch similarly argues that Mansur, creator of most of Jahangir's portraits of flora and fauna, drew inspiration from European scientific plant books. At the same time Jahangir was commissioning his animal and plant portraits, Europeans were creating scientific reference books with highly detailed drawings of plants and animals. Formal similarities between the two are sometimes striking—for example, a painting by Mansur and one from a European botanical magazine show tulips in almost identical compositions, showing bud and open bloom at the same time.<sup>31</sup> The key difference, however, between Jahangiri and European plant drawings is function and purpose. Jahangir was certainly not creating images for scientific reference. His commissioned paintings were highly personal works meant to represent important moments in his life, and to add to his own personal memoirs, collection, and prestige. Historian Michael N. Pearson's argument adds dimension to Koch's and Beach's, suggesting that though there were commonalities between early modern India and Europe, Mughals did not view European naturalism as superior to more local painterly traditions. There was demonstrably more interest in copying European works so that Mughal painters could learn from their foreign techniques, than in purchasing large amounts of European artworks or patronizing European artists.<sup>32</sup> Rather, Mughal artists identified an artistic mode (naturalism) that suited their patron's (Jahangir's) tastes, and incorporated it into their own artmaking.

Scientific naturalism—a concern with objective observation, experimentation, and measurement in order to increase one's knowledge of the world—was a large part of Jahangir's self-conception. Jahangir was constantly dedicated to increasing his body of knowledge, for example through his extensive collection of books. Upon Akbar's death, the imperial library already contained 24,000 volumes, and Jahangir expanded it significantly. Almost half of Jahangir's library contained books of non-Mughal origin, illustrating his desire to know the nature of the entire world. Jahangir was also the first Mughal to mark his books with his ownership and the names of any previous owners.<sup>33</sup> He applied this thirst for knowledge to the natural world in particular.

Not only did the emperor carefully observe and describe any striking natural phenomena he encountered, but he also documented and kept his observations for his own collection and records. Upon spotting a group of dipper birds on his travels, Jahangir “ordered two or three of them caught and brought to [him] so that [he] could see whether its feet were webbed like a duck's or open like other birds of the field.”<sup>34</sup> After observing the birds and determining that they were not related to

ducks, Jahangir ordered Mansur to paint a portrait of the birds for his collection. Similarly, on another journey Jahangir's retinue came across a field of banyan trees "of a size, greenness, and lushness that had seldom been seen". Desiring to know more about these spectacular trees, Jahangir ordered them measured and determined their exact sizes; he ends the account, "since it was so extremely strange, it has been recorded".<sup>35</sup> Again, in these episodes Jahangir measures in order to record and keep the unique, rare natural phenomena he encounters.

Jahangir also measured and recorded his empire as a whole, further evidence that measurement was for him a means of ownership and control. In an extensively detailed description of the region of Kashmir, Jahangir was unsatisfied by the geographic measurements Abu'l Fazl recorded in the *Akbarnama*. Rather than taking his father's assessment at face value, he assembled a team of experts to measure the entire territory with ropes by width and length, so that he could more accurately record his held territories in his own memoirs.<sup>36</sup> He ordered a similar assessment and measurement of the diamond mines in Barakar only after they had been captured, so that he could record it as his.<sup>37</sup> In his eleventh regnal year, a reflection on the importance of hunting to his reign prompted Jahangir to commission a list of all the animals that his court had hunted and killed since the time of his accession to the throne. An enormous research undertaking carried out by many hunters and scouts, this list—finally cataloguing over 28,000 animals killed during Jahangir's rule—was a physical, empirical embodiment of Jahangir's dominion over the natural world.<sup>38</sup> It enabled him to record and keep the impact of his activities, an impact that would otherwise be largely invisible. Not only was Jahangir here driven by a desire to factually know his strength as emperor, but in the costly act of creating a permanent list, he is adding each animal he killed to the same collection as each animal portrait and strange natural phenomenon he owned. It was not enough for him to know that he had killed thousands of animals; each one had to be carefully documented and added to the list. Measurement, not only of interesting individual phenomena but also of the holistic empire, was a main way by which Jahangir expressed his ownership of the world.

This impulse to measure and record was not entirely driven by scientific curiosity. In addition to a desire to own, it was driven by an idiosyncratic aesthetic sense, a taste for beauty and strangeness that resonated throughout his collection.<sup>39</sup> When Jahangir stated in his memoirs that he wrote of and commissioned portraits of animals like the lori "since these animals looked so extremely strange to me", "so that the astonishment one has at hearing of them would increase by seeing them",<sup>40</sup> he indicated that he valued them expressly for their beauty and strangeness. Not only was Jahangir interested in knowing and representing the exact physical nature of the animals and birds, but he was prompted by a markedly personal, aesthetic

reaction to them. This reaction is clear throughout Jahangir's memoirs. Upon first viewing the zebra in Fig. 2, Jahangir first describes it at length, then rhapsodizes on its rare form: "You'd say the painter of destiny had produced a tour de force on the canvas of time with his wonder-working brush". Next, of course, he orders Mansur to paint the animal.<sup>41</sup> When Ibrahim Khan Fath-Jang brought him a diamond that was "indistinguishable from a sapphire", Jahangir's jewel appraisers gave it a fairly low monetary valuation, claiming that if it was clearer it would be worth more money. Jahangir, however, kept it for his own all the same, loving it so much for its uniqueness that he inscribed his name onto it. It was not the diamond's inherent value that prompted Jahangir to acquire it, but his own personal love for its strangeness.

*Not only does Jahangir here transcend Alexander, another world-conqueror, but he equates the entire world with his own empire.*

One particularly famous Jahangiri drawing, Mansur's portrait of the dying Inayat Khan [Fig. 7], also falls into this category of natural phenomenon valued for its rarity. The drawing is striking for its naturalistic, hauntingly accurate depiction of a gaunt man living on his last breaths; it rivals the beloved animal portraits for its naturalistic detail, yet is rare in its depiction of a singular, isolated human. Though it is a portrait of a human, it was commissioned for the same reasons as the animal portraits, motivated by a desire to record a deeply moving strangeness. Jahangir's description of Inayat Khan's decrepit state proves his deep fascination with his deterioration, a degree of which Jahangir had never seen before. He describes his motivations for capturing the deterioration in a portrait: "nothing remotely resembling him had ever been seen. Good God! How can a human being remain alive in this shape?" Jahangir even transcribed two lines of poetry that the sight evoked: "If my shadow doesn't hold my leg, I won't be able to stand until Doomsday. / My sigh sees my heart so weak that it rests a while on my lip."<sup>42</sup> Again, the drawing was commissioned to record both the high emotion and the novelty of Inayat Khan's body, or rather, of Jahangir's interaction with it. The drawing was a physical, scientific documentation of a rare, deeply subjective experience.

Jahangir clearly had a loving relationship with the natural world, constantly striving to know it and collect it. He did so by recording his most striking interactions with the natural world, either by measuring them or commissioning paintings of them. Both were means by which Jahangir could assert his ownership of natural phenomena, and convert his ephemeral experiences with them to tangible, ownable representations of his experiences.

*Jahangir, World-Seizer: Owner of the World and its Finest Goods*

Collecting and recording rare and remarkable objects allowed Jahangir to own them. Though personal ownership is a necessary component of any private collection, for Jahangir it constituted a crucial part of his self-concept, one by which he defined his empire and rule. In naming himself *Jahangir*—translated, *World-Seizer*—the emperor asserted his ownership of the entire world. The following section will discuss ways in which Jahangir represented himself as world-seizer, and how his collection of valuables and naturalia reinforced that self-concept.

Jahangir's self-concept as seizer of the world is well-evidenced outside of his collection habits. In addition to his choice of the word *Jahangir* for his regnal title, the emperor commissioned many allegorical paintings that depicted himself quite literally seizing the world. [Fig. 4, Fig. 5] In allegorical paintings featuring a globe, Jahangir is always depicted subjugating it in some way, standing on it or holding his hand, in a visual extension of the world-seizer title.<sup>43</sup> Furthermore, in nearly all of these paintings Jahangir is centrally located and physically connected to the globe: standing on it, holding it, or receiving it as a gift.<sup>44</sup> In these pictures, Jahangir actively presents himself as possessor, conqueror, or divine ruler of the world. Globes and maps were always manipulated, either to show only suggestions of landmasses (ideas of maps rather than accurate depictions of them), or to place the Mughal Empire in the center of the world.<sup>45</sup> Globes that showed only the Empire and its borders implied that the entire world consisted of the Mughal empire, the world that Jahangir controlled. The globes in these paintings often appear populated with animals, predator and prey, lying peacefully with one another in a state of coexistence known in Persian as *dad-u-dam*. They serve as a further symbol of Jahangir's competence and legitimacy as ruler, and the goodness of his reign that extended throughout the world and into the natural realm.<sup>46</sup> One allegorical painting particularly drives these points home. Jahangir, seated in a throne with a radiating halo, holds a globe in his hand, about the size of his own head.<sup>47</sup> The painting bears the Persian inscription: Jahangir's "visage as world-illuminating . . . if a hundred kings like Alexander came to the World, they would all prostrate themselves a hundred times at a glimpse of his face . . . the kings of Rum and China wait at the gate."<sup>48</sup> Not only does Jahangir here transcend Alexander, another world-conqueror, but he equates the entire world with his own empire. This mode of expression of global ownership and rulership became so paradigmatic of the Mughal empire that it continued long after Jahangir's reign.<sup>49</sup>

There are quite a few European referents for the allegorical use of globes to symbolize imperial ownership. For example, art historian Milo Cleveland Beach argues that Jahangir's choices to depict the globe in this manner was based on English allegorical paintings of empire. He does provide convincing comparanda, for example, Marcus Gheeraerts the Younger's *Portrait of Elizabeth I*, in which the queen stands upon a large globe herself.<sup>50</sup> However, the evidence presented here

suggests that though Jahangir was likely aware of such European paintings and may well have drawn inspiration from them, he was not simply emulating them; rather, he was incorporating what he saw as the most useful elements of European imperial representation, and adapting them to his own ends. Jahangiri allegorical paintings often depicted specifically, idiosyncratically Jahangiri relationships—most famously, his brotherly relationship with Shah ‘Abbas [Fig. 4], or his antagonistic relationship with Malik ‘Ambar [Fig. 5]. Both paintings depict Jahangir with a globe, yet depict ideas and relationships that are undeniably, wholly Mughal. There is no denying that globes and maps, as scientific instruments, were important parts of early modern Europe, symbols of and tools for measuring an increasingly global world. They were also parts of the same prestige networks through which Europeans traded spices, metals, and other sought-after materials of global trade, networks that the Mughal empire certainly participated in.<sup>51</sup> In Jahangiri paintings, however, globes are never represented as European scientific instruments—if they bear recognizable landmasses, they are always manipulated and never show the world as it truly is. If Europe appears on the globes at all, it is only on the fringes.<sup>52</sup> Though globes may be instruments of European scientific knowledge, Jahangiri painters appropriated them to represent Jahangir’s idiosyncratic conception of himself as emperor. On the pages of these paintings, globes became signifiers of Jahangir’s cosmological reign as world-seizer.

These allegorical representations relate to Jahangir’s collection and collecting habits in their shared elaboration of global ownership. Unlike many other imperial collections like those of the Habsburgs, to which Jahangir and his collection are often compared,<sup>53</sup> Jahangir does not seem to have desired his collection to be displayed, or made available for study. Rather, it was stored in royal workshops or storage rooms, and made available whenever the emperor desired.<sup>54</sup> Jahangir clearly took great pride in his personal ownership of objects in his collection; the aforementioned gemstone on which Jahangir inscribed his own name next to Ulughbeg’s and Timur’s illustrates Jahangir’s literal inscription of his ownership onto the objects he acquired. The emperor similarly imprinted many objects in his collection with his ownership, especially books. As previously mentioned, Jahangir was the first Mughal to write ownership histories in the books he acquired for the vast imperial library, ending, of course, with himself.<sup>55</sup>

Even nature itself was claimed for the Jahangiri collection. Examples of Jahangir’s ownership of nature abound in the *Jahangirnama*.<sup>56</sup> In one example from his eleventh regnal year, Jahangir came across a palm tree with an unusual forked trunk while on his travels. He prompted his companions to help him measure it exactly, then built a terrace or platform [*chabutara*] around the unique tree in a gesture Ebba Koch termed “the imprinting of nature.” Furthermore, Jahangir ordered a painting of the scene to be made for the *Jahangirnama*.<sup>57</sup> Just as he inscribed

his ownership onto the books and gemstones he acquired, Jahangir constructed a physical sign of his contact with this rarity, marking it permanently as partially his. In commissioning a portrait, he also immortalized the experience and acquired a physical memento of it for his collection. [Fig. 6]

News of a meteor strike in Jalandhar prompted a similar reaction from the emperor. He ordered the meteor brought to him, and commissioned two swords and one dagger to be made out of its ore, working with his craftsmen to find a combination of metals that would render the meteoric metal suitable for a blade. A court poet composed this verse about the event: “The world attained order from the world-seizing monarch, / And during his reign raw iron fell from lightning. / From that iron was made by his world-conquering order / A dagger and a knife and two swords.”<sup>58</sup> Jahangir literally seized the tangible manifestation of this rare natural event, manipulated it into prestigious objects for his collection, and memorialized the experience with art reaffirming his status as seizer of the world. When Jahangir could not put natural phenomena into his collection directly, he marked, altered, or captured the nature he desired in order to forever imbue it with his ownership.

All private collections must reveal something about their collector; by definition, they are a group of objects that appeal to one, idiosyncratic person. Jahangir’s collection was by no means a traditional collection, but it certainly revealed much about him as an emperor and as a person. He collected beautiful objects from his neighbors to solidify political relationships, and from faraway lands to lay claim to the world’s strangest phenomena. He collected encounters with flora and fauna by writing and drawing about them, by including them in the permanent record of his life, thus defining himself by his encounters with them. And he took great pride in that record, making sure that at every opportunity it reflected his self-concept of World-Seizer. All these were ways for him not only to acquire fantastic and valuable goods, but also to feed his hunger for knowledge, to further seize his world and immortalize his ownership of it.

## NOTES

- 1 Jahangir, *The Jahangirnama: Memoirs of Jahangir, Emperor of India*, trans. W. M. Thackston (New York: Freer Gallery of Art, Arthur M. Sackler Gallery in association with Oxford University Press, 1999), 122.
- 2 Corinne Lefèvre, "Recovering a Missing Voice from Mughal India: The Imperial Discourse of Jahāngīr (r. 1605-1627) in His Memoirs," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 50, no. 4 (2007): 479.
- 3 Lefèvre, "Recovering a Missing Voice from Mughal India"; Jahangir and W. M. Thackston, *The Jahangirnama: Memoirs of Jahangir, Emperor of India* (New York: Freer Gallery of Art, Arthur M. Sackler Gallery in association with Oxford University Press, 1999), 193.
- 4 Jahangir, *The Jahangirnama*, 229.
- 5 Jahangir, *The Jahangirnama*, 363.
- 6 Jahangir, *The Jahangirnama*, 122.
- 7 Jahangir, *The Jahangirnama*, 357. Wheeler Thackston clarifies that the stone in question was most likely a spinel, not a ruby.
- 8 Jahangir, *The Jahangirnama*, 121-124.
- 9 Jahangir, *The Jahangirnama*, 143.
- 10 The veracity of the Mughal claim to shared Timurid heritage with the Safavids is highly tenuous, but clearly one that Jahangir sought to emphasize; the episodes I list here as well as many more in the *Jahangirnama* support this. This discussion concerns only the symbolic attributes of their relationship, not any real genealogical relation.
- 11 M.N. Pearson, "Portuguese India and the Mughals," *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress* 59 (1998): 407-26.
- 12 Pearson, "Portuguese India and the Mughals," 413.
- 13 Pearson, "Portuguese India and the Mughals," 420.
- 14 Pearson, "Portuguese India and the Mughals," 414-415.
- 15 Jahangir, *The Jahangirnama*.
- 16 Jahangir, *The Jahangirnama*, 94.
- 17 Jorge Flores, "The Sea and the World of the Mutasaddi: A Profile of Port Officials from Mughal Gujarat (c. 1600—1650)," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 21, no. 1 (2011): 60.
- 18 Jahangir, *The Jahangirnama*, 133.
- 19 Flores, "The Sea and the World of the Mutasaddi," 61.
- 20 Pearson, "Portuguese India and the Mughals," 408.
- 21 Pearson, "Portuguese India and the Mughals," 420.
- 22 Milo Cleveland Beach, "The Mughal Painter Daswanth," *Ars Orientalis* 13 (1982): 121-33.
- 23 Beach, "The Mughal Painter Daswanth".
- 24 Beach, "The Mughal Painter Abu'l Hasan and Some English Sources for His Style", 7.
- 25 Jahangir, *The Jahangirnama*, 94.
- 26 Jahangir, *The Jahangirnama*, 133; 360.
- 27 Jahangir, *The Jahangirnama*, 75.
- 28 Jahangir, *The Jahangirnama*, 133.
- 29 Das, *Wonders of Nature: Ustad Mansur at the Mughal Court*, 72.
- 30 Beach, "The Mughal Painter Abu'l Hasan and Some English Sources for His Style", 18. See, for example, the *putti* in Fig. 5, a common element of Renaissance painting. Beach somewhat objectionably describes a young Abu'l Hasan's depictions of fabric modeling as "better" than those of his contemporaries because they used more highlights and shadows, in the style of European painters.
- 31 Koch, "Jahangir as Francis Bacon's Ideal of the King as an Observer and Investigator of Nature", 312-314.
- 32 Pearson, "Portuguese India and the Mughals", 409-420.
- 33 Lefèvre, "Recovering a Missing Voice from Mughal India," 482.
- 34 Jahangir, *The Jahangirnama*, 339.
- 35 Jahangir, *The Jahangirnama*, 207.
- 36 Jahangir, *The Jahangirnama*, 331.
- 37 Jahangir, *The Jahangirnama*, 268-69.
- 38 Jahangir, *The Jahangirnama*, 216.
- 39 Lefèvre, "Recovering a Missing Voice from Mughal India," 474-75.
- 40 Jahangir, *The Jahangirnama*, 133.
- 41 Jahangir, *The Jahangirnama*, 360.
- 42 Jahangir, *The Jahangirnama*, 280-281.
- 43 Ebba Koch, "The Symbolic Possession of the World: European Cartography in Mughal Allegory and History Painting," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 55, no. 2/3 (2012): 556.
- 44 Sumathi Ramaswamy, "Conceit of the Globe in Mughal Visual Practice," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 49, no. 4 (2007): 711.
- 45 Ramaswamy, "Conceit of the Globe in Mughal Visual Practice," 753-58.
- 46 Koch, "The Symbolic Possession of the World," 556.
- 47 Ramaswamy, "Conceit of the Globe in Mughal Visual Practice," 773. The orb in his hand bears no visible landmasses, but is identified by scholars as a globe.
- 48 Ramaswamy, "Conceit of the Globe in Mughal Visual Practice," 773.
- 49 Ramaswamy, "Conceit of the Globe in Mughal Visual Practice," 769.
- 50 Milo Cleveland Beach, "The Mughal Painter Abu'l Hasan and Some English Sources for His Style," *The Journal of the Walters Art Gallery* 38 (1980): 6-33.
- 51 Ramaswamy, "Conceit of the Globe in Mughal Visual Practice," 755.
- 52 Koch, "The Symbolic Possession of the World," 556.
- 53 See especially Ebba Koch, "Jahangir as Francis Bacon's Ideal of the King as an Observer and Investigator of Nature," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 19, no. 3 (2009): 293-338. Asok Kumar Das also describes how Habsburg collections were displayed in special viewing galleries.
- 54 Asok Kumar Das, *Wonders of Nature: Ustad Mansur at the Mughal Court*, 2nd ed., vol. 64, Marg (Mumbai: Radhika Sabavala, 2012), 20.
- 55 Lefèvre, "Recovering a Missing Voice from Mughal India," 482.
- 56 A fruitful line of further investigation, for example, could be Jahangir's relationship with hunting and killing animals, as it is a recurrent and morally fraught theme throughout the *Jahangirnama*. The instances discussed in the previous section of Jahangir recording and making tangible his interactions with nature are further clear demonstrations of Jahangir's ownership of nature.
- 57 Jahangir, *The Jahangirnama*, 208; Koch, "Jahangir as Francis Bacon's Ideal of the King as an Observer and Investigator of Nature", 325-327.
- 58 Jahangir, *The Jahangirnama*, 363.

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## FIGURES REFERENCED

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Figure 1: (Right): Daswanth. *The Parrot Mother Cautions Her Young*. Ca. 1560. Opaque watercolor and ink on paper. Cleveland, Cleveland Museum of Art. (Left): Basawan. *The Hunter Throws Away the Baby Parrots*. Ca. 1560. Opaque watercolor and ink on paper. Cleveland, Cleveland Museum of Art.

Figure 2 (Title Image): Mansur. *Zebra*. 1620-21. Opaque watercolor and ink on paper. 18.3 x 24cm. London, Victoria and Albert Museum.

Figure 3: Mansur. *North American Turkey*. Ca. 1612. Opaque watercolor on paper, 22.5 x 15.5cm. London, Victoria and Albert Museum.

Figure 4: Abu'l Hasan. *Allegorical Representation of Emperor Jahangir and Shah 'Abbas of Persia* (St. Petersburg Album). Ca. 1618. Opaque watercolor, gold, and ink on paper, 23.8 x 15.4 cm. Washington, D.C., Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution.

Figure 5: Abu'l Hasan. *Jahangir Shoots Malik Ambar* (Minto Album). Ca. 1616. Ink, Opaque Watercolor, and gold on paper, 25.8 x 16.5 cm. Washington D.C., Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution.

Figure 6: *Jahangir has a palm tree with a forked trunk measured* (*Jahangirnama*). N.d. Opaque watercolor on paper, 34.3 x 22 cm. Rampur, Raza Library.

Figure 7: Balchand. *The Dying Inayat Kahn*. Ca. 1618. Ink and color on paper, 9.5 x 13.3 cm. Boston, Museum of Fine Arts.

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