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Review

Visual and Verbal Rhetoric in Islamicate Manuscripts: A Semiotic and Multimodal Perspective

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A B S T R A C T

This article presents a series of reflections on the visual and verbal rhetoric of Baburite art, with a particular emphasis on the interplay between visual and textual elements in Islamicate manuscripts. It particularly critiques the semiotic and multimodal methods employed to decipher the artistic customs of the period, specifically the reign of Zahiruddin Muhammad Babur and his descendants. The work offers a psychological analysis of miniatures, calligraphy, and inscriptions as powerful rhetorical tools to disseminate the imperial message, establishes cultural and national identity through their connection with various religions, and fosters political legitimacy. The paper itself also highlights Babur's impact on the evolution of Indian painting, particularly his role in importing Persian and Central Asian art practices that would meld with regional styles in India to form a distinct Mughal visual culture. As a result of cultural hybridity, Babur's artistic contribution informed the art direction of Mughal viceroys for their visual and literary narratives. This article highlights several key themes, including Persian, Central Asian, and Indian influences, and focuses on the significance of considering Baburite art as a vehicle for artistic representation and propaganda. The paper advocates for a more unified approach to considering Baburite art as a simultaneous cultural expression and imperial communication.

INTRODUCTION

The time of Zahiruddin Muhammad Babur and his descendants, the Baburids, was a critical moment in South Asian cultural and artistic history (Branfoot, 2018). When Babur invaded India in the early sixteenth century, he brought with him a wealth of artistic traditions from Persia and Central Asia that became infused with India's own artistic legacy, affecting even the monumental structures as well as miniature painting (Gonzalez, 2016; Losty & Roy, 2013; Patel & Leonard, 2011; Shahzad, 2025). During this time not only political power centralized, but a distinct mode of artistic expression with characteristics both Eastern and Western had emerged. The Baburite court radiated a renaissance, attracting scholars, poets, painters, and calligraphers from different parts of the country to participate in an unmatched cultural confluence (Gonzalez 2016). The visual arts, specifically illuminations and miniature paintings, were integral elements of this cultural flowering, providing a significant medium for the propagation of imperial propaganda, cultural identity, and political legitimacy. These works of art were not only decorative; they also formed an influential visual and ideological space within the Mughal Empire (Gonzalez, 2016; Losty & Roy, 2013); Mishra & Tyagi, 2024).

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The visual and verbal rhetoric in these works has not yet been systematically investigated, although the individual art traditions have been studied extensively (Abiodun, 1987; Aczél, 2023; Hagan, 2006; Stampoulidis & Bolognesi, 2019). Studies show that visual and verbal expressions generate interactive communication experiences more powerful than the sum of equally persuasive components. Hagan (2007) classifies four dimensions of visual-verbal interaction across the continuum of loose to tight picto-literate coupling in which coherent and perceptual relations between image/illustration and text can either support, oppose, or contest reader response. This interweaving encompasses not only literal and figurative content but also imagined ingredients that generate unrealized rhetorical potential. Aczél (2023) terms these visual hybrids and describes them as staging rhetorical 'plays of difference-and-unity' whereby identification occurs when thoughts connect to images, words to pictures. Macken-Horarik (2004) demonstrates that image and verbiage are complementary in creating meaning, so that the analysis of multimodal texts requires consideration of the co-alignment of evaluation between these modes.

Over time, the visual arts of Babur's era have been interpreted in terms of the stylistic source—whether Persian, Indian, or Central Asian (Gonzalez 2016). However, these works do not typically discuss the complex interaction between visual art and its complementary textual components, nor how both systems of information combine to convey nuanced messages. Semiotics, the science of signs and symbols, provides a useful means for analysing the role that visual features like miniatures and calligraphy serve in expressing authority, power, and ideology (Chandler 2025; Jappy 2013; Lagopoulos et al. Similarly, a multimodal analysis that takes into account the interaction of visual and verbal modes enables us to develop a more cohesive understanding of how these works functioned as communicative tools within their socio-political settings within the Baburite Empire (Iedema, 2003; Ledin & Machin, 2020; Macken-Horarik, 2004).

Previous research has explored the impact of Babur's Central Asian background on Indian art, but there remains a void in understanding how its visual and verbal components coalesced to convey a rhetorical statement (Branfoot, 2018; Dale, 2004; Foltz, 1998; Gonzalez, 2016; Hagan, 2006). A significant portion of the available literature focuses on either the aesthetic aspects or the historical significance of Baburite art as individual elements, such as groups of miniatures or calligraphic styles, rather than on how these elements interact to produce meaning (Balafrej, 2019; Gonzalez, 2016; Khajavi, 2020; Kia, 2006). Together with semiotic analysis, multimodality offers a more enriching approach to studying such artworks and artifacts, examining how text and image interact to create a coherent ideational message.

Despite the growing interest in multimodal analysis as an important method for understanding art, literature, and communication in general, relatively little attention has been devoted to this approach as it relates to historical artworks, specifically those from pre-Islamic times, such as the Baburidate period. Here, visual imagery and written text, including miniatures, border vignettes, and other details, work closely together as elements of a combined communicative system that includes inscriptions, poems, and narrative texts. This article proposes a conceptual framework for discussing visual and verbal rhetoric in Islamicate manuscripts from a semiotic multimodal perspective, aiming to fill the gap highlighted above. Using semiotic analysis, this research project deciphers the symbols, themes, and stories underlying the work's visual factors, while multimodal analysis considers how these visuals interact with textual elements to create a coherent and integrated story. Both approaches combined offer a comprehensive framework for analysing the relationship between image and text in Islamicate manuscripts, shedding light on their rhetorical, cultural, and communicative potential.

PRE-ISLAMIC INDIAN PAINTINGS AND MINIATURES

The tradition of painting in the Indian subcontinent has its roots in ancient times. Frescoes in the Ajanta and Ellora caves, Buddhist manuscripts on palm leaves, miniature paintings of the Mughal and Rajput schools, and numerous other paintings all testify to the high skill of Indian artists. Through painting, Indian classical visual art conveys the joy of life, the abundance of its blessings, spiritual sentiments, and the triumph of spiritual perfection (Ranjana & Shahid, 2025). A distinctive feature of Indian painting is that the theme of tragedy is avoided in these pictorial works.

Classical Indian visual art can be divided into two types: wall paintings (frescoes) and miniatures for manuscripts (Sahni et al., 2020). Over time, these types have evolved into a blend of various styles that influence one another. For example, cave wall paintings appear earlier than Hindu temple wall paintings. The history of stone art in the Indian peninsula dates back to the 2nd millennium BC (Newman, 1984). A vivid example of this is the frescoes of the Bagha and Sittanavasala caves. Special attention should be paid to the frescoes of Ajanta and Ellora, which are listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site and are considered a treasure of ancient art.

Figure 1. Miniatures at Cave frescoes

Tirthankara Parshvanatha

One of the most interesting features are the carved out niches containing three reliefs of meditating figures, including that of Tirthankara Parshvanatha (Figure 2), a Saint who is revered in Jainism.

Figure 2. Tirthankara Parshvanatha
Source : mapacademy.io

Parshvanatha is shown seated beneath the prickly leaves of a seven-hooded snake as a symbol of divine protection and spiritual power. On the south, on the other hand, is housed a figure of a seated man under an umbrella (parasol), with attributes similar to that of a tirthankara, whose identity remains unclear but is marked by an inscription as "Sri Tiruvasiriyam," meaning "revered teacher," which suggests that this figure may not represent a Tirthankara but possibly a teacher or a saintly figure of note within the Jain tradition. The uncertainty of identification in the images also calls for a more rigorous examination of the wide range and ever-changing nature of spiritual figures covered by Jain art, pointing to the intricate fabric and dynamism of religious iconography in a Jain context.

Figure 3. Samavasarana
Source : mapacademy.io

The most important and principal fresco in this rock-cut cave portrays a pond filled with lotus (Figure 3), where monks, ducklings, swans, fish, and other animals converge to gather the flowers. This episode is about the *Samavasarana*, a key aspect of Jainism. The Samavasarana is the divine pavilion where tradeankaras impart their sermons to followers. It is a seat for gods and divine beings, belonging to bulls, elephants, or apsaras (heavenly nymphs) who stand together to see this divine event (Hegewald, 2010; Restifo, 2019; Siderits, 2009). This symbolic lotus pond fresco has been shot in detail, as seen in the above image.

Miniature is a type of exquisite painting in the Indian subcontinent. The main aspect of this art is a complex and delicate writing style. Paints for writing miniatures are traditionally made from natural materials: minerals, plants, precious stones, gold, silver, and mollusc shells (Burgio et al., 2009). Writing miniatures is a very complex,

painstaking art, in which no detail is neglected. Depicts world-famous Indian miniature paintings, Buddhist scriptures, and works of Indian epics. Indian masters, following the best traditions of Persian book miniatures, clearly conveyed the plot of works of art, placing multi-figure compositions against the background of a traditional decorative landscape. The creation of miniature cycles required the participation of many artists. Each of them specializes in depicting certain elements: architectural details, landscape, and costumes. Painters applied egg colors with a very fine brush and, at the end, added gold or silver colors, using a bear's or tiger's paw. Thus, the work of these artists was similar to the work of jewelers. The works of Indian miniaturists are distinguished by their variety of colors, clarity of drawing, and elegance of artistic taste.

Pala School of Painting

The earliest copies of Indian miniatures date back to the reign of the Buddhist Pala Empire, which covered the territories of modern India. Bengal, Bangladesh, and Bihar. Pala miniatures are illustrations of religious Buddhist manuscripts from the XI-XII centuries (Ghosh, 2018). The style of the Pala school is characterized by skillful, elegant lines, tones, and modeling of figures, as well as the use of natural colors (Huntington & Huntington, 1990). This naturalistic style resembles the perfectly cast forms of bronze sculptures and echoes the Ajanta frescoes. The Pala school paid special attention to the symbolic use of color in Tantristic paintings (Figure 4). Western Indian school of miniature painting of the XII-VI centuries. Jain Miniatures The Western Indian style of miniatures developed and dominated the regions of Gujarat, Rajasthan and Malwa ((Brown, 1930; Lahoti, 2024).

In the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā* manuscript, the image of *Mamaki* holding a Vajra in a Lotus (Figure 4) neatly framed within its pages creates a deep association between Mahayana Buddhist doctrine and an artistic rendition. Mamaki, a female bodhisattva of wisdom and benevolence, standing on a Lotus holding a Vajra sign of indestructible spiritual power! The *Prajñāpāramitā* sutras stress the perfection of wisdom, and the iconography of Mamaki provides a direct means to express this notion. The Lotus springs from the mud; however, it is unaffected by

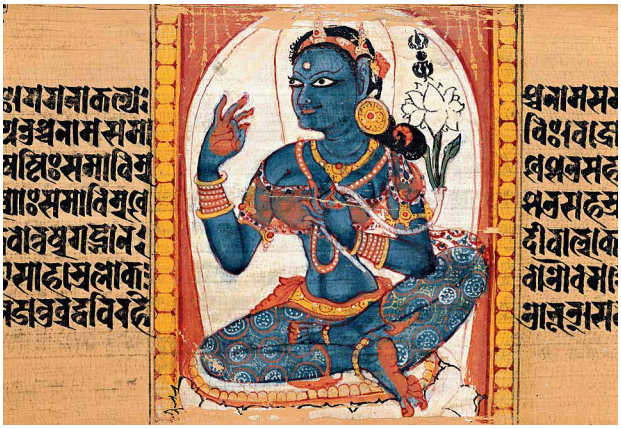

Figure 4. Māmakī with a vajra on a lotus in Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā Manuscript
Source : commons.wikimedia.org

such impurity, as wisdom and reason emerge from pain in the world yet transcend it; an account found throughout the written work.

The juxtaposition of text and image further enriches the viewer's understanding of the bodhisattva path that is central to *Prajñāpāramitā* teachings. *Mamaki* is depicted seated in a meditative posture with a vajra, embodying the ideal Bodhisattva and striving for enlightenment primarily for the benefit of all sentient beings. This is consistent with scriptures, which emphasise that the bodhisattva acts as a guide for others to understanding. The Vajra is meant to be taken in her hand to show that what she holds is an indestructible truth, while standing on the Lotus represents purity of realization and reaffirms the text's assertion that wisdom arises from an ordinary world, yet serves as a pathological sash that animates the soul to exist above anything else.

Furthermore, the Lotus in Mamaki's representation holds significant iconographic meaning, as it ties in with the principle of *śūnyatā*, or emptiness, throughout the *Prajñāpāramitā* sutras. The Lotus, which is also the symbol of purity and transcendence, blossoms out of muddied waters, yet its bloom remains untainted—just as wisdom sprouts forth from the world's ignorance and suffering. This is in accordance with the text's discussion on emptiness – an understanding of all things as devoid of any intrinsic existence and as being interdependent. The image of Mamaki on the Lotus illustrates graphically the wisdom that enables one to rise above *Maya*, another prevalent lesson in the *Prajñāpāramitā*.

The visualisation in both the Vajra and Lotus

is grounded in the spirit world and metaphysical concepts explained in *Prajñāpāramitā*, ensuring that the manuscript can be used to teach esoteric spirituality. Although the text delves into complex philosophical explanations of wisdom, emptiness, and the path to liberation, the visualization of *Mamaki* provides an intuitive understanding of these topics instantly. The picture serves as a practical guide for studying the Scriptures and conveys cardinal messages of life that engage the interest of those who are not literate, educating them on dharma. Thus, there's a complementary relationship between the text and the image—that they support each other, enabling us to relate to the teachings both intellectually and emotionally.

One of the driving forces of creativity in this region at that time was Jainism, which had been patronized since the middle of the 10th century (Ray, 2024). By the end of the XIII century, a substantial amount of Jain religious literature was widely used among the nobility and wealthy merchants of the time. Many of these manuscripts are preserved today in Jain book repositories (Bhandara) in many parts of Western India. The drawings in these manuscripts are highly stylized and distorted. Jain miniatures focus on disproportion and gross exaggeration of body parts, eyes, thighs and breasts. The Jain school of miniatures emphasizes pure colors, heavy gold outlines, and minimal clothing (De Jonckheere, 2019; Lavanya, 2022; Maitra, 2023).

From the 15th century, the West Indian school of painting began to be influenced by the style of Persian fine art. This is confirmed by the types of faces typical of Persian paintings, the shapes of flowering trees, the presence of hunting scenes, grasses growing in tufts, the sky and clouds (Agravāla, 2006; Kumar, 2018). This effect is especially noticeable in the use of ultramarine and gold colors, which are common in Persian fine art. The earliest examples of Persian painting in India were illustrated manuscripts, many of which were copied and gradually spread throughout India.

ISLAMIC PAINTINGS AND MINIATURES

Mongolian school of miniature painting (Mughal)

Although the Mongol school, which emerged in the second half of the 16th century, was founded on the basis of Indian artistic traditions, it was directly influenced by Iranian and Central Asian miniature art (Agravāla, 2006; Kumar, 2018). Acquaintance with European art, many examples of which appeared in India since the 16th century, also played an important role.

Mughal miniature paintings reflect a combination of Indian and Persian styles. As an art, it was created during the reign of the Mongol emperor Humayun (1530-1540; 1555-1556). Humayun, who returned to India from Persia in exile, brought with him two Persian artists who initiated the development of Mongol miniature painting. Over time, Persian art, which absorbed local traditions, formed its own style. The main subjects of Mongol miniatures are hunting, battle scenes, scenes of court life, moments from legendary stories, landscapes, animal images and portraits (Topsfield, 2013).

Under the patronage of Emperor Akbar, Jahangir and Shah Jahan, the Mongol school of painting reached a new stage of its development. During the reign of Akbar the Great (1556-1605), art workshops grew greatly (Balabanlilar, 2020; Beach & Das, 1980). Hundreds of artists worked in the palace, following the style established by the two Persian artists who came to India with Humayun. As Emperor Akbar loved legends and stories, the main themes during this period were scenes from the Mahabharata, Ramayana and Persian epics (Topsfield, 2013; Truschke, 2011). During the reign of Emperor Jahangir (1605-1627), art, particularly painting, received significant support. During this period, the painting style becomes more refined, the colors are lighter and quieter. In addition to portraits, animals, birds and nature images, events in Jahangir's life are the main themes in the paintings (Beach & Das, 1980; Jaykrushna, 2021).

During the reign of Shah Jahan (1628-1658), sensitivity and intricate detail in Mughal paintings began to give way to a sense of coldness and austerity. The lavish, highly decorative style that had flourished under his predecessors started to shift towards a more restrained and formal aesthetic. Previously, during the Mughal period, paintings featured rich textures and bright colors, with a focus on emotions. Paintings made during his rule often depicted certain characteristic subjects, such as musical performances, lovers, and holy men. These, however, were symbolically rich and often

tied to the world of courtly life and religious piety, and were also somewhat distanced from Raymund's character and the more somber mood of his court, reflecting as they did the emperor's own tastes.

Mughal painting, which had achieved its greatest heights under the patronage of Akbar, Jahangir, and Shah Jahan, began to decline after the reign of Emperor Aurangzeb. The extremely strict religious policy of Aurangzeb prevailed, and the arts suffered greatly. His lack of support for painters, and especially those in the imperial atelier, severely restricted the development of painting during his reign. Aurangzeb, unlike his ancestors, who had been art lovers and patronisers, was concerned with religious orthodoxy and military expansion; combined with his disinterest in the visual arts, this led to a decline in Mughal painting.

When Shah Alam II ascended to the throne (1759-1806), the Mughal painting tradition had practically perished, and the surviving paintings were of a bleakness which did not measure up to its former splendours. Mughal painting, which had been an artistic representation of imperial wealth and culture, of supreme nes as well as elite aesthetic sensibilities in the time of its greatest flourishing, in the mid-eighteenth century, was no longer a defining feature of the empire's visual repertoire (Losty & Roy, 2013; Topsfield, 2013). The flourishing Mughal art of the earlier period had declined significantly, with only one surviving practice in miniature painting that employed tight control and restraint: the Rajput school of painting. The Rajput school, which had also subsequently spread under the Rajput influence, retained a separate style, but it was hardly reminiscent of the bright Mughal period and did not belong to its tradition, testifying to a process of political and cultural upheaval in India at this time (Beach, 1992).

The Emperor Shah Jahan standing upon a globe

The emperor grasps the image of Shah Jahan as supreme ruler upon a globe in this striking visual representation (Figure 5). The globe under his feet signifies the sphere of his power and influence, indicating that he ruled over a wide area beyond the Indian subcontinent. Chapter 30 In that portrait, Shah Jahan appears not as a ruler of one land but as a world sovereign. The globe is no longer just a geographical icon; it becomes the sign of the emperor's control over heaven and Earth. These

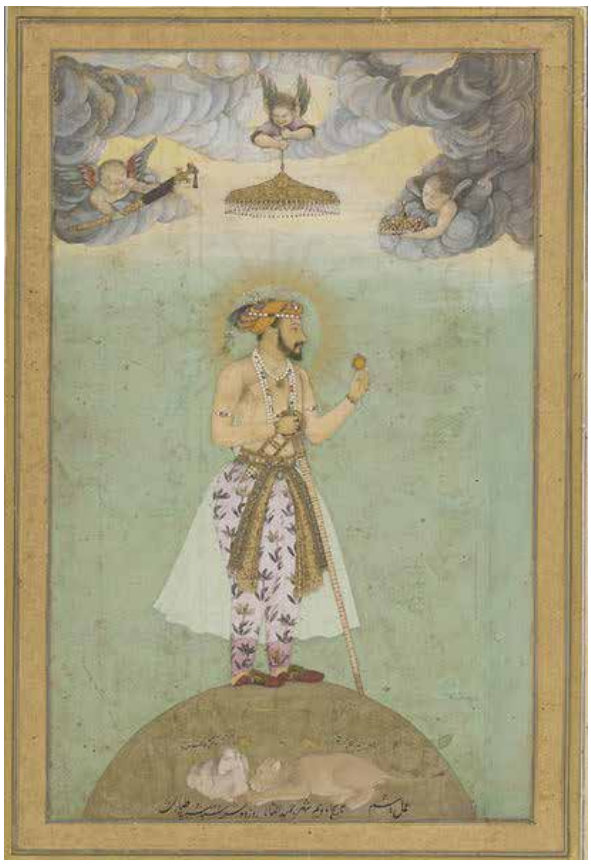

Figure 5. The Emperor Shah Jahan standing upon a globe
Source : commons.wikimedia.org

images reinforce the Mughal concept of the emperor as a king-divine whose authority was understood to be divinely authorized.

Shah Jahan's stance atop the globe is a depiction of him as all-powerful, reflecting his literal or symbolic connection to divinity. The standing in the world can be read as a visual assertion of his supremacy, to show that he is above all power and rulers. This pose also shows that he doesn't only rule on earth; there's something celestial about his power. Elevating Shah Jahan to the status of a figure who can transcend human limitations and have a relationship with a higher cosmic order also helps consolidate one's belief in Mughal emperors as intermediaries between heaven and earth.

The inscription in Arabic below the picture of Emperor Shah Jahan standing on a globe likely complements the themes of composite imagery that help construct this story about imperial authority, divine right, and global supremacy. In our image analysis, we have also observed how Shah Jahan is depicted as a ruler who represents a higher sense of life, transcending the earthly one, and it appears that he stands over the globe to remind all his

subjects of his control over them and his connection to higher cosmic energies. The Arabic inscriptions would add yet another dimension to this imagery, placing it in context with Shah Jahan's role as supreme sovereign, often with divine backing, and indicating not only that he ruled over earthly dominions but also claimed divine power.

The allegory of the globe as represented in this painting also represents Shah Jahan's conception of the Mughal Empire as a universal and eternal historical force. Rather than mere control of terrain, it emphasizes his ambition to make himself known and remembered by the world at large. Known for magnificent feats of architecture, such as the Taj Mahal, Shah Jahan's image is that of an emperor who stands upon the world – a reference to his desire to leave behind a global reputation. The globe is not only an image of his political authority, but also acts as a metaphor for the spiritual, cultural, and intellectual blossoming during his time. Under him, the Mughal Empire reached unprecedented heights in art, literature, and science, further solidifying his stature as a leading patron of culture and the arts.

Asvatthama Fires the Narayana Weapon (Cosmic Fire) at the Pandavas

The "Asvatthama Fires the Narayana Weapon (Cosmic Fire) at the Pandavas" is an impressive moment in a folio from Khan-i Khanan's *Razmnama*, which illustrated a manuscript of the Mahabharata produced during the Mughal period (Figure 6). This is one of the numerous narrative images that accompany the Persian translation of the *Mahabharata*, known as the *Razmnama*, commissioned by Emperor Akbar in the 16th century and completed under his Khan-i-Khanan.

A key to Akbar's success in creating a cohesive and prosperous empire on the subcontinent was his innovative and revolutionary rule, one that encompassed an openness to and fascination with cultures beyond his own. Akbar, who ruled from 1556 to 1605, was especially eager to promote unity between the Muslim and Hindu segments of his enormous empire. This interest led him to fund the translation of several important Hindu works into Persian, the court language, in order to facilitate a greater degree of understanding between the two communities. These included the Hindu epic poems, *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* that fuel Indian culture with references to the mythology, philosophy and moral of Hinduism. Akbar's desire

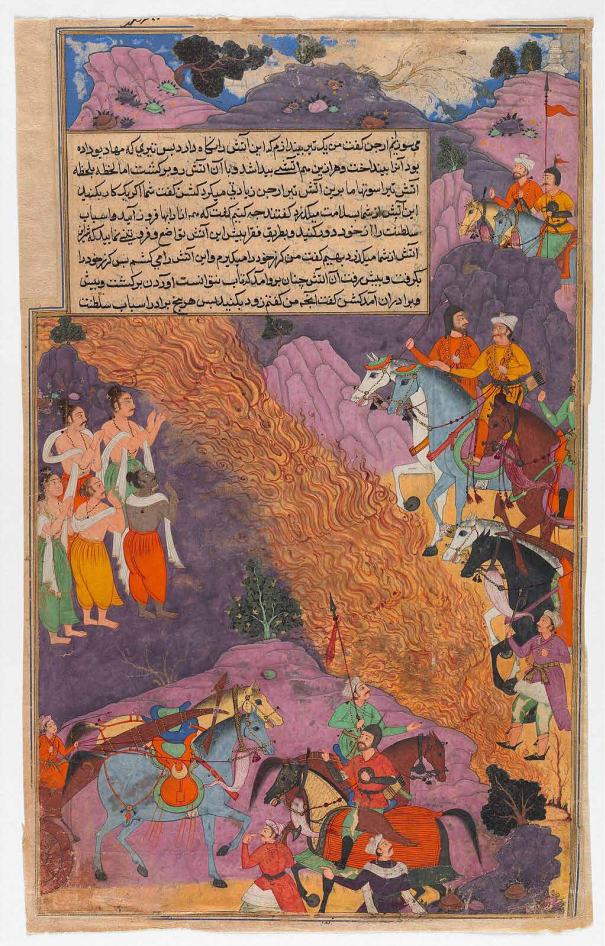

Figure 6. Asvatthama Fires the Narayana Weapon (Cosmic Fire) at the Pandavas
Source : commons.wikimedia.org

for cross-cultural knowledge and integration is evident in his approach to studying these epics, which he used to teach to his Muslim courtiers, many of whom would not have spoken Sanskrit. As a bibliophile, the Khan-i Khanan commissioned works that were intended to showcase both the grandeur of the Mughal Empire and his personal patronage of intellectual and artistic projects. The production of such manuscripts was an expression of his loyalty to Akbar's policies and an attempt to preserve and honor Akbar's cultural legacy.

One of the most significant elements (and not only in the painting, but in the whole manuscript) is style. *Fazl*, probably one of the principal painters in Khan-i Khanan's atelier, executed many of the miniatures in this manuscript. The painting has a slightly old-fashioned style, favouring elements of Akbar's early taste, although by the time it was produced under the Khanan's patronage, the imperial studio had started to abandon Hindu epics as subjects. Though not actually painted under Akbar's order, the miniature contains much of the

stylistic activity associated with the era of the great Mughal.

The figural composition of the painting, which emphasizes balance and clarity of composition, is also drawn from Persian artistic traditions. This is evident in the stylized rendering of the figures and the rather flat treatment of the looming hills in the background, which bears a slight resemblance to earlier Persian miniature painting. This mountain does not have the soaring, three-dimensional panoramas that infer the more dynamic constructs of the imperial court workshops of Akbar's reign. However, the picture remains replete with exclusively Mughal characteristics – the intricate and ornate faces, colourful costumes, and well-crafted ornaments. The color palette, with its rich tones and highlights, is indicative of the Mughal style. The landscape detail is characteristic of Mughal painting rather than Persian, reflecting a sense of sophistication and realism typical of late-Mughal Painting.

Another striking element in this particular manuscript is the dramatic effect of fire, shown as a fiery ribbon or embankment. The image of this cosmic fire, representing destruction and divine might, draws furthermore on the designs of Akbar's time. The diagonal strip of fire slashes through the composition violently, giving a sense of motion and immediacy. Though this image is toned down compared to the more psychedelic, vitalist images of Akbar's day, it still bears whispers of his dynamic visual style. This amazing diagonal is especially slippery and particularly demonstrates how Mughal artists continued to incorporate and revitalize earlier styles despite the political transition.

The text and image from the Razmnama are closely interrelated, as the two joint forces serve to depict the same mythological moment: that of *Asvatthama releasing the Narayana Weapon (Cosmic Fire) on the Pandavas*. This epic scene of *Mahabharata* is shown not only in the text but also through images, providing a double complement with details.

THE INFLUENCE OF BOBURATE PAINTING TOWARD ART AND POLITICAL RHETORIC

The arrival of the Baburs on the Indian territory made a sharp turn in the country's cultural life and left an indelible mark on its history. According to Babur scholars, a new era in the country's history

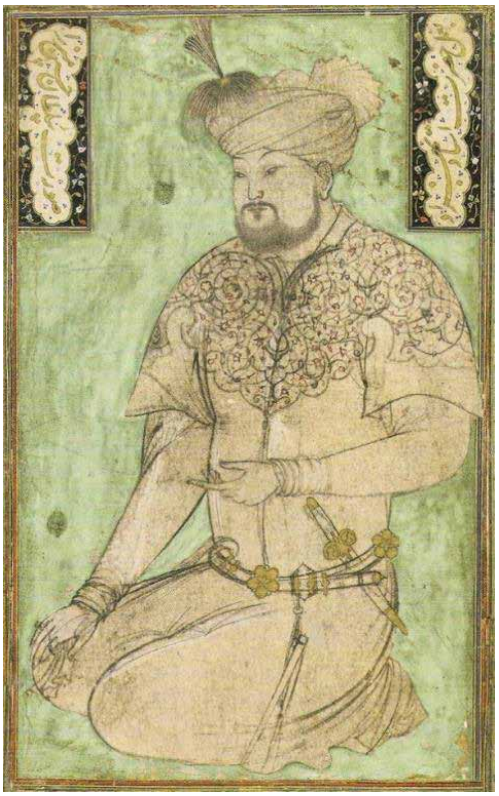

Figure 7. The potrait of Husayn Boykaro
Source : commons.wikimedia.org

began with Babur Mirza's arrival in this country. Because he put an end to feudal disunity and the struggle of small khanates for central power, and took a bold step towards social stagnation, economic development, and cultural change in society. The tradition of historicism in the painting of the Babur dynasty consisted of depicting historical figures in pictures. An example of this is the portraits of Husayn Boygaro (Figure 7).

The inscription on the Portrait of Husayn Bayqarah seeks to enrich the painting's semantic value by enacting a verbal equivalent of representations concerning an ideal prince. In Persian and Mughal miniatures, word-image pairings are a means to convey the sitter's identity, virtues, and divine legitimacy. In the case of Husayn Bayqarah, though the decorative text is unlike a manuscript, it plays a narrative role by enhancing one's knowledge of his mightiness, power, and identity. The ruler's legitimacy and divine right is further bolstered using titles such as. In Islamic art, rulers are frequently associated with the divine; these titles make explicit that the subject of this painting is not simply a political figure, but a ruler installed—and consecrated—by divine powers. This transcends Husayn Bayqarah's status as a human king alone by endowing him with a role

as a divine martyr, with cosmic implications. The Arabic inscriptions reinforce the notion of Husayn as a king chosen by divine will, a crucial aspect of Islamic and Timurid kingship ideology.

The Arabic inscription of a portrait frequently represents the virtues of the ruler, such as wisdom, justice, feats in battle, and piety. In the case of Husayn Bayqarah's portrait, an Arabic text may be included to emphasize the attributes integral to his profile as a perfect monarch. The face would depict him in an honorific stance, sitting serene and upright, which symbolizes his position as a farseeing and final decision-maker. The associated Arabic inscriptions, being in poetry perhaps, would further stress these attributes through a sophisticated network of references that would connect the young prophet's image with his ethical and intellectual gifts. Together, the painting and text would convey a ruler's multifaceted qualities, his political authority, personal traits, and spiritual value, presenting a complete image of Husayn Bayqarah as an ideal king.

The likeness of the text and image is evidence of the interplay between Persian and Arabic traditions in Timurid court art, to which Husayn Bayqarah belonged. The Arabic text situates the ruler within the larger framework of Islamic rule and places him in relation with the rich cultural background of the Islamic world, including its tradition of previous caliphs and sultans. By situating Husayn within this historical and spiritual context, those who wrote about him helped to establish his enduring presence in a broader political and cultural narrative, where he was both a regional chieftain and a spiritual guide. This also helps place Husayn Bayqarah in relation to his position in the Timurid dynasty, and as a result cements the subsequent prevalence of his rule amid the glories and cultural vitality of that dynasty. For a ruler like Husayn, who ruled Herat during times of great political and cultural change, the text serves as an important measure, anchoring his place in the stylized narrative of the Timurid Empire's history.

A similar association between image and text is employed to convey the cultural, intellectual, and political significance Ali-Shir Nava'i (Figure 8) during the Timurid period in the Portrait of Ali-Shir Nava'i attributed to Mahmud Muzahhib. A poet, an erudite and a leading statesman, his portrait not only represents his image but also epitomises

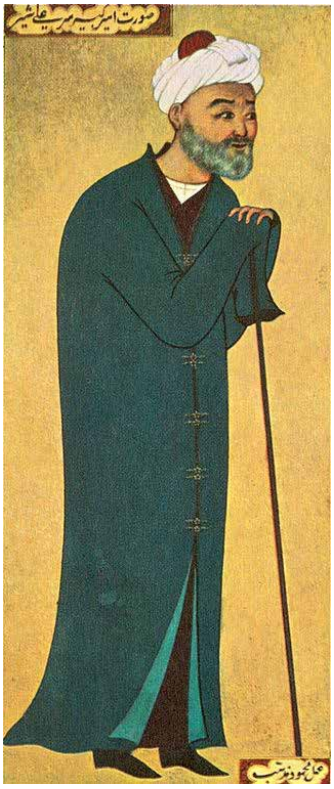

Figure 8. The potrait of Alisher Navoiy
Source : wikipedia.org

the revival of culture in that period. The Arabic or Persian text opposite illuminates his personality and services to the Timurid Empire. Dignified of expression, T'agay-Timur is shown here in his rich court robes, which confirm his status at the top of society and as a cultivated host of artists. Showing the thoughtful, calm demeanor that you would expect of an intellectual, he appears sagacious. The writing portrays him not only as a courtier but also as an esteemed personality whose labours were instrumental to the flourishing of the empire.

The same text insists on Nava'i's function as a man of learning, emphasizing his advocacy for the Persian and Turkic languages at the court. It also serves to immortalize his intellectual and cultural legacy, as well as to cement his place in the history of Central Asia (Golombek & Subtelny, 2023; Shea, 2018). The style of the portrait, with brilliant colors and Persian-Central Asian influences, testifies to the cultural exchange of the time. Because of his goodness and the service, he rendered to the intellectual life of the Timurid empire. The image of Nava'i in the miniature, in combination with its accompanying text, presents Nava'i not just as a ruler but also as a political and cultural presence that continues to shape the cultural and intellectual landscape of the Timurid era.

Babur's painting is based on the estalists. Akbar Shakh ordered the palace scholars to collect his grandfather's literary heritage and write manuscripts. His aunt Gulbadanbegim created the work "Humayunnama" (Dimand, 1953; Stronge, 2002). Babur had a significant impact on the history of Indian culture and art, particularly in painting, and established unique creative traditions before the establishment of the Babur dynasty (Stronge, 2002). It is known to everyone that classical miniatures are drawn according to the content of famous Indian epics such as "*Kalila and Damina*", "*Shubhisaddati*", "*Ramayana*", "*Mahabkhorat*", and this field is especially developed in Indian architecture. However, the arrival of the encyclopedic work "Baburnama" in India, its translation, and the commissioning of miniatures by Indian artists laid the groundwork for the introduction of worldly, realistic elements in classical painting here (Thackston, 2002). The development of miniatures during the Babur era in a general way and looks at the role of Babur in the history of painting art (Topsfield, 2013). At the same time, the creative work of Mukhammad Murad Samarkandi, a skilled painter brought to India by Babur from Samarkand, had a positive impact on the color image of India (Figure 9).

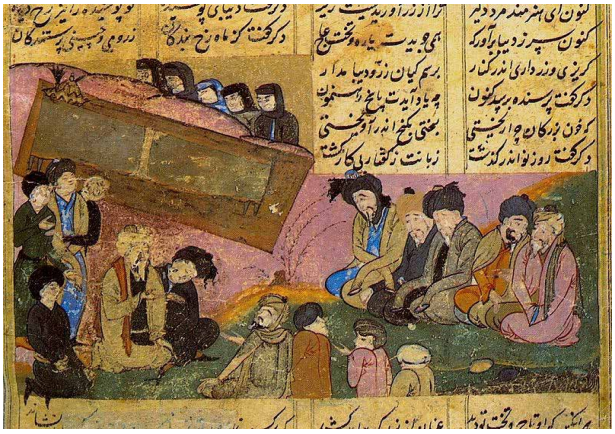

Figure 9. Le chant funebre aux funerailles d'Iskandar
Source : commons.wikimedia.org

16th century painter, Mukhammad Murad, a major representative of Samarkandi miniature school. The study of costumes in the Shahnoma manuscripts of Firdavsi, was noted in "Zafarnoma" who assumed that the manuscript miniatures are similar and stylistically close to each other, and that the performer of the "Zafarnama" miniatures could be Muhammad Murad Samarkandi (Akay, 2024). He worked for a while in India, at the court of the Mughal emperors Akbar (1542-1605) and Jahangir (1605-1627), and in Bukhara. In his works, Indian motifs typical of the painting style of these emperors are reflected. He must have returned to Samarkand after Jahangir's death in 1627, because the "Zafarnoma" miniatures were created by him after 1628. He made a great contribution to the development of miniature art in Central Asia with his unique style and works of a high artistic level. Firdausi's "Shakhnama" (115 miniatures that decorated the 1556 copy are in the National Museum of Uzbekistan), as well as Saadi's "Boston" (in the Chester Beatty Library in Dublin), have reached us. The work of the artist sought to update artistic methods; the artist, avoiding the traditional structure of plots and compositions, chose sharp plots (the blacksmith Aquarius uprising, who was able to lead the masses against oppression, Siyovush, who proved his innocence by trial by fire, etc.), was able to reveal the faces of people in an impressive state of mind.

Many artists contributed to the decoration of the "Boburnoma" manuscript with elegant miniatures. Six of the seventeen famous artists mentioned by the same author: Kesu, Miskina, Madhu, Romdas, Farrukhbek, and Sonvala also created miniatures for "Boburnoma". Originally from Movarounnahr, Farrukhbek first lived in Kabul and later in India (Thackston, 2002). We can see that Farrukhbek participated in decorating the "Boburnoma" manuscripts kept in Delhi and British museums. Farrukhbek also worked on Babur's portrait miniatures. In general, Jagannath from Gujarat, Shankar from Gujarat, and Muhammad Kashmiri and Ibrahim Lohury participated in the creation of "Boburnama" paintings from other parts of India.

Eastern miniature art is divided into several periods and schools. Among them, the Indian miniature school stands out. The establishment of this school had a great positive effect on the fact that the most skilled calligraphers and artists from major cultural centers such as Herat, Samarkand, and Bukhara were taken to India, and many unique manuscripts created in collaboration with them took place in the Indian library. During the Baburi period, Abul Qasim attracted the attention of Central Asian scholars and artists due to several positive developments in the field of memorization, visual arts, and literature in India, and as a result, they began to go to India, to the palace of the Baburi. These include artists such as Mir Said Ali Termizi,

Abdusamad Sherozi, Farrukhbek, and calligraphers Muhammad Baqir. This event had a significant positive impact on the development of Indian art. The works of Indian artists are also popular in European countries. In his time, the famous Dutch artist Rembrandt advised his students to copy Indian miniatures. The famous English artist J. Reynolds also recognized the high skill of Indian artists. The styles of Kamoliddin Behzad also had a special place in the 16th-century Indian miniature school. This is the reason why Babur and his successors greatly respected the work of the great artist. In their library, the Baburis carefully preserved the rare works decorated by Kamoliddin Behzod with miniatures. There is no doubt that Indian painters studied the styles of these miniatures. Because the great painter's style of portrait genre was further developed by Indian artists. According to art experts, in no country in the East has the portrait genre of miniature art reached such a high level as the Indian school.

Especially Abul Hasan, who was awarded the "Nadir uz-zaman" nisab, achieved great success in this field. He could depict great events on a small surface level with high artistic skill, he could imitate the qualities and appearance of the depicted people. As an example of this, this portrait of Prince Khurram, the eldest son of Mughal emperor Jahangir (1605-1627), Jahangir named him Shahjahan (Figure 10).

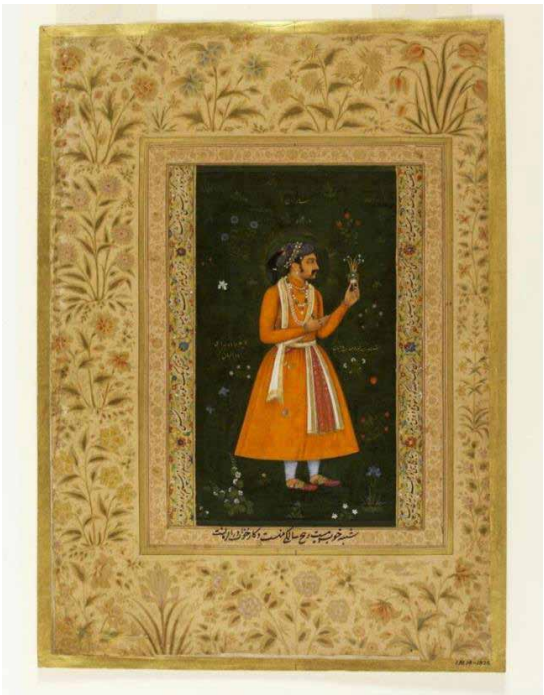

Figure 10. Shah Jahan artist Abul Hasan
Source : collections.vam.ac.uk

It was drawn when he gave the title of "King of the World". Shahjahan retained this title when he succeeded his father as emperor in 1628. Later, Shahjahan adds a Persian inscription in black ink to the border of the picture, noting that "this is a good representation of my twenty-fifth birthday, and it is a wonderful work of Nadir uz-Zaman's leading artist.".

Davlat Khanazod, an Indian portrait artist, also gained wide fame. It is worth mentioning that a total of fifty-seven historical and scientific-practical works were created under the material and spiritual support of Alisher Navoi and Abdurahman Jami, a copy of Davlat Khanazod's copy of the portrait of the great thinker Abdurahman Jami created by Kamoliddin Behzod, which has reached us (Figure 11).

Figure 8. The potrait of Abdurahman Jami artist Davlat Khanazod
Source : wikipedia.org

The state loved and appreciated the work of Khanazod Kamoliddin Behzod. This can also be observed in the miniatures in the copy of the "Baburnoma" manuscript made by this artist, which is kept in the National Museum of Delhi. Babur's son, Nasiruddin Muhammad Humayun, left a name in the history of Indian fine art as an enlightened ruler who founded an art workshop near the palace. When Humayun Shah was in the country of Tahmosp, he met Mir Mansur Musavvir, an artist originally from Termez. After Humayun took the throne of Kabul, he established an artist's

company under the palace, and in addition to Mir Mansur Musawvir, his son Mir Sayyid Ali, Abdusamad Sherazi, and also the students and comrades of Kamaluddin Behzad, such as Maulana Dost Muhammad, Maulana Darvish Muhammad, and Maulana Yusuf. took him to his service.

To this day, the number of scholars, including orientalists, historians, source historians, and art historians, who have studied the rich cultural heritage left by Zakhiriddin Mukhammad Babur and the Baburis, as well as the number of artists who have created creative works inspired by them, is very large. Analyzing the above studies and the opinions of scholars, it can be said that there are a lot of sources left during the time of Zakhiriddin Mukhammad Babur and the Baburites, and there are still unexplored manuscripts, samples of letters, miniatures, and their schools, which are used by art historians and historians to analyze. and many more resources for artists.

Visual art, which has existed in India for a long time, enriched its schools with masters, calligraphers, and painters that Zakhiriddin Mukhammad Babur brought from Mavorunnahr, together with local engineers, calligraphers, and artists, creating a rich cultural heritage worthy of a great empire. It can be seen in manuscripts, visual arts, murals, buildings, and architecture. In Indian painting, wall paintings employed a unique method, but when they transitioned to miniature, they were distorted into a holistic view (Orsini & Sheikh, 2014).

The Indian school of art has long been referred to as the art of the Mongols, but in reality, this artistic tradition flourished after Muhammad Murad Samarkandi from Samarkand brought his influence to India. Babur, the founder of the Mughal Empire, himself carried manuscripts from Central Asia and commissioned famous artists of the time to paint miniatures for these manuscripts in India. This historical connection suggests that what is often referred to as Mongol art should actually be called the art of Mawaraunnahr (the region of Transoxiana). However, a mistaken approach exists in some parts of the world that incorrectly attributes Babur and his dynasty to the Mongols. This misconception has been scientifically clarified by several prominent foreign scholars over time, who have impartially addressed the distinction between the Mongol and Timurid traditions.

The visual and verbal rhetoric of its art and manuscripts offer an intriguing snapshot of the intersection between iconography and language as early as the 7th century AD. In these manuscripts, the miniatures are not only handsome images; they also reflect the cultural and political identity of their creators. Semiotic analysis further aids in deciphering the visual vocabulary of these paintings, complex webs of symbolic motifs, ornamentation, and color schemes, all deliberately selected to amplify the message of divine rule, Babur's glorious lineage, and the legitimate authority of Mughal rulers. This visual semiotics conveys a sense of imperial majesty, connecting Babur to the belief in "the divine right of kings," and so locates the historical memory of his life within the larger cultural history of Central Asia and Islam. At the same time as pledging, the verbal propaganda inscribed in the inscriptions, poetry, and narratives in the manuscripts reaffirms the ideological basis of Babur's rule through an association with universal ideas of justice, potency, and spiritual endorsement.

In addition, in 2017, the conference on "The Role of Zahiriddin Muhammad Babur's Works in the History of World Culture," held at Andijan, witnessed a gathering of worldwide academicians who voted to shun the incorrect attribution "'The Great Mughul" when mentioning Babur. Rather, they proposed using the name "Turkish language" (literary one) instead of the erroneously treated name "Chagatai language" in Babur's works. Through this suggestion, the real languages and culture from which Babur emerged have been acknowledged; as such, this recommendation is a major milestone in reorienting his story towards world history and literature. This lexical change also serves to estrange Babur's historical self-definition from its Mongolocentric narrative and reasserts that his intellectual roots ran deep into the heart of Central Asia.

Babur's contribution to the world community is tremendous, and he raised our homeland's flag high into the international arena, making him a beacon of pride for everyone in Uzbekistan." His contribution has earned a new inroad between the arts and helped to harness intellectual and cultural cohesion in Central Asia. Babur's memory is carefully constructed through visual and verbal rhetoric used in the manuscripts, as well as a corpus of political narratives that surround them. These are political communications, which portray Babur

not only as the conqueror he was, but also as a civilized and learned ruler believed to be endowed with divine right. The representation of Babur as a ruler who follows divine and ancestral cultural traditions complements his political legitimacy and his status as a historical figure of considerable global significance.

It is thus essential to raise public awareness and highlight the immeasurable heritage left by our great ancestors, such as Babur, who made significant contributions to the world's science and culture. His reputation is established not simply by his military successes but through his support of the arts and culture. The variety of modes in which Babur communicates in his portraits, inscriptions, and manuscripts tells us how profoundly he influenced not only political history but also cultural history. These graphic details and textual explications demonstrate the enduring and expansive influence of Babur as a political and cultural symbol, long after his direct, centralized rule had faded. Thereby, it safeguards Babur's political legacy and the awareness of his involvement in politics, culture, and language by future generations, whether within his ethnic composition or within a global horizon.

It is also of great moment that one should understand history, and it is the duty of scholars fully to enter into the cultural life of those epochs in which our ancestors lived, when they elaborate for investigation many matters which have hitherto remained uninvestigated. Through a multimodal and semiotic analysis, we gain access to the illustrations' depiction of Babur's political authority and intelligentsia. In these perspectives, we learn not only about the visual and spoken politics of his rule but also about the afterlife of such politics in South Asia and beyond. In the process, the images and texts that surround Babur's legacy provide important evidence for how he saw his place in world history and for how he sought to preserve his empire's cultural inheritance.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this review reinforces the substantial place that Baburite art held within visionscapes and ideoscapes of the Mughal Empire. Through an analysis of the relationship between visual and verbal elements, it can be demonstrated that Babur's artistic legacy constituted more than simply an aesthetic exercise; rather, art was one mechanism of political propaganda and the articulation of cultural identity. The confluence of Persian, Central Asian, and Indian artistic traditions in Babur's court played a crucial role in the development of an Islamicate Mughal style that not only expressed imperial power but also facilitated a cultural renaissance that left its mark on Indian painting for centuries to follow. The convergence of semiotics with multimodal studies reveals fresh perspectives on the rhetoric embedded in these codices, stimulating a deeper comprehension of how visual and verbal modes interact to convey multifaceted meanings. Although Babur left behind no notable Indian architecture, his influence on painting remains one of the most important aspects of his cultural legacy, as it characterizes him as a patron of the arts and a king who spanned different worlds. Subsequent assessments could more fully investigate the lasting social effects of Baburite art traditions on later Mughal and Indian arts, as well as the development of visual and verbal rhetoric within historical works of art.

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