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MINIATURE. "PORTRAIT OF A ROHILLA AFGHAN"

NORTHERN INDIA; 1821-1822

LEAF: 27.3 × 16.3 CM

The foppish young man is wearing colorful garments that reflect his ethnic background. An inscription on the back identifies him as a member of the Barech family, one of the many Pashtun clans from the mountainous areas of Afghanistan that in the 17th-18th century settled in Rohilkhand, today Uttar Pradesh. The Rohilla Afghans (from the Pashtun word for mountain) were used as warriors by the Great Mughal Aurangzeb, for example.

Rohilkhand achieved independence briefly in the 18th century but came under the East India Company in 1801. Stylistically, the painting shows the clear influence of the West, but the unnaturalistic yellow background and treatment of the blue sky are remnants of the Mughal tradition.

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