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PAINTING PASTED ON AN ALBUM LEAF. 'MA'ALI MIAN SAIF AL-MULK BEING SHOWN SOME JEWELS.' ATTRIBUTED TO VENKATCHELLAM

INDIA, HYDERABAD; C. 1795
LEAF: 37.6 × 25.3 CM

MINIATURE: 29 × 17.8 CM

Ma'ali Mian was the only son of Aristu Jah, prime minister of the Nizam of Hyderabad Ali Khan Asaf Jah (1761-1803). From around 1720, the Nizams of Hyderabad ruled over large parts of the former Deccan states – formally as governors for the Mughals in Delhi, but *de facto* as independent sovereigns.

A note on the back from 1807 attributes the painting to the court's leading artist, Venkatchellam. The rather young nawab is shown in the last rays of the afternoon sun. He is sitting nonchalantly on a chair with a European form and is being shown some jewelry, though it does not seem to interest him very much. The garden is filled with colorful flowers, trees, birds, and insects that attain enormous size in the foreground. The glowing colors are repeated in the many textiles,

and an especially refined touch is Ma'ali Mian's emeralds, made from little pieces of metallic beetles.

The warm, exotic palette can resemble that found in art from Golconda and the other Deccan states during their heyday in the 17th century. The portrayal of the characters, however, is weaker.

Published in:

Christie's, London, 16/12-1965, lot 287;

Mark Zebrowski: *Deccani painting*, London 1983, pp. 264-265, figs. 242-243;

George Michell and Mark Zebrowski: *Architecture and art of the Deccan Sultanates*, Cambridge 1999, pp. 218-220, fig. 160;

William Dalrymple: *White Mughals: love and betrayal in eighteenth-century India*, London 2002, pp. 333-334;

Sotheby's, London,, 6/10-2015, lot 52;

Kjeld von Folsach, Joachim Meyer: *The Human Figure in Islamic Art – Holy Men, Princes, and Commoners*, The David Collection, Copenhagen 2017, cat.no. 49;

Kavita Singh: *Scent upon a southern breeze: the synaesthetic arts of the Deccan*, Mumbai 2018, the cover and pp. 20-22, fig. 9;

John Seyller, Jagdish Mittal: *Deccani paintings, drawings, and manuscripts in the Jagdish and Kamla Mittal Museum of Indian Art*, Hyderabad 2018, fig. 32, pp. 228-229;