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TWO MINIATURES. 'KALA WITH SABER DRAWN' AND 'KALA IN UNIFORM'

INDIA, DELHI; 1815-1816

LEAF: 37.9 × 24.9 AND 39.7 × 25.4 CM

Two groups of Company paintings in particular have become famous: the c. 300 botanical and zoological studies that were commissioned by Lady Mary Impey in around 1780 (see 38/2008), and the c. 100 paintings of native troops and villagers that were commissioned by the brothers James and William Fraser in around 1815.

One portrait shows William Fraser's servant Kala in trousers and turban as he looked when he killed a tiger with a thrust of his saber on a hunt in 1810. On the second he is wearing the uniform that was used by the irregular cavalry regiment Skinner's Horse, which was headed by James Skinner, with Fraser as his second in command.

The Fraser paintings were made by various Indian artists. Several of them are signed by Ghulam Ali Khan, while others were undoubtedly made by members of his family. A number of unsigned paintings stand out because of their high technical quality. They include these two of Kala that can probably be attributed to the same unknown artist.

The best Company paintings are characterized by a technical

perfection that imbues them with a super-realistic element. Kala's facial expression is moreover curiously distant or introverted, a phenomenon that emphasizes the miniatures' almost surreal character. The juxtaposition of Kala in trousers and turban and in uniform underlines the exciting but slightly eccentric meeting of cultures.

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Sotheby's, London, 7/7-1980, lot 10

Toby Falk: "The Fraser Company drawings" in *Royal Society of Arts*, 137, no. 5389, December 1988, p. 30, fig. 2;

Mildred Archer and Toby Falk: *India revealed: the art and adventures of James and William Fraser, 1801-35*, London 1989, pl. 63;

Rosemary Crill and Kapil Jariwala (eds.): *The Indian portrait: 1560-1860*, National Portrait Gallery, London 2010 [2009], cat. 54;

Sotheby's, London, 29/4-1992, lot 3;

B.N. Goswamy: "Masters of the "Company" portraits" in Milo C. Beach, Eberhard Fischer, B.N. Goswamy (eds.): *Masters of Indian painting*, vol. 2, 1650-1900, Zürich 2011, cat. 6;

William Dalrymple and Yuthika Sharma (eds.): *Princes and painters in Mughal Delhi, 1707-1857*, Asia Society Museum, New York 2012, cat. 52;

B.N. Goswamy: *The spirit of Indian painting: close encounters with 101 great works, 1100-1900*, Gurgaon 2014, pp. 386-389;

Ravinder Reddy: *Arms and armour of India, Nepal and Sri Lanka: types, decoration and symbolism*, London 2018, p. 78;

William Dalrymple (ed.): *Forgotten masters: Indian painting for the East India Company*, Wallace Collection, London 2019, cat. 97, p. 160;

Corinne Lefèvre, Jean-Baptiste Clais (eds.): *Les arts moghols*, Paris 2024, fig. 295, p. 283;

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Toby Falk: "The Fraser Company drawings" in *Royal Society of Arts*, 137, no. 5389, December 1988, p. 32, fig. 3;

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Barbara Schmitz: "After the Great Mughals" in Barbara Schmitz (ed.): *After the Great Mughals: painting in Delhi and the regional courts in the 18th and 19th centuries*, Mumbai 2002, p. 8, fig. 6;

Rosemary Crill and Kapil Jariwala (eds.): *The Indian portrait: 1560-1860*, National Portrait Gallery, London 2010 [2009], cat. 55;

B.N. Goswamy: "Masters of the "Company" portraits" in Milo C. Beach, Eberhard Fischer, B.N. Goswamy (eds.): *Masters of Indian painting*, vol. 2, 1650-1900, Zürich 2011, cat. 7;

William Dalrymple and Yuthika Sharma (eds.): *Princes and painters*

*in Mughal Delhi, 1707-1857*, Asia Society Museum, New York 2012, cat. 53;

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