



Inv. no. 13/2015

CAT. 46. "A MOUNTED PRINCE HUNTING WITH A FALCON."
MINIATURE PASTED ON CARDBOARD

INDIA, DECCAN; C. 1700

THE MINIATURE H: 28.9; W: 19.1 CM

A prince had to be able to lead an army in order to protect his lands or possibly conquer new ones. He consequently had to be a skilled horseman, and all manner of sport and hunting on horseback were both pleasurable and necessary training. This elegant man hunting with a falcon can be identified as a prince by his noble bearing, turban, clothing, boots, and jewel-encrusted weapons and saddle, as well as his noble, pale-blue stallion, which is outfitted with a rich harness, "socks" painted red, and gilded shoes.

In sophisticated fashion, a ceremonial fan behind the rider's head forms a halo – at this time a sign of princely status. As is so often the case in official Mughal or Mughal-inspired painting, his face is shown in profile, and this is why it seems surprising that a page breaks with the formality by looking out at the beholder.

The fact that this chic hunting party is only on a small excursion is underscored by the army marching on the horizon. This is probably an inspection tour. Recent research has shown that the man in the portrait is the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb's favorite grandson, Prince Bidar Bakht, who later lost his life in the struggle for the throne in 1707.