Despite significant temporal and geographical distances between ‘Adil Shahi Bijapuri (1490-1686) and Nawabi Lucknow (1732-1857), scholarship of the last two decades has increasingly acknowledged important correlations between the two courts. In her pioneering 2006 publication, for example, Deborah Hutton outlined the following religious, literary, and aesthetic overlaps between Bijapuri and Lucknow: the flourishing of Shi‘i Islam, the popularity of Urdu literature, and the production of yogini imagery. This paper introduces an additional parallel between the two cities: the legacy of paintings produced during the reign of Ibrahim ‘Adil Shah II (r. 1580-1627) within the ateliers and collecting circles of eighteenth century Awadh. In doing so, I propose a more fluid approach to the study of Indo-Persian painting and seek to establish a bridge between painting of the high Mughal period (sixteenth and seventeenth centuries) and that of the late Mughal period (eighteenth and nineteenth centuries).

After offering a brief introduction to the collecting of Ibrahim-era painting in Lucknow, this paper focuses on two case studies involving Bijapuri originals and their respective Lucknow copies. While a central goal is to clarify differences between originals and copies, I also investigate Ibrahim-era masterpieces as windows into a variety of cultural syntheses that are too often positioned as polar opposites. The paintings in question not only problematize rigid art historical taxonomies between Deccani and Mughal painting, they also blur sectarian and religious divisions (Shi‘i versus Sunni, Hindu versus Muslim) while underscoring European inspirations for Indo-Persian

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1 Deborah Hutton, Art of the Court of Bijapur (Bloomington & Indianapolis, 2006), p. 84, pp. 94-95 (hitherto cited as Hutton 2006).
2 For a recent exhibition devoted to Lucknow, see Stephen Markel with Tushara Bindu Gude, India’s Fabled City: The Art of Courtly Lucknow (Los Angeles, 2010).
painting. As such, they are compelling sites of Indo-Muslim cultures in transition and transformation.

In terms of the paintings themselves, the strongest links between Bijapuri and Lucknow can be found in a number of albums assembled by and for British officials stationed in Lucknow during the mid-to-late eighteenth century. One of these administrators, Richard Johnson (1753-1807), served as Head Assistant to the British Resident at Lucknow between 1780 and 1782, and his albums are today preserved in the British Library. The most important Bijapuri original in Johnson’s collection is “Mullah,” a portrait of a religious dignitary by the so-called “Bodleian Painter,” whose well-known masterpiece—“Dervish receiving a visitor”—is housed in the University of Oxford’s Bodleian Library. The most significant Lucknow copy of a Bijapuri original in Johnson’s collection is a painting by Mir Kalan Khan that is widely known as “A princess watching a maid killing a snake,” or simply “Maid killing a snake.” In the first case study of this paper, I will consider Mir Kalan Khan’s copy in relation to two ostensibly contemporary versions of the same painting in the National Library of Russia in St. Petersburg.

The largest corpus of imagery pertaining to both Bijapuri and Lucknow is found in nearly two dozen albums preserved in the Museum of Islamic Art (Museum für Islamische Kunst) in Berlin. Eight of these albums were assembled by the Scottish officer Captain Archibald Swinton (1731-1804). The rest were compiled by the Swiss-French mercenary and engineer, Colonel Antoine-Louis-Henri Polier

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3 I have argued elsewhere that the artist identified by Mark Zebrowski as “The Bodleian Painter” was in fact the Bijapuri painter ‘Ali Riza, who signed several known works. See Keelan Overton, “‘Ali Riza (The Bodleian Painter),” in Masters of Indian Painting I: 1100-1650, Milo C. Beach, Eberhard Fischer, B. N. Goswmany (eds.) (Zurich, 2011), 375-390. This essay reproduces all thirteen of the paintings that I have attributed to ‘Ali Riza/The Bodleian Painter. For “Mullah,” see fig. 9; for “Dervish receiving a visitor,” see fig. 1. Throughout this essay, I refer to the Bodleian Painter as such, because this is his most common designation. For Zebrowski’s analysis of the artist, see Mark Zebrowski, Deccani Painting (London, 1983), pp. 78-91 (hitherto cited as Zebrowski 1983).

4 See, for example, Toby Falk and Mildred Archer, Indian Miniatures in the India Office Library (London, 1981), no. 239, pp. 137-138, color illustration plate 10 and Zebrowski 1983, fig. 66, p. 88. “Maid killing a snake” was most recently on view in the Lucknow exhibition. See Markel, India’s Fabled City: The Art of Courtly Lucknow, no. 133, p. 39.

5 For further details on Swinton’s collection, see Lucian Harris, “Archibald Swinton: A New Source for Albums of Indian Miniatures in William Beckford’s Collection,” The Burlington Magazine 143, no. 1179 (June 2001), pp. 360-366.