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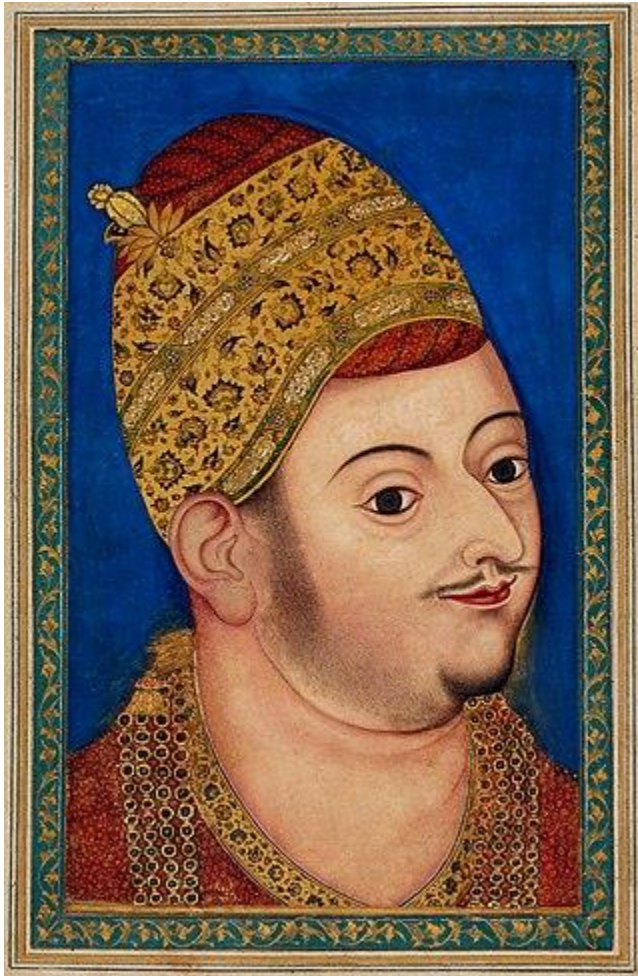
INDIAN ART OF HISTORY

Deccan painting

Sultan Ibrahim Adil Shah II, miniature, Bijapur, c. 1590. The David Collection. A three-quarter view which gives a powerful and lively impression of the sitter, despite lacking both Mughal precision, and very coherent modelling of the surfaces.

Deccani painting is the form of Indian miniature painting produced in the Deccan region of Central India, in the various Muslim capitals of the Deccan sultanates that emerged from the break-up of the Bahmani Sultanate by 1520. These were Bijapur, Golkonda, Ahmadnagar, Bidar, and Berar. The main period was between the late 16th century and the mid-17th, with something of a revival in the mid-18th century, by then centred on Hyderabad.

The high quality of early miniatures suggests that there was already a local tradition, probably at least partly of murals, in which artists had trained. Compared to the early Mughal painting evolving at the same time to the north, Deccan painting exceeds in "the brilliance of their colour, the sophistication and artistry of their composition, and a general air of decadent luxury". Deccani painting was less



interested in realism than the Mughals, instead pursuing "a more inward journey, with mystic and fantastic overtones". Other differences include painting faces, not very expertly modelled, in three-quarter view, rather than mostly in profile in the Mughal style, and "tall women with small heads" wearing saris. There are many royal portraits, and although they lack the precise likenesses of their Mughal equivalents, they often convey a vivid impression of their rather bulky subjects. Buildings are depicted as "totally flat screen-like panels". The paintings are relatively rare, and few are signed or dated, or indeed inscribed at all; very few names are known compared to the generally well-documented Mughal imperial workshops.

The Muslim rulers of the Deccan, many of them Shia, had their own links with the Persianate world, rather than having to rely on those of the imperial Mughal court. In the same way, contacts through the large textile trade, and nearby Goa, led to some identifiable borrowings from European images, which perhaps had a more general stylistic influence as well. There also appear to have been Hindu artists who moved north to the Deccan after the sultans combined to heavily defeat the Vijayanagara Empire in 1565, and sack the capital, Hampi.



Deccani School of Painting

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PGT Fine Art