Conclusion

The introduction of European botanical prints in Mughal, then Safavid workshops, represent a sudden and definite change, both in the iconography and the decorative repertoire of the arts of the book. The first objective of this book was to offer, for the first time, the analysis of the production resulting from the assimilation of exogeneous floral forms through copies and adaptations of European prints. For this, a corpus of 349 paintings and drawings was gathered in a catalogue that is not exhaustive but tries to come as close as possible. More pages will inevitably come to light in the next few months or years, and the hope of this author is that the comparison with the corpus presented here will support in dating and locating this new material. The second objective of this research was to offer in-depth analysis of this genre which constitutes one of the largest productions in premodern India and Persia.

To understand its characteristics, it was first necessary to consider the genesis of the production, where it came from and how makers understood the forms presented to them. The introduction of botanical prints in Mughal India and Safavid Persia was inherently linked to the dense network of commercial, artistic, and cultural exchanges that developed at the end of the 16th century. The phenomenon is separated from the arrival of figurative engravings in the region, in terms of temporality, modes of diffusion, and reaction. No known European model is older than Adriaen Collaert *Florilegium,* first published in 1587, while the first illustrated bible was presented to Akbar in 1580. Manṣūr's *lilies*, considered to be the oldest copy of botanical print in existence, could be dated from the 1610s, at a time when makers of the imperial workshop had already integrated many iconographic elements derived from European prints. In Safavid Persia, the process seems to have stated even later, in the middle of the 17th century and most likely under the impulsion of Mughal artistic importations. This delay is difficult to understand but might come down to two possible explanations: either the actors of the transfer – European travellers, merchants, ambassadors – didn't sent any botanical works, or flower engravings generated no interest until the

beginning of the 16th century. Considering the intense competition between European envoys to provide good quality prints to the court, narrated by Thomas Roe and others, and the general excitement of the court for exogeneous forms and crafts, the second interpretation seems less likely, and flower engravings might have then been nothing more than a new product presented to willing buyers, not knowing the massive impact it would have.

Nineteen drawings or paintings have been identified that include European botanical designs, either in parts or in full; 11 produced in India, 8 in Persia. Compared to the mass of flower paintings catalogued in the present book, this number is extremely low, a little above 5%. This can be explained by several factors, the first one being that not all sources have been identified. Some paintings probably derived from European botanical books that remain to be identified, for instance the three *narcissus* ascribed to Manṣūr, Muḥammad Zamān and Muḥammad Masīḥ. In the case of later paintings such as the ones bound in the Small Clive album, the floral forms were sometimes modified to such an extent that recognising the model came down to luck and a vague *deja-vu* impression. The other factor to be taken into consideration is the idea that faithful reproductions of botanical prints were maybe limited to exercises that were not destined to be preserved. The sketch of a *primrose* in the British Museum album [BM:13v] copied from Johann Theodor de Bry *Florilegium* illustrates this possible phenomenon, the roughness of the drawing clearly indicating that it was either an experimentation or a preparatory sketch. More of these drawings may have existed and were disregarded.

Despite their small number, these 19 copies illustrate the multiple responses to exogeneous floral forms. Manṣūr saw the *lilies* both as an exercise and as a shape to be completed, with the same approach than his peer Abū'l Ḥasan on the engraving of Raphael Sadler's *Timiditas.* The anonymous maker of the *gol o bolbol* in the British Museum album mixed sources to produce something new, as did the anonymous painter of the *snowbell* in the Dārā Shokūh album, while Shafī' 'Abbāsī used the same engraving in two different paintings. The integration of European shapes in larger compositions introduced an aspect of novelty in otherwise familiar creations, especially in the case of the Persian *gol o bolbol*, a theme known in full-page paintings since the 15th century, but we can argue it also sped up the production

process through the use of pouncing patterns.[1] Finally, it contributed in large parts to the diffusion of botanical forms. The paintings of the Small Clive album derived from L'Anglois and Vallet demonstrate the longevity of these forms, which continued to be used well into the following century. A 19th century Qājār *iris* is, for instance, a copy of Emmanuel Sweert *Florilgium* published in 1612.[2] Another, probably from the same period, is even more interesting, being a copy of an *iris* bound in the Dārā Shukōh album [DS, 41v].[3] The existence of this copy is particularly intriguing. The decorative aspect of the Indian painting doesn't match the descriptive exactitude of any European herbarium. The provenance of the Dārā Shukōh album prior to its appearance on the London market in 1908 is completely unknown, but the existence of this Qājār copy could suggest that the volume passed in Iran in the 19th century where it was partially reproduced. The action of copying a 17th century Indian painting is, by itself, surprising given the rich production of floral motifs in the first half of the 19th century, itself largely tributary of the 17th century innovations of Safavid painters such as Shāfī' 'Abbāsī and Muḥammad Zamān.

The size of the Mughal and Safavid corpus of flower paintings offered an unprecedented opportunity to analyse a cohesive production over a long period of time, and to precisely determine its shared characteristics as well as its local particularities. Subject matters are one of the main differences between Indian and Persian productions, with clear preference given to particular flower species. These differences are link to an intellectual and cultural substrate that has just started to reveal itself but that certainly deserves further attention. Floral imagery in Medieval Persian poetry finds direct correspondence with 17th

[1] See for instance the "Prince and Lady under Flowering Branch", bound on an album page made for the Timurid prince Bahrām Mirzā. The painting, on silk, can be dated from the first half of the 15th century and depicts a prince and his consort seated, accompanied by a servant and a musician. Above the group, in much larger scale, a blue bird on a flowering branch, painted in Chinese style, peers downwards. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (14.545). Another painting on silk, probably made in China, was included another album made for Bahrām Mirzā in 951/ 1544-45. Istanbul, Topkapi palace (hazine 2145). Published in Ernst J. Grube and Eleanor Sims, eds., *Between China and Iran: Paintings from 4 Istanbul Albums; a Colloquy Held 23 - 26 June 1980*, Colloquies on Art & Archaeology in Asia 10 (Colloquy on Art and Archaeology in Asia, London, 1985), fig. 119.. For an analysis of Bahrām Mirzā's album, see Roxburgh, *The Persian Album, 1400-1600*, 245–308.

[2] Ex-collection Edwin Binney, whereabouts unknown. Published in *Persian and Mughal Art* (London: P&D Colnaghi & co Ltd, 1976), 83, cat. 67. Copied from Emmanuel Sweert, *Florilegium* (Amsterdam: apud J. Janssonium, 1612), 39..

[3] The page was sold at Christie's London, Art of the Islamic and Indian Worlds including Rugs and Carpets, 26 October 2017, lot 40: https://www.christies.com/lot/lot-6099301?ldp_breadcrumb=back&intObjectID=6099301&from=salessummary&lid=1

and 18th century Persian paintings, the depiction of isolated flowers as well as associations of species can be read through this poetic lens. The theme of the *gol o bolbol*, particularly appreciated by Shafī' 'Abbāsī, appears like an obvious reference, but others are more difficult to grasp, especially regarding the associations of species such as roses and violets that could symbolise the pain of the poet mourning the beloved, or even different parts of a face. Flower paintings also take on whole new meanings when replaced in the context of the album.

If local particularities exist in the choice of the subject and in its depiction, the commonalities within the entire corpus reveal a shared repertoire and a codification of forms that define flower painting as a genre. The corpus gathered gives an impression of great diversity, but its analysis revealed that most of the paintings can, in fact, be reduced to a few traits, shared across the regions: Placement on the page, inclusion and exclusion of certain elements such as human figure, and use of geometrical outline characterise the compositions, with only rare exceptions. The makers of the genre are visible in the majority of anonymous paintings, but also in the work of renown artists whose productions have been highlighted for their individuality. Manṣūr, Mughal painter of flora and fauna *par excellence*, used a triangular composition to highlight the bloom of his *tulip*, as did Shafī' 'Abbāsī in his late drawings and in his tripartite *gol o bolbol* paintings. The transposition of pictorial techniques inherited from European botanical illustration and the integration of geometric figures in the compositions of these masters put a strong accent on the codification of the genre, however without taking away their personal creativity. The discovery and rediscovery of new material will undoubtedly reveal new information on their life and on their style, as well on the intricate connections between arts of the book and other media.

The placement and the role of flower paintings in Indian and Persian albums produced in the 17th and 18th centuries are complex and various, in the image of the production itself. Flowers could have been bound in the albums of Jahāngīr to serve as a visual reminder of his botanical collection, or as part of his reign chronicles, or even to decorate the volume and offer *varietas* within the thematic sequences. The flowers and birds in the Dārā Shukōh album are a clear reference to the metaphor of the enclosed garden developed a century earlier in the

preface of Safavid albums, but they might also be linked to the recipient of this lavish gift, his wife to be, Nādira Bānū Begum.

Floral margins appeared in Mughal albums out of thin air, maybe under the impulsion of European manuscripts and charts, maybe to satisfy the emperor.[4] The pseudo-naturalist plants of the Kevorkian-Minto-Wantage albums added diversity and profusion to the visual experience, which the Dārā Shukōh tried to replicate, maybe with less means, time or resources. This diversity was abandoned in the late albums of Shāh Jahān in aid of symmetry and balance as an embodiment of the principle of *qārina*, the universal harmony the emperor promoted. The species depicted in the margins of the Late Shāh Jahān album confirmed the dominant taste in the production of flower paintings: lilies of all kinds including martagon and fire, iris, dianthus, tulips and hibiscus are among the identifiable species which have also known a particular success in the corpus of paintings. These pseudo-naturalistic margins disappeared at the beginning of the 18th century, following what appeared to be another sudden change of taste and patronage. Imperial albums were still produced in the workshop of Muḥammad Shāh and Shāh ‘Alam II, as well for European collectors and connoisseurs settled in Bengal and Awadh and who breathed their taste and habits into the production.

Floral margins also appeared unexpectedly in 18th century Afshār Persia, this time under the influence of earlier Mughal volumes such as the so-called Nāsir al-Dīn Shāh album, looted from Delhi in 1151/ 1739. Here again, floral motifs took on different forms and functions: violets, tulips, narcissus, roses and cherry trees covered the gilded margins. Floral marginalia have often been neglected, but these motifs give crucial information on production and decorative practices on paper, and support in better dating volumes, isolated paintings, as well as productions on other artistic media.

In summary, this book offers a better and more complete comprehension of a production that has often been considered as secondary and only decorative. Based on the largest corpus of flower paintings and drawings ever assembled and on its precise and contextualised analysis, it provided a new foundational stone to the comprehension of

[4] The possible link between Mughal albums and European charts was first proposed in Brend, ‘On the Borders: A Possible Source for Naturalistic Floral Decoration at the Mughal Court’.

premodern painted productions in India and Persia, their patronage and their integration in a larger market economy encompassing all artistic creations.