**Public access description**

This illustration to the Akbarnama (Book of Akbar) depicts the victory of the Mughal army, led by Khan Zaman, over the Afghans in 1561 on the banks of the River Gomti (also known as the Gumti or Gomati) in north India. This is part of a double-page composition designed by the Mughal court artist Kanha, Museum no. IS.2:12-1896 being the other half. Banwali Khord painted the details of this page.

The Akbarnama was commissioned by the Mughal emperor Akbar (r.1556–1605) as the official chronicle of his reign. It was written in Persian by his court historian and biographer, Abu’l Fazl, between 1590 and 1596, and the V&A’s partial copy of the manuscript is thought to have been illustrated between about 1592 and 1595. This is thought to be the earliest illustrated version of the text, and drew upon the expertise of some of the best royal artists of the time. Many of these are listed by Abu’l Fazl in the third volume of the text, the A’in-i Akbari, and some of these names appear in the V&A illustrations, written in red ink beneath the pictures, showing that this was a royal copy made for Akbar himself. After his death, the manuscript remained in the library of his son Jahangir, from whom it was inherited by Shah Jahan.

The V&A purchased the manuscript in 1896 from Frances Clarke, the widow of Major General John Clarke, who bought it in India while serving as Commissioner of Oudh between 1858 and 1862.

**Descriptive line**
Painting, Akbarnama, victory of Khan Zaman (Ali Quli Khan), outline by Kanha, painting by Banwali the Younger, opaque watercolour and gold on paper, Mughal, ca. 1590-95

**Physical description**
Painting, in opaque watercolour and gold on paper, left half of a double picture, depicting the victory of Ali Quli Khan over the Afghans on the banks of the river Gomti in 1561. The illustration overleaf (IS.2:12-1896) continues the story.

**Dimensions**
Height: 33 cm, Width: 20 cm average

**Museum number**
IS.2:13-1896

**Object history note**
The Akbarnama was commissioned by the emperor Akbar as the official chronicle of his reign. It was written by his court historian and biographer Abu’l Fazl between 1590 and 1596 and is thought to have been illustrated between about 1592 and 1594 by at least 49 different artists from Akbar’s studio. After Akbar’s death in 1605, the manuscript remained in the library of his son, Jahangir (r. 1605-1627) and later Shah Jahan (r.1628-1658). The Victoria and Albert Museum purchased it in 1896 from Mrs Frances Clarke, the widow of Major-General John Clarke, who bought it in India while serving as Commissioner of Oudh between 1858 and 1862.

Historical significance: It is thought to be the first illustrated copy of the Akbarnama. It drew upon the expertise of some of the best royal painters of the time, many of whom receive special mention by Abu’l Fazl in the A’in-i-Akbari. The inscriptions in red ink on the bottom of the paintings name the artists.

**URL**
http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O9299/ali-quli-khan-painting-kanha/