

AMIR MOHTASHEMI



A Study of a Male Yellow-Footed Green Pigeon (*Treron phoenicoptera*)

Lucknow, India, 18th century (circa 1775-1785)

Pen, ink, watercolour on paper, gum arabic

Provenance: Major General Claude Martin (1735-1800)

Niall Hobhouse Collection Sale, Christie's London May 22nd, 2008.

47cm high, 28cm wide

Stock no.: A5506

The Yellow-footed Green Pigeon is primarily olive-green in colour with “ashy grey above, uniformly bright yellow below, with a lilac patch on wing-shoulder and a conspicuous band across the blackish wings.”^[i] The yellow tufted feathers on the legs make it stand out from other green pigeons and give it its name.

They are found in the scrublands, forests, and cultivated area near towns and villages of southern Asia from Pakistan and India through to some sightings in Sri Lanka. They perch on banyan and peepul trees, feeding mainly on fruits and berries, especially peepul figs. Their colouration helps with camouflage amongst the trees. They are locally known as Hariyal in Hindi and Marathi, as well as Haroli in the latter. Hariyal means green, referring to the olive-green colour of the bird’s feathers. The painter’s intention to paint a scientific painting with accuracy and not simply as a decorative piece is visible through the attention to detail. Extraordinary attention is paid to the feathers and the changing colours across the bird’s body. The male is shown with brighter colouration, seen particularly in the purple shoulder and the yellow feathers on the legs. The glistening eye is highlighted by the white ring around it.

Below the painting is an inscription in Persianised-Urdu saying “Haral” and the number 476 on the lower right. An inscription in ink in English reads “Purple shouldered Pigeon Lath. Sup. Strabo. B.C. male”.

[i] Ali, Salim, and Ripley S. Dillon. Handbook of the Birds of India and Pakistan, Together with Those of Nepal, Sikkim, Bhutan and Ceylon. Vol. 3. 10 vols. Bombay: Oxford University Press, 1968, p. 108