

The Alkazi Collection of Photography

The Alkazi Foundation for the Arts is a registered charitable trust based in New Delhi. It is primarily dedicated to the exploration and study of the cultural history of India.

Over the last 30 years, Ebrahim Alkazi, the Foundation's Chairman, has amassed a private collection of photographs known as **The Alkazi Collection of Photography** (www.acparchives.com), an archive of nineteenth- and early-twentieth century photographic prints from South and South-East Asia, amounting to over 90,000 images. The core of the Collection comprises works in the form of photographic albums, single prints, paper negatives and glass plate negatives from India, Burma, Ceylon, Nepal, Afghanistan and Tibet. Almost every region with a history touched by the British Raj is represented. These vintage prints document sociopolitical life in the subcontinent through the linked fields of history, architecture, anthropology, topography and archaeology, beginning from the 1840s and leading up to the rise of modern India and the Independence Movement of 1947.

The photographic archive has been digitally catalogued and documented, and is accessed by researchers, curators, historians and teams of scholars. The material is now being made available to a larger academic community and the general public through a series of publications that are accompanied by exhibitions and seminars. Each volume, under the editorship of a specialist in the field, examines a particular region or topic represented in the archive, encouraging cross-disciplinary approaches and interpretations.

Other titles in this series

The Marshall Albums: *Photography and Archaeology*
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Codell

POWER AND RESISTANCE
The Delhi Coronation Durbars



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Photography

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THE ALKAZI COLLECTION OF PHOTOGRAPHY

POWER AND RESISTANCE The Delhi Coronation Durbars

Edited by Julie F. Codell



POWER AND RESISTANCE
The Delhi Coronation Durbars

This volume explores how photography represented, idealized and publicized the Delhi Coronation Durbars, occasions marking the formal coronations of English monarchs as empress and emperors of India: Victoria in 1877, Edward VII in 1903 and George V in 1911. Formally schematized and instituted by the Viceroys of India—Lytton, Curzon and Hardinge—the durbars were the first examples of the aestheticisation of imperial politics and the inscription of the Raj in a celebratory history that served to legitimate colonial presence.

Lasting several weeks, each lavish occasion was imaged and described in photographs (*cartes-de-visite* as well as private, popular and commissioned photos), paintings, press illustrations, illustrated souvenirs, memoirs, photo albums and films.

The book focuses on photographs made for those who attended the Delhi Durbars and for a global audience who did not attend. It features vital photographs that were commissioned from the foremost British and Indian photographers such as Raja Deen Dayal & Sons, Vernon & Co., and Bourne & Shepherd, as well as those shot by amateur photographers.

The essays in this volume focus on semiotics of image and the role of durbar photographs in visually rendering the complexities of colonial logic, the scopoc regimes of surveillance and spectacle, and the pivotal ideologies and hyperbolic fantasies of a subjugated 'Orient' promoted by the imperial administrations to justify British rule in India.

With 147 photographs



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POWER AND RESISTANCE
The Delhi Coronation Durbars
1877 • 1903 • 1911

Editor
Julie F. Codell

Contributors
James R. Ryan, Nicola J. Thomas, Saloni Mathur, Benjamin B. Cohen,
Julie F. Codell, Deepali Dewan, Gita Rajan, Jim Masselos, Christopher Pinney



The Alkazi Collection of Photography
in association with
Mapin Publishing



First published in India in 2012 by
Mapin Publishing Pvt. Ltd
and
The Alkazi Collection of Photography

The publishers thank the
Ministry of Culture, Government of India
for their support.

Simultaneously published in the
United States of America in 2012 by
Grantha Corporation
E: mapin@mapinpub.com

Distributed in North America by
Antique Collectors' Club
T: 1 800 252 5231 • F: 413 529 0862
E: info@antiquecc.com • www.antiquecollectorsclub.com

Distributed in United Kingdom and Europe by
Gazelle Book Services Ltd.
T: 44 1524-68765 • F: 44 1524-63232
E: sales@gazellebooks.co.uk • www.gazellebookservices.co.uk

Distributed in Southeast Asia by
Paragon Asia Co. Ltd
T: 66 2877 7755 • F: 66 2468 9636
E: info@paragonasia.com

Distributed in the Rest of the World by
Mapin Publishing Pvt. Ltd
502 Paritosh, Near Darpana Academy,
Usmanpura Riverside, Ahmedabad 380013
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Russel Harris (figs. 88, 89, 91, 92)
Victoria and Albert Museum, London (fig. 71)

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ISBN: 978-81-89995-50-8 (Mapin)
ISBN: 978-1-935677-10-9 (Grantha)
LCCN: 2011926238

Copyediting: Smriti Vohra, Vinutha Mallya / Mapin Editorial
Design and Production: Paulomi Shah / Mapin Design Studio
Editorial support: Megha Abraham, Neha Manke / Mapin Editorial
Archival research: Jennifer Chowdhry, Shilpi Goswami, Joyoti Roy /
The Alkazi Collection of Photography

Processed by Reproscan, Mumbai
Printed by Jak Printers, Mumbai

Captions:
Front Cover: **Photo Central News**, Coronation Durbar, Delhi—Royal
Procession towards the Jumma Masjid Mosque, 1911, Phototype
Postcard, 87 x 140 mm (*fig. 23*)
Frontispiece: **James Ricalton (1844–1929)**; Underwood and Underwood
Publishers, The Fabulous Wealth of India—Native Princes in the Grand
State Entry, Delhi Durbar Series (Stereoscopic image of the Durbar),
1903, Detail, Stereo-card, Albumen Print, 83 x 76 mm (*fig. 19*)
Front Endpapers: **Vernon & Co.**, Bombay, Delhi Durbar, Military
Procession, from the album 'Souvenir: The Imperial Visit to Delhi', 1911,
Silver Gelatin Print, 160 x 275 mm
Pages 4–5: **R. Ellis**, The King and Queen entering Valletta (on King George V's
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24 January 1912, Silver Gelatin Print, 216 x 288 mm
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the album 'Souvenir: The Imperial Visit to Delhi' (Part 3 of Five Part
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INTRODUCTION



PHOTOGRAPHY AND THE DELHI CORONATION DURBARS: 1877, 1903, 1911

Julie F. Codell

Studies of historical photography in India have recently blossomed, embracing everything from photographic societies in Madras, Bombay and Calcutta, to photographs of imperial wars, industrial development, portraiture, ethnography, landscape, archaeological surveys and ruins. Victorian practitioners included Indian and British amateurs and professionals. Photography was taught at the British art schools in India; Samuel Bourne (1834–1912), one of the best-known British photographers working in India during the nineteenth century, even believed that students in the Madras School of Art were as competent as many British professional photographers.¹ The circulation of photographs linked metropole and colony—Indian views and Indian photographers exhibited at the London Photographic Society, for example, and many Britons photographed in India for the British government, for maharajas, or on their own.

This book focuses on photographs made for those who attended the Delhi Durbars and for a global audience who did not attend. Photographic records were vital to these events and were commissioned from the foremost British and Indian photographers. In the 34 years between the first and the third durbar, technological developments in photography permitted easy duplication for postcards and press images, as well as the opportunity for much amateur photography of the events.²

This book will explore how photography represented and publicised the Delhi coronation durbars in visual, historical and political contexts tied to these events. Photographs offer surprising insights into political and cultural conflicts over national identities, historical origins, and the purpose of media representation. Essays in this book suggest that durbar photographs functioned to express not only the order of the empire and its extravaganzas, but also complicated, often contradictory, beliefs about race, desire, and history shaped by imperial administrations whose durbars were intended to justify British rule.

The overarching thesis of this book is that the photographs of the coronation durbars, intended to overawe Indians in 1877 and the global community in 1903 and 1911, reveal hidden fissures and tensions in these visually rich, celebratory spectacles. Through close analysis, the authors point out discrepancies, those junctions in photographs where British and Indian photographers, sometimes inadvertently, sometimes deliberately, uncovered contradictions between the Raj's "civilising" intentions and its military dominance. Unconventional focal points in official and unofficial photographs show events from the margins of the spectacles. In official portraits, dissonances emerge between figures and backdrops. Other revealing interstices are persistent images of photographers at the edge of celebratory scenes, spatial manipulations that create vanishing points for durbar splendour, and discrepancies between durbar photographs and other accounts of durbar events—letters, books, sketches and newspaper reports.

Another important theme that emerges from these essays is the relationship between the durbars and concepts of

modernity applied across a variety of issues, such as the formal properties of the photographs, the nature of durbar spectacle and the often contradictory political interpretations of these photographs, both then and now.

The essays offer multiple perspectives on four linked themes: photography as an appropriate medium for these spectacles, the technical and aesthetic possibilities of photography in the colonial project of mapping and recording durbar events (James Ryan and Nicola Thomas, Saloni Mathur); maharajas' portraits and their role and presence as highly politicised signifiers in the imperial arena (Benjamin Cohen, Julie Codell); Raja Deen Dayal's role as coronation durbar photographer in the context of an emerging Indian modernism (Deepali Dewan, Gita Rajan); and coronation durbars as spectacles of crowds and events on an unprecedented scale (Jim Masselos, Christopher Pinney).

As spectacles, the durbars paralleled the venues of panoramas, dioramas and the international exhibitions held every few years around the world and were modelled after the 1851 London Great Exhibition, the revival of the Olympics in 1896 in Athens, which were then folded into later hyperbolic displays in Paris (1900) and St. Louis (1904), along with the expansion of the circus into three rings by the Barnum & London circus around 1881. Coronations durbars borrowed from these spectacles to disguise politics as aesthetic entertainment (fig. 1).

In its attempt to control the protocol and hierarchies of the durbars, the Raj anticipated the mass political rallies of European totalitarianism and the aestheticisation of politics in the modern world. The Raj hoped to control images of its spectacles, but failed, because journalists and amateur and professional photographers all exposed the underside of these events, such as their rampant commercialism or the concurrent famines in India during these durbars. In their pursuit of media attention (painting in 1877, then photography, journalism and film in 1903 and 1911),

Raj policies catalysed another "modern" development: the conflicted relationship between political authorities and a self-regulated, autonomous press. A third modern trait is the importance and independence of the crowd. No matter how much the authorities herded the crowd and issued traffic pamphlets, the crowd—a mix of classes, nationalities, and professions—became an entity and a force that helped determine the trajectories and interpretations of these durbars. There to see and be seen, the crowd became larger and more unruly with each durbar. Finally, in an ironic twist, coronation durbars meant to proclaim and ritualise the empire also fed the growing resistance to it among educated Indian middle classes, as evidenced in the press and in gatherings of the Indian National Congress, contributing to modern Indian nationalism.

Photographs, of course, capture much more than their ostensible subject. As anthropologist Elizabeth Edwards points out, texts or images are not simply inscribed with the colonial gaze, but also with their own social relations, exchanges, histories and contexts, all shifting and unstable over time. The photograph is a reciprocal object, not just an image of a referent. In this role it can embody a counter-narrative³ and over time convey to new audiences multiple meanings that escape imposed narratives of history and political authority.⁴ These escaped meanings, or reciprocities, or "leaks" of micro-intentions, as Edwards has called them, are analysed in detail in these essays.

History and Ceremony of Coronation Durbars

The Delhi Durbars were coronations of English monarchs as emperors or empress of India: Victoria (r. 1837–1901) in 1877, Edward VII (r. 1901–10) in 1903, and George V (r. 1910–36) in 1911. These massive events each lasted two weeks and required months of strenuous preparation. Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli (held office 1868, 1874–80) proposed the queen's new role as empress in 1876.⁵ After much parliamentary debate and hostility from political opponents, Disraeli's proposal became law. Robert Lytton,

Previous pages

1 **FEDERICO PELITI (1844–1914) (ATTRIB.)**

Retainers' Review—Warriors on Stilts, from the album 'Souvenir of the Delhi Coronation Durbar, 1903', 1903 Silver Gelatin Print, 130 x 205 mm

LANDSCAPES OF PERFORMANCE: STAGING THE DELHI DURBARS

James R. Ryan and Nicola J. Thomas

Introduction

From the day we entered Delhi on elephants to the day we left it in a state procession our pageant was grander than another and the State Ball in the Palace of Akbar was a thing to dream of. [...] Halls of alabaster inlaid with precious stones dazzled in the glow of electric light, India Chiefs covered with jewels, officers in full dress, women in jewels and as a background the jewelled throne of the old Emperor of Delhi towering in lofty beauty as a setting to British rule. People were perfectly speechless with admiration and there were no words to describe the beauty of it.¹

Thus Lady Curzon, the Vicereine of India, described to her father her sense of wonder at the magnificent Delhi Durbar of 1903 in which she and her husband, Viceroy Curzon, played a central role. Mary Curzon's use of the term "pageant" is particularly fitting because it locates durbars within a broader domain of spectacular performance and pageant-making emerging in early twentieth-century British and American culture. One of the hallmarks of such spectacular enactments was the emphasis given to place as well as people; indeed, durbars were performances not just of human actors but also of geography. This essay explores how durbars involved the fashioning of particular symbolic

landscapes and the specific ways in which their architects and agents represented the phenomena of which they were a part. As implied in the vicereine's observations, the border between observer and participant, actor and audience, was both fluid and porous. Representations of durbars need to be therefore understood not simply as objective outside views of a self-contained event, but as constituent parts of its performance. And although durbars were ephemeral events, existing no more than a few weeks, they were always intended to have a life beyond their immediate manifestation. How to achieve enduring renditions, however, became an increasingly complex question. Mary Curzon was by no means alone in expressing the desire, and difficulty, of capturing the grand scale and detail of the durbar spectacle.

Photography was one of the most ubiquitous means of recording durbars and conveying their spectacular qualities. As Julie Codell notes in her introduction to this volume, durbars were recorded in a wide variety of photographic formats, from the official photographs of commercial operators to the amateur snapshots made by the audience and participants. This essay examines how the practice of photography at durbars was in some ways a political act, since it was inextricably bound up with the dedicated staging of a symbolic imperial landscape. We consider photographs made at all three imperial durbars (1877, 1903 and 1911), though we pay particular attention to the 1903 Durbar, presided over by Curzon. Whilst this durbar drew on the template provided by Lytton's coronation durbar of 1877, and stayed true to the overall claim that the phenomenon was an extension of the Mughal court tradition in its reinforcement of political affiliations and hierarchies, Curzon's vision was

also significantly different in its manner of execution and documentation. Not only was it larger than the previous durbar, it was a self-consciously "modern" spectacle. As this essay argues, the modernity of the 1903 Durbar was also expressed in the way that photography was used to record and enhance its appeal as a visual spectacle.

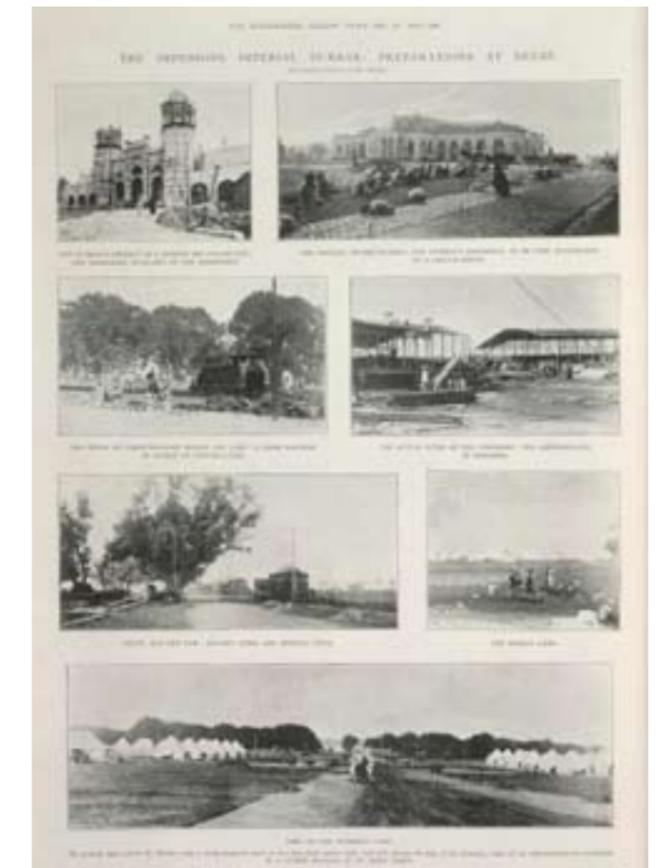
Durbar Topography as Imperial Text

"Landscape," as Iain Robertson and Penny Richards note, "is one of the principal ways by which the powerful in society maintain their dominance through a process of imposition and naturalisation".² The spatial parameters of the durbars and the extent of their presence within urban Delhi can be deduced from contemporary maps, such as those produced of the 1903 Durbar (fig. 13). The choice of Delhi as the site for all the durbars was itself an attempt to insert the British Raj within the fissured, atrophied yet still influential flow of Mughal history.³ Despite differences in orientation and emphasis within durbar landscapes of 1877, 1903 and 1911, the hybrid fusion of Mughal and "Mutiny" legacies were consistently drawn on and re-interpreted in persistent efforts to present the colonial regime as the "natural" ruler of India. Specific sites, such as the Ridge, the Red Fort and the Jama Masjid, were all utilised strategically by viceregal choreographers, melding potent histories and dramatic settings to configure Delhi and the Raj in a new relationship.

Landscapes should therefore not be seen as static entities but as spaces that are continuously evolving, with their inhabitants altering and re-negotiating the meanings within and around them. We therefore consider landscape less as a cultural product than as a cultural process; as W.J.T. Mitchell notes, "it is a verb rather than a noun".⁴ The full impact of imperial theatre is sensed once the glamorous fictions of the ceremonies unfold as a contingent vista and perpetuate their momentum through the sheer weight of excess.

The process of creating the durbar landscape happened over many years, in terms of planning and forming the vista for

each occasion. Curzon started planning the 1903 Durbar shortly after Queen Victoria's death in 1901. During the two-week event, the space continued to evolve through being inhabited dynamically by different formations of humans and animals. During this time the symbolic potency of the durbar landscape peaked in a remarkably energetic manner. Within the configuration, the assertion of Raj power and control through the spatial organisation and embedded technologies of order, as well as their documentation, became normative and naturalised for durbar participants. Commercial and



17 **ILLUSTRATED LONDON NEWS**
The Impending Imperial Durbar: Preparations at Delhi
27 December 1902, p. 980

Previous pages

16 **WILLIAM H. BURKE**
Their Imperial Majesties' arrival at Calcutta, Prinsep's Ghat,
1911
Silver Gelatin Print, 191 x 287 mm

THE DURBAR AND VISUAL ARTS: REVISITING THE PICTURE ARCHIVE

Saloni Mathur

Introduction

The reinvention of the durbar as an imperial spectacle by colonial officials, which epitomised the transformation of British authority in India after the Uprising of 1857, was from the outset a disputed set of events that had very different meanings for its British and Indian, elite and non-elite audiences of the period. In the three-decade span between these self-consciously archaic ceremonials, the British placed their own officials, in particular the viceroy as the Crown's representative, at the top of a new social order that proclaimed Queen Victoria as empress of India. It also saw the radical rise of nationalist consciousness in the Indian subcontinent, and the outright rejection of the pretences of the durbar in both, the English-language and vernacular presses in India.¹

In this essay, I approach this aspect of the durbar archive, namely its status as a disputed symbol and its unfixed epistemological status, by displacing it from one conventional arena of historical concern and revisiting it through the lens of another. More specifically, I turn to the multiple ways in which the durbar overlapped with the emerging domain of the visual arts in colonial India. The durbar's visual archive, consisting largely of photographs and paintings, has no doubt helped to construct the hegemony of an "imperial image".² This picture-archive—depicting triumphant processions of men on elephants, the crowds that flocked to witness the durbar, the sea of orderly tents of the housing camps, and the creamy-white amphitheatre of 1903—shining, as the Viceroy Lord Curzon boasted, "like

some fairy palace of marble in the fierce light of the Indian sun",³ has historically been used to affirm and validate the drama of imperial pageantry, and can no longer be simply taken at face value (figs. 38, 39, 14, 9). By considering the structures of artifice and artistry of the durbar, its historical connections to colonial art education and to the discourses of aesthetic revival at the turn of the century, I propose to illuminate another genealogy for this image-archive, one that is entangled within the history of modern visual culture in the Indian subcontinent.

There is undoubtedly a complex relationship between art and politics in the durbar phenomenon. This essay attempts to historicise this relationship by situating our understanding of the durbar's emergence alongside the modern visual regimes of photography, oil painting, and exhibiting on the one hand, and the legacies of these modern formations on postcolonial relationships in the present, on the other. The analysis proceeds, in part, by turning towards the margins of the durbar's pictorial landscape: first to the portrait of the camera itself within the photographic archive, and then to a body of paintings of the 1903 durbar that represents a departure from the dominant Anglo-European account.

Facing page

38 **RAJA DEEN DAYAL & SONS**
H.H. the Nizam's Elephant, Delhi Coronation Durbar
1903, 1903
Silver Gelatin Print, 263 x 197 mm



THE DELHI DURBAR: THE VIEW FROM HYDERABAD

Benjamin B. Cohen

One aspect, perhaps above all else, dominated the coronation durbars: rank. The durbar ceremonials were designed to reiterate, reinforce, and above all make manifest the rank of India's approximately 560 princes attending the events. In such an enormous gathering, constituted on three separate occasions, one might wonder about who was given absolute priority in this massive ordering of princes and their princely states. The answer is Hyderabad, the premier princely state, and its leaders, the Nizams. They were the premier princes at the pinnacle of each event and matter of social ordered protocol. Yet, while several works take seriously Hyderabad's history in various forms, we know little about the Nizams' participation at the Delhi Durbars. This work seeks to address this lacuna.

By examining the ways in which the Nizams and Hyderabad were reinforced as the premier princes and state of India, we can better understand how the British "imagined" or saw their empire.¹ As Bernard Cohn has described it, "The invitees were selected in relation to ideas which the British rulers had about the proper social order in India".² Further,

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60 VERNON & CO., BOMBAY; UNKNOWN ARTIST
Imaginary Scene of Lord Curzon and the Duke of Connaught Surrounded by Chiefs and Nobles of the Anglo-Indian Empire on the Occasion of the Coronation Durbar, Delhi 1903, c. 1903–4
Photo Collage of Hand-Painted Silver Gelatin Print, 228 x 371 mm

through studying the durbar protocols we can gain some understanding of how the Nizams viewed their own position within the empire, and how this was made manifest in celebrations at Delhi and at Hyderabad.

Viewed from the perspective of Hyderabad's status, the durbars and their simultaneous celebrations throughout India might extend Benedict Anderson's idea of "imagination" as a marker of emergent nationalism. While India's nationalist movement was well underway by the first durbar, these events help mark a simultaneous growing sense (or "imagining") of empire and imperialism concomitant yet separate from nationalist imaginings. If the Nizams in Delhi and their subjects in Hyderabad could simultaneously celebrate the durbars, this marked a truly powerful "imagined" empire.

How this was achieved with and for Hyderabad is the central theme of my essay, beginning with some background of Hyderabad's history, then an exploration of the journeys, accompaniment and accoutrements of the Nizams to Delhi. Next, I will examine their official portraits and critical moments of honour at the durbars themselves. Finally, we see how the durbars were celebrated in Hyderabad, thus demonstrating a reciprocity of ceremony.

The History of Hyderabad

The history of Hyderabad can be traced to Ala-ud-din Bahman Shah, who founded the Bahmani Empire in 1347, its territory stretching south to the Tungabhadra River and north to the fertile tracts of Berar. The capital was Gulbarga.

During their reign, the Bahmani rulers engaged the kings of Vijayanagar (located just south of the river) in repeated conflicts. A century later, as the Bahmani imperial fabric began to fray, one of its provincial governors, Qutb-ul-Mulk, declared independence at the outpost of Golconda in 1512, initiating the Qutb Shahi dynasty that ruled at Golconda until 1687. This regime was marked by the incorporation of Hindu kings who had survived the fall of Vijayanagar and now offered their services to these new Islamic masters. These kings were the *samasthan* rajas, and we shall meet them again later in this text.³ In 1687, then Mughal emperor Aurangzeb turned his attention to Golconda, having already reduced the Bahmani forces at Bijapur (a nearby province) the previous year. The mighty hilltop fort of Golconda resisted the besieging Mughal forces, but was finally overtaken after a treacherous betrayal. Thus was the end of the Golconda empire, and in its place the house of the Nizams was constructed. In 1713 the Mughal emperor appointed Asaf Jah as his viceroy in the Deccan, and bestowed upon him the title of 'Nizam-ul-Mulk', a hereditary conferral that has since been used by successive Nizams to distinguish their royal house.

In 1901, the state of Hyderabad had an area of 82,000 square miles, with a population of 11.1 million people. Nearly half spoke Telugu, with the remainder speaking Marathi, Kannada and Urdu. Hindus comprised 88% of the population while the other 12% consisted of Muslims and small communities of Christians, Parsis, Sikhs and Jains. The sixth Nizam, Mahbub Ali Khan, came to the throne in 1869 at the age of three. He attended the first two durbars at Delhi, while his son Osman Ali Khan attended the final durbar only a few weeks after his father's sudden death.

Hyderabad stands out due to its size and location within the subcontinent. While maps of princely India frequently show a patchwork of British controlled territory and the princely states, maps of Hyderabad, however, fail to reflect its diverse political composition. The state's royal court was comprised

of a variety of landholders who supported the Nizams' rule in terms of ceremonial bolstering, financial and occasional military support. Members of these different landholding groups were among the Nizams' royal entourages in Delhi. The oldest members of the Nizam's court were the *samasthan* rajas. They traced their families and origins back to the Kakatiya and Vijayanagar kings, and added critical support to the Nizams' administrations. Standing alongside the *samasthan* rajas were the *paigah* nobles: three families granted land in the Deccan when the first Nizam settled in the region. They too provided valuable military and financial support to the Nizams, and attended more ceremonial functions at the royal court. Finally, Hyderabad had a plethora of *jagirdars*: individuals who were granted land (sometimes non-contiguous) by the Nizams as reward for service. If a *jagirdar* and his family had long historical roots within Hyderabad circles, he might have been a regular attendee at the Nizam's durbars, and several were invited to accompany the Nizams to Delhi for the imperial durbars. Land not controlled by *samasthan* rajas, *paigah* nobles or *jagirdars* was held by the Nizams for their own personal use; these were the *sarf-e-khas* lands whose revenues went directly to the Nizam's personal coffers.

Accompaniment

When the Nizams travelled to Delhi, they were accompanied by a bevy of the state's nobles. This entourage was a reflection of the state's political composition as described above. For the Queen's Durbar of 1877, the 11-year-old Mahbub Ali Khan travelled to Delhi with 52 other state officials. His immediate care fell to two men: Sir Salar Jung, the state's minister (fig. 61), who spoke on his behalf at the durbar; and the British Resident, Sir Richard Meade.⁴ The Nizam returned to Delhi 26 years later, once again with a sizable entourage. The list of nobles accompanying the Nizam comprised the elite of Hyderabad's polity. The Nizam's Minister, Kishen Pershad, along with Colonel Afsur-ud-daula headed the delegation.⁵ Also attending was the Raja of Wanaparathi, a representative of the state's *samasthans* and Hindu nobility.

PHOTOGRAPHIC INTERVENTIONS AND IDENTITIES: COLONISING AND DECOLONISING THE ROYAL BODY

Julie F. Codell

...the great chiefs and native retainers, indescribably clothed... an Eastern survival of the old feudal grand seigneurs of Catholic Europe... One maharaja, half insensible from opium, had a loyal, beneficent smirk... painted... on his inexpressive countenance... in their howdahs of fantastic design... What histories, what traditions, what crimes they represented!... a horrible medley of the infernal and the grotesque, the ancient barbaric and the modern vulgar, the superb and the squalid... power without glory, and rank without grace...¹

There was no group of Indians upon whom the British expressed more emphatically and desperately their dependence in running the Raj than the princes of the Native States, sometimes called “Ruling Chiefs”. And, as the above excerpt reveals, they were “read” by presupposed notions of Eastern decadence against the unspoken assumptions of a Western work ethic and British stiff upper lip. The author Pearl Craigie also describes the eyes of Oriental princes that “seem to express every possible evil and good emotion at a single glance”, with “an effeminate figure, a clumsy gait, and an air of unmistakable intelligence”.²

I will focus on contradictions between what the British projected onto princes’ bodies and the princes’ own ways of negotiating their public identities and images in Britain and at home through photographs. Analysing maharajas’ portraits in official government-approved books published for each

coronation durbar, especially the images of maharajas who attended at least two durbars, held high rank or were British favourites, I will examine these photographs’ place and function within the broader spectrum of similar photographs taken in other circumstances in London and throughout India, commissioned by the maharajas themselves and thus in their control.

As Barbara Ramusack notes, “After 1858, colonial knowledge specifically targeted the princes and their states”.³ Put forward and honoured in every coronation durbar, the princes were not a monolithic group, and their roles changed significantly between 1877 and 1911, changes reflected in their photographic portraits in each coronation durbar’s official book. The photographs represented a complex mix of prevailing stereotypes of maharajas, the political intent of individual viceroys, princely self-fashioning and their photographers’ own styles.

Maharajas varied widely in their views of their roles in the Raj and of the Raj itself, some loyal enough to fight and die for Britain, others resistant in subtle ways. They also had a variety of relations to their subjects: some with long genealogical legitimacy, like the Rajputs, others with recent kingships, some sharing the religion and culture of their subjects, others at variance with them. The princes were not a cohesive group and did not share overarching cultural, social and political views. They differed among themselves on how to rule; whether to support the Indian National Congress, and if so, to what extent; and how to institute social change and reform.⁴

Princes and the Native States

In 1900, there were almost 700 Native States in British India,⁵ dispersed over the territory and constituting about 42% of the dominion. Native States were defined as autonomous, but in 1858 their rulers formally assumed the status of feudal vassals owing allegiance to Queen Victoria. The policy of indirect rule, the prime condition of such subordination, did not preclude the British from removing rulers they felt were “uncooperative” and replacing them with distant relatives, often hand-picked young boys educated by British tutors; or by taxing rulers and charging them for military assistance to the British; or for the construction of railroads, all justified by the concept of paramountcy (British authority and laws override local laws) articulated by Viceroy Lytton.⁶

The British approved successors, adoptions (if there were no sons), princes’ expenditures and travels abroad.⁷ British resident officers supervised princes’ economic and political affairs, and *diwans*, pro-British Indians, were maharajas’ assigned “consultants” or regents.⁸ The colonial administration took a percentage of state taxes, minerals and agricultural wealth. Depending upon political affiliation—Tory or Liberal—the viceroys formulated different strategies in their treatment and expectations of the princes, as did residents and *diwans*. Princes had to continually navigate policy changes and conflicts between Parliament and the India Office in London, and between the viceroy and his political secretary in India.⁹

The British also created a hierarchy of princes, each accorded a number of gun salutes: 21 the highest, nine the lowest—Queen Victoria received a 101-gun salute, the viceroy a 31-gun salute. For the 1877 Durbar, Lytton raised the three richest rulers, Hyderabad, Baroda and Mysore, to 21-guns each. The more loyal to the British in 1857, the more guns, sometimes with gifts of territory. Many princes tried to raise their place in the hierarchy and gain more gun salutes. Maharajas also complained that the fewer gun salutes allotted to them, the more the Government of India interfered

in their administration and finances.¹⁰ Choreographed protocols indicated seating arrangements, dress codes and the assigned spot where a prince stood to meet government representatives, viceroys or members of the British royal family.

The ceremonies initiated for Lytton’s 1877 Coronation Durbar—or “Imperial Assemblage”, a term the viceroy preferred—set precedents for rituals and homage rites for subsequent durbars. Among post-1858 institutions was the Order of the Star of India for princes and British military and civilian officers in 1861. The first 25 members included the loyal maharajas of Patiala and Gwalior. Members received a sun pin and necklace of alternating rose and lotus patterns with a pendant image of the queen. By 1865, the Order included hundreds in a three-tier hierarchy. Meanwhile, bestowing with one hand while appropriating with the other, British economic interests took from the states land taxes, agricultural revenues and revenues from manufacture of arms, opium, salt and alcohol. British land management often pitted princes against nobles, and provoked peasant riots. Heavy taxes were oppressive for both landlords and peasants.¹¹

The British worked to find ways to bind maharajas to the Raj. Initially the British strategised to educate princes as little Englishmen, but in the 1870s they added “traditional” education and parallel versions of British public schools, creating elite colleges for princely sons. The general opinion, however, was that these young princes received only a smattering of moral and intellectual education, and spent too much time on sports and other diversions.

Some princes complied with British demands, and others resisted. The states of Gwalior, Idar, and Bikaner fought for Britain in the Boxer Rebellion in China in 1900–01 and in World War I. Maharana Fateh Singh of Mewar, Udaipur turned back at the Delhi train station in 1903, refusing to attend the ‘Curzonation’—Viceroy Curzon’s Delhi Durbar—as a vassal. He did not attend the 1911 Coronation Durbar

THE LIMITS OF PHOTOGRAPHY: THE DAYAL STUDIO'S CORONATION ALBUM, 1903

Deepali Dewan

Introduction

In 1903, the firm of Raja Deen Dayal & Sons—hereafter referred to as the Dayal Studio—was present at the Delhi Durbar along with other photographic firms and individuals with cameras eager to capture the ceremonial events.¹ Raja Deen Dayal himself was present with his eldest son Gyan Chand, accompanied by several assistants and multiple cameras. The result of their efforts was over 400 photographs documenting the imperial spectacle, out of which about 100 images were arranged in a lavish photographic album available for purchase. After the festivities were over and the tents packed, this album of images hardly found an audience—relegated to the margins of durbar documentation and instigating the downfall of arguably one of the most successful photo studios of nineteenth-century India. This essay explores the limits of photography—both in an expansive and contractive sense—that is, the medium's frontiers and its limitations. It argues that the Dayal Studio's Coronation Album serves as a counter-narrative to the spectacle of imperial conquest by literally and metaphorically centering the Nizam's body in specific photographs as well as in the sequence of images within the album as a whole. In this way, the album's construction pushes the boundaries of the medium as

something more than simply a chronicler of the durbar's events. At the same time, it argues that the commercial failure of the album points to a shift in ocular epistemology at the turn of the century, when it seemed the medium was no longer sufficient to address the representational problems or desires of a new era.

The photographs produced by the Dayal Studio are interesting not only for their individual content but also the manner in which they are organised in the album format—their orientation, their composition on a page, and the narrative they convey—underscoring the profound role context plays in constructing meaning in photographic images. By 1903, photographic albums had been produced by the Dayal Studio for over a decade, and several “ready-made” albums were featured in their 1896 studio catalogue. Across the albums there can be observed the reoccurrence of similar modes of representation, narrative sequencing and visual strategies that the Dayal Studio had become adept at employing in deliberate ways. In the case of the Coronation Album, these are deployed as a way to centre the Nizam of Hyderabad, one of the many Indian rulers who attended the durbar ceremonies, and considered pre-eminent among them for having the largest and wealthiest territory.² As official photographer to the Nizam, the Dayal Studio was at the Delhi Durbar, in part, as part of the Nizam's entourage (even though they had to cover their expenses themselves). While the durbar itself was an imperial spectacle meant to celebrate British conquest, the photographs taken by the

Dayal Studio provide an alternate or counter-narrative. Their Coronation Album is not about the durbar itself, but rather about the presence of the Nizam at the durbar. Visual strategies employed in the album push the medium of photography in new directions in order to satisfy what can be seen as competing agendas—to satisfy the Nizam as patron and to create a document of the imperial event that could be marketed to a tourist audience.

And yet, following the durbar, the Dayal Studio's hopes for the Nizam's government to place a large order of albums were not realized. Many times in the past, the Hyderabad Government had indeed ordered numerous albums of visiting dignitaries to the territory of Hyderabad, which would then be used as gifts at court. In this way, the Government of Hyderabad has been over the years an important patron of the Dayal Studio's activities, and in many ways, their self-image at this time was constructed through an engagement with photography. Yet, despite the studio's efforts to focus their documentation of the durbar on the Nizam, a substantial order did not come through; as a result, the firm could not cover the exorbitant costs they had incurred in Delhi, leading the business toward a financial decline from which they never fully recovered.

Aside from the devastating consequences for the business, this commercial failure is instructive, for it reveals a moment in the history of modernity when there was a profound shift in ocular epistemology around the turn of the century. The shift is linked to the sociological phenomenon of the democratisation of photography, and a corresponding change in how people perceived their worlds and negotiated these perceptions. This reworking of the visual paradigms privileged an entirely different way of seeing. In this context, the medium of photography was seen as limited in how it captured events like the durbar, especially alongside the emergent medium of film, which was also present in 1903. While specific moments in the Dayal Studio's Coronation Album reveal an attempt to foreground the

logic of spectacle—understood as an event memorable for its appearance—it does not succeed, thus revealing the limits of the photographic medium.

The Dayal Studio's Coronation Album comes at a time of transformative change in the history of photography in India. Christopher Pinney identifies the turn of the century as a moment when the colonial state's perception of photography shifts from one of “cure” to one of “poison”.³ This poetic evocation points to the accelerating advances in the medium's technology which made it more accessible to a wider population and hence less under the control of the state, producing a new sense of anxiety around the use of the medium. The Dayal Studio's Coronation Album is an example of how this shift was not bound by the colonial state alone but rather indicative of a larger transformation within the development of modernity and the practice of photography that had a profound effect on its existing structures, such as commercial studios, and the networks and visual modes within which they operated.

The Images

Surviving images of the durbar by the Dayal Studio are all contained in an album or mounted on pages that were once part of an album. This is the case in all the collections consulted for this essay: The Alkazi Collection of Photography, New Delhi; the British Library, London; the Salar Jung Museum, Hyderabad; and the Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto. However there are loose prints in the British Library that were at one point in the collection of Viceroy Curzon, likely given to him during or soon after the durbar. In the case of the albums, while sharing the same overall format, they exhibit some differences in the arrangement of images, underscoring the manner in which each album was put together by hand despite being a product of mass reproduction technology.

The Dayal Studio's Coronation Album is lavish in size and scope, reflecting the grandeur of the durbar ceremony it

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Imperial Assemblage at Delhi, 1 January 1877, from
‘The History of the Imperial Assemblage at Delhi’, 1878
Coloured Lithograph, 267 x 444 mm

EVIDENCE OF ANOTHER MODERNITY: LALA DEEN DAYAL'S 1903 DELHI DURBAR PHOTOGRAPHS

Gita Rajan

Framing the Discussion

This essay queries the role played by Lala Deen Dayal's photographs from the 1903 Delhi Durbar in commemorating British presence in India, and explores the possibility of these images embodying a form of modernity that was not fully articulated as such within the British-Indian continuum. One strategy to investigate the presence of a new mode of visual modernity being produced in colonial India is to look closely at discourses of modernity *vis-à-vis* the numerous contemporary challenges to the term deployed through phrases, such as “alternative modernities”¹ and “vernacular modernities”.²

My logic in yoking Indian conditions of coloniality and European notions of modernity is grounded in the status that cultural theorist Walter Benjamin assigned to photography as a technological medium capable of capturing the moment or the present through “mechanical reproduction”.³ Benjamin posits a certain connection between and amongst: modernity and urban life, art, visual cultures, fragmentary representations and aesthetic sensibilities. A way into these connections, Benjamin theorises, is created by the “polytechnic[al] engineer” manipulating the lens.⁴ I recognize the sweeping nature of this claim—at the risk of both flattening key, complex ideas and linking factors that seem disparate—but make it on the basis of scholarship and critical commentary on his original theory about the potential of photography to further the project of European modernity.⁵ Consequently, using Benjamin's theory to read colonial spaces as captured by a selection of Deen Dayal photographs enables us to scrutinise correspondences between modernity and alternative modernities, and to

determine if the studio does indeed initiate another, as yet unnamed modernity.

Both modernity and photography occupy crucial places in cultural criticism; as charged discourses, they carry with them their own histories, deliberations, and controversies. Both fields have meanings not fully translatable to a colonial context; yet looking at them together through the lens of Indian coloniality leads to unexpected and astonishing points of convergence. Such convergences permit asking questions that could not be posed at earlier moments in history, but which promise new explanatory possibilities from the vantage point of the present. Modernity in its most “universalised” frame signalled a European phenomenon self-reflexively crafted to position the West as technologically superior and politically advanced, by situating its subjects as enlightened, secular, and autonomous agents against the rest of the colonised world. Photography as an emerging form of visual culture participated in that self-fashioning, and enabled the break with master narratives of canonical or classical historicity by stressing, among other things, the praxis of cosmopolitan public life characterised by progressive world views that valued immediacy and ordinary events and people rather than a heroic theatricality.

In my reading of Deen Dayal's specific works I privilege what Dilip Parameshwar Gaonkar argues elsewhere is a “particular angle of interrogation” to envision “alternative modernities”.⁶ But what strategies may we employ to shift and *frame* these observations in order to read a colonial world?

Framing the Photographs to Accent Another Modernity

Comparing the Delhi Durbar photographs taken by various Britons and official British firms with those taken by Deen Dayal is a valid exercise because it places the whole archival set on par in generating a popular, English national imaginary through the register of an official discourse articulated in the syntax of ritualised representations. As we will see in the comparative analysis below, Dayal's work reveals an important but unimaginable insight into the historical moment when the British were aggressively asserting their conquest because, ironically, they began to glimpse the impending erosion of imperial power.⁷

Every photographer captured or attempted to capture targeted views of government buildings, which were points of origin for the durbar processions; the different entrances to these buildings that dignitaries used; various other important offices and officials along the parade route; and the *maidan* (amphitheatre),⁸ the culminating point of the celebrations where high-ranking imperial agents granted audiences. Photographs of the *maidan* are important to consider because, although they were transient sites of celebration, they took on a veneer of permanence as durbar organisers erected structures to mimic or replicate the orientalist architecture of permanent Indian monuments. A repeated scene in many Delhi Durbar photographs is the originary point of the parade route from Jama Masjid to the climactic one from the domed dais at the *maidan*. Participants in these ritual processions were sometimes members of the British royalty, but were more often British peers, civil servants and military personnel with official cavalry brigades. Equally crucial to the staging of these durbars were members of various Indian princely families in attendance, as were numerous onlookers, both imperial and colonial.

Thus, to a large extent, these photographs captured and represented the same moments in ceremonies when important personages inaugurated events, granted audiences, *en route* to the *maidan*, and posed against a backdrop of cityscapes

and Mughal architecture. Different snapshots also included: elaborately draped horse-, bullock-, camel- and elephant-drawn carriages carrying British personages, but some Indian royalty as well. British personages bedecked themselves in perplexing combinations of European military dress and oriental accoutrements, and photographers aimed for the best aesthetic compositions because the stated purpose was to commemorate the splendid territoriality of the Crown. A comment made in a different context by Samuel Bourne in 1863 is pertinent here, revealing—and reminding us of—the iron fist encased in the velvet glove:

From the earliest days of the calotype, the curious tripod with its mysterious chamber and mouth of brass taught the natives of this country that their conquerors were the inventors of other instruments beside the formidable guns of their artillery, which, though as suspicious perhaps in appearance, attained their objects with less noise and smoke.⁹

That is to say, for all the formal pageantry, the durbars were instruments of control—an unspoken command—and understood and assimilated by both imperial agents and the colonised population. This intent is made visible in the chosen subject matter of many of the durbar photographs. It is perhaps most obvious in the 1903 Durbar, where Lord and Lady Curzon stood in place of the absent King Edward VII, and in the photographs of the 1911 Durbar, where King George V and Queen Mary were in attendance to emphasize imperial presence in colonial India.

Interestingly, the metaphor of witnessing these ritualistic commemorations was read by the participants and spectators of the durbars in India in a way similar to the English masses, who vicariously assumed a presence by viewing the many official photographs, postcards, souvenirs and newspaper images *and* the unofficial: personal photographs, print media items and memorabilia that were circulated around the world. Though it is not possible to approximate

THE GREAT DURBAR CROWDS: THE PARTICIPANT AUDIENCE

Jim Masselos

The grand displays of massed soldiery, British pomp and princely India that made up the face of the three great Delhi Durbars are exemplars of what the British could do by way of magnificence of display. The Raj, seemingly, could outdo its predecessors when it put its mind to it, and manufacture an imperial grandeur so elaborate as to arouse apparently enormous public enthusiasm throughout India. Yet in amongst all the pomp and power in durbar photographs—marching soldiers, princes on elephants, European sahibs and memsahibs, icing-cake pavilions—there is one feature usually caught only in passing. Rarely is the crowd, the audience, the public—supposedly the entity the durbar was meant to impress—the subject at the core of the photographic effort.

Crowds are present of course: there were too many people attending for some not to be in the frame. However, the object of their gaze is generally the focus of the photographic image. The crowd usually appears densely massed, seemingly with a single visual purpose—to frame and direct attention to the “main” action of the photograph: procession, marching troops, viceroy, monarch, or whatever else was offered as the key part of the show. This of course raises the question as to who the audience was, who constituted the crowds and why they were there. The photographic record provides some answers.

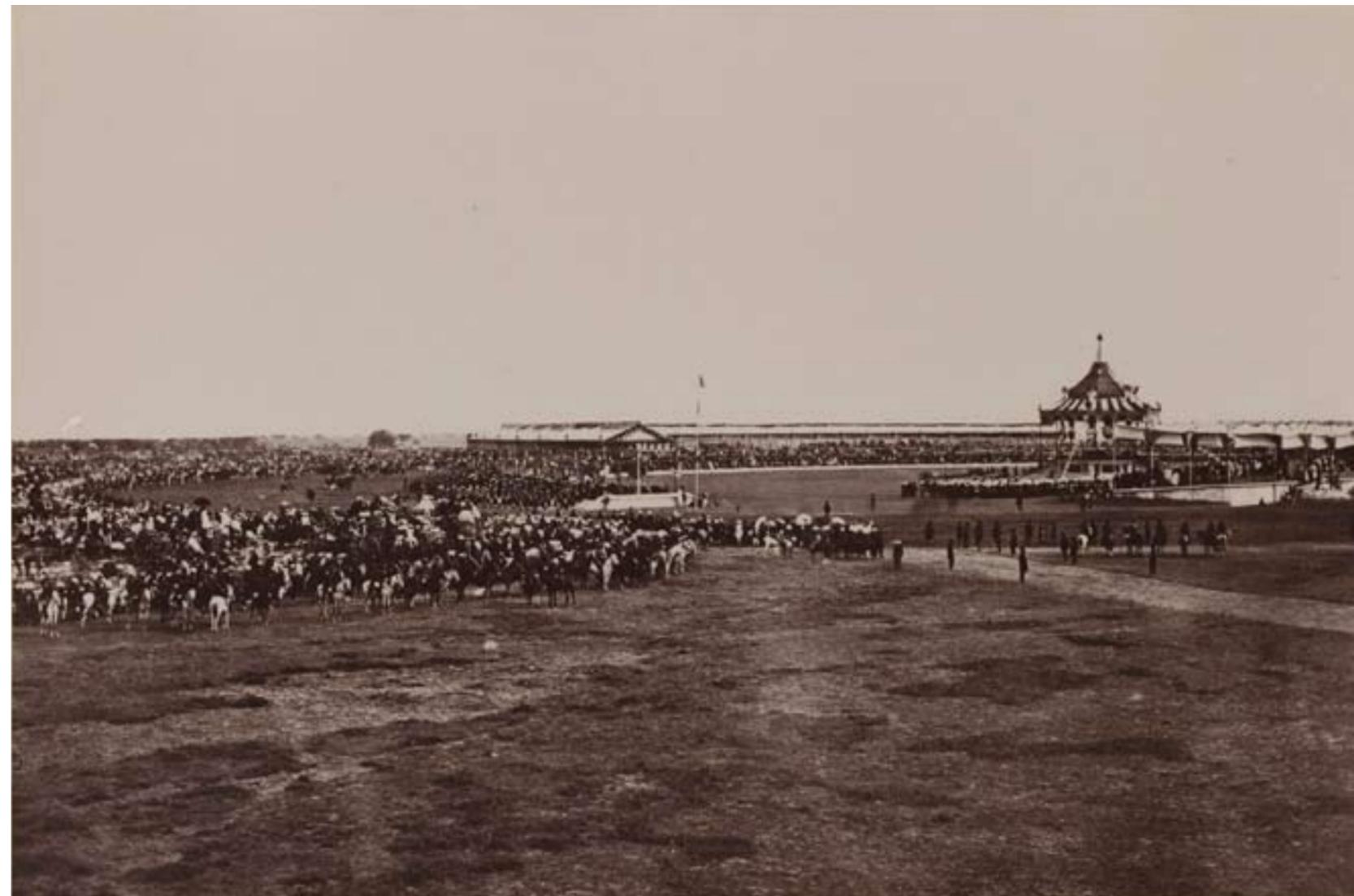
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114 **UNKNOWN PHOTOGRAPHER**
The Delhi Herald, 1911–12
Silver Gelatin Print, 196 x 288 mm

Although the audience achieves increasing visibility over the three durbars, in the first they feature in only a few photos. Several 1877 photographs show them in great semi-circles, separate from but surrounding the amphitheatre defined by the two extended pavilions seating official guests and the central “gazebo” where the viceroy, Lord Lytton, and his party presided. One photo establishes the geography of the proceedings on 1 January with a dense mass of people forming a huge outer sweep and so framing the circle of pavilions and the soldiers in formation within it. The crowd is virtually a solid block with hardly any detail discernible, though it is evident that some people are on horseback. People have been reduced to being part of the overall event, helping to make up the *mise-en-scène* of the Imperial Assemblage (fig. 115).

Likewise reduced to pinpoint invisibility were the notables in the pavilions; as invited audience, they are part of the undifferentiated backdrop to the activity around the viceroy. The presence of all those people in the standing crowd and in the seated audience helped provide a sense of the massive event’s spatial parameters. Thus, by framing the expanse, the photograph manages to make interesting and invest with significance an unremarkable plain that, according to Lady Lytton, was “so vast it is very difficult for anything to make a show on it”.¹

The greater detail in another photograph (fig. 116) gives some insight into the composition of this mass of people. They stand, backs to the camera, as a foreground frame for what they are looking at, the massed troops who are the dominant subject. The detail indicates that those in the



115 **BOURNE & SHEPHERD**
The Imperial Assemblage, from ‘The History of the
Imperial Assemblage at Delhi’, 1877
Woodburytype, 185 x 121 mm

THE LINE AND THE CURVE: SPATIALITY AND AMBIVALENCE IN THE 1903 DELHI CORONATION DURBAR

Christopher Pinney

It is one thing to make an idea clear, and another to make it affecting to the imagination.¹

Most people gazed and gazed, and gazed and were blinded, exhausted...²

The durbar was India as intentional spectacle, a pre-figuration of the staging of the Nuremberg Rally as an object for Leni Riefenstahl's film cameras a mere thirty years later in 1934. Mysterious India was staged as a slow-motion photo-opportunity. Its entire formal structure was grounded in the possibility of being seen: the spatiality and ordering of persons making sense only in terms of the logic of a stationary observer. These observers would be especially welcomed if they were "outsiders": as Stephen Wheeler's official account makes clear, while the 1877 event had been domestic in its intentions, the 1903 Durbar was staged to avail of the "increased facilities of communication with Europe and with foreign countries."³ Curzon had noted in a speech in September 1902 that "a good many eyes in a good many parts of the globe will be directed upon Delhi."⁴ Representatives from at least sixty-four international papers attended, including those from *The Times*, *Manchester Guardian*, *Daily Graphic*, *Hindoo Patriot*, *Bengalee*, and the *Bombay Samachar*.

Curzon's didactic hopes for the 1903 Durbar were perhaps only exceeded by his hopes of personal aggrandisement. The performative event of the durbar was designed to inculcate a pedagogy of precedence, of the ordering of units within a consensual hierarchy. However, obeisance—obedience, homage and subordination—could not be produced in

isolation. The group photographs in the durbar auditorium or the individual portraits of sundry rulers were incapable of performing this work since they invoked no "normalization"—no point of comparison between higher and lower. It was the physical "line" of the procession, weighted with a positive and negative polarity, which established the structure of the event.

Each ruler as an individual had no identity: they were invited to participate in the durbar simply in order to become the *other of others* and give form to the hierarchy of the line. A concatenation of chiefs, in themselves signifying nothing, would be assembled in a procession to implement this function, all affirming their subordination to Curzon and the King. This procession created a "line". The main space for the performance of this pedagogic line lay between the Railway Station and the Mori Gate from whence the procession proceeded to the more complex ballet of the main durbar camp. From the point of view of the still photographer, the durbar, with its processional form, may be thought first and foremost to pose a problem of narrative and movement. The stationary camera seems to yearn for cinematic effect, desiring to capture the continuity of the line. Both the 1903 and the 1911 durbars were extensively filmed. Stephen Bottomore has documented the various cinematographic traces left by the 1903 Durbar; R.W. Paul produced at least four films, including a 240-foot shot of the procession of 29th December; Gaumont released a 165-foot film of the procession that Bottomore surmises was shot by Bourne & Shepherd. The American Biograph Company was also there filming, as was Save Dada who subsequently toured with his films in southern India.⁵ In their negotiations prior to the event, the American Biograph Company was told that

Curzon's "only stipulation...is that the 'machine' shall not be exactly opposite the vice-regal throne".⁶

An alternative approach to the problem of the durbar's spatiality lay in the creation of stereoscopic images. One of the most visible commercial photographers at work during the 1903 Durbar was James Ricalton, working for Underwood and Underwood. Ricalton, a remarkable photographer, teacher and explorer, provided general advice directed at North American consumers of stereographs, and singled out India for comment: no country, he notes, offers so many delights and interest as India; however, few are able to visit, in person, that "teeming world-empire". But worry not, Ricalton assures those (who evidently have already bought the set of stereographs which his text accompanied), for it is "becoming well-known, that, next to real travel and personal observation, the stereographic itinerary affords a more realistic, permanent and pleasurable alternative". It is no exaggeration to state, he continues, that he frequently meets "those who have acquired a fuller and more accurate knowledge of places and things in foreign countries by means of stereographs accompanied by special maps and guide books, than I myself possess after visiting the places and seeing those things on repeated occasions".⁷

Ricalton concedes that "ocular observation" has some advantages (though he does not enumerate these), but for those that have already bought his stereographic photographs, these images have advantages over the everyday embodied visual experience of the world. First, of course, they minimise the expense and abolish the discomfort: "Many wonderful things in India, when seen in reality, are often in a debilitating temperature, and under liabilities to pestilential maladies." Seen through the stereoscope, by contrast "the expense is a trifle; there is no exposure to pestilence; you are among the comforts of home".⁸ Ricalton's claim, we should note, is not simply that stereoscopy gives one a cheaper and securer experience of India. Rather, he claims that there is an intensity of the viewing experience, an occultism, not present

in ordinary visual experience: "there is often a witchery and a charm in stereoscopic scenes not found in the real presence of places and things".⁹

This occultism seems to spring from its opposite, from a central concern with cartographic location. A precise topographical placement is explicitly foregrounded in Ricalton's instructions for viewing stereoscopes; the stereoscopic traveller must be keen and alert and map his/her virtual experience to a master cartography:

In topographical studies the points of the compass should always be determined. How often, after entering a strange city in the night and for the first time, I have discovered in the morning the sun rising at the most absurd point of the compass. This is bewildering and a positive hindrance to a correct knowledge of locality. The disarranged compass will refuse to be readjusted and one's ideas of places and direction will hereafter remain forever erroneous. This is true also of stereographic travel...¹⁰

In pursuit of correct knowledge, Ricalton enumerates a set of injunctions to prevent the "stereo-itinerant" from wandering. The stereo-itinerants should continually crosscheck their virtual location with the points of the compass and the "patent map diagrams" accompanying the book.

The final three of five injunctions describe this paradoxical process of severing oneself from existent conditions into a space of stereoscopic virtuality and the immediate anchoring of the body within the cartographic correlates of this new space:

3. Hold the stereograph with the hood close against the forehead and temples, shutting off entirely all immediate surroundings. The less you are conscious of things close about you, the more stirring will be your feeling of actual presence in the scenes you are studying.