



ALKAZI FOUNDATION FOR THE ARTS

NEW DELHI, INDIA

About Photography

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Possibilities from the Archive: 19th-Century Photography in India

Lecture Theatre, IIC Annexe, Lodhi Estate, New Delhi 110003

Friday, 20 February 2009

10:30 a.m.- 4:30 p.m.

Possibilities from the Archive: 19th-Century Photography in India, a seminar organised by the Alkazi Foundation for the Arts in collaboration with the India International Centre, explores the myriad perceptions of photography and its practice in colonial India. It highlights the importance the medium received during the period from a host of different patrons, practitioners as well as consumers, each fascinated by the dynamism of the new representative tool par excellence.

The seminar hopes to enhance our understanding of the invaluable place of visuality in the social sciences, beyond the narrow confines of illustration and towards a broader spectrum that recognises photography as material and method, as well as metaphor.



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A Royal Patron of Photography: The Nizam of Hyderabad

Anita M. Jacob

The sixth Nizam of Hyderabad, H.H. Nawab Mir Mahboob Ali Khan (r.1869-1911), known as the Premier Prince of India, ranked first in terms of wealth, territory and political importance. He ruled the princely state of Hyderabad for over 42 years, and his enduring legacy remains to this day. A celebrated patron of the arts, his endorsement of the medium of photography in the 19th century was unrivalled amongst native princes, in both scale and understanding. This talk discusses the Nizam's fascination for the camera by charting his life and times through the images produced at his court, while also examining the nature and extent of his patronage for photographers and studios alike.



Raja Deen Dayal & Sons, Bombay;
Messrs. Walker & Cockerell
H.H. The Nizam of Hyderabad,
G.C.S.I., G.C.B.
Photogravure, c.1902-03
The Alkazi Collection of
Photography: D2004.105.0001-00006



Unknown Photographer
The Nizam with Captain and
Mrs. Claude Clerk and Staff,
Albumen Print, c.1884
The Alkazi Collection of
Photography: 95.0064-00121



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A Royal Patron of Photography: The Nizam of Hyderabad

contd.



The talk draws upon rare photographs drawn from the Chowmahalla Palace Collection, Hyderabad and the Alkazi Collection of Photography. Brought together here for the very first time, they offer a unique glimpse of both the public and the private life of the sixth Nizam, highlighting his status as photography's most distinguished 'native' princely patron.

Photographer Unknown

H.H. The Nizam of Hyderabad, G.C.S.I.,
G.C.B. Albumen Print, 1903
The Alkazi Collection of
Photography: 95.0083-0004

Raja Deen Dayal & Son

The Nizam with His Infant Son Sahebzada
Salabath Jah
Silver Gelatin Print, c.1909
The Chowmahalla Palace Collection,
Hyderabad: 04.1.212i





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The Canning Album: A Personal Narrative *Deepthi Sasidharan*

This talk focuses on photographs in the Canning album (1855-65), which was over one hundred images relating to the life of the first Governor General of India, Lord Charles Canning, and his wife Lady Charlotte Canning, two of the most avid patrons of photography at the time. This album, sourced from the Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York), along with images from the ACP, reveals a compelling personal narrative linked to the 'first family' of India during a tumultuous period of Indian history.



Unknown Photographer
Sir James Outram - Bayard of India
Albumen Print, c.1858-61
The Alkazi Collection of
Photography: 96.20.0397.23



Unknown Photographer
Hindon Bridge, Destroyed by the
Rebels in 1857
Albumen Print, c.1858-60
The Alkazi Collection of
Photography: 2001.14.0245-00024



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The Canning Album: A Personal Narrative *contd.*



Unknown Photographer
Elephants Being Shipped to Burma
Albumen Print, c.1858-60s
The Alkazi Collection of
Photography: 94.22.0085

Events chronicled in the album include the Uprising of 1857 and the subsequent Canning Durbars. Another personal narrative unfolds as well, of the photographer Captain John Constantine Stanley, aide-de-camp to the first Viceroy of India, and his evident admiration for Lady Canning who died tragically in India. The album ends with images of her final resting place, marked by a simple structure that was later converted to an exquisite marble memorial and frequently photographed by British travellers.



Unknown Photographer
Lady Canning's Grave, Barrackpoor
Albumen Print, c.1861-64
The Alkazi Collection of
Photography: 98.72.0009



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Creating a Photography Archive at the City Place Museum, Udaipur *Pramod Kumar KG*

Udaipur, known as the 'city of the rising sun', is home to one of India's largest and oldest continuously inhabited palace complexes. Plans to convert a part of the complex, built in 1559, into a museum commenced in 1969. A significant part of Udaipur's history was uncovered in 2008 when the City Palace Museum, Udaipur (CPMU) initiated the process of documenting its extensive collection of photographs. This consists of more than 10,000 loose photographs, albums, folios and framed images from the 19th and 20th centuries.



Bourne & Shepherd
Maharana Sajjan Singh
Albumen Print
Carte-de-Visite, c.1860
City Palace Museum,
Udaipur: 2008.01.0269i



N. Parasur. Photographer Ajmere &
Kishengarh
City Palace Udaipur
Silver Gelatin Print, c.1910,
City Palace Museum, Udaipur: 2008.07.0062



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Creating a Photography Archive at the City Place Museum, Udaipur *contd.*



I. Cowell, Simla
Maharana Fateh Singh
Silver Gelatin print, c.1900
City Palace Museum,
Udaipur: 2008.02.0183iv

These images are currently being catalogued and archived on the basis of the photographic processes employed and the subjects represented. A gallery devoted to the photography archive is scheduled to open with an overview of the collection in March 2009. The subjects include portraits commissioned by the Maharanas, images of noblemen and formal durbars, and photographs of other occasions documented for the court. This talk will explore the physical process of archiving and documenting these images, and highlight some precious gems of this hitherto unknown collection.



Unknown Photographer
Jag Mandir on Lake Pichola, Udaipur
Albumen Print, c.1880
City Palace Museum,
Udaipur: 2008.06.0140



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From the Canvas to the Camera

Meha Desai

This talk aims to discuss the possible strands that connect photography to painting in colonial India. Painting and subsequently photography were both mediums adopted to meet a similar end: to 'document' the colony, its people, 'histories' and 'geographies'. Patronage, for instance, was an important factor in how the region was represented. So while artists such as William Hodges toured the colony along with the army in the late 18th century, officers such as Linnaeus Tripe adopted a similar role in the 19th century, albeit with a camera, under the Archeological Survey of India.



Robert Gill and James Johnston
Kailashnath Temple, Ellora
Albumen Print, c.1860s
The Alkazi Collection of
Photography: 2001.04.0002 -00050



Unknown Engraver
Kylas, from a Sketch by James Fergusson
Engraving, 19th c.
The Alkazi Collection of Photography



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From the Canvas to the Camera

contd.



Baltazar Solvyns
Behichy
Engraving, c.1808-12
The Alkazi Collection of Photography

Other aspects integral to the debate include commonalities in subject matter, approaches to the sites of interest and the various objectives involved in such documentation. The issue of differences in the perception of the two mediums is equally pertinent. Painting always came with a hint of awareness that the image was an individual's subjective perception of the 'Orient'. Photography, on the other hand, was believed to record objective reality as it stood. These and other issues will form the subject of this talk, with a particular emphasis on images from the Dutch painter Baltazar Solvyns' four-volume publication *Les Hindous* (1808-12) and *The People of India* (1868-75).



Unknown Photographer
Bheesties
Albumen Print, c. 1868-75
The Alkazi Collection of
Photography: D2005.88.00040016



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Anthropology and Visualisation in the 19th Century *Akshaya Tankha*

The talk attempts to critically analyse the uses of photography in early anthropological endeavours in India. British efforts to document the 'races', 'tribes' and 'castes' in the mid-19th century reveal a peculiar fascination with categorising peoples that arose along with advancements in the technology of photography. Although produced under the aegis of colonial rule, the concerns of such imaging practices were often far from those of the state, as a closer look at visual ethnographies of the Toda community in South India will affirm. Instead, they reflected the challenges of a burgeoning discipline trying to garner recognition and respect, wrestling with a medium and its rapidly changing perception for an exclusive clique of anthropologists and amateur fieldworkers.



Hanhart Lith.

Plate XVI, from a Photograph by
Dr. Simpson
Lithographic Plate, c.1862
The Alkazi Collection of
Photography: 96.20.0044-00017



Unknown Photographer

Toda Men Neelgerry Hills 433
Albumen Print, c.1860s-1875
The Alkazi Collection of
Photography: D2005.88.0008-00024



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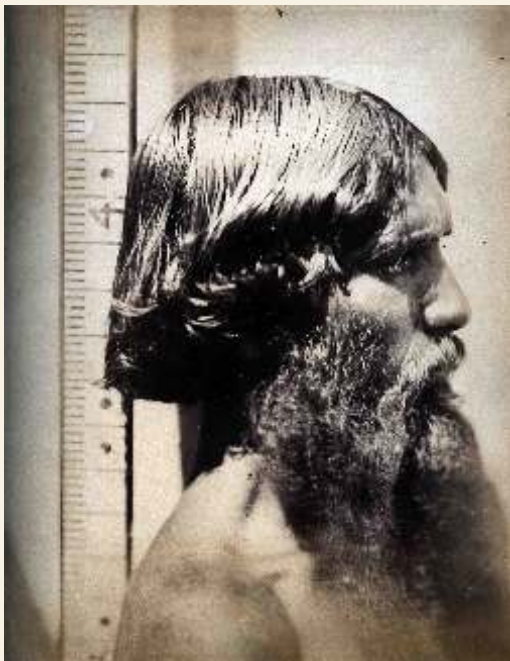
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Anthropology and Visualisation in the 19th Century

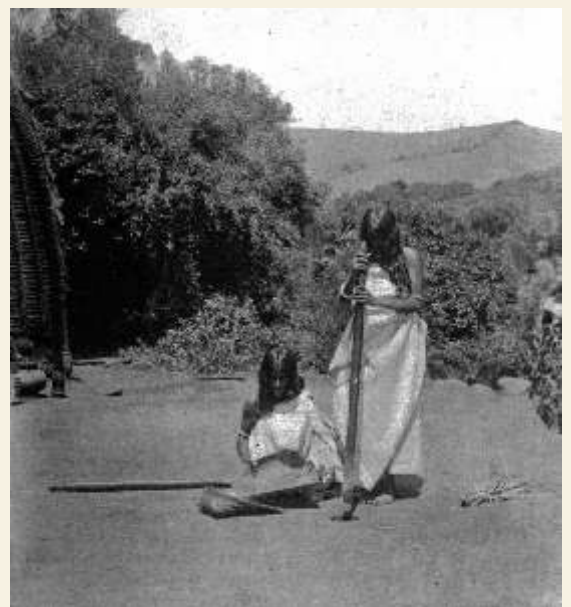
contd.



Unknown Photographer
Toda Man's Head
Albumen Print, c.1867
The Alkazi Collection of
Photography: D2003.56.0001-00006

The talk positions early anthropological photography within a broad discursive space that acknowledges the context of its production, varied reception and the milieu through which such images travelled. The archive asserts itself as a means of presenting the 'evidence' and legacies of technologies in museums and collections. Just as anthropology shows itself to be more than an aide to the cause of imperialism, photography reveals its constitutive powers, breaching the boundaries of passive illustration.

Unknown Photographer
Women Pounding and Sifting, the Broom
is on the Ground to the Right
Autotype, c.1902
Private Collection





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My Picture: The Patronage of Early Studio Photography in Delhi and Mumbai *Suryanandini Sinha*

This talk investigates the issue of women as subjects of studio photography in India from the late-19th to the mid-20th century. The corpus of images, sourced from the Alkazi Collection of Photography, embodies various complexities pertaining to sociological realities, gender relations and the aesthetic conventions of pictorialism. Revelations and questions emerge in equal measure in these images, raising questions which become historically pertinent, for while studio photography has since undergone much technological change, it still traces its aesthetic roots to the initial practice at the turn of the previous century.



Unknown Photographer
Studio Portrait of Two Young Girls
Hand-Coloured Albumen Print, c.1920-30s.
The Alkazi Collection of
Photography: 98.83.0230



Unknown Photographer
Dancing Girls
Silver Gelatin Print, c.1920-30s
The Alkazi Collection of
Photography: D2008.03.0019



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My Picture: The Patronage of Early Studio Photography in Delhi and Mumbai *contd.*



Unknown Photographer
Portrait of a Princess (Autographed
and Signed 8/8/1926)
Silver Gelatin Print, c. 1926
The Alkazi Collection of
Photography: D2008.07.0005-00091

Studios consciously posed women in postures of power or submission according to the delineations of social custom. The extent to which such mores are adhered to and photographically expressed, or transgressed through subtle inclusions and/or exclusions, forms the focus of this talk. The tension, then, is between the studio's role as possible emancipator or oppressor in imagistic terms. The female subjects in these photographs, mobile in their positioning and mutable in their acquired significance, offer themselves not as assertions of the 'real' but as equivocal repositories of constructed 'meaning'.



Unknown Photographer
Family Portrait, G.N. Maladkar Studio
Silver Gelatin Print, c. 1920-30s
The Alkazi Collection of
Photography: D2008.03.0029



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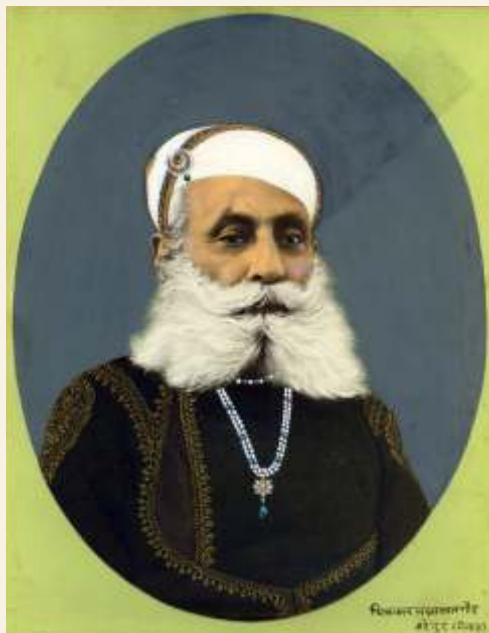
A Fusion of Styles: The Case of the Painted Photograph

Rahaab Allana

Through fine brushwork and a vibrant palette, the 'photographer-artists' of 19th-century India carefully transmitted their creative vision to the surface of an image, and by that very act challenged whether photographs were glimpses of the 'real'. Their alluring compositions represent an inter-pictorial approach to 'reality', a unique mode of simulation nourished by associations with ongoing cross-cultural and sociological transformations. Additionally, the combining of individual skill and personal intuition through years of aesthetic engagement forged the collective identity of a group: the patron, his photographer and the artist.



Shri Nursanwanji (D. Nuserwanji)
Photographer, 382 Kalbadevi,
Bombay; Unknown Artist
Seated Lady
Silver Gelatin Print and
Watercolour, 14 September 1942
The Alkazi Collection of
Photography: D2003.11.0043



Unknown Photographer; Chitrakar Pannalal Gaur
Udaipur (Mewar)
Maharana Fateh Singh of Udaipur (1849-1930)
Silver Gelatin Print and Watercolour, c.1920-30
The Alkazi Collection of Photography: D2003.08.0001



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A Fusion of Styles: The Case of the Painted Photograph *contd.*



Eduljee Sorabjee, Photographer, Park Lane,
Secunderabad; Unknown Artist
Seated Man
Hand-Tinted Albumen Print
Cabinet Card, c.1890
The Alkazi Collection of
Photography: D2003.05.0040

Painted photographs mark a crucial chapter in the history of Indian photography by abetting the notion of 'modernism' in visual practice at the turn of the 19th century. Gradually there emerged a self-sustaining genre, a hybrid of scientific documentation and artistic convention. The 'native' artist steadily developed an idealised 'photo-canvas', a monochromatic ground that simultaneously resists and yields to a layered impasto of colour. The dissemination of such images ushered the birth of hyperrealism, initiating a new visual paradigm in both photography and art.

J.C.A. Dannenburg; Unknown Artist
Maharaja Jaswant Singh of Bharatpur (1851-93)
Albumen Print and Watercolour, 1863
The Alkazi Collection of
Photography: 98.72.0021

