

THE WATERHOUSE ALBUMS

Central Indian Provinces

Editor

John Falconer

Preface

Siobhan Lambert-Hurley

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[Bhopal, November 1862], Albumen Silver Print, 165 x 117 mm.

Back Cover: **James Waterhouse**, 'Rear Faces of Architraves, Northern Gateway,
Sanchi' [December 1862], Albumen Silver Print, 225 x 190 mm.

Frontispiece: "Reception of a *Khillut* [letter of invitation] at the Court of
the Begum", Engraving in Louis Rousselet, *India and Its Native Princes.
Travels in Central India and in the Presidencies of Bombay and Bengal*
(London: Chapman and Hall, 1876), Ch. XLVI.

P. 2: **James Waterhouse**, Begum of Bhopal and her Daughter Shah Jehan, in
Maharatta Costume, Bhopal, November 1862, Albumen Silver Print.

Front Endpapers: **James Waterhouse**, 'Bheels of the Vindhya' [Sardarpur,
June 1862], Albumen Silver Print, 148 x 195 mm.

Back Endpapers: Pages from James Waterhouse's Transcripts, The Alkazi
Collection of Photography.

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FOREWORD

Siobhan Lambert-Hurley

In 1862, James Waterhouse undertook a mission never attempted before or after: to spend nearly an entire year using the then new medium of photography to record and document the peoples of central India. He did so at the behest of India's colonial government ostensibly for display at the International Exhibition, or Great London Exposition, of 1862 – though, as they did not arrive in time, his photographs actually found wider circulation in later publications such as Watson and Kaye's *The People of India* (1868–75). That Waterhouse's assignment emerged out of an Enlightenment impulse to categorise and order knowledge is reflected in his description of his many human subjects as "specimens" of the major "tribes" of the area. Captured in his images were "representative types" of different social, ethnic, religious, caste and tribal groupings: not just princely rulers and their nobility (though his collection is probably strongest in this area), but also merchants, musicians, holy men, slaves, agriculturalists and nomads. Most were men, but some, thanks to the enthusiastic participation of the Nawab Begum of Bhopal, were women and children. Among them were those that the photographer identified, in line with the evolving colonial typology of the time, as Brahmins, Mussalmans [Muslims], Mahrattas [Marathas], Rajputs, Pathans and Bheels [Bhils] – not to mention a few that were an "admixture".

Revealed in Waterhouse's labels and the accompanying ethnographic descriptions are the preconceptions and imperatives of the colonial state. His venture was part of a much bigger scientific project intended amass data on "physical types" into a comprehensive archive that could be used to the administrative, strategic, commercial and scholarly ends of the British in India. Once published, his high-quality images of an exotic and faraway empire would also fuel the imperial imaginations of the Victorian era's emergent bourgeoisie safely at home in Britain. The selectivity inherent to this process is reflected in his choice of subjects – among them a man of uncertain employment at the Sitamau court, seemingly picked

primarily for the picturesque quality for his immense turban (fig. 95) – and a certain imbalance within the collection. The Nawab Begum of Bhopal may have been a key ally of the British in central India, but, in ethnographic terms, that did not really justify the large number of photographs of her and her courtiers. Her willingness to "dress up" for the camera by posing in an array of "costumes" complemented by elaborate and often unusual headgear also points to an important performative element in these early photographs on the part of photographer and photographed alike, that undermines their purely documentary function. Yet to depict Waterhouse as someone who simply fulfilled the strategic interests of the colonial state by reducing India's population to collective groupings or generalised typologies would be to do him an injustice. In the careful and detailed notes that he kept to accompany his images, each sitter emerges as an individual to whom he gave the honour, in most cases, of recording their name, age, employment, height and often some component of personality – an amiability, a heartiness or perhaps a weakness for opium – alongside valuable observations about the colour and style of their dress. These notes reflect a genuine intellectual curiosity that must have sustained Waterhouse through the many obstacles that threatened to undermine his endeavour, not least the climate, insects, the appalling conditions of travel, and the fear, conceit and capriciousness of his prospective subjects. The same inquisitiveness could also have inspired him to take, at his own initiative, the impressive (and earliest surviving) run of photographs of the architectural ruins at Sanchi, as well as those at Mandu, Eran and the Dhamnar Caves.

The Waterhouse Albums, then, are an invaluable visual resource for the political and cultural history of a region so often neglected in the historical record. It also offers unique insight into the processes of imperial consolidation and archive construction in the early years of British crown rule in India, while also suggesting the way in which these developments were facilitated, abetted or subverted by colonial peoples.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

John Falconer

While examples of James Waterhouse's photography can be found in a number of collections both public and private, the two albums that form the basis of the present work undoubtedly comprise, in terms of condition and comprehensiveness, the finest single group of images from his work documenting the ethnic variety of Central India in 1862. This project, officially undertaken at the behest of the Indian colonial administration, was seminal to Waterhouse's photographic career and to his emergence in later years as a major figure in the fields of photographic chemistry and photomechanical reproduction. It has, therefore, been a great privilege and pleasure to study these albums at length in the course of the preparation of this book. For this, I must first thank Mr. Ebrahim Alkazi, both for his foresight in acquiring the collection and also for enthusiastically supporting its publication in the present form. My debt to Ebrahim Alkazi is, however, more wide-ranging, and I must also acknowledge my personal gratitude for generous access to the remarkable Alkazi Collection of Photography, as well as for assistance and encouragement in both India and England over a number of years.

My own contribution to this book comprises a general overview of Waterhouse's life. However, in the course of his career in the subcontinent, Waterhouse's interests spanned many disciplines, from the often arcane complexities of photographic chemistry to the details of Central Indian costume. I am, therefore, grateful for the skill with which my fellow contributors have compensated for my own deficient knowledge in presenting a full picture of Waterhouse's work and its significance. Rosemary Crill, in her essay on matters of dress and textiles illustrated

in these photographs, has provided a fascinating account of the wealth of social and cultural history embedded in the images. The most productive period of Waterhouse's work in Central India in 1862 was centred on Bhopal, and Shaharyar Khan's essay usefully provides a conspectus of the convoluted dynastic development of this most fascinating princely state. Waterhouse's later career was spent in administering the photographic department of the Survey of India; in terms of the technical history of photography, this was where he made his more significant contribution to the development of the medium, but it is also the most formidable area for the non-specialist reader to grasp. Michael Gray's account of Waterhouse's later career as a photographic scientist is therefore particularly welcome, in describing the breadth of his technical achievements in the context of his administrative duties at the Calcutta headquarters of the Survey Department.

The staff of the Alkazi Collection of Photography have also provided the help and support without which this book could not have been produced. I am grateful in particular for the friendship of and conversations with Sophie Gordon, former Curator of the Alkazi Collection in London; and I must also thank her successor, Stéphanie Roy Bharath. Rahaab Allana, Curator of the Alkazi Foundation for the Arts in New Delhi, has worked dedicatedly on the manuscript, as well as coped good-naturedly with this writer's often dilatory e-mail habits. I must also thank him for his company on an illuminating tour of Madhya Pradesh in Waterhouse's footsteps. Finally, the work of Smriti Vohra in undertaking the copy-editing of the text, and in tirelessly deciphering a spider's web of proof corrections, is also very gratefully acknowledged.



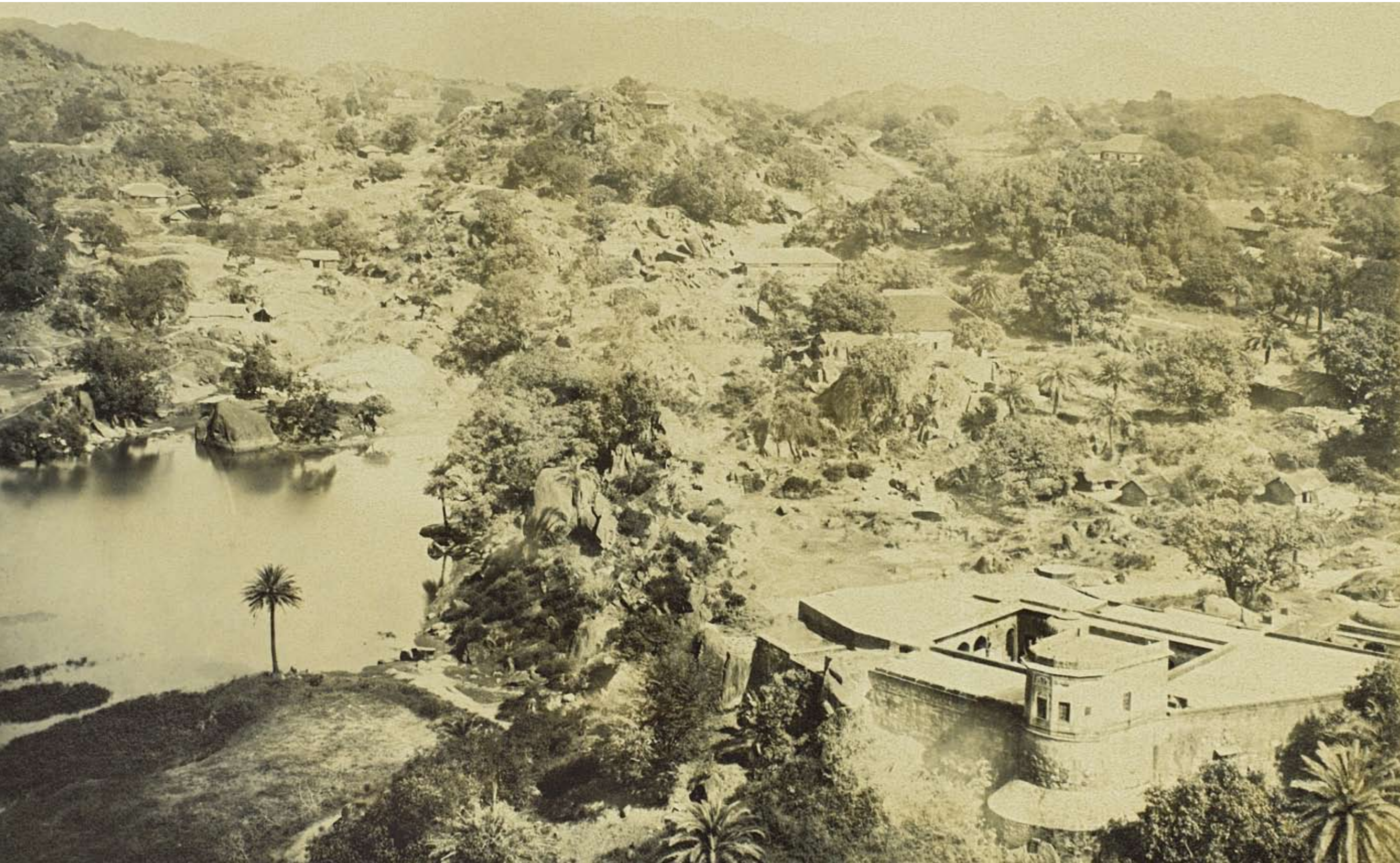
Chapter 1

JAMES WATERHOUSE: A CAREER IN PHOTOGRAPHY

John Falconer

On his retirement from the Survey of India in 1897, at the conclusion of a career in the subcontinent spanning nearly four decades, James Waterhouse was internationally acknowledged as a figure of major importance in the development of photography. To his contemporaries, his most notable achievements were centred on many of the more technical applications of the medium, particularly those relating to photographic chemistry and the applications of the medium to photo-mechanical reproduction and printing.¹ In great measure, the international reputation of the Photographic Department of the Survey of India, which by the 1890s was one of the largest such organisations in the world, was due to Waterhouse's administrative energy and scientific knowledge; while to the amateur members of the Photographic Society of India, whose president he was at the end of his career, he was considered a fount of authority on all technical aspects of their pastime. Subsequent generations,

1. **JAMES WATERHOUSE**
'Begum of Bhopal with Musicians'
[Bhopal, November 1862]
Albumen Silver Print, 155 x 206 mm



Chapter 2

THE WORK OF CLARENCE COMYN TAYLOR IN THE WATERHOUSE ALBUMS

John Falconer

Of the 94 images pasted into the two albums, the overwhelming majority – 79 prints – are the work of James Waterhouse, but some note should be made in passing of the additional 15 prints also included. These comprise eight views in and around the hill station of Mount Abu in Rajasthan, pasted in near the beginning of the first album, and a further seven portraits and views taken in Nepal by the young army officer Clarence Comyn Taylor [fig. 57], which form the final images in the second album. While the Nepalese prints have a clear connection with Waterhouse's ethnographic project in Central India, the reasons for the inclusion of the Abu material is not entirely clear. The photographer of these views has not been conclusively identified, although there is certainly a case for arguing that this work is also by Taylor. In addition to the other prints by Taylor that are included, both the subject matter and his own movements strengthen this attribution.

-
56. CLARENCE COMYN TAYLOR (ATTRIB.)
'Distant View of Aboo' [Abu]
Residence of the Agent to the Governor General, 1862
Albumen Silver Print, 197 x 238 mm



Chapter 3

BHOPAL: A BRIEF HISTORY

Shaharyar M. Khan

Bhopal was one of the 562 princely states of India that emerged as autonomous units after the demise of the Mughal empire. These were states founded mainly by warlords and feudal barons immediately after the death of the emperor Aurangzeb in 1707: when the British gained control of India, the princely states operated as quasi-independent entities under the umbrella of the British Crown. The smallest was no bigger than a modern-day airport, while the state of Hyderabad was larger than France. Situated in the fertile and picturesque mountains of Central India, Bhopal was in the premier rank of princely states, entitled to the 19-gun salute that was granted to only eleven major states in the subcontinent. The largest single series of portraits in the Waterhouse albums relate to the time he spent in Bhopal in November 1862, and this reflects both British perceptions of its ruler, Sikander Begum herself, as a loyal and valued ally, and the long-standing relationship of the colonial regime with the state, dating back to the late eighteenth century.

Bhopal was unique in that for over 150 years of its 240-year history it was ruled by five begums, the last four of



Chapter 4

DRESS AND TEXTILES IN WATERHOUSE'S PHOTOGRAPHS

Rosemary Crill

The photographs in these two albums of James Waterhouse's work provide a superb record of a surprisingly wide cross-section of the population of a particular part of Central India in the early 1860s, and the variety of costume types encountered in these images reflects this diversity. In addition to their inherent value as photographic documentation, Waterhouse's careful and detailed supplementary notes add further levels of information that make these images a fascinating and perhaps unique resource of visual data for the study of 19th-century dress in a particular area of India.¹ Waterhouse chose to depict not only the royalty and ruling nobility of Indore and Bhopal, in their magnificent robes and turbans, but also the merchants, administrators and clerks who worked for those elites, together with warriors, Marathas, Rajputs and bards, and even members of the tribal and rural groups of the area. Both Hindu and Muslim subjects are shown, and the photographs also offer a rare opportunity to study female courtly dress of the period, with the flamboyant, wide-legged divided skirts known as *farshi pajamas*



Chapter 5

JAMES WATERHOUSE: HIS CAREER IN PROCESS PRINTING

Michael Gray

When we enter this field [of photography] it is impossible to say where this must lead us, and the number of subjects we may be induced to study simply on account of the interest in them bought about by photography.¹

It is evident that in spite of the photographic difficulties that James Waterhouse had encountered in the field in 1862, the results of his tour were both impressive in quality and prodigious in quantity. This first phase of his career prior to 1863 marked the pinnacle of Waterhouse's achievement as a photographer in the field, and as a master-printer. The fact that his contribution to Watson and Kaye's eight-volume *The People of India* (1868–75) proved to be among the largest body of work originating from any single photographer, was

109. **SURVEY OF INDIA PHOTOGRAPHER**
Examining Room of the Duffing Section of the Photographic
Department of the Survey of India, Calcutta, c.1911
Gelatin Silver Print, 186 x 237 mm
British Library, Photo 527 (120)