

## 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](http://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*  
Edited by Sudeshna Guha

The Waterhouse Albums: *Central Indian Provinces*  
Edited by John Falconer

Vijayanagara: *Splendour in Ruins*  
Edited by George Michell

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Codell

## POWER AND RESISTANCE The Delhi Coronation Durbars



The Alkazi  
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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 Viceroy 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



The Alkazi Collection of Photography  
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POWER AND RESISTANCE  
**The Delhi Coronation Durbars**



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



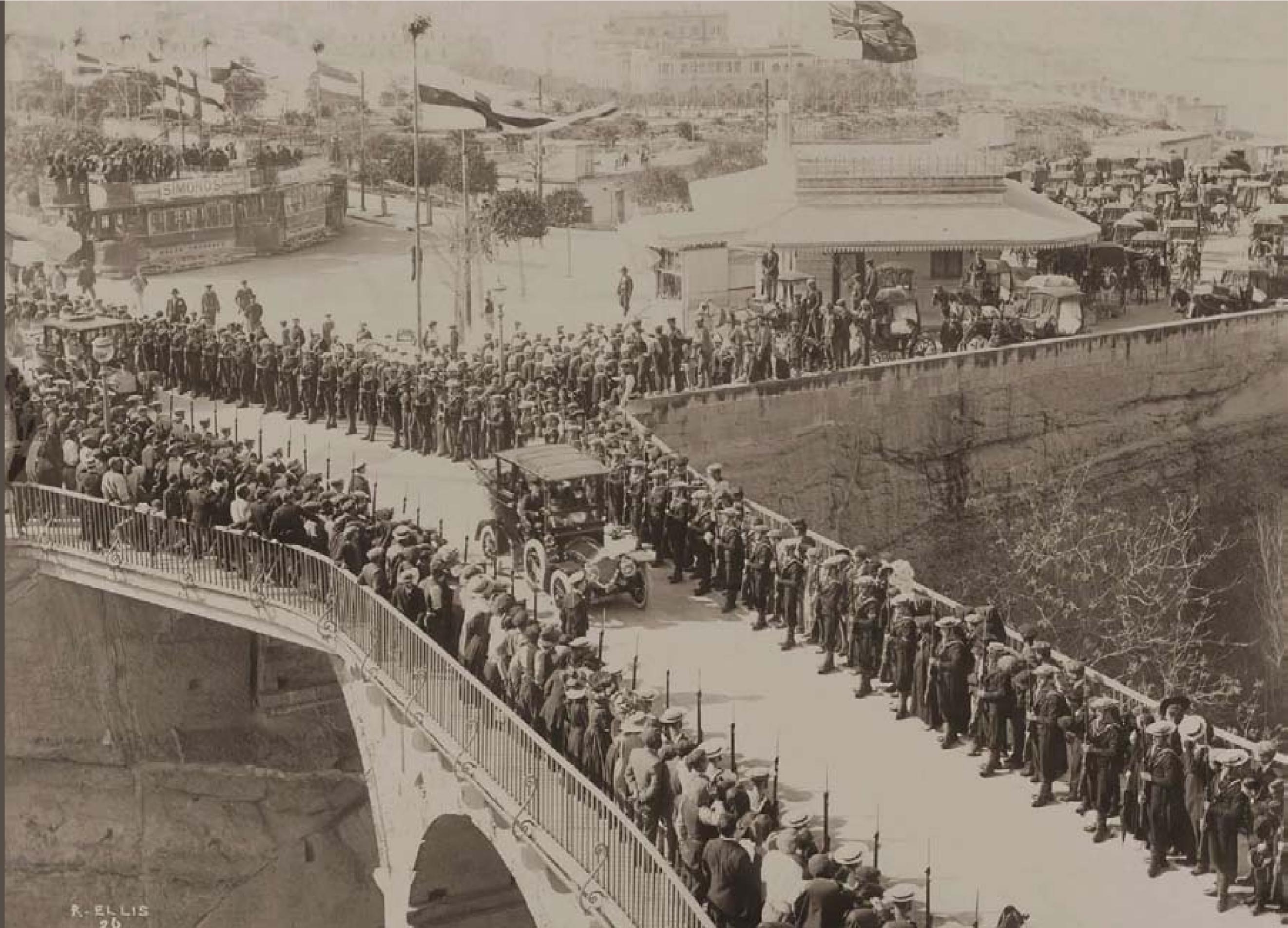
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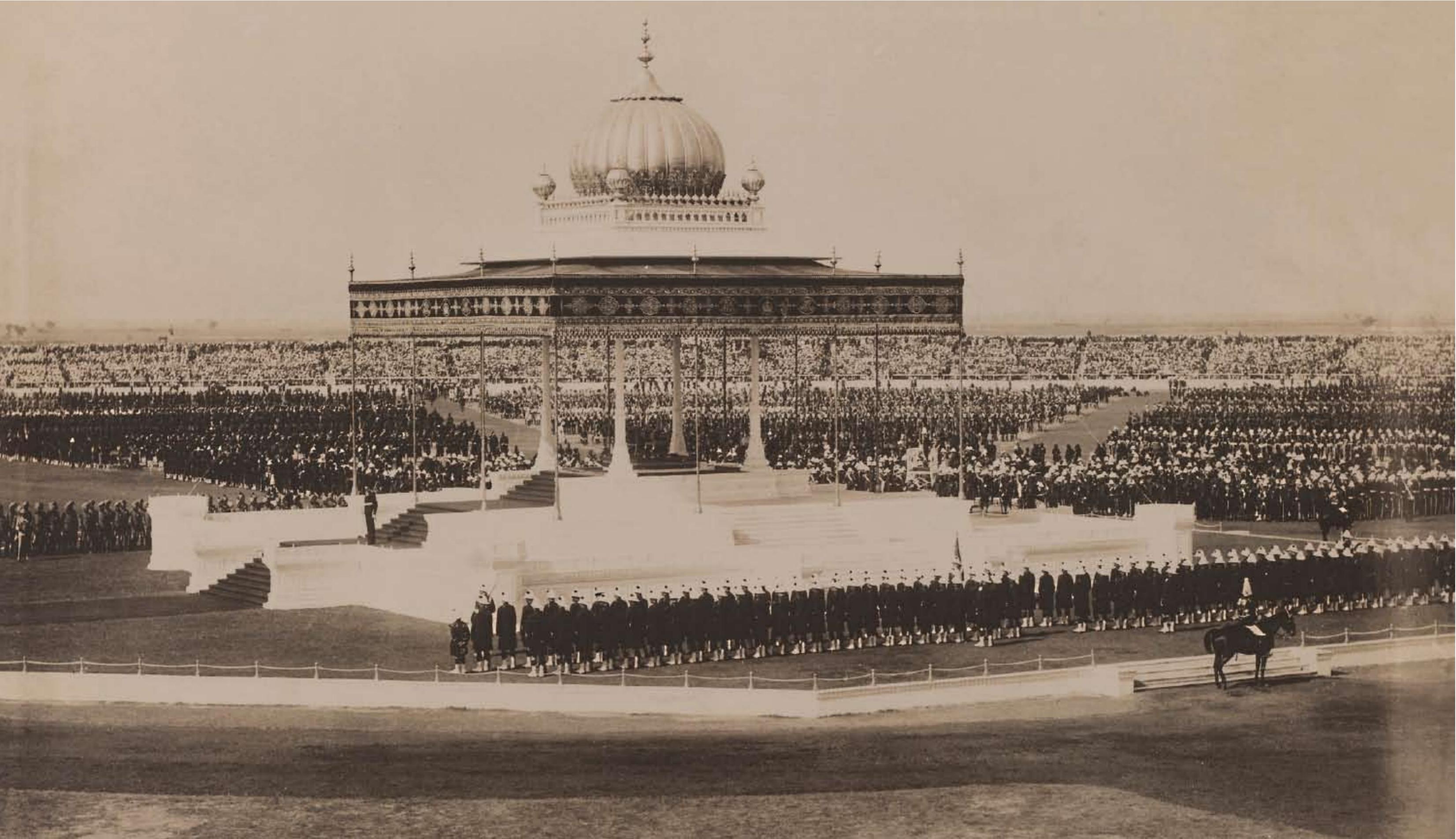
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Front Cover: **Photo Central News**, Coronation Durbar, Delhi—Royal  
Procession towards the Jumma Masjid Mosque, 1911, Phototype  
Postcard, 87 x 140 mm (*fig. 23*)  
Frontispiece: **James Ricalton (1844–1929)**; Underwood and Underwood  
Publishers, 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  
return journey to England from the Delhi Durbar in 1912), Malta,  
24 January 1912, Silver Gelatin Print, 216 x 288 mm  
Pages 6–7: **Vernon & Co.**, Bombay, Coronation Durbar, General View, from  
the album 'Souvenir: The Imperial Visit to Delhi' (Part 3 of Five Part  
Panorama), 1911, Silver Gelatin Print, 177 x 290 mm  
Pages 8–9: **Unknown Photographer**, Young Indian Kings and Princes at the  
1911 Delhi Durbar, 12 December 1911, Silver Gelatin Print, 111 x 160 mm  
Back Endpapers: **Bourne & Shepherd**, Durbar Light Railway from the album  
'Delhi Durbar of 1911', 1911–1912, Silver Gelatin Print, 217 x 294 mm  
Back Cover: **Bourne & Shepherd**, Prince of Bhavnagar and entourage, from  
the album 'Chiefs and Representatives of India', 1877, Albumen Print,  
221 x 296 mm (*fig. 120*)

## CONTENTS

### INTRODUCTION

- 16 Photography and the Delhi Coronation Durbars: 1877, 1903, 1911  
*Julie F. Codell*

### PHOTOGRAPHY, GEOGRAPHY AND THE ARCHIVE

- 46 Landscapes of Performance: Staging the Delhi Durbars  
*James R. Ryan and Nicola J. Thomas*
- 70 The Durbar and the Visual Arts: Revisiting the Picture Archive  
*Saloni Mathur*

### MAHARAJAS AND THE DURBARS

- 94 The Delhi Durbar: The View from Hyderabad  
*Benjamin B. Cohen*
- 110 Photographic Interventions and Identities: Colonising and Decolonising the Royal Body  
*Julie F. Codell*

### RAJA DEEN DAYAL

- 142 The Limits of Photography: The Dayal Studio's Coronation Album, 1903  
*Deepali Dewan*
- 160 Evidence of Another Modernity: Lala Deen Dayal's 1903 Delhi Durbar Photographs  
*Gita Rajan*

### THE DURBAR AS SPECTACLE

- 176 The Great Durbar Crowds: The Participant Audience  
*Jim Masselos*
- 204 The Line and the Curve: Spatiality and Ambivalence in the 1903 Delhi Coronation Durbar  
*Christopher Pinney*
- 216 Catalogue of Photographs
- 232 Bibliography
- 240 Contributors
- 242 Index

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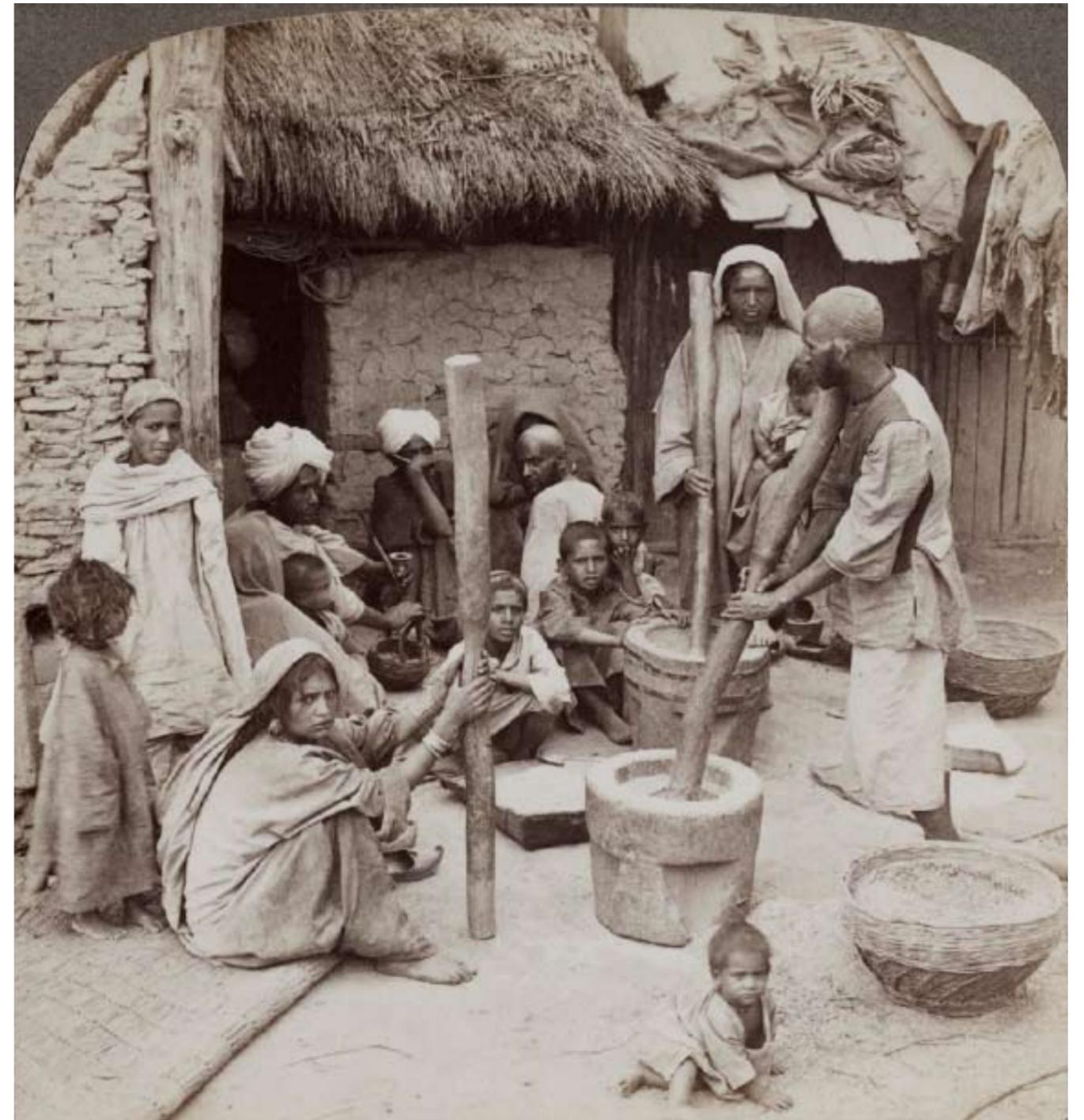
**Julie F. Codell**

*Facing page*

JAMES RICALTON (1844–1929), UNDERWOOD AND UNDERWOOD PUBLISHERS

Shelling rice and gossiping with the neighbours, home life of contented citizens of Cashmere, 1903, Detail  
Stereo-card, Albumen Print, 81 x 77 mm

See Fig. 138 for full image.



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.<sup>1</sup> 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.<sup>2</sup>

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-narrative<sup>3</sup> and over time convey to new audiences multiple meanings that escape imposed narratives of history and political authority.<sup>4</sup> 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.<sup>5</sup> 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