

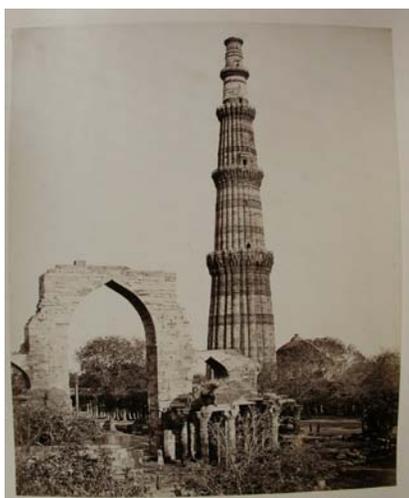
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Samuel Bourne (British, 1834-1912)
Kutub Minar with the Great Arch, from the West
Delhi, 1866
Albumen print

Loaned by Catherine Glynn Benkaim and Barbara Timmer



William Johnson and William Henderson
Europeans inside the Elephanta Cave
Bombay (Mumbai), India, c. 1855
Albumen print

Loaned by Catherine Glynn Benkaim and Barbara Timmer

**Pacific Asia Museum Announces Exhibition Opening of
*Through the Colonial Lens: Photographs of 19th and 20th Century India***

Pasadena, January 28 - *Through the Colonial Lens: Photographs of 19th and 20th Century India* will open on Thursday, February 3, 2011 at Pacific Asia Museum and will be on view until September 4, 2011. The exhibition is generously sponsored by the Los Angeles County Arts Commission. *Through the Colonial Lens* will feature more than 70 images in two rotations selected for both their striking imagery and for what they reveal about the dynamism of India in this era. This exhibition looks at the history of photography in India from its early adoption dating from the 1840s through the early 1900s and will explore themes of the subjective view, consumption of images and photography's growing prominence over earlier forms of visual media. Drawing from local private collections, *Through the Colonial Lens* will feature the work of both amateur and professional photographers of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, including Samuel Bourne, Lala Deen Dayal, Edward Lyon and John Murray.

Photography developed in South Asia almost immediately after its introduction in Europe, producing a rich body of images created both by Europeans living in India as well as by Indians themselves. Amateur and professional photographers used the new medium to document their daily life as well as conduct land surveys, anthropological and archaeological studies and produce images for the tourist trade and export. In its early years (1840–1900), photography was difficult to master due to its technical and practical requirements. These including adjusting large wooden box cameras and developing images while keeping their glass negative plates wet in searing temperatures. Photographic expeditions required many cases of these plates, “dark tents” or portable darkrooms, and chemicals for developing images. Assistants were often needed to facilitate the process. Porters and pack trains were required to transport the supplies. The further afield photographers traveled, the more difficult the undertaking became, so that trips to areas such as the Himalayas presented tremendous obstacles.

Each photographer exhibited in *Through the Colonial Lens* responded in varying degrees to the dual demands of their artistic eye and professional duties, whether Captain E.D. Lyon in south India, a British military officer tasked with documenting a historic site, or Lala Deen Dayal (1844-1910), a professional photographer with a studio in Mumbai. Samuel Bourne (1834-1912), along with others, brought his idea of the ‘picturesque’ with him from Britain to many of the images he took in India, a concept steeped in the Romanticism of 18th-century Europe.

The Victorian era’s emphasis on the role of science and technology, specifically natural history, led to a seeming mania for taxonomy. This urge to classify newly encountered phenomenon can be seen in the development of photography in the subcontinent. Military officers such as Captain Thomas Biggs and Captain Linnaeus Tripe were given reassignments from their military duties in order to photo-document local architecture, which provided key information to the newly-formed Archaeological Survey of India. Photography was understood to be closely linked to other scientific pursuits, with doctors in the British military, such as Dr. John Murray and Dr. William Henry Pigou, as early enthusiasts. Efforts to provide comprehensive photography of a wide swath of the diverse population of India were closely tied to the nascent fields of anthropology and ethnography.

As this medium’s popularity grew and eclipsed painting and printmaking, the market expanded to include those wishing to create their own photographic interpretations of India. Specific images could be ordered from photography studios, allowing both those in India as well as armchair travelers abroad to compile albums of their choosing. This market was not exclusively British. Photographers such as Lala Deen Dayal enjoyed the patronage of the sixth Nizam of Hyderabad. Other native rulers both embraced and dabbled in photography themselves. The Maharaja Sawai Ram Singh II of Jaipur (r. 1835-1880) is an example of a native ruler eagerly adopting the new technology, using it to document his surroundings and capture images that would have been inaccessible to foreign photographers, such as portraits of the women in his household.

Photography developed as a medium concurrent with the intensification of British colonization in India. Having conducted trade on the subcontinent since the seventeenth century, the East India Company began to consolidate its presence and control in the second half of the eighteenth century. After the Indian Mutiny, or Uprising, of 1857, the British Crown took control from the East India Company and ruled India directly until independence in 1947. Throughout the era known as the Raj, the period of British colonial control, native princes and rulers continued to rule smaller states within India under varying degrees of British oversight. Scholars have emphasized the British affinity for the Mughal emperors, whose rule of India preceded their own. This affinity meant that Mughal sites in Delhi and Agra – the Taj Mahal, Jama Masjid, Red Fort, and others – frequently appear in the photographs of this era. This comparison the British made between themselves and the Mughals highlights the colonists' need to perceive themselves as a 'civilizing' force, bringing new, and in their view much-needed, forms of government, trade and culture to India, just as the Mughal emperors Akbar, Jahangir and Shah Jahan had done centuries before.

Through the Colonial Lens does not argue that each photographer consciously strove to solidify British rule in India, but rather, that each photographer was touched by the colonial structure in which he or she worked. These effects ranged widely and manifested as a concern for what would sell to the consumer (the British particularly desired images emphasizing the picturesque or exotic), what best documented the 'good offices' of British rule (industry, architectural cataloging and conservation) and what was considered a contribution to science. While certain images were clearly used for political aims in Britain, the majority of photographs from this era inhabit a complicated landscape of competing purposes and cultural intersection. The classic colonial paradigm situates India as a possession of Britain up until independence in 1947. Contrarily, one must look to the impact of the colonized on the colonizer and understand the effect that India has had on Britain. The photographs featured in *Through the Colonial Lens* complicate those classic assumptions and give us a clearer visual record of India's hold on Britain.

Pacific Asia Museum is one of only four institutions in the United States dedicated exclusively to the arts and culture of Asia and the Pacific Islands. The museum's mission is to further intercultural understanding through the arts of Asia and the Pacific Islands. Since 1971, Pacific Asia Museum has served a broad audience of students, families, adults, and scholars through its education and outreach programs.

Pacific Asia Museum is located at 46 North Los Robles Avenue, Pasadena, California 91101. The museum is open Wednesday through Sunday from 10 am to 6 pm. Admission is \$9 general, \$7 students/seniors, and free for museum members and children under 12. Admission is free every 4th Friday of the month.

For more information visit www.pacificasiamuseum.org or call (626) 449-2742.

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