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**Title**

Colonial Frames, "Native" Claims: The Jaipur Economic and Industrial Museum

**Permalink**

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/9z92n746>

**Journal**

Art Bulletin, 96(2)

**ISSN**

0004-3079

**Author**

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**Publication Date**

2014-07-10

**DOI**

10.1080/00043079.2014.899180

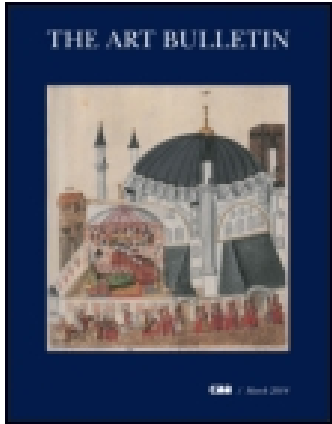
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Publisher: Routledge

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: Mortimer House, 37-41 Mortimer Street, London W1T 3JH, UK



## The Art Bulletin

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rcab20>

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Published online: 10 Jul 2014.

To cite this article: Sugata Ray (2014) Colonial Frames, “Native” Claims: The Jaipur Economic and Industrial Museum, The Art Bulletin, 96:2, 196-212

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00043079.2014.899180>

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# Colonial Frames, “Native” Claims: The Jaipur Economic and Industrial Museum

*Sugata Ray*

It has today become de rigeur to begin any discussion on nineteenth-century colonial museums by invoking Rudyard Kipling’s fictionalized encounter between his father, John Lockwood Kipling (1838–1911), the colonial arts administrator, and a Buddhist lama in the “Ajaib-Gher—the Wonder House, as the natives call the Lahore Museum.”<sup>1</sup> Kipling’s choice of the Lahore Museum (established 1864) as a metonymic space to enact this fateful encounter between “Western” science and “Eastern” religiosity, between “modern” knowledge and “traditional” belief, between “rational” orderliness and “irrational” disarray, binaries ad infinitum, was indeed appropriate. The colonial museum, as an instrument of authoritative knowledge making, was, after all, manufactured by the British Empire as “a powerful aid to loyalty and good government.”<sup>2</sup> Not only did the museum fabricate an immense archive of useful knowledge and a fictive past for the colony, but it also served as a space through which the empire rhetorically asserted the moral necessity, the civilizing mission, of its presence in the colony.<sup>3</sup>

Along with imperial museums, the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were marked by the establishment of a number of museums under the benefaction of the indigenous elite in colonies worldwide. In 1908, for instance, Marcus Simaika (1864–1944), an officer in the Egyptian State Railways, set up the Coptic Museum in Cairo. In contrast to its imperial counterpart, the “native” museum emerges in scholarship as a successful space to enact the drama of colonial modernity—a space through which the colonized elite argued for modern self-representation, employing to their advantage post-Enlightenment discourses on scientificity and modern knowledge forms. Writing on the creation of the Coptic Museum, Donald M. Reid thus notes: “By the 1890s, a few Europeans were turning their attention to Coptic art and architecture, and it was their enthusiasm that *inspired* Marcus Simaika to found the Coptic Museum.”<sup>4</sup> According to scholars such as Reid, the “native” museum was then a space through which the (Western-educated) indigenous elite articulated a (Western) modern subject position “inspired” by their colonial masters. Using Gyan Prakash’s oft-cited expression, it was a moment when “science went native” in the colony.<sup>5</sup> In India, for instance, the late nineteenth century saw the opening of a number of museums under the benefaction of the princely states, often with active support from the British residents at court.<sup>6</sup>

## House of Knowledge/House of Wonder

Recent scholarship on museological practices, nevertheless, posits the museum in the colony as a “failure.”<sup>7</sup> The nineteenth-century museum failed in its pedagogical role as a harbinger of modernity, as a space through which narratives of Western scientificity, modern knowledge systems, and a

rationalist historicism were to fundamentally transform the colony. For the masses visiting the museum, this space of modern pedagogy remained the space of enchantment. The modern museum thus resolutely remained a “Wonder House,” the Ajaib-Gher. While scholars see in this epistemological failure an enabling “move towards hybridity and difference,”<sup>8</sup> a subaltern reworking of history and the institutions that produced it, I want to make a different argument.

I suggest that we need to rethink the institutional frameworks of colonial museology beyond the binaries of success and failure. Perhaps the failure of the museum made possible a different politics for viewers who only came to see the Wonder House, the Ajaib-Gher. Perhaps the project of knowing and displaying the colony was indeed ruptured, broken, and made futile when faced by the boisterous gaze of subaltern masses. But how, then, do we understand the politics of the “native” elite who built museums across colonies worldwide in the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries? Was the “native” museum merely marking the triumph of Western science and technology in the colony? Do we once again return to imperializing strategies of “first in Europe, then elsewhere,”<sup>9</sup> paradigms that still privilege the metanarratives of European modernity and its claim to the universal?

Perhaps the question can then be tentatively reframed as not merely that of the success or the failure of the museum in the colony but as that of a creative reinscription of failure itself. Using the Jeypore [Jaipur] Economic and Industrial Museum, a nineteenth-century “native” museum in western India, as a lens, we can read museology in the colony as a productive failure, a productive reinscription of the sites where modernity broke down at the margins of the empire (Fig. 1).

Established in 1887 by Sawai Madho Singh II (r. 1880–1922), the ruler of the western Indian princely state of Jaipur, the Economic and Industrial Museum was a contested site from its very conception.<sup>10</sup> While the colonial state’s archive bears traces of this contestation, the marked silence on the part of the principal patron has led to a “loss” in understanding the role played by the indigenous elite in framing the design and the pedagogy of the Jaipur Museum. Perhaps this “loss” was intentional. The Jaipur monarchy’s refusal to participate in the British Empire’s leviathan project of creating a colonial archive was legendary and a source of ire for the British Resident at the Jaipur court.<sup>11</sup> The carefully preserved records in the state’s archive bear no testimony to the desires, aspirations, and demands of the “native” actors who reframed late nineteenth-century modern museological practices in the colony. How, then, do we recover the contours of nineteenth-century “native” museological practices when the only voice that can be heard today is that of the colonial state?

The Jaipur Museum offers us a compelling case study to rethink the methodologies that need to be employed to



1 Attributed to Samuel Swinton Jacob, Jaipur Economic and Industrial Museum, 1887 (photograph by the author)

understand micropractices at the margins of the British Empire that strategically evaded the colonial archive, and thus history itself. Taking the museum itself seriously, I read the architectural design and the display at the Jaipur Museum as a productive failure, a creative reinscription of colonial iterations of modernity and its museological practices. In doing so, I suggest that the museum allowed the elite of Jaipur to articulate a modern museological practice that operated from within the bureaucracies of colonial governance, yet challenged imperial exercises in making meaning, controlling space, and visioning order.

Only through a close attention to the micropractices that revolved around the making of this heterotopic space, practices that tactically eluded the colonial archive, can one delineate the complex matrix that underlies easy histories of museology. By providing a different reading of nineteenth-century “native” museological practices, I argue for a “counter-aesthetics of modernity” in the colony—a counter-aesthetics that displaced the very terms of the Western modern even as it engaged with its form.<sup>12</sup> The design and strategies of display at the Jaipur Museum allow me to make visible an enabling resistance to the oppressive teleology of (Western) modernity. Let me begin by revisiting scholarly debates that have framed our understanding of the Jaipur Economic and Industrial Museum.

#### **A Modern Museum for a Modern City**

By the 1880s, the Kachhwahas, a dynastic family that had established itself in western India in the eleventh century, had

transformed Jaipur, their capital, into a modern city with a Public Works Department, a school for women, a gasworks, a hospital run by a European surgeon, and an art school—“all things necessary to western municipal welfare and comfort,” as Rudyard Kipling noted in his description of the city.<sup>13</sup> Established in 1727, Jaipur (today the capital of the Indian state of Rajasthan), with its broad roads, remarkable urban infrastructure, and spectacular palaces and temples, had been, from its very inception, an exemplary city. However, it was only with the 1887 construction of the Economic and Industrial Museum, one of the first large-scale Kachhwaha royal architecture projects in Jaipur outside the walls of the old city, that the state’s indigenous elite visually declared their modernity to the innumerable nineteenth-century European tourists, administrators, and art enthusiasts who traveled to this center. Even Kipling, in his otherwise sardonic and disparaging description of Jaipur, registered “envy” at seeing the museum, a “wonder of carven white stone”:

Internally, there is, in all honesty, no limit to the luxury of the Jeypore [Jaipur] Museum. It revels in “South Kensington” cases—of the approved pattern—that turn the beholder homesick, and South Kensington labels, whereon the description, measurements, and price of each object are fairly printed. These make savage one who knows how labelling is bungled in some of the Government Museums—our starved barns that are supposed to hold the economic exhibits, not of little States, but of great Provinces.<sup>14</sup>

It should come as no surprise that the formal opening of the Economic and Industrial Museum on February 21, 1887, enhanced Jaipur's already established reputation as a modern, yet genuinely Oriental, city, the "Paris of India."<sup>15</sup> Simultaneously, the museum played an equally important role in generating income for the people of Jaipur, the direct subjects of the Kachhwaha monarch Madho Singh II. The Residency Surgeon Thomas Holbein Hendley (1847–1917), appointed as the curator of the museum in 1880, categorically stated that one of the principal objectives of the museum was to "complete local education by providing, as far as possible, a perfect collection of objects... from the State of Jeypore [Jaipur] or from the province of Rajputana."<sup>16</sup>

Unlike imperial museums established in Calcutta, Bombay, and Madras for the purpose of acquiring and preserving knowledge about India for colonial scholars, archaeologists, and administrators, the Jaipur Economic and Industrial Museum's primary aim was to produce, preserve, and disseminate knowledge about the region. In contrast to most museums, the Jaipur Museum allowed artisans to borrow objects from its collection in order to make reproductions. As an early twentieth-century guidebook on Jaipur informs its readers: "If they [visitors to the museum] desire any special article to be copied, to point it out to the demonstrator, who will place it at the disposal of the Principal of the School of Art for this purpose."<sup>17</sup> While natural history specimens—minerals, fossils, and shells—occupied the display on the upper floor, the first floor of the museum was dedicated to an extensive collection of regional craft traditions. Braj Ballabh, the head clerk of the museum, had extensively toured the major craft production centers in the region and had purchased exemplary pottery, metalwork, and textiles. The museum thus played a key role in framing the artisanal heritage of Jaipur for both tourists traveling to the city and the local population.

Predictably, most scholars recognize Hendley, the curator, as the force behind the conception of the museum, while the director of the Jaipur Public Works Department, Samuel Swinton Jacob (1841–1917), is credited as the architect, who, inspired by the British architects Robert F. Chisholm (1840–1915) and William Emerson (1843–1924), built the museum in the "Hindu-Saracenic"<sup>18</sup> style with a Western layout and an ornate "Oriental" facade.<sup>19</sup> The Jaipur Museum, as Thomas R. Metcalf writes, "most fitly represented, in the British view, the role the princes ought to play in colonial India."<sup>20</sup> It was rather appropriate that a building designed by two British military officers—one an engineer and the other a surgeon—through a carefully studied amalgamation of ancient "Hindoo" and "Muselman" styles would be the receptacle of modernity and the Western institution of the museum in Jaipur. The use of an "Oriental-style" building concocted by two British officers to house a "Western" museum seemingly echoed the imperial dictate that Indian princes combine their inherited traditions, pomp, and splendor, long since associated with the Oriental despot, with progressive ideals of modern governance learned under the benign rule of the British Empire.

In the recent past, Giles H. R. Tillotson has challenged this rather simplistic understanding of "native" museums by

recuperating the voices of the Indian officers and artists who participated in the making of the Jaipur Economic and Industrial Museum.<sup>21</sup> Rather than seeing the structure as solely a product of Hendley and Jacob's interventions, Tillotson argues that the museum, "if viewed from the perspective of the patrons, contributors, and audience, tells a story not of British colonial curating, but of an Indian state's self-fashioning and self-promotion as a commercial centre of the arts."<sup>22</sup> For Tillotson, it is figures such as Kanti Chunder Mukherjee, the prime minister of the Jaipur court, Opendra Nath Sen, the director of the Jaipur School of Art, and Mir Tujumoul Hoosein, the overseer of the Jaipur Public Works Department, who emerge as the heroes of the moment.

Yet, in Tillotson's narrative, these "native" figures still remain subservient—merely *assisting* Hendley and Jacob in their righteous attempts to bring modernity and modern Western institutions to the colony. Thus, even as Tillotson presents a much richer history of nineteenth-century museological practices in India, his understanding of "an Indian state's self-fashioning" remains restricted within totalitarian paradigms of colonial governmentality. Gyan Prakash's assertion of a museological "second sight"—the colonized elite's attempts to exercise subjectivity through practices of Western modernity—runs like a leitmotif through Tillotson's text.<sup>23</sup> Could one further complicate Tillotson's argument to read a different politics through the Jaipur Museum? If the museum did provide the elite of Jaipur a space for self-expression, was this expression necessarily governed by a Westernized "second sight"? A synoptic history of the Jaipur Economic and Industrial Museum will illuminate the strategies of space making through which the "native" elite in a small princely state in western India refashioned and radically transformed the disciplinary apparatuses of modern museology in colonial India.

### The Making of the Jaipur Museum

As one of the first large-scale architecture projects patronized by the Kachhwaha dynasty in Jaipur outside the walls of the old city, the Economic and Industrial Museum was invested with immense political significance from its conception. A five-story structure, the museum was built in a stepped pyramid form with receding levels that culminated in a large central dome (Fig. 1). Resting on elevated plinths, smaller domed kiosks, or *chattris*, were set on the upper floor porches. Open terraces, profuse architectural carvings, and a projecting arched entrance further mark the museum's architecture. Inscriptions in Hindi and English on the entrance facade unequivocally state that while "the building was constructed under the superintendence of" Jacob, "the museum collection was made under the superintendence of" Hendley. It is then not surprising that most scholars credit the two British officers for conceptualizing and designing the museum.

However, the relationship between these two British officers and the Jaipur court was, at best, tenuous. The colonial government had fervently hoped that the presence of British doctors, architects, and engineers such as Jacob and Hendley in the princely courts would, to a certain extent, lead to the regulation and control of the sly machinations of the "native" rulers. The "native" rulers, by contrast, saw the interventions of these British officers in the everyday functioning of the



2 Chimam Lal, Mubarak Mahal, Jaipur, 1900 (photograph by the author)

state as a way for the colonial government from faraway Calcutta to impose on their independence. Indeed, stray references, perhaps even slippages, in the various reports and catalogs written by Hendley and Jacob suggest that, from the beginning, the building of the museum had become a space for contestation between the court and the British officers in Jaipur. For instance, although scholars have identified Jacob as the sole architect responsible for the museum, an 1895 guidebook to the collection informs us that the foundation of the museum structure was “well-advanced” even before Jacob was asked by the court to supervise the construction.<sup>24</sup>

In fact, the very idea of building the Albert Hall, as the museum was initially called, as an “Assembly and Reading Room, Library and Museum” to commemorate the Prince of Wales’ visit to Jaipur in 1876 was developed by Madho Singh’s predecessor, Ram Singh II (r. 1835–80), a few months before the actual visit.<sup>25</sup> Ram Singh rejected the twenty-six designs submitted in the ensuing competition and finally appointed Surgeon-Major W. F. deFabeck, the first director of the Jaipur School of Art (established 1866), the residency surgeon, and the architect of the Mayo Hospital (established 1870), to come up with an appropriate design for the building. DeFabeck’s design did not find favor with Ram Singh, and consequently, he was dismissed from the court in 1879. Thomas Hendley, then a surgeon in the Bengal Medical Services, was brought in to replace deFabeck as the Residency Surgeon of the Jaipur court. In the same year, the design of the building was finalized and the Prince of Wales, in a letter dated October 16, 1879, gave “his entire approval of the plan in question,” expressing his appreciation of Ram Singh’s “additional proof of loyalty and devotion to His Majesty.”<sup>26</sup>

It was only in 1881, a year after Ram Singh’s death and two years after construction had begun on the museum, that Jacob was finally asked by the court to “superintend” the building process. In fact, the Jaipur Public Works

Department under Jacob had done nothing of importance in the city prior to this point except to repair a city wall in 1872 and renovate a clock tower. Formed only in 1860, the department had as its core responsibility the building of roadways, irrigation canals, and railway tracks across the state. It was, rather, under the Royal Building Department, the Raj Imarat, that Jaipur’s more significant structures were erected. In the 1880s, the Raj Imarat was constructing the women’s quarter of the Nahargarh Fort, a Kachhwaha palace complex in the nearby Aravalli Hills, without any intervention from the Public Works Department. Gordon Sanderson, an officer in the Archaeological Survey of India, describes the Mubarak Mahal, a public audience hall built by the Kachhwahas, as one of the key buildings in Jaipur designed by Chimam Lal, the director, or *darogah*, of the Royal Building Department, in 1900 (Fig. 2).<sup>27</sup>

Not surprisingly, the Mubarak Mahal, too, is attributed to Jacob’s influence in Jaipur in histories of Indian architecture. Comparing the entrance of Lal’s Mubarak Mahal to the aedicular openings on the facade of an 1883 town hall built by Jacob, Tillotson writes that by the late nineteenth century “a new kind of Western influence” had fundamentally transformed Jaipur’s traditional architecture.<sup>28</sup> Lal’s oeuvre thus emerges as merely derivative of the master narrative of Western architecture in the colony. This influence evidently led to the corrosion of Jaipur’s traditional building practices.

An unsettling discourse becomes apparent in such seemingly innocuous (mis)attributions. On the one hand, the “native” architect in colonial India becomes a figure lacking authorial agency, originality, or adequate imagination to visualize and erect edifices without British assistance. On the other hand, even if Lal, the director of the Royal Building Department, managed to build the Mubarak Mahal himself, it was because of the inspiration provided by Jacob. In contrast to both Hendley and Jacob, who wrote voluminous



3 Jacob, entrance to the Jaipur Economic and Industrial Museum (photograph by the author)

reports, very little is known about Lal, the Raj Imarat's director. We know that Lal had worked in the Jaipur Public Works Department for fifteen years and that he belonged to a prominent family of merchants from the Jain community in the city.<sup>29</sup> We also know that the Raj Imarat had been established in the eighteenth century and had been traditionally responsible for the building and maintenance of much of Jaipur's royal architecture.

The Raj Imarat, however, did not leave a trace in the nineteenth-century colonial archive, creating a methodological quandary in the study of "native" architectural and museological practices in colonial India. Hendley's meticulously cataloged records at the museum, now crumbling with age, can but only appear as an allegory to the empire's "museumizing imagination."<sup>30</sup> What did the architectural design of nineteenth-century museums in India connote to its audiences? How do we read the authorial intention of "native" patrons, architects, and curators through the architectural design and display at the Jaipur Museum?

### The Problem of the *Otla*

Traversing the stairway, we enter the Jaipur Museum through an arched entrance decorated with delicate Mughal-style floral designs carved in stone (Fig. 3). Two arched niches flank the central entrance, creating a visual effect not very different from that produced by the facades of earlier Mughal architecture in north India. Unlike the design of most contemporaneous museums in colonial India, with their imposing Western neoclassical facades, stately staircases, and Doric pillars, the architecture of the Jaipur Museum was defined through its citation of an earlier north Indian architectural vocabulary. Why was the Jaipur Museum so different from other museums in colonial India? It appears that the symbolic function of the museum becomes legible only when read alongside other architecture projects patronized by the Kachhwahas.

Besides the Jaipur Museum and other constructions within the state of Jaipur, the Kachhwaha monarch Madho Singh had also patronized two temples in Vrindavan and Barsana, key pilgrimage sites ninety miles south of New Delhi that were associated with the life of the Hindu god Krishna. Not surprisingly, it was the Raj Imarat under Lal that was responsible for building both the temples.<sup>31</sup> By 1896, construction on the Barsana temple had begun and, by 1900, the same year the Mubarak Mahal was completed in Jaipur, work had also started on the Vrindavan Madho Bilas temple (Fig. 4). A formal comparison of the Madho Bilas temple in Vrindavan and the Economic and Industrial Museum in Jaipur shows distinct resemblances. Along with the use of similar floral motifs and the crisp carving, the viewer is struck by the remarkable similarity in the arched entrance capped by a projecting balcony.

As an architectural device that linked the outer world to the inner spaces of the structure, the entrance had significant symbolic and ritualistic meaning, at least within the sacred context of the Madho Bilas temple in Vrindavan (now known as the Jaipur temple). Traditionally known as the *otla*, the arched entrance, flanked by two large niches with raised platforms, constituted a space of purification, marking a separation between the sacred and the profane. The devotee, while entering the temple, was expected to pause at the entrance, sit in the side niche for a moment to contemplate and remove all impure thoughts, and then finally take a step forward into the realm of the divine.<sup>32</sup> The antecedent of this particular architectural device lay in domestic architecture. Most western Indian residential structures had similar entrances that allowed for the creation of a transitional zone connecting the dwelling to the street (Fig. 5). In nonreligious contexts, this architectural device thus produced a liminal space between the inside and the outside, between the private and the public. Pratima Mehta, who grew up in a traditional house in the western Indian city of Ahmedabad, described the sociality that this space engendered: "Our



4 Lal, Madho Bilas temple, Vrindavan, ca. 1904 (photograph by the author)



5 Domestic architecture in Johari Bazaar, Jaipur (photograph by the author)

elder grandmother, Jadavba, used to sit on the *otlo* [*otla*] in the evening and women from the *pol* [neighborhood] would come to discuss with her their personal and social problems, seeking solutions.”<sup>33</sup>

It is difficult to ascertain whether Jacob was aware of the social practices that revolved around the space of the *otla*. Scholars have suggested that his buildings in Jaipur were inspired by a historicism framed through a close study of the Mughal emperor Akbar’s (1542–1605) sixteenth-century palace complexes in Fatehpur Sikri and Agra (Fig. 6).<sup>34</sup> Indeed, one of the key features of the Jaipur Museum was the intricate Mughal-style floral motif that sumptuously adorned the

surface of the building. Artisans trained at the Jaipur School of Art had been employed to execute these carvings. Jacob had encouraged his draftsmen to produce elaborate scale drawings, still preserved in the city’s Public Works Department archive, detailing the column types, plinth moldings, and projecting windows that were representative of Akbar’s architectural repertoire.

These drawings were then faithfully reproduced on the walls of the Jaipur Museum, transforming the structure itself into a usable archive of Mughal architectural typologies. Other architectural strategies, such as the use of Mughal-style flat projecting eaves supported by richly carved bracket





6 Diwan-i Khass (private audience hall), Fatehpur Sikri palace complex, ca. 1570 (photograph by the author)

figures along with domed kiosks adorning the corners of the structure, further reiterated visual similarities between the museum and Akbar's palace complexes. In this way, the Jaipur Museum was converted into a tactile repository of architectural motifs and typologies for local artisans. The act of viewing then became a performative act of knowing. Pedagogy was built into the very experience of seeing the museum. As Jacob himself put it: "The endeavour has been to make the walls themselves a Museum, by taking advantage of many of the beautiful designs in old buildings near Delhi and Agra and elsewhere."<sup>35</sup>

Jacob's "museumizing imagination," an attempt to engage with early Mughal architectural typologies, was embedded within colonial archaeology as a rationalist discourse of the empire. In 1876, only a few years before Jacob was asked by the Jaipur court to supervise the construction of the museum, the colonial antiquarian and archaeologist James Fergusson (1808–1886) had published the *History of Indian and Eastern Architecture*—a seminal text that, for the first time, narrativized the history of architecture in the subcontinent.<sup>36</sup> This was followed by a number of similar accounts written by colonial administrators, antiquarians, and archaeologists. The field of architectural history was thus born from within the discursive frames of archaeology, museum practices, and conservation. Reading architecture as a "great stone book, in which each tribe and race has written its annals," Fergusson had suggested that the "rapid decline of taste" in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was symptomatic of the moral bankruptcy of the later Mughals.<sup>37</sup>

In contrast, Akbar's sixteenth-century palaces and forts emerge as a brief, but exemplary, moment of a syncretic architecture practice that was soon abandoned under the later Mughals. In his celebrated *History of Indian and Eastern Architecture*, Fergusson proposed that Akbar's palace complexes were representative of the Mughal emperor's "sincere

love and admiration for his Hindu subjects." But, Fergusson categorically asserted, "The spirit of tolerance, however, died with him."<sup>38</sup> While the purported moral and political "decline" of the later Mughals, visible through their architecture, made possible an argument for the necessity of British rule in India, the British Empire saw itself as an heir to Akbar's enduring legacy in the subcontinent. After all, Akbar's architecture was, for Fergusson, a symbol of "manly vigour and exuberant originality."<sup>39</sup>

The appropriation of sixteenth-century Mughal domes and arches by architects such as Chisholm, Emerson, and Jacob to design buildings across India in the nineteenth century led to a new "museumizing imagination" in which the gardens, palaces, and tombs of the early Mughals became the cornerstone of architectural virtuosity in the subcontinent. However, the hybrid Westernized architecture of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century India was seen as reiterating British assertions of the gradual "decline" of morality and taste in the subcontinent, effectively implicating Westernization as signaling a loss in civilizational value. It was thus not surprising that Jacob turned to early Mughal monuments to create an architectural language appropriate for modern Jaipur, an architectural language that constructed a narrative of fictionalized historicism.

Given the colonial predilection of deeming eighteenth- and nineteenth-century architecture in India as signaling a civilizational loss, it is unlikely that Jacob would have paid attention to the quotidian practices that revolved around domestic architecture in colonial Jaipur. Reports, catalogs, and even architectural treatises by Jacob show no awareness of the significance of the arched entrance with adjoining platforms, the *otla*, as an ideal space of everyday life, a space of sociability. Why then did Jacob use the *otla* at the Jaipur Museum? One could argue that, at least visually, the entrance, flanked by two arched niches, resonated well with

earlier Mughal architectural typologies. In fact, it would not be imprudent to surmise that the *otla* itself had entered the vocabulary of domestic architecture in this region through an adaptation of earlier Islamic form.

The *otla* at the Madho Bilas temple in Vrindavan, capped by a projecting balcony, bears a startling resemblance to the arched entrance of the museum. Its designer, Lal, who had apprenticed at the Jaipur Public Works Department under Jacob for fifteen years, surely would have been familiar with the larger discursive frames that governed Jacob's architectural imperatives. Lal's own design for the Madho Bilas temple bears traces of this familiarity. At the same time, his intimate understanding of both the theological requirements of temple architecture and the everyday practices that revolved around the space of the *otla* in Jaipur would have played an equally significant role. In fact, it would be difficult to separate the two domains—the domain of the modern field of a professional architecture practice learned under the bureaucracy of the Public Works Department and the domain of an innate familiarity with localized architectural form, function, and space. This intricate interplay, I propose, led to a productive tension between localized knowledge forms and the rationalist historicism of the empire. In the process, a new discursive spatial politics emerged in nineteenth-century Jaipur.

When placed within a larger field, Lal's interventions can be read as producing a radical citational subjectivity that defined itself by distancing and differentiating itself from the master narrative of British architecture in India. Given Lal's lengthy apprenticeship under Jacob, this differentiation from the "master" was then both literal and metaphoric. If Jacob's archaeological approach to designing buildings was situated within imperial discourses of rationalist historicism, Lal reenchanting this space of historicism through his interventions. While it would be easy to mark Lal's act of reenchanting and sacralizing the spaces of colonial architecture as an oppositional practice that operated from within a discrete domain of the traditional, the indigenous, or the countermodern, I suggest that we rethink such localized enclaves of visual practices as a more insidious tactic of space making that was produced through an appropriation of the language of the master, the privileged language of modern rationalist historicism. But the practice of making one's own is, of course, to constitutively remake that which is being claimed. And it is precisely in this remaking that a counteraesthetics of modernity was articulated in the colony—a counteraesthetics that displaced the very terms of the Western modern even as it engaged its form.

If Lal's use of the *otla* allowed him to make habitable the cold archaeological gaze of the empire, for the patron, Madho Singh, the temple in Vrindavan inextricably linked the Jaipur Museum to the sacred spaces of Vrindavan, a key Hindu pilgrimage site in north India for the worshippers of the god Krishna. The monarch had sponsored the railway line that connected the state of Jaipur to this pilgrimage center. The building of the Madho Bilas temple thus situated his benefaction within an illustrious Kachhwaha genealogy that went back to the sixteenth century. Man Singh I (r. 1590–1614), one of Jaipur's most illustrious rulers and the highest-ranking officer in Akbar's court, had built the famed 1590

Govind Dev temple in Vrindavan. In the eighteenth century, the Kachhwaha monarch Jai Singh II (r. 1700–1743) had made Govind Dev, the icon of the 1590 temple, the tutelary deity of the Jaipur state. From then on, Govind Dev was seen as the ruler of the Jaipur state and the Kachhwaha monarchs merely the icon's agent. Madho Singh thus connected the Madho Bilas with his dynasty's earlier associations with Vrindavan. At the same time, the striking resemblance between Lal's Madho Bilas temple and Jacob's Jaipur Museum, not only in the arched entrance but also in the projecting cantilevered balconies and rich carvings, created a shared architectural language that intricately linked Vrindavan to Jaipur, bringing together a Kachhwaha past and the colonial present.

The stylistic similarity between the temple and the museum indeed suggests that Lal had been considerably influenced by Jacob's innovations in Jaipur. It is precisely this influence that has led scholars to argue that, by the 1900s, "the continuity of a traditional practice"<sup>40</sup> had been irreversibly altered in Jaipur. Jacob might well have designed the entrance to the Jaipur Museum. But by reusing this architectural device through a strategic citation, the Imarat and its patron, Madho Singh, invested stone and mortar with deeper meaning. For an understanding of the complex field of nineteenth-century architecture practices in the colony, we must move beyond discourses of originality to think of more complex articulations of subjectivities.

Certainly, everyday viewers, the subjects of the Jaipur state, would not read the *otla* at the Jaipur Museum as merely an architectural device invented by the British director of the Jaipur Public Works Department through a study of earlier Mughal forms. Rather, the museum's unusual entrance would be framed through an expansive visual field constituted through the familiar. This would include domestic architecture in Jaipur and Kachhwaha structures such as the Mubarak Mahal in the royal capital as well as the Madho Bilas temple in Vrindavan. Such a framing far exceeded Jacob's "museumizing imagination." As Homi Bhabha puts it, "faced with the hybridity of its objects, the presence of power is revealed as something other than what its rules of recognition assert."<sup>41</sup> Even today the entrance to the Jaipur Museum continues to function in myriad ways. While, on the one hand, the arched facade offers an imposing entrance to the museum, on the other hand, the *otla* remains a space of sociability, a space that shields visitors from the glare of the afternoon sun as they pause to rest before continuing on (Fig. 3).

### Looking Again

If the entrance to the Jaipur Museum itself gestured toward the multivalent registers through which viewers coming to see this "wonder of carven white stone" would read the architecture of the museum, the display, too, was carefully selected to further reinforce the contradictory allusions. Indeed, the display at the museum engendered a complex citational politics that went beyond the historicizing imaginary of the colonizer's gaze. Visitors entered the museum through a porch in which life-size portraits of the principal rulers of the state were exhibited, starting with Prithviraj Singh (1503–1528) and ending with the current ruler, Madho Singh (Fig. 7). The remaining walls were covered with murals depicting noteworthy monuments from all over the world, including



7 Portraits of the Kachhwahas in the front porch, Jaipur Economic and Industrial Museum, 1887 (artwork in the public domain; photograph by the author)



8 Murli, *The Emperor Justinian and His Attendants*, west corridor, Jaipur Economic and Industrial Museum, late 19th century (artwork in the public domain; photograph by the author)

the Buddha flanked by kings and demigods from the fifth-century Buddhist caves at Ajanta; a portrait of Ramses III (r. ca. 1187–1156 BCE) from the mortuary temple of Medinet Habu in Thebes; murals from the church of S. Francesco at Assisi attributed to Giotto (ca. 1267–1337); the mosaic of Emperor Justinian (r. 527–65) and his retinue from the apse of S. Vitale, Ravenna; a portion of the frieze of archers from the palace of Darius I (r. 521–486 BCE) at Susa; the ziggurat at Borsippa (625–539 BCE); and a mosaic representing the Battle of Issus in Cilicia between Alexander (r. 336–323 BCE) and Darius III (r. 335–331 BCE) from the House of the Faun, Pompeii (ca. 100 BCE), among others (Fig. 8). Each one of the murals was, according to Hendley, carefully selected “as characteristic examples of their respective styles.”<sup>42</sup> While the

murals might easily be explained in terms of Madho Singh’s attempts to portray Jaipur as a modern state presenting Western knowledge to its subjects through a grand narrative of world art, it is perhaps not a coincidence that the imagery focused solely on royal themes—from the defeat of Darius III by Alexander to the emperor Justinian from S. Vitale, Ravenna, from the royal palaces of Susa to the stately portrait of Ramses III.

Hendley, assuming the paternalistic role of a colonial scholar-officer-anthropologist, dismissed the portraits of the Jaipur maharajas as merely “showing examples of different styles of dress, and the personal peculiarities of men of past generations.” The murals, on the other hand, were “intended to represent all those influences which may be supposed to

have been at work in the formation of the Indo-Persian or present prevailing school of Indian art.<sup>43</sup> Yet, for the subjects of the Jaipur state, who were the principal audience, the portraits of their kings surely meant something more than a tableau of changing “styles of dress.” Similarly, Hendley’s dismissal of Indian art as lacking in “originality,” its influences including such varied sources as European wall murals, Chinese paintings, Greek vases, and Etruscan and Egyptian tombs, would be quite lost on his intended audience.<sup>44</sup>

The labels, in Hindi, Urdu, and English, merely describe the painting and name the Jaipur artist responsible for executing the mural. The “innocent” viewer—a viewer who would (presumably) not “scramble or resist the museum’s cues”<sup>45</sup>—first walks into a gallery crowded with portraits of the Jaipur maharajas and is then immediately confronted with foreign scenes of battle, regality, and imperial grandeur. Needless to say, it is today impossible to recover the experiences of the museum’s nineteenth-century subaltern audiences. Stray references in contemporaneous reports, however, suggest that for most viewers it was the spectacle of seeing the Kachhwahas in their resplendent glory that remained the predominant attraction of the Jaipur Museum.<sup>46</sup>

The rhetoric became more complex in the Central Hall. The enormous stained-glass windows of the Central Hall had images of the solar god Surya, from whom Madho Singh traced his genealogy, and the moon goddess Chandra, from whom Madho Singh’s wife traced her natal lineage. Three silver-plated plaques depicting narratives from the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata*, written approximately between the mid-first millennium BCE and the mid-first millennium CE, surrounded the obligatory oil on canvas portrait of the Prince of Wales—a copy of a Heinrich von Angeli painting displayed at Marlborough House, London. One of the silver-plated plaques illustrated the horse sacrifice, the *ashvamedha*, performed by the mythic hero of the *Mahābhārata*, the exemplary Hindu ruler Yudhishtira, to mark his imperial sovereignty. Ganga Baksh, a Jaipur-based artisan, was responsible for crafting the five-foot-high silver-plated plaques using images from Akbar’s personal copy of the *Razmnāma*, or the *Book of War*, an illustrated manuscript that the Jaipur monarchy had acquired in the 1740s.<sup>47</sup> The *Razmnāma* was the Persian abridged translation of the *Mahābhārata* completed under the patronage of Akbar in 1586. Along with the Jaipur *Razmnāma*, as the manuscript is now known, the Kachhwahas also possessed Akbar’s copy of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, as well as detached folios from manuscripts prepared in the last two decades of Akbar’s reign.

Akbar’s imperial *Razmnāma* was a valuable possession for the Kachhwahas. Enlarged copies of folios from this manuscript were displayed at the 1883 Jaipur Exhibition, an exhibition of industrial and decorative arts organized under the patronage of Madho Singh.<sup>48</sup> Modeled on the Great Exhibition of 1851 in London, the Jaipur Exhibition was the first of such expositions to be organized by a princely state in India. The very next year, Madho Singh sponsored a lavish four-volume catalog of the objects exhibited in 1883. Printed by W. Griggs and Sons, a prominent London-based publisher, *Memorials of the Jeypore Exhibition* contained detailed descriptions of the objects along with photographs and chromolithographs by students from the Jaipur School of Art.<sup>49</sup> The



X. Yudhishtira loses at dice his kingdom and wife, Draupadi. Duhshasani, one of the Pandavas, attempts to insult the Princess by dragging off her robes, which, however, are miraculously lengthened by Krishna.

9 Yudhishtira Loses at Dice His Kingdom and Wife, Draupadi, from Thomas H. Hendley, *Memorials of the Jeypore Exhibition 1883*, London: W. Griggs, 1884, pl. X, platinotype (artwork in the public domain; photograph provided by the author)

fourth volume of the *Memorials* contained reproductions in platinotype of 147 folios from the *Razmnāma* (Fig. 9).<sup>50</sup>

The introduction to the volumes, written by Hendley himself, claimed that the Jaipur *Razmnāma* was “far superior to those in [Nathaniel Brassey] Halhed’s copy or anything of that kind in the British Museum.”<sup>51</sup> Notwithstanding the accuracy of his claim, Hendley’s sole interest in the manuscript, however, lay in his hypothesis that the manuscript showed the lack of “changes in the domestic condition of the country during the past three centuries at all events removed from the British cantonments.” It was “in this living relation to the past”<sup>52</sup> that the study of the manuscript was of much value, according to Hendley. By this move, the colonial ideologue not only disavowed the present of the colony but also simultaneously rehearsed imperialist strategies that mapped the time-space of the colony in the distant past, far removed from the modernity of the West.



10 Ram Chandra and Nand Lal, *The Great Gambling Scene in the Mahābhārata*, central corridor, Jaipur Economic and Industrial Museum (artwork in the public domain; photograph provided by the author)

Nevertheless, the Jaipur court sent the four-volume *Memorials* to a number of museums and libraries in Great Britain, Germany, France, Italy, Russia, Egypt, Austria, Canada, Australia, and the United States.<sup>53</sup> Copies were also sent to European royal libraries, such as those of the Prince of Wales (Edward VII) and Frederick III of Germany. While scholars have read this gesture as Madho Singh's attempt to foster an awareness "of the cultural achievements of modern Jaipur,"<sup>54</sup> the act of gifting the lavish volumes to libraries and museums across the world also initiated a relation of reciprocal equivalence with these institutions. The German government, for instance, reciprocated the Jaipur monarch's generosity by sending a collection of wood carvings as a counter-gift, which was then displayed at the museum. Similarly, the Corporation of the City of Nottingham presented the museum with thirty cases of machine-made lace.<sup>55</sup> These gifts can perhaps also be read as a form of commodity exchange that allowed the Jaipur monarch to insert his museum into the late nineteenth-century global museological order. By the 1870s, major museums across Europe and its colonies had started exchanging reproductions, plaster casts, and

chromolithographs of objects in their collections to promote an international arena of knowledge exchange.<sup>56</sup> By participating in this global exhibitionary order, Madho Singh attempted to cultivate a social and political potential that exceeded his purported regional parochialism.

At the same time, this exchange was also imbricated in earlier Indic notions of the royal gift.<sup>57</sup> The Mughal emperor Akbar was known to have gifted his painted portraits to select courtiers who were then expected to wear the painting in their turbans as a sign of reverence.<sup>58</sup> The eighteenth-century rulers of the kingdom of Kota, a state approximately 140 miles south of Jaipur, distributed royal portraits to the nobility at court as a marker of the ruler's sovereignty and embodiment of royal grace.<sup>59</sup> In many precolonial courts, the ritualized act of the gift was thus built on theories of embodiment, presuming that the ruler's personhood or even charisma could be shared through the bequeathing of intimate objects or painted representations.

Given the immense symbolic power of this ritualized system of exchange in precolonial courts, Madho Singh's gift of the four-volume *Memorials* to the royal courts and public libraries of Europe perhaps suggests a desire to reframe the modern form of commodity exchange that the nineteenth-century global museological order had enabled through earlier Indic notions of the royal gift. Implicit in this act are two different ways of reading the act of the gift. While, on the one hand, the circulation of the volumes gave Madho Singh the opportunity to insert his museum into the international networks of late nineteenth-century museology, on the other hand, it also permitted him to articulate a language of kingship for his direct subjects through a citation of earlier courtly rituals.

This insertion into the late nineteenth-century global museological order was, indeed, effective. The organizing committee of the 1886 Colonial and Indian Exhibition, London, the first exposition dedicated to England's colonies, invited the Jaipur state to display products from the region. Enlarged reproductions of folios from Akbar's *Razmnāma*, painted by students from the Jaipur School of Art, were, once again, presented at the London exhibition. The paintings shown at the 1883 Jaipur Exhibition and the 1886 Colonial and Indian Exhibition were then reproduced as murals to be permanently exhibited in the corridors surrounding the Central Hall of the Jaipur Museum. Six paintings from the Jaipur *Razmnāma* were depicted as murals in the central corridor (Fig. 10). These included the scene of Yudhishtira, the exemplary hero of the *Mahābhārata*, losing his rightful kingdom with the throw of the dice, the marriage of Bikhya and Chandrasaha, and the *swayamvara*, or groom selection ceremony, of the princess Damayanti. Incidentally, the Kachhwahas traced their lineage to Nala, Damayanti's beloved, who appears in the ceremony, along with a number of gods, to request her hand in marriage. Damayanti, however, refused the gods and selected Nala as her husband. Other themes selected for the museum included the abduction of the white horse that was to be used for the crown prince Yudhishtira's horse sacrifice and the sacrifice of King Mewaradhwaia.

Each of these narratives reiterated notions of just kingship, universal sovereignty, and royal sacrifice for the

welfare of the subjects. The sacrifice of Mewaradhwaja, for instance, referred to a narrative from the *Razmnāma* that describes the confrontations over Yudhishtira's horse sacrifice. According to texts such as the *Mahābhārata*, the horse sacrifice involved a monarch setting a white horse free for a period of one year. If the horse returned unharmed, without being challenged by local kings and feudatories, the monarch could then claim to be a universal sovereign, the king of all kings. But Mewaradhwaja, a local feudatory, challenged the might of Yudhishtira, the great hero of the *Mahābhārata*, by capturing his white horse. In retaliation, the god Krishna vowed to punish Mewaradhwaja for his impudence. Krishna asked Mewaradhwaja for half of his son's body as tribute. With tears in his eyes, the king offered half of his own body instead. Krishna refused the gift, thinking that Mewaradhwaja was begrudging the tribute that he demanded. Mewaradhwaja informed Krishna that he was crying not because the divine lord has asked him to sacrifice his life, but because Krishna desired only half of his body. Impressed by his devotion, Krishna forgave the righteous king. This, along with the other murals, thus made visible the significance of piety and sacrifice as key in formulating a universal sovereignty.

For many, the repeated imagery of the Kachhwaha rulers at the museum, along with stained-glass windows portraying solar and lunar deities and regal scenes from the *Mahābhārata*, provided visual codes to locate Madho Singh within an illustrious history of just kingship. The multiple renderings of the horse sacrifice, a common trope of sovereign kingship in Hindu mythology, perhaps alluded to the Jaipur monarch Jai Singh II's actual performance of the sacrifice in 1734 and 1742. Jai Singh, the founder of Jaipur, had not only erected a pillar in 1742 to commemorate this sacrifice visually but had also built a temple with a life-size white marble horse before the actual sacrifice. As Tillotson and Vibhuti Sachdev observe, Jai Singh's act of performing the horse sacrifice went "far beyond what was considered normal" and was tantamount to "publicly declaring his rights as a paramount sovereign."<sup>60</sup> The building of a temple with a white marble horse and a pillar commemorating the horse sacrifice was Jai Singh's way of monumentalizing this moment for posterity. In an era in which the British had considerably limited the actual powers of the princely states, Madho Singh attempted to reclaim sovereignty, at least in the eyes of his subjects, by reminding them simultaneously about the sacrifice performed by Yudhishtira in the *Mahābhārata* and the one performed by his predecessor in 1742 to commemorate Kachhwaha political sovereignty.

The remarkable history of the Jaipur *Razmnāma* certainly added to the ambiguities and multiple interpretative possibilities for museum audiences. For those aware of Mughal notions of kingship, the fact that the Jaipur *Razmnāma* was the Mughal emperor Akbar's personal copy would not be missed. It was no coincidence that of all the Mughal manuscripts owned by the Jaipur monarchy, the museum brought this specific manuscript to the public eye. The notion that illustrated manuscripts accrued additional value from their previous ownership was already operative at the Safavid, Ottoman, and Mughal courts, where significant manuscripts were actively collected, copied, exchanged, and gifted. For

instance, several copies of Akbar's imperial *Razmnāma* were produced during the first half of the seventeenth century.<sup>61</sup> Even as late as the nineteenth century, copies of the manuscript were made in a number of regional courts.<sup>62</sup> As scholars have noted, of all the manuscripts produced in the Mughal court, Akbar's *Razmnāma* remains the most copied and circulated.<sup>63</sup>

That the production of the *Razmnāma* was a foundational moment in Akbar's imperial ideology, symptomatic of a new political ethos legitimized through syncretic cultures and a new sixteenth-century Indo-Persian imperial aesthetic, would certainly have significantly contributed to the importance given to the manuscript at the Jaipur Museum. Madho Singh's display of this particular manuscript therefore made a statement of legitimate and illustrious kingship that drew its genealogies from the courtly practices of the Mughal Empire. Akbar's practice of worshipping the sun publicly four times a day as well as his doctrine of Din-I Ilahi, Divine Faith, as a broader ideology that united the diverse members of his nobility under the figure of the emperor, furnished a key symbol to the Kachhwaha ruler, who also claimed a solar lineage.<sup>64</sup> Catalogs and reports of the 1883 Jaipur Exhibition thus referred to Akbar's worship of the sun when discussing Madho Singh's solar lineage, further bolstering the close association between the Kachhwahas and the Mughals.

Madho Singh's citation of Mughal notions of kingship, however, went beyond the display of the Jaipur *Razmnāma*. Persian carpets from Herat brought by Man Singh I, the highest-ranking officer in Akbar's court, were also exhibited at the museum, reaffirming, yet again, the close association between the Mughals and the Kachhwahas. Interestingly, Hendley notes the persistence of rumors in the city that claimed that the carpets were gifted by the Mughal emperor Shah Jahan (1592–1666) to Jai Singh I (r. 1611–67) in exchange for the property on which the Taj Mahal (1632–48) was eventually built.<sup>65</sup> Yet the official report of the 1883 Calcutta International Exhibition, where copies of the carpets had also been put before the public, testified that the carpets were gifted by the Mughal emperor Muhammad Shah (1702–1748) to Jai Singh II as a reward for building an astronomical observatory in the Mughal capital of Delhi.<sup>66</sup> These contradictory reports further reinforced the immense symbolic value that the objects in the museum commanded as embodied relics that gestured toward the Jaipur monarchy's inheritance of Mughal courtly practices.

At the same time, the two courtyards flanking the Central Hall were inscribed with extracts from diverse religious texts, including the Qur'ān, the Bible, the *Mahābhārata*, and the *Rāmāyaṇa* (Fig. 11). These multilingual inscriptions may perhaps be read, like the murals depicting scenes from Sumeria, Greece, and Rome, as Madho Singh's attempt to establish Jaipur as a center of international cosmopolitanism (Fig. 12). Nonetheless, the close parallel to Akbar's religious gatherings, where Hindu, Muslim, Jain, Zoroastrian, and Jewish leaders along with Jesuit priests from the Portuguese colony of Goa discussed theological issues, would not be overlooked, at least by the well-informed audiences of Jaipur—the courtiers, the landed aristocracy, and the local intelligentsia. Scholars have read Akbar's house of religious debate (the *ibadatkhana*), established in the mid-1570s at the imperial



11 Open court east, showing inscriptions from various religious texts, Jaipur Economic and Industrial Museum (photograph by the author)

palace in Fatehpur Sikri, as an exceptional space that made possible a complex cosmopolitanism in the sixteenth century.<sup>67</sup> I would like to suggest that Madho Singh sought to recreate this sixteenth-century cosmopolitanism at the Jaipur Museum through an engagement with a “world art” (murals replicating key monuments from Europe, Asia, and Africa), the nineteenth-century global exhibitionary order (the presentation of *Memorials of the Jeypore Exhibition* to libraries and museums), and the major world religions, including Hinduism, Islam, and Christianity (inscriptions from sacred texts in the courtyard).

How did the museum’s intended audience, the subjects of the Jaipur state, read this elaborately codified system of citational politics? Would unlearned peasants, the subaltern masses who forcefully disrupted the abstracted, disembodied gaze of modern museology, read the museum as an elegy to a counteraesthetic of modernity articulated through a politics of inheritance? Was the intricate history of the *Razmnāma* available to audiences outside the cosmopolitan world of elite Jaipur? Certainly, the labels and information plaques that accompanied the objects did not discuss the complex histories of the display. For instance, the labels that accompanied the murals in the corridors merely described the painting and named the artist responsible for the work. Thus, for most museum viewers, the spectacle of seeing the Kachhwahas in their resplendent glory remained the predominant attraction of the Jaipur Museum.

It was Jaipur’s elite, the feudatories of the Jaipur state and the local intelligentsia, whom Madho Singh tried to impress with his rhetoric of a Mughal-Kachhwaha kingship. It was no coincidence that Madho Singh turned to Akbar’s notion of kingship for inspiration. Akbar’s *Din-I Ilahi*, as a “discipleship order” that bound the “highest ranking nobles in complete loyalty to the emperor,”<sup>68</sup> might have appealed to Madho Singh’s autocracy and repressive ideals of kingship. For example, one of the most publicly reported of Madho

Singh’s oppressive political acts was the arrest of Arjanlal Sethi, a “seditious” schoolteacher who was “charged with being ‘concerned in political conspiracies’” and sentenced to five years of imprisonment without trial.<sup>69</sup>

Ruling Jaipur as an absolutist sovereign, the willful Madho Singh had systematically destroyed the power of the Jaipur nobility and the local intelligentsia by violently repressing antimonarchical resistance in his state. Madho Singh therefore needed to present himself through the rhetoric of indisputable divine kingship. It is in this context that the Jaipur Museum became more than just an institution of modern knowledge making. The Jaipur Museum, along with the building of the railway line that connected the state of Jaipur to the pilgrimage center of Vrindavan, made it possible for Madho Singh to assert his sovereignty at least within the state of Jaipur and declare himself as the First among the Kings of India, Lord of Princes, Great Prince over Princes. Taking this grandiose title, *Saramad-i-Rajaha-i-Hindustan Raj Rajendra Sri Maharajadhiraja*, Madho Singh reigned from Jaipur as a sovereign monarch.

Yet for his imperial audience, the “scientific” display of local arts and crafts “in South Kensington cases—of the approved pattern . . . and South Kensington labels, whereon the description, measurements, and price of each object are fairly printed,”<sup>70</sup> interspersed with “wax models, diagrams, printed charts and descriptive illustrated cards from European companies” indicated that the improvement of arts and crafts was a central concern for the Jaipur monarch (Fig. 13).<sup>71</sup> As Edward Bradford, the officiating agent to the governor-general of Rajputana, categorically mentioned in his speech at the opening ceremony of the museum in 1887: “The government, for whom the improvement of industries and art ware has been of special importance, will regard with esteem and gratitude the work of the Maharaja of Jaipur. . . . Jaipur will be considered to be of the foremost rank of the many patrons of arts in the native states.”<sup>72</sup>



12 Open court east, detail showing inscriptions (photograph by the author)

The colonial government's keen interest in the museum was driven by its larger discourse of crafts revival that was, at this very moment, being formulated in South Kensington and the imperial museums and art schools in India. Inspired by William Morris, colonial art administrators and aesthetes such as Lockwood Kipling (the curator of the Lahore Museum), George Birdwood (the founder of the Victoria and Albert Museum, Bombay), and Ernest B. Havell (at this time the superintendent of the Madras School of Art) had successfully persuaded the imperial government to develop and implement wide-ranging and ambitious crafts revival policies in the colony in the 1880s.<sup>73</sup> At the precise moment when the colonial government was instituting crafts revival policies across British India, Madho Singh was building his museum in Jaipur to "complete local education by providing . . . a perfect collection of objects . . . from the State of Jeypore [Jaipur]."<sup>74</sup> It was thus not surprising that the imperial government read the establishment of the museum as indicating the Jaipur monarch's support of British policies in colonial India.

Madho Singh's visit to London in 1902, his donations to the Imperial Institute, London, and a number of similar acts of appeasement further strengthened his relationship with the British. By the time of the Coronation Durbar of George V in Delhi, 1911, Jaipur was considered the foremost princely state in the Rajputana region in western India.<sup>75</sup> The maharaja of Jaipur was asked by the British government to lead the Rajputana processions into the durbar, in an obvious breach of seniority, establishing Madho Singh's undisputed leadership in the region.<sup>76</sup> Although the neighboring princely state of Udaipur had been traditionally considered the leading dynastic clan in the Rajputana region, Madho Singh succeeded in usurping this position for himself. It was the building of the Jaipur Museum, that "wonder of carven white stone," that allowed the monarch to seize a position of preeminence in this western Indian world of localized conflicts and political intrigues.

### Toward a Counteraesthetics of Modernity

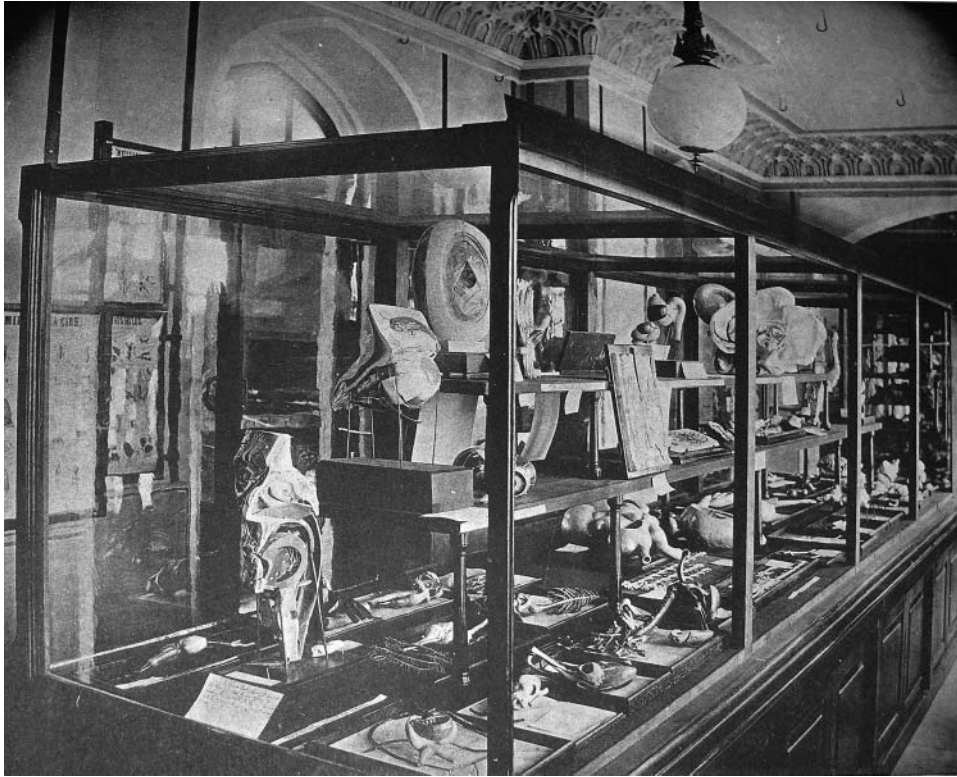
In a recent essay on contemporary museological practices in India, Saloni Mathur and Kavita Singh argue that the

postnational globalized world has led to a "blurring of the boundary between the museum and shrine."<sup>77</sup> The proliferation of new museumlike institutions in India over the last twenty years, the authors suggest, have generated a Bilbao effect. Implicated in reinvigorating regional economies through tourism and the production of cultural capital, the post-1990s museum far exceeds the conventional pedagogic aspirations of modern museology. While Mathur and Singh read this new museumizing imaginary as a product of contemporary globalization, the Jaipur Museum, purportedly a quintessential invention of the bureaucracies of colonial crafts revival, was already embedded within a discursive frame that made "blurry" the epistemic differences between the modern and the nonmodern, between the rational and the irrational, and between the museum and the shrine. The Jaipur Museum then allows us to problematize the very idea of the museum as a paradigmatic institution of modern knowledge making.

Rather than seeing the modern museum in the colony as merely symptomatic of a failed or incomplete modernization, an analysis of "native" museology will permit us to foreground micropractices at the margins of the empire that operated within, yet subverted, rationalist discourses of Western scientificism and historicism. An exploration of these resistances, however, requires newer frameworks of inquiry—those that reengage with the museum itself as a powerful site of discourse formation. I propose that the colonial archive was not the only space where histories were produced and taxonomies created in the nineteenth century but that a thick description, to use Clifford Geertz's formulation, of the colonial museum will yield new histories of polymorphous micropractices at the margins of the empire that creatively reinscribed the cultural economies of imperial museology.<sup>78</sup>

Even after Madho Singh's death, the Jaipur Museum continued to be a space through which a distinctive Kachhwaha kingship was both constructed and displayed. In the 1930s, the astronomical tools of Jai Singh II as well as a massive sixteenth-century carpet acquired by Jai Singh I from the Safavid court of Shah Abbas (1571–1629) were transferred to the





13 A showcase in the Jaipur Museum, from Thomas H. Hendley, *Handbook to the Jeypore Museum*, Calcutta: Calcutta Central Press, 1895, pl. V (artwork in the public domain; photograph provided by the author)

museum from the royal palace.<sup>79</sup> The institution of the museum, it can be seen, became a vehicle to promote a localized form of kingship through which the Kachhwahas could articulate notions of power, legitimacy, and authority that went beyond the scope of the modern museum, as the empire had imagined it in the nineteenth century.

This proposal, as a counternarrative to the more normative histories of museological practices in colonial India, is neither a justification for nor a celebration of the failure of the modern museum as a “key ideological apparatus, a *discipline* for the production of the social realities and subjectivities of the modern world.”<sup>80</sup> Madho Singh’s equally oppressive regime does not leave any space for the celebration of resistances to the totalitarian teleology of Western modernity. Instead, I have foregrounded a moment in the messy entanglements through which a counteraesthetics of modernity came into being in nineteenth-century India, a counteraesthetics that engaged with Western modernity, but not on its terms.

The Kachhwaha legacy was, however, short-lived in post-independence India. Within three years of India’s independence in 1947, the museum would once again be mobilized for an entirely different politics. In 1950, the Jaipur Museum was transferred to the newly formed Department of Archaeology and Museums of the post-independence state of Rajasthan. The consequent changes in the acquisition policy and the rearrangement of the museum become evident in official correspondence. Renamed the Central Museum, it became a showcase of the art and culture of Rajasthan. Its history as Jaipur’s museum was superseded by this new identity. Using the art historian Ananda Coomaraswamy’s 1916 *Rajput Paintings* as a handbook, the new curator, Satya Prakash, actively collected post-seventeenth-century Rajasthani paintings from the erstwhile princely states. Simultaneously, he traveled to

the interior of Rajasthan to purchase seventeenth- and eighteenth-century jewelry, textiles, and armor. In a 1952 letter to the director general of the Archaeological Survey of India, Prakash notes that “the present is the most opportunate time for making such a collection since with the disintegration of the old families and Thikanas [landed estates], a lot of art stuff has come onto the market.”<sup>81</sup> This shift in focus from Jaipur to Rajasthan produced yet another narrative—one that has to be traced through the politics of the post-colonial nation-state and the construction of Rajasthan as an idea.

Today, the Jaipur Museum is being transformed yet again. With a budget of 80 million rupees, the Department of Archaeology and Museums, Rajasthan, is in the process of renovating seventeen museums across the state.<sup>82</sup> Even as I write, teams of workers are busy removing from the Jaipur Museum the “South Kensington cases—of the approved pattern” that reminded Rudyard Kipling of the pleasures of metropolitan museums. As in the renaming of Indian cities, the Rajasthan state government is trying its best to erase the colonial history of the Economic and Industrial Museum, transforming it into a space appropriate for a new, globalized Rajasthan. An exploration of the new life of this museum would require different frames of inquiry, those that bring into focus the role of post-1990s liberalism, globalization, and the emergence of India as a key player in the global economies of the twenty-first century. The story of the Economic and Industrial Museum thus resists closure—demanding dexterous epistemological shifts that can adequately account for its multivalent incarnations. But that, perhaps, is the parable of Western modernity in the colony, a parable that challenges, exceeds, and destabilizes neat configurations, the neat binaries of the West/non-West, the self/other, and the modern/nonmodern.

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## Notes

1. Rudyard Kipling, *Kim* (London: Macmillan, 1901), 5.
2. Thomas H. Hendley, "Indian Museums," *Journal of Indian Art* 16, no. 35 (1914): 58.
3. For a discussion on imperial museology, see Timothy Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991); Annie E. Coombes, *Reinventing Africa: Museums, Material Culture and Popular Imagination in Late Victorian and Edwardian England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994); and Peter H. Hoffenberg, *An Empire on Display: English, Indian, and Australian Exhibitions from the Crystal Palace to the Great War* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), among others.
4. Donald Malcolm Reid, *Whose Pharaohs? Archaeology, Museums, and Egyptian National Identity from Napoleon to World War I* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 9, my emphasis.
5. Gyan Prakash, "Science 'Gone Native' in Colonial India," *Representations* 40 (Fall 1992): 153–78.
6. For instance, the Travancore State Museum (1855), the Baroda Museum (1894), and the Jaipur Economic and Industrial Museum (1887). For a discussion on colonial museology in India, see Bernard S. Cohn, *Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge: The British in India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996); Gyan Prakash, *Another Reason: Science and the Imagination of Modern India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999); and Tapati Guha-Thakurta, *Monuments, Objects, Histories: Institutions of Art in Colonial and Postcolonial India* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004).
7. See Prakash, *Another Reason*; and Guha-Thakurta, *Monuments, Objects, Histories*, esp. chap. 2. As Guha-Thakurta (45) writes: "A central case can be made about the failure of museums in India to transform themselves effectively from 'Wonder Houses' to new centers of disciplinary specialization, despite a concerted drive in this direction since the 1870s."
8. Guha-Thakurta, *Monuments, Objects, Histories*, 45.
9. Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 7.
10. For a history of the Jaipur Museum, see Thomas R. Metcalf, *An Imperial Vision: Indian Architecture and Britain's Raj* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989); Giles H. R. Tillotson, *The Tradition of Indian Architecture: Continuity, Controversy, and Change since 1850* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989); and Vikramaditya Prakash, "Productions of Identity in (Post)colonial 'Indian' Architecture: Hegemony and Its Discontents in C19 Jaipur" (PhD diss., Cornell University, 1994).
11. Robert W. Stern, *The Cat and the Lion: Jaipur State in the British Raj* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1988), 185.
12. See Ajay Skaria, *Hybrid Histories: Forests, Frontiers and Wilderness in Western India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999), for a reading of a possible "counter-aesthetics of modernity" through an analysis of oral narratives in India.
13. Rudyard Kipling, *Letters of Marque* (New York: H. M. Caldwell, 1899), 18–19.
14. Rudyard Kipling, *Out of India: Things I Saw, and Failed to See, in Certain Days and Nights at Jeypore and Elsewhere* (New York: G. W. Dillingham, 1895), 37.
15. J. Drew Gay, *The Prince of Wales in India; Or, From Pall Mall to the Punjab* (New York: R. Worthington, 1877), 306.
16. Thomas H. Hendley, *Handbook to the Jeypore Museum* (Calcutta: Calcutta Central Press, 1895), 111.
17. H. L. Showers, *Notes on Jaipur* (Jaipur: Jail Press, 1916), 32.
18. The term "Hindu-Saracenic" was used as shorthand to describe the British experiment of combining diverse precolonial building idioms to manufacture a modern architecture style appropriate for the colony. As Metcalf, *An Imperial Vision*, 77, writes, the Hindu-Saracenic style reflected a "combination of 'European science' and 'native art,' of 'traditional' forms and 'modern' functions."
19. For biographies of Jacob and Hendley, see *ibid.*; and Tillotson, *The Tradition of Indian Architecture*.
20. Metcalf, *An Imperial Vision*, 139.
21. Giles H. R. Tillotson, "The Jaipur Exhibition of 1883," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 14, no. 2 (July 2004): 103–10.
22. *Ibid.*, 126.
23. Gyan Prakash, *Another Reason*, 34–40, uses the idea of "second sight" to account for the Indian elite's attempts to take on the colonial project of educating the "unlearned" Indian peasant through networks of colonial exhibitions and museums.
24. The term "well-advanced" to describe the condition of the building before Jacob's involvement is used in Hendley, *Handbook to the Jeypore Museum*, 1.
25. *Ibid.*
26. "Proposed Construction of Albert Hall," December 1879, file no. 67–68, General A Branch, Foreign Department, National Archives of India, New Delhi.
27. Gordon Sanderson, *Types of Modern Indian Buildings at Delhi, Agra, Allahabad, Lucknow, Ajmer, Bhopal, Bikanir, Gwalior, Jaipur, Jodhpur and Udaipur: With Notes on the Craftsmen Employed on Their Design and Execution* (Allahabad: Government Press, United Provinces, 1913), 18.
28. Tillotson, *The Tradition of Indian Architecture*, 81.
29. Royal Commission on Opium, *First Report of the Royal Commission on Opium*, vol. 3 (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1894), 377.
30. As Benedict Anderson writes, "Museums, and the museumizing imagination, are both profoundly political." Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991), 178.
31. "Purchase of a site by the Maharaja of Jaipur at Barsana (Muttra) for the building of a temple," 1895–96, file no. 673 F, Residency Branch, Jaipur Agency Department, National Archives of India, New Delhi.
32. This process was described to me by the head priest of the Madho Bilas temple at Vrindavan in 2007.
33. Pratima Mehta, *Memories of My Pol in Old Ahmedabad* (Ahmedabad: City Heritage Collection, 2009), 17.
34. Metcalf, *An Imperial Vision*; Tillotson, *The Tradition of Indian Architecture*; and Giles H. R. Tillotson and Vibhuti Sachdev, *Building Jaipur: The Making of an Indian City* (London: Reaktion, 2000).
35. Swinton Jacob, quoted in Showers, *Notes on Jaipur*, 80.
36. James Fergusson, *History of Indian and Eastern Architecture* (London: John Murray, 1876).
37. James Fergusson, "On the Study of Indian Architecture," *Journal of the Society of Arts* 15, no. 733 (1866): 72.
38. Fergusson, *History of Indian and Eastern Architecture*, 574.
39. *Ibid.*, 590.
40. Tillotson and Sachdev, *Building Jaipur*, 125.
41. Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 160.
42. Hendley, *Handbook to the Jeypore Museum*, 5.
43. *Ibid.*, 2.
44. Hendley's *Handbook to the Jeypore Museum*, repeating current discourses on the lack of "originality" in Indian art, suggests that the murals would allow the visitor to visually understand the stylistic influences that led to the making of Indian art.
45. Carol Duncan, *Civilizing Rituals: Inside Public Art Museums* (London: Routledge, 1995), 13.
46. For example, Kipling, *Out of India*; and Thomas H. Hendley, *Report of the Jeypore Museum 1888–1898* (Calcutta: Caledonian Steam Printing Works, n.d.).
47. The plaques are reproduced in Chandramani Singh, ed., *Treasures of the Albert Hall Museum, Jaipur* (Ahmedabad: Mapin Publishing, 2010), 60–61. For the history of the Jaipur *Razmnāma*, see Ashok Kumar Das, *Treasures of Indian Painting from the Maharaja Sawai Man Singh II Museum, Jaipur* (Jaipur: Maharaja Sawai Man Singh II Museum Trust, 1976).
48. For a history of the exhibition, see Tillotson, "The Jaipur Exhibition of 1883."
49. Thomas H. Hendley, *Memorials of the Jeypore Exhibition 1883*, 4 vols. (London: W. Griggs, 1884), vol. 1, n.p.
50. "The Razm Namah," *Journal of Indian Art* 1, no. 12 (1886): 89–90.
51. Hendley, *Memorials of the Jeypore Exhibition*, vol. 1, n.p.
52. *Ibid.*, vol. 4, 4.
53. Charles Tupper, *Indian Political Practice: A Collection of the Decisions of the Government of India in Political Cases* (Calcutta: Office of the Superintendent of Government Printing, 1895), 40.
54. Tillotson, "The Jaipur Exhibition of 1883," 119.

55. Hendley, *Handbook to the Jeypore Museum*, 67, 71.
56. The 1867 International Convention for Promoting Universal Reproductions of Works of Art, a treaty signed by fifteen European courts, greatly facilitated the circulation of plaster casts between European museums in the 1870s. For this history, see Rune Frederiksen and Eckart Marchand, eds., *Plaster Casts: Making, Collecting and Displaying from Classical Antiquity to the Present* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2010).
57. For an analysis of gift exchanges in the Islamicate world, see Sharon Littlefield, "The Object in the Gift: Embassies of Jahangir and Shah Abbas" (PhD diss., University of Minnesota, 1999). Nicholas B. Dirks, *The Hollow Crown: Ethnohistory of an Indian Kingdom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), provides a compelling study of ritualized gifts in a Hindu court.
58. John F. Richards, *The New Cambridge History of India*, vol. 1, pt. 5, *The Mughal Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 48.
59. Norbert Peabody, "Kota Mahajagat, or the Great Universe of Kota: Sovereignty and Territory in 18th Century Rajasthan," *Contributions to Indian Sociology* 25, no. 1 (January 1991): 29–56.
60. Tillotson and Sachdev, *Building Jaipur*, 38.
61. Seventeenth-century illustrated copies include the *Razmnāma* (1605) in the Birla Academy of Art and Culture, Kolkata, known as the Birla *Razmnāma*, and the now dispersed 1616–17 *Razmnāma*. For a history of the manuscripts, see John Seyller, "Model and Copy: The Illustration of Three *Razmnama* Manuscripts," *Archives of Asian Art* 38 (1985): 37–66.
62. Audrey Truschke's recent doctoral dissertation provides a history of both the production and reception of Akbar's imperial *Razmnāma*. Truschke, "Cosmopolitan Encounters: Sanskrit and Persian at the Mughal Court" (PhD diss., Columbia University, 2012), esp. chap. 3.
63. *Ibid.*
64. The Mughal monarch Akbar's solar worship was framed through an official pedagogy of divine authority, which was further enhanced through contemporaneous portraits that depicted him as an "illuminated person." In most sixteenth-century paintings, Akbar was consequently shown as the light emanating from God, which made him more important than the earlier Mughals, who were merely a "shadow of God on earth." John F. Richards, "The Formulation of Imperial Authority under Akbar and Jahangir," in *Kingship and Authority in South Asia* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998), 285–326.
65. Thomas H. Hendley, *Asian Carpets* (London: W. Griggs, 1905), 7–8.
66. *Official Report of the Calcutta International Exhibition 1883–1884* (Calcutta: Bengal Secretariat Press, 1885), 329.
67. For Akbar's religious policies, see Richards, *The Mughal Empire*, and Catherine B. Asher and Cynthia Talbot, *India before Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).
68. Asher and Talbot, *India before Europe*, 130.
69. Stern, *The Cat and the Lion*, 205.
70. Kipling, *Out of India*, 37.
71. Hendley, *Handbook to the Jeypore Museum*, 109.
72. Edward Bradford, quoted in Thomas H. Hendley, "The Opening of the Albert Hall and Museum at Jeypore," *Journal of Indian Art* 2, no. 9 (1888): 22–23.
73. For this history, see Pushpa Sundar, *Patrons and Philistines: Arts and the State in British India, 1773–1947* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1995).
74. Hendley, *Handbook to the Jeypore Museum*, 111.
75. For Madho Singh's contributions to the British Empire, see Harnath Singh Dandlod, *Jaipur and Its Environs* (Jaipur: Raj Educational Printers, n.d. [1970]), 44–45.
76. M. L. Sharma, *History of the Jaipur State* (Jaipur: Rajasthan Institute of Historical Research, 1969), 274. Class, marriage, and clan affiliations determined hierarchies within the princely states in precolonial Rajputana. The Udaipur monarchs were traditionally considered to be the most important dynasty in the region. In colonial India, the empire acknowledged the Udaipur court's preeminence through ritualistic displays, including processions and gun salutes.
77. Saloni Mathur and Kavita Singh, "Reincarnations of the Museum: The Museum in an Age of Religious Revivalism," in *Asian Art History in the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Vishakha N. Desai (Williamstown, Mass.: Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 2007), 149–68.
78. Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973).
79. Aman Nath, *Jaipur: The Last Destination* (Bombay: India Book House, 1993), 103.
80. Donald Preziosi, "Collecting/Museums," in *Critical Terms for Art History*, ed. Robert Nelson and Richard Shiff (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 409.
81. "Official Correspondence, from Satya Prakash to Director General, Archaeological Survey of India," March 20, 1950, file no. 23/25/50, Records Room of the Archaeological Survey of India, New Delhi.
82. "Raj Plans Rs. 80-crore Facelift for 17 State Museums," *Press Trust of India*, February 16, 2009.