

An exceptional group of four large-format gelatin silver prints of two Hindu princes in Mughal court dress. Two are portraits of Maharawal Shri Pratap Sinhji and two his second son, the Rajkumar Pravin (or Prabin) Sinhji.

In these images, both subjects wear full Mughal court dress. It is thought they were taken in the Digvir Niwas Palace on the occasion of the Maharaja's silver jubilee. We infer this is because there are family groups which include these same individuals, taken in that interior. Four large-format gelatine silver prints with rich tonal contrast each portrait 13.5 x 10 ins. Two very small tears at the edge of two prints.

Maharawal Pratap Sinhji 1864–1911

Maharawal Pratap Sinhji ascended the throne of Bansda in 1876 when he was eleven. He was educated at the Rajkumar College, Rajkot; subsequently the British authorities granted him permission to become Joint Administrator of the state. In 1885 he was given independent charge of the state and directed much of his attention to his family's claim on the region of Bisanpur.

He introduced tax reforms, a banking system, provision of generous public charity during the famine of 1890, and invested in roads, hospitals, libraries and schools.

A major event of his reign was the second Delhi Durbar in 1903, which he attended with his heir apparent, Kumar Shri Indrasinhji. He had four sons. His silver jubilee was celebrated in 1911 probably the date of the portraits. He died shortly afterwards and was succeeded by his eldest son, Yuvaraj Shri Indra Sinhji.

Dress

The Rajput kings, though Hindu, dressed in the formal style of the Mughal Court. Since the reign of Shah Jahan in the 17th century the main elements of Mughal costume have been the coat, turban and dress. Both the Maharaja and the Rajkumar wear a jama, or sarab gati, a heavy, long sleeved coat which reaches below the knees. Here it is decorated with a gold brocade (kashida) sash. The coat is decorated with floral gold brocade patterns around the sleeves, the chest, and also on the sides of the arms, a style typical of Gujarat. In his seated portrait the Maharaja wears a brocaded kamarband around his waist. Both sitters hold a sword and a shal, or shawl of fine cloth, further symbols of their wealth and status. The Rajkumar wears lavishly decorated slippers. The occasion for these formal portraits may have been the maharaja's silver jubilee.

The King Edward VII coronation medal and the Delhi Durbar

Although Maharawal Pratap Sinhji's attire signals his status in a traditionally Indian way, his authority, and status endorsed by the British authorities is underlined by the medal he wears on his chest – the King Edward VII coronation medal.

The medal would have been presented in 1903, two years after the death of Queen Victoria, at the Delhi Durbar, an extravagant pageant held to commemorate the coronation of King Edward VII and his wife, Queen Alexandra, as Emperor and Empress of India.

A rare large-format group of four gelatin silver prints of two Hindu princes in Mughal court dress.

£3,500

