

COLNAGHI



Unknown photographer
*Rao Raja Guman Singh of Uniara with a young woman, probably
his wife, Rani Dashrath Kumari, c.1905*

COLNAGHI

UNKOWN PHOTOGRAPHER

RAO RAJA GUMAN SINGH OF UNIARA WITH A YOUNG WOMAN, PROBABLY HIS WIFE, RANI DASHRATH KUMARI, c.1905

Silver gelatin print, pasted down on card
25.4 x 18.3 cm.; 10 x 7 1/4 in.

Provenance

Antiquariaat Forum BV, Houten, Netherlands;
Private Collection, UK.

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The present photograph depicts Rao Raja Guman Singh of Uniara (1885–1913), ruler of one of the most important feudatory estates of the princely state of Jaipur. The Uniara family belonged to a branch of the Kachhwaha Rajputs, the dynasty which ruled Amber and Jaipur. Centred on the fortified town of Uniara, the estate comprised some 375 square miles and 177 villages, maintaining its own court and administrative establishment while owing allegiance to the Maharaja of Jaipur. Uniara also developed a distinctive artistic culture, including an important school of Rajput painting which flourished under the patronage of its rulers.

Born the son of Thakur Chiman Singh of Bijaygarh, Guman Singh was adopted into the Uniara ruling house following the death without a male heir of Rao Raja Sangram Singh in 1886. He succeeded as Rao Raja while still an infant and ruled until his death in 1913. Guman Singh married Dashrath Kumari, daughter of Raja Akshay Singh of Banera, a Rajput estate in Mewar. Having no male heir of his own, he was succeeded by his adopted son, Sardar Singh II.

Guman Singh was particularly renowned for his remarkable eighteen-layered safa. He was known for maintaining exceptionally strict standards regarding its arrangement: if even a single fold was not positioned to his satisfaction, he would have the entire *safa* removed and replaced with a new one. It is said that the individual responsible for disposing of the Rao Raja's discarded *safas* sold them and, in doing so, accumulated considerable wealth.

Another photograph (fig. 1) of Guman Singh depicts him surrounded by four elaborately dressed women. The young woman accompanying him in the present photograph appears also to be represented prominently in that group. Given her repeated position alongside the ruler, she was probably Guman Singh's wife, Rani Dashrath Kumari, although no documentary identification of the female sitter has yet been located.

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Fig. 1. Unknown Photographer, *Rao Raja Guman Singh of Uniara*, circa 1905, silver gelatin print, 25.7 x 18.7 cm, Private Collection

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