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MINIATURE PAINTED ON CARDBOARD. 'MAHARAJAH RAM SINGH WATCHING AN ELEPHANT FIGHT'

INDIA, KOTA; C. 1850

LEAF: 39 × 31.4 CM

Maharajah Ram Singh's distinctive physiognomy is found on innumerable miniatures painted in Kota in Rajasthan during his fairly long rule from 1827 to 1866. He is seen here together with courtiers on one of the palace's balconies, attentively watching a fight between two bull elephants chained to opposite sides of a wall.

In the 17th century, elephant fights were in fact reserved for the Mughal emperors, but as the Mughals' influence waned, this form of princely entertainment spread to minor courts in Rajasthan.

It is actually curious that these valued and admired animals were used in this way

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