

A search in the wrong direction

by A.R. Nagori

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and I respect them but I am bit taken aback by their indiscriminate ransacking of art and history of their own land. I am not against their use of the coinage 'Punjabi Art'. In fact pages of 'Muslim' and 'Viewpoint' would bear witness that I wrote 'there is no such thing as 'Pakistani Art' at present, but Sindhi Art, Punjabi Art, Baluchi Art etc. could be a possible classification.' I suggested that regional identity plays a vital role in the development of a particular regional style. If such a development takes place it is a welcome sign, but who would support the nonsensical renaming of old ruins buildings etc. If I recollect correctly I opposed the renaming of Karachi University and the names of old Sindhi cities and Lahori too had come out with an article opposing such madness in Lahore. Why then is there this urge to categorise Mughal and Gandhara works as 'Punjabi Art'? It is heartening that Punjab should realise the need of 'a quest for identity'. But why grasp at

They cannot be called art by any standard; at the best they could be described as low rated crafts of a certain historical period. These sculptures are not an agreeable 'synthesis' of Indo-Greek art either, as trumpeted. Perhaps the race of invaders saw the commercial demands of the local environment, rulers, religion, motivated propaganda, patronage, etc. Just as the Afghan refugees trade flourishes here in Pakistan under all sorts of odd tricks. Their Afghan carpets are greatly inferior to local and Persian rugs, but they are sent abroad as masterpieces of Pakistani art.

Greeks

Northerners from Darra are well known for the art of copying; some excel at producing German Mausers and Russian Kalashnikovs with trade marks carved in the local language! And we are proud of them. A similar knack for copies, at an infant age, might have produced Gandhara Sculpture. Compared to the proficiency seen today in copying, Gandhara Sculpture is horribly copied. Inaccuracy and lack of skill is evident. The Greeks in Gandhara might have done a better job at carving. They sculpted with the help of

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Greek objective of the classical principles of Aesthetics. It also fails to produce that sensual or spiritual quality found in Indian sculptures. The Hindu temple sculptures of dancing girls and the Buddhist 'Yakshis' of Sarnath and Sanchi represent the finest and the most voluptuously sensuous renderings of female characteristics found amongst the living Indian women of the area, depicted and translated into the stone media. Gandhara sculpture on the other hand is devoid of both these elements—beauty, objective or subjective.

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Then why are an army of pen pushers claiming 'synthesis of Indo-Greek Art'? The Hindu sculptures or for that matter the figurines of Moenjo-Daro, which are 5000 years old, show us the kind of life still found in this region. The same can not be said of Gandhara. It betrays traces of a most unimaginative and a monotonous art which appears to have been thrust upon the artisans. And they in turn treated it as a chore full of drudgery and manual labour. Such as a potter making pottery for feeding his family. A certain Monarch's wish or perhaps a High

the son, an emperor. One could agree with Zeno that Dulla Bhatta was a hero but it is not easy to swallow the painter and the poet of the east's dubious leanings towards the imperialists and his praise of fascists. No Mian Sahib, this is not right thinking. This is a retrogressive path that kills your enlightened and progressive mission.

P.S. This Writer supports, whole heartedly the struggle for due recognition of Punjabi Language, and firmly believes, that they will succeed in their righteous cause and noble mission, but urges them to show judicious approach in selection of their model heroes. Lest they be dubbed as chauvinists and their movement becomes stillborn.

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