

Majallah-e-Tahqiq
Research Journal of
the Faculty of Oriental Learning

جلد تحقیق

کلیہ علوم شرقیہ

Vol: 39, Sr.No.111, 2018, pp 15 – 21 111 شمارہ 2018 جون - اپریل - جلد 39

Lahore, City of *Kuchas* and *Muhallas* of Artists A Rarity in the World

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Abstract:

City of Lahore was a trade centre since ages. Traders from all over the world used to come and sell their products, which proved to be bloodline for the local art and crafts. Many forms of artistic expressions flourished here. Artists and artisans were encouraged and patronised by the rulers but these times of creativity ended when the Mughals lost control of the region and the city was plundered and looted both by the locals and foreigners. That's why we see no substantial work produced during the 18th century, in and around Lahore that could be worth mentioning. First half of 19th century again saw a peaceful Lahore under the rule of a Sikh ruler Maharaja Ranjit Singh who had a good eye for arts. This period proved to be revival of local arts in true sense. Artists and artisans enjoyed immense wealth and respect during the peak days of Lahore. Many areas, were named after them or their professions, a way to pay tribute to their contribution to the city.

The history of arts and crafts in the city of Lahore is not persistent. It kept on touching its peak in one era and loosing its importance at the other. It is important to investigate the history to establish the fact that the artists and artisans of the city have proven their abilities in whatever art form they touched during every period and under every dynasty.

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has given the region an air of cooperation, fertility and prosperity. The upper Indus region in the northern areas of Pakistan being a crossroad of civilizations from India, China, Central Asia and Iran has enriched the culture of the land in multiple ways. The prehistoric petroglyphs, which occupy only the five percent of the total number of rock carvings discovered in the region give us a faint but encouraging idea that how this region was a crucible of influences coming from the adjacent communities that travelled through the silk route. The style of rock carvings, later on developed these influences giving us a detailed documentation of the Buddhist culture in the region, integrating Gandhara, India and China into a historical interface of ideas and culture. The speculations that can be made by looking at the petroglyphs are nothing more than a guess work. They cast light on a much quicker cultural transition from hunter-gatherer communities to pastoral settlements as compared to the rest of the world. This was probably due to the greater movement of diverse cultures across the region. The history remains shrouded in mystery but with a careful study and examination of the petroglyphs and inscriptions, many historical events of significance can be discerned, which have not found their place in historical accounts.

This actually meant that man moved from biological survival to the culture of mental well-being. This transition also had another consequence; the hunter-gatherer community was territorial but the pastoral community had a greater chance of mobility (Cribb 2004, 21). The pastoral community could move with its pastoral capital to new grazing grounds, which meant a greater possibility of interaction and cultural awareness. The interaction was much more necessary since the pastoral way of life demanded a totally new learning that was involved in animal husbandry. The settlements in the valleys of Indus regions were certainly a result of seeking greener pastures and a greater cohesion and corporation, resulting into ceremonies and festivals.

The freedom from serving the food consumption needs on day-to-day basis to a mode where in the form of livestock, the food was secured for immediate future, the pastoral communities found leisure time. The mind became freer from immediate survival agenda and it could now more concentrate on bigger questions of life. This freedom would have become the basis for developing macro-perspectives on life in which religion found its place. The advent of notational systems, symbolic language, would have helped the individuals to preserve and communicate ideas about the intangible world of the soul seeking a greater self-awareness. The anthropomorphic figures probably belong to this kind of spiritual seeking. Berghaus mentions the importance of caves in prehistoric time period, he mentions that as a 'cultural reservoir, the cave was a place where myths were generated and recorded... It was a place where initiated men returned to receive higher a degree of esoteric knowledge and expertise' (Berghaus 2004, 132). The rock surfaces spread along the Karakoram highway served for the hunter-gatherer communities and pastoral settlements as places much like caves, particularly for the pastoral communities, who had a major part of their lives spent in the open. They recorded on the rock surfaces whatever became significant in their lives and centered their ceremonies and religious activities around it.

Conclusion

Pakistan can be seen in a similar bond with the Indus river as Egypt has with Nile. The Indus river running across the country

The hands for the prehistoric man, must have been an expression of individual identity. This position becomes more plausible in the light of the fact that the emergence of language was also the emergence of a capability of abstraction and reflective thinking. Man became able to conceptualize his existence beyond sense experience and was able to develop a concept of self, a necessary pre-requisite for social relations and consequently collective culture (Megarry 1995, 115).

The depiction of wild animals in the petroglyphs of Indus region can probably related to another current in the history of prehistoric mindset. It was perhaps an attempt to control them. It has been speculated that the depictions of animals in the cave art of the world belonging to Paleolithic age was an attempt in practices of magic. It was thought that by making an image, man would be able to overcome their power (Kleiner 2013, 19). In case of representation of the Indus region, this seems far-fetched. Unlike, the European cave paintings, where we find a developed realistic rendering of animal form, the petroglyphs represent animals only in hunting scenes. Their controlling through image making must have demanded an imitation par excellence as observable in the cave of Lascaux, France (figure 16).

The depiction of animals in the Indus region is probably for instructional purposes; the images were used to teach the younger generation the art of hunting. It might also be possible that the act of hunting was thought as the noblest since it was an act that procured food and ensured survival. This position seems more appropriate since we do not find a focus on depicting the identities of hunters and the hunted per se but a greater focus is on representing the process. The hunting scenes are well preserved in the caves of Bhimbetka

The transition from a hunter-gatherer community to a pastoral one also had its influence on the cognitive and emotional development of man. This transition meant a change in consumption of food. The domestication of animals gave the chance to postpone consumption. For the hunter-gatherer community, the hunt served the need in an immediate way but in the pastoral way of life, securing a future regarding consumption of food became possible.

the wild animals with bow, arrow and sometimes stones. The sheep herds are not very frequent however, the sites containing them also depict images where groups of human beings are shown participating in leisure activities. Hauptman noted that 'thirty representations of male anthropomorphic figures with extended arms take a prominent position in the prehistoric engravings ...perhaps they portray demons, deities or giants that held an important place in the beliefs of prehistoric man'(Ardeleanu-Jansen et al. 1997, 36).

In terms of subject matter, we are given at least five principal themes; 1) a frequent and continuous presence of hand motif, 2) the hunting scenes, 3) herds of domesticated animals, 4) leisure activities, and 5) anthropomorphic figures. We may assume that the prehistoric period of this region shows a transition from hunter-gatherer community to a pastoral community, which later on seems to have developed religious inclinations. This transition occurred in the wake of influences coming from Central Asia, Iran and India in a period of spanning over four millennia. The transition can be justified through the influences of foreigners on local population but there is another perspective that can be taken into account.

In *Origins of the Human Mind*, Merlin Donald proposes that the human line of decent over two million years went through three major transitions, i.e. 1) freeing of hands that made the inventions of tools possible, 2) emergence of language, 3) invention of symbolic and notational systems. (Donald 1991)

Probably, the frequent presence of hand motif is reminiscent of the importance of hands that man realized in developing tools. The importance of hands can also be seen from another perspective. It can be an expression of a rudimentary form of self-awareness. This claim is supported by the fact that the hand impressions have been a universal theme in prehistoric art whether found in Asia, Africa, Australia, Europe or America (Grace 2013, 346). The motif is clearly visible in the cave at Perch-Marle in France (figure 13) and abundantly in the Cave of Hands in Argentina (figure 14) comparable to what we find in Ziarat II (figure 15).