

**The Gandhara is Mikri Ellayda  
(Greek Influence on Gandhara Art and Architecture)**

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The first Greek expedition to Indus Valley (now Pakistan) focused on surveying the Course of River Indus. The Geek came into contact with the people of this area for the first Time in the rein of the Achaemenian emperor Darius I (522-486 B.C) who sent Scylax of Caryanda to explore the entire river Indus. Scylax started his voyage from the city of Kaspptyros, and sailed down the River Indus and discovered the place where it emptied itself into the sea. The Greeks as traversed by Scylax, named this country, Indus. Subsequently, this name was applied to the whole of the South Asian Subcontinent. The second contact was more vigorous and left more durable effects. It was Alexander's military campaign in 326 BC, which temporarily brought the entire Indus Valley under Greek control. Though it was a short-lived phenomenon, but it opened the gates for subsequent campaigners to control Asia. After this Bactrian period Greek also control and ruled the Gandhara region with 39 kings and 03 queens. The Gandhara art is totally derived from the Greek arts and nobody can deny this fact. The Gandhara remained under the controlled of Greek empire for 186 years leaving behind Greek's impression on the Gandhara's art and architecture. There are two sects of Buddhism, one is Hinayana and Mahayana. The Hinayana did not encourage the Buddhist Sculptures while the Mahayana did. When the Mahayana sects opened eyes, the framework designed by the Greeks are already there, transferred through inheritance, e.g. toilet tray found here in my excavation reflects the Greek mythology. The influence of Geek is obvious on Buddha and Bodhisattva style and face, Mary Making scene, Bachallinan scene and Dragon etc. The Architectural influence of Greek is noticeable on Corinthian Pillars, Ionic Columns, and Judian Temple as seen in Taxila. Greek influences on coins are also clear, with sophisticated cravings on the Gandhara's coins.

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Pakistan is endowed with a rich historical past which is replete with cultural sites and monuments found all over the country. Its history goes back to the Paleolithic period. Here flourished the two internationally acclaimed civilizations, Indus Valley and Gandhara. Gandhara played an important role in preaching the Buddhist religion. Thus, Gandhara is considered the second holy place for Buddhism (Dar, 1984).

The earliest reference to Gandhara is found in the Bisutun inscription of Emperor Darius dating to 516 BC in the inscription, where Gandhara is mentioned as a province of the Persian Empire, and its status as a province continued until Alexander invasion 327 BC (Ingholt, 1957).

The Greek influence in Gandhara is one of the numerous foreign influences, which affected this society during a specific period. Beginning of its interaction goes back to the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC when Greek Naval master Skylax of Caryanda sailed down the River Indus with the intention to stay at an unidentified station known as Kaspapyros in Gandhara (Sastri, 1988).

With the preaching of Buddhism, Gandhara dispersed into various directions. The Gandhara first absorbed the foreign elements considering the ethnic amalgamation of culture and religion. The reappraisals and reformation of the external impacts made the space, pushed the boundaries and took the shape of geographical contacts, which made the art more rich and attractive. All this added cultural, religious and linguistically richness to the area – this also became the reason for others to participate and make more influence. (Kosambi, 1956).

There has never been any doubt that the art of Gandhara is replete with western elements. But, the question of presence of western communities in ancient Gandhara and the nature and the extent of their influence on the local art has always proved to be complex and controversial ever since its discovery more than 150 years back (Marshall, 1973). In the first instance, it has been asked whether this influence is direct or indirect. Besides, was this?

The influence on Gandhara art is not easy to be described but I will try because of excavation and practical work I have done for the last twenty eight years. I have analyzed; this is the combination of different arts – indigenous, Roman, Greek, Byzantine or Hellenic. But the root of this art and Architecture is Greek. It has different opinion of the researchers' (Marshall, Burgess, Schlumberger & Foucher described that Gandhara art is derived from Greek). Smith, Wheeler, Spooner, Rowland and Buchthal expressed this art as Roman. Dr. Dani viewed the art as indigenous. Majorly Gandhara Art and Architecture can be divided in following two categories.

- Direct Impact – it is the influence of local, artistical ability on Gandharians.
- Indirect Impact – this is the influence of foreign elements on Gandhara civilization.

### **Direct Impact**

People travel because of trade, migration, friendship and invasions which help to exchange art. If we look back to the chronological point of view, then we will know that discoveries made at Indus Civilization and Crete was similar. Their ornamentation beads show similarity which means that the relation of the two areas was there even before the existence of Gandhara civilization. The discoveries also reflect that this area already had the influence of other societies.

At the time of Alexander, who opened doors to other areas, artists and the experts of different fields found the opportunity to express themselves, coins, art, architecture and language. In that era, the Greek artists visited other areas and started their work – they introduced the same style there, which resulted in the direct impact of Greek culture.

We have to keep in mind that Greek art had the influence of other areas when it came to Gandhara. Before they came to Gandhara, the existence of Greek Civilization was dominant and the artists of different areas were contributing (Herald, 1957). Those artists who worked in Greece were not from Greece only but they came from all the area, occupied by Greece. At that time, they brought art from all those areas occupied by Greece including Gandhara – this is the reason we see the influence of other areas in Gandhara civilization.

Some researchers say this has Roman influence. Yes I do agree, but we should not forget this is the continuation of Hellenistic influence. Another important fact which has to be considered, all the excavations, which were conducted so far, did not go to the original level of the Greek time. Dr. Lolita Nehrou mentioned in his book "Origins of Gandharan Style" that the excavation level has not reached to the proper place of Greek. I am looking forward to conduct an excavation at Taxila which will lead us to it.

#### **Indirect Impact (Middle age influence)**

At the time when Greek art spread to different areas – Egypt, Persia and after some time when it came to Gandhara and brought the impact of other art and architectures, it did not remain pure Greek art but it had the influence of all those areas it had come through. This was the indirect impact on Gandhara but its origin was Greek.

#### **Provincial Hellenism**

Most of the researchers pointed the impact of Greek art was abolished on about 3<sup>rd</sup> Century AD but I have different opinion because the art can never die or cannot be ended (Basham, 1963). The influence of art and architecture can change the shape but still it will live. The new name of late age Hellenism is Provincial Hellenism which I have pointed out in my studies of Gandharan sculptures.

The nature and extent of Greek influence on Gandhara art depends on the long distance between the two regions as well as on the cultural and geographical barriers that exist between India and Gandhara. Being at the extreme northwestern edge of India and at the furthest eastern point of the range of western influence, Gandhara art is usually misunderstood by the art writers of both areas. Particularly for Greeks, Gandhara art is too far away to fall within the permeation of Hellenistic civilization, whereas for Indian writers, it is totally non-Indian (Ahmad, 2016). Hence both disowned it. But for those who study Gandhara art in detail, note for certain that what makes Gandhara art distinct and different from the main course of Indian art is the predominance of Hellenistic elements in its town planning, certain architectural elements, several decorative motifs, and some aspects of sculptures such as statues of Athena, Tyche, Eros and Aphrodite, panels of garland bearers, Apollo, Poseidon, Zeus, Helios etc. appearing on the coins.

#### **Variance in Gandhara**

The controversy raged between two opposing camps as to whether the western influence in Gandhara art is Greek or Roman, whether the standing helmeted female figure in Lahore museum is Athena or Minerva, whether Gandhara Buddha borrowed his robe from Greek CHLAMYDAS or Roman TOGA, whether bust on a coin of Scythian emperor is that of Roman Emperor Augustus or somebody else, whether small boys frolicking among foliage in Gandharan relics are Roman Amorinis or Greek Erotes, or whether Buddha figures shown seated among Corinthian capitals have been borrowed from Greek or figured Roman capitals – there might be many other examples. On the other hand Indian studies tried to prove Gandhara art only as a second rate creation with no place in the history of native art. There are two solitary voices Dr. Dani tried to study Gandhara art as an outcome of local impulses and compulsions, architecture, numismatics, jewelry, ceramics etc.

These arguments almost have no value but the issue is still open to debate. Discoveries at Ai Khanum in north Afghanistan and Takht-i-Sangeen in southern Tajikistan have helped turn the Bactrian Hellenistic Mirage into a reality of Greek presence in the area of Bactria and Central Asia.

Problem regarding the origin of Gandhara art can be solved only if we can discover and excavate pure Greek or semi Greek cities or towns of this period and of the period of Greek rule in this region in particular.

### **Pioneer Art at Gandhara**

In many sites of Gandhara, small and round shaped dishes have been discovered which were usually called *Toilet Trays* – these dishes vary in shape and size from 9 to 17.5 cm in diameter and the soft stone is used is steatite, Phyllite, schist. The obverse side of these trays generally consists of concave surface and raised borders whereas bottom sides are usually curved – only in some cases the back is flat. Most of the concave surface of Toilet Tray is left plan and the rest of the space is either plan or decorated with incised geometric and floral designs. Scallop shell and lotus petals form the usual background of the motifs on the obverse side with sunrays in the exergue (Davids, 1890). Though in numerous cases backside receives some incised floral or geometrical motifs in majority or left blank. The main motif on the obverse consists of two, three or more human figures grouped in thematic arrangements of human and animal or animal and composite figures alone.

Chronologically, the Greek Toilet Trays in Gandhara were found at different places but the trays found at Taxila that depicts the date of 2<sup>nd</sup> BC, remained with no stop till 1<sup>st</sup> Century AD. The change in cultural patterns of the Greek city in Kushan period can be observed clearly.

The majority of the Toilet Trays were made with the schist stone which clearly indicate that its origin is local “Gandharan” but the question is where the basic idea came and the design came from? It is for sure that it came from “Greece”.

From the gold coins, toilet tray, pottery and other architecture it is clearly indicated that the influence of Greek art was dominant at that time. However, the gods and goddess found at both Gandhara and Greece have many differences. The Greek coins at Gandhara were found there even before the invasion of the Alexander the Great. The thirty-two Athenians Drachmas (coins of 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Century B.C) were excavated in Afghanistan and are kept in Kabul Museum. This shows that the trade of Gandhara with the Greek people was in progress.

We have remarkable collection of plaster copies of Hellenistic circular plates found at Bagram. But it is strange that majority of the scenes occurring on circular plaques from Bagram never appeared on Gandhara trays. But nevertheless, these few examples from Bactria and Kabul Valley are sufficient indication that some proto-type of our trays did exist in Bactria during the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC executed on the spot or as exports from Seleucid West. The Gandhara Trays have undoubted Hellenistic origin – it can be made more clear with the discoveries and comparison of the common art used by the artist.

### **Way of Life**

Every religious and cultural entry of any kind in Gandhara, area of multiple ethnic groups, adopted and made changes to the original practices which were introduced by ancient Greece. These practices still continue in amended form which is accepted traditionally by the locals.

- Have seashell (Oyster) to the child ankle to Cure– this will protect him from injury
- Put oil onto grave, religious personalities.
- Pour gold dipped water on new thing/animal coming home
- Crow sitting on your home roof – guests are coming

- Have hiccups – someone is missing you
- Fire burning with sound, heavy fire – someone is backbiting
- Slipper or shoes come on top of each other – you will travel
- Days are categorized – good and bad
- If you see black snake in dream – this is the expectation of good thing.
- Animal horn on the top of the roof corner – this is the protection of *Nazar*.
- In the Gouger community if someone elder died they took the new leader to the grave of the person and put the turban on the head of new one.

### Discussion and Confirmation of Greek Influence on Gandhara

The Greek frame of work was available before the existence of Gandhara and this is the reason the impact of Greek art is visible on the Art, Architecture, Culture, Religion, Language and most importantly on the way of life of the individuals of Gandhara, regardless of any occupation or group.

1. The Greek culture existed before Hinyana in the region of Gandhara but the art was not encouraged because it was the time of symbolic representation of Buddhism. Also the sculptures were not developed due to the belief of the followers of Buddhist religion.
2. The beginning of Mahayana Buddhism started with the decision of five hundred monks (Buddhist Council) to preserve the Buddha life stories into stones. It was the time of 1 Century AD (Ca) the sculpture art started under the Greek artistic influence.
3. The face of Buddha derived from god Bava Davas – the origin of god was Greek, this god was copied by Romans, it should stand clear that this god was Greek.
4. The occupation of Greek started from 2<sup>nd</sup> and 1<sup>st</sup> BC – 180 years of domination – had three queens and thirty-nine kings who introduced Greek art to the area and it was enough time to spread the art and architecture and motivate focus to the new direction.
5. With the passage of time, new entries and artististical amendments occurred to the Greek art. It can be said that the art was made more sophisticated but the Greek roots still remained.
  - a. At the excavation of Marchaki Dheri, Charsadda (1994) we discovered female heads which were typically Hellenistic – as compare to heads displayed at Peshawar Museum, Hellenistic period.
  - b. We found Appolodotus coins (copper) at Marchaki Deri, Charsadda which were spread in different places – it means these coins were in use at the time of Kushan.
  - c. The Greek coins found at the time of Kushan had Greek language which is understood the language of Greek was operational.
  - d. The Greek language and coins were outfitted and it is definite that the influence of Greek on Gandhara is not secondary.
  - e. The first Buddha image on Kanishka gold coins were introduced and had Buddha name in Greek language.
  - f. We found the late Kushan coins at Gangudher which showed Greek letters (PAK) – it is for sure that the Greek language still existed.
  - g. The sculptures of 5<sup>th</sup> Century AD were found at Gangudher which showed the amended Hellenistic form of Provincial Hellenism.

The art Greek – Archaic, Classic and Hellenistic – is present at Gandhara. The **Archaic** Greek art can be observed in the eye of lady deer (female sculpture), found at Gangudher. The sculptures of Buddhista of Gandhara particularly the hair style and face; were probably derived from Apollo, **Classic** art. The Apollo head was found at Greece scyprus dated 450BC. The exemplary archaic and

classic Greek art is found at Gangudher which is in Triangular shape below the Carnes of the Stupa. The same triangular shape was found in Accropoloi architecture which is continued in Gandhara sculptures.

The coin of Aghatuklis of 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC showed the six arch designs – it can be believed that the Stupa model is derived from that coin. The influence of Greek **Hellenistic** art can be observed in every aspect of art – Costumes, Hairstyle, Jewelry, Faces etc. The inscriptions of Ashka at Mansehra and Shabaz Ghari in thirteenth edict mentioned the Greek king Antiyoka (Antiochos) – these indicate the relationship of Gandhara with Greek.

### Conclusion

The discussion of Greek influence on Gandhara cannot be ended and the room for debate will always be there but the prominent features of the argued can be summarized in the following few lines.

- First Greek Art started at Afghanistan – a human headed pillar was found there which means the Greek art landed for the first time in Afghanistan.
- Another figure Aphrodite and toilet tray found in Afghanistan, that was the pioneer art observed.  
King Menander accepted and patronized Buddhism – it means the Greek kings had interest in the religion of Buddha. The questions of King Milinda, trans. by T.W Rhys Davids, Part I, Oxford, 1890, Part II 1894. See also O. Boppearachchi.
- The toilet tray found at Gandhara indicated the development of Greek influence.
- Later on Greek art and architecture grew and passed on the inheritance to the artists which is still in progress in the local community.

The above discussion regarding the Greek influence (Archaic, Classic and Hellenistic) on Gandharan Coins, Sculptures, Architecture, Inscriptions, Toilet Tray, Jewelry, Religious Activities, Medical Treatments, Diagnostics and every aspect of life had been very deep. Although, the flash of impact of other areas can be experimented but the roots will always remain Greek.

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