

VISUAL ARTS IN BALOCHISTAN—EVOLUTION & DEVELOPMENT ART & ARCHITECTURE

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ABSTRACT:

Balochistan is the region that played the role of a cradle for ancient civilizations and one among the most eminent civilizations of South Asia Mehrgarh had also flourished in this particular region. However, it remained far behind in respect of education in fine arts as compared to the other regions of the sub-continent. The purpose of this study is to bring forward the evolution of visual arts through a descriptive method using the secondary data, and also to unveil the developments occurred in this field before the formal introduction of fine arts and after its commencement at different academic and professional levels.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:

This land has the credit of shaping many civilized settlements including the sites of Naal, Kech, K.G.M. and many more flourished between the 3rd and 4th millennium B.C. while the significance of the role of region has been acknowledged by the world authorities who agree on formation of the network of ancient Harrapa civilization the traces of which are found in Sindh and Punjab provinces. (UNESCO: 2000)

Among these sites 'Kulli' (ruins) of these reflect a transitional change from village to urban life entering into the 3rd millennium B.C. followed by another significant and mature site of Harrapa civilization called as Nausharo and Mehrgarh flourished near the ancient city of Dhadhar in Balochistan during the last phase of 3rd millennium B.C.

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Since the partition of the Sub-continent in 1947, there were no regular magazines for almost 52 years focusing on art, heritage and culture. This didn't mean that this was a society devoid of art. Obviously there had been no dearth of artists, poets and musicians as they were found working and evolving through generations and centuries. (Magsi: 2008)

ART & ARCHITECTURE IN BALOCHISTAN:

The proper development of art and architecture in Balochistan is a matter of the recent years and the reasons behind these late occurrences are multiple. Of these, the ones worth mentioning are the no proper education specifically in visual art, tribal ego and religious taboos, nomadic life, poor socio-economic conditions and lack of exposure to the local people who also remained unexposed to those belonging to the other areas. Another significant factor behind the early days' non-existent art and later the slow-paced developments is believed the scattered Baloch settlements despite existence in Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan. However, during the British Rule, artists among the British administrative and army officers produced colored lithographs, sketches and paintings since their arrival in this region. (Mikoff: 2008)

There were a few artists including the foreigners and some locals who perhaps followed the guidance of that time foreigner artists becoming local pioneers of arts and this was the era between second quarters of the 20th century could be described as the commencement of history of formal visual arts in Balochistan. One among the local artists Syed Aziz Jan (1880-1960) Pishin (a town 30 kilometers away from Quetta) had been known as sculptor, painter and draftsman also had the art of stuffing animals. He also made 30 to 40 feet height effigies of DOSSEHRO (Rawan of Lanka) on the occasion of famous festival of Hindu community called Ram Leela. Materials used in these effigies were paper-mash, bamboos, wooden planks and other burnable material filled with explosive. Aziz Jan also sculpted figurative sculpture of Bagwan (God of Hindus) admired by Hindu community but unfortunately most of his work has been perished only elders of that time are left to talk about his creations. His other works included figurine in clay modeling representing the common life scenes like people offering prayers and watching cock fighting. He also produced figurine of cultural set up, portrayal of traditional cooking style with pottery, players while playing and artisans at work. (Baloch: 2008)

His contemporary was Zainuddin, who used to follow a very popular style of painting on glass. He used to paint in reverse and when seen from the other face, it gave true picture of the subject. He was also known as a good

artist in some other cities of Pakistan even after partition. His painted glass on fruit-trays, tea trays and decoration pieces had seen in restaurant and hotels but now these have almost vanished. He was inspired by Abdul Rehman in the same technique who remained active in Quetta even in the decades of forty and fifty. Deepak, another artist and contemporary to Zainuddin was also active during pre-partition period who might leave Quetta as most of Hindus, who constituted about 30 percent of the total population, migrated to India.

In the later years a new comer Yaqub entered into the arts field from Bombay who used to paint portraits of the heroes and renowned personalities like Kamal Ataturk of Turkey, Anwar Pasha of Syria, King Amanullah of Afghanistan and used to paint very rarely landscapes. Yaqub was quite skillful in lettering and consequently, he painted calligraphy and verses of Iqbal. Another artist S.S. Hyder arrived Quetta to experience his art in Quetta all the way from Ludhiana (East Punjab) in 1940, but Quetta was still suffering the trauma of earthquake of 1935, thus, seeing little chances here he left for Peshawar the same year where he enthusiastically worked for art promotion and put life into the decaying art atmosphere of Peshawar. This had his name little known in the history of art in Balochistan and carries lot of significance in 1977 he spent in Quetta and breathed his last the same year and laid to rest in Quetta.

Arif Durrani (1935-1993), though quite junior to all of the above artists is still another acknowledged commercial artist of Quetta. He illustrated Balochistan's heroic scenes in oils. In a very conventional illustrative realism he also worked a lot for military purpose. His cousin Yousaf Durrani is another commercial artist and followed the style of Arif. Thus, artists like S. Aziz Jan, Zainuddin, A. Rehman and Yaqub, though not properly educated in any art institute, laid down the foundation of the history of art in Balochistan and indeed called as the pioneer artists.

In 70's art in Balochistan mostly remained in the hands of sign-board painters one among them no doubt one is Zia Sidiqqi. Besides, Muhammad Riaz Ahmed (died in late eighties). Muhammad Shafi of Peshawar trained by M. Riaz also played enormous part to mould the history of Balochistan's art in fifties. Shafi's work was inspired too much with Lala Aziz Jan and Saeed Akhtar of Gujranwala in the late fifties when both decided to become artists. In 1958, Saeed Akhtar got admission in Mayo School of Arts Lahore and Lala Aziz in Sindh University, Hyderabad in 1960 and both obtained their diplomas in 1962. Saeed Akhtar got appointment as Art Teacher in Mayo School of Arts (National College of Arts) in 1962 where he served till his retirement in 1998 and was given the title of fellowship of Associate

Professor. Lala Aziz returned Quetta and served a long career in B.M.C and Civil hospital as illustrator and artist. Another name during the same era was of Lal Muhammad who excelled in the same field without any proper education from any institution but worked with M. Shafi. He had been in BMC till 2000 as illustrator of anatomical charts. Similarly, Shukr Ullah of Mekran is an illustrative realism in watercolor.

DEVELOPMENT OF VISUAL ARTS:

The second phase which could be described the commencement of era of the development of visual arts begins with the arrival of academically qualified artists, establishment of councils for arts promotion and the beginning of fine arts on institutional level.

The academic phase in arts began with Pir Muhammad Tareen of Harnai who got admission in NCA Lahore in 1969 and obtained NDA in 1973 becoming among the initial qualified youth of Balochistan in fine arts. During that period Pakistan Arts Council (presently Idara-e-Saqafat Balochistan) was established in Quetta on May 12, 1972 with Mir Gul Khan Naseer as the first Chairman and Mr. Lal Bakhsh Rind as its first Resident Director. In 1975, Pakistan Television started its transmissions from Quetta establishing a Center in the Cantonment area where Tareen got the job of Set Designer. Late Ata Shad, a prominent Balochi poet who was the then Executive Director advised him to take classes of fine arts in the Pakistan Arts Council which he honored. Thus, the first center for academic art education had opened where Jamal Shah, Kaleem Khan and Akram Dost had used to attend fine arts classes.

In 1978, Shakir Ali held a solo show at Pakistan Arts Council and this was an inspiration and a point of taking decision for young boys to continue struggling in fine arts. Furthermore, Khalid Mengal of Nushki who was a student of NCA motivated Akram Dost and Kaleem Khan to opt fine arts as their future academic and professional career. Consequently, the same year all of them got admission in NCA. Jamal Shah opted sculpture, Kaleem Khan and Akram Dost felt them comfortable in painting. Thus Pakistan Arts Council was the base for these artists to breakthrough their future in arts. In 1984, all the three fresh graduates returned their hometown. The then Vice-Chancellor of the University of Balochistan, Quetta, Agha Akbar Shah and Agha Aman Shah, the then Home Secretary and an art lover motivated these young graduates towards formal education in fine arts and resultantly the Department of Fine Arts was created at the University launching a 2-year certificate course. Jamal Shah, Akram Dost and Kaleem Khan including Faryal Gohar (spouse of Jamal Shah) an anthropologist and qualified from

Canada, became lecturers. The year 1984 is described a milestone in the field of fine arts as this subject became an undergraduate course of an institution of Balochistan that had earlier remained in the hands of commercial artists and sign-board painters.

In 1986, when Jam Muhammad Yousaf was the Chief Minister of Balochistan, nomenclature of Pakistan Arts Council was changed as Balochistan Arts Council. The same year Jamal Shah accompanied by Faryal left for Slade School London and returned in 1988 with Master's in Graphic Arts but never returned to Balochistan University and preferred to work as TV artist, drama director, music director and story writer.

In late eighties, Department of Fine Arts made another breakthrough introducing Bachelors of Fine Arts four-year professional degree course equivalent to Master's and since then hundreds of students have passed out from this Department paving their way in different fields.

In 1990, a foreign qualified artist from Japan and France, Abid Hussain Qureshi joined University of Balochistan as lecturer of Fine Arts who has contribution on the research in history of arts. Jamal Shah adopted contemporary trends, Abid's style covers surrealism with sub-conscious symbolism, Kaleem Khan's realism and Akram Dost's work reflects socio-political realism in combination of indigenous art of Balochistan to the modernism. Jamal Shah left Balochistan, Abid Qureshi was retired while Akram Dost and Kaleem Khan are still engaged with University of Balochistan.

In 1995, Jamil Baloch a young chap of Nushki and the younger brother of Akram Dost excelled in Fine Arts by obtaining NCA diploma with distinction. NCA on his excellent academic and professional performance offered him teaching and since then he is rendering services in the National College of Arts Lahore, one of the prestigious fine arts institutions of Pakistan. He is pride for Balochistan for being the single faculty member from this province in NCA. He has the specialty in sculptures.

Another teacher Muhammad Ayub of Quetta, who obtained Master's Degree in Fine Arts from University of The Punjab, Lahore in 1996 with first division and silver medal. His area covers oil painting and has joined University of Balochistan.

Liquat Ali—Quetta obtained his NCA Diploma in 1989 and his style is obstruction. Nusrat Raza Mangi of Larkana (Sindh) did his NCA Diploma in 1994. With style in distortion, Mangi joined University of Balochistan and later left and now serving Sindh University Jamshoro. Nadir Ali Jamali also of Larkana did his graduation from NCA in 1996. His style is obstruction. He also served University of Balochistan till April 2009 following his

appointment as Lecturer in Sindh University Jamshoro. Both Mangi and Nadir have specialization in sculpture. Tariq Kakar of Quetta obtained his education from Ukraine, Russia and is working a free-lance artist. He encompasses the range of conventional realism and stylization. He also joined University of Balochistan for a year and then quit the job.

Fazil Hussain Mousavi and Ramzan Shad of Quetta did their DFA from UoB are nowadays art teachers, the former in Iqra Army Public School Quetta and the latter Beacon House Karachi. Both are painting realistic landscape mostly in water color and occasionally in oils. Abdul Hameed Baloch of Khuzdar is the first one to obtain 4-year degree in Bachelor of Fine Arts from UoB in 1995 and is nowadays Arts Instructor in Balochistan Arts Council Quetta. Similarly, Mazhar Hameed who is devoted to landscape in realism, Ishaq Lehri and Shaukat Hussain, both sculptors and derive inspiration from primitive art. This list does not end at this point as there are many more who have professionally entered in the field of Fine Arts making this area rich in arts. Students graduated from Fine Arts Department feel comfortable in finding ways and means for their further studies and specialization in the known institutions of arts all over the country particularly in the National College of Arts Lahore where they are digested in a respectable manner due to their excellence in different areas of Fine Arts.

Another credit of the Fine Arts Department worth pointing out here is a female graduate Parveen Akhtar who opted a unique field and dedicated her art for stuffing animals. She has followed the art and style of her late father who had used to stuff animals and market these all over Pakistan.

The beginning of 21st century experienced opening of another University in the women sector, the first in Balochistan named as Sardar Bahadur Khan Women University in Quetta on March 16, 2004 where besides other teaching departments, the Fine Arts Department was also established certainly with the faculty qualified from University of Balochistan, Quetta. A number of students were enrolled and qualified obtaining the Bachelor of Fine Arts Degree from this University specifically further paving way for the women folk to enter into the arts profession boosting the arts promotion in Balochistan.

ARTS PROMOTION ORGANIZATIONS:

Besides the arrival of academically qualified artists and the establishment of Fine Arts Department in the University of Balochistan, a number of organizations and cultural guild also played pivotal role in promotion of arts and artists in the Province.

Prominent among these organizations/bodies include Pakistan Arts Council Balochistan chapter which was established in May 1972 with Mir Gul Khan Naseer as its first Chairman and Mr. Lal Bakhsh Rind as the first Resident Director. The establishment of this Council took place with the efforts of renowned Balochi poet Ata Shad who was also an art lover and had an eminent place in the cultural history of Balochistan who gave the concept to have a branch of the Council in the provincial metropolis so as to boost arts activities. Among others, the initial instructors of the Council also included Ms. Shehr Banó and Farhan Gul who were gold medalists from University of The Punjab. Ms. Zareen Ashraf who belonged to Quetta and had also completed her Master's in Fine Arts from University of The Punjab was among those who later joined the Council. Mr. Ghalib Baqir, the son of renowned Urdu scholar Prof. Mujtaba Hussain, also rendered his expertise as instructor. He had qualified from Karachi. Presently, Mr. Abdullah Baloch is the Resident Director of Balochistan Arts Council.

Pakistan Arts Council Balochistan chapter was renamed as Balochistan Arts Council (Idara-e-Saqafat Balochistan) in July 1987 and since then besides arranging workshops, trainings, displays, seminars, exhibitions, competitions etc. also actively engaged in classes for the young to be artists resulted in promotion of arts in Balochistan.

The main objectives behind the establishment of Balochistan Arts Council include collecting folk material and organizing scattered talent; offering patronage and preservation of Art; projecting the distinct cultural image of region by arranging exhibitions, puppet shows, folk performances of music and dance, exhibition of folk material such as costumes, embroidery and so on and spotlight various others cultural training and characteristics of the people of the region and training of the people of Balochistan depicting its folk art so that they may be able to participate in the cultural activities and represent Pakistan with particular reference to Balochistan abroad effectively.

Another important organ of arts and crafts promotion in Balochistan worth mentioning is the Small Industries functioning under the Industries Department, Government of Balochistan is also actively engaged in promoting the artisans. Different varieties crafts are designed and produced in the Small Industries under the supervision and guidance of professionally qualified artists of Balochistan. This organization not only patronizes training centers in different parts of province mainly covering Quetta, Kalat, Mastung, Pishin, Nushki, Kharan, Khuzdar, Lasbela, Sibi, Loralai, Zhob, Chaman and other major cities of the Province having their unique products but also arranges marketing of these products on local, regional, national and

international levels. These centers provide training in different trades including carpet weaving, rugs, leather work, embroidery, traditional and cultural dresses, shawls, Balochi caps, marble and wood works. (Wafa: 2008)

Small Industries has a main display center "Chiltan Shop" in the center of city while its display centers are also located in different training centers of the above cities attracting not only the local and national art lovers but the tourists too.

Another important forum for promotion of arts in Balochistan is the historical, traditional and cultural Sibi Festival being held in an enthusiastic manner every year since the era of Mir Chakar Khan Rind and also continued by the British regime. Sibi, besides having historical importance, is the region having significance due to the existent ruins of Mehrgarh which is an internationally recognized archaeological site in Balochistan. The figurine, pottery, jewellery, animal sculptures, kitchen utensils with traditional motifs and many other objects excavated from the ruins of Mehrgarh had remained the center of attraction not only for the archaeologists but also the artists and artisans have made their replicas in different media time and again. Thus Sibi Festival provides a unique platform for the artists to display their productions also resulting promotion of historical, traditional and cultural arts of Balochistan as these products receive attention by the visitors not only from all the four provinces of Pakistan but also of neighbouring countries.

CONCLUSION:

The folk art of Balochistan is unique in entire world but it is still in the process of evolutionary growth and made tremendous progress by passing through stages. The pottery formation, embroidered dresses, leatherwork, metalwork; the art of rugs and weaving, stonework and jewelry are the key features of folk arts of Balochistan. "The archaeological sites of Mehrgarh present the marvelous and amazing example of folk art in Balochistan. The folk art can be depicted either in the form of sculpture, paintings, weaving, textile formation, knitting and pottery formation." (Haq: 1994) Balochistan is a treasure house of exquisite handicrafts made up by the people who grew up to weave, to pot, to work metal, wood and stone, to decorate and to build objects of various sizes and varieties. Balochistan pottery is a living history, a traditional craft that becomes an art with its origin from different parts of the province. Its traditional jars and jugs from study terra-cotta to paper made ceramics, timid colors of mustard yellow, deep green mud and sky blue hand-woven carpets, brass items, wood-carved, embroidered "kurtas" (shirts) and "kaush" (shoes) and countless objects of art are found. (Magsi: 2008)

The Charm of Folk Art, Costume, Toys, Masks and Primitive Paintings” by Movie Harmon in Encyclopedia Britannica, it has been stated that the Folk Art is predominantly functional or utilitarian visual art created by hand for use by the makers or a small circumscribed group and containing an element of retention—the prolonged survival of tradition. Folk art is the creative expression of the human struggle towards civilization within a particular environment through the production of useful but aesthetic buildings and objects.

In the broader sense, folk art refers to the art of the people, as distinguished from the elite or professional product that constitutes the mainstream of art of highly developed societies. The term in this comprehensive context combines some quite disparate categories of art. Historically, the term folk and popular has been used interchangeably in the art field.

The element of retention is considered fundamental in folk art as it is in folklore. In an isolated situation, the sophisticated ideas that penetrate are generally belated and simplified, and there is a natural trend towards conservatism.

The history of Folk Art is as old as human life. Balochistan was cradle of civilization about 9000 years ago. The important Neolithic excavated site at “Mehrgarh” is the oldest civilization in the sub-continent. There are numerous archeological sites date back to antiquity, hosting valuable treasure and cultural heritage of Balochistan. The various types of ornaments, clay, pottery, weapons, and figurine were found from these archeological sites. “Pieces of painted pottery and ornaments and figurines representing both human being and animals have also been discovered from this site.” (Dawn 2000)

The old designs of rugs, carpets and textiles existed in Balochistan. In the old times, indigo was used to dye the textiles. The hand woven carpets were popularly weaved by various artisans.

Folk art in Balochistan has made tremendous progress mainly with the element of modification coping with the changing era. The folk art produced in Balochistan got promotion by display and presentation on different occasions in many parts of the country including horse and cattle show, industrial exhibitions, national pavilion (Lok Virsa), Pakistan National Council of Arts, national parades, festivals etc. in Islamabad, Rawalpindi, Lahore, Karachi and other big cities of Pakistan.

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