

P R E F A C E

India has attracted foreigners throughout the ages of her history. They came to India, as traders or travellers and as pilgrims or political leaders. The Śakas/Scythians also entered into Indian soil and played a significant part not only in the chessboard of her politics, but also made their mark in the sphere of culture in such a magnitude that across the inaccessible barriers of centuries it still retains its firm hold in our minds. Attempts have been made by scholars to study critically some of these aspects like administration, numismatics, etc. However, the subject of the study of the Śaka/Scythian elements in early Indian art does not seem to have attracted sufficient attention. Since I was a post-graduate student (1987-1989) specializing in "Fine Arts" in the Department of Ancient Indian History and Culture of the University of Calcutta, I was interested in this subject, and have been working on it and a comprehensive study of the subject is humbly attempted in the present work.

The study and research of the history of Indian art and foreign influence on it, being a subject of absorbing interest, started receiving special attention of scholars and art historians from about the beginning

of the nineteenth century. Such study in history of art and archaeology is, however, rather handicapped, since the same is primarily based on extensive factual knowledge of the material available in published records including the catalogues or reports on the collection of different museums or research papers contributed by scholars. It is only through a study of these sources, that we can hope to gradually fill in the gaps of our knowledge of the course of development which a particular branch of art pursued. Unfortunately, however, the published records (on the antiquities of the earlier period having association with foreign influence) collected from different areas (India and outside) are not much available in Indian libraries. Therefore, a researcher always feels unhappy with a topic related to foreign influence on Indian art, especially of early times. Moreover, owing to the very nature of the subject, we have been compelled to be mostly dependant throughout upon the works of others, as stated above, since visit to the archaeological sites from where the materials were found and the foreign museums in which the artifacts are housed, has seldom been possible. Our debt to these archaeologists and art historians will be apparent to every reader. Many of the interpretations given are based on the works of the previous writers; in some cases, however, we have ventured to draw attention to the shortcomings in reports or in interpretations and also offer our humble explanations. As for example, we may refer to our discussion on page

106 to show how art historians have attempted to relate the origin of the Scythian art to the period of Scythian campaigns in Asia Minor, and how we have traced examples of the pre-Scythian and Scythian art found from Siberia which are earlier than those from Ziwiye (belonging to the seventh century B.C.) and are also decorated with animal style.

The classical authors refer to the Sakas as Scythians, but not all Scythians were Sakas. The Sakai or the Sakas of the classical sources have been universally identified with the people called by the name Saka (also spelt as Śaka) in Indian sources. It is apparent, therefore, that the Scythians were not wholly identical with the Śakas of the Indian sources. The Persian inscriptions use the term *Šakā*. Chapter I of our work delineates the scope, sources and method of study. The geographical location of Scythia and the connotations of Scythia and Śaka territories are described in Chapter II. The advent of the Sakas and the Śaka-Pahlavas and their rule in the Indian subcontinent are discussed in Chapter III. An elaborate description of Śaka/Scythian art of the Western and Eastern sections, also, drawing attention to the differences between them, is given in Chapter IV of the present study with an intention to help determining the essential elements of the Śaka/Scythian art, and then examining in the subsequent chapters (V and VI), how much they are reflected in early Indian art. The description in the three Chapters

(IV, V and VI) has been attempted to be aided with illustrations (Plates 1 to 235). The Plates are to be found in Volume II of our work. Besides a 'Select Bibliography', we have included two maps showing the Scythian/Saka/Śaka sites.

Regarding the System of Transliteration, diacritical markings have been used to a minimum. I have assumed that modern names of towns and cities in Central Asia and the Indian subcontinent are in sufficiently current usage and do not, therefore, require any diacritical definition. In order to avoid any confusion, we point out in this connection that the diacritical markings for the term *Saka/Śaka* have been used only when it is mentioned in the Indian context.

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In course of my research I have used different libraries and museums. Here, special mention may be made of the National Library, Kolkata, Indian Museum, Kolkata, Centre for Archaeological Studies and Training, Kolkata, the library of the Department of Ancient Indian History and Culture, University of Calcutta, and the library of the Government Sanskrit College, Kolkata. I have also used the libraries of the Alliance Française, Kolkata, and Gorky Sadan, Kolkata, etc.

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