

The Portrayal of Women in Gandhara Art

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ABSTRACT

The ancient Gandhara region has a diversified history. Gandhara region had experienced a noteworthy status at all times. The region has a very strong cultural and historical background since earliest times, which reposes it with the regions of great regard. Its significance was heightened with the artistic activities which were employed to serve the Buddhist faith since first century BCE to sixth century CE, known to the world by the name of “Gandhara art”. It was intended to spread the Buddhist faith through the depiction of Buddha and his life story. Besides, men and women were portrayed with great stylistic diversity in Gandhara Art. The representation of females in Gandhara art is far sophisticated as compared to the other arts of India, which obviously reflect their high and respected position in society. They were mostly depicted with their bodies covered with elegant dresses. The status of women can be studied by reviewing how women were portrayed in art. Ordinary women as well as goddesses and few mythological beings were portrayed in Gandhara art. The paper aims to investigate the various influences that women had over the society and provide information to help the understanding of this important area of art and culture. An effort will be made to examine the status of women in ancient Gandhara solely on the evidence of the art of that region rather than on the information of the literary source.

Keywords: Gandhara, Women, Art, Buddhist, depiction