

EUROPEAN INFLUENCE IN THE PAINTINGS OF M. SARLIS

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Sri Lankan culture changed drastically with the advent of European powers in Sri Lanka. The traditional Kandyan painting style deteriorated under the impact of European naturalistic styles (Christian wall paintings). As a result of this, local mural painters followed the above styles in their work. As a prominent local mural painter, M. Sarlis too followed these styles. M. Sarlis was the best known artist to associate with Richard Henricus and acquire European Naturalistic styles to paint his Buddhist themes in his mural & water colour paintings (Lithographic prints).

The attention of connoisseurs was drawn to the paintings of the artist, Sarlis, who had come into the limelight as a popular artist who inspired the Buddhist awakening by his mural paintings. These became very popular during the period. However, the researchers who have studied his style of painting have not given due consideration to the European influence in his works and also to his contribution to the field. Artists and critics have always displayed an element of condescension in their appraisal of his work. Even though some critics annotated his work, no systematic study of his paintings has still been carried out on the basis of content and style. Hence, my aim in this study was to examine the work of these critics intensively. With this in view, in my study I focused on European artistic styles which influenced Sarlis's artistic works, creation of human figures, figure composition, color mixing and architecture, etc. For this purpose, I have studied a considerable number of M. Sarlis paintings and have also considered the views of critics about his work.