Migration of Art.

(DIARY LEAVES)
BY NICHOLAS ROERICH

The Archive of Nicholas Roerich Museum

Reprinted from The Scholar, June 1935.

The end of the last century we arranged travelling exhibitions of French and American art, which besides previous International Exhibits, were among the pioneers of the modern migration of art. Great migrations of nations, as in the past, so also in the present, have many analogies. At present, of course, one of the first messengers of such movements is, as was to be expected, Art. When we wrote on the coat of arms of our Institutions about the universal significance of art, we likewise had in view the mutual understanding of nations by means of the language of Art.

During the last years a great deal has been done in this direction. Various institutes of art, societies and leagues, each in its own sphere tried to sponsor the exchange of art, as well as mutual understanding through the best universal language—creativity.

Even into the most remote countries penetrate the travelling exhibitions, lectures and concerts. During the period following the Great War, one could have observed remarkable peaceful conquests through art. The names of writers, painters, artists and musicians, both composers and players, as well as the news concerning the development of science, travelled colossal distances. During journeys one may with joy realize to what an extent and surprisingly widely were spread these peaceful inspiring news even in the most unexpected corners of the world.

Some time ago haughty politicians and leaders of governments probably did not even admit the thought how potent may be such untiring messengers of Culture. Undoubtedly many such political leaders would be sincerely surprised would they had heard what helpful powerful factors irresistibly grow up in the world. Truly, no matter how hard certain bipedes would try to darken the significance of creativeness as a universal moving power, no mechanical intellectual calculations can overthrow the authoritative facts about the growth of cultural relations. And let us also not forget, that these relations in the majority of cases originate not from governments, but from private social initiative. Thus the people themselves take part in the widest world constructiveness, strengthening the foundations of culture. This private social initiative must be greatly emphasized. It is a radiant sign that above all confusions and
misunderstandings, the universal wisdom builds its paths of achievement by means ineffable.

In many departments of creativeness—in literature, in the pictorial arts, in the theatre and in the newest forms—everywhere at present may be noticed the most curious circumstance. The migration of art takes place not only by spreading or acquainting with its art, but also in the desire to work within the forms of the neighbours' art. One may observe, how for instance in the theatre the East dreams of Western forms, and the West is often inspired precisely by Eastern originality. In the theatres of China and Japan one can at times notice various imitations of Hollywood. Besides, how may attempts in the Eastern style take place amongst the exhibitions of Paris and America. It is just as if narrow nationalism is mutually condemned. And it is rather questionable whether anyone has seen a successful Chinese or Japanese Hollywood and whether the excursions into the East as manifested by Western hands continue to be convincing. Amongst the multitude of such attempts, comparatively few are really persuasive.

Of course, let us not consider those cheap superficial stagings, which are not even concerned with the questions of inner convincingness and character. Even in many better cases, where a very respectable striving is evident, there is often a lack of inner persuasiveness. And yet this is a fundamental condition of all arts. No emphasized imitation will lead to desirable results. And in this sense only a kind of mechanization or technocracy of purely external methods is attained. It is true that one often notices an author trying to acquaint himself with the museoarchival side. No doubt he had consulted some specialist but one can easily see whether the author came to like the essence of his own creations or whether some other objects and desires predominated in him. Artificial intellect does not carry convinciness, which comes from the knowledge out of love.

The authors will probably not always give themselves an account when they were directed by a special problem ordered by extraordinary contemporary conditions or when their creativeness arose from the unrestrainable song of the heart. In this respect also some peculiar divisions into civilization and culture will take place. In other words, the conventional contemporary problems will appear to be as if bound by civilization, but the convincing song of the heart, all-conquering and unforgettable, will already be in the realm of Culture.

When in various countries one meets such conventionally borrowed forms of creativeness, one has mainly to doubt the correctness of the so much desired paths of the migration of art.

Especially now, when many nations consciously have opened their eyes upon their past and at the same time have mastered the latest achievements, one can expect that the migration of art will again find a correct course between the shores of the true concordant of nations.

The charm of these truly national resoundings is understood with difficulty in distant countries, which are so different psychologically as well as climatically. Why should we admit any imitations, when the discovery of the true sources of people is possible? We see that in India, China, Japan there lives its own refined theatrical art. Why then does it need Hollywood, which in its own way will say those words of creativeness, typical for it?

Lately everywhere a most remarkable phenomenon can be noticed. The most unsuspected countries have manifested their own artists, creators and executors. We are not surprised at this in any way, for we always knew that this is so and must be so! But why this simple circumstance was revelation in itself. Such revelations only show the ignorance of many and the unjustified haughtiness, as if much is above the understanding of some one. Such limitation of thinking is mere ignorance. There are many beautiful circumstances which people do not wish to admit. And in the matter of exchange of art, must be applied a special care and refinement, all true love, which will kindle and give convinciness to creation.

The great pilgrims of antiquity believed in their migrations. They were not only driven by trying circumstances; they moved according to some great creative decisions. Of course they loved these migrations and the best of these travellers accepted with the greatest attention the peculiarities and beauty, which they met on their way. We see it from the heritage which they left us. The migration of art will also widely fulfil its world-unifying mission. On these glorious paths CREATION will always remain the true resounding of nations, with all their inexhaustible treasures. In the wake of the great travellers remained intact the picturesque mountain ranges and limitless seas and rivers crossed by them. Likewise will remain intact the convincing sources of national beauty, transmitted through creativeness in care and deep love.

The paths of exchange of Art and Science will of course become longer and broader. In the history of our time this peaceful cultural achievement will not only be recorded, but will be appreciated in full attention.

It is the time of great migrations and profound mutual understandings! Let it be so!