As the first nation created as a religious asylum, Pak-
istan has a short but tormented history of fifty-five
years, half of which was controlled by a military
regime, founded in the name of ‘Islam in danger’ by
Muhammad Ali Jinnah (1876-1948), Pakistan official-
ly elected Islam as the religion of the state in 1973,
during the tenure of Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto (1928-1979),
the first popularly elected Prime minister of the coun-
try. Bhutto was arrested and hanged by general Zia
ul-Haq (1928-1988). While the Islamization rhetoric of
Bhutto was characterized by its mixture of socialism,
nationalism and populism, the discourse of Zia ul-
Haq appeared to be of a much more straightforward
military-Islamist type. In opposition to his rule, a
counter-discourse developed in which Mughal her-
itage was revived.

Without going deep into the details of the selec-
tive brand of Islamization the state promot-
ed, let us say that the regime was above all a
dictatorship: eleven years of military rule
(1977-1988) that ended only with Zia ul-
Haq’s death. Zia’s Islamization programme
was mainly twofold: Firstly, it comprised a
deliberate attempt at reforming selective as-
pects of the penal code inherited from the
British through the Hudood Ordinances
(1979), the Law of Evidence (1984) and the
Blasphemy Law (1986). It was then a kind of
juridical bricolage that tended to harm
above all women and religious minorities.
Secondly, it used propaganda through the
media (television, radio, and schoolbooks) in
favour of religious education, Arabization
(Zia ul-Haq himself put on an Arabic accent
when he was speaking in Urdu), sanctity of
juridical Blasphemy Law (1986). It was then a kind of
Blasphemy Law (1986). It was then a kind of
propriety (e.g. which was Delhi, Faisalpur Sikri and Agra
(located in present-day India). The flamboy-
ant exception was Lahore, which for 13
years (1585-1598) was the main seat of the
16th-century Great Moghul Akbar (1542-
1605) and one of the major imperial cities
in the Mughal period.

The ‘Mughal miniature’
The most prestigious art school in Pak-
istan, the National College of Arts (NCA, a
19th-century institution built by the British),
became one of the centres for the revival of
the Mughal nostalgia dur-
ing Zia ul-Haq’s era (when
figurative art and call-
ligraphy became the
domi-
nant ideological style). Mi-
nature painting was the
epithome of this attempt
at revival – not, of course, that
the reproduction and mer-
chandising of the so-called ‘Mughal miniature’
were ever new. In this
instance, under Zulfikar
Ali Bhutto the declaration of
Islam at the NCA became a part of the na-
tionalist rhetoric and the
miniature was regarded as
the perfect gift for visiting
dignitaries.1 But it was defi-
nitely under the regime of
Zia ul-Haq that ‘Mughal mania’ really took off at the
NCA, where art was pro-
cemeral, co-educational institu-
tion where the golden youth of
the country mix freely, fe-
male students and teachers
never donned the veil (even
at the peak of Zia ul-Haq’s
regime) (for girls), tight-tights and cigarettes
are commonplace. In short,
it is a milieu where study of
rudes is compulsory as a part of the curricu-
um, the NCA was considered to be at
the forefront of ‘westernization’. Hence the im-
portance of this concept of ‘endangered Is-
lamic tradition of miniature art’ vocally pro-
cated by the government rhetoric, the
80s on-
wards. However, the students, especially the
current generation of graduates, are
more keen on art, and this is most
to be seen in the production of
Stuff like the graduates from the miniature depart-
ment have also produced a great
dynasty, widely known as the ‘Mughal’ dy-
nasty, founded by Babur in the mid-16th-
century, dominated India politically
above all women and religious minorities.
What is now considered Pakistan was then
at the periphery of Mughal India, the heart
of which was Delhi, Faisalpur Sikri and Agra
(located in present-day India). The flamboy-
ant exception was Lahore, which for 13
years (1585-1598) was the main seat of the
16th-century Great Moghul Akbar (1542-
1605) and one of the major imperial cities
in the Mughal period.

The NCA, which is a semi-
governmental institution, al-
ways an area of liberalization
of (liberational or objection-
able) issue-fare, according
to the state’s ideological and
co-educational institution
Where the golden youth of
the country mix freely, fe-

Notes
1. Whiles, Virginia, ‘Miniature Painting in Pakistan’
Today, Lecture at the DHEW, Paris, 10 January
2. See for example, Amuele, Jean-Loup (1990),
‘L’oeuvre métonymique, anthropologie de l’identité
e centrale dans l’espace d’Afrique de l’Ouest’, Afrique et ailleurs,
Vol. I, pp. 57-59. See also Mukul Kesavan
1996, ‘Stitching women into the Margins’, in Gruzinsky,
Paris: Fayard.
Islam: Conscience and History in a World Civilization
with an introduction by Eveline S. Hobsbawm.
The Invention of Tradition, Cambridge: Cambridge University

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