

# WAKSAW Collaboration Bridges Knowledge in the 1st International Winter School on Gandharan Buddhism

*The event brought WAKSAW together with numerous partners to continue fruitful discussions launched in Summer 2024*

NEW YORK, NY, UNITED STATES, January 24, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The [WAKSAW Uddiyana Archaeological Alliance, USA](#) is delighted to announce the successful completion of the 1st International Winter School on Gandharan Buddhism, held in January 2025. This landmark event brought together about 40 scholars from 14 countries and 20 institutions, marking a significant milestone in advancing Gandharan Studies. It served as a continuation of the academic dialogue initiated during the prestigious seminar at Harvard University in March 2024.



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*Yinghan Zhai*

Organized by the WAKSAW Uddiyana Archaeological Alliance, USA (Chaired by Ms. Yali Xuan), in collaboration with the Taxila Institute of Asian Civilizations (TIAC), Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad (under the directorship of Prof. Dr. Ghani-ur-Rahman), the winter school aimed to bring scholars and students from across the globe to the very heart of ancient Gandhara—modern-day northern and western Pakistan—for a unique blend of academic

seminars and immersive cultural experiences.

This initiative was further supported by the Directorate of Archaeology and Museums, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the Ministry of Science and Technology, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation (PTDC), and the Woodenfish Foundation, USA.

## EVENT HIGHLIGHTS

### The Opening Ceremony

The event commenced with a celebration of collaboration and cultural exchange at Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad.

- Prof. Dr. Ghani-ur-Rahman, Director of TIAC, welcomed participants, introduced TIAC's objectives, academic and research activities, achievements, and international collaborations, emphasizing the importance of this event as a continuation of the Harvard dialogue.
- Distinguished speakers included Mr. Yinghan Zhai, Executive Director of WAKSAW, and Mr. Aftab ur Rehman Rana, Managing Director of the Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation.

Mr. Yinghan Zhai delivered an inspiring speech, saying, "The WAKSAW-Uddiyana Archaeological Alliance is dedicated to uncovering the history of Buddhism in ancient Gandhara through archaeological research. In our work, we strive to create an academic platform for Buddhist studies, fostering international scholarly exchange, sharing research findings, and supporting scholars. The Gandharan civilization represents a crucial chapter in the history of Buddhism, and our research deepens understanding of cultural interactions among ancient civilizations while preserving this invaluable treasure."

He expressed his gratitude to the event's supporters, including Venerable Yifa, Prof. Dr. Ghani-ur-Rahman, Dr. Abdul Samad, and WAKSAW's founder, Ms. Yali Xuan.

### Academic Sessions

Three lectures were delivered by renowned experts:

1. Dr. Stefan Baums: Explored ancient languages and scripts, including Gandhari and Kharoshti, highlighting their pivotal role in understanding Gandharan culture.
2. Dr. Elisa Iori: Presented the archaeological contributions of the Italian Archaeological Mission to Pakistan, showcasing groundbreaking fieldwork and discoveries.



3. Dr. Dessislava Vendova: Delved into the artistic traditions of Gandharan sites, highlighting the diversity and richness of South Asian Buddhist art.

### Cultural and Archaeological Immersion

Participants experienced the rich heritage of Gandhara through visits to:

- The Museum and Buddhist archaeological sites of Taxila, a UNESCO World Heritage Site.
- The Islamabad Museum, followed by a general discussion on Gandhara at TIAC.
- Iconic Gandharan-period locations in Peshawar, Mardan, and Swat, offering in-depth exploration of Gandharan art, architecture, and culture.

### A STEP FORWARD IN GANDHARAN STUDIES

The winter school was more than an academic event—it was a bridge connecting the global community of scholars to the living heritage of Gandhara. By continuing the dialogue initiated at Harvard, the program underscored the importance of collaborative research and cultural exchange in preserving and understanding our shared past.

WAKSAW and its partners noted that they extend their deepest gratitude to all organizers, speakers, and participants for making the event a success and shaping the future of Gandharan Studies together.

The public can stay connected for more updates and upcoming initiatives at [www.waksaw.org](http://www.waksaw.org).

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