

# Scholars Hail the 2025 Inaugural International Workshop on Scientific Research and Studies on Gandhara

*Attendees praised the workshop as a landmark event for global collaboration in Gandharan studies*

NEW YORK, NY, UNITED STATES, February 19, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The 1st International Winter School on Gandharan Buddhism 2025 and Inaugural International Workshop on Scientific Research and Studies on Gandhara successfully concluded its 10-day field expedition. The event brought together leading scholars, archaeologists, and researchers from over 20 universities and research institutions across 11 countries. The workshop was initiated by the [WAKSAW-Uddiyana Archaeological Alliance, USA](#) in collaboration with the Taxila Institute of Asian Civilizations (TIAC), Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad, and hosted by the Directorate of Archaeology and Museums, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and the Ministry of Science and Technology, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Following two days of lectures at TIAC and QAU and a one-day trip to Taxila, the Scientific Research and Studies on Gandhara opening ceremony took place on January 12, and on January 16, a one-day seminar on Uddiyana at the Swat Museum featured discussions on Buddhist heritage preservation and the royal family's support for archaeological excavations.

## LEADERS AND SCHOLARS COMMEND THE INITIATIVE

Dr. Abdul Samad, Director of the Directorate of Archaeology and Museums, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, emphasized Pakistan's role as a guardian of Gandharan heritage noted, "Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is the true custodian of Gandharan heritage, home to 90% of the world's



Shafqat Ayaz, Special Assistant to the Chief Minister for Science & Information Technology, and Sajid Hussan Shah, Director General of the Science and Technology Department, Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan.

Gandharan sites. Our government is deeply committed to preserving these invaluable treasures. In recent years, through our collective efforts, Pakistan has proudly re-emerged on the international tourism map."

He also recognized WAKSAW's dedication to promoting and preserving Gandharan heritage.

Shafqat Ayaz, Special Assistant to the Chief Minister for Science & Information Technology, highlighted the significance of the gathering: "Your presence here is not just a recognition of Gandhara's significance but also an opportunity to redefine how we connect to this extraordinary heritage. As you explore Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's historic sites, I encourage you to envision Gandhara not only as a subject of study but as a living bridge between civilizations, cultures, and innovations."

Mr. Sajid Hussan Shah, Director General of the Science and Technology Department, Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, reinforced this sentiment: "We come from different corners of the world, united by our shared fascination with Gandhara. Here, we witness the wisdom of humanity and the exchange of cultures. But Gandhara is not just a reflection of the past; it is a bridge to the future! By leveraging cutting-edge technology, we can preserve, study, and share its heritage in ways that were once unimaginable."



Ms. Yali Xuan (left), founder of WAKSAW Archaeological Alliance, Mr. Sardar Hassan Azhar Hayat (center), Managing Director of Green Pakistan, and Dr. Abdul Samad (right), Director of Archaeology & Museums, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

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*Yali Xuan*

## A NEW ERA OF COLLABORATION

Ms. Yali Xuan, founder of WAKSAW, described the event as a pivotal moment for future partnerships: "Civilization is one of the foundations of a nation, and culture is the lifeblood of its people. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's efforts in religious tourism have been highly successful, attracting researchers and cultural enthusiasts eager to trace the origins of ancient civilizations. This conference marks just the beginning. Moving forward, WAKSAW will initiate multi-faceted collaborations with local universities and the

Directorate of Archaeology and Museums, establishing a research platform for scholars."



## FIELD RESEARCH AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL INSIGHTS

Over the following ten days, participants conducted in-depth site visits across the Gandhara region, engaging in hands-on research and discussions. Highlights included:

- Dr. Elisa Lori (Italian Archaeological Mission) presented her team's 70 years of excavation findings in Pakistan.
- Dr. Dessislava Vendova (Museum of Fine Arts, Boston) delivered a comprehensive analysis of Gandharan art in its archaeological context.
- Dr. Stefan Baums, a leading expert on Gandharan manuscripts, provided an on-site lecture on ancient coinage and inscriptions, assigning research exercises to scholars.

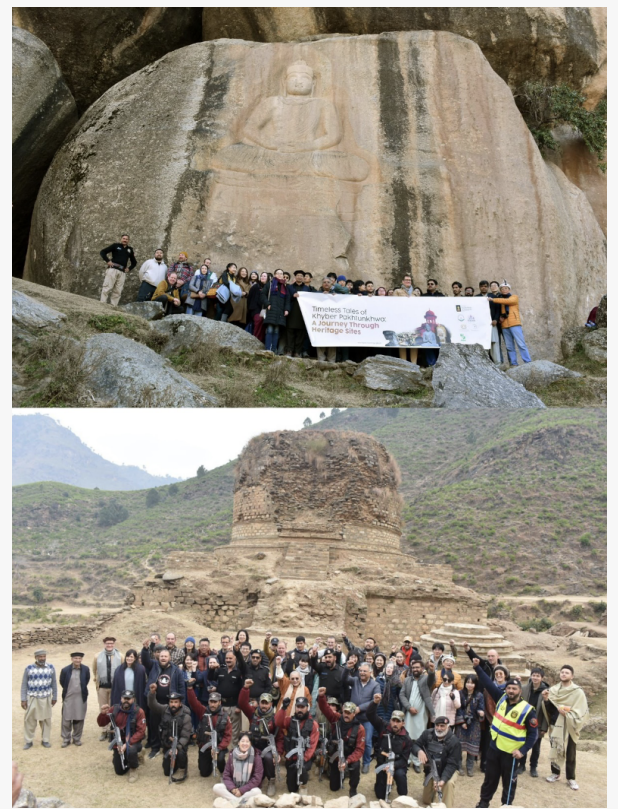
## GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES ON GANDHARAN LEGACY

Prof. Georgios T. Halkias (Hong Kong Buddhist Studies Center, Greece) remarked, "Gandhara's position at the crossroads of trade routes enabled the transmission of religious, philosophical, and artistic traditions across Eurasia, reaching as far as China. The remarkable synthesis of Hellenistic traditions and Buddhism in Gandhara was likely the result of Hellenic and Hellenized individuals who had embraced Buddhism."

Grace Ramswick (Stanford University, USA) noted, "Experiencing these sites firsthand—moving through their landscapes and monastic corridors—provided invaluable context for my research. More importantly, this program fostered connections with Pakistani scholars dedicated to preserving this heritage."

Ulysse Barthel (École Pratique des Hautes Études, France) reflected, "As an archaeology PhD student specializing in the Kushan Empire, visiting these sites has deepened my understanding of their material aspects and environment. The opportunity to engage with Pakistani curators and scholars was invaluable."

Nadine Künne (Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich, Germany) shared, "For someone who has worked primarily with manuscript photos, visiting these excavated sites added a whole new dimension to my studies. Witnessing the work of local archaeologists and preservationists was truly inspiring."



Group photos at archaeological and excavation sites

Christopher Wilvert (Wilfried Laurier University, Canada) emphasized the spiritual and artistic impact of Gandhara: "Sitting among these sacred ruins, I imagined how this landscape inspired the artistic and religious evolution of Vajrayana Buddhism. This experience has deepened my commitment to studying Gandhara's influence on Buddhist traditions across Asia."

Albert Rodríguez (University of the West, USA) reflected on the spiritual depth of his journey, describing it as a profound karmic connection to Pakistan: "Being in Uddiyana deepened my faith and devotion to Guru Rinpoche, filling me with gratitude and inspiration. Gazing across the Swat Valley, I felt overwhelmed, vowing to carry this experience into my life and practice. May all beings benefit!"

The participants were taken to Shahbazgarhi Rock edicts, Takht Bhai Monastic remains in Mardan, Peshawar Museum, and city tour. In Swat the participants visited Bazira, Shingardar Stupa, Ghaligay Buddha, Jahanabad Buddha, Butkara, Swat Museum, Saidu Stupa, Amlukdara stupa, Tokardara stupa, and Monastery remains. The return trip to Islamabad included a visit to Hund Museum and the the spot where possibly Xuan Zhang and Alexander the Great crossed the Indus River.

#### LOOKING AHEAD: A LASTING IMPACT ON GANDHARAN STUDIES

The 1st International Winter School on Gandharan Buddhism 2025 and International Workshop on Scientific Research and Studies on Gandhara set a new benchmark for global collaboration in Gandharan studies. Through immersive research, fieldwork, and academic dialogue, the event reinforced Pakistan's role as a global attraction and center for Gandharan Heritage and Archaeology.

Iris Wong  
WAKSAW  
info@waksaw.org

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