

# ***A Study of Archaeological Research Activities during Colonial and Post-Colonial Eras in Pakistan***

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## **ABSTRACT**

*This paper presents an investigation about the archaeological research activities carried out during the last three centuries on the soil of Indo-Pakistan Sub-continent mainly in British Colonial and after independence of Pakistan by the Department of Archaeology & Museums, Pakistan. The topic is presented in two parts: first part presents early research activities carried out during the British Colonial era, second part provides information about the establishment of regional offices under the administrative control of Archaeological Survey of India.*

### **Archaeological Research Activities of British Government Colonial Era (17<sup>th</sup> -19<sup>th</sup> Century)**

The first European notices of the living temples and ancient monuments of India are found in the reports of travelers in the 16<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup> and the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. The important records are contributed by John Huighen van

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Linschoten in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century and Pietro della Valle in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century about the living temples in India. The beginning of a systematic and scholarly interest is however, evident in the middle of 18<sup>th</sup> century. The interest in Gandhāra region was however, arise in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century as collections of coins, reliquaries, and sculptures were assembled by adventurers such as Charles Masson, and by British military units who amassed objects during punitive raids into “tribal areas”. This material kept in colonial museums such as the Indian Museum in Calcutta and the British Museum in London, lost record of its precise provenance and was generically labeled as Gandhāran, thus shifting the meaning of the word from precise geographical designation to a broad cultural one. However, the proper discovery and archaeological excavations of ancient sites in the Indian Sub-Continent can be traced back to the early British Indian Government around the middle of 18<sup>th</sup> Century. William Finch (1608-11) was among those who first described the Ashoka pillars in Dehli and Allahabad and recorded observations about the architecture of Dehli, Agra, Lahore and other cities. However, there were many other adventurers who travelled all over India such as; from Portuguese colonial times, Duarte Barbosa, Tavernier, from French colonial times, Thevenot, Niebur, Mahilton, Tieffenthaler and many others.

During the first decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the recoding of monuments began and these records led up to James Fergusson’s successive studies of Indian architecture. The discovery and publications of accounts of prehistoric remains also began in the first decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The first recorded find of stone implements was in 1842 when Primrose discovered stone knives and arrow-heads in Raichur district, but it was eleven years later that John Evans published the first account of worked flints discovered on the Narbada River near Jabalpur. About the research activities in ancient region of Gandhāra, Zwalf describes that after its annexation by the British East India Company in 1849, great quantities of Buddhist cult images and reliefs in

gray-blue and green schist and lime plaster gradually came to light and by the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century scholars were using Gandhāra as a convenient term for what was being recognized as a remarkable, long-lived and influential tradition of Buddhist art and Architecture. However, the initiated researches carried out in the second half of 18<sup>th</sup> Century brought various new aspects into light and their significant was well recognized through numerous writings of these British scholars.

In the year 1861, Lord Canning, the first Viceroy of India sanctioned a scheme for preparing an “accurate description – illustrated by plans, measurements, drawings or photographs and by copies of inscriptions- if such remains as deserve notice, the history of them so far as it may be traceable, and a record of the traditions that are retained regarding them”. These events are clear evidences of interest and struggle in the preservation of monuments by the British Rule on Indian Sub-Continent. However Gandhāran research came with the integration of “North-West-Province” after 1847 by the British, who took over the territory from the Sikhs.

A significant step was taken in the year 1860 when the Archeological Survey for Northern parts of the Sub-Continent was established. Major General Alexander Cunningham who was basically a civil engineer was appointed its first Director. He carried out archaeological excavations at many places including at Taxila. New information was gained from the translation of the Chinese texts of Faxian and Xuanang, which inspired Cunningham to write his “*Ancient Geography*”. Major General Cunningham was raised to the post of Director General of Archaeological Survey of India in February, 1871. After his extensive tours to the Northern and Central parts of the Sub-Continent, the archaeological reports which were published by the ASI in the “Archaeological Survey of India Reports” (ASIR) are indeed a remarkable contribution.

In this context the contribution of French scholars in the field of archaeological researches however, cannot be overlooked. When Maharaja Ranjit Singh (1780-1839) built his kingdom on the banks of the Indus facing British India, he recruited French Officers namely ; General Court, Allard, and General J.B Ventura, who after Waterloo (1815) had travelled east to the Persian court and from there crossed Afghanistan to the Sikh Capital, Lahore. The French Officers were sheer in classical culture and familiar with Greco-Roman sources. Among them General Court explored the Mankiyala Stūpa and sent excavation report to the Asiatic Society of Bengal (JASB, 1834).

Alfred Foucher, a French expert in Indian Culture, had made a long journey along the Afghan border in 1897. He was fascinated about the material discovered by the British excavators during the course of excavations at the different areas of sub-Continent. In his publication entitled "*L'Art Gr'eco-bouddique du Gandhāra (Paris, 1901)*" he discussed the influence of Alexander the Great and Hellenism in the Sub-continent. In the year 1899, Lord Curzon was appointed as Viceroy in the Sub-continent. He brought fundamental changes in the policy of the British Government towards the maintenance and preservation of monuments. Due to his personal interest in the preservation of cultural heritage, "*Ancient Monuments Preservation Act, 1904*" was enacted. It is widely presumed that the study of Buddhist archaeology in this region since the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century started first with an antiquarian interest with no scientific methods or techniques. However, in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when the subject attracted the attention of scholarly world a more systematic and scientific approach was developed.

### **Cultural Significance of the Gandhara Art and Studies**

According to Banerjee the existence of an Indo-Hellenistic School of Sculpture was not recognized generally, until 1870, when Leitner brought to England a considerable collection of specimens to which he gave the name of Greaco- Buddhist. During the year 1833, Gerrard had

uncovered the first known example of a circular relief of Buddha from the chamber of a ruined Stūpa near Kabul. In 1836, James Prinsep published his account of the so-called Silenus, discovered by Colonel Stacey at Mathurā. Some of the important sites of Gandhāra are; Jamalgarhi, Sehr-i-Behlol, Takht-i-Bhāī Chanaka Dheri, Mekha Sanda, Chargul Dheri, Husai Dheri, Thareli, Mohmand Nari, Sampur Dheri, Aziz Dheri and many more. The Sculptures which are found in Gandhāra bear strong evidence of classic influence. In figures of Buddha, rigid lines of drapery were superseded by more picturesque folds; even the round knobs by which the hair of the head was represented by Indian artists had given place to more naturalistic treatment.

According to Ingholt, Gandhāra and Palmyra have many ichnographical similarities with each other. He summarized that Palmyra and Gandhāra assumes unusual importance, as the former furnished basic material for the Byzantine art whereas the latter proved of capital significance for the later Buddhist art of the Far East. This writer further states that the earliest Indian sculptures represented Buddha by various symbols, but some Gandhāra sculptor one day took the significant step of portraying Buddha in human form; just as both Greek and Partho-Mesopotamian sculptors had been representing their gods. A.H. Dani however, mentions about the foreign influences on the Gandhāra art in following words:

“All the stone sculptures that have been recovered from Taxila give us some idea of the new trends that were developing in Gandhāra. They tell us at least one thing clearly: that in spite of borrowing different features from east and west; Taxila evolved its own particular style by synthesizing all of them and contributed to the fruition of Gandhāra art and civilization. It is this rich cultural heritage of Gandhāra that is revealed at Taxila. The excavated material present us with a continuous story of mankind as he lived here, as he came in contact with others, and as he assimilated and integrated the various trends into a cultural pattern, which we call today Gandhāra, in the centre of which lies the historic city of Taxila—a heir to the past glory of Gandhāra and a focal centre of humanity coming from east and west.” (Dani, A.H. 1986: 173-74).

Gandhāra Art has been the focus of attraction both for the eastern and western scholars since its discovery in the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century CE. The Indus-Oxus region covers the valleys of the Indus and Oxus and the territory between them. This area comprised a number of ancient states including *Uḍḍiyāna* (Malakand Division), and Gandhāra (Peshawar Valley), which are now situated in Pakistan and Kapsia (Panjshir-Ghorband Valley) and Bactria in Afghanistan. The sculptural or regional styles of these states which are slightly differed from each other and therefore these are usually referred to as *Uḍḍiyāna*, Gandhāra, Kapisa and Bactrian.

### **Buddhist Art of Gandhara and the Artisans**

The Art of Gandhāra was not uniform in style throughout the vast possessions of the Kushanas. A number of local centers and distinctive schools have been identified and the Kushanas Empire may be divided into four principles artistic regions: Bactria; Arachosia and Nagarahara; Gandhāra in Pakistan; and Mathurā in India. However, despite regional differences and variations, the fact remains that these areas were politically united under a single state and this helped the pooling of ideas in various fields of artistic culture. In the words of Agarwal, the Gandhāra School of art distinguishes itself from other Indian school of art, further from the fact that no one sculpture was brought to completion and did not possess fullness as the front part of the sculpture appeared to be round in shape but flat or un-finished from its backside.

Although no direct evidence is available which indicates that there were any benefactors of the artists but keeping in view the innumerable sculptures and architectural monuments, one is led to conclude that there was tolerance and even encouragement of a sort from the ruling class and leading community even if only with the intent to propagate an deity the faith. In this context it is presumed that the artists of Gandhāra turned towards the Roman styles for using their techniques. The result was the combination of two different styles i.e. Indian and the West. But the unsatisfactory mixture of the two styles became a hall mark of the

Gandhāra art and contributed to its historical importance. However, the gradual changes enabled the artist of later period to make Buddha in a more indigenous form.

### **Scope and Religious Zeal of Gandhāra Artists**

During the 1<sup>st</sup> Century CE Mahāyanā Buddhism was deep rooted in the region of Gandhāra. Mahāyanā, based on the concept of Mahapurusa, with distinctive “*laksanas*”, the images of Buddha were created in the different areas. The Buddhist sculptures were used to fix to the bases, drums and stairs of the Buddhist Stūpas and around which the worshippers circumambulated. The individual Buddha images were used to fill the niches around the stūpas and monasteries. Sir John Marshall mentioned three main points about the Buddhist Art of Gandhāra; (i) this School was an indigenous growth inspired as much by the traditions of the Early Indian Schools which had preceded it as by those of the Hellenized Orient, (ii) the Gandhāra School follow the precedent of the older Indian Schools, (iii) the Gandhāra School is known to us almost exclusively from its stone sculptures which occurred in vast numbers in Gandhāra itself and have been found in places as far distant as Benares and Rajgir and even in remote Northumberland. We can assume that the iconography of Gandhāra art is essentially Indian; the language of its expression is a dialect of Roman provincial art.

The study of Buddhist archaeology in Gandhāra since the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century started first with an antiquarian interest with no scientific methods or techniques. In the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, however, when the subject attracted the attention of scholarly world a more systematic and scientific approach was developed. A large number of Buddhist sites in Gandhāra have been investigated but it is very unfortunate that the materials, in particular the sculptures recovered from these sites had been studied according to their style or analogy rather than their contextual, stratigraphy and historical background. The dates inscribed on Gandhāra sculptures are very few, they

are more common on contemporary sculptures of the Mathurā school and they also occur in inscriptions not on sculpture in northern India and Gandhāra. Alfred Salmony has very precisely mentions about the evolution of Gandhāra style in the following words:

For some time, it had been assumed that the sculptural evolution moved from the imitation of classical models to an Indianization which becomes gradually more pronounced. This theory has been successfully changed by Rowland, and van Lohuizen e Leeuw. Although both authors differ considerably in the placing of individual sites and monuments, they are in accord in having the Gandhāra development begin with a "primitive base" dating roughly from 50 to 150 A.D. This style is characterized by garments having folds which are treated flatly or simply incised. Then follow the enormous quantities of Greek and Roman inspired sculptures (de Leeuw's "Golden age") reaching from the middle of the II to the end of the IV Century. The last phase, during which Indian tradition reasserts itself through the transparency of the garb, may have lasted for another 200 years (Salmony A. 1954: 32).

According to Saif-ur-Rahman Dar, the earliest Gandhāran sculptures are in the form of a group of small round stone dishes of varied sizes found from all over Gandhāra. An analytical study of 33 trays, according to this writer shows that they made their first appearance at Taxila during the Greek period with pure Hellenistic themes and workmanship. Hence the chronology of Gandhāra sculptures suffers from the use of several eras in their inscriptions and from the lack of scientifically conducted excavations. The views of M. Nasim Khan about the dating of Gandhāra art are very particular who says that:

Most of the Buddhist sculptures from Gandhāra are dated to the 2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> century AD but scrutiny of the material from Aziz Dheri showed that dating of the Buddhist art of Gandhāra may not be based on its stylistic variations or iconographic analysis but to get an exact date of it, the art may be studied in their archaeological content rather than to focus only on their stylistic and iconographic details which may lead to a great deal of discrepancy (Khan, M. Nasim. 2010: 12).

According to Chongfeng Li, since most of the stūpas in Gandhāra have been laid in ruin a long time ago, the reliefs attached to the drum of a stupā naturally fell off or were



scattered and covered by later layers or debris. Because of the unsystematic excavations undertaken early on, most of the Buddhist sculptures unearthed from Gandhāra and kept in museums and private collections are incomplete tableaux extrapolated from relief strips and lack the original surroundings of when the stupā was built. It is mentioned by Garima Bharti, that *Vajrayana* entered into Buddhism during the Gupta dynasty (6<sup>th</sup>–7<sup>th</sup> century CE) and thereafter the concept of five Buddha and Bodhisattva was introduced for the very first time. Both of the Five Meditating Buddha (Amitabha, Aksobhya, Vairocana, Amoghsiddhi and Ratnasambhava) and Bodhisattva (Padmapani, Vajrapani, Samnathabhadra, Vishvapadi, Ratnapadi and Manjurshri) have been called as Buddhist deities after Buddha. Madeleine Hallade says that at the beginning of the Christian era these two schools, however, each gave an anthropomorphic aspect to the Buddha about the same time. The sculptures of Mathurā adopted the heavy and powerful appearance formerly used for the “Yaksha” (male tutelary spirits) whereas the Gandhāran artists were inspired by Greek deities particularly Apollo.

The Gandhāra sculptures show more aesthetic charm as compared to Mathurā images. In Mathurā art tradition, the Buddha image has long earlobes, thick lips, wide eyes and prominent nose whereas in Gandhāra art, the eyes are longer, angular chin, shorter earlobes whereas nose is sharper and much better defined. Gandhāra sculptures preferred large drapery with heavy pleats for their images which covers almost the entire figure of the Buddha. In Mathurā the drapery is however thin and transparent. In Gandhāra images, the curls of hair are more separate while in Mathurā images these are rises as coils.

### **Regional Offices under the Administrative Control of the Archaeological Survey of India**

The British India was divided into five Archaeological Survey Circles, namely: Madras with Coorg; Bombay with Sindh and Berar; the Punjab with Balochistan and Ajmer; the United

(then North-West) Provinces with the Central Provinces; and Bengal with Assam. Later on in 1901, Kashmir, Rajputana and the Punjab States as well as Dir, Swāt and Chitral were added to the charge of the Surveyor of the Punjab-Baluchistan-Ajmer Circle; Baroda, Central India, Hyderabad (Deccan) and the Bombay states were added to the charge of the surveyor of the Bombay-Berar Circle; and the States within the political jurisdiction of the Government of Madras and Bengal were added to the charge of the surveyor of the Madras-Coorg and Bengal-Assam Circles respectively.

In the year 1902, Viceroy Lord Curzon decided to reorganize the Archaeological Survey of India and Sir John Marshall was appointed its new Director General who reorganized all the activities of the Survey, excavation, exploration, conservation, epigraphy, numismatics and publications in a befitting manner. A series of "Memoirs" was published in addition to the "Annual Report" (ASIR) devoted to the works carried out by the Survey in a particular year. Sir John Marshall's outstanding contribution escorts the activities of Archaeological Survey of India such as; preservation of monuments, archaeological excavations, epigraphy and other related fields of Archaeology. He was the real architect of Archaeology in the Sub-Continent and his discoveries added new and put the Archaeological Survey of India on a sound footing. Before his retirement on 6<sup>th</sup> September, 1928 his major works is included; excavations at modern city "Charsada" (ancient "Puskalavati"), one of the great centers of Indio-Hellenic civilization, the Buddhist sites of Sarnath, Kasia, Rajagrha, and Vaisali. Besides, he also excavated important Buddhist sites such as; Shah-ji-ki Dheri (Peshāwar), Dharmarajika Stūpa, Jaulian monastic complex and other sites in Taxila Valley (1913-34) (*Marshall 1951*) as well as at the Indus Valley celebrated site of Moenjodaro. During this period another major contribution is credited to Sir Aurel Stein from 1898-1928 which comprises on; archeological tours, surveys and excavations in different regions of sub-Continent. However, his major concern was to follow the Alexander the Great's route to the Indus. The

early archaeological excavations, explorations and survey reports were carried out mainly during the British colonial period. These annual reports which were published by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) during first half of 20<sup>th</sup> century served as primary source material on the subject of Gandhāra Art. The significant annual reports include the illustrious work of various archaeologists such as; (i) Marshall, Sir John & Vogel. (1902-03) for Excavations at Charsada (*Pushkalavati*) (ii) Spooner, D.P. (1906-07) for Excavations at Sehr-i-Behlol, near Mardan (iii) Spooner, D. P. (1907-08) for Excavations at Takht-i-Bhāī, (iv) Spooner, D.P (1908-09) for Excavations at Shah-Ji-Ki Dheri (v) Spooner, D.P. (1908-11)for Excavations at Takht-i-Bhāī, and Shah-ji-Ki Dheri (vi) Spooner, D.P. (1909-10) for Excavations at Sehr-i-Behlol, Mardan (vii) Hargreaves, H. (1910-11)for Excavations at Shah-ji-Ki Dheri. (viii) Stein, Aurel (1911-12) for Excavations at Sehr-i-Behlol. (ix) (1912-13) for Excavations at Takht-i-Bhāī and Sehr-i-Behlol (x) Hargreaves, H. (1920-21) for Excavations at Jamal Garhi and (xi) (1920-24) about the Sculptures discovered during Conservation at Jamal Garhi and Takht-i-Bhāī.

After the retirement of Sir John Marshall, his successors served Archaeological survey of India and continued his policies and archaeological researches. His successors who served for Archaeological survey of India were Herald Hargreaves (1928-31), Daya Ram Sahni (1931-35), J.F. Blakiston (1935-37), K.N. Dikshit (1937-44) then Sir Mortimer Wheeler (1944-1948). A systematic study of the Paleolithic sequence in the Potohar region was however carried out by De Terra and Peterson (1933) which gave ample evidences of Paleolithic period of Pakistan. Sir Mortimer Wheeler put the Archaeological Survey of India on scientific lines, after his appointment as Director General, Archaeological Survey of India in 1944. The “British Rule” in Sub-continent was ended in 1947 by dividing the country into two new independent states namely; Pakistan and India.

## **Conclusion**

The first European notices of the living temples and ancient monuments of India are found in the reports of travelers in the 16<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup> and the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. The beginning of a systematic and scholarly interest is however, evident in the middle of 18<sup>th</sup> century. The interest in Gandhāra region was however, arise in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century as collections of coins, reliquaries, and sculptures were assembled by adventurers such as Charles Masson, and by British military units who amassed objects during punitive raids into “tribal areas”. However, the proper discovery and archaeological excavations of ancient sites in the Indian Sub-Continent can be traced back to the early British Indian Government around the middle of 18<sup>th</sup> Century. William Finch (1608-11) was among those who first described the Ashoka pillars in Dehli and Allahabad and recorded observations about the architecture of Dehli, Agra, Lahore and other cities.

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A significant step was taken in the year 1860 when the Archeological Survey for Northern parts of the Sub-Continent was established. Major General Alexander Cunningham who was basically a civil engineer was appointed its first Director. He carried out archaeological excavations at many places including at Taxila. After his extensive tours to the Northern and Central parts of the Sub-Continent, the archaeological reports which were published by the ASI in the "Archaeological Survey of India Reports" (ASIR) are indeed a remarkable contribution. When Maharaja Ranjit Singh (1780-1839) built his kingdom on the banks of the Indus facing British India, he recruited French Officers namely ; General Court, Allard, and General J.B Ventura, who after Waterloo (1815) had travelled east to the Persian court and from there crossed Afghanistan to the Sikh Capital, Lahore.

Gandhāra Art has been the focus of attraction both for the eastern and western scholars since its discovery in the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century CE. The Indus-Oxus region covers the valleys of the Indus and Oxus and the territory between them. This area comprised a number of ancient states including *Uḍḍiyāna* (Malakand Division), and Gandhāra (Peshawar Valley), which are now situated in Pakistan and Kapsia (Panjshir-Ghorband Valley) and Bactria in Afghanistan. It is pertinent to mention here that the Buddha image was not sculptured in human form in the earliest Buddhist art and his presence was shown through symbolic representation. An-ionic phase of Buddhist Art however lasted from 5<sup>th</sup> Century BCE to 1<sup>st</sup> Century BCE avoiding the direct representation of Buddha. During the early second century BCE the symbols were progressively replaced by images of the Buddha himself. The first images of the Buddha were made independently by the sculptors of Mathurā and Gandhāra. Mathurā was the great trading centre where Buddhist images were made to be sold all over Asia. The Mathurā artists used the earlier *yaksha* statue of pre-Buddhist cults as their model, whereas the sculptors of Gandhāra used Greaco-Roman models of the Apollo for their first Buddha image. Buddha image also appeared on Kanisha's coin for

the first time. The earliest representation of Buddha was made for about four or five centuries after his death. Relying on the legend that tells how Gautama the Buddha was born with certain signs of greatness, the artists started depicting him with a protuberance on the skull, *uṣṇīṣa*; a third eye, *ūrṇā* and elongated ear lobes. We can conclude that the earlier and later research studies on the Buddhist Art and Architecture is a great contribution and asset for the mankind to understand the different aspects and characteristics especially the iconography of the image of Buddha in its true perspective.

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