

Preservation of Endangered Moveable
Cultural Assets of Gandhara Art

Experts Meeting

Peshawar, 13-14 November 2006

organized by UNESCO

at

Sir Sahibzada Abdul Qayyum (SSAQ) Museum

University of Peshawar

REPORT OF THE PROCEEDINGS

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INTRODUCTION

This document records the proceedings of the Experts Meeting organized within the framework of the UNESCO project on the *Preservation of Endangered Moveable Cultural Assets of Gandhara Art* in the Islamic republic of Pakistan.

The meeting was held at Sir Sahibzada Abdul Quayyum Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology (SSAQ), University of Peshawar from 13 - 14 November 2006. It was aimed at initiating a process of consultation and consensus-building among various stakeholders for improving the conditions of conservation of moveable cultural assets of Gandhara Art.

The purpose of the meeting was to examine the objectives of the project and to establish a programme and schedule of specific activities. The meeting also provided an opportunity to establish a detailed work plan and helped in clarification of roles and responsibilities. Representatives of the institutions participating in the project, UNESCO staff and national and international experts attended the meeting.

This document presents summary of discussions held and records the decisions made during the meeting. It provides the revised project structure as an outcome of the meeting.

PROCEEDINGS OF THE MEETING

1. Experts Meeting

In 2004, UNESCO initiated a programme for the *Preservation of Endangered Moveable Cultural Assets and Museum Development*, thanks to the US contribution to UNESCO Regular Programme in 2003. In line with the directives of the UNESCO programme and the findings of an assessment of the conditions of the important Gandahra collections in seven museums in Pakistan, the project on *Preservation of Endangered Moveable Cultural Assets of Gandhara Art* was submitted by UNESCO/Islamabad and approved by the Director-General of UNESCO.

The original proposal was reviewed by the International Scientific Advisor to the programme and revised. As a result, the objectives of the project were redefined, and three out of the seven museums were selected in the North West Frontier Province. These are:

- Peshawar Museum, under the Provincial government of North West Frontier Province (NWFP);
- Sir Sahibzada Abdul Qayyum (SSAQ) Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology at the University of Peshawar, which is semi-autonomous and under the University of Peshawar;
- Swat Museum in Saidu Sharif, under the Directorate of Archaeology and Museums of the Federal government of Pakistan.

An Experts Meeting was organized by Islamabad Office of UNESCO, at Sir Sahibzada Abdul Quayyum Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology (SSAQ), University of Peshawar from 13 - 14 November 2006.

The Experts Meeting initiated a process of consensus building among stakeholders for improving the conditions of conservation of endangered moveable cultural assets of Gandhara Art in Pakistan. The specific objectives were:

- i) to build a consensual platform among stakeholders;
- ii) to define the national coordination mechanism;
- iii) to prepare and discuss with the stakeholders a work plan until March 2008, date by which the project should be terminated.

2. Participants

The Experts Meeting was attended by representatives of the Federal Ministry of Culture, Government of Pakistan, national and international experts, Programme Specialists from UNESCO Islamabad office and Headquarters in Paris, Directors of the participating Museum, Director General of the Department of Archaeology and Museums, Curators and other staff members of the participating museums, faculty members and students of the Department of Archaeology at Peshawar University and other invited guests. A list of Participants is annexed (Annex 1).

The Federal Minister of Culture, H.E. Mr Ghazi Gulab Jamal, Government of Pakistan presented the keynote address. Mr Ejaz Ahmad Qureshi, Chief Secretary, Government of NWFP, Pakistan gave the concluding remarks.

DAY ONE

3. Inaugural session

(i) The meeting was inaugurated with a recitation from the holy Quran. The welcome remarks were made by Mr Abdul Hafeez Chaudhry, Additional Secretary for Culture. Ms Galia Saouma-Forero, Senior Programme Specialist-Culture, UNESCO Headquarters presented the programme outlining the objectives of the meeting and its expected outcomes. She gave a brief overview of the UNESCO programme for *Preservation of Endangered Moveable Cultural Assets and Museum Development* that has received special funds from USA.

(ii) Ms Saouma-Forero highlighted the significance of *Gandhara* art in Pakistan and detailed how the UNESCO project on *Preservation of Endangered Moveable Cultural Assets of Gandhara Art* would help in safeguarding such collections in the three participating museums. She said that the project in Pakistan would adhere to the UNESCO approach of stakeholder participation and consensus building for safeguarding cultural assets. She underlined the need to build a consensual platform among stakeholders, and the need to appoint a National Coordinator.

(iii) The keynote address was given by the Federal Minister of Culture, H.E. Mr Ghazi Gulab Jamal, Government of Pakistan. The Minister for Culture expressed his support for the UNESCO project on *Preservation of Endangered Moveable Cultural Assets of Gandhara Art*. In his address, the Minister declared that Government of Pakistan would assist UNESCO in every possible way to increase protection of cultural assets of *Gandhara* art and would work to develop this important cultural resource for promoting tourism. Mr Jamal also stressed the need for museums to become more proactive and to initiate outreach programmes in order to communicate the significance of *Gandhara* collections to the general public. He especially highlighted the need for transforming storage areas and for letting the public view objects held within reserves. He declared that the project was launched on 13 November 2006.

(iv) Following the keynote address, Dr Fazal Dad Kakar, Director General, Department of Archaeology and Museums, made a presentation on *Challenges and Coordination Mechanisms* related to the UNESCO project on safeguarding moveable cultural assets of *Gandhara* art. In his presentation he provided information on: museums that have *Gandhara* collections, current situation of their inventories, various governing authorities and possible coordination mechanisms for the UNESCO project. Mr Kakar underscored the need for regular meetings for strengthening cooperation between various museums and stressed the need for a standardized inventory system at the national level to mitigate some of the key threats to *Gandhara* collections in Pakistan.

4. Session One

Mr Ichiro Miyazawa, representing the Director of UNESCO Islamabad moderated the first session which included:

(i) The presentation of reformulated objectives of the project on *Preservation of Endangered Moveable Cultural Assets of Gandhara Art* by Ms Farhat Gul, National Programme Officer-Culture, UNESCO Islamabad. She introduced the project and stated its original objectives which included: inventory and documentation of the dispersed collections of the *Gandhara* art in Pakistan; preservation of endangered *Gandhara* objects in selected museums; increased knowledge and appreciation of *Gandhara* collections among scholars and the general public. Ms Gul gave justification for reformulation of the project objectives and stated that as per the initially set aims and activities, the scope of the project had become very large and there had been problems of coordination with different administrations, especially as several activities were expected to take off

simultaneously. She presented the reformulated objectives and activities that were based on consultations with stakeholders and a conservation assessment of the museums and collections identified for the project.

- (ii) The objectives are to seek increased protection of Gandhara objects in Pakistan through:
 - a) the registration of the objects in a standardized inventory system;
 - b) the establishment of proper conservation conditions of the objects on display and in reserves.

Ms Gul concluded her presentation by highlighting the issues related to preservation of Gandhara collections and those related to the coordination of the UNESCO project. At the same time she also described necessary steps to be taken for overcoming these issues.

(iii) Following the presentation on reformulated objectives, Ms Marta de la Torre, International Scientific Advisor to UNESCO, led the discussion on specific activities to be undertaken in each of the three areas of the project i.e., conservation, registration and storage reorganization. She clearly outlined the following activities to be undertaken to meet the reformulated objectives of the project.

A. Registration

- i) Museums are to adopt a common inventory system
- ii) Inventory teams are to be identified in each participating museum
- iii) Inventory teams are to be trained
- iv) The work of inventorying and registration of Gandhara collections is to be undertaken.

B. Conservation

- i) Procedures for conservation and risk mitigation are to be integrated into the registration and storage reorganization processes in order to avoid mechanical damage, catastrophic losses from natural disasters and theft.

C. Reorganization of Storage

- i) Teams for storage reorganization are to be identified in each of the participating museums
- ii) Teams for storage reorganization are to be trained
- iii) Plans and schedules for adapting the spaces are to be created.
- iv) Plans are to be implemented.

Ms Marta de la Torre underscored the significance of the project that would bring together teams from three museums to work collaboratively for preservation of endangered moveable cultural assets of Gandhara art in Pakistan. She also highlighted the key approaches on which the project would be based namely, teamwork, standardized systems and work methods and sustainability and continuity.

Ms de la Torre's presentation was followed by a brief but active discussion in which issues such as illicit trafficking, limitations of current selection criteria in Pakistan for accession of museum objects and lack of integration of conservation into archaeological practice were raised by the participants.

(iv) Session One concluded with the unanimous approval of the reformulated objectives of the project on *Preservation of the Endangered Moveable Cultural Assets of the Gandhara Art*.

5. Session Two

(i) Session Two featured a presentation on challenges faced by the three museums participating in the UNESCO project. This presentation was made by one of the national experts, Dr Ihsan Ali, Vice-Chancellor of Hazara University. He provided an overview of the facilities and Gandhara collections held in all the three museums participating in the project i.e., Peshawar Museum, SSAQ Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology and the Swat Museum. He described the different governing structures of the three museums and at the same time highlighted the fact that the bulk of Gandhara collections are in storage and need to be registered for ensuring full protection. Dr Ihsan Ali also described the recently installed computer based registration system in Peshawar museum that uses File maker Pro programme for inventory and accession database of the collections, and that could be especially adapted to record various categories of objects and materials of the Gandhara collections. Session Two concluded with a question and answer session.

6. Session Three

(i) Session Three was initiated with a presentation on the framework for project implementation by Ms Marta de la Torre, International Scientific Advisor to UNESCO, who presented the three key concepts of the UNESCO project, i.e. registration of cultural assets, their protection and promotion. She highlighted the need to adopt a preventive conservation approach to ensure continued preservation and access of the Gandhara collections. Through her presentation Ms de la Torre described the criteria and quality standards to be adopted for registration, conservation and storage reorganization in the project. She also outlined the responsibilities of the participating museums that are as follows:

- a) Nominate team members and notify UNESCO Islamabad and the Project Coordinator.
- b) Gather information needed for the training component of the project.
- c) Present priorities for conservation and inventories.
- d) Agree on workflow.
- e) Observe work plans and schedules.
- f) Adhere to reporting procedures.

(ii) The presentation of the framework of the project was followed by a description of the type of training for conservation and storage reorganization to be adopted for the project. The presentation was made by Ms Aparna Tandon, Project Specialist, ICCROM (International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of the Cultural Property).

To build capacity in the participating museums for conservation and storage reorganization, ICCROM will be collaborating with UNESCO for training the respective teams for storage reorganization in each of the participating museums. Through her presentation Ms Tandon highlighted the ICCROM experience of providing context specific training that respects the existing resources and administrative structures. Ms Tandon said that teamwork, strategic approach for risk mitigation, critical thinking, efficient use of existing resources and innovation would be some of the key concepts underlining the training component of the project. She also outlined quality criteria that need to be adopted by the participating museums to transform their storage areas into functional spaces ensuring preservation of Gandhara collections and facilitating access to them.

(iii) A conservation assessment of the Gandhara collections in the participating museums was carried out. Mr Rohit Jigyasu, Conservation Architect and Planner had carried out the conservation assessment prior to the Experts Meeting. Mr Jigyasu presented the results of his assessment in the third session. He highlighted the urgent need for registration and proper storage conditions for Gandhara collections and enlisted several risks that could result in damage or loss. He stressed the need for an integrated approach for risk mitigation that would take into consideration the state of conservation of the buildings in which Gandhara collections are housed.

The third session concluded with a lively discussion on preventive conservation and the need for adopting proper inventory systems. One of the invited national experts, Dr Asma Ibrahim, said that there is a great need for establishing protocols for de-accessioning of objects in museum collections, especially those objects which are copies/imitation and consume otherwise limited resources of museums in Pakistan. She also stressed on the need for evolving ethics for museum practice at the national level in Pakistan.

7. Summary of first day

Agreement was reached on the following points:

- (i) the consensual platform means: one project but three museums; therefore all the training workshops will include the three museum teams, which shall adopt standardized work methods; accept the procedures and work flows; observe the adopted standards; adhere to reporting procedures; accept the monitoring of the activities; and commit their institutions to complete the activities within the time frame;
- (ii) the training workshops will be held only in the North-Western Frontier Province, and they will be limited to the teams of the three museums (3 to 6 persons each);
- (iii) the final outputs of the project, such as the manuals describing standard procedures and guidelines, shall be translated in Urdu, by the project, and disseminated to museum professionals in Pakistan;
- (iv) the project funds will be earmarked by taking into account local needs, expenses, and available local human resources;
- (v) the personnel from the selected museums shall be trained to ensure sustainability and to enhance their capacities by the end of the pilot project.

DAY TWO

8. Session One

The second day of the meeting started with a closed session which was attended by the Curators in charge of the three participating museums, Director General, Department of Archaeology and Museums, the six invited national and international experts and UNESCO staff. The closed session was organized to evolve consensus on a work plan to implement the project on the *Preservation of the Endangered Moveable Cultural Assets of Gandhara Art*.

- i) Ms Galia Saouma-Forero, Senior Programme Specialist-Culture, UNESCO Headquarters moderated the closed session. The session was initiated with a brief review of the proceedings of

day one. The expected outcomes of the closed session were outlined, and more specifically the preparation of a work plan consistent with the adopted objectives and 18 month timeframe.

It provided a unique opportunity to explain to the stakeholders: (a) the activities that shall be undertaken in their logical sequences; (b) the limited resources to be assigned to priority activities in accordance with existing local expertise; (c) the modus operandi of UNESCO projects.

ii) The first half hour of the session was devoted to the discussion on the identification of registration and storage reorganization teams in each of the participating museum. All three museums assured the UNESCO representatives that requisite staff time would be allocated for the implementation of the project. Dr Kakar, the Director-General of the Department of Archaeology and Museums assured his full cooperation and committed to depute two curators and one computer operator to the Swat Museum (one of the participating museums) for the duration of the project.

iii) The discussions then focused on the need for a project coordinator, his/her profile and job description. It was agreed that the project coordinator would be a museum professional, preferably with a background in Archaeology. He/she should have advanced skills in communication as well as management. He/she should also have a sound knowledge of computerized databases.

iv) With consensus, the group agreed to implement the project in a phased manner. For each phase action steps to be taken in the areas of registration, conservation and storage reorganization were clarified by international experts Ms Marta de la Torre, Mr Rohit Jigyasu and Ms Aparna Tandon respectively. The group also discussed in detail the mechanisms for monitoring and reporting. It was agreed that the Project Coordinator would submit periodic reports on implementation of the various phases of the project in Islamabad every two months.

After discussions, the following work plan was agreed upon.

iv) Phase I : (30 November 2006 - 31 January 2007)

Registration and storage (the processes have to be integrated)

Preliminary steps:

1. Teams from participating museums will be established upon receipt of written recommendations by the Heads of the selected museums, to be submitted to the UNESCO/Islamabad Office, and their profiles will be approved by the International Scientific Advisor and ICCROM;
2. A National Project Coordinator shall be recruited by UNESCO/Islamabad according to the profile discussed during the experts meeting. Each stakeholder will submit potential candidatures. The evaluation will be carried out by UNESCO/Islamabad and the appointment made in consultation with the Ministry of Culture;
3. The facilities of the documentation Centre in Peshawar are to be used as office of the Project Coordinator.
4. **The registration form currently in use by Peshawar Museum is to be used to develop a common form and for all the participating museums for documentation of Gandhara collections.** However, UNESCO is to facilitate consultations with international experts for documentation of collections to revise existing forms, foresee their future update, and any

recommendations for backing-up of software and database storage in order to reach a common agreement.

5. Each museum will provide UNESCO Islamabad with a list of materials and equipment for the documentation component of the project.
6. A questionnaire will be sent by ICCROM for information gathering to enable ICCROM to customize the content of the workshops, which will define the process for the reorganisation of the reserves and its implementation.
7. Each museum will provide floor plans, information on status of the building, equipment needed for moving collections etc., as part of the questionnaire to be sent by ICCROM for the preparation of the information dossiers required for the first training and planning exercise.

Phase 2: (1 February - 30 April 2007)

1. **Introductory workshop for documentation will be held during February-March 2007. The workshop will be aimed at training the teams of the participating museums for the use of computerized systems, use of common terms, completion of the forms etc. As part of the workshop each museum team will set documentation priorities as well as procedures, and prepare calendars for the documentation of the objects.**
2. Training and Planning Exercise of maximum 4-5 weeks duration will be held at the SSAQ museum, Peshawar in April 2007. It will be attended by the conservation and storage reorganization teams of three participating museums. The training will establish timeline, plans for conservation and reorganization of storage areas including lists of necessary supplies and equipment. After the training and planning exercise, the teams will be engaged throughout the project in reorganizing/upgrading existing storages facilities and working in close collaboration with the teams in charge of the documentation process.

Attendance of the museum teams will be compulsory for the entire duration of the two training and planning sessions.

Phase 3: (1 May - 30 November 2007)

1. The work of conservation, storage reorganization and documentation of collections will continue and the plans will be implemented in the three participating museums.
2. Technical monitoring missions will be undertaken upon specific requests from the participating museums to support the work of documentation, conservation and storage reorganization.
3. Guidelines and procedures to be developed by the teaching teams in close collaboration with the project coordinator for reference purposes within participating institutions and eventually for wider dissemination.
4. Technical review meeting of 7-10 days duration will be held to review progress and if needed readjust work plans. Two days will be devoted to reviewing and assessing all the components of the project. An independent evaluator will attend the technical review meeting.

5. At the request of the National Project Coordinator, participating museums will prepare their respective plans for publications such as catalogues, inventories, promotional materials and submit them to UNESCO Islamabad

Phase 4: (1 December 2007- 30 April 2008)

1. The evaluation process will be completed.
2. The plans for publications and preparation of promotional materials will be implemented.
3. Final report will be submitted.

9. Session Two

Dr Farooq Swati, Provost/Chairman, Department of Archaeology, University of Peshawar moderated the second and the final session of the Experts Meeting. The objectives and the work plan for the project, *Preservation of Endangered Moveable Cultural Assets of Gandhara* were endorsed by the participants of the meeting.

Prof. Haroon Rahshid, Vice Chancellor of Peshawar University in his concluding remarks assured full cooperation and support of the Peshawar University for the UNESCO Project and offered the facilities of the University to host the training workshops of the project.

The formal valedictory note was presented by Mr Ghulam Dastagir, Additional Chief Secretary, Government of NWFP. Mr. Dastagir expressed his appreciation of the initiative for the preservation of Gandhara Collections and promised to extend full support for the project.

Ms Saouma-Forero thanked all the participants for their participation and noted that “a learning process has been engaged”, and the foundations of a consensual platform laid down.

Ms Farhat Gul, National Programme Officer-Culture thanked the Peshawar University, the Government of NWFP, the Department of Archaeology and Museums and the participants for a successful meeting.

PRESERVATION OF ENDANGERED MOVEABLE CULTURAL ASSETS OF GANDHARA ART

**Experts Meeting
Peshawar, 13-14 November 2006**

