

## **AIPS Travel Grant Final Report**

Project Title: Exhibiting Pakistan, Italian Style: Partition and the Exhibition of Buddhist Sculpture in Italian Museums

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Conference: Exhibit Asia: Partition and the Transition to Nation States in South and East Asia

Location: Royal Holloway, University of London (Egham, UK)

Dates: 31 August- 2 September, 2023

### 1. Significance to Pakistan Studies

My conference paper made a number of contributions to the study of the history of Pakistan, particularly to scholarship on the history of archaeology and museums in Pakistan in the 1950s and 1960s. In particular, this conference paper discussed the impact of the collaborations between Pakistani archaeologists and museum curators and Italian archaeologists and curators in the excavation and exhibition of Buddhist artifacts from ancient Gandhara in the 1950s and 1960s. In so doing, my paper contributed to ongoing interdisciplinary efforts to study the history of archaeology and museums in Pakistan. More broadly, the paper addressed how the international exhibition of art and archaeological artifacts from Pakistan shaped the making of influential narratives of ancient history and art history in Pakistan in the early postcolonial period. While the impact of the Italian Archaeological Mission to Pakistan is widely known to archaeologists, it has been less studied by historians of modern South Asia. Therefore, my ongoing research (of which this paper was a part) examine the cultural and historical impact of Pakistani-Italian archaeological and museum collaborations in the 1950s and 1960s.

In turn, the larger conference, “Exhibit Asia: Partition and the Transition to Nation States in South and East Asia” at Royal Holloway (University of London), addressed the history of museums and exhibits in Pakistan in comparison to museums in other post-partition nations in South Asia and East Asia. Therefore, the conference opened-up valuable opportunities for comparative research for historians of Pakistan as well as for interdisciplinary collaborations between art historians, historians, and anthropologists who work on Pakistan.

### 2. Key Outcomes and Deliverables

#### **Key Outcomes**

- The opportunity to present at the “Exhibit Asia” conference was an invaluable opportunity to get helpful feedback on my paper (and my ongoing research on the history of Buddhist art in Pakistani museums and on the collaborations between Pakistani and Italian archaeologists and museum curators in the excavation and exhibition of Gandharan art, which AIPS has generously funded.)
- Participating in this conference also opened-up new opportunities for international collaborations on the history of Pakistan. Specifically, the opportunity to attend this conference enabled me to connect with art historians and scholars in Pakistan, including

scholars at the National College of Arts (NCA) in Lahore, and to plan future collaborations with them on the history of museums and archaeology in Pakistan.

- Participating in this conference also introduced me to scholarship on post-partition/ post-division exhibits and museums in mid-twentieth century East Asia and Southeast Asia that will offer valuable comparative insights to my ongoing research on the history of museums and archaeology in Pakistan.

### **Deliverables**

- In terms of deliverables, the conference gave me the opportunity to develop and write a paper that I will submit (in the near future) for consideration as an article to a peer-reviewed journal.
- At the conference, I also learned about exciting new digital public history teaching tools (including new additions to the “Heritage Lab” website) on the history of Pakistan. This will directly enrich my teaching on the history of South Asia and Pakistan.
- This conference made possible future interdisciplinary collaborations with art historians, historians, and anthropologists who work on Pakistan in the United States, in Pakistan, and in the UK. This will lead to future publications and conference panels.