

Inventorying and Documentation of the Collection at Taxila Museum

The Museum

Taxila Museum is an archaeological site museum situated about 35 kilometres from Islamabad. Its collection is rich and varied, mainly comprising centuries old Gandharan antiquities that principally come from the archeologically sites of Bhir Mound, Sirkap, Sirsukh and the monasteries and stupas of Dharma Rajika, Julian and Mohra Muradu. The collection dates back from 6th Century BC to 5th Century AD.

The museum displays sculptures from Taxila valley, depicting life stories of Buddha from his birth to death, small statuettes and large size stucco sculptures, presumed to be the earliest sculptures at Taxila, and fragments of architecture and other miscellaneous objects in chronological order. Beside the Gandharan collection, ceramic vessels, metal-wares, iron and copper implements and tools, terracotta figurines, pottery, toilet trays, ivory objects, charred wheat, wood and mica sheets are also on exhibition in the museum. Additionally, the museum has a rich and exquisite collection of gold and silver jewellery, silver vases, seals and coins which are exhibited in a special room. The museum is visited by a big number of national and international tourists, including school children and families.

The Taxila Museum has great potential to serve as a source of knowledge and research for scholars, students and youth in general. However, the limited human and financial resources could not allow this potential to be tapped so far. The full potential of the museum can be realized and offered to the public through collaborative research on its collection.

Total Budget:	USD 127,690
Time Frame:	18 months
Dates:	July 2016 to December 2017

The Challenges

The Taxila Museum currently does not have any computerized inventorying system and still practices the traditional system of manual registration. The existing system has a number of drawbacks: high chances of error and duplication; it's time consuming, laborious and lacks security. There is a need to preserve and secure its objects, as well as ensure the integrity of its collection when used and stored. In addition to the absence of professional and modern system of inventory, the museum also struggles with regular control of collection.

Due to lack of adequate records, a large number of



Taxila Museum ©UNESCO

museum objects are still lying in dilapidated condition in the store of Taxila Museum. The recent incidents of destruction and looting of archaeological sites and museums internationally, and the prevailing practices of illicit trafficking of museum objects in the region point to the urgent need to establish a standardized digital inventory of the Taxila Museum objects. An inventory is an essential tool to protect a museum and prevent illicit trafficking of museum objects. It also facilitates the sound management of collection's mobility.



Taxila Museum ©UNESCO

The Project Rationale

The museum reflects a rich history and varied achievements of the people of Taxila during the last four thousand years. It is a great source of information about the socio-economic and religious life of the people of Gandhara civilization, which occupied a unique geographical position connected to China and Tibet in the east and imperial Rome in the west. A vast treasure of knowledge and wisdom is associated with this wide range of museum objects which needs to be researched and documented.

To address these issues, the SDC launched the 'Inventorying and Documentation of the Collection



at Taxila Museum' project in July 2016 in collaboration with United Nations Education, Scientific, Culture Organisation (UNESCO) as its implementing partner.

The project is designed to achieve three main objectives: 1) to accomplish documentation and cataloguing of the collections, 2) to establish a standardized digital inventorying system, and 3) to educate and engage the youth through transmission of knowledge on the museum collection.

Project Partners

- UNESCO
- Department of Archaeology,
Government of Punjab and Taxila Museum
- Local Academia / NGOs

The Swiss intervention will facilitate engagement of an international museum expert for assessment of the existing practices and policy of managing the museum's collection, and development of a strategy on research, documentation, inventorying and training the relevant staff as per international guidelines. Strong linkages will be established with relevant academic and research institutions to identify areas and modalities of research. Through an IT expert or a software solution company, a prototype web portal/data entry interface will be developed and errors and issues identified while digitally inventorying the objects. For this purpose, staff will be given trainings on professional data entry by using digital resources.

Through this initiative, Switzerland supports the

concerned authorities in preserving one of the most famous ancient museums in Pakistan, preventing its precious collections from being depleted and/or misused, and turning it into a research platform from where scholars and Pakistani youth can benefit. SDC believes that protection and preservation of culture and art contributes effectively to promoting diversity, tolerance and peace.

Further information

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