**2026 CONFERENCE WEBSITE**

**INITIAL CONTENT**

**THIRD INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE**

**ON**

**EXPLORING THE BUDDHIST HERITAGE OF PAKISTAN THROUGH MULTIDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH**

**Islamabad, March 27-31, 2026**

**INTRODUCTION**

Pakistan is a holy land for millions of Buddhist devotees around the world. It is the cradle of the famous Gandhara Buddhist art and iconography. It is the birthplace of renowned Buddhist philosophers and spiritual masters like Asanga, Vasubhandhu, Guru Rinpoche and Monk Marananta. The two brothers, Asanga and Vasubhandha, lived in Peshawar, then known as Purushapura, in the 4th century CE. They became prominent Buddhist philosophers by shaping Buddhist thought for centuries to come.

Guru Rinpoche (also known as Padmasambhava) was from the Swat valley. He is venerated as the “second Buddha” by adherents of Buddhism in Bhutan, Nepal and China. The monk Marananta is believed to be from Chhota Lahore in today’s Swabi district. He travelled from Chhota Lahore to Korea through China and preached Buddhism there.

Gandhara of Pakistan is home to the ancient and highly sacred Buddhist stupas and monasteries in Taxila Valley, Mardan, Swabi, Swat and many other parts of Pakistan. Buddhist manuscripts discovered in Gandhara dating back to the 2nd century CE are the oldest surviving collection of Buddhist texts in the world.  As a holy land of Buddhism, Pakistan houses the Buddhist heritage of unmatched significance for devotees, scholars and students of Buddhism to explore.

The Fo Guang Shan Education Centre Malaysia, Taxila Institute of Archaeology and Civilizations at Quaid-i-Azam University, Directorate of Archaeology and Museums, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Silk Road Centre are jointly organizing the third international conference to promote the Buddhist heritage of Pakistan for knowledge development, peace and prosperity. The event features research sessions and post-conference tours to key Buddhist sites in Gandhara.

**PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVE**

This year’s conference is designed to engage a wide range of stakeholders including scholars, faith leaders, conservation specialists, tour operators, and young researcher in knowledge development, conservation discourse, and dialogue to preserve and promote the Buddhist heritage of Pakistan dating back to the 3rd century BC.

**CONFERENCE FORMAT**

Following two successful events in 2022 and 2024, the 2026 conference will feature in-person panel discussions, presentations and talks for two days starting on Friday, March 27, 2026. The conference will be followed by guided tours to key ancient Buddhist sites and museums in the Gandhara region of Pakistan.

***Research Sessions***

The research sessions will follow a format of panel discussions providing an opportunity to multiple presenters to speak on a common sub-theme of the conference. There can be multiple concurrent sessions depending on the number of presenters on one theme. Research presenters will be encouraged to rely less on paper reading and lecturing and use more engaging techniques to present their research. Presentations by the panelists will be followed by questions and answers.

***Guided Tours***

After two days of the conference, conference attendees will be offered flexible 1 to 3-day itineraries to visit key Buddhist heritage sites and museums in Gandhara such as Islamabad, Taxila, Peshawar, Mardan, and Swat.

**CONFERENCE THEME AND SUB-THEMES**

The 2026 conference aims to bring together and engage key stakeholders in a meaningful dialogue on preserving and promoting the Buddhist heritage of Pakistan for peace and prosperity. Centered around research and knowledge development, the conference theme and sub-themes will explore the significance of Buddhist heritage and emphasize the need to protect it as a vital cultural and economic asset for the development of Pakistan. This multi-disciplinary conference will address a range of topics covering history, archaeology, art, architecture, the use of technology, and the impact of climate change on cultural heritage.

***Conference 2026 Theme***

*Exploring the Buddhist Heritage of Pakistan through Multidisciplinary Research*

***Sub-themes***

1. **Buddhism in Gandhara and Its Transmission Beyond:** This will cover research on the development and transmission of Buddhism in Gandhara and its spread across Asia. Research contributions will examine the role of Gandhara as a cultural crossroads in the broader Buddhist world.
2. **The Gandhara Legacy - New Excavations, Discoveries and Interpretations:** This area will include research on recent archaeological findings, fieldwork, and reinterpretations of the history and material culture of Gandhara. This sub-theme will highlight how new evidence is reshaping our understanding of the region’s Buddhist past and its dynamics.
3. **Conservation and Management of Buddhist Sites - Challenges and Opportunities:** This sub-theme focuses on the preservation of Buddhist heritage in Pakistan. Research contributions will examine issues such as site management, legal frameworks, stakeholder collaboration, and sustainable tourism. Contributors are invited to share case studies, research and analysis to safeguarding cultural heritage.
4. **Impact of Climate Change on Cultural Heritage:** As climate change increasingly threatens heritage sites, this sub-theme seeks interdisciplinary research addressing its effects on Buddhist monuments and landscapes. Topics will include risk assessment, climate adaptation strategies, and integration of environmental science in heritage preservation.
5. **Use of Technology and Innovation in Buddhist Heritage Conservation:** This sub-theme invites research that explores the role of technology and digital tools in the documentation, analysis, and conservation of Buddhist heritage. This includes range of applications from 3D modeling and GIS to virtual reconstructions and possibly AI.

**IMPORTANT DATES**

Contributors and conference attendees are requested to take note of the dates below to ensure their participation in the conference.

***Submission of Proposals***

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| September 30, 2025 | Deadline for submission of abstracts |
| October 31, 2025 | Notification of decision to contributors |
| December 15, 2025 | Submission of full papers |
| December 31, 2025 | Deadline for registration of presenters/attendees |
| January 31, 2026 | Finalize conference program |
| February 28, 2026 | Publish final program |

**ABSTRACT SUBMISSION GUIDELINES**

Authors are requested to send in their abstracts for review by the Conference Academic Committee, comprising research scholars and academics. The Academic Committee shall not accept full papers prior to submission and approval of abstracts. Authors of selected abstracts will be notified to submit full research papers within the specified. Contributors are requested to send their abstracts on or before the closing date of **September 30, 2025**. While preparing your abstracts, please note that:

1. Abstracts must be relevant to any of the conference sub-themes.
2. The word count for abstracts is 150-300. Abstracts exceeding word limit will not be considered.
3. Abstracts should be structured as follows:

• Background and aim of research

• Methodology, Analysis and Results

• Conclusion and implications

1. Contributors are requested to use the **following format** to send in abstracts:

|  |
| --- |
| **BHP Conference 2026 - Format for Submission of Abstracts** |
| Name of Author |  |
| Co-Author/s (*if any*) |  |
| Author Email  |  |
| Author WhatsApp/Phone Number |  |
| Title of the Paper |  |
| Conference Sub-theme |  |
| Abstract (150 to 300 words) |

1. Please send your Abstracts to: abstract@pakistanbuddhistheritage.org