GANDHARA AND PROSPECTS OF RELIGIOUS TOURISM IN PAKISTAN

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GANDHARA AS WORLDWIDE POPULAR WORD

• It conjures up:
  1) an image of sophisticated art
  2) memory of a widely followed religion (Buddhism)
  3) most importantly the idea of peace and sacrality

• All this can be used as a utilitarian vehicle in the framework of sustainable development and cultural dynamism.
PARTS OF THIS PRESENTATION ARE:

1) Geographical distribution of Gandhara

2) Socio-cultural landscape: sacred places and settlement phenomena

3) Some normative observations
GEOGRAPHY OF GANDHARA
The socio-religious heritage represented by the word Gandhara, if properly conceptualized and operationalized, can offer vital opportunities for religious tourism in Pakistan.

However, before delineating such prospects, let’s define what religious tourism is.
RELIGIOUS TOURISM DEFINED

• The concept of religious tourism represents a broader phenomenon as compared to pilgrimage. Pilgrimage is motivated by pure religious pursuits of piety and merit. A shrine or cultic place is considered as sacred due to divine presence or its benign reflection.

• Religious tourism, with the religious element as one of its leading objectives, also entail educational aspects. Sacred places are visited en route but they do not form the points of destination.

• ‘Tourism so understood is pursued to contribute to learning about the rich cultural heritage of the whole human family’. (M. Ostrowski)
SIGNIFICANCE OF GANDHARA IN THE CONTEXT OF RELIGIOUS TOURISM

• The monumental heritage of Gandhara consists of:
  1) stupas and monasteries
  2) urban/settlement sites
  3) rock art
TAXILA
GILGIT BALTISTAN

• Since 1979
• Pak-German Study Group
• Dani and Jattmar
Swat is important from two points of views:
1) Mahayana tradition
2) Vajrayana tradition
SWAT

PHOTO COURTESY: ITALIAN ARCHAEOLOGICAL MISSION
SWAT, TO KAR-DARA
PHOTO COURTESY: ITALIAN ARCHAEOLOGICAL MISSION
SWAT, KAKAI-KANDAO

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TOURISM POTENTIALS

• Buddhist world comprises:
  1) considerable number of people: app. 500 million
  2) China 244 million (app.); largely Mahayanists
  3) total followers of Mahayana Buddhism, aka Eastern Buddhism, are app. 360 million
  4) Vajrayana, Northern Buddhism, is followed by around 18.2 million people

• Beside this, Gandhara can attract a considerable number of visitors for educational and recreational purposes
NORMATIVE OBSERVATIONS

- Cultural policy (?)
- Sense of history and ownership
- Lack of historical consciousness is responsible for the thinking and practice of otherizing
- Dynamic tourism is preconditioned by local peoples’ socio-cultural openness, especially a sense and respect for other faiths.
- Remaining alert to pilgrims and others’ religious and cultural sensitivities must be accompanied by provision of other facilities.
Gandhara presents a deserted view:
One of the pre-requisites of sustainable tourism is successful and strategic popularization.

- Media, publications, lectures
- Wheeler and Dani (publications, cultural caravans, lectures, Unesco, GB)
- Luca and ACT
ACADEMIA-COMMUNITY-TOURISM

• Strong academia – providing scholarly and intellectual foundation – is needed.

• Present state of academia in Pakistan

• Locals also shall be a target audience so as to inculcate in them ethics which are highly required in the framework of tourism.

• And all this, no doubt, conditions the future of productive religious tourism in Pakistan.
TO CONCLUDE WITH:

• We shall not only ‘throw light on the past of Gandhara but also to push forward the land and people of Gandhara towards newer and newer goals of activity. In the new historical context of Asian history Gandhara lies at the cross-roads of this history but that history unfortunately lies unheard of and finds no place in the current studies. . . . Let Gandhara of the past stand as a solid foundation for the better Gandhara of the future.’

(Prof. Ahmad Hasan Dani)
PROF. DANI TURFAN, SILK ROAD EXPEDITION
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SWAT
THANKS.