

## **8. Conservation of Cultural Heritage and Tourism in Pakistan**

**Atsushi Noguchi**

### **Abstract**

The Islamic Republic of Pakistan has a lot of diverse cultural heritage resources. The two major Harappan sites, Mohenjo Daro and Harappa, are well-known as well as the Gandharan Buddhist remains in the northwest.

Practices of protection and conservation of cultural heritage in Pakistan were established in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century under the British rule. After the independence, DOAM (the Department of Archaeology and Museum) plays the key role in federal administration sector, while Peshawar University, Quid-e-Azam University and other universities have helped to establish the necessary academic foundation. However, since 2010, after the eighteenth constitutional amendment, situation has drastically changed. It is said that major authority for the protection and conservation of cultural heritage has been moved to the provincial government. However, the interpretation of the amendment is still in under controversy.

Another problem is the decline of tourism due to security conditions. Once the cultural heritage sites and historic monuments were major destinations for foreign tourists. For instance, there were plenty of Japanese tourists in Gandharan sites in 1990s, but only a few in the recent years. Decline of tourism affects the conservation of cultural heritage. Decrease of social presence and importance, especially loss of economic efficiency, induces the public neglect of cultural heritage. Such a tendency causes poor conservation, vandalism, looting and smuggling, or all other type of infringements to the cultural heritage resources. But we have to understand that this is, basically, not motivated by religious ideology, but is related to the general awareness on the material culture, which is not only limited to the case of cultural heritage.

The Pakistani government is looking for the recovery of tourism on cultural heritage sites. Of course, the measures for restoration of security are very important. In the meantime, several other attempts for attracting the foreign tourists are being made. Collaboration between tourism and religion is one of the focal areas. Buddhist delegates from South Korea, Bhutan and Sri Lanka are being invited to visit Taxila Museum and other Gandharan sites for pilgrimage. Delegates are allowed to offer prayers in the sites. Even the golden casket which was discovered at the Dharmarajika Stupa, believed to contain the relics of Buddha and stored in the Taxila Museum is lent to Sri Lanka during the Vesak Festival. Interestingly, the casket is treated as an archaeological material and a museum collection by the Pakistani side, while Sri Lankans treat it as the holy, religious relic. For this relic, the custodian from the Pakistani side is a museum curator and his Sri Lankan counterpart is a Buddhist monk. Allowance and perception of tolerant and fluid treatment of the artefact seems to be key for cooperation between different religions and cultures. This may be one possible means for further development of religious tourism on cultural heritage.

The other important progress is the development of non-governmental or non-profit sectors. Besides the activities of both federal and provincial governments, the role of NGO/NPO sectors increases year by year. The character of private activity of NGO/NPO sectors is closely connected to the local communities. Conservation works are seamlessly conjoined with social awareness on the importance of cultural heritage. The source of NGO/NPO's activity is mainly private sponsors and donation programs of the religious organizations. Therefore, NGO/NPO are eager to promote their activity among the public. Then such promotion itself becomes a good attempt of dissemination of cultural heritage for public awareness. The rise and rapid growth of NGO/NPO sector depict another potential of future development on conservation of cultural heritage in relation to tourism.

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