

From colonial Greece to postcolonial Rome? Re-orienting ancient Pakistan in museum guides in the 1950s and 1960s

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Introduction

In 1956, the National Museum of Pakistan, a recently established institution in Karachi, launched a new exhibit on Buddhist sculpture from Gandhāra to mark ‘the 2500th anniversary of the birth of the Buddha’ (*Gandhara Sculpture in the National Museum of Pakistan* 1956: 3).¹ To celebrate this new exhibit, Pakistan’s Department of Archaeology published *Gandhara Sculpture in the National Museum of Pakistan* to go along with the new exhibit. The anonymous exhibit organizers flagged two important elements of this ancient Buddhist sculpture for the newly created Muslim-majority nation-state of Pakistan. First, the exhibit organizers noted that in the first century BC, ‘Buddhist sages made Gandhāra a sacred region’ through the production of texts that connected ‘local sites with previous incarnations of the Buddha.’ Second, they emphasized the alleged Roman influences on ancient Gandhāra. In their own words, ‘Mediterranean influence, first from Greece by way of Iran, and more directly and for a longer period from the Roman Empire, gave Gandhāra sculpture the character which distinguishes it from all other Buddhist art’ (*Gandhara Sculpture in the National Museum of Pakistan* 1956: 3). In turn, the exhibit organizers celebrated this ‘fusion of Buddhist forms with Mediterranean humanistic style’ as ‘forming a part of Pakistan’s own cultural heritage’ (*Gandhara Sculpture in the National Museum of Pakistan* 1956: 4).

Elsewhere, I have discussed how some early Pakistani curators and public intellectuals publicized ancient Buddhist artefacts to make sense of Pakistan’s recent creation as a religious homeland in the mid-twentieth century through the valorization of Gandhāra as a ‘sacred region’ (Amstutz 2019). Here, I unpack the second claim of this 1956 museum guide: that ‘Mediterranean influence’ from the Roman Empire had forged ‘a part of Pakistan’s own culture heritage’ through a ‘fusion’ with ‘Buddhist forms’ in Gandhāran sculpture. Expanding upon the juxtaposition of ‘colonial’ and ‘postcolonial’ with Greece and Rome in the title, this essay begins to investigate whether a shift in attribution from ancient Greece to ancient Rome in some Pakistani museum exhibits on Gandhāra was partially shaped by the mid-twentieth century transition from empire to independence. Specifically, this essay explores how M.A. Shakur, the longtime curator of the Peshawar Museum, jettisoned a British colonial model of ‘Graeco-Buddhist art’ for an alternative model of ancient Roman influence on Gandhāra in his 1954 guide to the Peshawar Museum. I argue that a gradual shift in emphasis from alleged Hellenistic influences to Roman ones was a component of the incorporation of Gandhāran artefacts into an imagined ancient past for Pakistan. Specifically, his shift from alleged Greek influence to alleged Roman influence gave Shakur the opportunity to distance Pakistan from some of the problematic colonial framing of Gandhāra in terms of ‘western’ influence, while still positioning the ancient territories of Pakistan as somehow different from ancient India. As will be discussed in more detail below, in making this turn from Greece to Rome, Shakur built upon new archaeological scholarship in the 1940s and 1950s. In particular, Shakur’s career suggests the important place of Pakistan in wider public-facing intellectual projects to recover, commemorate, and imagine traces of ancient Rome in the Indian subcontinent that began before the 1947 end of empire and continued into the early postcolonial era.

¹ I would like to express my gratitude for the generous feedback that I received during the online Gandhāra Connections workshop on ‘The Rediscovery and Reception of Gandhāran Art’ on 24th-26th March 2021 and to Professor Peter Stewart for kindly inviting me to participate in the workshop.

There is a rich and growing body of scholarly work on archaeology and nationalism in South Asia, or in Nayanjot Lahiri's compelling phrasing, the pairing of 'ancient heritage and modern histories' (Lahiri 2012: 4). This essay builds upon Lahiri's argument that the 'modern histories of ... archaeological relics' reveal some of 'the conceptions, contradictions, and conflicts of modern India' (Lahiri 2012: 5), while shifting the focus to Pakistan. It also attends to how the study of the exhibition of Gandhāran art in early post-colonial Pakistan can contribute to larger historiographical debates over the politics of the ancient past in modern South Asia or what Mrinalini Rajagopalan terms the 'polyphonous' and 'dynamic' histories of monuments in India (Rajagopalan 2016: 6).

The late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century construction of an Indian art historical canon with Indian sculpture at its centre was used to critique the British colonial celebration of classical Graeco-Roman sculptures as allegedly superior to those of the Indian subcontinent (Guha-Thakurta 2004; K. Singh 2015: 110). Specifically, the rejection of Gandhāra – and a critique of the British colonial embrace of Gandhāran sculpture as influenced by ancient Greece and Rome – lay at the heart of the making of an Indian art-historical canon (Guha-Thakurta 2004: 186-187). If 'a systematic inversion of the Gandhāra bias' became an important element in the making of a national art history for India (Guha-Thakurta 2004: 186), how do we make sense of M.A. Shakur's seeming embrace of this 'Gandhāra bias' in early Pakistan?

In answering this question, it is important to emphasize that this essay does not constitute an evaluation of the archaeological accuracy of claims of Greek or Roman influence, but rather an assessment of the political and ideological contexts that shaped the production and reception of public-facing museum guides and popular archaeological publications in the early postcolonial era. However, I would like to call attention to recent scholarship on Gandhāra that has critically evaluated the search for the 'influence', 'origin', and 'essence' of Gandhāran art (Falser 2015: 10, 14, 21). Maurizio Taddei, Michael Falser, and Anna Filigenzi, among many other scholars, have brilliantly traced the changing understandings of the local and trans-regional influences on Gandhāra in earlier generations of archaeological scholarship (Taddei 1980; Filigenzi 2012; Falser 2015). While the curators and authors who are studied in this essay largely left a binary model of western influence on local Buddhist art intact in their publications in the 1950s, recent scholarship has explored alternative approaches to the development of Gandhāran art that emphasize 'cultural, aesthetic, and technical dynamism' (Olivieri and Filigenzi 2018: 90), locally adaptable 'models' and 'adaptive forms' (Filigenzi 2012: 137), 'multiple, inter-cultural links' rather than 'a presumed binary, linear relationship with the classical world' (Rienjang and Stewart 2020: vi), and the multifaceted development of Gandhāra imagery beyond a 'singular, linear process' (Rhi 2018: 49). In this vein, Himanshu Prabha Ray has argued for the substitution of a 'multiplicity of trading partners and their cross-cultural links' for an 'earlier model of the civilizing influence of the Greeks or the Romans' (Ray 2008: 210-212).

There also has been a recent scholarly turn towards examining the shifting discursive construction of the category of Gandhāran art from the colonial era to the present (Falser 2015: 3; Ray 2017: 232). In his influential article tracing 'the various attempts to appropriate the Gandhāran style for different ideological ends' (Falser 2015: 19), Michael Falser provides a nuanced analysis of the development of Gandhāra as an art-historical category, especially the deployment of Gandhāra within narratives of 'national or universal cultural heritage' (Falser 2015: 5). In turn, Falser tracks shifts during the colonial era in the attribution of Gandhāra to Greek and Roman influences, as well as the origins of critiques of these attributions (Falser 2015: 19-21, 33).² Of particular relevance for this essay is Falser's analysis of

² Falser builds on the important scholarly work of Maurizio Taddei in the examination of Gandhāra scholarship as a 'storia ideologica' (Falser 2015: 39). In his account, Taddei played a transformative role in the 'pluralisation, diversification, and, at the same time, de-ideologisation' of the category of Gandhāran art (Falser 2015: 39).

the ‘re-nationalization’ of Gandhāran art (Falser 2015: 6) in which the dual framing of Gandhāra as ‘a peaceful element within a history of world or universal art’ and its simultaneous ‘regionalization into ... [a] quasi natural element of today’s Muslim ... nation states of Pakistan and Afghanistan’ ultimately solidified in a post-9/11 moment (Falser 2015: 49). Turning to an earlier period, this essay investigates the development of this narrative of Gandhāra sculpture as a ‘fusion’ between ‘Buddhist forms’ and ‘Mediterranean styles’ that constituted a central component of Pakistan’s ancient ‘cultural heritage’ in museum guides and popular archaeological publications in the 1950s and 1960s.

The first section of the essay below examines how M.A. Shakur, the curator of the Peshawar Museum, reworked a colonial exhibit of Gandhāran artefacts to jettison a British colonial emphasis on ancient Greek influence for an embrace of alleged ancient Roman influence in 1954. If Gandhāra served as a historical mirror in which early post-colonial Pakistani museum curators could imagine the contours of ancient Pakistan, it was a territory divorced from India and connected westward. The second section then addresses Shakur’s international collaborations with R.E.M. Wheeler and Benjamin Rowland in order to place his 1954 revisions within wider professional exchanges and popular archaeological publications. Finally, the third section engages both the endurance of this shift to Rome in Pakistan through an analysis of an influential Urdu history of Gandhāra and its disavowal.

From colonial Greece to postcolonial Rome

In 1954, Mohammad Abdul (M.A.) Shakur published a revised guide to the Peshawar Museum titled *Guide to the Peshawar Museum: Part 1*. In producing this 1954 *Guide to the Peshawar Museum*, Shakur significantly edited an earlier museum guide, *Handbook to the Sculptures in the Peshawar Museum*, that H. Hargreaves had written and published in 1930 (Hargreaves’s 1930 *Handbook*, in turn, was a revised edition of D.B. Spooner’s 1910 *Handbook* for the Peshawar Museum collections). Shakur’s 1954 revision of the Peshawar Museum guide offers the opportunity to assess how one curator refashioned an existing colonial Graeco-Buddhist framework for Gandhāran art in early Pakistan in conversation with scholarship from around the world.

M.A. Shakur was born in Mardan District in 1908 and lived until 1997. He served as the curator of the Peshawar Museum for three extended periods from 1938 and 1963 during the late colonial and early post-independence eras (Waqar 2019: 205, 207). Shakur began his career at the Peshawar Museum in 1932 as a research scholar and advanced to curator by 1938.³ As will be discussed in more detail below, he received a Fulbright scholarship in 1953 to conduct research at the Fogg Art Museum and to take museum courses at Harvard University (Waqar 2019: 207, 214). During his career, Shakur undertook extensive international travel for professional programmes and conferences (Waqar 2019: 207, 209). At home, Shakur was instrumental in founding the Museums Association of Pakistan in 1949, and he served as its long-time General Secretary. Alongside his curatorial work, Shakur embarked upon sustained public-facing museum and archaeological efforts through training courses, tours, and radio talks (Waqar 2019: 208). The study of Shakur’s career, therefore, contributes to Ray’s call for more scholarship on the complex relationship of both the late colonial state and the postcolonial state to archaeology in South Asia (Ray 2008: 2, 187, 219, 243).

Scholars of modern South Asia have critically interrogated the colonial categorization of the subcontinent’s diverse material heritage. In turn, recent scholarship has recovered how Indians contributed to the making and unmaking of these colonial categories and narratives around heritage sites, or as Rajagopalan puts it, ‘the subtle strategies used by colonial subjects as well as citizens of independent India to create parallel worlds of meaning around the monument’ (Rajagopalan 2016: 5).

³ I would like to thank Professor Rafiullah Khan for sharing with me this memorial essay, ‘In memory of Mohammad Abdul Shakur’ by Muhammad Waqar from the *Journal of Asian Civilizations*.

While there is a rich body of scholarship on colonial engagements with Gandhāra, as well as on more recent post-9/11 appropriations of Gandhāra for national discourses in Pakistan and Afghanistan (Falser 2015), there is little on Gandhāran artefacts and museum exhibits in the early post-independence era in Pakistan.

In 1954, Shakur edited the Peshawar Museum guide to argue that ancient Gandhāra not only was separate from India, but also was decisively influenced by ancient Rome rather than ancient Greece. It is important to remind the reader here that this essay does not assess the accuracy of these arguments, which have been contested in archaeological and art historical scholarship in the following decades.⁴ Instead it considers the ideological, political, and cultural significance of these early postcolonial claims. In this way, it contributes to Falser's wider efforts to track the 'various attempts to appropriate the Gandhāran style for different ideological ends' (Falser 2015: 19). Therefore, this section will address the narrative shifts between the 1930 and 1954 guides to the Peshawar Museum, rather than changes in the exhibit displays. Shakur claimed that there had been 'a reorganization of the entire collection' after World War II (Shakur 1954: i). However, the extent to which Shakur and his colleagues physically shifted the objects displayed in the Peshawar Museum exhibits after independence is unclear and awaits further research. In attending to the early postcolonial appropriations of Gandhāran art, it also is important to acknowledge the inherent ambiguities in the reception of archaeological and museum projects.

In compiling this 1954 *Guide to the Peshawar Museum*, Shakur drew extensively on the colonial-era *Handbook to the Sculptures in the Peshawar Museum* that was written by H. Hargreaves, and published in 1930. In fact, the layout of Shakur's 1954 *Guide* followed the structure of Hargreaves's 1930 *Handbook*, and Shakur directly incorporated many sections from the 1930 Hargreaves edition. Both Hargreaves's 1930 *Handbook* and Shakur's 1954 *Guide* had the same chapter structure: the first chapter was titled 'History and Art of Gandhāra' and was followed by the second chapter on 'Introduction to the Buddha Legend' and finally the third chapter was titled 'The Sculptures'. While the first chapter was significantly revised in 1954, Shakur only made minor modifications to the second and third chapters. Given these structural similarities, the specific differences in the narrative provide a lens onto how one museum curator repurposed late colonial assumptions about Gandhāra for Pakistan. In the preface, Shakur acknowledged that he was particularly grateful for the feedback from Benjamin Rowland of the Fogg Museum while revising the first chapter. Shakur noted that the first chapter had been extensively rewritten with the assistance of Rowland, but that 'except for minor changes here and there', the second and third chapters of Hargreaves' 1930 *Handbook* were 'kept intact' (Shakur 1954: i.) More than this acknowledged assistance, Shakur sometimes used Rowland's words verbatim without attribution in his 1954 guide. This will be discussed in more detail below.

Shakur's narrative and argument in Chapter 1 significantly diverged from that of Hargreaves in 1930, even if the title of Chapter 1 and its subsections, 'History' and 'Art' were identical. The most significant change between the 1930 and 1954 editions was the diminished role of ancient Greek influence. At the beginning of the second subsection, 'Art,' in Chapter 1 in 1930, Hargreaves wrote 'The school of Gandhāra ... is not a natural continuation of the Ancient Indian School but exhibits clear evidence of Hellenistic influence', while insisting that 'though the form be strongly Hellenistic, the matter is Indian' (Hargreaves 1930: 7-8). Throughout the 1930 'Art' section of Chapter 1, Hargreaves discussed Gandhāra in terms of 'Graeco-Buddhist art' and its patrons, 'Indo-Greek princes' (Hargreaves 1930: 10).

While Hargreaves celebrated Hellenistic influences on Gandhāra in 1930, Shakur went in a different direction in 1954. For example, in the 1954 version of Chapter I dealing with 'History', Shakur deliberately cast doubt on 'the perpetuation of Hellenic artistic ideals in Asia' and dismissed the second and third

⁴ For an overview of scholarship that has contested arguments for Roman influences, see Ray 2008: 23, 40-41, 208, 210-212.

century BC Graeco-Bactrian kingdom – which had earlier been the source of much scholarly speculation as to the origins of Gandhāran art – as an ‘unhappy band of Hellenic exiles’ (Shakur 1954: 3). In fact, throughout this first chapter, Shakur repeated this refutation of the earlier Greek Bactrian kingdom as the origin point of Gandhāran art in favor of the Kushans in the first centuries AD (Shakur 1954: 11). In turn, Shakur maintained that ‘the influence of Alexander’s raid in West Pakistan has been greatly exaggerated, and this is particularly true of the region of Gandhāra and its art’ (Shakur 1954: 1).

While Shakur exchanged Roman influence for that of Greece, he did not fundamentally alter the basic structure of Hargreaves’s argument. Hargreaves originally framed Gandhāra art as emerging from a fusion of ‘numerous Indian or Indianized motifs’ with Hellenic ones (Hargreaves 1930: 8). In 1954, Shakur reworked this framework into a new model consisting of the fusion of western classicism centred on Rome, not Greece, with localized Buddhism that was detached from India (Shakur 1954: 6). In Shakur’s reformulation, ‘the art of Gandhāra is not in any way a continuation of this indigenous [Indian] tradition. Its geographical position and the contacts between the Kushan rulers and the West, made for the development of a style quite apart from the main stream of Indian tradition, and in certain aspects almost entirely Western in form,’ even though the thematic subject was Buddhist (Shakur 1954: 6). Not only did Shakur emphasize the non-Indic origins of Gandhāran art, but he also framed Gandhāran art as ultimately displaced by ‘the development of the truly Indian ideals of the Gupta school’ due to ‘the inappropriateness of the humanistic classic forms of Western art for the expression of the mystical and symbolic beliefs of Indian Buddhism’ (Shakur 1954: 6). Thus, for Shakur, from its inception to its decline, Gandhāran art was decidedly non-Indic. While the fusion of western classicism and Buddhist mysticism might have been ‘inappropriate’ for ‘truly Indian ideals,’ Shakur implicitly left open the possibility that it was viable for Pakistan. In her scholarship on the development of an Indian art-historical canon, Guha-Thakurta explores how an earlier generation of Indian art historians undertook ‘the erasure of foreign influence (particularly Hellenic influence) from the national body’ (Guha-Thakurta 2004: 187). In contrast, in the 1954 Peshawar Museum guide, this ‘foreign influence’ shaped the new ‘national body’ of Pakistan.

The changes in one specific formulation in the 1930 and 1954 guides illustrate how Shakur re-deployed Hargreaves’ east-west ‘union’ framework for early Pakistan. In 1930, Hargreaves had celebrated ‘the figure of the Buddha’ as Gandhāra’s ‘greatest contribution to Indian art’ through its distinctive ‘union of Hellenistic genius and Buddhist piety’ (Hargreaves 1930: 8). In 1954, Shakur revised this colonial-era ‘union’ between Buddhism and Hellenistic themes into an early postcolonial fusion of Buddhism with ancient Rome. In his own words,

The art of Gandhāra is, properly speaking, the official art of Kanishka and his successors. It is important to note that it is the style that flourished exclusively in the Northern domain of the Kushans in contrast to the much more Indian art that the Kushan Kings supported in their Southern capital of Mathura. The Gandhāra sculptures are sometimes described as Graeco-Buddhist, a term that is distinctly misleading, since it implies a derivation from Greek art. The Gandhāra sculptures have little to do with Greek art and are much more closely related to Roman art. The Gandhāra school is perhaps best described as the eastern-most appearance of the art of the Roman Empire (Shakur 1954: 7).

While Shakur rejected the troubled ‘Graeco-Buddhist framework’ in this passage, he embraced the dubious framing of Gandhāra as an artistic province of Rome. Now that Gandhāran art was an ‘official art’, a proto-nationalist art, for Gandhāra it had to be securely detached from the geography of India in this account. While acknowledging the historical reality that Kushan rule had extended into contemporary northern India, Shakur pointedly insisted that Gandhāran art ‘flourished exclusively in the Northern domain of the Kushans in contrast to the much more Indian art’ in their southern territories (Shakur

1954: 7). Thus, Shakur re-imagined the Kushans' domains as separated on a north-south axis that approximated contemporary borders.⁵

As the passage above illustrates, the role of nationalism is somewhat obvious in this 1954 narrative. Less obvious, but equally important is the displacement of ancient Greece by ancient Rome.⁶ And this was evident throughout the 1954 guide as Shakur connected specific items in the Peshawar Museum to Roman influences. For example, he insisted that 'It would not be difficult to find in the collection of the Peshawar Museum fragments of sculpture resembling Roman workmanship of all periods, from the time of the Flavians, Kanishka's contemporaries, to the very last style of Roman sculpture of the 4th century A.C.' (Shakur 1954: 8). He then argued that early images of the Buddha with datable inscriptions 'reveal a style of drapery clearly derived from Roman workmanship of the Imperial period' with reference to objects on display in the museum (Shakur 1954: 12). In turn, Shakur insisted that some images of bodhisattvas in the Peshawar Museum illustrate 'a mixture of techniques of Western origin, so that, for example, the stiff swallow-tail folds of the *dhoti* are obviously an adaptation of the neo-Attic style that flourished in Rome under Hadrian' (Shakur 1954: 10). Whereas in 1930, Hargreaves framed Gandhāran art as 'Indian' and 'Hellenistic', by 1954, Shakur had reframed Gandhāran sculpture as 'Roman', not Greek, and certainly not Indian. What informed this shift to Rome?

The answer to this question will require more research, but one potential way to explain this early postcolonial shift from Greece to Rome was that it gave Shakur the opportunity to shed some of the problematic associations of colonial engagement with Gandhāran sculpture that was especially centred on alleged Greek influence – what Rowland in 1942 termed 'the much-maligned Graeco-Buddhist school of Gandhāra' (Rowland 1942: 223). While Shakur did not entirely shed the problematic binary framework of an east-west fusion, he did retool it in ways that served the imagining of an ancient art history for Pakistan that was detached from the body politic of India. There potentially was a competitive angle at work here as well. As Upinder Singh has discussed, independent India often positioned itself as Buddhism's ancient homeland (Singh 2016: 224-225), which might have encouraged compensatory Pakistani claims to Gandhāra.

It is important to acknowledge that Hargreaves and Shakur agreed on many points. For example, both Hargreaves in 1930 and Shakur in 1954 emphasized the transformative role of the Kushan ruler Kanishka in Gandhāra. In one passage, Hargreaves originally wrote that 'the Buddhist texts make of him [i.e. Kanishka] a second Asoka and of Gandhāra a second holy land of Buddhism' (Hargreaves 1930: 5). In 1954, Shakur slightly altered this older write-up on Kanishka. In Shakur's 1954 rendering, 'Kanishka is frequently referred to as a second Asoka because of his efforts on behalf of the Buddhist religion... Although the Buddha himself never visited Gandhāra, the text composed by Buddhist sages under the Kushans made of the region a veritable holy land of Buddhism, by the association of various sites with events in the previous incarnations of Sakyamuni' (Shakur 1954: 4).⁷ Not only did this change enhance the agency of ancient Buddhist scholars in the making of Gandhāra as a 'holy land', but Shakur, in fact, directly incorporated this phrasing, without attribution, from a 1953 publication of Benjamin Rowland.

⁵ Despite Shakur's robust rhetorical refutation of Greek and Indian influences on Gandhāran art in the opening pages of his 1954 revised guide, these references to Greece and India proved difficult to parse throughout the text of the revised guide (See Shakur 1954: 9, 14).

⁶ Nor should the impact of early postcolonial nationalism on the guide constitute grounds for dismissing its relevance. Ray makes the compelling point that the nationalist undertones in the scholarship of some late colonial Indian archaeologists have sometimes been used to underplay their intellectual significance in comparison to British colonial archaeologists (Ray 2008: 32).

⁷ This and the following quotation match the words of Rowland 1953: 77 and 79 respectively and suggest either that he was copying that publication or using language otherwise suggested by Rowland. (I am grateful to Professor Peter Stewart for drawing this to my attention.)

Some colonial-era museum officials framed the alleged ‘foreign’ influences on Gandhāra as proof of the inherent superiority of Western/European/classical arts to those of the Indian subcontinent.⁸ In 1954, Shakur embraced the alleged presence of foreign artisans in ancient Gandhāra to further demarcate its territories from those of contemporary India (Shakur 1954: 8). In his revised guide, Shakur wrote, ‘Although the presence of this material in a way provides a properly speaking Hellenistic background for Gandhāra art, it was unquestionably the introduction of bands of foreign workmen from the Eastern centres of the Roman Empire that led to the creation of the first Buddhist sculptures in the Peshawar Valley’ (Shakur 1954: 8). Again, Shakur copied this line directly from Rowland without attribution. While these claims are clearly not unique to Shakur, his direct incorporation of them into the revised 1954 museum guide illustrates how he drew on international engagements, which will be discussed in more detail below, in shifting the narrative thrust of the Peshawar Museum guide from Greece to Rome. While Gandhāra was framed as possessing a ‘Hellenistic background’ in Shakur’s account, this Greek influence had been transported to the subcontinent by ‘foreign workmen’ from the Roman Empire.

The alleged role of ancient ‘foreign workmen’ in forging ancient Pakistan’s local past was also mentioned in the 1956 exhibit of Gandhāra sculpture in Pakistan’s national museum with which this essay began. The anonymous authors of this 1956 guide argued that Gandhāran imagery was forged by ‘bands of foreign workmen from the eastern centres of the Roman Empire to provide images and decorated shrines for the devotional cult of Buddhism’ (*Gandhara Sculpture in the National Museum of Pakistan* 1956: 4). While this 1956 exhibit insisted on the ‘foreign’ elements in Gandhāra, it also underlined how the sculptures were ‘all of schist, a native slate’ (*Gandhara Sculpture in the National Museum of Pakistan* 1956: 5). The repetition of this theme of ‘foreign workmen’ in Gandhāra and its role in imagining a distinct local artistic past for Pakistan would recur in popular archaeological publications in English and Urdu, as discussed below.

In summary, M.A. Shakur’s revised guide to the Peshawar Museum reveals the utility of a reworked east-west ‘fusion’ model in the (imaginative) process of detaching the ancient territories of Pakistan from India. At the same time, Shakur’s shift from alleged ancient Hellenistic influence to ancient Roman influence in his 1954 narrative illustrates how some early postcolonial South Asian intellectuals embraced (and repurposed) problematic colonial art historical categories after the end of empire for their own local cultural and political projects. In her work on cultural heritage, Laurajane Smith argues for heritage not as a fixed point, but instead as a ‘cultural and social process’ of active experiences and shifting meaning making (Smith 2006: 2). Even if Shakur, as a founding figure in early Pakistani museum work, very much fitted within the dominant heritage establishment that Smith critiques in her seminal study, her redefinition of heritage as ‘something that is actively made in the present’ and that is oriented towards community-making, presents us with a useful framework for better understanding the cultural and ideological work of this turn to Rome in early Pakistani museum guides (Smith 2006: 239).

Wider collaborations

Shakur’s transformation of the Peshawar Museum guide can, in part, be explained by early postcolonial efforts to craft a usable national heritage for Pakistan. However, this is not the only way to understand this transformation. Building on Lahiri’s emphasis on the importance of studying the intellectual and institutional lives of archaeologists (Lahiri 2012: 16, 19-20), this section seeks to contextualize Shakur’s editorial choices in reference to the scholarship of two of his mentors and collaborators, the previously mentioned Benjamin Rowland, the curator of the Fogg Museum, and Mortimer Wheeler, the last British

⁸ For a nuanced assessment of the gradual development of the ‘Graeco-Buddhist’ category in the colonial era and of the accompanying narrative of transformative western ‘influence’, see Falser 2015: 6-21.

Director-General of the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI).⁹ A review of some of Rowland and Wheeler's publications reveals that Shakur was part of a wider shift towards Roman influence in Gandhāran scholarship in the middle decades of the twentieth century. In particular, Wheeler's popular writings about his archaeological work in South Asia suggest that Shakur's 1954 guide should be contextualized within larger intellectual projects to recover traces of ancient Roman influence in South Asia in the 1940s and 1950s that began before the 1947 end of empire.¹⁰

In the preface of his 1954 revised guide, M.A. Shakur expressed gratitude to Dr Benjamin Rowland of the Fogg Museum of Art at Harvard University for 'guid[ing] me in rewriting the entire chapter on History and Art of Gandhāra [i.e. the first chapter of the guide.]' (Shakur 1954: i). Then in the body of the text, Shakur cited Rowland's 1942 article, 'Gandhāra and Late Antique Art: The Buddha Image,' as evidence that the drapery of Gandhāran Buddhist iconography was 'derived from Roman workmanship of the Imperial period' (Shakur 1954: 12). Rowland's arguments in his 1942 article are well-known, therefore, I will foreground certain elements that help to explain Shakur's editorial choices.¹¹ (As mentioned earlier, Shakur did more than just cite Rowland's 1942 article since he also incorporated, without attribution, some phrases from Rowland's 1953 book.)

In his 1942 article, Rowland directly posed the question of 'whether or not Gandhāra art is an offshoot of Hellenistic sculpture in the East or whether we can say that it was influenced by Roman Imperial art' (Rowland 1942: 228). He suggested that both options were probable, while leaning towards the later (Roman) interpretation. For example, Rowland argued that the robes of Gandhāran sculptures of the Buddha resembled 'the togas of the Roman Imperial statues' (Rowland 1942: 227). He also contended that 'the art of Gandhāra was affected by waves of influences coming from the West – from Rome itself and the Eastern Roman Empire' (Rowland 1942: 234). He did not propose that Gandhāra was unique in these artistic developments, but rather just one more provincial arena in the wider Roman world. Or to paraphrase Rowland, 'these artistic provinces of the Roman Empire', including Gandhāra, Armenia, Gaul, and Palmyra, exhibited 'Roman Imperial art, or, better, Roman provincial art' (Rowland 1942: 236). As illustrated by this short quotation, Shakur's 1954 presentation of Gandhāra as an artistic province of the Roman Empire clearly echoed Rowland's earlier formulation.¹² Moreover, Shakur shared Rowland's scepticism that second and third century BC Bactria constituted anything more than 'a very minor influence' on the development of 'the later Graeco-Roman school of Gandhāra' (Rowland 1942: 223). Rather than direct Greek influence via Bactria, Rowland attributed 'the great majority of these so-called Graeco-Buddhist carvings' to 'a sudden and intensive mass production' by 'artisans imported from the Roman East' between the second century and fifth century AD (Rowland 1942: 224).

Clearly Shakur's professional collaborations with Rowland informed his 1954 editing of the Peshawar Museum guide. However, I am hesitant to attribute Shakur's shift to Rome entirely to his time in the United States or to his professional interactions with Rowland, despite his previously discussed copying of Rowland's phrasing. Instead, the writings of the British archaeologist, Mortimer (R.E.M.) Wheeler, Shakur's one-time boss and frequent collaborator, suggest that Shakur's revisions to the Peshawar Museum guide in 1954 also were part of ongoing archaeological projects to recover traces of ancient

9 I am grateful to both Professor Pia Brancaccio and Professor Anna Filigenzi for encouraging me to consider the impact of Benjamin Rowland's scholarship on Shakur's writing.

10 I am grateful to both Professor Peter Stewart and Professor Rafiullah Khan for their generative suggestions to look further into the collaborations between M.A. Shakur and Mortimer Wheeler, as well as to engage in more detail Wheeler's writings on Roman connections.

11 For a discussion of some of the international collaborations surrounding Gandhāran art in the postcolonial era, see Falser 2015: 35-46.

12 Ray discusses how Wheeler framed India as a provincial arena of the Roman Empire due to trading links (Ray 2008: 191-192, 218.) Ray also argues that Wheeler often connected the history of the Roman Empire to the history of the British Empire during his archaeological work in India (192).

Rome in the Indian subcontinent. Here I will address Shakur and Wheeler's professional relationship as described in two of Wheeler's memoirs. In 1955, Wheeler published *Still Digging: Interleaves from an Antiquary's Notebook* and in 1976 he published *My Archaeological Mission to India and Pakistan*. This section does not argue that Wheeler (or Rowland) constitute the origin point of Shakur's editorial decisions in 1954.¹³ Instead, this analysis of Wheeler's popular publications suggests that Shakur, Rowland, and Wheeler were all participants in wider intellectual projects to recover, commemorate, and imagine traces of ancient Rome in the Indian subcontinent.

Wheeler was appointed as the Director General of the Archaeological Survey of India in 1943 and assumed the position in 1944. In his memoirs, Wheeler framed his Indian tenure as part of a late colonial revival of the ASI after the institutional decay following John Marshall's retirement in 1928 and the financial difficulties of the 1930s. (Wheeler 1955: 181-185). Wheeler's posting in India lasted from 1944 to 1948.¹⁴ He then took on the part-time position of Archaeological Advisor to the Government of Pakistan in 1949 and 1950 (Ray 2008: 50-51). A crucial component of Wheeler's archaeological work in Pakistan was assisting in the establishment of the new National Museum of Pakistan in Karachi (Wheeler 1955: 219-220, 225-227; 1976: 81). Wheeler then returned to Pakistan in 1958 to continue excavations at Charsada, near Peshawar (Wheeler 1976: 17-18).

Wheeler is already the subject of robust scholarly discussion. In her brilliant study of Wheeler's life (and afterlives) in Indian archaeology, Ray rigorously assesses the multifaceted archaeological impact of Wheeler on India with particular attention to his institutional, methodological, and thematic legacies (Ray 2008: 3-4, 253). Locating Wheeler at a 'a critical juncture in the subcontinent's history' (Ray 2008: 1), Ray argues that his publicity campaigns contributed to the 'sustained interest in Indo-Roman trade and other ceramics' and the propagation of a 'model of imperial Roman domination' in South Asian archaeology (Ray 2008: 201, 212). In turn, Wheeler is an important figure in Falser's account of the shifting ideological discourses surrounding Gandhāran art. Falser argues that Wheeler played an important role in pluralizing interpretations of Gandhāran art beyond the older 'Graeco-Buddhist' category and in early efforts to construct Pakistan's 'cultural identity ... from archaeological evidence' (Falser 2015: 635-36).

Both of Wheeler's memoirs note his professional relationship with Pakistani archaeologists, including M.A. Shakur, F.A. Khan, Ahmad Hassan Dani, and Waliullah Khan, who will be discussed in more detail below (Wheeler 1976: 18, 33-34, 85). Wheeler also detailed his professional ties with many prominent Indian archaeologists and museum officials (Wheeler 1976: 89-90). While Wheeler does not extensively discuss Shakur in his memoirs, Shakur does appear in his narration of two memorable events: a 1946 cultural mission to Afghanistan to explore future Indo-Afghan archaeological and cultural collaborations and the 1949 founding of the Pakistan Museums Association (Wheeler 1947: 57). In September 1946, Wheeler, Margaret Collingridge Wheeler, Norman Edgley (the president of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal), and Shakur, as the representative of the provincial government of the North-West Frontier Province, undertook an Indian cultural mission to Afghanistan (Shakur 1947: 1; Wheeler 1955: 208). Both Shakur and Wheeler wrote about their 1946 Afghan mission. Shakur published the book *A Dash Through the Heart of Afghanistan*, while Wheeler published an article in *Antiquity* (Shakur 1947; Wheeler 1947: 57-65). In their accounts, Wheeler and Shakur emphasized the importance of Afghan archaeology to understanding the Indian past and anticipated future Indo-Afghan archaeological collaborations (Shakur 1947: 2; Wheeler: 1947: 57, 64-65).

¹³ As Ray notes, there is an often 'startling' inattention to the impact of Indian archaeologists who worked during the late colonial era (Ray 2008: 219). This essay contributes to ongoing efforts to foreground South Asian voices and global interactions surrounding the excavation and exhibition of Gandhāran art.

¹⁴ For a detailed analysis of Wheeler's tenure at the ASI, see Ray 2008: 20-23.

Ancient Rome was a preoccupation for Wheeler throughout his tumultuous career in late colonial India and early postcolonial Pakistan.¹⁵ In his first memoir, the 1955 *Still Digging*, Wheeler insisted that initial Indian skepticism surrounding his appointment as Director-General, which was centred on doubts over the suitability of his scholarly background in Roman Britain, was allegedly answered by the discovery of links to the ancient Roman Empire across the Indian subcontinent (Wheeler 1955: 187, 194). As Wheeler noted, a sceptical Indian legislator in the Legislative Assembly in New Delhi had challenged his appointment with the pointed question of ‘What has Roman Britain got to do with India?’ (Wheeler 1955: 194).¹⁶ More broadly, Wheeler seems to have had a fractious relationship with the Legislative Assembly during its oversight of his activities (Ray 2008: 62, 230).

Wheeler retrospectively narrated his time in South Asia in terms of the discovery and quantification of traces of ancient Roman ties (Wheeler 1955: 206, 209). I do not want to suggest that Wheeler had an exclusive, or even primary, focus on Gandhāra in his accounts of his time in South Asia. In fact, in the short chapter on ‘Pakistan, 1947-1950’ in his 1976 memoir, Wheeler focused on Indus Valley Civilization sites not Gandhāra (Wheeler 1976: 81-88). However, when he did address Gandhāran art, he clearly framed Gandhāra within a wider history of Roman traces in the subcontinent. In turn, Wheeler primarily attributed the alleged Graeco-Roman elements of Gandhāran art to Roman influence via maritime trade (Ray 2008: 203-204).

In his memoirs, Wheeler adopted a conflicted approach to South Asian archaeologists. He veered between caustic critiques of Indian bureaucrats and enthusiasm for some younger Indian archaeologists whom he helped to train (Wheeler 1955: 187, 189, 207-208, 214). Ray has thoroughly assessed Wheeler’s often bigoted attitude towards Indian students and archaeologists during his time in India and his diminution of their contributions in later publications (Ray 2008: 63-65). While Wheeler adopted a paternalistic and often patronizing tone towards his Indian archaeological students, he also admitted that ‘they taught me much’ and celebrated their subsequent professional accomplishments (Wheeler 1955: 198). In turn, alongside troubling cultural stereotypes, he maintained friendships with some of his students and protégés (Wheeler 1955: 214).

Wheeler spilled considerable ink on the 1944 Taxila School of Archaeology that he organized as a field-school for junior Indian archaeologists at the famous archaeological site. He retrospectively touted this multi-month gathering at Taxila as a unique training opportunity for a new generation of South Asian archaeologists (Wheeler 1955: 197-198; 1976: 27-41). In turn, Wheeler framed it as a vital moment in the rediscovery of traces of ancient Rome in the Indian subcontinent that began in this heritage site where ‘more than twenty-three centuries ago the rulers of west and east forgathered in friendly and intelligent interchange’. He presented his 1944 archaeological field-school as ‘the final urge for renewed co-operation in a modern context’ (Wheeler 1976: 32).¹⁷ Wheeler claimed that a direct result of this Taxila gathering was the initiation of a systematic study of where Roman coins had been located across the Indian subcontinent (Wheeler 1976: 35). Wheeler maintained that the ‘identifications of Roman wares’ in Pondicherry and Madras in 1944 in the wake of the Taxila field-school constituted some of the greatest finds ‘in the total story of recent Indian archaeology’ (Wheeler 1976: 41). How did Wheeler’s zeal for discovering Roman traces in South Asia shape his subsequent work in Pakistan in 1949 and 1950?

One potential answer is found in Wheeler’s musings upon the paradoxical opportunities which Pakistan’s newly drawn borders presented for popular archaeology in *Still Digging*. I do not want to suggest that

15 For a more in-depth discussion of how Wheeler’s earlier research on Roman artefacts in Britain informed his time in South Asia, see Ray 2008: 40-41, 187-212.

16 Ray incisively critiques the appointment of Wheeler as Director-General of the ASI despite his lack of training in Indian archaeology and the presence of many Indian archaeologists who were qualified for the position in 1943 (Ray 2008: 43).

17 For a more detailed discussion of Wheeler’s understanding of possible Roman links to ancient Taxila, see Ray 2008: 201-208.

Wheeler welcomed the 1947 partition. He mourned the division that partition wrought through the ASI and noted that partition's removal of trained Muslim archaeologists to Pakistan was 'dictated solely by the accident of creed, without any sort of regard to professional qualification' (Wheeler 1955: 219). At the end of his short article on the 1946 cultural mission to Afghanistan, Wheeler had recorded his hopes for future cross-border archaeological collaborations between (undivided) India and Afghanistan in the exchange of materials, students, and scholars since 'the history and prehistory of Afghanistan and India form an indivisible unit' (Wheeler 1947: 64-65). These Indo-Afghan exchanges were significantly curtailed by the 1947 partition.

However, once Pakistan was created in August 1947, Wheeler embraced the opportunities for public engagement with archaeology that were presented by the new country's seemingly divergent political geography and archaeological heritage.¹⁸ In his own words, 'To me, the experience was primarily of interest as an opportunity for seeing, in many aspects, a new and peculiarly bizarre political experiment in the first formative stage'. Despite the seeming disjuncture, Wheeler insisted, 'But the living contest of ideology *versus* geography on so vast a scale is enthralling and significant drama to any humanist, and a ring-side seat was a privilege of a memorable kind [*italics in the original.*]' (Wheeler 1955: 220). Of particular significance for our argument here, he was intrigued by the interesting work of forging a viable ancient history for the new nation-state, and he maintained that 'persistent attempts to make Pakistan aware of a past, to root its present hopes and sufferings in some sort of traditional and confident subsoil, were not altogether without effect' (Wheeler 1955: 220). Wheeler's early postcolonial anticipation echoes Upinder Singh's analysis of the 'reinvention' of Buddhist sites in nineteenth and twentieth century India (Singh 2016: 223). In particular, Singh underlines the important role of ancient Buddhist artefacts as 'anchors' and 'revitalized ancient remains' in modern cultural and religious projects in India (Singh 2016: 225).

Wheeler did not begrudge the public-facing efforts, or what he termed the 'necessary propaganda,' that his new job in early Pakistan entailed (Wheeler 1955: 223). In fact, he relished the opportunity to cultivate a mass Pakistani audience for 'the archaeology of their own country' (Wheeler 1955: 222). Ray draws attention to the centrality of the promotion of public engagement with archaeology to Wheeler's career even before he came to India (Ray 2008: 21, 60, 244). Ray notes a dissonance between Wheeler's 'professed scientific temper and the unabashed use of archaeology in the creation of national identities, especially in the post-independence period' (Ray 2008: 65). Alongside this dissonance, one possible interpretation for Wheeler's embrace of 'necessary propaganda' was that he saw postcolonial South Asian nationalism as a useful vehicle for his ongoing archaeological popularization projects.

M.A. Shakur was an important collaborator in these early endeavors to forge new audiences for museums and archaeology in Pakistan. In his memoir, Wheeler fondly remembered his efforts, along with 'my energetic friend M.A. Shakur', in the establishment of the Museums Association of Pakistan in 1949. Shakur and Wheeler organized the inaugural session for the new association in Peshawar, which was followed up by a bus tour of the Khyber Pass (Wheeler 1955: 222-223). In Wheeler's telling, this inaugural session served as 'surely the most remarkable outing in the world-history of museum associations' (Wheeler 1955: 223).

Wheeler returned to the opportunities presented by Pakistan's seemingly incongruous new political boundaries and ancient heritage in his discussion of the opening of the National Museum of Pakistan in

¹⁸ In this same vein, Ray notes the institutional and programmatic continuities in the ASI across the Partition divide, despite the significant individual suffering of displaced archaeologists (Ray 2008: 47, 236).

April 1950.¹⁹ In his narration of the museum's opening, Wheeler veered between an acknowledgement of 'the scarcity of exhibits' in the newly minted museum that was only partially concealed by carefully placed flowers and officials during the opening ceremony and the celebration of 'a sufficiently interesting nucleus of material' that was stashed 'in odd corners', including objects 'from Buddhist Taxila, from Buddhist shrines in Bengal'. Wheeler seemed to relish how the juxtaposition between pre-Islamic artefacts and the flag and map of Pakistan in the new museum created 'a disparate complex from which to mould a new political unit of immense size and strategic world importance!' (Wheeler 1955: 226). If the paradox of Pakistan's geography and politics was a productive space for connecting the past and present, what was role of alleged ancient Roman influences in this public history project?

A potential answer is found in Wheeler's 1954 volume, *Rome Beyond the Imperial Frontiers*. As the title suggests, this book centred on the discovery of material and literary traces of Roman commodities and artistic influences in Asia, Africa, and northern Europe beyond the empire's formal borders (Wheeler 1954: 1-5). In the preface, Wheeler claimed that the book had a distinctly Indian origin with the 1945 discovery of an ancient Tuscan dish on the Bay of Bengal by one of his students (Wheeler 1954: v). In the sections on Gandhāra, Wheeler sought 'the basic explanation of Romano-Buddhist art in north-western India' (Wheeler 1954: 171). Despite the enduring ambiguities around the chronology of Gandhāra, Wheeler framed Gandhāran sculpture in *Rome Beyond the Imperial Frontiers* as either 'Romano-Buddhist art' (Wheeler 1954: 171) or 'Romano-Indian art [that] was confined to Buddhist patronage' (Wheeler 1954: 166).²⁰ Of particular interest for our argument here, Wheeler maintained that Gandhāran materials in Pakistan and Afghanistan reveal that 'more than merely scatter[ing] Roman bric-à-brac across the world', these ancient Roman links had resulted in 'a cultural contact which had a far-reaching effect upon the history of art' (Wheeler 1954: 4).

A noticeable feature of Wheeler's narrative about Gandhāran art in *Rome Beyond the Imperial Frontiers* was the search for its origins, or as he phrased the question, 'How did the Western elements reach the Gandhāra studios?' (Wheeler 1954: 169). Wheeler's answer presented parallels to Shakur's contemporaneous writings. Like Shakur, Wheeler expressed considerable skepticism that earlier 'Indo-Greek kings' of Bactria had any significant impact on the making of Gandhāran art since their influence would have 'dwindled to vanishing point'. Instead, Wheeler insisted that the 'Western clothing, Western types' and 'Western grouping' that were 'transmuted by the Buddhist craftsman and given a Buddhist context' in 'the sculptors' workshops of Gandhāra' were enabled by 'Kushana commerce' (Wheeler 1954: 168). In this 1954 formulation, 'new contacts' and the 'Khushana commerce which brought into and through the kingdom objects and craftsmanship of the Roman empire' were responsible for forging this 'non-native' 'idiom or "language" of the new Buddhist art'. (Wheeler 1954: 168). Not only does Wheeler detach Gandhāra from India as 'non-native', but he also suggests the transformative impact of foreign craftsmen from the Roman Empire. These arguments echo the claims of Shakur (and Rowland) that were discussed in the preceding section.

In the chapter of *Rome Beyond the Imperial Frontiers* on Pakistan and Afghanistan, Wheeler conceded that although excavations at Taxila did not reveal significant traces of Roman commerce, instead 'there were other contacts with the West, of a kind which had in fact, as we shall see, a far more enduring influence upon Asian thought or expression' (Wheeler 1954: 158). Specifically, he maintained that sculpture and stucco artefacts from Taxila reveal 'a recurrent Western, Graeco-Roman element of a striking and significant kind' (Wheeler 1954: 160). Wheeler framed specific objects from Taxila and Gandhāran sites

¹⁹ As Ray discusses, before his early postcolonial involvement in founding the National Museum of Pakistan, Wheeler had been an advocate for establishing a national museum for India (Ray 2008: 22).

²⁰ As Falser notes, while Wheeler shifted from an earlier narrative of direct Western impact to 'international borrowings' via Roman trade and other avenues, he still fundamentally framed Gandhāran art as generated by 'an artistic vacuum at its very centre' (Falser 2015: 35-36).

in Roman terms: a ‘stucco head’ that ‘would be in place on any Graeco-Roman site, and has nothing in origin to do with the art of India’ and another stucco head that is ‘unmistakably reminiscent of 2nd-century Roman portraits’ (Wheeler 1954: 160-161). Paralleling the Pakistani museum guides discussed earlier in this essay, Wheeler maintained that other artefacts from Taxila, Peshawar, and their environs illustrated a fusion of Indian and Western styles – or in his words, ‘a strange and revealing mixture of India and the Mediterranean with a distinctly Western theme’ (Wheeler 1954: 161).

While Shakur is not referenced in *Rome Beyond the Imperial Frontiers* and he does not cite Wheeler’s text, both authors make strikingly similar claims about the impact of Roman influences on Gandhāra and often employed similar phrasing. This suggests that Shakur and Wheeler were both participants in overlapping public-facing intellectual projects that aimed to foreground the alleged traces of ancient Roman influence on South Asia in the middle decades of the twentieth century.

It is important to acknowledge that Wheeler set clear limits on the possibility of ancient links between the Roman Empire and Gandhāra. While he celebrated Gandhāra as evidence of ‘the most penetrating and enduring impact of the Roman upon the Eastern world’, he also critiqued earlier Western scholars for exaggerating its significance (Wheeler 1954: 165). For example, he dismissed claims of mutual Christian and Buddhist artistic influences as ‘a good deal of nonsense’ (Wheeler 1954: 165). In turn, he noted that the endurance of Gandhāran schist sculpture has ‘tended to concentrate attention upon it and perhaps to exaggerate its relative importance’ (Wheeler 1954: 168). Wheeler also criticized how the alleged toga-like elements of Gandhāran renderings of the Buddha ‘is commonly exaggerated by modern writers’ (Wheeler 1954: 168). This scepticism pre-dated Wheeler’s work in Pakistan since in his account of the 1946 cultural mission to Afghanistan, he emphasized that ‘every caution is necessary in speculating as to the precise origin of a phenomenon such as the “Afghan-Gandhāra” school of Buddhist art’ (Wheeler 1947: 60).

This section has sought to place Shakur’s 1954 turn from Hellenistic to Roman influence in the revised guide to the Peshawar Museum’s collections in a wider intellectual context through his professional collaborations with Rowland and Wheeler. In turn, a careful reading of Wheeler’s popular archaeological publications suggests that Shakur’s 1954 reframing of the Peshawar Museum collection could be understood as part of a wider project of recovering traces of ancient Rome in South Asia that began before partition and continued after the creation of Pakistan in 1947. Moreover, Wheeler’s time in early Pakistan indicates the importance of international collaborations in the imaginative potential opened-up by the juxtapositions of Pakistan’s recently drawn borders and ancient artefacts.

Echoes and disavowals

M.A. Shakur subsequently curtailed his enthusiasm for the ancient Roman connections that he had celebrated in the revised 1954 guide to the Peshawar Museum’s collections. In a later publication, the 1963 *Gandhāra Sculpture in Pakistan*, Shakur raised doubts about the Roman influence on Gandhāran art.²¹ Although Shakur included a number of passages from his 1954 guide in this 1963 publication, in 1963 he emphasized ‘local traditions’ over Graeco-Roman influence (Shakur 1963: 1). In his own words, while ‘the character of this art is still a matter of dispute ranging from Graeco-Buddhist to Romano-Buddhist ... the underlying spirit is, no doubt, Buddhism of a kind that found favour in Gandhāra.’ (Shakur 1963: 3-4).

Despite Shakur’s subsequent distancing from the ‘Romano-Buddhist’ framework, it endured in some Pakistani publications on Gandhāra. For example, in 1988, Muhammad Waliullah Khan published

²¹ For a discussion of changes in Shakur’s understanding of the origins of Gandhāran art, see Amstutz 2019: 251-252.

Gandhāra: Guzishṭa Pānch Hazār Sāl ki Sarguzisht (*Gandhāra: An Account of the Past 5,000 Years*). Muhammad Waliullah Khan's 1988 Urdu publication echoes many of the arguments that Shakur put forward in Peshawar in 1954 and that Wheeler had made in the 1950s.²² This 1988 Urdu guide was published by Lok Virsa, Pakistan's Folk History Museum. Khan had been trained by Mortimer Wheeler, and he dedicated his 1988 volume to the memory of Wheeler, whom he referred to as 'my benefactor' (Khan 1988: v). The multi-generational scholarly connections between Wheeler and Khan (as well as Wheeler and Shakur) evoke what Hoda Bandeh-Ahmadi has termed in another context 'intellectual kinship' (Bandeh-Ahmadi 2018). This Urdu guide built on Khan's decades of research, writing, and restoration work with Pakistan's Department of Archaeology and Museums. Khan had represented Pakistan in international conferences on the protection of ancient monuments in 1957, and he played an important role in designing some early museum exhibits on architecture in Pakistan. He was well into his eighties when he published this Urdu text on Gandhāra (Khan 1988: i-iii).

Khan did not hesitate to suggest connections between ancient Gandhāra and contemporary Pakistan. In his 1988 introduction, Khan pitched his book as filling what he saw as the need for more histories of Gandhāra that addressed the historical, geographical, social, religious, and architectural angles beyond a narrow focus on sculpture (Khan 1988: 7). In his own words, 'In this book, my own endeavor was to present the past of Gandhāra ... Gandhāra as a nation and country (*quom aur mulk*), its arts, political revolutions and the results that came from them, the rise and fall of religions in Gandhāra ... this country's ancient greatness and restoration' (Khan 1988: 7).

The arguments over Roman versus Greek influences that had animated Shakur in 1954 were echoed in Khan's text in 1988. Khan maintained that Gandhāran art should be referred to as 'Indo-Roman art' since 'now in it the Roman influence was greater and more direct' (Khan 1988: 75). Khan went on to claim that thanks to the Kushan connections to the Roman world, the Roman influence on 'Gandhāra's art of Buddhist sculpture-carving' had grown (Khan 1988: 76). He insisted that the 'special connections' between the Kushan and Roman governments were sustained by Kanishka, and, 'therefore, the influence that we find on the Buddhist sculpture-carving and the sculpture-making that we find in the Kushan era, that is not particularly Greek, but Greco-Roman ... In comparison to Greek art, Roman art is to a great extent more stimulating' (Khan 1988: 76). Echoing Shakur, Khan framed the sculptural arts of 'Gandhāra' and 'Hind [India]' as separate (Khan 1988: 71). More to the point, Khan insisted that Gandhāran sculptural art was 'in opposition' to 'the Indian art of sculpture carving' (Khan 1988: 72).

Much like Rowland, Shakur, and Wheeler, Khan imagined a lost history of Roman artisans in Gandhāra. Khan maintained that the Roman government in West Asia 'and the experts in the arts from there' were the basis for the 'advancement' of Gandhāra's Buddhist arts (Khan 1988: 77). In his exuberant phrasing, 'the Kushan era was the golden era for the Buddhist religion and the art of sculpture-carving, and in this era, the art of Greek-Roman sculpture-carving was excessively imitated' (Khan 1988: 78). In his own words:

Even though this claim cannot be proven in written sources and from history that an expert artisan was loaned from the Roman government or happened to come, all of the details of Roman art that can be found in the Buddhist art of the Kushan era certainly substantiates that claim for us that some Roman expert artisans of sculpture-making and sculpture-carving surely came to Gandhāra in this era' (Khan 1988: 77).

This passage is revealing, less for the veracity of the claims, which as Khan admits cannot be found in written records, but rather for the creative potential opened-up by the possibility of Roman artistic

²² I am grateful to Professor Rafiullah Khan's suggestion to further consider the possible professional connections and intellectual ties between Mortimer Wheeler, Waliullah Khan, and M.A. Shakur.

influences and Roman experts in Gandhāra. In making these arguments, Khan echoed both his teacher, Wheeler, and Shakur. For example, in the previously discussed *Rome Beyond the Imperial Frontier*, Wheeler speculated that a crucial, if undocumented, element in what he called ‘the making of Romano-Buddhist art’ was the presence of ‘small numbers of Western craftsman’ (Wheeler 1954: 171). Once again, the celebration of the alleged non-Indic origins of Gandhāran art was conjoined in Pakistani museum guides and publications to the embrace of external artistic expertise and expert migration.

Conclusion

This essay contributes to ongoing efforts to study ‘the modern histories of ancient sites’ in South Asia (Singh 2016: 216), particularly in terms of what the exhibition of Gandhāran art in early post-colonial Pakistan can contribute to larger historiographical debates over the politics of the ancient past. Specifically, it argues for the significance of the interactions, collaborations, and exchanges between Pakistani archaeologists and their colleagues around the world in shaping the early postcolonial trajectory of public-facing archaeology in Pakistan. As discussed in the preceding pages, a close analysis of the editorial changes to the guide of the Peshawar Museum in 1954 suggests that a shift from alleged Hellenistic influences to Roman influences was part of the incorporation of Gandhāran artefacts into an imagined ancient past for Pakistan. However, this was not the entire story. Shakur’s international collaborations with (and borrowing from) Rowland and Wheeler indicate that his specific efforts in the Peshawar Museum were part of wider and continuing archaeological efforts to document Roman traces across South Asia. More broadly, this essay explores how some early postcolonial South Asian public intellectuals appropriated problematic colonial art-historical hierarchies and then redeployed them for their own political purposes and cultural projects.

Scholars have explored the ways in which institutions, intellectuals, and political actors in independent India engaged with the subcontinent’s ancient past, yet Pakistan often has been left out of this story. In her excellent study of the making of India’s national museum, Kavita Singh observes that while European national museums could exhibit a ‘trans-national tale of the history Western civilization,’ including ‘ancient Greece and Rome,’ formerly colonized nations were limited to the material objects that fell within their national borders (Singh 2015: 107–108). And this is largely true of Pakistan. However, as illustrated by Shakur’s reworking of the Peshawar Museum’s collection of Buddhist sculpture in 1954 and Khan’s 1988 Urdu guide, some Pakistani curators and archaeologists diverged from this framework. While in early postcolonial India, the construction of the exhibits of the new National Museum of India centred on efforts ‘to recover India’s indigenous traditions, untainted by “external” influences’ (Singh 2015: 117), in Pakistan, external influences beyond Islam also were carefully curated. As I noted elsewhere, what makes the selective and often quixotic embrace of ancient Buddhist artefacts in early Pakistan particularly interesting is that it stands outside the assumed contours of religious nationalism in modern South Asia (Amstutz 2019).

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