

**In the memory of  
Mohammad Abdul Shakur, B. A., M. R. A. S<sup>1</sup>.**

**Muhammad Waqar**

**Abstract**

*After establishing the Archaeological Survey of India in 1861, the Britishers soon wanted to strengthen it by involving native people in it. For this they tried to train and later hired them on various posts. In the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century, Lord Curzon, Viceroy of India between 1899-1905, appointed Sir John Hubert Marshall as Director-General (1902-1928) of the Archaeological Survey of India, who served this department for a long period and made marvelous discoveries and established many museums throughout the Subcontinent. Similarly, Peshawar Museum was also amongst his achievements. Mohammad Abdul Shakur (late) was one of his followers in his early career. The present research paper is confined to the life and achievements of M.A. Shakur, one of the greatest and renowned archaeologist-cum-museologist of Pakistan. He remained the Curator of Peshawar Museum three times before and after independence of Pakistan. He holds many achievements to his credit in the field of archaeology and museum management. There is no doubt that M. A. Shakur had greatness in him, as a scholar, an archaeologist, a museologist and a man. No such study exists that outlines his life and works. This paper attempts to highlight his life, works and achievements.*

**Keywords:** Peshawar Museum, Museums Studies, Archaeological Survey of India.

**1. Birth, Childhood, Family and Education**

Mohammad Abdul Shakur, also known as *Lala*<sup>2</sup> Shakur, was born in a village named *Dob Hoti*, district Mardan, on 1<sup>st</sup> January 1908. Later, his

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<sup>1</sup> Bachelor of Arts and Member of Royal Asiatic Society.

family shifted to Serai (Mardan). His father name was Muhammad Yousaf, of Afghan Yousufzai ancestry. He had four sons and six daughters. His eldest son Abdul Haq Afandi retired as Chairman Bannu Board, his second son M. Haroon is a Ph.D (Doctor) and a UK National, who retired from Queens College, London. His third son Dawood Kamal (late) retired as Draftsman from the Department of Archaeology, University of Peshawar. Dawood Kamal started his career with Prof. Dr. Ahmad Hasan Dani and worked with many renowned archaeologists during his service. His fourth son, Muhammad Luqaman retired as Tehsil Officer from local government.

Mr Shakur got his early education from his home-town and did matric from Government High School, Mardan in 1928, while his graduation is from Edwardes College, Peshawar in 1932. It is supposed that he was the first graduate in district Mardan in the year 1932. He acted as Editor of the college magazine for several years and a prefect of the college hostel. There, he won first prize for contributing to the college chronicle (MAPJ 1962: 50). He was member of the football and tennis teams during college life. Since student life, he had keen interest in archaeology and he utilized productively his holidays in getting lessons from the renowned archeologists and attending excavation at different sites i.e. Taxila. For such activities he was encouraged by famous archaeologists like Marc Aurel Stein<sup>3</sup> and Sir John Marshall during his early days. He died of heart-related illness on 8<sup>th</sup> November 1997 (*May Allah Bless His Soul in Heaven, Amin*) (Durrani, 1997). He is buried at *Syed Jalal Bukhari* graveyard, Mardan<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> Elder brother in local *Pashto* language.

<sup>3</sup> Aurel Stein also remained as the first Curator in 1906-07 of Peshawar Museum and first Superintendent of the A.S.I Frontier-Circle in 1904. It is said that before leaving for Kabul (Afghanistan) where he died on 26<sup>th</sup> October 1943, Aurel Stein exchanged these last words with Shakur, “Shakur probably this is my last visit and I may never come back again”.

<sup>4</sup> The author would like to express his utmost gratitude to Mr Majid Khan, his grandson (Federal Government employee) for providing all relevant information about the life and family of Mr Shakur for this research paper.

## **2. As an Archaeologist and his service in the Peshawar Museum**

On completion of his education, he joined Peshawar Museum as a research scholar in 1932 and after two years extensive training he was appointed as Assistant Curator. Later he became the Curator<sup>5</sup> of Peshawar Museum in 1938. After eighteen years services in Peshawar Museum, he was selected by the Federal Public Service Commission for the post of Assistant Superintendent of Archaeology, but the Provincial Government did not spare his services to join the new employment. During 1957, he was taken as an Officer on Special Duty (Museums) by the Government of West Pakistan to prepare a scheme for the establishment of a Directorate of Museums and Libraries in West Pakistan. He was also assigned the charge to recommend and assist in drawing up a proposal for the development and re-organization of existing museums and libraries in West Pakistan (MAPJ 1962: 50). An Historical Exhibition, inaugurated by His Excellency Sir George Cunningham<sup>6</sup> in 1945, organized by the Government of North West Frontier Province about the 22<sup>nd</sup> Session of the Indian Historical Records Commission was held at the Victoria Memorial Hall during M.A. Shakur's tenure with the assistance of S. M. Jaffar<sup>7</sup> (Sen 1945: 18). He was awarded a Fulbright scholarship to do research work at FOGG Art Museum, Harvard University and won glorious remarks.

He was one of the oldest stalwarts in the field of museology and museum management. In his professional career, he worked with legendary figures in Indian Archaeology before the independence of Pakistan and India. He was known to everyone for taking active part in the planning and development of archaeology, museums and government committees in various capacities. He has been awarded several government awards before and after the independence of Pakistan. During his professional career, he was exposed to short-term training programmes in several prestigious institutions in U.K., U.S.A and Europe etc. He played a major role in the Italian contributions to Pakistan Archaeology after independence and closely collaborated with Dr. Ahmad Hasan Dani

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<sup>5</sup> He remained the Curator of Peshawar Museum for three times i.e. 1938-52, 1953-57 and 1958-63.

<sup>6</sup> Administrative and 1<sup>st</sup> Governor of North West Frontier Province (now Khyber Pakhtunkhwa) before and after partition of Pakistan and India.

<sup>7</sup> He also remained the Director of Peshawar Museum between 1964-70.

in setting up the Department of Archaeology, University of Peshawar, in 1962. He briefly served as a faculty member of the department after retiring from Peshawar Museum (Durrani, 1997). He also accompanied Dr. Ahmad Hasan Dani, when he discovered Sanghao Cave<sup>8</sup> in 1962 (Dani 1964: 01).

### **3. Contribution in the field of Museology (Museums Association of Pakistan)**

Selfless, devoted and enthusiastic, Mr Shakur had been the General Secretary of the Museums Association of Pakistan since its inception in 1949. He nourished this Association in its embryonic stage and by his own efforts saw it grow into an effective and powerful organization in the service of the Pakistani Museums. In achieving this, Mr Shakur's contribution is worthy of all commendation (MAPJ 1962: 50). He organized a conference on Museums Association of Pakistan and his first meeting was held in the premises of Peshawar Museum, on the 10<sup>th</sup> April 1949, under the presidentship of the Hon'ble Khan Abdul Qaiyum Khan, the then, North-West Frontier Province Prime Minister. It was inaugurated by renown archaeologist and former Director-General Archaeological Survey of India Sir Mortimer Wheeler, the then Archaeological Adviser to the Government of Pakistan. M. A. Shakur (late) was the first Secretary of the Museums Association of Pakistan (Shakur 1949: 10).

He also initiated two short-term courses and a Diploma course in Museology in Peshawar Museum during the year 1955-56 for the first time. In these courses he also trained people from other departments to promote Archaeology and Museum studies in our country. During his tenure, batches of students of local schools and colleges were given conducted tours to the museum and archaeological sites in Peshawar Division. He also gave talks to the Radio Pakistan, Peshawar, related to the Museum studies (Shakur 1955-56: 01).

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<sup>8</sup> A middle Palaeolithic site located in District Mardan, excavated by A.H Dani in 1962-63.

#### **4. Cultural and Academic Activities**

Mr Shakur took an active part in cultural and literary activities and was an active member of several Associations and Societies in Pakistan as well as abroad. He was a fellow of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland, member of the Royal Numismatic Society of Great Britain, the Numismatic Society of America, the American Federation of Artists and the Asiatic Society of France. He was the Secretary of Pakistan National Committee for Cooperation amongst the Museums formed under the constitution of ICOM and was also the Executive of the Education Committee of the ICOM. Mr M. A Shakur was the founder Secretary of Abasin Art Society<sup>9</sup>, a cultural organization founded in 1955 for the preservation, propagation and development of regional arts and crafts in the old N.W.F.P. He has travelled extensively in Europe, Middle East, America and the Far East and attended International Museum Conferences and Seminars held in London, Bern, Paris and Brooklyn (MAP 1962: 51).

#### **5. Publications**

He was the author or chief editor of the following books, reports and articles:

1. *A Short Guide to Takht-i-Bhai* (1946).
2. *The Red Kafirs* (1946).
3. *Handbook of Inscriptions in the Peshawar Museum* (1946).
4. *A Dash Through the Heart of Afghanistan* (1947).
5. *A Catalogue of exhibits, displayed at the first North-West Frontier Province Arts and Crafts Exhibition* (1948)
6. *The Museums Association of Pakistan (Constitution)* (1949).
7. *The Museums Association of Pakistan (Aims and Objectives)* (1949)
8. *Proceedings of the Museums Association of Pakistan* (First Session, April 1949).
9. *Museum Studies* (1953).
10. *Guide to the Peshawar Museum* (1954).
11. *Report on the working of the Peshawar Museum for the year 1955-1956* (1957)
12. *Handbook for Curators* (s.d.)
13. *Museums Problems* (*Museum Journal of Pakistan* XIV: 1962).
14. *Gandhara Sculpture in Pakistan* (1963).

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<sup>9</sup> In 1967 its name was changed to Abasin Arts Council.

15. *Sirat al-Tauhid* by Bayazid Ansari (edited the Pashto manuscript).<sup>10</sup>
16. *Dastar Namah* by Khushal Khan Khattak (edited the Pashto manuscript).
17. *Fazal Namah* by Khushal Khan Khattak (edited the Pashto manuscripts).
18. *A Catalogue of Coins in the Peshawar Museum.*
19. *Archaeological Sites in the North-West Frontier Province.*
20. *Survey of various Museums in India and Pakistan.*
21. *The Chinese Three (Fa-hian, Hiuen Tsang and Song Yun).*
22. *Buddhist Art in India.*
23. *Notes on Gems and Jewels with special reference to the collection in the Peshawar Museum.*

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<sup>10</sup> Full record of nos. 15 to 21 is missing.



Fig. 1 - M.A. Shakur. Courtesy: Museums Journal of Pakistan (1962).

*In the memory of Mohammad Abdul Shakur...*



Fig. 2 - In the photo, Richard A. Davis Sr, Curator of the Minneapolis Institute of Art is showing to M.A. Shakur a sculpture on display (1953).  
Courtesy: Internet Archives.





Fig. 3 - M.A. Shakur. Courtesy: Family archives.

*In the memory of Mohammad Abdul Shakur...*



Fig. 4 - The Museum Class Harvard University, Cambridge, (Mass), U.S.A.  
From left to right: Dr Charles L. Kohn (Chairman, Department of Fine Arts, Harvard University), Mr Rudolf W. Oxenaar (Netherlands), Miss Lucile M. Golson (U.S.A.), Mr James Early (U.S.A.), M.A. Shakur (Pakistan). Courtesy: *Museum Studies* (1953).

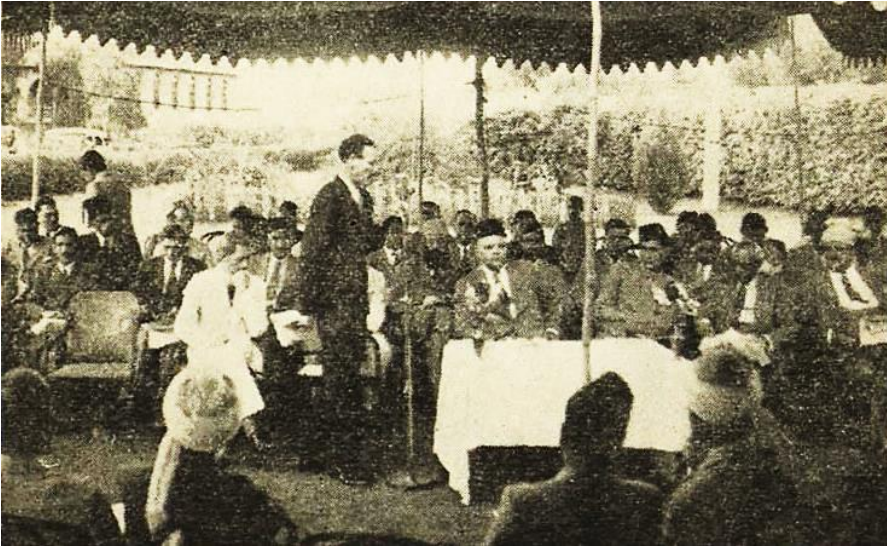


Fig. 5 - Sir Mortimer Wheeler, Archaeological Advisor, Government of Pakistan, reading his inaugural address in the Proceeding of the Museums Association of Pakistan first session (1949), held in Peshawar Museum, Peshawar.  
Courtesy: *Proceeding of the MAP first session (1949)*.



Fig. 6 - Members of the Indian Historical Records Commission, 22<sup>nd</sup> Session, Peshawar, 29<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1945.  
Courtesy: *Indian Historical Records Commission, Vol. XXLI*.

*In the memory of Mohammad Abdul Shakur...*



Fig. 7 - M.A. Shakur in his last days. Courtesy: Family archives.

**CURATORS, PESHAWAR MUSEUM**  
**PESHAWAR**

| S.No. | NAME                          | FROM | TO   |
|-------|-------------------------------|------|------|
| 1.    | DR. M. A. STEIN               | 1906 | 07   |
| 2.    | DR. D. B. SPOONER             | 1907 | 10   |
| 3.    | MR. H. HARGREAVES             | 1910 | 11   |
| 4.    | DR. SIR AUREL STEIN           | 1911 | 12   |
| 5.    | K. S. MIAN WASIUDDIN          | 1912 | 15   |
| 6.    | PANDIT V. N. AIYAR            | 1915 | 18   |
| 7.    | K. S. MIAN WASIUDDIN          | 1918 | 20   |
| 8.    | DR. J. Ph. VOGEL              | 1920 | 21   |
| 9.    | MR. H. HARGREAVES             | 1921 | 27   |
| 10.   | MR. DILAWAR KHAN              | 1927 | 58   |
| 11.   | MR. M. A. SHAKUR              | 1958 | 52   |
| 12.   | MALIK M. AMIN (OFFICIATING)   | 1952 | 53   |
| 13.   | MR. M. A. SHAKUR              | 1953 | 57   |
| 14.   | MALIK M. AMIN (OFFICIATING)   | 1957 | 58   |
| 15.   | MR. M. A. SHAKUR              | 1958 | 63   |
| 16.   | MALIK M. AMIN (OFFICIATING)   | 1963 | 64   |
| 17.   | MR. S. M. JAFFAR (DIRECTOR)   | 1964 | 70   |
| 18.   | MR. FARID KHAN (DIRECTOR)     | 1970 | 72   |
| 19.   | FIDA ULLAH SEHRAI (DIRECTOR)  | 1972 | 88   |
| 20.   | MR. AURANGZEB KHAN (DIRECTOR) | 1988 | 98   |
| 21.   | MR. SALEH MUHAMMAD KHAN       | 1998 | 2011 |
| 22.   | MR. NIDA ULLAH SEHRAI         | 2011 |      |

Fig. 8 - The List of Curators of the Peshawar Museum, shows the long tenure of Mr M.A. Shakur in the Museum. Courtesy: Peshawar Museum, Peshawar.



Fig. 9 - His Grave (Syed Jalal Bukhari graveyard, Mardan).



Sebastiano Tusa  
(Photo: “Museo Nazionale Radio3” – RAI)

In this Volume 42 (2019) the Editorial Board of the Journal intends to honour the memory of Prof. Sebastiano Tusa (1952-2019), a great archaeologist and cultural heritage manager. Pakistan held a special place in Sebastiano Tusa's professional life. He was member of the IsMEO Italian Archaeological Mission in Pakistan under the tenure of Domenico Faccenna. He first co-directed with Giorgio Stacul, and then directed the excavation project of Aligrama in Swat. He carried out extensive surveys in various parts of Pakistan, including the valleys of Darel and Tangir in Indus Kohistan (1980). Sebastiano Tusa, a dear friend and colleague of many Pakistani archaeologists, passed away on the 10th of March 2019, in the tragic crash of the Ethiopian Airlines Flight 302 near Addis Ababa (Ethiopia), while he was traveling to Nairobi as UNESCO delegate.