

**In the memory of Prof. Farid Khan:
His Early Career and Contributions to Archaeology,
with Special Reference to the Bannu Archaeological Project**

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Prof. Farid Khan was the senior-most archaeologist trained by stalwarts like Dr. F. A Khan and Dr. A.H Dani, and himself had a brilliant career both as professor of Archaeology and Director of Peshawar Museum. He died on 28th June 2020 at Peshawar. He was born in 1934 at Bazar Ahmad Khan in the historical city of Bannu, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. He got his bachelor's degree from Islamia College Peshawar in 1957 and Masters' degree in History from the University of Peshawar in 1959. Later he was registered as scholar in Archaeology and appointed lecturer in 1961 at the historic Islamia College. In 1962 he was posted to the Department of Archaeology, University of Peshawar. He participated in a number of exploratory and excavation expeditions in various parts of Pakistan and also continued to develop his knowledge of archaeological theory and practice through studies at universities in Europe. He obtained B.A (Hons.) in Archaeology in 1967 and M.A. in Archaeology 1996 from the University of Cambridge, U.K., and in 1981 he was awarded an M.Sc. (with Distinction) in Quaternary Geology and Geomorphology by the Free University of Brussels in Belgium.

Throughout his life he remained a popular teacher and a serious researcher, always contributing new ideas, concepts and theories related to South Asian Archaeology throughout his long and highly active career. When, in 1971, it was almost decided by the University of Peshawar to close the Department of Archaeology, he rescued it with his strong arguments.

He was appointed as Director of the Peshawar Museum in 1970. During his tenure he re-organized the entire display of the Peshawar Museum and added two new galleries, one Islamic and the other on Tribal ethnography.

He excavated a number of sites in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and published many research articles in national and international journals. He re-excavated the Middle Stone Age site of Sanghao Cave, near Mardan, in 1974 and also made the first investigation of Rehman Dheri, a large Bronze Age site in the Gomal valley. In 1990, his NGO, the Pakistan Heritage Society, in collaboration with Professor Dr. Michael Meister of Pennsylvania University, Philadelphia, USA, initiated a project to document the Hindu temples along the Indus and the Salt Range. The joint project also established the chronology of these temples.

He was elected a member of the Syndicate of the University of Peshawar and also served on various national and provincial level policy-making committees. He held various academic, administrative and co-academic positions until his retirement in 1994. He was appointed first Director of newly

created Directorate of Archaeology and Museums of the (then) NWFP. During his one-year tenure he contributed greatly and many bold steps were taken in respect of administration and research. He conducted extremely important surveys/explorations of potential areas and excavations of sites in KPK. The Buddhist site of Aziz Dheri, the grave site of Adina in Swabi, and Sheikhan Dheri at Charsadda are among some of the sites he excavated.

Farid Khan's archaeological explorations and surveys in the Bannu Basin in 1975-76 (Khan 1986) lead to the discovery of many new and important settlement sites, some with artefact assemblages closely resembling those of Gumla II and Rehman Dheri I in the Gomal Plain (see below). Indeed, one of the earliest publications by Farid Khan was on the lithic technology at the early Bronze Age site of Rehman Dheri (Khan 1979). Subsequent field surveys and excavations were undertaken in Bannu by Farid Khan, initially as joint director of a project with archaeologists from Cambridge University (1977-79) and then as co-director of the Bannu Archaeological Project (1985-2020).

The Bannu Archaeological Project was established in 1985 as a collaborative research project (Khan et al. 2000a) and its work broadened considerably the range of early settlement sites known in the Bannu Basin (Khan et al. 1987, 1988, 1991a, 1991b) and of previously unknown or poorly understood cultural phases in both the Bannu Basin and the Gomal Plain, as detailed below.

Most notable among the new sites discovered by Farid Khan is Sheri Khan Tarakai, which was found during surveys by the Bannu Archaeological Project in 1985 and excavated over several seasons, as reported in detail in many publications (Khan et al. 1986, 1989, 1990, 1991c, 1992), culminating in a substantial volume on the site and its broader cultural context (Khan et al. 2010). The research undertaken at Sheri Khan Tarakai confirmed it to be an early village settlement, radiocarbon dated to the late fifth to the early third millennium BC, making it the earliest known village site in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province. The inhabitants of Sheri Khan Tarakai deployed a range of subsistence strategies, including the cultivation of barley and wheat, the management of domestic sheep, goat and cattle, the collection of a range of wild plant and wood species, and the hunting of wild animals. Following the discovery of Sheri Khan Tarakai, other sites with identical types of material culture were found in the Bannu Basin and the Gomal Plain, including at Jhandi Babar A/I (Khan et al. 2010). This cultural episode, known only from the Bannu Basin and the Gomal Plain, has been named the 'Sheri Khan Tarakai Phase' after the nominal 'type site'.

Lak Largai, Lewan and other sites in Bannu, plus Gumla II, Jhandi Babar A/II and RHD I in the Gomal, represent another very distinctive and homogeneous cultural phase, later in date than the Sheri Khan Tarakai Phase but with a similar geographical distribution. This cultural phenomenon was first identified by Farid Khan and colleagues in the Bannu Archaeological Project

who named it the 'Tochi-Gomal Phase' (Khan et al., 2000b, 2000c, 2000d, 2001, 2004).

Prior to Farid Khan's ground-breaking archaeological surveys, the best-known ancient sites in Bannu were the huge mounds at of the Early Historic period at Akra. The Bannu Archaeological Project undertook a series of seasons of survey and excavations at Akra (Khan et al. 2000f, 2000g, 2008; Knox et al. 2002; Magee et al. 2005), the results of which have recently been brought to fruition in a major book by Cameron Petrie (2020), one of the team members of the Bannu Archaeological Project.

In addition to his wide-ranging archaeological interests, Farid Khan was keenly interested in ethnoarchaeology, including recording traditional building methods (Figure 4), crafts and other practices in Bannu that, sadly, are on the decline in this modern age. He published a wide-ranging article on this (Khan 1994) and a more focused article on traditional village-based pottery production (Khan and Thomas 2020), which was the last scholarly work he produced during his long and highly productive life.

Until his death he was working for his NGO, the Pakistan Heritage Society, and was also engaged in supervising and guiding research scholars in the fields of Prehistoric, Bronze Age and Buddhist archaeology of South Asia. The present author first met him in 2007 at a conference in Islamabad and later on he guided me in my Ph.D. studies and research at the Department of Archaeology, University of Peshawar. For this cooperation and sincere help, the author is very much thankful to him and prays for his soul in heaven.

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Fig. 2 - Standing: Prof. Farid Khan, Ihsan H. Nadeem, sitting, A.H Dani, F.A Khan 1995
(Courtesy of Shakirullah Khan).

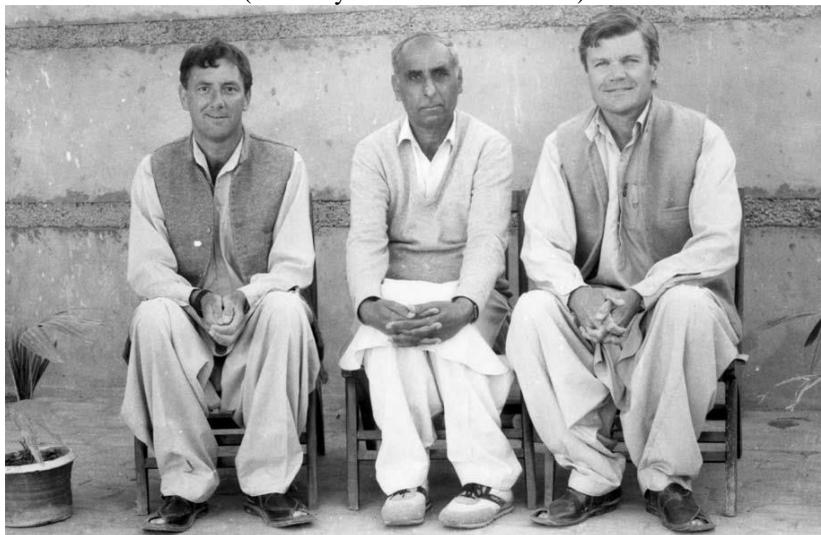


Fig. 3 - The founder members of the Bannu Archaeological Project in 1985. Centre:
Prof. Farid Khan (Department of Archaeology, University of Peshawar); Right: Mr. J.R.
Knox (Keeper of Oriental Antiquities, the British Museum, London); Left: Prof. Dr.
Kenneth D. Thomas (Institute of Archaeology, UCL/University of London).



Fig. 4 - Prof. Farid Khan beside a recently abandoned structure in the west of Bannu District which shows the very effective traditional method of wall construction using boulders, cobbles and clay.