

SIR JOHN MARSHALL AND SOUTH ASIAN ARCHAEOLOGY: A SKETCH

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ABSTRACT

Sir John Marshall was one of few Director Generals of the Archaeological Survey of India. He served the Survey from 1902 to 1928. During this time, Marshall carried out numerous excavation and conservation works. The present paper attempts to comprehend this gigantic work in a meaningful way. It provides some major themes related to Marshall's activities in India and a long list of publications which resulted from the decades-long archaeological activities done during Marshall's Director Generalship.

Keywords: Marshall, Survey, Taxila, Director General, conservation

INTRODUCTION

Sir John Marshall was the third Director General, after Alexander Cunningham (1861-1865, 1871-1885) and James Burgess (1885-1889) of the Archaeological Survey of India. After the retirement of James Burgess from the Director Generalship of ASI in 1889, the Survey became decentralized and the post of Director General was abolished. The responsibilities in the field of archaeology were devolved to the Local Governments. However, the ensuing archaeological activity did not live up to the expectations and it was in this messy milieu that Lord Curzon as the new Viceroy of India arrived in 1899. With him a 'new era dawned for Indian archaeology'. He got himself completely au fait with realities on the ground and gave a deep thought to the problems. Curzon showed great dissatisfaction with the existing state of affairs especially the untidily arranged archaeological circles and the poor role of the Local Governments. He lamented all the failings on the part of the government and, at first instance, proposed the revival of the post of the Director General so that the need for a central coordinating body be met. Curzon really felt such

a need and hence the vitality of such a parent body. Therefore, proposals were submitted to the Secretary of State on 20th December 1900 in which the recreation of the post of Director General was proposed. The proposals were sanctioned by the Secretary of State on 29th November the following year. It was, perhaps, on the recommendation of the British Museum that John Marshall was appointed as the new Director General of the Survey. He took the office on 22nd February 1902 (Roy 1953: 25-27; 1961: 78-83; Chakrabarti 1988/2001: 120-122). However, Wheeler expresses doubts about the decision of the selection of Marshall. He writes that 'whether the very young Marshall who, in response to a telegram, arrived in India with his bride in 1902 was or was not the Marshall actually intended for the new and responsible post, there can be no doubt that Fors Fortuna knew her business' (Wheeler 1955/1958: 157). However, he appreciates the tremendous job handsomely accomplished by Marshall (Wheeler 1955/1958: 157ff.).

The post of Director General was initially sanctioned for five years. However, with the

efforts of Marshall and the active support by Curzon the Survey was regularized in April 1906 with the approval of the Secretary of State. In the result of the Montagu-Chelmsford Reform, 1919, it was transformed into a central body. The number of high position increased in the Survey till 1921.

Marshall's Contribution to Indian Archaeology

Sir John Marshall was born on 19th March 1876 and passed away on August 17th 1958. He served as Director General of the Archaeological Survey of India from 1902 to 1928. He surrendered the post in 1928 in order to write 'a series of monographs' on his excavations and 'coordinate the results of the Taxila excavations'. He continued this work till he retired in 1931. After his retirement, Marshall was re-employed on special duty and at last he bade farewell to India on March 15, 1934 (Chakrabarti 1988/2001: 127).

The Archaeological Survey of India was restructured in the wake of Curzon's arrival and its mandate was expanded by assigning to it new tasks. The Director General was invested with the responsibility of getting archaeological activities across the country vigilantly supervised. In this context, Marshall made valuable contributions to Indian archaeology. His period is characterized by the extension of archaeological activities to the nook and corner of the country. Specialized studies were initiated, extensive excavations were undertaken and important discoveries were made. Most importantly, Indian scholars were inducted into prestigious position in the Survey (Chakrabarti 1982: 334-335). Archaeological activity at Taxila valley – spreading 'over a period of twenty years, resulting in the accumulation of a substantial body of archaeological spanning the period 500 BC to AD 500, not to mention the discovery of the Indus Valley Civilization through excavation of Harappa and Mohenjo-daro' (Clark 1979: 5) – is to be rightly termed as a hallmark achievement in the ancient Indian studies.

Lord Curzon from the very beginning visualized three areas of great importance in relation to archaeological activity in India. They were conservation, epigraphy and researches. He spoke

on February 6, 1900 before the Bengal Asiatic Society at Calcutta in these words:

Epigraphy should not be set behind research any more than research should be set behind conservation. All are ordered parts of any scientific scheme of antiquarian work. I am not one of those who think that Government can afford to patronize the one and ignore the other. It is, in my judgment, equally our duty to dig and discover, to classify, reproduce, and describe, to copy and decipher, and to cherish and conserve (as reproduced in Chakrabarti 1988/2001: 230). It is also clear that these considerations, as visualized by Curzon soon after his arrival into India, found a central place in the newly promulgated legislation in connection to archaeology viz. the Ancient Monuments Preservations Act of 1904.

It is against this comprehensive and well-thought-out background that Marshall's career as Director General of the Archaeological Survey and his contributions in that capacity are better understandable. He was to supervise archaeological activities in India, coordinate the multiple projects in the various parts of the country and advise and guide the personnel of the Survey.

Marshall's work at Taxila was carried out in line with the stipulations of the new archaeological policy and reflects profound care given to excavation, conservation and epigraphic studies. The area was one of his first choices along with Pataliputra. However, the initial point of focus remained, since 1902, the incompletely excavated Buddhist sites with a clear vision as to 'coordinate the results obtained by earlier excavators and to check the often unreliable conclusions which they had drawn. For all practical purposes this part of the programme was completed in 1910 . . .' (Marshall 1916: 24). It was followed by archaeological activities at Bhita and, in turn, Taxila and Pataliputra. 'The choice in the next stage [after Bhita]', writes Chakrabarti (1988/2001: 129), 'fell on Taxila in the west and Pataliputra in the east. Taxila with ruins spread over an area of 25 square miles was a world by itself whereas Pataliputra with its high subsoil water level and the thick covering deposit of the

Ganges alluvium was a difficult proposition'. Thus, it might be deduced that the archaeology of Taxila garners special importance in the reconstruction of Indian ancient history.

One of Marshall's great achievements is the prompt publications of the results of archaeological researches. He has to his credit a long bibliography as is clear from the following table:

Title	Year of publication	Book/Journal (Title in case of journal)	pp. (in case of journals' articles)
Introduction	1904	<i>Archaeological Survey of India: Annual Reports</i>	1-13
<i>Annual Report of the Director General of Archaeology for the year 1903-4</i>	1905 (Pt. I)	Calcutta	-
Conservation (general)	1906	<i>Archaeological Survey of India: Annual Reports 1903-04</i>	1-12
Rajagriha and its remains	1909	<i>Archaeological Survey of India: Annual Reports 1905-06</i>	86-106
Excavations at Saheth-Maheth	1914	<i>Archaeological Survey of India: Annual Reports 1910-11</i>	1-24
Excavations at Bhita	1915	<i>Archaeological Survey of India: Annual Reports 1911-12</i>	29ff.
Taxila	1916a	<i>Archaeological Survey of India: Annual Reports 1912-13</i>	1-15
Director-General's notes	1916b	<i>In: Indian Archaeological policy 1915. (Calcutta)</i>	3ff.
Taxila	1918a (Pt. I)	<i>Archaeological Survey of India: Annual Reports 1916-17</i>	10-12
<i>A Guide to Taxila</i>	1918b	Book	-
Taxila	1920	<i>Archaeological Survey of India: Annual Reports 1914-15</i>	1-35
Taxila	1922	<i>Archaeological Survey of India: Annual Reports 1919-20</i>	18-20
<i>Conservation Manual</i>	1923a	(Book) Calcutta	-
Notes on Sahni's work at Harappa in 1920-21	1923b	<i>Archaeological Survey of India: Annual Reports 1920-21</i>	15-17
Exploration and research	1926a	<i>Archaeological Survey of India: Annual Reports 1923-24</i>	47-50

Taxila	1926b	Archaeological Survey of India: Annual Reports 1923-24	61-66
Taxila	1927	Archaeological Survey of India: Annual Reports 1924-25	46-50
Taxila	1930	Archaeological Survey of India: Annual Reports 1926-27	110-119
Mohenjodaro and the Indus civilization (3 vols., ed.)	1931a	Book (London)	-
Taxila	1931b	Archaeological Survey of India: Annual Reports 1927-28	54-67
Taxila	1933	Archaeological Survey of India: Annual Reports 1928-29	51-66
Taxila	1935	Archaeological Survey of India: Annual Reports 1929-30	55-97
Taxila	1936	Archaeological Survey of India: Annual Reports 1920-34	149-76
Taxila (3 vols.)	1951/2006	Cambridge	-
A Guide to Taxila (4 th ed.)	1960	Cambridge	-
The Monuments of Sanchi	1983	Delhi	-

Marshall has also coauthored these works:

Title	Year of publication	Book/Journal (Title in case of journal)	pp. (in case of journals' articles)
Excavations at Sarnath (with S. Konow)	1911	Archaeological Survey of India: Annual Reports 1907-08	43-80
Excavations at Mandor (with D.R. Sahni)	1914	Archaeological Survey of India: Annual Reports 1909-10	93-103
Excavations at Charsada in the frontier province (with J. Vogel)	1904	Archaeological Survey of India: Annual Reports 1902-03	141-84

Criticism on Marshall

Marshall and his work have been subjected to critique by some scholars. Wheeler was one among them.

Wheeler has been accused of being harsh in his judgment of Marshall, yet he fully recognized his achievements. If there were any bias at all it was because Marshall was weakest in two areas in which Wheeler was strongest and which he

considered most important: in technically skilled and purposefully selected excavation and in the training of able lieutenants and successors. Cut off and overburdened with his vast responsibilities, Marshall had not kept in touch with advances in scientific method, while he was also one of those men who did not like to delegate responsibility. As someone said of him, he was like 'a beech tree under which nothing grows'. When he retired, therefore, all about him were old, backward-looking and soon to retire themselves. There were four Directors General within a decade. Collapse was inevitable (Hawkes 1982: 231).

Wheeler enumerates failures of Marshall while keeping in view state of the Survey and political circumstances. His training in Classical archaeology was by the first decades of twentieth century somewhat outmoded. Marshall could not keep academic contacts with archaeological innovations and techniques which had been taking place outside India. Most of the senior officers of the Survey retired at the same time which negatively affected the Survey. Furthermore, Marshall failed to delegate authority which 'hinder[ed] therefore the adequate training of subordinates to assume responsibility' (Wheeler 1955/1958: 158-159).

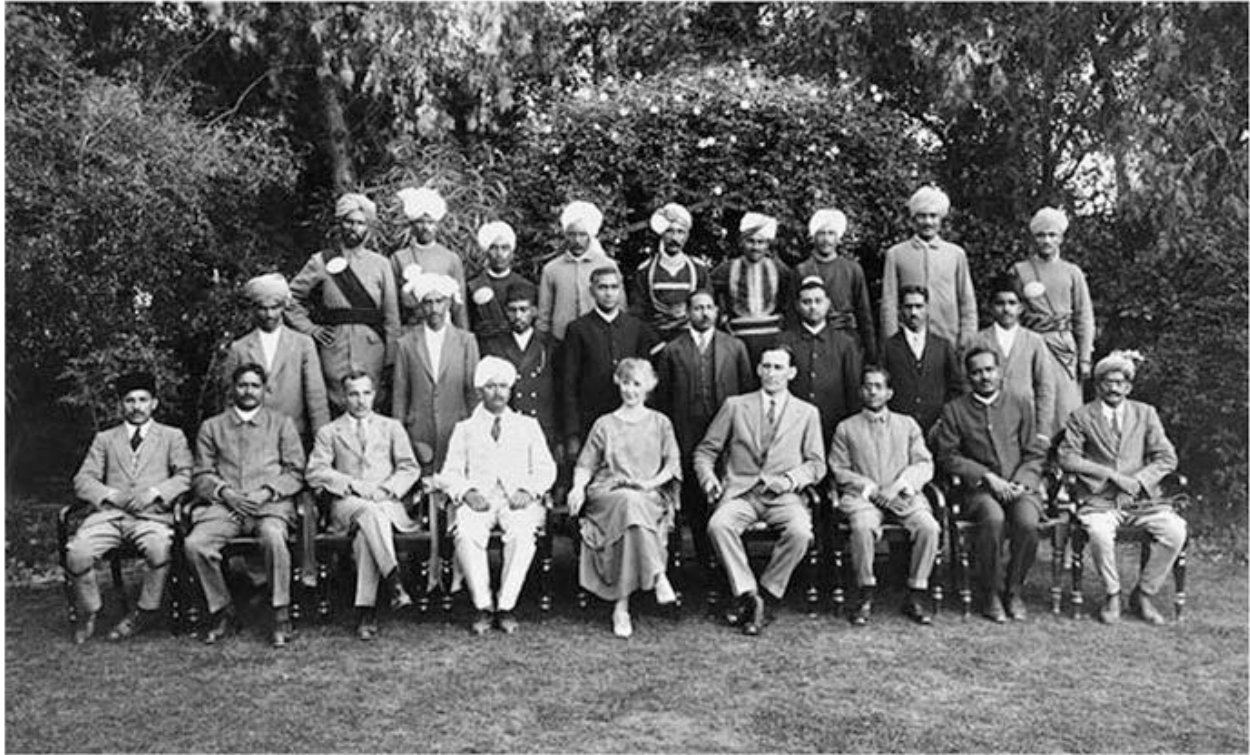
Conclusion

John Marshall made revolutionary contributions to Indian archaeology both in term of the fieldwork and administrative mechanism. He is particularly known for the discovery of the Indus Valley Civilization and large-scale excavation at Taxila. Considering legal archaeology in South Asia, he is to be credited for a sagacious plan for the management of archaeological and historical heritage. Of similar significance is Marshall's conservation strategy and work on the ground.

But unlike other maestros of South Asian archaeology, no due attention is paid from scholarly viewpoint to his work and intellectual influences. It is highly needed to explore all these aspects of the scholarly and leadership persona of John Marshall through archival research both in South Asia and the United Kingdom. In this way, many of doubts and uncertainties about him will be dispelled.

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John Marshall and his wife Florence with the Staff of the Archaeological Survey of India, 1925: Courtesy:
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