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In Memoriam
Professor Katsumi Tanabe (1941–2026):
A Distinguished Alumnus of the University of Peshawar and a Dedicated Scholar of Gandhāra

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The Department of Archaeology, Tourism and Hotel Management, University of Peshawar and the editorial board of *Ancient Pakistan* mourn the passing of Professor Katsumi Tanabe, one of the most distinguished scholars of Gandhāran art and archaeology. Professor Tanabe passed away at his home on 19 April 2026, after a battle with lung cancer, at the age of 84.

Professor Tanabe shared a unique and enduring bond with Pakistan, particularly with the city of Peshawar and the Department of Archaeology, University of Peshawar. His association with the department began in the 1960s when he travelled from Japan to pursue higher studies in archaeology. After completing his undergraduate studies in French at the University of Tokyo in 1965, he enrolled in the MA Archaeology Programme at the University of Peshawar. He graduated with distinction in 1969 and was awarded a Gold Medal in recognition of his exceptional academic achievement. During his stay in Peshawar, he studied under the guidance of eminent scholars, including Dr. Abdur Rahman, Dr. Farzand Ali Durrani, Professors Fidaullah Sehrai and Farid Khan, whose teaching and mentorship left a lasting impression on generations of archaeologists. According to Professor Abdur Rahman, after completing his MA in Archaeology at the University of Peshawar, Tanabe travelled to Afghanistan to explore its rich Buddhist art and architectural heritage. However, the exact duration of his stay and the date of his return to Japan remain uncertain.

Following his return to Japan, Professor Tanabe pursued advanced studies in Art History at the University of Tokyo. Although he withdrew from the Doctoral Programme in 1973 after completing the required coursework, his academic career continued to flourish. He was appointed Research Assistant at the University Museum, The University of Tokyo, and later joined the Ancient Orient Museum as a Senior Researcher in 1979. In 1985, he became Director of the Museum's Research Department, a position through which he further established himself as a leading authority on the art and archaeology of Asia.

His illustrious academic career continued with his appointment as Professor in the Faculty of Letters at Kanazawa University in 1993. In 2001, he joined Chuo University as Professor in the Faculty of Policy Studies. The following year, he was awarded the degree of Doctor of Letters by the University of Tokyo for his dissertation, *The Origin of the Vaiśravaṇa Image: East–West Cultural Exchange in Gandhāra*, a work that exemplified his lifelong commitment to understanding the cultural interactions that shaped the art and religious traditions of ancient Asia.

Even after his retirement from Chuo University in 2012, Professor Tanabe remained academically active. He continued to write, research and engage with fellow scholars, contributing to the field with the same dedication that had characterized his entire career. His intellectual curiosity and commitment to scholarship never diminished.

Professor Tanabe's scholarship transformed the study of Gandhāran art. Through decades of dedicated research, he explored the artistic, religious and cultural connections that linked South Asia, Central Asia, China and the wider ancient world. His publications on Gandhāran iconography, Buddhist art, numismatics and cultural exchange remain valuable resources for scholars around the world.

Despite spending most of his academic career in Japan, Professor Tanabe never lost his connection with

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Pakistan, particularly with Peshawar, where he received his archaeological training. Whenever an opportunity arose, he returned to Pakistan for research, visited archaeological sites and museums, and maintained close connections with his teachers and colleagues. On several occasions, he also delivered lectures at Pakistani universities and generously shared his knowledge with younger scholars. For him, Peshawar was not merely a place of study; it remained a cherished memory throughout his life. In correspondence with the editors of Ancient Pakistan, his son, Dr. Tadashi Tanabe, recalled how his father often spoke fondly of his days in Peshawar and would frequently remark that the mutton pulao he ate there was 'the most delicious in the world.' More than half a century after his student days, those memories remained vivid, reflecting the deep affection he held for the city, its people and its cultural heritage.

During one of his last visits to Peshawar on 27th February 2020, Professor Tanabe returned to his alma mater, and spent a day at the Sir Sahibzada Abdul Qayyum Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, University of Peshawar. The visit brought together former teachers, colleagues and friends, who welcomed him warmly. They shared memories of earlier days, discussed archaeology, enjoyed each other's company and spent time together over lunch. The photographs reproduced here capture some of these happy moments and reflect the affection and respect that existed between Professor Tanabe and the archaeological community of Peshawar. More than fifty years after completing his studies, he remained deeply attached to the University of Peshawar and to Pakistan, a bond that he valued throughout his life.

The editorial team of *Ancient Pakistan* had the privilege of corresponding with Professor Tanabe during the final year of his life. In response to an invitation to contribute to the current issue of the journal, he wrote with characteristic humility:

> "It was very nice to hear from you that you kindly invited me to contribute to Ancient Pakistan, vol. XXXVI (2025). However, I am now 83 years, too old to make an article. Therefore, I asked my son, Tadashi Tanabe, associate professor at Kyoto University to contribute his paper entitled 'A Note on the Vima Kadphises Statue in the Collection of the Mathura Museum' on my behalf. I am assured that his paper shall be sent to you before the deadline."
>
> With best regards, KATSUMI TANABE (October 14, 2025).

On December 29, 2025, when invited to serve as a reviewer for *Ancient Pakistan*, Professor Tanabe graciously expressed his willingness to support the journal but regretfully declined due to his illness, informing us that he was undergoing treatment for lung cancer. It was therefore with profound sadness that we received news from his son on 22nd April 2026 that Professor Tanabe had passed away peacefully at home on April 19, 2026.

Professor Tanabe leaves behind an extraordinary scholarly legacy, a vast body of research and generations of students and colleagues who benefited from his knowledge, generosity and friendship. For the University of Peshawar, he will always be remembered not only as a renowned international scholar but also as one of our own alumni whose achievements brought distinction to the institution and whose affection for Peshawar never faded.

As we remember Professor Katsumi Tanabe, we pay tribute to a scholar who devoted his life to the study of Gandhāra and to the promotion of cultural understanding across borders. His contributions will continue to inspire future generations of researchers, and his memory will remain an enduring part of the shared intellectual heritage of Pakistan and Japan.

May he rest in peace.

Acknowledgements

The author gratefully acknowledges the assistance of all those who contributed information, memories and materials for the preparation of this obituary. Special thanks are due to Professor Dr. Abdur Rahman

for kindly recalling his memories of his former student, Professor Katsumi Tanabe, and sharing valuable details about his time at the University of Peshawar. Sincere gratitude is extended to Dr. Tadashi Tanabe for providing biographical information on his father's early life, education, academic career and final days.

The author is particularly indebted to Professor Dr. Zakirullah Jan, Chairman of the Department of Archaeology and Editor of *Ancient Pakistan*, for his tremendous support and for granting access to the departmental archival records, which helped verify and authenticate important details of Professor Tanabe's academic association with the University of Peshawar. Special thanks are also due to Mr. Asim Amin, for his assistance and cooperation during the preparation of this tribute.

The author also thanks Mr. Naeem Bacha, former Draughtsman and MPhil/PhD Coordinator of the Department of Archaeology, University of Peshawar, for sharing useful information and recollections.

Any omissions or inaccuracies that may remain are solely the responsibility of the author.



DEPARTMENT OF ARCHAEOLOGY
UNIVERSITY OF PESHAWAR
LIST OF GOLD MEDALISTS

SESSION	NAME	MARKS
1964	Mr. FAZLI HAMID	551/800
1965	Mr. WILAYAT KHAN	522/800
1966	Mr. ALI MOHAMMAD	500/800
1967	NIL	
1968	NIL	
1969	Mr. KATSUME TANABE	484/800
1970	Mr. MOHAMMAD SALEEM	515/800
1971	NO STUDENT	
1972	NO STUDENT	
1973	NIL	
1974	Mr. JAVEED HUSAIN	607/900
1975	NO STUDENT	
1976	Mr. TAJ ALI	596/900
1977	Miss HUMERA ALAM	1485/1900
1978	Mr. KARIM DAD	1303/1900
1979	Mr. IHSAN ALI (Record Holder)	1571/1900
1980	Miss ZAHIDA NAHEED	1311/1900
1981	Mr. ALAM ZEB	1446/1900
1982	Mr. FARZAND	576/900
1983	Mr. MOHAMMAD NASIM	752/1100
1984	Mr. SAEED KHAN	660/1100
1985	Mr. ALIULLAH	706/1100
1986	Mr. JEHAN ZEB KHAN	743/1100
1987	Mr. MOHAMMAD NAWAZ KHAN	800/1100
1988	SESSION MISSING	
1989	Mr. MOHAMMAD NAEEM	783/1100
1990	Miss ALIA JAVAD	821/1100
1991	Mr. IBRAHIM SHAH	868/1100
1992	Mr. MOHAMMAD HANIF	729/1100
1993	Miss NADINE ZUBAIR	783/1100
1994	Miss SAADIA REHMAN	763/1100
1995	Miss SAMINA SHAFIQ	697/1100
1996	Mr. AHMAD HILAL	767/1100









Visit of the late Prof. Katsumi Tanabe to the SSAQ Museum of Archaeology & Ethnology, February 2020

