



# DÉLÉGATIONS ARCHÉOLOGIQUES FRANÇAISES

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**DÉLÉGATIONS ARCHÉOLOGIQUES FRANÇAISES**, bodies established by the French government to conduct archeological investigations in Persia and Afghanistan respectively.

*i. Délégation Archéologique Française en Iran.*

*ii. Délégation Archéologique Française en Afghanistan.*

## i. DÉLÉGATION ARCHÉOLOGIQUE FRANÇAISE EN IRAN

Archeological research in Persia began with the explorations of the British geologist W. K. Loftus in 1847 and was continued by [Marcel](#) and [Jane Dieulafoy](#) in 1884-86. The main site to catch the interest of these investigators was Susa in *Ḳūzestān*, one of the capitals of the Achaemenid empire and mentioned in the Bible as the palace where Esther was chosen queen by Ahasuerus (Esther 2; M. Dieulafoy, 1888). C.\*\* Babin mapped the three major areas of the site (the acropolis; the [Apadāna ii](#); and the “Ville royale”) while the Dieulafoys excavated the Achaemenid palace in the Apadāna. Since their early efforts Susa has remained the largest excavation site in Persia, under the



direction of the Délégation en Perse (D.P.), which underwent many changes of name and became Délégation Archéologique Française en Iran (DAFI) after World War II. In 1982 the DAFI and the Institut Français d'Iranologie merged under the name Institut Français de Recherches en Iran (IFRI).

In 1312/1895 René de Balloy, the French minister in Tehran, obtained from Nāṣer-al-Dīn Shah (1264-1313/1848-96) a French monopoly of archeological exploration in Persia. Two years later [Jacques de Morgan](#), a mining engineer who had already visited Persia in 1889-91 and had advised on the terms of this agreement, was appointed delegate general to Persia from the French Ministère de l'Instruction Publique (ministerial decree, 19 April 1897), and the French parliament allocated 100,000 gold francs for the establishment of the D.P., with an annual budget of F. 130,000.

De Morgan assumed direction of the D.P., which he retained until 1912. His own archeological investigations were focused on the prehistory of Susa and achieving a first appreciation of the stratigraphy of the site (de Morgan et al.). The major discoveries included a prehistoric necropolis with painted ceramics of Susa style A (4th millennium B.C.E.); clay tablets with a proto-Elamite pictographic script that is still undeciphered; Elamite temples from the second half of the 2nd millennium B.C.E.; the stele of Hammurabi, with his law code; the stele of Naram Sin; the Manishtusu obelisk; and a bronze statue of Queen Napirasu. These and other finds, for example, the famed archers' frieze excavated by the Dieulafoys, which Moẓaffar-al-Dīn Shah (1313-24/1896-1907) had seen in the Musée du Louvre in Paris, led, in 1900, to a convention in which France was granted the exclusive right to excavate in the Persian empire and to keep all the antiquities discovered; the Persian government was to be compensated for gold and silver objects only (Bagherzadeh, p. xv).

An increasing number of investigators were also working at other sites under the sponsorship of the D.P.: Tepe Mūsīān on the plain of [Dehloran](#) (Gautier and Lampre, pp. 92-148), "dolmen" fields in Gilān province, ancient Sasanian irrigation systems in Kūzestān (Graadt van Roggen), fossil fish at Marāḡa in Azarbaijan (de Mecquenem). These investigators included the botanist L.-C. Watelin, J.-E. Gautier, Roland de Mecquenem, Paul Toscanne, G. Pézard, and the hydrologist D. L. Graadt van Roggen. The results of this work were published in the *Mémoires* of the successive avatars of the Délégation (for a complete catalogue of those related to Elamite sites in Kūzestān, see Amiet, pp. 602-06).



Following de Morgan's resignation no successor was chosen immediately; the funds of the renamed Mission Archéologique de Perse (M.A.P.) were allotted to several scholars working in different parts of Persia: de Mecquenem and the architect Maurice Pillet at Susa; Charles Fossey at Hamadān, Ray, and Sar-e Pol; G. and Maurice Pézard at Līān near Būšeher (Pézard). J. V. Scheil and Pillet edited the various volumes of the *Mémoires*.

Field work was halted during World War I. In 1920 de Mecquenem was named director of the M.A.P., and he and Scheil resumed the work at Susa and in the adjacent region, with funds provided by the French Ministère d'Instruction Publique and the Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres. Between 1920 and 1938 de Mecquenem excavated Elamite levels, the 4th-millennium B.C.E. necropolis, and the post-Achaemenid *donjon*. In 1939 he initiated work at the large site of Čōgā Zanbīl, where he explored the ziggurat (de Mecquenem and Michalon). His assistant Louis Le Breton surveyed small sites of the 6th-4th millennia in Susiana. Meanwhile, outside the Susiana plain more modern methods of research and more controlled exploration of stratigraphy were adopted at Tepe Gīān near Nehāvand (Contenau and Ghirshman) and Tepe Sīalk near Kāšān (Ghirshman, 1938).

In 1308 Š./1929 the Persian government renounced the terms of its treaty on antiquities with the French; thenceforth all finds, with the exception of clay tablets, elements of architectural decoration, and valuable objects considered components of the Persian patrimony, were to be divided equally between the Iran Bastan Museum in Tehran and the Louvre (Bagherzadeh, p. xvi).

After a further suspension of activity during World War II Roman Ghirshman became director of the Mission Archéologique en Iran (M.A.I.) in 1946. Until 1951 he focused his own efforts on the "Ville royale" at Susa, dating from the 2nd millennium B.C.E.; he was assisted by the architect Hermann Gasche and the epigrapher M.-J. Steve. Then he turned his own attention to Čōgā Zanbīl, where he continued to work until 1961 (*M.D.A.I.* 39-42); in the meantime other members of the renamed Délégation Archéologique en Iran (D.A.I.) continued the work at Susa, at the acropolis (4th-3rd millennium B.C.E.), the Apadāna, and the "Ville des artisans" (Achaemenid, Parthian, and Sasanian periods; Ghirshman, 1954), and also investigated the Sasanian city of Ayyān-e Karkā (Ghirshman, 1952, pp. 10-12), Masjed-e Solaymān, and Bard-e Nešānda (Ghirshman, 1976).

In 1968 Jean Perrot became the fourth director of the DAFI and under his



guidance close ties of cooperation were forged with the department of archaeology at the University of Tehran, the Persian department of antiquities (Edāra-ye koll-e bāstān-šenāsī), the Persian Center for archeological research (Markaz-e pažūhešhā wa kāvešhā-ye bāstān-šenāsī), and the National organization for the preservation of historic monuments of Persia (Sāzmān-e mellī-e ḥefāzat-e ātār-e bāstānī-e Īrān). In 1348 Š./1969 the system of dividing excavated antiquities between the two countries was terminated. All finds, recorded on cards in both Persian and French, are kept in the regional museum at Susa, except for those of greatest importance, which are sent to the Iran Bastan Museum in Tehran (Bagherzadeh, p. xviii).

Beginning in the late 1960s the new staff gathered by Perrot, including archeologists, epigraphers, geophysicists, natural scientists, geologists, and engineers, tended to be more interdisciplinary and more international in composition; for example, it included Persian archeologists and American anthropologists. The goal remained a comprehensive reassessment of the societies of Susa and the Susiana plain from the 6th millennium B.C.E. onward. The excavations at Susa and such nearby sites as Ja‘farābād (Dollfus), Jovī, and Band-e Bāl have been focused on establishing a solid stratigraphical basis for the chronology of the region (Vallat, pp. 16-17), the indispensable framework for the study of the natural environment, population trends, shifts in settlement, strategies of subsistence, international trade (see [COMMERCE i](#)), and successive stages of political integration; comprehensive reports of this effort are published in CDAFI, of which fifteen volumes had appeared by 1987. French excavations in Persia were suspended after the Revolution of 1357 Š./1978-79.

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## ii. DÉLÉGATION ARCHÉOLOGIQUE FRANÇAISE EN AFGHANISTAN

The Délégation Archéologique Française en Afghanistan (DAFA) was established after the independence of Afghanistan was recognized in 1921. [Amir Amān-Allāh Khan](#), later king, in his efforts to modernize the country, rejected the help of his near neighbors and turned to France. Among the projects that he promoted was the DAFA, first proposed by Sardār ‘Abd-al-‘Azīz Khan and Philippe Bonin, respectively Afghan and French ambassadors to Persia, who were probably inspired by the example of the Mission Archéologique de Perse. Alfred Foucher, a well-known authority on the ancient history of Afghanistan, was entrusted with the difficult task of negotiating an agreement. After a hard journey through Persia and the Hindu Kush he reached Kabul in the spring of 1922 (Foucher, I, p. 10). On 9 September a convention was signed by Amān-Allāh Khan, his minister Fayz-Moḥammed Khan, and Foucher. The newly appointed ambassador to France, Maḥmūd Beg Ṭarzī, carried it to Paris, where it was ratified by the French minister for Foreign Affairs, Philippe Berthelot. Foucher became the first director of the DAFA (Courtois).

By the terms of the agreement the French government had the exclusive privilege to conduct surveys and excavations in Afghanistan for a period of thirty years; at the expiration of that period the convention was renewed, with amendments, until 1357 Š./1978. The initial program of the DAFA included research on the art of Gandhara, Buddhist and Hellenistic sites, and the Silk Road (Courtois, p. 18). It was stipulated that the finds, with the exception of gold and jewelry, were to be divided equally between Afghanistan and France (Hackin, 1933, p. 1). In 1344 Š./1965 the system of sharing finds was terminated, and Afghanistan assumed the right to all of them. Archeological material collected by the DAFA is kept at the Kabul museum and the Musée des Arts Asiatiques-Guimet in Paris. Research results and excavation reports were published in *MDAFA* (1-32, 1942-89).

The activity of the DAFA can be divided into three periods. From 1923 to 1925 the work was limited to surveys, based on the model of the Archaeological



Survey of India. Foucher's colleagues included the architect André Godard, who had previously worked in Persia; Joseph Hackin, director of the Musée Guimet; and Jules Barthoux. They followed the ancient trails of Buddhist monks, Chinese pilgrims, and the various invaders of the land. Stupas, monasteries, and columns were recorded in the Kabul area, in Kāpīsā, and around Jalālābād, where the major site was Hadda (Foucher, I, pp. 138-48, 150-53). In November 1923 the team visited [Bāmīān ii](#). (Godard et al.) on the way to Balk, where Foucher and his wife remained for eighteen months, seeking remains of the Greek period, with disappointing results (Foucher, I, pp. 55-121).

In the second phase (1926-40) the first full-scale excavations were undertaken. Although Foucher had returned to France in 1925, he remained director of the DAFA (Dollot, pp. 276-79) up to 1946. Meanwhile Barthoux began excavations at Hadda (1926-28), where eight monasteries and 500 stupas were recorded, as well as approximately 15,000 sculptures and fragments; only 3,000 of the latter reached Kabul, owing to opposition of the inhabitants led by the mullas (Barthoux, 1933; idem, 1930). About half those finds were sent to France, and the other half were placed in the Kabul museum (Bāḡ-e bālā), where they suffered some damage during the revolt of [Bačca\(-ye\) Saqqā](#) in 1308 Š./1929.

The other major figure in the DAFA in the early days was Hackin. He returned to Bāmīān in 1930 with his wife, Ria, and the architect Jean Carl. They worked rapidly but carefully, with the help of the local inhabitants, making surveys, plans, and photographs of the grottoes and their decoration. The painted cupola from nearby Kakrak was restored and sent to Kabul (Hackin and Carl). Hackin joined the Croisière Jaune, a motor expedition to Central Asia and China sponsored by André Citroën in 1931 (Le Fèvre) but returned to Bāmīān three years later (Brühl) and undertook excavations on several monuments in the Kabul area: Kayr-Kāna (Hackin and Meunié) in 1935, Sāka, and Goldarra (Hackin, 1959, pp. 13-18; Fussman, 1976). In 1936 he turned to the desert of Afghan Sīstān (Hackin, 1959, pp. 19-21) but soon returned to the Hindu Kush, where he worked for a while at Qondūz (Hackin, 1937; Curiel and Fussman), before moving on to Šotorak in Kāpīsā (Meunié) and Fondoqestān in Parvān province (Hackin, 1959, pp. 49-58).

In April 1937 the Hackins and Carl began excavations at Begram. On 17 May the first of the famous "Begram glasses" was unearthed. A total of 216 items was eventually found in a single room (no. 10); beside the glasses, they included bronzes, coins, and ivories, among them the well-known "casket IX"



and figurines of river goddesses (Hackin, 1939). Two years later the excavations were resumed, and in room 13 ivories, bronzes, plaster casts, and Chinese lacquers were found (Hackin, 1954). Considerable restoration work was conducted, first at the site by Ria Hackin and Carl and later in Paris by P. \*\*\*Hamelin and P.\*\*\* André (Hamelin). During World War II the Begram discoveries were stored in various embassies in Kabul and Peshawar, after a sharing agreement had been reached between Hackin and the king himself. The Afghan share was sent to the new Kabul museum in Dār al-Amān and the French share to the Musée Guimet. Hackin and his wife died at sea in February 1941 while trying to return to Afghanistan. Roman Ghirshman continued the excavations at Begram, but no further hoards were found (1948). He also resumed the exploration of Nād-e 'Alī in Sīstān (Hackin, 1959, pp. 23-25).

During the third phase (1946-82) there was a major shift in the orientation of the DAFA. After World War II Daniel Schlumberger, a specialist in the late Hellenistic period in the Near East, became director, serving from 1946 to 1963. The French monopoly of archeological research in Afghanistan was gradually eroded, as missions from other countries were granted permission to work in the country, under the control of a newly developed cultural administration in Kabul. The Afghan Institute of archaeology, distinct from the Kabul museum, was established; its last director was Zemaryalai Țarzī. In this phase the French program took on new dimensions. Prehistoric sites related to the Indus civilization were excavated: Mondegak (Qandahār province) in the late 1950s (Casal) and twenty years later Šortōgay (Taḳār province; Francfort). The Islamic monuments at Jam (Maricq and Wiet), **Bost**, and Laškarī Bāzār were also investigated (Schlumberger).

Schlumberger discovered two other major sites, the large mound at Sorḳ-kotal and **Āy Kānom**. At the former coins and inscriptions, as well as a wealth of architectural and sculptural fragments, yielded new data on the religious monuments of Bactria during the early Kushan period. Following Schlumberger's untimely death in 1973, the final publication of the architecture at Sorḳ-kotal was entrusted to Gérard Fussman (Schlumberger et al.; Fussman and Guillaume). The excavations at Āy Kānom were led by Schlumberger's successor as director of the DAFA, Paul Bernard. The publications that have appeared so far reveal the scope and quality of the work at this important site (Bernard).

The last fieldwork carried out by the DAFA in Afghanistan was a survey of



northeastern Bactria, under the direction of Jean-Claude Gardin. It led to the discovery of a large number of sites and the remains of irrigation systems, all dated by surface pottery, which provided a basis for a broad history of the area over the last 5,000 years (Gardin and Lyonnet; Gentelle). Political events in Afghanistan in 1358 Š./1979 halted this work; Gardin, the last director, was entrusted with the transfer to the Kabul museum of the material collected by the DAFA over the years, after it had been recorded and studied by his associates in Kabul for later publication in France. When this work was completed in 1361 Š./1982 the headquarters of the DAFA were closed.

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