



# DÉLÉGATIONS ARCHÉOLOGIQUES FRANÇAISES II. DÉLÉGATION ARCHÉOLOGIQUE FRANÇAISE EN AFGHANISTAN

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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 ʿTarzī, 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 Ȧarzī. 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 (Takār 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 Sork-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 Sork-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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