



EXCAVATIONS II. IN AFGHANISTAN

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ii. In Afghanistan

Archeological investigation, both excavation and recording of sites and monuments, began in Afghanistan in the early 19th century. Most such work was by travelers and British Indian army officers and often consisted of little more than passing observations. These reports did, however, awaken international scholarly interest in the immensely wealthy historical heritage of Afghanistan. The spectacular Buddhist monuments of Bāmīān (q.v.), for example, were first made known to the scholarly world in this way. From the beginning this interest was international: French (Alexandre Court, J.-P. Ferrier), Danish (Ole Olufsen), Swiss (J. M. Honigberger), Russian (N. I. Grodekov, J. L. Yavorski), Indian (Mohan Lal) to name but a few. Most of the archaeological travelers, however, were from British India: William Moorcroft, Alexander Gerard, Alexander Burnes, Charles Masson, H. W. Bellew, G. T. Vigne, John Wood, William Simpson, and many others. Although they did not conduct scientific investigations in the modern sense of the term, their inexhaustible curiosity and ability to amass raw information would put many a modern archeologist to shame. Their researches were occasionally backed up by informal excavations, usually in pursuit of art objects, particularly in the large number of Buddhist shrines and monasteries to the



north (Begrām region) and east (Jalālābād region) of Kabul. Although such informal excavations are often condemned by modern archeologists, they were no less scientific than similar “antiquarian” researches undertaken at the same time in Egypt and the Near East, which laid the foundations of modern scientific archaeology. The researches in Afghanistan also resulted in a considerable body of important archeological information. Indeed, of approximately 1,200 archeological sites so far recorded in Afghanistan, nearly 40 percent were first recorded before formal archeological work began in 1922 (Ball, p. 19). They include most of the spectacular sites supposedly discovered in the 20th century, like Sorḳ Kotal, Aī Khanum (Āy Kānom; q.v.), and the minaret at Jām.

Of the 19th-century “programs” of archeological research in Afghanistan, two in particular deserve mention. The first was conducted by Masson, who, between 1833 and 1836 surveyed and excavated large numbers of mainly Buddhist sites around Kabul and Jalālābad, as well as ancient Kapiśa, Kushan capital of Begrām (q.v.) in the 1st-3rd centuries C.E. Beside recording many Buddhist monuments, many of them no longer extant, he recovered more than 30,000 coins, which still serve as the basis of Greco-Bactrian, Indo-Parthian, and Kushan numismatic history of Afghanistan (C. Masson, *Narratives of Various Journeys*, 3 vols., London, 1842, III, pp. 109-70).

Between 1883 and 1905 the work of British members of several commissions charged with demarcating Afghan boundaries with the Russian empire (1883-87) and Persia (1903-5; see BOUNDARIES iii) resulted in a massive amount of new archeological information being recorded. Although the commissions’ work involved primarily geographical and military intelligence, the many British, Indian, and Nepali officers involved, including Hira Singh, Thomas Holdich, Imam Sharif, P. J. Maitland, William Peacocke, Henry Rawlinson, G. P. Tate, and A. C. and C. E. Yate, recorded many archeological sites and historical monuments for the first time. These records are particularly important for the archeologically rich regions of Herat and Sīstān, as well as the still little explored region of central Afghanistan.

Formal archeological research began in 1922, when the Délégation Archéologique Française en Afghanistan (q.v.; hereafter DAFA) was established by official agreement between the French and Afghan governments. For many years DAFA had a virtual monopoly on archeological research in Afghanistan, and ultimately all subsequent work there is indebted to it. The first director, Alfred Foucher (1922-26) surveyed the ancient route



between Balk (q.v.), Bāmīān, Begrām, and Jalālābād (*La vieille de l'Inde de Bactres à Taxilla*, 2 vols., MDFA 1, Paris, 1942-47). André Godard, and J. Barthoux), Begrām (1924-46 under Barthoux, J. Carl, J. Hackin, Roman Ghirshman, and Jacques Meunié), and Balk (1924-25 under Foucher). Joseph Hackin succeeded Foucher as director of DAFA. Smaller scale excavations were also carried out during the same period at Paytāva, Nejraw, Tepe Maranjān, Kayr-Kāna, Šahr-e Bānū, Nād-e 'Alī, Fondoqestān, Šotorak and other sites, most centered around Begrām and Kabul. The primary focus of all these excavations was to document the Gandharan style of art of the first few centuries C.E., its antecedents, and its context. A few (e.g., Balk, Nād-e 'Alī) were focused on Islamic remains. After World War II DAFA's work became more diversified under its new director, Daniel Schlumberger. Excavations were at first resumed at Balk (1947-49), but in 1949 Schlumberger moved to the 11th-century Ghaznavid winter capital at Laškarī Bāzār in the south, where large scale-excavations of the palace complexes continued until 1952. Jean-Marie Casal excavated the major prehistoric site at Mondīgak in Qandahār province between 1951 and 1958, one of the key excavations on the entire Indo-Iranian border region. In 1954 the discovery of the Kushan dynastic capital at Sorḳ Kotal in Bāglān province shifted Schlumberger's attention back to the north; excavations continued there until 1963. The Bactrian language of the Kushans (see BACTRIA) was properly documented for the first time and a large temple complex, possibly associated with fire worship, was excavated. The discovery in 1963 of the 3rd-1st century B.C.E. Greek site of Aī Khanum on the Oxus in the far northeast ensured that the attentions of DAFA remained in the north; excavations began under Schlumberger in 1964 and continued from 1965 to 1978 under his successor as director, Paul Bernard. Equally important was the discovery and excavation of the Harappan site of Šortūgay, near Aī Khanum, by Henri-Paul Francfort in 1976-79, which first pushed the frontiers of the Indus civilization beyond the subcontinent. DAFA also devoted considerable energy to large-scale surveys. Marc Le Berre, Jean-Claude Gardin, and others carried out such work intermittently around Bāmīān and in northern Afghanistan between 1952 and 1975, and Gardin conducted major surveys in eastern Bactria between 1974 and 1977.

After the second world war an increasing number of foreign missions became involved in archaeology in Afghanistan, and the establishment of the Afghan Institute of Archaeology in 1966 resulted in a significant amount of research by the Afghans themselves. In 1946, Aḥmad-'Alī Kohzād of the Historical Society of Afghanistan (Anjoman-e tārīk-e Af@gānestān, q.v.) carried out an



important survey of central Afghanistan. Full-scale excavations sponsored by the Afghan Institute began at the major Gandharan religious center of Hadda (Tepe Šotor) in 1965, until 1974 under the direction of Shahibiya Mostamandī and Zemaryalai ʿArzī until 1979.

The Americans were the first nationality after the French to become involved in archaeology in Afghanistan, just before World War II, when Robert Byron, Eric Schroeder, and Donald Wilbur surveyed monuments in and around Herat on behalf of the American Institute of Iranian Studies. A longer-term American presence and a major commitment to prehistoric research were established in 1949, with surveys in Qandahār and Sīstān by Walter A. Fairervis of the American Museum of Natural History in New York (*Archaeological Studies in the Seistan Basin of Southwestern Afghanistan and Eastern Iran*, Anthropological Papers of the American Museum of Natural History 48, part 1, New York, 1952). In the following year Louis Dupree (q.v.), from the same institution, began a long-term stay in the country, where he excavated at Šamšīr Ġār near Qandahār (though the results were mainly of late date). Apart from some excavations at Balk by Rodney Young of the University Museum, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, in 1953, subsequent American work was concentrated in the field of prehistory: Excavations by Walter Fairervis and Jim Shaffer at Saʿīd Qalʿa Tepe near Qandahār in 1951 and 1970-71; Dupree at Deh Morāsī Ġonday, also near Qandahār, in 1951, at Āq Koprūk in 1962 and 1964, and at Ġār-e Morda Gōsfand in 1969 and 1970 (both in the Balk region); Carlton Coon, of the University Museum at the northern site of Kara Kamar in Samangān province in 1954; Charles Kolb of the American Museum of Natural History at Hazār Gōsfand in the north in 1966; and George Dales of the University Museum of Pennsylvania at Nād-e ʿAlī and elsewhere in Sīstān in 1968-72. Surveys and excavations in Sīstān were carried out by William Trousdale of the Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C., between 1971 and 1976, mainly in and around the large Islamic site of Sar o Tar.

Despite British domination of 19th-century research, the British were slow to resume in the 20th. The first work consisted of some reconnaissances, mainly in the north, by members of the Archaeological Survey of India, Evert Barger in 1938 and its director-general, Mortimer Wheeler, in 1946. For a long time British archaeology remained small in scale, for example, Beatrice de Cardi's survey in southern Afghanistan in 1949, Raymond Allchin's survey and excavation at Šahr-e Žoḥāk in 1951, and C. B. M. McBurney's surveys and soundings of Stone Age material in the north in 1971. In 1972, however, the



British Institute of Afghan Studies was established at Kabul to provide a permanent base for archeological operations, the first such base in Afghanistan since DAFA. As a result large-scale excavations of mainly Achaemenid to Sasanian material were undertaken at Qandahār, at first under David Whitehouse and Anthony McNicoll in 1974 and 1975, then under Svend Helms between 1976 and 1978.

German investigations began with reconnaissance work in 1955 and again between 1959 and 1961 by Klaus Fischer of the Deutscher Akademischer Austausch-Dienst. From 1966 to 1974 Fischer carried out a series of surveys of mainly Islamic sites in Sīstān. The Italian presence began in 1956 with excavations at the 11th-century Ghaznavid capital, Ġaznī, under the direction of Alessio Bombaci and Umberto Scerrato of the Istituto Italiano per il Medeo ed Estreme Oriente (ISMEO). This work continued until 1964, by which time attentions had shifted to the nearby 7th-9th century Torkī Šāhī religious site of Tepe Sardar, where excavations between 1959 and 1977, mainly under Maurizio Taddei, uncovered a wealth of Buddhist and Hindu sculpture (M. Taddei and G. Verardi, "Tapa Sardar. Second Preliminary Report," *East and West* 28, 1978, pp. 33-136). Italian archeologists also carried out surveys west of Ġaznī and in central Afghanistan.

Some Indian work also began in 1956 with reconnaissances by T. N. Ramachandra and Y. D. Sharma of the Archaeological Survey of India. Between 1969 and 1975 R. Sengupta, sponsored by the Indian government, conducted preservation work on the smaller Buddha at Bāmīān. In 1960 the University of Kyoto in Japan began a number of important surveys under the direction of Seichi Mizuno, mainly of Buddhist caves in the northern and eastern parts of the country. They continued until 1964, when the university began excavations at the northern sites of Čaqalaq Tepe and Dūrman Tepe and at Lalma near Jalālābād, all dating between the 1st and 5th centuries. From 1965 to 1967 Takayasu Higuchi and Shoshin Kuwayama conducted this work. Between 1970 and 1978 they excavated the Hindu site of Tepe Skandar in Kabul province (7th-9th centuries), recovering important sculpture. Between 1974 and 1978 Higuchi, with Akira Miyaji, also carried out the first systematic recording of the Buddhist caves at Bāmīān.

In 1967 a combined Afghan and Soviet archeological mission was established. It began work with surveys of Islamic monuments around Herat by Galina Pugachenkova, which continued until 1969. Large-scale excavations began in 1969, at the Kushan urban site of Delbarjīn (q.v.) near Balk under the direction



of Irina Kruglikova; they lasted until 1977. The mission simultaneously excavated other sites in the area. Kruglikova excavated the nearby Kushan site of Emši Tepe in 1969-70 and, with Viktor Sarianidi, the mainly Bronze Age sites of Dašli (1969-74) in Jūzjān province, probably the most important Bronze Age site so far investigated in Afghanistan. She also excavated Achaemenid Altin 10 (1971-74), and Pugachenkova excavated the Hellenistic to Sasanian site of Jīgā Tepe (1974-76). The most spectacular Soviet discoveries, however, were about 20,000 gold objects from a series of 1st-century B.C.E. burials at Tilla Tepe during excavations by Sarianidi (1969-78; *The Golden Hoard of Bactria from the Tillya-tepe Excavations in Northern Afghanistan*, New York, Kabul, and Leningrad, 1985; idem, *Khram I necropol' Tilliatepe*, Moscow, 1989).

See also [AFGHANISTAN vii](#).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

All excavations and field work are fully summarized in W. Ball, *Archaeological Gazetteer of Afghanistan*, 2 vols., Paris, 1982, particularly Appendix 3. This has a comprehensive, annotated bibliography of all works published up until 1981, after which there has been no field work in Afghanistan. A summary of excavations is found also in F. R. Allchin and N. Hammond, *The Archaeology of Afghanistan from the Earliest Times to the Timurid Period*, London and New York, 1978.

The only series on the archaeology of Afghanistan is the *Mémoires de la Délégation Archéologique Française en Afghanistan*, published in Paris from 1928.

The only journals concerning Afghan archaeology are *Afghanistan*, published in Kabul from 1946, and *Afghan Studies*, published in London from 1978 to 1982.