

The Impact of War upon Afghanistan's Cultural Heritage

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Afghanistan, which stands at a crossroad of the ancient civilizations in the East and West, has kept a great unique treasure in different parts of its land, and due to that reason some scholars and researchers of different countries decided to start their archaeological activities in this area.

Official archaeological excavations were carried out from 1922 onwards by French, Japanese, British, American, Italian, Indian, ex-Soviet Union, and Afghan archaeologists and consequently, hundreds of archaeological sites, historical monuments, and thousands of unique cultural and historical objects relating to different periods of pre- and proto-history, such as the Stone Age, Bronze age, Achamenids, Greco Bactrian, Kushan, Sassanid-Ephtalits, Hindu shahis, and Islamic, were unearthed. Every discovered object and relic has a lot of value from the artistic and historical points of view. A large portion of these objects was kept in the Kabul National Museum and a number of them were preserved in the depot of the Archaeological Institute. However from 1978 to 1992 the cooperative relations between the scientific and cultural organizations of the western countries and Afghanistan in the field of archaeological activities were cut off. But cultural heritage sections of Afghanistan like the Archaeological Institute and the Kabul National Museum, despite numerous problems, were able to preserve and protect the discovered cultural heritage of Afghanistan and to publish scientific research articles about past archaeological activities. Afghan archaeological reviews such as the *Kushan Gazette*, *Ancient Herat Gazette*, and the writing of more than 30 dissertations on different topics are outstanding examples of our achievements. Nevertheless, the catastrophe of war annihilated seventy years of our hard work and accomplishments. Administrative, economic, political, and cultural systems lost their order and were replaced by anarchy and chaos with the entire country overrun by warlords. The central government became so weak that it was not in a position to protect public and state properties. From 1992-1994, not only were the governmental departments plundered, but more than half of Kabul was destroyed and changed into a traumatized city. More than 60,000 innocent people were oppressed and killed. Furthermore, over 70% of the Kabul National Museum and 100% of the objects were stolen and looted, and their buildings were damaged and burned down. Illegal excavations and extensive clandestine digging started at most historical sites and thousands of valuable objects were transported to other countries, notably through Pakistan to the international markets.

On the basis of 1980 statistics, there were then more 2,800 archaeological sites and historical monuments in Mr. Warwick Ball's *Archaeological Gazette of Afghanistan*, which later became

a good source for looters. The priceless treasures of Mir Zaka in the Paktia Province were illegally excavated from 1993-1995 by the local people and commanders with the encouragement of Pakistanis and Afghan dealers. The finds, consisting of ornaments, coins, vessels, stamp seals, and animal figurines made of gold, silver, copper, and bronze metals weighing tons, were stolen and smuggled to Pakistan and according to a French publication, from there to Japan, London, Switzerland, Italy and the United States, among other countries. Also Ai Khanum, which is a Greco-Bactrian city, was badly damaged by looters using bulldozers during illegal excavations. Likewise, the ancient sites of Tela-Tepe, Delbergin-Tepe, Sorkh-kotal, Bagram, Robatak, Khamezgerger, and Kharwar, did not remain intact. During the oppressive Taliban regime cultural activities were severely restricted and diminished. Ignorance and suppression ruled everywhere throughout the country. Bamiyan's two colossal statues, along with others in the Foladi valley and Kakrak, were dynamited and hundreds of statues in the collection of the Kabul Museums were destroyed in 2001, which inflicted irreparable losses on our cultural heritage. Tepe Shutur-e-Hadda, the great Buddhist Temple, which was an immovable museum and a masterpiece of Gandahara art was demolished and all its unique moldings were plundered. The Minaret of Chakari, one of the most important monuments of the first century A.D., was also blown up. This is a brief summary of the unpleasant results of war over more than the past two decades on the cultural heritage of our country that under no circumstances can be compensated. In a war stricken country one can repair or even renovate roads, bridges, schools, hospitals, etc, but lost and destroyed cultural heritage can never be rehabilitated nor renovated. Now, after the fall of the Taliban regime and with the establishment of the Transitional Islamic State of Afghanistan under the leadership of Mr. Hamid Karzai, the opportunity to reconstruct and rehabilitate our country is made possible with the help of friendly countries and UN agencies interested in the reconstruction of Afghanistan. We will be able to take great steps in the area of Afghanistan's cultural heritage. I hope the international cultural organizations will not leave us alone in this endeavor. For this reason I would like to propose the following suggestions to this gathering of esteemed scholars.

1. We request from the international communities of UNESCO and Interpol to support the repatriation process of the stolen and smuggled historical and cultural heritage of Afghanistan that currently exists in the international markets.
2. The majority of our professional experts specialized in archaeology, museums, and historical monuments migrated to other countries due to the two decades of civil war in Afghanistan. To train a young professional staff we are in need of short-term and long-term scholarships in various aspects of the above-mentioned fields, as well as receiving the financial and technical support of the friendly countries that are keen to promote Afghan's historical and cultural heritage.
3. Through the initiative of scientific and academic cooperation in the fields of archaeology, museums, and restoration of historical monuments, and through the ratification of new protocols with the scientific and cultural institutions of the interested countries, we can improve the current research situation of Afghanistan's historical and cultural heritage. I would like to mention that the free Archaeological Institute of Berlin, the Oriental and African Research Institute of Rome, Italy, the Cultural Heritage Research Institute of Tokyo, Japan, and the University of Sidney, Australia have already signed such a protocol with the National Archaeological Institute of Afghanistan.

The above stated proposals will play a vital role in rehabilitating, reconstructing, and improving the poor condition of Afghanistan's historical and cultural heritage. Thus my cordial request from the participants of this gathering is to keep Afghanistan in mind.

Thanks for your kind attention.

Ai Khanoum

Ai Khanum (Lady Moon) is the name of a modern village in the province of Takhar, northeastern Afghanistan, in the neighborhood of what was once a great archaeological site, to which archaeologists gave the same name: Ai Khanum. The archaeological site limits itself to the ruins of a great Hellenistic city (Greek-Bactrian) founded during the era of Alexander the Great. The ancient city's emplacement, situated at the angle where the Daria-e Pandj river (the Greek's Oxus called Amu Daria) and the Koktcha river meet, was chosen for its strategic location as it facilitated the oversight of river passages and also because the Ai Khanum and Dasht-e Qal plains lend to a prosperous intensive agriculture that met the need of the Greek colonies left behind by Alexander the Great.

The antique city surrounded by a powerful wall formed an imperfect triangular shape because of the topography of the terrain. To the west and south its fortifications went along the Oxus and Koktcha rivers, whereas the walls to the north and northeast protected the city toward the plains, and separated it from the extramural and the necropolis. Topographically speaking the city was divided into two parts and measured 1.5 km in length north to south.



Figure 1: Ai Khanoum, general plan of site (drawn by Jean-Claude Liger)



Figures 2 (top) and 3: The southern residential area of the lower city before excavations. The view taken is of the high city from north to the southwest showing in foreground the higher city; in the middle the lower city with the main road running across; in the background from left to right: the Koktcha and Oxus rivers meeting separating Khwadj Ghar from Ai Khanum and the Tadjikistan mountains.

The high city, the so-called Acropolis or the triangular shaped citadel, was to the east; the low city on the plain is almost rectangular, it spread to the north and south to the west of the High City.

The first archaeological activities began in 1964 with the survey by Daniel Schlumberger, who was then professor at the Strasbourg Human Sciences University and director of the Délégation Archéologique Française en Afghanistan (DAFA). During the first surveys Paul Bernard, future director of the DAFA and responsible for the Ai Khanoum excavations, accompanied Daniel Schlumberger. In the Fall of 1965, the first excavation campaign began under the Direction of Paul Bernard; they lasted until 1978 when the Taraki pro-Soviet coup occurred. For approximately 14 years, over 15 excavation campaigns were led by the French under the direction of Paul Bernard with the active participation of young Afghan archaeologists. These excavations revealed the high city's military and cultural monuments.

The low city excavations, far more interesting, unearthed important monuments representative of life in the Hellenistic (Greek-Bactrian) city. These constructions were laid out in an urban plan in relation to the main road crossing the city's north-south axis.

To the north, a third of the low city's area was occupied by large, apparently empty spaces that served as gardens. One of the two large monuments in that part of the city was a gymnasium, built along the walls towering above the Oxus, where beautiful young men were most likely receiving a Greek education. The other typical Greek monument of this septentrional part of the city is a Greek theater leaning against the high city's wall. The Ai Khanum Theater is second only to the Epidaurus Theater in terms of seating capacity. The central third of the lower city was the administrative center, composed of courtyards with gantries, palaces, the treasury, the Heroon (temenos or tomb of Kineas, founder of the city), the propylees, a sanctuary with the main city's temple, the arsenal, etc. The southern third of the city was reserved for private residences composed of houses and villas. It is at Ai

Khanum that the first columns made entirely out of stone were found in the whole of Central Asia. The three Greek orders were present: Doric, Ionic and Corinthian; the latter predominated.

In addition to this oriental architecture adorned in the Greek fashion, the city of Ai Khanum displayed a strong taste for Greek art such as the roller mosaic similar to the one in Pella, the city of Philip of Macedonia, father of Alexander the Great. Stone and metal statues, silverware, ceramics, and coins were also found. The end of the city was due to the invasions of the Sakas and Scythian nomads who invaded Bactria by the second century A.D.



Figure 4: Excavations of the central part of the lower city of Ai Khanum. In the foreground the excavations of the sanctuary and the city's main temple; in the background, the Tajikistan mountains.



Figure 5: Ai Khanum, view of the excavations of the administrative district or palace, located in the central part of the lower city; standing in the background, the higher city and the theater.



Figure 6: Ai Khanum, in the administration district, the bath's mosaic. The photograph shows a bath's changing room in the administration district, the ground is covered of roller mosaic of Macedonian style.



Figure 7: Ai Khanum, the gymnasium excavations. View showing the cleared raw brick walls of the gymnasium; In the background one can see the mountains Tajikistan side.



Figure 8 (left) and 9 (below left): Ai Khanum, after 15 years of systematic looting of the ancient city by illegal excavators. View taken from the higher city (in the foreground) onto the septentrional part of the lower city. In the top right the northern wall is visible and to the left the Oxus separating Afghanistan and Tajikistan.



Figure 10 (below): Photography taken from the lower city. The cavities are not sand dunes nor a lunar landscape but the result of 15 years of thousands of illegal excavations. At the top, the Oxus river separating Afghanistan and the mountains of Tajikistan.



Balkh

Nothing is more evocative of the history of ancient Afghanistan as the name of Balkh as it is linked to the epic of the Aryan people. One thinks of the land of Hystaspas, Yama, and Zoroastre. What is certain is that by the third millennium B.C. the so called Bactrian civilization places itself between the septentrional cultures of Central Asia, Ouzbek, and Tadjik, and the ones from the Indus valley to the South and Iran to the West. The excavations of the Dashli site are of great importance for a better knowledge of protohistoric Bactria.

Under the Achemenids, Bactria became an important satrapy, with the city of Bactres (Balkh) as its capital. The remnants of that period (sixth-fourth centuries B.C.) were unearthed on the Altin 10 site. Alexander the Great kept Bactres (Balkh) as the capital of Bactria but transformed it into a Greek city. Most western archaeologists coming to Afghanistan began excavating on the site of today's Balkh precisely because by 250 B.C. it was the capital of the Greek-Bactrian kingdom. Among the many of them let us mention the names of the famous ones. Indeed, the first "official" archaeologist, Alfred Foucher, who had just signed a convention between Afghanistan and France began his first surveys between 1924 and 1925 and stayed for 18 months. He was disappointed with the results of his excavations, as he had anticipated the discovery of a stone architecture such as on the Greek sites. However the excavations of the Tope Rostam stupa located to the south of the city of Balkh are very satisfying to us. In 1947 and 1948 following the Second World War, the second Director of the D el egation Arch eologique Fran aise en Afghanistan (DAFA), Daniel Schlumberger, began his first surveys on the Afghan soil of Balkh, followed by the 1955-1956 campaigns of which the ceramics collected during the many surveys, was studied by a great specialist, Jean Claude Gardin. Ar-



Figure 11: The Balkh Bala Hissar. Illegal excavators in search of archaeological masterpieces. It is an easy and systematic way to make a living that directly impoverishes the heritage of Afghanistan and the world's heritage more generally.

chaeologist Rodney S. Young worked in the region in 1953 between Daniel Schlumberger's two periods of activity.



Figure 12: The Balkh Bala Hissar: Cavities caused by illegal surveys.

By the 1950s, the site of Balkh did not interest archaeologists as much. In the past 20 years of recent civil wars however, illegal diggers have relentlessly excavated the Bactrian sites in general and particularly the Balkh site where they found limestone capitals dating from the Greek and Kushan periods. The new director of the DAFA, Roland Besenval, also became interested in the Balkh site with the advantage of having the Greek architecture already unearthed by the illegal excavators. But excavations such as the ones from the Balkh sites, northwestern Ectabane (Hamdan or Hamdhan today's Iran), Constantinople (Istanbul, on the

Bosphorus), Alexandria in Egypt, and Susa in southwestern Iran are not easy because the thickness and depth of the archaeological layer is a result of thousands of years of accumulated ruins over several periods and overlapping levels that often times exceed 15 meters in depth.

The plan of the ancient city of Balkh, such as it was drawn up by the DAFA architect Marc Le Berre, is composed of a low city on the northeastern side of a citadel (Bala Hissar) with a more or less circular, irregular geometrical shape. The ancient levels probably go back to the Achaemenid period (sixth-fourth centuries B.C.) and the most recent layer from the 17th century A.D.

The tumultuous history of Balkh is associated with both glorious and tragic events of Central Asia. We know that Genghis Khan had this "mother of the cities" destroyed from top to bottom in 1221. But when Marco Polo visited Balkh a half a century later he mentioned the existence of "many beautiful palaces and marble houses." Let us not forget to mention that the urban tapestry of the modern city does not go beyond the ancient city. The modern city's evolution is slowed down because of the ancient site and resembles a modest township.

Balkh: Balkh Khwadja Parsa

Khwadja Parsa is a mausoleum from the Ghorid period. Amongst the Muslim period monuments still standing in the city of Balkh, the tomb or Mausoleum of Khwadja Parsa has conserved 50% of its decoration, which dates to the late Timurid provincial style of the 15th century A.D. This mausoleum is considered a sanctuary of a saintly man and is moreover a respected place in Balkh amongst believers.

The monument consists of a building on a polygonal plan, arched with a superimposed cupola and dome. The latter has a heavy architecture built with a ribbed décor covered with blue earthenware squares. It is the result of a restoration at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries A.D. The façade possesses an "iwān" (a kind of porch opening to the outside) flanked with two round towers and two small columns twisted into spirals. The outside décor consists of beautiful and charming earthenware panels with a predominant blue color.



Figure 13: Balkh, the Khwadja Parsa Mausoleum, baked brick and earthenware from the Timurid monument, end of 15th century A.D. The building is seen from ¾ back showing one of the round tower of the "iwān" and the ribbed dome covered with blue earthenware surmounted by two drums, of which the lowest has windows.



Figure 14: Balkh, the Khwaja Parsa Mausoleum, construction from the Timurid period, end of 15th century A.D., made of baked brick and covered with earthenware.

The monument, as it is conserved today, is a result of consolidation and restoration I undertook in the 1970's as Director of Archaeology and Conservation of Historical Monuments of Afghanistan. This restoration is the work of Afghan experts from my office and Indian experts from the Archaeology Survey of India.



Figure 15: Balkh, the Khwaja Parsa Mausoleum, detail of the ribbed dome showing the damaged or destroyed areas after the 1970s restoration.

Balkh: Tepe Zargaran

Tepe, or Tapa, so called of Zargaran, literally meaning “the jeweler’s hill”, is at the level of the lower city. The surveys and excavations to come will define the limits of the Greek city, which was probably larger than the one dating to the Middle Ages.



Figure 16: Balkh, typical landscape in the lower city's surroundings. The photography shows us the fertile plain of Bactria and the Southern mountains range. In the foreground we see ancient walls still standing in the cultivated fields.



Figure 17: Balkh, Tepe Zargaran, traces of illegal excavations.



Figure 18: Balkh, Tepe Zargaran, fields of ruins practically “plowed” by illegal excavators.



Figure 19: Balkh, Tepe Zargaran, fields of ruins illegally excavated.

Bamiyân

A beautiful site in central Afghanistan, Bamiyân was molded by man to become a resting place for travelers, a meditation haven for Buddhist monks, a reputable artistic school, and finally, one of the world marvels. Bamiyân is an alluvial plain composed of a thick tertiary conglomerate bottom surrounded by imposing mountains. A landscape eroded by the flow of rivers and the passage of glaciers to create valleys dominated by abrupt cliffs, of which the almost vertical walls lend themselves to being carved, sculpted, and adorned with images of the Sakyamuni Buddha. The smallest Sakyamuni Buddha measured 5.5 cm and the largest 55 m tall. The smallest image of the Blessed One sitting is 3 cm high and the largest statue, although representing Buddha in Parinirvana (Buddha on his death bed), is 300 m long. In this vast site artists were able to ally the taste for miniature as well as gigantism to honor the cult of Buddha.

The Bamiyân Valley is located to the north of the plain, oriented west to east, and communicates with two adjacent valleys, the Foladi Valley to the southwest and the Kakrak valley to the southeast. The most impressive remnants are found in the Bamiyân Valley itself, especially in the east to west 1.5 km long cliff towering above the valley to the North, that I call the "Great Cliff". The cliff is pierced with approximately 1,000 grottos that were coated and adorned with sculptures and painted murals representing scenes inspired by Buddhist iconography. These grottos were carved in a style imitating built architecture, so one can find Bamiyân grottos with square, rectangular, hexagonal, octagonal, and round floorplans. Some are vaulted in cupolas, while others have ceilings with distorted beams of varied form, generally of Macedonian style called "lanternendeke" or in the shape of a lantern. On the floorplan the grottos often appear rectangular with vaults imitating the raw brick cupola architecture.

Most of the painted grottos adorned with moldings were called Caitya (chapel) and were used for the cult of the Blessed One. On the other hand the décor-less grottos of modest aspect and smaller size probably served as storage or as a monk's cell. A Middle Age chronicler who visited Bamiyân and gives us a good description of the remnants, writes that there were up to 12,000 grottos in Bamiyân, a number seemingly exaggerated, but if one accounts for all the grottos in the 50 km of surrounding valleys, one would come up with that number.

Bamiyân's fame is due not for its grottos but more so for its gigantic Buddha statues. Indeed in the Great Cliff towering above the Bamiyân Valley to the north, the craftsmen at the service of Buddhist monasteries carved, in addition to the grottos, the conglomerate rock face to give form to two standing statues and three seated statues all sheltered by their own niches.

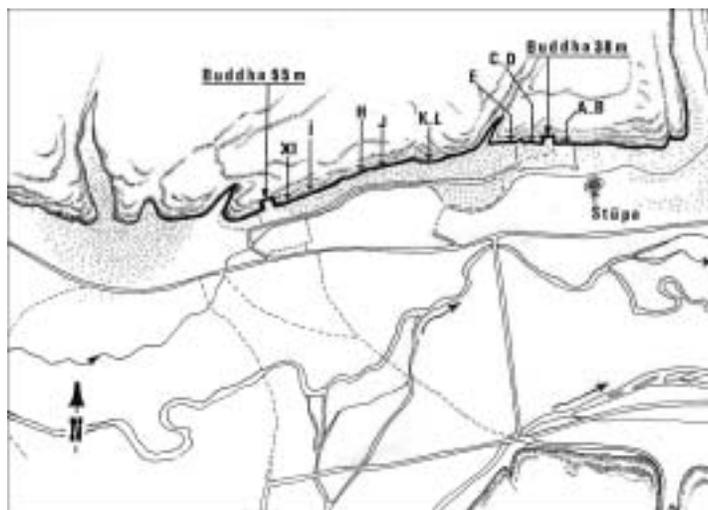


Figure 20: Bamiyân, the "Great Cliff" and its Buddha statues and caves (drawn by Zemaryalai Tarzi)



Figure 21: Bamiyân, the Eastern part of the "Great Cliff". The niche of the 38 m high Buddha statue surrounded of cave-temple ensembles A, B, B1 to the right (East) and C, D, and D1 to the left (West). Far to the right, there used to be grottos F and G and on the opposite, grottos E and E1.



Figure 22: Bamiyan the "Great Cliff" photographed from the East, towards the West, not far from the 38 m Buddha statue and in direction of the 55 m high Buddha statue.

The 38 m high standing statue was fitted out in the eastern part of the cliff and is probably the oldest. Its awkward and disproportionate appearance is due to a restoration dating from antiquity. The body was carved in the conglomerate mass and the outside finishing of the body and clothes was molded in clay and later on covered with stucco, which in turn was painted. This 38 m statue was executed in a very high-relief under its niche, and flanked by the grottos ensembles A, B, B1, and C to the right (east), and D and D1 to the left (west). The vault of the 38 m Buddha's niche had a beautiful mural painting, a composition depicting the god Surya on its quadriga pulled by four horses.

The 55 m high Buddha statue stood at the western extremity of the cliff sheltered by its niche. In the execution of the statue and the niche itself proportion and symmetry were rigorously respected. I dated the statue and its paintings to be from the sixth century A.D. The niche's walls were adorned with beautifully painted murals, unfortunately completely destroyed by the explosion set off by the Taliban.

In the median part between the 38 and 55 m Buddha statues, was the seated Buddha statue of group E with fewer than 12 grottos. At the keystone of the niche this seated statue had a beautiful and interesting mural painting depicting the Bodhisattva Maitreya with a dominant lapis blue color.

To the west one could find the ensemble of grottos of group K. Grotto K2 used to have its vault covered by a painted composition depicting pearled medallions surrounding a multitude of Buddha. One of the medallions was reserved for the image of a Bodhisattva, this time with a dominant red color. Further to the west is the ensemble of grottos group J. It almost occupies the center part of the cliff and the dominant color used is a blue, similar to the one used in group E.

Further along to the west one finds the niche of the large seated Buddha statue of group H. The paintings of its niche offered a beautiful composition, especially in the western projection of the niche (lateral left lobe of the tri-lobed niche) where one could see two couples of flying genies making a flower offering. The composition in its appearance and its choice of colors, yellow ocher, orange, brown ocher, and dark blue, reminds us of the murals in the niche of the 55 m high Buddha statue.



Figure 23: Bamiyan, the niche of the 38 m Buddha statue, after its destruction by the Taliban. The general state of the statue and its niche, seen here with fragments in large part fallen at the monument's feet.



Figure 24: Bamiyan, the niche of the 38 m Buddha statue, after its destruction by the Taliban. The photograph shows the beginning of the right forearm and the top right part of the statue's body, keeping partially the draping of the monastic costume.



Figure 25: Bamiyân, the niche of the 55 m high Buddha statue. On this 1920 photograph one can notice the state of the statue and its niche prior to French archaeologists work, directed by Andre Godard. He opened and built the way to the Buddha's head from where he could access the mural paintings adorning the niche and to fasten fragments. (Photograph DAFA, Musee Guimet in Paris)



Figure 26: Bamiyân, the niche of the great 55 m Buddha statue, after its destruction by the Taliban. The statue of Buddha carved in a high relief used to stand under this approximately 60 m high niche. On this photograph one can see the broken pieces of its body covered with a blue UNESCO tarp.



Figure 27: Bamiyân, the niche of the great 55 m Buddha statue. Photograph after the explosion by the Taliban. The cavities under the forearm show the built of a statue essentially carved into the rock.

Still further to the west, about 50 meters above the plain level, is the niche of group I where the smallest sitting Buddha statue used to be. Nothing is left of the statue but the walls still offer beautiful painted murals where a taste for miniature and a certain mannerism remind us of the art from the Fundukistan site, located in the Valley of Ghorband between Bamiyân and Kapisa-Begram.

We cannot conclude the description of Bamiyân without mentioning the art found in the Foladi grottos, where one can see precision in the size of faux ceilings imitating wood and a palette of blue turquoise and malachite strongly influenced by the Chinese Central Asia of Qyzyl. The niches and their paintings underwent restoration in the 1970s under my supervision with a group of Afghan and Indian experts. If it weren't for this colossal and costly restoration, the niches of the two standing Buddha statues would not have withstood as long the explosions committed by the Taliban.

As far as Bamiyân archaeological research is concerned, I only mention the first 20th century explorers. The true archaeological enterprise began in the 1920s with



Figure 28: Bamiyân, the niche of the great 55 m Buddha statue, after its destruction by the Taliban. One notices the perfect symmetry of the trilobe niche conceived with an excellent understanding of geometry.



Figure 29: Bamiyân, the niche of the 38 m Buddha statue, after its destruction by the Taliban. Despite the force of the explosion that seriously damaged the niche in several places, a piece of the statue itself is spared.

French archaeologist Alfred Foucher, followed by Mr. and Mrs. Andre Godard, Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Hackin, and Jean Carl. Their works consisted of a detailed description of archaeological remains. One excavation was undertaken in grotto G. The results of their efforts can be found in two tomes and four volumes published in 1928 and 1933.

In 1967, following the Second World War, I began new research at Bamiyan, working towards the preparation of my thesis, which I supported in 1972. It was published in 1977 and brings to light a new date for the Bamiyân site and describes differently the site's artistic evolution. One must acknowledge the works on Bamiyân of Kosaku Maeda of the Wako University, Professor Akira Miyaji of the Nogoya University, Professor Takayasu Hugushi of the Kyoto University, and Deborah E. Salter Klimburg of the Vienna University.



Figure 30: Bamiyân, the niche of the 55m Buddha statue. The high part of the trilobe niche with details of the central lobe, which consisted of a large cavity in the back part of the wall (North); that used to serve as the door giving access to the Buddha statue's head. The rows of holes seen on the lateral sides served as anchors for beams holding balconies.



Figure 31: Bamiyân, the niche of the great 55m Buddha statue, after its destruction by the Taliban. The large conglomerate fragments of the 55m Buddha statues ripped apart by the explosion are seen here covered by blue UNESCO tarpaulin.



Figure 32: Bamiyân, the median part of the "Great Cliff". Group K and L grotto ensembles occupy this part of the cliff.



Figure 33 (far left): Bamiyân grotto XI. Grotto XI is located to the east of the great 55m Buddha statue. It is carved on an octagonal floor plan. To each polygonal panel corresponds a niche in which used to be a Buddha statue, except for the eighth panel to the south, which is occupied by the front door. These niches were surmounted of a first register of blind arcades itself surmounted of a second one at the beginning of the cupola. Today, a family of refugees occupies the grotto.

Figure 34 (left): Bamiyân, grotto XI. Grotto XI is carved on an octagonal plan to the East of the niche of the 55m high Buddha statue. To each polygonal panel corresponds a niche in which used to be a Buddha statue, except for the eighth panel to the South, which is occupied by the front door. Above these niches were two superposed registers of blind arcades and the cupola adorned with hexagonal sunken panels. The visibly light stains are due to the stripping of grimacing masks removed by the Bamiyân inhabitants throughout the past years.



Figure 35: Bamiyân, grotto XI. Detail of the two registers of blind arcades and the cupola.



Figure 36: Bamiyân , grotto XI. Detail of the inferior register: the niches welcoming sitting Buddha statues which were formerly molded and affixed with the help of tenon joints.

For your information, my 2002 and 2003 excavations have brought to light one of the monasteries built at the feet of the Great Cliff where I found heads and masques in polychrome clay belonging to Buddhist divinities. My mission is supported by the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs and has as its goal to explore and excavate the royal city, the Buddhist monasteries, and hopefully find the Bamiyân, 1,000 feet long, reclining, Buddha statue mentioned by the Chinese pilgrim Xuanzang.



Figure 37: Bamiyân, grotto XI. Detail of the arcade's superior register and the cupola with sunken boxes. The gap through which light is filtering into the grotto is recent and is one of the signs the grotto is in danger of collapse.



Figure 38: Bamiyân, grotto XI. Detail of the superior blind leaning on an ornamental rinceau and the beginning of the cupola adorned with sunken panels.

Kakrak

The Kakrak valley delimits to the Eastern side the Bamiyân valley; and its art is an integral part of the art of Bamiyân.

The archaeological remains of Kakrak consist of a 15 m high standing statue of Buddha as well as paintings from the grotto of the so-called Hunter King. I excavated the statue in 1977-78 and it was restored by Mohammad Taher, a member of the Afghan Archaeology Institute I directed. The original paintings of the Hunter King were stripped in the 1930s by the DAFA architect Jean Carl and were then divided between the Kabul and the Guimet museums. Based on recent information it seems that the Kabul Museum panels are safe and have not been damaged. The paintings consist of a decoration of concentric medallions filled with many seated Buddha articulating around the central image, the Bodhisattva Maitreya, occupying the cupola as well as at the start of the cupola where one saw a succession of sitting Buddha in different attitudes, sometimes meditating, sometimes teaching. In this frieze, under a cut pediment appears a crowned character holding a bow. Because of the crown it was identified as a hunting king. In reality it is either a Bodhisattva Siddhartha before illumination or during an episode of the jataka. The red Kakrak palette should be compared to the one of the Bamiyân group K.



Figure 39: Kakrak, Bamian region. The ruin of the 15 m high standing Buddha statue after the Taliban exploded the site.



Figure 40: Kakrak, Bamian region; View on the niche and what is left of the superior part of the 15 m high standing Buddha statue after the Taliban exploded the site.

Begram

Begram is the name of a village and a place in the Kapisa plain, about 50 km north of Kabul. It is also the name of a site that, just before World War II, delivered a fabulous treasure of art objects that became known worldwide. The treasure was composed of several hundred Greek and Roman objects originating from Alexandria, Egypt, hundreds of ivory objects originating from India, and several dozen Chinese lacquers. This treasure underlines the welcoming nature of ancient Afghanistan and the important role and power of the Kushan sovereigns who controlled the trade routes between the Near and Middle East, China, and India. It is also during this period that Buddhism flourished and was tolerated as one of the empire's religions. As a result, the trade route also became a way through which pilgrims could travel safely in complete Kushan peace, which I have termed "Pax Kushana."

The site's exploration began with the 19th century's first explorers. The first excavations were the masterpieces of French archaeologists such as Jules Barthoux, Joseph Hackin and Roman Ghirshman. The most significant excavations are of Joseph Hackin's mission, who in addition to the great treasure also excavated the royal city of Begram and the neighboring Buddhist monasteries such as Shotorak, Qol-e Nader, Koh-e Pahlawan, and, further away, Paitawa. However, we must keep in mind the excavations by Jules Barthoux, who unearthed the Buddhist site of Qaratcha, situated very close to the royal city of Begram. The ensemble of these monasteries produced a Greek-Buddhist schist sculpture very specific to the region.

Other archaeological activity to consider is that of Roman Ghirshman, which took place during World War II. He proceeded with a stratigraphic excavation and unearthed three occupation periods of the capital, that used to serve as summer capital to the Kushan kings. According to Roman Ghirshman: Begram I corresponds to the period of the Indo-Greek domination, Begram II corresponds to the Kushan kings, and Begram III corresponds to the Kushano-Sassanid period and later the Hephtalites and Turcs who stayed until the Muslim invasion. In 1946, under the direction of Daniel Schlumberger, new DAFA director, Jacques Meunié undertook several excavations near the royal city's door. Since then no other official missions have been undertaken on the site. However, recent studies conducted by Paul Bernard and myself attempt to prove that the Begram site should be identified as Alexandria under Caucasus.



Figure 41: View of the Begram site. The photograph is taken from an Afghan airplane between the 1930' and 40'. In the middle we see the ruins of the royal city, the Southern and Western walls and their ditches, to the right the airplane's wing.

Istalif

Istalif is a large village located approximately 30 km north of Kabul, to the west of the Kabul-Tchaharikar road, on the Eastern slope of the Paghman Mountain. No archaeological activities have taken place in Istalif; on the other hand it is renowned for its ceramic studios and for its beautiful surroundings. For connoisseurs of France, Istalif could be compared to St-Paul-de-Vence.

The village was built over several centuries on a hill dominating the Khodaman plain. The village was organized in levels. At the bottom, one finds the sheep skin tannery studios, then the felt makers studios, next to them the weavers studio, and the studios where one weaves the Gilims (wool tapestries with geometrical shapes). Above are the agricultural installations where wheat, vines, and orchards are grown. Finally at the top were about twenty pottery studios with large ovens next to each potter's house. Only a few years ago Istalif had almost three hundred potters, with women and children involved in pottery making. At the very top is buried Eshan Ze the patron saint of the potters corporation. The potters say that their ancestors came to Istalif from Bukhara with their master Eshan Ze. These potters are all Tajiks and were very well organized into a closed corporation. An initiation followed by a test was of order and available to older craftsmen and given that a position in one of the studios was open. The potter's art and specifically the secrets of the blue colored enamel are considered as a gift from God that should be disclosed only to those who deserve it.

Apart from old legends, one does not know much about ancient life in Istalif. However in 1842, we know that the British destroyed Istalif and almost a century later Istalif was heavily bombed by the Soviet-Afghan army and later by the Taliban. These destructions did not keep the resilient inhabitants of Istalif from pursuing their artistic production. Today the diverse trades are making a difficult comeback, but a comeback nevertheless.

Rabatak

Rabatak (should be pronounced Robatak, robot=relay; robatak= small relay) is a place located between the city of Pol-e Khumri and of the city of Haibak in the province of Samangan, to the north of the Hindukush (Southern Bactria). The Robatak site was discovered and illegally excavated within the past five years. The impact of these illicit operations is catastrophic. Indeed, the looters unearthed archaeological remains dating from the 1st-3rd centuries A.D. They discovered architectural struc-



Figure 42: Istalif, the village and the potter's neighborhood around an imposing centenarian plane tree.



Figure 43: Robatak, general view of the site. The archaeological remnants were built on a headland facing south.



Figure 44: Robatak, the summit of the acropolis. We see here to what extent the site has been looted.

tures and sculptures as well as an inscription in Bactrian (the Kushan's language) but using Greek symbols. This inscription eventually took the road back to the Kabul Museum and is dated from the era of the famous king Kanishka (1st-2nd century A.D.). The site and its inscription remind us of its twin site Surkh Kotal, located less than 50 km to the southeast.

The Robatak inscription is being studied by British scientists Nicolas Sims-Williams, Joe Cribb, and by French scientist Gerard Fussman. Can one consider Robatak as a second Surkh Kotal? Future official excavations will bring many solutions and answers and determine if the bulldozers of illegal excavators destroyed the temple or the superior temples.



Figure 45: Robatak, a closer view of the site. Not only can see the headland that was chosen as construction site, but also below at the plain level, other buried remnants.



Figure 46: Robatak, illegal excavations at the summit of the acropolis. These diggings committed by non-scientists have for consequence the disruption of the ruins and the disappearance of the edifices.



Figure 47: Robatak, unearthed by looters, a column's limestone base. This column base unearthed at the summit of the acropolis was moved and is far away from its architectural context. Typical of Kushan style the base differentiates itself from the Greek ones. Indeed the Kushans built their bases and plinth in one single block of stone.



Figure 48: Robatak, the state of the illegal excavations at the summit of the acropolis. We see a stump of wall spared by miracle despite the hurried and anarchic series of illegal excavations, done in the hopes of discovering objects, which will be negotiated later on at the Peshawar bazaar.

Samangan-Haibak

Samangan is a province with a very rich archaeological past. In addition to remnants of the Palaeolithic period, Bronze Age, Greek, Kushan, and Muslim sites can be found. Alexander the Great's army went through Samangan. The site that is of interest to us here is Haibak, located on the road from Pul-e Khunmri to Mazar-e Sharif. In other words, as one leaves Robatak towards the center of Samangan (where the famous bazaar of Tashqurghan, studied by Suisse scientist Pierre Centlivres, is located) not far from



Figure 49: Haibak, archaeological Buddhist site.

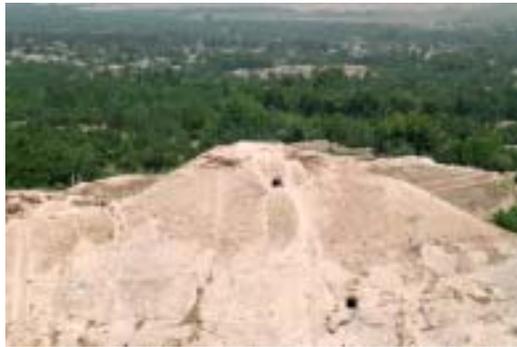


Figure 50: View on the mound's summit. One notices the beginning of the insidious process of illegal excavations.

Haibak is a Buddhist site built on a natural rock mound. Grottos or caves used as chapels as well as monks' cells were carved at the base of the site. One of the grottos is famous for its bas-relief décor in the shape of a huge lotus flower covering entirely the cupola. Further out on the pseudo-mound a large monolith and circular stupa are carved, of which the construction was interrupted due to a lack of funding or to ancient military attacks. On the main mound, one can see the ruins of a Buddhist monastery whose remnants were studied by Alfred Foucher in the 1920s and later by a Kyoto University team directed by Professor Seichi Mizuno.

Surkh Kotal

Surkh Kotal is a famous archaeological site of the Kushan period, located in southern Bactria, to the west of the road between Pul-e Khumri, Robatak, Samangan and Mazar-e Sharif. The site was excavated during the 1950s and '60s under the direction of Professor Daniel Schlumberger from the Strasbourg University, who was then director of the DAFA. The site is located on a natural headland facing east thus dominating the plain. At the summit of the site, a temple was built on a podium surrounded with a portico. One had access to this cultural ensemble by the means of three immense terraces connected to one another by monumental stairs composed of more than one hundred steps each, and by way of a ramp of about 150 m. The buildings are built in dried earth but with a white limestone facing. Several mutilated statues of Kushan kings were discovered; one of them identified as representing King Kanishka. The cult celebrated in the great temple A is still subject to discussion. However, the two later temples B and D are designated, rightfully so, as sanctuaries for the sacred fire.

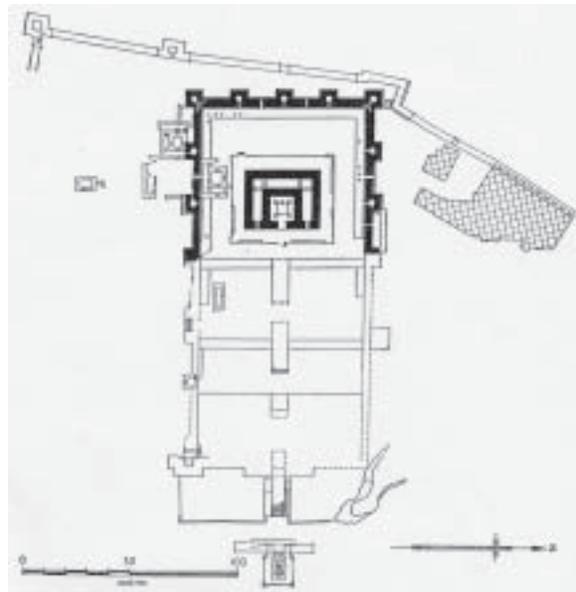


Figure 51: Surkh Kotal, sketch plan of the sanctuary (drawn by M. Le Berre)



Figure 52: Surkh Kotal, the site and its terraces seen from the cultivated fields, east to west.



Figure 53: Surkh Kotal, illegal excavations carried out on the altar's plinth, temple A.

The results of Daniel Schlumberger's Surkh Kotal excavations are remarkable, as they demonstrate how the Kushans played an intermediary role in the transmission of Hellenistic art to the rest of Central Asia and India, as well as the role of the dynastic art of these sovereigns. The Surkh Kotal inscriptions brought about many scientific discoveries. Thanks to the excavations on this site in southern Bactria we have now a plausible explanation regarding the discoveries of Robatak. Isn't the latter a second Surkh Kotal? Probably from a general conceptual point of view, but awarded to another divinity of the Kushan's rich pantheon.



Figure 54: Surkh Kotal, present state of the temple at the summit of the site dominating the fertile Pul e-Khumri and Baghlan plains.



Figure 55: Surkh Kotal, present state of temple A. One notices the altar's plinth of temple A, framed by four column bases supporting the roofs.

The looting of the Archaeological Heritage of Afghanistan does not limit itself to these few sites proposed by Mr. Ferozi. One should also mention the sites of the regions of Herat, Maymana, Balkh, Samangan, Qunduz, Bakhshan, Takhar; the mountainous regions of the center of Afghanistan such as Bamiyan, Yakaoling, further south, Panjshir, Kohestan (especially Khom e- Zargar), Kapissa, Begram, Kabul, Jalriz, Maydan Shahr, Kandahar, Helmand, Seistan. And let us not forget the Eastern regions such as Jalalabad (especially Hadda for its beautiful Buddhist monasteries, excavated by the French and Afghans, Dr. Chaibai Mustamandy and Dr. Zetaryalai Tarzi), Kunar, Laghman (especially Khoguiani), Patchir, and Agam, etc. These sites of which I mention only few, have been subjected to illegal excavations by local commanders for the past twenty some years, before the Taliban, during the Taliban, after the Taliban, and are still being looted today.

If we add up the values of numerous objects looted and illegally sold these past two decades, it amounts to several billion dollars worth of art objects belonging and constituting Afghanistan's wealth and national heritage, now in the pockets and homes of private individuals and collectors. Afghanistan's banking system is not yet established and therefore any money collected is placed in foreign countries. The Afghans loss is doubled. They are robbed financially and most of all are deprived of their right to be proud of their cultural heritage.

Mr. Abdul Wasey Feroozi

Mr. Abdul Wasey Feroozi, head of the Institute of Archaeology, Afghan Ministry of Information and Culture, is from the city of Istalif about 30km north of Kabul. After graduating from Lycee Esteqlal in Kabul he completed a professional journalistic license. Following a contest initiated by the Director General of the Archaeology Institute, at the time Professor Zemaryalai Tarzi, he was selected to study at the Institute first and later on complete his license in India. Upon completion of his studies he returned to Afghanistan. During the mid-1980s he was nominated Director General of the Archaeology Institute which is a dependant of the Ministry of Culture and Information and the Academy of Sciences, both of which Mr. Feroozi is a member. He remained with his family in Afghanistan throughout twenty difficult years of war and destruction. Since the fall of the Taliban, Mr. Feroozi has participated in many conferences on the subject of Afghan archaeology. Mr. Feroozi has recently joined the Honorary Board of Advisors for the Association for the Protection of Afghan Archaeology.

Professor Zemaryalai Tarzi

Born in 1939 in Kabul, Professor Zemaryalai Tarzi completed his studies under the supervision of Professor Daniel Schlumberger, in the process obtaining three PhDs. From 1973 to 1979, he was Director of Archaeology and Preservation of Historical Monuments of Afghanistan as well as the Director General of the Archaeology Institute of Kabul.

He later directed the excavations in Bamiyân and Hadda on the sites of Tape Shotor and Tape Tope Kalan. Exiled to France in 1979, he assumed the post of Professor of Eastern Archaeology at the March Bloch University of Strasbourg, France. He is currently director for the French Archaeological Missions for the Surveys and Excavations of Bamiyân. Prof. Tarzi is the author of some sixty articles and books; and also president for the Association for the Protection of Afghan Archaeology, Inc. based in San Rafael, California. www.apaa.info



Nadia Tarzi

Born in Strasbourg, France, Nadia Tarzi has been living in the U.S. since 1989. Multi faceted art background, which includes training at the "Arts Decoratifs School" of Strasbourg; 13 years of ongoing performing arts training and work in theater, film and voice over. Has tackled the world of scientific translation, poetry writing and short stories. Since 1997 she is a certified holistic massage therapist and health educator.

Out of love for her father's country, passion for Afghan archaeology and determination for a better future for her fellow human beings Tarzi created the "Association for the Protection of Afghan Archaeology, Inc." a non-profit organization dedicated in promoting and preserving the Afghan archaeological heritage through education, training and scientific programs. The Association is presided and guided by Professor Zemaryalai Tarzi her beloved father and world known expert on Afghan Archaeology.

Since the fall of the Taliban, Tarzi has worked at raising awareness on Afghanistan's rich and unique archaeological heritage by organizing events throughout the Bay Area of San Francisco, visits to local libraries and schools presenting slide shows on Afghan Archaeology and culture. Tarzi also organizes lectures and conferences where her father speaks on specific aspects and periods of Afghan archaeology when he visits the U.S.

From 2002 to 2003 Tarzi also served as the Afghan liaison for Roots of Peace, a humanitarian Marin County based organization dedicated to the removal of landmines around the world including Afghanistan.

