

THE RISE AND FALL OF ARCHAEOLOGY IN AFGHANISTAN



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SPECIAL LECTURE

Archaeological Investigations in the region of Afghanistan began in 1832 when British officers such as Charles Masson came to the region and identified, and to some extent excavated, few archaeological sites. This early phase ended when the Afghan Government signed a contract with the French Archaeological Mission to Afghanistan (DAFA) in 1922.

This agreement marked the beginning of the second phase of scientific explorations and archaeological excavations. As a result, many great discoveries of the 20th century took place in this region. During this second phase, scientific excavation around the country were carried out not only by French archaeologists, but also by researchers from other countries such as the US, Soviet Union, India, Germany, and Italy.

Unfortunately, with the invasion of the Soviet Union in Afghanistan (1979–1989), and the civil war between (1992-1995), as well as during the previous Taliban period (1996-2001), excavation and archaeological research stopped. During this period, many archaeological sites and museums were illegally excavated and looted.

In 2001, with the establishment of the new government in Afghanistan, a new phase of archaeological research began. Many foreigner institutions resumed their archaeological explorations in collaboration with the Archaeology Institute of Afghanistan. As a result, many great archaeological discoveries took place at various sites, shading new light on the archaeological landscape of the region. Regrettably, with the fall of the previous government and the return of the Taliban in 2021, Afghanistan's archaeology has just stepped into a new phase, under the control of extremist groups.

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