

The Archaeology of Afghanistan: From Earliest Times to the Timurid Period (revised and updated edition). Edited by F. R. Allchin, Warwick Ball, and Norman Hammond. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2019. 752 pp., 36 b&w and 353 color illustrations, 128 b&w drawings, bibliography, index. Hardcover £175.00, US \$270, ISBN 9780748699179; PDF £175.00, ISBN 9781474450478; epub £175.00, ISBN 9781474450461.

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Afghanistan is without doubt one of the most important regions of the world for understanding the interactions between humans in Asia and beyond, beginning from the earliest period of hominin evolution up until the present. This region has attracted antiquarians and historians from the earliest periods of recorded history and has been a magnet for archaeologists, numismatists, and art historians since the eighteenth century. The first comprehensive volume on the archaeology of Afghanistan, published over four decades ago (Allchin and Hammond 1978), was one of the most important resources for scholars working on the history of the region. This new revised and updated edition provides an amazing amount of detail that was not found in the earlier version, as well as totally new material that is both up to date and highly relevant to new research directions. Anyone familiar with the recent political instability of the region would have expected that there has been little new research in Afghanistan, but this volume clearly demonstrates that, even in the context of war and destruction, dedicated Afghan archaeologists and foreign scholars have managed to continue their heroic efforts at documenting and preserving previously discovered remains as well as discovering exciting new information on all periods of Afghanistan's history.

In contrast to the first volume, the new edition has a large number of color maps and photographs. Some of the color photographs are of objects that were originally published only in black and white, but photographs of many newly discovered objects have also been added. A chapter on the Helmand Civilization has also been added to the book, for a total of nine chapters. Some of the chapters have been revised by new coauthors so that, although

most chapters contain most of the original text, each chapter includes significant additional text, photographs, maps, and updated summaries. As with the 1978 edition, the 2019 edition was authored by outstanding foreign scholars and it includes a new foreword by a young Afghan scholar, Mohammad Fahim Rahimi, Director of the National Museum of Afghanistan (also known as the Kabul Museum). While one of the editors, Warwick Ball, emphasizes the important new work being carried out in Afghanistan by local Afghan scholars in his introduction to the new edition, there is a significant lacuna in terms of bibliographic references to the research and publications of the Afghan archaeologists themselves. Hopefully, current Afghan archaeologists who have been excavating sites and documenting their own history will be able to prepare a supplement to this volume that includes their important contributions.

Chapter 1, written by Sophia R. Bowlby and Kevin H. White, covers the overall geography of Afghanistan using the same text as in the first edition, but their major revisions to the sections on climate and subsistence provide new information and more details. Other major additions are numerous color photographs showing different geographical features and subsistence patterns. Chapter 2 by Richard S. Davis repeats the same basic information on the Palaeolithic found in the first edition because relatively little new archaeology has been carried for this time period. New techniques for calibration of radiocarbon dates has allowed for more precise dating, however. The new calibrated dates provided in Table 2.2 will be useful for comparisons to other regions of West and South Asia. Another important update relates

to the dating and mtDNA analysis of a human skull fragment from the site of Darra-i-kur. This skull was originally thought to date to the Middle Palaeolithic due to its association with some charcoal samples dating to 30,000 B.P., but direct dating of the bone itself has now dated the sample to around 4500 B.P. during the Neolithic. Unfortunately, the 2019 edition was not able to include the most recent DNA data that has been published for many of the skeletal remains in Afghanistan, but fortunately scholars can access these new data through open-access online sources (Narasimhan et al. 2018).

Chapters 3 and 4 replace the single chapter 3 from the first volume. They cover the prehistoric periods beginning with the Neolithic and continuing through the Chalcolithic or Bronze Age. Chapter 3, compiled by Henri-Paul Francfort, Bertille Lyonnet, Cameron A. Petrie, and Jim G. Shaffer, deals with the Oxus Civilization and regions to the north of the Hindu Kush mountain range. Chapter 4, written by Cameron A. Petrie and Jim G. Shaffer, focuses on the Helmand Civilization and regions to the south. The recalibrated radiocarbon dates provided in Table 3.1 provide extremely important data for discussing the issue of domestication of animals such as sheep, goat, and possibly cattle. The very careful assessment of data from faunal analyses is also reevaluated, presenting important new perspectives on the issues of where and when sheep, goat, and cattle became an important part of subsistence strategies. An important new addition to the discussion is the extensive and up to date comparison with surrounding regions to the west, east, and north. One of the most important new additions to this section is the inclusion of surveys conducted from the Qunduz River Valley and the Amu Darya/Darya-i Panj valleys to the Hindu Kush ranges. The excavations at Shortughai have also been added. Details of the Shortughai excavations have been accessible in French publication of the excavations, but this is the first summary in English. It includes color photographs of the many important artifacts found at that site and a full listing of calibrated radiocarbon dates (Table 3.2). The important sites in the Dashli region are also presented,

along with color photos and new discussions that were not available in the first edition.

In chapter 4, much of the discussion regarding the site of Mundigak (as well as the other major excavated sites) is the same as was presented in chapter 3 of the 1978 edition. However, based on new calibrations of the radiocarbon dates, some new discussion is presented regarding the chronology of the Mundigak sequence (Table 4.2). Comparisons are made with other contemporaneous sites including the important new dates from the site of Shahr-i-Sokhta, which is located at the end of the Helmand Basin in Iran. While chapters 3 and 4 provide some of the most important new information on the prehistoric period in Afghanistan, they also highlight the need for future excavations to clarify issues of chronology and cultural interaction.

In chapter 5, the Iron Age is presented along with the Achaemenid and Hellenistic periods by Warwick Ball, Simon Glenn, Bertille Lyonnet, David W. Mac Dowall, and Maurizio Taddei. It begins with a major chronological presentation of different periods and dynasties, including an expanded discussion of the Yuezhi (Yueh-Chi) and Saka communities. The remainder of the chapter has been significantly reorganized. It presents the settlements and archaeological context for finds, including inclusion of new sites such as Tillya Tepe and more detailed discussions of Ai Khanoum. The final section discusses the many inscriptions from this time period, as well as numismatic data with excellent color photographs of coins. Major and newly discovered coin hoards are summarized, but the extensive numismatic detail that was found in the first edition has not been reproduced since this information can always be found in other publications.

Chapter 6 includes contributions from Warwick Ball, Olivier Bordeaux, David W. Mac Dowall, Nicholas Sims-Williams, and Maurizio Taddei. This chapter covers the period of Kushana to Shahi rule in Afghanistan. It begins with an important list of Kushana Kings (Table 6.1) and a chronological framework (Table 6.2), a welcome change from the presentations found in most other publications. This chapter includes significant information from recent

excavations, including new plans, aerial photographs, and color photos. The expanded section on Bamiyan provides very detailed descriptions of monuments that have been destroyed by the Taliban. The newly excavated site of Mes Aynak is also presented, but only in a very short summary. This chapter also includes data on major sculptures, murals, coins, and manuscripts, although some of the manuscripts were on the art market and are now being held in foreign museums. Given the extensive looting and sale of antiquities from Afghanistan, it is important to publish this information so scholars can be aware of these discoveries, but hopefully at some point these items can be repatriated to Afghanistan from their current locations.

Chapter 7, written by Warwick Ball and Klaus Fischer, begins with the earliest evidence for Islamic architecture and continues up to the Mongol invasions. It starts with the new dating of the No Gunbad mosque in Balkh and suggests it could be as early as C.E. 794–795. New details are presented for many of the famous monuments that were covered in the first edition, including color photographs of architecture, murals, and ceramics. The brief discussion of monuments in Sistan included in this chapter was originally in a subsequent chapter in the 1978 edition. This is followed by an excellent summary of Ghaznavid art and architecture and a comprehensive discussion of Ghurid monuments and towers that were constructed throughout Afghanistan and as far as Delhi.

In chapter 8, Warwick Ball and Klaus Fischer deal with the Mongol invasion of Afghanistan and provide a summary of the historical events leading up to the emergence of the Timurid Dynasty and eventually the Mughals. Much of the text is similar to that found in the first edition, but it has been enhanced by the addition of new maps, the surveys in Sistan, and much greater detail about the Timurid monuments in Herat and northern Afghanistan. This chapter is also enhanced with color photographs, new drawings, and building plans that provide excellent reference material for studies

of architecture, gardens, cisterns and reservoirs, monumental calligraphy, and decorated metal vessels.

The final chapter by Raymond Allchin and Norman Hammond is almost identical to the conclusion of the first edition, with some minor rewording to address some of the important new discoveries noted in earlier chapters. It provides an excellent summary of the major discoveries from the Palaeolithic to the Mughal period, basically reinforcing the main points presented in each chapter. However, the editors should have ended this volume with some discussion of the major contributions of local Afghan scholars to the success of foreign teams working in the country and also their independent research contributions through surveys, conservation, and excavation. This would also have given them an opportunity to discuss the issue of repatriating looted finds to museums throughout Afghanistan so that the average Afghan citizen can appreciate the history of their own country.

Overall this book is an outstanding and long-awaited contribution that will greatly increase our understanding of the importance of Afghanistan to the history of Asia and the world as a whole. The book is thoroughly researched and up to date (despite the time constraints of the modern publication process). It is extremely well-edited, with endnotes for each chapter and a comprehensive bibliography that can be used by scholars carrying out additional primary research.

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