

Historical overview of the National Museum of Afghanistan 1992–2002

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Upon his death in 1919, king Habibullah Khan (r. 1901-1919) left behind a small collection of manuscripts as well as various archives, coins, family items, weapons, miniatures and other works of art. These objects were preserved by the royal family, who kept them at the summer palace and other villas in the fashionable Baghe Bala quarter of Kabul.

A few years later, king Amanullah Khan (r. 1919-1929) transferred the collection to a building within the palace grounds. In 1931 the collection was relocated to its present home at Darul Aman. During the subsequent decades, the collections in the National Museum were gradually expanded to include archaeological finds from archaeological excavations around Afghanistan.

The first damage to the National Museum occurred after the coup d'état of 27 April 1978. In 1979 the Museum building was used by the Ministry of Defence, and the Museum's collections were transferred to the residence of Minister Sardar Mohammad Naim Khan. The collections returned once again to Darul Aman in 1980.

In 1989 the National Museum was closed on the orders of President Najibullah. Some works were transferred to the presidential palace, while others were taken for protection to the Minister of Culture and Information. However, the majority remained in the National Museum.

Between 1992 and 1994, Kabul was devastated by guerrilla fighting and the Museum was hit by a stray bomb and then looted. The objects found in the rubble of the Museum were inventoried in 1995-1996. In 1996, one week before the Taliban seized power, approximately 3500 objects were transferred to the Hotel Kabul and to the Ministry of Culture and Information.



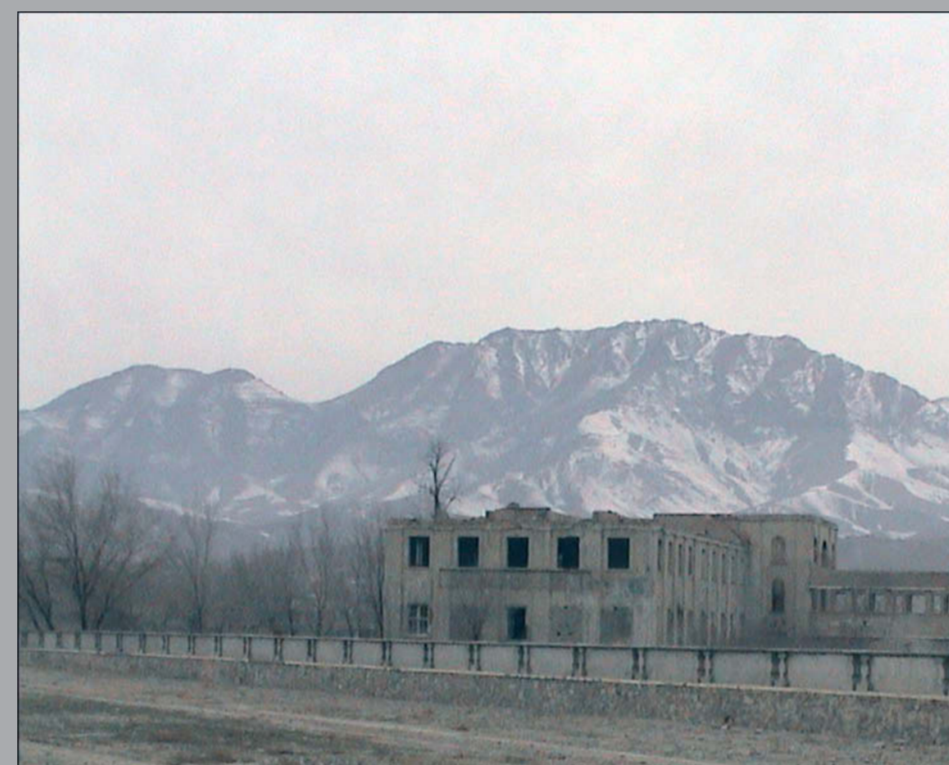
Restoration of Kanishka by an Afghan and French (Guimet Museum) team.



Remains of Kanishka after its destruction by the Taliban in 2001. Photo by Ana Rodriguez. 2002/ SPACH Photocatalogue.



National Museum of Afghanistan. Destroyed in Civil War. Photo by Max Klimburg.



National Museum of Afghanistan. Destroyed in Civil War.



Entrance of National Museum.



Documents burned in the Civil War.



National Museum, 2002. Photograph Pierre Cambon.



Upper floors of the National Museum after its destruction in 1993. Photo by E. F. 1996/ SPACH Photocatalogue.



Upper floors of the National Museum after destruction in 1993.



Repairing the roof of the National Museum. Photo by Ana Rodriguez 2004/ SPACH Photocatalogue



Gardening work at National Museum.