

University Museum Expedition to Afghanistan

1065

Finding aid prepared by Sarah Kemp.

Last updated on October 25, 2016.

University of Pennsylvania, Penn Museum Archives

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Summary Information

Repository	University of Pennsylvania: Penn Museum Archives
Creator	Cammann, Schuyler V. R. (Schuyler Van Rensselaer), b. 1912
Creator	Coon, Carleton S., b. 1904-d. 1981
Creator	Young, Rodney S. (Rodney Stuart), 1907-1974
Title	University Museum Expedition to Afghanistan
Call number	1065
Date [inclusive]	1952-1955
Extent	0.4 linear feet
Language	English
Abstract	<p>The University Museum Expedition to Afghanistan spent six months in 1953 excavating the Bactrian sites of Balkh and Kunduz. The expedition was helmed by Rodney S. Young (Curator of the Mediterranean Section), Schuyler Cammann (Associate Curator in the Oriental Section), and Dorothy Hannah Cox, with additional scouting and surveying work performed by Carlton Coon. Uncovering evidence of the area's pre-Buddhist historical record was this expedition's primary focus. The textual records of the expeditions to Balkh and Kunduz consist of .4 linear feet of correspondence, inventories, preliminary reports, published reports, excavation agreements, field notes, and images. The records have been compiled from two sources: the papers of Dr. Schuyler Cammann (contributed in 1992) and the records of the Asian Section Office at the Museum of the University of Pennsylvania, an ongoing contribution of</p>

records to the Archives over time. Because very similar records were found in both sets of source materials (e.g., correspondence from the same exchange), the records were integrated and then divided into four series: Correspondence, Reports, Field Notes, and Images.

Biography/History

In 1952, Froelich Rainey undertook a survey of the Bactrian plain of Northern Afghanistan, traveling from Turkey to the Khyber Pass in search of promising sites for future archaeological research. He wrote extensively and romantically about the area's charms and openly about his hope that successful excavation in this area would compel the Afghan government to open more areas to Western researchers. To this end, he dispatched Rodney S. Young (Curator of the Mediterranean Section), Schuyler Cammann (Associate Curator in the Oriental Section), and Dorothy Hannah Cox to excavate the sites Kunduz and Balkh. Uncovering evidence of the pre-Buddhist history of the area was the primary goal of this expedition.

Kunduz, a Buddhist monastery roughly half a mile from its companion modern city, consists of a long rectangular enclosure oriented north-south, a stupa at its southern end, and a large southern gate destroyed in the 7th century. The site had been partially excavated by Joseph Hackin (of the Musée Guimet) in 1936, but was still hoped to contain worthwhile artifacts and examples of Greco-Persian art.

Unfortunately for Cammann, who led the excavation, these hopes were to prove false. The site had been repeatedly destroyed throughout its history by groups referred to by both Cammann and Young as "iconoclasts" (likely Muslim Arabs), who smashed statues and frescos off of the walls and pulverized them into powder, leaving little for the archaeologists to document.

Balkh, also known as Bactra or Balkh-Bactra (in Arabic, Umm Al-Belaad or "Mother of Cities"), thought to be established in 2000-1500 BC, was the seat of ancient Bactria and sat at the convergence of many trade routes. The site consists of the fortress and city, the citadel (Bala Hissar) and its keep (the Arg), and approximately seven miles of walls. French excavations led by M. Alfred Foucher in 1924–25, and in 1947–48 by M. Daniel Schlumberger, made numerous sondages in the site, but did not carry out any extensive digging. During this expedition, Young explored a portion of the southern outer wall of the city.

Scope and Contents

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contribution of records to the Archives over time. Because very similar records were found in both sets of source materials (e.g., correspondence from the same exchange), the records were integrated and then divided into four series: Correspondence, Reports, Field Notes, and Images.

“Correspondence” consists of copies of letters sent to Museum Director Froelich Rainey by Cammann regarding the excavation in Kunduz; and by archaeologist Rodney Young regarding the excavation in Balkh, the equipment and maintenance of the expedition, and the often arduous negotiation with local officials for the release of artifacts found during the excavation. It also contains the joint agreement between the Kabul Museum and the University Museum regarding excavation permissions and the ownership of any materials found. This series is arranged chronologically.

“Reports” contains copies of preliminary reports sent to Rainey by Camman and Rodney Young, copies of final reports, and a copy of a report on the expedition published in the Bulletin of the Philadelphia Anthropological Society. Also included is a copy of the report “L’art Bouddhique de la Bactraine et Les origins de l’ Art Gréco-bouddhique,” written by Joseph Hackin and originally published in the Bulletin archaologique publié par la section historique de l’Académie Afghane. This series is arranged chronologically.

“Field Notes” contains three notebooks containing the field notes of Cammann, Young, and Deborah Hannah Cox. Cammann and Cox’s notes document the excavation of Kunduz, including the floor plan. Young’s notes describe the excavation of Balkh. Authorship has been attributed through handwriting analysis and comparison with existing records.

“Images.” [TBD] [128 slides in sleeves in photo archives and cataloged; digitize on demand.] [0000.1936.36]

Administrative Information

University of Pennsylvania, Penn Museum Archives
Finding aid prepared by Sarah Kemp.

Immediate Source of Acquisition note

University of Pennsylvania Museum Archives, Coll. 1146 Schuyler V. R. Cammann Papers; Coll. 0052 Asian Section.

Processing Information note

Compiled from papers removed from Coll. 1146 Schuyler V. R. Cammann Papers, and from Coll. 0052 Asian Section. Duplicates of copied materials were removed.

Related Materials

Related Archival Materials note

Other Museum Archives records related to this collection can be found in the following collections: the papers of Schuyler Camman, the correspondence of Froelich Rainey, v. 17 no. 4 of the Bulletin of the University Museum, and the autobiography of Froelich Rainey entitled "Reflections of a Digger: Fifty Years of World Archaeology."

See also Accession Record 0000.1936.36, Afghanistan Slide Collection.

Controlled Access Headings

GEOGRAPHIC NAME(S)

- Bactria (Asia)
- Balkh (Afghanistan)
- Quonduz (Afghanistan)

PERSONAL NAME(S)

- Cammann, Schuyler V. R. (Schuyler Van Rensselaer), b. 1912
- Cox, Dorothy Hannah, b. 1893-
- Froelich Rainey, Director of the University Museum
- Rainey, Froelich, Director of the University Museum
- Young, Rodney S. (Rodney Stuart), 1907-1974

SUBJECT(S)

- Archaeological expeditions
- Art history
- Excavations (Archaeology)

Collection Inventory

CORRESPONDENCE, 1952-1953.

	Box	Folder
Correspondence [1952-1953].	1	1

REPORTS, 1953-1954.

	Box	Folder
Balkh and Kunduz, Preliminary Reports [1953].	1	2
"Report on University Museum Expedition to Afghanistan".	1	3
Joint Agreement of the Kabul Museum and the University Museum.	1	4

FIELD NOTES, 1935.

	Box	Folder
Balkh and Kunduz, Field Notes [1935] 1 of 2.	1	5
Balkh and Kunduz, Field Notes [1935] 2 of 2.	1	6

IMAGES, 1955.

	Box	Folder
Plates from University Museum Expedition to Afghanistan, Am. J. Arch. [1955].	1	7
Separated Materials note		
Withdrawn 11/24/1981.		