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**| RESEARCH ARTICLE**

## Tala Tepe Jawzjan is the Forgotten Ancient Site of Afghanistan

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**| ABSTRACT**

The Golden Treasure of Bakhtar is the most valuable historical treasure of Afghanistan and one of the souvenirs of the era of Western Greece. In 1978, Victor Sarianidi, the famous Soviet archaeologist, and his team started their excavations on top of Talatepe, Jawzjan province. As a result of this research, they found the world's biggest treasure after 2000 years of obscurity. The findings of this research show that this ancient and historical area is the legacy of the Western Greek and Kushan eras. Analyzes show that Afghanistan's security situation was in a very critical state during the Soviet archaeologists' research; Victor Sarianidi was able to, with this emergency, continue his research, which shows the commitment and good sense of an archaeologist. The purpose of this research is to investigate the current situation of the ancient and historical area of Talatepe, Jawzjan. The findings of this research show that atmospheric and climatic changes have caused the collapse of this historical area and if serious attention is not paid to it, we will witness the complete destruction of this historical area in the earliest time. It should be mentioned that the Tala Tepe area is located near the irrigated agricultural lands, and besides other problems of this area, it is also under the threat of flooding. In the research of this article, the methods of comparison, logical historical analysis, copying and field have been done.

**| KEYWORDS**

Jawzjan, Talatepe, Ganjineh, works, Western Greece, Kushani and archaeologist

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### 1. Introduction

Talatepe, one of the ancient and historical areas of Afghanistan, is located five kilometers northeast of Shaberghan City, the center of Jawzjan province. The form and cultural example of old Afghanistan can be seen in the valuable works of Tala Tepe. This ancient place has been identified and excavated by the archaeologists of Afghanistan and the former Soviet Union.

In total, the works of Talatepe reached 21,618 works, which have been discovered from six limited graves. These graves are now located next to the ruins of the ancient settlement, which was destroyed by water. The construction of these graves was very simple. The corpse was placed in a wooden coffin with a base and buried in the lower level of a rectangular grave that was dug from one and a half to two meters deep. The coffin was decorated with thin pieces of gold and silver.

In the graves that have been excavated in Talatepe, some of the discovered works have entered this place from the outside. Among them, we can mention the Roman golden muskets. As far as talking about local items and goods in Tala Tepe, two artistic styles and traditions can be recognized in this field. The images of wild animals and winged dragons are clearly related to the artistic tradition of the nomadic tribes of Central Asia.

## 2. Talatepe is a unique treasure

A treasure whose existence was obscure for more than 25 years, and no one knew where the most valuable treasure in the world was found in 1978 AD by the Afghan-Soviet archeology group in Tala Tepe Sheberghan.

In the first days of 1978 AD, Victor Sarianidi, a famous Soviet archaeologist, was standing on top of Talatepe in Sheberghan city suddenly a thought appeared in him, and this thought caused the world's greatest treasure to be found after 2000 years of ambiguity. During these 2000 years, many explorers, kings, and even adventurers searched for this treasure in this part of the world. But no one knew where the great treasure of the West was.

Many in Balkh were looking for this treasure, and many were convinced that the existence of such a treasure was nothing more than a legend. Viktorsrianidi came to the conclusion that the graves of kings and princes should be located next to the 3000-year-old temple next to Tala Tepe (Kosha, 2011, 78).

In the early winter of 1978, Afghanistan was in a critical state. After the Haft Thor coup and the fall of Mohammad Dawood Khan's government, two government leaders were killed in one year. Guerrilla groups had emerged in different places in Afghanistan to confront the government, and the revolutionary government had requested help from the Soviet Union. One day before the Soviet Red Army entered Afghanistan, Sarianidi was able to find one of the two largest and most valuable gold treasures in the world by finding a piece of gold.

On this day, Srianidi found the first grave after seeing this cloth of pure gold. In this grave, there was a soldier's coffin covered with animal skin and a temporary roof was built over it.

Inside the coffin was a Mushan lady whose head was decorated with gold. The Afghan-Soviet joint group, led by Sarianidi, who spent ten years exploring the hills of Ai Khanum for the remains of the Mushan civilization, did not believe that it was the treasure of the West had been achieved.

As a result of the research of Afghan and Soviet archaeologists, graves were found one after another. As a result, the group of Soviet archaeologists headed by Srianidi found seven graves in which five women aged 15 to 45 and a prince were buried. It was thought that all the princes died at the same time. When they went to their graves, they had amazing golden gifts with them. Not one or two, but 21,618 pieces of pure gold were taken with them to their graves (Abdi, 2018, 16).

The analysis shows that there were ideas in the minds of the people of that time that a new life was born after death, so they buried their dead with many works.

These works were artistically designed in the form of kopits (gods of love, fish and mythical animals) and decorated with precious stones. The bodies of women inside these graves looked like they were very decorated when they died. In these graves, hundreds of different gold plates were found, which were firmly sewn on the clothes of the mentioned women.

Based on the findings of history, the civilization of Western Greece was established after the conquest of the West by Alexander the Great in 327 BC, and gradually, this region became one of the most prosperous regions of that time. After that, the desert dwellers of the plains of Central Asia moved to the south. They seized power in the territory of Western Greece and founded the great Kushan Empire.

With the passage of time, these desert dwellers became comfortable and paid taxes to the merchants who traveled from Syria to China and did business with the merchants who passed through the famous Silk Road. In this way, they obtained a lot of gold and popularized the art of goldsmithing and gold engraving. It was in this way that the fame of the abundant treasures of the West reached the whole world (Kosha, 2010, 67).

But this treasure was discovered in the worst conditions. Viktorsrianidi was in a critical situation. The security situation was getting worse every day, and they had to work fast. Archaeologists recorded and photographed the works every day, and at the end of the work, they put the works in a sealed and varnished room under strict care.

But the monster of war did not let the archaeologists finish their work; they had to leave their excavations half-finished and go to Kabul after they had just found the seventh grave. But no one knew what was in the seventh grave!

The Western gold treasure was transferred to the Kabul Museum and registered. Although Srianidi insisted that this treasure be handed over to UNESCO and kept in a neutral country until the end of the war, this request was not accepted, and Srianidi returned to the Soviet Union (Bernard, 2007, 123).

In 1989, ten years had passed since the discovery of the world's most valuable treasure, but the situation in Afghanistan was worse than ever. The Red Army had left Afghanistan, and the Afghan government was in a shaky state.

So, the gold treasure of the West was again threatened by a great danger. But a far-sighted person who knew the situation of the country better than anyone thought of saving the greatest wealth of his country and the world. He was Dr Najibullah, the then president.

In a top-secret operation, Dr Najibullah took the Western gold treasure from the Kabul Museum to the central bank treasury, which has a gate to the presidential palace and is the safest place in the country.

He wrapped every piece of gold in cotton and put it in old chests, in the safe of the Central Bank of Afghanistan and in a three-story basement, which is an architectural masterpiece. Khan was built. Vegav has a chest that is protected by seven locks. To open this safe, all seven keys must be present so that the locks can be opened in order. If a key is thrown into the locks without order, the key will get stuck in the lock, and the possibility of opening the safe will be lost.

Dr Narjib personally sealed the safes and handed seven safe keys to seven National Bank trustees and asked them to promise not to open the safe door to anyone else except for the president or a legitimate leader of Afghanistan.

After that, the rumor of the loss of Bakhtar's treasure began to rise; some said that the Russians had taken this treasure with them, and some said that Dr Najib had sold it to the Russians. These rumors peaked when Dr Najib's government fell. But he kept silent about the Western treasure.

With the intensification of regulatory wars in Kabul, no one knew what happened to Bakhtar's treasure. There were even songs about the sale of these works in the world markets. These rumors upset the world and mostly Victor Sarianidi (Azami, 1979, 53).

Finally, on May 2, 2003, Hamid Karzai, the president of Afghanistan, and Ashraf Ghani, Ahmadzai, the then finance minister, went to the central bank treasury. They thought that there would be ninety million dollars' worth of gold bars behind these doors, and since all but one of the seven who had the keys were not in Afghanistan, an expert from a German safe manufacturer was asked to open all seven locks. He opened it, and in the meantime, his heart was beating more than any other: a Soviet archaeologist and a white-haired Sarianidian, and after twenty-six years had passed, he was very anxious and did not know what he would see.

But next to 90 million dollars of gold bars, there were steel boxes with Mehr Dr. Najibullah. When these chests are opened, Srianidi sees with amazement that the treasure of Bakhtar is protected among them.

This treasure went all over the world to introduce the rich history of Afghanistan's culture to the world and change the world's view of Afghanistan. (Bavar, 2016, 24)

Based on the study and findings of this research, it is clear that the role of the Soviet archaeologists regarding the ancient and historical areas of Tala Tepe is outstanding, and it also shows their commitment towards the trustworthiness of Afghanistan's antiquities.

The works obtained from the ancient and historical areas of Talatepe are based on the following pictures:

### **3. Golden Ram:**

This extremely attractive ram with beautiful eyes was obtained from grave number 4; its date reaches the second quarter of the first century AD (Azizi, 2012, 88).

The findings of this research show that all the elegance and sophistication you see in the making of the eyes, horns, under the throat, forehead and ears of the golden ram represents the progress and greatness of craftsmanship of that era because around Two thousand years before today, in those days, there were neither the Renaissance era of the 16th century, nor the era of the industrial revolution, nor the inventors and inventors of the new and contemporary era, and in a word, the possibilities of contemporary man did not exist at that time.

To those artisans who made such a golden ram and other ancient fountains with sophistication, elegance, and awe-inspiring, which makes the progressive people and the age of intellectual and industrial revolution so thoughtful and under.



(Picture-1) Golden ram

**4. Golden Goddess Aphrodite:**

In ancient Greek mythology, the goddess Aphrodite is the goddess of love and beauty; in Greek and Roman mythology, the goddess is seen as a winged goddess, and in the gold works of Tepe, the goddess Aphrodite has wings and an Indian-style forehead mole, which is a collection of art and It shows Greek and Western art (Kosha, 2010, 503).



(Picture-2) Golden goddess Aphrodite

**5. The type of wine:**

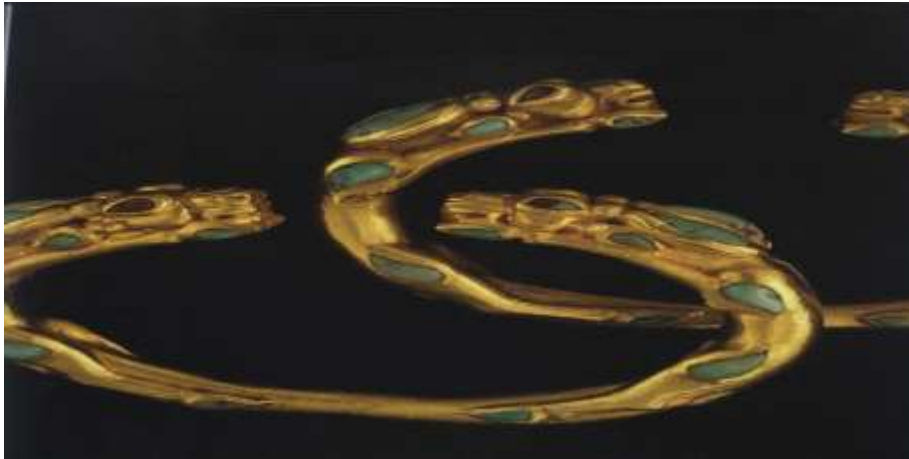
The statue of the god of wine is seen flirting with Ariadne, the daughter of King Minos; the lover and the beloved are riding on a Bactrian horse while someone presents them with a bottle of wine, which is a sign of Greek art, pretending to be Bactrian, because it is in Greek art. It has been suggested that courtship should take place on top of a leopard or a tiger, but here, the winemaker is riding on a western horse instead of a leopard. (Kosha, 2010, 505)



(Picture - 3) Wine souse

**6. Gold bracelet:**

A type of gold bracelet, each of which weighs two pounds, was found in grave number two, which archaeologists estimate to be between 100 years BC. Next to the Ahvan bracelet, it is decorated with large ruby eyes and prominent turquoise beads, which shows the cyber industry.



(Picture-4) Gold bracelet

Other artefacts discovered from Tala Tepe are a kind of pearl-eyed dolphin, on which the goddess, the bird of Cupid's hair, who is the Roman god of love, is sitting naked.



(Picture-5) Dolphin eye pearl

### 6. Necklaces:

A royal necklace, a type of ring and a dish-like cauldron decorated with a gold chain found in grave number 5, which is dated to the second quarter of the first century AD, made of gold, turquoise, aluminum, and iron, Egyptian style. It is very beautiful and attractive; it represents the unique monarchy of that time. (Dolatabadi: p. 57)



(Picture-6) Necklace

### 7. The current situation of Talatepe

According to the observation that took place from the ancient site of Talatepe, Jawzjan, this ancient site is in danger and destruction. At this time, the ancient area of Tala Tepe is considered the greatest historical treasure of Afghanistan and reflects the national and cultural identity of the people of Afghanistan. It is expected that practical measures will be taken to preserve and prevent the destruction of this area.

The current status of this area is based on the following pictures.



(Picture-7)

On the right side of this picture, Professor Hafizullah Rasouly explains the communication tunnel of the Talatepe area, and on the left side of this picture, Assistant Prof Dr. Hashmatullah Omid discusses the issue.



(Picture-8)

In this picture, Prof. Hafizullah Rasuly and Assistant Prof Dr. Hashmatullah Omid are observing and explaining the destruction of the ancient site of Tala Tepe.

### **8. Conclusion**

One of our precious cultural treasures has more than 21,000 works of different types: gold, silver, etc. Tala Tepe is located in Jawzjan province, the like of which has rarely been seen in other parts of the world. The artefacts were discovered in Shaberghan in 1978 as a result of joint excavations by Afghan archaeologists and the Soviet Union at the time and are currently located in Afghanistan.

As a result of the research, archaeologists have discovered six graves full of jewels and gold during their excavations there; the gold works and objects obtained from these graves show that they are more than two thousand years before today and from the period of the great Kushans. It reflects both beyond data and objects of Hellenic traditions.

Based on the findings of this research, Sahoui shows that from the excavations of Tala Tepe, the Kushans and the residents of that time in the same period of history, as well as Egyptian pharaohs, noble dead, warriors, kings, princes and queens in a special fashion. They were buried with countless jewels and gold. As it has been found out from the discoveries and statements of archaeologists, every square inch of the body of the dead has been decorated with gold tute.

The discovery of gold in the hill in the north of Afghanistan has surprised the world because no part of the world today has a valuable treasure accumulated by various ancient civilizations; archaeologists can compare these treasures with the wealth of Pharaoh Tut Ankhamun, the king of Egypt. They know comparison.

The most important gold artifacts obtained from the excavation of the graves are a golden ram, gold necklace, gold earrings, gold coins, gold ring, and a gold crown (this crown was obtained from grave number 6 and is one of the masterpieces of the gold spoils of the hill) gold necklace, gold bracelet, gold armband, golden dolphins, golden winged goddess, golden goddess Anahita, statues of the god of wine and the king's daughter made of gold, golden seal, goddess Athena, etc. All these works show the identity, art, and national and cultural values of the people of Afghanistan.

The findings of this research show that atmospheric and climatic changes have caused the collapse of this historical area. If serious attention is not paid to it, we will witness the complete destruction of this historical area at the earliest time. It should be mentioned that the Tala Tepe area is located near the irrigated agricultural lands, and besides other problems of this area, it is also under the threat of flooding.

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