

**INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF
INNOVATIVE RESEARCH AND KNOWLEDGE**

ISSN-2213-1356

www.ijirk.com

**THE PRESERVATION OF BAMMIYAN BUDDHA
SCULPTURES AS ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONUMENT
THROUGHOUT AFGHAN HISTORY****Pakiza Mahboobi**

Balkh University, Afghanistan

Abstract

This paper focuses on the preservation of Bamiyan Buddha sculptures as archaeological monument throughout afghan history. It is viewed that historical and archaeological heritages are a great opportunity for tourism industries, job opportunities, and economic developments of Afghanistan. This paper examines the importance of the historical and archaeological monuments in Afghanistan, and mainly focuses on the preservation of these monuments throughout history. Ultimately, the efforts made to preserve these monuments in the country locally and internationally are discussed in this article. This paper adopts a qualitative research method and the analysis made concludes that the preservation of Bamiyan Buddha statues and other heritages has more positive impacts on the Afghanistan economy and society. In order to draw benefits from historical and archaeological heritage based on their historical worth, its proper implementation, preservation, and functioning are important.

Keywords: *Preservation of Bamiyan Buddha sculptures, heritages, Afghanistan economy*

Introduction

Human beings cannot be separated from their history. History has played an important role in shaping today's society. It helps to understand a country's culture, values, traditions, norms, beliefs, and religions. It is through history that society can trace back to their origins and lineage. Therefore, in studying history, primary sources like

historical monuments and archaeological sites are considered the most significant for proving reliability of that particular historical, and archeologically event. They are proven that the country's historical, and archeologically sites and buildings often been used to identify their unique historical, and archeologically background.

Hence, archaeological sites aid to imagine the past of countries. They also demonstrate different changes that have occurred over time throughout history. They are also a reminder of the heroic individuals who have served the region. Also, archaeological sites serve not only as aesthetic values but also as a heritage to be preserved for future generations.

Architectural design and techniques which are used in historical, and archeologically monuments reflect the creativity of the past generation and signifies the artefacts of the people in a country. Some of the historical monuments are associated with the folklore, traditions, and customs of the past, which prove the existence of the past traditions (Gazin-Schwartz & Holtorf, 2005). It is a blessing to possess past heritages especially those that have a positive input to the country's development and do not contradict the fundamental teaching of Islam.

Flagstaff Area National Monuments (2001) argues that Afghanistan is blessed with valuable historical, and archeologically monuments since it is located at the crossroads of trade routes that allows an exchange of different cultures such as Persian, Greek, Buddhist, Hindu and Islam. Afghanistan has various historical monuments, archaeological sites, folk arts, and traditions, which are globally and nationally significant to the survival of the traditions. Some of these monuments are useful for educational and scientific activities.

This paper thus continues to examine the importance of the historical, and archeological monuments in Afghanistan, and mainly focuses on the preservation of these monuments throughout history and their destruction in 2001. Finally, the efforts made to preserve these monuments in the country locally and internationally are discussed at this article.

Review of Related Literature

There is a plethora of studies available on the Bamiyan Buddha Statues in Afghanistan in several languages. However, each study has raised the prospects of introducing Buddha idols based on selected criteria such as its destruction, reconstruction values, and historical and background of the Bamiyan Buddha statues. This applicable literature for this research is reviewed accordingly.

Nabizadeh (2010) provides information about the past of Bamiyan province and its current situation. Moreover, the author mentions that Bamiyan is one of the most important historical areas in the country. This work also highlights the history of building Bamiyan sculptures, ornaments, and mentions the names that were popular in the area. Therefore, the author assures that having unique monuments in Bamiyan is the desire of the people in this area including Hazara people and their political leaders. This request encourages the Afghan government to fulfil the promise to rehabilitate and preserve the ancient heritage and monuments. Consequently, this book highlights the value of this ancient and historical land as well as its historical importance. Hence, this evidence is related to my research which highlights historical heritage in Afghanistan.

Blänsdorf and Petzet (2009) explains the history and state of conservation of Bamiyan valley and Bamiyan Buddhas before their destruction in 2001. It describes that the Bamiyan Valley's historical landscape and archaeological remains were inscribed on the World Heritage List in July 2003 and placed on the List of World Heritage in Danger in the same year. This article also mentions about the perspective of the world heritage committee regarding the cultural and historical landscape and archaeological remains of the Bamiyan valley according to its cultural standards. First, the criteria which the authors mentioned in his paper are the Bamiyan Buddha statues and the art

in caves discovered in this valley, which are the symbols of the Gandhara School of Buddhist art developed in Central Asian region. Second, the remains of the Bamiyan valley are artistically and architecturally important as a part of Buddhist centers on the Silk Road. Third, the Bamiyan valley preserved a cultural tradition in Central Asia from its Buddhist past, which has disappeared in other parts of the region, and also this place indicated an outstanding example of a historical view that explains a significant period of Buddhism. Therefore, this committee recommends to the government that they should protect and conserve the Bamiyan valley and its valuable areas.

Laura (2013) her motivation was to point out the reasons for social legacy devastation that may be less obvious yet highly detrimental as brutal conflicts. The author mentions that she will endeavor to outline the importance of this exploration by considering the instances of three nations influenced by social legacy annihilation during the peaceful period: Afghanistan, Libya, and Egypt. This study accordingly provides a comparable socio-political history of these countries and the contribution of insecurity and social clashes to the annihilation of a segment of their legacy. In addition, this thesis investigates the causes leading to the destruction of heritage during peaceful times as well. It also explicates the role of local populations, governments, and international organizations in guaranteeing the preservation of cultural heritage. Although this study has touched the topic regarding the destruction and instruction of Bamiyan Buddha statues and their historical value, the discussion is still at its initial stage. Thus, an in-depth study is required to provide an explanation of the importance of the current topic.

Petzet's *Anastylosis or Reconstruction* (2002) examining the case of the destruction of Buddhas of Bamiyan, which was presented at a UNESCO Seminar in Kabul themed *Preservation of Afghanistan's Cultural Heritage*, has concluded that either state has to preserve the remaining of Buddha statues after the destruction as is it or it has to be reconstructed before destruction. This work also describes that preserving this state after the destruction could be combined with the idea of refraining from any intervention, keeping this site unchanged as a sort of commemoration to the demonstration of vandalism by the Taliban, which has upset the world. On the other hand, this article has highlighted important criteria for the inscription of cultural properties in UNESCO's World Heritage List according to the 1972 convention that "reconstruction is only acceptable if it is carried out on the basis of complete and detailed documentation on the original and to no extent to the conjecture." Hence, reconstruction is possible, but it requires a sound scientific basis. Also, it should not begin with a supposition, otherwise, reconstruction should stop because it would falsify the monument's features. Therefore, the author suggests that the reconstruction of Buddha statues should be conducted under the guidance of UNESCO and co-operation between an international ICOMOS team, Afghan colleagues, and a regional workforce. It would be highly desirable if India could also contribute. The author in this specific work mentions the construction of Buddhas in general, while the research significantly focuses on the preservation of specific Bamiyan Buddha statues.

Hussaini (2014) talked about antiquities and architecture in the provinces of Afghanistan. He also discusses the Bamiyan valley and its Buddha statues. This book focuses on the founding of the Buddha statues in Bamiyan and discusses its background, early period, i.e., its building proposed for the establishment of Buddhism in the beginning, as well as how they became a founder in Bamiyan. According to the author, the Bamiyan Valley with all its historical monuments were included in World Heritage Sites in 2003. According to archaeologists who did research in Bamiyan, they explained the danger to these artifacts due to negligence and the lack of care that the Buddha's porches and monuments are falling apart, and no one is paying attention. Therefore, this source particularly emphasizes the necessity of preserving the historical and cultural heritage of the region and suggests that, if the situation persists, it will cause a serious threat to these historic sites. However, this book only describes the formative period of Bamiyan Statues and threats to their remains and none of the officials pay any serious attention to them. Yet, the topics including their reconstruction, cultural and historical values are not recorded in the book.

Francioni and Lenzerini (2003) highlighted that the demolition of historical heritage has occurred as a consequence result of iconoclasm and the effects of clashes and injustices throughout Afghan history. It also demonstrates the importance of the protection of historical heritage based on international law and international public opinion, which define this destruction as a perilous action.

Results and Discussion

Significance of Bamiyan Buddha Statues as Historical and Archaeological Heritage of Afghanistan

Afghanistan has played an important role in human cultural development as the passage between eastern and western civilisations and has attracted the attention of many scholars and researchers from around the globe. Afghanistan is a country with a long history of ancient civilisations and cultures, and it has played an important role in the world religious history. Moreover, Afghanistan became a member of the World Heritage Convention in 1979 (UNESCO Region: Asia and the Pacific, 2003).

Since 1979, Afghanistan submitted its nine nominations for the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) World Heritage Committee, which signed by the Minister of Information and Culture of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan in 21 December 1981, for the properties as follows:

- i) The monuments and city of Herat;
- ii) The monuments in the Bamiyan Valley (such as Kakrak, Fuladi, Sharr-e-Zuhak, and Sharr-i-Ghulghular);
- iii) The Ai Khanum archaeological site;
- iv) The monuments and site of Ghazni;
- v) The Jam Minaret;
- vi) The Haji Piyada or Nu Gunbad Mosque;
- vii) The Stupa and Monastery of Guldarra;
- viii) The monuments and site of Lashkari Bazar-Bust; and
- ix) The Surkh Kotal archaeological site. (World Heratige Committee, 1996).

According to World Heritage Committee (2015), in 2002, the World Heritage Committee re-examined the Minaret of Jam and it was recognized as the first cultural heritage in Afghanistan. In addition, in 1981, the Afghan government sent the Bamiyan Valley nomination dossier to UNESCO, but the World Heritage Committee postponed the inscription to 1983. After two decades of internal unrest inside the country, the Taliban deliberately exploded and destroyed large Buddha statues, along with most of the Buddhist statues and murals left in the Bamiyan Valley in 2001.

A Declaration on the Deliberate Destruction of Cultural Heritage was adopted at the UNESCO General Conference on 17 October 2003. This text appeared as a response to the destruction of the Bamiyan Buddha statues. The introductory remarks read: "Recalling the tragic destruction of the Buddhas of Bamiyan that affected the international community as a whole." (Hoffman, 2006). It then continues with a recommendation that member states pledge to fight against the deliberate destruction of the common heritage in any way possible so that this transition can be made to a successful generation (Hoffman, 2006).

Perhaps, if this action had been taken earlier by UNESCO, the Bamiyan Buddha statues, the valuable cultural symbols, could have been saved. However, UNESCO's effort might not be sufficient to stop the Taliban from attacking the cultural heritage. In fact, Western affiliations of UNESCO may have worsened the situation since their presence in the region may not be welcomed. Furthermore, in 2003, 20 years after the first postponement and two years after the destruction of the largest Buddha of Bamiyan by the Taliban on the site, the Bamiyan Valley was

simultaneously listed by World Heritage Committee to the World Heritage List and World Heritage in Danger (Cassar and Noshadi, 2015).

According to Cassar and Noshadi (2015), Cultural heritage is considered as a priority in post-war reconstruction. The biggest challenge facing UNESCO today is that the government officials, civil society and the private sector in general are aware that cultural heritage is not only a tool for peace and reconciliation, but it is a factor for its development as well.

Challenges Faced by Historical Monuments in Afghanistan

As highlighted earlier highlighted, Afghanistan is culturally rich and full of historical monuments. However, this historical heritage is in danger of being destroyed and some of them are even destroyed or partially destroyed. There are many factors that lead to these destructions, which will be discussed in the following section (Aalund, 1990).

Current Attitude towards Historical Heritage in Afghanistan

One of the main reasons for destruction of historical heritage in Afghanistan is related to attitude of the government and ordinary Afghans towards national heritage. This research divides these reasons into three sets.

Firstly, such destructions happened due to incessant decades of wars, conflicts, and political instability in the country. For example, the monumental minarets, Gawharshad's mausoleum, and remains of the Timurids architecture, which dated back to the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries were severely damaged by artillery shells fired by the Soviet troops in 1985. In Herat province, the historic urban quarter, especially the west and southwest sections, were destroyed due to intense fighting (Aalund, 1990).

Secondly, the Afghan government has been unable to adequately control urban development in the country, and due to this inability, there have been improper policies adopted for maintenance of historical heritage. Hence, most of the historical monuments were destroyed by constructors during urban development or expansion. For example, Bagh-e-Bala (the summer palace of Amir Abdul Rahman), built in the ninth century, is now a place for recreation and various events (Cassar and Noshadi, 2015). In addition, the ruined ancient Balkh on the north side of the city, which was one of the dilapidated walls of the Timurid city, never been properly excavated although its history dates back thousands of years. Several towers intersecting with local farms and brick houses were still standing while illegal excavations are still going on around the old walls. Moreover, Herat's old city was rescued from the worst Soviet bombings in 1979 and 1984, which covers almost one square mile and is divided into four quarters, centred on Chahar Su (Four Directions), which is as a crossroads at the centre of the Herat city. The city was walled until 1950, but in present, only small parts of the ramparts remain and markets emerged from Chahar Su lead to the city gates, which no longer exist although the place is still called with its old names (Asia, 2018).

Thirdly, there is a widespread of vandalism and lootings of many archaeological sites, which failed to prevent the destruction of these sites. These public actions often expose heritage sites to destruction. Furthermore, looting is one of the most widespread challenges of these cultural heritages in Afghanistan. As highlighted by Basu and Modest: "More than 98 to 70 percent of the items in the National Museum collection and 100 percent of items in the [Afghan] Institute of Archaeology were plundered and exported to neighbours countries for selling [during the civil war]." (Basu & Modest, 2014).

According to Elia (1997), about 90 percent of Afghanistan's archaeological sites have been looted. It is worth mentioning that the reason for all these illegal excavations and looting is negligence and poverty in Afghanistan, where people tend to earn their livelihood through the looting of historical monuments and illegal digging for artefacts in the sites near to their villages. In addition, there are also many other undocumented looted items in

Afghanistan. Therefore, it should be noted that Afghanistan will not flourish by smuggling its antiquities due to looting and destruction of ancient resources. In fact, these actions are part of international crisis, threatening the cultural heritage of the world and destroying the ability to understand past cultures.

Destruction of Historical Monuments in Bamiyan in the Past

Saddiqi et al. (2019), argue that there are two large discovered statues, Sal Sal and Shah Mameh in Bamiyan Valley, which are the subject of this study, were destroyed during the Taliban regime in 2001. In addition to these statues, there were other Buddha statues, such as the three idols sitting among the great Buddhas and a seven-meter Buddha in the Kakrak Valley, which were also completely destroyed by natural factors and wars. The Tarzi Archaeological Team has identified another 300-meter-high Buddha lay down in the Bamiyan Valley that has not yet been excavated due to security concerns as discussed in chapter three.

Several destructions have happened to some monuments in Bamiyan including the two Buddha statues during different periods in the past. Bamiyan was rampaged by the Mongol invader Genghis Khan in 1221 and a terrible disaster befell the whole region while the statues were spared. In addition, during the reign of the Mughal emperors, Aurangzeb in 1689 and Nadir Shah (r.1736-1747) in the eighteenth century, heavy artillery was used to destroy the statues and, as a result of this action, one of the Buddha's legs were destroyed (Saddiqi et al., 2019).

In fact, several reasons are discussed in this paper which have contributed to the destruction of Buddha statues in Bamiyan. These reasons include urban development, looting, maintenance problems, natural decadence, personal religious verdict, or opinion. Poverty and wars are among the main factors that contributed to the loss of historical archaeological artifacts in Afghanistan.

Furthermore, in the eighteenth century, Safavid King Nader Afshar (r. 1736-1747) (Hitchins, 2001), directed cannon fire at the statues to destroy them. The faces of the statues were also destroyed during the time of Amir Abdul Rahman (r.1880-1901) when he launched a military campaign against the Shiah Hazara rebellion in the area and the recent destructions occurred during the Afghan civil war in 1978 (Taylor, 2015).

Bakshi (1998), revealed that when Taliban captured Mazar-i-Sharif in August 1998, Bamiyan and other areas around the Buddha statues fell under their controls. Abdul Wahid, who was the Taliban commander at that time and controlled the area, announced his intention to blow up the Buddha statues by making holes in the Buddha's head using explosives. However, he was prevented from taking further action by the local governor and received direct order from their Supreme Leader, Mullah Mohammed Omar. He also noted that the government considered Bamiyan sculptures a potential source of income for Afghanistan from international visitors, so they should not be destroyed, but rather, they should be protected (Harding, 2001).

In 2000, Taliban local authorities governing the Bamiyan region solicited for UN assistance to rebuild drainage ditches around the tops of the alcoves where the Buddhas were set (Saddiqi et al., 2019). Later in 2001, the Taliban governor of Herat enthusiastically supported the Society for Protection of Afghanistan Cultural Heritage (SPACH) and the Help Afghan Farmers Organization for the protection of the monumental sites, of Herat and Jam.

However, unfortunately, the Taliban finally decided to blow up the Buddha statues in 2001, despite opposition from several parties. Some scholars have argued that the political terrain of the time was one of the factors, which led the Taliban to blow to the statues. Ahmadi (n.d.) believes that, "The political atmosphere of those days, particularly the Kashmir conflict and the demolition of the Babri Masjid, ... caused by the international sanctions against their regime, led the more puritan Taliban to seek revenge through the infamous destruction of the Buddha statues of Bamiyan in 2001" (Ahmadi, n.d.).

Shakespeare (2006), examined that the destruction of Buddha statues occurred in phases. The first phase was done a few weeks before the final blow, with anti-aircraft guns and artillery fired at the statues for several days. Then, during the second phase, anti-tank mines were placed at the bottom of the niches. Lastly, the statues were blown with rockets and were ultimately destroyed (Knuth, 2006).

After the destruction of Bamiyan Buddha statues by the efforts of the 'Taliban Minister of Information and Culture and Finance', several Taliban people with sledgehammers destroyed much of what was left in the Afghan National Museum complex in Kabul. The Kabul Museum was the main reservoir of the cultural achievements and aesthetic legacy of the people who travelled and lived in the Asian crossroads for thousands of years (Cuno, 2006).

The destruction was responded by different criticisms from many parties, including UNESCO, which will be discussed further in detail. Mullah Omar responded by a critical explanation in an interview:

"I did not want to destroy the Bamiyan Buddhas. In fact, some foreigners came to me and said they would like to conduct the repair work of the Bamiyan Buddha that had been slightly damaged... That is why I ordered its destruction. Had they wanted philanthropic work, I would have never requested the Buddha's demolition." (Shehzad, 2004).

Based on Gil (2006) study which it translated by Jones and Ereira (2006), the Taliban deliberate and discriminatory destruction of the Greater Bamiyan Buddhas in March 2001 was considered as a violation of international customary law, which prohibits the destruction of cultural heritage. In addition, the destruction of the site has led to a specific World Heritage commitment to ensure the protection of cultural heritage located in the territory. The principles for protection of cultural heritage has been confirmed by the text of the "Declaration on the Intentional Destruction of Cultural Heritage," adopted by the UNESCO in 2003, exactly as a response to the destruction of Bamiyan Buddhas.

In reality, due to some political issues, although there have been requests for assistance from the UN, it has failed to help the situation. The organization may claim to renovate statues as the main reason and justification for exploding the Bamiyan statues (Atai, 2019).

Preservation of Historical Monuments in Afghanistan

1- Efforts by Previous Afghan States

According to Emadi (2005), the monuments and archaeological remains of the Bamiyan Valley are regarded as national property and has owned by the state of Afghanistan. However, large parts of the buffer zone consist of private and public properties. Many documents defining the ownership of the area were destroyed during the decades of conflict and civil unrest. The State Law on the Protection of Historical and Cultural Properties provides the basis for financial and technical resources.

Based on regulation, the management of the serial property is under the authority of the Ministry of Information and Culture (MOIC) and Institute of Archaeology and the Department for the Preservation of Historical Monuments. The management also falls under the jurisdiction of the Governor of the Bamiyan province. The Governor of the region is liable for the usage of a territorial improvement plan, which incorporates recovery of lodging, the arrangement of wellbeing and instructive administrations, and the advancement of infrastructure and agriculture in the area. The Ministry of Information and Culture should have a provincial local office representative in the town. Eight guards should be specifically allocated for the site this is to guide against vandalism and looting of the historical monuments (Brenner, 2005).

As Basu and Modest highlights, "King Habibollah Khan was first to establish the Afghan cultural heritage collection in 1919 at Bagh-i-Bala Palace. The current building of the National Museum was built as an office building in 1922

in the Darulaman area, which located in the south of historic Kabul. In 1931, the collections have transferred there from Bagh-e-Bella Palace.” (Basu & Modest, 2014).

Other previous governments also made various efforts to preserve historical monuments, archaeological sites, cultural artefacts and cultural heritage in Afghanistan (Stein, 2017). For example, the founder and head of the Republic of Afghanistan, Mohammad Daoud, addressed the nation on 23 August 1973 as he made a certain declaration on the commitment of Afghanistan as a nation to protect historical monuments in the country. His declaration includes:

- i) Promoting the aesthetic standards of the people so that they can appreciate the artistic phenomena of cultural life;
- ii) Encouraging the people to respect and uphold national traditions and cultural traits of other societies. Planning direct links between socio-economic conditions and cultural life;
- iii) Preparing the ground for acceptance of the world cultural phenomenon, with the hope of fostering international unity and coexistence, and providing means to inform and enlighten the people, thereby persuading them to take an active part in cultural issues;
- iv) Preserving genuine aspects of the cultural heritage, and preventing the infusion of negative aspects of alien cultures; encouraging academic research on the customs, traditions, and literature of the people and other aspects of folk culture;
- v) Preserving all historical monuments and examples of the cultural heritage of the nation;
- vi) Introducing Afghan culture to other societies by means of cultural relations, exhibitions, theatre, films, publications, tourism, conferences, seminars, and other cultural activities; and
- vii) Reviving and popularizing all indigenous Afghan handicrafts and crafts (Rahel, 1975).

All these programs were creatively structured under the Ministry of Information and Culture. The ministry is divided into four main departments which are Administrative and Tourism Deputy Ministry, Cultural Deputy Ministry, Publication Deputy Ministry, and Deputy Ministry of Youth Affairs, run by the deputy presidents. Therefore, cultural activities and heritage preservation were assigned under cultural segments. In fact, the major reason for protecting heritage in the country is to foster national integration. Thus, the information department aims at informing, educating, entertaining, and guiding the public. Based on this, mass media, theatre and folklore activities are utilized to achieve the stated objectives (Basu & Modest, 2014).

Apart from the national efforts, the government also works harmoniously with the international community as a way of preserving the monuments. Since the nineteenth century up to 2001, the government cooperated with the United States and many international donors and organizations such as UNESCO, the Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC) and the Turquoise Mountain Foundation as a way to preserve historical and cultural heritage in Afghanistan (Chow, 2016).

Throughout this period, the United States have provided financial assistance to Afghanistan to support the conservation projects to regenerate historic urban areas and revive traditional Afghan arts and architecture (Goodhand & Sedra, 2006). As Basu and Modest (2014), pointed out that after consulting with the Afghan Ministry of Information and Culture, the US Embassy and US State Department in Kabul took special measures to preserve cultural heritage in Afghanistan. In July 2010, Laura Tedesco arrived in Kabul as the second professional archaeologist to serve as a program manager of cultural heritage at the United States Embassy. The United States then launched 11 cultural heritage preservation projects in Afghanistan and the budget has been awarded to a wide range of international, Afghan, and American NGO consultations and organizations.

Another effort was made by the Afghan government to safeguard historical monuments by keeping some of these artefacts in the national museum. However, the museum has been constantly affected by incessant wars in the country. Since the civil war between 1989 (Lawson, 2011)-1994, the museum was badly damaged and consequently, the valuable historical collections were looted (Grissmann, 2012). In 1993, the museum's roof and upper floors were destroyed by rockets (Dupree, 1998). It was rebuilt but lasted only for few years before it was exploded in 1996 from renewed fighting in Kabul. Later, the incessant attacks on the museum by the Taliban have halted the government's mission to preserve these monuments. Based on this, after the 1996 attack, the government removed some portions of the museum's collections and hide in several locations to ensure that they are protected (Dupree, 1998).

At present, there are different positions on the reconstruction of the Bamiyan Buddha statues. It is important to note that preservation depends on the prevalent culture in the country, national peace, religious directives, and the economy of the country. Thus, even if these specific Buddha statues are reconstructed, these new statues will no longer be historical artefacts as they are built at present and not in ancient times. Also, the preservation of ancient buildings and monuments is based on Afghan government policies and projects, and not on international policies or recommendations. Afghanistan is officially an Islamic country: thus the preservation decisions will be based on Islamic laws and teachings. Besides, the reconstruction of these Buddha statues may bring the nation into another chaos as the statues have been the bone of contention from the past. The resources acquired internally or externally at this time can be used to salvage the poor economic condition of the country. At the same time, however, we should note that archaeological sites and monuments can contribute to the progress of the country, and cultural unity in Bamiyan and other areas need to be given attention and revamped appropriately (World Archaeological Congress 2003).

2- UNESCO and International Community Efforts

International communities have been actively involved in managing the area of historical heritage in Afghanistan. UNESCO has been leading a three-phase safeguarding plan for the property since 2003 and focuses on how to preserve Buddha niches and other artefacts that survived the destruction. In addition, a new management plan for the historic property in the country is under preparation with the objective of implementing a program that will focus on the protection, conservation, and presentation of the Bamiyan Valley in order to achieve sustainable cultural tourism in the Valley.

Since Afghanistan became a member of the World Heritage Convention in 1979, it had submitted nine nominations to the World Heritage list to UNESCO as discussed earlier in chapter three. After long-standing discussions between UNESCO and Afghanistan government on strengthening culture and heritage as a tool for economic development and peace, an operational plan for the Bamiyan Cultural Centre was adopted in 2008. In November 2013, the Republic of Korea agreed to give financial assistance for the project, and with UNESCO and the Government of Afghanistan, it has a vision for promoting Afghan culture for the country's future. Under the auspices of the Republic of Korea, Afghanistan and UNESCO are working together with the common goal of creating a free and conflict-free society where ethnic diversity becomes a social benefit. The project seeks to create a model and anchor for what a creative centre can look like in the Afghan environment and attempts to integrate local communities and identify rich cultural backgrounds in Bamiyan.

From International Design Competition of the Bamiyan Cultural Centre, a group of Argentine architects were selected as the winners after a two-month international design competition. The competition received a significant number of submissions; 1,070 architectural groups from 117 countries. The competition proved the international community's desire to bring peace to Afghanistan through design and culture. In addition, well-known international

experts, led by Mr. Kim Young Joon, a Korean architect and the winning designer, several high-ranking Afghan officials, including the President of Afghanistan were appointed as the jury panel. The local community has already recognized the selected project of Bamiyan Cultural Centre in the future in Bamiyan. This became the first new architectural building to be built in Afghanistan (Bamiyan Cultural Centre, 2020).

Conclusion

This article has discussed the importance of one of the archaeological sites in the country as a part of its Buddhist heritage, which is the Buddha statues. Many archaeological sites preserved in the country are not antithetical to Islamic culture of Bamiyan in particular, and in the country as a whole. Rather, these monuments are a cultural part of Afghanistan and need to be preserved and protected by the government. Therefore, this chapter discusses the challenges faced by the government and international organizations in preserving historical monuments in Afghanistan and the efforts taken by them.

It is worth noting that the government has tried to protect historical monuments, which are not contradicting Islamic religious tenets and belief. It is also part of promoting cultural diversity, national unity and safeguard of cultural heritage, both tangible forms (historical monuments, archaeological sites and museum collections) and intangible forms (oral traditions, traditional music and languages).

The paper has also highlighted that Afghanistan has always been marked by wars, especially since the end of the monarchy in 1973. All these instabilities and the severe climate have had bad effects on all affairs, including the ancient and historical sites, monuments, and cultural heritage.

It should be also highlighted that during the Taliban regime, all cultural activities were unfortunately limited and reduced. Taliban brought a different understanding of Islam in all parts of the country. Consequently, in 2001, most of the country's historical and archaeological remains were destroyed in the Kabul Museum, two huge Bamiyan statues and other cultural heritage sites in the Fuladi Valley and Kakrak in Bamiyan province were exploded, causing irreparable damage to Afghanistan cultural heritage. The war has reached the cultural heritage of the country, which cannot be compensated under any circumstances (Feroozi & Tarzi, 2004).

Islam really encourages traveling, transformation of learning from one place to other place in order to take the lessons and to learn from experience of other people. IN such way, Islam encourages to maintain national heritages if it is not against the rule of the principles of Islam. Like in the Qur'an Allah (SWT) says that:

Have they not travelled through the earth and observed how the end of those before them was? They were greater than them in power, and they plowed the earth and built it up more than they have built it up, and their messengers came to them with clear evidences. And Allah would not ever have wronged them, but they were wronging themselves (The Qur'an, 30:9).

REFERENCES

- Aalund, F. (1990). *Afghanistan: assistance to member states for the preservation of cultural heritage*. Draft inventory of historic monuments, Heart province, Afghanistan. Report prepared for the Government of Afghanistan by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO).
- Bamiyan Cultural Centre. (2020). About Us. Accessed: May 14, 2020. <https://bamiyanculturalcentre.org/about-us>.
- Ahmadi, F. (n.d.) *Afghanistan Archaeological Review*.
- Asia. (2018). Afghanistan travel guide – popular destinations and travel information. *TripXperia*. <https://tripxperia.com/blog/afghanistan-travel-guide>. Accessed on 5 May 2020
- Atai, J. (2019). The destruction of Buddhas: dissonant heritage, religious or political iconoclasm? *Tourism Culture & Communication*, 19(4), 303-312.
- Bakshi, G. D. (1998). Mono, ethnic solutions: The Taliban's cheque book campaign, autumn 1998. *Strategic Analysis*, 22(9), 1297-1310.
- Basu, P., & Modest, W. (2014). Museums, Heritage and International Development: A Critical Conversation. In *Museums, Heritage and International Development* (pp. 11-42). Routledge.
- Brenner, C. (2005). Cultural Property Law: Reflecting on the Bamiyan Buddha's Destruction. *Suffolk Transnat'l L. Rev.*, 29, 237.
- Cassar, B., & Noshadi, S. (2015). *Keeping history alive: Safeguarding cultural heritage in post-conflict Afghanistan*. UNESCO Publishing.
- Cuno, J. (2006). Beyond Bamiyan: Will the world be ready next time? *Art and Cultural Heritage. Law, Policy and Practice*, 41-46.
- Dupree, N. H. (1998). Online features museum under siege: full text. *The Archaeological Institute of America Archive*. Accessed on: 6 May 2020 from <https://archive.archaeology.org/online/features/afghan/>
- Chow, C. M. E. (2016). *Afghan theatres since 9/11: from and beyond Kabul*. Doctoral dissertation, The University of Manchester (United Kingdom).
- Elia, R. J. (1997). Looting, collecting, and the destruction of archaeological resources. *Nonrenewable Resources*, 6(2), 85-98.
- Emadi, H. (2005). *Culture and customs of Afghanistan*. London: Greenwood Publishing Group.
- Feroozi, A. W., & Tarzi, Z. (2004). The impact of war upon Afghanistan's cultural heritage. Accessed on: 2 May 2020. Available at: <https://www.cemml.colostate.edu/cultural/09476/afgh08-01enl.html>
- Flagstaff Area National Monuments. (2001). *Sunset Crater Volcano National Monument (N.M.), General Management Plan: Environmental Impact Statement*. Arizona: Flagstaff.
- Gazin-Schwartz, A., & Holtorf, C. J. (2005). As long as ever I've known it.... In *Archaeology and folklore* (pp. 20-41). Routledge.

- Gil, R. (2006). The Law of Sé: Linking the Spiritual and Material. *BT Hoffman, "Art and Cultural Heritage–Law, Policy and Practice"*, Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore, Sao Paolo, 21-27.
- Goodhand, J., & Sedra, M. (2006). *Bargains for Peace?: Aid, Conditionalities and Reconstruction in Afghanistan*. Netherlands Institute of International Relations, 'Clingendael'.
- Grissmann, C. (2012). Kabul museum. *Encyclopædia Iranica*. Available at: <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/kabul-museum>. Accessed on: 6 May 2020.
- Harding, L. (2001). How the Buddha got his wounds. *The Guardian*, 11. Accessed from: <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2001/mar/03/books.guardianreview2> (Accessed on: May 17, 2020).
- Hitchins, K. (2001). History of Iranian-Georgian Relations. *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, 10, 264-270.
- Hoffman, B. T. (Ed.). (2006). *Art and cultural heritage: law, policy and practice*. Cambridge University Press.
- Jones, T., & Ereira, A. (2006). *Barbarians*. London: BBC Books
- Knuth, R. (2006). *Burning books and leveling libraries: Extremist violence and cultural destruction*. Greenwood Publishing Group.
- Lawson, A. (2011). Afghan gold: how the country's heritage was saved. *BBC News Website*.
- Saddiqi, M. E., Ekhlash, F., and Ramesh, F. (2019). Assessing of geographical history the Buddhas of Bamiyan in Afghanistan. *Journal of Emerging Technologies and Innovative Research (JETIR)* 6(6).
- Rahel, S. (1975). *Cultural policy in Afghanistan*. Paris: UNESCO Press.
- Shakespeare, W. (2006). Fundamentalism and the destruction of Afghanistan's cultural heritage, 1994–2001. In *Burning Books and Leveling Libraries: Extremist Violence and Cultural Destruction*: 141. United States of America: Preager.
- Shehzad, M. (2004). The rediff interview. *Rediff. Com*. Accessed on: 5 May 2020 from <https://www.rediff.com/news/2004/apr/12inter.htm>.
- Stein, G. (Ed.). (2017). *Preserving the Cultural Heritage of Afghanistan: Proceedings of the International Conference Held at Kabul University, November 2014*. Oriental Institute, University of Chicago.
- Taylor, A. (2015). What Mohammad Omar took from Afghanistan that can never be returned? The Washington Report. Accessed on: 4 May 2020 from <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2015/07/30/what-mullah-omar-took-from-afghanistan-that-can-never-be-returned/>.
- UNESCO Region: Asia and the Pacific. (2003). Cultural landscape and archaeological remains of the Bamiyan valley. *World Heritage Scanned Nomination*. Accessed on: 23 February 2020 from <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/208>.
- World Archaeological Congress. (2003) *Washi of the Past, for the Future: Integrating Archaeology and Conservation, Proceedings of the Conservation Theme at the 5th World Archaeological Congress, Washington, D.C., 22–26 June 2003*. Los Angeles, California: Getty Publications.

- World Heritage Committee. (2015). *World Heritage*. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. Accessed on: 25 October 2019 from <http://www.gat.st/sites/default/files/whc15-39com-19-en.pdf>.
- Nabizadeh, M. A. (2010). Bamiyan yake az sar zamen hai kuhan wa tarikhi Afghanistan ast (Bamiyan is one of Afghanistan's ancient and historic lands). Accessed on: 19 November 2019 from www.mashal.org.archive.mashal.org/content
- Blänsdorf, C., & Petzet, M. (2009). Description, history and state of conservation before the destruction in 2001. *Monuments and Sites*, 19, 17-35.
- Laura, R. (2013). The politics of selective preservation: A study of causes and consequences of cultural heritage destruction during peace the cases of Afghanistan, Egypt and Libya. Doctoral dissertation, Rutgers University-Graduate School-New Brunswick.
- Petzet, M. (2002). Anastylis or reconstruction: The conservation concept for the remains of the Buddhas of Bamiyan. *International Council on Monument and Sites*, 2002, 189–191.
- Hussaini, S. Z. (2014). *Muqhadema-e- Bar Tarikh Mamari Wa Shar Sahzi Afghanistan* (Introduction to Architectural and Urban History in Afghanistan). Khurasan.
- Francioni, F., & Lenzerini, F. (2003). The destruction of the Buddhas of Bamiyan and international law. *European Journal of International Law*, 14(4), 619-651.
- The Qur'an. (n.d.). 30:9 (translated by M.A.S Abdel Haleem).