

Recommendations of the Fourth Expert Working Group on the Preservation of the Bamiyan Site

Kabul, 7–10 December 2005*

Conservation of the Buddhas, documentation and relocation of the fragments

The Experts,

1. Acknowledge the extraordinary efforts of the ICOMOS team for their progress in recovering fragments from both Buddha niches and storing them safely, especially the preservation of remaining original plaster in situ by fixing it provisionally to the back wall of the niche;
2. Acknowledge the results of the analysis on the surface material of the Buddha figures and their contribution to the understanding of the history including the original colouring of the figures;
3. Acknowledge the results of the combined geological and paleomagnetic approach towards the identification of the original position of rock material executed by the University of Cologne;
4. Acknowledge the presentation of the 3D model and visualization of both Buddha figures by Aachen University and encourage to further develop this model for future documentation as well as ideal planning instrument to ensure accuracy and estimation of costs;
5. Welcome that the Afghan authorities acknowledge the possibility of an anastylosis as one well established method of proper relocation of the rock fragments to their original position;
6. Encourage the finalization of the ICOMOS activity in safeguarding and documenting all remains of the Buddhas in both niches in combination with the geological and paleomagnetic analysis;
7. Encourage the installation of scaffoldings as an essential basis for further geological documentation of the back walls for a successful identification of the rock fragments to be relocated and to ensure the accessibility for necessary consolidation and monitoring activities;
8. The possibilities for anastylosis (material used for integration and stabilization) should be further investigated (see Article 15 of the Venice Charter);
9. Underline that for the above mentioned activities the assistance of the Mine Action Programme for Afghanistan is essential to guarantee safety and security from unexploded devices on site;
10. Recommend that the proposed general stabilization plan for cliffs and niches takes into account the necessity of stabilization of the vaults at the bottom of both Buddha niches especially the endangered caves surrounding the feet of the Eastern Buddha and is coordinated with the ICOMOS activities to ensure the safety and success of the ongoing work.

General stabilisation plan for the consolidation of niches and cliffs

1. The programme should include the investigation of structural conditions of the caves and the Great Cliff. Within this strategy, priorities can be identified as follows, in part already sanctioned in 2004;

A. Eastern Giant Buddha

2. The emergency consolidation measures on the western part of the niche should be completed and enlarged to the external top part of the niche;
3. The East Giant Buddha niche is now in less risky condition and scaffolding should be planned within the niche and outer surface, just after the completion of on going consolidation work on western side and top and after cleaning the niche;

B. Western Giant Buddha

4. Complete identification and stabilisation of minor but unstable areas of the West Giant Buddha niche is required;
5. At the Western Great Buddha site, water infiltration should be prevented and cracks should be grouted and filled;

C. Back side of both niches

6. The fragile areas of the back of both niches should be safeguarded in cooperation with the ICOMOS team as soon as possible. There is the need to understand distribution, depth and intensity of failures in the back side of both niches, also affecting the stability of underneath caves. Any stabilization plan should be properly studied, before execution. Possible techniques might include seismic noise, fragility test on stones, engineering geology tests, Ground Penetration Radar, etc;

* Abridged version without sections on conservation of mural paintings, capacity building, Bamiyan museum, Bamiyan master plan and World Heritage management plan, General stabilisation plan for the consolidation of niches and cliffs, and laser beam project for the projection of the artist's images of Buddha in Bamiyan.



Laser beam project with 13 Buddhas by the Japanese media artist Hiro Yamagata