

Thanks to funds provided by the German Foreign Office the activities of the ICOMOS team, supervised by Dipl.-Ing. Georgios Toubekis, Edmund Melzl and Bert Praxenthaler could continue (as from June 2007). A clearly visible sign of the progress made in safeguarding the remains of the Buddha statues was the erection of tubular steel scaffolding made available by the Messerschmitt Foundation in the niche of the Eastern Buddha. After the work of putting up this scaffold had already started the year before, in 2007 it was erected up to the height of the statue's shoulder (planning: Dipl.-Ing. Thomas Strauch, Ingenieurgesellschaft Pesch & Strauch, Cologne). This made it possible to inspect the fragile back wall closely. Apart from the detailed geological investigation of the rock face (see report by Dr. Michael Urvat, pp. 130–133) for the purpose of allocating individual fragments, the scaffold helped to identify further threatened zones. These detailed inspections have shown that without additional consolidation measures on the back wall the original, in-situ surfaces of clay plaster belonging to the Buddha statue will be highly endangered. This threat also applies to the cave structures in the lower area of the niche, whose partition

walls were completely destroyed by the enormous explosion of 2001 (see report by Prof. Edwin Fecker, pp. 145 ff.). Here, the original space geometries could be defined on site and initial space-defining “reconstructions” could be carried out on a trial basis (see fig. below).

At the site of the Western Buddha, progress was more complicated because due to the disastrous road conditions of parts of the road between Kabul and Bamiyan the necessary heavy crane could not be transported. Under these circumstances, the recovery of larger fragments was only carried out manually and with the aid of hoists. Naturally, this slowed down the work progress considerably. Still, it was a success that one foot of the Buddha statue became clearly recognisable where a huge rubble heap had been before, and that some of the caves in the lower area were once again made accessible. At the end of the campaign in early November the ICOMOS team could present the progress made on-site to the Afghan Minister of Information and Culture.

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Preparing the reconstruction of the partition walls in the niche of the Eastern Buddha

