

In the year 2008 the ICOMOS activities in Bamiyan, funded by the German Foreign Office, could not start before mid-August. Unfortunately, under these circumstances it was not possible to complete the upper part of the scaffold in the Small Buddha niche, since the necessary material was not available on site. Nonetheless, the scaffold has already proved its worth for the work of restorer Bert Praxenthaler on the remaining plaster fragments of the Small Buddha (in this context the sensational find of another relic from the time the Buddha statue was made, see also report Praxenthaler, p. 137). The team of local workmen was primarily employed to salvage stone fragments from the area of the Western Buddha. Two Afghan colleagues joined the ICOMOS team: architect Sekandar Ozod Seradj and Mujtabah Mirzai, a stonemason trained at the Dombauhütte Passau. Furthermore, as rock engineer we once again had Prof. Dr.-Ing. Edwin Fecker, and for the increasingly important matters of conservation/restoration the team was supported by Prof. Erwin Emmerling (chair of conservation sciences at the Technical University of Munich). A decisive progress was the reconstruction of the partition walls of the rearward caves, completely destroyed by the explosions of 2001; this was carried out jointly by the architect's office Seradj and the rock engineer (see report, pp. 145 ff.). Also for static reasons this work was a necessary precondition for stabilising the back wall with its remains of the Buddha statue.

In the meantime, by means of the 3D documentation developed in cooperation with the RWTH Aachen (see pp. 117–121) the condition of the Eastern Buddha niche has been recorded in an exemplary way. It must also be considered a success that the storage for more than 9,000 fragments of loam plaster, collected and documented by restorer Edmund Melzl since 2004, has been improved. Together with further relicts from the two Buddha statues they were transferred from an interim storage inside the buildings near the Western Buddha, to two rooms in the Cultural Center (Heritage Center) erected by the Japanese colleagues. Thanks to the close collaboration with the Japanese colleagues under Prof. Kosaku Maeda the two work and storage rooms for ICOMOS in the Heritage Center are a crucial basis for future research on the Buddha statues. Samples of the various materials were analysed by the chair of conservation sciences at the Technical University of Munich and other institutions within the framework of an activity contract made with UNESCO (see reports of the Munich research project, pp. 197 ff.).

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