

# PREFACE

Thanks to funds provided by the German Foreign Office for rescuing cultural properties in Afghanistan our ICOMOS team, starting its first mission to Bamiyan and its work in Kabul (Babur Gardens) in 2002, has in the meantime made considerable progress in preventing further decay of the remains of the Bamiyan Buddhas, which were blown up by the Taliban in March 2001. Since 2004 when the back walls were secured against rock fall by means of wire nets approximately 2000 cubic metres of fragments have been recovered; not only sand and hopelessly deteriorated stone fragments, as was assumed immediately after the disaster, but identifiable small and large fragments weighing up to 60 tons. In the meantime, most of the fragments are stored in specially erected shelters to protect them against weathering. Now, the giant feet of the 55-metre Great Buddha (Western Buddha), originally hidden under a rubble heap, are once again visible, and the blocked caves in the backward part of the niche are again accessible. The back wall of the completely scaffolded niche of the 38-metre Small Buddha (Eastern Buddha) with original remains in situ is largely stabilised. In autumn 2010, this niche and the associated galleries could be presented to the public together with an exhibition of fragments in the partly reconstructed lower caves as a first important step of the safeguarding measure. Apart from two sensational finds of Buddhist relics thousands of plaster fragments from the surfaces of both statues were recovered and from the scientific investigation of these and other remains a wealth of scientific insights was gained, helping to date the statues in the period between the mid-6<sup>th</sup> to the early 7<sup>th</sup> centuries AD. As under the present circumstances the work of the ICOMOS team cannot be completed yet, this volume XIX of the ICOMOS series Monuments and Sites is not to be considered a final conservation report on the safeguarding of the two Buddha statues. Instead it is meant as a first work report, to which a great number of authors kindly made contributions.

As the safeguarding of the remains of the Bamiyan Buddhas is a project that receives worldwide attention, speculations have occurred time and again about a possible “reconstruction” of the Buddha statues and there have also been discussions to which the public media and some artists have contributed with their ideas. After every loss ideas of reconstructing the state before the destruction suggest themselves. For all reflections of ICOMOS on this matter the international principles of conservation linked to the famous Venice Charter are fundamental. During the restoration between 1969 and 1976 the team of the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) already worked in accordance with these principles and achieved good results. And of course, these results, if they were not destroyed during the blowing up in 2001, had to be included in the ICOMOS conservation concept. R. Sengupta wrote: It may be mentioned that in carrying out the restorations on the above-mentioned images

and all the units at Bamiyan, the internationally accepted policy laid out in the ‘Venice Charter’ by the International Council on Monuments and Sites (as practised in India for many years) was strictly followed. In archaeological restorations, the mutilated images are not renewed, nor the missing paintings replaced with new ones. Our goal was to preserve the great works of art in their present forms by such measures that would stop further deterioration. Our intention was to respect the original artistic creation, as well as to preserve the whole gamut of its history as it is written across the monument. The various mutilations reflect both the material environment and the long period of history to which the sculptures have born witness (R. Sengupta, Restoration of the Bamiyan Buddhas, in: Klimburg-Salter (ed.): The Kingdom of Bamiyan, Buddhist Art and Culture of the Hindu Kush, Naples 1989, p. 205).

One of the criteria for the inscription of cultural properties in UNESCO’s World Heritage List according to the 1972 Convention is 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 (Operational Guidelines, 2005, paragraph 86). But independently of the scepticism of many colleagues concerning the various suggestions for a reconstruction of the Buddha statues the ICOMOS team since the first mission in 2002 focussed for the time being only on practical and technical solutions in order to secure with limited funds the existing remains threatened by final decay and to consolidate the rock structures and especially the traces of the Buddha statues still visible on the back walls of the niches.

Besides, the remains in situ and the piles of fragments were pointing at a conservation concept called anastylosis, which is common practice at many archaeological sites worldwide (for this and for the following remarks see my paper ‘Anastylosis or Reconstruction – Considerations on a Conservation Concept for the Remains of the Buddhas of Bamiyan’, pp. 46–51). The method of anastylosis, developed in the field of classical archaeology but also applicable for partially destroyed monuments of later epochs, is referred to in article 15 of the Venice Charter: Only anastylosis, that is to say, the reassembling of existing but dismembered parts can be permitted. The material used for integration should always be recognisable and its use should be the least that will ensure the conservation of a monument and the reinstatement of its form. This means in order to be able to show original fragments on their original location and in their original context as part of an anastylosis, there is of course a need for more or less extensive provisional structures. The limits of anastylosis are reached when the original fragments are too sparse and would appear on the provisional structure as a sort of ‘decoration’. Anastylosis, an approach which can indeed help to protect original material in certain circumstances, also illustrates the special

role of the fragment in archaeological heritage preservation.

In the case of the Bamiyan Buddhas an anastylosis seems the most obvious solution, because before the destruction by the Taliban the statues had only been partly preserved due to losses in previous centuries. Consequently, a complete reconstruction of the 'original' state which is unknown in important details (faces, arms, etc) is totally out of the question. Besides, the remains of the Buddhas as important witnesses to Afghan history could play an important role for future tourism, even in their fragmentary condition. In this sense the conservation concept for the Buddha statues has continuously been discussed with representatives of the Afghan government and with UNESCO since the first meeting of the Expert Working Group on the Preservation of the Bamiyan Site (Munich, 21–22 November 2002), for instance in 2005: *The experts 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.* And in 2008 *the participants recommend for the long-term preservation of all fragments, a reversible step-by-step strategy reflecting the different location and the mass of existing material: the 'Big Buddha' has a large amount of massive fragments (up to 70 t), the 'Small Buddha' has original plaster surfaces and rock fragments in situ (right arm with robe, fragments of shoulders and head). The completed identification of all fragments can be considered as a first step. A second step would be the adequate semi-permanent storage of the documented material close to the Buddha niches, considering the possibilities of reassembling.* Moreover: *Consider further proposals for the technical possibilities of an anastylosis (refer to Article 15 of the Venice Charter) as a method of reassembling the fragments of the Buddha sculptures based on a re-evaluation of the specific, 'concrete' conditions. Different possibilities of reassembling individual fragments should be considered and be discussed by the Advisory Board at the appropriate time.*

Under these circumstances the concept of an anastylosis in fact remains in my opinion the only appropriate solution, not least because the alternative of a museum presentation does not seem to make much sense, given the gigantic masses of material. The flexible approach followed in the discussions of the Bamiyan Working Group opens up the possibility of a different treatment of both statues and their very fragile stone material. In addition, there is the step-by-step method and the chance for future generations to continue working on certain parts in the sense of a partial reconstruction. From case to case such step-by-step measures could open up different chances. The ICOMOS team for example only recently developed and tested a new conservation method for the fragile conglomerate stone of the cliff, – finally there is a chance to consolidate individual fragments permanently (see report Emmerling, p. 160).

In any case, it is of course the responsibility of the Afghan government, in coordination with UNESCO, to decide upon the overall concept for the World Cultural Heritage Bamiyan Valley and its monuments. In addition, in the surroundings of the monuments there remains the question how to preserve the authentic spirit of the place

in the sense of the Nara Document (1994). This means it is also a matter of the so-called intangible (immaterial) values increasingly discussed in recent years in connection with the World Cultural Heritage. In the case of Bamiyan these values are fortunately guaranteed by a strong genius loci in a spectacular cultural landscape with witnesses of Buddhist and Muslim traditions contributing to the cultural wealth of present-day Afghanistan.

Of fundamental importance for the results of the work in Bamiyan, presented in vol. XIX of the Monuments and Sites series, was the good cooperation with RWTH Aachen and Prof. Michael Jansen and his team. Apart from the documentation of the Buddha niches they contributed to a databank of all monuments and sites in Afghanistan (see pp. 45 f.) and to an inventory of the cultural heritage of the Bamiyan Valley. They also worked out a cultural master plan for Bamiyan (pp. 122–124). Since 2007 ICOMOS has also been working closely with TU München and Prof. Erwin Emmerling and his team. Their research project on fragments, coordinated by Catharina Blänsdorf, is published here in chapter V (see pp. 197 ff.). Besides, I would like to point out our restorers Edmund Melzl and Bert Praxenthaler, who have been working successfully in Bamiyan for years, as well as Prof. Dr.-Ing. Edwin Fecker, Dr. Michael Ubat and Dipl.-Ing. Georgios Toubekis, who committed himself untiringly to this project in the first years, and since 2008 the Afghan architect Dipl.-Ing. Sekandar Ozod-Seradj with his engineer Nomohiyadin Zeada and the stonemason Mujtabah Mirzai (Atelier Prof. Dr. Michael Pfanner, ARGE Pfanner, Scheffau/Allgäu). For all geotechnical problems we could also rely on Prof. Claudio Margottini, who planned and supervised the emergency consolidation of the Buddha niches in the years 2003/04 and 2006 funded by UNESCO. I would also like to thank our Japanese colleagues Prof. Kosaku Maeda and Mr Kazuya Yamauchi, Japan Center for International Cooperation in Conservation (NRICPT), as well as restorer Yoko Taniguchi for the good cooperation we have had for years. Among the Afghan colleagues who have helped a lot with their advice I would like to name Mr Abdul Ahad Abassy (Director, Department of Historic Monuments), A. Wasay Feroozi (Director, Preservation of Cultural Heritage) and Mohammad N. Rasuli (Director, Institute of Archaeology).

H. E. Dr. S. Makhdoum Raheen, Minister of Information and Culture, selected me as member of the Council on the Rehabilitation and Preservation of Afghanistan's Cultural Heritage (letter of 10 December 2002) and I would like to emphasise the good cooperation with the different Afghan representatives at the meetings of the Bamiyan Working Group in the years 2002–2008: Mr Ghulam R. Yusufzai, Vice Minister of Information and Culture, Mr Omar Sultan, Deputy Minister for Culture, Mr Quiamuddin Djallalzada, Deputy Minister for Urban Development, and lately Deputy Minister Mohammad Zia. My special thanks for her exceptional commitment in preserving the cultural and natural heritage goes to Ms Habiba Sarabi, Governor of Bamiyan.

As advisory body of UNESCO and the World Heritage Committee ICOMOS has been working under the guidance

of UNESCO in Afghanistan since the first International Seminar on the Rehabilitation of Afghanistan's Cultural Heritage (Kabul 2002, see p. 39). The then-Assistant Director-General for Culture, Mounir Bouchenaki, requested me to become UNESCO's scientific advisor for Bamiyan (letter of 22 August 2003). I also wish to thank Prof. Francesco Bandarin, Director of the World Heritage Center, and Mr Giovanni Boccardi, Chief of Unit, Asia and Pacific. In the first years Christian Manhart, supported by Ms Sarah Finke, then Ms Junko Okahashi and more recently Ms Junhi Han and Dr. Roland Lin have been important partners at UNESCO. Furthermore, at the UNESCO Kabul Office we have received support from Mr Masanori Nagaoka and Mr Brendan Cassar. In recent years the latter has helped a lot in managing our projects: Fortunately, in 2009/2010 ICOMOS is able to carry out further measures thanks to funds provided within the framework of phase III of the Japan-Fund-in-Trust project 'Safeguarding the Cultural Landscape and Archaeological Remains of the Bamiyan Valley, Afghanistan'.

I would like to thank all colleagues, members of staff and helpers who have been involved in safeguarding the remains of the Bamiyan Buddhas, especially the excellent team of workers from the Bamiyan region; sometimes up to 50 workers who took greatest care in tackling the difficult task of salvaging the fragments from the rubble. My thanks also include the local craftsmen and the teams of de-miners as well as the local representatives of MOIC. Time and again, the salvage work was interrupted by finds of ammunition (my special thanks to the PRT New Zealand for their help in removing the Russian aircraft bombs from the Western Buddha niche, see p. 84).

Finally, I wish to thank once again all sponsors, first and foremost the German Foreign Office for its long-standing financial support, the German Embassy in Kabul for frequent assistance and the German Federal Government Commissioner for Cultural Affairs and the Media for the generous support of this publication. I am also grateful to UNESCO, which has not only supported our project, but has actually coordinated it within the framework of international cooperation. This has also become evident through the very useful recommendations of the Bamiyan Working Group, the meetings of which ICOMOS has been able to host in Munich three times so far, in 2002, 2003 and 2008. We are also very indebted to the Messerschmitt Foundation and to its chairman, Dr. Hans-Heinrich von Srbik, for providing us with the big scaffold that has been put up in the Eastern Buddha niche (see figs. p. 159, 161).

Last but not least I would like to thank all authors of this publication, some of whom have also given us extensive picture material, as well as Ioana Cisek and John Ziesemer from the ICOMOS Germany office for their indispensable help. Nora Eibisch and Melanie Eibl together with Cristina Thieme were responsible for the layout of the lavishly illustrated publication, printed by Bäßler Verlag Berlin.

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Prof. Dr. Michael Petzet  
President of ICOMOS Germany



