

Conclusions on the Future of the Bamiyan Buddha Statues: Technical Considerations and Potential Effects on Authenticity and Outstanding Universal Value (Tokyo, 27-29 September 2017)

Preamble

In 2001, the Taliban destroyed two giant Buddha statues and associated archaeological features in Bamiyan, Afghanistan. Carved into a cliff face, the statues stood at 55m and 38m high, and represented the apotheosis of Gandharan and Buddhist art in Central and South Asia. Dating from the 6th to 7th centuries C.E., the statues were an iconic and integral part of the wider cultural landscape in the Bamiyan Valley.

Long after the decline of Buddhism in the region, the statues continued to be a source of national pride in Afghanistan. Their destruction in 2001 was a significant loss to the country and to humankind.

During the 40th session of the World Heritage Committee in Istanbul (Turkey) in 2016, the Government of Afghanistan requested that at least one of the Buddha statues be reconstructed. However, heritage practitioners and experts have highlighted the challenges of reconstructing the Buddha statues according to strict conservation ethics and other considerations. At the Committee's 41st session (Krakow, 2017), general decisions concerning reconstruction (41 COM 7) were also taken.

There is increasing awareness that the destruction of cultural properties is not only a loss for humanity; it also affects the identity, history, integrity, memories and dignity of local populations. Hence, reconstruction of cultural heritage in response to acts of deliberate destruction should be addressed not merely from the perspective of material conservation philosophy but more widely, through holistic strategies for the protection and advancement of human rights, promotion of peace building and sustainable development. At the same time, reconstruction must contribute to the protection and understanding of Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of destroyed sites or properties, and should not negatively impact it.

Based on the principles of these more recent perspectives, the present conclusions provide for new avenues to be explored for recovery, rehabilitation, reconstruction and revitalisation of cultural heritage properties destroyed by acts of violence.

The participants¹, assembled in Tokyo, Japan, from 27 to 29 September 2017, for a scientific technical meeting entitled “The Future of the Bamiyan Buddha Statues: Technical Considerations and Potential Effects on Authenticity and Outstanding Universal Value”, initiated by the Government of Afghanistan, UNESCO, and Tokyo University of the Arts and organized with the financial assistance of the Government of Japan,

Recognizing the substantial body of extant charters, declarations, and recommendations on conservation ethics (see Annex 1), and evolving knowledge;

Considering the technical proposals that have been presented during the Tokyo Meeting:

Note that:

1. the unlawful and intentional destruction of cultural heritage (2003 Declaration) may deprive local communities and nation states of their sense of identity, pride, and the opportunity to learn about and transmit cultural heritage to current and future generations. Moreover, it deprives humanity of the diversity of artistic and cultural expression, which constitutes a shared global heritage;
2. the Cultural Landscape and Archaeological Remains of the Bamiyan Valley World Heritage property represents the combined works of people and nature. The Bamiyan landscape is a continually evolving environment, bound together by complex social practices, traditions and natural systems that have formed a distinctive character and influenced the relationship between the local communities and their environment. Therefore, the OUV of the site is more than its physical attributes;
3. the Bamiyan World Heritage property should be considered a place of collective identity and memory, particularly for the local communities; the archaeological remains cannot be separated from their natural and cultural landscape nor from local perspectives;
4. there are many ways in which the World Heritage property, including the Buddha niches and former statues, could be interpreted as illustrated by the technical proposals presented during the meeting.

¹ See list of participants

Agree that:

5. in compliance with paragraph 86 of the Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention, “reconstruction of archaeological remains or historic buildings or districts is justifiable only in exceptional circumstances. Reconstruction is acceptable only on the basis of complete and detailed documentation and to no extent on conjecture”; therefore any reconstruction at the site in any form of the Buddha statues can only be justified on the basis of sound argumentation and insofar as it contributes to both the OUV of the site and the peace-building process in the country;
6. respecting all principles of the integrity and authenticity of the site, according to the definitions laid out in the Operational Guidelines in paragraphs 79-95 and recognizing the need for future treatments of the archaeological remains to be planned and implemented within the overall conservation strategy for the Cultural Landscape of the Bamiyan Valley, any consideration of recovery and reconstruction should be based on thorough multi-disciplinary research and scientific analysis, to ensure an understanding of the structural, material and other characteristics of the damaged heritage property. This includes the study of physical remains from the original structure, photographic evidence, and historical accounts;
7. further actions should be undertaken after consultation on a long-term strategy while stabilizing the niches to prevent further damage to the surviving features of the cultural property and the integrity of its historic and landscape context, bearing in mind also the current volatile situation in the area. In preparation of a long-term strategy to identify the role of and benefits for the local communities and the phasing of activities for the safeguarding of the properties, immediate actions may include: stabilizing the niches and cliff; integrating multi-national efforts; supporting the protection and presentation of the fragments; supporting archaeological excavations, conservation of historical architecture, education and awareness (e.g., site interpretation and museum activities);
8. capacity-building to raise awareness of local communities and other stakeholders, including youth, on the values of Bamiyan cultural landscape is essential, to enable them to participate fully in management, conservation, protection activities, and archaeological research.

Prior to any consideration of future treatment of the Bamiyan Buddha niches, the participants recommend that:

9. extensive consultation be conducted by the local and national government with local communities, civil society, as well as spiritual leaders so as to ensure that all stakeholder interests are taken into consideration;

10. any activity should aim to provide socio-economic benefits for local communities;
11. taking into account the continuous development of research, the Afghan authorities consider submitting to the World Heritage Committee a boundary modification encompassing all the attributes of the OUV with a view to enhancing the protection of the archaeological remains and the cultural landscape of the Bamiyan Valley, and ensuring the safeguarding of the heritage resources of the area;
12. taking into account the needs of the local communities and the agreed Desired State of Conservation for the removal of the property from the List of World Heritage in Danger (DSOCR) adopted in 2007, any work carried out at the World Heritage property, including the niches of the Buddha statues, their surrounding corridors and caves, should be capable of being maintained sustainably;
13. the cultural master plan for the Bamiyan Valley should be revised;
14. risk management and sustainable tourism management should be included in an appropriate plan for the Bamiyan Valley;
15. the Afghan authorities submit any proposed projects (including technical intervention plans, timeframes, budget estimates) that describe the link between the approach and OUV (including authenticity and integrity, interpretation, and management) for review by the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies before submission to the World Heritage Committee;
16. the international donors should be thanked for their efforts to safeguard the property, and continued investment for the implementation of these recommendations should be encouraged.

The participants welcomed the establishment of a working committee for reviewing proposals for the Bamiyan Buddha statues, and encourage the Afghan authorities to send the Terms of Reference (TOR) and list of proposed committee members to UNESCO.

ANNEX 1

UNESCO Conventions

- *The Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict* (1954) and its two (1954 and 1999) protocols
- *Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property* (1970)
- *Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage* (1972)
- *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage* (2003)

UNESCO Recommendations

- *Recommendation concerning the Safeguarding of the Beauty and Character of Landscapes and Sites* (1962)
- *Recommendation concerning the Safeguarding and Contemporary Role of Historic Areas* (Nairobi 1976)
- *Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape* (2011)
- *Recommendation concerning the Protection and Promotion of Museums and Collections, their Diversity and their Role in Society* (2015)

Declarations/Charters/Policies

- *The International (Venice) Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites* (ICOMOS 1964)
- *The Nara Document on Authenticity* (ICOMOS 1994)
- *The Riga Charter on Authenticity and Historical Reconstruction in Relationship to Cultural Heritage* (ICCROM/UNESCO 2000)
- *UNESCO Declaration concerning the Intentional Destruction of Cultural Heritage* (UNESCO 2003)
- *The Xi'an Declaration on the Conservation of the Setting of Heritage Structures, Sites and Areas* (ICOMOS 2005)
- *The Hoi An Protocols for Best Conservation Practice in Asia* (UNESCO 2005)
- The 2015 World Heritage Sustainable Development policy
- *Abu Dhabi Declaration on Heritage at Risk in the context of Armed Conflicts* (Abu Dhabi 2016)
- *The Australia ICOMOS Charter for Places of Cultural Significance* (the Burra Charter 2013)
- *Report on Promotion and Protection of Human Rights: Human Rights Questions, including Alternative Approaches for Improving the Effective Enjoyment of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms* (UN General Assembly 2016)
- *Report of the Special Rapporteur in the field of Cultural Rights* (UN General Assembly 2017); *ICOMOS Guidance on Post Trauma Recovery and Reconstruction for World Heritage Cultural Properties* (ICOMOS 2017)

29 September, 2017

Document WHC/17/41.COM/7 and Decision 41 COM 7 of the 41st session of the World Heritage Committee.

List of Participants

Participants (alphabetical order)

- Amra Hadzimuhamedovic, Assistant Professor, International University of Sarajevo
- Aparna Tandon, Project Manager, ICCROM
- Bert Praxenthaler, Conservator, Managing Director, ICOMOS Germany/BRR
- Cornelius Holtorf, UNESCO Chair in Heritage Futures / Professor, Archaeology, School of Cultural Sciences, Linnaeus University
- Christina Cameron, Professor and Canada Research Chair on Built Heritage, University of Montreal
- Christopher John Young, Heritage Consultancy
- Claudio Margottini, UNESCO Chair on Prevention and sustainable management of geo-hydrological hazards, University of Firenze
- Deborah Klimburg-Salter, Associate, Department of South Asian Studies, Harvard University
- Douglas C. Comer, Principal, Cultural Site Research and Management
- Erwin Emmerling, Lehrstuhl für Restaurierung, Kunsttechnologie und Konservierungswissenschaft Technische Universität München
- Fabio Colombo, Senior Conservator
- Gamini Wijesuriya, ICCROM
- Giacomo Massari, TORART
- Helaine Iris Silverman, Professor of Anthropology and Director of Collaborative for Cultural Heritage Management and Policy (CHAMP), University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
- James Janowski, Hampden-Sydney College
- Jukka Jokilehto, Special Advisor to the Director General of ICCROM
- Julio Bendezu, Director, DAFA
- Junko Okahashi, Associate Professor at University of the Sacred Heart, Tokyo
- Kazuya Yamauchi, Professor, Research Institute of Cultural Properties, Teikyo University
- Kazuyuki Yano, Secretary General of Japan ICOMOS
- Kosaku Maeda, Visiting Professor, Tokyo University of the Arts
- Lassana Cisse, former National Director of Cultural Heritage, Mali/expert in heritage and local development
- Manfred Hinz, Professor, Universität Passau, Philosophische Fakultät
- Masaaki Miyasako, Professor, Tokyo University of the Arts
- Marie Louise Stig Sørensen, Professor, Division of Archaeology, University of Cambridge
- Mathias Effler, Engineering Geologist, BRR
- Mechtild Rössler, Director of the Division for Heritage and the UNESCO World Heritage Centre
- Michael Jansen, Professor, GUTech University of Technology, Oman
- Michael Turner, Professor, the Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design, UNESCO Chair in Urban Design and Conservation Studies
- Mirella Loda, Professor, Dipartimento di Storia, Archeologia, Geografia, Arte e Spettacolo – SAGAS, University of Florence
- Mounir Bouchenaki, Special Advisor for Cultural Heritage, UNESCO Director-General

- Nobuko Inaba, Professor, World Heritage Studies, Graduate School of Comprehensive Human Sciences, University of Tsukuba
- Ruggiero Ludovici, Infrastructure Sector, Development Cooperation Office, Italian Agency for Development Cooperation, Embassy of Italy in Kabul
- Shigeyuki Okazaki, Professor, Mukogawa Women's University
- Shukria Neda, Civil Society member in Afghanistan
- Susumu Morimoto, Head, Data and Information Section, Department of Planning and Coordination, NRICP Nar
- Tatsuya Kumamoto, Agency for Cultural Affairs, Japan
- Toshiyuki Kono, Vice President of ICOMOS / Professor, Kyushu University
- Yasuyoshi Okada, Kokushikan University
- Yoko Taniguchi, Associate Professor in Archaeological Science/Conservation Science, Graduate School of Humanities and Anthropology, University of Tsukuba, Japan
- Yukio Nishimura, President of ICOMOS Japan / Professor, Department of Urban Engineering, Faculty of Engineering, University of Tokyo

Afghanistan (alphabetical order)

- Abdul Ahad Abassi, Director of the department of Historical Monuments, Ministry of Information and Culture
- Bashir Mohabbat, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, Embassy of Afghanistan in Tokyo
- Mohammad Aman Aman, Mayor of Bamiyan
- Mohammad Fahim Rahimi, Director of the National Museum of Afghanistan
- Mohammad Rasoul Bawary, Acting Minister of the Afghanistan Ministry of Information and Culture
- Noor Agha Noori, Director of the Institute of Archaeology
- Omar Sultan, Former Deputy Minister of Information and Culture, Afghanistan
- Reza Sharifi, Ph.D. Candidate in International Graduate School, Brandenburg University of Technology Cottbus-Senftenberg
- Tahir Zuhair, Governor of Bamiyan

Tokyo University of the Arts (alphabetical order)

- Emiri Miyama
- Kenji Tamai
- Shigeo Aoki
- Shogo Kume
- Takashi Inoue
- Yukiko Aono

UNESCO (alphabetical order)

- Catherine Heim, Consultant for Culture, UNESCO Kabul Office
- Ghulam Reza Mohammadi, Project Assistant, UNESCO Bamiyan Of
- Maria Rita Acetoso, Team Leader for Tangible Heritage, UNESCO Kabul Office
- Masanori Nagaoka, Chief of Culture Unit, UNESCO Kabul Office

29 September, 2017

- Mechtild Rössler, Director of the Division for Heritage and the UNESCO World Heritage Centre
- Omar Khan Masoudi, Senior Consultant for Culture, UNESCO Kabul Office
- Patricia McPhillips, Director, UNESCO Kabul Office