

**A HISTORICAL STUDY OF BAMMIYAN BUDDHA
STATUES IN AFGHANISTAN: THE ORIGINS,
FEATURES AND PRESERVATION**

BY

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**A dissertation submitted in fulfilment of the requirement for
the degree of Master of Human Sciences in History and
Civilization**

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ABSTRACT

This research explores the historical and cultural significance of Bamiyan Buddha statues in Bamiyan, Afghanistan, their origins, features, and preservation. It mainly highlights the value of this unique heritage as a national asset of the country and the region of Bamiyan. The research examines the preservation of these statues throughout history in Afghanistan. It also aims at examining the cultural and archaeological legacy of Buddhism in Afghanistan and its preservation up to the present date on the example of two Bamiyan Buddha statues. To obtain these goals, this research utilized a qualitative method by textual analyses of primary and secondary sources. The first part of this research found that Afghanistan is a country of cultural crossroads that has been in constant contact through trade, immigration, imperialist structures, imitation, and ongoing conflict with the civilizations of Central Asia, South Asia, the Middle East, and China. Therefore, all these various communications and periodic developments have led to the creation of unique historical and ancient treasures, architecture, art, and cultural heritage in Afghanistan, especially in the Bamiyan Valley. The second part of this research studied the spread of Buddhism in Afghanistan and particularly in Bamiyan region. The Buddhist artefacts and statues, their features, significance, and preservation were analysed as well. It was found that the ongoing wars had severely damaged the region's historical remnants, the most prominent of which is the destruction of Bamiyan Buddha statues. The study also examined ongoing threats to Bamiyan cultural and historical heritage and highlighted the necessity of serious efforts which are required to be undertaken to monitor their damage, prevention, and protection of ancient and historic sites. The research found that cultural and historical heritage can be an asset of any nation which can boost their economy by tourism industry as well as contribute positively in building national identity and cultural integrity.

خلاصة البحث

يستكشف هذا البحث الأهمية التاريخية والثقافية لتماثيل بوذا باميان في أفغانستان، وأصولها، وميزاتها، والعوامل التي أدت إلى الحفاظ عليها، ويبين قيمة هذا التراث الفريد الذي يُعدُّ أصلاً وطنياً للبلاد ومنطقة باميان بخاصة، وذلك بهدف فحص التراث الثقافي والأثري للبوذية في أفغانستان، وقد توسَّل البحث النهج النوعي من خلال التحليلات النصية للمصادر والمراجع؛ ليتوصَّل في جزئه الأول إلى أن أفغانستان مفترق طرق ثقافي دائم الاتصال عبر التجارة والهجرة والتقاليد والتنظيمات الإمبريالية والصراع المستمر بين حضارات آسيا الوسطى وجنوبي آسيا والشرق الأوسط والصين، وقد نتجت عن هذه الاتصالات المختلفة والتطورات الدورية في أفغانستان بعامة ووادي باميان بخاصة؛ نتجت كنوز تاريخية فريدة من نوعها من حيث العمران والفن والتراث الثقافي، أما الجزء الثاني فتناول انتشار البوذية في أفغانستان، مع تحليل ملامح التحف والتماثيل البوذية التي دمرتها الحروب الجارية في المنطقة الأثرية، وأبرزها تماثيل بوذا باميان، ودراسة التهديدات المستمرة للتراث الثقافي والتاريخي في باميان، والجهود الكبيرة لتتبع الضرر الملحق بها، ومن ثم؛ توفير الحماية لذلك الموقع التاريخي القديم، وقد تبين أن التراث الثقافي والتاريخي يمكن أن يكون مصدر قوة لأي دولة من أجل تحسين الاقتصاد من خلال صناعة السياحة وبناء الهوية الوطنية.

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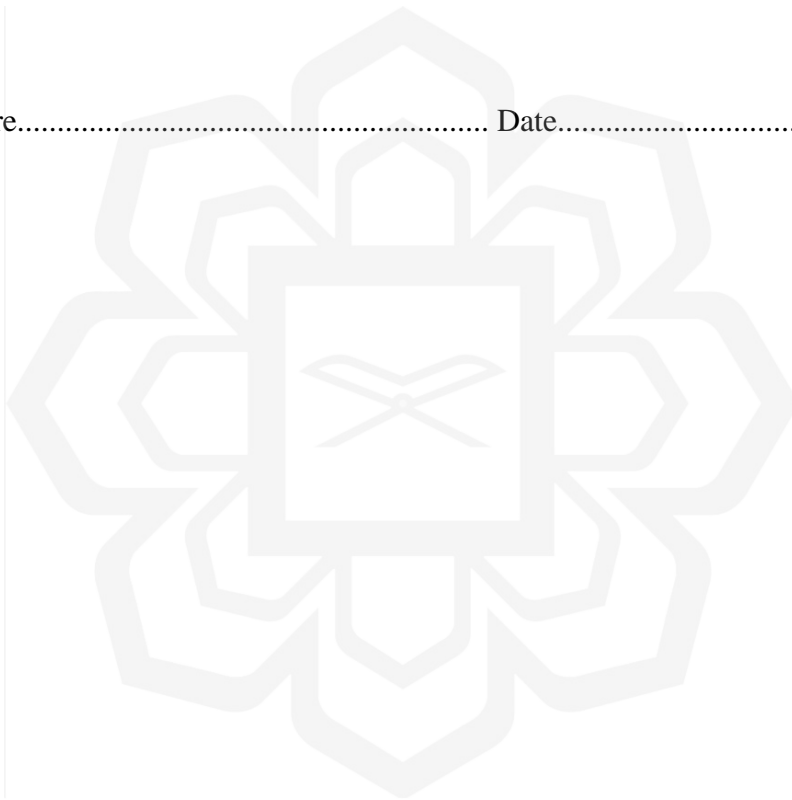
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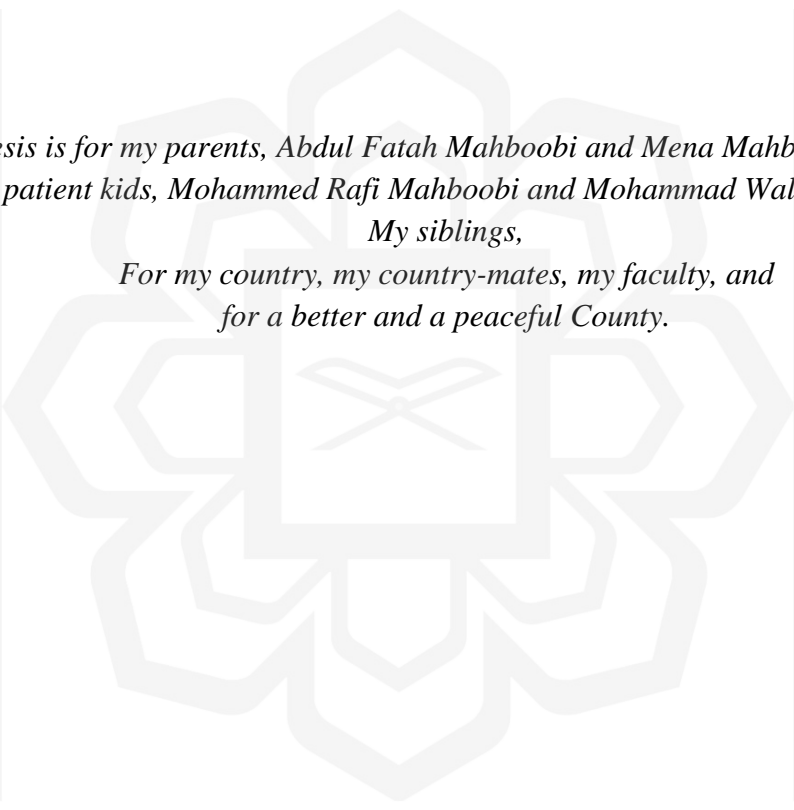
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*This thesis is for my parents, Abdul Fatah Mahboobi and Mena Mahboobi, My brave
and patient kids, Mohammed Rafi Mahboobi and Mohammad Wali Mahboobi
My siblings,
For my country, my country-mates, my faculty, and
for a better and a peaceful County.*

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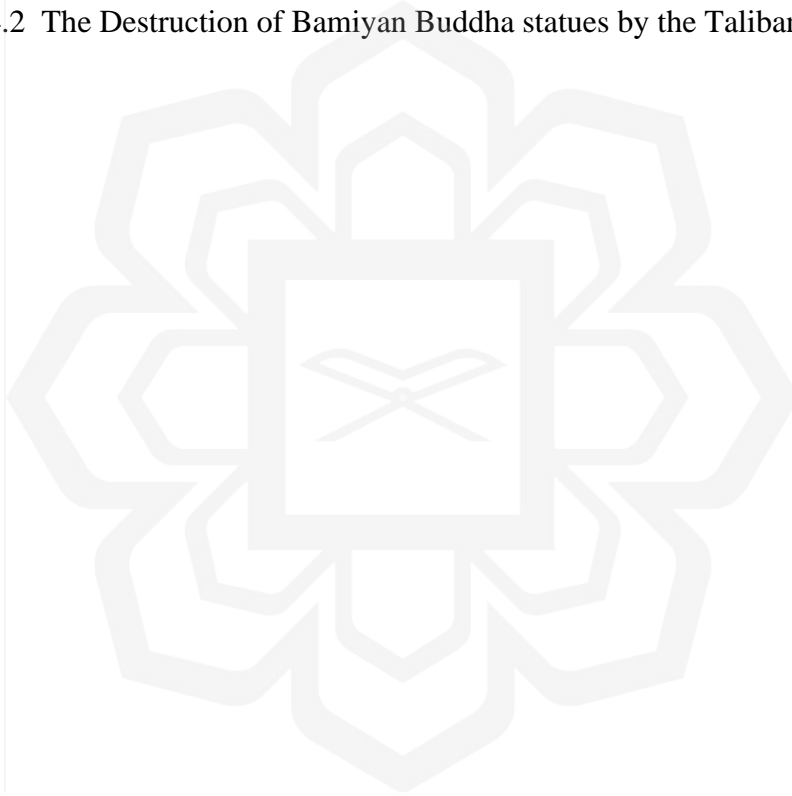
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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

Afghanistan is a landlocked country located in south-central Asia.¹ It has a rich history and culture of above 5000 years.² This region was earlier called as Aryana, and later became famous as Khorasan.³ Only in 1747CE, Ahmad Shah Durrani succeeded to unite the different tribes of Aryana and established a united state what is now known as Afghanistan.⁴ It has borders shared with Pakistan in the south and east, with Iran in the west, in the northwest with Turkmenistan, in the north with Uzbekistan, and in the northeast with Tajikistan and China. Afghanistan has an area of 652864 square kilometres.⁵

Afghanistan is an Islamic country.⁶ Islam is its official state religion today with approximately 99% Muslim population.⁷ Islam began to spread in the region from the seventh century. Before Islam, a number of other religions were practiced by people who were living in ancient Afghanistan, such as Christianity, Zoroastrianism, and Buddhism.⁸ In line with this, Buddhism was one of the most important and central

¹Mir Bahmanyar, *Afghanistan Cave Complexes 1979-2004: Mountain Strongholds of the Mujahideen, Taliban and Al Qaeda* (USA: OSPREY, 2004).

²Ghulam Ahmad Waak, "A New History of Afghanistan," *University of Helsinki Aleksanteri-Instituutti*, 2005, 4, http://www.helsinki.fi/aleksanteri/julkaisut/tiedostot/ap_5-2005.pdf.

³Mujib Rahman Rahimi, *State Formation in Afghanistan: A Theoretical and Political History* (London New York: I.B.Tauris-Co.Ltd, 2017).

⁴Mir Ghulam Mohammad Ghobar, *Geography-e-Tarikhi Afghanistan (Historical Geography of Afghanistan)* (Kabul: Banga Maiwand Press, 2011).

⁵Ramamoorthy. Gopalakrishnan, *The Geography and Politics of Afghanistan* (New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company, 1982).

⁶Ashraf Ghani, "Islam and State-Building in a Tribal Society Afghanistan: 1880—1901," *Modern Asian Studies* 12, no. 2 (1978).

⁷Kristin Mendoza, "Islam and Islamism in Afghanistan," *Islamic Legal Studies Program, Harvard*, 2008, 2.

⁸John Walbridge, "Explaining Away the Greek Gods in Islam," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 59, no. 3 (1998).

religions of the region when it was called as Aryana during the third and eighth centuries. The evidences from the period of Buddhism could be found especially in the Bamiyan region.⁹

Buddhism became a religion by the teachings of Siddhartha Gautama who was known as Buddha and lived in north-eastern India around the sixth century BC.¹⁰ At first, Buddhism grew in the northwest under the Hellenistic state of Bactria, and, later, spread to the Kushan Empire, the territory currently covering Uzbekistan, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. Buddhism experienced its second successful era under the patronage of the third Kushan king, Kanishka, in the early second century of CE. Kanishka built a great stupa (means “heap” in Sanskrit) which became a wonder of the world at that time, and Taxila with its several priories changed in an extensive place of Buddhism.¹¹

The Kashan’s Empire came under the pressure of the Sassanian Dynasty of Iran after the third century.¹² Consequently, Afghanistan was divided into small kingdoms, and Bamiyan was one of those numerous kingdoms. It is worth mentioning here that, Bamiyan became known due to its religious refuge properties and two Buddha statues carved into the rock cliff. Finally, the Sassanians surrendered to the Arab rulers who brought an Islamic religion and culture to the region. Thereafter, many historical heritages were demolished due to different reasons including religious factors.¹³

In the past, consequently, the territory which is known today as Afghanistan was divided into several independent kingdoms. Therefore, the exact history of Buddhism’s

⁹Hatch Dupree Nancy, *An Historical Guide to Afghanistan* (Kabul: Afghan Air Authorit and the Afghan Tourist Organization, 1977).

¹⁰Purushottam Bapat, *2500 Years of Buddhism* (Afghanistan: Publications Division Ministry of Information & Broadcasting, 1959).

¹¹Gina L Barnes, “An Introduction to Buddhist Archaeology,” *World Archaeology* 27, no. 2 (1995).

¹²Ferreras Verònica Martinez et al., “The Enclosure of Tchingiz-Tepe (Ancient Termez, Uzbekistan) during the Kushan and Kushan-Sassanian Periods. Archaeological Stratigraphy and 14C Dating Analyses,” *Ranica Antiqua* 49 (2014).

¹³Gina L Barnes, “An Introduction to Buddhist Archaeology,” *World Archaeology* 27, no. 2 (1995).

arrival to Afghanistan is difficult to establish, but some relatively clear evidences suggests that the emergence of Buddhism dated back to the third century BC, and it later made a remarkable contribution to Buddhist art in the Bamiyan region.¹⁴

Bamiyan is one of the provinces out of other 34 provinces of modern Afghanistan with its rich historical and cultural heritage.¹⁵ Several significant historical sites are located in this province such as Shahr-I Gholghola, Shahr-I Zohak (a historical city), Band-e-Amir (Amir Dike), which is the first national park in Afghanistan since 2009, Koh-e-Azhdar (Dragon Mountain), temples, Samuch (caves), and two famous statues of Buddha. Although other objects of cultural heritage with historical importance will be stated occasionally, the main focus of this study is the remains of these two statues of Buddha in Bamiyan.¹⁶

Statues are part of historical and cultural heritage and a significant attraction of ancient Afghanistan. They were carved out in the mountain of Bamiyan. The first Buddha statue was famous as a Shamama with 38 meters high, and it was carved in the fourth century.¹⁷ The second statue was known as Sal Sal with 53 meters high, and it was carved in the sixth century. The colours discovered during restoration projects from the 38 meters Buddha statue are very distinctive from the combination of materials such as tree sap, the animal skin, and the lazuli. As a home to these statues, the Bamiyan province was recognized by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural

¹⁴ Jens-Uwe Hartmann, "Buddha's Forgotten Country," *Fikrun Wa Fann= Art & Thought* 78, no. 34–37 (2004).

¹⁵ Rebecca Knuth, *Burning Books and Leveling Libraries: Extremist Violence and Cultural Destruction* (United States of America: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2006).

¹⁶ Hussein Ja'fari, "Avamel-e-Muather Dr Twsahe Grdeshgare Vlayte Bamiyan" (Factors Affecting Tourism Development in Bamiyan Province) (Afghanistan: Bamiyan University, 2016).

¹⁷ Motamedi A.A Dupree Nancy Hatch, Dupree Louis, *The National Museum of Afghanistan: An Illustrated Guide* (Kabul: Afghan Air Authority and the Afghan Tourist Organization, 1974).

Organization (UNESCO) as a region of cultural heritage. Therefore, UNESCO has organized several programs to protect the historical monuments of the province.¹⁸

Both statues were destroyed by the Taliban rule in 2001.¹⁹ This action was condemned by the supporters of cultural and historical heritage around the world.²⁰ Consequently, one of Afghan journalists, Sediqullah Tohidi described destruction of Buddha statues by the Taliban as a big crime. He also declared that the destruction of the Bamiyan Buddha sculptures were major crimes committed by the Taliban in the Afghan history and culture in 2001.²¹ Also, the destruction of Bamiyan Buddha statues gained the attraction of the international community and suggestions were made to reconstruct the replicas of these statues. Japanese experts currently run the reconstruction project of the destructed statues in cooperation with Afghan specialists and constrictors. In line with this Japanese project, series of awareness programs on archeology and museums on Bamiyan heritage resulted in remarkable results.²² This research, accordingly, focuses on historical study of two giant statues in Bamiyan and their importance for Afghan historical heritage. Moreover, this study also aims to discover the motives for the destruction of Buddha statues in 2001, and the consequences of its destruction.

¹⁸Zaman Ahmadi, "Panzda Sahl Pas Az Takhreb, Tandes Haiy Buddha Dar Entezar-e- Baz Saazy," *Afghanistan, Deutsche Welle: Jameha-o-Frhang*, accessed on October 11, 2019, <https://p.dw.com/p/1IBZx>.

¹⁹Sara Quagliaroli, "The Buddhas of Bamiyan: Should They Be Rebuilt?," *International Relations Study Team Briefing Paper 4* (2005):26.

²⁰Corrine Brenner, "Cultural Property Law: Reflecting on the Bamiyan Buddha's Destruction." *Suffolk Transnat'l L. Rev.* 29 (2005): 237-269.

²¹Hussain Serat, "Destruction of Buddha Statues, 'a Crime in History'" (Takhreb-e-Mujasema Hay Buddha' ' Genayate Dar Tarikh'), *Deutsche Welle*, 2011, accessed on January 13, 2020, <https://p.dw.com/p/R8ge>.

²²Saikal Amin and Ramesh Thakur, "Vandalism in Afghanistan and No One to Stop It," *In the International Herald Tribune*, 2001, accessed on November 30, 2019, <http://archive.unu.edu/hq/ginfo/media/Thakur38.html>.

This study does not aim at ratifying the significance of Buddha statues as idols or promoting the Buddhist religion. Rather, this is academic research that aims at studying the history of Afghanistan with full respect towards its heritage and culture.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Located in the centre of Afghanistan, Bamiyan is one of the oldest provinces of the country and the centre of its civilization. The existence of two giant historical statues of Shamama and Sal Sal pictures the province's long history and vast heritage. It was estimated that these were the biggest Buddha statues in the world with more than 1600 years old of known history. The statues, unfortunately, were destroyed destroyed two decades ago by the Taliban rule, who believed that the existence of these 'idols' was against the Islamic teachings.²³ Today, as Ebrahimi states, these historical treasures are still waiting to be repaired and reconstructed.²⁴

Moreover, Bamiyan in history was a stopover along the Silk Road between China and the Middle Eastern region. It was the site of monasteries, where about 5,000 monks lived at the peak in this Buddhist centre during the sixth and seventh centuries. The artisans in the region were a part of Greek civilization,²⁵ which has been founded by Alexander the Great, the king of Macedonia (r. 336-323 B.C)²⁶ several hundred years earlier in northern Afghanistan. The researcher also believes that the mutual integration

²³Gruen Armin , Fabio Remondino, and Li Zhang, "Image-Based Automated Reconstruction of the Great Buddha of Bamiyan, Afghanistan," in *International Archives of the Photogrammetry, Remote Sensing and Spatial Information Sciences* (Switzerland: The International Society for Optical Engineering, 2003), 1, doi:10.1109/CVPRW.2003.10003.

²⁴Baqir Ebrahimi , "Buzurgtaren Tandes Buddhah Dar Bamiyan Afghanistan Dar Entezar-e-Tarmem" (Buddha's Greatest Statue in Bamiyan Awaits Recovery), 2018, *Epoch Times*, accessed on June 12, 2019, <https://persianepochtimes.com/>

²⁵Ron Synovitz, "Archaeologists Find Giant 'Sleeping' Buddha In Afghanistan," *Free Europe: Radio Liberty*, 2008, accessed on July 23, 2019, https://www.rferl.org/a/Archeologists_Find_Giant_Sleeping_Buddha_In_Afghanistan_/1197572.html.

²⁶James R Ashley, *The Macedonian Empire: The Era of Warfare under Philip II and Alexander the Great, 359-323 BC*, (North Carolina: McFarland, 2004), 5 and 185.

of European and Asian cultural influences led to the creation of first statues with the face of Buddha. Previously, Buddha was illustrated by artists as an arrow or umbrella.²⁷

Another major discovery in 2008 in Bamiyan was made by a Japanese researcher Taniguchi, who found many oil-based wall paintings located near the Buddha caves. With the discovery of these paintings that were created around the mid-seventh century CE,²⁸ it confirms that the processes of oil paintings was well-known in the area where modern Afghanistan is located today, particularly in Bamiyan region, before it appeared in Europe several hundred years later.

The area around the Bamiyan region was Islamized only in the twentieth century. It is true that the religion of Islam generally forbids human representations as idols.²⁹

Yet, the destruction of the statues in the Mosul Museum and attributing it to idolatry by justifying with Islam and other Abrahamic religions seems quite confusing. In fact, these statues are not idols that are currently worshiped by anyone for centuries. Their history as worship objects dates back to five to ten thousand years ago, while what has been recorded about the idol-breaking by the prophets and saints is related to the idols that were worshiped at that particular time by the idolatrous people. Idol worshippers have sought help from these idols. Accordingly, in the history of the revealed religions, the breaking of idols and statues happened when people worshipped them, but when there were no more worshipers, statues were left alone mostly.

²⁷Ron Synovitz, "Archaeologists Find Giant 'Sleeping' Buddha In Afghanistan," *Free Europe: Radio Liberty*, 2008, accessed on July 23, 2019.

https://www.rferl.org/a/Archeologists_Find_Giant_Sleeping_Buddha_In_Afghanistan_/1197572.html.

²⁸European Synchrotron Radiation Facility, "Ancient Buddhist Paintings From Bamiyan Were Made Of Oil, Hundreds Of Years Before Technique Was 'Invented' In Europe," *ScienceDaily*, 2008, accessed January 11, 2020, www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2008/04/080422083309.htm.

²⁹"Afghan Caves Hold World's First Oil Paintings: Expert," *ABC (Australian Broad Casting Corporation) NEWS*, accessed on May 14, 2019, <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2008-01-26/afghan-caves-hold-worlds-first-oil-paintings-expert/1024106>.

Also, there are several verses in the Holy Qur'an that invite the audience to walk on the earth in different tones and ways to acknowledge about the past, otherwise it would be impossible to know about past. Allah Subhana wa Ta'ala says that: "Say, travel over the land, and see how was the fate of those who were before you."³⁰ Also, it is mentioned in the Qur'an that "Certain [Divine] precedents have passed before you. So travel through the land and observe how was the fate of the deniers."³¹ In addition, Allah Subhana wa Ta'ala also revealed that "Say, 'Travel over the land and observe how was the fate of the guilty.'³²

The fundamental question here is that if we destroy all whatever is left from the previous nations, then how we will travel and take lessons from their wrongdoings? Are we ordered to destroy the remnants of polytheists and idolaters who are considered sinners and, in most cases, have relied on deception and lies, and only maintain the remnants of the true worshippers of God and the monotheists? Can we carry out Allah's commands and recommendations mentioned in the previous ayats if we have destroyed all the remnants of the criminals and liars of the past? And, finally, there is a need to enlighten public opinion, to explain Islamic views and rules on this regard and identify the place of historical monuments based on Islamic teachings.

Nevertheless, for centuries of Islamic rule in Afghanistan, these Buddha statues remained and were considered as a significant part of Afghanistan's heritage and culture until March 2001, when the followers of the Taliban and al-Qaeda movements decided to demolish them by using explosives.³³ It is clear that, as stated by Hafizullah Emadi,

³⁰The Qur'an: 30:42 (translated by M.A.S Abdel Haleem).

³¹The Qur'an: 3:137 (translated by M.A.S Abdel Haleem).

³²The Qur'an: 27:69 (translated by M.A.S Abdel Haleem).

³³Ashli Dougherty, "A Nation Can Stay Alive When It's Culture and History Stay Alive": *Afghanistan's Ongoing Battle to Protect Its Cultural Heritage from Looting, War, and Terrorism* (USA: Baylor University, 2011).

if an object is recognized as heritage, it becomes the property of international community and local governments are advised to protect them.³⁴ Heritage cannot be destroyed easily as it is not the property of the government alone, but many international communities are concerned.³⁵ But in the case of Bamiyan statues, there were official announcements throughout the media internationally by the Taliban and the destruction arrangement was documented with all its phases. Consequently, this demolition act was a well-planned deliberate project. In fact, the destruction of these statues and other significant ancient collections took place against the pressure of the Ambassador Matsuura, of his exceptional envoy to Kabul, Director-General UNESCO, Ambassador LaFrance, and the UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, who requested Taliban to reconsider their disgraceful decision. All international community reacted to the destruction of the Buddha statues negatively. Such destruction was called a “crime against culture” in the words of the UNESCO General Director.³⁶

Besides, the act of demolishing statues is a complicated and sensitive issue and these incidents were based on politics of hatred and extremist behaviour.³⁷ As it is explained below in the literature review, there are plenty of studies that have been conducted on these statues in Bamiyan. Still, an insightful study is required to be conducted regarding the study of their history and the reasons for their demolition.

³⁴Hafizullah Emadi, *Culture and Customs of Afghanistan*, (USA: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2005).

³⁵John Henry Merryman, John Henry, "Two Ways of Thinking about Cultural Property," *American Journal of International Law* 80, no. 4 (1986).

³⁶Francioni Francesco and Federico Lenzerini, "The Destruction of the Buddhas of Bamiyan and International Law," *European Journal of International Law* 14, no. 4 (2003).

³⁷Solomon Abraham Stavis, "From Kabul to Islamabad: How to Win the Long-Term Battle against Islamic Extremism" (Phd dissertation, Georgetown University, 2010).

1.3 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study is significant due to the following three reasons. First, Bamiyan statues are the unique heritage of Afghanistan from its Buddhist past, and, thus, there is a need to study their origins and features. Also, it is an essential heritage for the worldwide Buddhist population who used to visit this region of Afghanistan for religious practices and cultural identity purposes. These statues are one of the glimpses to the early history of Afghanistan and its Buddhist past. Thus, it is hoped that this study will contribute to the trend of scholarship of highlighting of the history of Afghanistan as a whole, starting from the time of its earlier civilizational periods. Ahmad Hasan suggests that Afghanistan is the first civilizational centre in the Central Asia and the fifth among the seven global civilizations back to 3000 BC.³⁸ It has 5000 years of cultural and political history under different three names, i.e. Aryana, Khorasan and Afghanistan.³⁹ The first civilization established by the Aryans was called Vide and continued until 3000 years ago. The second was Avest, which was also created by the Aryans. From 330 BC, Afghanistan had witnessed the influence of the Greco-Bactrian civilization. It was established after Alexandrian invasion, and was a mixture of the Aryan and Greek cultures. Furthermore, Greco-Buddhist civilization was the most glorious civilization in Afghanistan, which was established during the Kushanid rule from 40 to 220 CE.⁴⁰ Later, the Arabs conquered Afghanistan in the medieval period (the seventh - eighth centuries CE), and, consequently, Islam became a dynamic political, cultural and

³⁸ Ahmad Hasan Dani Ahmad Hasan, *History of Civilizations of Central Asia, v. 1: The Dawn of Civilization, Earliest Times to 700 B.C.* (Paris: UNESCO Publishing, 1992).

³⁹ Fareed Tokhi, "Afghanistan Before and After 9/11 from the Perspective of an Afghan Muslim Studying near Ground Zero," *Explore New York University (Www.Nyu.Edu)*, 2001, accessed on January 12, 2020, <https://www.nyu.edu/classes/keefer/joe/tokhi10.html>.

⁴⁰ Aziz Ahmad Panjsheri Aziz Ahmad, *Afghanistan and the Silk Road* (Kabul: Deputy Tourism, Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism, 2005).

civilizational power in the region. Hence, the fifth civilization on the soil of Afghanistan was created in the name of Islamic civilization and culture.⁴¹

Second, it is expected that, in the current situation in Afghanistan, more academic studies are required on the subject to highlight the reasons for the destruction of *Butt-e-Bamiyan* (Bamiyan Buddha) statues due to the minimal reference sources available today on Buddhism in Bamiyan. Therefore, this study is important due to its intention to add a new knowledge and fill the gap in the existing literature on the field. It also intends to understand the reasons behind these statues' destruction, as well as the importance of Bamiyan Buddha statues as a historical heritage of Afghanistan.

Thirdly, this study is in line with the project initiated by the Department of Historical Eternities of the Ministry of Culture Information of Afghanistan, and other internal and external organizations who are endeavouring to preserve historical heritage of Afghanistan. This study is an attempt to contribute to this agenda by revealing the importance of these statues for the Afghan cultural heritage.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following questions try to answer in this research:

1. What are the peculiarities of Afghanistan that opened possibilities for different cultures and religions to spread in the region?
2. How did Buddhism spread in Bamiyan region, and what is the cultural and archeological legacy of Buddhism in Afghanistan?
3. How was the preservation of Bamiyan Buddha sculptures throughout Afghan history?

⁴¹ Ahmad Habibi, *Fifty Articles* (Kabul: Academy of Sciences, 1983).

1.5 OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The objectives of this research can be summarized as follows:

1. To indicate the geographical and cultural peculiarities of Afghanistan that played an important role in providing possibilities for various cultures and religions to spread in the Bamiyan region.
2. To evaluate the reasons and steps of spread of Buddhism in the Bamiyan region, and the cultural and archeological legacy of Buddhism in Afghanistan.
3. To examine the preservation of Bamiyan Buddha sculptures throughout Afghan history by highlighting the importance of peace and stability for the preservation of legacy and heritage.

1.6 LITERATURE REVIEW

There are plenty of studies available on the Bamiyan Buddha Statues in Afghanistan in various languages. However, each study has raised the prospects of introducing Buddha idols based on selected criteria such as its destruction, reconstruction values, and historical and background of the Bamiyan Buddha statues. This applicable literature for this research is reviewed accordingly.

Nabizadeh Mohammad Awaz's work entitled *Bamiyan Yake Az Sar Zamen Hai Kuhan WA Tarikhi Afghanistan Ast* (Bamiyan is One of Afghanistan's Ancient and Historic Lands) published in 2010⁴² provides information about past of Bamiyan province and its current situation. Moreover, the author mentions that Bamiyan is one of the most important historical areas in the country. This work also highlights the

⁴² Mohammad Awaz Nabizadeh, "Bamiyan Yake Az Sar Zamen Hai Kuhan Wa Tarikhi Afghanistan Ast" (Bamiyan Is One of Afghanistan's Ancient and Historic Lands), 2010, *Mashal.Org*, accessed 19 November, 2019, <archive.mashal.org>.

history of building Bamiyan sculptures, ornaments, and mentions the names that were popular in the area. Therefore, the author assures that having unique monuments in Bamiyan is the desire of the people in this area including Hazara people and their political leaders. This request encourages the Afghan government to fulfil the promise to rehabilitate and preserve the ancient heritage and monuments. Consequently, this book highlights the value of this ancient and historical land as well as its historical importance. Hence, this evidence is related to my research which highlights historical heritage in Afghanistan.

Catharina Blansdor and Michael Petzet's article entitled *The Giant Buddha Statues in Bamiyan: Description, History, and State of Conservation before the Destruction* (published in 2001)⁴³ explains the history and state of conservation of Bamiyan valley and Bamiyan Buddhas before their destruction in 2001. It describes that the Bamiyan Valley's historical landscape and archaeological remains were inscribed on the World Heritage List in July 2003 and placed on the List of World Heritage in Danger in the same year. This article also mentions about the perspective of the world heritage committee regarding the cultural and historical landscape and archaeological remains of the Bamiyan valley according to its cultural standards. First, the criteria which the authors mentioned in his paper is the Bamiyan Buddha statues and the art in caves discovered in this valley, which are the symbols of Gandhara School of Buddhist art developed in Central Asian region. Second, the remains of the Bamiyan valley are artistically and architecturally important as a part of Buddhist centres on the Silk Road. Third, the Bamiyan valley preserved a cultural tradition in Central Asia from its Buddhist past, which has disappeared in other parts of the region, and also this place

⁴³Catharina Blansdor and Petzet Michael, "The Giant Buddha Statues In Bamiyan: Description, History And State Of Conservation Before The Destruction In 2001," *Momuments and Sites 19*, (2009), 17–18.

indicated an outstanding example of a historical view that explains a significant period of Buddhism. Therefore, this committee recommends to the government that they should protect and conserve the Bamiyan valley and its valuable areas. This article is relevant to my study because it highlights the significance of Bamiyan, but it does not explain about the reasons for the Buddha statues' destruction in 2001, which will be highlighted in this research.

Panjsheri Aziz Ahmad's book entitled *Afghanistan and the Silk Road*⁴⁴ is a particularly important source to learn the details related to the Silk Road as the author extensively utilizes accurate reliable primary sources and materials. The author indicates that the Silk Road was not only a crossroad of travellers but it also included tourist attractions, artists, craftsmen, scholars, writers, architects, painters, sculptors, poets, scientists and journalists. It provides an ample information that this road transferred cultures from one city to another. Beyond, it was over a highway that the religious preachers of Kanishka the Great took with them the principles and fundamentals of Buddhism from Afghanistan to Fareast China, Korea, Japan, and south-eastern Asia up to Indonesia, and spread and propagated this new religion among those nations. In this book, the author also acknowledges that the restoration of the Silk Road with all its branches and courses in Afghanistan could revive national pride and could play an important role in expanding the history of Afghanistan that may contribute positively to the growth and development of national economy. Although this book gives a good overview of the Silk Road where the Buddha statues were located, it has a little specific information about the reconstruction of this place.

⁴⁴Aziz Ahmad Panjsheri, *Afghanistan and the Silk Road* (Kabul: Deputy Tourism, Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism, 2005).