

GREPAL

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Paris, march 2001, the 1st

**Amîr al-Mu'minin Mohammad Omar
Taliban Supreme Leader
Kandahar, Emirat of Afghanistan**

Subject: Protection of the archaeological site of Bâmiyân.

In the Name of God The Merciful,

Amîr al Mu'minîn,

The Islamic state of Afghanistan has been proclaimed in 1996 at Kabul, and extends today across the country, including since May 1999 the province of Bâmiyân, flourishing in cultures which rose and fell before your great movement.

It is thus since this date that Your government and Your movement are the stewards of these unique relics, which prove that the inspiration of God can create through the hand of Man.

We represent a modest and international group of independent researchers. Our members are multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, and multi-religious, and are involved in the protection of the World's historical heritage. The regions in which we have the honor of such stewardship include the Arab-Muslim countries of the Middle East, of which Afghanistan – the golden land of culture and religion – is a part.

Islam has always been a religion with great capacities for integration, including during the phases of conquest, which have always fed the creativity of the Muslim world.

It is for this reason that we are all the more saddened and surprised by the publication of the Edict which has been proclaimed by your religious and political leaders: the planning for the destruction of all pre-Islamic structures across the country, including the Colossal stone statues of Bâmiyân which are near 1500 years old.

These statues come, it is true, from a cosmology differing from that of Islam, and constitute an unique architectural complex, witness of the representations flourishing from civilizations that preceded yours and whom metaphysical speculations led to the emergence of monotheist religions such as Islam.

To the degree that markers of these cultures have disappeared, and furthermore that no Buddhists come there, it seems to us that these treasures of Civilization cannot represent a struggle against idols: their destruction can in no way be compared to the Prophet Muhammad's destruction of the idols, for in Prophet Muhammad's case, his people were bowing before the idols. No one worships the statues at Bâmiyân.

For a thousand years, Islam alone has been practiced in the Bâmiyân region and has always observed that, since there are no worshippers to bow down, they represent no danger for Islam.

All of the Muslims who have been to this place honored themselves and honored God, by respecting the memory of the civilizations that lived in this place long before them. They have demonstrated and practiced the great quality of the Faithful, which is humility of man before the manifestation of God, the sole Owner.

Traditionally, all of the great conquerors of Islam have been marvelous protectors of the Arts and Letters, exhibiting a profound comprehension of God's guidance of human acts, as when the Caliph Omar, conqueror of Jerusalem, forbid the destruction of the temple of Solomon, and who himself conducted archaeological excavations for the sole purpose of deepening his knowledge of the Almighty.

It is for this reason that, as Man concerned with the righteous image of Islam, we pray you, Oh! Commander of the Faithful, to reconsider your decision, that the Pashtûn people may be all the greater by so generous a gesture.

May God Bless You

LUC WATRIN

President of the GREPAL