IN THE SHADOW OF THE BUDDHAS: A NEW POLITICS OF HERITAGE RECONSTRUCTION IN AFGHANISTAN

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The niche of the western Buddha, Bamyan, June 2015. Photograph: C. Wyndham

UCL

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Declaration

I, Constance Wyndham, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

Signature:

Date: 31st May 2021

ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates the politics of cultural heritage preservation in Afghanistan between 2008 and 2015. Based on several periods of fieldwork in Afghanistan between 2012 and 2015 and combined with observations from working on a number of internationally sponsored heritage projects in Kabul, I study the new and complex intersections between cultural heritage and politics. I argue that a particular configuration of heritage and politics has emerged after the destructions of the Buddhas at Bamyan and show how the characteristics of this 'post-Bamyan' heritage paradigm are revealed through a number of case studies of internationally sponsored heritage work. These case studies reveal how politics and heritage are currently configured across a diverse range of governments, state and non-state actors, NGOs, individuals and forms of expertise and why such intersections matter. The case studies include the ongoing conservation of the niches of the Bamyan Buddhas; the work of the Kabul based Scottish NGO Turquoise Mountain; a project to restore and conserve the Khwaja Parsa mosque and shrine complex by Aga Khan Trust for Culture in Balkh; and a number of projects focused on Afghanistan's pre-Islamic past. This research has responded to a call from across the discipline of Heritage Studies to look more closely at the relationships between heritage, power and politics as heritage work is inextricably part of 21st century diplomacy, entangled with new forms of soft and hard power and mobilised to soften the 'new imperialisms' of neoliberal interventions as they alter political and economic climates in countries such as Afghanistan.

IMPACT STATEMENT

This thesis contributes to ongoing debates in the field of Critical Heritage Studies focused on the complexity of how heritage, power and politics interrelate. Rather than the more common analyses of the politics of heritage destruction, this research focuses on collaborations between international governments, state and non-state actors, NGOs and individuals over heritage preservation. These new and complex intersections of heritage and politics are explored through an analysis of several case studies of 'heritage intervention' in Afghanistan which have been undertaken as part of the wider project of national reconstruction. The key contribution is an ethnographic approach to power and politics as they intersect with heritage. The thesis draws on debates about power in heritage studies, international relations and anthropology in order to push for a more sophisticated and explicit means of discussing the operations of politics through heritage as heritage is increasingly mobilised as part of international interventions. This study provides a useful framework for deepening understandings of the role of heritage in such projects which is relevant for researchers in the field of heritage studies, museum studies, anthropology and contemporary archaeology. With its focus on both the intended but also the unintended consequences of such work on local groups and populations, the research also aims to have impact on international organisations, policy makers and heritage practitioners engaging with heritage preservation as part of wider projects of national reconstruction and international diplomacy across the MENA region. This research could be of public interest in light of the recent high profile heritage destruction and subsequent preservation efforts undertaken in Iraq and Syria. The ethnographic methodological will have impact on research methodologies in heritage studies as ethnography becomes an increasingly prominent research methodology for the discipline.

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INTRODUCTION

At the time of writing, I'm in touch with several families of Afghan friends and colleagues desperate to leave Afghanistan since the Taliban took Kabul on 15th August. They have terrible memories of the violent Taliban government of the 1990s, its repression of women, targeting of minorities and dread the return of such a regime. The abrupt nature of the US withdrawal in July 2021 and the subsequent speed with which the Taliban gained ground across the country shocked many. Emboldened by their quick sweep across Afghanistan, the Taliban took Kabul several week later. As they surrounded the capital, final deals were done with President Ashraf Ghani, who quickly left on a plane with much of his inner circle of ministers and advisors. As the Taliban entered the city and took control, a chaotic evacuation programme started, and many governments sent planes to rescue diplomats and foreign nationals. Flight lists of names of thousands of Afghan interpreters, and others deemed at risk such as journalists, lawmakers, women's rights advocates and those that worked closely with international NGOs and embassies, were hastily compiled. Many Afghans were eligible for resettlement abroad, or had been promised visas, but hadn't yet left the country. I began to receive desperate messages from friends in Kabul terrified and asking for help to board flights. As the evacuation effort started, thousands went to the airport, desperate for a chance to leave. Total chaos ensued as more and more people thronged the airport and the first evacuation flights prepared to leave. With no airport security in place, hundreds rushed onto the tarmac and tried to board the planes. Horrific footage showed young men clinging to the undercarriage of one airplane. One fell to his death as the plane took off. For many, these will be the lasting images of the chaotic withdrawal and a potent visual symbol of the failures of the international project in Afghanistan.

While the human cost of the chaotic evacuation programme and the Taliban takeover was at the forefront of everyone's minds, my Afghan friends and informants all work for Afghanistan's cultural sector and were also focused on securing heritage sites and museums. The lapse in security between the Ghani administration leaving and the Taliban taking control sparked looting in Kabul and had been a worrying time. One friend told me that the Aga Khan Trust for Culture's site office at the Bala Hissar, a project to make an archaeological park in an

area around Kabul's principal fortress, had been looted during this period. He spoke of the bizarre experience of accompanying a member of the Taliban around the site as they attempted to restore order together. Old colleagues at the National Museum told me they had packed up objects quickly in early August and stayed on guard at the museum for several days, fearful of looters arriving. The museum's director spoke of his fears that the Taliban might, again, destroy figurative pre-Islamic objects in the collection, but then also of his relief when members of the group arrived to secure the building against looters. Meanwhile, I heard rumours from journalist friends in Kabul that the Taliban had taken the carefully restored area of Murad Khane which housed the Turquoise Mountain Institute for Arts and Architecture and were installing themselves. A few weeks later, the new Taliban cabinet was announced, with Mullah Hasan Akhund at the helm as interim Prime Minister. In a surreal turn of events, he was one of the key decision makers that sanctioned the destruction of the Bamyan Buddhas in 2001.

I worked and researched in Afghanistan, on and off, for six years. In the face of the current situation, at different moments, I feel disbelief, shame and helplessness, and am acutely aware of the privilege of my passport that allowed me to leave that country at a moment's notice. As these flights left Kabul, such scenes of chaos recall a long history of international intervention, abandonment and Afghan suffering. The Taliban takeover - twenty years after an international military intervention and attached reconstruction programme - provokes questions as to the value of such a project. What has this international venture and billions of dollars of support achieved? What part have I played, as a project manager and cultural heritage professional working on projects funded by international donor governments, in the failures of this international intervention?

The current scenario seems far from my own experiences of Afghanistan and work on various cultural heritage projects which inspired this thesis. My experiences in Afghanistan started in February 2008, a time of misplaced optimism for the international project there. I went to Kabul for three months to work as a journalist. After several weeks, I visited Turquoise Mountain, an arts and crafts NGO run by Rory Stewart, a British ex diplomat who had previously worked in Iraq. Turquoise Mountain had been set up by Stewart in 2006 and was working to restore a historic area of Kabul's Old City of Kabul and establish an Institute to train young Afghans in several different craft skills such as calligraphy, woodwork, ceramics and jewellery making. The offices of this NGO were, at that time, housed in a 19th century mud brick fort in Karte Parwan, a district to the north of the city. The fort stood behind the old

British Embassy, once a fine building with carefully mown lawns that had been reduced to rubble and strewn with mines during the Afghan civil war of the 1990s. The scene inside the Turquoise Mountain fort was unlike anything I had seen in Kabul during my short time there. The several hundred Afghan students hard at work in the workshops made an impression on me and so did the commitment of the dynamic Afghan and international staff running the organisation. In an adjoining courtyard a pair of peacocks slowly pecked at a patch of emerald, green grass under an arghawan tree. I applied for a job assisting on contemporary art projects.

Before I joined Turquoise Mountain, I had stayed for a short time at the Gandamack Lodge, a guesthouse where I heard international journalists swap stories about military embeds and prospective sought-after interviews with high level members of the Taliban. I was immediately struck by how far removed the scene inside Turquoise Mountain's picturesque mud brick fort and the work of the organisation inside seemed from everything else I had experienced in Kabul at that time. Daily debates over how to dry cedar wood, the correct temperature at which to fire pots, or how to entice a calligraphy *ustad* (teacher) from the western town of Herat to Kabul to teach young Afghan students in Turquoise Mountain's Institute seemed distant from the realities of a country in the midst of a conflict combined with a highly politicised reconstruction programme. Through my work with Turquoise Mountain over the next two years I met, engaged with and sometimes collaborated with the small number of other international cultural organisations working in Kabul, such as the Aga Khan Trust for Culture and the French Archaeological Delegation. With such a small number of NGOs involved, these cultural projects were a very minor part of the wider international intervention in Afghanistan. And, if you were working with Afghanistan's culture, you were largely understood to be 'doing something good', which meant that this area of intervention was rarely scrutinised. As cultural practitioners at Turquoise Mountain we did not see ourselves as political actors and instead enjoyed our status as a small, idiosyncratic NGO that seemed to sit apart. However, I soon became interested in how the seemingly distinct spheres of cultural intervention and Afghanistan's wider military intervention and adjacent national reconstruction programme were in fact linked, and the shape of such connections. I worked for Turquoise Mountain for two years, leaving Kabul in 2010 before working on a range of other projects focused on Afghanistan's heritage and art, from a job as assistant curator of an exhibition of objects from the collection of Afghanistan's National Museum which was held at the British Museum in 2011, to work back in Kabul as a registrar inventorying the collection of Afghanistan's National Museum, and later, in London, managing events and a learning programme for an exhibition of works by Turquoise Mountain's artisans held at Leighton

House Museum in 2013. During these projects, certain moments, some of which are outlined below, began to make me aware of continuities, both subtle and explicit, between the spheres of heritage intervention and global politics. This research originated from my interest in these intersections.

When I joined Turquoise Mountain I was new to cultural work in Afghanistan and was intrigued by how this small NGO framed its work. I soon realised that it was understood by the majority of international organisations and individuals working on internationally funded projects with Afghanistan's cultural heritage at that time that the most likely way to secure funding from the big donors to the wider reconstruction project, such as the United States Agency for International Developed (USAID) and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), was to frame it in this powerful language of international development. As a newcomer to NGO and heritage work, this initially seemed surprising as I saw a disconnection between what I experienced at the Turquoise Mountain fort and how our work was represented or promoted to others. I saw a small organisation with about a hundred Afghan students learning calligraphy, woodwork or ceramics and a project to restore buildings in the Old City. Yet, it was being couched in this grand language of development and its ability to 'renew identity', 'contribute to gender equality', 'restore pride', and 'reduce poverty'. I would later come to learn about the role of culture for development and the rhetorical shift around the justification for heritage work's ability to fulfil the objectives of development in such contexts as Afghanistan or the Balkans as part of internationally sponsored reconstruction programmes, but at first I was surprised. How would these projects 'restore identity' and 'reduce poverty' beyond bringing an income to this small group of Afghan students? They seemed like grand claims that were disconnected from my experiences of the daily realities of the organisation.

Another example of interactions between the spheres of cultural intervention with the wider international project were the frequent visits by donors or diplomats, often accompanied by small groups of visiting dignitaries, that visited Turquoise Mountain for tours of the workshops and to shop for jewellery or ceramic bowls in the organisation's shop. As a small, seemingly apolitical arts organisation, the Turquoise Mountain compound was vetted as safe to visit for such groups. While the groups toured the compound, their armed security guards would sit inside their armoured vehicles, engines on and purring outside the offices, filling the courtyard with exhaust fumes, ready for a quick escape in case of an attack. These popular trips to the

haven of the fort were seemingly a way for such groups to experience something other than the heavily protected offices and embassies of Wazir Akbar Khan, but, as these visits grew more frequent, it seemed as if something else was going on too. As if a rhetorical question was being asked: if the wider internationally sponsored project, which was stalling on many levels by this point, can achieve these busy workshops full of talented craftsmen and craftswomen working alongside each other, deeply engaged in creative practices, then surely it has been worthwhile on some level? It began to seem as if these regular trips of high-level dignitaries to Turquoise Mountain represented a means to show these visiting diplomats a rare, positive side of an international intervention that was otherwise badly faltering. While there is, of course, a long history of the direct instrumentalisation of cultural projects as tools of soft power and diplomacy, was this a more subtle form of cultural mediation in which these busy Afghan students and their beautiful artworks had become a symbol of the successful, civilising power of the intervention?

At Turquoise Mountain we organised evening cultural events such as Pashto poetry recitals, Afghan film or music nights. While junior ranking military officers were not allowed out of the ISAF base (International Security Assistance Force, the name for NATO-led military intervention), high-ranking staff such as Generals were allowed to visit Turquoise Mountain, which, among only a few other locations, had been 'vetted' for such occasions. Some of these military actors rarely encountered Afghans outside the military sphere and sometimes had a narrow understanding of Afghan life and culture. The events at the fort offered a rare opportunity for them to engage with and talk to Afghan civilians. Afghan elites, military figures, international diplomats, UN representatives, journalists and a range of other actors involved in the reconstruction project also attended these events and socialised with each other. Turquoise Mountain was a place for encouraging Afghan crafts and through these informal gatherings it also became an arena for politics.

I worked at Turquoise Mountain for two years, until 2010, before returning to London to work at the British Museum, as assistant curator on an exhibition of objects from the collection of Afghanistan's National Museum that focused on the country's pre-Islamic past. Throughout my time at the museum I noticed more subtle entanglements between cultural work and Afghanistan's national reconstruction. This was a relatively small exhibition of objects from four archaeological sites in Afghanistan which spanned the Bronze Age to the early centuries ACE. One highlight was a number of gold artefacts from Tillya Tepe, a nomadic burial site on

the Central Asia steppe. The British Museum became a backdrop for international diplomacy when on March 1st 2011, at the opening of the exhibition, the then Foreign Secretary, William Hague, hosted Afghanistan's President Karzai at the museum. At the opening ceremony both dignitaries made speeches focused on these objects as representative of the intense cultural interaction and mixing along the Silk routes. One theme was the values of tolerance and multiculturalism that these objects, with their eclectic stylistic influences, inhabited. While nuanced, in these speeches there was seemingly an attempt to link the richness and multiculturalism of Afghanistan's pre-Islamic past, as represented by these objects, with the same values that the international liberal intervention sought to nurture in Afghanistan for its future (British Museum 2011).

A crucial shift in my understanding of how other groups understood cultural interventions by international organisations came in 2011 when members of the Taliban attacked the British Council, whose offices were just around the corner from the Turquoise Mountain's fort. The Taliban released a statement about the attack, declaring it marked the anniversary of 'Afghanistan's independence from the UK,' which referred to British attempts to colonise the country through a series of Anglo-Afghan wars during the nineteenth century (BBC 2011). Three years later the message was made much clearer. In December 2014 members of the Taliban launched a suicide attack on the French Cultural Centre, a popular venue where young Afghans mixed with international peers during cultural events such as concerts and exhibitions. The attack, which injured fifteen people, happened during a theatre performance. Afterwards, the group released a statement declaring that cultural invasion by international organisations amounts to military invasion:

"We are fully aware of the aggressive nature of Western thought and culture... We know that those working for the West are disguising their attempts to promote Western culture. From now on, those working in this arena will be understood as military invaders and will be eliminated in similar attacks" (Mujahid 2014).

1. A NEW POLITICAL PARADIGM FOR HERITAGE

George Yúdice has called the 'expediency of culture' (2003) a contemporary phenomenon in which culture is mobilised to solve problems that were previously understood as economic or political issues. Yúdice has argued that, in an increasingly globalised world, culture is being used a resource and that the 'the role of culture has expanded in an unprecedented way into the political and economic' (Yúdice 2003: 9). Hillary Clinton used the phrase 'smart power' (the combination of 'hard' military power and 'soft' power of building partnerships and

institutions) four times in her opening statement and nine times during her testimony, representing a shift in the US State Department policy in which public diplomacy took centre stage alongside defence and development in winning hearts and minds (Luke & Kersel 2013: 4). Anne-Marie Slaughter echoed this in her understanding of the measure of power in the twenty-first century as 'connectedness,' in which control is achieved through a horizontal network of partners, rather than vertical hierarchies, which connect through power structures across different sectors such as politics, the arts and business (2009). With these new intersections between politics, power and culture in mind, my two core research questions evolved out of the entanglements I had witnessed between internationally funded cultural heritage work and Afghanistan's internationally sponsored project of reconstruction. Firstly, how are politics and international heritage intervention currently mutually entwined? And, secondly, considering the ever-changing nature of global politics, how does the character and rationale for heritage intervention change over time and in different contexts according to dominant political dynamics?

The destruction of the Bamyan Buddhas by the Taliban in March 2001, just six months before the 9.11 attacks, brought heritage squarely within this political paradigm. This thesis is engaged in exploring the series of discursive shifts in how heritage has been managed and understood since the destruction of the Bamyan Buddhas in March 2001. I argue that the relationship between heritage and global politics is an ever-shifting paradigm and the destructions at Bamyan had a series of aftershocks that echoed far beyond the Bamyan Valley itself to define a new heritage 'post-Bamyan paradigm' which has informed the current entanglement between heritage intervention and international relations. The Oxford English Dictionary defines a paradigm as: 'a conceptual or methodological model underlying the theories and practices of a science or discipline at a particular time; (hence) a generally accepted world view'. I argue there has a been a global paradigm shift, a change or development in how we understand and interact with heritage since the destruction of the Bamyan Buddhas, in which the practice and understanding of heritage has shifted in line with global politics. My research questions relate to the shape of this current 'post-Bamyan' paradigm and to understanding how politics operate through heritage interventions in Afghanistan as part of this paradigm.

- How has heritage intervention changed since the destructions in Bamyan in 2001?

- What can certain case studies of heritage intervention in Afghanistan tell us about the characteristics of this 'post-Bamyan' era for international heritage intervention?

- Do models of power developed in International Relations provide an adequate framework for understanding the operation of power 'on the ground' in these international heritage interventions?

- What can an ethnographic approach to researching this 'post-Bamyan' heritage paradigm contribute to understanding the operations of power through heritage?

2. CHAPTER OUTLINE

This thesis is engaged with studying the relationship between cultural reconstruction and the wider political project of national reconstruction through several case studies of heritage intervention. The first chapter sets the scene for heritage preservation work in Afghanistan after 2001 by outlining some of the issues of the military intervention and attached project of national reconstruction. I outline how Afghanistan became such a focal point of global politics in the post 9.11 era and some of the core failings of the internationally sponsored reconstruction project. This sets out the highly political context in which these heritage interventions are taking place and the broad range of international governments and organisations engaging with the country's past.

The second chapter sets the methodological frameworks of this study, outlining the constraints of conducting fieldwork in a war-torn country. I outline my methodology which was based on the idea of 'multisitedness' in order to enable the study of intersections between heritage work and international politics across a number of sites. I describe some of the issues of access to my field sites, how this affected my choice of case studies and outline the ethical choices I made in relation to my informants and research participants. Finally, I describe my periods of research at the French Archaeological Delegation in Kabul, UNESCO in Bamyan, Turquoise Mountain in Kabul, and the Aga Khan Trust for Culture in Balkh.

The third chapter introduces the theoretical framework for this research. Here, I give a general overview of the current discussions of power and politics in the emerging discipline of Heritage Studies, and the concepts of soft power and cultural diplomacy, arguing that these understandings of the workings of power are insufficient for exploring the complex space of international heritage intervention in Afghanistan. I present my theoretical approach, which draws on a framework of power from the International Relations literature and provides a useful means of discussing and unpicking the complex, multiple types of power, and how they operate, through heritage interventions. This theoretical power framework is nuanced

through a review of anthropological analyses of power. Together, this framework and the anthropological approach, provide insight both into how different types of power can coexist at these sites of intervention, and the contradictory ways in which power works in practice on the ground. The second half of this chapter focuses on the complex global context for heritage intervention. Here, I focus on the particular configuration of heritage with politics that emerged after the destructions at Bamyan: a 'post-Bamyan' heritage paradigm. This is reflective of the range of organisations, governments, state and non-state actors and individuals that currently collaborate over cultural heritage work and how the destructions at Bamyan have affected how cultural heritage is understood and managed. In this section I outline some of the key characteristics of this 'post-Bamyan' heritage paradigm and show the complexity of ways in which politics and heritage interact across these networks of actors and in a range of different scenarios including in diplomacy, international development, and heritage reconstruction in post conflict contexts.

In Chapter 4 I outline three historical heritage paradigms in order to set the 'post-Bamyan' period for heritage in context and to show that these configurations of heritage and global politics are an ever-shifting set of relationships. Here, I explore three successive heritage 'paradigms' in order to show how heritage has been historically entangled with politics in Afghanistan: during the colonial period; during a period of twentieth century modernization; throughout the Cold War. The chapter starts with an outline of a brief cultural history of Afghanistan to show the different periods of the country's past on which these paradigms draw. For each paradigm, 'Imperial', 'Modernization' and 'Cold War,' I explore how these intersections of politics and cultural heritage operate on the ground through the actions of individuals such as British soldiers, French archaeologists and Afghan historians.

In chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8 I draw upon empirical data gathered during my fieldwork and explore how particular characteristics of the current 'post-Bamyan' heritage paradigm operate at a series of sites, which constitute my main case studies. Here I am concerned with illustrating how different forms of power operate through international heritage interventions at each site. Chapter 5 shows how the predominant focus on the pre-Islamic past, a focus which is evident in earlier heritage paradigms, has continued. However, as this chapter reveals, the politics which currently intersect through these interventions into Afghanistan's past are now reflective of a 'post-Bamyan' era for heritage. Rather than focusing on a single site, this chapter explores an ongoing focus on Afghanistan's pre-Islamic past through a number of current heritage interventions by looking at the role of international expertise at the Bamyan

Buddhas; the galleries of the National Museum of Afghanistan; the travelling exhibition of objects from the collection of the National Museum of Afghanistan; and the archaeological excavations at Mes Aynak.

The following chapters each focus on a single site of heritage intervention. Chapter 6 discusses a preservation project undertaken by the Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC) at the Khwaja Parsa shrine complex in Balkh. I discuss how AKTC has developed a hybridised practice of heritage preservation which speaks to the organisation's political objectives internationally, regionally and locally. Through the promotion of classic preservation principles, AKTC can appeal to donors, the German government and its network of international alliances. At a local level, in Balkh, the organisation deploys autonomous, trusted local experts who are both well versed in these international conservation charters and, at the same time, familiar with religious practices and the local environment in Balkh. This project reveals how soft power can operate as a differentiated form of power which speaks to multiple audiences at the same time.

Chapter 7 focuses on the work of Turquoise Mountain, an NGO based in Kabul, and how nuanced ideas about Afghan traditions and aesthetics intersect with wider discourses of liberal intervention. I attempt to show how Turquoise Mountain has developed a practice of heritage preservation in which distinctive, orientalist notions of heritage value rooted in aesthetics have been updated for the 21st century. This 'updating' is located in its intersection with the liberal values of the internationally sponsored reconstruction programme and its focus on the 'liberation' of Afghan women. This chapter shows how such a model was developed and maintained by the craftsmen and craftswomen who benefitted from the initiative and through the skills of the organisation's employees that matched Turquoise Mountain's work to the donor priorities of the reconstruction programme in order to access funds and survive. I show how this 'updating' of a more traditional heritage discourse with these progressive values had consequences for certain individuals. Finally, I discuss how an exhibition of Turquoise Mountain's work appealed to US audiences. While Turquoise Mountain's heritage preservation model might have constructed an Afghan 'other' in a system of meaning and value, we see how such constructions can operate in a positive way, as at the same time this exhibition operated as a site for dialogue and exchange to build understanding across cultural fault lines that have emerged in the post 9.11 era.

Chapter 8 highlights the slippery and unexpected nature of power through heritage

intervention. Here, I discuss how international heritage interventions in the Bamyan Valley have been received locally and how local groups of Hazara activists, the ethnoreligious group that live in the valley, have attached to global heritage discourses as part of forming their own Hazara political space. Powerful ideas about the value of the Buddha niches arrived in the valley after their destruction and this chapter explores how a local group has accessed these discourses and mobilised them as part of their own national struggle for Hazara rights. Here we see how this group's own efforts for recognition are mediated through particular aspects of international heritage politics and the international focus on the Buddhas.

CHAPTER 1

INTERNATIONAL INTERVENTION IN AFGHANISTAN SINCE 2001

1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter sets the scene for the following chapters by showing how Afghanistan became central to global politics after 9.11 and is therefore an ideal context for exploring the current multiple intersections between heritage and politics. I outline some of details of the international military intervention in Afghanistan and the attached project of national reconstruction. I set out the political context in which cultural heritage interventions are taking place, showing the highly politicised nature of the national reconstruction project, the range of different governments and donors involved, and how such nation building work has often bypassed weakened Afghan state political institutions instead of rebuilding them. I discuss some of the key problems of the reconstruction programme and how these relate to a long history of reconstruction assistance to the country which has entrenched certain issues. In the last section, I describe the range of international governments and organisations working with Afghanistan's heritage and how such work became part of international donors 'rush for profile'. Here we see the diversity of interests and agendas that converge on heritage work in Afghanistan and how such interventions operate across new, broad networks of donor governments, state and non-state actors, institutions and NGOs.

2. A MILITARY INTERVENTION

The so called 'curtain raiser' for the US military intervention in Afghanistan happened on September 9th 2001 two days before the destruction of the Twin Towers (Bergen 2006). Two al-Qaeda operatives posed as journalists and assassinated Ahmad Shah Massoud, the leader of Afghanistan's Northern Alliance anti-Taliban resistance movement. Massoud and the Northern Alliance were a threat to the Taliban and his murder, ordered by Osama bin Laden just prior to the 9.11 attacks, was much welcomed by the Taliban. Massoud's death also ensured the group would protect al-Qaeda and bin Laden who was hiding in Afghanistan. Two days later, on September 11th, nineteen al-Qaeda operatives hijacked four airplanes intent on flying them into high profile buildings in the US. Two planes were flown into the Twin Towers of the World Trade Centre in New York, the third hit the Pentagon in Virginia and the fourth crashed in a field in Pennsylvania. The destruction of the World Trade Centre

doubtlessly recalibrated the global geopolitical arena as 9.11 became the reorganising principle for US foreign and defence policy and the beginning of a 'War on Terror'. With previously competing ideologies such as communism and socialism in decline, 9.11 ushered in new schisms between ideas of Islam and the West. A 'clash of civilisations' narrative took hold with the idea that militant Islam was the main ideological competitor to liberal democracy (Huntingdon 1993). The face of 21st century conflict changed as 'radical Islamic terrorism' was elevated to a core threat to US security and Afghanistan, the country that hosted bin Laden, became central to global politics.

In President Bush's address to the nation on September 11th 2001, after the destruction of the Twin Towers, he made it clear that Afghanistan had now symbolized a growing global movement of radical groups and that a fight for 'freedom' and 'democratic values' would be fought on Afghan soil (American Presidency Project 2001). He demanded the Taliban hand over Osama bin Laden to the US and expel al-Qaeda. The Taliban refused and on 7th October, the US led a military invasion of Afghanistan with the support of the British armed forces, named Operation Enduring Freedom. The objectives of the mission, as outlined by President Bush, were to destroy al-Qaeda training camps, capture their leaders and stop terrorist activity (The White House 2001). The US troops had the support of the Northern Alliance and a strategy of aerial attacks against specific targets such as Taliban airfields and the Tora Bora cave complex, where bin Laden was reportedly hiding, was started. These aerial attacks set the tone for the continued use of drone attacks throughout the war, which have often killed innocent Afghan civilians (ed. Bashir & Crews 2012). After eleven days of bombing, ground troops entered the country and on 13th November 2001, troops from the Northern Alliance, with the support of US air strikes, took Kabul and the Taliban retreated.

The Bush administration imagined it was confronting a global movement of extremists in Afghanistan. However, while western policy makers have often confused and conflated the two, al-Qaeda and the Taliban are, in fact, very different movements. As Strick van Linschoten and Kuehn explain (2012), the Taliban was a regionally focused movement that offered bin Laden protection but essentially disapproved of al-Qaeda's tactics. The Taliban's support of al-Qaeda proved fatal as it led to the US military intervention and downfall of the regime which collapsed ten weeks after the US invaded with its leaders disappearing into Pakistan. The US soon convinced other nations to join a military coalition. In 2003, The United States

and 42 countries (including all the members of NATO) formed a joint military mission called International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). International governments contributed varying numbers of troops throughout the mission. Initially, Canada committed the most troops and by 2010 the US contributed the most soldiers to Afghanistan, followed by the UK, Turkey, Germany, France, and Italy; nations such as Georgia, Denmark, Norway, and Estonia were among the largest contributors per capita (NATO n.d.). As the conflict continued, the US's desire to hunt down their Taliban enemies was exploited by Afghan elites who took the opportunity to settle old blood feuds or vendettas by accusing rivals of having Taliban affiliations. As Mike Martin (2014) describes in his oral history of the conflict in Helmand, ISAF quickly became drawn into decades old conflicts between villages and families over land and water disputes, and innocent Afghans were sent to Guantanamo by their enemies. As a result, many old fighters rejoined the Taliban in self–defence, a new Taliban movement emerged and the number of NATO forces grew to reflect the growing insurgency. From a situation in which the Taliban had all but disappeared, there emerged a new and bloody conflict, largely in the south of Afghanistan, between the Taliban and NATO forces. ISAF represented one of NATO's largest coalitions and at its height was 130,000 strong with military forces from 51 NATO and partner countries (NATO n.d.). To counter the growing insurgency, on December 1st 2009, President Obama announced he would deploy 30,000 more US troops to Afghanistan in response to a request from US commanders based there. The Bush administration had shifted its focus to the war in Iraq, rerouting US troops and attention there, and as a result the Afghan insurgency had grown steadily since 2003 (Marsh 2014). With this new commitment, the war in Afghanistan became 'Obama's war', as the new US president followed up on his commitment made to Afghanistan during his electoral campaign (Marsh 2014: 265). A crucial factor in the new military strategy was the use of counterinsurgency (COIN), a military doctrine used during wars Afghanistan (and Iraq) with the aim of 'winning hearts and minds' of local populations that were liable to become insurgents rather than focusing solely on killing 'terrorists'. The architect of this approach was General Stanley McChrystal, who was also a key advocate for the troop surge, he pursued this approach after he took over the command of ISAF in 2009 (Marsh 2014: 272). This approach blurred the lines between military interventions and aid work as military actors undertook humanitarian projects such as building schools, infrastructure and hospitals. As Hopkins suggests, there is a much older genealogy to this strategy which dates back to the British imperial wars in Afghanistan (Hopkins 2010).

3. The Bonn Agreement

The fight against the Taliban quickly morphed into an internationally sponsored state building project. In the post 9.11 era, military interventions, such as those in Afghanistan and Iraq, have attached programmes of liberal 'state building' and development, for which allied western nations sought to remake these countries in their own image through rebuilding political institutions (ed. Fukuyama 2005). In December 2001, the UN brought together a group of 25 prominent Afghans in Bonn, Germany, to decide on a plan to govern the country and establish an interim government immediately after the US invasion. At this meeting of Afghan leaders and international donor countries, a plan for the country's reconstruction was agreed: Afghanistan was to undergo a transition to a liberal, constitutional democracy with the support of effective government institutions, alongside the ongoing conflict. In 2002, Hamid Karzai was installed as an interim president (he subsequently won elections in 2004 and 2009). Goodhand & Sedra (2010) discuss what they understand as the failings of Bonn, which was to ignore the political realities of the country. The crucial mistake was to only include Afghan stakeholders that were on the same side at the US. The Taliban were excluded, regional players such as Pakistan and Iran were side-lined and the conference failed to address the human rights abuses of those Afghans it supported to take power (2010: S82). In 2004, a new Afghan Constitution was launched, and the plan became one of both eliminating Taliban terrorist networks while simultaneously rehabilitating the state and modernizing Afghan society: it was a project of 'social engineering' with the objective of establishing a stable, functioning, democratic state with a centralized government (Suhrke 2007: 1291). However, this project has been accused of being rife with multiple agendas, divisions and rivalry between the governments and international organisations involved in constructing the new Afghan state (Rubin 2006: 175).

4. A history of international assistance and the Afghan state

The last 50 years of history of Afghanistan, with its intersecting conflicts, international and regional agendas and forms of aid, is crucial for understanding the complexities, and failures, of the current reconstruction project. Indeed, although the country faced new challenges and a different geopolitical scenario, many of the problems of the 2001 reconstruction effort were familiar issues from the past when aid had been tied to regional struggles and foreign powers attempts to gain power and influence and (Johnson & Leslie 2002). Goodhand describes how the conflicts in Afghanistan since 1979 have been accompanied by highly politicised forms of

foreign aid to the country which have contributed to creating a rentier state reliant on foreign assistance and removed from its citizens (2002).

During the 1950s and 1960s, for example, Afghanistan was entangled in Cold War power struggles as the Soviets and the US both sought to gain power and influence in the country through offering financial and technical assistance (Cullather 2002; Nunan 2016). During this period, foreign aid accounted for more than 40% of the state budget which meant the ruling elites were never forced to develop domestic accountability (Goodhand 2002: 841). Also, these state-led modernization programmes, paid for by Cold War powers, led to a society split between a rural subsistence economy and an urban economy largely reliant on international aid and support (Ibid.). A Marxist party, the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan, had formed in 1965, a challenge to the longtime rule by the Afghan royal family, and led a bloodless coup to seize power in 1978. The Soviets finally invaded in 1979 and afterwards all development programming from Europe and the US was terminated while the Soviet government continued forms of support. This compounded the Afghan state's reliance on external funds. In order to undermine the Soviets, highly politicised forms of Western humanitarian aid was delivered along the same routes, via Pakistan, as those used by anti-Soviet resistance groups. Aid to Afghanistan during the 1980s became part of a conscious international strategy by the CIA and allies such as France and the UK, to challenge the Soviet government in Kabul and the culture of aid dependency continued (Goodhand 2002: 841). International NGOs, such as Afghan Aid, were covers for cross border support for the *mujahideen* fighters. The supply of aid was uneven, in a situation which is mirrored by the post-2001 aid effort, in which the distribution 'reflected political ties and proximity rather than absolute humanitarian need' (Goodhand 2002: 842). Refugee camps in Pakistan became highly political refuges for mujahideen fighters and all Afghan refugees were forced to register with one of the political or military parties that had been recognized by the Pakistani government (Goodhand 2002: 842). Such camps, funded by the CIA, also became where religious teachers recruited their madrassa students (*taliban*) in order to wage religious war (*jihad*) against the Soviets (Coll 2004).

After a decade of conflict between Soviet forces and the Afghan, internationally funded *mujahideen*, the Soviets retreated in 1989. During the post-Cold War years, as Goodhand (2002) discusses, when the country quickly descended into civil war (1992 – 1996), and split along religio-ethnic lines, many of the key characteristics of the current politics of aid to Afghanistan were created. The crucial international organisations at this time in Afghanistan

were UN agencies and the Red Cross/Red Crescent, but there was a lack of coordination and accountability around the delivery of aid and the aid system developed in ad-hoc, competitive fashion. Kabul was still aid dependent and aid agencies used the term 'failed state' to justify their role as a form of substitute government. As the UN and NGOs took control, they circumvented Afghan state political institutions and regional centres such as Herat and Jalalabad gradually became more integrated with neighbouring countries of Iran and Pakistan (Goodhand 2002: 844). During the Taliban period that followed the civil war (1996 – 2001), conditionalities were placed on aid by the UN and western countries, in the belief that aid could change the behavior of the Taliban on issues such as gender, human rights, and drugs, with the UN introducing sanctions in 1999 and 2000. These conditionalities demonstrated a growing politicisation of aid, also reflected in the post 2001 reconstruction effort and its focus on gender equality and women's rights, a focus which reflects Western interests and values.

5. THE POST 2001 RECONSTRUCTION PROJECT

After the Bonn Agreement, the plan for the reconstruction of the country was decided at a number of donor conferences during which international donors pledged aid and investment to Afghanistan. Each conference identified issues with the reconstruction effort, called for certain changes and advocated for principles to be upheld (Poole 2011). In 2002, The Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF) was established, a multi-donor fund that coordinated development assistance funds to Afghanistan from donor countries. 34 countries donated to the fund, which was administered by the World Bank (ATRF). Since 2001, Afghanistan's economy has been reliant on international aid and many of the historic issues with international assistance have dogged the present reconstruction effort. By 2009, for example, international assistance constituted 90% of all public expenditure in the country (Waldman 1: 2008) and Afghanistan was the leading global recipient of official development assistance for the second consecutive year (Poole 2: 2011). The amount spent on security, the military and aid between 2002-2009 totals around US$286.4 billion, or US$9,426 per Afghan citizen and the volume of aid has risen each year (Poole 2011: 2). This spending continued apace and by 2021, the US government had spent a total of $121 billion on both rebuilding Afghanistan's security forces, civilian government institutions, economy, and civil society and the military conflict. During this time, 3587 American and allied troops have been killed. Many more Afghans have died, at least 66,000 Afghan troops and 48,000 Afghan civilians have been killed, and at least 75,000 have been injured since 2001. Such figures are likely underestimations (SIGAR 2021: vii).

The US has been the biggest donor to the reconstruction project and has provided almost 50% of the total international assistance budget since 2001. After the US, the biggest donors have been the EU, the UK, Germany, Canada and Japan (Poole 2011: 4). However, amongst these donors, there began a lack of coordination and a 'rush for profile' as donor governments, UN agencies and NGOs wanted to draw attention to themselves under the spotlight of international attention (Johnson & Leslie 2002: 872). Rather than increasing their profile with the Afghan government, this was more a contest between countries in which Afghanistan became a platform for wider, international public diplomacy drives. While certain amounts were pledged and committed in the early years, a large gap grew between what was committed and what was actually spent, for example donors committed to giving $25 billion aid in 2001 but by 2008 had only delivered 15 billion (Waldman 2008: 5). Much of the aid budget spent on Afghanistan was not actually spent in Afghanistan, and left the country through 'imports, expatriated profits and outwards remittances' (Hogg et al. 2013: 18). Afghanistan became a complicated environment for the disbursal of aid due to the reliance on international contractors to implement programmes. This scenario started early on in the reconstruction effort, with an estimated 40% of aid going back to donor countries in corporate profits and consultant salaries – some $6bn between 2001 and 2008 (Waldman 2008: 10). In 2008, the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) was set up by US Congress 'to provide independent and objective oversight of Afghanistan reconstruction projects and activities' for the Department of Defense, Department of State and USAID, notably to investigate 'a growing concern about the possible disconnect between overall U.S. policy and its field implementation. There appears to be a growing gap between the policy objectives of Washington and the reality of achieving them in Afghanistan' (SIGAR 2013: 4). SIGAR identified nearly 7000 contractor groups and highlighted the bureaucracy involved in employing contractors. SIGAR's report showed that US government agencies were not able to account for nearly 18 billion dollars earmarked for reconstruction in Afghanistan shown (Ibid.).

6. Aid and global security

Rubin understands the use of terms such as 'peace-building', 'post-conflict reconstruction', 'nation-building' or 'stabilisation' as misleading when they conceal the real aim of the US, which, he argues, is the pursuit of human security through the processes of global governance (2006: 177). The 2001 intervention in Afghanistan came during a new era of 'principled humanitarianism' in which lines between humanitarian, military and development work became blurred (Duffield 2001). Security and counterinsurgency experts argued that

development and prosperity follow security, and therefore international aid should be explicitly linked to security. Mark Duffield refers to this increased merging of development and security in the minds of 'nation-builders' as the 'securitisation of aid' in which the stabilising effects of aid are seen as an instrument to avoid future wars (Duffield 2001: 15). Aid spending followed the military and was used as part of a 'bomb and build' strategies but explicit links made between poverty and insecurity meant that insecure provinces attracted aid which, perversely, also contributed to the spread of insecurity because of the lack of incentive for these areas to become secure (Waldman 2008: 3). In 2011, for example, up to 20% of DFID's resources were spent directly in Helmand province (DFID 2011: 7) despite the fact that Helmand province is one of the richest in Afghanistan, and only home to 3% of the population. This issue is picked up by Coburn who comments on how 'manipulating narratives of crisis' is beneficial for Afghans because these narratives attract more funds. Afghanistan's elites developed a political system which benefits from the perception of crisis (Coburn 2013).

7. THE AFGHAN STATE AND STATE-BUILDING

Afghanistan's official vision for reconstruction was laid out in The Afghan National Development Strategy (2008), the document agreed on and signed by donor countries for the country's reconstruction. Critics of the strategy argue it is full of the language of partnership and ownership but detached from the reality on the ground and provides an overly technical analysis of problems and possible solutions, ignoring the deeply political nature of the development process (Goodhand & Sedra 2009: S78). The state-building effort sought, broadly, to build Afghan political institutions and create an effective Afghan state. However, instead of supporting fledgling and fragile government institutions, donors often by-passed these and created parallel structures, while senior Afghan officials created networks that coopted aid money for private gain (Maley 2018). Zurcher has argued that aid is more likely to do harm than good to fragile states such as Afghanistan and that weak Afghan state institutions have not been able to absorb funds and effectively manage aid (Zurcher 2012). The way the disbursement of aid was organized also encouraged competition between the major donors to the reconstruction programme. While the major funds donated by the US went to military aid, in terms of reforming the wider security sector, a system was arranged in which each country was assigned a section: military reform (US), police reform (Germany), demilitarisation (Japan), judicial reform (Italy), and counter-narcotics (UK). This developed into a territorial situation with each donor working alone instead of collaborating with others (Goodhand and Sedra 2009: S85). While donors have focused on a lack of capacity within the Afghan government to deliver and manage aid in fact it is often the myriad agendas of donors

and the elites of the recipient country that made aid ineffective. Rubin understands these divisions and rivalries between donor countries as one of the key obstacles to peace-building (Rubin 2006). Suhrke argues that this massive support apparatus constructed by international donors has impeded, rather than helped Afghanistan post 2001 and that the amount of economic assistance given has, in fact, had an adverse effect (Suhrke 2011). The aid effort was also plagued by lack of coordination between international donors. Orzala Ashraf Nemat, a civil society activist and researcher, describes how poor donor co-ordination had manifested at the district level, stating that, "every country, every government has their own priorities." As an example, she pointed to the creation of three separate programmes —National Solidarity Programme (NSP), Afghan Social Outreach Programme (ASOP) and the District Delivery Programme (DDP)—which in some places were being implemented in the same villages with duplicate objectives" (House of Commons 2012). Suhrke understood the withdrawal of troops and scaling-back of funds post 2014 as 'a necessary precondition for a more accountable, autonomous, and sustainable statebuilding process in Afghanistan' (Suhrke 2013: 283). This is the contradictory nature of the engagement with Afghanistan, that through providing extensive external help, international donors undermined the Afghans effort to create a sustainable, Afghan-owned order (Suhrke 2013).

8. ETHNIC GROUPINGS AND RELIGIOUS AFFILIATIONS

In Afghanistan, religious affiliations often intersect with ethnic groupings and differences between these groups have often been exploited by extremists and politicians. Article Four of the Afghan Constitution mentions fourteen ethnic groups: Pashtun, Tajik, Hazara, Uzbek, Turkman, Baluch, Pachaie, Nuristani, Ayrnaq, Arab, Qirghiz, Qizilbash, Gujur, Brahwui (2004). However, there are no official figures on the ethnic make-up of Afghanistan and any such figures are disputed. A census project started in 2013 and supported by the UN deliberately avoided asking respondents which ethnic group they belong to (Graham-Harrison 2013). According to 2010 data from the US Department of State, the largest ethnic group in Afghanistan are Pashtun (including Kuchis), comprising 42% of Afghans. The Tajiks are the second largest ethnic group, at 27% of the population, followed by the Hazaras (9%), Uzbeks (9%), Aimaq (4%), Turkmen (3%), Baluch (2%) and other groups that make up 4%. Afghan Ismailis, who I discuss in Chapter 6 in relation to the work of the Aga Khan Trust for Culture, are another minority group. While the Pashtuns and Tajiks and predominantly Sunni Muslims, the Hazaras are largely Shia. The Hazaras Shia religion and ethnic difference has been a feature of a long history of oppression of Hazaras by the Afghan state (Mousavi 1998). This started under the 'Iron Emir' Abdur Rahman Khan, who was intent on forming a Pashtun dominated

Afghan state and killed, enslaved and displaced groups of Hazaras in order to do so (Kakar 1979; Mousavi 1998). There has been a historic hierarchy of ethnic groups in Afghanistan in which Hazaras are seen as an 'ethnically defined underclass' (2004: 709). During the series of conflicts from 1979, such tensions have reappeared and during the civil war, for example, the country was largely split along ethnic lines between the three major ethnic groups of Pashtuns, Tajiks and Hazaras. Human and minority rights have been a key focus of the new 2004 Afghan constitution, which signalled a new era for Hazara rights and increased access to education and political representation in central government (Adleparvar 2014). The new constitution acknowledged the rights of Afghans to practice their own religious rights and to be able to participate with equality in all aspects of socio-economic and political life in Afghanistan (The Constitution of Afghanistan 2004). In article six of the new constitution ethnicity was explicitly recognised as part of the political reconstruction process, this was evident in the granting of two Vice Presidents, a Tajik and a Hazara. As Adleparvar describes, the effect of this formal recognition of ethnicity has meant that 'ethnicity has become the *modus operandi* of post-Bonn systems of governance in Afghanistan' (2015: 112). However, as I discuss in Chapter 8 with regards to a group of Hazara civil rights activists in Bamyan, the effects on this focus on ethnicity can have the effect of deepening divisions, which are still strongly felt.

9. Regional players

The conflicts and political instability since 1979 also created a power vacuum which has allowed the neighbouring countries of Pakistan and Iran to exert their influence in Afghanistan and have a destabilizing effect (Rubin & Armstrong 2003). The links between Afghanistan and its immediate neighbours are often based on religio-ethnic groupings, for example, Pashtuns live in both Pakistan and Afghanistan, Tajiks live in Afghanistan and Tajikistan, while Iran's population is Shia Muslim and is home to many Hazara refugees. Such ethnic diasporas have 'facilitated recruitment to militant groups and the parallel economy' and have thus fuelled tensions (Rubin & Armstrong 2003: 33). One regional issue tied to wider Cold War geopolitics, is the Pashtunistan issue, a dispute between Afghanistan and Pakistan over an area of land to the north of Pakistan that had been split in two by a colonial era border called the Durand Line which divided a tribal area between Pakistan and India and split up Pashtun communities (Behzan 2014). With the Partition of India, this border became the de facto border between the newly independent state of Pakistan and Afghanistan. Since then, successive Afghan governments have called for either Pashtuns in Pakistan to join Afghanistan or for the

formation of a separate Pashtun state (Behzan 2014: 198). This spurred the rise of Pashtun nationalism in Afghanistan, created tensions between Afghanistan and Pakistan and fueled Cold War rivalries. While Pakistan hosted many Afghan refugees and supported several mujahideen factions against the Soviets, it has also supported the Taliban. By forming allegiances with various power brokers in Afghanistan, Pakistan had nuanced and sometimes conflicting objectives. Pakistan was keen to build allegiances with Afghanistan against India, its long-time foe, curb Pashtun nationalism, and build a trade corridor with Central Asia (Rubin & Armstrong 2003). Pakistan has played a long game in Afghanistan, offering support while also serving its own interests through its intelligence forces (Gall 2014). Other surrounding states, such as Iran, Russia and Tajikistan were keen to dilute the influence of Pakistan in Afghanistan by supporting opposing factions, and while Pakistan supported the Taliban, these nations supported the Northern Alliance, the anti-Taliban group led by Ahmad Shah Massoud. Other cross border relationships exist too, with the Afghan Uzbeks receiving support from Uzbekistan and Turkey. One way in which Iran has asserted influence in the post 2001 era, as Crews describes (2015: 292 - 298), is through Shia religious scholars that have protested against the post 2001 liberal restructuring of the country. Afghan Shia elites have links to Iran through Afghan Shia scholars that have studied at the religious centres in Qom and Najaf and through these ties to Iran, they try and establish personal and institutional authority in Afghanistan. In turn, Iran has also exerted influence through these channels.

10. AFGHANISTAN AND THE UN DEVELOPMENT GOALS

In 2004, four years after the Millennium Declaration was issued by the UN Summit, Afghanistan joined the group of countries committed to reaching the UN's Millennium Development Goals (MDG's). Due to the conflict and difficulty in accessing data, it was decided to extend the time for meeting the MDG targets for Afghanistan from 2015 to 2020, setting a 15-year timeframe from its start point of 2004/2005. The country also added an extra goal to address security issues. According to the Afghanistan Millennium Goals report (2010): 'Afghanistan's current condition, compounded by insecurity, makes review and progress of the MDGs extremely challenging, sometimes threatening to destroy any hard won MDG gains' (MDG report 2010: 8). The Afghanistan National Development Strategy was based around three core themes – Security; Governance, Human Rights and Rule of Law; and Economic and Social Development (ANDS 2008). Each of the MDGs is reflected in one or more of these pillars. Despite the huge influx of aid to the country since 2001, however, poverty has been compounded by a lack of health and social services, as well as poor education and nutrition

levels. The MDG report shows that progress had been made in terms of certain goals such as reductions in infant mortality, education, gender gaps and access to telecommunications but by 2010 Afghanistan was still ranked as the lowest in Asia and second lowest in the world in terms of the Human Development Index. In 2010, only 3% of Afghans had access to safe drinking water, 12% to adequate sanitation and 6% to electricity. 40% of the Afghan population were unemployed and another 8.5 million or 37% of the population were on the borderline of food insecurity and thus hunger (MDG report 2010: 8). By 2020, according to the Human Development Report, some improvements had been made, 36% of the population use safely managed drinking water and 41 per cent use safely managed sanitation services. Health outcomes have improved, especially for women and children. Between 2005 and 2016-17, adult literacy rose from 24 to 35 per cent. At the secondary school level in 2017, net enrolment was 62 per cent among males, though only 36 per cent among females (UNDP 2020).

One of the key themes of the reconstruction, or modern statebuilding effort, has been a focus on Afghan women and their role in Afghan society. While women's rights were a focus of the MDG's (MDG 3 is focused on eliminating gender disparity in women's primary and secondary education), the attention paid to women's rights in Afghanistan also has other origins. President Bush and his wife, Laura Bush, used strong rhetoric to put women's rights at the top of the agenda of the 'War on Terror' (Abu-Lughod 2002). Afghan women were becoming a growing area of international concern and at the Bonn conference efforts and promises were made to address the situation of Afghan women, for example the reservation of 10 percent (of a total 1,600) seats in the 2002 emergency Loya Jirga ("Grand Council"), the establishment in 2002 of the Ministry of Women's Affairs (MOWA), the signing of the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 2003. Suhrke describes the symbolism of this support for women: 'The rights of women became a primary symbol of the new order and given the Taliban's dismal record on this, an important post hoc justification for the intervention' (2007: 1303). However, much of the focus on women was powerful rhetoric and justification for the military intervention and did not translate into policy or change on the ground. For example, at its inauguration in November 2005, Afghanistan's parliament had a very high number of female parliamentarians, 68 (27%) of 249 seats were occupied by women which was a result of objectives outlined in the new constitution. While this number is close to the UN required 30% of women in legislative bodies

this has not led to significant representation of women's interests (Larsen 2012: 2). Larsen discusses the social construction of gender roles in Afghanistan, showing that women's interests are not a stand-alone area for development but that they intersect with a range of other issues, one core being the attitudes of Afghan men (Ibid.) Women's presence alone is not sufficient to make changes in a context such as Afghanistan where the broader sociopolitical context is so fragile, heavily geared towards the interests of men and issues such as ethnic groupings are also significant factors for women legislators (Larsen 2012: 3). Julie Billaud describes a disorienting situation for Afghan women who were forced to negotiate between the strictures of a conservative Afghan society and the pressure put on them to be 'empowered' and 'liberated' by the reconstruction project (2009). Afghan women were the focus of the some of the first changes in governance after the Bonn Agreement, with the establishment of the Ministry of Women's Affairs and the promotion of women in the public sphere. As Billaud notes, these were easy changes to make for the new interim government to appease international demands about the visibility of women. However, these have been accused of being a tokenistic 'cosmetic sham' undertaken by Afghan elites to keep aid money flowing when the reality was one of limited representation of women in policy and decision-making processes (Billaud 2009: 131). Women became one core focus of the reconstruction effort, but these reforms failed to reach beyond the capital of Kabul. The rights of women became a highly politicised area both for international donors and their objectives but also for Afghans who began to see this focus on women as a form of unwelcome foreign interference, as I will show in Chapter 7 in relation to Roya's experiences at Turquoise Mountain (Billaud 2009: 129).

11. THE RECONSTRUCTION OF AFGHANISTAN'S CULTURAL HERITAGE

Since the beginning of the reconstruction project, international governments, heritage agencies and NGOs have been participating in a cultural intervention, working to conserve and rehabilitate the country's cultural heritage. In the Afghanistan Compact (2006), an agreement between the Afghan government and international donors for the development of the country over the subsequent five years, the state's official vision for the cultural sector was to 'respect the pluralistic cultures, values and history of Afghanistan, based on Islam' (NATO-ISAF 2006: 2). In the National Development Strategy, the strategy document that outlines how to achieve these objectives, the stated goals for the Culture, Media and Youth sector were (i) to create awareness and foster a sense of pride in the country's history, future, culture and achievements; (ii) to document and preserve cultural artifacts and heritage sites

(Islamic Republic of Afghanistan National Development Strategy 2008: 11). Several big and somewhat vague targets were set, the first to compile a 'comprehensive inventory of Afghan treasures' by the end of 2007, the second that 'measures will be taken to revive the Afghan cultural heritage, to stop the illegal removal of cultural material and to restore damaged monuments and artefacts by end-2010' (NATO-ISAF 2006: 10). The third target was to 'establish a well maintained and accessible cultural artifacts data base and the cultural artifacts collection held by the Ministry will be expanded. In the longer term, museums will be established and or expanded and historical heritage sites will be protected' (Ibid.). However, there has been no strategy for how to achieve the targets for culture in the National Development Strategy or delineation of roles and responsibilities between NGOs, the Afghan Ministry of Information and Culture, and international donor governments, and 'most external donors have failed to align their investments with them' (Leslie 2009: 78).

In 1994, during the Taliban era, a small group of individual Afghans and internationals were concerned about the fate of the country's cultural heritage and established the Society for the Preservation of Afghan Cultural Heritage (SPACH). In the post 2001 era, however, this focus on the country's heritage greatly expanded and many international governments and NGOs have rallied in support of cultural preservation. The range of supporters, and their agendas, reflects the politics of the wider reconstruction effort. Initially, UNESCO was tasked with coordinating this effort and, in 2002, at the International Seminar on the Rehabilitation of Afghanistan's Cultural Heritage, donor countries collectively pledged US $7 million for cultural heritage initiatives (Manhart 2004: 402). The initial sum of US $7 million is miniscule compared to the country's overall reconstruction budget and was soon exceeded (Manhart 2002). The number and range of different organisations initially supporting Afghanistan's National Museum reveals the diversity of interests converging on heritage. Since 2002, the National Museum of Afghanistan has received funding from the governments of Italy, Greece, France, the United Kingdom, the United States, the Netherlands, Japan either directly or through UNESCO's office. Other supporters include SPACH, the Aga Khan Trust for Culture, the British Museum, the University of Vienna and the Musée Guimet for training programmes, inventories, conservation laboratories, building repairs and other initiatives (Manhart 2004; Remsen & Tedesco 2015: 10). Tasked with coordinating international activities for heritage, in 2002 UNESCO organized an International Coordinating Committee (ICC) of Afghans and internationals. In 2003, the committee's first session was held in Paris, chaired by the Minister

of Culture, Makhdoom Raheen (Manhart 2004: 403). While more than 60 international 'experts' attended, only seven Afghans, representatives of the Ministry of the Information and Culture, were there (Manhart 2004: 4012), which seemingly set the tone for a sector which became dominated by international organizations and donors. This reflects the wider issues of the 2001 reconstruction project, that of weak or fledgling Afghan institutions, a lack of clear strategy and a range of international donor countries, or organisations, each with a different agenda. Leslie has commented on the often piece-meal focus on the museum by international governments in the early years, and that the brand-new equipment given by 'well-intentioned donors lies largely unused due to a lack of trained Afghan staff. After more than six years of investments, the museum remains little more than a shell—a building without a coherent program of activities' (2009: 79).

Cultural heritage work has certainly been a factor in donors 'rush for profile' while Afghanistan remained in the international spotlight as such work puts a positive spin on the wider military or state building project. In the early years of the reconstruction project, the US State Department funded projects by the Aga Khan Trust for Culture and Turquoise Mountain and then, in 2009, in tandem with the troop surge in which the US expanded their military presence, the US devoted considerably more funds to cultural heritage as part of an accompanying focus on public diplomacy (Remsen & Tedesco 2015: 105). In 2010, Laura Tedesco, an American archaeologist, arrived in Kabul to oversee the US's new support for heritage and was based at the US Embassy. Between 2010 and 2015, the US government spent a total of $15 million on cultural heritage work. One of the key recipients for US funds was the Aga Khan Trust for Culture, who were undertaking a range of heritage projects such as the restoration of historic buildings such as the Goldasta Mosque in Kabul, the Shish Nal Masjid in Herat and the huge fort, the Qala Ikhtyaruddin in Herat aswell as funds for cultural heritage education programmes, conservation of museum objects (Remsen & Tedesco 2015: 105 – 106). The US also funded work at the archaeological site of Mes Aynak implemented by the French Archaeological Delegation. In addition to this, the US has worked with the National Museum of Afghanistan, forming the US–National Museum of Afghanistan Museum Partnership, in which the US committed US $2.77 million for a multi-year project, implemented by the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago and focused on building an inventory of the museum's collection (a project on which I worked as a registrar); rehousing the museum collections; training for museum staff (Ibid.) In 2011, the US committed $5 for the first stage of building an entirely new National Museum building, at the ceremony the US Ambassador Karl Eikenberry explained the rationale for supporting a new museum building:

'The United States stands strong with our Afghan partners on vital issues of cultural heritage and national pride. An exciting new National Museum will contribute to the development of a renewed Afghan national identity, the growth of a peaceful Afghan civil society, and be at the foundation of the social reconciliation process' (US Embassy Kabul 2011 quoted in Remsen & Tedesco 2015: 110).

The government of Germany has also funded heritage preservation work. The Germans have also funded work by the Aga Khan Trust for Culture, at the Qala Ikhtyaruddin in Herat and for the restoration of the Khwaja Parsa shrine in Herat, which I discuss in Chapter 6. Funds from the Foreign Office of the Federal Republic of Germany supported archaeological research for the Afghan-German Archaeological mission to Herat in 2005 (ed. Franke 2008). According to an official at the German Embassy in Kabul, between 2003 - 2013 the German Embassy spent 7.4 million euros on cultural projects in Afghanistan, making it the single largest beneficiary for German cultural programs (pers. comm. June 2013). The funds originated from the Stability Pact for Afghanistan, which included the objectives of support for Afghan political processes, emergency aid and the Afghan police force. The German government's implementing partner for much of the heritage work has been the Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC). In 2004, Germany and the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) initiated a programme of bilateral cultural relations, which included programmes focused on infrastructure and education as well as funds for cultural work. As part of this agreement, which was expanded in 2009, the German government funded, or co-funded, a range of AKTC's projects in Afghanistan, including, among others, the preservation of Bagh e Babur and the restoration of the citadel of Herat (AKDN 2009). The German government's rationale for funding this work is 'to foster knowledge transfer and cultural dialogue among partners' (Germany n.d.). While 'intercultural dialogue' and 'social reconciliation' may have been a reason for the US and Germany supporting heritage projects, the positive public relations potential of this work also allowed these governments to show a softer side to the hard politics of the military intervention. Jolyon Leslie suggests that during the early years of international support for heritage 'external donors continued to rely largely on highly visible, set-piece interventions (with a largely urban focus) rather than on processes that might take time to bear fruit and that depend on investments for success' such as 'an analysis of needs across the cultural professions and disciplines' (Leslie 2009: 78).

The French Archaeological Delegation (DAFA) has been operating, on and off, in Afghanistan since 1922, and is funded by the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs. DAFA's work halted during the recent intersecting conflicts and started again in 2003 under French Archaeologist Roland Besenval with a focus on excavating proto historic and Islamic sites such as Tepe Zargaran, the Bala Hissar and the Ancient walls of Balkh. More recently DAFA have worked closely with UNESCO and AKTC at sites in Balkh province (Noh Gombad), in Herat (Gowhar Shad) and in Bamyan at Shahre Golghola. Since the discoveries at Mes Aynak, DAFA has collaborated with the Ministry of Mines and the World Bank over the archaeological excavation there. DAFA's core focus has been on creating an archaeological map of Afghanistan (Bendezu-Sarmiento 2019). Rather than setting up their own cultural projects, other donor governments have chosen to donate directly to UNESCO. Between 2001 – 2015, for example, UNESCO received approximately $6 million dollars for preservation and stabilisation work at the Buddhas. This has been funded by a range of donors and the majority of funds came from the Japanese government. Other donors to UNESCO's work in Afghanistan include $4.2 million from government of Italy for work across sites Afghanistan, largely in Herat and at Shahre Golghola in Bamyan; $5.4 million from the government of South Korea for a new cultural centre in Bamyan; $2 million from the World Bank to work in partnership with UNESCO and the extractive industries such as copper mining, other smaller sums have come from the governments of Switzerland, Greece and Norway, according to an informant at UNESCO (pers. comm. June 2015). The World Bank is also involved in the country's heritage and has funded the archaeological excavation at the copper mine site of Mes Aynak. The exact figures are hard to access, but the Bank has promised $7.6 million for the Preservation of Aynak Antiquities and Support for Alternative Livelihoods (World Bank 2018: 8). The UK government have been less focused on supporting cultural heritage than others, with small donations made to Turquoise Mountain and the Aga Khan Trust for Culture in the early years. More recently, with the launch of its Cultural Protection Fund, more significant funds have been donated to Turquoise Mountain, such as the £2.5 million for preserving historic buildings in Murad Khane heritage and supporting craft skills (British Council 2016).

While this scenario reveals the range of international interests converging on heritage and a lack of Afghan agency, I became aware too, as David Mosse has suggested, of how these interests were not always a 'top down' enterprise, but were rather a joint, creative effort,

enacted and maintained by a range of stakeholders, for a variety of different reasons (2005: 6). As detailed above, The National Museum, for example, became a popular site for public diplomacy by international donor governments to the reconstruction. However, I saw how the museum also served these donors too. The museum and its donors became locked in a cycle of perpetual dependence (which was impressively negotiated by the director) as the museum counted on international money for its exhibitions and programmes, while donor governments needed the museum to enhance their image in the wider donor 'rush for profile' that had become a key feature of the internationally sponsored reconstruction programme. From my experience working on some of these projects I was able to witness the entanglements of power, politics and heritage preservation work as they happened 'on the ground' and, also, how cultural heritage preservation takes place across a range of networks which blur the boundaries between international donor governments, NGOs, Afghan state actors, Afghan artisans and community groups.

12. Conclusions

In this chapter, I have set the scene for the highly politicised environment in which cultural heritage interventions were taking place. Afghanistan was catapulted into the global spotlight by the events of 9.11 and quickly became central to global politics and the 'War on Terror'. The US led military intervention was quickly followed by a reconstruction programme which has been rife with conflicting agendas and a culture of competition rather than collaboration between donors. As a result, state institutions have remained weak. This situation reflects the problems of the long years of international assistance to Afghanistan which have served foreign interests and undermined Afghanistan's ability to create a stable, functioning state. Cultural preservation work is a small area of intervention and the funds spent on such work are minimal compared to the vast expense of the international spending on military and aid. However, the number of governments, organisations and actors involved is revealing of the complex ways in power, politics and heritage currently interact in such spaces in the 'post Bamyan era'. In the following chapter I discuss the methods I used to undertake research in this space, how I accessed my case studies of heritage intervention and some of the difficulties encountered.

CHAPTER 2

ARRIVING AT THE FIELD: HERITAGE, NATIONAL RECONSTRUCTION AND POWER

FIGURE 1 KABUL STREET SCENE, 2012. PHOTOGRAPH C. WYNDHAM

1. METHODOLOGY

In September 2012, four years after my first trip to Afghanistan, I landed back in Kabul (fig. 1). The city looked the same, choked with traffic and with the same herds of sheep and goats grazing amidst piles of rubbish. Despite the huge injections of funds from donor countries, the signs of poverty and homelessness were still very visible, with more beggars in rags gathered at traffic junctions. Such scenes now contrasted sharply with a growing number of glitzy wedding halls fashioned from coloured glass with fluorescent flamingo shaped lights in their parking lots. Other signs of the city's growing disparity between rich and poor were the number of new multi-story malls in the city centre, the speed of their hasty construction with cheap materials visible in their wonky structures. Symbols of the deteriorating security situation were the pick-up trucks full of uniformed, private militias, who worked for a particular governor, politician or 'strongman' and hung threateningly on either side of open-top jeeps wearing wrap-around sunglasses. Convoys of these heavily armed, intimidating groups sped around the city. Another response to the increasing violence was that the neighbourhood of Wazir Akbar Khan, where embassies, diplomats and a large portion of NGOs were based, had retreated further behind rolls of barbed wire and concrete blast walls for

protection. The international guesthouse of Turquoise Mountain, the NGO for which I had worked, had left the mud brick fort where I had lived and was now located in this 'green zone'.

In this chapter I outline the methodology for my research and the research techniques I used in order to answer my research questions. I discuss some of the constraints that affected the design of my study and how I gained access to my case studies of heritage intervention. I go on to discuss some of the risk and ethical considerations of conducting research in Afghanistan and then describe my periods of research at the French Archaeological Delegation in Kabul, with UNESCO in Bamyan and with the Aga Khan Trust for Culture in Balkh. In order to understand the shape of entanglements between heritage work and politics in Afghanistan it was clear I needed to study a number of different sites, and that I would be undertaking a 'multisited' ethnography of power (Marcus 1995: 90). Ethnographic methods have developed in order to study sites of global connection or the phenomenon and effects of globalisation as it happens across multiple sites. Gupta and Ferguson called for a revaluation of culture in a globalised age and for a mapping of culture that transcends national borders and nation states so that the 'familiar lines between "here" and "there", center and periphery, colony and metropole become blurred' (ed. Gupta & Ferguson 1997: 38). Amit called for methodological flexibility to reflect this new environment and suggests that anthropologists must become mobile in order to study the networks and sets of relationships that exist across these boundaries (Amit 2000). Appadurai calls for a focus on these new 'global ethnoscapes' (1991) and argues that 'ethnography must redefine itself as that practice of representation which illuminates the power of large-scale imagined life possibilities over specific life trajectories' (1991: 200). While Appadurai refers to these sites of global connection, or interactions between global and local actors as 'scapes', they have also been conceptualized as 'flows' (Featherstone, Lash et al. 1995) and 'cosmopolitanisms' (Breckenridge, Pollock et al. 2002).

This study builds on a history of heritage ethnography which has examined the relationship between cultural heritage, international development and neoliberal development (e.g. Breglia 2006; Hancock 2008; Butler 2007), and on studies which examine the role of heritage in post conflict contexts, such as ethnographic research which examines both the cooperation and competition between international organisations and stakeholders contributing to the post conflict reconstruction of post conflict Cambodia, at Angkor (Ollier & Winter 2006; Winter 2007). While an ethnographic approach has previously been used in Heritage Studies to explore the relationship between power, politics and heritage, there has been a tendency

to focus on either examining the semiotics of heritage charters or how heritage discourses operate from the 'top down', rather than on the complex and sophisticated ways in which politics are concealed and negotiated through heritage. A common theme has been dispossession and domination through heritage intervention, in which regimes of 'global' heritage value intersect with and ultimately dominate 'local' conceptions of heritage value (e.g Butler 2007; Kreps 2003). More recently, ethnography has been forefronted as a part of actor-network approaches to heritage which have emerged as a means of charting the shifting relationships between people, 'things' and the environments which they inhabit, institutions and governments (e.g. Harrison 2013). Basu and Modest have called for ethnographic approaches in order to assess the relationships between heritage, museums and international development (2015).

An ethnographic approach to power was crucial in understanding the complexity of how politics and heritage are entangled in Afghanistan's reconstruction programme. My research questions demanded a means of understanding how politics intersect with and operate through organisations that collaborate over heritage work, and also how forms of power work on the ground across a number of case studies of heritage intervention. Shore and Wright (1997) echo Marcus's idea of multisitedness as they describe a method for studying the operations of politics and power across a number of sites: '…studying through' [that is, tracing ways in which power creates webs and relations between actors, institutions and discourses across time and space] entails multisite ethnographies which trace policy connections between different organisational and everyday worlds…' (Shore & Wright 1997: 14). My methodology was a multisited ethnography and as part of this ethnographic approach I used a number of qualitative research techniques. These included observation, informal discussion and semi-structured interviews.

2. Methods

I returned to Kabul in 2012 in order to work as a registrar on a digitisation and inventorying project at the National Museum of Afghanistan (fig.2) run by the Oriental Institute which is part of

FIGURE 2 THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AFGHANISTAN, KABUL. PHOTOGRAPH C. WYNDHAM

the University of Chicago, and funded by the US State Department. The project was to design and complete a dual language digital inventory of the museum's collection, which had suffered significant damage and losses during the civil war and later Taliban era. My plan was to scope out the contacts and potential sites for my research while working on this project and staying at the guesthouse of the French Archaeological Delegation. I worked at the museum before leaving to focus on my research in April 2013. Similar to any research conducted in an unpredictable environment, this study has been subject to constraints which have informed the design and methodology. One of my core concerns was how to gain consistent access to research participants and these sites of heritage intervention. Heritage work in areas of conflict has typically been limited by the tendency for international 'experts' to swoop in and out for short periods of research focused on technical solutions to damaged monuments or sites, or to gather information for 'awareness raising' about the damage to sites. However, gaining longer- term access to sites and projects was problematic as the security situation was in flux, certain sites became off limits for periods of time, and international consultants would arrive and leave at a moment's notice. To mitigate the combination of a potential lack of access with a situation of highly social actors, I had to become a 'mobile ethnographer' that was responsive to the ever-changing circumstances (Marcus 1995: 96). Although I knew I wanted to study Turquoise Mountain from the outset, as I had previously worked for the organisation, my other sites of heritage intervention emerged as opportunities arose and access became possible.

FIGURE 3 ENGRAVED STONES OUTSIDE THE ENTRANCE TO THE NATIONAL MUSEUM. PHOTOGRAPH C. WYNDHAM

The National Museum in Kabul was an ideal place from which to start thinking about heritage and politics as it has been such a focus of international donor attention. Every day on the way

to work I passed an engraved stone which sat at the entrance to the museum which reads, 'A nation stays alive when its culture stays alive,' a saying which many assumed was attributed to Omara Khan Massoudi, the much-respected museum director that worked at the National Museum throughout the civil war and Taliban periods (fig. 3). I asked around and no one knew exactly where the original saying came from, or when it was said, but due to its popularity with Afghans and donors alike, it had become a motto much quoted by organisations and individuals working with Afghanistan's heritage. It struck me as a quotable phrase with mass appeal but also made me think about the complexity of support for culture and heritage. The sentiment evidently carried within it some of the features of the 'post-Bamyan' era for heritage in which I was interested, such as the idea of heritage currently being at greater risk and of the greatest value of heritage resting with material, tangible forms of the past, such as the objects inside the museum. Also, the idea of an Afghan nation is core to the ideals of the reconstruction programme, but the reality is more complex as the idea of Afghan nationhood serves the dominant Pashtun political elite and the country is heavily integrated into its neighbouring countries of Pakistan and Iran through porous borders, diaspora populations and economic ties (Hanifi 2012: 83 – 101). The stone was placed next to another which bears the words 'The Embassy of Greece'. I later learned that Greece was but one donor amongst many to the museum. Since the museum reopened in 2002, it has received funding from Italy, Greece, France, the United Kingdom, the United States, the Netherlands, Japan and the Aga Khan Trust for Culture for training programmes, inventories, conservation laboratories, building repairs and other initiatives, which shows the range of political interests converging on heritage. The motto also prompts other questions such as 'whose culture should be kept alive?' which is pertinent in a country where culture has historically been divisive and is part of very real ethno-sectarian tensions.

With little funds available from the impoverished Afghan Ministry of Information and Culture, it became clear that the museum was largely reliant on this donor funding. Through my daily engagement with museum staff and the building I saw the range of support that had been given from different countries, such as display cases from Japan, support for a gallery showing objects from Mes Aynak from the US State Department, another gallery devoted to Buddhism with support from the Netherlands and lots of conservation chemicals left by individual experts who came to give workshops. One entire room was filled with crates of objects returned by the British Museum after their seizure by UK customs. These contributions sat under the museum's ever-leaking roof. Downstairs the toilets functioned intermittently. One curator told to me it was easier to secure support for a new museum rather than secure

funding to mend the leaking roof. Indeed, in 2011, the US State Department had offered seed funding of $5 million to build an entirely new National Museum. It struck me that this piecemeal support from donors keen to burnish their reputation through support for culture was somehow a microcosm of the wider reconstruction programme. In my time at the museum, I was impressed by how Mr Massoudi carefully negotiated between and balanced the requirements of donors and the programmes they wished to support with his vision for the museum's future.

While working at the museum, I realised that, due to issues of access, each individual case study of heritage intervention might provide a rather 'thin' analysis of the entanglement between heritage and politics which happen across sophisticated networks of governments, NGOs, individuals and forms of expertise (Marcus 1998). In order to provide a more profound level of analysis, Marcus suggests the ethnographer also 'follows' a certain cultural phenomenon across different contexts to help build this multisited space for ethnographic study (Marcus 1995: 90). This inspired me to also look beyond the sites of heritage intervention themselves towards researching the more complex dynamics of interaction of a particular idea about the value of heritage across a number of sites, such as a focus by international organisations on Afghanistan's pre-Islamic heritage, an emphasis which I had begun to understand through my work at the museum and the daily interactions with staff there. The Oriental Institute did not allow me to write about their project so while working there I merely observed, took short notes and chatted about heritage issues at lunch to Afghan colleagues. Later, I returned and conducted semi-structured interviews with the director and three of the curators.

Reflective of the focus of much of the funds for national reconstruction, a great deal of the internationally sponsored heritage work was focused on sites in and around Kabul as it was here that donors were able to see the effects of their gifts as part of the wider 'rush for profile' amongst donors to the reconstruction programme. Kabul was home to the offices of Turquoise Mountain, the Aga Khan Trust for Culture, UNESCO and the French Delegation, along with all the other international organisations working to reconstruct the country, embassies, NATO military bases and Afghan government institutions. I stayed at the guesthouse of the French Archaeological Delegation while working on the National Museum project, and afterwards for stints of several months during my fieldtrips in 2013, 2014 and

2015. Here, I was able to make and remake connections with international organisations and individuals working with heritage and plot access to particular sites of heritage intervention. My previous work at Turquoise Mountain helped me hugely in making these connections. There are some issues with accessing a visa in order to do research for periods of longer than one month. I had a work visa from my time on the National Museum project and used that until it ran out. After that, I applied for one month tourist visas and when they ran out I navigated the various fines, extensions and exit visas at Kabul's passport office and managed to remain for periods of up to 3 months. I conducted research in Afghanistan in three-month periods, spending a year in total there between 2013 and 2015. I also followed up some of my research findings in Bamyan with members of the Hazara diaspora based in Birmingham.

While the organisation did not end up as a specific case study of heritage intervention in my final thesis, the French Delegation plays a crucial role in the small, internationally funded cultural sector and was a crucial venue for the intersection of heritage with politics. Meetings between Afghan archaeologists, international consultants, representatives from the Ministry of Information and Culture, employees of the Aga Khan Trust for Culture, the French Cultural Centre, Turquoise Mountain and the World Bank often happened here. This small group of organisations and individuals working with Afghanistan's heritage can be closed and secretive due to a sense of competition over limited funds for heritage work and the profile that such work can give an organisation or an individual. The French archaeologists regularly played host to this 'inner sanctum' of core heritage players which enabled me to have daily interactions with them, immerse myself in conversations about heritage preservation, tag along on visits to nearby archaeological sites or monuments, and either re-establish or build contacts across the small sector of Afghan heritage work. Although now an independent researcher, I had worked in this area since 2009 and so was trusted to come along on trips to sites and be privy to certain conversations that might have been harder to access as a stranger. After the rights to exploit the copper at Mes Aynak were sold to MCC, the Chinese mining company, the French Delegation was tasked by the World Bank with setting up the initial archaeological survey of the site and was subsequently involved with the excavations. Through relationships formed at the guesthouse I tagged along on three trips to Mes Aynak, in Logar Province about 40 km outside Kabul, which was otherwise inaccessible due to the distance from Kabul and the Taliban presence in the area. I also organised six structured interviews with Afghan and international archaeologists working there and an interview with an official from the Afghan Ministry of Mines. In the evenings, the French archaeologists often played host to diplomats and officials from the French and other embassies. Such social occasions provided insight into

how funding for heritage work can be ad hoc and reliant on personal relationships between heritage actors and a particular ambassador, for example. The most valuable data was gathered through informal conversations and observation. From my base there I was able to secure access to my other field sites outside Kabul, in Bamyan and Balkh, through UNESCO and the Aga Khan Trust for Culture. Although I had introduced my research project as 'researching the relationship between cultural heritage and national reconstruction', the French archaeologists, my hosts, were rather bemused by the nature (and point) of my research but this suited me as they didn't ask many questions which allowed me to occupy a sort of blurred line between heritage professional and researcher. While based there, I took daily visits to Turquoise Mountain, where I spent the day observing a pottery lesson or talking to ex-colleagues and interviewing the Country Director, or I visited the museum to follow up on conversations I had had with the Director. I had to be flexible and opportunistic, eagerly jumping on each opportunity as it arose.

Kabul is notoriously hard to navigate and because, at that time (2013 – 2015), it was inadvisable for foreigners to walk around, I used local taxi companies. The traffic is terrible, with long rush hours in both the morning and afternoon, and roads are often blocked due to military convoys or embassies which close down roads to enable employees to enter and leave in safety. I found that visits to field sites such as the National Museum or Turquoise Mountain were limited to, on average, one trip per day. I sometimes didn't know where I was going and, asking to be dropped at the Ministry of Mines for an interview about Mes Aynak, I found myself wandering around outside a high wall with traffic rushing past and heavily armed security guards until I saw the hidden entrance. Government ministries were hidden, without any signage outside, to make them safer from attacks. Inside the compound it became clear this was one of the richer ministries, as pressure from the World Bank had Afghanistan opening up its mineral resources to the international market. The huge and lavishly decorated office of the official I interviewed, who had recently returned from Dubai where he had moved his family, gave a clue as to where some of this support was being directed.

I experienced issues with access to Turquoise Mountain. NGOs are generally less keen to take part in research, as they seek to emphasise positive stories in order to 'justify their existence to donors, secure new contracts, and fend off competitors' (Cooley & Ron 2002: 37 – 38). As a way to control access, the Director selected a group of *ustads* (teachers) and students that I could interview. I supplemented these interviews with my memories of working at the organisation for two years. Initially I found it hard to think about Turquoise Mountain's work

critically and felt awkward doing so as these were my friends and former colleagues and I had also played a role in shaping the organisation through my work there between 2008 and 2010. I found it easier to analyse my interviews, observations and memories of the organisation when back in the UK, at some distance from it.

As part of my research, I often visited Murad Khane in Kabul's Old City, where the Turquoise Mountain Institute is located. This was only a 20-minute walk from the French Delegation but due to security restrictions I had to go by car, driving past the huge billboards showing adverts for Roshan mobile telephone network and recruitment adverts for the Afghan National Army. The experience of driving around everywhere by car, common to such contexts, was somewhat disorientating and I refamiliarised myself with the city through these daily traffic-choked routes to my field sites, rather than by walking around it. The same markers stood out, the glamorous Serena Hotel, built by the Aga Khan Development Network, the umbrella organisation for the Aga Khan Trust for Culture, to attract international business to Kabul (which is also revealing of the links between the Aga Khan's heritage work and the private sector), and the dried-up Kabul River. In Kabul I was frustrated by these feeling of distance from the city and lack of access to Afghans who didn't work with heritage. I was always curious to what level Afghans were engaged with these official forms of national heritage, such as the National Museum. From snatched conversations with taxi drivers, shopkeepers and friends, there seemed to be little engagement. I felt the gulf between the French Delegation guesthouse and its international guests and the daily life of the city and its inhabitants. Getting out of the taxi just before the Turquoise Mountain offices of Murad Khane allowed me to walk through a few streets before getting to Turquoise Mountain and it was always a relief to stroll through the silver bazaar, glance at the stalls and their wares, walk past the Abu Fazl shrine and adjacent tea house and engage with the city for a few moments.

3. RISK ASSESSMENT AND ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The ongoing conflict in Afghanistan raised questions and challenges about how to collect useful data and conduct ethical research. Researchers that work in conflict zones have a moral responsibility towards their research subjects and decisions about research must take into account the harm that can be done by compromising the security and anonymity of research participants (Goodhand 2000: 12). There is a literature that discusses research design and ethical conduct in armed conflicts (e.g., Nordstrom & Robben (eds.) 1995; Goodhand 2000; Barakat et al. 2002; Wood 2006; MacGinty, Brett & Vogel 2021). My field sites, however, were not directly within a theatre of conflict but were in parts of the country that, at that time,

existed somewhere between a conflict and a post-conflict scenario. While the threat of a random attack, or an improvised explosive device existed in Kabul, instances of these attacks were rare during my periods of research. Research in such environments represents certain challenges that effect data. It tends to be geographically limited, focused on capital cities, and on accessible elites (Roll & Swenson 2019). The security situation meant I could not go to Ghazni, where the US State Department was funding a series of heritage projects in line with the Year of Islamic Culture festival, which would have made an interesting case study. However, in terms of the access bias due to the 'capital city trap', I found this worked in my favour, as it meant I had access to the inner circle of heritage professionals as they were all forced to come through the city and many stayed at the French Delegation (Roll & Swenson 2019: 248).

Returning to Kabul to work at the museum after a few years away, I saw how the security situation had deteriorated. I witnessed many conversations between Afghan friends turn to the US green card lottery or changing visa permissions and restrictions in Europe or the US. I became acutely aware of my privilege at being able to leave at a moment's notice while my Afghan friends and colleagues were largely only able to leave for a few weeks if given a much-coveted place on a workshop or training abroad. Throughout my fieldwork I was aware of Afghanistan's ongoing political instability and the issues that this potentially presented for Afghan research participants. In their introduction to *Fieldwork Under Fire*, Nordstrom and Robben make the point that violence is 'intricately layered' (1995: 5). I was aware of the possible risk of endangering Afghan research subjects through asking them to engage with me. While Kabul is ostensibly seen as 'post conflict' by aid and humanitarian agencies, aspects of the conflict are still relevant. As a foreigner in Afghanistan, by association, I was linked to the international military intervention and therefore a target for the Taliban or other insurgent or criminal groups. In this environment, Afghans deemed to have engaged with foreigners are also at risk and, for example, can, albeit rarely, be subject to checks on their mobile phones for international contacts by Taliban affiliates in Taliban-controlled areas outside Kabul. I became aware of the importance of maintaining the anonymity of Afghan research participants even outside of Afghanistan when working at the British Museum on the *Crossroads of the Ancient World* exhibition before my PhD research started. Journalists covering the exhibition for the international press often focused on the vibrant story of the 'hidden treasures', the parts of the National Museum's collection which were carefully concealed from civil war era looters and the Taliban during the conflict and were keen to interview the museum *tavildars* (keyholders), the members of National Museum staff that

had kept the objects' whereabouts secret, about their involvement. I witnessed the Afghan curators' discomfort at being asked their names for fear of potential reprisals from the Taliban. To address issues such as this, I collected data from Afghan research subjects that had already worked in international organisations or with foreigners and were therefore aware of these risks. My Afghan informants were employees of the National Museum, Turquoise Mountain, Aga Khan Trust for Culture and members of the Ministry of Information and Culture, the Ministry of Mines and Petroleum and UNESCO. I never used a digital recorder as Afghans (and internationals) in Afghanistan are suspicious of being recorded or asked for signatures on consent forms. Instead, I obtained oral consent. Where possible, I have kept all these contributions anonymous and have changed names. Interviews with all informants took place in safe places such as the offices of international organisation or secure locations such as hotels, restaurants or guesthouses. When moving around the city, I kept a low profile and made efforts not to draw attention either to myself or to research subjects. In terms of being able to protect myself, I had good knowledge of the city having lived and worked there for two years, could speak Dari to intermediate level and had daily updates from ANSO, an NGO focused on security dynamics in Afghanistan. With my supervisors, we set up a weekly system of updates and check-ins.

My international research participants were all heritage consultants or archaeologists working in the cultural sector in Afghanistan and therefore had already taken the risks associated with living and working in Afghanistan. However, other perils existed, such as my research negatively impacting on the careers of consultants or the reputations of heritage agencies or organisations. In certain cases, when a research subject is identifiable such as, for example, the Country Director of an international heritage organisation, I have endeavoured to maintain the anonymity of the research participant and where this is not possible, have considered the impact of the research on the informant. If the potential harm or risks outweighed the potential benefits for using the data collected, I have withdrawn the related analysis from my thesis. In these cases, I will have to address this issue if I submit the thesis for publication.

4. FIELD SITES

A) BAMYAN

I was struck by the contrast between how frequently the destruction of the Buddhas was a focus of international media representations of Afghanistan's heritage, compared to how little the Buddha niches featured in the discussions of the small group of international heritage

professionals and archaeologists that I engaged with in Kabul at the French Delegation. This seemed to be because UNESCO had assumed control of the site, due to its World Heritage listing, and had its own programme of technical interventions and 'working group' meetings that, by and large, did not include these other organisations or individuals. This was a crucial site for my research as I was keen to see how the global reactions to the destructions, both in the media and through the arrival of UNESCO and the many heritage consultants and 'experts' in the valley, had impacted local understandings of the niches. I was also interested in unpicking the converging agendas of international heritage organisations, the Afghan tourist industry and local civil society groups. Here, I was inspired by Tsing's idea of 'friction' which draws attention to the 'productive friction of global connections' and 'the awkward, unequal and unstable, and creative qualities of interconnection across difference' (2005: 3-4). Tsing challenges the idea of unhindered global flows (such as, in this instance, powerful, global heritage discourses) and 'refuses the lie that global power operates as a well-oiled machine' (2005: 6).

I imagined it would be difficult to be attached to UNESCO due to the site's high profile and UNESCO's fear of any negative attention. So, I was surprised when a German consultant working for UNESCO allowed me to attach to his project. This wasn't at the Buddha niches themselves but focused on the conservation and stabilisation of certain buildings at the site of Shahre e Golghola (City of Screams), the remains of the 12th century town which was reputedly ransacked by Genghis Khan on a hill opposite the niches. I travelled to Bamyan in May 2015 and stayed for five weeks in a small hotel outside the town. From this base I conducted a small study focused on the ideas, attitudes and concerns of a few Bamyan residents towards the cultural heritage in the valley since the destructions that was later published by ICOMOS (Wyndham 2016). With the help of one of the hotel managers, Farid, who had previously worked for UNESCO in the valley, we identified a range of heritage stakeholder groups amongst the local population: village residents, shop keepers, youth activists, archaeology students at Bamyan University, Ministry of Information and Culture officials, representatives of the governor's office in Bamyan, and religious leaders. While there has been a considerable focus on the technical aspects of the preservation of the niches so far, I discovered there has been very little focus on what the local population think, or want, for the future of the niches and my interviewees often spoke of how they felt excluded from decisions. Farid was very helpful throughout my time in Bamyan and we had long discussions about the issues around cultural heritage in the valley. Through his contacts at Bamyan University's archaeology department we set up a debate there about the future of the niches.

He also introduced me to a local mullah and accompanied me during the interview. My methods for gathering data with these groups included structured, semi-structured interviews and discussions which were conducted in a combination of Dari and English with the help of a research assistant, Fawzia, a second-year archaeology student at Bamyan University. I paid Fawzia for her work and also introduced her to the French Delegation in Kabul where she later secured an internship.

In Bamyan I felt the freedom to walk around and engage with the local population in a way that had been impossible in Kabul. This meant I could plan better and there were less constraints. However, I soon realised the added responsibilities of conducting interviews in the valley, as many of my research participants had experienced violence during the Taliban period. One day I was driving past the Buddha niches with Daud, who ran the hotel with Farid. I was staring up at them and he said: "They're really big, aren't they!? *(Besyar bozorg astand!)* as a way of teasing me about my continued interest in the niches. I was aware of outsiders' fascination in the Buddhas' destruction and that the valley's inhabitants therefore expected questions about this event. Although I focused my questions on the time *after* the Buddhas destruction and the new values and ideas about the past that arrived in the valley as part of the 'post-Bamyan' era for heritage, inevitably my interviewees did end up speaking about the destruction itself. Of course, there are significant ethical considerations when talking to groups that have experienced violence and trauma. Research with trauma victims has shown that while ethnographers might give voice to the victims of violence, and discussing trauma can potentially provide relief, similar research has shown that the opposite is also true and the reliving of traumas through participating in research can elicit painful memories or even cause the participant to 'relive' the distressing event (Olujic 1998; Seedat et al 2004). I was aware that discussing the Taliban era would be painful for some participants and I had the 'do no harm' imperative ringing in my ears, underlining the requirement for research not to negatively impact participants (Andersen 1999). In interviews I deliberately did not dwell on the destruction of the Buddhas, explained that I was more interested in what has happened since and I was also keen to explore the meanings and values attached to other sites in and around the valley. When the destruction of the Buddhas and the Taliban did come up, before asking any further questions I asked permission to discuss this sensitive subject and if participants wished to continue contributing to the research. Despite these strategies, there were some moments when I felt out of my depth as interviewees discussed violence and worried that my questions had led them in that direction.

I discovered that the powerful heritage discourse that had arrived in the valley after the destructions had affected these groups in two conflicting ways in particular. While certain groups showed ambivalence about the focus on the valley's pre-Islamic heritage since the destructions, others had embraced the idea of the valley's Buddhist past and aligned themselves with it. A moment of almost comical realisation about the ongoing sensitivities over pre-Islamic heritage in Afghanistan, a country where 99.9% of the population identifies as Muslim, happened when interviewing the Bamyan representative from the Ministry of Information and Culture. He explained to me how a commemorative tee shirt and mug, made for the South Asia Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) celebrations in the valley, for which Bamyan had been nominated cultural capital, would only be acceptable if the design included a band of Islamic geometric pattern around the Buddhas, 'for balance'. Later that afternoon when interviewing a Hazara activist, I encountered a very different point of view, as he spoke of how he and his friends were wholeheartedly embracing the valley's Buddhist past and mobilising it as part of their efforts to form a Hazara political space.

I realised how separate local heritage groups and archaeology students were from the international, technical experts that visited Bamyan for UNESCO. I discovered that international 'experts' and their forms of technical knowledge are both reified and a source of tension. I was attached to the UNESCO project and therefore I was seen as an 'expert' with answers. This became evident during a debate that I organised at Bamyan University's archaeology department on whether or not the Buddhas should be rebuilt. After each side had presented their arguments the students turned to me and asked what I thought. I felt on the spot and realised that whatever answer I gave would somehow have weight. I tried to sum up both sides of the argument without showing a preference. The arrival of such forms of expertise in the valley had also caused divisions. Trips abroad to conservation workshops or trainings for local archaeologists and conservators were a symptom of the international attention on the Buddha niches as UNESCO projects often include income streams for 'local capacity building'. I often heard complaints from interviewees about how they had not been offered these opportunities and accused Ministry officials of grabbing them for themselves and their families. My trip to Bamyan was short and in such a short time I was only able to understand a few themes and felt that I would like to explore these themes further. I focused on one particular theme that emerged as a way of showing how local groups attach to international heritage politics: the reclaiming of a Buddhist past by a group of Hazara activists and how this past was now featuring in wider narratives about the Hazara experience of marginality. I subsequently followed up this theme both in Kabul and with

another, linked, group of Hazara activists based in Birmingham in the UK.

B) THE AGA KHAN TRUST FOR CULTURE IN BALKH

I was very keen to include the work of the Aga Khan Trust for Culture in my study as I had frequently visited Bagh e Babur, the public gardens in Kabul which had been impressively restored and reconstructed by the organisation and now function as the city's biggest public space. As explained by a former employee of the organisation, one function of AKTC's heritage work was as a 'calling card' for the wider organisation, and I was keen to learn more about the organisation's methods and how heritage intervention intersected with the political objectives of the wider Aga Khan Development Network and the Ismaili community.

The organisation kindly agreed to host me at their guesthouse in Mazar e Sharif, a city in the north of Afghanistan, for a month in 2013. I later followed this up with a shorter trip of a week in 2014 and interviewed the director and the AKTC's previous director in Kabul. When I visited Mazar e Sharif and Balkh in 2009 we drove the seven-hour journey from Kabul. This time, I took a short 40-minute flight and landed in a shiny, clean new airport constructed by the government of Germany as part of its 'hearts and minds' effort, adjunct to its contribution of soldiers and policemen to the NATO mission who were stationed nearby at Camp Marmal in Mazar e Sharif. From the AKTC guesthouse we took daily trips to the site in Balkh, a small town to the east of the city of Mazar e Sharif, where the organisation was restoring the shrine and mosque complex of Khwaja Parsa. This project was off the beaten track for AKTC, who had worked extensively in the cities of Kabul and Herat and had only relatively recently begun to have a presence in Balkh. This scenario enabled me to witness how the organisation built and developed trust with local stakeholders in the early stages of its work. We spent each day at the site, returning to the guesthouse in Mazar at night as the architects were worried about security in Balkh after dark. While the provincial governor had succeeded in securing the provincial capital of Mazar, in the surrounding towns police can abandon their posts at night or, if there is a Taliban element, swap sides at night drawn by extra pay offs.

During the days at the site in Balkh I was able to talk to a range of employees in the office which sat at the edge of park, close to Khwaja Parsa. I soon realised that because I was staying with the architects in the guesthouse, structured interviews with masons and other employees on the site in Balkh would not give very fruitful results as these research participants saw me as part of the bigger AKTC organisation which hampered any discussions about the politics of the project. Participant observation on the site itself and during conversations at lunch worked best for obtaining data in Balkh. However, the most useful data

was gathered while I engaged in long, daily discussions with the architects over dinner at the guesthouse and during our trips to and from Balkh. I felt very privileged to have such access to an organisation which is well known for its effective work with heritage and also for its guardedness. Like any marginal group, Ismailis are focused on self-protection and self-preservation. The time I spent there remains one of the most memorable of my research period in Afghanistan. Here, there was none of the social aspect of life at the French Delegation where the archaeologists frequently hosted dinners with diplomats and journalists, serving French wine and cheese. At the AKTC guesthouse there were three architects or project managers living in spartan rooms, wholly focused on the project, rising early and working late. Dinner was often spent discussing the technical aspects of the tiles and glazes they were developing on site at a tile workshop.

After DAFA and the range of international heritage professionals and archaeologists I had interacted with that worked for Turquoise Mountain, at the National Museum and for UNESCO, I was immediately struck by the lack of international employees. The core team consisted of three Afghan architects and one Iranian conservation architect, all of whom were working for the organisation long term, rather than international heritage consultants or 'experts' on short contracts. I was also struck by the seeming independence of this team from the wider organisation. Here, the Trust for Culture's country office in Kabul felt far away (and the head office of the organisation, in Geneva, even further) and any form of cultural diplomacy was clearly operating very much at 'arm's length'. On one level this was a group of highly skilled and dedicated heritage professionals conserving and restoring this historic complex. However, as well as doing their jobs on site it I witnessed how these project managers were also engaging in forms of 'everyday diplomacy' as they skilfully navigated the needs, expectations, and suspicions of local community leaders, the *ulema*, local government institutions and the residents of Balkh with the objectives of the heritage project and the wider organisation (Marsden et al 2016).

One project manager, Tamim, in particular was very helpful in explaining the daily trade-offs he made in order to ensure the success of the project. He explained the slow process of embedding within the community, starting with cups of tea with groups of elders and community leaders over a number of months, making suggestions about the mosque and how it could be repaired and slowly building up to starting work on Khwaja Parsa, and leading onto a number of other preservation projects on religious buildings in the surrounding area, such as the Dehdadi mosque. I soon discovered that the team wasn't explicitly known as being part

of the Aga Khan Development Network and that no one working for AKTC in Balkh was Ismaili. The project manager explained that despite the organisation's secular work, the Ismaili connection might raise suspicions in this predominantly Sunni town. "We don't want to be accused of spreading Ismaili culture. Many people don't know who the Aga Khan is," he told me. AKDN was founded and is directed by His Highness the Aga Khan, the spiritual leader of the global Ismaili community. At one police checkpoint our jeep was stopped, and we were asked to show identification and who we were working for. One of the architects replied and the policeman asked, "*Aga Khan bank dorad*?" (does the Aga Khan have a bank?), referring to AKDN's microfinance programmes but also showing that he is not well known there. The architects estimated there was perhaps one Ismaili family in Mazar but none in Balkh. I noticed that rather than engage in the usual forms of donor behaviour, such as erecting plaques and signs emblazoned with the name of donors, one project manager preferred to spread news about the project by talking to those gathered at the taxi rank in town, secure in the knowledge that this was the most effective method of public relations for the project in such a sensitive context. Tamim repeatedly underlined to me the value of the adjunct development work they were doing, in terms of building skills amongst masons, creating jobs for locals and repairing the infrastructure of the surrounding park and how, for him, this was the most important factor of the project. I learned a huge amount from Tamim and after our long daily conversations he became a friend. I was able to help him with an application for an architectural conservation course in Rome which I hope went some way to repay the help and insights he gave me.

5. CONCLUSIONS

In this chapter I have aimed to show how an ethnographic approach to power, focused on a number of sites of heritage intervention, is a useful means of exploring the current nexus of heritage, politics and international relationships in Afghanistan. Taken individually, each site would provide a rather thin account of this configuration while together they provide a way to explore the current relationship between heritage and politics more profoundly. This broad selection of case studies allows me to understand the characteristics of the 'post-Bamyan' paradigm through a number of different examples, while an ethnographic approach allows me to understand, and unpick, the multiple forms of power and politics that operate through heritage intervention at the same time. I was aware that this research captured a fleeting moment in the international intervention, one of, broadly, international donor optimism for both the military and developmental solutions proposed to ensure Afghanistan's political and economic future. The international intervention is a constantly shifting set of relationships

between international donors, the military, NGOs, NGOs and international and national organisations. Similarly, the relations between politics, power and heritage, are an ever-shifting set of relationships. I have used the past tense in my narrative, this is to avoid the 'ethnographic present' (Davies 1999) which would present an unchanging scenario of the relationship between heritage and politics, when this is an ever-changing scenario. This research took place between 2013 and 2015 and my research reflects a small part of a much wider set of constantly evolving relations between heritage and politics. In the following chapter, I discuss the complexities of this current 'post-Bamyan' era for heritage and how a framework of power drawn from both International Relations and Anthropology provides a useful means of discussing the sophisticated ways in which heritage intervention is currently entangled in international relationships. This, however, is a theoretical model which helps in unpicking the types of politics that converge on heritage, the ethnographic approach which I have outlined above allowed me to observe the sometimes haphazard and contradictory ways in which power is negotiated and concealed through heritage.

CHAPTER 3

AFTER BAMYAN: A NEW POLITICS OF CULTURAL HERITAGE

1. INTRODUCTION

This theoretical chapter provides the context for the later, empirical chapters, by reviewing current debates about heritage and power and setting out the complexity of the current scenario for heritage intervention, which I term the 'post-Bamyan' heritage paradigm. This chapter has three sections. Firstly, I review the current debates around the relationship between heritage and power in Heritage Studies and identify their analytical limitations, especially in relation to the current complex scenario for heritage and its role in international interventions, diplomacy and international aid. Secondly, I focus on the concepts of soft power and cultural diplomacy and argue that these are also insufficient for discussing the complex ways in which power and heritage currently interact. I argue that there is a need for more sophisticated models of power and how power operates in order to understand the complex space in which intervention current operates in the 'post-Bamyan' era in Afghanistan and how power exists in an array of networks which work across people, governments, organisations and forms of expertise. Instead of the concept of soft power or cultural diplomacy, I discuss how theories of power drawn from International Relations and Anthropology are relevant for Heritage Studies as a lens through which to explore, and unpick, the multiple forms of power which coexist through heritage in the current 'post-Bamyan' era and how these forms of politics operate across networks which blur the lines between international, governmental and state actors at the level of such interventions in Afghanistan and elsewhere. In this chapter's final section, I set the scene for the current scenario for heritage intervention in the international context. I outline some of the key characteristics of the current 'post-Bamyan' heritage paradigm, showing the complex range of ways in which heritage and politics are currently entangled and why these entanglements matter. Here, I argue that the current scenario for heritage has arisen since the destructions at Bamyan which created series of discursive shifts in heritage policy and practice which we now see being played out at heritage sites in Mali, Yemen, Libya, Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan. Since Bamyan, a huge amount of comment and broader rhetoric has been generated that has been instrumental in creating this powerful 'post-Bamyan' heritage paradigm which has been crucial in determining the role of heritage in the post 9.11 world. I explore some of the characteristics and the different forms

of power in this current scenario by drawing on a diversity of contexts showing how power operates across governments, development actors, diplomatic programmes, UNESCO consultants and discourses focused on the relationship between heritage and Islam to explain the current entanglement of heritage with different political spheres.

2. HERITAGE, POWER AND POLITICS

A) A PREOCCUPATION WITH A GLOBAL/LOCAL DICHOTOMY

While the relationship between power and heritage has been a dominant focus of Heritage Studies, existing studies of power in the discipline have tended to focus on particular analyses of the relationship between heritage and politics which fail to describe the sophisticated ways in which heritage and politics currently interact. In this section, I discuss how power and politics have previously been discussed in relation to heritage and argue that we need a new means of discussing and exploring this relationship which allows for a deeper understanding of these intersections and how they operate in practice.

Thus far, the discipline of Heritage Studies, does not provide an approach to the relationship between heritage and politics that helps disentangle the current complexity of ways in which heritage work is entangled with politics. The core focus of the discipline has been the 'authorized heritage discourse' or AHD, a concept developed by Laura-Jane Smith (2006), to describe the operations of a powerful global heritage discourse which privileges certain aspects of the past such as its materiality, age, and monumentality. Such dominant analyses of how power intersects with heritage obscure the complexity of how heritage currently operates in post conflict scenarios such as Afghanistan with its assemblages of governments, NGOs, state actors, military actors, forms of expertise and community groups. As Harrison has suggested (2013; 2018), while Smith's important work has been helpful in understanding some of the operations of power in heritage work today, her analysis, which draws on a particular reading of Foucault, has led to a subsequent preoccupation in Heritage Studies on these top-down workings of discursive, diffuse forms of power through heritage. This means that such analyses miss the more complex and sophisticated ways in which politics and heritage interact today, particularly in the context of international interventions such as Iraq, or Afghanistan. Also, within these common analyses of the discursive workings of heritage, a focus has been on the operations of specific instruments of a global heritage discourse, such as the World Heritage Convention (e.g. Cleere 1996; Labadi 2007; eds. Labadi & Long 2010) or the Intangible Heritage Convention, and either the semiotics of what these conventions 'say'

(e.g. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2004; Alivizatou 2012) or how these conventions come into conflict with other ways of doing or thinking about heritage when applied to 'local' contexts (e.g. eds. Ruggles & Silverman 2009). Other areas of focus have been on how such conventions or 'heritage regimes' interact with existent state structures for heritage preservation (e.g., Bendix et al. 2012) or how the structures created by heritage policy and practice act operate as instruments of social governance (e.g., Bennett, Dibley & Harrison 2014; Bennett et. al. 2017). Another symptom of this focus within Heritage Studies on the workings of this globalised, 'authorised heritage discourse' is an established binary in which, for example, 'Islamic', 'Asian' or 'spiritual' regimes of heritage value are presented as somehow irreconcilable with that of this dominant heritage discourse (Rico 2016: 103). Trinidad Rico has called for a redescription of some of the discipline's keywords and concepts, such as the 'AHD', which have come to dominate discussions of power relations, arguing that the notion of the 'AHD' operates as a discourse in itself that can work not to complicate the binaries of 'local/global', but to reify them (Rico 2015: 285 - 292). While more recent discussions of heritage intervention and globalisation do undertake broader examinations of the workings of power, these tend to focus on the role of UNESCO and how it operates rather than foregrounding the range of political dynamics at play through cultural heritage work in the complex space of international interventions and the range of organisations and governments involved (e.g., Brumann 2014; Meskell 2013, 2014, 2015b, 2018; Meskell et al. 2015).

An emerging literature focused on the history of more intricate aspects of the relationship between heritage, international relations and politics is more useful for understanding todays alignments between heritage and politics (e.g., Hall 2011; Swenson 2013; eds. Swenson & Mandler 2013). Here, the arguments focus on the entangled histories of heritage preservation with that of empire in 18th – 20th centuries to reveal the diverse range of actors, organisations and individuals at play and are therefore helpful for understanding the current entanglements between heritage, diplomacy, international development and national reconstruction in Afghanistan. This historical literature shows how preservationists operated in a global context and with sometimes coexisting, sometimes conflicting, local, national, international, European, universal, and imperialist visions of heritage and the past, all of which combine to shape the idea of heritage we know today (Swenson 2013: 5). Indeed, crucially Swenson suggests that war has been a key factor in the formation of new international networks around cultural heritage (Swenson 2016: 8). As the case studies in Swenson's book show, power

operates in a number of ways through heritage, both discursive and direct. What also stands out from this type of analysis is the messiness of such heritage endeavours and the importance of encounters, personal tastes, ambitions, idiosyncrasies, and passions in shaping them, which escapes a single coherent narrative and simple statements about the 'imperial project' (Swenson 2013: 28). This approach, which gives insight into the entanglements of heritage and politics in Afghanistan, builds on work by Alan Lester which focused on networks of actors in order to describe the more fluid operations of colonial power (Lester 2006). In a related article on the history of heritage and global networks, Swenson points out that the history of heritage 'internationalism' has often been written as either a 'Whig history' of progress towards universalism, or a Foucauldian history of the dominance of western heritage discourses. In an argument relevant to the current interplay of heritage and politics she argues that neither analysis does the situation justice and that we need to pay attention to the 'deeper, more complex and less linear histories' and range of processes that shape heritage in the modern era (2016).

3. CULTURAL HERITAGE, CULTURAL DIPLOMACY AND SOFT POWER

Cultural diplomacy and soft power are two concepts which are often used to describe the mobilization of culture in international relationships. The idea of cultural diplomacy is, of course, not new and there is a long history of diplomatic gift giving and receiving. The British Council was established in 1934 to mobilise culture and education as tools of propaganda to counter the country's reputation for aggressive foreign policy (Taylor 1978). During the Cold War, the use of culture, in the form of music, dance and art exhibitions, was mobilized as an instrument of diplomacy to promote American values across the Iron Curtain. Such programmes prompted anew the realisation of the power of the arts to promote values and serve political ends (Stonor-Saunders 1999). Then, 9.11 again marked a new era for cultural diplomacy when in the UK, for example, cultural programmes were understood as being able to foster both trust and dialogue in a post 9.11 environment of 'cultural schisms' between Islam and the West while also contributing to the UK's economy (Rose & Wadham-Smith 2004; British Council 2012). As a result, during the 2000s, cultural diplomacy became a popular concept in the UK that attracted government backing and media attention. There was much discussion of the role of museums and exhibitions in forging cultural relations and the concept of cultural diplomacy became widely adopted by cultural institutions, policy makers and government (House of Commons 2007; Nisbett 2013). However, despite its recent rising recent popularity, there has been a lack of both clear definitions of the term 'cultural diplomacy' or useful analysis of how power operates through culture 'diplomatically'. Bereson

notes that 'cultural diplomacy' is recognised as a combination of two remarkably slippery concepts – i.e. 'culture' and 'diplomacy' (2007: 11). Gienow-Hecht declares cultural diplomacy 'one of the most confusing terms in modern diplomatic history' (2010: 3). Bound et al. assert that cultural diplomacy 'is not easily defined' (2007: 16). The ambiguity between the terms 'cultural relations' and 'cultural diplomacy' has been noted, with the former described as 'neutrally descriptive' and able to be conducted on the initiative of private as well as public institutions, while the latter is largely understood as the business of governments (Mitchell 1986: 3). While there are many journal articles on the subject of cultural diplomacy, it is often taken at face value and rarely defined or unpacked (e.g. Channick 2005; Hicks 2007; Keith 2009). A report by the think-tank Demos was published on the subject, which promoted the role of British culture in forging and modifying international relationships with countries such as China and India, making it clear as to the contradictory nature of culturally diplomatic programmes, and arguing that both cooperation and competition were involved (Bound et al. 2007). However, much of the literature sees cultural diplomacy as an 'unwaveringly positive' undertaking (e.g Bound et. al. 2007; Schneider 2010). As Nisbett argues, since the 1980s little has changed in academic approaches and there is an ongoing preoccupation with making distinctions between the different terms cultural diplomacy, cultural relations, soft power, propaganda, cultural imperialism with little focus on theoretical explanations (2016: 6). Despite the recent popularity of this idea, there is a lack of accompanying critical analysis of the concept, how it operates, or is effectively mobilised.

In International Relations, cultural diplomacy is often used in conjunction with 'soft power'. Foreign policy specialist Joseph Nye coined the term 'soft power' in order to describe how the US could address the changing face of power in the post-Cold war era (Nye 1991). Later, Nye redefined 'soft power' for the post 9.11 environment, as '…the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payments. The ability to exert soft power arises from the attractiveness of a country's culture, political ideals, and policies' (Nye 2004: x). However, in her insightful analysis of the trajectory of the terms, Melissa Nisbett argues that the use of these concepts is not fixed and has developed in line with expansionist neoliberal politics (2016: 25). Nisbett notes how the terms are used 'vaguely, loosely and interchangeably' (Nisbett 2013). However, more recently the term 'soft power' took precedence over 'cultural diplomacy' in the UK in the mid 2000s as the country shifted away from the mobilization of culture for cooperation and more towards using British culture as a means to compete on the world stage when the country has lost its advantage in terms of manufacturing and sport (2016: 12). Nisbett shows how the use of culture as a form of soft

power is currently less about trying to attract another country towards certain values and more about putting a positive spin on neoliberal foreign policy (Ibid.). Kaldor also discusses this and argues that ideas of distinct 'soft' and 'hard' power, and their deployment for the benefits of a nation state, are obsolete and miss the point in today's increasingly networked world of multinational corporations and global markets (Kaldor 2014). Neoliberalism and global capitalism have developed since Nye coined the phrase and where once 'soft power' might have suggested the dissemination of American values across political schisms, its new principal uses are by powerful states to expand economic power and generate positive public relations messages. Others have also criticised Nye's distinction between hard and soft forms of power (e.g. Lukes 2005; Hall 2010). Hall argues that the idea of attraction, which was central to Nye's idea of soft power, has become obsolete in the 9.11 era when the US has relied extensively on forms of hard power, such as military intervention, which have negatively impacted the reputation of the US. Nisbett also shows how we have come to use these terms to describe a whole range of cultural activities undertaken in the age of globalization in which 'anything and everything could be labeled and understood as cultural diplomacy and soft power….This leads us to the question not of what is cultural diplomacy and soft power, as much of the literature continues to wrestle with, but what isn't cultural diplomacy and soft power' (Nisbett 2016: 9). As such, these terms are somewhat vague and do not offer a helpful means of analysing the complexity of ways in which power actually operates through cultural programmes, or heritage intervention, today.

Recently, power has been an implicit focus of an increasing amount of Heritage Studies scholarship which explores archaeology and heritage intervention in relation to cultural diplomacy and soft power (e.g., Winter 2014; 2015; 2016; 2017; 2019; Agakawa 2015; Luke 2013; Luke & Kersel 2013; Yapp 2016; Clarke 2018). However, while soft and hard forms of power are mentioned, the actual workings of power itself are rarely discussed beyond the concepts of 'cultural diplomacy' and 'soft power' and so do not provide further insight into how power really operates on the ground. For example, in her discussion of the relationship between heritage preservation work and US and Turkish foreign policy, for example, Christina Luke notes the obvious new entanglements of heritage with forms of hard power (2013). She outlines how the US Embassy's Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation (an initiative which has been active in Afghanistan and across the Middle East) has shifted towards heritage work in Muslim countries post 9.11 and is directly linked to the US's foreign policy objectives. Here, heritage work is understood to play a role in expanding the 'symbolic geographies of power' and influence of the US government abroad but exactly how these forms of power

operate is not clear (2013: 350). Similarly, in their book focusing on the role of archaeology in US cultural diplomacy, Christina Luke and Morag Kersel discuss the 'diplomatic' capabilities of cultural heritage in the context of US foreign relations, citing the war in Iraq as an example of the potential uses of heritage as a tool for diplomacy (2013). But here, such capabilities are largely seen as a means to further the diplomatic mission of the US abroad, with little interrogation into the operations of these complex configurations of heritage, power and politics that this involvement of heritage in 'bomb and build' scenarios entails. Questions remain such as: is power visible in such cultural work? How are politics concealed by heritage interventions?

Tim Winter takes the debate further with his concept of 'heritage diplomacy' with which he discusses some of the diplomatic mobilisations of heritage in Asia. As Winter suggests, discussions around heritage and diplomacy have tended to focus on either the nation state or, when considering the global structuring of heritage preservation, on UNESCO, with little attention paid to the range of other ways in which heritage is entangled in international affairs (2016: 17). Winter's work goes further than others in its analysis of the multiple forms of direct and diffuse types of power that coexist through international heritage intervention. He elaborates on the concept of 'heritage diplomacy', dividing it into two categories (2015). The first is heritage '*in* diplomacy', which describes the growth of post conflict conservation aid as part of wider diplomatic relationships. Here, he draws attention to the intersection of heritage with the discourses of neoliberal intervention as heritage increasingly forms part of international aid programmes in the Balkans or the Middle East (2015: 1007). While echoing Akagawa's analysis of Japan's approach to cultural diplomacy in Asia (2015), Winter categorises 'heritage *as* diplomacy' as scenarios in which states assert historical connections as a means to promote cooperation in the present. Winter makes the point that this use of heritage is distinct from more traditional forms of cultural diplomacy as the diplomatic relationship relies on more than a cultural export: it is about the representation of shared histories and certain types of exchange through heritage (Winter 2015: 1007). He also critically examines the idea of cultural cooperation between nations over their shared pasts, drawing attention to the 'asymmetries of power' inherent in this politically potent mode of collaboration (2015: 999). Winter uses the prominent current example of The Silk Road Economic One Belt and the 21st-century Maritime Silk Road, otherwise known as the Belt and Road initiative, which promotes the idea of common pasts in order to build a global network of trade routes connecting China with the rest of the world (Winter 2015; 2017; 2019). More recently, Winter has drawn attention to a growth in 'heritage diplomacy' in post-conflict

scenarios across the Middle East as Western and non-Western powers vie for regional control after the Arab Spring, calling this a form of aid that 'combines both soft and hard power' which reflect geopolitical shifts (2017: 10). While such analyses have a focus on power and politics and unpick some of the complexity in the current era for heritage intervention, they also lack an ethnographic analysis of how such diplomatic initiatives and their attached forms of power operate 'on the ground'. Winter has also called for a better understanding of how heritage currently operates in the global sphere, beyond the operations of both state-to-state relations and the heritage governance of UNESCO, arguing that the 'complexities' of how power relates to heritage in international relationships have 'yet to be teased out', and that we need to better understand the 'complex forces, the political logics' of such scenarios (2015: 1012).

A series of recent articles discuss the use of heritage as a tool of cultural diplomacy and soft power in East Asia. Nakano and Zhu conceptualise heritage as soft power and show the similarities in how Japan and China mobilise heritage in this way. They outline a number of concurrent ways in which heritage can be mobilized as soft power including for nation building, nation branding and also as part of strategies for achieving both global and regional moral supremacy. Both Japan and China have learned the international language of heritage preservation or 'World Heritage' in order to legitimize the use of certain sites and myths in forming their own national heritages. Secondly, they challenged the World Heritage discourse by presenting alternative, East Asian, approaches to heritage conservation, and extending their influence this way. Thirdly, they have increasingly sent conservation assistance to other countries as a form of aid and have enhanced their national image this way (Nanako & Zhu 2020: 878). Here the term 'soft power' is used to cover a broad range of activities, from mobilizing the discourses of heritage to the sending of heritage experts or funds for preservation, but is still conceptualized, loosely, as 'soft power', which fails to illustrate the complexity of how politics intersects with heritage. Tim Winter, in his analysis of Silk Road diplomacy, shows a similarly complex scenario for the entanglements of politics and heritage as powerful narratives about the Silk Road are mobilized as part of China's expansionist foreign and economic policy (2020). Winter shows how a romanticized idea of pre-modern globalization as encapsulated in the idea of the Silk Road, with accompanying ideas of 'dialogue', 'trust', 'harmony' and 'openness', has been mobilized by China in its Belt and Road initiative as a means of positive public relations or diplomacy for the country's expansionist ambitions (2020). Here, 'new diplomacies of connectivity' are taking place as the idea of the Silk Road is the impetus for arts festivals, expos, music forums, and heritage and politics intersect at range of venues across Central Asia and its neighbours from Dunhuang Caves, to

Gavin city in Iran. In 2014, Silk Roads was added to UNESCO world heritage listing and certain heritage sites in Central Asia are becoming focal points for the global heritage sector. The complexity of actors is revealed as Winter charts how Chinese, British and Japanese universities are involved, and are working alongside governmental development agencies such as JICA (Japan's development agency) with funding from the EU, or museums such as the Hermitage. Winter terms China's use of narratives of the Silk Road as 'geocultural power' but also admits that, amongst all this cooperation and competition, 'pinning down the impetus for such forms of international cooperation is a complicated task' (Winter 2020: 909).

My work expands on these insights into the more intricate intersections of power and heritage and seeks to further unpick them. In the following section, I explore how a taxonomy of power drawn from the discipline of International Relations, combined with observations about the operations of power in Anthropology, provide a broad analytical framework for discussing the current, nuanced operations of politics and heritage and studying them 'on the ground'. As I outline later in this chapter, the 'post-Bamyan' scenario for heritage shows how certain forms of politics and power are currently configured in heritage preservation work. In order to understand these entanglements, we need to go beyond such concepts as 'soft power' and 'cultural diplomacy' to identify the multiple ways in which power currently operates through heritage, and to see how vague concepts such as 'soft power' actually operate. Below I outline a more sophisticated model of different forms of power which helps in understanding the messy nature of how different forms of power operate through a wide range of networks which blur the lines between governments, military actors, international heritage organisations, NGOs, international consultants, powerful heritage discourses and Afghan heritage professionals.

b) A power framework from International Relations

Analysis of power in International Relations focuses on power as the ability to effect change through exploiting tangible, visible resources. This is reflected in political scientist Robert Dahl's conception of power which he understands as an entity related to material elements such as wealth, the military and geography. His definition of power: when 'A has power over B to the extent that he can get B to do something that B would not otherwise do' (1957: 203). Throughout the twentieth century, power theory in international relations developed from Dahl's focus on power's material aspects to include the multiple 'faces' of power which draw on Marxist and neo-Marxist theories that explore the structural and productive, or less visible, aspects of how power works (e.g,. Bachrach & Baratz 1962; Digeser 1992; Lukes 2005).

Inspired by the shift in global politics after 9.11, political scientists Michael Barnett and Raymond Duvall developed a new definition of power and an accompanying taxonomy which brings these multiple 'faces' of power together to show its multiple operations. Their taxonomy was motivated by their understanding that discussions about the intervention in Iraq focused on an overly simplistic analysis of the workings of power which concentrated on overt, visible, material forms of power (such as military might or economic resources) while ignoring the variety of alternative and invisible forms of power that also participate in international intervention (2005: 40). I found their broad taxonomy a useful tool for identifying the range of types of power which intersect with heritage in the 'post-Bamyan' era. Their definition of power is focused on the production of power through social relationships: 'Power is the production, in and through social relations, of effects that shape the capacities of actors to determine their circumstances and fate' (Barnett & Duvall 2005: 39). The key distinction here, which is useful for thinking through current configurations of heritage and politics is the categorisation of the workings of power as either 'direct' (where power is visible and there is an observable connection between actors) or 'diffuse' (where power is hidden and exerted through indirect means and works at a distance). They also break down power into four further types: compulsory, structural, institutional and productive. I have found 'structural' power less useful because this type of power describes how power operates in a social system (such as family, law, class and religion) in which mutually constituted positions are defined. This is a Gramscian view, derived from Marx, which relates to state structures and civil society institutions such as the church, the educational system and trade unions, which are commonly understood as either 'private' or non-political, and yet operate as instruments of state power, insofar as they create modes of behaviour consistent with the state's hegemonic order (Gramsci 1971 [1929-1935]). This operation of power is therefore less useful for describing the predominately non-state, transnational and networked operations of power such as heritage interventions. Stuart Hall has expanded on Gramsci's work in relation to the construction of a British national identity through heritage since World War Two, which essentially ignores the impacts of multiculturalism and cultural diversity in Great Britain (2008). Below I will outline the three types of power from the taxonomy that I have found useful for discussing heritage interventions. I also include the concept of performative power, which helps in explaining how heritage is mobilised as part of the performance of politics in the post 9.11 era.

c) DIRECT OR HARD POWER

One crucial direct form of power (which is classified as 'compulsory' power in Barnett and Duvall's taxonomy) is drawn from the traditional, commonly used theory of power which depends on visible material resources to exert direct control over another state. It relates to Robert Dahl's 'realist' concept of power, for which 'the base of an actor's power consists of all the resources, opportunities, acts, objects etc. – that he can exploit in order to affect the behaviour of another' (Dahl 1957: 203). This form of power includes the direct use of observable, visible tangible resources such as military intervention to force certain outcomes in international politics, and the power of multinational corporations to shape global economic policies through economic rewards or penalties. This is relevant to the above discussions by Nisbett (2016) and Kaldor (2014), which show how ideas around 'soft power' have developed as part of the global expansion of neoliberal economic policy, showing us how heritage intervention, even though frequently classed as a form of 'soft' power, is another facet of, and operates as, a legitimising tool for harder forms of military and economic power. For example, when heritage work is deployed as part of 'hearts and minds' positive public relations strategies for wider military projects.

d) DIFFUSE FORMS OF POWER

Barnett and Duvall identify a number of diffuse types of power. These are either more hidden or invisible forms of power. The first of these is classed as 'institutional', and this describes the control actors exercise indirectly over others through diffuse interactions, or 'non-events'. Peter Bachrach and Morton Baratz identified this more subtle 'second face' of power that concerns the agenda-setting power of institutions, which can reinforce or create social and political values through institutional practices (Bachrach & Baratz 1962: 948). Whereas compulsory power sets the agenda through overt decisions and resources, institutional power is about 'non-decisions' and 'non-events'. Here, for example, power is exerted through the institutional structures of organisations which set an agenda through which certain issues or policies are promoted and others silenced. As we regularly see in international politics, when there is little consensus between governments, international institutions such as the UN or the World Bank can seize political opportunities, take advantage of structures and, through bodies such as the Security Council, set the global agenda. The question here in terms of heritage intervention is: how are global heritage institutions setting the current global heritage agenda? The first is the institutional power of UNESCO and other agencies in setting a global heritage agenda through international conventions for heritage preservation and ideas of authenticity and 'universal value' (in which alternative ways of valuing or preserving

heritage are marginalised). This has been much discussed in the heritage studies literature (e.g., Smith 2006; Labadi 2007). The second is how global institutions such as the World Bank focus on heritage preservation work (such as the rescue excavation at the Mes Aynak copper mine, which I discuss in Chapter 5) as part of opening up Afghanistan's mining sector to international interests. Other forms of institutional power are also at work, such as the private, non-state, development organisation the Aga Khan Development Network and the Aga Khan Trust for Culture, which sets its own international heritage agenda, as I will discuss in Chapter 6.

A second type of diffuse, invisible power is classed as 'productive' power. This is a post-structuralist concept of power derived from Foucault's idea that power is expressed diffusely and operates in situations which seem devoid of power relations, and as discussed, has been a core feature of the critical heritage turn. Barnett and Duvall describe it thus: 'productive power is the constitution of all social subjects with various social powers through systems of knowledge and discursive practices of broad and general social scope' (2005: 55). Here, power is primarily concerned with discourse and rather than operating as a repressive force, can be 'productive'. The operations of this 'universal' international heritage discourse and its attached conventions creates subjects and subjectivities and serves as an example of the productive workings of power which marginalise alternative understandings of the past (e.g., Smith 2006) and operate as forms of social governance (Bennett 1998; 2012; Bennett et al. 2017). In his seminal work, *Orientalism*, Edward Said drew from Foucault's work of the productive operations of power, particularly *The Order of Things* (1973), in which Foucault discusses how power works through the application of categories which assign a particular order to the world, creating subjects and subjectivities. Said argued that Orientalism is a nuanced form of domination that works to produce 'the other', or the Orient and its people, in an essentialised system of meaning and representation which limits social capabilities. Said's argument was based on Gramsci's idea of cultural hegemony in which cultural forms, such as ideas, operate through consent rather than outright domination (1978: 7). In this way, certain ideas dominate others, and become more influential. Said notes that it is cultural hegemony, or the workings of Orientalism through a range of different vehicles such as academics, institutions, politics and literature, which gives Orientalism its form of productive power (1978: 7).

Other operations of power are relevant here too, such as the performance of power through spectacles either of destruction or preservation of heritage. This performed power relates to

the spectacles of heritage destruction since 9.11 and the role that theatrical acts and performance play in seizing the imagination of the public. Here we see how certain governments and the media draw on imagination and powerful and grandiose imagery as part of politics. The destruction of heritage by ISIS across Iraq and Syria was undertaken to provoke strong reactions, akin to the international response to the destruction of the Bamyan Buddhas and to deepen divides between ideas of the 'West' and 'Islam' which played into the hands of extremists. Audiences watched in shock and awe at these heavily choreographed spectacles and duly shared and replicated these images, thus both imbuing such spectacles with more power and contributing to these groups' propaganda machines and recruitment drives (Harmansah 2015; Isakhan & Shahab 2018). Žižek, drawing on work by Baudrillard, has explored the power of the spectacle of destruction at the Twin Towers on 9.11 (2002). The destruction by the Taliban and ISIS, and the response to such events, reflects this new era of spectacles of both heritage destruction, and, in response, heritage preservation, which have been brought about by the events of 9.11.

As I have discussed, in Heritage Studies, power is often described in relation to heritage in terms of its discursive nature and a 'top down', 'bottom up' dichotomy. The 'post-Bamyan' era for heritage intervention shows us that power relations concerning heritage combine both diffuse and direct forms of power. What is missing is a greater analysis of the intersection of these diffuse, invisible forms of power with the harder, more direct forms of power with which heritage intervention is also entangled and how power is concealed, performed and negotiated on the ground at the level of these heritage interventions. This taxonomy is a neat, theoretical model which I found useful as a shorthand to unpick the operations of power through heritage in the 'post-Bamyan' era. It doesn't, however, allow for discussion of how these types of power coexist, intersect and operate on the ground as organisations and governments both compete and cooperate over heritage work. The following section discusses how an anthropological approach is useful for understanding how these power relationships play out through heritage interventions.

4. POWER, ANTHROPOLOGY AND INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT
While the above taxonomy is useful for unpicking the types of power at work, we also need to understand how these work on the ground. In his history of political anthropology, Gledhill discusses a renewed focus in the discipline on the operations of power since 9.11. He discusses a trajectory of debates around power from that of power 'over' people and resources to

Foucauldian analyses of the productive aspects of power. Using examples of work by Escobar (1995) and Ferguson (1990) Gledhill argues against the dominating influence of Foucault on power analyses, arguing that it can obscure the range of actors, discourses and politics that also exist in these interventions (2009: 18). He argues that these types of analysis allow:

> 'no space… for studying the actual interplay of power and politics that takes place between all the actors and stakeholders involved in development projects: these include the international agencies that sponsor development projects, the project workers who try to implement them on the ground, who have different skills, values, interests and power to influence events, and the people with whom these development workers, who are also differentiated by such things as political status, class position and gender. Ironically, …it also makes a lot of the politics that takes place in and around development projects disappear from view' (Gledhill 2009: 18-19).

Bemoaning the focus on 'productive' types of power in anthropology, Gledhill argues for a more holistic view of power relations which is relevant for this study: 'We do need to put the whole of politics back into political anthropology, albeit in a culturally aware manner, if we are to go beyond 'hope' and the Promethean illusion of 'speaking truth to power'' (Gledhill 2009: 29). Also relevant to understanding how power works in practice is David Mosse' ethnography of aid policy and practice which takes an 'on the ground' perspective of the politics of aid projects revealing the diverse range of actors at work in creating and maintaining development policy (2005). He focuses on the relationship between policy and practice in international development work, showing how aid policy and practice is not a top-down enterprise, but is rather a joint effort, enacted and maintained by a range of stakeholders, for a variety of different reasons (2005: 6). Mosse shows the creativity of individuals and aid agencies in negotiating the complex world of development funding and policy and in doing so, he argues for a better understanding of the social life of projects, organisations and professionals, and for this to be combined with insights into institutional practice (2005: 6). However, while Mosse provides a fine-grained analysis of some of the more complex workings of power through detailing the social lives of aid projects, this type of analysis tends to bypass the agency of differently positioned actors, ignoring the fact that different agents have access to different resources and the ability to control or affect outcomes. Mosse's analysis downplays hidden political motivations and denies some of the wider politics and power relationships inherent in development work.

While power analyses in Heritage Studies may have tended towards a particular reading of Foucault, the interaction between heritage intervention and global politics shows how we need to expand our analyses to encompass all the direct and diffuse forms of power that exist in heritage interventions if we are to understand these intersections. The current 'post-Bamyan' era can be characterised by transnational operations of power, as new intersections between power and heritage emerge from connections and networks between state and non-state actors. As Latham et al. suggest in their edited volume, the anthropological study of transnational networks, arenas and deployments and how they operate is a useful means of analysis in such scenarios (2009). Frederik Cooper argues that the study of the 'intersection of institutions, networks and discourses' can provide insights into these transnational networks (2009: 24). In his discussion of the consequences of the relationships between states, commodity chains and a transnational human rights discourse for the slave trade, Cooper asks some useful questions about the operations of power:

'How do mobilizations create networks and shape discourses that in turn redefine norms, perceptions of commonality and difference, and visions of what is politically possible? How do discourses give cohesion to networks and how do networks influence institutions that can make and enforce policy? Whose voices influence discourses and are supported by networks? How do networks establish inclusions and exclusions and what sorts of discourses reinforce those patterns?' (Cooper 2009: 23-24).

James Ferguson's mapping of the 'transnational topographies of power', which is a 'multi modal approach' that doesn't privilege actors, structures, discourses or networks, is also a helpful tool for thinking about how power currently works through heritage (2006: 89 -113). While above taxonomy of power is a useful tool for thinking through and unpicking the types of power that exist the relationship between heritage and politics in the 'post-Bamyan' era, this anthropological lens allows for an understanding of the nuances of how these types of power operate on the ground across networks of governments, NGOs, heritage agencies and community groups.

5. A 'POST-BAMYAN' HERITAGE PARADIGM

A) NEW CONFIGURATIONS OF HERITAGE AND POLITICS

In this section I illustrate my argument by applying the theories of power discussed above to the current complex scenario for heritage and politics. I show how a new paradigm for heritage and politics has emerged and developed into a global phenomenon since the destruction of the Buddha statues at Bamyan in 2001. While much has been written about the motivations behind the Taliban's destruction of the Bamyan Buddhas (e.g., Flood 2002; Elias 2007; Meskell 2002; Falser 2015; Green 2017) there has been comparatively little focus on a powerful new alignments of heritage and global politics that emerged from the act of destruction and the asssemblages of people, organisations, technologies and forms of expertise that currently coalesce around heritage as a result. However, as I argue below, international reactions to the dynamiting of the statues had a resonance, or series of aftershocks, which have echoed far beyond the empty niches in the remote Bamyan valley and have instigating a shift in the relationship between heritage and politics. In the following section, I will briefly outline some of the key characteristics of this 'post-Bamyan' paradigm and describe these new, nuanced intersections between heritage and politics as they manifest across a number of different contexts, showing how these different types of power are either visible or concealed and why these new intersections matter. I also explore how these intersections have been discussed in the heritage studies and anthropology literature and show how my previously discussed framework of power helps elucidate understanding about how these various forms of power intersect and are currently disguised in heritage interventions. The first section charts the nuanced, invisible, productive forms of power that interact with heritage while the second outlines the intersections between heritage and overt, compulsory forms of power.

B) THE BUDDHAS IN A GLOBAL HERITAGE DISCOURSE

A crucial catalyst for this recent shift in the relationship between heritage and politics was the destruction of the Bamyan Buddhas and the subsequent global reaction to this act. In March 2001, the two spectacular Buddha statues carved into the sandstone cliffs on one side of the Bamyan Valley were thrust into the international spotlight through their destruction by the Taliban. They stood at 38 metres and 58 metres high and sat amongst a vast complex of about 700 human-made caves, hostels and storage rooms which spoke of the wealth of a Buddhist community that existed in Bamyan in the 5th – 7th centuries ACE (Klimburg-Salter 1985). A few weeks earlier, on 26th February, after consulting with a religious council (*ulema*), Mullah Omar, the leader of the Taliban and the de facto government of Afghanistan, reversed a

previous edict which swore to protect the statues, and issued a decree ordering the destruction of all non-Islamic statues in Afghanistan, declaring they were offensive according to Islam. The destructions happened over a few weeks and on 14th March the Taliban made a public announcement informing the public that the Buddhas of Bamyan, and thousands of figurative, pre-Islamic statues kept in the National Museum in Kabul, had been destroyed. In a statement Mullah Omar asked: "Why preserve false idols? And if they have no religious character, why get so upset? It is just a question of breaking stones" (Harding 2001).

The international community took a different view and the Buddhas' destruction, and the Taliban's deliberate flouting of international appeals, was called a 'crime against culture' by UNESCO Director General Koïchiro Matsuura (UNESCO 2002). Prior to their destruction, a global effort had rallied to save the statues which involved personal letters from the UNESCO Director General to Mullah Omar; the rallying of Islamic countries such as Pakistan, UAE, Qatar and Saudi Arabia to the cause; an international petition launched on UNESCO's website; and a Funds-in-Trust account set up (Manhart 2004). This followed offers from the Director of New York's Metropolitan Museum, Philippe Montebello, to buy the statues from the Taliban, but these fell on deaf ears. The destructions in Bamyan, an example of performative power, were filmed by a journalist from Al Jazeera and images of the exploding Buddhas were disseminated around the world, inspiring feelings of shock and awe. Through such media representations and the subsequent reactions of the international community who rushed to condemn and comment on the destruction, the events quickly went from what could have been a localised moment to an event with global impact. While Taliban members have never definitively explained why they undertook such an act, the motivations have been much discussed by a range of commentators outside the country. Finbarr Barry Flood asserts that despite their claims to be only 'breaking stones', the Taliban were well aware the statues were no longer Buddhist icons and the destructions were a reaction to the value placed on these statues by organisations and individuals from the international community (2002). He argues that what was deemed offensive was that the Buddhas had been transformed from idols into art objects and that this Enlightenment tradition of valuing art was a cultural belief shared by a group of countries which had explicitly rejected the Taliban as a legitimate government (2002: 651). One Taliban representative, Sayed Rahmatullah Hashimi, offered another explanation in an interview with the *New York Times*, claiming that the Taliban were reacting to these offers of money for the statues at a time when funds were desperately needed to support Afghan citizens suffering from a famine caused by UN sanctions (Sayed Rahmatullah Hashimi, quoted in Crosette 2001). Meskell argues that the Buddhas represented for the Taliban a site of what

she called 'negative heritage', which necessitated erasure as they represented religious difference and the movement's exclusion from the international community (2002). Others have discussed how, through these destructions, the Taliban were claiming sovereignty over Afghanistan through exercising a dramatic form of heritage management (Gamboni 2001; Bernbeck 2013). Another motive that has been discussed is that the Taliban were reacting against the Afghan government's promotion of an official national identity for Afghanistan based on its pre-Islamic past which, as Green argues, had been going on since the 1930s (Green 2017), or to the reinvention of Afghanistan's past as European through the stylistic entity of Gandharan art (Falser 2015). Others have focused on the religious or historical context for the Taliban's actions, such as Jamal Elias who points out the religious relevance of the timing of the destructions which happened close to the festival of Eid Al Adha (Festival of Sacrifice) (2007). Flood explores the historical symbolism of the Taliban's words and actions, arguing that Mullah Omar was legitimising Taliban rule by echoing the words of 11th century Afghan ruler Mahmud of Ghazni ('we are only breaking stones') (Flood 2002).

While there may have been myriad motivations for such an act, the reaction to the destruction of the Buddhas caused a significant discursive shift both in international heritage policy and practice in which heritage is increasingly thought of as an international concern. This is one key characteristic of the 'post-Bamyan' era for heritage: that through the operations of this hidden, discursive, or productive, form of power, heritage sites such as the Buddhas are constructed as forms of common and universal heritage which are an international concern (rather than sites of national or local interest), this idea of heritage as an international concern which warrants intervention by foreigners also underpins the increasing role for heritage in international diplomacy and development. While this was not new, as the notion of heritage as an international concern was asserted during UNESCO's intervention at Abu Simbel, inspired by the United Nations ideals of international cooperation and then later formalised in the 1972 World Heritage Convention, the idea was seemingly given more weight after Bamyan. Prior to their destruction, the Buddhas were already entangled in such a discursive, diffuse form of power. For example, the 1997 UNESCO World Heritage Committee Statement underlined the value of the Buddhas for the 'heritage of humankind'. After the destructions, they were further subsumed into this powerful discourse as their value 'for all humanity' was again asserted by their inclusion on the World Heritage List and World Heritage in Danger List in 2003, two years later. Other intersections of heritage and politics are at work too here as such designations also work legitimise the institutional power of international heritage

agencies such as UNESCO in these contexts, and indeed the Buddhas became a 'poster site' for the work of the organisation in this regard (Harrison 2013: 188).

More nuanced politics are also at play as the destruction, but more so these reactions to it, placed heritage at the centre of an often violent battle over cultural values. Flood's compelling analysis was prescient; that through such destructions the 'global' veneration of cultural icons such as the Buddhas (and other sites across the Middle East) is revealed, which turns certain sites into targets for conflicts over values. One symptom of this has been the targeting of heritage by groups hostile to the international community, as we have seen being played out more recently in Syria, Iraq and Mali. While, on the other side, an important intersection between diffuse types of power is at play as the idea of morality was attached to protecting 'global' heritage. The destruction of the Buddhas has been discussed as lending a position of 'global moral fairness' to the subsequent NATO invasion of Afghanistan a few months later, which was exploited as a pretext to invade (Harrison 2013: 187). This demonstrates an intersection between two types of power, both invisible and visible: an international heritage discourse which constructs heritage as a global concern with the overt, compulsory power of international military intervention.

The local significance of such acts is obscured through this framing of the events as spectacular, one-off acts of 'barbarism' that deliberately flout global conventions and are aimed at the international community. However, underlining the value of the Buddhas for 'all humanity' in this productive form of power, which is how they were routinely framed in media representations of the events, shows how as such discursive, invisible types of power converge, the effect is the sidelining the local inhabitants of the Bamyan Valley, the Hazaras, who were routinely excluded from discussions of the destruction (Colwell-Chanthaphonh 2003; Husseiny 2012; Chiovenda 2014a; Chiovenda 2014b). Many Bamyanis, who are largely Hazara Shia Muslims, understand the destructions in the context of deepening sectarian divides in the region and see such events through the lens of a history of persecution and discrimination at the hands of the Afghan state (Chiovenda 2014b). It is easy to see why, as the destructions which took place in the remote Bamyan Valley were part of a two-year campaign of violence against the Hazaras by the occupying Taliban forces in Bamyan. This included detentions, execution of prisoners and a massacre in Yakawlang, a district to the west of Bamyan town, in which 166 Hazara civilians were killed (Semple 2011: 3). I will explore this international framing of the Buddhas site as one of 'global' heritage, with its attached idea of universals and how politics have operated here at ground level between UNESCO

consultants, the site and members of the local community, in Chapter 8. However, while such global/local interactions, and the operations of power, are commonly portrayed as silencing such alternative understandings of this past, I will show how this form of discursive power, a global heritage discourse, actually works across networks of heritage discourses, international heritage consultants and community groups on the ground, as Hazara groups access and attach to it in order to shape their own political space.

c) New forms of heritage diplomacy

One key facet of the current intersections of heritage and politics is the increasing use of heritage in international diplomacy. Here, heritage is brought into more explicit relationships with power as heritage is mobilized as part of public diplomacy drives which put a positive spin on the hard politics of international interventions. After Donald Rumsfeld's disastrous comment in April 2003 about the looting of the Iraq National Museum ('stuff happens'), it was recognised that heritage possessed an instrumental value for public relations and political objectives in military intervention. Soon after his comment, Iraqi heritage was used by the US as a cost-effective tool of public relations and cultural diplomacy through heritage preservation programmes in a bid to both improve the US's reputation after 9.11 and win over Iraqi 'hearts and minds' as part of the 'softer' side of international engagement (eds. Stone & Farchakh Bajjaly 2008; Rothfield 2008; Schneider 2009; Luke & Kersel 2015: 103; Luke 2013).

Kersel and Luke refer to these new intersections between heritage and neoliberal interventions as the 'new imperialisms' of 21st century diplomacy, in which heritage is summoned to smooth the ideals of liberal democracy as it was promoted across the Middle East, as part of altering political climates (2015: 70). The implication behind the forefronting of heritage here is that the machinery of international neoliberal intervention works in multiple ways – humanitarian, economic, military *and* cultural – and all these strands were somehow regarded as compatible. Therefore heritage care, as part of the 'war on terror', became synonymous with 'new meta-narratives of redemption and global reconstruction' (Butler & Rowlands 2007: 1). In contexts such as Iraq and Afghanistan, heritage work presents a softer side to military intervention, which is seen to 'fall outside political clout, military posturing and economic agendas' but it is 'highly strategic' (Kersel & Luke 2015: 75). This is because the building of new museums or the preservation of cultural sites is inextricably linked to hard, direct forms of power such as military engagement. To add to the complexity, other less visible forms of politics were at play too, such as the forms of expertise that accompany such heritage work as conservation aid is sent to Iraq and Afghanistan in the form of conservators (Nisbett 2016; Remsen & Tedesco 2015). Such heritage expertise is a form of

productive, discursive power, and can work to marginalize local systems of heritage management and care. The ethical implications for international heritage professionals that work to identify, excavate and conserve the past in conflict and post-conflict contexts, and are linked to the military intervention, have been debated. One prominent critic was Yannis Hamilakis who has highlighted the converging of military intervention with heritage work and has claimed that this situation represents a 'deep ethical crisis in archaeology' (Hamilakis 2003). Hamilakis claimed that archaeologists' involvement with the military 'provided academic and cultural legitimacy to the invasion' (2003: 107) which contributed to a new 'military-archaeology complex' (2009), drawing attention both to the ethical implications for archaeologists working in these contexts and highlighting the various forms of compulsory and productive politics at play when such heritage work, and its related international governments and forms of expertise, become implicated in the hard politics of military intervention.

One instrument in the US's public diplomacy toolkit was The Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation (Luke 2013; Luke & Kersel 2013; Kersel & Luke 2015). Here we see an example of how politics currently works through a wide network of international and state actors who collaborate over such heritage work. The Fund was established by the US Department of State in 2001 and the latest figures from the US Department of State show it has supported 850 projects in over 125 countries (2014/14 Annual report). While in its early days the Fund typically supported projects between $10,000 and $40,000 and had a broad remit of support for largely local initiatives with little or no involvement of foreign experts or entities (Schneider 2010), in its third funding cycle there was a shift towards the more explicit objectives of managing the US's reputation after 9.11 and the invasion of Iraq (Kersel & Luke 2015: 82). The directive shifted towards cultural dialogue across cultural schisms and to show the US was a nation that cared for Muslim heritage and therefore accepting of a range of religions and cultural backgrounds. The Ambassadors Fund increased funding for projects of Muslim heritage or from predominantly Muslim countries, and heritage work became part of the official 'toolkit in the fight against terrorism' (Luke & Kersel 2013; Kersel & Luke 2015). To do this, the US State Department funded a range of national heritage institutions or NGOs in these countries, or employed heritage consultants to do the work. In Afghanistan, for example, the US State Department has funded a range of international and local heritage organisations including the Aga Khan Trust for Culture, UNESCO, the Afghan Cultural Consulting Organisation, the Oriental Institute at Chicago University, to name but a few, which shows how diplomacy, or power, works across these networks of governments, institutions

and individuals that coalesce around heritage work.

Iraqi archaeologist Zainab Bahrani has drawn attention to further, more nuanced intersections between heritage and politics through her discussions of the public relations potential of individual archaeologists and heritage 'experts' working with Iraqi heritage during conflict. She highlights the role of the international media in disseminating powerful messages about heritage and international military interventions which can work to legitimize them. The rise of the 'heritage consultant' reflects the rise of the expert or consultant in international development, which has been a focus of development studies critiques that study the culture of 'aidland' (e.g., Fechter & Hindman 2011; ed. Mosse 2011). In 2004, Bahrani worked as an advisor to the Iraqi Minister of Culture and recounts the multiple requests she received from the media to tell of her 'experience as an archaeologist in the line of fire' (Bahrani 2008: 165). Bahrani outlines the hypocrisy of 'sensationalising narratives that set out to portray the western protagonist as a hero figure and give either little or no credit to the Iraqi archaeologists and scholars' (2008: 167). In Iraq, for example, the media attention on these archaeologist-hero figures resulted in personality cults developing around certain experts working with Iraqi sites and artefacts. Indeed, the public relations disaster that damaged and looted heritage caused for the US was partially mitigated by a member of the US military itself: the compelling Marine Colonel Matthew Bogdanos. The back cover of *Thieves of Baghdad* (2005), Bogdanos's book on his personal quest to recover antiquities looted from the National Museum in Baghdad, describes how Bogdanos 'was in Southern Iraq, tracking down terrorist networks – until he heard about the looting of the Iraq Museum. Dashing across the desert with an elite group of volunteers, he risked his career and life in pursuit of Iraq's treasures…' (Bogdanos 2005). Bogdanos, who was, of course, part of an instrumental (the US military) accused of its appalling treatment of heritage, was much lauded in the press for his role in recovering antiquities looted from the National Museum. Whether his story of 'recovering the world's greatest stolen treasures' significantly influenced public opinion over the role of the US military in the loss of Iraqi heritage is hard to measure, but here we see how heritage is instrumentalized as part of public relations strategies which seek to subvert or control a dominant narrative (that the US is careless about Iraq's cultural property). Here, as I will explore in Chapter 5, Afghanistan's heritage becomes a pawn in the game of messaging and image wars in the public sphere. Due to the media and internet technologies, it is possible to generate positive messages through relatively inexpensive heritage projects and associated public relations campaigns, which are attached to the harder forms of power of the military intervention. I explore these intersections of heritage with the military and the attached forms

of power, the intersections of heritage with the hard, compulsory forms of power of the military; the entanglement of heritage with the less overt discourses of military intervention; and the role of heritage expertise in Chapter 5, with reference to work at the archaeological excavation at Mes Aynak.

d) Heritage for international development

The role of culture and cultural heritage in international development signifies another entanglement of heritage and politics typical of the 'post-Bamyan' era, albeit one with less explicit power relations than the mobilisation of heritage as a tool of diplomacy outlined above. Here we see how heritage has become subsumed into the discourses of international development, a form of productive power which works across NGOs, their international funders and project managers 'on the ground'. The rationale for heritage work in Afghanistan often lay in its ability to fulfil particular development agendas, such as poverty reduction (through craft sales, for example) or to contribute to the more social aspects of post conflict development such as 'social cohesion' or 'identity building' in Afghan society (e.g., UNESCO n.d.). This 'heritage for development' discourse represents a marked shift from the more traditional arguments for heritage preservation which have focused on preserving the aesthetic or historic aspects of the past for their own intrinsic value. This confluence of heritage preservation with the discourses of development originates in a crucial shift in development strategies during the 1990s, focused on the positive role for culture (such as traditional forms of knowledge, skills and practices) to assist in effective international development programmes (eds. Altbach & Hassan 1996; eds. Rao & Walton 2004; ed. Radcliffe 2006). As opposed to the more technocratic methods of intervention, which had been common practice for international development but were being questioned, traditional forms of cultural knowledge or modes of behaviour of a particular group or society were mobilised by development actors in a new development paradigm in order to contribute to goals such as poverty reduction, human rights and gender equality. *Our Creative Diversity* (1996), a UN/UNESCO commissioned report, was a landmark moment which pinpointed development as a 'cultural project' and posited there was no single, 'Western' development model and that development must be driven by each nation or group, according to their culture. The report included a section on cultural heritage for development, promoting heritage as a resource to be protected due to its ability to contribute to socio-economic development.

While the impact of these earlier treatises on the importance of heritage for development really had have been questioned (e.g. Basu & Modest 2015; Isar 2015), UNESCO wholeheartedly embraced this new culture for development discourse. 'The Power of Culture

for Development' pamphlet, for example, argues that culture 'is a vehicle for economic development (through cultural industries, cultural tourism and traditional livelihoods)' (UNESCO 2010). While a related UN 'thematic think piece' entitled *Culture, a driver and enabler of sustainable development* (2012) focused on the contribution of culture to the 'post-2015 development agenda' and referred to heritage as a 'powerful driver for development' with the ability to 'revitalise the economy of cities', 'stimulate urban development', 'promote social cohesion' and 'foster environmental sustainability' (UNESCO 2012). The anthropology of development literature that focuses on the operations of power in international development has provided a useful framework for unpicking the nuanced politics of this heritage for development discourse and why the entanglement of heritage in development discourses matters. Arturo Escobar took a Foucauldian analysis of the power relations in international development and describes local actors as subject to a development discourse which achieves control much like colonial rule, through reproducing categories such as 'donors' and 'beneficiaries' and 'developed' over 'to be developed' (Escobar 1995). In Escobar's reading, the categories of aid, such as 'participatory' and 'local ownership' work to reproduce asymmetries of power which perpetuate these inequalities. More recent ethnographic analyses of development projects have built on Escobar's work and draw attention to how development really works 'in practice' and 'on the ground' which reveals more about the complexities and nuances of power relationships in development programmes beyond Escobar's idea of 'global' and 'local' (e.g., Crewe & Harrison 1998; Mosse 2005; 2011).

Basu and Modest draw across critiques from the anthropology of development to examine such how instrumental uses of heritage to achieve development objectives work in practice and the results of such intersections of heritage with development (2015). Increasingly, heritage (ostensibly an exercise in 'past-making') is being deployed as a tool in development (an exercise in 'future-making'); yet they argue that invariably the pasts that are brokered through international interventions, such as Iraq or Afghanistan, do not necessarily reflect the values of local populations, but are projected through the priorities and understandings of international experts. If futures are to a large extent determined by pasts, they argue that the agency to determine those pasts and futures should rest with local populations – even if the pasts and futures are not palatable to the international community (2015: 6). One crucial point seems to be the looseness of this heritage for development discourse, which has been also noted for its 'ubiquity, versatility and chameleon-like nature' and for how it can be put to work by diverse actors for a diverse range of projects (De Cesari 2020). I will be investigating some

of the entanglements between heritage and the productive power of the discourses of international development in my chapter focused on Turquoise Mountain, an arts NGO based in Kabul. Basu and Zetterstrom-Sharp argue that the mobilisation of 'culture for development' discourses in Sierra Leone has led to a zone of 'awkward engagement' in which there is a disjuncture between the supposedly 'universal' values promoted by UN agencies, including UNESCO, and local cultural practices which may not actually evince these values (2015). The language and values of international development, such as gender equality, and how NGOs attach to these values in order to attract funds and legitimise themselves in order to survive, and the impact of this on Afghan craftswomen, is something I also explore through Turquoise Mountain's work. Another symptom of the rising role for heritage in international development, which adds to the complexity of organisations and actors involved in heritage politics, is the increasing NGOisation' of heritage preservation in the current era. As De Cesari discusses, in both Italy and Palestine, for example, there has been a decreasing involvement of the state as non-state actors such as NGOs take increased responsibility for heritage preservation. NGOs are a perverse confluence for both democratic participatory projects for communities and neoliberal ones, and such outsourcing results in the expansion of the neoliberal state (Clark et al in De Cesari 2020). NGOs are agents of global discourses of heritage and development which advocate for participation, but at the same time they play a role in statebuilding according to a particular mode of neoliberal governance (De Cesari 2020). In Chapter 5 I explore these intersections between heritage preservation and the values of neoliberal intervention, showing how this has led to an emphasis on Afghanistan's pre-Islamic past, with its attached ideas of tolerance and multiculturalism, by international actors engaged in the country's reconstruction. In Chapter 7, I will explore these intersections in relation to Turquoise Mountain, which promotes a participatory 'heritage for development' discourse but accesses funds for its work by matching its programmes to the priorities and values of donors to the international nation building project (with its focus on themes of gender equality). Here, I explore how craftsmen and craftswomen become entangled in this transition to a liberal democracy with the attached values of women's rights and gender equality.

E) HERITAGE FOR POST CONFLICT REHABILITATION

The 'post-Bamyan' era for heritage can also be characterised by a further intersection between heritage and politics which has become increasingly common. In post conflict scenarios that include an internationally sponsored reconstruction programme (such as the Balkans, Iraq and Afghanistan), heritage interventions are often part of rebuilding activities

and couched in terms of their ability to contribute to processes of post conflict 'social cohesion' or 'rehabilitation' of communities divided by war. This is a further entanglement of heritage and politics that represents another discursive shift from the 'heritage for development' idea. As Basu and Modest note, these entanglements matter and that while cultural intervention can serve emancipatory or economic goals, it can also assist other objectives, and 'international cultural intervention…. is the continuation of politics by other means' (2015: 18). Heritage interventions undertaken against the backdrop of international interventions intersect with the wider values and hegemonic processes of these internationally sponsored post-conflict reconstruction programmes, which often include an aspired-for transformation to liberal democracy. As part of a neoliberal peace process, heritage for 'post conflict reconstruction' rhetoric was deployed in the aftermath of the Balkans conflict. In Bosnia in particular, the destruction of monuments and religious sites during the conflict took place as part of wider campaigns of ethnic cleansing which expelled populations from certain areas. The 16th century Stari Most bridge fell into the river below on 9th November 1993 when it was destroyed by Croat gunners during the Croat-Bosniak war. Rapt media attention followed as images of the destruction were quickly disseminated worldwide and the destroyed bridge became a metaphor for a Bosnia 'broken' by conflict. Subsequently, UNESCO burdened the reconstructed Stari Most Bridge with new meanings in its publication, *Culture: A Bridge to Development* (2010). Irina Bokova used the metaphor of the rebuilt bridge to assert the idea of heritage as a potential 'bridge builder' to join divided communities as part of wider post-conflict reconciliation processes, giving substance to her metaphor promoting the bridge as a symbol 'of culture's capacity to build unity in diversity' (2012). The destroyed bridge was valued as a unique example of 16th century Ottoman architecture, designed by Mimar Hajruddin, a pupil of the celebrated architect Sinan, and deemed worthy of reconstruction as UNESCO, the World Bank and the Aga Khan Trust for Culture collaborated over its reconstruction. However, in an intersection of heritage work with the aspirations of post-conflict reconstruction, the idea of rebuilt heritage as a 'bridge builder' for the tensions between Christian and Muslim residents of Mostar was also used by international organisations in order to promote a new, wider vision of multiculturalism and cohesion for post-conflict Bosnia (Walasek 2015: 209). This was a process 'stage managed' by UNESCO to legitimise itself and its role in creating peace, stability and encouraging tourism and economic development in such contexts (Forde 2016). Helen Walasek argues that the bridge did not previously connect these two factions and that this was a myth constructed to

support the broader project and values of the internationally sponsored project of national reconstruction (2015: 209).

The results of such intersections of heritage with post conflict rehabilitation have been explored in a number of contexts and also underline why such entanglements matter (e.g., Meskell & Scheermeyer 2008; Viejo Rose 2011, 2013; Basu 2008). Focusing on South Africa during the end of apartheid and shift to majority African rule, Meskell and Scheermeyer describe the mobilisation of heritage as a tool for post-apartheid reconciliation in South Africa as a form of 'heritage pageantry', which 'touts national success and healing' but in fact masks deep societal rifts (2008: 158). Viejo-Rose shows that heritage interventions after the civil wars in Spain and Bosnia can actually prolong violence and contribute to ongoing antagonisms between groups by essentialising their differences (2011; 2013). Meskell has also critiqued these strategies of 'past mastering' after conflict in which painful and problematic pasts are suppressed in order to create more palatable versions of the past for the purposes of nation building (2002). In Syria, heritage interventions by international actors have even invited renewed attacks and iconoclasm from ISIS (Munawar 2017; Plets 2017). While Giblin, in reference to the role of the past in building a future in post-apartheid South Africa, argues that in post conflict scenarios, when everything is intensified, heritage does not operate as either an essentially positive or negative intervention, but is simply one 'symbolic' factor, or vehicle, among many others in processes of renewal which must be negotiated sensitively (2014). The public relations potential of such heritage interventions is also a factor for agencies such as UNESCO where funding is scarce. This is a point taken up by Meskell and Isakhan, who show that high profile initiatives, such as 'Revive the Spirit of Mosul' in Iraq, can prioritise heritage reconstruction over more urgent humanitarian needs and sideline the involvement of local groups (2019).

F) AN ISLAMIC HERITAGE DISCOURSE

Another facet of the 'post-Bamyan' era for heritage and the shift in alignments between heritage and politics, albeit a nuanced one, is an increased scrutiny of the relationship between heritage and Islam. Trinidad Rico has discussed how the reactions to the destruction at Bamyan have informed another form of invisible, productive power, an emerging 'Islamic heritage discourse' (2017). This is a set of ideas under construction focused on how Islam relates to heritage. Muslim attitudes to religious figurative sculpture and imagery have changed over time, according to regimes, dynasties and geography, and there is no one attitude to these types of representation (e.g., Flood 2002; Elias 2007; Elias 2012; ed. Gruber 2019). However, the destruction of the Buddhas has been used repeatedly as an example to

characterise an attitude to idolatry in Islamic contexts and has informed discussions about heritage destruction in international law (Francioni & Lenzerini 2003). Rico argues that the destructions at Bamyan contributed to a growing perception, based on selective practices and case studies, that Islam and heritage are somehow incompatible and that Islam takes a destructive attitude to heritage (Rico & Limbabidi 2017). More recently, we have seen how such ideas about the relationship between Islam and heritage can become entangled in powerful narratives and stereotypes which give fuel to notions of Islamophobia. Examples of such attitudes exist in reactions to the violence of the ISIS 'iconoclasts' in Syria, who are understood to be attacking the 'cradle of civilisation.' Their 'medieval and barbaric' behavior is framed in civilisational terms and understood as the antithesis of civilisation itself (De Cesari 2015: 22). Commonly, reactions to the behaviour of ISIS, which many commentators have reduced to an essential difference between 'us' and 'them', create binary, divisive narratives in which the wars in the Middle East are constructed as a battle between the 'international community' fighting to defend its universal values against an 'Islamic world' which is bent on destroying them (Rabbat & Karimi 2016: 2). These reactions construct particular ideas of how heritage is managed and valued in the wider Muslim world and in these representations of 'self' and 'other' which shape identities and ideologies, Islam is seen as barbaric, and the West as civilised. Through the workings of an Islamic heritage discourse, the treatment of heritage forms part of these incongruities between 'Islam' and 'The West' and becomes a polarising agent in this clash of attitudes.

One example was the reaction of the London Mayor, Boris Johnson, to a 3D replica of the central section of a classical arch from the site of Palmyra in Syria that was erected in London's Trafalgar Square in April 2016. In an act of performative power, the arch was dynamited during ISIS's ten-month occupation of the site. In March 2016, Syrian government forces retook Palmyra with support from Russian airstrikes. While the Palmyrene arch has multiple names, such as the Monumental Arch or the Arch of Septimus Severus, the one emphasised for its London replica was, notably, the Arch of Triumph. The gleaming Hollywoodesque replica, 3-D printed from Italian marble using existent photographs of the site, was unveiled by the mayor of London, Boris Johnson, in an opposing act of performative power. The reconstructed arch was placed at the heart of a capital city in the UK in a celebration of the military victory in Syria backed by Russia, as a victory cry against ISIS; in the words of Johnson, 'in defiance of the barbarians who destroyed the original' (Brown 2016). In a related article entitled 'We must

save Palmyra or the maniacs will raze civilisation', Johnson emphasised his wonder at 'coming far into the deserts of Arabia and finding structures that derive so plainly from ancient Greece and Rome…. I believe there is something more at stake in Palmyra – and that is the very idea of our Western civilisation and what we stand for' (Johnson 2015).

The role of heritage as a polarising agent in conflicting ideologies is also exemplified by the case of Ahmad al Faqi al Mahdi, a member of Ansar Dine, the Islamist group which occupied Timbuktu in 2012, at the International Criminal Court (ICC) in The Hague in 2015. In 2012, al Mahdi destroyed sites of Islamic religious heritage in Mali with the goal of instilling a 'pure' form of Islam among inhabitants. Charlotte Joy discusses how the case entangles the conflicting attitudes to cultural heritage between Al Mahdi and UNESCO in a wider ideological battle between ideas of 'Islam' and 'the West' (2018). In an unprecedented move, al Mahdi's lawyers made plans to defend his actions by pitting his radical, Islamist worldview, which includes his approach to these religious sites, against the worldview which underpins the ICC, which understands heritage destruction as a criminal act. This landmark case in The Hague emerged as a clash between two alternative ways of valuing heritage: prosecutors planned to argue that al Mahdi's actions were an attempt to eradicate a civilisation, while defence lawyers intended to state that al Mahdi's actions were correct according to his philosophy and worldview (Joy 2018). Through this entanglement, we see how attitudes to heritage again become polarising agents in wider 'clash of civilisations' narratives (in which Islam is seen as barbaric, and the West as civilised) in the post 9.11 era.

As the relationship between Islam and heritage has come under more scrutiny, there are more nuanced aspects of this 'Islamic heritage' discourse, or form of productive power, at work too, which are relevant in my case studies of heritage intervention in Afghanistan, and this is the construction of oppositional heritages, in which 'Islamic' heritage is paid less attention while 'pre-Islamic' heritage is viewed in a positive light. Shazad Bashir argues against the idea of an identifiable and distinct 'Islamic' past (as compared to a 'pre-Islamic' past) as part of a constructed and fixed timeline, but asserts that we need to think beyond such rigid constructions as they are merely a form of constructed knowledge that adapts and changes to reflect our situation in the present (2017). I will explore how certain values of the neoliberal intervention, with its attached ideas of multiculturalism and tolerance, have found expression in the support for the preservation of sites of Afghanistan's pre-Islamic heritage. Here we see

how a form of invisible, productive power, an Islamic heritage discourse which constructs ideas about Islam and heritage, intersects with other forms of direct, compulsory, overt power of the wider military and economic intervention in Afghanistan.

G) HERITAGE SPECTACLES

Another factor in the 'post-Bamyan' scenario for heritage and politics are the images of destruction (and preservation) that make effective propaganda tools. The images of the exploding Buddhas worked as a form of performative power and a powerful instrument of propaganda for the Taliban. As dramatic videos and images of the exploding statues were disseminated across television networks, the internet and print media, instilling widespread feelings of shock and outrage, this small, regional movement suddenly gained widespread international celebrity. Walter Benjamin discusses the effects of this multiplication of images in which, far from weakening the authenticity of the original, the image gathers power and is 'reactivated' in new spaces and situations (1969: 223). According to Bruno Latour, through their acts of destruction, 'iconoclasts,' and 'theoclasts' (such as the Taliban, or ISIS) produce 'a fabulous population of new images, fresh icons, rejuvenated mediators: greater flows of media, more powerful ideas, stronger idols' (Latour 2002: 17). In Iraq and Syria, more recently, we have seen the Islamic State (ISIS) harness the imagery of heritage destruction and how such images operate as instruments of provocation in an increasingly connected, digital world. Harmansah has discussed how these performative spectacles of destruction in Syria work to further entrench cultural attitudes to the past and operate as powerful symbols (Harmansah 2015). While the Taliban created an awareness of the power of images of heritage destruction, ISIS take image-making a step further by choreographing carefully conceived performances around their dynamiting of heritage sites and smashing of objects. During the acts of demolition, costumes worn by protagonists, props, gestures and particular camera angles work to produce a 'spectacle of destruction' in the global media which is conceived by this 'super-modern' movement, whose propaganda machine relies on outraged audiences to disseminate these powerful images through the internet (Harmansah 2015). These spectacles also act as powerful reminders of the threat to heritage and legitimate international heritage interventions to protect and preserve sites and generate powerful public relations messages for international heritage organisations. So, on one level, we see how these 'spectacles of destruction' subsequently become 'spectacles of preservation' (or at least of the apparently self-evident need to safeguard) through projects which I discuss such as the UNESCO- and ICOMOS-managed preservation programme at the Buddha niches in Bamyan. Such spectacles, or acts of performative power, can also act as masks for other forms of power at work, namely

geopolitical aspirations and their accompanying forms of compulsory, military and economic power. In one recent example of the St Petersburg Mariinsky Orchestra playing amongst the ruins at Palmyra, we see how such a stunt allowed Russian Present Putin to represent his world view to audiences: high culture had replaced 'barbarism' and Russia was able to show its involvement in Syria was about civilisation, not geopolitics (Plets 2017: 19).

6. CONCLUSIONS

This chapter has reviewed the current debates focused on heritage and politics and identified the limitations of these discussions, recognising that we need a new, more sophisticated way of discussing the varied and complex ways in which heritage and power are currently mutually entangled across networks of international and state actors, NGOs, individuals and forms of expertise. The top-down operations of power which appear regularly in Heritage Studies literature ignore the multiple types of power that intersect and coexist through heritage in the current era. I have argued that, in order to discuss the current scenario and the multiple ways in which power and politics operate through heritage, we need a new, more comprehensive means of describing the different forms of politics at play and the ways in which they coexist and intersect through heritage. I presented theories of power drawn from International Relations and Anthropology, arguing that these are relevant for Heritage Studies because these different concepts of power provide a useful lens, and language, for thinking through and describing the multiple ways in which power intersects with heritage, and how it works across these networks of governments, organisations and people in the current 'post-Bamyan' era. Finally, I drew from a number of different global scenarios in order to outline some of the key characteristics of this current 'post-Bamyan' entanglement of heritage with global politics, showing the many messy intersections of direct and diffuse types of power as they converge on heritage intervention, such as the intersection of global heritage discourses with the moral, civilising discourses of international intervention; the instrumentalisation of heritage as a tool for 'hearts and minds' diplomacy initiatives that accompany military interventions; and the mobilization of heritage as a means to achieve the objectives of international development or post conflict reconstruction. I find the power framework a useful tool for unpicking the many types of power at play here, direct and diffuse, through such scenarios. These discussions of the characteristics of the 'post-Bamyan' era for heritage have set the scene for my later empirical chapters, where the distinctive features of this current heritage paradigm, and the attached forms of power and politics as they manifest through my case studies of heritage intervention in Afghanistan, will be discussed in more

ethnographic detail. The subsequent chapter introduces the geographic, political and cultural context of Afghanistan more fully. Here, a history of heritage intervention in Afghanistan is discussed, showing how different periods in Afghan history represent successive heritage paradigms, or different configurations of heritage and politics. This historical context shows that the current paradigm is nothing new, but that heritage and politics have been differently configured and that these entanglements correspond to wider geopolitical dynamics.

CHAPTER 4

LOOKING FOR 'EUROPE IN ASIA': HISTORICAL HERITAGE INTERVENTIONS IN
AFGHANISTAN

1. INTRODUCTION

Historically, Afghanistan's past has been intimately tied to international politics. While the
2001 military intervention accompanied by an elaborate internationally sponsored nation
building project made it clear that Afghanistan is currently a global concern, such globalism
has existed historically too, and this has had consequences for the country's heritage. Despite
popular stereotypes of the country as a remote, distant place in which time has stood still
(which were promoted in the travelogues of European spies and explorers during the 18th and
19th centuries), a spate of recent research seeks to overturn these misconceptions and show
how the country, rather than being peripheral, has been a 'global nation' that has played a
crucial role in geopolitical dynamics, both historically and in the present day (e.g., Crews 2015;
Wide 2014). The ancient trade routes that criss-crossed the region, joining Europe with Asia
and later termed the Silk Road, are a well-known example of historical global connections,
and, as this chapter will discuss, the interplay of local, national and international settings has
endured. Given this centrality of Afghanistan to wider global processes, both historically and
today, it is an ideal place in which to examine the entanglements of cultural heritage with
politics. This chapter explores three successive 'heritage paradigms' which show how
Afghanistan's past has been differently configured with politics during the 19th and 20th
centuries and the range of governments, state actors, institutions and individuals involved.
Through these successive heritage paradigms, we see how the rationale for heritage
intervention changes over time and according to different dominant geopolitical dynamics,
and how the values ascribed to particular periods of Afghanistan's past are reflective of these
dynamics. This history starts by outlining a brief cultural history of Afghanistan in order to
describe the different layers of the country's past upon which these successive paradigms
draw. I subsequently explore three historical intersections of politics and heritage, 'Imperial',
'Modernization;' and 'Cold War', unpicking the types of power that operate through heritage
in each. I also focus on the role of certain individuals and how they operated under the wider
umbrella of these interventions, which gives a sense of how such archaeological or heritage

projects were as much dictated by individuals 'on the ground' as they were by international governments or institutional policy.

2. A BRIEF CULTURAL HISTORY

Afghanistan has been described as sitting at the 'crossroads of the ancient world' by cultural institutions such as the British Museum, and indeed the archaeology of the region attests to a diversity of cultural influences (eds. Hiebert & Cambon 2008). Situated on principal trade routes connecting China, India, Europe and Arabia, the region has experienced a great deal of cultural interaction and mixing. Prior to the arrival of Islam in the seventh century CE, the area now occupied by Afghanistan experienced numerous waves of population migration and came under the influence of successive civilisations: Indo-Aryan, Persian, Hellenistic and Central Asian, each with their own religious traditions, including Zoroastrianism, Hinduism and Buddhism (Dupree 1973; Ball 2019; eds. Allchin et al. 2019).

From 522 BCE, for example, campaigns were launched from Persia in which parts of Afghanistan were annexed into satrapies, or provinces of the Achaemenid empire. In 330 BCE Greek incursions followed under Alexander of Macedon and subsequently his followers established a number of settlements in the region which left a lasting Hellenistic cultural influence. This is evident at the site of Ai Khanum, a city founded by Greek settlers, which shows a convergence of Greek with local Bactrian culture. Discovered by King Zahir Shah by chance during a hunting party in 1961 and later excavated by the French Archaeological Delegation, the city boasted a palace, gymnasium and theatre, all in the Greek style, complete with Greek inscriptions (Bernard 2008). Such cultural interaction during the early centuries ACE is also visible through the finds from sites such as Begram, a later site on top of a previous settlement that had been founded by Alexander. Here, in the 1930s, French archaeologists and their Afghan counterparts discovered a royal treasury, or a merchant's commercial storage facility, containing items from all over the ancient world, including Roman glass, Chinese laquerware, Indian ivory carvings and Roman plasterworks (Mehendale 1997; Errington 2001). Further north is the site of Tillya Tepe, a burial site where Soviet and Afghan archaeologists discovered more than 21,000 pieces of gold, portable adornment and jewellery on the eve of the Soviet invasion in 1978, which also speaks of this cultural intermingling of

people, goods and cultural influences along trade routes later called the 'Silk Road'. This rich site dates from the 1st century BCE – 1st century ACE and tells of the range of stylistic and cultural influences on a sophisticated nomadic group to the north of the present-day northern border of Afghanistan. Such finds included a foldable crown, brooches and items from Rome and China (Sarianidi 1985; Schiltz 2008). The finds from these three sites are in the collection of the Kabul Museum and form part of the traveling exhibition 'Hidden Treasures from the National Museum, Kabul' which has been traveling since 2004 and been shown in cultural institutions and museums across Asia, Europe, Australia and the US.

In the first century, as part of the Mauryan Empire, Buddhism became a major religion in the region and there was a flowering of Buddhist art (Klimburg-Salter 1985). Northern Pakistan, just over the border from modern Afghanistan, was the site of the first depiction of Buddha in a human form around 1st century CE. This Gandharan or Greco-Buddhist style, an eclectic fusion of Hellenic, Indian and local motifs, is visible at the plethora of wealthy monasteries and Buddhist settlements that sprung up in southern and central Afghanistan, such as Hadda, Fondukistan and Mes Aynak, as the political economy of Buddhism spread north into Central Asia and then China (eds. Allchin et al 2019). The extensive site of Bamyan, where the two large Buddhas were constructed during the 6th and 7th centuries, was a wealthy stronghold which benefitted from its position along one of the many trade routes reaching across Central Asia, connecting China with India, Europe and Arabia (Tarzi 1977; Klimburg-Salter 1985). Between 629 and 645 Chinese pilgrim monk Xuanzang traveled through the region and noted in his travelogue details of the settlement's giant, brightly painted Buddha statues, man-made caves complexes and monasteries that he saw in Bamyan, soon after their construction (tr. Beal 1884: 49 – 53).

Although there were successive invasion attempts by Muslim Arabs from the 7th century, due to the geography and difficult terrain of the region various pockets remained under Buddhist rule until the ninth century. By 900 CE the region's principal cities were dominated by Muslim political power (Green 2016: 3). Arezou Azad describes how Arab invaders were impressed by the wealth of the northern city of Balkh, which operated as crucial stop along regional trading routes and which became known as the 'Mother of Cities' amongst 8th century Arab invaders. In Balkh, Muslim invaders overtook Buddhist monasteries and literary sources, such as the 12th century chronicle, the *Fada'il-i-Balkh* ('The Merits of Balkh'), tell of their transformation

into Muslim holy sites (Azad 2013). From the 9th century, the arts and architecture of Islam flourished under powerful dynasties of the Ghorids, Ghaznavids, Timurids and Mughals. The Minaret of Jam, a towering 65 metre, 12th century brick minaret, was constructed during the Ghorid Empire as part of the dynasty's summer capital and still stands in the remote province of Ghor in northern Afghanistan. Further south, the Persianate dynasty of the Ghaznavids was established by slave commanders, who ruled over large parts of Iran, Afghanistan and India from 977 – 1186 BCE. The architectural remains of this dynasty are visible in Ghazni today, such as a ruined royal palace, minarets and a mausoleum (Knobloch 2002). In 1219 Genghis Khan invaded the region from the north, and thus initiated a series of powerful Muslim Turkic, Central Asian dynasties that combined ruthless military tactics with elaborate programmes of cultural patronage. The first of these was Timur, or Tamerlane (1336 – 1405), a nomadic ruler from the north, who established the Timurid dynasty. During ruthless military campaigns he spared and relocated artisans to Herat and Samarqand which became centres of artistic achievement, combining Persian, Islamic and Central Asia steppe cultural traditions into distinctive architectural styles, miniature paintings and other portable decorative objects (Akbarnia 2013: 70). The Mughal dynasties followed, established by Timur's descendant Babur (1483 – 1530). So impressed by the monuments and workshops of Herat, he praised the city as having 'no equal in all the world' in his memoirs. Babur captured Kabul 1504, and laid out public gardens in Kabul on the slopes of the Sher Dewaza mountain, where his tomb now lies (Franke-Vogt, Barti & Urban 2003). The gardens have been impressively restored by the Aga Khan Trust for Culture and now function as Kabul's biggest public space. It is this Islamic past and history that resonate most strongly in Afghanistan today, a country in which the official state religion is Islam and the majority of the population is Muslim. This Islamic character has been central to the self-image of the modern Afghan nation, at least since the reign of Amir Abdur Rahman Khan between 1880 and 1901.

3. IMPERIAL PARADIGM: BRITISH COLONIALISM AND ARCHAEOLOGY (1833 – 1850)

A) CHARLES MASSON IN AFGHANISTAN (1833 – 1842)

One Saturday in April 2013, the director of the French Archaeological Delegation in Afghanistan organised a picnic for a group of international NGO workers and UN employees at Topdara, a magnificent ruined Buddhist stupa, which dates from the 2nd century, near the town of Charikar, about one hours drive north of Kabul (fig. 4). The huge stupa sits on a grassy knoll overlooking the valley, towering over the fertile landscape of the Shomali plain. Grassy tufts sprout from areas of the dome's impressively intricate brickwork, much of which is still intact. As our group found a suitable place to sit, a group of villagers approached and we began chatting. We walked over to the stupa together and began looking around. The stupa was made from pieces of schist stone quarried from the nearby mountains. Scree slopes of schist, gradually dislodged

FIGURE 4 PICNIC AT TOPDARA APRIL 2013. PHOTOGRAPH C. WYNDHAM

over the years, had collected in deep piles around the base of the structure and there was a hole in the schist through which one could climb into the interior of the structure. Known as a 'looters' hole', this leads right to the centre of the stupa and was where previous visitors had attempted to find relics or precious materials which, according to Buddhist practice, are often placed in these central locations. During our conversations with the Afghan villagers, I was curious as to how they understood the monument and asked who had built this structure and when. The reply came: "This was built by the British, three hundred years ago!"

Although our companion was mistaken (it was built by Buddhist communities in 4th to 5th centuries CE), his reply tells of the relationship between Afghanistan's cultural heritage with the British colonial intervention. In 1833 Topdara was investigated by Charles Masson, a deserter from the British Army stationed in India, an explorer and spy, who surveyed a number of stupas and sites in the area around Kabul (Errington 2017: 83). Masson's investigations, although they predated the discipline of archaeology, make up the first recorded foreign archaeological intervention in Afghanistan. Between 1833 and 1835, this pioneer archaeologist recorded over a hundred Buddhist sites around Kabul, Jalalabad and Wardak through

FIGURE 5 LOOTERS HOLE VISIBLE AT TOPDARA. PHOTOGRAPH C. WYNDHAM

drawings, maps, compass readings, section drawings and sketches of his finds (Errington 2017: 1). He described his visit to Topdara in his diaries: 'this was the first tope (stupa) I opened…' In the stupa's interior there was a small enclosure, painted red, in which he found a Buddhist relic of a fragment of bone (Wilson 1841: 116 – 117) (fig. 5). Many of Masson's finds now reside in the collection of the British Museum and tell a wider story about colonial power and the removal of objects.

The political backdrop to Masson's investigations was the so-called 'Great Game', when, during the 19th century, Afghanistan came under the influence of two imperial powers jostling for position and control over territory: Russia to the North and the British in the Indian subcontinent. A mutual mistrust developed between these two countries, as each feared the other's desire to expand influence and territory (e.g. Hopkirk 1990). Caught between the Russian empire and the territory of the British East India Company, Afghanistan became a focal point of political and diplomatic wrangles as British and Russian spheres of influence moved ever closer to each other, with the British East India Company establishing a series of puppet governments in Kabul. Archaeology in Afghanistan is intimately tied to these European colonial ambitions and Masson's explorations across this green valley north of Kabul represent

the beginning of a long relationship between Afghanistan's heritage and ambitious foreign interests that have dramatically shaped how both Afghans and others have understood the country's past.

Gordon Whitteridge's biography describes Masson as an enigmatic character focused on finding evidence of Alexander the Great's military campaigns and settlements in Afghanistan (Whitteridge 2002). A deserter from the British army who changed his name from James Lewis to Charles Masson to avoid detection, he set out independently to Afghanistan, and started to research and collect Afghan antiquities for his own interest. While operating under the wider umbrella of colonial power, Masson was an individual, whose tastes also shaped these intersections between Afghanistan's past and colonialism. Masson was interested in a large area which ranged from Nangahar to Wardak provinces. He also focused on the village and surrounding area of Begram, an area just north of Kabul on the Shomali Plain (not far from Topdara) for a number of years, convinced that the site and its surrounding wide plains held evidence of Alexander's activities and made repeated visits, building relationships with local leaders who helped his collecting and research activities (Whitteridge 2002: 76-78). Here he collected thousands of coins between 1834 and 1837. These coins revealed new information about the Greco-Bactrian period, the period after Alexander's campaigns when an area known as Bactria, which encompassed parts of northern Afghanistan, became an independent satrapy (province) of the Achaemenid Empire under Greek sovereigns. News of Masson's work soon reached the British government in India and he was engaged as an intelligence agent, compiling his extensive knowledge of the local political scenario, geography and economics of Afghanistan into dispatches which he sent to the East India Company in Bombay between 1834 and 1837. As part of his employment, the East India Company funded his explorations of ancient sites and thus instigated the beginnings of internationally sponsored archaeology in Afghanistan. The total number of coins found at Begram was approximately 60,000, all of which were forwarded to the East India Company in Bombay and later to the India Museum in London (Errington 2017: 12). Upon its closure, the majority of archaeological artefacts and coins arrived at the British Museum (Errington 2017:1).

b) LOOKING FOR A EUROPEAN PAST, MORAL AUTHORITY AND A 'CIVILISING MISSION'
Alongside this direct relationship between British colonialism and archaeology, with its attached forms of compulsory power that allowed for the collection and removal of material culture from the country to fill British museums under the direction of British colonial power

in India, there also operated more diffuse forms of power. Masson and other 19th century spies and explorers sent missives back to Europe which constructed powerful ideas about Afghanistan and its past. Edward Said has discussed how colonialism works through a complex hegemony of cultural and political factors, arguing that the West exerts domination over the 'Orient' through a pervasive discourse of 'Orientalism' which constructs an image of the East as undeveloped, exotic and irrational. Through the productive power of this orientalist discourse, a complex hegemony of power and representation, the 'other' is produced in an essentializing discourse (1978). Through the productive workings of power, the descriptions and narratives that accompanied his archaeological work contributed to how Afghanistan and its past was constructed in the popular British imagination. Masson's drawings of Afghanistan's archaeological heritage, his diaries and descriptions formed part of a wider group of travelogues, illustrations and drawings of Afghanistan from this period that served a British public hungry for images, maps and texts about this 'far off land'. Masson's missives were part of a series of travelogues by soldiers and spies from this period, constructing powerful, essentialising narratives about Afghanistan which often include descriptions of the country as a forgotten place of remote mountains and wild, uncivilised tribesmen (Schadl 2007; Green 2013: 69). Nile Green and Marcus Schadl have both described how the 19th century British colonial enterprise in Afghanistan, beset by frustrated imperial ambition, made the country increasingly mysterious and desirous in the eyes of the British public (2007; 2013). A symptom of this enterprise was the founding of a tradition of European travel writing in Afghanistan which endures today (e.g. Elliott 1999; Stewart 2004; Thubron 2006). Much as further south in India, under the East India Company, the rescue of archaeological heritage from such remote lands became entangled in the ideological hegemony of the British empire's 'civilising mission', and the preservation of decaying architectural and 'rescue' of archaeological heritage was another means through which to both perform the empire's sense of moral authority and legitimise the colonial project (Swenson 2013: 10). This idea of morality linked connected to heritage draws on ideas that emerged during the French Revolution when ideas of morality, preservation of the material past and nationhood became linked in Europe (Jokilehto 1986: 116).

Upon his return to the UK, Masson lectured at the Royal Asiatic Society and in 1842 published the diaries from his travels in three volumes, *Narrative of various Journeys in Balochistan, Afghanistan and the Panjab,* just as the news of the East India Company army's disastrous

retreat from Kabul to Jalalabad, in which 4600 men and 12000 camp followers were killed, reached the UK (Whitteridge 2002: 183). Masson's account of his life in 'remote' Afghanistan, his archaeological activities and the landscape, people and archaeology of Afghanistan provided a contextual backdrop to the news of the horrific British defeat as it travelled to Europe. Similar to the scenario further south in British colonial India, this in turn underscored the idea of Masson's 'rescue' of thousands of artefacts from Afghanistan as part of the British Empire's wider necessary 'civilising mission' in Asia and its performance of moral authority. With Masson's descriptions of Afghanistan's archaeology featuring as a backdrop to the violence and bloodshed of the British retreat, the country's past became linked to the European colonial venture.

Another powerful discourse through this Imperial paradigm was one which promoted the value of Afghanistan's Greek past. Masson's focus was on finding evidence of Alexander's campaigns. Afghanistan's Greek past represented a familiar, 'European' past in this 'far off' country that was a focus of British imperial desires. *Ariana Antiqua: A Descriptive Account of the Antiquities and Coins of Afghanistan* (1841) was a publication by British Sanskrit scholar H.H. Wilson largely focused on Masson's discoveries of Afghan coins and antiquities. 'Ariana' is the name certain Greek historians, such as Strabo, gave to Afghanistan. Published in London, it charts the campaigns of Alexander, citing Masson's finds firmly within the context of the Greek campaigns in Afghanistan, and included maps of the marches of Alexander as a means of orienting the reader (1841: 215). Masson also made two maps comparing his own route of exploration with that of Alexander the Great's campaign in Afghanistan. Masson's search for a Greek past in Afghanistan mirrored activities in India where ancient coins were used as evidence to back up claims of a European past in Asia. Alexander Cunningham, for example, who was an army engineer and subsequently appointed as the first Director of the Archaeological Survey of India, published 'Coins of Indian Buddhist Satraps with Greek Inscriptions', in 1854, and 'Coins of Alexander's Successors in the East, the Greeks and the Indo-Scythians' in 1869. Nile Green has suggested that the search for evidence of Afghanistan's Greek past by Masson and others was, among other things, a means of relating this 'remote' place to a more familiar, European history as part of a wider quest for a 'European historical self' in Afghanistan (2013: 69). Indeed, it was this empty remote space that lent itself well to 'explorations of the limits of the British self' (Green 2013: 67). Such associations drawn between Ancient Greece and 19th century Britain likely gave fuel to

imperial desires back home: if Afghanistan had been conquered by the Greeks, it could surely be conquered by Europeans again (Hanifi 2018: 14).

Alan Lester discusses the working of empire as 'networked or webbed imperial space' which is shaped through a range of relationships between colony and metropole, rather than a coherent, top down, colonial heritage policy (2006: 129). Similar to how the personal interests and research methods of Cunningham and Ferguson informed the direction of the Archaeological Survey of India further south, the East India Company's heritage policy in Afghanistan was largely based on the personal tastes and charisma of personalities such as Masson. Masson had his own agenda in setting off for Afghanistan and, while he worked under the colonial structures of the East India Company, it was his own predilection for Afghanistan's Greek past, for collecting coins, looting stupas and methods of recording sites and finds, that shaped the co-opting of Afghan heritage for the wider colonial project. The East India Company agreed to pardon Masson for his desertion in exchange for intelligence reports. At the same time as collecting artefacts, Masson's intelligence work contributed to British imperial ambitions in the region. Whitteridge paints Masson as a naïve character drawn into intelligence work through the wiles of British handlers but in denial about the political ramifications of his dispatches (Whitteridge 2002: 126 -129). Later, Masson described his disillusionment with the 'shallow and misguided men' who he perceived as having wrecked the Afghanistan he had known (Whitteridge 2002: 183).

There is little evidence to show how Masson's work was received locally. He did, however, note a few reactions to his research in his diaries which reveal something as to how Masson's Afghan interlocutors informed his collecting. Masson reports a difference in attitude between Afghan educated elites and uneducated local groups towards his pre-Islamic, figurative finds. He noted that locals left him alone as long as he was engaged with 'broken idols' of Buddhist sculpture (Errington 2017: 8). While local groups were seemingly disinterested in his Buddhist finds, he was more encouraged in his research by Afghan elites; one of the sons of Dost Muhammad, Muhammad Akbar Khan, was 'enraptured' by two clay heads from Takht-I Shahi, and understood Masson's work as making advances in the name of science and instructed local elders to help Masson in his work (Errington 2017: 8).

Meanwhile, beyond the European interest in Afghanistan's Greek past, another aspect of the country's pre-Islamic past was becoming a focal point of study for European soldier explorers. Masson, with his focus on Alexander's campaigns, failed to notice at the time that the 'topes' and 'tumuli' he was exploring in fact related to Afghanistan's Buddhist past. Pierre Centlivres has discussed how Afghanistan's Buddhist heritage is similarly 'intimately related to the European venture' (2008: 8) and Europeans first noted the extent of the country's Buddhist sites in their travelogues during incursions into Afghan territories of the 1820s, as many stupas and ruined Buddhist settlements were visible from the route between Peshawar and Kabul through the Khyber Pass. The Hindu Kush range of mountains that run across Afghanistan (and Pakistan) had been identified as a potential natural border between British and Russian empires and the location of Bamyan within the foothills of these mountains meant that Bamyan became a focus of these travelogues and linked to frustrated British imperial ambitions in the European imagination. These travellers were fascinated by the Buddha statues in the Bamyan Valley and recorded their observations in diaries. Early European travellers such as William Moorcroft (1767-1825), veterinarian and superintendent of the East India Company stud, and George Trebeck (1800-25), a geographer and draftsman, noted stupas and other Buddhist sites, notably Bamyan, on their way north on an expedition in search of new breeding stock for the East India Company (Keay cited in Errington 2017: 15). Their travelogues were published back in Britain in 1841. Llewellyn Morgan discusses, in his history of the Bamyan Buddhas, a lithograph of the Bamyan Valley based on a drawing by Lt. John Sturt of the Bengal Engineers, drawn on the morning of 23rd August 1840 when Sturt and his companions were on a secret mission to survey possible passes over the Hindu Kush during the British occupation of Afghanistan (Morgan 2012: 132). Sturt died in the British retreat from Kabul while his widow Alexandrina and his mother-in-law, Lady Sale, were kidnapped and imprisoned in Bamyan. After their release and return to England an account of their imprisonment was published, thus contributing to the growing celebrity of the country's Buddhist heritage in Europe and its role as a backdrop to colonial tales of 'derring-do.'

This Imperial paradigm shows the various ways in which, during the 19th century, Afghanistan's pre-Islamic past became entangled with the colonial enterprise, but also the crucial role of individuals such as Masson in shaping such relationships. There are multiple intersections between Afghanistan's past and politics here, from the compulsory power of the

colonial enterprise intersecting with a moral discourse that underpinned the colonial project which resulted in the removal of antiquities, to Masson and later explorers' emphasis on the value of Afghanistan's pre-Islamic past. We see how certain discourses about the value of Afghanistan's pre-Islamic past emerged and were given cohesion due to a combination of these individuals, their institutions and the wider colonial umbrella under which they operated.

4. MODERNIZATION PARADIGM: FRENCH ARCHAEOLOGISTS AND AFGHAN NATION BUILDING (1920 – 1960)

A) AMANULLAH KHAN AND THE FRENCH ARCHAEOLOGISTS

Between 2012 and 2013 I worked as a registrar for the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago on a project to catalogue the collection of the National Museum of Afghanistan, sponsored by the US State Department. During this time I lived at the compound of the French archaeological mission in Afghanistan, the Delegation Archeologique Francaise en Afghanistan (DAFA) which was based in a walled compound in a quiet, leafy area of Kabul named Shash Darak. Since 1922, DAFA has discovered and excavated many archaeological sites in Afghanistan and is renowned for its work, particularly at Ai Khanoum. This impressive site (although now reduced to pot-holes by looters) is the remains of a town at the confluence of the Amu Darya (also known as the Oxus) and the Kokcha rivers in Northern Afghanistan which was established by Greek settlers in 329-329 BCE and shows an intermingling of Greek with local Bactrian styles. The intricately detailed and lengthy field reports from these excavations represent the life's work of French archaeologist Paul Bernard and fill an entire shelf of DAFA's library. DAFA has been working intermittently in Afghanistan since 1922 and is funded by the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs. When I lived there, the compound housed two French archaeologists and hosted visiting heritage consultants for UNESCO or employees of other heritage organisations such as the NGO Turquoise Mountain. Guests stayed in rooms named after the renowned sites excavated by French archaeologists over the last century: Shortugai, Bactres, Sorkh Kotal, Begram, Ai Khanoum and Balkh, among others. DAFA has an extensive library of publications on the archaeology and history of Central Asia which includes all their excavation reports. On the walls above the staircase hang a series of black and white photographs of DAFA's previous directors, Alfred Foucher, Joseph Hackin, and Daniel Schlumberger, taken at excavation sites around Afghanistan, the Europeans often clad in headgear for protection from the Afghan winter. The code for the intermittent WiFi internet

in the compound was 1922, an auspicious date for French archaeologists in Afghanistan as it marks the year when a 30-year bi-lateral agreement allowing France access to Afghanistan's archaeological heritage was signed by both countries.

Afghanistan's King Amanullah Khan (1919-1929) invited French archaeologists to Afghanistan as part of a programme of modernisation, undertaken during his nine year reign. These reforms were largely inspired by his Foreign Minister, Mahmud Tarzi, who had returned from political exile in Turkey with a modernist vision for the country that included reorganisation of agriculture, new policies on women's rights, healthcare and education (Gregorian 1969; Crews 2015: 130 – 137). However, these were modernist policies exercised by the elites, rather than modernisation as a result of the processes of industrialisation, mass production and class conflict. Such social reforms were not welcomed by rural populations where community leaders understood them as a challenge to their authority and a corruption of the customs, beliefs and traditions of *Afghaniyat* (Afghanness), and these reactions signalled the end of Amanullah's reign (Dupree 1973: 441 - 457).

As Annick Fenet (2015) explains in her research on the emergence of an Afghan national heritage, Amanullah's aim was to enlist European nations to help instill modes of governance through which he could demonstrate his acquaintance with modern ideas and assert himself as a new sovereign. In 1922, as part of a reorganisation of the education sector, Amanullah invited the government of France to establish a High School in Kabul (Lycee Istiklal), where classes were taught in French by teachers newly arrived from France. In the name of embracing science, Amanullah also invited France to send a delegation of French archaeologists to explore the country's archaeological heritage. The rationale for archaeological work was tied up with demonstrating his regime's modernity. France nominated Alfred Foucher to play the role of archaeologist-ambassador, a charismatic man in his late fifties who had worked in Pakistan and was a specialist in Buddhist iconography and art history. On 9th September 1922, a 30-year bi-lateral agreement allowing France sole access to Afghanistan's archaeological sites was signed by both countries. The deal was that precious finds such as gold or jewellery would remain the property of Afghanistan, while other discoveries would be split equally between both partners. Amanullah also enlisted Foucher's help to establish a museum to house DAFA's finds alongside a private collection of coins, sculpture, manuscripts and weapons which had belonged to Afghanistan's previous ruler, Habibullah Khan. This formed the first iteration of the Kabul Museum, which became the country's national museum. In his correspondence, French archaeologist Foucher discusses

his sudden realisation of the more public role Amanullah was keen for him to play. He describes his surprise at being accompanied by two hundred horsemen when he arrived on what he imagined to be a low-key visit to the city of Herat in western Afghanistan (Olivier-Utard 1997: 30-31). The horsemen were to accompany him into town as the foreign archaeologist played the role of ambassador for Amanullah's modernising push.

The deal over archaeology was mutually beneficial for both French and Afghan governments as it worked as a tool of cultural diplomacy for France's foreign policy and as a showcase for Amanullah's domestic modernising programme. In this particular configuration of heritage with politics, we see a shift from the Imperial paradigm and its moralising attitude to heritage work as part of its 'civilising mission' to the instrumental use of heritage as a tool of 'soft' power and positive public relations for French and Afghan policies. These positive public relations messages focused on Afghanistan's archaeological heritage were also linked to harder, more direct forms of power: France had expansionist desires into Asia while Amanullah aimed to consolidate his power at state level. Francoise Olivier-Utard, in her analyses of the DAFA archive held at France's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, explains Amanullah's objectives in seeking French support from a number of possible other European partners. France had gained a positive reputation in Muslim majority countries through its support of the Turkish government of Ataturk (aimed at defending its own interests on the Syria-Turkey border where France had a frontier under the newly formed French mandate of Syria and Lebanon). Amanullah was anti-British due to the recent Anglo-Afghan wars and the long-standing British colonial designs on Afghanistan. The British were also seen as having instigated punitive policies on fellow Muslim majority country Turkey at the Treaty of Sèvres (Olivier-Utard 1997: 21-22). Amanullah was intent on securing Afghanistan as an independent nation and granting France sole access to the country's archaeological heritage served his wider foreign policy objectives to ward off the British. France had also developed a successful programme of cultural diplomacy across the Middle East which focused on establishing French schools in Cairo and Istanbul, along the French model of secular education, 'laicite'. This model, which would free Afghan schools from the grip of religion without the fear that students would be subject to Christian proselytising, appealed to Amanullah's modernising agenda (Olivier-Utard 1997: 22). Similarly, it was this modern science of archaeology that introduced a European, secular approach to Afghanistan's past.

B) FRENCH POLITICAL OBJECTIVES

The correspondence between Foucher and the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs reveals how the archaeological intervention in Afghanistan aimed to fulfil French diplomatic objectives and

was linked to the direct politics of French foreign policy. One crucial, broader aim was to build trust and a positive reputation for France amongst Muslim majority nations through educational and cultural policies, of which archaeology was one part, in order to smooth the French mandate in Syria and Lebanon. Also, since WW1 there had been a revival of Franco-Anglo tensions and, through French schools in Cairo and Istanbul and archaeology in Persia, the Levant and Tunisia, France was mobilising educational and cultural programmes as a means of extending its influence in the Middle East, Africa and Asia, in competition with Britain. Frances's use of education and cultural programmes as culturally diplomatic tools was comparatively early as the British Council was not established until a decade later in 1934 (Olivier-Utard 1997: 26). A French monopoly over Afghanistan's archaeology, which had occupied the European imagination due to the powerful idea of Alexander the Great's campaigns and the rich descriptions of the Bamyan Buddhas by 19th century travellers and explorers such as Masson, could further burnish France's image internationally.

c) Cultural diplomacy 'on the ground'

While the engagement of DAFA in Afghanistan's archaeology suited both French and Afghan political objectives at the international and state levels, how such positive public relations ventures worked on the ground tells another story. Beyond the positive public relations value of Foucher and the deal over archaeology for Amanullah's modernising initiatives, it is not clear what designs Amanullah had on the archaeology itself. As Olivier-Utard describes, due to a lack of documentation, Amanullah's objectives in terms of the archaeological finds are less clear, other than a desire to locate an appropriate past upon which to build the idea of the modern Afghan nation (1997: 23). This left the French archaeologists free rein to excavate as they pleased as Afghan archaeological heritage had been handed over to them, both in terms of funding and excavations (Fenet 2015: 159). Back in France, powerful orientalist narratives relating to the ideological hegemony of a colonial 'civilising mission', such as those which had been at play during the colonial period, began to inform the French excavations. In the French Senate, the diplomat, politician and Hellenist Victor Bérard gave a speech in favour of Foucher searching for Afghanistan's Greek past, which he deemed would 'demonstrate how ancient Europe had since the distant past had the same civilising and softening role on the Far East that we hope to reclaim today' (Fenet 2015: 137). The idea of finding a European past in Asia had endured from the time of Masson and other explorer spies and dominated DAFA's early work, as Foucher was instructed to search for the Greek monuments of Bactria and find evidence of a Greek colonial state. Foucher was disappointed at this directive as he was keen to pursue his own interests in terms of excavations: the Greco-Buddhist or 'Gandharan' art of

southern Afghanistan. However, upon instructions, Foucher excavated at Balkh for 18 hard, thankless months of excavation during which he found little, and as a result pronounced the idea of this supposedly rich Greco-Bactrian culture in this area as nothing more than a 'Bactrian mirage' (Mairs 2011: 14)

With their focus on Afghanistan's pre-Islamic past, Foucher and the subsequent directors of DAFA continued to put emphasis on a value system ascribed to Afghanistan's heritage introduced by Masson and the early European explorers during the Imperial period but with a different twist. Foucher's major works, written before his arrival in Afghanistan, were *Les Bas-reliefs Gréco-bouddhiques du Gandhâra* (1905) and *L'art Gréco-bouddhique du Gandhâra*: *Étude sur les origines de l'influence classique dans l'art bouddhique de L'Inde et de L'Extrême-Orient* (1918/1922/1951). These identified the influence of Greek art and culture on the development of the first figurative sculptures of the Buddha in the northwest corner of India in the first century BCE (this region is currently located on the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan). While Alexander and his troops had passed through this area leaving stylistic influences, Foucher had aggrandized the influence of Greek and Roman art on the first figurative representations of the Buddha. Michael Falser discusses how Foucher played a crucial role in constructing Afghanistan's early Buddhist or 'Gandharan' heritage as a legitimate art historical category or research entity complete with origin narratives, influences and a development of style, which has become part of an accepted 'global' or 'universal' canon of Western art history (2015). Through the productive workings of discursive power, Greek and Roman antiquities had emerged as the 'perfect' objects for a global art history even though these are the results of hybridity and complex networks of trade and exchange. As Falser describes, Foucher and others drew on particular archaeological sites in the region, systems of classification and aesthetics to describe a view of the world and an art historical category that 'treated 'the West' as an active transmitter of art, and Asia as a mere passive receiver of stylistic expressions' (Falser 2015: 10).

DAFA's focus on this period had later repercussions (as I will discuss) but also proved occasionally problematic with local groups during the excavations themselves. Here we see how heritage interventions, conceived at the international and state level, work 'on the ground' and the issues of mobilising Afghan archaeology as a modernising tool. French archaeologists brought with them modern attitudes to Afghanistan's past, which reified the

ancient, more distant past and helped to construct and delineate such categories as 'pre-Islamic' and 'Islamic' in Afghanistan. In her research, Annick Fenet found little material that reveals Afghan attitudes to DAFA but from her analysis of Foucher's reports and letters we gain a sense of the local reception to this archaeological work through descriptions of how excavations at pre-Islamic sites provoked tension amongst local groups. In 1923, when Foucher was excavating Buddhist material at Hadda, a huge complex of Buddhist monasteries and stupas in the south of the country, local groups destroyed some figurative sculptures after the team left. Foucher reported this tendency to destroy 'idols' at several other sites too (Oliver-Utard 1997: 74; Fenet 2015: 142). Twenty-six statues were destroyed at Hadda during DAFA director Jules Barthoux's dig there (Olivier-Utard 1997: 85-86). Indeed, in some cases the archaeologists were forced to play down the Buddhist origins of their finds in order to protect them. These attitudes existed at the level of local communities and were not shared by elites in the capital and Amanullah apparently sought to punish those responsible. However, a worried Foucher turned for advice to his British friends, who counselled him to excavate sites from the later, Islamic period (Fenet 2015: 142-3).

These attitudes introduce the idea of an ambivalence amongst certain groups towards pre-Islamic figurative sculpture. The idea is that, according to certain interpretations of Islam, figurative objects are 'un-Islamic' because they retain religious meaning. Interpretations of the past are entangled in this push to modernise as secular Enlightenment values remove the cult value of objects. Or, as Alfred Gell suggests, the Enlightenment has worked to neutralise these idols and reclassify them as art objects (Gell 1998). The modern science of archaeology, as ushered in by Amanullah on the back of the French archaeologists, understood these objects as cultural artefacts rather than cult objects, as having made the shift 'from cult to culture', a shift in thinking that had not necessarily been made by all Afghans (Flood 2002). However, it is important to note the nuances and inconsistencies in attitudes towards the past. While some groups may take offence at figurative sculpture, accepted notions of culture change are negotiated, challenged and redefined in opposition to a variety of factors (and also heavily politicised in order to assert certain objectives, such as, much later, by the Taliban). Groups that live close to Buddhist era sites, such as the Bamyan Buddhas or Topdara, a Buddhist stupa in Parwan province, for example, currently tend to see these sites as part of the landscape and not as representative of either a 'pre-Islamic' or an 'Islamic' past. While an ambivalence might exist amongst some groups and individuals these categories or

differentiations have largely been introduced, and binaries established, through interventions such as Foucher's, which ascribe to European methods of archaeology and art history. Through the workings of power, as Cooper discusses, we see how such discourses give cohesion to networks, which, in turn, establish inclusions or exclusions (2009: 23-24). Due to existent sensitivities and in the current unstable political climate, if one group emphasises the value of one period over another, and uses it for political advancement, for example, then binaries and tensions are created (as I will show in the subsequent chapter).

Despite some tensions on the ground, the French archaeological intervention helped to establish a long-term relationship between France and Afghanistan at the top level. Between 1928 and 1929 Amanullah travelled to Europe as part of a wider tour to India and the Middle East. He visited various sites including Versailles and the Louvre. In a statement made during the trip, he declared that his efforts to modernise Afghanistan had brought Afghans closer to France. He singled out the work of DAFA as 'the collaboration provided by France is already important in the realm of culture as it is in the reconstitution of our historic past' (Fenet 2015: 132). Nadir Shah (1929-1933), the subsequent Afghan ruler, continued the archaeological convention signed with France and sought France's continued assistance in the education sector (Gregorian 335). Zahir Shah (1933-1973) was largely educated in France while Mohammed Daoud Khan (1973-1978), a later President of Afghanistan, spent 9 years in France (Crews 2015: 132). Throughout the twentieth century, France continued to play a key role in shaping a new generation of Afghan intellectuals as many members of the Afghan elite attended Lycee Istiklal and subsequently travelled to France to study.

During this 'modernisation' paradigm we see how the political objectives of the French and Afghan governments aligned over the mobilisation of Afghanistan's archaeology. For France, the work of the French archaeologists worked as a form of public relations, or soft power, for the hard politics of its expansionist foreign policy. While for Amanullah, foreign archeologists were a useful means of showcasing a modernisation programme and consolidating his rule. These hard politics of French expansionism and Afghan modernisation intersected with Afghanistan's pre-Islamic past as an emphasis on this period was carried forward from the colonial era and reinforced through the work of the French Archaeological Delegation and the personal tastes of Foucher. In the next section I will explore the effects of this entanglement of heritage and politics on Afghan national institutions and the country's programme of nation

building in the 1930s as Afghans attached themselves to these discourses and made them their own.

D) CONSTRUCTING AN AFGHAN NATIONAL HERITAGE (1930 – 1960)

How did this intervention by French archaeologists, at the behest of Amanullah, shape understandings of the value of Afghanistan's past? While Amanullah had shown interest in locating a past upon which to build the idea of the modern Afghan nation, he soon became preoccupied with retaining power before he finally abdicated in 1929. The 1930s was an era of rising nationalisms globally. As Afghanistan developed its own sense of an 'imagined community' (Anderson 1983), Afghan historians searched for an appropriate Afghan past upon which to assert their new nation on the international stage. The French archaeologists, and the Great Game adventurers before them, had ascribed a value system which prioritised Afghanistan's ancient and pre-Islamic past and here we see how this emphasis is upheld. As Nile Green discusses in 'The Afghan Discovery of Buddha', European scholarship and archaeological methods introduced by the French were subsequently 'coopted for nationalist purposes' (Green 2017: 57). As Green describes, this new approach to Afghan historiography happened in two ways. The first was that a new generation of Afghan intellectual elites with Francophone and Anglophone connections engaged in writing a fresh historical narrative of the Afghan nation that put the country's ancient and pre-Islamic past at the forefront of this new initiative, while the second was a shift in methodology, in which a new Afghan style of history writing was informed by the archaeological and numismatic methods learned from the French archaeologists at DAFA (2017).

The intervention into Afghanistan's past arranged by Amanullah and the French archaeologists introduced new methods and narratives concerning Afghanistan's ancient and pre-Islamic past that were subsequently appropriated and disseminated by Afghanistan's national cultural institutions. French geopolitical objectives converged with Amanullah's domestic agenda over the country's archaeology, and through this partnership powerful new ideas and ways of managing the past were introduced which have had lasting effects on how Afghans have understood and related to the past. However, as Alan Lester has suggested, these power relationships are never straightforward and are shaped by networks of individuals rather than top-down power relations (2006: 129). Both Nile Green and Senzil Nawid focus on the historian Ahmad Ali Kuhzad as a key interlocutor in this enterprise and describe how he 'translated' the techniques and systems introduced by the French

archaeologists into Afghan state-driven heritage policy and practice (2018; 2016). Kuhzad was an eminent historian of Afghan history, who learned French at Lycee Istiklal. He later translated DAFA's publications into Persian and worked closely with French archaeologists, accompanying them on tours and translating for them at excavation sites. Kuhzad's first publications were translations of DAFA's works from the French. His first, published in 1936, was a translation of André Godard's *Les antiquités bouddhiques de Bamiyan* (Green 2018: 52). Kuhzad's most important work was a three-volume history of Afghanistan, two volumes of which took an entirely new direction from previous histories of Afghanistan, focusing on the pre-Islamic past and forefronting Buddhism, the Kushans, Bactrian Greeks and Aryans (Green 2017: 57).

After spending time with DAFA, Kuhzad started to use archaeological and numismatic methods in his history writing. This development saw Kuhzad's work move away from the genealogical or dynastic framings of history towards a new, chronological way of thinking about time informed by DAFA's methods (Green 2017: 9). This chronological means of thinking about the past reifies the ancient, more distant past and reflects a European system of heritage value, as identified for Critical Heritage Studies by Laurajane Smith: the value of the past resides with old, material and monumental forms of heritage which are managed by experts such as archaeologists and historians (2006). Individual intellectuals such as Kuhzad were instrumental in bringing European methods to inform how crucial state cultural institutions approach and manage the past. New cultural institutions were established, such as the Kabul Literary Society (1931) and the *Anjuman-i Tarikh-i Afghanistan* (Afghan Historical Society) (1942) with Kuhzad as President. Kuhzad was also Director of the National Museum from the early 1940s until 1957. Here we see how the institutional power of these new organisations enabled the spread of such ideas. Through new journals published by these societies, such as the journal *Aryana*, which published articles on ancient, medieval and modern Afghan history, these ideas were disseminated to wider Afghan audiences.

Kuhzad's use of language across his publications was interesting. As if aware of the potential tensions that this officially sanctioned version of Afghanistan's past might encounter, instead of using the perjorative Persian word 'but' (idol) for his descriptions of Buddhist statuary he sought to remove any religious interpretation of these objects in favour of an art historical or aesthetic understanding (Green 2017: 59). From DAFA's descriptions of figurative finds being

destroyed by local populations that lived next to excavations, it is clear there was ambivalence amongst certain groups about particular forms of material heritage. While this ambivalence might have existed amongst rural populations, metropolitan elites such as Kuhzad and a range of state-affiliated cultural institutions continued to emphasise the pre-Islamic past. One example is the galleries at the Kabul Museum. The museum moved to a new building in 1931, in Darulaman, a new, modern city just outside Kabul which was built as an architectural showcase for Amanullah's modernist policies. The building that later became the museum was originally intended to be the municipality for Amanullah's ambitious 'new city' of Darulaman. Indeed, today, the current President Ashraf Ghani has ambitious plans for the same area, which echo Amanullah's.

An Indian scholar described a visit to the museum in 1933, noting that the majority of exhibits were from the Islamic periods which resonated well with Afghan visitors (Green 2018: 50). However, since the arrival of finds from DAFA's excavations of Hellenic, Buddhist and Greco-Bactrian sites, the emphasis of the museum's collection shifted dramatically towards pre-Islamic objects (Gregorian 1969: 360). The American scholar Richard Frye (1920–2014) visited in 1944 and described the change in the displays: "The hall of Begram", wrote Frye, "is by far the most impressive in the museum, for here are found Greek figurines and plaques, placed beside pure Indian carved ivories, and colored pieces of Chinese silk" (quoted in Green 2018: 51). In tandem with the museum displays, Kuhzad was working to bring these Indian-inspired ivory carvings, discovered by DAFA, within the folds of this new emerging story of the Afghan nation. Images of these 'Begram' ivories, a number of ivory carvings of voluptuous women (the site where they were found is thought to have been 'Alexandria in the Caucasus,' a city founded by Alexander the Great), were published by Kuhzad alongside an article in which he related them to classical Greek deities and explained them to readers as a 'legacy of the homeland' (Green 2018: 54-55).

Pierre Nora has described the difference between 'lieux de memoire', officially sanctioned public heritage spaces such as national museums, where official versions of the past are generated and presented with attached notions of heritage expertise (in contrast to 'milieux de memoire' which describe an 'unofficial past' of private repositories of cultural memory which exist in the traditions and imaginations of the citizenry) (1989: 7). This officially sanctioned version of the Afghan past, which was appropriated by Afghan scholars and

national institutions, was one of the by-products of the Franco-Afghan deal over the country's archaeology. Multiple direct and diffuse forms of power intersect: the hard power of French foreign policy objectives and Amanullah's domestic agenda connect with a powerful discourse focused on the value of the archaeological evidence from Afghanistan's ancient and pre-Islamic past. In turn, the Afghan state enlisted these cultural institutions as engines of governance in the building of a modern Afghan nation. Crucial in translating between these layers was the ambitious and charismatic interlocutor Kuhzad. Here we see the longer-term impact of heritage interventions and their entanglements with global politics and also the role of networks and individuals 'on the ground,' who play crucial roles in shaping understandings of Afghanistan's past.

5. COLD WAR PARADIGM: SOVIETS, THE US AND AFGHAN ARCHAEOLOGY (1960 – 1990)

A) COLD WAR DYNAMICS AND AFGHAN ARCHAEOLOGY

In 2010, I travelled to Moscow to interview the charismatic archaeologist Viktor Ivanovich Sarianidi. This was for research that I carried out, prior to undertaking this thesis, into his discoveries at the site of Tillya Tepe in Afghanistan in 1978 just before the Soviet military intervention in Afghanistan. Professor Sarianidi (1929 - 2013) was a celebrated archaeologist who worked extensively on a Bronze Age civilisation in Central Asia, particularly at a site in Turkmenistan known as Gonur Tepe. Prior to his discoveries at Gonur, Sarianidi was deputy director of a Soviet Afghan team of archaeologists which excavated in the north of Afghanistan and discovered the site of Tillya Tepe. Here, in 1978, Sarianidi and his team discovered six tombs of a wealthy nomadic family containing more than 21,000 pieces of gold, silver and ivory jewelry and portable adornment which reveal some of the trade relationships, and the wealth derived from them, on the Central Asian steppe during the 1st century BCE – 1st century ACE (Sarianidi 1985; Schiltz 2008). The finds became colloquially known as the Bactrian Gold and are Afghanistan's most celebrated archaeological discovery. Selected objects from this gold hoard are currently traveling as part of the 'Hidden Treasures from the National Museum, Kabul' exhibition that has been shown in cultural institutions worldwide since 2006.

Sarianidi discovered this site by accident when he was part of a Soviet Afghan team digging in this area of northern Afghanistan for earlier layers. The Soviet-Afghan expedition began work in 1968, under the direction of I. T. Kruglikova. According to Sarianidi, sites such as Tillya Tepe,

near the town of Sheberghan, were chosen because the team had 'institutional orders' to excavate close to the borders with the USSR (pers. comm. 2010). Sarianidi also mentioned another archaeologist working in Afghanistan at that time, the American Louis Dupree, who is said, anecdotally, to have worked for the CIA. The stories of these two archaeologists tell of the wider Cold War geopolitical tussles for the future of Afghanistan during the 1950s – 1970s, how Afghanistan's past was entangled with these wider political dynamics, and how expertise and archaeology as 'soft power' operated on the ground at the level of these individuals. Here we see another shift, towards a Cold War heritage paradigm, in which the rationale for heritage intervention shifts to reflect dominant geopolitical dynamics as each side sought to expand its influence and transmit their conflicting political ideologies. For the Soviets, archaeologists formed part of a wider 'humanitarian invasion' (Nunan 2016) in which diffuse forms of power, such as technical expertise and aid, was sent as a diplomatic forerunner to the invasion of Afghanistan by Soviet troops. Archaeological science was a means of cultural diplomacy through which the Soviets could showcase the success of their modern nation. On the other side, the US was fearful of Soviet influence and expansion southwards and Louis Dupree was tasked with reporting back on Afghanistan's political and economic outlook alongside his archaeological work. The political context here is the formation of the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) in 1965. In 1973 Daod seized power from his cousin and declared Afghanistan a republic. During the 1970s the Soviets slowly tightened their grip, leading to the Marxist-led Saur Revolution and the assassination of President Mohammad Daoud Khan on 27th April 1978 before the Soviet invasion a year later. There are many Russian sources which focus on Soviet archaeology in Central Asia. Some of these include references to Afghanistan and the excavation reports from Soviet-Afghan expeditions which are also available in Russian. However, due to my inability to read Russian, in this section I have relied on English language sources and a few Russian sources translated by a colleague.

In the 1950s, a new 'Great Game' emerged, this time between US and Soviet interests. Under Prime Minister Daoud Khan (1953 - 1963), Afghanistan played the US and the USSR off against each other as they competed over expensive, high profile investments in Afghanistan's infrastructure to ensure political leverage. In this tit for tat Afghan nation building enterprise, expertise played a crucial role as the US mobilised science and technology in an attempt to modernise the country and prevent it turning to communism. For the Soviets, on the other hand, such projects and their related forms of expertise were a way to both showcase the

idea of Soviet efficiency and capability abroad and also, through the creation of factories and factory jobs, to create class consciousness that might lead Afghans to revolution (Nunan 2016: 101-102). Between 1951 and 1953, for example, the US based firm Morrison Knudsen initiated a huge economic development project in Helmand. Its engineers lived in a purpose-built modern city in Lashkar Gah of eight thousand residents with surburban style lawns and picket fences (Cullather 2002: 512). The American historian Arnold Toynbee visited in 1960 and was shocked at its scale, calling it an 'America-in-Asia' (quoted in Cullather 2002: 512). This ambitious project in the south of the country aimed to construct two dams, an extensive canal and road system in the desert, at the cost of $63.7 million (Dupree 1973: 483). However, it was replete with technical hold ups and water management issues and, after such a large financial investment, the US was not interested in helping further. The Afghans turned to the USSR who subsequently undertook their own infrastructure project which was completed in 1964 and has been crucial for the economic development of Afghanistan and its relationship with its neighbours. The Salang Tunnel is an underground thoroughfare through the Hindu Kush mountains which joined the north and south parts of Afghanistan for the first time, opening a major trade route with Russia (Dupree 1973: 507 – 511). The country had been divided, an 'economic Korea', as the Soviets focused on the north of the country and the US on projects in the south, until this new artery for trade was built (Cullather 2002: 513). However, despite these investments which were explicitly tied to Cold War interests, small areas of development would happen without the Afghan state itself being 'built' (Nunan 2016: 48).

When discussing the situation of international archaeologists working in Afghanistan, Sarianidi explained that there were several archaeologists digging at that time and 'not all with scientific aims'. He was referring specifically to Louis Dupree, the American academic, who, according to Sarianidi, complained that he had to write reports on the political scenario rather than focus on his preferred pastime of archaeology (pers. comm. 2010). Dupree had been trained at Harvard and was a key interlocutor between Afghan and US institutions as he was part of the Fulbright programme, the CIA and the US Peace Corps (Hanifi 2018: 2009). Between 1959 and 1983 Dupree was affiliated with the American Universities Field Staff (AUFS) for whom he wrote dozens of reports with such titles as 'An informal talk with Daod' (September 1959); 'Pushtunistan: The Problems and its larger implications' (December 1961); 'Landlocked images: Snap responses to an informal questionnaire', June 1962, in which he

included results from a free association experiment at Kabul University using the terms 'Afghanistan' and 'United States'. Dupree's book, *Afghanistan*, reads somewhat like an intelligence briefing note in the form of a history book and focuses on Afghan opinions of US and Soviet assistance (1973). He spent nineteen years in Afghanistan and Pakistan, returning every third year to lecture at American universities that supported the AUFS programme. With his considerable knowledge of Afghanistan, Dupree served as an advisor to various governments, including those of West Germany, France, Denmark, Sweden and Great Britain, and he advised the US State Department and the United Nations (Edwards 1996). After the Marxist coup Dupree was briefly imprisoned and then deported from the country. While Dupree's wide-ranging research focused on Afghan ethnology, folklore, history and archaeology, his most important archaeological discovery was the site of Aq Kupruq, just south of Balkh in northern Afghanistan, where he found 20,000 flint tools from the Upper Paleolithic period. He also found a small limestone pebble with a human face carved on it which is known as the oldest piece of portable cave art in Asia (Dupree 1968; Edwards 1996). Dupree was able to undertake archaeology in his spare time between work for the AUFS. Here we see the haphazard nature of how this particular mobilisation of archaeology for diplomacy operated on the ground and how such the politics of such interventions works across networks of individuals and their personal interests or private ambitions. Dupree's discoveries were the result of his own personal interests but also crucial for the development of Afghan archaeology.

As the USSR ramped up its interest and the Afghan economy became increasingly intertwined with that of its northern neighbour, the Soviets started what Timothy Nunan has called a 'humanitarian invasion' (2016) alongside these direct forms of power, in which Soviet specialists were sent to provide expertise on the modernisation and development of Afghanistan. Oil and gas engineers had arrived in the north of Afghanistan looking for resources through which Afghanistan could repay its debt to the USSR which, in 1963, had invested $39 million Afghanistan for the exploration of natural gas (Nunan 2016: 98). With a sense of urgency to recoup funds lost, Soviet geologists started to prospect for gas near the northern town of Sheberghan. They found gas, built a gasworks, constructed a pipeline to Turkmenistan and built a petroleum sciences technical college in nearby Mazar e Sharif (Nunan 2016: 98). Such discoveries delighted the Soviets who were keen to make good on

their investments, but Nunan discusses how these pipelines ultimately became 'umbilical cords,' complicating Afghan-Soviet political economies (Nunan 2016: 99).

Under the umbrella of Soviet expertise as diplomacy, Sarianidi and his team of Soviet and Afghan archaeologists followed this flow of Soviet experts to the north of Afghanistan. The Soviet-Afghan expedition began work in 1968, under the direction of I. T. Kruglikova. For these archaeologists working under the umbrella of the wider foreign policy of the USSR, the mapping and excavation work itself was of acute interest to the Soviet Institute of Archaeology, as it complimented the already considerable archaeological and ethnographic work undertaken north of the Afghan border in the Soviet states of Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan (Davydov & Litvinsky quoted in (ed.) Dubova 2016: 21). There was already scholarly interest in Afghanistan from the Soviet Academy of Sciences, who had supported publications of the country's ethnography, history and literature in the 1940s by B. A. Dorn (Ibid.). While the geopolitical aims of the USSR were complemented by the desire for Soviet archaeology to expand its reach and knowledge of the region, similar to previous interventions in the country's heritage Afghanistan's pre-Islamic past became a focus for the excavations. Surveys covered the whole of the north-western part of Afghanistan and focused on a range of sites such as Dashlitepe, Dilberjin, Emshitepe and Jigatepe (Munchaev & Koshelenko 2009: 125). The finds were transferred to the museum in Kabul. As French art historian Franz Grenet explains, there was 'a concern with restoring to these peoples a historical memory which was in no way indebted to Islam' (2013: 11). Through the Soviet project these ex-republics had come under a single unit of control and the location of a common past (that was decidedly not Islamic) was a means through which to build a Soviet national identity. While ethnic pride was stimulated in these states through other means such as national languages and local heroes, archaeology had been mobilised to serve the political objectives of unity (Klejn 2012: 136). Another aim of this work, which fitted within the politically driven idea of locating a common Soviet past, was to establish a chronology for Afghanistan's archaeology. This objective was different to other international delegations such as the French, who had initially been preoccupied by finding evidence of Alexander or Greek settlements and had thus far only provided evidence about 'individual centres of culture', as Davydov and Litvinsky explain, without a linking sequence of how these periods fitted together (quoted in (ed.) Dubova 2016: 21).

Within the wider umbrella of geopolitical dynamics and the objectives of such archaeological work, these US and Soviet interventions were also shaped on the ground by certain individuals and their networks. By chance, when digging near the town of Sheberghan, Sarianidi and his team happened upon Afghanistan's most celebrated discovery: the Bactrian Gold. Sarianidi had a particular interest in the Bronze Age and he had been focused on finding evidence in Afghanistan of a regional Bronze Age civilisation (this was later named the Bactria Margiana Archaeological Complex). His excavations at Tillya Tepe were hopeful in this respect, when he suddenly, literally, 'struck gold' and the thousands of pieces of gold hidden in the graves revealed themselves. Nunan calls his discoveries 'unplanned' (2016: 99) and Sarianidi has spoken of his initial disappointment as he wasn't at all interested in these 1st century BC – 1st century AD layers and wanted to dig deeper to access the older layers of the site (pers. comm. 2010). The excavation took place at great speed, with the pressure to finish and transport the finds to Kabul before the arrival of Soviet troops to the country. Soviet advisors living nearby were invited by Sarianidi to touch the finds before they were sent to Kabul to the museum (Nunan 2016: 99). Sarianidi hurriedly left the country.

b) Loss and destruction during conflict

Characteristic of the beginning of this Cold War paradigm was the entanglement of Afghanistan's archaeology with Soviet and US geopolitical interests as both sides strove to build influence in Afghanistan through infrastructure projects and forms of technical expertise. This led to two crucial discoveries for Afghanistan's archaeology, that of Tillya Tepe and Aq Kupruq, which owe much to the personal ambitions and passions of Viktor Sarianidi and Louis Dupree. However, the geopolitics of the Cold War eventually had a disastrous effect on Afghanistan's heritage, as it directly provoked a series of interrelated conflicts in the country between 1979 and 2001. The Soviet period lasted for ten years, during which the US and Saudi Arabia supported resistance *mujahideen* factions to fight the Soviets and halt the spread of communism. The Soviet–Afghan war culminated in the withdrawal of the Soviets from Afghanistan in 1989. This conflict had a huge impact on Afghanistan's economy and it is estimated that almost 7 million Afghans left and took refuge in Pakistan, Iran or further in Australia and Europe. After the Soviets were pushed back, the *mujahideen* groups fought over the leadership of Afghanistan and the country split down ethno-religious lines during the subsequent civil war of the early 1990s. The chaos led the rise to power and rule of the Taliban (1996 – 2001), a group that originated in Pakistani refugee camps during the 1980s as a direct result of CIA training and funding given to Afghan resistance fighters.

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FIGURE 6 OBJECTS FROM THE COLLECTION OF THE NATIONAL MUSEUM BEING REMOVED FOR STORAGE ELSEWHERE. PHOTOGRAPH CARLA GRISSMANN

During this period 1979 - 2001, international archaeological missions were halted and the damage done to Afghanistan's culture heritage was significant. Many sites were looted and damaged and the museum was repeatedly looted and attacked. This destruction has been a focus of the recent literature on the country's heritage (e.g., Dupree 1998; Dupree 2002; (ed.) van Krieken-Pieters 2006). The previous director of the Kabul Museum, Omara Khan Massoudi (2008), has noted some of the key incidents. In 1981, during the early years of the Soviet intervention, an important site museum at Hadda was plundered and burned. By the mid 1990s the Kabul Museum was a roofless shell, as the museum building sat on the outskirts of Kabul in a strategic area and so was repeatedly taken by various Afghan *mujahideen* factions and looted multiple times. In 1989, objects from the museum's collections were moved to different locations around Kabul, including the Ministry of Culture and the Central Bank, under the Arg or Presidential palace (fig. 6). In 1994, the museum building was struck by a rocket (Massoudi 2008: 37). Witnesses have spoken of a military base for *mujahideen* fighters at the adjoining Darulaman Palace. 1994 saw a hiatus in the destruction with help from UN agency UNOCHA; the Society for the Preservation of Afghan Cultural Heritage (SPACH) was established by a group of concerned internationals and Afghans in Islamabad and an inventory

of the museum's collection was undertaken. In 1996 the Taliban declared their support for the rehabilitation and protection of the museum. What came next was therefore a surprise and shows the rise of factions of zealots within the Taliban. In 2001 a special Taliban delegation was sent to the museum to demolish figurative works of art and destroyed about 2500 pieces from the collection (Massoudi 2008: 39). In March 2001, the Taliban dynamited the Buddhas. SPACH newsletters issued reports and updates of the destruction, including impassioned pleas for information as to the whereabouts of objects looted from the museum (e.g., SPACH 2000; SPACH 2001).

Even before the destructions in Bamyan, such damage to heritage came to international attention, and a new heritage paradigm began to emerge which reflected the impending 'War on Terror' and its related geopolitical dynamics. One characteristic of this new 'post-Bamyan' era for heritage was already becoming clear: the idea that a nation's heritage is a cause for intense international concern. The UN General Assembly Resolution (A/RES/s4/189A-B, paragraph 30) of 14 February 2000, reads: 'The cultural and historic relics and monuments of Afghanistan belong to the common heritage of mankind .... and requests all Member States to take appropriate measures ... '. This appeal was reiterated by Secretary-General Kofi Annan (paragraph 82, Report of 16 November 1999): 'to protect cultural and historic relics and monuments of Afghanistan from acts of vandalism, damage and theft' (quoted in SPACH 2000). Once on the international agenda in this way, after the actual destruction of the Buddhas in March 2001 the idea of intervening in a country's heritage took another turn when, in October 2001, such events arguably lent a position of 'moral fairness' to the US military intervention and were exploited as a pretext for invasion (Harrison 2012: 187).

6. CONCLUSIONS

In this chapter, I have attempted to show that Afghanistan has been central to wider global processes and it therefore provides a suitable context for examining how heritage intervention and politics are mutually entangled. During each historic paradigm, Imperial, Modernization, and Cold War, the treatment of Afghanistan's cultural heritage is reflective of particular geopolitical dynamics. The notion of 'soft power' is not sophisticated enough to untangle the politics that work through heritage in these instances, from the direct power of British colonial and French expansionist foreign policy to diffuse forms of discursive power, such as the introduction of discourses that privilege the country's pre-Islamic past. The

workings of politics through heritage are complex and I have tried to draw attention to the multiple forms of power, direct and diffuse, that co-exist and operate through such heritage interventions and observe the sometimes haphazard ways in which these forms of power operate.

Afghanistan's pre-Islamic past has been a focus of these interventions. While such a focus on the pre-Islamic era was introduced during the colonial period, we see how this was upheld and given shape throughout later paradigms by networks of individuals, particular organisations and institutions, and for myriad different reasons, from Masson's search for a Greek past in Asia, Foucher and the creation of a Gandharan art historical discourse, to the mobilisation of this past by Kuhzad and Afghan historians as a suitable base upon which to build an idea of the modern Afghan nation. The Soviets again focused on these histories, as they complemented their work in the ex-Central Asian republics which sought to locate a past, beyond Islam, upon which to nation build the Soviet state. Alan Lester has commented on the 'multiple trajectories that define any space or place' (2006) and while these individual archaeologists or heritage professionals worked within the wider geopolitical structures and direct forms of power of the British colonial enterprise, French expansionist foreign policy or Afghan domestic political objectives, these histories also give a sense of how power operates across individuals as their private passions and ambitions also shaped such interventions.

While this chapter has given the historic background to the current 'post-Bamyan' scenario for heritage, the subsequent chapters show how the characteristics of this current entanglement of heritage with politics play out on the ground in Afghanistan through a number of internationally sponsored heritage interventions. In this historical chapter we get a sense of the chaotic and haphazard way in which politics operates through these networks of international governments, state heritage institutions and individuals involved in heritage intervention. The following chapters, however, include data derived from ethnographic research on these projects which reveals more about the workings of the current entanglements of politics and heritage 'on the ground'. The predominant focus of these historic interventions has been on Afghanistan's pre-Islamic past and in the next chapter I show the long-term impact of such an emphasis by exploring a number of internationally sponsored heritage preservation projects that focus on this era in Bamyan - at the archaeological site of Mes Aynak, in the galleries of the National Museum of Afghanistan, and through a traveling exhibition of objects from the museum's collection – and examine how these interventions are shaping understandings of Afghanistan's past. While this focus has

endured into the current era, however, the politics that intersect with it are symptomatic of the configurations of politics and heritage that emerged after the destructions at Bamyan.

CHAPTER 5

RECONSTRUCTING AFGHAN IDENTITY? NATION BUILDING AND THE SAFEGUARDING OF
AFGHANISTAN'S BUDDHIST HERITAGE

1. THE NEW POLITICS OF AFGHANISTAN'S PRE-ISLAMIC HERITAGE

Since 2001, international governments, agencies and organizations have been working to conserve, preserve and rehabilitate Afghanistan's cultural heritage as part of the wider, internationally sponsored project. In 2002, UNESCO was tasked with the coordination of all heritage-related initiatives by international governments, non-governmental organisations and international agencies (Manhart 2004). The value of working with Afghanistan's heritage as part of a post-conflict nation building enterprise was summarised by UNESCO as follows.

'The safeguarding of cultural heritage holds an important position in order to strengthen the sense of national identity. Cultural heritage can become a rallying point for former adversaries, enabling them to rebuild ties and dialogue and re-design a common identity and future together.'

(UNESCO n.d.)

This sentiment was echoed by official rhetoric within the Afghan government. Thus, the deputy minister of information and culture, Omar Sultan, asserts that:

'Cultural heritage can become a point of mutual interest for former adversaries, enabling them to build ties, to engage in dialogue, and work together in shaping a common future ' (quoted in Hiebert & Cambon 2008: 30).

UNESCO's rationale for intervening in cultural heritage was this idea that Afghanistan's past could act as a bridge builder as adjunct to the wider programme of internationally sponsored

reconstruction. The civil war and Taliban era had left Afghan society divided and the language used by UNESCO was prescient of the rhetoric deployed for heritage reconstruction after the conflict in the Balkans, where the Mostar bridge was promoted as a symbol of the ability of heritage to act as a 'bridge builder' to join communities that had been divided by the conflict (Walasek 2015: 209). However, Afghanistan has a multilayered past and while UNESCO stated that its strategy was 'to help re-establish the links between the populations concerned and their cultural history, helping them to develop a sense of common ownership of monuments that represent the cultural identity of different segments of society' (UNESCO n.d.), the degree to which international heritage initiatives apportioned equal value to all pasts requires scrutiny.

This chapter focuses on the legacy of the historic, imported discourses, or forms of productive power, which have focused on Afghanistan's pre-Islamic heritage and shows how this focus has been maintained into the present day through a range of state and non-state actors, organisations and institutions all working with Afghanistan's heritage. We see how the focus on this particular past by international spies, explorers and archaeologists throughout the Imperial, Modernization and Cold War heritage paradigms described in the previous chapter has been carried forward by networks of international institutions and individuals. In comparison with other

FIGURE 7 DAMAGED HEAD OF A DEVOTEE OF BUDDHA UNDER CONSERVATION, MES AYNAK, JUNE 2013. PHOTOGRAPH C. WYNDHAM

chapters that look at a single intervention or project, this examines a broad intervention into Afghanistan's pre-Islamic past through a number of projects and initiatives which have been undertaken since 2001. While this historic focus on the country's pre-Islamic past has endured, the politics have shifted in line with political dynamics which are indicative of the 'post-Bamyan' scenario for heritage intervention. This past, which was previously claimed as 'European' heritage by Charles Masson and Alfred Foucher, is now being recast as specifically Afghan. These examples show how the country's pre-Islamic past has been promoted as a key feature upon which to reconstruct Afghan national identity as part of the wider,

internationally sponsored nation-building programme and how this works through a wide and diverse range of non-state and state institutions, international organisations, military actors and international exhibitions despite an ongoing ambivalence about material forms of pre-Islamic heritage amongst some groups. Firstly, this chapter looks at the powerful global heritage discourse that arrived at the Buddhas after their destruction, imported by a number of international heritage consultants working with UNESCO and ICOMOS; the effects of this intervention on local ideas of ownership at the site; and the resulting current 'stalemate' caused by a clash of expertise between these international heritage agencies. Secondly, I look at two different scenarios that display Afghanistan's pre-Islamic heritage: the galleries of the National Museum and the international exhibition display of the so-called hidden treasures saved from the National Museum. Finally, I discuss the rescue excavation at Mes Aynak, focusing on how the entanglement of pre-Islamic cultural heritage, military intervention and national reconstruction is typical of the 'post-Bamyan' era in which heritage work is used as a form of positive public relations for international neoliberal interventions (fig. 7). The unifying element of this chapter is the focus on Afghanistan's pre-Islamic past and I show how this focus, which was introduced in the past, intersects with, and is given shape by, a range of state and non-state actors, military actors, international heritage agencies, NGOs and international museums, showing the complex and nuanced ways in which heritage and politics currently intersect.

2. INTERNATIONAL EXPERTISE AT THE BUDDHAS

A) A TECHNICAL INTERVENTION

In the aftermath of the Buddhas' destruction a significant amount of international heritage expertise was drawn to the preservation challenges of the Buddha niches (ed. Petzet 2009). As a result, the site became quickly entangled in the institutional power of UNESCO and ICOMOS, the two organisations which set the global agenda in terms of heritage preservation, and this had a range of affects. Through the huge amount of media attention, images and video footage of the destructions appeared on televisions in living rooms around the world, giving a sense of immediacy and closeness to the event. As discussed in Chapter 3, such a high-profile site, and one that was still perceived to be at risk, initially drew a lot of attention from international heritage organisations such as UNESCO. In December 2001, for example, following the collapse of the Taliban regime, UNESCO sent a mission to Bamyan to assess the

condition of the site and protect the remaining stone blocks which remained in the niches after the blasts (Manhart 2009: 32). The following year, in July, another mission, organised with the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS), led by the then ICOMOS president Michael Petzet, and paid for by the government of Germany, traveled to Bamyan to prepare a conservation program, while another group of German, Italian and Japanese experts visited in September 2002. This initial phase of work included a program of extensive surveying, measuring and logging of data relating to the niches and the surviving fragments (Manhart 2009: 40).

After these missions, in 2003, the cultural landscape and archaeological remains of the Bamyan Valley were inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List and the List of World Heritage in Danger, firmly asserting their place in a global heritage discourse and with it underlining the idea that Afghanistan's heritage was of significant international concern. With this inscription came a related set of ideas, in which the value of heritage is understood as the material, monumental and historic aspects of heritage. This system of value has been described as the 'authorised heritage discourse' (AHD), and has been outlined by Laurajane Smith (2006). The workings of such a discursive, productive forms of power that focuses on these aspects of heritage promotes the idea that sites can only be cared for by trained experts who specialise in technical interventions. This was borne out at Bamyan and since the site's inscription on the World Heritage List many more international heritage consultants have visited. In 2003, for example, a three-week-long mission was sent by Leuven University to undertake scientific documentation, and later that year, in August, scaffolding to support the niche of the Western Buddha was transported to Afghanistan by the German army, donated by the German Messerschimdt Foundation (Petzet 2009a: 56). Also, as part of this global effort, the Japanese National Research Institute for Cultural Properties made four visits to the valley between 2003 and 2004 to prepare a long-term management plan that was submitted to the Ministry of Information and Culture and UNESCO in 2005 (Manhart 2003: 259). In terms of funding, after piecemeal contributions from the German government, the Japanese Foreign Ministry organised a funds-in-trust grant for 'safeguarding' the Buddhas with a budget of US $1,815,967 for 2003–2006 (Manhart 2009: 40).

Since 2002, under the umbrella of UNESCO, experts from these heritage agencies and organisations have implemented a highly technical programme of conservation which has

largely been funded by this budget from the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The focus has been on surveying, measuring and logging of data relating to the niches and the surviving fragments from the blasts, and stabilising the niches of both the Eastern and Western Buddha (ed. Petzet 2009). Hundreds of fragments with a recognisable sculpted surface have been recovered, numbered and documented, and are currently housed in temporary buildings constructed at the foot of each Buddha. A Japanese team of conservators and archaeologists has undertaken an adjunct programme of laser scanning of the extensive network of caves and conservation of the remains of the mural paintings. There have been a number of international and Afghan suggestions for the future of the niches, which have included a digital museum, holograms and a new Buddha fashioned out of another area of cliff. In November 2002, a meeting was organized by UNESCO and ICOMOS in Munich to bring together twenty-five international and Afghan experts, including UNESCO staff, archaeologists, heritage consultants and members of the Afghanistan Ministry of Information and Culture, to form the Bamiyan Expert Working Group. This group has met yearly since 2002, in a different city around the world, to discuss and develop a management plan for the future of the valley's heritage. While a small number of Afghans are included at each Expert Working Group meeting, the majority of the group consists of international experts from UNESCO, the Japanese National Research Institute for Cultural Properties, the Italian Institute for Protection and Environmental Research, Italian firm RODIO, Aachen University, Munich Technical University and ICOMOS Germany.

To date the interventions at the niches themselves have been highly technical, with an emphasis on the role of the international expert or consultant who visits Bamyan for short periods, rather than longer-term investments focused on either understanding how local groups value the niches, or on training for Afghan conservators or engineers. It seems that this influx of technical expertise has had a significant impact on how local groups relate to the site. During interviews with local residents in 2013 and 2015, my interviewees made it clear that local groups felt sidelined by the international efforts. In the interviews conducted in nearby villages and bazaar, the dominant idea was that UNESCO owns the sites: "UNESCO owns that whole area – they have the documents from the government. The government sold it to UNESCO," said a resident of the nearby village of Dara e Qazan (22nd June 2015). Another respondent cited Japan as the owner of the Buddhas. One result is that certain groups and individuals had relinquished responsibility of the valley's heritage because they understood

international agencies and experts as having control: "It is a World Heritage site – we don't have a role," explained another informant (22nd June 2015).

While these respondents felt sidelined by the influx of expertise, this was seemingly compounded by the lack of communication from UNESCO and the Afghan government about what was happening at the Buddhas. Several respondents talked about issues of communication, and that they would feel more involved if they knew what was going on. "People don't see any visible changes. The issue is communication, if they could explain the work people would be less suspicious," stated one business owner in Bamyan (24th June 2015). This lack of communication worked in tandem with suspicions that residents already have about foreigners: "There has been a rumour since foreigners first came to Bamiyan that UNESCO and the PRT (Provincial Reconstruction Team, the NATO military troops stationed in the valley) are taking artefacts from the sites. One part of this is the lack of information from UNESCO and the government team working there. People respect their work but are suspicious they are taking artefacts," said a local mullah (20th June 2015).

B) A CONFLICT OF EXPERTISE

While on a local level this powerful discourse which privileges international experts and technical interventions had worked to alienate local groups and inspire feelings of exclusion and suspicion about the work at the Buddhas, something different was happening amongst the teams of experts focused on 'safeguarding the remains.' Such had been the influx of expertise that a disagreement had arisen over interpretations of international heritage charters and the most 'authentic' way to

FIGURE 8 THE NICHE OF THE EASTERN BUDDHA, JUNE 2015. PHOTOGRAPH C. WYNDHAM

conserve the niches. This clash between the institutional power of UNESCO and ICOMOS resulted in a conservation stalemate, the results of which were visible when I visited the valley in 2015 when all conservation work at the niches had stopped. I noticed the cause of this when driving to the bazaar on the first morning. The bottom section of the niche of the Eastern Buddha was swathed in plastic sheeting that was gently billowing in the wind (fig. 8). Behind the sheeting some scaffolding was visible and two pillars constructed out of brick (fig. 9). I soon learned from my companion, who was a heritage consultant for ICOMOS, how this difference of opinion had happened and how this clash had actually worked 'on the ground' at the level of these international experts who were quarrelling over the future of the site.

Local opinion in Bamyan has always been strongly in favour of some form of reconstruction at the Buddhas. In July 2002, upon the arrival of the first ICOMOS Germany mission to the valley, the governor of Bamyan province expressed his urgent wish to 'reconstruct' the Buddhas (Petzet 2009b: 43). However, due to the site's inscription on the World Heritage List in 2003, full reconstruction without the correct documentary evidence is not permissible under paragraph 86 of the World Heritage guidelines and its principle of authenticity (UNESCO 2005). With this in mind, the group of heritage professionals from ICOMOS Germany based at the Munich Technical University, led by ex ICOMOS President Michael

FIGURE 9 CONCRETE AND BRICK SUPPORTS FOR THE PROTECTIVE PLATFORM FOR THE NICHE OF THE EASTERN BUDDHA, BAMYAN, JUNE 2015. PHOTOGRAPH C. WYNDHAM

Petzet, was the first to recommend a possible solution for the site: anastylosis. This is a method which involves reassembling and restoring the many boulders and fragments to their original positions on the monument, possibly with the use of a foundational structure as support (Petzet 2009a). However, there was another camp with a different opinion, as I learned from my interviews with ICOMOS heritage professionals in Munich in August 2015. In this camp were the Japanese donors, Japanese heritage consultants and UNESCO who largely advocated for the niches to be stabilised but remain empty. One supporting argument here is that the niches were inscribed on the World Heritage List after the destruction of the Buddhas

and therefore any change to the integrity of the site as it has been inscribed would be considered to detract from its authenticity. Others have argued that leaving the large niche in its empty state serves UNESCO well because it underlined the importance of the organisation's work in these contexts (Harrison 2013: 188). After some deliberation, at the 10th Expert Working Group meeting which took place in Tokyo in 2011, it was announced that neither Buddha statue was to be totally reconstructed. This was followed by a recommendation from the Group that the large western niche be left empty 'as a testimony to the tragic act of destruction,' while a study be undertaken to see if a 'partial reassembling of fragments of the eastern Buddha could be an option' (UNESCO 2011). When the Expert Working Group confirmed that the Buddhas were not going to be reconstructed, Andrea Bruno, the consultant for UNESCO, declared that 'the void is the sculpture' (Martini & Rivetti 2014).

The actions of these two giants of international heritage policy and practice following the 2011 Expert Working Group decision reveals the difference in agenda and lack of communication between the institutions of ICOMOS and UNESCO, and how such international heritage discourses, or forms of productive power which privilege certain forms of expertise, also operated at this high-profile site. In 2013, experts from ICOMOS Germany were contracted by UNESCO to build a small platform to structurally consolidate the rear face of the Eastern Buddha and protect the public from falling rocks. During their work at the site to build this platform, ICOMOS consultants also fashioned two structural supports to the eastern Buddha niche that were constructed with iron rods, reinforced concrete and bricks. As the work progressed, these half-built pillars which stuck out at the bottom of the niche, began to resemble the Buddha's destroyed feet. As my informant from ICOMOS told me (3rd August 2015), ICOMOS maintained they were merely following UNESCO's instructions and these pillars were part of the protective platform to improve access to the site. However, members of UNESCO in Kabul understood the appendages as an opportunistic attempt by ICOMOS to reconstruct the eastern Buddha's feet as a means of instigating its preferred conservation strategy of anastylosis and were outraged at this apparently deliberate flouting of World Heritage conservation doctrine. In an article by *The Art Newspaper* from February 2014, a consultant architect for UNESCO accused ICOMOS Germany of carrying out work that was 'bordering on the criminal', 'wrong on every level' and taking place without their knowledge or permission (Martini & Rivetti 2014). As a response, in July 2014, UNESCO terminated

ICOMOS Germany's contract to work in Bamyan, accusing the organisation of making new constructions which threatened the Outstanding Universal Value of the site.

Since this tussle between these giants of international heritage preservation to set the agenda for preservation at the Buddha niches, funds from the Japanese government have stopped and two independent international heritage consultants have been sent to Bamyan to assess the situation at the Eastern Buddha. According to a representative from ICOMOS, they subsequently sent a report back to UNESCO recommending that the 'feet' be carefully removed, a solution that is not possible due to local sensitivities around any further destruction at the site (pers. comm. August 2015). In 2015, the unfinished appendages were sticking out at the bottom of the niche, partially covered by a plastic sheet which flaps around the ungainly ankle-like structures. This controversy, and the battle between these institutions, or their institutional power, which was played out in the international media and photographs of the supposed and unfinished 'feet' included for everyone to make their own judgment, demonstrates the power of the monument for international heritage organisations such as UNESCO and ICOMOS Germany to attract publicity, leverage themselves and undermine each other's work. The effect of such power tussles between these institutions is that the idea that the value of heritage lies in such monumental, historic sites and that these can only be cared for by internationally trained experts is further asserted. Since this wrangle there has been no further conservation work at the Eastern Buddha.

In the 1830s, Charles Masson gazed at the Buddhas in wonder, unsure as to their origin, and wrote in a cave above the niche of the western Buddha, as discovered by French archaeologists in the 1930s, 'If any fool should this high samooch (cave) explore, know that Charles Masson had been here before' (Errington 2002). A hundred and fifty years later, the site is entangled in the intricacies of a powerful international heritage discourse and its attached concepts of authenticity. The assertion of these World Heritage conventions and their attached mechanisms for protecting heritage, which are common in the aftermath of spectacular attacks such as Bamyan, empower the idea that heritage is increasingly endangered. Indeed, as I discussed in Chapter 3, one aspect of the 'post-Bamyan' era is that forms of heritage are perceived to be more 'at risk'. In turn, this idea of increased threat to heritage provides legitimacy to the construction of specific forms of discursive power, such as preservation knowledge, agendas, and policies (Vidal & Dias 2016). This notion that heritage

is increasingly under threat has given power to institutions such as UNESCO and ICOMOS and the dominant global approach to heritage preservation that results from what Laurajane Smith has called an 'Authorised Heritage Discourse' (AHD) (2006), a hegemonic discourse and productive form of power that promotes the value of the past as monumental, material and permanent and something to be cared for by trained 'experts' rather than local groups. In terms of how this discourse worked 'on the ground' in Bamyan, firstly, local opinion and desires for the future of the niches were sidelined, and secondly, it ushered a huge amount of technical expertise to the valley which resulted in a conflict between the two giants of international heritage conservation, ICOMOS and UNESCO. While analyses of the 'top down' workings of the AHD have been common to Heritage Studies, here we see how such a powerful, diffuse form of power can work in such other, haphazard ways too, as the deluge of expertise that arrived in the valley through international heritage agencies resulted in a conflict between ICOMOS and UNESCO over the nuances of authenticity of international heritage charters which halted further work at the niches. Later, in Chapter 8, I explore another symptom of the arrival of these powerful international ideas about the value of the Buddhas in Bamyan, and the haphazard, nuanced workings of this powerful global heritage discourse, showing how local groups attached to this discourse. As I will explore, while some Bamyanis feel ambivalence about the niches, others have wholeheartedly attached to the international heritage politics focused on the Buddhas and have mobilised them for their own agendas.

3. An ambivalence about pre-Islamic heritage

a) 'We value Islamic heritage over Buddhism'

In this section I outline why an ongoing focus on the country's pre Islamic past matters to Afghans. While it is clear from the World Heritage Listing that UNESCO does recognise the cultural diversity of the Bamyan Valley's heritage, with sites representing artistic and religious developments from the first to the thirteenth century, including important sites from the Islamic period, so far, international resources have been directed at the Buddha niches. As work proceeded to reinforce the empty niches, other sites in the valley such as Chehel Burj, a series of fortifications and mud brick buildings, which date from the twelfth to thirteenth century Islamic Ghorid dynasty, were visibly crumbling away. Sites such as these, as I discovered through interviews, seemingly have great relevance for local communities. I also discovered that, unsurprisingly, local people strongly identify with local Islamic shrines and

mosques, which they feel are part of their own culture. Also, given the current relative absence of an international tourism market, the Bamyan tourist board is focused on developing domestic tourism to the region from within Afghanistan. As a representative from the tourist board explained in an interview, "domestic tourists are more attracted to Islamic heritage and international tourists are more focused on Buddhist heritage. Afghanistan is 99% Muslim and their values don't match those of Buddhism, so of course we value Islamic heritage over Buddhism" (May 2013).

B) DISPLAYING PRE-ISLAMIC HERITAGE

A focus on this particular past by international organisations is a continuation of the historical emphasis placed on the country's pre-Islamic past during the Imperial, Modernization and Cold War periods. I discovered that this ambivalence also existed at the National Museum in Kabul, where, while I was working on the Oriental Institute digitisation project at the National Museum in 2013, I noticed the extent of international support that had been directed towards the museum's displays of Buddhist heritage and the ambivalent reactions of staff members to this emphasis.

FIGURE 10 MODEL OF THE WESTERN BUDDHA, ENTRANCE OF THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AFGHANISTAN. PHOTOGRAPH C. WYNDHAM

For example, the object that museum employees and visitors encounter when entering and leaving the museum, and that dominates the entrance hall, is a large replica model of the western Buddha from Bamyan (fig. 10). Upon entering the main hallway, a stairwell of niches filled with statues of the Buddhas is visible while a map of Buddhist sites in Afghanistan dominated the landing at the top of these stairs. In the summer of 2013, the two principal galleries upstairs were dedicated to displays of Buddhist objects. In the methods of display and the quality of lighting and interpretation, these displays stood out from the rest of the museum's galleries

FIGURE 11 ONE OF THE GALLERIES OF THE EXHIBITION 'MES AYNAK: RECENT DISCOVERIES ALONG THE SILK ROAD'. PHOTOGRAPH C. WYNDHAM

and as a result attracted many more visitors than the other, dimly lit galleries that showed the museum's ethnographic and Islamic collections. The first gallery that visitors encountered at the top of the stairs was entitled 'Buddhist Heritage of Afghanistan', which was funded by the Dutch government and opened in May 2012. The display focuses on the life of Buddha, the history and culture of Buddhism in Afghanistan and explanations of Buddhist iconography. Adjacent to this gallery, a lavishly produced, architect-designed display contains purpose-built cases and lighting imported from Germany. This gallery features the Buddhist objects recently excavated at Mes Aynak, a Buddhist site in Logar Province. This exhibition is entitled 'Mes Aynak: Recent Discoveries along the Silk Road' and opened in 2011 with the support of the US government, who also funded a catalogue in both Dari and English (fig. 11). The Buddha and bodhisattva heads in this display are individually spotlit from above, and the red walls and stylish yellow interpretation panels contrast sharply with the sparse displays and limited interpretation of the rest of the galleries in the museum. The display in the Mes Aynak gallery contrasts most sharply with the gallery a few doors down, at the far end of the upper floor of the museum, which is dedicated to objects from the Islamic site of Ghazni (the summer capital of the Ghaznavids, the country's first Islamic dynasty). The gallery devoted to Ghazni has had no such international support, the objects on display had neither lighting nor interpretation and the paint was peeling from the walls.

In Afghanistan, where Islam is at the core of Afghan society, some of the reactions from museum staff showed this internationally sponsored focus on Buddhist displays to be contradictory. Due in part to the ongoing conflict, Afghan society has also become increasingly conservative over the last thirty years and, as I discovered at the museum, this emphasis on Buddhist culture was disorienting and perhaps even offensive. One staff member at the National Museum explained to me, "There are so many political and economic problems in Afghanistan—it makes it hard for us to think about the value of other pasts." In these attempts to show the value of the destroyed Buddhist heritage and to make Buddhist objects more prominent, these exhibitions risked alienating museum staff and visitors. Responding to the abundance of Buddhist objects at the museum, another staff member described how he felt like 'a traitor' when he comes to work. One staff member described the 'fantastical' nature of the designs of the Buddhas, while another associated them with magical powers or negative forces, referring to a figurative sculpture of a female devotee of Buddha on display in the Mes Aynak gallery as a 'devil woman'. A member of museum staff told me that a visitor had warned

him against praying in the museum due to the presence of these Buddhist 'idols'. For these museum employees, Buddhist objects have seemingly maintained their religious meaning and relevance. Finbarr Barry Flood has discussed how the Buddhas, in the eyes of the Taliban, had not yet made the metaphorical leap from 'cult icon to cultural object' (Flood 2002). In the museum too, these statues of the Buddha had continued to represent an 'other' that contrasted sharply with the daily realities of museum staff.

C) Pre-Islamic heritage and public relations

While these ambivalences existed in Bamyan and at the National Museum, this focus on Afghanistan's pre-Islamic heritage has been further reflected in a travelling exhibition of objects from the collection of the National Museum that is currently touring the world. Here, we see a continuation of the historical focus on Afghanistan's pre-Islamic past by international interests that I outlined in the previous chapter, but in this instance the politics are different as this exhibition of pre-Islamic objects becomes entangled in the harder politics of the wider international intervention.

In the previous chapter I described how, in 2004, many objects from the collection of the National Museum that had been hidden in 1989 were 'rediscovered' in the vaults of the Central Bank under the Presidential Palace. Thousands of objects that had been considered lost or removed by the Russians, or melted down or stolen by the Taliban, had in fact been saved thanks to the *tavildars* (keyholders) that had hidden them (Massoudi 2008). Once the vaults were reopened, an effort began to catalogue the objects and a touring exhibition of a selection of the 'rediscovered' objects was proposed and organized by a consortium of a number of international institutions including the National Geographic Society, the Musée Guimet in Paris, the French Archaeological Delegation and the National Museum in Kabul. The range of organisations involved, each with their own agendas, shows the complexity of these alignments over Afghanistan's heritage. It was decided that the exhibition would display pre-Islamic objects. These would be from the Bronze Age site of Tepe Fullol, the Greek city of Ai Khanum, the first-century BCE hoard from Tillya Tepe as well as material culture associated with the Silk Road found at the site of Begram. These collections, of course, reflected the historical emphasis on excavating sites from this period by international archaeological delegations. Two of the sites, Begram and Ai Khanum, had been excavated by French archaeologists; Tillya Tepe by the Soviet sponsored Sarianidi, while Tepe Fullol was a chance discovery by Afghan farmers. More organisations and institutions became involved as the

inventorying activities for the exhibition were funded partly by the National Geographic Society and partly by the National Endowment for the Humanities, a US government agency. The 'Hidden Treasures from the National Museum, Afghanistan' show has been exhibited at the most renowned cultural institutions in France, Italy, the Netherlands, Germany, the United States, the United Kingdom, Sweden, China, Korea, Australia and Hong Kong.

As these objects have travelled the world, a powerful narrative concerning Afghanistan's pre-Islamic past developed which established a dichotomy between the country's Muslim present and its pre-Islamic past. At the Nieuwe Kerk in Amsterdam, for example, the exhibition was augmented by a selection of sculptures from the Greco-Buddhist monasteries of Hadda loaned by the Musée Guimet; these further evoked a 'golden age' of Afghanistan prior to the coming of Islam. Although the focus of the display was on other pre-Islamic sites, in the entrance to the Dutch exhibition, a loop of the Al Jazeera footage of the dynamiting of the Bamyan Buddhas was played continuously on a monitor, creating a contrast between the riches of Afghanistan's pre-Islamic past with the destructive iconoclasm of its Islamic present and playing into emerging stereotypes of the 'post-Bamyan' era which portray a problematic relationship between Islam and heritage. The Islamic history of the country, which dates from the seventh century, several centuries later than the date of any objects included in the exhibition, was rarely mentioned in the exhibition texts and accompanying catalogue. The touring exhibition has been very successful, attracting large numbers of visitors at most venues. When the exhibition opened at the Museo di Antichità in Turin, for example, it was attended by 'huge crowds of visitors' and was described as 'a major cultural event for the whole of northern Italy' (Jarrige 2008: 19).

As well as its own diplomatic work, the exhibition has been used as a venue for more conventional diplomatic meetings, providing an attractive and seemingly neutral cultural backdrop for meetings between government representatives. When I worked as assistant curator of the show at the British Museum I witnessed, at the exhibition's opening in 2011, President Karzai and the UK's foreign secretary William Hague give speeches and mingle with representatives from each other's government. This desire for the world to take a 'new look' at Afghanistan through the exhibition is reflected in some of its surrounding discourse as the deputy minister of information and culture, Omar Sultan, wrote in the catalogue: 'By organising this exhibition, we want to affirm our commitment to the international community

that Afghanistan is changing from a culture of war to a culture of peace' (Sultan 2008: 30). The message as these objects travel the world is clear: rich cultural layers lie beneath the commonly held perceptions of Afghanistan as a haven for militant, hard-line Islamists. In presenting an 'un-Islamicised' version of Afghanistan, the exhibition seeks to find common ground between the international audiences and the objects. In this way, the exhibition could be understood as useful for Afghanistan's global image because it distances the country from its associations with radical Islam. The exhibition therefore worked as a branding exercise (Lewis 2011; Anholt 2011), constructing an identity for Afghanistan that is distant and distinct from its Muslim present. By mining the 'Lost Worlds of Afghanistan' (Hiebert 2008: 55), the exhibition, which has been seen by millions, has acted as an international public relations opportunity for the country. Here, Afghanistan's past is being used to shape the present and to create a sanitised, 'safe' image of the country. In the context of this exhibition, pre-Islamic Afghan heritage is somehow seen as 'neutral' by international audiences, but it is, of course, charged with meaning for Afghans. In celebrating the country's pre-Islamic history, the exhibition presents a different, more palatable impression of Afghanistan for international audiences, but in so doing it ignores the present-day realities of a country in which Islam and its history have a huge relevance for contemporary Afghans and lie at the centre of contemporary social, political and cultural life. The historical focus on Afghanistan's pre-Islamic past by foreign archaeological delegations, keen to find a European past in Asia, has taken on a set of new meanings through its entanglement with the narratives of the internationally sponsored project of reconstruction.

The show was partially supported by the National Endowment for the Humanities, an organ of US cultural diplomacy. In this way, the exhibition might be regarded as a reflection of the then thinking in US cultural policy. Frank Hodsoll (2010), former chairman of the National Endowment of the Arts, highlights the effectiveness of cultural engagement and suggests that creating connections through mutual understanding is the future of global power. Through such cultural projects, the 'liberation' of the riches of Afghanistan's pre-Islamic heritage is somehow associated with the discourse of neoliberal intervention and the liberation of Afghanistan itself from the yoke of radical Islam. These entanglements of heritage and politics work to give legitimacy to, and garner public support for, the hard politics, or compulsory power, of international military intervention.

4. MES AYNAK AND BUDDHIST HERITAGE UNDER THREAT

A) 'LITTLE SOURCE OF COPPER'

Another example of how various forms of politics are currently entangled with Afghanistan's pre-Islamic past is the Buddhist era site of Mes Aynak, which lies in Logar Province, south of Kabul. Mes Aynak is a Pashto name meaning 'little source of copper', and, indeed, the Buddhist archaeological remains sit on top of what is thought to be the second largest copper deposit in the world. The copper mining concession at Mes Aynak represents the biggest foreign investment in Afghanistan by a private company in the country's history and is regarded as key to Afghanistan's economic development (Hogg et al 2013). The concession is,

FIGURE 12 THE VIEW FROM THE TOP OF KAFIRAT TEPE, MES AYNAK, MAY 2013. PHOTOGRAPH C WYNDHAM

however, highly controversial, and numerous conflicting interests, and their accompanying sources of power - national, international and regional - converge at the site. At Mes Aynak, contests between heritage preservation and raw materials extraction, between national and regional economic interests, and between different international, national and regional governments, businesses and conservation bodies have all been entangled in the wider political and economic instability that has afflicted Afghanistan. Between 2013 and 2015 I conducted seven interviews with Afghan and international archaeologists working at Mes Aynak either in Kabul or via Skype and one interview with the World Bank-appointed official in charge of the rescue excavation in order to understand how politics and heritage intersected at this site across the range of different stakeholders involved. I visited the site several times during the Spring of 2013 with archeologists from the French Delegation who were overseeing aspects of the rescue archaeology dig, funded by the World Bank, to get a sense of the range of organisations that were converging here and how the site was entangled

in their array of agendas (fig. 12). To get to Mes Aynak, we drove the forty-kilometre drive in a pick-up truck out of the traffic-choked city to the south, past the old city walls of the Bala Hissar and the graveyard which houses Afghanistan's famous 1970s pop star, Ahmed Zahir. To the left, past the graveyard, is a ruined Buddhist stupa complex, Tepe Narenj (Orange Hill) which was being excavated by a Franco-Afghan team. The road ran past a series of roadside stalls selling lengths of bamboo. After some time speeding down the quiet road, we took a left turn and drove up a stony gully which was formerly a riverbed. The truck stopped and we got out to survey a vast area of land, interspersed with wheelbarrows and clusters of tarpaulin held down with bricks, where teams of Afghan and international archaeologists were hard at work, shielded from the sun and dust by scarves wrapped around their heads (fig. 13).

In 2007, amid accusations of bribery and corruption, the China Metallurgical Group (MCC), a state-backed Chinese mining company, won a thirty-year lease to exploit the copper deposit at Mes Aynak, thus entangling the country's heritage in regional alliances over mineral exploitation under pressure from the World Bank to open up its extractive industries to tender. The contract with MCC included commitments to construct a power plant, a railway to the border of Pakistan and other major infrastructure projects. The funds and infrastructure derived from the exploitation of the copper could apparently have huge benefits for Afghanistan's

FIGURE 13 AFGHAN ARCHAEOLOGISTS FROM THE INSTITUTE OF ARCHAEOLOGY AT WORK, MES AYNAK, MAY 2013. PHOTOGRAPH C. WYNDHAM

fragile economy. Afghanistan has been at a juncture in terms of economic development as the extent of the country's mineral wealth, which includes large resources of oil, gas, lithium, gold and precious and semiprecious stones, has been revealed and mapped (BBC News 2012). When the political situation was more stable, these findings suggested that minerals were set to play a crucial role in the country's economic future. As part of the wider neoliberal

intervention, mineral resources were widely understood as a means of ending aid dependency and rescuing Afghanistan from economic adversity. The World Bank, who supported this deal from the outset as part of opening up Afghanistan's economy to the international market, estimated that Mes Aynak could create 4,500 direct, 7,600 indirect and 62,500 induced jobs and approximately $250 million in annual revenues once the operation reached its projected capacity of 250,000 tons per year of copper. This 'world class' mineral deposit was understood by the World Bank as the resource to help Afghanistan respond to the economic impact of sharply declining aid revenues (Hogg et al. 2013: 9). However, Mes Aynak is an example of the considerable challenges in developing a stable and lasting extractive industry for Afghanistan. Despite the awarding of the contract to the MCC in 2008, the hoped-for royalties have not yet been realised and the mining-related infrastructure projects are delayed. Integrity Watch Afghanistan's report on Mes Aynak hypothesises that the Afghan government has not achieved its objectives due to 'corruption and issues of weak governance, imbalanced legal framework, weak state institutions and poor oversight' (Noorani 2013: 1).

The Mes Aynak site was first explored in 1963 by French archaeologists and noted as a potentially important site in the publication *Monuments bouddiques de la région de Caboul* (1976). In 1977, Mes Aynak was included in a survey of some of the ancient mines of Afghanistan (Berthoud et al. 1977). When the MCC took over, the open-pit mining which was initially planned for the site creates a large pit around and on top of the mineral deposit, which meant that the archaeology would mostly be destroyed unless it were removed. In 2009, the French Archaeological Delegation was engaged by the Afghan Ministry of Information and

Culture to provide technical support on the World Bank–funded Mes Aynak Archaeological Project, with responsibilities including surveying the site and conducting rescue excavation work (DAFA 2010; Yavazi 2013). In 2010, a team of Afghan

FIGURE 14 SOME OF THE FINDS AT MES AYNAK, MAY 2013. PHOTOGRAPH C. WYNDHAM

archaeologists from the Ministry of Information and Culture's Department of Archaeology was employed to conduct the first excavations. The archaeological teams were initially given one year to complete a rescue excavation before the mining started, a deadline which has since been extended multiple times. There has been considerable pressure from the World Bank to finish the excavation and archaeological heritage is thus entangled in the institutional power of the World Bank as the rescue dig is delaying the start of the mining. Protected by a security force, the archaeologists discovered hundreds of statues of Buddhas and bodhisattvas, richly decorated wall paintings, stupas, schist reliefs, coins, ceramics and manuscripts which show the wealth of the area's inhabitants was derived from copper exploitation (Engel & Massoudi 2011). This work has revealed the remains of a huge Buddhist city that included a series of monasteries, stupas and villages spread over four hundred thousand square meters on top of and around the copper deposit. The majority of the finds date from the Kushan and Kushan-Sassanian period, from the second century BCE to the eighth century CE, and reveal the site was a major copper mining centre during antiquity and crucial in terms of the history of Buddhism (fig. 14). The lavishly decorated monasteries and secular settlements largely date from the first to the ninth century CE, and some more recent finds date back as far as the Bronze Age (Ibid.). The site includes crucial information about the spread of Buddhism north across Central Asia to China and was revealed to be comparable to Bamyan or Hadda, two of the largest Buddhist sites in Afghanistan, in terms of its scale and size.

Certain commentators understand the situation at Mes Aynak as an unambiguous battle between good and evil, insofar as the extraction of the copper would spell disaster for local inhabitants due to the environmental devastation, displacement of local populations and loss of cultural heritage, and the situation is regularly portrayed in the media as a choice between the heritage and economic benefit (e.g. Vogt 2010, O'Donnell 2013, Caulderwood 2014). However, as the intricate global dynamics and range of stakeholders suggest, the power tussles at Mes Aynak are more complex than the dichotomy between the copper and the heritage. One such entanglement is the relationship between the site and the Taliban. Logar is a largely rural province. The majority of inhabitants are ethnically Pashtun, and the site itself inhabits a contested terrain. Mes Aynak was used as a jihadi training camp during the 1990s, and Logar, which, although relatively close to Kabul, came under Taliban control just after the MCC won the deal to exploit the copper. The area was quiet and relatively stable until around 2006, when it started to be used by the Taliban as a convenient place to stockpile weapons

and gain access to neighboring Wardak Province. Since 2007, the Taliban have begun to slowly dominate this region, which provides a crucial entry point into Kabul and a strategically important area to control due to the links to both the capital and the Afghanistan/Pakistan borderlands (Dorronso 2014). Since the rescue dig started, the Taliban have attempted to attack the groups of foreigners at the site but cannot due to the heavy Afghan army presence. Mes Aynak has also been important locally, but for different reasons. During the recent decades of instability and conflict, local officials employed villagers to loot the site, and in many cases, these were the same teams of villagers who are now working for the archaeologists. The fact that the site was looted is evident from the archaeologists' discoveries of many headless Buddhas and 'looter holes' dug into stupas, some of which were likely made during antiquity but the remainder during the civil war and Taliban era. Buddha heads were removed and sold to antiquities dealers in Kabul and Pakistan and from there on to the international antiquities market. Before the deal was done with MCC, Mes Aynak was therefore already providing local people the means for economic benefit, to which both the mining contract and the archaeological rescue project put a stop.

B) HERITAGE FOR 'HEARTS AND MINDS'

The situation at Mes Aynak has sparked a lot of media attention and these 'positive' stories focused on the rescue archaeology dig have provided a counterpoint to the constant stories of conflict and disaster that dominate the news about Afghanistan (e.g. Parker 2011). Here we see how the heritage intersects with the compulsory power of the intervention through a network of government departments, journalists

FIGURE 15 CONVOY OF VEHICLES CARRYING JOURNALISTS AND REPRESENTATIVES FROM THE US STATE DEPARTMENT, MES AYNAK, APRIL 2013. PHOTOGRAPH C. WYNDHAM

and archaeologists. Similar to the stories of Marine Colonel Matthew Bogdanos in Iraq 'rescuing' Iraqi heritage, such stories are easily mobilised by international governments engaged in Afghanistan as part of

their wider hearts and minds publicity drives which draw on Afghanistan's heritage to paint a more positive view of the international intervention. During one visit to the site in April 2013, for example, it was interesting to observe how local villagers looked on, bemused, as a long convoy of armored vehicles made the journey from Kabul with an international journalist and representatives from the US State Department, keen to generate news stories about the site and photograph the latest finds as part of wider campaigns to win over Afghan (and international) audiences. This convoy of more than ten vehicles snaked up the hill to the site, with heavily armed security contractors in wraparound black sunglasses perched on the back (fig. 15). Journalists and officials wearing flak jackets jumped out and asked the international archaeologists about their latest discoveries, walked around a part of the site, took pictures and leapt back into the vehicles for the return to Kabul. This level of coordination between US State Department, the military and press demonstrates how publicity can be strategically orchestrated around cultural heritage in a manner not dissimilar to the use of 'embedded journalists' in military units to produce stories that influence public opinion (Brandenburg 2004). Here we see how the rescue excavation at Mes Aynak becomes entangled in the compulsory power of the US military intervention as it is used as a form of positive public relations for the wider intervention. There is a parallel here, of course, with the way in which the Taliban circulated video footage of the destruction (and preservation) of the Bamyan Buddhas, as we see how a 'spectacle of destruction' seemingly has a corresponding 'spectacle of preservation' (Harmansah 2015). In a shift typical of the 'post-Bamyan' era, after Iraq there has been a realisation of the power of heritage as a tool of public diplomacy to tell 'hearts and minds' stories that put a positive slant on the wider activities of the international intervention.

c) A NARRATIVE OF THREAT

The international media has drawn attention to the archaeological significance of the Buddhist site. As a consequence, several petitions, which argue that the mining will destroy the heritage were launched (eg. Change.org 2012), a range of international organisations became involved and a number of documentaries have been made, including one by US filmmaker Brent Huffman, entitled *Saving Mes Aynak*. In July 2013, a petition was presented to President Karzai, and protests against the Chinese mining company and the imminent destruction of the heritage were organised in Thailand, the United States and the Netherlands (Change.org 2013). A range of organisations including The Global Heritage Fund and National Geographic have been campaigning to save the Buddhist heritage at the site. Beverly Butler has argued that a 'motif of loss' is a powerful means for any contemporary society to declare a rebirth or revival, and one that is capable of reaching back over the heads of the current

culture (Butler 2007: 60). Perhaps due in part to the loss of heritage at Bamyan, the prospect of 'saving' Afghanistan's Buddhist heritage at Mes Aynak has elicited a great deal of international attention and support. Similar to the scenario at Bamyan after the destructions, an idea of increased threat to the site has taken hold, when in fact the situation at Mes Aynak shows that the heritage is no less safe for being excavated. Shock waves resulting from the destruction of the Bamyan Buddhas are seemingly still powerfully felt and are affecting the way in which Mes Aynak is regarded and the plans for the future of the site. In these campaigns, Mes Aynak is often referred to in conjunction with Bamyan. The result is that, like the Buddhas, Mes Aynak and its Buddhist heritage are caught up in the 'narrative of threat', typical of the 'post-Bamyan' era, and one which can be easily manipulated. At the Buddhas this narrative has asserted a global heritage discourse which, in turn, has ushered in increasing amounts of international, technical expertise while at Mes Aynak, however, this idea of risk has seemingly been used as a mask for personal and national economic interests. The US-based nonprofit organisation Alliance for the Restoration of Cultural Heritage (ARCH), for example, describes Mes Aynak as a site 'at least as significant as the tragically lost Buddhas of Bamyan' (ARCH n.d. a). At this organisation's website and elsewhere, the narrative of the Buddhas is often mentioned to justify the need for action at Mes Aynak, as if by saving this important Buddhist site from the Chinese mining company the international community can atone for its powerlessness to save the devastation at Bamyan: 'The world was not able to prevent the destruction of the Bamyan Buddhas, but we are working hard to stop the next major cultural attack, namely the planned destruction of Mes Aynak' (ARCH n.d. b). It is interesting to observe how a rhetoric of conflict is used here by the heritage campaigners, which again parallels the Taliban's conscious decision to target heritage sites in its ideological warfare. The 53,803 signatories to the online campaign, 'Save Our Past', implore 'Let us NOT repeat the same mistake and ACT now for . . . the Heritage of Afghanistan is once again faced with violation and impending loss' (Change.org 2012).

The saving of Mes Aynak thus appears to represent a chance for members of the international community to 'get something right' in Afghanistan in an otherwise controversial series of international engagements. It is notable that the idea of increased threat and rescue can be appropriated for other agendas, and the motives behind ARCH's Mes Aynak campaign have been questioned. The directors of ARCH organisation filed a complaint with the World Bank in 2012, citing the environmental damage, displacement of villagers and destruction of the

cultural heritage that the mining would cause, pressuring the World Bank to undertake an inspection of the site, which delayed the project by several months. In December 2012, ARCH organised a conference on Mes Aynak in Washington DC called 'Cultural Heritage vs Mining on the New Silk Road?', funded by a defense contracting company that has secured US government contracts in Afghanistan worth $360 million, which raises questions as to the US government's interest in the site (Roston 2009). In a related article in *The Guardian*, it was noted that none of the organisation's original directors has a background in cultural heritage, but that 'several have connections to a US energy company interested in Afghan contracts which are managed by the same ministry that manages mine contracts' (Graham–Harrison 2013).

d) Military engagement

As part of a counterinsurgency strategy to wins hearts and minds and integrate international forces into the local community, international military actors have also contributed to the preservation of the Buddhist finds at Mes Aynak. Here military actors coordinate with Czech museums over heritage. In December 2014, an exhibition of finds from Mes Aynak was shown at the Náprstek Museum of Asian, African and American Cultures in Prague. The Czech army was the occupying force in Logar province, where Mes Aynak is located, with a five-year mission that ended in 2013. Upon its departure, it was announced that the Czech government paid US $75,000 to Afghanistan toward archaeological research. It was reported that 'the gift is connected with the ongoing work of the civilian part of the Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) in Logar province' (Czech News Agency 2013, 2014). In the announcement about the exhibition, statistics relating to the Czech military invention were also noted: 'Almost 2,500 soldiers rotated in the PRT unit, ten of them were injured and one died in the foreign mission' (Czech News Agency 2013). During the Imperial heritage paradigm, heritage work was entangled in the idea of a 'civilising mission,' when archaeology and heritage work was a means through which to perform the empire's moral authority and legitimize the colonial enterprise (Swenson 13: 10). In the Bamyan era, however, heritage work is also a part of 'hearts and minds' public relations enterprises, but is used in order to put a positive public relations spin on the wider intervention.

5. Conclusions

In this chapter I have used a number of sites to demonstrate how historic interventions by

foreign archaeologists introduced a focus on Afghanistan's pre-Islamic past which has endured but shifted to reflect the current intersections of politics and heritage. Afghanistan's heritage was placed definitively in the arena of conflict through the destructive acts of the Taliban. However, the iconoclastic zeal of the Taliban has been met with an equal zeal in the international community to counter the destruction wrought specifically on Afghanistan's pre-Islamic heritage, by focusing its attention on sites and collections from this period. Such efforts, as I have outlined, have real consequences for how Afghanistan's past is understood. While this historic focus has continued, however, the politics have shifted anew and we see the various state and non-state actors, military actors, international heritage agencies, NGOs and international museums (and their attached agendas and forms of power/politics) which intersect with Afghanistan's pre-Islamic past. These new intersections have resulted in tussles between the institutional power of UNESCO and ICOMOS and their assertion of powerful discourses, or forms of productive power, which privilege forms of heritage expertise, to the mobilisation of 'heritage work for hearts and minds' public relations drives which support the compulsory power of the neoliberal intervention and work across journalists, the US State Department and international archaeologists. I have attempted to show how these intersections of politics and heritage work through these new networks and 'on the ground' through the tensions over the influx of international expertise at the Buddhas, which has sidelined local groups, to how the personal agendas of groups such as ARCH have become entangled in the powerful notion of saving the Buddhist heritage at Mes Aynak. Power and politics are concealed through the powerful idea of saving Afghanistan's Buddhist heritage at Mes Aynak. Powerful language accompanies this work as ideas of threat, rescue and saving underpin interventions such as the travelling exhibition and the preservation work at Mes Aynak and give power to the idea that heritage is the realm of international experts. This language is used in conjunction with pre-Islamic collections and sites has meant that 'saving' Afghanistan's Buddhist heritage has become implicated in the wider narratives of rescue and redemption implicit in the neoliberal intervention.

The subtle messaging about Islam across these interventions is revealing of how the relationship between heritage and Islam is under increased scrutiny in the post 9.11 era. Binaries between an Islamic present and a 'golden' pre-Islamic past are created through the messaging of the international travelling exhibition, while the idea of 'saving' Afghanistan's pre-Islamic heritage at Mes Aynak is implicitly tied to the military objectives of rescuing

Afghanistan from the negative forces of the Taliban and the 'liberation' of the Afghan nation through international help. Heritage has been used in an ideological battle in which Afghanistan's pre-Islamic past has been prioritized, not only as a way of undermining the monoculture of the Taliban but perhaps also insofar as it represents—at least in the international imagination—a religious tradition that promotes nonviolence, mindfulness and tolerance that is perceived to be diametrically opposed to Islamic fundamentalism. The moral idea of saving, which arose during the Imperial period and its 'civilising mission', still exists, but now with a slightly different slant. The metaphorical battle being fought for Afghanistan's Buddhist heritage seems to represent a morally acceptable mirror image to the morally dubious military campaign led by the international forces in Afghanistan—on the one hand acting as a public relations smoke screen and on the other legitimising a counterinsurgency military intervention on the grounds of promoting neoliberal values of religious and political freedom and tolerance.

This chapter looked at multiple intersections of heritage and politics as they converge on the pre-Islamic past across a network of state and non-state actors, heritage agencies, journalists, museums and international exhibitions. In the next chapter, I discuss one particular intervention: a restoration project by the Aga Khan Trust for Culture at a shrine and mosque complex in the northern town of Balkh. This reveals how heritage and politics intersect across a range of organisations in Balkh and how heritage preservation work is an effective form of soft power, or diplomacy, for the Aga Khan's wider objectives.

CHAPTER 6

THE AGA KHAN TRUST FOR CULTURE AND DIFFERENTIATED SOFT POWER IN BALKH

1. THE AGA KHAN TRUST FOR CULTURE

One summer evening in 2014, I was visiting the Kabul offices of the Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC), the cultural wing of The Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN), an umbrella organisation for a group of private development agencies which focus on social, economic and cultural development work across the Muslim world. AKTC is the cultural arm of the wider Aga Khan Development Network. The organisation is engaged in the preservation of architectural and urban heritage sites across Asia and Africa where Islam is the majority faith and works with a range of donors that fund their work. AKTC's flagship project is the restoration of Bagh e Babur (Babur's Garden), a public garden in Kabul originally set out in 1528 according to the instructions of Mughal Emperor Babur and which had suffered long-term neglect and damage during the civil war of the 1990s. Funded by a range of international donors in collaboration with AKTC, the restoration project resulted in recreating Kabul's largest public space that now hosts thousands of visitors for walks, swimming and picnics and is widely celebrated for its positive impact on the lives of Kabulis.

FIGURE 16 THE KHWAJA PARSA SHRINE, BALKH, SHOWING THE ADJACENT MOSQUE ON THE SOUTH WING, 2012. PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY THE AGA KHAN TRUST FOR CULTURE

The offices are distinctive among other NGOs for their lack of blast walls, hesco barriers and barbed wire. In contrast to the UN, for example, which transports its employees in militarised vehicles with 'UN' emblazoned across the side, AKTC prefers to keep a low public profile by using soft skin jeeps and cars that blend in with local transport and largely employing Afghan, rather than international, employees. The organisation's offices are in Foroshgah, an area of

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Kabul far from international embassies and journalists and close to Bagh e Babur, the extensive gardens reconstructed and preserved by the organisation. During dinner, one of AKTC's project managers, an architect, showed me some footage on his smart phone. The video showed a group of middle-aged Afghan men dressed in turbans and long winter tunics laying blows to the concrete structure of the town mosque of Balkh with sledgehammers. My host explained that the film showed a group of community elders and members of the Balkh *ulema* (religious council) undertaking the first steps of AKTC's heritage preservation project at the shrine and mosque complex of Khwaja Parsa. The first stage of the project was to destroy the leaking concrete mosque (fig. 16), which was hot in summer and freezing cold in winter, before rebuilding it in more sustainable materials such as brick. I was struck by this footage that demonstrated the ability of AKTC, an international, private development organisation working in Afghanistan, to convince a group of elders in Balkh to destroy their own mosque amidst an unstable security situation and in an impoverished town where there was likely to be some mistrust of foreigners. I remembered a visit I had taken to the town in 2009, accompanied by two British NGO workers, and how the guardian of the shrine had been outwardly hostile and barred us from entering. Afghanistan can be a complex place to operate for NGOs because their work is being undertaken against the backdrop of the military intervention and politicised reconstruction programme. Certain groups in Afghan society are hostile to the western-led international project, particularly as its failures have become increasingly obvious and the continued blurring of military and civilian programmes means that military actors, international development consultants and heritage professionals can all be understood as part of the same set of interventions. With this in mind, I was struck by AKTC's ability, an international organisation that works with Afghanistan's Islamic heritage, to negotiate such obstacles and sensitivities.

The previous chapter explored the ongoing focus on the pre-Islamic past by international organisations and agencies working with Afghanistan's heritage and how this focus is maintained by a wide range of state and non-state actors and organisations, each with their own agendas and political interests. In this chapter I look more deeply at the operations of 'soft power' in the 'post-Bamyan' era through one specific intervention. Here I will discuss the networks along which heritage preservation as 'soft power' operates for the Aga Khan Development Network, a private, global development organisation. The mobilisation of heritage work as a tool of 'soft power' is increasingly common in the 'post-Bamyan' era. And

while we might be more aware of the range of diplomatic roles that heritage work plays after 9.11, AKTC's work heritage preservation at Khwaja Parsa in Balkh also reveals how such initiatives operate across a range of donor governments, non-state actors and individuals on the ground. Here, I describe how the organisation has developed a unique, hybridised approach to heritage intervention that operates as an effective instrument of diplomacy for a range of audiences. On the one hand AKTC's practice of heritage preservation replicates the western, globalised conservation ethic which acts as a form of diplomacy for the wider work of the Aga Khan Development Network in international contexts. At the same time, the organisation's work is sensitive to Islamic practices that are part of the function of this mosque and shrine complex in Balkh. By adhering to these practices, heritage work also acts as a form of positive public relations for AKDN both within communities in which they work in Balkh and in smoothing relationships with the Afghan government. In the first part of the chapter, I discuss how heritage can operate at the international, regional and national level for AKDN and in the second half I describe how such a project works at the site in Balkh.

2. A HYBRIDISED APPROACH

In terms of power dynamics, as I have already discussed, power is often discussed as operating through heritage in a 'top down' direction and one preoccupation of the critical heritage turn has been on the workings of the AHD, or 'authorised heritage discourse' at different heritage sites, looking at which 'alternative' regimes of heritage value it obscures (e.g. Winter 2007; Byrne 2008; Labadi & Long 2010; Byrne 2014). Trinidad Rico has suggested that the focus within Heritage Studies on the workings of this globalised, 'authorised heritage discourse' has also established a binary in which, for example, 'Islamic', 'Asian' or 'spiritual' regimes of heritage value are presented as somehow irreconcilable with that of this dominant heritage discourse (2016: 103). While Smith's and her followers' work has been helpful in understanding some of the workings of power through heritage, these analyses miss the opportunity to unpack some of the other ways in which politics and heritage converge. In this instance, I discuss how AKTC has developed a hybridised approach to heritage preservation which demonstrates this co-existence of 'global', preservationist heritage values with sacred or spiritual values that reflect how the community in Balkh uses the Khwaja Parsa complex. This approach aligns with AKDN's wider international diplomatic objectives, while also deploying particular heritage preservation methods which cater to the organisation's objectives in terms of building hearts and minds in Afghanistan and the region.

AKTC adopts a 'heritage for development' rhetoric and their range of cultural programmes focus on the 'physical, social, cultural and economic revitalisation of communities in the developing world' (AKDN website). De Cesari has commented on the popularity of such an approach and how it can operate as an umbrella for a wide range of approaches and projects (2020). AKTC's projects are funded through a range of partnerships and donors which include the World Bank, World Monuments Fund, the Ford Foundation and the Getty Grant Program, among others. As part of these alliances and its 'heritage for development' rhetoric, AKTC adopts a 'preservationist' approach to cultural heritage which focuses on the value of preserving the material, historical and aesthetic aspects of a building or site. The Venice Charter (Charter on the Conservation and Restoration of Historic Monuments and Sites) of 1964 established an international framework for restoration, based on 19th European heritage values, 'the spirit of which all experts will have to keep if they do not want to be considered cultural outlaws' (Gazzola quoted in Petzet 2004: 7). These international conservation guidelines were adopted by UNESCO as preservation doctrine for listed 'world heritage' sites and have become known as the 'authorised heritage discourse' (AHD), which, as a focus of the critical heritage turn, has been criticised for universalising 'Eurocentric' heritage values focused on monumentality, materiality and historicity (Cleere 2001; Smith 2006; Labadi & Long 2010; Harrison 2013). This powerful, globalised heritage discourse is based on rationalist ideas of nineteenth century preservation doctrine in which the materiality of a building is understood as its truest essence (Choay 2001). These classic preservation principles, which focus on the value of material integrity, have been discussed as secularising and undermining of the spiritual function or sacred values of a site (Baillie 2007; Byrne 1995). At the same time as performing support for these secularising 'global heritage values', the AKTC is part of a network of development agencies founded by the Aga Khan, the spiritual leader of Ismaili Muslims whose claim of direct lineage to the Prophet puts him in the central role of the Nizari Ismai'li (Ismai'li) faith. Isma'ili Muslims are a religious minority belonging to the Shia branch of Islam and are a non-territorial community of several million who live across areas of Central and South Asia, Africa, the Middle East, Europe, North America and Australia, and are connected through a centralised, institutional structure with headquarters in Paris and Geneva (Daftary 2011: xiii). AKTC is largely engaged in heritage preservation work in Muslim contexts where the organisation frequently restores sites of living religious heritage such as mosques and shrines. This preservation practice, which tends to focus on the preservation of

historical, monumental sites that are in use, requires the organisation to engage with the spiritual function of each site.

3. MUTUALLY AFFIRMING AGENDAS

In late June 2013, I took a 45-minute flight from Kabul to Mazar e Sharif in order to spend time with the architects and project managers working for AKTC at the Khwaja Parsa site in Balkh. By day they worked in Balkh but returned to a guesthouse in Mazar for the night as the security situation in Balkh was unpredictable. The terminal at Mazar airport was pristine, the smartest airport I had seen in Afghanistan. It was newly constructed by the government of Germany who, at that time and as part of the structure of NATO, were in control of the north of Afghanistan. One of my informants, Tamim, an architect that worked for AKTC, picked me up at the airport and we made the short drive into the city, past a newly constructed university, funded by the government of Pakistan. Next door, the government of Turkey was laying the foundations for another large building although Tamim was not sure what, yet. There was a certain competition for profile between the different donors to Afghanistan's reconstruction and shiny, modern buildings are a popular way to compete, partly because they symbolise the aspired-for modernity which the reconstruction project aims to instil and, of course, because they build 'hearts and minds'.

In the 'post-Bamyan' era, the preservation of historic buildings and heritage are also increasingly part of this rush for profile and hearts and minds as part of wider international interventions (Luke 2013; Luke & Kersel 2013). AKTC's project in Balkh was an example of the complex new configurations of organisations and governments that collaborate over such work and reveals how 'soft power' operates across these networks. As one of the principal contributors to the NATO mission in Afghanistan, the government of Germany stationed 5,350 soldiers and policemen at Camp Marmal in Mazar e Sharif with the objective of maintaining peace and security in the north of Afghanistan as part of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) cooperation group. As discussed in the Introduction, the government of Germany has a long relationship with AKDN and in 2004 launched a bi-lateral agreement which has included funds for AKTC's cultural work in Kabul and Herat (as well as infrastructure and education). AKTC's heritage preservation work in the northern city of Balkh was part of this agreement and seemingly allowed the German government to pursue its diplomatic goals which included maintaining stability in terms of regional politics and security in northern

Afghanistan. Balkh is close to Camp Marmal, where German troops are stationed in the north of Afghanistan. Here we see how heritage becomes entangled in the compulsory power of the German military project. The German government's funding for AKTC's work, one government and one private development organisation, both engaged in Afghanistan's reconstruction but each with its own political objectives shows, as Winter has discussed, how the past has become entangled in a 'new cosmology' of relationships through interactions and partnerships with a wide, amorphous range of local, regional and international actors and organisations (Winter & Daly 2011: 28). The project in Balkh reveals how these new collaborations work in situ.

4. THE HISTORY AND HERITAGE OF BALKH

A) 'MOTHER OF CITIES'

Balkh is a small town in Balkh province in northern Afghanistan, situated 20 kilometres northwest of the provincial capital, Mazar-e Sharif. The town of Balkh is historically important as a centre of both Zoroastrianism and Buddhism, and as the birthplace of famous Persian poets such as Jalāl ad-Dīn Muhammad Rūmī (known as 'Rumi') and Nasir Khusraw. Since the international intervention of 2001, Balkh has had comparatively little focus from the international aid and reconstruction effort as the focus of donors' spending has been on military and security related programmes close to the conflict zone in the south of the country. However, the Taliban's sporadic incursions into the nearby province of Kunduz in 2015 and attacks on the international military base, UN compound and German consulate in Mazar e Sharif, brought the conflict northwards and created growing regional political instability. A power vacuum left by a government with limited reach outside Kabul was filled by the current governor of Balkh province, Muhammad Atta Nur, who, in spite of accusations of corruption, has provided relative security for the province of Balkh. As I learned through discussions with architects at the AKTC guesthouse, Muhammed Atta Nur had played a significant role in Afghanistan's civil war on the side of the Northern Alliance against the Taliban and has since grown a significant power base in the north of Afghanistan. One of his enterprises is the sale of Uzbek petrol bought cheaply across the nearby border and sold through the numerous petrol stations visible during our daily drive on the road between Mazar e Sharif and Balkh.

The daily 45-minute drive between the organisation's guesthouse in Mazar and its project office in Balkh gave a sense of the rich history of this area of northern Afghanistan. As the car left the outskirts of the city of Mazar, the fields to left and right of the road were scattered with the remains of ancient brick walls and towering lumps of earth which historically held much promise for archaeologists. This is where Alfred Foucher was first told to direct his excavations for DAFA as there was rumours the remains of a Greek outpost lay somewhere in the vicinity of Balkh (Mairs 2011: 14). Known as the 'Mother of Cities' in Arabic, Balkh was reputedly the birthplace of Zoroaster and subsequently became a focal point for Buddhism in the region until the Islamic period (Azad 2013). The town served as the administrative capital for Balkh province until a malaria outbreak in 1866, when the status of provincial capital was transferred to Mazar e Sharif, and its population dwindled. Governor Mohammed Atta Nur seemingly attempted to align himself with the area's rich history and its cast of characters as a way to assert himself in the present through the construction of a series of memorials to three important literary figures from Balkh in nearby Mazar: the 10th century poetess Rabia Balkhi; Hakim Naser Khosraw-ye Balkhi, an 11th century philosopher poet; and, Mawlana Jalaluddin Mohammad Balkhi, the internationally renowned 13th century poet otherwise known as Rumi. Next to these memorials Atta Nur dedicated a memorial stone to himself, thereby inserting himself into a regional grand historical narrative which stretches from 10th century to the present day (Kazemi 2014). This alignment with Balkh's history also takes the form of a huge new gate at the entrance to Balkh, a pink structure made of concrete through which all cars are supposed to pass as they enter. The design of the gate tries to ape traditional designs in Atta Nur's attempt to build a connection between these historic elements and his current regime in order to portray his power as timeless.

b) A history of the Khwaja Parsa complex

This section shows how an historical focus on the site's materiality has compromised its function. Balkh's shrine of Khwaja Parsa in Balkh was built in the mid-15th century to house the tomb of an influential local Sufi shaykh Khwaja Abu Nasr Parsa, a proponent of the Naqshbandi order of Sufi Islam. Robert McChesney's account of the history of the monument, derived from written sources in Persian, tells us that the existing structure visible today is the family mausoleum commissioned in 1467 by local politician and military commander Mir Mazid Arghun to commemorate Khwaja Abu Nasr Parsa (d. 1460/61), son of scholar Khwaja

Muhammad Parsa (d. 1420), one of the principal disciples of Baha al-Din Naqshband (d. 1389) (McChesney 2001). As his father died, his spiritual legacy was transferred to Khwaja Abu Nasr Parsa, who was also important in his own right as Timurid era mediator and politician (2001: 95). Later a *madrassa* (Muslim school) was built, which sparked the construction of a *madrassa* district in the vicinity of the shrine. Currently, adjacent to the shrine, on either side, stand two mosques. The shrine is largely attended by visitors to Balkh who pay their respects to Khwaja Parsa, while the mosques to either side are frequented by Balkh residents. The mosque to the south of the building (south wing) operates as the 'Friday mosque', the town's principal space for prayer which is attended by a congregation of approximately 4000 every Friday. The mosque at the north wing is used as an informal *madrassa* for teaching children lessons, such as Arabic alphabet, before school and is supported by *zakat* (charitable donations) from the community.

A previous intervention at Khwaja Parsa, initiated by the Afghan government in the 1930s, demonstrates how a heritage intervention that emphasizes monumentality and materiality can undermine a site's spiritual function. This scenario also illustrates a preoccupation of the critical heritage turn in which a globalised set of conservation principles is depicted as being in conflict with how local groups might understand and use a site (e.g. Byrne 1995; Baillie 2007). As the visitor walks through Balkh's central, tree-lined park, the towering blue fluted dome of the Khwaja Parsa shrine comes into view above the trees as the focal point of the town. A 1930s urban planning project redesigned the town according to a radial plan and recreated the shrine as its centrepiece (McChesney 2002: 88). This initiative was part of the wider national program of modernisation undertaken by the Afghan government during the 1930s, as discussed in Chapter 4, which sought to emphasise Afghanistan's 'grand' past as part of a nation building enterprise. In his detailed history of Khwaja Parsa, Robert McChesney describes the effects of this intervention, in which the shrine was forced to play a symbolic role as the frontispiece of a "New Balkh". Physical changes were made to the monument which separated the shrine from its cemetery, preventing the local community from using it as a graveyard and therefore compromising the building's spiritual meaning and function in favor of its monumental and aesthetic qualities (2002: 89).

This historic focus on the monumental and material aspects of heritage, over their religious function, is also a common emphasis of international organisations working with

Afghanistan's heritage today. The Afghan Ministry of Culture's official vision for the rehabilitation of the country's cultural sector as part of the wider program of national reconstruction, as outlined in the 2006 Afghanistan Compact, is to "maintain unity while celebrating diversity" and to "respect the pluralistic culture, values and history of Afghanistan, based on Islam" (2006: 2). Results from a survey on the cultural sector in Afghanistan by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation recognises a disproportionate focus by international funders on the tangible aspects of culture, such as rebuilding monuments, rather than "intangible actions" (SDC 2014: 4). The report is based on interviews with a range of participants across the country, including 'community elders', who expressed the need for "programmes that respect and protect the Islamic religion" (2014: 24). Amongst a small group of individual heritage consultants, a preservation practice has recently been developing which shows a balance between a preservationist approach and the religious function of the site. This approach has been documented in the conservation of the shrine of Khoja Sabzposh, as discussed in the previous chapter, by a consultant for ICOMOS in Bamyan, in which a compromise was reached with the local community over the wall restoration in order to preserve the function of one room as a 'ritual kitchen' (Praxenthaler 2015). Another example discusses a heritage preservation practice in Helmand which demonstrates concern for the physical continuity of a shrine's historic structure while engaging with the sacred function of a grave platform, undertaken by the Afghan NGO, Afghanistan's Cultural Heritage Organisation (Leslie 2018). These approaches understand religious value as a crucial aspect of heritage preservation, albeit one that should be in balance with the usual 'global' sets of values. It is a similar, hybridised approach that AKTC has been undertaking at Khwaja Parsa in Balkh and one which speaks to the organisation's range of constituents.

5. HERITAGE PRESERVATION AND PUBLIC RELATIONS

A) HERITAGE AS AN INTERNATIONAL 'CALLING CARD'

In this section, I will discuss how AKTC's agents deployed these two regimes of heritage value and how each catered to the organisation's wider political objectives in Afghanistan and internationally. Here we see how AKTC used heritage as a 'calling card' for the wider AKDN development organisation and operated a differentiated form of soft power which speaks to a range of audiences. In 1866, the Aga Khan assumed religious authority over the Ismailis after a court case overseen by British colonial authorities in Bombay (Van Grondelle 2009; Purohit

2012). Since this designation of the Ismailis as a unified sect and one with the Aga Khan as religious leader, this small, non-territorial community has set about fashioning a distinct Ismaili identity. In 1967, The Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) was established and the organisation's work on economic development, humanitarian and international development has subsequently emerged as a key feature of the reign of the current Aga Khan (Devji 2009: xv). AKDN's international development work has brought the Aga Khan and the Ismaili community into relationships with a wide range of governments and their attached forms of compulsory power, including in this case Afghanistan and Germany, which fund AKDN's programmes. The organisation's diplomatic department in Aiglemont deals with these treaties and agreements, of which the signatories are the Aga Khan and a nation state. Through such accords this non-territorial community engages in forms of nation state-style diplomacy as a means to seek international prestige, protect the Ismaili community and further economic opportunities (Steinberg 2011: 57-58).

As part of constructing a public face for AKDN, the Aga Khan consistently showed support for, and publicly aligned AKTC with, UNESCO's preservationist heritage values. Indeed, AKTC's work has won several UNESCO awards for cultural heritage conservation and the two organisations are regularly in financial partnership over the preservation of sites. AKTC's international recognition has seemingly appealed to the German government in seeking a partner for its 'hearts and minds' culturally diplomatic heritage work, as AKTC offered prestige through its track record of heritage interventions at some of Afghanistan's most celebrated and 'iconic' heritage sites. These are also sites of monumental and historical heritage that afford visibility for the German government, which was a consideration of donors to Afghanistan's reconstruction programme in their rush for profile on the wider international stage. Faisal Devji discusses how AKTC's cultural preservation programmes, cultural awards and keynote speeches for organisations such as UNESCO also form a significant part of the Aga Khan's international media profile and have facilitated his transformation into a celebrity and media icon, synonymous with charismatic forms of religious leadership. This alignment with the institutional power of UNESCO and its heritage preservation discourses, a form of productive power, can boost the image of the Aga Khan and AKDN. These popular cultural programmes and their attached publicity campaigns can be mobilised as a means of raising the Aga Khan's media profile and asserting religious authority (Devji 2009: xiii – xiv).

B) THE SOFT POWER OF PLURALISM

In the post 9.11 era, there has been increased scrutiny of the relationship between Islam and heritage (Rico 2017). Recently, across Iraq and Syria, heritage destruction (and preservation)

has played a crucial role in sectarian politics (Isakhan & Zarandona 2018). Amidst such sensitivities, AKTC's approach in Afghanistan simultaneously engages with both ideas of religious difference and religious pluralism in Islam. Khwaja Parsa shrine holds the tomb of Khwaja Abu Nasr Parsa, a proponent of the Naqshbandi order of Sufi Islam and both Sunni and Shia groups have attended the shrine and its adjacent mosque over time. Currently, its congregation is mixed, although consists predominantly of Sunni worshippers. Steinberg argues that the choice of heritage site is an important consideration for the AKTC: 'the monuments, sites, projects, and areas chosen bear more than a tangential relationship to Isma'ili identity and metacultures of history…' (Steinberg 2011: 71). However, in Afghanistan AKTC has restored few sites of Isma'ili heritage, choosing instead to restore the heritage of Islam at large. Pluralism is a core concept at the heart of the Isma'ili Imamate and the organisation's global image. On the website of The Global Centre for Pluralism, an organisation in Ottowa founded by the Aga Khan, this is explained as an ethic of 'respect for diversity' which is focused on promoting religious tolerance and respect within religious difference (Global Centre foe Pluralism n.d.). AKDN forefronts its non-denominational approach, stressing that it works to improve living conditions across the world, irrespective of religion, race, ethnicity or gender (AKDN n.d.). Through the preservation of sites of non-Ismaili heritage such as Khwaja Parsa, AKTC is able to demonstrate this commitment to pluralist values and impartiality, and its support for the heritage of Islam at large, which enhances its global image. AKTC also runs the triennial Aga Khan Award for Architecture, which is awarded to projects that address the needs of Muslim societies and plays a role in constructing the organisation's image. Steinberg notes that through this award the Aga Khan is able to build an identity for the Ismaili community which draws upon historic aspects of the broader Islamic world (Steinberg 2011: 71).

However, while the Aga Khan frequently presents AKDN's work as 'non- denominational' and pluralistic in terms of which communities they support, their pattern of investments suggests the presence of Ismaili groups within a country is a determinant of whether the organisation engages. In Afghanistan, marginalised groups of Ismailis live in the north-eastern province of Badakhshan, where they number about 200,000 and constitute approximately one third of the population. In Badakhshan, Ismailis are a minority group surrounded by groups of Sunni Muslims and have practised *taqiyya* (hiding one's faith in a hostile environment) (Emadi 1998). Badakhshan has recently become infiltrated by Taliban and Islamic State militants who have

persecuted Ismaili inhabitants and in nearby northern Pakistan, where larger communities of Ismailis live side by side with Sunni Muslims, there have been Sunni-Ismaili clashes. Amidst Afghanistan's bid to move beyond the war, there has been a sense that religious factionalism belonged in the past. However, more recently the political backdrop has shifted and groups swearing allegiance to ISIS and the Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP) reignited tensions over religious difference through attacks on Shia mourners in cities such as Kabul and Mazar e Sharif, which brought a toxic sectarian dimension to the ongoing conflict (Osman 2016). The positive public relations value of the AKTC's work on the heritage of Islam at large is potentially a factor in boosting both the organisation's and the Ismaili community's regional reputation in the face of these growing tensions.

c) The hard politics of economic investment

These soft power capabilities of AKTC's preservationist approach in generating positive public relations messages to audiences both internationally and within Afghanistan are also linked to forms of compulsory power: AKDN's combination of public development programmes and private investment in Afghanistan's economy. AKDN has a diverse range of development programmes and private investment in Afghanistan which it is interested in protecting and promoting. A crucial consideration of this work is safeguarding the wellbeing of Ismailis in Afghanistan through a range of development programmes focused on health and rural development. As these groups often live in impoverished, inaccessible areas of Afghanistan, the success of these programmes relies on good relations with the Afghan government. The wider organisation is also a significant donor to Afghanistan's reconstruction programme, to which AKDN and its sister agencies have contributed over $1 billion in development funds since 2002. These rural development, health and civil society programmes are implemented alongside a $300 million investment in the country's private sector. The organisation also owns majority shares in one of the country's biggest mobile phone networks, Roshan, and a five-star hotel in Kabul and, during early years of the international intervention, has been Afghanistan's biggest private investor and taxpayer (Ruthven 2011: 211).

6. 'On the ground' in Balkh

a) Local experts

Above, I have outlined how AKTC's heritage work can contribute to 'soft power' strategies for the organisation at the international, regional and national level through its relationship with a range of organisations and institutions such as the German government, UNESCO and the wider network of AKDN. I was very interested to witness how such projects take place on the ground at sites such as Khwaja Parsa and the role of local actors in these networks that converge on heritage work. I accompanied the small group of architects and projects managers to Balkh daily during my few weeks with them in June 2013 and October 2014. There I was able to witness how the project took shape and the complexities of being an international organisation intervening in such an environment. Upon my arrival in Mazar, I was first struck by the lack of international employees. This was rare as other international organisations, such as Turquoise Mountain, employed a mix of international and Afghan staff, while UNESCO tended to employ international consultants on short-term contracts who are restricted to short visits to project sites

FIGURE 17 THE KHWAJA PARSA SHRINE SHOWING THE FRIDAY MOSQUE CONSTRUCTED FROM CONCRETE, 2012. PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY THE AGA KHAN TRUST FOR CULTURE

due to logistics and institutional security regulations. AKTC employed project supervisors from Afghanistan and neighbouring countries that had both expertise in international conservation charters and long-term experience of working in Afghanistan. AKTC has its headquarters in Geneva, the organisation has a country office in Kabul, and Balkh is located in a relatively remote rural area of northern Afghanistan. I saw how AKTC's management style and the relatively remote location of the project granted a degree of autonomy amongst its employees in Balkh. It became clear that effectiveness of AKTC's work owed much to these individual 'local experts' such as Tamim, who knew the context in Balkh well and had the ability to carefully and diplomatically negotiate such a project in a highly politicised environment.

In this section I describe how the AKTC team in Balkh made quick, creative decisions that responded to the needs and concerns of members of the Balkh community and also juggled between a 'preservationist' heritage practice and one that reflected the sacred function of the Khwaja Parsa complex. This was a sensitive intervention and as such there was certainly room for error, or for the project to merely work on the level of public relations internationally as 'paper promises,' but it seemed effective at the local level too. One familiar model of heritage expertise is that of the international heritage 'expert' on a short visit to a site to impart technical knowledge that is in tune with international heritage charters. However, the work in Balkh revealed a different type of heritage expertise where the role of the 'expert' was to skilfully negotiate between the needs of AKDN, both the 'preservationist' and 'sacred' approaches and also the desires of the community, or communities, in Balkh. Swenson (2016) argues that analyses of the international operations of heritage often miss the impact of individual agency in shaping preservation practice, instead focusing on the role of institutions and organisations (particularly UNESCO), but in Balkh this intervention, rather than merely operating at the top level for public relations, was the direct result of skilful and clear-sighted negotiations by such interlocutors as Tamim.

Tamim described to me the situation with the two mosques, both of which had been constructed in the 1980s out of concrete, a non-porous material, which had stood adjacent to the shrine prior to AKTC's intervention (fig. 17). I also remembered them from my trip to the site back in 2009. As Tamim explained, these concrete mosques had been preventing the evaporation of water and had resulted in waterlogging beneath the shrine. They were also built of concrete and steel, materials that are in contravention of international heritage preservation charters governing what can be built close to historic monuments. The beginning of AKTC's heritage intervention was to destroy these mosques before rebuilding them in materials of baked brick, lime mortar and cedar wood. The use of these more 'traditional' materials was seemingly an appeal to a more virtuous materiality characteristic of the 'universal' preservation language espoused by UNESCO, which prioritises a certain materiality and aesthetics. Despite the future plans to rebuild it, the destruction of a community mosque, and particularly one that operates as the 'Friday mosque,' could have been interpreted as questionable in terms of the Balkh community's relationship with the building. However, the

manner in which the destruction took place shows how the AKTC team in Balkh emphasised community spiritual well-being. In order for the Balkh community to support the preservation work at Khwaja Parsa, Tamim described the intermittent visits he took to the town before initiating the project in order to meet and foster trust amongst members of the local *ulema* (religious council) and community elders. After these consultations with a range of local groups and institutions, including the Department of Historic Monuments in Balkh Province, the Ministry of Religious Affairs, the Mayor and District Governor of Balkh, agreement was reached on the fragility of the structure, the heat of the concrete building in summer and the danger the

FIGURE 18 RECONSTRUCTION OF THE FRIDAY MOSQUE UNDERWAY SHOWING THE NEWLY CONSTRUCTED DOORWAY, 2014. PHOTOGRAPH C. WYNDHAM

building posed to worshippers. Tamim described how "this takes time, it's a slow process involving lots of cups of tea. This is how to do projects, you need time, but no one has time here, everyone is thinking about funding deadlines" (pers. comm. 2nd June 2013). He described how the many visits to the site over the years before the project was started were a crucial factor in securing the community's trust. In order to further secure local support Tamim and his colleagues involved a group of senior community members, including participants from Balkh's *ulema*, in a ceremonial demolition of the mosque in order to prepare for its reconstruction in brick. After the mosque was demolished and

FIGURE 19 THE DOORWAY SHOWING HOW THE DEAD ARE LAID OUTSIDE THE MOSQUE DURING FUNERAL PRAYERS. PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY THE AGA KHAN TRUST FOR CULTURE

before the new one was rebuilt, Rasool and his team ensured that the Balkh congregation's Friday prayers took place in the empty space where the mosque stood. As well as grand policy at the international level between Germany and AKTC, it was these patient negotiations

between AKTC architects and project managers and members of the Balkh community that shaped the intervention.

When I visited again in 2014, the work on the first mosque was almost complete. Again reflecting the classic preservationist practice espoused by UNESCO, the new mosques were rebuilt on top of the foundations of a 19th century structure which was used for the same purpose and was discovered due to an archaeological survey conducted after demolition. As well as this allegiance to the historical foundations, on this second trip to the project I witnessed how the building's sacred function had also been catered for, as the AKTC team had expanded the size of the Friday mosque by 2m long and 1m wide in order to accommodate more of Balkh's congregation (fig. 18). I saw how the newly reconstructed mosque also included changes to the structure that enabled the space to be used by the community in a way that better reflected their needs. Although altering the material structure of a building is generally against the 'preservationist' approach, Tamim and his team had built a series of new niches in the walls of the new building.

FIGURE 20 THE TIMURID-ERA DOME OF KHWAJA PARSA SHOWING THE LOSS OF TILES. PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY THE AGA KHAN TRUST FOR CULTURE

These spaces enabled more members of the congregation to stand behind the Mullah during prayers. At the back of one of the niches a door was constructed leading out to a platform on which the bodies of the dead were laid during funerals, enabling the congregation to attend funeral prayers and mourn the dead from inside the mosque during winter, while keeping the body outside, as per Islamic practice (fig. 19). During the last ten days of Ramadan, this niche accommodates a person conducting *i'tikaaf* (residing in the mosque for worship) and is hung with a curtain ensuring the person remains secluded and undisturbed. The door operated both as means for him to exit the mosque to perform ablutions and for food to be delivered. Through these changes Tamim and his team had adapted the reconstructed mosque to

accommodate the site's religious function. During one interview, Rasool described how hard it is to define a budget for working on a historic building because so many things change over the course of the project. It was only when the team could access the dome of the building that they realised how much the tiles on the 15th century dome had

FIGURE 21 THE TILE PRODUCTION WORKSHOP IN USE. PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY THE AGA KHAN TRUST FOR CULTURE

deteriorated (fig. 20). The German funders had contacted AKTC with some spare funds they were keen to spend on culture, so AKTC used it to retile the dome and to construct brick paths and balustrades around the park. Rather than bring in international experts, Rasool and his team had established a tile-making workshop at the site which I saw on my first visit (fig. 21). Here a father and son team were working to produce tiles for the dome. Rasool explained how he had researched tile and coloured glaze production, and, in collaboration with these local craftsmen, had established this workshop. By the time I visited again in 2014, they had

produced 44,000 simple tiles for the resurfacing of the dome over a period of 10 months and more complex 3-dimensional tiles for use on the *murqanas* in the mosque. As per the 'preservationist' approach, aesthetics and materiality were a concern and the new tiles had been produced to match the historical tiles, glazed with 'traditional' colours using 'traditional' firing techniques. The coloured glazes originally used on the shrine complex tiles were accurately reproduced
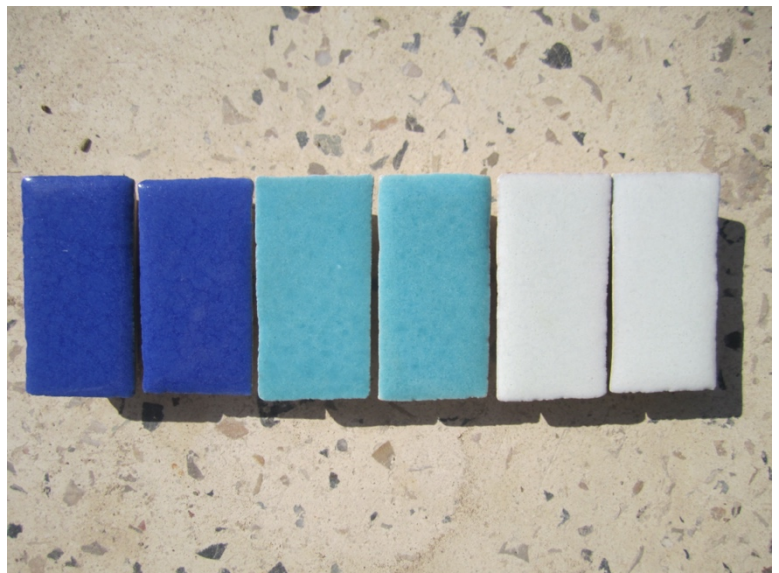

FIGURE 22 NEW TILES PRODUCED IN THE TILE WORKSHOP. PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY THE AGA KHAN TRUST FOR CULTURE

using oxides from lead, tin, cobalt, copper and manganese (fig. 22). The processes included

mixing of specially procured soil to produce the appropriate clay and baking them in a kiln fired with *safidar* (white poplar), a local wood which burns quickly without producing smoke that would discolour the tiles. To put this in context, such attention to historic detail, which appeals to the idea of a more virtuous materiality typical of a 'preservationist' approach, is in stark contrast to the tiles used on several construction projects in the local area, sponsored by Mohammad Atta Nur. These new projects, which include the construction of a new mosque in Mazar, close to the shrine of Hazrat Ali, use factory-produced tiles made in Iran, which are seen by the governor as more 'modern' than the locally produced, handmade tiles that AKTC favoured. A training program was set up to train local tilemakers and over the course of the work 45 local craftsmen were trained in specialised skills such as pointing brick masonry, tile production and installation. In total, 85 local people were employed. So the production of handmade and locally produced tiles created economic opportunities for residents of Balkh, making way for new relationships between the shrine and its community. The approach the team took to tilemaking was another attempt to balance allegiances to international preservation doctrine while also appealing to the community and its relationship with the Khwaja Parsa complex.

c) SOCIAL AUTHENTICITY

As described, with the additional funds from the German government, AKTC also included the landscaping and partial redesign of the park surrounding the shrine in its work. On my first visit in 2014, I witnessed how the park, as the central public space for the town, had become an informal market, with local farmers from neighboring villages coming to sell products such as eggs or yoghurt in and around the park, close to the shrine. However, the local mayor and governor had recently built two markets on the outskirts of town and were threatening this relationship between the shrine and its community by forcing local sellers to rent stalls and sell there. The exorbitant cost of rent and the location of the new markets meant that people were going out of business. One local blacksmith I chatted with told me he could make 4500 Afghanis ($60) per month selling tools in the park but was now under pressure to sell in the newly constructed market, where he could only make 2250 Afghanis ($30) per month. After procuring the funds from Germany, Tamim described his careful negotiations with local government officials which enabled AKTC to construct the paved paths through the park that supported these systems of local trade, and enabled tradesmen and women to sell their wares close to the mosque. These measures were focused on respecting and strengthening the relationship between the community and Khwaja Parsa and show an appreciation for how these buildings functioned within the wider cultural landscape.

D) LOCAL PUBLIC RELATIONS

AKTC's approach to public relations for the Khwaja Parsa project engaged these different regimes of heritage value, both 'preservationist' and religious or social, in order to appeal to different audiences. The organisation's publicity images of AKTC's work at Khwaja Parsa, which appeared on AKTC's website, were taken by British photographer Simon Norfolk. Taken at night, the images focused on the carefully lit physical structure of the shrine and adjacent mosque, emphasising the building's monumentality and decorative blue Timurid era tilework. No people are visible. These speak of how the organisation aligns with the 'global' heritage discourse, a form of productive power, and its values of monumentality, materiality, aesthetics and history which seemingly appeal to the organisation's international supporters such as UNESCO and the World Monuments Fund. At the same time, the organisation's local agents on the ground in Balkh were deployed to manage public relations for the project, and used locally appropriate methods in order to do this. One of the responsibilities of AKTC's employees was to manage perceptions and act as a representative for the wider organisation. Following the permission to work at Khwaja Parsa, Rasool explained that maintaining such community relationships in Balkh was a priority. Afghans can be suspicious of offers of support from international non-governmental organizations and in my interviews some of the AKTC team reported that members of the local community initially had doubts about outsiders coming to work on the site. There are several doctrinal differences between Sunni and Ismaili Shia interpretations of Islam, as there are between Sunnis and mainstream Shias. In Afghanistan, religious affiliations have often intersected with ethnic groupings and continue to be part of the conflict, as they have throughout history, but today's differences are as much stoked by politicians as by 'extremists'. However, even this predominantly Sunni congregation allowed AKTC, with its known links to Ismailis, to work at Khwaja Parsa, showing that these groups can continue to coexist despite attempts, both globally and within Afghanistan, to exploit these differences and create conflict. This tolerance does not mean that some doubts over notions of religious difference do not exist, however, and, as I discovered, some community elders were initially suspicious that funds for the project originated either with the government of Germany or the Aga Khan. They apparently had inquired about whether this money was *haram* (forbidden). On one of our trips between Mazar and Balkh local police had stopped our car and asked who we were working for, when we replied "The Aga Khan", the policeman looked quizzically at us and asked, "Aga Khan Bank dorad?" (The Aga Khan has a bank?). The Aga Khan's microfinance programmes are well known in Afghanistan but can be divisive, as where some participants have benefitted, others perceive the system of repaying financial loans with added interest as exploitative or 'unIslamic'. In Balkh, AKTC's public

relations techniques included tasking a community liaison officer with visiting the local mosque to debate with residents about any concerns. I was struck by the absence of signboards promoting AKTC or the German government at the site and how this collaboration over heritage work was concealed from locals. This shows how such 'soft power' strategies are meant to work for some audiences but are concealed from others. It is common for donor-driven projects in urban centres to be characterised by signs publicising the sponsor; however, Balkh is in a more remote situation and the need for this form of donor acknowledgement seemingly did not sit comfortably with Afghanistan's oral culture. The team in Balkh tapped into this through alternative ways, and in place of these more traditional forms of advertisement, one project supervisor would stand at the front of the taxi queue and chat with the taxi drivers, ensuring any messages about the project were quickly relayed about town. Such methods, combined with Rasool and his team's approach to the project, have seemingly proved effective. Khwaja Parsa was handed back to members of the Balkh community in time for the festival of Eid. One of the project supervisors reported that he overheard a group of community elders, who had initially been suspicious about AKTC's intentions, convincing another local group about the value of AKTC's work at the handover: "Angels from heaven came to restore our mosque!".

7. Conclusions

The mobilisation of heritage as a tool of 'soft power' and diplomacy is a common occurrence in the 'post-Bamyan' era but how such work actually takes shape is often less clear. Cooper has argued that the study of the 'intersection of institutions, networks and discourses' can provide insights into the operations of power (2009: 24). In Balkh I saw the new configurations of the range of international governments, private development agencies and individuals that converge over such heritage initiatives, and how such projects operate on the ground. Heritage provides a useful tool for diplomacy. Post conflict interventions, with their range of actors with diplomatic objectives, are one context in which these new collaborations over heritage, and their related forms of power, are configured. During my interview with the cultural attaché for the German embassy, he mentioned that the overall yearly budget for civilian operations, known as the Stability Pact, was 430 million euros and there was approximately 800,000 euros of that dedicated to cultural projects (pers. comm. June 2013). AKTC is an ideal implementing partner for the German government because the work in Balkh is in the north, close to where the German troops are stationed. For the Germans, their bid at cultural diplomacy is at 'arms-length'. Within the wider intervention in Afghanistan, AKDN and

the German government have mutually affirming agendas, broadly to smooth relations with the Afghan government and build their international reputations.

The more intricate details of how certain heritage discourses operate as part of these networks around 'soft power' were also visible in Balkh. The critical heritage turn has insisted that heritage preservation practice in Muslim contexts either sits outside Eurocentric notions of heritage value or is suppressed by them (Rico 2017). However, AKTC's project in Balkh reveals a heritage practice which engages with both classic preservation principles and the practices of Islam, showing how these two worldviews are made to coexist through a hybridised, vernacularised preservation practice which addresses different audiences. In order to achieve this coexistence, the organisation deploys specific agents to cater to its range of diplomatic objectives. Through the promotion of classic preservation principles, AKTC can appeal to donors, the German government and its network of international alliances which speak to the organisation's geopolitical agendas. At a local level, in Balkh, the organisation deploys autonomous, trusted, local experts who are well versed in international conservation charters and familiar with religious practices and the local environment in Balkh. Rather than grand policy, it was the clear-sighted and patient interactions between individual Afghans, such as Tamim, and community members that shaped the results of this work. This careful, balanced approach, which has been honed since 2002 when the organisation started preservation work in Afghanistan, can smooth AKDN's economic and political relationships with the Afghan government and internationally in order to support its mixed economy of aid and investments. Couched as 'soft' interventions, such heritage work in Afghanistan is directly linked to harder forms of compulsory politics for both AKDN and the German government, for which it seeks to generate positive messages. While, in the post 9.11 environment, extremists and Afghan politicians might exploit sectarian differences, such work also generates positive messages about the wider network of AKDN, the Aga Khan and the Ismaili community both within Afghanistan and internationally.

To unpick the politics operating through heritage in this chapter, returning to the power framework is helpful. Through such configurations we see how heritage as soft power works along networks which include the German government, AKDN's economic and humanitarian interests, preservationist heritage discourses and the Afghan state and its Ismaili populations. The soft power of heritage work is linked to the direct forms of compulsory power of the German military as it seeks to build hearts and minds in the north of Afghanistan and curry

favour with the Afghan government. The Aga Khan Trust for Culture, meanwhile, has developed its own discourse of heritage preservation, a discursive, diffuse form of power, which speaks to its audiences in Balkh, in the Afghan government and operates as a tool for image-building for the wider AKDN network internationally. My next chapter focuses on the relationship between politics and another international heritage intervention, this time the work of the Scottish NGO, Turquoise Mountain, to look at the entanglements between heritage and international development as nuanced ideas about aesthetics intersect with the wider set of ideas that underpin the international reconstruction project in Afghanistan.

CHAPTER 7

21ST CENTURY ORIENTALISM? TURQUOISE MOUNTAIN AND THE LIBERAL
INTERVENTION

1. INTRODUCTION

One cold day in October 2015, the Afghan artist Royah had invited me to her brother's flat in Wembley. She had recently arrived in the UK from Afghanistan and wanted some advice about how to sell her paintings and pieces of calligraphy. In the sparsely decorated flat she had laid out about thirty pieces of calligraphy, drawings, some sculptures, all of which she had shipped over from Afghanistan at considerable expense. Over some green tea and Afghan *mantu* (dumplings) which she had painstakingly prepared, she told me she was hoping to be able to sell the works in London in order to make money before her application for asylum was granted. I looked through the pieces. Royah was trained in Turquoise Mountain's calligraphy department and her skill is in creating the intricate borders with floral or geometric motifs that surround Islamic written texts such as poems or prayers. Often Royah (and other craftsmen and craftswomen at Turquoise Mountain) would paint these without including the text within, so the intricate border would exist in its own right as a piece of decorative art, devoid of the religious text. There were many examples of these in her collection, as well as paintings in the style of Persian or Mughal miniature paintings, which depict a figure or a narrative within a similar painted border of floral motifs. I realised that I might be able to sell a few of her works to Afghan and international friends that had lived and worked in Afghanistan, but that beyond this small group it would likely be hard to find buyers in the UK. We discussed the realities of a potentially limited market in the UK for her work and she was taken aback.

Royah had learned her skills at Turquoise Mountain, a Scottish NGO based in Kabul that is working to retrain and train Afghan craftsmen and craftswomen in particular craft skills and to preserve a historic area of Kabul's Old City. She explained in an interview in October 2014 at Turquoise Mountain in Kabul how she had enrolled and quickly became one of the organisation's best students. She described to me how she arrived there by chance, after a family member spotted an advertisement, and had passed the entrance exam despite her lack

of experience or ability to draw at that time. For her, the attraction had been the $60 monthly stipend offered to students at the outset of the project, which was the same as the salary of a teacher and was therefore a considerable amount for a student of art and design. She learned quickly, graduated and in 2010 started her own studio *Meft-e-Hunar* (Art Studio) employing calligraphers. In 2014, Turquoise Mountain managed to secure a rare and lucrative $650,000 commission to provide artwork for a five-star hotel in Mecca, Saudi Arabia. Turquoise Mountain awarded one part of the commission to Royah's business and she produced 600 hand painted pieces of calligraphy and 8,000 prints for the Anjum Hotel, Mecca. Her business earned over $65,000 in revenues and employed 30 women over 6 months. She became a celebrated businesswoman, running a team of men and women to make calligraphy pieces on commission. During this period she travelled internationally, unaccompanied by a family member, and was awarded Best Woman Entrepreneur at an International Women's Day event sponsored by the Women's Centre at the American University of Afghanistan (Afghan Business 2015). Several articles about her appeared in the international media, lauding her success as a young, single Afghan businesswoman (e.g. *USA Today* 2015). Later that year she visited the US and met with then Secretary of State John Kerry. Through our conversation I realised Royah was struggling to reconcile her status in Afghanistan, where she had been celebrated as an award-winning artist and businesswoman by high profile organisations such as USAID, with the reality of a lack of interest in her or a market for her work in the UK. Royah described to me her disorientating realisation: her artwork, story and awards only have power if she remains in Afghanistan.

This chapter continues to explore the various entanglements between heritage and politics in the 'post-Bamyan' era through discussions of the work of Turquoise Mountain, a small NGO supporting Afghan craftsmen and craftswomen and restoring historic buildings in the Old City of Kabul. The previous chapter looked at the work of the Aga Khan Trust for Culture in Balkh and how soft power operates along a diverse network of state and non-state organisations, heritage discourses, military actors and individuals. The wider Aga Khan Development Network is an umbrella for a variety of development programmes and projects which operate in many countries across the world. Turquoise Mountain, by contrast, is a small Scottish NGO with offices in Kabul, Myanmar and Amman. Turquoise Mountain's intervention reveals a more nuanced interaction between heritage and politics but one which nevertheless shapes

understandings of Afghanistan's past and has consequences for the Afghan craftsmen and craftswomen engaged with the project.

This chapter discusses how the organisation's practice of heritage preservation became entangled with the ideas of the liberal intervention in Afghanistan through a network of international donors, project managers and craftspeople. The intersection of heritage work with the discourses of international development is a crucial characteristic of the 'post-Bamyan' era. Here I attempt to show how this intersection resulted in Turquoise Mountain developing a practice of heritage preservation in which distinctive, orientalist notions of heritage value rooted in aesthetics have been updated for the 21st century via the discourses of development. This 'updating' is the entanglement of heritage work with the politics of the internationally sponsored reconstruction programme with its dominant focus on the 'liberation' of Afghan women. I observe how such a model for heritage preservation was developed and maintained by the artisans that benefitted from it and through the skill of cultural practitioners who matched Turquoise Mountain's programmes to the wider donor priorities of the reconstruction programme in order to access funds and survive. I explore how, this discursive, productive forms of power worked on the ground, complicating any simple reading of orientalism, showing that some craftsmen and craftswomen benefitted from Turquoise Mountain's intervention, others didn't, while some resisted this model. I show how this 'updating' of a more traditional set of ideas about heritage rooted in aesthetics and materiality with these progressive values had consequences for certain individuals such as Royah. Finally, I discuss how an exhibition of Turquoise Mountain's work appealed to US audiences. While Turquoise Mountain's heritage preservation model might have constructed an Afghan 'other' in a system of meaning and value, we see how such constructions can operate in a contradictory and positive way, as at the same time this exhibition acted as a site for dialogue and exchange to build understanding across cultural fault lines that have emerged in the post 9.11 era.

This chapter is based on observations from my experience working in Kabul for Turquoise Mountain over a two-year period (from 2008 – 2010, several years prior to formally enrolling for my PhD at UCL), interviews conducted with employees of the organisations in 2014 and ongoing interactions with the organisation through ex-colleagues and friends that I made there. Where my other empirical chapters are the result of data collected during specific

periods of fieldwork, during which I lived with a particular organisation or engaged with a site under preservation for a specific amount of time, this chapter is more anecdotal.

2. A VISION FOR HERITAGE PRESERVATION

A) PRESERVING AFGHAN 'TRADITIONS'

This section focuses on the founder of Turquoise Mountain, Rory Stewart, and how the initial vision for the organisation was developed. Turquoise Mountain was founded in 2006 by Stewart, a privately educated British ex-diplomat, now politician, who served in the British Army and subsequently worked for the Foreign Office. In 2003, he served as Deputy Governor of two provinces in Iraq after the invasion. After working as a tutor to his children, Stewart formed a friendship with the Prince of Wales that helped to inform his attitudes to heritage preservation. The idea for Turquoise Mountain was inspired by the Prince's School of Traditional Arts which is focused on preserving 'traditions' through maintaining a particular materiality and aesthetics, and on preserving craft skills and historic processes of production, such as making paper, pigments and traditional glazes (The Prince's Foundation 2021). The Prince of Wales was a crucial early supporter of Turquoise Mountain and gave financial support through his charity The Prince's Trust. Turquoise Mountain is one of the Prince's Charities. Stewart's initial vision for the project was to 'revive the rich artistic heritage of Afghanistan' through a focus on Afghan crafts and the restoration of historic mudbrick buildings in an area of Kabul's Old City called Murad Khane, right in the city centre on the north banks of the Kabul River (Turquoise Mountain n.d.). This area is also home to a busy silver bazaar and a shrine and there were 130 shops practising 20 trades at the beginning of the project (Ibid.). The buildings and courtyards, many of which included architectural woodwork and intricate carvings, either housed tenants or were used as storage for market sellers nearby and were collapsing through neglect. At the Institute, I witnessed the organisation's distinctive approach to training and conservation work in which *ustads* (master craftsmen) were located across Afghanistan, largely through word of mouth, and brought to Kabul to teach at the Turquoise Mountain Institute for Afghan Arts and Architecture. The idea was to ensure the skills involved in the various disciplines selected - calligraphy, woodwork, ceramics and later jewellery - would be passed down by *ustads* to future generations of Afghans. Turquoise Mountain's model is reminiscent of the Arts and Crafts movement in which William Morris and his followers harked back to a pre-Industrial 'golden age' unsullied

by factories and industrial modes of production, in which the handmade was highly prized. These particular disciplines were under threat due to the conflict when materials were scarce and there was a diminished market for craft. Craftsmen and craftswomen had sought other means of employment, which meant an interruption in the traditional guild systems through which knowledge is passed down. Turquoise Mountain's choices of craft discipline to support were also dependent on the expertise available, on funding, and access to materials (Kennedy 2010: 78). Carpet making, for example, was deemed to be alive and well and therefore not in need of support. There was a three-tiered approach: start an Institute with training programmes for Afghan students in various craft disciplines; restore and rebuild an area of Kabul's historic city which would house this Institute; and thirdly, enhance the quality of Afghanistan's craft products in order to increase local and international sales and thus bring economic benefit to craftsmen and craftswomen. When I worked there, the organisation was starting to move into the restored buildings in the Old City. From this initial focus on craft skills and restoration the project became more wide ranging and took on more traditional development work, such as setting up basic infrastructure in Murad Khane, sanitation, vocational training, adult literacy, primary education and establishing a healthcare clinic in Murad Khane focused on child and maternal health.

B) 'HERITAGE FOR DEVELOPMENT'

The rationale for this work is outlined in the organisation's early literature, in which Turquoise Mountain describes the organisation as 'pioneering an approach to development which merges education, livelihoods and cultural heritage' (Turquoise Mountain n.d.). The emphasis here, typical of the 'post-Bamyan' era, is the intersection of heritage with development objectives. As we have seen, the idea that heritage preservation can contribute to the wider goals of development such as poverty alleviation, gender equality and economic development is a popular justification for internationally sponsored cultural heritage preservation work in Afghanistan. The ready usage of the 'heritage for development' discourse for preservation work in post conflict scenarios has been commented on (De Cesari 2020, see also Basu & Modest 2015). Indeed, it has become known for its 'ubiquity, versatility and chameleon-like nature which is put to work by various diverse actors for very diverse projects' (De Cesari 2020: 1). As described in the two previous chapters, this is the same rationale used by UNESCO for largely technical, expert-led interventions, while the Aga Khan applies it to the restoration of historic buildings and their wider environment. Similar to the rhetoric surrounding post conflict heritage work in the Balkans (Forde 2016), Turquoise Mountain pushes this idea

further, and emphasises heritage preservation, not only as a means to contribute to development goals but also as a way to rebuild Afghan identity after years of conflict: (Turquoise Mountain's) **'**focus on traditional crafts and historic buildings renews Afghanistan's sense of identity after years of conflict and restores pride in Afghan heritage through investment in Afghanistan's artisans, craft businesses and historic cities' (Turquoise Mountain n.d.). In Mostar, for example, there was an intersection between heritage preservation of the Mostar Bridge and the wider values of the internationally sponsored project in the Balkans; the reconstruction bridge was loaded with symbolism about 'bridging communities' and creating a new multicultural Bosnia, as part of the wider post conflict project (Walasek 2015: 209; Forde 2016). In Afghanistan, one of the key values underpinning the intervention has been Afghan women, gender equality and human rights. This powerful set of ideas has been taking shape since George Bush put women's rights at the forefront of the 'War on Terror' (e.g. Abu-Lughod 2002) and has been at the forefront of the 'modernization' agenda of the internationally sponsored reconstruction project since 2001. It was interesting to witness the intersection of this focus on women's rights and gender equality with Turquoise Mountain's cultural heritage work.

c) Popular guided tours

Although Turquoise Mountain, like any small NGO, struggled to attract funds and survive, the organisation's sense of aesthetics and approach to craft education was consistently appealing to the international community based in Kabul. When I worked for Turquoise Mountain between 2008 and 2010 groups of donors, government officials and their international guests visited several times a week and it was easy to see why these tours were so popular. At this time, the Institute for Arts and Architecture and the organisation's offices were housed in a 19th century fort (it later moved into the series of restored courtyards and buildings in Murad Khane). A visit to Turquoise Mountain was a welcome respite for these groups who tended to spend time in purpose-built concrete embassies or offices in Kabul's green zone. Opportunities for these members of Kabul's international community to venture beyond the blast walls and barbed wire were rare. A trip to the quiet and secluded compound also offered a brief escape from the grim realities of the chaotic, polluted, traffic-ridden streets of central Kabul. As the visitor entered the fort, the image was one of time standing still, of a world untouched by the processes of modernity. The walls were constructed with mudbrick and the office windows contained a large restored and repurposed wooden *panjare* (window) screen (fig. 23). These are traditionally used to demarcate space within Afghan courtyards and

houses. In the doorway between the offices and the guesthouse stood a large, cracked wooden door with intricate carvings. These architectural features, common to traditional Afghan houses and courtyards, contrasted sharply with the concrete, barbed wire and hesco barriers of the parts of Kabul where international diplomats, aid workers and journalists tended to live. During the week, when the students were at work, the sound of hammering from the woodwork

FIGURE 23 A RESTORED PANJARE (WINDOW) SCREEN AT THE TURQUOISE MOUNTAIN FORT. PHOTOGRAPH C. WYNDHAM

workshops resounded across the compound. An inner courtyard surrounded by rooms lay beyond the area containing offices. These served as a guesthouse for the international staff of Turquoise Mountain. On a small lawn mulberry trees and a pair of peacocks gently pecked at the carefully tended, luminous green grass. A sense of otherworldliness was conjured through this powerful aesthetic experience in which visitors were keen to immerse themselves. The tours also offered these groups the opportunity to engage with and talk to Afghans, a rarity for many diplomats and consultants working in Kabul. They invariably left with a piece of pottery or jewellery bought from the shop at the entrance. Here, absorbed in an atmosphere of calm and creativity, the realities of the ongoing Afghan conflict and politics of the reconstruction programme seemed distant.

FIGURE 24 A RESTORED COURTYARD AT TURQUOISE MOUNTAIN'S INSTITUTE FOR AFGHAN ARTS, MURAD KHANE. PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY LALAGE SNOW

3. TURQUOISE MOUNTAIN AND ORIENTALISM

After its restoration, the area of Murad Khane encompassed by Turquoise Mountain also attracted many visitors (fig. 24). The spectacle of craftsmen and craftswomen at work,

against the backdrop of these carefully restored historic buildings, was a powerful image enhanced by the idea that these craft traditions were threatened. Linda Nochlin has discussed how the picturesque is intimately related to Orientalism. Afghanistan's heritage is frequently depicted as being at risk and of course this was one of the arguments for founding Turquoise Mountain. As Nochlin has observed, there is another

FIGURE 25 A CERAMICS LESSON AT THE TURQUOISE MOUNTAIN INSTITUTE FOR ARTS AND ARCHITECTURE. PHOTOGRAPH C. WYNDHAM

symptom of the idea of heritage being increasingly at risk, different to the argument that Trinidad Rico makes about the idea of threat asserting the AHD, or the value of heritage as

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material and monumental (2014). This is the idea that heritage practices deemed to be under threat take on a romantic allure: 'it is the threat of destruction to customs and rituals …. which means they are seen as picturesque' (1989: 50). 'Reinterpreted as the precious remnants of disappearing ways of life, worth hunting down and preserving, they are finally transformed into subjects of aesthetic delectation in an imagery in which exotic human beings are integrated with a presumably defining and overtly limiting décor…' (1989: 50 -51). Nochlin goes on to discuss how the picturesque image thus constructs those within it as 'irrevocably 'Other' (Ibid.). Anna Källén has argued that tourists intent on experiencing communities' traditional lifestyles are like time travellers who are keen to see a traditional and therefore somehow simpler way of life. These communities (in Källén's case, in Hintang, Laos) therefore occupy a space that is different and 'other' from the modernity of everyday life for these tourists (2015). In its appearance as traditional, harmonious and unthreatening, Murad Khane encapsulated this idea of 'anti-modernity'. However, certain 'modern' elements were key to the spectacle. Turquoise Mountain had a policy of mixed classrooms for students which was progressive for Afghanistan where education is largely single sex. This was reflective of international donors' prioritisation of gender equality in their programmes, and also of the liberal values of Turquoise Mountain employees. On these tours, the visitor would see the artisans often at work together in these shared classrooms. As such, Turquoise Mountain's picturesque restored buildings and students at work in mixed spaces combined to create a seductive visual representation which seemed enduringly positive to visitors against the backdrop of an otherwise compromised set of interventions (fig. 25).

The picturesque spectacle of these restored buildings full of students hard at work at endangered craft disciplines, as Nochlin has argued, can be viewed through the lens of Orientalism, a form of productive power. S. M. Hanifi argues that 'There is no country on earth more subject to misrepresentations based upon Orientalism than Afghanistan' and this section charts a few examples (2018). Hanifi asserts that Orientalism is an ongoing process that is continually being updated as colonial powers focus on aspects of a culture which are appropriated and 'reframed… for circulation and consumption within the institutional matrix of the imperial culture' (2018: 53). Indeed, there have been many shifts in orientalist representations of Afghanistan from the 19th century to today. Said notes that it is cultural hegemony, or the workings of Orientalism through a range of different vehicles such as

academics, institutions, politics and literature, which gives Orientalism its form of productive power (1978: 7). He crucially asks how Orientalism transmits or reproduces itself from one epoch to another (1978: 15). One key focus of an orientalist critique focused on Afghanistan today has been on the role of women in the international intervention (e.g. Fluri 2009). Abu Lughod discusses how the need to 'save' Afghan women was an important part of the rhetoric that justified the intervention and the new 'democratic' order that would be instilled, as different from the Taliban's approach to women's rights (2002). This quickly morphed into gender equality and women's rights as one of the key, albeit symbolic, themes that underpinned the objectives of the international intervention (Suhrke 2007; Billaud 2009).

While Afghan women have been at the forefront of this 'fantasy of misrepresentation' since 2001 (Hanifi 2018: 52), there is a long history in which Afghanistan's cultural heritage has also been entangled with the productive power of such orientalist imaginings. Travel writing on Afghanistan has been one such catalyst for constructing orientalist representations of Afghanistan's past and heritage. Afghanistan is often painted as a traditional society, as home to an 'anti-modernity' (Green 2013: 67-68) which gives a corresponding potency to the idea of preserving its traditions. Before Stewart founded Turquoise Mountain, he walked across Afghanistan in a journey documented in his book *The Places Inbetween* (2004). Stewart's book is similar to others in the genre of contemporary European travel writing on Afghanistan through its portrayal of contemporary Afghanistan as a country untouched by modernity. This characterisation of the country, as Nile Green argues, is a continuation of a crucial theme of the tradition of 'discovery literature', a genre of travel literature established in the 19th century age of colonialism in which travellers and spies recounted tales of their trips across the country for a European audience (2013: 67). Afghanistan's cultural heritage has featured in this genre of travel writing. As discussed in Chapter 4, Charles Masson's diaries and travelogues were published in Britain at the same time as news of the violence of the British defeat. Maps of Afghanistan which traced Alexander's route, reproduced in *Ariana Antiqua: A Descriptive Account of the Antiquities and Coins of Afghanistan,* were published alongside Masson's finds (1841). This focus on descriptions of historic sites gives the idea that Afghanistan is somewhere the past can be experienced in the present. Certain orientalist characterisations of Afghanistan and Afghans, which appear in the 19th century diaries and the travelogues of those such as Charles Masson, Alexander Burnes and Mountstuart Elphinstone among others, have taken root and endure through the work of later by 20th century travel

writers, such as Peter Levi, whose travel book, *The Light Garden of the Angel King,* is focused on his search for the route of Alexander and Afghanistan's Greek past (1972).

Both historic and contemporary travel writing on Afghanistan offer an extreme example of a 'nostalgia' for an imagined past through its presentation as a remote place, as yet unblemished by modernity (Green 2013: 69). As Nile Green argues, Stewart's work also follows 'a self-conscious tradition of British travel writing [that] has formed from Afghanistan a kind of Central Asian Scotland whose wilder highlands provided a primitive literary space in whose emptiness it was possible to explore the limits of the British self' (Ibid.). This was alluded to in the British press who created the moniker 'Lawrence of Belgravia' to refer to Stewart (Coghlan 2007). During Stewart's trip, recounted in *The Places Inbetween*, he walked across Ghur, an isolated mountainous province in northern Afghanistan. The Ghurids are renowned for having built the celebrated Minaret of Jam in the 12th century ACE, an elaborately tiled, towering minaret whose inaccessibility in this remote valley adds to its romantic allure. During his walk, Stewart witnessed firsthand the looting of archaeological material in the valley beneath the Minaret and describes how this image of loss and destruction motivated his idea for an organisation that would revive Afghanistan's cultural heritage. Stewart named the organisation after *Firuzkoh* (Turquoise Mountain), the name for the lost capital of the remote 12th century Ghorid Empire which is suspected to be in Ghur. Since the location of the real Turquoise Mountain (*Firozkoh*) is as yet undiscovered, the name evokes a mythic place which exists in the imagination. The romantic notion of a mythological *Firozkoh* was a beguiling backdrop against which to establish a heritage preservation organisation.

4. ORIENTALISM 'ON THE GROUND'

How Turquoise Mountain's model for heritage preservation worked 'on the ground' at the level of project managers, *ustads* (teachers) and students, was more complex than the typical Heritage Studies analyses of the 'top down' workings of power and also complicates any simple reading of orientalism. This section shows the haphazard nature of how such models are created, maintained and operate through a range of networks and agents. The ongoing attempts of Turquoise Mountain, a small NGO, to legitimate itself and survive meant that, rather than an established notion of what constituted Afghan 'traditions', this was in flux as the project and craft products were reframed in order to bring economic benefit through

access to markets and appeal to funders. Cultural practitioners working for Turquoise Mountain developed an awareness of the mutability of the powerful concept of Afghan 'tradition' and, with this awareness, were able to use it in a variety of contexts to market themselves and their products. During an interview at the organisation's offices in October 2014, for example, one project manager described his ambivalence about the term and that he enjoyed playing with it in a range of scenarios for different audiences. He explained that while Turquoise Mountain staff knew that the carving techniques on historic buildings in the Old City were often referred to in sales pitches as 'traditional Afghan carving', these are actually derived from a convergence of carving styles that originate in Central Asia, Iran and India. Similarly, the practice of pottery in Istalif was described to visitors and funders as part of a '400-year tradition,' despite an awareness across the organisation about how this tradition has constantly shifted over the last hundred years. The changing use of glazes for these pots is one example. The use of *ishkor* glaze, a blue colour derived from a plant which grows in northern Afghanistan, shifted to facilitate the introduction of new, lead-based glazes which originate in China and are imported from Pakistan. These were more readily available during the recent conflicts and cheaper than *ishkor*. My interviewee described how the Istalifi potters were more aware than anyone about the shifts in their practice and its social context. Yet they had learned about the power of the idea of 'Afghan traditions' for those outside Afghanistan had learned to talk about their work in terms of 'Afghan tradition' too, and to conjure the idea of their practice as a tradition rooted in time and place, in order to promote their work and make it accessible to museum audiences when they travelled abroad as part of international exhibitions, or as part of sales pitches.

Mutability around the concept of tradition existed and craftsmen, craftswomen and project managers played with the term to benefit themselves and the organisation. However, at the same time students made products for sale on the international market which demanded a particular aesthetic and accompanying narrative. Alongside the Institute's three-year training programme for Afghan students ran a business development programme that aimed to connect products made by master artisans and their students to international and local markets. This economic development aspect of Turquoise Mountain's work was described by the organisation's managers as the 'final piece in the puzzle' that proved the sustainability of the Institute and fulfilled the organisations 'heritage for development' objectives. In order to meet market demands and transform certain products into marketable commodities,

Turquoise Mountain focused on a hyper-aestheticised materiality which seemed to decontextualize the product and divorce it from the social and cultural milieu of its maker. One example is the wooden products made by Turquoise Mountain artisans. A woodcarving workshop at Turquoise Mountain was established as a place for training young students in carving techniques under a series of more experienced master artisans. The skill level in the woodwork shop improved quickly due to the high skill levels of master craftspeople such as Fawad Mansouri, and in 2009 a Turquoise Mountain Design and Production Studio was established that operated independently of the Institute and the student training programmes, making pieces for sale on an international and a growing domestic market. The principal wood carving techniques used are 'Kabuli' and 'Nuristani', two distinct styles of carving which include floral and vegetal motifs. These are traditionally used to decorate functional, architectural woodwork such as structural pillars, posts, *patayi* arcade screens and doors on historic buildings. A popular subject in the woodwork workshop were *panjare* (window) screens. These lattice screens were previously an integral function of historic Afghan houses where they allowed for a balance between light and shade, delineated space and controlled ventilation. In order to create marketable versions of these screens, their aesthetic elements were emphasised and functional aspects downplayed as they were recreated for use as decorative wall hangings, screens or trays (fig. 26). Other wood products that were developed to be transformed into commodities were small single square panels, carefully carved in expensive rare woods such as walnut, chestnut and cedar, which included motifs in the classic Kabuli or Nuristani style. These derived from functional wooden pillars, *panjare* screens and doors on historic Afghan houses, which served as their inspiration. The transformation required a hyper-aestheticization of these craft products for which the carving must be faultless, the piece of wood sanded and unbent, and varnished to a glossy finish. There was an emerging niche market for these woodwork pieces locally, amongst Afghan elites (the

FIGURE 26 A DECORATIVE PANJARE SCREEN. PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY TURQUOISE MOUNTAIN

current President of Afghanistan and the Vice President both commissioned woodwork), and an international market amongst hotels and embassies. The Embassy of Afghanistan in Tokyo contains a meeting room fashioned from these carved wooden panels.

5. MARKETING AFGHAN 'TRADITIONS'

On the one hand, this transformation of Turquoise Mountain products such as woodwork and calligraphy into marketable commodities extended the capacities of their makers, who were able to make money and achieve an international status for their products. While on the other, this transformation involved the limiting of certain capabilities. In Afghanistan, woodwork products were bought by a small Afghan elite keen to display their country's artistic traditions in their homes. However, the price of these commissions, and the individual screens, wall hangings and panels, meant that the market for them inside Afghanistan is restricted. To sustain the Woodwork Design and Production Studio, Turquoise Mountain sought lucrative woodwork and calligraphy commissions from international hotels. I learned that, in order to secure these international relationships, Turquoise Mountain needed to employ consultants who were adept at marketing and sales. Indeed, these international commissions were realised in the UAE, the US and Europe, places to which Afghan artisans have difficulty travelling due to visa restrictions and were therefore reliant on these international consultants to create and maintain relationships. The market for these products largely existed outside Afghanistan, which created a scenario in which craftsmen and craftswomen were often divorced from the audiences for whom they were creating. While artisans have always adapted their products according to market tastes, ready access to these markets could have helped them make informed responses. Pierre Centlivres describes the workings of an Afghan bazaar in his ethnography of the market in the town of Tashkurgan (1970). Here artisans have direct contact with the customers that visit the bazaar daily. Surrounded by local customers for their wares, they can make and adapt their products according to developing demands and tastes. However, with the international markets for Turquoise Mountain wood products often inaccessible to ordinary craftsmen and craftswomen, this resulted in a disorientating scenario of artisans making objects for a market while unaware of its often orientalist whims and tastes, resulting in a separation between maker and product, a loss of control of the product and a reliance on international consultants to act as mediators.

In order to market these products, certain narratives about 'tradition' were attached to them, which also often reflected an orientalist sensibility. One example is The Prince's Lodge at the Connaught Hotel in London for which Afghan artisans produced carved wooden beds, panelling and furniture (fig. 27). The hotel advertises this room as:

FIGURE 27 THE PRINCE'S LODGE ROOM AT THE CONNAUGHT HOTEL, LONDON. PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY THE-CONNAUGHT.CO.UK

'A treasure trove of style and comfort. Take a golden-age journey from Mayfair to the Middle East in this magical suite inspired by Kabul's Peacock Palace. The Prince's Lodge feels like a fantasy world all of its own. Named after Prince Arthur, Duke of Connaught, this one-bedroom suite conjures a bygone age of exploration'.

Here, Afghan woodcarving styles are mixed with contemporary design. In true orientalist style, the Afghan elements of the room are representative of the East as an exotic world in which European fantasies of escape and exploration can be realised. The marketing strategies of businesses that sell Turquoise Mountain products can revert to such essentialised, orientalist stereotypes which results in a paradox: for craft to contribute to the international development goal of 'sustainable livelihoods,' the artisans have to keep producing products which pertain to ideas of Afghan tradition which are defined by others. Also, the market for which they are producing is distant and it fluctuates, as it is dependent on Turquoise Mountain's international employees' ability to secure these lucrative commissions, sales and exhibitions abroad, which asks questions as to these craftsmen and craftswomen's ability to define and control their own livelihoods and futures. A focus on this particular aesthetic impacted the artisans in different ways. A few hugely benefitted as they both understood and helped to shape the Turquoise Mountain model, and through it found a market for their products. In addition to this discursive model working in a top-down direction, we see how such a model is co-created and maintained by Afghan craftsmen and craftswomen.

An example is Fawad Mansouri, an accomplished woodcarver who grew up as a refugee in Iran where he worked as an apprentice to an Iraqi master carver. He came to work for Turquoise Mountain in 2006 as a woodwork master at the Institute. He quickly became one of the 'stars' and ambassadors for the organisation. Already a highly skilled carver, Fawad was introduced by Turquoise Mountain to Afghan carving motifs on buildings in the Old City. As he explains in an essay for an exhibition of Turquoise Mountain's work in Doha and London, *Ferozkoh: Tradition and Continuity in Afghan Art*, he had very little previous experience of Afghan styles and motifs but he learned quickly though exposure to the traditional carving on buildings in the Old City. Fawad expressed an eagerness to meet Turquoise Mountain's standards and began to conceptualise his work in the same vein: "Initially I did not really comprehend what their vision was, but as I began to understand I was keen to be a part of it and lend a hand in shaping it," he explains in the essay (2013: 161). Fawad began to articulate his vision and work in a way that was in alignment with Turquoise Mountain: "The craftsman's hand has the power to make our living environment more beautiful and ultimately more humane" is a quote from Fawad as he visited the workshops of Shackleton Thomas in the U.S (ShackletonThomas 2016). Alongside his teaching work, Fawad set up his own business employing Afghan men and women in a workshop to complete prominent commissions for a range of clients including the Connaught Hotel, London and UNESCO. I saw how Fawad's workshop in Kabul was a rarity amongst businesses supported by Turquoise Mountain in that it was able to reach clients independently of Turquoise Mountain's international staff. Fawad's skilled work was popular and inspired a small domestic market for woodwork amongst the Afghan elite. While Fawad benefitted as the Turquoise Mountain style grew in popularity in Kabul, questions still remain about power dynamics and the extent to which Fawad's self-construction as a craftsman relied on processes of self-orientalism and the internalisation of Turquoise Mountain's vision.

The situation in Istalif shows a different scenario in which Turquoise Mountain's attempts to produce products with a certain materiality aimed at international markets was resisted by the artisans. Here we see how the organisation's model was actively contested by certain groups. One reason is that the local market for ceramics is active and therefore there was no need for Istalifi potters to adopt new techniques, styles and materials in order to sell their work. Many of the pots produced in Istalif had a high lead content and were too fragile to be exported. Several expert ceramics consultants visited Turquoise Mountain during my time there in order to address these issues. However, despite this influx of expertise, the quality of

the pots in the town remained largely unchanged. The town of Istalif is celebrated for its distinctive blue pottery and its location outside of Kabul in the foothills of the Hindu Kush mountains means that it is a popular picnic spot for Afghans and internationals alike. Several families in the town have been making pottery for three or four generations due to the local abundance of a particular type of clay. Although there have been several attempts by NGOs to intervene in modes of pottery production in the town, Turquoise Mountain's efforts represented the longest standing engagement between an international organisation and the village, and a group of potters from Istalif attend the Turquoise Mountain Institute daily. This group is made up of master potters, who teach the students, and students themselves.

FIGURE 28 ISTALIFI CERAMICS DRYING IN THE SUN, ISTALIF, 2014. PHOTOGRAPH C. WYNDHAM

Istalifi ceramics have a significant local market as Afghan picnickers often buy pots on weekend trips to the town (fig. 28). The town is also a popular place for internationals to visit during the weekends and I made many trips to Istalif, both during my time working for Turquoise Mountain and afterwards. The town is a one-hour drive out of Kabul from the city centre to the northern outskirts where the side of the road is dotted with bakeries and electrical shops. After the heavy urban congestion, you can pick up speed as you leave the city

and enter the fertile Shomali plain where carefully constructed irrigation channels run between the fields and orchards. The geometric shapes of mudbrick houses and their courtyards stretch out across the plain. To reach the town, you take a left turn up a dirt track, past a police checkpoint and on up the hill to a popular picnic spot at a garden originally built by Babur, the Moghul emperor. The town of Istalif sits yet higher up, across a river where the town's bazaar is dominated by shops selling pottery. Each shop is managed by an Istalifi family. Inside the shops, rows of bowls, plates and ceramic candlesticks of varying sizes are stacked up on carpets. On the mud brick roofs of the houses above the shops, rows of freshly glazed pots sit drying in the sun, ready for the kiln. The pottery workshops are attached to the side of these houses and consist of a single mudbrick room where the potter sits at his wheel.

During my time working for the organisation, three international ceramics consultants came to work at Turquoise Mountain to focus on helping potters adapt their products for an international market in order to 'sustain livelihoods'. As discussed earlier in this chapter, I learned that the objective was to improve the quality of the pots and to reintroduce the use of *ishkor* glaze, a bright blue glaze that derives from the ash of a plant found in northern Afghanistan. The recent conflicts in Afghanistan had meant that potters no longer had access to this glaze, which had been used here historically, and were using a substitute cheaper glaze that originated from China and contained lead. The reintroduction of the *ishkor* glaze has been successful in the pottery workshop in Kabul, where pots sell to richer, international customers at higher prices and there is access to international markets but these attempts at changes have been resisted in Istalif where potters sell to, and have an awareness of, local markets. While international customers to Istalif come and go, the core market for the pots in Istalif are local Afghans, who use the pots in their houses. While an international customer might pay 500 Afghanis ($10) or 750 Afghanis ($15) for a pot, a local customer expects to pay only a fraction of that. The Istalifi potters have made a product that responds to the local market and so these attempts to reintroduce the more expensive *ishkor* glaze in Istalif had largely failed, while the potters at Turquoise Mountain, who can demand higher prices for their products and are able to sell some abroad, were willing to use this glaze. This resistance to the Turquoise Mountain focus on aesthetics and materiality was visible on one visit to the town with Turquoise Mountain colleagues in 2014 when we met a small boy that had been helping to glaze his father's pots. His hands were covered in glaze and he complained about his eyes stinging, a result of the lead content in the glaze his family continues to use. Other changes the Istalifi potters resisted were attempts to reduce the weight of the pots, the

introduction of gas kilns to enable temperature regulation more easily and the elimination of stacking marks (which happens when many pots are stacked together in a kiln on top of supports). In Istalif several potters might contribute to paying for one kiln firing and their objective is to fit as many pots as possible into the kiln for firing. This results in small marks on the interior of the pot where the glaze has been rubbed off by the support. One of the Istalifi potters told me that he could make a pot for $1 using the Pakistani glaze and fill a kiln with up to 700 pots for one firing. Here we see the workings of Turquoise Mountain's model for heritage preservation and how its attempts for these products to reach an international market, focused on a particular aesthetic, were adopted by some craftsmen and craftswomen, but resisted by others such as the Istalifis.

While Istalifi potters resisted being disciplined in their output by the Turquoise Mountain desire for a pot that would be marketable internationally, they developed their own marketing techniques which directly responded to local demands. In his ethnography of the Istalifi pottery community Noah Coburn discusses the 'Made in Afghanistan' stamp, applied by potters to the bottom of their pots as part of marketing tactics, and potters' reluctance to improve the glazing or clay quality of the pots. Coburn argues that the 'narrative of crisis' surrounding Afghanistan peddled by the global media in anticipation of the withdrawal of international troops in 2014 informed ceramic production. Pots sold regardless of their fragility and cracks, because it is the narrative of the pot, rather than the pot itself, which demonstrates how its buyer had travelled to an 'exotic, dangerous and war torn' place. These cracks and chips allow the buyer to tell a particular story of her their time in a conflict zone and therefore remove any incentive for the potter to alter their technique or materials (Coburn 2013). Here, unlike the woodworkers, the potters were in touch with the market and adapted their products and marketing strategies accordingly, which gave them both agency and control over their livelihoods.

6. CRAFT AND THE LANGUAGE OF THE LIBERAL INTERVENTION
The previous section described how Turquoise Mountain's heritage preservation model was informed by an orientalist informed set of ideas but also how this played out in practice. Certain employees, craftsmen and craftswomen ascribed to these constructions of Afghan tradition and benefitted, while others resisted such interventions and developed their own techniques and marketing strategies. In this section, I will discuss how the organisation

managed to attract funds by carefully matching its approach to the ever-shifting development language and goals of the wider reconstruction project, and the effects of this on craftswomen such as Royah. As we have seen, one characteristic of the 'post-Bamyan' era is the ever-popular justification that heritage work contributes to development goals. As I have discussed in the Introduction, one core theme of the internationally sponsored reconstruction project has been a focus on gender equality and human rights, both as a justification for the military intervention and as a core theme of the state building project that followed. Funds for heritage work at Turquoise Mountain came from the donor governments or international development agencies involved in this wider statebuilding project whose funding priorities were aligned with the objectives of the intervention. As a result, through these donors, Turquoise Mountain's work became entangled in the wider objectives of the international project and its focus on gender equality and women's rights.

A common sight in Kabul were the advertisements stuck on buildings and billboards around the city for lessons promising to teach students, for a small fee, the skills of 'report writing' or 'funding applications'. Indeed, these were crucial skills in post 2001 Kabul as they enabled access to the considerable coffers of USAID and other big funders to the intervention. Turquoise Mountain employed a department of personnel familiar with development language to write funding applications and reports for its donors. Jobs which focused on 'monitoring and evaluation' and 'report writing' were some of the most lucrative for Afghan employees working with international organisations and, in one project related to me, the talents of these employees lay in describing projects in terms of this shifting language and goals. As the wider international intervention in Afghanistan failed to achieve its goals, the language and objectives of the internationally sponsored reconstruction programme shifted, and organisations applying for funds had to keep up. David Mosse argues there is a gap between development policy and practice, and that development actors devote energy to development models while paying scant attention to the practices they are expected to generate (Mosse 2005: 2). Andrea Cornwall deconstructs the 'buzzwords and fuzzwords' of development discourse, showing how the use of certain words and phrases are 'passwords to funding and influence' (2007: 471). In development discourse such buzzwords are *participation*, *empowerment* and *poverty reduction* (Cornwall & Brock 2005). Basu and Zetterstrom Sharp note how, in Sierra Leone, a similar vocabulary developed around the role of culture for development in which culture was posited as 'a fundamental component of

sustainable development', 'a powerful global economic engine', 'a vehicle for social cohesion and stability', and 'a repository of knowledge, meanings and values that permeate all aspects of our lives'' (2015: 56). They argued that these buzzwords have an 'incantatory' power and are readily adopted by NGOs and a variety of actors, but their fuzziness allows for slippages; local and international actors can say one thing and do another (Ibid). The development aspect of Turquoise Mountain's work was emphasised in order to access funds for the organisation but, as I describe below, these entanglements between heritage work and the powerful discourses of development and liberal intervention had unintended consequences for Afghan craftswomen such as Royah.

Turquoise Mountain made a small number of applications for funding based on the idea of preserving heritage for its intrinsic value, emphasising the historic value of Murad Khane and the value of preserving Afghan intangible craft skills for their own sake. One such grant of £2.5 million came from the British Council's Cultural Protection Fund in 2016 for which Turquoise Mountain presented itself as the 'Preserving Afghan Heritage' project, focused on the 'protection of built heritage and intangible craft skills in Kabul's Murad Khani' (British Council 2016). However, one project manager spoke of the difficulty of accessing funds for heritage work for its intrinsic value and that the 'big money' lay in adapting the project to suit the development language and priorities of government-funded agencies and international development organisations. When I worked for Turquoise Mountain, these goals were focused on economic growth, education, community development, private sector development and gender equality. The two first major donations sought for Turquoise Mountain were from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). In the same year, 2008, the organisation was able to present itself in a number of different guises in order to access funds. The CIDA funds, which totalled 7 million USD for the time period of 2008 – 2011 were for 'economic, social and cultural' regeneration of the district of Murad Khani (CIDA 2007). In 2008, USAID donated $10.6 million for the organisation's programmes from 2008 to 2015. This grant was called 'Building Livelihoods and Trade' and the focus was on 'providing education and training, economic opportunities, and livelihoods for Afghans' (USAID 2008). Also during that year, an application was made to the Reach Out to Asia programme which awarded Turquoise Mountain $355,637 for a 'Literacy, Primary Education, and Community Development Program,' focused on the education of women and children through a literacy

programme and the improvement of lives of the community in Murad Khani (Reach Out to Asia 2008). USAID donated $4.8 million to the organisation as part of a fund designed for 'Rebranding Afghanistan: Creating Jobs, Changing Perceptions, Empowering Women' for the years 2015 – 2018 (USAID 2015). DfID donated £121,000 from the Afghan Business Innovation Fund for technical and vocational training in Afghan crafts. For one donor, Turquoise Mountain presented itself as an 'economic regeneration' project, for another it was an organisation focused on 'education and literacy', and for others it was a 'private sector development' project focused on 'job creation' through 'skills building' for women in Afghanistan's craft sector. The skill here was seemingly matching Turquoise Mountain's programmes to the priorities of these organisations. On occasions, this 'shape shifting' did seem to involve some embroidery or avoidance of the facts. Initially the small quarter of Murad Khane had been presented as an 'abandoned' quarter and more latterly as 'bustling'. While there was undoubtedly a busy bazaar with shops, the shopkeepers largely came from outside of the area and the number of inhabitants inside Murad Khane always seemed small, about several hundred. The Institute had about twenty graduate students each year, while the total number of students at the Institute at any one time was around 70. Above I have outlined some of the donations to Turquoise Mountain, which, in total amount to approximately $26 million over 12 years. However, this list does not include private donations and is not comprehensive. While Turquoise Mountain was 'successful' in its attempts to fundraise, the cumulative donor spend on its projects was certainly disproportionate to the number of Afghans that the project directly impacted and does ask questions as to the relevance and value of such work to Afghans.

As discussed above, Afghan women have been a constant focus of the internationally sponsored intervention (Abu Lughod 2002; Billaud 2015). As part of this wider focus, international NGOs that worked to 'rebuild women's lives' from the sale of Afghan products used a range of marketing strategies to sell their products. Jennifer Fluri and Rachel Lehr (2017) developed the concept of a 'grievable object' to describe a popular narrative that was attached to handmade Afghan products as part of marketing campaigns for international audiences. Often a conflict, Taliban, or gender inequality related story was attached to the object, in which suffering became a currency which helped sell it. These stories of violence became a commodity much like the object itself (2017: 63). So the product is transformed into a 'grievable object' and the buyer is somehow alleviating Afghan suffering by purchasing it.

Turquoise Mountain, however, took a different approach, and these narratives of suffering and violence were not part of the organisation's marketing strategy for its products or work. The organisation had an ambivalent attitude to the wider reconstruction programme's focus on women. Project managers explained that they specifically didn't want Turquoise Mountain's work to be seen as a 'charity case' to be bought by international buyers because they felt sorry for Afghans, but that the products should compete on the international market due to their incomparable quality. However, as an NGO that needed to legitimise and sustain itself in order to survive, and as an organisation seeking funds from agencies such as USAID, that had put an emphasis on programmes focused on women's rights and gender equality, it was hard to resist framing projects in these terms when they facilitated access to crucial funds. Here, the powerful values underpinning the reconstruction programme manage to infiltrate heritage work. Fluri and Lehr also note that refusing to use these powerful narratives can act as barriers for organisations (such as Turquoise Mountain) as they attempt to operate outside of traditional development funding structures (Ibid.). So, in order to attract donors' attention, Turquoise Mountain also began to attach to these values and frame some of its work in these terms, and successfully too. In 2015, Turquoise Mountain received a grant of $4.8 million as part of USAID's 'Rebranding Afghanistan: Creating Jobs, Changing Perceptions, Empowering Women' (USAID 2015). Another example is a section of the funding application to USAID for an exhibition of the organisation's work at the Freer Sackler Gallery at the Smithsonian Institution, for which Royah and her awards were highlighted in the section entitled 'Gender Integration Plan'.

As Julie Billaud has noted, while funds were readily available for programmes aimed at women's 'empowerment', women were rarely asked either what they wanted or what the terms of their own 'empowerment' might be (Billaud 2009: 10). As the scenario in Royah's flat in London suggests, categorising Royah as a symbol of Afghan women's liberation after the internationally sponsored intervention has had disorientating repercussions for her and her family. Her emancipation as an Afghan woman brought her status and attention in Afghanistan. However, while Royah had some Afghan clients, her lucrative commissions for calligraphy in international hotels had all been secured by international Turquoise Mountain employees. So, similar to some of Turquoise Mountain's woodworkers, Royah was divorced from the rarefied market she was creating for, unaware of its particular whims and tastes, and less able to work independently of Turquoise Mountain. This didn't matter in Afghanistan and

as news of her success grew, narratives around female empowerment, liberation and gender equality, the discourses of the winder intervention, converged upon her and her work and she was held up as a success story of how the intervention had furthered women's rights. Royah has a chapter dedicated to her calligraphy and miniature painting in Laura Bush's book *We are Afghan Women: Voices of Hope* (Bush Centre 2016). According to the narrative of the book, she is able to emancipate herself from the Afghan patriarchy through the practice of calligraphy. However, stories of Royah's success began to appear in the Afghan press and she reportedly started to receive attention and threats from conservative, anti-western groups in Kabul which ultimately resulted in her departure from Afghanistan to seek asylum in the UK. For Royah her 'liberation' has resulted in acute feelings of disorientation as she realised neither the skills she learned in Afghanistan nor the accompanying narrative, which she had learned to tell, of her liberation as a woman through craft, were relevant in the UK. Here we see how the intersection between heritage and the productive power of the discourses of development and liberal intervention had real, long term consequences for individuals such as Royah. These discourses were so powerful and pervasive and operated in a way that Turquoise Mountain's work became quickly entangled in them.

7. ORIENTALISM, DIALOGUE AND EMPATHY

Foucauldian notions of the workings of power, as adopted by Said for his orientalist critique, show how the relationship between power and knowledge controls systems of representation that can lead to an absence of self-determination. As discussed, Turquoise Mountain's heritage preservation practice has resulted in a focus on a particular aesthetic, both through the new demands placed on craft products in order for them to reach international markets and the focus on materiality and historicity in the reconstruction of the buildings in Murad Khane. While orientalist ideas at work in Afghanistan have been accused of creating a 'fantasy of misrepresentation' (Hanifi 2018). I have explored above how Turquoise Mountain's work complicates a simple reading of orientalism and how this model for cultural heritage preservation became entangled with the discourses of development and liberal intervention and the range of effects. In this section, however, I further explore how such a model for heritage preservation works, showing how it provided a space for creating dialogue and empathy between Afghans and American audiences during an exhibition of Turquoise Mountain's work in Washington D.C.

FIGURE 29 VIEW OF THE EXHIBITION TURQUOISE MOUNTAIN: ARTISTS TRANSFORMING AFGHANISTAN. COURTESY THE FREER-SACKLER GALLERY

The exhibition 'Turquoise Mountain: Artists Transforming Afghanistan' opened in March 2016 at the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, which, with the Freer Gallery of Art, forms the National Museum of Asian Art at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington D.C (fig. 29). Rather than placing Turquoise Mountain craft products in a museum context, and transforming them into decorative arts, which had been the case for another internationally touring exhibition 'Ferozkoh: Tradition and Continuity in Afghan Art', this exhibition focused on the stories of artisans and the reconstruction of some architectural features from Murad Khane. In the words of the curator, the exhibition was deliberately 'story based' rather than 'object based' (Wide 2016: 163). Through six principal sections, the show focused on the life stories and work of five individual artisans (a potter, woodworker, artist and jewellery maker, all of whom are either students or master artisans at Turquoise Mountain, and one engineer). In a paper outlining the exhibition's approach the curator explained that each craftsman and craftswoman had input as to how these stories would be told, with editorial oversight provided by Turquoise Mountain (Wide 2016). The story of the area of Murad Khane, its destruction, neglect and subsequent reconstruction, was told in a film by Pahlawan Aziz, a

wrestler and longtime resident of Murad Khane. Another section focused on the Istalifi potter Abdul Matin Malikzada. Here, a film told the story of the four generations of potters in his family, the processes of preparing the clay and making and firing a pot, including his journey with a donkey to collect clay from the mountain behind the village. Fawad Mansouri's section included an installation of a carved set of arches made of Himalayan cedar wood which are replicas of arches from a 19th century *caravanserai* in Murad Khane. This architectural woodwork was carved by Fawad in his workshop in Kabul and used as a framing device and backdrop for a text panel written by Fawad, a film of Fawad recounting his life story and a small display of his *jali* woodwork pieces. Visitors were able to touch most of the objects on show. As part of the emphasis on human stories and people, eighteen Turquoise Mountain artisans spent two weeks in Washington, visiting the gallery daily to meet visitors and conduct workshops, thus creating physical contact between the US audience and the artisans.

The curator conceptualised this human-centric approach as 'empathetic' with the goal of creating a rapport between US audiences and Afghans (Wide 2016: 163). According to the Director of the Freer Sackler, Julian Raby, this was a bid to move away from the museum as a 'dispassionate storehouse of objects' towards a museum as an 'emotional storehouse' (2016: 166). Raby defined empathy as 'understanding, but with emotion added'. The curator notes that one of the primary goals of the exhibition was to 'disrupt stereotypes' about Afghanistan and to 'make connections between Afghans and US visitors' in order to challenge negative stereotypes of Afghan people constructed in the media that focus on Afghans as 'tribal', 'warlike' and 'corrupt' (2016: 167). A Masters dissertation entitled: "How does *Turquoise Mountain*: *Artists Transforming Afghanistan*, both reflect and produce representations of Afghanistan in American geopolitical imaginings?" explores the ability of the exhibition to alter such stereotypes (Shaw 2017). Research undertaken for this dissertation, which included interviews with visitors and participant observation, shows that the curators were, to a certain point, successful in their endeavour. The decision to out Afghan artisans at the centre of the exhibition helped to overcome some visitors' orientalist preconceptions of them. "I can relate to them now but I couldn't do that before when I thought they were all in these Bedouin tents and trudging through the desert and this no man's land," said one of the respondents to a survey (Shaw 2017: 27). Other interviews show that it was particularly the human focus of the exhibition and the presence of craftsmen and craftswomen in the space which contributed to this 'de-othering' of Afghans and Afghanistan, as most had not heard somebody from

Afghanistan speak before (Ibid.) Participants described how the exhibition created forms of empathy and understanding between US audiences and Afghans which enabled them to see beyond cultural fault lines which had constructed powerful notions of an Afghan 'other,' established in the wake of 9.11. Turquoise Mountain products, and therefore the organisation's notions of beauty and aesthetics, also played a role in disrupting stereotypes. One respondent discussed the exhibitions "…emphasis on the cultural intermediary of beautiful artisanal objects that encourage visitors to step outside of the well-established geopolitical frame through which they typically regard Afghanistan' (Shaw 2017: 33). "Americans watch the news and see 'they're hateful and they're out to get us'. With this, we're setting out on the path of beauty, commonality and peace. If we see the beautiful, maybe we can allow it to flourish", reported another respondent. Such comments illustrate the ability of *Turquoise Mountain* in achieving Julian Raby's aim: to 'provide a way in which maybe a beauteous object provides a neutral ground where people might begin to let some of their prejudices fall away' (Shaw 2016: 24). Seemingly, it was precisely through Turquoise Mountain's rarefied notions of aesthetic value, combined with the focus on human stories, that such an exhibition was ultimately able to create connection and understanding.

Certain strategies were deployed in order to make aspects of the exhibition more accessible for audiences, such as a section that focused on international designers and artists like the British jeweller Pippa Small, who has worked with Turquoise Mountain artisans. The curator explains how such 'cross cultural figures could help "take" visitors to Afghanistan, rather in the way a US television presenter is able to guide a US audience through a foreign subject that might otherwise be too alien for many to engage with' (2017: 175). In Spivak's terms, the subaltern must speak (1988), and while this exhibition did provide a space for the voices of craftsmen and craftswomen, it was in a language mediated by an interlocutor, in this case the curator at Turquoise Mountain, which made their 'voice' more recognisable to US audiences and therefore easier to hear. This was underlined by several research participants for the study mentioned above, who explained that the framing of all of the artisans in a 'Western context' both undermined their preconceptions of the country and helped visitors relate to Afghans at an individual level (Shaw 2017: 26).

The funding proposal made to USAID (who gave $500,000 to fund the exhibition) outlines the potential ability of the exhibition to create a different image of Afghanistan in the US:

'As Afghanistan's "transformation decade" gets under way, the symbolic value of such a high-profile showcasing of Afghanistan in the U.S. capital is very great. As President Ashraf Ghani urges the world to remain engaged in Afghanistan – and urges Afghans to engage with the world – this exhibition will send a very strong message both about Afghanistan's transformation and the U.S.'s engagement' (USAID 2015).

These stories and the human subjects behind them also had their own currency, different from the 'grievable object' in which the story becomes a commodity that gives the objects added value. This 'empathetic' approach was useful for USAID as it underlined the value of USAID's work in Afghanistan and, tangentially, strengthened the case for continued US government involvement there. While Turquoise Mountain managers likely framed the exhibition in terms that would appeal to USAID so they could access funds, the fact the exhibition was on show at the Smithsonian which sits in the middle of Washington D.C. and therefore at the heart of US government, helped to legitimise the work of USAID by highlighting its projects in Afghanistan. While an 'empathetic' approach is useful in terms of creating understanding and talking across schisms, it also created sympathy for the US intervention. At a time when the US public's interest in the military intervention was flagging, the exhibition shows that Afghanistan is a country worth caring about, and it therefore serves US foreign policy objectives. We see how the discursive power of the exhibition intersects with other, harder forms of power, as it helps to make the case for continued US financial and military engagement in the country. The Smithsonian hosted several receptions for USAID and government representatives and became a backdrop for diplomacy. The exhibition was mentioned in a White House press release as part of the US - Afghanistan Joint Statement on the Strategic Relationship, 24 March 2015, on the occasion of a visit by the Afghan president Ashraf Ghani, to Washington DC (The White House 2015). At the opening reception a diverse range of diplomats gave speeches, including USAID Assistant to the Administrator Larry Sampler, Afghan Ambassador to the United States Hamdullah Mohib, Afghan Minister of Information and Culture Abdul Bari Jahani, Deputy Secretary of State Anthony Blinken, and U.S. Ambassador to Afghanistan Michael McKinley. There were several opening receptions, including one by Laura Bush where she introduced her new book, *We Are Afghan Women:*

Voices of Hope, which includes the chapter by Royah and in which the liberation of Afghan women is forefronted as a justification for US involvement in Afghanistan.

8. Conclusions

In this chapter I have shown the discursive operations of Turquoise Mountain's heritage preservation model, in which an orientalist style approach to heritage preservation is updated with the 21st century liberal values of the intervention and its focus on gender equality and women's rights. While in the previous chapters I discussed intersections between heritage and the more direct forms of power such as the Czech or German military, this chapter has looked at more nuanced entanglements between heritage and politics through examining how these two discourses, or diffuse types of power, interact through Turquoise Mountain's work and how the operations of such a model of heritage preservation complicate more traditional readings of how orientalism works.

The entanglement here is of heritage preservation with powerful sets of ideas: both a Eurocentric orientalist idea of Afghan 'traditions', and the discourse of international development and liberal intervention. These intersect through Turquoise Mountain's model of heritage preservation which was co-created and upheld by a network of project managers, craftsmen and craftswomen and funders. Rather than pertaining to the more traditional analyses of politics through heritage, which tend to focus on the 'top down' operations of power, we see how this model operates across a complex network of international donors, project managers, potters, craftswomen and initiatives such as the exhibition at the Smithsonian Institution. Rather than the more simple readings of orientalism, we see how these entanglements work on a number of levels and can advance possibilities for some, such as Fawad Mansori, while limiting the chances of others, such as Royah.

De Cesari has noted how ubiquitous the 'heritage for development' rhetoric has become (2020: 1). Indeed, as noted by one of Turquoise Mountain's senior staff, it was very difficult to attract funding for heritage work unless it was justified in these terms. In the 'post-Bamyan' era, the idea that heritage can contribute to development goals has become one of the core arguments for internationally funded heritage preservation. Certainly, in Afghanistan, the majority of internationally funded projects use this rhetoric. Despite Turquoise Mountain's ambivalence towards the powerful narratives focused on gender equality, they are seductive

because they unlock funds and assistance for NGOs seeking to survive. However, while certain individuals benefitted from Turquoise Mountain's model, Amartya Sen's 'perspective of freedom' analysis of the role of development is relevant in terms of thinking about the longer-term consequences of this work for individuals such as Royah. Sen argues for the need to give development subjects the tools for them to define their own futures, through the 'expansion of the capabilities of persons to lead the kind of lives they value – and have reason to value' (1999: 18). Certain aspects of Turquoise Mountain's work did expand capabilities in this way. One example was the retraining of several hundred masons and builders in mud brick, timber and earth architecture techniques, skills which had been lost as over the last decades this style of building had been going out of fashion in Kabul. Despite the dominant trend for concrete housing in Kabul and other cities, there had also been a recent resurgence of interest in this style of architecture, as these buildings remain cool in summer and retain heat in winter and are cost effective to build and maintain. Turquoise Mountain's retrained engineers and masons were able to use their skills in order to demand higher salaries on construction sites across the country. Here their capacities were developed in a way that allows these individuals some control over their futures. To take another example, Fawad Mansori has also benefitted through his ability to build a business for himself and other Afghan woodworkers, although this has arguably been dependent on his ability to 'self-orientalise' along the Turquoise Mountain model. Both Fawad and Royah also played roles in co-creating and maintaining this model, but Royah had the confusing experience of being celebrated for her art (and her gender) and then ultimately had to restart her life in the UK where neither her art nor her story has any power. While Rory Stewart has seemingly had the opportunity to engage in a journey of self-discovery through his work in Afghanistan, Royah has also experienced a journey; however, the terms of her 'liberation' have been defined by others.

While some of the limiting effects of these intersections of heritage, international development and orientalist style representations of Afghan traditions have been noted above, the capacity of Turquoise Mountain's model for building understanding and empathy across schisms is evident in the data collected from the Smithsonian exhibition. Here, we see how this rarefied model for heritage preservation is recognisable to certain audiences and can build connections in an era of stereotypes. At the same time, while this approach builds relationships and understanding at an individual level this can also be used as part of positive public relations messages for the hard politics of the US engagement in Afghanistan. In the

subsequent chapter, I explore the slippery nature of power through a group of Hazara activists, who have attached to powerful ideas about the value of the Buddha statues which arose in the valley after their destruction as part of forming their own Hazara political space.

CHAPTER 8

BAMYAN, THE BUDDHAS AND A HAZARA POLITICAL SPACE

**FIGURE 30 VIEW OF THE WESTERN BUDDHA FROM THE ROAD INTO BAMYAN SHOWING THE STORAGE FACILITIES, 2015.
PHOTOGRAPH C. WYNDHAM**

1. 'THEY'RE SO BIG AREN'T THEY?'

One sunny morning in Bamyan in June 2015 I was accompanying one of my informants, Sediq, in his car to the bazaar. Sediq ran a hotel just outside Bamyan that was popular with international guests and heritage consultants working for UNESCO or ICOMOS who sporadically visit the valley in order to work on the preservation of the Buddha niches or at other sites. I stayed there during my time in Bamyan and became friends with him and his business partner, Farid. As we bumped down the road that leads past the tall sandstone cliffs housing the Buddha niches and caves, Iranian pop music blaring, I gazed up at the niche of the western Buddha which was filled with scaffolding erected by UNESCO. To either side of the

niche, at the feet, there are two storerooms, each containing the large salvageable boulders of rock from the niches that have been collected and documented after the destruction (fig. 30). There is chicken wire around the site and the gate is locked as the site was closed to the public. On either side of the niches the cliffs were dotted with human-made caves which historically housed Buddhist monks. The road ran in front of the cliffs and past an active shrine before we turned right towards the bazaar just before the niche of the smaller, eastern Buddha. Ahead lay the University of Bamyan. Cars were rare as most people travel on foot or by bicycle. He looked at me as I stared up, and laughing said, "BESAYR bozorg astan?!" (*they're SO big aren't they!?*). He was making a joke about the intense interest in the Buddha niches by international visitors to Bamyan.

The international focus on the Buddhas both before and after their destruction was discussed in Chapter 3, where I outlined the characteristics of the 'post-Bamyan' heritage paradigm and with it the range of international interests and related politics that currently converge on cultural heritage. In Chapter 5, where the discussion focuses on the new forms of politics to intersect with Afghanistan's pre-Islamic heritage, I highlighted the amount of international expertise that arrived in Bamyan after the destruction of the Buddhas and the related technical focus on certain aspects of the site such as its age and materiality. These forms of technical expertise were part of a wider global, 'authorised heritage discourse' (Smith 2006), a productive form of power, which descended on the Buddhas as they came under threat from the Taliban, and one which privileges the material, monumental and historic aspects of heritage. In this chapter, I focus on the various, and haphazard, operations of this heritage discourse as it works across international heritage organisations such as UNESCO, the discourses of the intervention focused on minority rights and local activist groups. First, I unpack some of the effects of this discursive, productive form of power on members of the local community in Bamyan. This analysis of power has been more typical of the critical turn in Heritage Studies, that of the 'top down' operations of the AHD and how these can sideline local voices. Secondly, however, I show how the operations of such a discourse are, in fact, more complex than the vertical operations of politics that have been so typically described as part of the critical heritage turn and how this discourse became entangled with the ideas underpinning the wider intervention in Afghanistan. My data from Bamyan shows the intersections between two powerful sets of ideas: international, imported discourses about the Buddhas with the discourses of the liberal intervention and ideas about human rights and

representation of minorities. While the previous chapter looked at the intersection of a heritage preservation model based on particular aesthetics with ideas about gender equality and women's 'liberation' typical to the wider international intervention, this chapter concentrates on how international heritage discourses focused on the value of the Buddhas have been adopted by a group of activists in Bamyan as part of their own struggle for recognition and political representation.

In recent years, Bamyan has become home to a young generation of self-styled Hazara 'civil society activists' who are part of a movement working to improve Hazara rights across Afghanistan and internationally. From my interviews with members of this group in Bamyan and Kabul, it emerged that cultural heritage, and particularly the Buddhas, are a source of pride in their struggle for improved Hazara rights. The group in Bamyan was largely educated in Iran and returned to Bamyan in the last few years, either to work for NGOs or to teach at Bamyan University. Despite being sidelined in decisions over the Buddhas, this group is drawing on the international heritage politics that arrived in the valley after the Buddhas' destruction to give cohesion to their history-making project, which is inspired by the ideals of the international liberal intervention and its focus on minority rights. Here, the slippery, haphazard nature of power is revealed, as these activists access and attach themselves to international ideas about the Buddhas and use them for the creation of their own Hazara political space. While previous chapters have focused on the development of heritage preservation models and how these become entangled with both direct and diffuse forms of politics, this chapter looks at the effects of 'global' ideas about heritage on members of the local community in Bamyan, including a small group of activists based in Bamyan and in the Hazara diaspora. In contrast to my other chapters which focus on organisations with which I was engaged over a number of years, this chapter is the result of a shorter period of research. I visited Bamyan for a month in June 2015 and was attached to an ICOMOS preservation project at Shahre Gholghola, a site in the Bamyan valley. During my time there I conducted interviews and a survey questionnaire with informant groups and followed up the emerging themes with Hazara activists in Kabul and members of the Hazara diaspora in Birmingham, UK.

2. THE HAZARAS
The following section provides some background to the inhabitants of the Bamyan Valley, the

Hazaras, and also gives a brief history of the different values and meanings ascribed to the Buddhas in order to put current international focus on this site in context. Bamyan province is located in Afghanistan's mountainous central highland region, 175 km northwest of Kabul. This area is known as Hazarajat, the land of the Hazaras, where this group has settled across a series of linked provinces or districts. The town of Bamyan is the largest settlement in Hazarajat and became the political centre of the Hazaras in the early 1990s under Abdul Ali Mazari, leader of the Hizb-i Wahdat (Unity) party. After Pashtuns and Tajiks, Hazaras currently constitute the third largest ethnic group in Afghanistan, and, unlike the majority of the Afghan population, who are Sunni Muslims, are predominantly Shia. Religious and ethnic difference has been a factor in this groups' history of oppression and marginalisation by the Afghan state. This state sponsored oppression started under the Emir of Afghanistan, a Pashtun nationalist known as the 'Iron' Emir, Abdur Rahman Khan (1880-1901), who understood Hazaras as a threat to the emerging Afghan nation state and sought to destabilise their power (Mousavi 1998: 116). Abdur Rahman was intent on establishing a nation in which Pashtuns dominated non-Pashtuns and Sunni were privileged over Shia (Shahrani 1986). With financial help from the British, he declared a 'religious war' against the Hazaras of the Central Highlands of Afghanistan (the area now known as Hazarajat) and conquered it in order to integrate it into the Afghan state (Kakar 1979: 213). Many Hazaras were killed, displaced from their lands, punishing taxes were imposed and tens of thousands of Hazaras were enslaved (Mousavi 1998). This resulted in an established hierarchy of ethnic categories in Afghanistan in which Hazaras have historically been seen as inferior by the majority Pashtuns and indeed Simonsen refers to Hazaras as an 'ethnically defined underclass' (2004: 709). In more recent times such ethnic tensions have flared up. During the civil war of the 1990s, for example, the country was split along ethnic lines between the three major ethnic groups of Pashtuns, Tajiks and Hazaras. Today, several sources claim that Hazaras make up 9-10% of Afghanistan's population (e.g. CIA Factbook 2011). However, these figures are contested and there are no official Afghan government statistics on the ethnic make-up of the Afghan population. This is still a highly pertinent and politicised issue. This was visible on a more local scale in Bamyan, where several of my respondents in the activist group mentioned a group of Sunni Hazaras that are currently claiming affiliation with the wider Hazara group. This, they claimed, would increase the number of Hazaras in Afghanistan and therefore crucially give the group more political clout. In this chapter I am using 'ethnicity' and 'ethnic group' not as static categories but as something fluid, following previous discussions of Hazara ethnicity in which it has been presented as self-defined, contextual, relative and something that is constantly under

construction (Monsutti 2004; Monsutti 2005; Adlparvar 2015).

3. BAMYAN

A) THE BUDDHAS 'RESPLENDENT WITH ORNAMENTATION'

In stark contrast to the proliferation of images of the Buddha niches and the availability of video footage of the destruction, the Bamyan Valley itself is difficult to access and is rarely visited by outsiders. I visited the valley several times before my period of fieldwork in 2015. For these trips we travelled by road in a 4 x 4 jeep, north out of Kabul past Begram and the town of Charikar in the very early morning. We stopped to eat fatty kebabs by the roadside for breakfast. A sharp left turn led to a smaller, bumpy road where the jeep was forced to drive slowly past villages and ruined mud brick compounds which sat to either side. The landscape changed quickly as Bamyan is set within the foothills of the Hindu Kush, in the Koh e Baba range. Flashes of emerald-green, lush valleys were sporadically visible within the rocky mountains, dotted with mud brick houses and grazing sheep. The road squeezed between towering rocks, with occasional ruined forts teetering on top, until the arrival at the end of the Bamyan Valley, its green, fertile fields spread out before the road which leads into the town. In May 2015, the period of my fieldwork, the road to Bamyan was closed due to security reasons. There had been several attacks on the minibuses that run between Kabul and Bamyan by Taliban or other armed groups as the security situation was

FIGURE 31 VIEW OF THE BUDDHA CLIFFS SHOWING SOME OF THE HUMAN-MADE CAVES. PHOTOGRAPH C. WYNDHAM

steadily worsening. Afghans I spoke to feared taking the trip due to ad hoc checkpoints set up by insurgents and very few international tourists were travelling by road. For this trip, I

was travelling with an ICOMOS consultant who was working with UNESCO and so we were able to find seats on a UN helicopter traveling to Bamyan which took twenty minutes to reach the valley from Kabul.

What is initially surprising, after hearing so much about the Buddhas' destruction, is that the wider landscape in which the Buddhas sat stretches far beyond the niches themselves. The cliffs adjacent to the niches are dotted with man-made caves which were fashioned during the same era as the Buddha statues (fig. 31). Many of them are decorated with faded and scratched paintings of Buddhas, boddisattvas and devotees of Buddhism. The two empty niches where the Buddhas stood dominate the valley. These voids and the monochrome cliffs to either side are far removed from the images of highly decorated lavishness as described by a Chinese pilgrim that passed through the valley soon after the Buddhas were constructed in the 7th century ACE.

> 'To the north east of the royal city, on the side of the mountain, there is a stone statue of the standing Buddha. It is 140-50 feet high, of a dazzling gold colour and resplendent with ornamentation of precious substances. To the east of it is a monastery built by an earlier king of the country. East of this is a standing image of Shakyamuni Buddha, more than 100 feet high, made of brass, the pieces which have been cast separately and then assembled to make up the statue' (quoted in Morgan 2012: 55)

These are the travel notes of Chinese Buddhist monk Xuanzang who passed through Bamyan on his way from Xi'an in China to India, on a pilgrimage to discover the birthplace of Buddha in 629. He saw Bamyan at the height of its glory, and he describes monasteries housing 'several thousand monks' and the Buddhas as brightly painted. This explains why later, during the Islamic period, the two statues became known as *Surkhbud* (Red Idol) and *Khinkbud* (Moon-white Idol). The reason for these large statues and the surrounding monasteries was the wealth of Bamyan at that time. The town was situated along one of many trade routes reaching across Central Asia connecting China, India, Europe and Arabia and experienced a great deal of cultural interaction and mixing. The lavishly constructed Buddhas would have been built by wealthy patrons keen to display both their wealth and devotion to Buddhism. In the first century BCE, as part of the Mauryan Empire, Buddhism had become the major religion

in the region. There had been a flowering in Buddhist art in north west Pakistan where the first figurative representations of the Buddha appeared in 1st century BCE, and this style, which was later called Gandharan or Greco-Buddhist art, showed a mix of stylistic influences which combined Indian and Greek (Alexander the Great had conquered this region) motifs with local styles which lasted until the 6th century ACE (Klimburg-Salter 1985). The Bamyan Buddhas were typical of this eclectic style.

B) SHIFTING INTERPRETATIONS

Although the fact the two statues represented Buddha is indisputable now, this was not always the case and the history of their interpretations shows how they, and the landscape in which they sit, have been subject to dramatic shifts of meaning and value. In 1218 ACE, 600 years after their construction, and several centuries after the Muslim invasions to Bamyan of 770 ACE, Yakut al Hamawi described the statues in his entry for 'Bamiyân', the fourteenth-century Qâmus-e joghrafiyâ (the geographical dictionary of Afghanistan): 'There are two statues carved in the stone cliff and high from the base of the mountain until its top. One is called Surkhbud, the red statue and the other is called Khinkbud, the white statue' (quoted in Blaensdorf & Petzet 2009: 19). ('Bud' here is likely 'but', the Persian term for idol, rather than Buddha) which shows that the Buddhas had been subsumed into a system of meaning informed by Islam. Seemingly, it is only relatively recently that the monumental and historical aspects of these statues have been the focus and less attention paid to their surrounding landscape and context. Indeed, al Hamawi's entry praised the climate of the valley and the quality of its agricultural products rather than the beauty of the cliffs where the Buddhas used to stand (quoted in Centlivres 2008). Later, they were described and sketched by several British explorers and spies that travelled to Bamyan in 1830s. William Moorcroft and George Trebeck note some damage done to the monuments, reputedly by Moghul Emperor Aurangzeb. This pair, who reached Bamyan in June 1824, noted the form of the statues reflected 'Lamaism' and noted their names, correctly identifying Shamamah as a corruption of Shakyamuni. However, they failed to recognise the statues as distinct from Hinduism (Errington 2017: 16). If we can presume that these travellers interacted with the inhabitants of Bamyan and the surrounding area at this time, it seems their original meaning was lost. Western travellers often made speculations as to their origin. Mountstuart Elphinstone mentions the 'worship of Boodh' and refers to a male and female statue but doesn't mention Buddhism (1815: 487). Although he reports 'vague and unsatisfactory' stories about the idols, Alexander Burnes reports they are named Salsal and Shahmama, the latter is female, and that he learned this from his local informants: 'they were excavated about the Christian era by a

tribe of kaffirs (infidels), to represent a king named Salsal and his wife, who ruled in a distant country and was worshipped for his greatness' (1834: 568). The British colonial adventurer Alexander Burnes also mentions the names Lal and Manat, the name for two idols which are mentioned in the Koran. These names were seemingly transferred to the statues after the arrival of Islam in the valley. Writing at the turn of the eighteenth century, the British Orientalist Francis Wilford reported some iconoclastic behavior towards the statues by Afghans which shows ambivalence concerning their religious value: 'the Musulmans never march that way without firing two or three shots at them' (Literary Panorama 1819: 455).

In the 1920s, a focus on the valley's archaeological heritage began and so arrived a confirmed idea, imported from outside, of the statues' Buddhist origins. French archaeologists working for the French Archaeological Delegation arrived in the 1920s. These were followed by Japanese archaeological delegations in the 1950s and 1960s. However, alongside these excavations, local stories about the statues endured, in which the Buddhas were the heroes and villains of both Persian myths and local Hazaragi folk tales. There are several versions of these tales, with dominant themes of love or gallantry. In the 1940s, Afghan historian Ahmad Ali Kuhzad recorded some local folktales in Bamyan with the French archaeologist Ria Hackin in which the two statues feature (Hackin & Kohzad 1953). They note that although the statues are known as Buddhas elsewhere, 'the inhabitants of the valley take a different point of view' and that there are several legends about the statues (1953: 20). The one transcribed in their account is about Salsal the famous soldier, his wife Chahmama and the Muslim invasions of Bamyan.

"Salsal, known for his acts of gallantry, was the most famous warrior in the whole region of Bamyan. Thanks to his extraordinary fighting spirit, he had succeeded in imposing his law on the peoples of Bamyan, who, while dreading him, admired him greatly. At the time of the Muslim conquest, he defended the country admirably against the new invader; he went as far as to take the fight to the enemy, who fled, terrified. The Muslim invaders asked the Prophet for help against Shamamah who sent Ali to help. However, upon his arrival in Bamyan, Ali realised it would be hard to overcome his adversary as he was dressed in a coat of protective armour which was made of links of words from a holy book. Ali realised he couldn't fight him and was considering returning to Medina to ask advice from the Prophet. However, the next night, he had a dream about how he

could conquer his enemy. A fairy came to him, telling him to carve an arrow from tamarisk wood and to fire it into the eye of his enemy. Ali followed these instructions and after Salsal was wounded in the right eye he fled in pain and hid in a well. His supporters gave up the fight and submitted to the invader. Hazrat Ali, with his generous spirit, pitied his enemy. Approaching the well, he cried out: "If you accept the word of God, I will give you back your eye." Salsal accepted his offer, climbed out of the well and was healed immediately by the saliva of Hazrat Ali (Hackin & Kohzad 1953: 20 - 21).

The arrival of hippies from the West in the 1960s and 1970s, with their cameras and awareness of the history of the valley, must have brought with them an awareness that the statues represented Buddhas. International tourism was a major source of income for the Bamyan valley and several of my interviewees spoke about a 'golden age' when foreigners visited the valley and brought with them crucial economic development.

c) The Buddhas as 'world heritage'

Above I have described the variety of meanings and names ascribed to the Buddhas over time before March 2001 when they were thrust into the international spotlight by the Taliban through their destruction. In the following section I will outline how the global reactions to the destruction repeatedly, and in diverse ways, worked discursively to sideline local stakeholders. The Buddhas' destruction, and the Taliban's deliberate flouting of international appeals, was called a 'crime against culture' by UNESCO Director General Koïchiro Matsuura (UNESCO 2002). With this idea that they were the 'common heritage of humanity' the Buddhas were quickly propelled onto the world stage as objects of intense international concern. As outlined in Chapter 3, these events went from what could have been a very localised moment of destruction to an event with global impact. The global impact of the destructions and the subsequent world heritage listing and global heritage discourse that arrived in the valley has had multiple effects on local groups. The events were frequently portrayed in the media as an attempt to anger an international audience with little attention paid to the local politics (Colwell-Chanthaphonh 2003; Chiovenda 2014a). However, the story of the destruction can also be read according to local ethno-religious conflicts. Hazaras suffered violence and discrimination at the hands of the Taliban after they came to power in 1996. According to the UN Regional Coordination Officer, Michael Semple, who was responsible for Bamyan at that time, the Taliban led several destructive missions to the Buddhas as part of multiple attempts made to conquer the valley. In 1998, for example,

Taliban commander Abdul Wahed drilled holes for explosives in the top of the Buddhas and burned a tyre on top of the western Buddha as part of a wider attack on thousands of houses and places of Shia worship (by the Sunni Taliban) in Bamyan. The actual destructions of the Buddhas in 2001 were part of a two-year campaign of violence against the Hazaras by the occupying Taliban forces in Bamyan which included detentions, execution of prisoners and a massacre in Yakawlang, a district to the west of Bamyan town, in which 166 Hazara civilians were killed (Semple 2011: 3). On 26th February, after consulting with a religious council (*ulema*), Mullah Omar issued a decree ordering the destruction of all non-Islamic statues in Afghanistan and the final act of destruction in Bamyan happened over a few weeks in March 2001. Several inhabitants from Bamyan were forced to lay the dynamite inside the statues and also to watch the destruction. On 14 March, the Taliban made a public announcement informing the public that the giant figures of the Buddhas of Bamyan and thousands of figurative, pre- Islamic statues kept in the Afghan National Museum in Kabul had been destroyed.

When discussing the destructions with informants in Afghanistan I heard about a number of possible other motivations. These ranged from the growing influence of al-Qaeda within the Taliban, who, as a considerably more sophisticated, older, global movement, were keenly aware of the power that the spectacle of destruction of dynamiting the Buddhas would have, to the idea of factional splits within the Taliban itself, of which those that supported destruction wielded more power at that time. Research into the ideology of the Afghan Taliban cites the destructions as part of the organisation's efforts to reposition itself both regionally and internationally (Gopal & Strick van Linschoten 2017: 30). As Flood has already suggested, such acts were possibly part of a trend of behaviour that appealed to and referenced Afghan history in order to legitimise the regime (2002). Other stunts in this vein included Mullah Omar hoisting the cloak of the Prophet Mohammed to a crowd in Kandahar, copying King Amanullah Khan who did the same in 1929 in an attempt to recapture the Afghan throne (Dam & Foschini 2014). Michael Semple, who worked extensively in Afghanistan during the Taliban period and afterwards, and was UN Regional Coordinator of an area which included Bamyan, argues that pleas from international governments and Western officials were wrong-footed rhetorical protests, and that no serious effort was ever made to save the Buddhas by an international community unable to 'contemplate the type of intervention that might have worked' (2011). Semple discusses the potential for saving the Buddhas through engagement with Tajik and Hazara Afghan groups that were occupying the valley and that could have intervened on the behalf of international actors. He accuses the international

effort of a lack of understanding of the local context and motives and of a purely 'rhetorical engagement… (which) did not address Afghan reality' (Semple 2011: 5). Semple understands the failed attempts to save the Buddhas as reflective of the failed wider intervention: 'Their destruction symbolises the thousands of lives lost and homes destroyed in Afghanistan when we either do nothing or do the wrong thing, remaining wedded to approaches which seem good in international fora but which do not actually work on the ground in Afghanistan' (Semple 2011: 5).

The sidelining of the inhabitants of Bamyan began to happen in other ways too, as powerful narratives intersected with and underlined certain elements of this global discourse. The idea of the Buddhas as the heritage of humanity, or world heritage, quickly took hold in the international media (Colwell-Chanthaphonh 2003). This has been a typical theme of the 'post-Bamyan' era that has more recently played out in discussions over the destructions in Syria and Iraq, where ISIS's "medieval and barbaric" behavior has been framed in civilisational terms and understood as the antithesis of civilisation itself (De Cesari 2015: 22). However, in Bamyan, one result of the defence of the Buddhas as the 'heritage of humanity' against barbarity was that, as part of this idea of the statues being 'for all humanity', they themselves, and the era in which they were built, came to represent a past that was somehow peaceful and unproblematic (Falser 2015: 49). Melissa Chiovenda undertook an analysis of media reports focused on the Buddhas' destruction (2014a) in which a clear narrative was visible that focused on the importance of the Buddhas as the 'heritage of all humanity' combined with a construction of their history which emphasised the 'dynamic, intercultural aspects of the area at the time when the Buddhas were built. This contrasted with the accompanying depictions of the Taliban as intolerant, backward and irrational' (Chiovenda 2014a: 410). The media focus was on the idea of Buddhism in the Western popular imagination, with such attached ideas as 'multiculturalism, peacefulness and tolerance' (Chiovenda 2014a: 417). These media reports created a dichotomy between the cosmopolitan, Silk Road past when the Buddhas were built, and the destructive, intolerant nature of the Taliban regime and Afghanistan's present. The message being, like the one underlined by the travelling exhibition of objects from the collection of the National Museum (as explored in Chapter 5), that rich cultural layers lie beneath Afghanistan's current atmosphere of intolerance and radicalism. Chiovenda argues that 'the Western media shaped, and possibly even created, a particular history of the region in the retelling of the story to a Western audience' (2014a: 417). Chiovenda's analysis also shows how the Hazaras, because they didn't fit into this neat

dichotomy, were routinely excluded from this powerful narrative that compared a 'cosmopolitan, tolerant West with the Silk Road era of the statues' (Chiovenda 2014).

The destructions were quickly followed, as outlined in Chapter 5, by an influx of international and technical expertise focused on the Buddhas. As part of being subsumed into a global heritage discourse, the Buddha niches became subject to a set of ideas which privilege the material and monumental aspects of heritage and asserts the idea that heritage can only be cared for by trained experts. This approach is also visible in the annual policy recommendations of the Bamyan Expert Working Group (the group of international and Afghan experts that has met almost yearly since the destruction) which focus on material concerns such as the specifics of conservation approaches, archaeological remains, and site monitoring and maintenance (e.g. UNESCO 2013). While the Expert Working Group recommendations do advocate the involvement of local community through workshops, training and education programmes, so far, the processes of preservation and clashes between conflicting realms of international expertise at the Buddha niches have worked to largely sideline locals. The clash between UNESCO and ICOMOS, outlined in Chapter 5, illustrates the territorial manner in which international bodies have dealt with the Buddha niches. One result is that local groups and individuals have relinquished responsibility for the valley's heritage because they understand international agencies and experts as having control: "It is a World Heritage site – we don't have a role" explained one informant.

d) A DAILY REMINDER OF VIOLENCE

The decision taken at the 10th Expert Working Group meeting in Tokyo in 2011 was that neither Buddha statue was to be totally reconstructed. This was followed by a recommendation from the Expert Working Group that the large western niche be left empty 'as a testimony to the tragic act of destruction' while a study be undertaken to see if a 'partial reassembling of fragments of the eastern Buddha could be an option' (UNESCO 2011). These

decisions not to rebuild, as Rodney Harrison has discussed, can act to legitimise the work of UNESCO and its attached idea of 'global heritage,' with the empty niches as a 'poster site' for the vulnerability of

FIGURE 32 VIEW OF THE NICHES FROM THE BAZAAR, BAMYAN. PHOTOGRAPH C. WYNDHAM

heritage and for the work of such international heritage organisations in conflict scenarios (2013: 188). Such decisions were met with disappointment locally. During an interview, one respondent expressed how the niches act as a daily reminder of the violence experienced by Hazaras during the Taliban period, and that rebuilding is seen as a way to assuage these reminders of trauma and loss (22nd June 2015) (fig. 32). Others repeatedly mentioned rebuilding as a means of solving some of the valley's economic problems. Some respondents mentioned feelings of 'anger' and 'sadness' inspired by the daily sightings of the empty niches. Every person I spoke to in Bamyan expressed the desire for at least one of the Buddhas to be rebuilt. A core concern is the rebuilding of the Bamyan economy, perceived as directly related to the rebuilt Buddhas which would supposedly attract more international tourists and create much needed local employment. A manager at the Ministry of Information and Culture remembered "there were 64,000 tourists in 1960s and 1970s and Bamyan was the second source of income for Afghanistan at that time" (26th June 2015). The notion of rebuilt Buddhas plays a central role in an imagined future for Bamyan based on these memories of the valley's peaceful and prosperous past. When discussing the best period for the inhabitants of the valley, respondents noted both the period at the beginning of President Hamid Karzai's (2001-2014) leadership when Hazaras secured improved rights and political representation, or the era of Afghanistan's first President Daud Khan (1973-1978), which was remembered as one of security and wealth when thousands of tourists visited Bamyan. One respondent described his desired future for Bamyan in terms of a *madina e fazilah* (utopia) in which there are three

key aspects: the province is safe, the Buddhas are rebuilt, and the valley attracts many tourists (28th June 2015).

E) LOCAL IDEAS OF AUTHENTICITY

The subsuming of the Buddhas in a global heritage discourse brought with it certain ideas of authenticity which pertain to the World Heritage convention and these were somewhat in tension with more local ideas of authenticity. The careful policy recommendations of the Expert Working Group, and the final decision taken in 2011 to investigate if the eastern Buddha could be partially reconstructed using some of the fragments through a technique called anastylosis, are in keeping with international heritage charters and conventions. Due to the site's inscription on the World Heritage List in 2003, full 'reconstruction', without the correct documentary evidence, is not permissible under paragraph 86 of the World Heritage guidelines and its principle of authenticity (UNESCO 2005). However, as I discovered in my interviews, such plans for the future contrast sharply with local desires for the niches and local ideas of authenticity. When discussing the Buddhas with respondents in the villages and bazaar two phrases dominated the discussions. These were 'to remake/rebuild' *baz saazi kardan* or 'to build again' *dubara jor kardan.* Although I heard these terms used repeatedly in Bamyan amongst local people, the word 'rebuilding' was rarely used by international heritage consultants such as my companion from ICOMOS. Instead he discussed the possibilities of anastylosis or the 'preservation of the niches,' which refers to the current efforts to stabilise the niches in their current form to prevent further deterioration and protect visitors from falling rocks. However, local groups with which I spoke had little interest in the preservation of original materials for anastylosis. Shukria Neda, a well-known activist for the rebuilding of the Buddhas, described her attitude to authenticity: *"If I lose my arm, I go to hospital and get a new arm – and with my new arm you can't say that it's not me. I'm still the same person with the new arm. Nothing is different"* (30th June 2015). The majority of those I interviewed thought it would be possible to rebuild the statues and that this is something that either UNESCO or the Afghan government are able to do. All respondents expressed the desire for at least one of the Buddha statues to be rebuilt. Some of the ideas offered as to what the new Buddhas might look like included chiselling further into each niche in order to carve out new statues; carving out new Buddhas from the cliff face next to the niches; and rebuilding the Buddhas using a combination of old and new fragments.

In Chapter 5 I outlined the 'clash of expertise' that happened between ICOMOS and UNESCO over the future of the Buddha niches and what was deemed authentic or inauthentic reconstruction according to the principles of the World Heritage Convention (WHC). As well as igniting such debates between ICOMOS and UNESCO, the furore surrounding the partially rebuilt 'feet' had an effect locally. Respondents explained that the debacle over the feet, and the wrangles over authenticity and what was allowed in terms of the WHC, were a catalyst for several local movements that support reconstruction of the statues. However, these have largely been excluded from international discussions over the future of the niches, such as those held by the Bamyan Expert Working Group. Shukria Neda launched a pioneering campaign to collect two Afghanis from local residents (four US cents), with the aim of collecting enough to pay for the reconstruction work. She is campaigning for the rebuilding of Salsal while leaving the Shahmama niche empty as a symbol of extremism and as a testament to the violence against women during the Taliban period (Neda n.d.). Under pressure from the Afghan Ministry of Information and Culture who are keen to move forward with decisions for the Buddhas, UNESCO organised the 14th Expert Working Group Meeting in Tokyo in September 2017 at which proposals for the statues' 'revitalisation' were sought. However, this call revealed telling hierarchies of such meetings. In an accompanying document, as at all Expert Working Groups, Afghan participants are referred to as 'Afghan authorities' and international consultants as 'international experts'. At the meeting itself, some forms of authority and expertise were clearly deemed more acceptable than others, as Shukria Neda was excluded from speaking in the main public symposium where the international proposals from Japan, Germany and Italy were discussed.

According to informants from ICOMOS that attended the meeting, other international proposals presented in Tokyo included a range of propositions for the future of the valley: ongoing work on the remaining fragments; a lapidarium of fragments; a rammed earth Buddha; a marble Buddha; and a plastic Buddha situated on the cliff opposite the niches. However, the outcome of the Expert Working Group meeting in Tokyo was similar to that of the 2012 ruling, and recommendations that followed the meeting advocated for "the establishment of a working committee for reviewing proposals for the Bamyan Buddha statues," which was disappointing for Bamyanis as it means more discussions and likely no action (UNESCO 2017). As negotiations over the future authenticity of the site continue, and the site continues to attract international expertise, it remains to be seen what role local

expertise and civil society will play in authenticating reconstruction. Above I have outlined how a global heritage discourse, which arrived in Bamyan and focused on the Buddhas prior to their destruction, has worked productively to routinely sideline local understandings of heritage value. This discourse, or productive form of power, has worked to exclude local interests in a number of ways, through its intersection with a powerful narrative in the international media focused on 'heritage for humanity', which meant the exclusion of Hazaras from media depictions of the destructions, to the sidelining of local ideas about authenticity in defining a future for the niches. In the next section I discuss how this international focus on the Budd became entangled with another powerful set of ideas. I show how a group of Hazara activists accessed and attached to this powerful set of ideas about the Buddhas for their own political project, and how these global ideas about heritage intersected with notions of human rights and political representation of minorities that were crucial to the wider international project.

4. The Buddhas and a Hazara history-making project

a) 'The destruction of the Buddhas put us on the map!'

Despite the gap between international and local desires for the future of the niches, and the fact that locals have had little involvement with the Buddhas since their destruction, the site's World Heritage status, place in the international media spotlight and influx of expertise has had a number of effects locally. One of my informants that worked for a local tourist organisation stated: "After the Taliban the Buddhas became a focus in a way they hadn't before. They were unknown before, or so familiar" (18th June 2015). "The destruction of the Buddhas was terrible, but it put us on the world map. It had some good results," said another activist (13th June 2015). Through the responses to my interviews, it became clear that this group of Hazara activists are attaching themselves to the ideas that arrived in the valley after the Buddhas' destruction, but paradoxically are using them to assert their own agendas which tie in with the construction of a Hazara political space. Here we see how this discursive power works through heritage in multiple and haphazard ways (not merely in a 'top down' direction), as the ideals of the international liberal intervention in Afghanistan converge with discourses of world heritage through the lens of Hazara rights activism.

b) A rising Hazara political consciousness

The Bonn Agreement of December 2001 followed the allied invasion. Afghan leaders and international donor countries met to establish an interim government and write a new

Afghan constitution. The large-scale state building and reconstruction effort that followed has influenced the construction of ethnicity and ethnic relations (Adleparvar 2015). Human and minority rights were a core concern of the international liberal intervention and the 2004 Afghan Constitution, which signalled a new era for Hazara rights and increased access to education and political representation in central government. This happened through Abdul Karim Khalili, a Hazara who was appointed one of the vice presidents under President Hamid Karzai (2004 – 2014) in the first administration to follow the allied intervention. The Afghan Constitution states, with regards to religious minorities, that religious freedom is protected, 'followers of other religions are free to exercise their faith and perform their religious rites…', and there is a specific 'non-discrimination' clause (UNESCO 2017). During my interviews, several respondents referred to President Karzai's administration as the 'best time for Hazaras' as this period gave Hazaras better political representation and access to education. Such new freedoms have spurred a rise in Hazara political consciousness and the activists I met in Bamyan and Kabul represent a generation of young Hazaras that are advocating for better rights for this group.

Certain aspects of Afghan and Hazara history are informing this new era for Hazara rights, including the international focus on the Bamyan Buddhas. Appadurai has used the term 'culturalism' to describe 'identities consciously in the making' (1996: 15). He has discussed how groups can attach themselves to a particular past in response to 'national and international spectacles' which render the

FIGURE 33 POSTER OF ABDUL ALI MAZARI VISIBLE FROM THE BAZAAR, BAMYAN. PHOTOGRAPH C. WYNDHAM

past 'more an arena for conscious choice, justification and representation…' (Appadurai 1996: 44). The development of Hazara ethnicity has been informed by a range of political, social and economic factors, including the group's persecution under Abdur Rahman Khan, the execution

of Abdul Ali Mazari, leader of Hizb e Wahdat, and the violence of the Taliban regime (fig. 33). One dominant theme of this Hazara recent rise in political consciousness has been a 'mythology of suffering' (Canfield 2004: 260). Naysan Adlparvar's PhD thesis focused on Hazara ethnicity in the Bamyan Valley (2015), discussing how the 'reification' of Hazara culture in a history of oppression and violence has been a key factor in the construction of contemporary Hazara ethnicity (2015: 103). Melissa Chiovenda, who has studied political protests in Bamyan and the activist groups based there, has also discussed the groups perception of marginality and how certain contemporary events, such as the lack of electricity in Bamyan, are understood in terms of this history of oppression and perceived marginalisation by other religio-ethnic groups (2014b).

C) A NARRATIVE OF MARGINALIZATION

Contemporary events at the Buddhas also seem to inform this perception of marginalisation. I discovered that the 2012 decision taken by the Expert Working Group to investigate anastylosis at the eastern Buddha and not to rebuild the western Buddha has been perceived by certain activists through the lens of this Hazara rights discourse. Several interviewees from the activist group cited what they understood as a 'lack of rebuilding' work as a form of continued discrimination against Hazaras by the Afghan government. For other members of this group, the empty niches seem to serve as an embodied reminder of their perceived subordination to other religio-ethnic groups and play a role in maintaining the belief that the Hazaras are a disadvantaged people. And the lack of rebuilding is seen as a means of exerting this discrimination. Several people commented that the Buddhas would already have been rebuilt if they were in another province. One activist stated: "If the Buddhas were in Helmand or Kandahar they would be rebuilt. It's continued discrimination against the Hazaras" (13th June 2015). I noticed that the violence endured by the Hazaras in the 19th century under Abdur Rahman Khan was mentioned by respondents in the same sentence as the destruction of the Buddhas, and the lack of subsequent rebuilding. This lack seems to play into the 'mythology of suffering' and is seen as an episode in a longer history of discrimination (Canfield 2004: 260).

Land rights are a constant source of contention in Afghanistan and particularly amongst the Hazaras, who had much of their land taken and redistributed to other Afghan groups, specifically Pashtuns, by the government of the 1880s (Mousavi 1998: 136). Currently, Bamyan province is vulnerable due to its proximity to provinces with a Taliban or insurgent presence. Conrad Schetter draws on Arjun Appadurai as he writes about the territorialisation of power in the Afghan 'ethnoscape' – ethnic spaces which compete with one another (and

also contradict Afghanistan as a national territory) (Schetter 2005). Hazarajat is the 'ethnoscape' of the Hazaras and Bamyan is its political centre. The Buddhas already played a role in situating Hazaras as natives in Bamyan, as the writings of Sayed Askar Mousavi show. He has written extensively on the Hazaras and their history and claims that the answer to the origins of the Hazaras lies in Bamyan, at the Buddha statues (1998: 37).

'From the coins found in Bamyan, the paintings on the temple walls and walls around the Buddha statues, the paintings of the last Kushani kings available, together with the physical features of the statues, it can be said that the inhabitants of the area were, until approximately 2300 years ago, of the same facial and physical features as today's Hazaras. Thus it becomes possible, if not irrefutable, to trace the Mogholi appearance of the Hazara inhabitants of northern Afghanistan much further back in history, long before the incursion of Changiz Khan and Amir Timur.' (Mousavi 1998: 38).

Several other sources written on the history of the Hazaras support the theory that the group is largely descended from the 'war-like' Mongol invaders that captured Bamyan in the 13th century (e.g. Bacon 1951). However, several of my interviewees in Bamyan had a different idea, claiming to be either a mix of Mongol and earlier groups that lived in the region, or, as some of the group of activists asserts, to be directly descended from the Kushans, the name for the group that occupied the area when the Buddhas were built in the $6^{th} - 7^{th}$ centuries. From our discussions, it emerged that some members of this group understand a significant link between themselves, as Hazaras today, and the valley's Kushanian past, rather than the association which is commonly made by both Hazaras and non-Hazaras alike between Hazaras and Genghis Khan. The Buddha niches provide a tangible connection to this past which is used by this group to assert an identity for Hazaras in the present. This affinity with the Buddhist past is also rooted in the physical features of the Buddha statues. One informant implored me to "just look at the faces of the Buddhas, they are like Hazaras." However, there is no available evidence for the faces of the Buddhas above the mouths, which have been discussed as being covered by large masks (Tarzi 1977: 115; Blänsdorf & Melzl 2009: 211 – 212; Klimburg-Salter 2020: 224-225). These assumptions seem to be based on the appearance of a typical Buddha statue from the region but also show a desire to transplant Hazara physical characteristics, which have been pin-pointed as markers of difference in the ethnic tensions between these groups in Afghanistan, onto the Buddhas. Other physical features of the Buddhas were also cited in some discussions about the destructions. And amongst my interviewees, one of the reasons cited for the demolition of the Buddhas was the Sunni Taliban's desire to destroy both

the Bamyan economy and, as one respondent mentioned, the "faces of the Hazaras" as an act of persecution against Shiite Hazaras. Respondents specifically cited the eyes and noses as bearing similarity to Hazara features. Some of the findings at the site by UNESCO consultants, such as a 'camel tail' (*dom e chittor)* which is made from bunge, the name for a local plant, are a focus for these activists: "These ropes are only used here and they are still used" (25th June 2015). Such links drawn between the time of the Buddhas' construction and the present help to assert the relationship between the Buddhists that built the Buddhas and Hazaras today.

The powerful narrative about the Buddhas which appeared after their destruction, as noted above, and which established a dichotomy between the supposedly tolerant Silk Road cosmopolitan past of the Buddhas and an intolerant, radical Taliban present has also informed this rise in political consciousness. Echoing this narrative, several activists spoke of the reputation of Hazaras compared to the other ethnic groups in Afghanistan, for 'peace and tolerance'. "We were Buddhist 2000 years ago. In Buddhism they don't even harm trees... this is why Hazaras are tolerant and patient," explained one business owner during an interview (21st June 2015). This link between Hazaras in the present and the area's pre-Islamic past was being used by this group in order to differentiate Hazaras from other ethnic groups. The Buddhist past and its association with 'tolerance and openness' was used specifically to differentiate this group from Pashtuns, who were described as 'Islamist and radical'. A Buddhist past is useful in that it can mark out Bamyanis as both different to the Taliban that destroyed the Buddhas in 2001, and to Pashtuns that currently live in Afghanistan. The Buddha niches provide a tangible connection to this past and this group believes that emphasising their relationship to this era will strengthen their claim to the lands and territory of Hazarajat. "We are physically the same...The Kushans are our ancestors. The Hazaras have been in Bamyan for 2000 years. The structure of the Buddhas shows that Hazaras are the original people of Bamyan, we were here before others," explained one activist (22st June 2015). As land rights are a frequent source of tension in Afghanistan, particularly between ethnic groups, making a link between Hazaras in the present and a pre-Islamic, Buddhist period allows this group to lay claim to the original ownership of Hazarajat before the first wave of Islamic invasions in the 8th century.

D) 'ONE NIGHT WITH BUDDHA'

However, while this group of activists is engaged in an impassioned construction of Hazara history and is drawing on the global discourse focused on the Buddhas for their project, there was seemingly some ambivalence about the Buddhas amongst the wider Bamyan community and further afield. While none of my interviewees perceived the niches as controversial in Islam, I interviewed a mullah, Baba Mohseni, in his home in Bamyan and he was keen to debate whether certain rituals or events associated with the Buddhas were either un-Islamic, or were perceived to be un-Islamic, by outsiders. He spoke of his worries about the reputation of the valley and its inhabitants. One event he mentioned was 'One Night with Buddha', an annual event organised by the Bamyan Tourism Association, a local organisation, to commemorate the destruction of the Buddhas. This ceremony takes place on 2nd of March, the date of the beginning of the statues' destruction. Students and younger residents of Bamyan attend the event, during which participants walk with candles around the site and read poetry. Baba Mohseni, however, spoke of his fear that the candles used at the ceremony might give the impression the attendees are worshipping the Buddhas. He recommended that the ceremony invite fewer guests and ban the use of candles. One activist explained:

"The candle was a symbol of peace but the mullahs took it to be a religious thing. The reason for the ceremony was to remember past civilisations and past history. Partly it was to show the world we are upset and disappointed we lost the Buddhas. We were responsible for the Buddhas and we are not able to hand them to the new generation. Lots of people feel guilty and hopeless that they couldn't do anything."

The event is seemingly a way for local groups to momentarily reclaim the site from international experts and undertake acts of memorialisation and commemoration of their own. His fear seemed to be more about how this ceremony might be perceived rather than behaviour which was deemed 'un-Islamic' but nonetheless demonstrates some ambivalence over the niches amongst local residents. Another instance which I heard about concerned a café and tourist office that was built next to the niches by a German NGO and informally called the 'Buddha Villa' by the NGO and some local residents until the Deputy Governor intervened and asked for the building to be given a

FIGURE 34 T-SHIRT SHOWING AN IMAGE OF THE SAARC LOGO. PHOTOGRAPH C. WYNDHAM

different name. Another realisation about this ambivalence came during my interview in May 2015 with the Bamyan representative from the Ministry of Information and Culture in his office overlooking the Buddhas from the opposite cliff. At the end of our interview he gave me a present of a mug and tee shirt commemorating Bamyan's nomination as Cultural Capital for South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) in 2015. The logo for the festival was an image of the undestroyed western Buddha which was printed on the mug and tee shirt (fig. 34). As he gave it to me he explained that the Buddhas motif was only possible in this instance because, in the design, the 'image of the Buddha is surrounded by a border of Islamic, geometric design.'

Baba Mohseni mentioned his fears about negative media attention and what this might mean for the valley. It seemed that one aspect here was the fear of the reputation of Hazaras or Bamyanis, especially in a climate of increased ethnic divisions. Some non-activist interviewees also spoke about how the activists' approach and attachment to these imported discourses about the Buddhas might cause tensions and become problematic for Hazaras. One such interviewee, who works for a cultural heritage organisation based in Bamyan, warned, "It's a mistake to use the past like this" (June 14th 2015). Another interviewee explained that non-Hazara groups often accuse the Hazaras of worshipping the Buddha statues which are understood as the 'Gods of the Buddhists,' echoing an accusation made by Taliban groups when they took Bamyan in 1998 (June 17th 2015). An editor of an online forum for Hazara rights reported that photographs of the images of Buddhas that were projected into the Buddha niches during the SAARC festival in July 2015 inspired comments declaring that "the Buddhas will be destroyed again if they are rebuilt."

Despite gains for Hazaras since 2001 and the safety of the province itself, Bamyan is currently surrounded by provinces with a Taliban presence and security on the roads to Kabul and Herat is becoming less predictable. Respondents in my interviews cited their biggest fear was the country's worsening security situation and the impact this will have on Bamyan. In February 2015, thirty-one Hazaras were kidnapped from the Pashtun dominated province of Zabul in a clearly ethnically motivated attack, and as political instability grows, many of my informants spoke of themselves as being at further risk from ethno-sectarian marginalisation and violence. The reclaiming of the Buddhas as part of the activist groups' construction of a Hazara political space was taking place against this background of wider tensions between

Afghanistan's ethnic groups. Despite the well-meaning intentions of the 2004 Afghan Constitution, the recognition of minorities has paradoxically resulted in each ethnic group making claims for resources or political representation on an ethnic basis and therefore differentiating themselves from other groups. Such aspirations of the international liberal intervention were ambitious and not always attuned to the realities of Afghan society. While recognising minority rights is seemingly a constructive development for any nation state, it has, perversely, contributed to more divisions and violence, as ethnic categories become increasingly reified and defined in contrast to each other. The formal recognition of ethnic groups in this way has resulted in 'ethnicity…as the *modus operandi* of post Bonn systems of governance in Afghanistan' (Adlparvar 2015: 112). Adelkhah discusses how such a focus on equal rights has 'extended the process of the invention of a Hazara Hazarajat and the ethnicisation of the Hazaras' (2017: 21). This explicit recognition of ethnicity in the Afghan Constitution and processes of political reconstruction has, tragically and contrary to intentions, created a deepening of ethnic divides (Schetter 2005; Adlparvar 2015; Adelkhah 2017).

5. Conclusions

In this chapter I have shown how the Bamyan Buddhas became entangled in a powerful international heritage discourse which promoted them as objects of 'world heritage' and how this set of ideas has operated in several ways. The chapter has focused on nuanced, diffuse, productive forms of power as they operate through a network which includes UNESCO, the values of the wider liberal intervention and a group of civil society activists. While the critical turn in Heritage Studies has been preoccupied by the 'top down' discursive operations of such global heritage discourses, the case of Bamyan shows how such discourses can operate in a variety of other more haphazard ways too. While we see how international heritage politics have worked discursively to sideline local understandings of the Buddhas, we also see how, at the same time, a disenfranchised group of Hazara activists have accessed and attached to these ideas as part of their own political project. These actions by the Hazara activists show a further entanglement between heritage and politics, as the discourses of 'world heritage' intersect with the ideals of the liberal intervention and its aspired-for scenario for minority rights in Afghanistan. We see how this group's national struggle is mediated through aspects of international heritage politics and the international focus on Bamyan. While the power framework which I have used throughout has provided a useful shorthand for unpicking the complexity and naming the particular forms of politics as they coexist and work through

heritage, it does not cover such haphazard ways in which power also operates. These have been revealed through an ethnographic approach to politics and heritage 'on the ground' as they operated in Bamyan through a range of international heritage bodies, the global media, heritage 'experts' and networks of Hazara activists.

CONCLUSIONS

Afghanistan has been crucial to the geopolitical arena since 9.11, with multiple governments investing in a protracted, highly politicised state building project alongside a military intervention. Heritage interventions are frequently part of such wider internationally sponsored nation-building projects in post conflict countries. While such work might seem like an apolitical sphere of intervention, the post 9.11 era has seen a shift in how heritage is mobilised. With such a range of governments, NGOs, state and non-state actors all involved, cultural heritage work has become entangled with a wide range of actors with diverse developmental or diplomatic objectives. As these different organisations and actors converge and collaborate, more nuanced forms of politics have converged upon international heritage work. These nuanced politics can be characterised as part of a global paradigm shift, a change in how we understand and interact with heritage, a 'post Bamyan' heritage paradigm, which has developed since the destruction of the Bamyan Buddhas. Afghanistan has been a useful context in which to examine the new entanglements between heritage and politics, how they take shape, the different forms of power, overt and hidden, to flow through heritage and why these intersections matter. As demonstrated by my case studies, heritage intervention has been configured with, among other interests, the objectives of international diplomacy, international development, military interventions and a wide range of governments, organisations and individuals all involved in Afghanistan's reconstruction project.

This thesis was conceived as an exploration into the relationship between international heritage interventions and politics between 2008 – 2015 in Afghanistan. Three key research objectives emerged when designing this research project. Firstly, I wanted to draw attention to the complex ways in which cultural heritage and global politics are currently entangled and to explore how these entanglements work on the ground at the level of these interventions. Secondly, I aimed to contribute to the debate concerning the operations of power and heritage, arguing that a more holistic means of discussing these complex intersections of politics and heritage is needed. Finally, I sought to show how a particular configuration of heritage and politics that has emerged after the destructions at Bamyan, a 'post-Bamyan' heritage paradigm, is revealed through a number of case studies of internationally sponsored

heritage interventions in Afghanistan. This research has responded to a call from across the discipline of Heritage Studies to look more closely at such relationships between heritage, power and global networks. Astrid Swenson called for analysis of the 'deeper, more complex and less linear histories' and the range of processes that shape heritage in the modern era (2016). While Tim Winter has asked for further study of the 'complex forces, the political logics' of how power relates to heritage in international relations (2015: 1012). The study of power in Heritage Studies has tended to focus on official policy documents and the 'top down' operations of certain heritage discourses when in fact the ways in which heritage and politics are currently mutually entangled, and the different forms of power that currently coexist and operate through international heritage interventions, are clearly more complex. While intersections between heritage and diplomacy have previously been characterized as cultural diplomacy or soft power, I argue that these conceptions are too broad to allow discussion of the complexity of ways in which heritage and politics interact across wide networks which blur the lines between governments, state and non-state actors, NGOs, individuals and forms of expertise in a space such as Afghanistan. As a means of unpicking these nuances I presented a power framework drawn from International Relations (Barnett & Duvall 2005) to be used as a shorthand for identifying the multiple types of power, both direct and diffuse, as they flow through my case studies of heritage intervention. Throughout the thesis I used the power framework in order to identify the various types of power as they intersect at each case study from the more overt, visible and compulsory power of military actors to the more nuanced or hidden productive types of power of international heritage or orientalist discourses. However, while this framework provided a useful shorthand for naming the types of power which operate through heritage, it is a theoretical model that remains largely abstract. Understanding such complexities, and how power and politics intersected with heritage work through a range of different networks, discourses, individuals and institutions in Afghanistan, and how these intersections played out on the ground also required a nuanced, embedded, multi-sited ethnographic approach to power. So, I combined the framework with anthropological insights into how power operates in practice through particular case studies of heritage intervention to reveal how these complex and sometimes contradictory intersections actually work at the level of these projects. David Mosse argued for a better understanding of the social lives of development projects and the range of individuals, institutions, policies and practices at work, and also the creativity of certain actors in negotiating development funding and policy (2005: 6), while John Gledhill has argued for more of a focus on political status, class and gender of development actors (2009: 18-19). Indeed,

the operations of power in practice in my case studies of heritage intervention were often revealed as messy, contradictory and ambiguous.

In Chapter 3 I argued that the current entanglement of heritage and politics, the 'post-Bamyan' paradigm, can be characterised by a series of discursive shifts in the understanding of the value of heritage and the practice of heritage preservation that have developed after the destruction of the Bamyan Buddhas by the Taliban, and are reflective of some of the geopolitical dynamics of the post 9.11 era. I outlined the dominant characteristics of this paradigm and described how each show particular configurations between politics and heritage. These shifts include an intensification of the idea of heritage as both increasingly under threat and an international concern, which has ushered in a powerful discourse that heritage can only be cared for by trained, international experts. Since the destructions at Bamyan and the subsequent 9.11 attacks, there has been more scrutiny over the relationship between heritage and Islam and with this the idea that particular attitudes to heritage can be representative of the 'West' or 'Islam' in polarised and divisive debates. Heritage interventions have also become inextricably part of 21st century diplomacy; heritage work is entangled with new forms of soft and hard power as it is used to win 'hearts and minds' as part of the hard politics of counterinsurgency, or as a means of softening the 'new imperialisms' of neoliberal interventions as they alter political and economic climates in Iraq and Afghanistan (Kersel & Luke 2015: 70). Alongside these more direct relationships between heritage and forms of hard power, more nuanced discursive entanglements between heritage and development discourse have happened, as heritage work is routinely presented as being able both to achieve the objectives of development and to act as a vehicle for post conflict 'cohesion' and 'identity building' for internationally sponsored nation-building projects.

These heritage paradigms shift to reflect wider geopolitical dynamics and as a background to the current scenario, in my historical chapter I attempted to demonstrate how a series of historical entanglements or 'heritage paradigms' in Afghanistan ('Imperial', Modernisation' and 'Cold War') have revealed different configurations of heritage and politics and how histroically 'soft power' also worked across a wide range of governments, state and non-state organisations, individual actors and forms of expertise. During the 18th and 19th centuries Afghanistan's past became entangled with the 'Great Game' and colonial politics of the East India Company. The colonial mission was underpinned by powerful ideas of rescue and redemption which resulted in many objects being shipped to the UK as part of colonial

policies. During the 1920s, expansionist French foreign policy of the 1920s intersected with Afghanistan's pre-Islamic archaeological heritage. The focus on the country's pre-Islamic past by French archaeologists subsequently informed Afghanistan's domestic policy under modernist Amanullah Khan and later the work of Afghan historians engaged in creating a national identity upon which to build a modern, Afghan nation. During the 1960s and 1970s Soviet archaeologists were sent alongside Soviet 'armed humanitarians' to Afghanistan prior to the arrival of Soviet troops (Nunan 2016). My research was based in texts and accounts of this period (rather than ethnography) but the role of charismatic individuals such as Alfred Foucher, Ahmad Ali Kuhzad and Viktor Sarianidi and their networks were revealed as crucial in shaping such interventions.

Throughout the historical heritage paradigms there was a dominant focus on Afghanistan's pre-Islamic past by foreign interests and the subsequent chapter showed how this interest had endured into the present but now intersects with a different range of governments, heritage agencies, military actors and their related interests. The destructive impulses of the Taliban have resulted in a particular focus on Afghanistan's Buddhist past era by international heritage preservation organisations and individuals keen to counter these destructions. New configurations of politics and heritage typical of the Bamyan era, and the complexity of these configurations, were evident, from the institutional power of UNESCO and the assertion of powerful discourses which privilege forms of heritage expertise in Bamyan, to the mobilisation of heritage work for 'hearts and minds' public relations drives which support the hard, compulsory politics of the neoliberal intervention in Afghanistan. Powerful ideas of threat and rescue also gave weight to this heritage work and we see how 'saving' Afghanistan's Buddhist heritage became implicated in the wider narratives of rescue and redemption implicit in the neoliberal intervention. This emphasis has been accompanied by the idea that the pre-Islamic past represents something uncomplicated and 'peaceful', and a multicultural past which Afghanistan should resurrect as part of its transformation into a modern nation. However, such a focus on a pre-Islamic past sets up a dichotomy between the categories of 'Islam' and 'pre-Islam' which can play into stereotypes and Islamophobia which shows why such new entanglements matter. While such a focus on the pre-Islamic past has endured, ethnographic research revealed the wide range of interests that currently converge on this past.

Chapters 6, 7 and 8 all focused on one particular heritage intervention, each case study exemplified various intersections between heritage and politics and also revealed how these

intersections worked, often in an unexpected or contradictory manner. Each intervention revealed the multiple and coexistent types of diffuse and direct power as they operate through heritage. The role of cultural heritage as a tool of soft power became a focus after the conflict in Iraq, when there was a realisation of the power of heritage, or its destruction, for public relations (Luke & Kersel 2013). However, the ability of such projects to work as anything more than 'paper promises', or public relations exercises at the top level, is down to their implementation on the ground. Also, the focus of public diplomacy projects which mobilise heritage is not only to boost relations with the Afghan state but is a part of a wider 'rush for profile' in the international spotlight. This is revealed through the Aga Khan Trust for Culture's work in Balkh that shows how heritage preservation as 'soft power' works across a broad network which includes German military actors, a private international development organisation – the Aga Khan Development Network and local project managers on the ground in Balkh. This form of 'soft power' is AKTC's own hybridised preservation practice which replicates the western, globalised conservation ethic and this works on two levels. Firstly, as a form of soft diplomacy for the wider work of the Aga Khan Development Network in international contexts. At the same time, the organisation's work is sensitive to Islamic practices that are part of the function of this mosque and shrine complex in Balkh, which ensures buy-in from the communities in which they work and smooths relations with the Afghan government. The notion of religious pluralism is also harnessed, which works to counteract any stereotypes which might negatively affect the global community of Ismailis.

Chapter 7 looked at Turquoise Mountain and the intersection of heritage preservation with the wider discourses of the international intervention which focused on the liberation of Afghan women. Here more diffuse, productive forms of power, such as nuanced, orientalist-infused ideas about aesthetics, interacted with these wider, powerful ideas underpinning the international intervention. These intersections happened through networks of donor governments, individual craftsmen and craftswomen, products and exhibitions and had some surprising outcomes such as the empathy generated amongst the audience of the Turquoise Mountain exhibition at the Smithsonian Institute. However, while some individuals benefitted from this model, others lost out, as evidenced by Royah's story. Chapter 8 focused on another intersection of heritage and politics. Here, there was an intersection between two discursive, diffuse types of power: 'global' ideas about the value and meaning of the Buddhas, and the discourses of the liberal intervention focused on minority rights. This revealed the slippery, unpredictable nature of power as a group of Hazara activists accessed and attached to these discourses as part of forming their own Hazara political space.

My case studies show a particular configuration of heritage and politics which I have argued is typical of a 'post Bamyan' scenario. More recent shifts in this current 'post-Bamyan' paradigm include further intersections of heritage with issues of 'peacebuilding', 'conflict resolution' and 'security' and their related governments, international organisations and state institutions as heritage becomes more intricately entangled in networks that include new civil military partnerships and public private alliances. In 2015, for example, the UN Security Council declared illicit trafficking and heritage destruction a security issue in Resolution 2249 (UNSC 2015b). The related UN Resolutions 2199 and 2347 outlined that threats to and the destruction of cultural sites, objects and practices represent a menace to people's identity and collective memory, and therefore their 'ontological security' or ways of being in the world (UNSC 2015a; UNSC 2017). In the same year, UNESCO's General Conference adopted the Strategy for Reinforcing UNESCO's action for the Protection of Culture and the Promotion of Cultural Pluralism in the Event of Armed Conflict (UNESCO 2015). UNESCO's 2015 Strategy is focused on embedding the protection of culture into the work of organisations and UN agencies focused on humanitarian and post conflict reconstruction work. One emphasis of this strategy has been on promoting cultural heritage as a legitimate field of international humanitarian response as well as more obvious needs such as health. This would involve closer collaboration between UNESCO and humanitarian relief agencies such as UNDP, with heritage work not only intersecting with international development programmes but being part of 'first response' humanitarian programmes after natural disasters or conflict. Another shift has been the inclusion of heritage protection in peacekeeping activities where heritage is at risk, with the idea of creating a taskforce of experts to protect heritage during conflict. In the same year, at the UNESCO General Conference in Paris, November 2015, a resolution was passed to establish the 'Blue Helmets for Culture,' an initiative to train peacekeepers to protect sites of heritage during and after conflict. This was based on the UN peacekeeping programme undertaken during the conflict in Mali, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) which had been assigned to collaborate with UNESCO on the protection of cultural heritage, as a reaction to the destruction of sites by Ansar Dine and other insurgent groups.

While UNESCO's 2015 strategy speaks of the new, nuanced discursive alignments between heritage, conflict and humanitarian work, at the same time culture 'at risk' has become a new (and crowded) field, and several recently founded international organisations demonstrate

new alignments between governments, private donors and NGOs over heritage work and the inevitability of new heritage paradigm shifts beyond the current 'post-Bamyan' era. Such alignments speak of shifting global politics in which we see a shift in focus from the 'West vs radical Islam', a theme which underpinned the 'post-Bamyan' era, to a resurgence of aspects of the Cold War in which the West is in conflict with Russia. Such new conflicts and tensions, which also include the animosity between the West and China, have been referred to as 'Hot Peace' rather than 'Cold War'. A key feature of this shift in the geopolitical landscape is the weakening of the power and authority of the West. Such developments are reflected in new alliances over cultural heritage. In 2016, France, together with the United Arab Emirates, founded ALIPH, an organisation focused on protecting heritage in conflict and post conflict areas. ALIPH has a mix of public and private donors, and its board shows the 'polylateral' framework of such an initiative as it includes donor countries, NGOs, private donors, cultural heritage experts and UNESCO (Foradori et al 2018: 88). While initial funding came from France and the UAE, more recently Saudi Arabia and China have contributed funds. Such collaborations are mutually beneficial, as they allow France to gain leadership in the area of cultural protection which burnishes its image on the world stage at a time when its hard power is waning (Foradori et al 2018: 88). These alliances also benefit Saudi Arabia and China, both countries that are keen to promote a cultured self-image. The British government has taken a different approach and in 2016 founded the Cultural Protection Fund, run by the British Council, and focused on heritage protection in twelve countries around the Middle East and North Africa. As well as mutually beneficial diplomatic alliances, heritage discourses work along these new networks of public and private donors. UNESCO is also on the board of ALIPH, for example. ALIPH and the Cultural Protection Fund both use UNESCO's charters and heritage conventions to guide their work. The emergence of these new organisations speaks of a new set of configurations of heritage with a range of direct and diffuse types of power. The framework which I have used throughout the thesis to unpick the complexity of the alignments of heritage and politics is potentially useful for understanding this new paradigm and the politics that run through internationally sponsored heritage interventions, such as those underway in Iraq and Syria, and also as cultural heritage is mobilised as part of China's new Belt and Road economic project. Such shifts in Chinese heritage politics are currently being explored by Tim Winter (2019). These new intersections imply particular shifts in the forms of power and politics operating through heritage and an ethnographic approach to how such forms of power work across networks, institutions, discourses and the individuals involved will reveal more about the consequences of such entanglements.

At the time of writing, the Taliban has taken Kabul and there are no remaining international troops in Afghanistan. NGOs are working out, with little hope, if they can continue their operations in this new environment. The Taliban is operating without the huge economic support from donor countries upon which the country has relied since 2001. Without this support, the country is fast approaching a humanitarian crisis. While there have been promises from more media savvy Taliban members of Taliban 2.0, that the Taliban have changed, particularly in the movement's approach to women, this does not seem to the case, with girls still banned from attending secondary school and women gradually disappearing from public life. In terms of the case studies for my research, Turquoise Mountain is shifting its focus to supporting more carpet work where they hope to support a larger number of weavers through commissions. The organisation, which started as a Kabul-based NGO, had anyway reduced the size of its Kabul office and has been growing its projects internationally with offices currently in Amman, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Myanmar. The Aga Khan Trust for Culture is continuing to operate in Kabul on a much reduced staff. All international staff have left and a very reduced number of Afghan architects are running the organization's projects in Kabul, such as the preservation of Kabul's ancient citadel, the Bala Hissar, and the creation of an archaeological park in the surrounding grounds (AKDN 2020). Such a large-scale project, if it is finished, will enable much more public space for Kabulis and provide employment as the site is constructed. The Aga Khan Development Network has longer term interests in Afghanistan, such as the support of the Ismaili community and the Aga Khan's considerable financial investments in luxury hotels and a major mobile phone network, Roshan, and is naturally keen to maintain a presence in the country. For the Bala Hissar project, AKTC looked beyond such funders as the German government who had a waning interest in the country and had sought support from ALIPH, whose funding model and board of trustees speaks of the shifting landscape of international funding for heritage work and the new political alignments this entails. AKTC's continued presence in Afghanistan and the alliances it has been seeking to fund its work are a reflection of the wider shifting international interests which converge on heritage work. However, now it is unsure if such projects will be able to continue under the current regime.

At the time of writing, Royah is living in Leicester and using her calligraphy and painting skills to teach adult painting classes. She is reportedly happy with her life in the UK. The group of

Hazara activists I met in Bamyan and Kabul are struggling with the new Taliban regime and new forms of persecution. In rural areas there has been forced displacement of Hazaras from their homes and, in early October, Taliban fighters executed thirteen Hazaras in Daikundi province, not far from Bamyan. Many Hazaras fear for their lives and are trying to flee. Before the Taliban takeover, the Afghan government was still waiting for mining to start at Mes Aynak and for the project to reap the promised economic rewards. In December 2020, the Afghan government terminated the contract with China, alongside its other oil and gas contracts with Beijing, upon discovery of a Chinese spy ring in Kabul, and was seeking to renegotiate the contract either with China or other investors (O'Donnell 2021). Meanwhile, in Bamyan, the plastic sheeting to hide ICOMOS's ungainly ankle constructions on the Eastern Buddhas still flaps in the breeze, as groups of 'experts' continue to explore the possibilities of anastylosis at the western Buddha. The recommendations of the most recent Expert Working Group, held in Tokyo in September 2017, were to establish yet another working group to 'review proposals for the Bamyan Buddha statues' (UNESCO 2017). The niches themselves have been stabilised and visitors are allowed to enter, but with so much money spent, and so much international expertise consulted, one can't help but wonder if the international consultants and UNESCO are the real beneficiaries of all this work.

As cultural interventions are increasingly a feature of internationally sponsored neoliberal interventions, crucial questions remain about both the utility and ethics of such work. When I was working in Afghanistan, my initial questions about these projects were focused on the effectiveness of the work and its value for Afghans. Who was benefitting, and how? It was later, when I started my research, that these questions developed into more ethical reflections. Hamilakis has discussed how the involvement of international archaeologists with the US military in Iraq and the lamenting of damaged sites and the museum over the loss of Iraqi lives 'contributes to the legitimacy of an illegal and unethical war' (Hamilakis 2015: 97). In Afghanistan, these heritage projects put a positive spin on an otherwise disastrous, and neocolonial, international intervention. Are the benefits achieved by this work worth it for the role they played in legitimising the failed wider international project? Would it have been better not to have intervened in Afghanistan's cultural heritage at all? What are these benefits, and how much relevance and value does this work really have for Afghans?

These interventions clearly had benefits but sometimes these were not the original intentions of the work. As discussed in Chapter 7, one unintended consequence of Turquoise Mountain's work was the number of masons and bricklayers that received training through their work on

the restoration of historic buildings in the Old City who could subsequently find employment and demand higher salaries on other construction sites. Turquoise Mountain became increasingly wide-ranging as the organisation took on different projects beyond establishing the Institute and restoring Murad Khane. One such project was a healthcare clinic. This was started when I was working for Turquoise Mountain, on an ad hoc basis in a resident's front room in Murad Khane with an American volunteer doctor working for Turquoise Mountain. Later, it developed into a purpose-built clinic which is now managed by a healthcare NGO that runs several clinics across Afghanistan. After some years of subsidies, the clinic can increasingly pay for itself through means-tested payments for medicine. The number of people directly impacted contrasts sharply with the small number of graduate students at the Turquoise Mountain Institute, where 144 students graduated over 4 years, while several thousand people visit the clinic per month (USAID 2008). In Bamyan, the international focus on the valley's Buddhist past has, unintentionally, given shape to growing Hazara political space through asserting an historical identity for Hazaras. The Aga Khan Trust for Culture's work, while fulfilling political agendas, also has relevance and value for its employees and the communities in which they work. AKTC's choice to largely work with buildings of 'living heritage', such as mosques or historic houses, means that, after their work, they are likely maintained by communities. Their model employs mainly national employees and works to build their skills over time. Consequently, Afghan architects, project managers and construction workers have the opportunity to build skills which will ensure further employment and likely higher salaries if they choose to leave. The Aga Khan's heritage work is one (small) factor in a wider array of public and private investments in Afghanistan which, while linked to the wider reconstruction programme, also support the Ismaili community that lives in Afghanistan and will therefore ensure the continuity of such work in Afghanistan as the competition over donor funds and visibility shift elsewhere to the next international intervention.

'Sustainability' was a buzzword around heritage work that I heard frequently in Kabul. 'Cultural sustainability' is gaining rhetorical traction and is often included at the level of policy and reports, but what it means at the level of practice is less clear. How do we measure the 'sustainability' of such work, or translate the concept of sustainability into practice? Two issues spring to mind with regards the sustainability of such efforts. While such projects in Afghanistan often used the common language of 'participation' and 'capacity building,' they often circumnavigated the Afghan institutions set up to manage the country's heritage sector. This funnelling of funds to international organisations that employ international heritage

professionals reflects one of the wider issues of the reconstruction project, that of setting up parallel structures that operate outside of Afghan political institutions. Internationally funded and staffed cultural projects worked to build the skills of their international employees while the Afghan Ministry of Culture remained poorly funded and without international support. Another factor was that while 'sustainability' and 'heritage for development' were popular terms, I became aware in Afghanistan of how much work that took place under the 'heritage for development' rhetoric was still firmly rooted in heritage conservation categories of significance, aesthetics and states of physical preservation, and that experience and skills in areas such as development economics, urban planning and community engagement were lacking amongst heritage professionals and project managers, myself included. Such skills seem crucial when such heritage interventions are so vulnerable to wider political forces and ever-shifting donor desires.

I return to Amartya Sen's 'perspective of freedom' in his critique of development in which he discusses that freedom and the expansion of capabilities, through education, for example, ought to be the key objective of development work, rather than economic betterment (1999: 18). Freedom should be the focus of development, and the 'removal of major sources of unfreedom' its goal (1999: 1). Basu and Modest have noted how this might translate to heritage work in these contexts and that rather than focusing on building up 'technical capacity' through heritage for development projects, such as the craft skills of Turquoise Mountain students, or the (limited) involvement of Afghan conservators at the technical interventions at the Buddhas, international heritage interventions, if they are to happen, should focus on facilitating the capacity of individuals to determine their own pasts (and therefore futures) (2015: 14). As new configurations between heritage and international interests emerge, such issues and questions must be at the forefront of our minds. It is hoped that writing accounts such as this will draw attention to these complex entanglements of politics and heritage and their consequences, as the past is called upon to play a number of increasingly prominent roles in the present.

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