



LSE Literary Festival event

# Approaches to Bamiyan: Afghanistan's cultural crossroads

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**LSE** events

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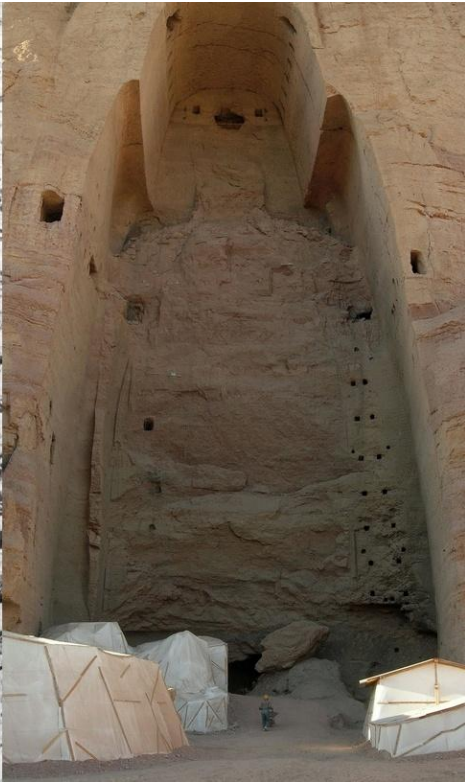


# Approaches to Bamiyan

## Afghanistan's Cultural Crossroads



CAVES OF BAMEEAN







## 2001

On the basis of consultations between the religious leaders of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, religious judgments of the ulama [senior clergy] and rulings of the Supreme Court of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, all statues and non-Islamic shrines located in different parts of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan must be destroyed. These statues have been and remain shrines of unbelievers and these unbelievers continue to worship and respect them. God Almighty is the only real shrine and all fake idols should be destroyed. Therefore, the supreme leader of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan has ordered all the representatives of the Ministry of Promotion of Virtue and Suppression of Vice and the Ministries of Information to destroy all the statues. As ordered by the ulama and the Supreme Court of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan all the statues must be destroyed so that no one can worship or respect them in the future.

EDICT of Mullah Omar, Feb 26 2001



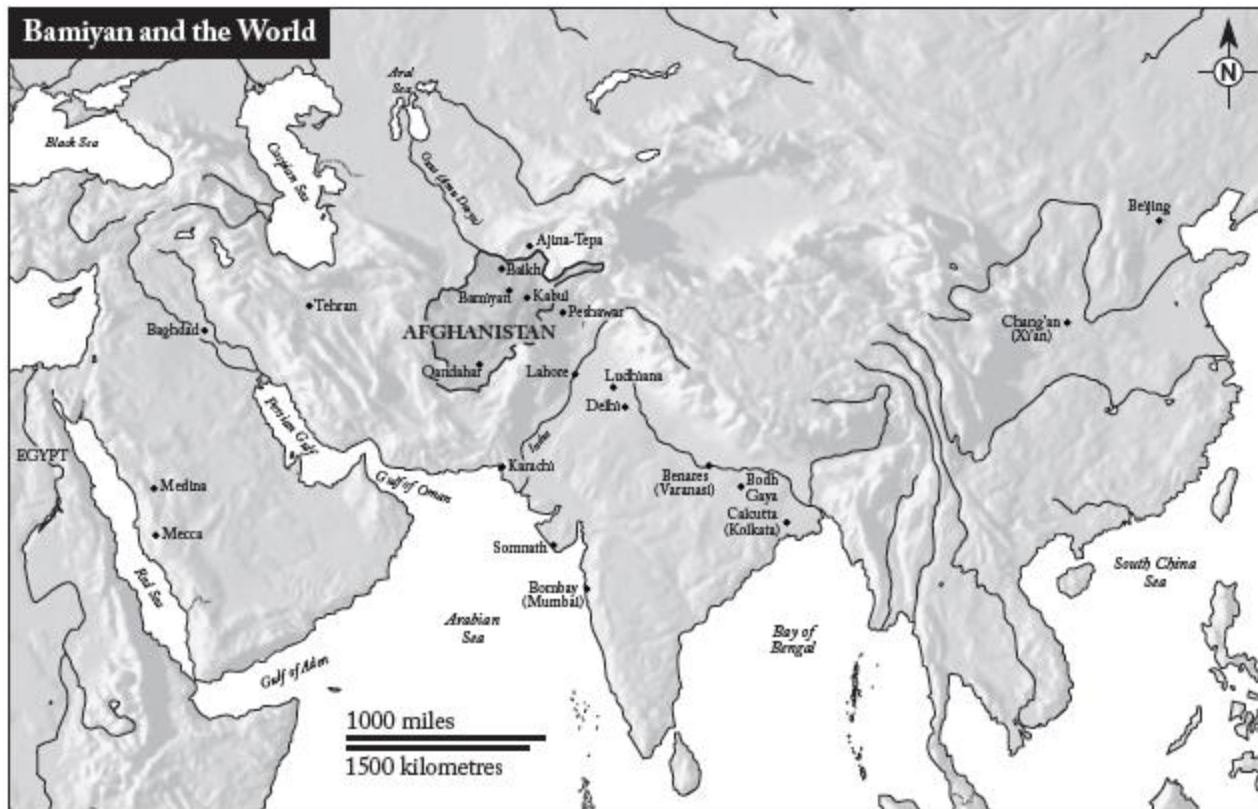
(CNN EXCLUSIVE)

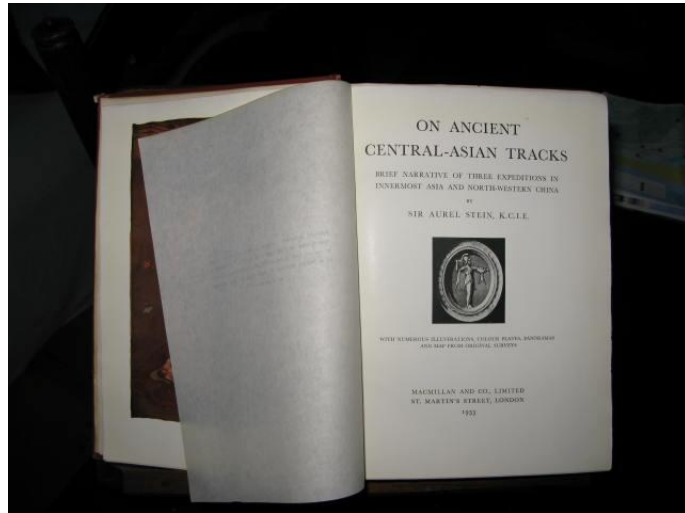
550 Carving of smaller Buddha  
615 Carving of larger Buddha  
622 Islamic era begins  
629 Visit of Xuanzang  
750-900 Conversion of Bamiyan  
900 Heyday of the Barmakids  
973-1048 Life of Al-Biruni  
1528 Visit of Sultan Mohammad  
1832 Visit of Charles Masson  
1842 British hostages in Bamiyan  
1922 Visit of Alfred Foucher





## Bamiyan and the World







## Begram



“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 of which have been cast separately and then assembled to make up the statue.”



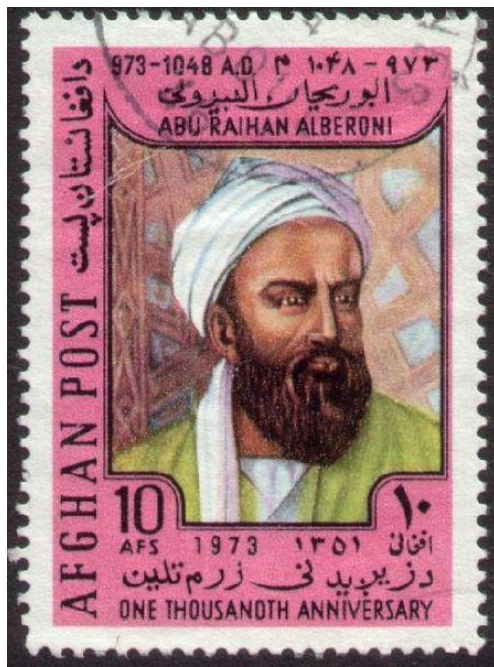
“The people of India [i.e. non-Muslims] go on pilgrimages to these two [idols], bearing with them offerings, incense and fragrant woods. If the eye should fall upon them from a distance, a man would be obliged to lower his eyes, overawed by them. If he is lacking in attention or careless when he sees them, it is necessary for him to return to a place from which he cannot view them and then to approach them, seeking them as an object for his attention with reverence for them.”

FROM the *Fihrist* of Al-Nadim



Ja'far ibn Yahya al-Barmaki  
a.k.a Jaffar, evil vizier in *The Thief of Bagdad* (1940)





“The writer of these words, when he was headed for Kabul from the city of Balkh, came to this place on Tuesday the 14<sup>th</sup> of Rabi’ al-Thani in the year 935 [26<sup>th</sup> December 1528]. As a result of wind and of rain the caravan took refuge in the niche of the male idol. I recall that the caravan had close to two hundred horses, and a hundred men with the camels and mules were contained in this niche, and another group of about three hundred men and horses and mules found rest in the other niche of the female idol. And near to these two huge idols two small idols are carved in the rock. One is in the appearance of a slave girl, and the other the appearance of a slave boy.”

Sultan Muhammad, *Majma’ al-ghara’ib*



Band-i Amir



Hazrat-i Ali

# Shahr-i Zohak, August 23, 1840



SHAHRI ZOHAK

Lieut. John Sturt

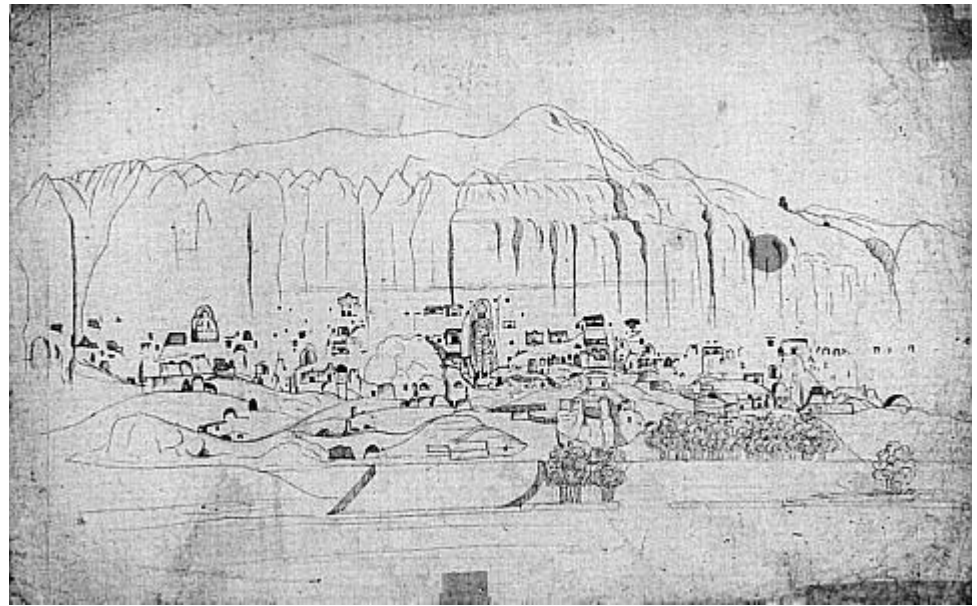






THE LATE SIR ALEXANDER BURNES C.B. & c.

Drawn on Stone by Lowes Dickinson from the Original Picture by D. Mc Clise Esq. R.A.



“The superior idol has or had the same facilities of ascent to the summit, but at the time of our visit the lower caves near it were occupied by an unaccommodating Tajik, who had stowed in the passage his stock of provender. We could not prevail on him by menace or entreaty to open the path, and he evasively affirmed that he had never heard of one.”

Charles Masson

Alexander Burnes



V. Eyre del<sup>t</sup>

Lowes Dickinson lithog

LADY SALE

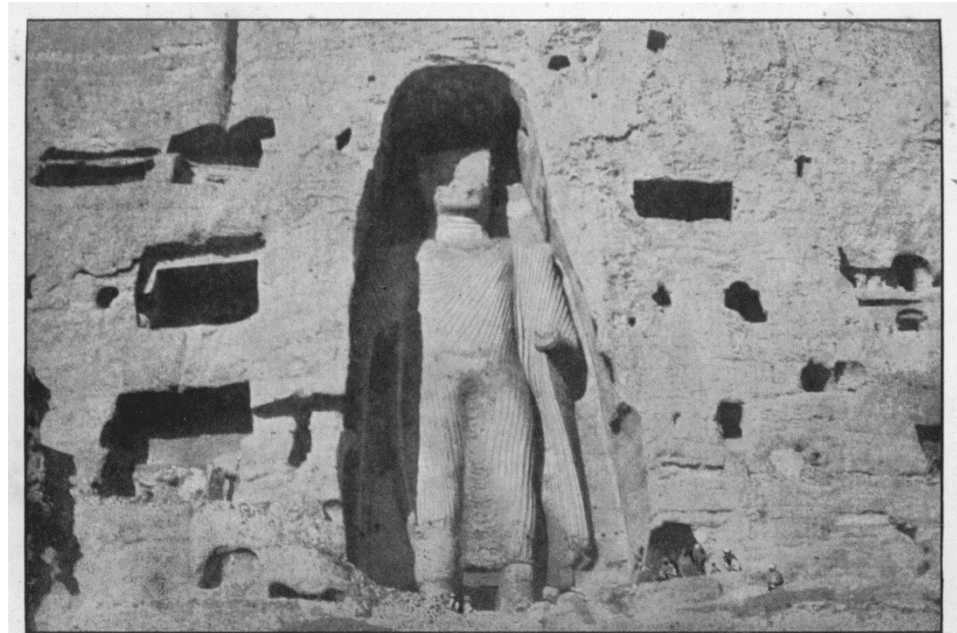
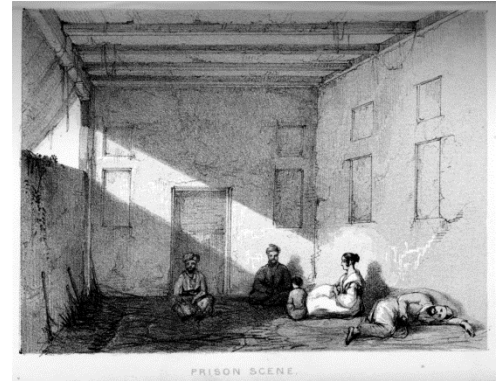


LIEUT VINCENT EYRE.  
BENGAL ARTILLERY

Drawn on Stone by Lowes Dickinson from an Original Picture in the Possession of the Family.

“While sitting on the lady’s crown, enjoying a splendid view of the country, I was joined by some of the inhabitants, who were very inquisitive to know what was written in our books concerning the place. I told them it was generally supposed Alexander the Great founded a city there.”

**Vincent Eyre**



COLOSSAL FIGURE, “SA-MAMA,” IN THE BAMIAN VALLEY.

*From a photograph by Arthur Collins, F.G.S.*





Jean Carl

Aurel Stein



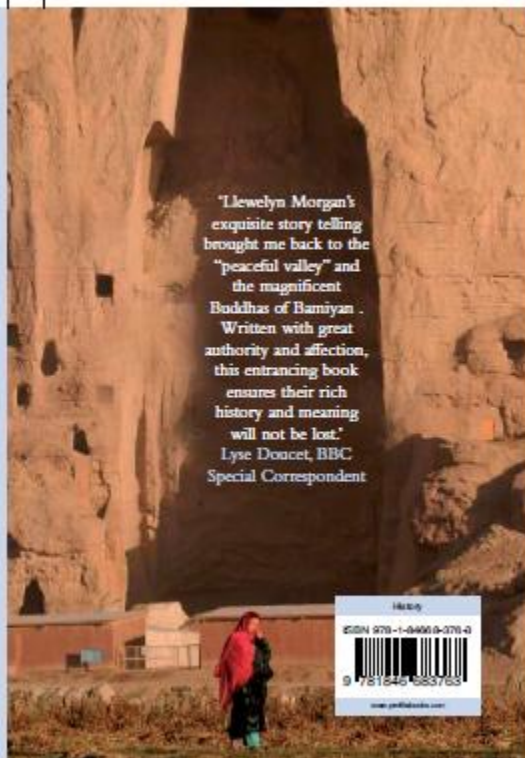
LLEWELYN MORGAN is a Lecturer in Classics at Oxford University. He has also taught in the Republic of Ireland and America. His interest in Afghanistan was sparked by finding a samovar mysteriously inscribed 'Candahar 1881' in his grandmother's house. In recent years his fascination for Afghan history, ancient and modern, has taken him on a number of trips to Bamiyan and other parts of Afghanistan.

'Llewelyn Morgan's exquisite story telling brought me back to the "peaceful valley" and the magnificent Buddhas of Bamiyan. Written with great authority and affection, this entrancing book ensures their rich history and meaning will not be lost.'

Lyse Doucet, BBC  
Special Correspondent

John Major  
New & non-renewable  
Sub & non-renewable

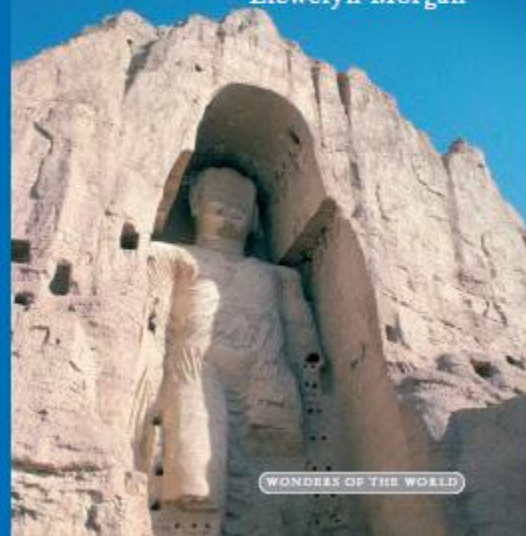
John Major 2011



The Buddhas of Bamiyan  
Llewelyn Morgan  
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# The Buddhas of Bamiyan

Llewelyn Morgan



WONDERS OF THE WORLD

This is a book about a monument, an astonishing monument, a wonder of the world. But this wonder no longer exists.

The Buddhas of Bamiyan were carved out of a cliff face in Afghanistan 1,400 years ago, and had towered over their remote mountain valley ever since. Then, in 2001, despite international protest, they were demolished on the orders of Mullah Omar, leader of the Taliban, one of a train of events in that year that culminated in the Al-Qaeda attacks on 9/11, and the toppling of the Taliban regime.

Llewelyn Morgan takes us back to the Buddhist kingdom of Bamiyan, a flourishing centre of commerce in the first millennium AD which constructed two colossal and elaborately decorated Buddhas to advertise its piety and prosperity, and describes the intense interest the statues continued to provoke in the Islamic culture that followed, deeply intrigued as they were by the Indian culture they encountered on their eastern borders. We also meet the European adventurers and spies from British India who brought Bamiyan celebrity again in the nineteenth century, representatives of a third great world religion sharing the same fascination for these remarkable creations as their Muslim and Buddhist predecessors.

In a richly researched book Llewelyn Morgan is telling the story of the Buddhas is able to introduce us to the whole history of Afghanistan.

£15.99