

while weeping crocodile tears over destruction of the world's cultural heritage, has imposed a selective ban of scientific cooperation on nations mistakenly considered as "opposed to its rules and values." The complete freeze of all cooperation in the field of archaeology between France and both Syria and Afghanistan, is just one example of this tragedy.

2) We request particular attention to the case of Afghanistan. Its neighboring countries, national and international institutions, and countries involved in international conventions for the protection of cultural and natural heritage, are committed to cooperation in the field of guarding cultural heritage sites and artifacts and to preventing their smuggling and destruction.

Therefore, it is expected that in the current situation they will fully play their role in the protection of Afghanistan's cultural heritage in accordance with international laws and conventions. However, the dramatic neglect of international cultural institutions and donors to Afghanistan, the lack of sufficient funds in the field of cultural heritage pro-



CC/Zde, own work

Statue of a standing bodhisattva with halo, 3rd–6th centuries CE. Found at Mes Aynak, southeast of Kabul, which had a large complex of Buddhist monasteries.

tection, and the political treatment of international cultural heritage institutions have seriously endangered Afghanistan. Undoubtedly, the non-recognition of the Afghan government has dimmed the attention of cultural institutions.

Considering the above, we expect these international institutions to renew their full support to protect both the tangible and the intangible cultural heritage of Afghanistan.

3) We regret that UNESCO, which should raise its voice against any new form of "cultural and scientific apartheid," has repeatedly worsened the situation by politicizing issues beyond its prerogatives.

4) Therefore, we call on the international community to immediately end this form of "collective punishment," which creates suffering and injustice, promotes ignorance, and endangers humanity's capacity for mutual respect and understanding.

The progress of scientific knowledge, in a positive climate permitting all to share it, is by its very nature beneficial to each and to all, and to the very foundation of a true peace.

IEA Ministry of Information and Culture: Preserve All Cultural and Historical Heritage

Feb. 24—As Western researchers, based on what has happened in the past, wondered about the current Afghan government's actual policy on the issue of preservation of cultural and historical heritage, the Ibn-e-Sina Research and Development Center questioned the relevant authorities in Kabul of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan.

At the end of January 2024, the Ministry of Infor-

mation and Culture completely clarified the matter for the Ibn-e-Sina R & D Center and for the world, in a hand-signed letter from Mowlavi Atiqullah Azizi, Deputy Minister of Culture and Arts. [Emphasis in the letter is in the original.]

Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan
Ministry of Information and Culture
Letter N° 220, Jan. 31, 2024

To the attention of Ibn-e-Sina R&D Center, International experts and cultural organizations and to those whom it concerns:

The Ministry of Information and Culture of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA) has, among others, the following tasks in its portfolio:

- To establish a suitable environment for the growth of genuine Afghan culture;
- To protect national identity, cultural diversity, and national unity;
- To preserve tangible and intangible cultural heritage;
- To support the development of creativities, initiatives, and activities of various segments of the society in general and of the Afghan youth in particular;
- To support the freedom of speech;
- Development of the tourism industry;
- Introduction and presentation of Afghan culture regionally and internationally, to transform Afghanistan into an important cultural hub and crossroads in the near future.

We would like to confirm that *with preservation of tangible and intangible cultural heritage* we mean all Afghan cultural heritage belonging to all periods of history, whether it belongs to Islamic or *non/pre-Islamic* periods of history.

This Ministry expresses its concerns that due to in-



CC/Klotz

Ivory carving of women wearing dancers' anklets from the Kingdom of Kapisa near modern Bagram, north of Kabul, 1st–2nd centuries CE. Indian artistic influence is evident. The rulers of Kapisa were Indians of the Kshatriya caste.



Public domain/Ana Rodriguez

A ram figurine from the vast gold hoard found in burial mounds at Tillya tepe in Bactria—in the far north of modern Afghanistan. The burials are dated to 1st century BCE–1st century CE.

sufficient means it is not able to preserve the Afghan cultural heritage sufficiently.

Therefore, this Ministry asks UNESCO and other international organizations, working on preservation of the world's tangible and intangible cultural heritage, to support Afghanistan in preservation of its tangible and intangible cultural heritage, including the ones belonging to Islamic and non/pre-Islamic periods of its history. The cultural heritage of Afghanistan does deserve to be preserved without any political motivations.

Besides, this Ministry also confirms it is ready for all kinds of cooperation with all national and international organizations, working on preservation of world cultural heritage.

The Ministry of Information and Culture of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA) supports and appreciates all efforts of the

Ibn-e-Sina R&D Center and their international experts in appealing for urgent attention of national and international organizations and experts to resume their support and cooperation with Afghanistan to preserve its cultural heritage, an important part of world cultural and historical heritage.

Sincerely,
Mowlavi Atiqullah Azizi
Deputy Minister of
Culture and Art