

# Cultural Heritage

# 13

## READING 1

Andrew Lawler. "Afghanistan's Challenge," *Science*, 8 November 2002, 1195.

### -- Discussion of Reading 1 -----

1. Explain the meaning of the statement by the British aid worker in Kabul: "We aid people only deal with half the human." (She meant that the aid people help meet practical needs for food, clothing, and housing, but that human beings also need culture and beauty.)
2. Which countries came through with money and expertise to help Afghans rebuild their cultural heritage? (Germany, Italy, and Japan)
3. How does archaeology offer a way to bring Afghanistan back into the scientific mainstream? (Foreign missions can assist in training a new generation of Afghan researchers. New digs might replace looting as a source of income for impoverished villagers and discourage the illicit antiquities trade. Rebuilding museums, collections, and schools and universities will rekindle vigorous domestic support for archaeology to ensure that the devastation of Bamiyan is never repeated.)

4. List the author's examples of globalization in ancient Afghanistan. (In ancient Afghanistan, Greek thought met Chinese philosophy, Indian gardens inspired Persian poetry, and four major religions were either born or transformed.)
5. Who will benefit from archaeological research and study in Afghanistan? (All people in the world can benefit from this research and study of a place that has for so long mingled so much of human culture.)
6. Why did the Taliban destroy the ancient Buddhist statues at Bamiyan? (The Taliban destroyed the Buddhist statues because the Taliban banned all artistic representations of humans and animals.)
7. Write a one-sentence statement in your own words of the main idea of the article. (Much of Afghanistan's vast cultural heritage was destroyed under the Taliban regime, so wealthy countries should contribute to helping Afghanistan rebuild its collections and restore its museums and archaeological sites.)

## READING 2

**Andrew Lawler.** "Leaning Tower Poses a Technical and Political Challenge," *Science*, 8 November 2002, 1201–1202.

### -- Discussion of Reading 2 -----

1. When did the West first become aware of the Minaret of Jam? (It was unknown to the West until the 1950s. It came to the attention of scholars in 1957.)
2. Explain the disagreement between the local villagers and aid workers and officials from UNESCO about the minaret. (Local villagers and aid workers insist that they need roads to bring food and medicines into the impoverished region. UNESCO officials insist that these roads could easily damage the minaret, and they also fear that road building will accelerate looting of the area by providing looters access to mechanized tools.)
3. What temporary compromise was reached? (All roadwork must cease within one kilometer of the minaret until a more detailed plan can be worked out.)

4. What wider struggle is going on in Afghanistan? (The struggle is to honor and rescue Afghanistan's cultural heritage while reviving the economy—and to resolve differences without resorting to assault rifles.)
5. Describe the physical appearance of the minaret. (Built late in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, the minaret soars 65 meters above the valley. The tower features elaborate lacelike brickwork, and elaborate Kufic script encircles the tower in aquamarine.)
6. What purposes have been suggested for the minaret? (Suggestions include a ceremonial gateway to the Ghorid homeland, a victory tower, part of a mosque long vanished, or the site of the legendary city of Firuzkoh.)
7. What problems with the tower alarmed the Italian engineer Andrea Bruno and UNESCO officials? (Erosion from the Jam River and the pronounced lean of the tower alarmed them.)
8. Explain the steps already taken and future plans to preserve and strengthen the tower. (Huge metal baskets filled with stone were used to shore up the banks of the rivers to protect the minaret from a flood. The next step is to examine the foundations and measure the exact position in order to propose how to strengthen the fragile minaret.)
9. Why does the prospect of road-building worry UNESCO consultant Andrea Bruno? (He says that work on a road has made systematic excavation of the area by looters possible. Widespread looting in the valley has intensified since 1999.)
10. How does the UNESCO designation of Jam as a World Heritage Site protect the minaret? (It confers at least paper protection to the minaret and the area surrounding it. Any new structure built nearby—roads or buildings—must undergo strict review.)
11. What was Governor Ismael Khan's attitude toward the minaret? (He told Bruno and other UNESCO officials that he was worried about the monument's stability and that the organization's efforts "are good news for us.")
12. Why is the backing of Governor Ismael Khan so important to the preservation of the minaret? (Ismael Khan is a powerful man, and in a land where raw power is still an important currency, those words might be worth all of UNESCO's paper.)
13. Which archaeological sites in Afghanistan or in other countries would you like to visit? Explain your answer.

## Vocabulary . . . . .

Fill in the blanks with the correct words. Use each word only once.

archaeological	fragile	upheavals	designation
accelerate	debris	preservationists	heritage
devastating	impoverished	bureaucrats	erosion

Since preserving historic sites is a way to keep a country's ancient culture and heritage alive, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has designated World Heritage Sites around the world. There were 730 of these amazing sites as of December 2002. Even though most countries take pride in having the UNESCO designation, some have seen the sites as ways to strengthen the economies of their countries and have not hesitated to commercialize these archaeological and architectural wonders. The question is how to balance tourism at these breathtaking locations with the need to protect and preserve their existence.

The Great Pyramid at Giza in Egypt, the oldest and most famous World Heritage Site, is the only surviving Wonder of the Seven Ancient Wonders of the world. Construction of this immense geometric shape probably began about 2478 B.C.<sup>1</sup> It was built by Pharaoh Khufu (Cheops) and intended to be used as a royal tomb. The Pyramid, which covers 13 acres, was originally 481 feet high, but now has a height of 451 feet.<sup>2</sup> The ravages of time, heavy tourism, and air pollution have had devastating effects, including erosion of the stones. The Egyptian government has considered various methods that would lessen the environmental damage.

The incredible Machu Picchu, a World Cultural Heritage Site in Peru, was discovered by Yale archaeologist Hiram Bingham in 1911.<sup>3</sup> The granite stone remnants of a 15th-century Incan civilization are situated high in the Andes at an altitude of 8,000 feet. The magical setting for this sacred city evokes feelings of mystery and eternity. Because more than 300,000 tourists come to Machu Picchu every year, there is concern in Peru about erosion of the Inca roads and pollution of the ruins.<sup>4</sup> However, the government of Peru is interested in the financial benefits that tourism provides to a/an impoverished economy, so the government and the preservationists have different priorities. Moreover, at one time, a company wanted to build cable cars to replace the buses that now carry tourists up a narrow, twisting

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1. "Age of Great Pyramid Is in the Stars," *Current Science*, 9 February 2001, 13.  
2. "Traveler's Notebook: Unforgettable," *Town and Country*, January 2003, 91.  
3. Jeffrey Kluger. "Spiritual Retreat," *Time*, 24 February 2003, 46-47.  
4. "The Americas: Road to Ruin; Tourism in Peru," *The Economist*, 21 July 2001, 29.

road to the top of the mountain where Machu Picchu is located.<sup>5</sup> Fortunately, this plan, which would have destroyed the fragile natural habitat, was not approved.

In Greece, the home of the 2004 Olympics, the Parthenon on the Acropolis had been undergoing restoration. This was a longstanding project in Athens, but because of problems with funding and arguments among government bureaucrats, the Parthenon remained covered with scaffolding and surrounded by debris for ten years. As the date of the Olympics approached, the Greek government suddenly decided to accelerate the renovation.<sup>6</sup> Of course, preservationists did not want the complex work done in a hurry. If any damage to the fifth-century B.C. treasure were to occur, it would be a catastrophe. Lena Lambrinou, an architect working on the Parthenon, said: “We can only hope and pray that what we are doing now to protect this great beautiful site will be considered the right thing to have done.”<sup>7</sup>

Yemen, a country in the Middle East with a 7,000-year-old history, has countless archaeological wonders, but these ancient ruins had been neglected, and tourism was not encouraged. In fact, the country had not had many visitors due to political upheavals; however, in May 1990 the Republic of Yemen became a democracy.<sup>8</sup> Now conservationists have taken on the project of rebuilding the Royal Citadel of Sana’a, which was designated a World Heritage Site in the early 1990s. Yet there are no UNESCO officers in Yemen and little funding, so the country is struggling to begin the preservation of Yemen’s vast heritage.<sup>9</sup> According to Marco Livadiotti, a consultant to the government, “There are no rules or conditions to protect Yemen’s heritage, no inventories of its monuments, no rules governing what happens to a place once it is given protected status. How can we protect our heritage when we don’t know what there is to protect?”<sup>10</sup>

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5. Peter Davey. “Outrage,” *The Architectural Review*, October 2001, 33.

6. Helena Smith. “A Cloud Hangs over the Temple,” *New Statesman*, 29 July 2002, 17.

7. *Ibid.*, 17.

8. Karen Thomas. “A Showcase for Yemen’s Past,” *History Today*, June 2002, 5.

9. *Ibid.*, 6.

10. *Ibid.*, 6.