

Ancient Cultural Sites in War and Disaster Zones

Posted on September 17, 2018

Cultural Heritage Sites and Their Historical Significance

The famous and most mysterious civilization of all times named as Indus Valley Civilization and its features still exist in the northwestern regions of South Asia. Its existence is predicted mainly at the time of 3300 to 1300 BCE. The archeologists are still not able to find out that what the religious views of the civilization were and what were the main reasons for the destruction of Indus Valley.

The Buddhas of Bamiyan were statues created between the era of the 4th and 5th centuries. These were crafted into a cliff in the area of Bamiyan, Hazarajat, in the country of Afghanistan. The Buddhas of Bamiyan's height were 53 and 35 meters, and these were created using these art designs. The statues were designed so that the expressions of the faces were clear, and their structure was based on straw and stucco. They were destroyed in 2001 by the Taliban (an extremist Muslim terrorist group), who considered these statues idols, so they decided to destroy them. Another ancient site named Palmyra, which was an ancient city in Syria. It was an ancient city established in the late second Millennium BC. There were many monumental projects, including the Great Colonnade and the Temple of Bel. When the civil war started in 2015, Palmyra came under the complete control of Islamic rulers who destroyed the city and its ancient sites. Mausoleum Alpha Moya in Timbuktu, the country of Mali, was one among the different mausoleums that were destroyed by Islamic terrorists. Almost 16 mausoleums were destroyed in the Conflict of War 2012. These were historical heritages of Muslims, including saint shrines and several ancient works were there that were destroyed badly by the Muslim extremists.

The Indus Valley Civilization is considered mysterious due to its unique structure, features, characteristics, and culture. Many materials are found that represent several important aspects of the civilization, but still, many aspects are not clear to the archeologists. The main features that are important about the civilization include the structural design of the cities, baked brick houses, water, and waste management systems, art and handicraft systems, urban planning, and the style of designing the cities. The mysterious things include some major factors, and the reasons behind its destruction are still not clear. Mausoleum Alpha Moya in Timbuktu, Palmyra in Syria, and The Buddhas of Bamiyan are some ancient sites that were destroyed due to war and conflicts. These all were destroyed by the Muslim extremist people named Taliban (Terrorists).

National Responsibility for Heritage Protection

The protection of ancient sites is important because of several reasons. The major one is that these sites are representations of old cultures and ancient times and serve the world through their ancient historical events. These sites are the heritage of world cultures, and it is significant to protect these sites in their original form.

Moreover, the ancient sites are worthy of the archeologists who study the ancient sites and define their historical significance (Bussiere, 2016). They are the ones who provide a detailed analysis of the history of the ancient sites and provide details about all the small or large elements present in the ancient sites. Many times, ancient sites are damaged by uncertain circumstances such as war, accidents, earthquakes, floods, rainfall, or volcano erosions. Except for war, other scenarios occurred by nature, and there are fewer measures that could be taken in these scenarios to protect the ancient sites. However, humanmade incidents could be stopped to protect the ancient sites.

The countries that have their ancient cultural sites are most responsible for protecting their cultural heritage. However, when some war scenarios occur, other world countries and international organizations should try to take action to protect the ancient sites in any country facing the war. Historical heritage is important and needs preservation. When any war or conflict scenario occurs, the most integral factor is to recover the place as soon as possible.

International Responsibility and Threats to Cultural Sites

After the countries, world communities are responsible for the safety and protection of ancient historical sites. It is because the ancient sites help the modern world to learn about the past, cultures, pattern of people and their lives, and their whole living structure. The ancient sites help to understand the past social structures and help to learn from the failures of the past that should not be repeated in the future. The ancient sites are also important because they invite innovation and economic profit.

Many countries are earning a huge rate of profit from the tourism of their ancient sites by the other world people. These ancient sites also help to boost the culture of tourism and provide profits to the country ("5 Reasons why we should Preserve Heritage Sites", 2014). When countries fail to protect their ancient sites, such as in war situations or conflict situations, then the world countries are responsible for the protection of these sites.

The people who are responsible for the destruction of ancient sites are the ones who do not care about the importance of these sites. Many times, cultural, religious, and ethnic issues increased that led the people to destroy ancient sites, such as the terrorist extremist people in the destruction of Mausoleum Alpha Moya in Timbuktu, Palmyra in Syria, and The Buddhas of Bamiyan. When the

scenarios of destruction are humanmade, then the situations are preventable and inevitable, but in the case of natural disasters and incidents such as earthquakes, the conditions are not preventable.

Artifacts, Archaeology, and Evidence of the Past

The artwork is important because it is linked to an ancient site, and it helps to provide evidence of historical events. Many countries that pay attention to the safety of their ancient sites, such as the United States of America, the United Kingdom, and many others, protect the artwork of their ancient sites. Many times, the artworks are placed in museums under the protection of high security so that these artworks can be secured in a proper pattern.

The ancient sites such as Mausoleum Alpha Moya in Timbuktu, Palmyra in Syria, The Buddhas of Bamiyan, and the Indus Valley Civilization are ones that might be overlooked sometimes, but many world organizations worked to protect the artworks of these sites. The biggest example of Indus Valley civilization is in which several writing symbols, artwork, sculpture, crafts, and metal works are found. In the National Museum of New Delhi, India, the artwork of the Indus Valley civilization is placed with protection.

UNESCO Restoration and Global Heritage Preservation

Moreover, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) took part in the restoration of the Mausoleum Alpha Moya in Timbuktu. It helped to recover the sites of different mausoleums that were destroyed by the Muslim extremist people. The organization helped the local people to recover their ancient work and to recover their dignity back ("Timbuktu marks rebuilding of mausoleums destroyed by Islamists," 2016). The Islamist people destroyed the Buddhas of Bamiyan, and the recovery measures are designed to initiate the remedial measures. The organization UNESCO designed the remedial measures, but these have not been initiated yet due to several issues in the country (Bobin, 2015).

The ancient sites, their artwork, and their security are important as these sites are the cultural and societal heritage of the world countries. The countries that have ancient sites are responsible for the security of their sites and need to protect these sites with protective measures. Moreover, after the countries, international archeological world organizations and all world countries are also responsible for protecting the ancient historical sites. These sites link the modern world to the historical world and provide in-depth knowledge about historical cultures and people that existed in the world in the past centuries.

Ancient sites such as Mausoleum Alpha Moya in Timbuktu, Palmyra in Syria, and The Buddhas of Bamiyan were destroyed by humans for several reasons. The measures that humans take to destroy

ancient sites are preventable, and several things have been initiated to protect them from humanmade disasters. However, in the case of natural disasters and incidents such as earthquakes, floods, and rainfall, the situations are not preventable. Many world organizations, such as UNESCO, work on the global level to secure the world heritage present in the form of ancient sites. These organizations are helping countries apply measures to save their ancient sites and the sites that have been destroyed by people or natural disasters. They are trying to restore these sites, such as the Mausoleum Alpha Moya in Timbuktu, which was restored by UNESCO. Also, UNESCO is trying to save the Buddhas of Bamiyan, but the initiatives have not yet been taken due to the difficult scenarios in Afghanistan. All the sites that have been destroyed and need remedial measures in the world should be restored appropriately to preserve the ancient heritage of the world.

References

5 Reasons Why We Should Preserve Heritage Sites. (2014). *GoUNESCO / Go UNESCO*. Retrieved 30 March 2018, from <https://www.gounesco.com/why-preserve-heritage-sites/>

Bobin, F. (2015). *Disputes damage to rebuilding Afghanistan's Bamiyan Buddhas.* *The Guardian*. Retrieved 30 March 2018, from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jan/10/rebuild-bamiyan-buddhas-taliban-afghanistan>

Bussiere, L. (2016). *Why protect archaeological sites? / The TARL Blog.* *Sites.utexas.edu*. Retrieved 30 March 2018, from <https://sites.utexas.edu/tarl/2016/10/02/why-protect-archaeological-sites/>

Timbuktu marks rebuilding of mausoleums destroyed by Islamists. (2016). *the Guardian*. Retrieved 30 March 2018, from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/feb/04/timbuktu-marks-recovery-of-mausoleums-after-destruction-in-islamist-takeover>