

present can help to preserve sites – or at least retain a record of them before they disappear.

In the modern world, population growth, together with subsequent industrial and economic development are new threats, not to mention infrastructural development issues, such as dams, roads and housing projects.

Human conflict has also led to the destruction of archaeological resources. Perhaps the most well-known is the destruction of the sixth century monumental statues of the Buddhas of Bamiyan by the Taliban in 2001. Subsequent conflicts in Syria and Libya have also damaged archaeological sites. In Mali, the Timbuktu shrines and manuscripts have been under threat.

### Archaeological heritage management

Given that archaeological heritage is a material record of past human activities, it constitutes an outstanding instrument for a better knowledge of the past and for emphasizing cultural diversity that has emerged within any given territory in the course of history, irrespective of the present-day political context. Its protection and proper management is therefore essential (ICOMOS, 1990).

A primary objective of archaeological heritage management is the preservation of monuments and sites *in situ*, which implies not only the long-term conservation of the fixed heritage assets, but also all related records and collections (ICOMOS, 1990). Moreover, many socioeconomic benefits are associated with the management of the archaeological and historic environment. There is no doubt that the pyramids of Egypt have contributed to the socioeconomic development of that country.

The aim of archaeological heritage management is therefore to protect archaeological heritage as a source of collective memory and as an instrument for historical and scientific study. Archaeological heritage encompasses all past physical traces of humankind, whether on land or underwater. This includes not only monuments, buildings and other structures, but also entire sites, their contexts, and movable objects.

It has to be borne in mind that the buildings, features and complex settlements that are now archaeological remains were originally conserved and maintained as part of daily life and traditional practices. This involved change of use, alteration, destruction and rebuilding. Materials and contexts changed with time. As a result of their various values these places were able to survive in one form or another and passed on as archaeological remains. Some survived due to their historical or even esthetical values. Apart from the acknowledged scientific values of archaeology there are also associated cultural ones, which ensure that the remains and artefacts from archaeological sites continue to play an important role in societies all over the world.