



Acknowledgements:

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Ways to Support Preserving Mes Aynak

» **Host screenings** of the film for your community, learn more at www.SavingMesAynak.com/requestascreening/.

» **Sign the Change.org** petition asking Afghan President, Ashraf Ghani, and others to preserve the site. <http://tinyurl.com/PresidentGhani>

» **Write letters** to President Ghani and other Afghan officials expressing your support at <http://president.gov.af/en/form/contactus>.

» **Contact your local U.S. embassy** or your closest Afghan embassy to let them know that you support the protection of Mes Aynak: [www.USEmbassy.gov](http://www USEmbassy.gov).

» **Follow us on Facebook and Twitter.** Use the hashtag #SaveMesAynak to tell your social network why Mes Aynak matters to you.

» **Contact your UNESCO office** and let them know that you want to preserve Mes Aynak. (<http://en.unesco.org/countries/field-offices>)

» **Volunteer to translate** our film into other languages to reach a global audience. www.savingmesaynak.com/translate-the-film/

» **Share your ideas** via savingmesaynak@kartemquin.com, or through our website, www.SavingMesAynak.com.

Kartemquin (www.Kartemquin.com) is a collaborative center for documentary media makers who seek to foster a more engaged and empowered society. In 2016 Kartemquin celebrated 50 years of sparking democracy through documentary. The educational and impact campaign was produced by by Kartemquin, Blueshift and the filmmaker.

The filmmaker would like to thank all the archeologists who are risking their lives to excavate Mes Aynak.

To Learn More Visit www.SavingMesAynak.com

Endnotes:

¹ Graham-Harrison, Emma. "Mes Aynak Highlights Afghanistan's Dilemma over Protecting Heritage." *The Guardian*. May 23, 2013. Accessed November 19, 2016. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/may/23/mes-aynak-ruins-afghanistan-copper>.

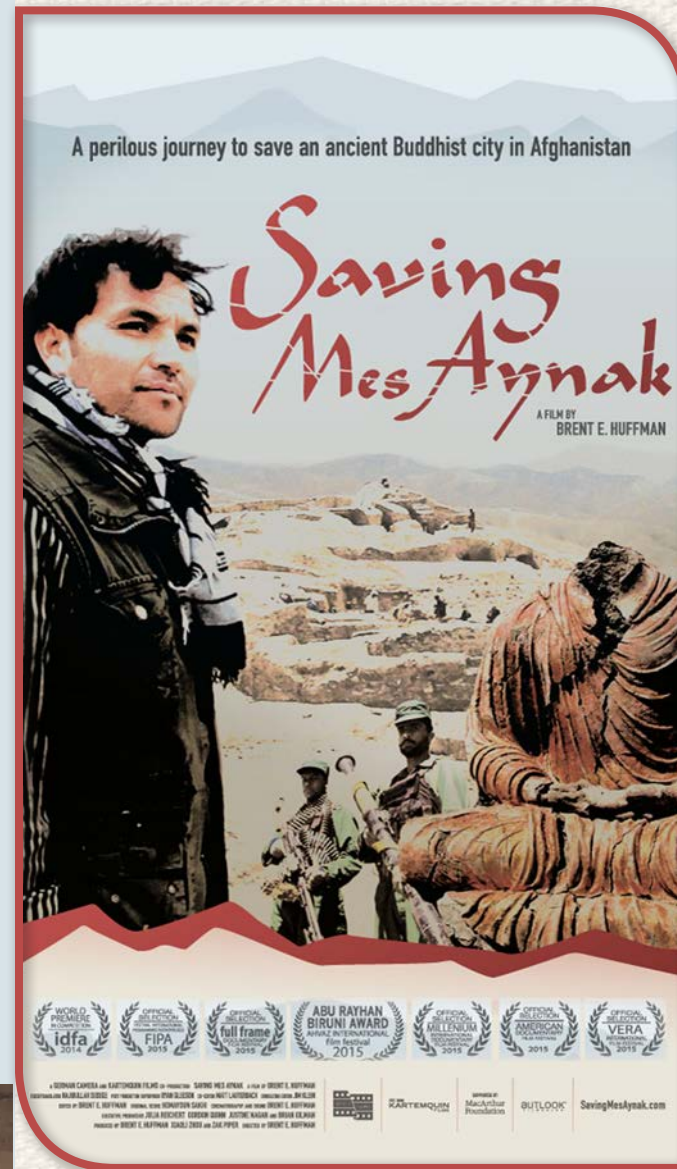
^{2,5} Noorani, Javed. "Aynak: A Concession for Change." *Integrity Watch Afghanistan*. November 2013. Accessed November 19, 2016. https://iwaweb.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/aynak_a_concession_for_change_english.pdf.

³ Huffman, Brent E. "Erasing the History of Buddhist Afghanistan One Mine at a Time." *The Martin Mary Center for the Advanced Study of Religion*. June 13, 2013. Accessed November 19, 2016. <https://divinity.uchicago.edu/sightings/erasing-history-buddhist-afghanistan-one-mine-time-brent-e-huffman>.

⁴ Huffman, Brent E. "Ancient Site Needs Saving Not Destroying." *CNN*. September 24, 2012. Accessed November 19, 2016. <http://www.cnn.com/2012/09/22/opinion/afghanistan-buddha-site-mine/>.

"NOBODY SHOULD ALLOW THEIR CULTURAL IDENTITY TO BE ERASED."

— Qadir Temori, in *Saving Mes Aynak*



Mes Aynak is invaluable to our shared global history and heritage. Together, we can create the social awareness and political pressure to protect and preserve the ancient city and environment from destructive mining.

Letter from the Filmmaker, Brent E. Huffman



"Saving Mes Aynak is ultimately a story of hope. It is a film that is optimistic for a better future for Afghanistan, a country plagued by over 30 years of perpetual war, yet containing one of the richest cultural histories in the world. The documentary is dedicated to Afghan archaeologists like Qadir Temori who face constant threats from the Taliban, private industry, and their own government to preserve this ancient archaeological site.



Saving Mes Aynak documents these courageous efforts to protect and preserve invaluable cultural heritage, and represents a voice for the voiceless — a vehicle where Afghans can speak out on camera against the injustices happening all around them. Now these passionate, courageous voices will finally be heard."

More about Mes Aynak

Afghanistan's Mes Aynak ("little copper well" in Pashto) is situated in Logar Province, southeast of Kabul. An ancient Buddhist city, Mes Aynak sat at the heart of the Silk Road, a series of trade routes that connected East and West in the ancient world. Traders and pilgrims from many cultures passed through, bringing diverse wares, thoughts and perspectives. Comparable in size to Pompeii and Machu Picchu, the uniquely preserved findings at Mes Aynak include Buddha statues, including rare ones made of wood, temples, some of the oldest birch-bark manuscripts ever found, gold and copper coins, jewelry and painted murals that could all influence our understanding of Afghan and Buddhist history. To date, archaeologists estimate that only ten percent of the site has been revealed. Ironically, while copper mining likely set the stage for Mes Aynak's settlement centuries ago, the estimated \$100 billion of copper still there may lead to its destruction as the Afghan government has sold the mining rights to the land.¹

Mining at Mes Aynak has not yet begun, but continued social and political awareness and pressure will be necessary to protect it.



The Cultural and Environmental Cost of Mining



WHAT MES AYNAK WILL LOOK LIKE WITH AN OPEN-PIT MINE

In 2007, the Chinese state-owned China Metallurgical Group Corporation (MCC) signed a 30 year lease for to mine copper at Mes Aynak. Their proposed "open-pit" mining method would destroy Mes Aynak, the surrounding mountain range, and

six nearby villages. Open-pit mining uses massive amounts of water, already scarce in the area, and will pollute existing water sources which serve both Kabul and Pakistan.² Most pressingly, experts say that the damage open-pit mining would cause at Mes Aynak would be as devastating as what happened at the Berkeley pit in Butte, Montana which has turned the land so toxic that nothing can ever live on it again.³

What's Happening Now?

- Archaeological excavation has slowed due to the threat of Taliban violence, the evacuation of foreign archaeologists, and the persistent lack of appropriate funding.
- Priceless discoveries continue to be unearthed including three life-size Buddha statues, one of which is complete and untouched by looters.
- Qadir Temori is now Director of Archaeology in the Ministry of Culture, and, despite the ongoing threats of violence to him and his family, his commitment to Mes Aynak is unwavering.
- Afghan president Ashraf Ghani was prompted to visit the site in 2014 by a petition signed by 84,000 people from around the world, and he stated his support for its preservation.

Rescue Archaeology

Temori and other archaeologists believe a full excavation of Mes Aynak should take thirty to forty years, but MCC agreed to wait only three. Because of the time pressure, the team resorted to rescue archaeology, a form of excavation meant to quickly salvage as much as possible, but which may damage fragile structures and artifacts. In order to permanently preserve and protect Mes Aynak, the archaeologists and the filmmaker are advocating for rescue archaeology to stop.

Conflict & Corruption

Afghanistan is in need of foreign investment to rebuild, develop, and resist the resurgent Taliban. Yet there is little accountability or oversight to prevent corruption as funds flow in. Despite sizable promises of international funding, much of the money promised never made it to Mes Aynak, leaving the team without payment or appropriate technology. Furthermore, destroying Mes Aynak may set a precedent for other sites in Afghanistan to be mined without regard for cultural heritage or environmental consequences.⁴

The Afghan People

Villagers around Mes Aynak were originally supportive of mining, as they were promised jobs, improved infrastructure, and compensation and reimbursement if their village was displaced. Yet none of these promises have been kept. New jobs have gone mostly to Chinese workers, preliminary drilling depleted the water table, and the resettlement village is in an unsustainable flood zone. Neither the villagers nor the Afghan government seem likely to see economic benefits from the mining, as funds continue to be lost to corruption or stay in the hands of MCC and its Chinese workers.⁵

