

REPORT ON THE PROGRESS OF WORKS AT HERAT

To: Mawlawi M. Naim Safi
Head of the Department of Planning
Ministry of Information and Culture
From: Robert Kluyver, SPACH representative in Afghanistan

Visit of SPACH representative: Monday 2 to Saturday 7 October 2000

Purpose of visit: monitoring of the project, sorting out difficulties, launching our project at Jam

General Opinion: the project in Herat is advancing nicely. Engineer Shafi, the project supervisor, is doing fine, and has shown himself to be competent and very dedicated. The Department of Historical Monuments has been able to solve some difficult questions, and is cooperating nicely. Overall, there is a good team spirit, all seem happy with the project.

The project in Jam is all ready to start. We are waiting for the final agreement with the Ministry of Information and Planning, which we hope shall come soon, as the weather might become too cold if we wait too long.

Main problem encountered: The Department of Historical Monuments in Herat was feeling a bit uneasy after receiving a letter from the vice-minister Mawlawi Hotaki requesting the project to be stopped pending further notification. It would be good if the Ministry of Information and Culture could send a new letter to Herat to assure the local Department of Historical Monuments of its support.

In Jam the project implementor, Gul Agha Karimi of Payham-e Ghor Rehabilitation, requested SPACH to ask the Ministry of Information and Culture to dispatch one of its members, preferably Engineer Maiel, working for the Department of Historical Monuments, and SPACH trainee, to supervise our project in Jam.

I have also met the Deputy Governor of Ghor, the responsible of the Department of Information and Culture in Ghor, and his colleague in Herat (Mawlawi Hakimi), as well as the head of the Department of Foreign Relations in Herat (Mawlawi Dadullah) and of course the members of the Department of Historical Monuments in Herat. All these dignitaries were happy to hear about SPACH's projects in Herat and Jam and expressed their full support.

Detail of the progress on different subparts of the project (please refer to project proposal)

Project One: construction of a wall around Gawhar Shad Mausoleum

The work is advancing nicely, albeit at a slower pace than expected. The wall will look good when finished and I've received several compliments on it from passers-by and neighbours. Some would like the whole wall to be made of brick and cement according to present-day fashion, but that would be much too costly and, I'm sure, much less esthetic.

Several hurdles have been cleared:

- the terrain will only be open from the East side through the main gates (to the detriment of neighbours living behind it and who will now have to walk around);
- On the east (gate) side, the wall is being built *on the road* to allow it to make a straight line; this was not easy to obtain as road space, here as elsewhere, is very difficult to reclaim.
- Mr. Ross from the UN demining agency has accepted to lend us a couple of deminers, while a team under the supervision of the archaeologist Mr. Rasuli sifts through the rubble of Minar 6 which may contain unexploded ordinance or mines. Once the rubble has been cleared we may finish that section of the wall.

- the religious authorities have allowed us to build the wall close around the big madrassah which is being built on terrain once belonging to the park. We thus reclaim more than one hectare for the park, whose total surface is now approximately 6 hectares.
- IDPs are no longer settling on the land though one Kutchi tent was still standing in the middle of our site.

Moreover, since the last week of September water is again flowing through the Enjil canal around the site, allowing us to use its water. Up to the present day we have had to use the Herat Department of Historical Monuments water tanker, since mudbrick construction uses a lot of water.

The Gawhar Shad mausoleum has been cleaned and is used as office space, the enormous pile of tiles from the site has been organised and the mausoleum is securely locked, whereas before one could easily climb inside.

A shack has been built to keep the tools, which were in the beginning stocked in the Gawhar Shad mausoleum.

Alisher Nawoi mausoleum has been temporarily converted into a straw deposit.

The well once installed by DACAAR has been reopened for drinking and ablutions water.

Dr. Rasuli, an archaeologist, has arrived in the last week of September. He is not only supervising the works for the Ministry of Information and Culture, but is also responsible for ensuring no damage is done to archaeological remains. On the day after his arrival he stopped the digging of the foundations in the northern section of the eastern wall, as he saw they would cut through what seems to be an ancient wall. He will excavate around it to determine its value and importance. He's also responsible for sifting through the rubble of Minar 6 destroyed by Russian artillery fire. This should provide enough bricks for the repair of the other minars, and certainly a lot of fine tilework.

He has performed a series of test diggings on the site, and has determined that in most places any archaeological remains, if present, must be located some two meters under the surface; no harm would be done to these by our constructions and the trees.

He will employ a team of workers to which he'll also give some training. His presence is a guarantee that no major mistakes will be made.

Finally, a decision which has to be made urgently is the kind of gates we will put in, and their location. The Architect Hajji Ahad of the Herat Department of Historical Monuments made two drawings, one a replica of the gates that existed in the 70s, the other a beautiful one consisting of two smaller iwans surrounding a higher central one, with a small building on either side. Mrs Neubacher apparently preferred the replica on the grounds that they were the original ones and cheaper, but they are quite ugly; moreover the park has often changed and there is no reason why we should absolutely stick to its last version. Also the guard/gardener buildings on either side of the gate would come in very handy, otherwise the mausoleums might be used for this purpose, or makeshift shacks/containers be set up.

I asked Hajji Ahad to make budgets for both of them, and submit them to SPACH, since I think this ought to be a collective decision. As to the location, two possibilities exist: one in the center of the East wall, where they used to be (they're closer to the city, in front of a main road arriving at the park, and give better access to the whole park) and one in front of the mausoleum of Gawhar Shad, Jawed's plan (they would be opposite some mechanical workshops). I asked the Department of Historical Monuments, where opinions are divided, to reach a consensus on this point.

Project 2: Construction of a mudbrick wall around Sultan Hussain Baigara Mausoleum

This project has not properly started yet, with the exception of the making of mudbricks. Fortunately the Department of Historical Monuments succeeded in building a traffic limitation gate similar to the one near Gawhar Shad to avoid the passage of trucks (a previous attempt had been defeated by strong protests from the transportation sector

and neighbours). The Taleban guards, here as near Gawhar Shad, are being very helpful in limiting interference in our work by passers-by.

Engineer Shafi will prepare complete drawings and a new estimation for this project.

Project 3: Repair of the five minarets of the Musallah complex

In the nine weeks since the scaffolding started to be put up around Minaret #4 we haven't gotten further than reaching the entrance of the minar and cleaning it (there were literally tons of bird droppings). This project part, certainly the most important one from a conversationist viewpoint, was dramatically underestimated. Not only does it take a long time to put up the scaffolding (the scaffolding actually has to go all the way to the top, on all sides of the minaret at once), but also, the damage could not be correctly verified from outside.

As it is, the central spine of this minaret has been wiped out in three parts, two of which are more than a meter long, and parts of the stairs have disappeared, in one place completely, in another partially. It is actually quite amazing (and a tribute to the 16th century architects) that the inside of the minaret hasn't completely crumbled.

There are therefore major repairs to be made. Engineer Shafi will make exact drawings of all necessary interventions, and a new budget will follow, taking into account only this minaret. I suggest that we limit the present project to this minaret, which will already greatly exceed in cost and time the planned amounts for all five of them. In case this restoration is deemed successful, we can make new plans and find new funding for the other four.

The bricks to be used for the restoration will be provided by the rubble of minaret #6; some of those required are quite special (the outer bricks of the spine have one rounded side) and it has not yet been verified whether both sets of bricks are exactly similar. As to the mortar, it has been sent to Islamabad for verification, in order to make exactly the same one.

The repairs do not seem to be too difficult, if done carefully, for there is no special brickwork and enough is still standing as an example of what is to be done. I have the impression that Engineer Shafi is up to the task, as he is fully conscious of the importance of this work and is determined to proceed cautiously. He is of course working in careful collaboration with the Department of Historical Monuments.

Another problem to be solved is the lack of scaffolding. The Department of Historical Monuments does not have enough of it to reach to the highest point where repairs should be made. Our team is currently seeking a solution to this problem.

Project 4: Creation of the Gawhar Shad Park

Although work on this part of the project will not start until December it is high time to start thinking about how to create it, as this is what will obviously have the greatest impact on the public.

I have advised Engineer Shafi to seek the help from a professional gardener (landscapists are surely not available) and to make the plans in collaboration with the Department of Historical Monuments staff. Before reaching a decision, I suggested, the plans should be submitted to all gardening and park experts still available in the Herat region for their input. This may be a painstakingly slow process, but the stakes warrant it.

For example, some neighboring children I spoke to expressed their desire to have a football field, which I think is a perfectly reasonable demand (the park is easily big enough to leave one open space for ball games). Likewise, the playground should be somewhere near the gates. The question of where to put the gates rearises. As most people will come for strolling, picnics and the playground, I think it would be wise to keep the mausolea a bit secluded, which is more fitting for the visitors who come specially to the mausolea.

To make our task easier, the former pathways, fountain space etc. are still quite visible. Although a good reason to follow the earlier layout is that it was probably better thought out than ours, we may deviate from it when improvements may be made.

The plans that will be made will show each tree, each flowerbed (not included in the budget, but hopefully provided at low cost or free of charge), and all infrastructural elements. The well will be located in higher ground towards the northwest corner of the park. We must still make an agreement with the Herat municipal authorities to arrange for the diesel and maintenance of the water pump.

The cost of the park creation must also include some formerly omitted items: for example, tubes to link waterchannels under the pathways, toilet and washing facilities, not to speak of lighting - which can be installed in a later phase, for it will take about two years before the garden is open to the public. Engineer Shafi reckoned it would take about two months, including the planting of the trees, to complete the park.

Project 5: Clearing and re-opening of the citadel

Although the clearing of the upper part of the citadel has already begun, I have decided to halt the project. A closer inspection of the main gates, to be reopened in order to have access to the upper part of the citadel and the projected office space there, convinced all present that this was a major project in itself, that would cost at least 30,000.00 \$, according to Engineer Shafi. Indeed, the walls on both sides of the main gate would need to be fortified, for both are falling. The eastern wall does not support anything (and is not supported by anything) and would have to be torn down and rebuilt from scratch on new foundations. The western wall seems to reach all the way down to the back of the ex-archaeological museum and its collapse could cause major damage. As it is the guard-building on its western side shows big cracks along a north-south line, all the way through the building. We could not access the archaeological museum premises under it, but they may show the same signs of deterioration on the same crack.

In addition, the causeway leading up to the gate on the outside would have to be entirely rebuilt, for right now it is simply inaccessible. I suggest a proper architectural study be made of this project by a competent team, with a new budget. Meanwhile we should continue to lobby to have the ammunition depot removed from the lower part of the citadel; this would be much easier of course if we had funds lined up to do the restoration work.

Presently it makes no sense to create an office space in the upper part of the citadel, if we have no direct access to it and would have to pass through the military installations to reach it. That's why I stopped the project.

Project 6: Jam minaret

I had the occasion to visit this isolated site again, and this time with a couple more hours to spend there. I also had longer discussions with the Jam Preservation Committee set up by Mr. Karimi from PGRO to follow-up on the first half of SPACH's project.

I climbed high into the mountains around the minaret to get a good overall view of the site; from there it is quite obvious that the Hari Rud has a straight left bank up to a distance of some 15 meters from the minaret, where it curves outward to meet the Jam Rud river. The flood protection wall should follow this line to avoid it coming under too much pressure of the springtime flash floods; the surface added at the foot of the minaret would be of a triangular shape, the right angle being at the intersection of the two rivers, the wall being about 8 meters long on the Jam Rud side and 25 meters on the Hari Rud side. From the base of the minaret to the river there would thus be at least 6 meters.

By walking in a semi-circle around the minaret high up in the mountains I also managed to determine, albeit in a rough manner, the direction of inclination of the minaret, which had eluded us earlier and foiled our attempts to measure its exact angle of inclination. The photographs should allow me to study the matter more closely.

Finally, I examined the illegal excavations around the minaret. These extend on both slopes around the minaret and are particularly extensive in a valley a bit further west, on

the opposition side, which leads to Bidan. The excavations have picked up recently, and I saw some on the flat surface adjacent to the minaret which has been relatively untouched. The Committee had stopped these excavations, incurring the wrath of the diggers, and I greatly appreciate their selfless efforts to stop the digging, as well as Gul Agha Karimi who is their driving spirit. The excavations in question had revealed beautiful brickwork (flowershaped, probably from the same period as the minaret) both on the walls and on the floor of the excavated site. Along the riverbed one also sees several remains of brick walls. Certainly, professional excavations would allow to reconstruct the famous Ghorid capital, Firuzkoh. A major source of touristic income for the future generations of Jam village, if the site is not spoiled.

In Jam village, which can be reached by truck since a local merchant had the road repaired, I inspected the future wheat storage facilities and made a contract with both the storekeeper and the local Sayed who will supervise the distribution of the wheat, making them both responsible for their respective areas. I had these contracts signed to avoid abuse, so far away from our permanent supervision.

The metal gabions required for the project can be found in Herat (imported from Iran) which will be much cheaper than bringing them from Kabul. I propose however, for esthetic reasons, to continue the wooden gabion wall which seems so satisfactory along the Jam Rud side, and the metal gabions on the rougher Hari Rud side. Engineer Shafi agreed with this in principle. He planned to go soon to Jam with Gul Agha Karimi to make the exact plans.

I've also suggested Engineer Shafi and Gul Agha Karimi to take care of the replanting of the trees cut for last years project; apparently there's a nursery in Kamenj, nearby, where saplings would be cheaper than transporting them from Herat, even if we can get them there free of charge. Some trees would be planted nearby (but not adjacent to) the existing wood-gabion wall, in the Jam Rud river bed, to provide extra flood protection and a nice setting. They would be irrigated by a little channel running between the trees and the floodprotection wall.

A little shack will be built for the tools, the guard and for making tea and lunch for the workers, who shall be busy up to Christmas if the project starts soon.

Finally, Gul Agha Karimi and Eng. Shafi expressed their concerns about the legal framework of our project. Mawlawi Abdul Haqq declared that the Herat Department of Historical Monuments could not be held responsible for what we were doing in Ghor province. Gul Agha has an authorization from Hotaki to carry out the works which mentions both phases, but it is a year old.

We're thinking of employing someone from the MoIC. I was thinking of Engineer Maiel, a serious young man who made the plans for Timur Shah Mausoleum and who I've selected for English language and computer training.

Conclusion

All in all everything is going fine, because our team is dedicated to the job, getting along nicely together, and sufficiently competent (and cautious where experience is lacking). Most of my fears were allayed. The remaining problems can be solved quite easily, and I will try to take care of them before my departure, on 30 October 2000.

END