

## SPACH Kabul Office Summary Report

Robert Kluyver, 09 May 2000

### PERSONAL SITUATION :

With the help of Joyenda and other people, I found my bearings rather quickly. Within a week after my arrival I had signed contracts for Joyenda (part time assistant), a driver and the borrowing of a UN car. I'm enjoying full support of the UNDP/UNOCHA staff, who besides lending me a car give me access to their satellite-e-mail service.

I have no personal communications means, which poses a security threat. That upsets the expats at the UNDP/UNOCHA and elsewhere, and I realized that on field-trips I have no means whatsoever of getting into touch with people that could help me.

*Therefore I require a satphone urgently (project 2).*

### OFFICE RENTAL :

I have opened an office for SPACH on 192 Chicken Street. The 210 square meter apartment will be used in the following way:

- 1 room for the SPACH representative in Kabul
- 1 guestroom for visitors
- 1 librarians / archive office with all valuable books
- 1 main office
- 1 dining cum conference room with a big table
- 1 reading and study room

It is our announced intention to open SPACH's research resources (books and magazines, later photoCD and General Survey results) to national and foreign researchers in the field of Afghanistan's Cultural Heritage.

*To make our office function, we need to hire a librarian/secretary who takes care of the day to day administration and another computer. If the library is to make sense, we need a book acquisition budget (projects 1 & 4).*

### AUTHORITIES :

With the invaluable assistance of Joyenda I have built good working relationships with the Ministry of Information and Culture (Deputy Minister Hotaq, Director of the Department of Planning and Foreign Relations Safi), with the Kabul Museum (director Amadyor, key-man Masudi), and with the Institute of Archaeology (Director Ferowski, senior members Rasuli, Azizi, etc.).

*Due to the unpredictable nature of Taleban policies it is difficult to engage constructively with the government institutions. SPACH must strengthen its position vis-a-vis its governmental partners. It is absolutely essential to register as all other NGOs have done, thus specifying our mandate and giving us official stature (project 3).*

I meet representatives of each institute at least once every two weeks. Hotaq is however under pressure from above to be less friendly towards foreigners - UN sanctions and inner power struggles have hardened the MoIC's stance towards us, but Hotaq's personal feelings remain positive.

*Hotaq wants to see some results of SPACH cooperation, and has requested support for publishing a magazine, Farhang, devoted to culture and destined for an international audience. His goodwill depends on this (project 10). In exchange, he has granted SPACH a blanket authorization to film monuments and sites in Afghanistan, a unique opportunity which we should use to make a documentary movie (project 12).*

The Kabul Museum being part of the MoIC, Amadyor has taken over Hotaq's role as SPACH partner. He is for example the man granting us photography permits. The Kabul Museum, pretty much empowered by the present division of government power, will remain a leading partner of SPACH in times to come.

*Ahmadyor and the museum staff have given priority to the creation of museum laboratory facilities (a project already approved by SPACH), the completion of the inventory (project 8), and reconstructing the Dar-ul Aman building (project 21).*

The Institute of Archaeology is subjected to the Academy of Sciences, which is led by hard-line Talebs. Ferowski is thus likewise under some pressure to be tough on us. This Institute has academic status and, although it has been thoroughly looted, still has a lot of documents and employs some competent archeologists.

*The Institute badly needs some support to rebuild its capacities, which are at present in a latent condition. They have requested SPACH support for several of their projects. Since they will certainly be our main implementing partner in any survey or exploration work, their requests for equipment seem justified (see projects 6 and 7).*

#### SURVEYING :

**Archives:** Before any meaningful survey work can be done, we must have a good grip on what has already been done. The SPACH library is an important tool, but the Kabul Museum and the Institute of Archaeology likewise have important archives (books, photographs, reports...) which must be mapped. Moreover, the Kabul Museum inventory will be useful to compare other finds. All this must become part of a major database, or system of compatible digital catalogues.

*For this and to facilitate communication we must equip our principle partners with computers and teach them how to use them (project 5). We will train young people to get them involved in cultural issues.*

**General Survey Plan:** In the second week of my stay in Kabul I devised a General Survey plan (see attached document) which must guide SPACH's survey plans for the years to come. It proposes a model for cooperation with the concerned government institutions to complete a general survey plan. It has been received enthusiastically by our partners, who have formulated some criticisms which have been incorporated in this second draft.

*Although such a survey is a major task and cannot be started tomorrow, we should give it consideration from the very beginning, and try to realize it (project 11).*

**SPACH initiatives:** I realized, while making a trip to the northern provinces with Dr. Jonathan Lee, historian specialized in Afghanistan, that much treasures remain to be unveiled. Despite the looting and the illegal excavations, there is no reason to be pessimistic about Afghanistan's capacity to refill a museum with a world-class collection such as that which disappeared.

*I would like to commission surveys of some of the more remarkable sites and monuments (projects 14, 15, 17, 20 and 22). The ideal would be if SPACH Kabul had some discretionary funds to spend on such surveys.*

#### CONSERVATION AND RESTORATION PLANS

I have been approached by Afghan professionals asking for SPACH support for their conservation and restoration projects. One of these projects is old and is based on a survey commissioned by SPACH (**18: Timur Shah Mausoleum**), others are the continuation of government funded projects (**21: Kabul Museum**, and **16: Khwaja Parsa**) while yet another is the brainchild of the Institute of Archaeology (**19: Tepe Maranjan**), and is the continuation of an excavation started before the mujahiddin wars by the same people at the Institute of Archaeology.

*SPACH should fund these initiatives which will allow Afghan professionals to work, restore some parts of their cultural heritage, provide tests for judging the levels of expertise, and allow for training opportunities.*