

FINAL REPORT ON SPACH'S PROJECT IN TEPE SARDAR, GHAZNI

Kabul, 22 August 2000

Results

On Monday 21 August, a SPACH team visited the site of Tepe Sardar in Ghazni to inspect the completed works planned by SPACH. My assistant Joyenda and I had seen the site before initiating the project and made a surprise visit while the works were in progress, in the third week of July.

During our surprise visit we had seen that the team was working with an enthusiasm and energy rarely observed in Afghanistan, thanks to the project implementor, Ghulam Naqshbandi Rajabi, a trustworthy collaborator of IsMEO. The fact that a relatively good lunch was served every day greatly increased everyone's motivation. The lunch was part of the budget.

At that time Naqshbandi had shown us which extra-project activities he planned to do, protecting other parts of the site of Tepe Sardar, with the money left over on the current budget. I agreed to that, and the result is truly pleasing, because now all archaeological remains are well protected by a layer of mud-plaster and intelligent drainage systems:

- the central stupa
- the remains of the eleven stupas behind it
- the Parinirvana chapel holding the remains of a 12 meter long Buddha statue
- the three chapels (Durga, Buddha feet and Nagas respectively)

These were the works originally planned; in addition the following structures have been thus closed/covered:

- the remains of half a dozen other votive stupas
- a Sanskrit inscription
- a chapel which originally held four statues
- remains of original walls and the excavations of the monastery

Thus everything on the site plan drawn by the IsMEO is now safely protected from the weather, vandalism and looting.

Recommendations

1. SPACH should carry out further protective works in Ghazni under Mr. Naqshbandi's supervision, to start with the mausoleum of Abdul Razzaq, restored by the IsMEO who turned it into a museum of Islamic Art. A project and budget have been drawn up and will soon be submitted to SPACH's Executive Committee.

2. Lunch should always be a part of the budget of work-intensive projects, because unskilled labourers in Afghanistan are generally undernourished and thus less effective. Besides, it saves time and energy when the labourers do not need to go home for lunch.

3. On any future projects in Ghazni we must include an employee of Kabul's Ministry of Information and Culture (MoIC) and one of the local authorities (in the former case, typically a member of the Department of Historical Monuments, in the latter, usually a guard). Both authorities will stop projects if they are not included on the payroll, regardless of whether they actually provide labour or not. A letter of the MoIC arrived on the very day that Naqshbandi completed the project, ordering it to be immediately interrupted. Our investigation showed that the MoIC objected to not having SPACH pay for one of its representatives to supervise the project. Actually, this is a pure bakshish because the said representative would not need to go to the site nor do anything else other than picking up his wage and handing it over to the MoIC. We cannot avoid such bakshish-paying. As to the guards employed by the local authorities, they in fact got a free lunch every day and Naqshbandi paid them an "incentive" to satisfy the governor. We must face the fact that present government systems in Afghanistan are thoroughly and fundamentally venal and keep it in mind when devising budgets.

Financial Balance

The works were carried out in exactly 30 days, such as planned. Naqshbandi slightly overspent on the agreed budget because of bakshish to the local authorities and to complete the extra-project activities, driving the total costs up to 1778 \$ instead of 1720 \$ such as planned, an overexpenditure of 3.3%. Seen his excellent results and obvious honesty I did not object.

He kept excellent accounts and has provided neat bills for all expenditures and clear salary-sheets.

Evidence

Photographs have been taken during and after the completion of the project.

Robert Kluyver
END