



SDNRP- Ministry of Mines and Petroleum SDNRP



Mes Aynak Archaeology Project

UP TO DATE PROGRESS REPORT (April- 2014)

Mes Aynak Archeological Progress

Staffing: by **resignation of Paul Murray the international team** number has been reduced to **11 specialists**: 9 archaeologists (including 1 architect-archaeologist), 1 geomatic officer and 1 conservator, however due to Nawroz break followed by presidential elections several team members (Amanda Watts, Rahmatjon Salomov, Roberta Marziani, Firuza Abdulwakhidova) were still staying this month on annual leave. Farrukh Safoyev returned to the project on 02APR2014.

Of **10 Afghan trainee-archaeologists** working on the project at the beginning of month only three or four were present in the camp while some other were not able to get back due to several reasons (closed roads in Ghazi province, avalanches on Salang Pass etc.). Their number returned to normal in the second half of April.

Only 14 days of April were accessible for fieldwork. Mostly due to **weather conditions** (heavy rainfalls) and **presidential elections period** the site as well as some public holidays (ex. 28APR2014), as per decision undertaken by the MoIC, was remaining completely closed for excavation for several days, particularly between 02APR2014 and 10APR2014 completely no activities were conducted. Thereupon April is the next month of a **very moderate progress of fieldwork**.

Absence of the most staff resulted in **temporary suspending weekly strategy meetings** however we held **two informal meetings to discuss objectives of our new work schedule**. Essential supervision on the staff through **individual written reporting** on the monthly basis is still continued. PMU management is reported on the weekly basis (**MAAP Weekly Reports**) and **“Monthly Brief Report**

on March 2014 Activities” was submitted to the Institute of Archaeology.

On 20APR2014 Dr. Farhad Yavazi and Marek Lemiesz (MAAP) **met with HE DM Sayed M. Khalili** to discuss preparing the documentation required for formal approval of the monuments removing from Mes Aynak.

MDC team is sustaining **demining operation on the western slope of the Aynak mountain**. Accomplishing has been re-scheduled for early May and that significantly delays timelines for walking survey in this area.

Several **visits of journalists** to Mes Aynak: Sean Callens with CCTV crew preparing documentary on copper mining (01APR2014) and Valerie Plesch (19APR2014). A tour on the archaeological site was given, moreover the journalists got a brief written information on current state of archaeological work.

No weekly teams’ meetings were held this month mostly as a consequence of suspended on-site work. Nonetheless we are going to resume them in May.

This month we were facing repeatedly with situation when **the international team is not informed** in advance by the MoICs **about either suspending or resuming work** on the site, as it was previously agreed. As a result the team members had to be ready to go to the field even those days when weather conditions were not conducive to any activities on the ground. Some efforts were undertaken to set better communication line between the teams in the future.

On 27APR2014, during visiting an area of Gol Hamid the archaeologists (Marek Lemiesz, Agnieszka Dolatowska and Aziz Addi) accompanied a group of workers were subjected to personal search by ANP/AFFP policemen. One of the soldiers was trying to touch Mrs. Dolatowska explaining this as ‘talashi’ procedure. When stopped by M. Lemiesz, some other ANP officers started a serious quarrel with Mr. Addin that soon after turned into a very serious incident that resulted in Aziz Addin being punched by a few soldiers and (probably) an NDS officer before leaving the place. Potentially this incident could result in far more fatal

consequences. Our **female colleague was almost a subject of an abuse** what is a reprehensible and punishable action either in Afghanistan or in Europe. And yet, **the MoIC employee became a victim of act of violence from the side of ANP/AFFP** officers who are assigned to protect the archaeological team. A relevant report was submitted to the PMU Management with request to undertake prompt action.

Fieldwork

Due to absence of the baulk of archaeological staff **regular excavation is currently ongoing on 7 sites** under the direct supervision of the MAAP: Mes004, Mes038, Mes045, Mes046, Mes052W, Mes058 and Mes059. At the end of April the team was preparing for suspending presently ongoing field activities within the Lower Town and moving to the Aynak mountain area (as the first phase of 2014 work program). Up to now unexcavated features had to be accomplished and all archaeologists have been requested to update the majority of current field record or to complete producing missing documentation.

- **Site Mes004** (temporarily supervised by Agnieszka Dolatowska and Sayed Ali Shah Payez, 6 workers): machinery supported removal of topsoil baulk in the western part of the site followed by handy excavation extended down to the '*karez*' area. This work revealed presence of another trench/canal (used to collect water?) that seems to be of earlier date than the *karez* masonry framework. Moreover, in one of sondage slots set up to determine stratigraphic sequence a full layout of a circular stone wall structure (ctx. no. 069) with an open 'mouth' from the south-west was registered, presumably a part of a feature connected with some water accumulation (a sort of pool?).
- **Site Mes038** (supervised by Farukh Safoev assisted by Sayed Hussain Rajabi, 12 workers): excavation was conducted near Room 29 in the southern part of the complex, as well as in steep area between Rooms 28 and 31, where on 29APR2014 remains of a rectangular wooden box (1.08x0.45x0.45m) containing some human bones were registered (probably an infant burial or *ossuarium*-type secondary deposit of pre-Islamic date). Significant artifacts recovered this month: a terracotta figurine of goddess Ardohshe (Room 28) and a silver coin of a Sassanid king Shapur II (Room31).

- **Site Mes045** (supervisor: Dr. Usmon Eshonzoda, assistant: Mohammad Ali Amiri, 7 workers): site cleaning, minor works at the top of the steep southern escarpment and along Rooms 17, 36 and Courtyard 32 in the northern site limit.
- **Site Mes046** (supervised by Sultan Masoud Muradi, between 10 and 6 workers): continuation of work in the Central Building's Room 18, final cleaning rooms in the southern and eastern premises for total station survey.
- **Site Mes052** (supervised by Hussain Ali Haidari, 6 workers): small scale excavation was run within Room 4/02 (removal of fill ctx no. 294), Rooms 4/03 (backfill ctx no. 267) and 4/05 (backfill no. 286 removed). A massive retention wall ctx. no. 293 has been partially exposed to the north
- **Site Mes58** (Dr. Dowdy Davlatkhoja assisted by Mirwais Qaderyar, 11 workers): cleaning walls and rooms 15, 16 and 40, exposing a 27m long section of an outer northern complex wall no. 67 was completed. In the southern extend of the site work was continued on exposing wall no. 69 with two semi-circular towers (one still under the access road). Among numerous small finds there are fragments of iron knives as well as 18 coins.
- **Site Mes059** (Dr. Rahmatsho Mahmadoev, 10 workers): continuation of work in Room AA2 and within terrace-form structures in the central part as well as excavation in areas A4-6 and D6-7. Entrances of vertical shafts of the subterranean galleries (canals system or storages) were initially unearthed. Among numerous small finds registered in April an unique head of a terracotta female figurine can be mentioned.

Machinery fieldwork: removal of topsoil baulk on Site Mes004 was completed this month, moreover we began cleaning the remaining 25m long part of the eastern wall of area Mes042 (suspended due to the excavator's breakdown). In addition, disposal of spoil heaps on Site Mes063+Mes064 was continued.

With the object of preparing catalogues of stupas and sculptures for MoIC (see below), over April Agnieszka Dolatowska and Marek Lemiesz carried out **photo record of over 30 stupas and several rooms containing sculpture decoration or murals** on the following sites: Mes003,

Mes007, Mes013, Mes032N, Mes045, Mes058 and Mes060. In addition, with logistic support provided by the MoIC on 27APR2004 an access to the **Gol Hamid monastery** (within the Chinese Camp) was arranged. Photo record of current state of Main Chapel decoration was carried out as well as basic documentation of the entire complex. Also, some basic **preliminary inspection** of the surrounding area was done in order to evaluate a scope of future fieldwork.

Geomatic survey: this month Sayed Rahim updated survey on Sites Mes035, Mes060, Mes059 and Mes063, moreover taking levels at Kafiryat Tepe (Mes003) was accomplished.

Post-ex work

- **GIS, digitizing field plans and production of final site plans** (Sayed Rahim Hussainkhalil): digitizing site plan of area Mes033, preparing site plan printings for areas Mes058 and Mes059.
- **Reorganization of ceramic materials** from Mes046 (Agnieszka Dolatowska assisted by Sultan Massoud Muradi, Hussain Ali Haidari and Sayed Ali Shah Fayeez) was continued this month and for the time being is close to be completed. Some more small finds from Sites Mes032 (season 2013) and Mes046 were catalogued. Firuza Abdulwakhidowa after her return to Mes Aynak continued updating a catalogue of ceramics from area Mes004.
- Marek Lemiesz accomplished a **final version of the Project Work Program for 2014**. On 08APR2014 the Program was submitted to MAAP Director for further review and subsequently **the approval was signed by HE DM of MoIC Mosadiq Khalili and HE DM of MoMP Nasir Ahmad Durrani**.
- On a request of HE DM Khalili, a **catalogue of stupas proposed for removal** was prepared by Marek Lemiesz and submitted to MoIC on 20APR2014. We were also working on a **catalogue of sculptures and wall paintings** for MoIC that shall be ready by the beginning of May.