

Mes Aynak Archeological Project

Archeological Progress Update

June 2014



Summary

We were only able to carry out fieldwork for 2 days in the month of June. MoIC closed the site due to the Afghan archaeologists strike. MoIC archeologists are not paid their salary for more than 6 months.

It was promised to reopen the site as soon as possible

We received information that in view of the upcoming second round of the presidential election the site – for security reasons – will be closed until next announcement, but till the end of the month we were not informed of any changes in MoIC's decision.

Accordingly, the progress of the research conducted in the reporting period was less than impressive.

As can be seen, the implementation of "Mes Aynak Archaeological Work Programme for 2014" prepared by Mr. Mark Lemiesz encountered many difficulties and obstacles. At this stage of work we should expected delays in the assumed work schedule. It is quite understandable that it is impossible to meet time limits in a situation where the excavations are suspended so frequently and for such long periods.

We were continuing extensive work in an area of high density archaeological-architectural remains on the eastern and north-eastern slopes of Kuh-i Aynak. A rigorous timetable assumes completing this stage of work within ca. 6.5 months. However, apart from the reasons already mentioned above, there are several points of concern that call into question some aspects of our ongoing activities:

1) Number of international archaeologists working on the project is insufficient. Staff shortages are particularly noticeable in the process of finds registration and in the field. A specialist ceramicist is needed to establish a

ceramic typological sequence, which should be one of the academic goals of the project. Experienced archaeologists with fieldwork skills, able to record and understand complex archaeological remains, and organize artifact assemblages to professional standards are needed;

2) Currently ongoing work was carried out in a very exposed and steep area. In some places (Particularly Mes050) danger of falling is quite realistic. After several months still neither the archeologist nor the workmen have an insurance policy that would cover the cost of possible medical treatment in case of fatal injuries, accidents or contusions;

Taking advantage of a momentary resumption of the work we were able to show newly arrived archaeologists from Tajik several significant locations at the site. With the aim of familiarizing them with a specificity of the site and type of structures exposed during the excavation we visited Mes006 (Shah Tepe), Mes007 (Shamar Tepe), Mes052 and Mes053. Beyond that, new conservators were able to familiarize themselves with the state of preservation sculptures and paintings unearthed at Mes045 and Mes058.

MDC team is still continuing demining the western slope of the Aynak Mountain.

Staffing

Formally, an international team consisting of 17 specialists: 11 archaeologists (including one architect), 1 geomatic officer and 5 conservators.

Project Coordinator Mr. Marek Lemiesz went on leave on 4JUN2014. His absence will last until early-July. Currently still on leave are Robert Marziani and Amanda Watts. The date of their return to Afghanistan is still unknown. In addition, currently there are 9 trainee-archaeologists, from this group only 2-3 are

able to carry excavations without constant supervision.

Field Work

The site is closed by MoIC until further notice

Geomatics

It is worth mentioning that due to the prolonged holiday of Ms. Roberta Marziani there is no specialist who can do more advanced or complicated geomatic works – starting from such issues of setting up of grids in the field, and ending with the preparation of more complex plans in AutoCad. Mr. Sayed Rahim Hussainkhil is only able to perform basic tasks related to mapping or digitizing and is not able to replace a competently prepared specialist.

Mr. Rahmatjon Salomov being in the camp worked on finishing plan of *karez* located in the southern part of the site Mes004. At the site, he

worked on Mes033 where he tried to recognize phases of the rebuilding an architectural complex exposed there during excavations.

Conservation

With the arrival of 4 new Tajik conservators it became possible to resume work in this area. However, as the terms of cooperation between MAAP and MoIC conservators have not been established yet, all of them are temporarily working in the laboratory.

Site Visit

On 1st June H E Minister of Mines and Petroleum has visited the Mes Aynak copper mine project. H E the Minister met the archeological team of MAAP and the newly arrived Tajik archeologist and give a comprehensive speech. During his visit to the Afghan camp H E has request the archeological team to work hard to complete the task.