

# Mes Aynak Archeological Project

Archeological Progress Update

May 2014



## Summary

Extensive work is carried on 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, there are several points of concern that call into question some aspects of our ongoing activities: such as MoIC problem with paying salaries of their staff and labor wages which is not paid for more than 6 months.

## Staffing

Formally, an international team consisting of 17 specialists: 11 archaeologists (including one architect), 1 geomatic officer and 5 conservators. 6 new Tajik archeologist have joined the project on 28<sup>th</sup> of this month.

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

Due to absence of the baulk of archaeological staff regular excavation is currently ongoing on 7 sites under the direct supervision of the MAAP: Mes045, Mes049E, Mes050, Mes052W, Mes052W, Mes052S and Mes053.

**Site Mes045** (supervised by Usmon Eshonzoda assisted by Mohammad Ali Amiri, 7 workers): cleaning of massive retaining wall forming the northern edge of the monastery complex in the eastern part of the site. In addition, workers removed the damage caused

by wind and rain that have occurred last week. Work was focused mainly on the repair of damaged covers to statues and stupas.

**Site Mes049E** (Supervised by Jumakhon Saydaliev, 10 workers): exploration of a backfill in Room 35. In addition, work has begun in an area located north of the rooms Room 36 and Room 37. A layer of loose soil and stones accumulated during the previous work has been removed. Cultural layers have not yet been reached.

**Site Mes050** (supervised by Sultan Masoud Muradi, 9 workers): after completion of the work in Room 1, the area of the site was extended towards the south and east where two new squares were marked out. In these new squares layer of topsoil has been removed.

**Site Mes052W** (supervised by Hussain Ali Haidari, 6 workers): work has continued inside of Room 4/03 and Room 4/05. During the work a new stone was exposed. The wall outlines the eastern border of the Room 4/03. Temporarily, Mr. Komron Safolov has joined the team working at the site.

**Site Mes052W** (part supervised by Farukh Safoev assisted by Sayed Hussain Rajabi, 11 workers): Research was carried out inside Room 8, Room 9 and Room 10. Inside Room 8 a floor layer has been encountered. Cleaning of the floor has been started.

**Site Mes052S** (Dr Rahmatsho Mahmadsheev, 10 workers): removal of soil and slag deposit from the sections A1, A2, B2 and D4-D5.

#### Site Mes053

(Supervised by Agnieszka Dolatowska assisted by Sayed Ali Shah Payez, 10 workers): work was carried out in both test-pits. In Sounding 1 (□ 204/400) remains of architecture were exposed. For the section located in the eastern part of the site (next to the road) a full archaeological record and documentation has been produced.

#### Site Mes091N

(supervised by Dowdy Davatkhoja assisted by Mirwais Qaderyar, 15 workers): a layer of soil with a thickness of 0.5 m has been removed from sections 17, 18 and 19. During the work a fragment of a small terracotta figurine depicting a woman breastfeeding a child has been found. Temporarily, Mr. Rahmonali Sharipov has joined the team working at the site.

Except of where mentioned above, the MoIC are presently conducting fieldwork on sites Mes041, Mes047, Mes048, Mes091S and in trial trench to a distance of ca. 20 m to the south of area Mes052S.

### Geomatics

A desktop computer from the Geomatics Office has not yet been returned to Mes Aynak despite the fact that it was sent for repair a few weeks ago. Because of this, Sayed Rahim Hussainkhil has not been able to continue digitization of the sites plans.

Lack of the computer has a negative impact on the current work. The nability to print plans of the sites or gain information on their leveling lowers the quality of produced records.

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.