

• PROJECT FINAL REPORT •

REPORT PREPARED BY:

BRENDAN CASSAR,

EDITED BY MASANORI NAGAOKA

REPORT DATE: MARCH 15 2007

PROJECT NAME: Project of Endangered Movable Assets (EMA) of the National Cultural Heritage - 24225110KAB Documentation and Conservation of the Collections in the National Museum of Afghanistan

BUDGET CODE: 24-225110-KAB

SECTOR/DIVISION: KAB CLT

PROJECT OFFICER: MASANORI NAGAOKA

PROJECT BUDGET: USD 250,000

DONOR: US FUNDED UNESCO REGULAR PROJECT

COORDINATING ORGANIZATION: UNESCO OFFICE KABUL

IMPLEMENTING ORGANIZATION: THE SOCIETY FOR THE PRESERVATION OF AFGHANISTAN'S CULTURAL HERITAGE (SPACH)

DATE OF START OF THE PROJECT: 30 NOVEMBER 2004

DATE OF COMPLETION OF THE PROJECT: 28 FEBRUARY 2007,

### 1) Report of the work of the project

This project aimed to address two immediate concerns of the National Museum of Afghanistan and the international community when it began in 2004; the need to document and inventory the collections remaining after the looting and destruction of the Museum during the civil war and Taliban iconoclasm, and to improve the storage, conservation environment and the capacity of the Museum staff to safeguard the remnants of that national, movable cultural heritage into the future. These goals were met through the implementation of the inventories, conservation interventions and training exercises listed below and completed during the course of the project. It is true that more such projects need to be implemented in the coming years to build upon the foundations laid during the last several years and that much will also depend on civil service reform in Afghanistan to raise the institutional capacity of cultural infrastructure, but the standards and practices of Museum staff have been raised during the course of the project and conditions in the Museum, the Ministry of Information and Culture and the Presidential Palace, where various collections are currently stored, have improved immensely. The project has furthermore created and installed the first electronic database of cultural property in Afghanistan and as a direct result of the inventory and conservation of the Ai Khanoum collection, has contributed to the capacity of the Government to raise revenue through the international exhibition of its cultural heritage. Moreover, the lessons learned from the database in

particular have been shared with the Government and UNESCOs other partners to be incorporated into the Ministry's plans to create an electronic inventory of the National Archives.

Project activities:

- A. Inventory of the Ceramics Department
- B. Inventory of Fondukistan, Bamiyan and Kakrak
- C. Inventory of the Nuristan collection
- D. Inventory of Ethnographic materials
- E. Conservation assessment of the Ghazni and Tepe Sardar collections
- F. Inventory and conservation of the textiles collection collection
- G. Inventory of the Ai Khanoum Collection
- H. Conservation of the Ai Khanoum Colection
- I. Development of database, server installation and data entry
- J. Publications: manual on the conservation of archaeological ceramics, Nuristan exhibition brochure and manual server and museum database
- K. Photographic equipment and training
- L. Classification and Restoration of schist objects destroyed by the Taliban

#### A) THE INVENTORY OF THE CERAMICS DEPARTMENT COLLECTION

The Ceramics Department hosts a complete collection of ceramics from archaeological surveys and excavations carried out by different missions across all the regions of Afghanistan. The collection consists of thousands of shards and complete objects from all periods dating from 4,000 B.C until the present. The team that worked on the Ceramics Collection Inventory and their responsibilities are referred to in Table I below.

Table I: Ceramics Collection Project Team

TITLE	NAME	JOB DESCRIPTION
Project Director	Mr. Daoud Lali	Director of the Ceramics Dep.
International expert	Dr. Bertille Lyonnet (C.N.R.S.)	Responsible for all aspects of the scientific description and assessments of the objects
Supervisor	S. Muhammad Younis Moshfiq	Administration Department
Team member	Daoud Shah	Measurement, labeling, inventory numbering
Team Member	Muhammad Hamid	Digital Photography
Team Member	Reza Sharifi	I.T. / logistical support (SPACH)
Team Member	Muhammad Abed	Digitization
Team Member	M. Sayed	Computer Operator
Team Member	Sayed Jalal	Security Committee Rep.
Team Member	Mohammad Younis	General Assistance
Team Member	Najibullah	General Assistance

The inventory was implemented according to procedures agreed upon by the Museum and international experts in a previous inventory project involving the Bactrian Gold collection and other pieces from various collections stored in the Presidential Palace. This was a joint project implemented by the National Geographic Society and the Society for the Preservation of Afghanistan's Cultural Heritage, chosen as an implementing partner for this project due largely to its long standing association with the National Museum from 1994 onwards and the expertise the organization had demonstrated in Museum projects in Afghanistan during these years.

All inventories undertaken in the UNESCO project followed basically the same methodology with an international expert working with a national team, using the inventory cards designed by the Museum and the implementing agency to fulfill the basic requirements of the inventory process in both Dari and English. Slight adjustments were made to the procedures followed in consideration of the sensitivity of the collection, security and the schedule available.

Figure 1: Sample Inventory Cards from the Ai Khanoum Collection

National Museum of Afghanistan, Inventory Project		National Museum of Afghanistan, Inventory Project	
Catalog by: P. Bernard	Catalog Date: 10.10.2005	Catalog by: P. Bernard	Catalog Date: 10.10.2005
Object ID: 05.42.14/2	Object Name: heamaic pillar	Object ID: 05.42.13	Object Name: Stone inscription
Category: sculpture	Material: limestone	Category: inscription	Material: stone
Collection: Ai Khanoum	Period: Hellenistic	Collection: Ai Khanoum	Period: ca. III B.C.
Old No.:	Old KM No.:	Old No.:	Old KM No.:
Field No.: 0.2868	Site Number: 42	Field No.: 0.2867	Site Number: 42
Found: Ai Khanoum / central niche in the northern part of the gymnasium.	Mission: DAFA 1966	Found: Ai Khanoum / premises (vestibule) of the main house of the king.	Mission: DAFA 22.10.1966
Province: Takhar		Province: Takhar	
Date Range: Hellenistic	Culture: Graeco-Bactrian	Date Range: Hellenistic (ca. 300 B.C.)	Culture: Seleucid period
Dimensions(cm): H: 63,5 cm W: 34,5 cm max. (without head)	D: Dia:	Dimensions(cm): H: 28 cm W: L: 65,5 cm D: 46,5 cm Dia. socket: 26 x 20 cm. d: 15 cm.	
Weight:	Box Number:	Weight:	Box Number: in display
Number of Objects: 1	Technique: sculpture	Number of Objects: 1	Technique: engraved limestone
Condition: broken into small pieces by the Taliban and restored	Condition Date: 10.10.05	Condition: excellent	Condition Date: 10.10.05
Assessment by: P. Bernard		Assessment by: P. Bernard	
Condition Notes: A few pieces are missing		Condition Notes:	
Description: Bust of an old man crowning a pillar (so called: heamaic pillar). The man was draped in a mantle, the right arm folded under the himation; the left arm half-folded held a staff with the clenched hand.		Description: Stone basis made for a stele on which the famous maxims defining the main qualities of the Greek citizen, which were shown in the sanctuary of Apollo in Delphi, had been engraved on the right. The last maxim of the series, concerned with the ages of human life. On the left, declaration in verse of this maxims by Clearchos, a well-known disciple of Aristotle, who visited the Greek town of Ai Khanoum around III B.C.	
Store-Keep	Remarks: me-mous which had been found separately and fitted to the bust was separated from the torso before the breaking of the latter. The head is well preserved because it escaped the Taliban and is stored	Store-Keeper: P. Tachir	Remarks: missing: the left inferior angle of the stele with some letters of the last maxims of the first column (the maxims had been disposed in three marked columns): 0.2804 (field)

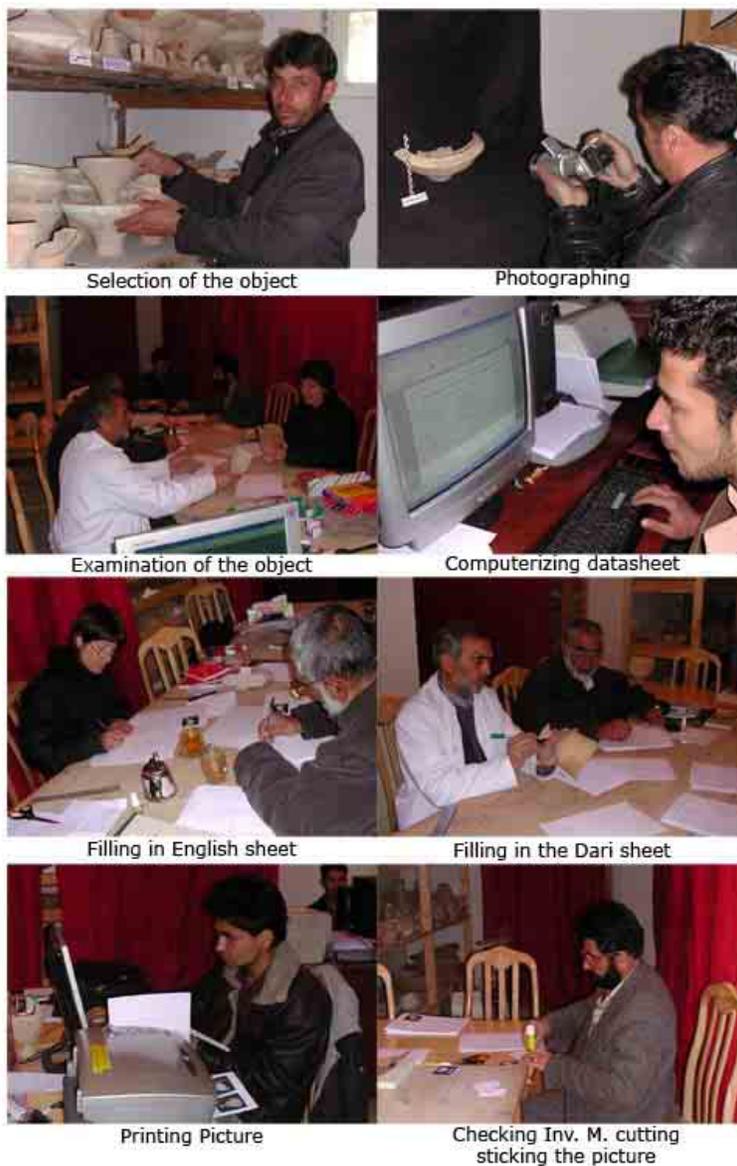
The cards and the database contain all the information necessary in most cases to be directly convertible into the Object ID records which would be recommendable for a future project that could make use of the comprehensive inventory conducted as

part of this project in order to maximize preventative measures against theft from the Museum into the future.

The inventory cards were filled out simultaneously in both languages to reduce the likelihood of later misunderstandings or mistranslations. Figure 1 (above) provides an example of the cards used in all inventories and Figure 2 illustrates the procedure followed in the Ceramics Department and in all subsequent inventories described herein. Training was provided by the international expert in regard to object assessments, descriptions, conservation and handling practices.

Figure II:

**Photo Documentation of the Inventory Process of  
the Ceramics Department**



At the completion of the ceramics inventory process 692 objects from various sites, periods and archaeological contexts were inventoried:

**Table II: Ceramics Inventory Results**

Site name	Institutions that excavated the material	Site inventory number	Number of objects inventoried
Ai Khanoum	DAFA	42	117
Dashly	ASE	38	218
Daulatabad	ASE	47	11
Zulm	DAFA	48	5
Dil'berdzhin	ASE	39	179
Zhiga-Tepe	ASE	J39	22
Kohna Masjid	DAFA	37	57
Kutlug/Olvia	ASE	K47	12
Shortughai	DAFA	49	29
Bactres	DAFA	50	42
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>692</b>

The inventory of these 692 ceramic objects represents 100% of the objects that belong to the above mentioned sites and were chosen for inventory by Dr. Bertille Lyonnet and M. Lali, Dir. of the Ceramics Department of the Museum. The sheer volume of the total material belonging to this Department militated against any complete or absolute inventory of the entire material and thus the selection process had to take into consideration questions of historical/cultural value, necessity and the work undertaken by Dr. Lyonnet in previous missions to the National Museum. The collection (shards or complete objects) of those sites chosen had already been classified and arranged in the storerooms by Dr. Bertille Lyonnet in the two previous missions that she had carried out in 2002 and in 2004, also organized and financed by UNESCO.

The ceramic material and collections that remain to be inventoried could, as a result of the training provided under the project, be implemented by the Museum itself without external consultancy and in the normal course of its activities.

## **B) THE INVENTORY OF THE FONDUKISTAN / BAMIYAN COLLECTION**

(with additional Kakrak material)

This inventory was implemented directly by Professor Klimburg-Salter, her assistant Suzy Kogler and the staff of the National Museum and the Ministry in April/May 2005. During the inventory process, 114 inventory cards for Fondukistan were composed and in addition Professor Klimburg-Salter continued and completed the inventory of 126 inventory cards for the Bamiyan collection (some specifically from Kakrak) at the request of the Museum Director. The total number of objects inventoried was approximately five hundred.

Professor Klimburg-Salter reported that the figure of 500 objects represents one hundred percent of the (known) objects from Fondukistan and Bamiyan in the Museum's collection. Notwithstanding, it is still possible that a few pieces remain in a container in

one of the storage spaces at the Arg, the Museum and the Ministry or that some pieces are represented in the volume of unclassified fragments left behind by the Taliban iconoclasm. It may have been possible to recover some of these pieces, classify and inventory them during the conservation mission that was planned for these collections, but that had to change due to the absence of the tawildars (store-keepers) who accompanied the Bactrian Gold and Ai Khanoum collection to the Musee Guimet for exhibition. Until the security situation for Afghanistan and the Museum in particular becomes more stable and the collections more easily accessible by the Museum staff, these remaining anomalies will not be known, though the inventory and conservation process have reduced them considerably.

### **C) THE INVENTORY OF THE NURISTANI COLLECTION**

The inventory of the Nuristan collection started May 2005 and the collection was completed in June 2005. In all, 376 pieces were inventoried meticulously by not only the world's foremost scholar on Nuristan, but by the person who had researched and donated much of the collection in Dr. Klimburg himself. The inventory component of this project also supported the Museum's other efforts in regard to the restoration and exhibition of the Nuristani collection- a collection deliberately targeted by the Taliban for destruction 2001.

These artifacts came from various places across the region of Nuristan which in themselves represent the cultural expression of different language groups and cultures within traditional 'Kafiristan', such as, Waigal, Ashkun and Parun. The inventory, conservation and restoration of this collection now stands as a symbol for the reconstruction process in Afghanistan.

The exhibition was installed and then formally opened by the Minister for Information and Culture in December 2004 in order to raise-awareness on the rehabilitation of the Museum and its collections but it had not been inventoried according to the newly established system. This has now been completed under the project and remains the only collection permanently exhibited in the Museum, the first for several decades in fact.

### **D) THE INVENTORY OF THE ETHNOGRAPHIC COLLECTION**

The ethnographic collection (including wooden objects, metals, stone and textiles) in the National Museum of Afghanistan represents a significant part of the historical and contemporary cultural heritage of the nation. It is this collection more than any other that represents Afghanistan as a contemporary multi-ethnic society. Professor Bernard Dupaigne was responsible for this part of the inventory project and began his mission in July 2005 and inventoried as many articles as possible until August 2005. Due to the large volume of ethnographic articles from disparate regions and ethnic groups in Afghanistan it was clear from the beginning that it would be impossible to complete a full inventory of the ethnographic collection in the one month he had available. It was decided then that some responsibilities for the inventory of this collection had to be split between different specialists or to arrange a follow up mission by Professor Dupaigne at another time. However, given that much of this collection is represented by textile material and that much of it was in a very bad state of conservation, it was decided to arrange for the mission of a textile specialist who could cope with the particular conservation needs of much of the material.

Professor Dupaigne was able to inventory 778 articles in the ethnographic collection, concentrating on the traditional clothing in a good state of conservation and in particular, on other artifacts, such as, weaponry, regalia, decorative household elements, tools, religious objects, and musical instruments made variously of wood and metals. Elements in the collection came from many Provinces in Afghanistan, including Kandahar, Helmand, Kunar, Balkh, Bamiyan, Mazar-i-Sharif, Herat, Kabul and many others, and represent a good coverage of multi-ethnic Afghanistan. For instance, the different ethnic groups represented by the articles that Professor Dupaigne inventoried include, Baluchi, Uzbek, Tajik, Turkmen, Hazara and Pashtun.

#### **E) CONSERVATION NEEDS ASSESSMENT OF THE BUDDHIST COLLECTION OF TEPE SARDAR AND THE ISLAMIC COLLECTION FROM GHAZNI**

It was at the request of the Museum Director that a full conservation needs assessment of a specific collection be made in order to get recommendations on how to ensure its conservation and ongoing preservation. Such expert recommendations could not only serve as general and basic advice required by the Museum to conserve virtually all of its collections, but also to assist implementing partners in designing projects on conservation. The collection identified as being in urgent need was Tepe Sardar and the Islamic collection from Ghazni which is composed of a variety of objects made from various materials, including unbaked and baked clay, stone, stucco/plaster, pottery, metals and manuscripts. This mission would also help us to achieve one of the overall project objectives identified as being of great importance, which was to extend activities to a Provincial level and not merely focus on Kabul.

Unfortunately, there are presently few options in this regard as the National Museum in Kabul is currently the caretaker of Provincial collections and therefore a natural focus of conservation, training and restoration works. However, the Ghazni collection presented an obvious opportunity for a conservation mission of this nature. Indeed, security has deteriorated sufficiently in Ghazni province since 2005 when the mission took place so as to militate against further missions of this nature until the Taliban and criminal presence has been brought under control. This fact highlights the important impact of the window of opportunity that was seized upon at that time to assess and “stabilize” the conditions in which the objects were being kept. UNESCO also followed this up with a separate project funded by the Italian Government for remedial works to the building in 2006 before the onset of winter in order to ensure the sustainability of the results obtained by this current conservation intervention.

The mission was able to realize 2078 condition reports on objects belonging to the collections of Tepe Sardar and the Islamic collection from Ghazni. Mr. Colombo’s report contains extensive information and recommendations concerning the conservation of this collection which can also serve as a template for Museum staff when dealing with other collections of similar materials.

During this mission Mr. Colombo also achieved the objective of being able to identify training needs in regard to the balance between staff capacity and collection requirements. Mr. Colombo concentrated on basic collections care as an essential part of the training he provided to Museum staff because at a fundamental level even this was lacking.

The conditions under which the objects were kept in the storerooms were studied and immediate improvements were made. For example, the storerooms were cleaned and wooden trunks were made for each object to at least maintain their current state of preservation. The Museum conservators were also taught how to measure the humidity and temperature of the rooms and information was provided on the ideal environment necessary for adequate care of the collection.

Further funding has now been secured and a project begun to implement these recommendations and to reestablish the Museums of Ghazni accordingly.

## **F) THE INVENTORY AND CONSERVATION OF THE ETHNOGRAPHIC TEXTILES COLLECTION**

The inventory project of the textile collection began in August 2005. The project had aimed to inventory and conserve the total collection remaining in the Museum and this objective was achieved by the end of December 2005.

The inventory and conservation of each piece involved the following:

- Photographing and technical description of each piece using the inventory card system established and adopted by the Museum in 2004
- A status report on the condition of each piece
- A needs assessment on the storage and conservation requirements of each piece and the implementation of the recommendations that emerged from the process, including the storage of the collection in specifically designed cabinets to reduce the risks of infestation by animals and moisture. These cabinets have two functions: a) hanging storage spaces to reduce the risk of damage whilst in storage and b) drawers where particular pieces could be stored flat (such as carpets) where appropriate for proper conservation
- Recommendations for the restoration of specific pieces in a particularly bad state.

The conservation involved the removal of infestations of insects and mould, cleaning dust and dirt from each piece, washing pieces where appropriate (such as cotton) and consolidation for some pieces which involved sewing torn and ripped fragments in place. The expert is concerned to note that this consolidation does not represent restoration, as it is only a preliminary step in any future restoration project that would involve far more extensive interventions in the pieces to prepare them for exhibition. Nonetheless, the project has halted their decline.

During the inventory and conservation of the textile collection, Mr. Florenceau identified the threats to the collection from the environmental conditions in which they had been kept over many years and trained his team in conservation practices pertaining to textiles over an approximately four month period. It was stressed from the beginning that the training should involve every aspect of good textile collections care from even the most basic practices of keeping the area clean and dust free etc. to more complicated practices concerning the atmospheric conditions in which textiles are stored. The conservation training began with an assessment of each article and recommendations for their conservation. This was followed by the purchase of the necessary equipment for this purpose and the implementation of those recommendations with the full input and collaboration of the team of Museum staff. Mr. Florenceau has also prepared a training manual on all such aspects of textile

conservation and restoration practices which could serve as a training resource that the Conservation Department will be able to use for their own training purposes in the future.

#### **G) AI KHANOU M INVENTORY**

The Ai Khanou m inventory began formally in October 2005 with the arrival of Prof. Paul Bernard and his assistant Sabrina Zannier. The inventory was completed on the 21<sup>st</sup> of December 2005 and included up to 15 participants, trainees, Ministerial and Museum representatives at any one time.

The inventory began initially in the fourth floor of the Ministry where the collection had been stored since 1996. Given that the conservation of the collection was planned for the spring and that Prof. Bernard had identified factors in the environment of the Ministry building that would impede both safe storage and efficiency of the inventory process, it was thought prudent that it be finally returned to the National Museum at this time and inventoried and stored securely there, awaiting the proposed conservation later in the project.

Paul Bernard supervised the return of the collection to the Museum where all objects were removed from the boxes during the inventory process and re-packed safely in new boxes once again. The space and better working environment of the Museum also allowed some basic conservation considerations to be employed. The overburdened storage environment at the Ministry had actually been putting the more fragile objects of the collection, such as the ivories, at great risk of damage due to mishandling within the constraints of the storage space. Of course, they were moved there initially during the civil war and packed quickly and in some cases haphazardly due to the greater threat at the time of being looted. Indeed, some boxes had not been opened since they were first packed in 1996, thus concealing just how desperate the conservation requirements actually were in many cases. The experts inform us now that this basic measure of moving the collection has already significantly reduced the risk of any further damage to objects if they are handled according to guidelines that they detailed during the training of Museum technicians working on the inventory team.

During this inventory a total of 639 inventory cards were inscribed and more than two thousand actual objects inventoried. Many objects such as, nails, arrow heads, tools socles, architectural elements and hundreds of non-descript stucco fragments have the same typological description so could be subsumed under the same inventory number according to conventional inventory procedures.

Many of these pieces are part of the exhibition of Afghanistan's treasures in the Musee Guimet in Paris. As they could not have been exhibited without being inventoried and conserved first, this project has directly contributed to awareness-raising and education concerning Afghanistan's cultural heritage and to the Government's ability to raise revenue from the world-wide tour of the exhibition it has planned. Doubtless, there are very few projects being undertaken in Afghanistan that could make such a boast. This is an illuminating thought when cultural projects are often seen by many as a kind of "luxury" and not contributing greatly to overall economic development.

#### **H) AI KHANOU M CONSERVATION**

The conservation of the Ai Khanou m collection had been planned for March 2006 according to the availability of the conservator and the Afghan registration team

assigned to the project. All conservation recommendations particular to Ai Khanoum were developed through consultation of the conservator with Prof. Bernard prior to the official commencement of the mission. The Project Monitoring Committee ensured that information gathered through the experience of the course of Phase 1 of the project was made available to the conservator to enable and ensure a realistic and achievable schedule for the conservation work to be implemented. In the meantime, the purchase of the necessary equipment and the logistical arrangements for shipping some of it from France were undertaken. Part of the equipment was bought in France and some purchased in the local markets in Kabul after the conservator inspected the storage space. This ensured a safe and sustainable storage and handling policy for the Ai Khanoum collection into the future. A detailed plan was elaborated by the foreign and Afghan conservators to purchase more equipment once further funding and space is made available for this purpose. However, the current storage conditions were able to meet minimum standards and vastly improved upon the tin boxes that had been stacked on top of each other in the Fourth floor of the Ministry of Information and Culture.

The activities undertaken in this intervention were a conservation needs assessment for the Ai Khanoum collection, training of museum staff in basic metal chemistry and restoration, using both theoretical and practical techniques, and the reorganization of the Ai Khanoum storeroom in the Museum according to the new standards recommended. The conservation needs assessment includes information on the materials, collection care policies, exhibition policies, storage policies and the status of individual objects for possible display. Many of these objects are indeed presently on display in Paris and will tour the world in the coming years.

#### **I) DEVELOPMENT OF THE DATABASE, SERVER INSTALLATION AND DATA-ENTRY**

Arguably, one of the most important activities of the project was the development of a database that was installed in the Museum in 2006 on a server and internal network also installed under this project. The installation of this database makes the National Museum's collections the only one of its kind in Afghanistan when compared with State Libraries, the National Archives and the existing registration system of historical monuments and sites in Afghanistan. The database, training and activities that went into producing the data of some 41,000 objects currently inventoried on the system, are therefore a great step forward in the preservation and documentation and Afghanistan's movable cultural heritage. The successful completion of this activity allows us to move on to the possible transfer of the data to an Object ID format to enhance protection of that heritage and the lessons learned and challenges faced in achieving this end mean that UNESCO and other implementing agencies in the culture sector can apply these to the digitization of Library catalogues and the National Archives in the future.

There were many issues and challenges regarding arriving at a consensus with the Afghan authorities who had initially rejected the installation of Past Perfect in 2004 on the grounds of its lack of bi-lingual Dari/English capacity. This could not be rectified in accordance with copyright issues and also the amount of funds available or likely to be available for such a project. The Department of Museums was also concerned and commented negatively on its complexity in relation to the level of capacity of the staff currently available who would be assigned to administer it and there were also the issues of ownership of the process, the database and access to the

data which are highly sensitive in Afghanistan because of the traumatic events of the 1990s in regard to the looting and destruction of the Museum.

The Government, UNESCO and the implementing agency, through the Project Monitoring Committee mechanism, arrived at a consensus on the solution that identified a national candidate who already had sufficient knowledge to undertake the responsibility and whose skills could be advanced through relatively short but intensive training with our academic partners in the Departments of Urban History and Computer Science in Aachen University, Germany.

The training and programming was undertaken in early to mid 2006 and the database installed on the newly acquired Museum server accessible through an internal wireless network in the Museum later in the year. All necessary departments and authorized personnel of the Museum now have access to the system and with the purchase of back-up tapes the institutional memory of the Museum will be preserved into the future. This was precisely the problem with the destruction of the Museum in the 1990s; the catalogue was burnt, administrative documents destroyed or missing, the collections looted and little or no information concerning the previous 70 years of institutional history remained.

The data-entry component of the project was done via the implementing agency and Eng. Zia who had programmed the database and undertaken training in Aachen University, Germany, for that purpose. A team of 7 members of the Museum staff was composed and trained for the task of entering the data into the newly installed data-base and server. Approximately 60% of the Dari datasheets have been entered into the database and the Museum staff now have sufficient training and knowledge of the system to complete the process with ongoing monitoring by UNESCO. The direct involvement of the Museum staff in the process should ensure a more sustainable outcome for the institution in the medium-term with the hope that new staff can be trained by the responsible persons with the aid of the server manual (see below) written in Dari for the long-term.

The inventory, database and server installation undertaken as components of the project have not only addressed the problem of the institutional history of the Museum, but placed the Museum in perhaps a much better position in this regard than it was before onset of the civil war.

#### **J) PUBLICATIONS (Manual on Archaeological Ceramics, Nuristan Exhibition Brochure and Database and Server Manual)**

Publications training, equipment and awareness-raising activities were identified by UNESCO and the government authorities as especially important in Afghanistan where a generation has grown up largely unaware of its nation's history as refugees in foreign countries. The difficulty of accessing information tailored to the needs of Museum staff in their own language is also broad problem in Afghanistan and one experienced by the Museum. The publications component of the project attempted to address these concerns and produce material in Dari that could be used for further training activities as well as engaging the Afghan public in awareness-raising material concerning the Museum's exhibitions. Now that a small Publications Department has been established and equipped, it is hoped that internal initiatives of the Museum to engage the local public through information and awareness-raising activities will follow, as well as donor related initiatives aimed at the same ends.

A technical manual on the Conservation of Archaeological Ceramics was produced in Dari at the request of the Museum Director. This manual was written specifically for the National Museum by an expert in the field and was translated into Dari for the Conservation Department. It contains extensive information on all aspects of the conservation of ceramic artifacts from field methods on archaeological sites to conservation and restoration methods in the laboratory and the use of specific technology and chemistry to achieve that objective. The manual is of a high standard and thus could also be used as a textbook in Afghan Universities for the purpose of learning such techniques when courses of that nature are provided. Three hundred copies of the conservation manual were produced and distributed in Kabul and the Provinces through the National Museum, the Ministry of Information and Culture, Institute of Archaeology, Historical Monuments Department, Faculty of Social Sciences, the Public Library, UNESCO Kabul office and also other national and international cultural organizations. Indeed, SPACH and the National Museum are making this text available to institutions for the purposes of any training in regional Museums in Afghanistan that may be conducted in the future by the Museum or other parties.

A brochure on the Nuristani collection in both English and Dari was also produced by the implementing agency and the Publications Department of the Museum. Five hundred copies of the brochure were handed over to the National Museum of Afghanistan for distribution to visitors and to increase visibility. The basis for the English text was provided in consultation and with the approval of Dr. Max Klimburg, the international expert on the culture and the collection from Nuristan. The brochure is now available for distribution at the Information desk at the National Museum and remains on record for future production.

Specific training of Museum staff on Photoshop and Microsoft Publisher was provided. Through this process we have initiated the establishment of a Publications Department at the Museum and we have provided the tools and basic skills required for participants to produce similar materials in Dari on their own behalf as required. This will become increasingly important with international tourism, but it is also important for the Museum to begin engaging the local community through increased visibility and relevant exhibitions.

In order to enhance the sustainability of the server and database installation, a manual was produced in Dari that will serve as a reference for future technical interventions in the programming, day-to-day operating issues and ongoing data-entry programs. The manual has been deposited with the Museum and the Ministry of Information and Culture as both a training guide and a record of the database installed in the Museum. Being the first electronic Museum database in Afghanistan, it is hoped that this component of the project can serve as a model for future projects and the manual distributed and utilized for that purpose (e.g. proposed inventory of the national Archives).

In regard to publications, a high quality printing press was identified in Kabul in order to achieve the best quality results and to represent the National Museum appropriately. As with all aspects of this project our preference was to purchase such services (or equipment) within Afghanistan where possible in order to contribute to the local economy and we have been pleased to find that quite a number of newly established companies equipped with the proper technology do exist in Kabul that are able to print an adequate number at the necessary standard. Museum staff were involved and trained throughout the process and thus acquired a good understanding of the procedures involved in producing publications for future reference.

## **K) PHOTOGRAPHIC EQUIPMENT AND TRAINING**

Photographic equipment and training were identified as an important area of focus by the Ministry and the Museum for several reasons. As the security situation in Afghanistan and the Museum does not presently allow the establishment of exhibitions of the more economically valuable collections, photographic exhibitions of the recent history of the Museum form a significant part of the visitor's experience in the National Museum and photography is also an important component of interpretation and the overall museology employed. Photography has also been employed during the inventory process and highlighted as necessary area for training and equipping by the Museum so that they can explore possible exhibitions on cultural issues and produce material for the publication of its collections. The Ministry has also highlighted its wish to increase the publication of educational materials specifically concerned with Afghanistan's tangible and intangible heritage. Therefore, by increasing the capacity of the Museum and its staff to document and publish its collections through photographic means the project made an important contribution to the overall aims of the Ministry of Information and Culture.

John Steiner from the Smithsonian Institution was employed to provide advice and establish what equipment the Museum required to fulfill their aims and to train Museum staff in the use of that equipment in December 2006. For this purpose a computer and software was purchased, cameras and other photographic equipment. The Director of the Photography department and two other staff members received intensive training on the equipment and also on the basic techniques of photographic composition. One of Steiner's recommendations was that the Museum staff continues to learn through using the equipment more regularly. UNESCO Kabul hopes to follow this up with the installation of a small photography exhibition executed by the Museum staff on the theme of Afghanistan's cultural diversity later this year.

## **L) SCHIST CLASSIFICATION AND RESTORATION**

The restoration and classification of the schist objects destroyed by the Taliban and scattered in thousands of pieces in the Conservation Department of the Museum was an ambitious part of the project that produced outstanding results, given that it was not part of the initial planning, but became necessary due to the absence of the tawildars (key-holders) accompanying the exhibition of the Bactrian Gold and Ai Khanoum collection to Paris.

The services of the restorer/conservator whom had worked on the conservation of the Ghazni collection, Fabio Columbo, were employed again here to sort and classify fragments for possible restoration and also to restore as many pieces as possible within the work schedule in November/December 2006. This mission was combined with another expert mission for the same purpose funded by the US Embassy in Kabul.

Staff of the conservation department received intensive training on the techniques of conservation and restoration from the identification and placement of fragments to their final consolidation within the sculpture. Through this process the restorers and the staff were able to piece together a number of schist sculptures smashed by the Taliban and to classify fragments for future restoration. Necessary materials and equipment were also purchased for the department and the restorers made extensive recommendations for the department according to the guidelines of the Getty Conservation Institute. It is hoped that these recommendations can be

implemented in future projects in the Museum and they will be made available for that purpose.

Much work remains on the schist fragments in order to continue the restoration of as many pieces as possible in the coming years. This project has made a start and provided training for the staff on what projects they can feasibly and competently pursue in the conservation department and what should be left to more expert intervention and assistance. If this aspect of the training takes hold, quite apart from the actual restoration of pieces undertaken as apart of the project activities, it will have proved successful in further safeguarding the collections for future restoration.

## 2) Impact of the project

Most of the collection of the National Museum of Afghanistan was either assumed looted, destroyed by rocket attacks on the building or delivered a final, fatal blow by the Taliban regime's iconoclasm in the Museum. Few people knew what was actually left when the Taliban fell in 2001 apart from a select group of Museum staff that were understandably wary and reluctant to reveal the information due to the ongoing possibility of the type looting seen with the fall of the Bath Party in Iraq. When information began to emerge that the famous Bactrian Gold collection and the Ai Khanoum collection may still be stored in the Presidential Palace, negotiations commenced in regard to the documentation of the collection and to assess its conservation needs. Following this the Government became more willing to open storerooms in the Museum and the Ministry of Information and Culture to experts whose assessments detailed the ongoing deterioration of artifacts, the poor storage conditions, the *ad hoc* handling practices, the lack of documentation and the overall risk that more important artifacts would be lost to the conditions prevailing in the aftermath of the war unless urgent interventions were undertaken.

The National Geographic Society had funded the inventory project of the objects stored in the Presidential Palace, the famous Bactrian Gold pieces, in the hope of exhibiting them in the United States at some time in the future, and part of the collection in a makeshift storeroom in the office of the MoIC. However, there was no concrete plan either to continue to inventory the rest of the collections or to improve the environmental and storage conditions, and nor to continue to engage the Museum staff in the process of reconstruction and rehabilitation of their Museum. The Ghazni collection was in a desperate situation for example, the Fondukistan/Bamiyan also and the entire ethnographic collection was literally in tatters and the Ai Khanoum collection stored in terrible conditions in the MoIC. Without documentation of these collections no-one could know exactly what had been lost and what had been salvaged from the war and they were being put at further risk.

This project was designed to fill the void of a more complete plan for the rehabilitation of the National Museum and it has laid down a methodology of intervention and consensus with the Government to achieve this end in a consultative and inclusive manner. Against this background then, the project was designed both as an emergency intervention for collections but also to build the institutional capacity of the Museum to better realize its mandate in Afghan society. This was achieved in very practical ways through the activities described above: inventories of the ceramics department, the Nuristan collection, the Fondukistan and Bamiyan collections, the entire ethnographic collection and the Ai Khanoum collection, through conservation assessments and interventions in the Ghazni and Tepe Sardar collections, the Ai Khanoum collection, and the ethnographic collection. Furthermore the project

assisted in the establishment of a publications department equipped with computers and software and carried out photographic training and provided specialized equipment for the Museum to undertake community-awareness raising and education on their own behalf through publication of their collections and activities to an Afghan audience.

It hoped to address the conditions of as many collections as possible within budgetary constraints and to make a difference in the way the collections were being stored and handled. It was not enough just to know what still existed of the collection, but to do something about the way these collections were being managed. To be sustainable, the Museum staff had to be exposed to modern techniques and standards and to begin to implement those for themselves. Modernizing the Museum also had to take into account a hiatus of nearly three decades of training and information on the part of the staff and provide realistic solutions to problems in the Museum that could be implemented without requiring other funding sources to provide at least a minimum standard of collections care. The Museum staff also had to be encouraged to move out of a kind of "siege" mentality and to begin working in ways that would meet the Museum's obligations to preserve and exhibit their collections. This process is ongoing and future projects will enhance the gains made during this project. The process will naturally take time as clear lessons have been learnt from this and the overall reconstruction of Afghanistan, in that the disintegration of Government institutions and staff capacities over three decades cannot be directly rectified in a mere few years; it requires targeted projects designed to address specific issues.

There were many difficulties and challenges faced in delivering this project. As mentioned above, collections care and practice was rather *ad hoc* and had evolved under siege conditions during the years of war where the realistic threats posed to the collections- primarily looting and deliberate destruction- meant that simple objectives such as moving the collections back to the Museum building and implementing better storage and handling practices were not received as well as may have been expected. In this vein, it was only after intense negotiations that the Ai Khanoum collection was able to be moved back to the Museum under heavy security. However, it must be stressed that the threats to the collection during the civil war and under the Taliban are still very much real and we would concur that under present security conditions that the Bactrian Gold remain under tight security in the Presidential Palace until security at the Museum is vastly improved and the infrastructure exists to actually run and maintain an adequate security system of the type existing in important US or European museums for instance. This will require more time as it requires the introduction of an efficient and reliable administrative system within the Ministry and across Ministry's that would have to provide security personnel, monitoring, transparency, checks and balances. It is not simply a question of funds in this regard.

Other challenges involved simply getting permission to access the collections regularly and according to a schedule. The first element in this was having to obtain Ministerial permission for access to the Ghazni, Ai Khanoum and Fondukistan collections in particular and to organize the presence of representatives of the Attorney General's office to provide a security detail. On a practical level, it also required the presence of all the tawildars (key-holder/caretakers) whose collections were stored in the same storage rooms, as such areas cannot be opened unless all the tawildars responsible for particular collections are present to open and seal the room. The scheduling of project activities had constantly to deal with this issue of the absence of certain tawildars on other training missions and the ability to get a

particular expert to come to Kabul at a particular time. The Department of Museums and the MoIC in general is in the precarious position of having to accept virtually all offers of assistance from all possible sources which means that scheduling conflicts arising continually and on short notice.

Within the Afghan Government also, the bureaucracy empowers few people below the Minister and deputies to take decisions which thus requires the simultaneous presence of several senior people in order to get permissions for ongoing access and project implementation, proving to be another constant challenge to overcome.

Despite these challenges, all the activities undertaken and equipment purchased during the course of the project have contributed in some way to strengthening both individual and institutional capacities. This is an extremely positive outcome. The inventories and conservation interventions have improved our knowledge of what the Museum actually holds in its stores and how those artifacts are kept. This is, as we have suggested, huge progress on where the Museum was in 2001. The progress in regard to digital record keeping is clear in regard to enhancing security for the collections and protecting them from unknown pilfering or organized theft. Some of the secondary impacts of the project have been the new relationships that the Museum has been able to build with other museums and academic institutions as potential donor institutions as a result of their engagement in this project. The possibility of projects with such institutions has emerged precisely because this project enhanced the Museum's institutional capacity. Nonetheless, the project has also highlighted gaps in the capacity of the Museum in regard to being able to handle such interaction with foreign institutions in a predictable and manageable way. This goes back to the issue of agreeing to and abiding by project schedules.

The project had to be flexible in regard to changes in schedules and some activities due to the availability of particular experts or Afghan officials to supervise and participate in the process, logistical problems with the transportation of equipment purchased overseas, and security issues which also caused some delays. The Project Monitoring Committee was empowered to find solutions to these problems as they presented themselves and was able to do so adequately throughout the course of the project. The participation of the Museum, the implementing agency and UNESCO Kabul in the process ensured that it was inclusive and executed in a positive manner with consensus. One example comes from the problem of the Fondukistan/Bamiyan conservation mission that was planned for late in 2006 but cancelled at the last minute due to the Government signing an exhibition agreement with the Guimet Museum and the tawildars accompanying the collections to Paris. Under the Museum's regulations we simply could not get access to the storerooms although this had been planned months in advance. Alternatively, we arranged to make an intervention in the schist fragments being kept in the conservation department which has had an extremely significant impact on those artifacts destroyed by the Taliban. The Fondukistan Bamiyan collections remain in need of conservation and we would recommend this be tackled as soon as possible by another expert mission.

Schedules also proved difficult to abide by because of the number of activities that were planned during the project and decisions by the Government to participate in an international exhibition with little notice. However, the number of activities including inventory, conservation, photographic and publications training, programming and installation of a database and classification and restoration of schist objects also arguably had a far greater impact on the Museum than one or two large

and expensive workshops would have for instance. When the project started, follow-up on the outcomes of such workshops would not have been realistically pursued due largely to a lack of both financial and human resources. The success of this project lies in its execution of tangible activities in combination with training and capacity-building activities- not in one or the other exclusively. On the basis of the achievements of this project, future projects should now look to address specific issues and activities, such as a formal disaster management plan for the Museum, the replacement of the tawildar system with a curatorial system, ongoing conservation and restoration of specific collections, environmental conditions in the Museum, security, public education and exhibition. Having completed what could be termed an emergency phase in the Museum, it is now ready for a more comprehensive evaluation and strategic planning exercise to determine current and future needs and activities. This will also prove valuable to donors in maximizing assistance to the Museum according to the priorities of the action plan. UNESCO intends to follow this up in the coming months.

### 3) Legacy of the project

The legacy and long-term impact of this project should be assessed in relation to the overall improvement of conditions of storage and handling and the inventory of the collections. The installation of an electronic database was a first for Afghanistan and enhances the long-term sustainability of the Museum to manage its collections. The training programs in various areas have also had a discernable impact on Museum management and practice though there is certainly much more work that needs to be done in this area. Equipment that was installed during the project for storage, conservation/restoration, photography and computer equipment has also increased the Museum's capacity to function at a higher standard. The overall methodology of the project- practical and theoretical training exercises combined with measurable outcomes for collections in danger- has also increased the Museum's capacity to engage with other international donors and organizations in ways which will achieve concrete outcomes for their collections. Having done a significant proportion of this groundwork during the project, it also enable the Museum to realistically begin to address policy development and administrative restructuring.

Ensure that these impacts continue into the future centers around the Museum management and staff following-up on the activities that were undertaken. That would mean, for instance, that the format of the inventory cards and their registration within the database is ensured in future projects implemented independently by the Museum or with the assistance of donor agencies. There is no reason why this shouldn't happen as the inventory cards were filled out simultaneously in Dari and English and not merely translated by a bilingual individual. This means that Museum staff were trained and produced their own inventory according to international standards. Ensuring impacts also requires that information on handling practices, collections care and management are followed-up and the training and advice passed on by international experts engaged on the project are taken into to consideration by the responsible people in the various departments of the Museum when making interventions in the environmental conditions conservation conditions of the collections. All experts engaged in the conservation and inventory training were briefed in the necessity of stressing "what not to do" as much detailing interventions that were reasonable to undertake according to the standards of the staff.

The sustainability of results obtained during this project will depend largely on the follow-up of Museum management and staff. It will also depend on the skills that have been updated or acquired by the current staff are passed on to new staff in the future. Formal policy formulation will be an important part of this process as will the recruitment of more individuals able to contribute to policy formulation and indeed to implement them. Encouraging a new generation to take up a career in the Department of Museums or other departments of the Ministry of Information and Culture is a major obstacle to the sustainability of cultural heritage projects and management in Afghanistan. It requires that greater monetary incentives be offered as the current salary scale provides little incentive for passionate and skilled individuals to take up such a career. The entire system- which includes virtually all Ministries in the Government in fact- requires an overhaul and restructuring to encourage higher competencies amongst the staff.

The current system is also highly conservative and no incentive (monetary or otherwise) exists for its employees to be adaptable and creative in regard to change. Most employees receive no more than forty dollars a month, for instance, which is clearly inadequate to live in the increasingly expensive city that Kabul is becoming. Change is thus not embraced with any enthusiasm and is seen as potentially dangerous or disruptive to the organization. The "organizational culture" could therefore be described as one where time spent 'behind the desk', so to speak, is of utmost importance and where initiative has neither immediate nor long-term reward for individuals. For these reasons, qualified and well educated younger people tend to work for NGOs and private companies and not the Government.

It is in this context that new policies would have to be formulated, implemented and monitored for efficacy. The Museum does not have enough skilled personnel to input into the policy formulation process and to oversee its implementation at this stage. Simply translating established policies from the Getty Institute and ICOM into Dari still requires an environment where these can be variously accepted, understood and implemented with sufficient vigour. This is simply not the case for the time being though with continued vocational training, support and advice the organization is becoming more willing to adapt and change as necessary.

The point is that this project has advanced conservation *practice* which includes identifying activities that improve the way conservation treatments are carried out and increased access to information on conservation subjects for Museum employees.

#### 4. Project Expenditures

Table IV:

BL	Activity	Heading	2005/Total (US\$)	Heading	2006/Total (US\$)	Total (US\$)
10	staff missions		0	mission to HQs	4,579	4,579
11	Temporary Assistance			Inter-Consultant Contract from April-May 2006	8,055	8,055
20	Fee Contract	Sub-contracts for 5 Inventory & 3 Conservation <b>PHASE I</b>	83,350			83,350
20	Fee Contract	Sub-contract for 1 Inventory, 1 Conservation, 1 database programming & Publication of training materials and exhibition brochure <b>PHASE II</b>	76,310			76,310
20				Sub-contract for Restoration and classification of schist fragments, 1 Photography, server/database installation, data-entry and publication of server manual <b>PHASE III</b>	75,442	75,442
40	Equipment & Stationery			Equipment & Stationery	1,698	1,698
40	miscellaneous			Stationary	566	566
<b>99</b>	<b>Total</b>		<b>159,660</b>		90,340	<b>250,000</b>
	support cost		0		0	0
	Grand Total		159,660		90,340	<b>250,000</b>