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Report on
Mission to Evaluate
the State of Conservation of
the World Heritage Site of the SHALAMAR GARDENS
Lahore (Pakistan)
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Report on Mission to Evaluate the State of Conservation of the World Heritage Site of the SHALAMAR GARDENS, Lahore (Pakistan)

1 BACKGROUND TO THE MISSION

The mission concerned World Heritage Site (No. 171-172) – the Fort and Shalamar Gardens of Lahore (Pakistan) The reason for the mission was the information received by the UNESCO World Heritage Centre from the national authorities of Pakistan that the Department of Archaeology was proposing to "restore the demolished hydraulic works of Shalamar Gardens," and that the authorities "had expressed their intention to nominate two sites (ie the Fort and Shalamar Gardens of Lahore and Taxila) to the List of World Heritage in Danger" (Letter from the Director, UNESCO World Heritage Centre, to H.E. Mr Shararyar M. Khan, Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Ambassador of Pakistan to France Permanent Delegation of Pakistan to UNESCO, 2 August 2000, WHC/74/400/ PKS/00/JT/425).

The Centre and ICOMOS had also already considered sending a mission "to elaborate a comprehensive management plan for both the Fort and Shalamar Gardens of Lahore site and the Taxila site". During its 24th Session in Paris on 26 June–1 July 2000, the Bureau of the World Heritage Committee decided to request the World Heritage Centre and ICOMOS "to organise a reactive monitoring mission to the Fort and Shalamar Gardens." The Bureau, while "expressing its appreciation for the information received from the Pakistan authorities concerning its intentions to undertake corrective measures ... at the Shalamar Gardens, requested the Government of Pakistan to report on further actions taken to restore the 375 year old hydraulic works ... to the 24th Extraordinary Session of the Bureau." The Bureau "requested the World Heritage Centre to continue consultations with the authorities of Pakistan concerning the Government's intentions to nominate the two sites (ie Shalamar Gardens; Taxila) on the List of World Heritage in Danger. A report on the results should be provided to the 24th Extraordinary Session of the Bureau to enable it to formulate recommendations for the decision of the Committee" (letter quoted above).

The mission took place on request of the Secretary General of ICOMOS (ref. RD/172RM, Paris, 23 June 2000). It was a mission together with the World Heritage Centre, in the person of Ms Junko Taniguchi (Programme Specialist for the Asia-Pacific Region & Special Projects for Cities).

The undersigned had previously carried out a mission for ICOMOS to the Shalamar Gardens (28 October–4 November 1998) and reported on this mission in his *Report on the mission concerning Preservation and Conservation of Shalamar Gardens (Lahore/Pakistan)* (February 1999: 10 pages) and in his *Mission to Lahore, Shalamar Gardens, 28 October–4 November 1998* (23 January 1999: 4 pages).

At the request of the Secretary General of ICOMOS he also drew up a document entitled *The Shalamar Gardens at Lahore, a garden monument as World Heritage of UNESCO, its restoration, maintenance and future/Pakistan and World Heritage* (December 1999: 15 pages).

Both Ms Taniguchi and the undersigned will submit a report on this mission. Ms Taniguchi will report to the World Heritage Centre; the undersigned will report to ICOMOS.

2 PROGRAMME OF THE MISSION

6 October Reception in Shalamar Gardens, visit to the demolished hydraulic works of the Shalamar Gardens, and discussion on the situation there with representatives of the Department of Archaeology, meeting with the Commissioner and the Assistant

Commissioner of the Lahore Division, tour along the outside of and visit to the Shalamar Gardens [JT and RdJ].

7 October Working visit at the suggestion of the Commissioner to (planned) renovation/rehabilitation and restoration projects in Lahore ("Chambers"; Tollinton Market Building), meeting with the Principal of the National College of Arts, meeting with the Director of Lahore Museum, visits under the guidance of Mr Qasi (Curator, Shalamar Gardens) and Mr Qureshi (Department of Archaeology) to Lahore Fort, the Hiran Minar, and Jahangir's Tomb, and in the evening to the municipal rehabilitation project "Food-Street of Gwalmandi" in Lahore accompanied by the Commissioner among others [JT and RdJ].

Visit to the so-called Old Walled City, next to the Lahore Fort [RdJ].

3 CONSULTATIONS DURING THE MISSION

Consultations took place with Mr Shahid Najam (Commissioner, Lahore Division), Mr Abdullah Khan Sumbal (Assistant Commissioner, Lahore), Mr Ahmad N. Sukhera (Deputy Commissioner, Sheikhupura), Ms Prof. Sajida H. Vandal (Principal, National College of Arts, Lahore), Dr Anjum Rahmani (Director, Lahore Museum), Mr Mhummed Shabbir Malik (Director Projects, Auquaf Department), Mr Qasi (Curator, Shalamar Gardens), and Mr Sharafatullah Quereshi (Department of Archaeology).

4 OBSERVATIONS

4.1 *The hydraulic works*

During the mission we discovered that the preserved impressive remains of three water tanks belonging to the former 375-year-old hydraulic works of the Shalamar Gardens had been irrevocably demolished over ten days in June 1999 by the Metropolitan Corporation of Lahore (MCL) within the Provincial Government of Punjab in order to widen the GT Road (Grand Trunk Road), the main highway to India, running along the southern side of the Shalamar Gardens. These water tanks, constructed of brick, formerly stood next to each other on the opposite side of the GT Road.

All that remains today of two of the tanks are parts of the walls in the ground, and the third tank was reduced in size on the GT Road side and at the back through demolition. They are the original tanks of the canal, the Shah Nahar, later known as Hahn's Canal, which once helped to irrigate the Shalamar Gardens and which was led to this location from the former Rajpur (now Madhupur).

The site that fell vacant after the demolition is now used by the MCL as a parking lot for heavy trucks (eastern part), and partially also for the sale of furniture by a furniture vendor (western part).

It was revealed during the mission that:

- the legal situation concerning the borders of the plots there is unclear;
- the Department of Archaeology and Museums of the Federal Government of Pakistan protested several times against the execution of the demolition work but to no avail;
- no notice was given to the proposals drawn up by the Department for widening the GT Road;
- the Department was requested by the Commissioner of Lahore and the Governor of Punjab to submit a proposal for correcting the demolition of the hydraulic works on 14 August 2000. To date, the Department had not submitted a proposal.

4.2 The perimeter wall

The tour along the outside of the perimeter wall around the Shalamar Gardens as well as through the gardens themselves and through the Naqqar Khana, the garden bordering along the east side, showed that since the 1998 mission nothing has changed in the state of repair – which can be described as very inadequate – of the buildings and gardens, other than recent restoration activities.

During the past year, hydraulic works were installed for pumping water, with the exception of the lowest terrace, ie the northern terrace. The natural stone on the inside of the eastern and western entrance gates to the lowest terrace is currently being replaced by hand-carved stone..

Although we had been informed during the 1998 mission that funds had been made available for 1999 for restoration activities in the Naqqar Khana, nothing has been done.

Both the outside and the inside of the perimeter wall have deteriorated considerably (peeling plaster and mud mortar, advertisements painted on the outside, vandalism, graffiti, illegal use of the walls for housing, continuous destruction of the original hand-painted decoration on the outside, moisture problems at the base of the wall caused by illegal settlements raising the ground surface along the outside and by the construction of raised sidewalks against the wall along the northern and western sides, by garbage).

4.3 The Lahore Fort

The visit to Lahore Fort showed that various large-scale restoration work on buildings had taken place during the past two years, as can be seen in the restoration of the natural stone (eg screens/*jali*) of the wings along Jahangir's Quadrangle. The Shah Burj of the Shish Mahal (Palace of Mirrors) (1631–32, Shah Jahan) and the pavement of the spacious courtyard with its shallow water basin located in front of the Palace of Mirrors is currently being restored.

As far as could be ascertained, the gardens located in the Fort are not being restored.

4.4 The Hiran Minar and Jahangir's Tomb

The Hiran Minar and Jahangir's Tomb were also visited. Besides hunting places elsewhere, the Hiran Minar was the favourite hunting ground of and frequent stopping place for Jahangir (reigned 1605–27) of Jahangirabad on his way to Kashmir and Kabul.

The construction of the tank, the royal residence as an octagonal pavilion constructed in the middle of the man-made lake (the tank), the causeway with a gateway to the pavilion, and the minaret were commissioned by Shah Jahan in 1607 (*hiran* means deer). Jahangir erected the minaret (100 feet high) to commemorate the death of his pet deer, Maans Raaj. The tank was filled with water by means of an ingenious system of canals, water reservoirs, and a filtering tank. The greater part of these works still exists, albeit no longer in use.

Jahangir's Tomb, just outside of Lahore (3 miles north-east of Lahore across the river Ravi), is the final resting-place of Jahangir, a descendent of Akbar the Great, built on order of Shah Jahan (reigned 1628–58), son of Jahangir, and situated in a garden laid out previously by Empress Nur Jahan, wife (died 1645) of the deceased. The mausoleum is built of finely decorated red sandstone and marble.

Jahangir's mausoleum was and is surrounded by a walled Mughal garden. The garden around the mausoleum (a 500m square garden) can be reached on the western side through a high rising gate building on the east side of a forecourt (*chawk-i-jilau*), situated on the axis of the mausoleum. The mausoleum is accentuated by four minarets (approx. 35m high) in the corners.

Since the early 1990s, regular restoration activities have been carried out on the mausoleum and other structures. As an example, a new perimeter wall was built along the eastern side of the garden at the place where the wall had been lost.

Both properties can be considered exceptional monuments that, along with the Shalamar Gardens and Lahore Fort, represent the Mughal period (1526–1799), a period in which Lahore became the centre of cultural and political life in the Punjab.

In the meantime and since the new Commissioner took office, some rehabilitation projects have been carried out in Lahore along the Mall and elsewhere. It could be the first beginning of active attention for the cultural heritage that the city itself represents. But the question is, how long will this Commissioner stay in office? Usually they take up this position for a period of anywhere between a few months and a few years.

5 CONCLUSIONS

The integrity and authenticity of the World Heritage site of the Shalamar Gardens has been irretrievably damaged by the demolition of the greater part of the hydraulic works, the Shah Nahar, located on the opposite side of the GT Road.

It must be noted that the State Party Pakistan does not meet the obligations and responsibilities concerning the Shalamar Gardens to which it committed itself to by ratifying the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage. Awareness of the unique character, historical significance, and World Heritage values of the Shalamar Gardens appears to be low.

In 1977, Pakistan requested assistance from the World Heritage Committee for the Shalamar Gardens. To this end, a mission was carried out in 1998 on behalf of ICOMOS. The Pakistan authorities then declared that they would comply with the ensuing recommendations. There is nothing to prove that they acted upon this recommendation in any way.

In the meantime, the World Heritage Committee has made funds available for technical co-operation for "Research and documentation to prepare a comprehensive management plan for the Shalamar Gardens." To date, Pakistan has not put this into effect.

In the case of the Shalamar Gardens, it can be stated that "the property is threatened by serious and specific danger" (*Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention [OG]*, para 80.ii). To conserve this site "major operations are necessary" (*op. cit.* 80.iii).

In connection with the credibility of the World Heritage List and of the Convention, it is urgently required that the State Party Pakistan nominates the Shalamar Gardens for inclusion on the List of World Heritage in Danger, and that the World Heritage Committee indeed places it on the List.

During the 1998 missions (see *Report on the mission concerning etc.*, p 7) and the recent mission, the undersigned determined that all parts of the site (*OG*, para 85.b) are subject to "ascertained danger" as intended in *OG* para 83.i as regards 'serious deterioration of materials' (a), 'serious deterioration of structure and/or ornamental features' (b), 'serious deterioration of town-planning coherence' (c), 'significant loss of historical authenticity' (e), and 'important loss of cultural significance' (f), and that in the case of the Shalamar Gardens there is also "potential danger" (*OG*, para 82.ii) due to the 'lack of conservation policy' (b) for this site and the 'gradual changes due to climatic or other environmental factors' (f).

The following repeats one of the Recommendations in the Report of February 1999, which states:

To realise technical cooperation between the Pakistan Government, UNESCO/World Heritage Committee, and ICOMOS to help ensure that the Shalamar Gardens are restored in accordance with the international standards and charters.

The following is what the undersigned wrote on 23 January 1999 in his report entitled *Mission to Lahore, Shalamar Gardens, 28 October–4 November*:

The restoration has to occur by a long-range plan (10 years) and under the counselling of a Board of experts.

As indicated previously in the *The Shalamar Gardens at Lahore.....* document (December 1999, p 9) written by the undersigned, the *Management Guidelines for World Cultural Heritage Sites* (1993) is a solid basis and a guideline for drawing up the Shalamar Gardens Management Plan.

This document also recommends (p 9),

an essential component of sound future management of the Shalamar Gardens would be that a Site Commission of professionals be installed here as well, functioning as guardians of the World Heritage site,

as well as:

it would be advisable to install a research co-ordination committee that will formulate long- and short-term research programmes for research in and about the Shalamar Gardens. This committee also formulates the goals, establishes the work plans and schedules and reviews the progress of the research projects. (p 9)

The document indicates exactly what the contents of the management plan should be (pp 10–12).

The State Party (Pakistan) must be incited to define and implement a "rescue programme" as soon as possible in order to safeguard the remains of the former hydraulic works, ie consolidation as an archaeological relic of the remaining foundations of two tanks, by taking architectural measures to prevent further deterioration of what still remains of the third tank with its brick arches, and by fencing off the site on which these remains are located from the immediate surroundings so that it is no longer directly accessible.

Parking on the site of the first and second tanks must be prohibited as soon as possible. It is equally urgent that an end is made to the remains of the third tank being used as both a toilet and a garbage dump. Considering the drastic extent of destruction and because most of the original materials of the two demolished tanks have now been removed, reconstruction is no longer possible.

As regards the area around the remains of the hydraulic works, the State Party must be incited to quickly provide legal and governmental clarity concerning ownership, use of the grounds, and the legal status of the land within 200 feet of these hydraulic works. The Punjab Special Premises (Preservation) Ordinance, No. XXXIV of 1985 (*The Punjab Gazette*, Lahore, Wednesday, Feb. 27, 1985) applies here.

The experience gained and information provided during the mission show that the factors threatening the survival of the site are of a legal, political, financial and management nature. There is no structured cooperation in any form whatsoever between local authorities. Unchecked environmental developments (settlements, traffic) and ecological circumstances directly and negatively influence the integrity and authenticity of the site.

6 RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Conservation of the perimeter wall, both inside and outside, and of the gates; this will ultimately require the full cooperation of MCL, and may demand establishment of a sound drainage system near the walls to mitigate further damage caused by humidity undercutting the walls;
2. Priority to the restoration (not reconstruction) of the pavilions and other historic monuments within the Shalamar Gardens;
3. Revitalization of the garden layout and water works, based upon archaeological research and scientific analysis of the original layout of the gardens;
4. Formalization of a co-ordination body (commission or committee), with members representing all stakeholders concerned in the protection and utilisation of the Shalamar Gardens, which will develop, with technical assistance of UNESCO, the World Heritage Committee, ICOMOS, ICCROM and other relevant bodies as appropriate, a long-term management plan to ensure the development and conservation of this unique site.

7 FINAL COMMENTS

The Tentative List of World Heritage in Pakistan dates back to 14 December 1993. According to this List, the State Party is amongst other things planning to submit Jahangir's Tomb and the Hiran Minar and Tank in Sheikhpura as new nominations.

Mughal architecture is of exceptional universal significance for the history of mankind. It should take its place on the World Heritage List.

The World Heritage Committee and ICOMOS should invite the State Party of Pakistan to nominate the Hiran Minar and Jahangir's Tomb soon. A combined group of sites reflecting the history, life, working, and building of three successive Mughal Emperors will then be consciously listed together on the World Heritage List, fitting the Global Strategy.

The Lahore Fort, as we know it today, was erected by Akbar the Great (1542–1605, reigned 1556–1605) around 1566. Jahangir (1569–1627, reigned 1605–27) commissioned the Hiran Minar. He lives on also through his last resting-place, built for him by his widow and his son/successor (Jahangir's Tomb), while Shah Jahan (1592–1666, reigned 1627–1658) started constructing the Shalamar Gardens in 1642.

Robert de Jong

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