

Management Plan for the Site of Ashur (Qal'at Sherqat), Iraq

1. Structure of organisation and responsibilities (pertaining to 4.e, 4.f and 4.j)

Republic of Iraq
Ownership, budget

Ministry of Culture
Mr. Hamed Yousuf Hummadi

State Board of Antiquities and Heritage Chairman Dr. J.K. Ibrahim
General management, site supervision and coordination of taken measures DECISION MAKING

Department of Archaeological Excavations and Investigations	Department of Research	Department of Restoration and Conservation
Supervision and coordination of archaeological expeditions	Supervision and coordination of research strategies	Supervision and coordination of restoration and conservation strategies

Inspector of Antiquities of the province Salah Addin at Tikrit
Mr.Saud Faisal Azzawi

Director of the Iraqi Archaeological Expedition	Director of the Makhool centre for research	Director of the tourism in Tikrit
Local coordination and execution of archaeological fieldwork of the Iraqi expedition	Local coordination for the archaeological field documentation.	Local coordination of tourist facilities

Director of the German Archaeological Expedition	Iraqi-International Survey team (IRQ/Multi National)	International experts in restoration and conservation	International consultants in site planning
Local coordination and execution of archaeological fieldwork of the German expedition	Execution of an integrated survey in the Makhool Dam reservoir area, including Ashur		

2. Statement of objectives

The research objectives presently constitute

- (1) The exploration of the site by means of modern archaeological techniques (stratigraphic excavations, surface survey, remote sensing techniques), depending on the decision about the protective measures against the reservoir
- (2) Steps towards conservation and restoration of monuments: measures of continuing conservation, evaluation and improvement
- (3) The development of tourist facilities

They are summarised under paragraph 4f in the nomination form.

The two events which require the urgent development of an integrated approach for the salvage of the site of Ashur are

- the construction of the Makhool Dam with a reservoir which constitutes a threat to the site by flooding and infiltration
- the application submitted by the State Board of Antiquities and Heritage for the inscription of Ashur into the World Heritage List.

2.1 The protection of the site and archaeological exploration strategies

Since no definite decision has been made yet on the specific construction of a retaining system, it is not clear which parts of the site and its monuments will be affected. However, it cannot be excluded that extended parts of the site at the northern and eastern margins may be damaged by the erection of this retaining wall. Any construction on the site would have consequences for the salvage strategy of the site.

In view of the present situation, there are three possibly options for the site of Ashur:

- a) No retaining wall will be erected and the site will be flooded / infiltrated from 2006 onwards
- b) A retaining wall will be erected separated from the site
- c) A retaining system will be erected on-site, located on the eastern and northern margins

At present, it is only to a certain degree possible to discuss and develop salvage measures under the given conditions. An outline of salvage strategies will be presented below. Nevertheless, in view of both, the construction of a retaining system and the application for the inscription of the site of Ashur in the WHL, a request of emergency assistance has been submitted to the UNESCO. Assistance is requested for the development of an integrated strategy covering the steps which have to be

undertaken in order to save and preserve the site of Ashur and its monuments - excavated, to be excavated and unexcavated - the best possible way.

Possible salvage measures for the site of Ashur

a) Without protection wall

It is the intention of the Ministry of culture of Iraq and the connected authorities, such as the SBAH, to save the site of Ashur and its monuments. Therefore, this option is considered only theoretical.

From the four research objectives mentioned above remain **the archaeological exploration by excavations** added by any possible remote sensing technique which allows the study of unexcavated areas on the site and its immediate surroundings. Within this scenario, the site will be flooded in the year 2006 (at its lower parts; see map) and, at the beginning; the northern and eastern side will be exposed to infiltration by the waters of the reservoir. Experience at other archaeological sites in the Near East illustrates that also the site of Ashur will be destroyed by the time even though it is impossible to predict the time when any archaeological activities will be impossible. Only if there is no protection at all against the waters of the Makhool Dam reservoir, the entire site will have to be object of a concentrated rescue campaign. Such a campaign should cover areas within the city walls and outside, such as, e.g., the area of the New Year’s festival building to the NW of the city, but also other zones. **Protective measures** may refer either to the coverage of excavated areas with earth or to the transfer of objects and specific complexes from the site to museums. Restoration and conservation pertains exclusively to objects removed from their context. The **development of tourist facilities** on the site itself can be excluded in this case. Nevertheless, the construction of an information centre near the site may be taken in consideration.

Time schedule and working programme for rescue excavations

Year	Measure	Location / task
2003	Archaeological excavation	Southern city; Quay along the Tigris river
	Geophysical Survey	Unexcavated areas in the Southern city and beyond
	Surface Survey	Outside the city wall (South) and the New Year’s festival building area
	Record	Modern recording techniques parallel to excavations: CAD drawings, kite and aerial photographs; geomorphology; scientific analysis
	Restoration and conservation	Selected objects and contexts

Year	Measure	Location / task
2004	Archaeological excavation Geophysical Survey Surface Survey Record Restoration and conservation	Southern city, Quay along the Tigris river, eastern part of the Northern city Unexcavated areas in the Southern city and beyond (optional: New Year's festival building area) Outside the city wall (South, West, North) Modern recording techniques parallel to excavations: CAD drawings, kite and aerial photographs; geomorphology; scientific analysis Selected objects and contexts
2005	Archaeological excavation Geophysical Survey Record Restoration and conservation	Southern city, Quay along the Tigris river, eastern part of the Northern city, Northern city Unexcavated areas in the city Modern recording techniques parallel to excavations: CAD drawings, kite and aerial photographs; geomorphology; scientific analysis Selected objects and contexts
2006	Archaeological excavation Geophysical Survey Record Restoration and conservation Protection	Southern city, eastern part of the Northern city, Northern city Unexcavated areas in the city Modern recording techniques parallel to excavations: CAD drawings, kite and aerial photographs; geomorphology; scientific analysis Selected objects and contexts: transfer of ensembles to museums Coverage of excavated areas
2007-2010	Archaeological excavations Geophysical survey Record Touristic facilities	Northern city Unexcavated areas Modern recording techniques parallel to excavations: CAD drawings, kite and aerial photographs; geomorphology; scientific analysis Construction of an information centre near the site
2010 -	Archaeological excavations according to a specifically designed strategy (to be developed)	Central parts of the Northern city

b) with a protection wall separated from the site

If a protecting system is constructed entirely separated from the site **archaeological exploration** should concentrate **only on those areas accessible which will be affected** by the construction of such a system. This will be **outside the city walls**. Methods for the study of archaeological data should concentrate on survey, geophysical prospection and archaeological excavation. A surface survey at the southern and northern periphery of the site should be accompanied by geophysical prospection since the question, whether there was any settlement, industrial quarters or a graveyard in the immediate vicinity of the site has never been studied adequately. A geophysical prospection should be adopted in any case in the area of the New Year's festival house which a hundred years

ago had been studied by means of excavation at the spot itself. Archaeological excavations should be carried out in areas with anomalies or concentration of surface finds. Within the city walls, there will be no need of enhanced salvage measures.

Since the other objectives, i.e. steps towards **conservation and restoration** and the **development of tourist facilities** will be the same (at least in terms of the management level) whether there is a protective system separated from the site or on-site, they will be discussed below.

c) with a protection system on-site (gabions at the northern and eastern margin of the site)

Within the State Board of Antiquities and also on the occasion of the UNESCO visit last November, the option of a rather cost-effective solution for the protection of the site of Ashur was discussed. It is basically the so-called "gabion"-system which makes use of the existing shape of the site since the gabions will be placed at the slopes of the margins of Ashur. If this solution is adopted, parts of the site will be destroyed by the erection of supporting measures, other parts will be covered by the gabions forever. It is only these limited parts of the site which will be object of an intensive archaeological rescue operation.

Due to the specific topographic situation **archaeological excavations** will be the key method for the exploration of the affected areas. **Geophysical prospections** equally form an accompanying exploration method in this area. At the north of the site it will be the area from the Tabira gate and *Außenhaken*-area in the west to the Mushlalu gate complex at the central northern flank until the area of the temple of Ashur. At the eastern side it will be the entire zone bordering the river from the temple of Ashur down to the end of the city wall of the New City in the south and beyond. Due to the topography of the site, the eastern area will be affected more intensely by a gabion system, since parts of the central and southern city are lying below the reservoir level (156 m), basically the area south of the expedition house. The actual topography combined with the superimposed archaeological deposits requires a detailed and careful research strategy.

Thorough stratigraphic excavations will have to be carried out in the affected areas. Presently, it seems that there are considerable differences in height, which led to the erection of substantial retaining walls by means of quarry-stones. A second issue concerns the study of the entire riverside of the site, an area which is partly covered by the Tigris today. So far, archaeological research concentrated on the northeastern zone, i.e. below the temple of Ashur.

The exact area affected by the erection of a gabion-system is not known yet, nor has there a decision been made on which system will be applied for the protection of the site. It should be stated that the results of the drilling operations on behalf of the construction company are will provide valuable information about the archaeological deposits in the affected areas. Therefore, cooperation seems desirable.

Time schedule and working programme for rescue excavations

Year	Measure	Location / task
2003	Archaeological excavation Geophysical Survey Surface Survey Record Conservation and restoration Touristic facilities	Affected areas at the northern and eastern margins Unexcavated areas in the eastern parts of the Southern city and beyond Outside the city wall (South and North) Modern recording techniques parallel to excavations: CAD drawings, kite and aerial photographs; geomorphology; scientific analysis Selected objects and contexts from excavations Preparation of a management plan (implementation, monitoring, development Preparation of a management plan (several steps)
2004	Archaeological excavation Geophysical Survey Surface Survey Record Conservation and restoration Touristic facilities	Affected areas at the northern and eastern margins Unexcavated areas in the eastern parts of the Southern city and the northern periphery Outside the city wall (south and north) Modern recording techniques parallel to excavations: CAD drawings, kite and aerial photographs; geomorphology; scientific analysis Selected objects and contexts from excavations Implementation (conservation of already restored buildings) Implementation
2005	Archaeological excavation Geophysical Survey Record Conservation and restoration Touristic facilities	Affected areas at the northern and eastern margins Unexcavated areas in the eastern parts of the Southern city and the northern periphery Modern recording techniques parallel to excavations: CAD drawings, kite and aerial photographs; geomorphology; scientific analysis Selected objects and contexts Conservation and restoration of already restored buildings Evaluation and conclusions for future measures Application of restoration measures for excavated buildings Implementation

2006	Archaeological excavation Record Conservation and restoration Protection Tourist facilities	Affected areas at the northern and eastern margins Modern recording techniques parallel to excavations: CAD drawings, kite and aerial photographs; geomorphology; scientific analysis Selected objects and contexts: transfer of ensembles to museums Application of restoration measures for excavated buildings Coverage of excavated areas Implementation
2007-	Regular archaeological excavations according to an archaeological strategy for the site Geophysical survey Record Conservation and restoration Touristic facilities	Northern city and Southern city Unexcavated areas Modern recording techniques parallel to excavations: CAD drawings, kite and aerial photographs; geomorphology; scientific analysis First review phase First review phase

2.2 Conservation and restoration

It is the aim of the State Board of Antiquities and heritage to develop a **conservation and restoration** programme for the site. One part concerns actual conservation and restoration activities on the site; a second part pertains to the Makhool research centre (MRC) and to its function as a training facility for local staff.

Generally, it is aimed to further develop the conservation policy which had been adopted in the late 70s. This is the careful conservation and smooth restoration of excavated archaeological features. Usually, this is architectural remains. In addition to the large palatial or cultic architectural complexes (such as temples, palaces and gates), it is aimed at exemplifying the life of the inhabitants of the site. Numerous well-preserved residential buildings of different social groups within the city will help to illustrate the conditions of daily life in the city of Ashur. The building material and the climatic conditions require constant care of taken conservation measures. These will consist of traditional techniques, such as, e.g., mud brick-plaster. This conservation strategy will also have to be applied also for already existing restorations, since they are now threatened by erosion.

As to new restoration activities, they will **not** concentrate on an entire and overall reconstruction of monuments and buildings but on the protection of excavated structures. Only selected specific and characteristic features will be taken in consideration. This is important for the understanding of those

processes which start with the discovery of archaeological remains and extend to the interpretation of them. With the long history of excavations, interpretations and reconstructions at Ashur, there is a unique chance to illustrate the achievements of different methodologies of restoration. Actual restorations in the field will be accompanied by a reader / flyer presenting the reason, potential and limits of restoration activities during the last hundred years.

2.3 Tourist facilities

The development of **tourist facilities** on the site will follow the same strategy of a smooth archaeological tourism. The activities of tourists will concentrate on the northern city, this is

- (a) the area of public buildings (from the Tabira gate to the temple of Ashur)
- (b) the area of private houses in the central part of the northern city. From here, the entire site can be overlooked.

As an option

- (c) there is a pathway which carefully leads through the site down to the southern city.

In view of ongoing excavations this step will have to be discussed in a second step of planning. Any new constructions for tourists will be erected outside the city walls. This pertains to a car and bus park area, a rest house with a small restaurant and toilets, a souvenir shop with ticket sales and information facilities.

In order to protect excavated and unexcavated archaeological remains (and deposits) visitors will be obliged to visit the site by walking. Information plates with explanations in Arabic and English will be placed in the vicinity to architectural complexes. Initially, the tourist facilities will be coordinated by specialists from the Makhool research centre which are employed by the Ministry of Tourism.