



Figure 1: Photo of the reconstructed entrance taken on the last day at the site.

Architectural Restoration and Seismic Strengthening of Gönpa Gang

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Project Report, Second Year, Quarter 1 – October to December, 2023

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Introduction

This report accounts for the progress of the work during the architectural restoration of Gönpa Gang in the 1st quarter of the 2nd year. The progress of the work is listed below, and future plans are mentioned.

The report also covers the opening ceremony at the occasion of the visit of US Ambassador Dean R. Thompson and other members of the embassy. The visitors were welcomed with traditional rituals by the mothers group.

Opening Ceremony

On October 6, at the occasion of the visit of a US Embassy team headed by Ambassador Dean R. Thompson, the opening ceremony for the restoration work took place. The Ambassador was welcomed by the mother's group and the villagers with traditional rituals. Many other local dignitaries were also present.

The US ambassador started the ceremony with lighting the butter lamp inside Gönpa Gang. Then the delegation visited the working areas inside and around the Monastery. In the following ceremony, the Ambassador's speech highlighted the importance of cultural heritage and also expressed gratitude for the warm welcome. Further, the mother's group performed dances. The following photos document the different parts of the ceremony.

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Figure 2: The mother's group in expectation of the visit of the US ambassador.



Figure 3: Arrival of US Ambassador and his team at the restoration site.



Figure 4: Lighting the butter lamps inside the temple.



Figure 5: Inspection of the restoration site.

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Figure 6: Opening ceremony.



Figure 7: Speeches given during the ceremony.

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Figure 8: Gifting the book on the history of Gönpa Gang as token of appreciation.



Figure 9: Dance performed by the mother's group.

Restoration Works

During this quarter we continued the work on the entry section and the northwest corner wall and made significant progress in the construction of the building up to the base of the roof and completed the north-west corner wall.

Repair of Northwest Corner Wall

We continued the repair work at the northwest corner wall up to roof level. When reconstructing the wall, we made sure that it was properly joined with the walls to its sides. For this we used wooden ties and wall ties at different levels.



Figure 10: Reconstructing the northwest corner wall with wall ties.

The wall had been constructed with wooden ties. For the winter, it has been covered with plastic sheets to prevent snowfall damage. We also left the roof supports that were installed before work as a security measure.



Figure 11: Installing the temporary roof above the new northwest corner wall.



Figure 12: The second floor of the newly constructed wall from the interior.



Figure 13: Northwest corner wall after completion.

Temporary Roof at South Wing

In the south wing area, which was a focus of this year's work, we installed a temporary roof for the winter. We made sure that it is properly supported from the inside to make sure that it can bear heavy snowfall.



Figure 14: Installing the temporary roof above the south wing.



Figure 15: Installing temporary roof at south wing.



Figure 16: Temporary roof after completion.

Balcony and Floor Finish

After finishing the temporary roof work, we moved on to the balcony installation work. A balcony was assembled in place assimilating the previous one in both appearance and technique (Figure 1).

Further, we finalized the flooring in the room above the entrance. We maintained the level upon wooden splits and layout the wooden batten filled with mud in between and finished with wooden planks. Then the floor was finished by wooden planks.



Figure 17: Laying out the wooden batten and mud for flooring.



Figure 18: Photo showing the new flooring and balcony in the room above the entry to the monastery.

With these works the site is well prepared for the winter and the remainder of the quarter was used for planning next year's work.

Drawing Detail

In December I together with a helper and Santosh went back to the site to measure the details of the existing wooden members anew and compare them with previous drawings. Thereby, we focused on the Dhukang area which will be the main working area next year. We then also updated the existing drawing in sketches drawn by hand which in the following quarter will be converted into a digital format.

This work will support planning the restoration work more broadly as well as the calculation of needed resources.



Figure 19: Measuring details inside the monasteries' main hall.



Figure 20: The scaffolding set up to be able to measure the detail of columns.

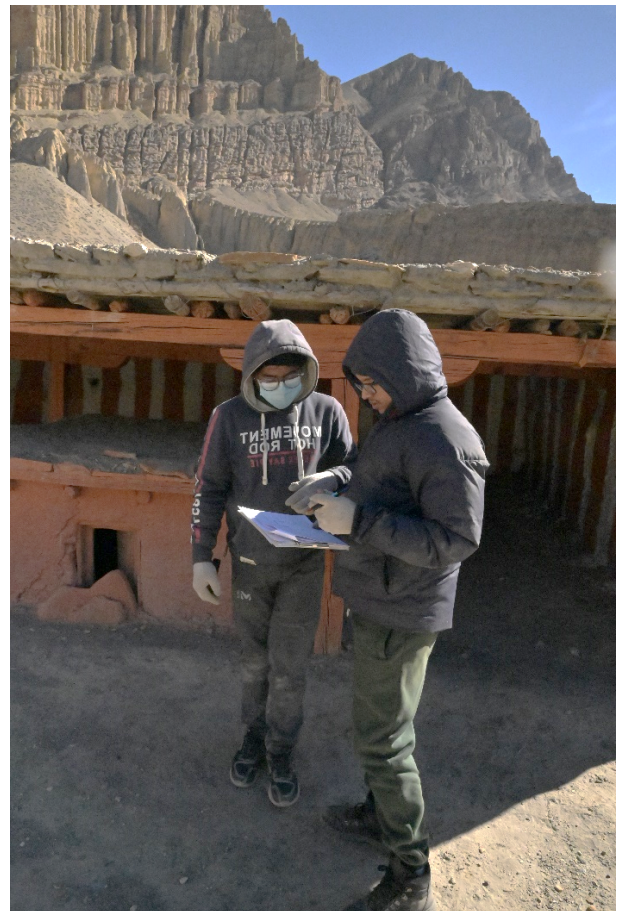


Figure 21: Taking detailed measurement of the capital on one of the long columns and discussing the measurements on site.

Challenges and Successes

Wind was a regular challenge during the work on the roof as well as in open spaces around the site. This not only affected the work, but also covering the worksite in the evening when the wind did not recede. Electricity also became an issue when the national grid supply was interrupted, as also our backup generator broke down. This affected the work of the carpenters and slowed down closing the site for the year.

Transporting heavy materials from Chuksang village continues to be challenging. In November, when the wood arrived, snowfall made it impossible for the truck bringing the wood to transport it all the way to the site. Therefore, we had to transfer the wood unto several tractor loads to bring the wood to the site. Finding workers was also difficult at that time.

Technically, tying the northwest corner wall to the building was the greatest challenge.

In the end, all these challenges could be overcome, but they resulted in unplanned expenses.

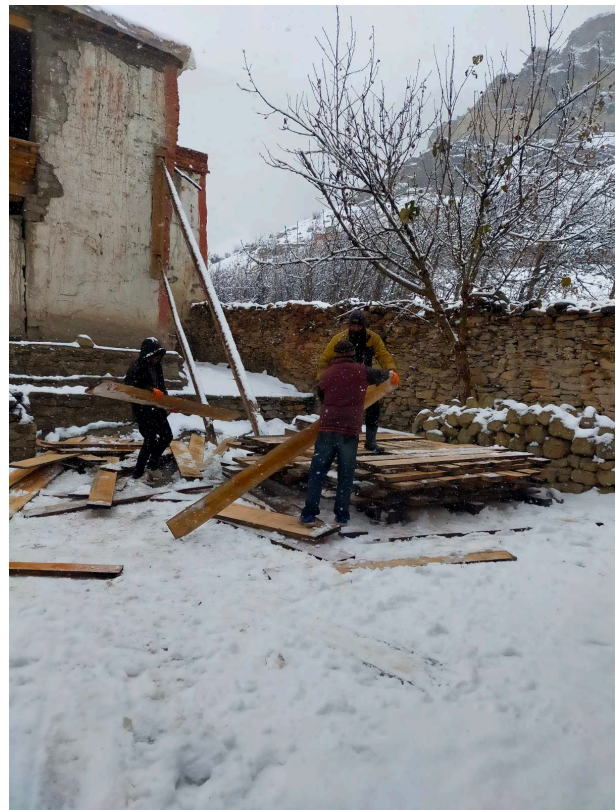


Figure 22: View of the river valley and stacking wood during snowfall in November.

Further Preparations

Towards the end of this quarter, we started to plan for the closing of the site this year. We covered the work areas of site with temporary roof before we left for the winter.

We estimated the wood needed for the next year by considering the wood left at the site. In December we then purchased most of the wood needed for the next year and stored it properly. This will ensure that the wood is dry and ready to use when needed.

We also worked on a detailed drawing of the work that needs to be done next year. This will help us to calculate the material needed as an addition while running the site for next year. We also prepared a list of materials needed. Some of these were already bought.

Further, in an October meeting among the villagers it was decided that in 2024 any donation or entry fee collected for a visit to the monastery will be used for the restoration work.



Figure 23: Loading the newly purchased wood in the village on a tractor.

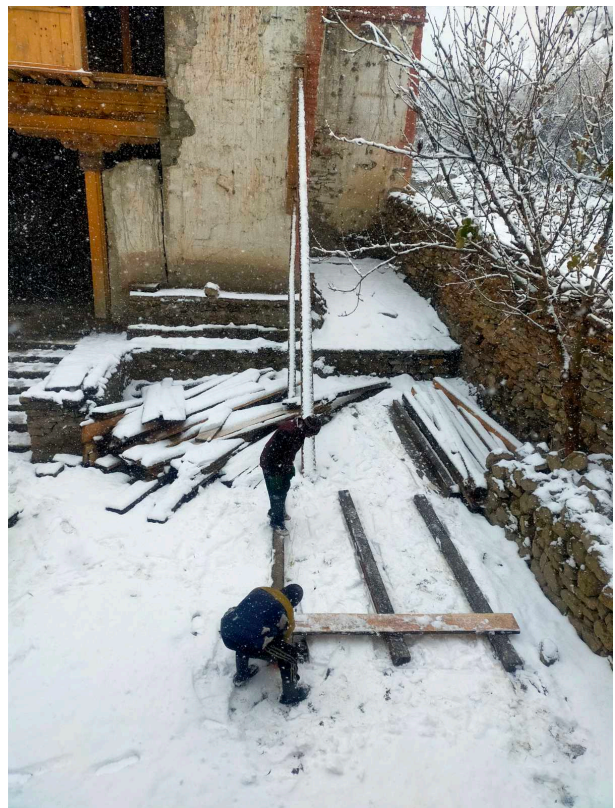


Figure 24: Storing the wood on site in snowfall.



Figure 25: Stacking the wood properly.



Figure 26: Showing all areas of wood stored in front of the temple.



Figure 9: Covering the wood to protect it from snow.

Accounting

Evaluation

The challenges mentioned in the report aside, the work at Gönpa Gang went well. Sabin Shrestha and Santosh Gurung manage the work on site appropriately and responsibly. Installing the temporary roof was somewhat delayed due to electricity and manpower issues.

Reporting still is an issue, as is also documented by this report. While the works overall are mentioned, the report is short on details both in terms of the chronology of the work and the effort necessary for each of the steps. We have asked for more details to be provided in future reports.

Going forward

The winter quarter will mainly be spent on planning for this year's work. Sabin Shrestha will work on updating the plans as well as the purchases of the necessary



material. He will then return to the site in early March to finalize the timber purchases and prepare the next restoration phase.

Broadly the plan is to have an intense building phase in the following quarter to complete much of the exterior restoration work before the rains set in.