



*Figure 1: Photo taken on March after renovation of corner wall.*

# Architectural Restoration and Seismic Strengthening of Gönpa Gang

U.S. Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation, Award No. SNP40022GR0039

**Project Report, Second Year, Quarter 2 – January to March, 2024**

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## Introduction

The first two months of this quarter were dedicated to preparatory works including planning and purchases. In early March final purchases were made and workers gradually assembled at the site.

## Preparatory Works

Preparatory works included the improvement of the available plans, calculations of the materials necessary for this year’s restoration campaign and their purchases, as well as making sure that all necessarily personnel is available. In February, Binod Gurung also went to New York in February to raise additional funds for the restoration.

## Updated Digital Plans

In January, Sabin Shrestha updated his digital drawing from the measurements he took in December. These not only document the state prior to restoration, but they also document the restoration work by recording the changes made.

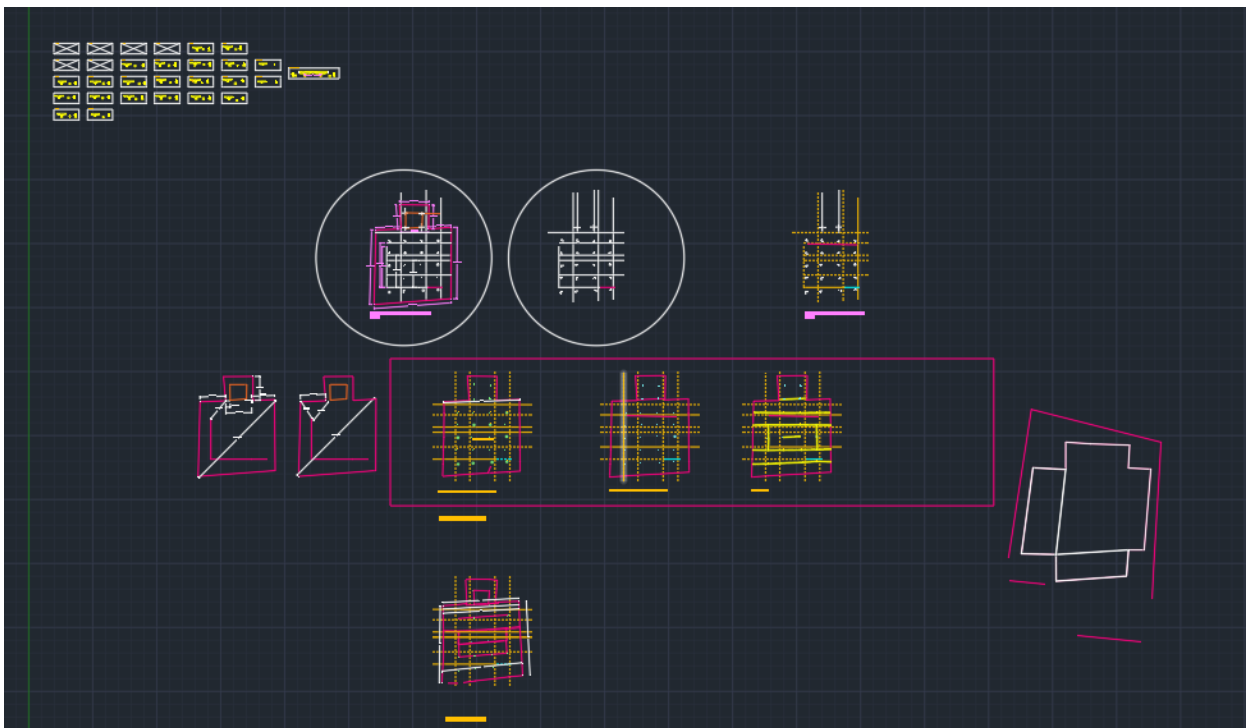


Figure 2: Screenshot of the digital drawings showing different elements of the temple in different colors.

## Planning of the Works

During the winter, the design of the balcony and the new roof remained topics of discussion. Plans for them were finalized on February 28 in a meeting between Sabin Sreshta, Thomas Schrom and Kunjon Thakuri. In this and previous meetings also the work schedule, the necessary materials and labor as well as the resulting revisions to the budget were discussed and agreed upon.

Sabin Shrestha also prepared a detailed schedule for the works to be undertaken in 2024. Again, it was discussed with Thomas Schrom and Kunjon Thakuri, and it was shared with all team members. This work schedule, covering the entire period from March to September, is provided in a separate file (see WORK SCHEDULE FOR 2024.pdf).

## Purchases

According to these plans, Sabin Shrestha estimated the necessary wood, materials, tools as well as the number of workers and required food. Purchase orders were then sent to the vendors, namely Shree Baba Tools and Machinery and Sapkota and Sons, in February. He also bought all the necessary tools and food items for the labor accommodation at the beginning of March. Most of these were acquired in Pokhara and transported from there, while those not available there were acquired in Kathmandu.



Figure 3: Packing of the equipment in the stores.



Figure 4: Arrival of the equipment and food items at Gönpa Gang.

## Personnel

For this year, we contracted some of the workers from the previous year, while others needed to be newly hired. Some of these began working in early March,

while others joined mid-March. Temporary workers were hired from the village as needed.

Initially work started on March 10 with one carpenter from last year. By the end of March we employed up to eighteen workers. Among these are six carpenters, two of their helpers, two stone masons and foreman, seven laborers and one cook.

## Restoration Works

Work first focused on the south wing, the entrance area and the eastern (entry) section of the main Assembly Hall. Further works were undertaken in the drainage areas outside the temple.

### Repair of the Northeast Corner

An issue remaining from last year's work was a major crack in the northeast corner of the Entry Hall. On the ground floor the inner walls are covered with murals, the walls there thus cannot be rebuilt. Therefore, we decided to take down a larger section of the corner on the upper floor and rebuild it in a way that ties the two corner walls together and thus avoids that the crack widens on the lower floor.



*Figure 5: The severe crack at the northeast corner of the Entry Hall in October 2023.*

First, the walls at the corner had to be taken down, which we started on March 19. We then reconstructed the walls using wooden ties with rammed earth to connect them across the corner. This work was finished by March 22.



*Figure 6: Supporting the cross beams of the northeast corner on the ground floor level.*



*Figure 7: Opening the northeast corner on the upper floor level by dismantling the walls.*



Figure 8: The upper part of the northeast corner after dismantling.



Figure 9: Placing the lowest wall tie on the upper floor of the northeast corner.



Figure 10: The northeast corner during reconstruction.



Figure 11: Finishing the reconstruction of the northeast corner.



*Figure 12: The northeast corner after reconstruction, the crack still visible on the lower floor.*

## Balcony

The balcony design has been a contested issue over the past months (see Figure 12). On the one hand, it is clear that the balcony as it was preserved was not original but a later construction that likely was much narrower than the original, which should have been of the width of the lower parts above the door. On the other hand, its original appearance cannot be reconstructed anymore.

The version added last year did replicate what was preserved at the site, but the areas to its sides remained to be decided on. It was decided to keep the narrow balcony and to introduce screens to its side. Accordingly, some adjustment work on the balcony was undertaken March 20 and finished by March 21.

## South Wing

In the area of the south wing, we first dismantled the temporary roof and started to add the joist that were prepared when work began in March. After adding the joists, we did the planking of the roof. Then we shifted to batten work to finish the floor of the southeast room. We also integrated an electrical pipe before the mud

and floor finish, then we prepared the planks for the floor. Also, the decorative wooden band to finish the roof if the southeast room was done.



Figure 13: Removing the temporary roof of the south wing.



Figure 14: Placing the joists above the south wing.





Figure 15: Adding the planking to the roof of the south wing.



Figure 16: Preparing the wooden floor for the painted room of the south wing.

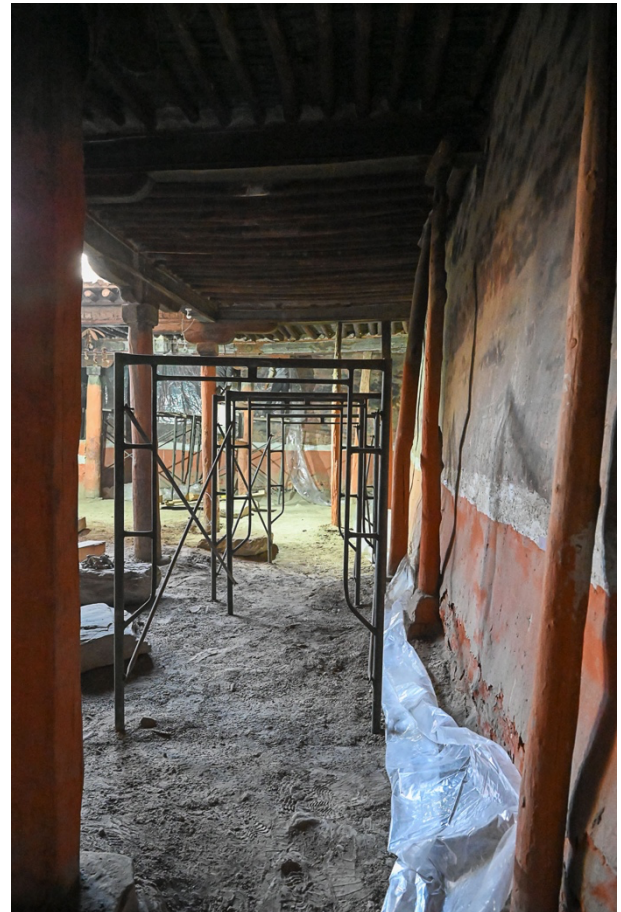
## Assembly Hall

As soon as sufficient labor was recruited, we covered all the paintings within the main temple with thin plastic sheets to protect the murals from the dust. Then, we started to dismantle the eastern half adjacent to the Entry Hall on March 18. Once that was completed, we began to level and strengthen the wooden support structure. All existing wooden splits used for the ceilings were cleaned and we will reuse them in the same area. Equally, all wooden members of the ground floor, including the painted beams were cleaned and prepared for reuse.

By the end of March works on the wooden members was still ongoing, as was the preparation for the stone bases for the columns. This is a rather complex task as in the end the ceiling needs to be level.



*Figure 17: Attaching the plastic sheets.*



*Figure 18: Further plastic sheets laid out for covering.*



Figure 19: Removal of the roof above the Assembly Hall, including the plastic sheets added in an earlier village restoration.



Figure 20: Dismantling the support structure on the upper level.



Figure 21: The wooden splits covering the ceiling of the lower level after removal of all the mud.g



Figure 22: View into the entry area of the Assembly Hall after the dismantling of the two levels above it.



Figure 23: Inspection of the original wooden beams to prepare them for reuse.



*Figure 24: Preparation of a new stone base for one of the columns.*

## Drainage

Our stone mason suggested to first prepare all the necessary stone panels for the drainage. We thus started with this work. We also removed the stone from the dry-stone wall in the northeast corner of the temple.



*Figure 25: Preparation of the stone panels for the drainage.*

## Meeting with the Community

On March 24 we organized a meeting with community to discuss the progress of the work and upcoming plans. In particular the demolition of dry-stone wall at north side and the demolition of the partition wall on first floor needed the approval of the villagers. We also discussed the contribution of the village to prepare the mud for the roof as well as the temporary removal of all portable sculpture which will be needed in the near future. We agreed on these points and documented the decision.

On March 28 village committee members again visited the site to observe the progress of the work at the site.



Figure 26: Discussion at the community hall.



Figure 27: Inspection of the work on site.



*Figure 28: Preparation of a document recording the decisions made.*

### **Working Conditions**

Since some of the workers from last year were ill equipped, we decided to improve on this. In February, we ordered jackets to be made for the workers and also bought better shoes for them. While the former could be given to them at the beginning of their work, the jackets could only be distributed on March 29.

We also temporarily transferred the solar power from temple to site accommodation building and improved the electrical wiring in that building.

To make sure that visits to the temple are a safe during the work, we guide all visitors ourselves. Further, if they decide to leave a donation to the monastery, that donation will now be recorded.

### **Challenges and Successes**

Wind continues to be a regular challenge during works on the roof as well as in open spaces around the site. This not only affects the work directly, but also any



protective measures to covering the worksite in the evening when the wind did not recede.

Electricity also was an issue, as the national grid supply was interrupted. Further, we had temporary water issues as a vehicle drove over our water supply. Tackling these issues at times resulted in additional, unplanned expenses.

### Accounting

At the end of this quarter (Y2Q2), our cumulative expenditure amounts to **\$105,274.85**, approximately **49%** of the total approved budget. On the timeline, we've completed the second quarter of the second year, which accounts for 75% of the total project duration. Despite this, we still have 51% of the budget remaining to spend.

The first two months of the quarter were utilized on planning the activities for active months ahead, revising the budget based on budget balance report at the end of Y2Q1 to fund the activities planned and liaising with vendors to secure materials and supplies as well as with prospective personnel for potential employment in subsequent months.

Total expenditure observed in Quarter 2 individually stands at **\$11,316.32**. A major expenditure to note in this quarter were the food supplies for the workers, most of which are items with longer shelf life and thus are expected to last for months to come. Additionally, a few tools, materials and stationery were procured in first half of March. Major restoration activities on site began in mid-March, towards the end of the reporting quarter, workforce expenses are thus relatively low. Workforce is expected to be in full capacity by mid-April as planned.

### Fundraising New York

In February, Binod Gurung went to New York to raise additional funds for the Gönpa Gang restoration project from the Mustang community there. He succeeded in raising 26,335 USD, which will be used as backup funds for unforeseen expenses and for work not budgeted for by the project. For example, project funds do not include expenses for electrical installations, and these can now be covered by these additional funds. Further, these funds will be used to reconsecrate all images inside the temple once the restoration is finished.

While we will report on the usage of these funds here, they will not appear in the project accounting.

### **Evaluation**

With sufficient skilled workers on site, work in March started well and at different places around the site the same time. We also succeeded in securing a group of more experienced carpenters for this year, which started in mid-March. Overall, the work appears even better organized than last year.

### **Going Forward**

Work has continued throughout April at increasing pace, to have a major part of the restoration done before the rains set in. Currently, the implications of trying to level the ceiling of the entire Assembly Hall is under discussion, as height differences amount to as much as 10 inches. A detailed account of the works planned is available in the work schedule document provided separately (WORK SCHEDULE FOR 2024.pdf).

Unfortunately, Sreekumar Menon will not be able to join this year again for personal reasons. He will be replaced by Noor Jahan Chunka (Noori), a restorer from Ladakh recommended by Sree. Thomas Schrom and Noori will join the on-site team in early May for the most crucial parts of the restoration, the area immediately in front of the apse housing the large sculpture of Maitreya.