



1. View of the temple of Lo Gekhar and in early April 2021, photo Kunjon Thakuri.

Seismic Strengthening and Restoration of Lo Gekhar

Award No. SNP40020GR0042

Project Report, First Year, Second Quarter – January to March 2021

Compiled by Christian Luczanits

Norbusum Foundation (NGO)

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Kunjon Thakuri
Chairman

April 25, 2021

Report Narrative

The three winter months were predominantly used to

- buy the necessary computer and camera equipment,
- to create a website and a poster for the promotion of the project
- and to explore the different options for project activities from April onwards.

Equipment

In terms of equipment the project purchased a laptop and camera equipment with attention to quality, portability and durability. In terms of computer a laptop and backup disc with solid state drives were purchased, reducing the risk of disk damages under the rough high altitude conditions of Mustang. Equally, a mirrorless camera equipment with professional zoom lens was chosen to avoid issues with movable parts and dust. A second battery, additional flash cards and a flash complement and a bag for the entire equipment complement the purchase. The equipment fits in one bag and is to be used on site by on site for documentation and record keeping by whoever represents the Norbusum Foudnation there.

Further, an all in one printer has been purchased to equip the Norbusum office.

Website

To promote the project and the Norbusum Foundation a website has been created using Weebly, with the hosting paid for two years at once, which turned out to be cheaper than yearly purchases. Weebly has been chosen as it is relatively easy to use and still provides a modern looking and responsive website. This service also enables the movement of the site to other hosts if necessary in future. The website is available under the domain name (www.norbusum.org).

Further, a poster has been designed to promote the project on site, with its text also translated into Nepali for a Nepali version.

Planning

Due to COVID-19 planning this year's campaign has been particularly difficult. Originally it was planned that John Harrison does all the architectural work, but uncertainty concerning his second jab of vaccination made this impossible. Therefore, the conservation architect Thomas Schrom, who otherwise serves as advisor to the Norbusum Foundation, was asked to begin the architectural planning through a visit on site to verify all measurements. At this stage it is unclear when the baton will be handed back to John Harrison.

Discussion with the community and other stakeholders about present needs and future usage of the complex continued. There also have been a number of virtual meetings among the foundation board members to clarify procedures and payments.

Evaluation

There are a number of difficulties the project phases at the moment that keep both the planning and implementation process fluid:

- The biggest factor for this is the situation around Covid-19, which changes continuously and affects travels of project members both internationally and nationally. Consequently, the planning process may be severely curtailed or take longer than envisioned. It is also clear that depending on the situation the foundation may have to resort to different personnel.
- While a local management committee for the restoration project was established at Marang, this falls short of the heritage committee envisioned for the project and the future maintenance of Lo Gekhar. There is no agreement on site and within the Norbusum board on the involvement of international parties in such a committee. In this regard, a statement by the US embassy recommending such a committee may be useful.
- Already before this commenced last autumn, the sacred area of Lo Gekhar was defined by a perimeter wall built by the district government. This wall is less expansive than has been hoped.
- More broadly, there is a flurry of politicking around the project both on a village and local politics level. While the village is supporting the project, there are a number of different opinions on what exactly needs to be done and how. The caretaker is extremely supportive and is happy for the project to go ahead as soon as possible. The villagers appear to be more concerned in their share of the project, also in financial terms. Further, local leaders have their own initiatives around the monastery, in particular regarding the community building in front of the temple. In other words, it will be extremely hard if not impossible to maintain the site's integrity without establishing the committee suggested in the project application.

Going Forward

Early April Thomas Schrom will survey the current condition of the monument, re-measure it in its entirety and start the planning process. He is in contact with John Harrison and together they will decide on how to best tackle the architectural issues of the monument.