

Zafar, Capital of Ḥimyar, Ninth Preliminary Report, September-October 2010¹

Owing to an unstable security situation in the Yemen (see appendix), we limited our final season of fieldwork to a skeleton crew of four and a short season (11.09. – 16.10.2010). Our limitations reduced our risk. The Yemen's uncertain political conditions are publicly described in the warning published by the Foreign Office of the Federal Republic of Germany. This year our work had four emphases:

- 1 conservation measures for the excavated Himyarite period Stone Building in Zafar
- 2 recording of the Himyarite period reliefs as part of the conservation plan and for the publication as well
- 3 Support of GOAM
- 4 recording of the Himyarite period pottery for the final excavation publication

1 Conservation Measures for the Himyarite period Stone Building site in Zafar

The task of protecting an antique monument in perpetuity is a tall order. Having excavated the Stone Building, in 2007 and 2008 we proposed to GOAM (General Organisation for Antiquities and Museums) to re-bury it in order to improve its chances for survival. Those responsible did not take this advice to heart. Daily fluctuations in the temperature and humidity adversely affect the condition of the excavated remains. To get more precise information about such factors, in 2009 the restorer Prof Dr Michael Pfanner (Munich) visited the site for a week and prepared a conservation plan. Thereupon, this year we built a gutter to conduct rainwater which flows into the ancient building area from the east back out again (Fig. 1). This reduces the fluctuations of water upon the building and its reliefs, but does not eliminate them completely. Our main goal was to roof the entire surface which we excavated (28 x 30 m) during our stay which was finished a week after our arrival back home (Fig. 2 and 3).

A second main problem is the security of the area owing to vandalism and clandestine excavation. Finds are being removed from the excavated area. The lack of illumination exacerbates an already unfavourable security situation. Given the poor pay of the guards, they may not always be motivated: For this reason, the roof which we erected in 2008 over the eastern relief wall has been vandalised. The undersigned decided to illuminate the 50 x 50 m excavation area by means of two floodlights. First, we tapped a nearby electrical main for our power supply and set up two electrical masts. The floodlights are positioned on the southern and western sides (Fig. 4). In order to make the guards' house (which we built in 2008) more comfortable, this year we supplied mattresses, blankets, pillows and electrified it. In addition, we repaired the roofs of this house and our magazine which leaked.

¹ The Gerda Henkel Foundation generously financed our conservation efforts and the DFG the costs for our research component. Regarding AZ 109/V/09 Restaurierung des himyarischen Steingebäudes in Zafar, Hauptstadt von Ḥimyar. Date of the grant: 24 July 2009. Our team included Martine Brucker (documentation specialist), 'Alī 'Abdul-Karīm al-Ḥakīm (inspector), Curt Hilbrig (technician), Jörg Lindenbeck (scan application), Rašid Tabit al-Nagar (inspector), Fuād Mḥd al-Qašim (ex-officio inspector), David Wenge (documentation specialist) and Paul Yule (leader). Without the support of H.E. Michael Klor-Berchtold and Mḥd. al-Moraisy of the embassy our task would have been impossible. We thank our Yemenite host, the General Organisation for Antiquities and Museums and its director, Dr Abdullah Ba Wasir for permission to conduct study and restoration measures in Zafar.

2 Recording of the Reliefs as part of the Conservation Plan

This year we recorded the Himyarite period reliefs of the eastern interior courtyard wall by means of a 3D scanner (Fig. 5). Our annual photography revealed their alarming degrading exposed to the elements. Our photos proved insufficient for an accurate rendering of the reliefs. Once assembled, the resulting scans will offer a high resolution 3-dimensional rendering of these unique and endangered works of art. Such 3D images are far more accurate than the simple normal and rectified photos which we took in previous years, and are to appear in the final publication.

3 Support of GOAM

At the end of our 12 year mission in Zafar, according to our contract, we donated our entire equipment inventory to GOAM in order to develop this Third World department of antiquities. They were deposited in the Zafar Site Museum. Foreign missions cannot bear the costs of all conservation measures in the Yemen. GOAM must finally take matters seriously in order to sustain the preservation of the antique remains in the immediate and outlying area. As usual, we subsidized GOAM members as a condition to conduct our field work.

Prof. Dr. Paul Yule, 07.11.2010, Heidelberg, (10 field report)



Fig. 1 The new water channel in the Stone Building.

Fig. 2. New roof over the entire Himyarite period Stone Building.





Fig. 3. New roof over the entire Himyarite period Stone Building.



Fig. 4 New floodlighting in the Stone Building area.



Fig. 5 As part of our conservation programme at Zafar, J. Lindenbeck documents the 15 m long Himyarite period relief wall by means of a 3D scanner.

Appendix:

Aus der Länderwarnung des Auswärtigen Amtes:

Stand 07.11.2010

(Unverändert gültig seit: 01.11.2010)

Aktuelle Hinweise/ Teilreisewarnung/ Gefahr von Entführungen und Anschlägen

- Wegen des in Jemen bestehenden erheblichen Risikos terroristischer Anschläge, des ständig hohen Entführungsrisikos, der in einzelnen Landesteilen immer wieder aufflammenden Stammeskonflikte, sowie sich häufender gewalttätiger Demonstrationen in südlichen Regionen wird von Reisen nach Jemen abgeraten.
- Vor Einzelreisen über Land und vor Reisen in die Regionen Ma'rib und Sa'ada (einschließlich angrenzender Bezirke), Abyan, Al-Jawf, Shabwa und Hadramaut wird ausdrücklich gewarnt.
- Derzeit besteht ein erhöhtes Risiko terroristischer Anschläge in der gesamten Nah- und Mittelostregion. Die länderspezifischen Reise- und Sicherheitshinweise sollten sorgfältig beachtet werden.