



ONGOING ACTIVITIES

■ INVENTORY OF CULTURAL HERITAGE SITES, WAKHAN AND PAMIRS

AKTC has recently undertaken a survey in the Wakhan and the Pamirs in Badakhshan province, as part of wider efforts to document cultural and architectural heritage in Afghanistan. Building on earlier research work in this remote region, the survey has enabled the preparation of an inventory of some 100 sites, including petroglyphs, shrines, mosques, forts and burial structures, as well as examples of indigenous architecture. The results illustrate the rich built heritage of the area, and have enabled identification of sites that might be at risk from looting or natural deterioration. Once finalised the inventory will be made available to the Ministry of Information and Culture and other relevant institutions in Afghanistan. Apart from its use for purposes of research and possible conservation of key sites, the inventory contains material that might contribute to the ongoing tourism promotion work of the Aga Khan Foundation and others in the Wakhan and Pamirs.



■ SHRINE OF CHARDA MASOOM, KABUL OLD CITY

Co-funding from the British Embassy has enabled conservation work to begin on the Charda Masoom shrine in Kuche Gharabat quarter of the old city in Kabul. This builds on upgrading works carried out during 2006 in an area where many of Kabul's musicians live.

Situated in the shadow of the Bala Hissar, or citadel, at the centre of the shrine is a raised octagonal platform on which survive 4 childrens' graves, protected by an elaborately-carved timber screen. Still an important place of pilgrimage, the name of the shrine suggests that 14 graves might originally have existed on the site. It is said that an historic quran had been kept in the shrine and, during an epidemic during the reign of Amir Abdur Rahman, was carried on an elephant through the city, resulting in an end to the plague affecting the inhabitants.

The present structure of the shrine, probably dating from the late 19th century, was badly damaged during the conflict that raged through this neighbourhood in 1992/3, when factional fighters looted and burned many homes and religious buildings. The first stage of the works has entailed careful documentation, followed by the replacement of damaged rafters and re-alignment of the structural timber frame.

This will allow for the main shrine area to be re-roofed before the onset of winter, when cleaning and repairing the decorated timber work will proceed. An unusual brick *langarkhana* survives in the courtyard of the shrine and is still used for cooking food distributed to the public on the anniversary of the birth of Hazrat Muhammed.





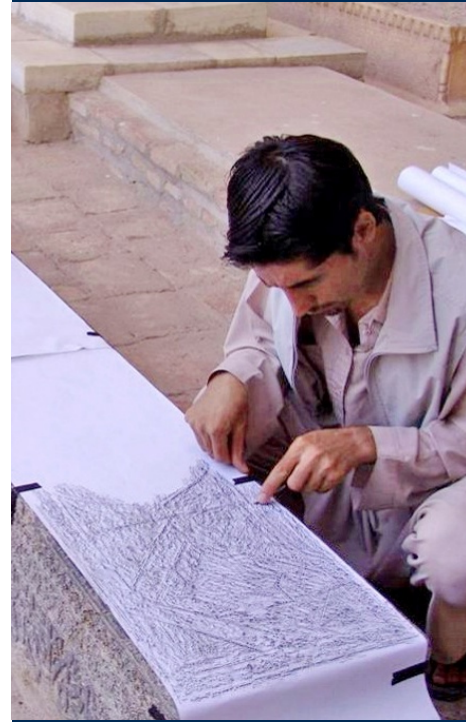
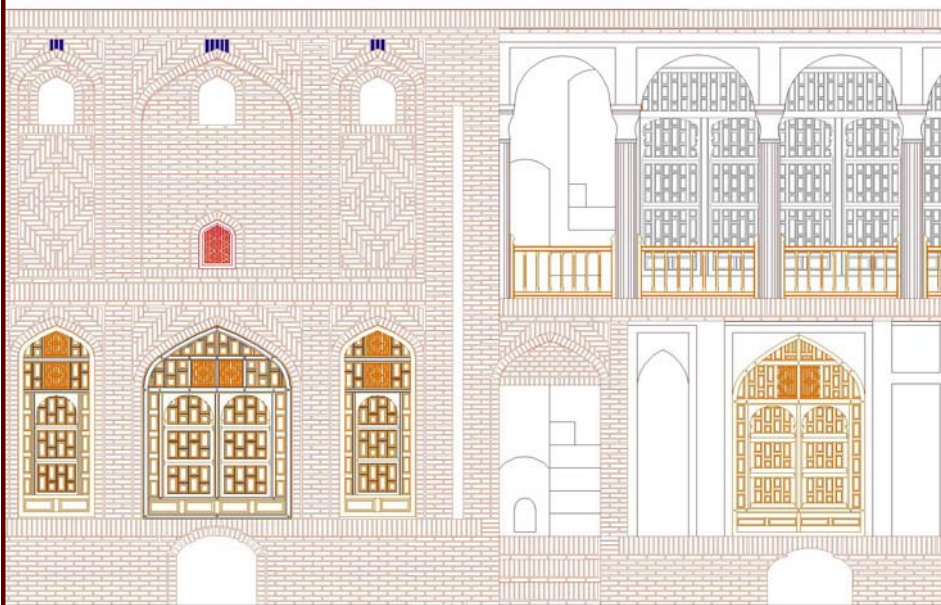
### ■ ATTARBASHI HOUSE, HERAT

In early 2006, AKTC began the documentation of the Attarbashi house, built by a distinguished physician in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century but, along with many other homes in the old city, had fallen into disrepair and partially collapsed. This home comprises a northern (summer) and southern (winter) range of rooms, arranged around a central courtyard that is accessed from a covered passage or *dalan*. The complex retains some of the characteristic elements of large family homes of the era, including a double-height central domed reception room, which has subsequently been reconstructed, along with timber colonnades along the upper levels of both ranges. Traces of fine moulded and painted plasterwork have been documented and safeguarded, as have the characteristic timber screens along the internal elevations, which retain sections of geometric

patterned brickwork. On the eastern side of the courtyard is an unusual domestic *hammam* beside a small shrine adjacent to the main entrance.

As with AKTC's other conservation initiatives in the old city, the project has provided opportunities for a range of specialist craftsmen to demonstrate their skills in restoring decorated plaster and woodwork, while training apprentices in workshops set up on site.

With growing local interest in the conservation of the Attarbashi and other houses in this quarter, it is hoped that the project might raise awareness locally of the potential for retaining and upgrading traditional structures in a context where many owners see no alternative but to demolish and 'redevelop' historic property.



### ■ DOCUMENTATION OF HISTORIC GRAVES, GAZORGAH, HERAT

As part of efforts to document the rich artistic and architectural history of the shrine complex of Abdullah Ansari in Gazorghah, a group of students from the faculty of Fine Arts at Herat University is engaged in preparing full-scale drawings of the most significant historic graves. Representing fine examples of decorative stone techniques spanning from the 16<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> century, these drawings will form the basis of an illustrated inventory of a cemetery where many important figures in the history of the region are buried.

## EVENTS

### ■ GETTY FOUNDATION WORKSHOP

Dr. Abdul Wasay Najimi and Mohammed Rafi Ahadi attended the workshop *Cultural Heritage: Research, Resources and Methods* organised by the Getty Foundation and the Council of American Overseas Research Centres (CAORC) in Istanbul between 7<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> September. They were able to present two examples of AKTC's ongoing work in public open spaces, the Timur Shah mausoleum and park and Baghe Babur garden.