



(Top) The mausoleum of Timur Shah before restoration.

(Middle) The mausoleum after restoration.

(Bottom) Terraced walkways and water channels lead up the sloped access to the garden Pavilion of the Baghe Babur (Babur's Gardens). Since opening, Baghe Babur has become a popular destination for the citizens of Kabul.

INTRODUCTION

In 2002, under an agreement with the Government of Afghanistan, the Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC) began to restore and rehabilitate a number of significant historic buildings and public open spaces in the city of Kabul. In concert with a broad range of development initiatives ranging from agricultural productivity to telecommunications undertaken by the other agencies of the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN), AKTC undertook a range of conservation and urban regeneration efforts, living condition improvements, community development programmes and planning initiatives in war-damaged neighbourhoods of the Old City of Kabul. A similar initiative commenced in the Old City of Herat in 2005. The Trust has also been involved in the preservation of intangible cultural heritage in Afghanistan through the Aga Khan Music Initiative.

CONSERVATION OF TIMUR SHAH MAUSOLEUM, KABUL

In 2003, AKTC began work on the restoration of the Mausoleum of Timur Shah. Timur Shah was the Durrani King who made Kabul the capital of the modern Afghan State. The historic monument had fallen in disrepair during decades of civil war and had been encroached upon by a market of informal traders. AKTC's work encompassed the restoration of the mausoleum and the rehabilitation of the one hectare park surrounding the building.

The park has been replanted with mulberry trees in keeping with the original plans. The central space of the mausoleum has already been the setting for lectures, seminars and exhibitions.

BAGHE BABUR, KABUL

In early 2003, conservation began on the sixteenth-century Baghe Babur in Kabul, where the first Mughal Emperor Babur is buried. Now managed by an independent Trust, the restored 11-hectare garden not only re-establishes the historic character of the site with its water channels, planted terraces and pavilions, but also provides the population of Kabul with a space for recreation and cultural events. The bulk of physical works were completed by 2007, since when the various facilities – including a swimming-pool, garden Pavilion, caravanserai and Queen's Palace complex – have been in public use. In addition to the conservation work in Baghe Babur, investments have been made in upgrading basic infrastructure for residents of the surrounding neighbourhood, while the joint formulation of a District Action Plan continues.

In 2008, Baghe Babur has seen a steady increase in number of visitors, with some 60,000 per month in mid-summer. Since the introduction of a new system of management under the Baghe Babur Trust, with participation from Kabul Municipality, the Ministry of Information and Culture and AKTC, there has also been an appreciable increase in revenue. In order to ensure that the restored

landscape and monuments can be maintained to appropriate standards, the Trust aims over time to achieve financial sustainability by generating revenue from entrance fees and appropriate public events in the various facilities.

URBAN REGENERATION PROJECTS IN KABUL

The Asheqan wa Arefan neighbourhood, which takes its name from an important shrine at its centre, represents one of the last surviving clusters of historic fabric in the Old City, which suffered massive damage in the early 1990s. The Asheqan wa Arefan neighbourhood, which suffered massive damage in the early 1990s, has also been a focus of activity. Since early 2003, 11 homes and 15 historic public buildings have been conserved as models of restoration. Nearly 7.5 kilometres of underground and surface drains have been repaired or rebuilt over the past eight years, while an area of more than 16,000 square metres of pedestrian alleyways and streets have been paved within the historic fabric. Zarnegar Park, to the north of the old city, and the Baghe Qazi, have also been rehabilitated.

Over 30,000 residents benefited directly from these programmes, which required over 365,000 workdays of skilled and unskilled labour. More than 150 young men have undertaken apprenticeships as carpenters, masons and plasterers, working alongside highly skilled Afghan craftsmen. More than 2200 women from the neighbourhood have attended courses in tailoring, embroidery and kilim-weaving, along with literacy classes. Among the socio-economic initiatives supported in the Old City are home-based training and literacy courses for women and the operation of a restored community bath-house, whose revenue is used to meet the costs of neighbourhood upgrading. A second bath-house is currently under restoration.

Efforts have been made to protect and upgrade public open space through the old city. Zarnegar Park, to the north of the old city, has been transformed through re-planting, the installation of irrigation, paving and the provision of public facilities. The Baghe Qazi has been rehabilitated.

HERAT OLD CITY REHABILITATION INITIATIVE

In 2005, AKTC initiated a process of mapping of all property in the old city of Herat, which has taken place in parallel with the conservation of five important historic houses and 17 public buildings, along with provision of small-scale grants to more than 70 households. This work alone has generated more than 60,000 work/days of employment. Based on surveys of living conditions, investments have been made in repairs or reconstruction of 2,500 metres of drain and laying of more than 4,000 metres² of stone paving in pedestrian alleyways. Along with the removal of solid and liquid waste, these measures have benefited more than half the residents of the Old City. With technical support from AKTC, an Old City Commission now oversees urban development and upgrading within the confines of the historic quarter, as well as formulating neighbourhood plans and raising public awareness of the need for safeguarding in the Old City and beyond.



(Top) Nearly 7.5 kilometres of underground and surface drains have been repaired or rebuilt by AKTC over the last eight years.

(Middle) Interior of the restored Charda Masoom Shrine and Mosque in the Old City of Kabul.

(Below) A general view of the Citadel of Herat after restoration.





GOZARGAH SHRINE COMPLEX

The grave of the 12th century Sufi poet and scholar, Abdullah Ansari, in Gozargah, is one of the most important religious sites in the region. Situated in the courtyard of an important shrine complex dating from 1425 AD, Ansari's grave remains an important focus for prayer and contemplation to this day. In order to protect the distinctive decoration in the complex, repairs have been carried out to all roofs, while access by visitors to the courtyard has been enhanced by brick paving, the installation of discreet external lighting and the replacement of modern fittings where necessary. Work continues on documentation and interpretation of the decoration and dedications on the many historic graves that lie in the courtyard of the shrine. Parallel restoration work on the adjoining Namakdan Pavilion (left) and Zarnegar Takiahana has also been completed.

CITADEL OF HERAT

One of AKTC's larger undertakings was the restoration of the Citadel of Herat. An ancient citadel that some historians believe was originally built in 330 B.C. by Alexander the Great, the walls and towers were rebuilt in the 14th and 15th century after it was largely destroyed by the Mongols. Since 2008, AKTC, with financing from the United States and German governments, completed the restoration of the citadel in 2011. A museum was also set up at the site.

AGA KHAN MUSIC INITIATIVE

The Aga Khan Music Initiative (AKMI) has engaged six masters to offer instruction in traditional music on the premises of AKTC in Kabul. In 2006, a group of *ustâds* began teaching students in historic premises in the centre of the Old City of Herat. The *ustâds* provide instruction to groups of around 20 students in two-hour sessions three times a week. All students are selected on the basis of merit, and have to pass regular tests to retain their place in the course. While initial enrolment in the Training Programme was all-male, efforts continue to identify female students in the various courses, in which some 170 students now receive instruction. The Government of India has provided instruments for these classes.



(Top) Interior the newly-restored Namakdan Pavilion, which adjoins the Ansari Shrine Complex in Gozargah.

(Middle) Students in the Aga Khan Music Initiative programme in Kabul.

(Cover) The mausoleum of Timur Shah after restoration.

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RESTORATION PROJECTS IN AFGHANISTAN

PROJECT BRIEF