



ONGOING ACTIVITIES



■ REGISTRATION OF HISTORIC MONUMENTS IN KABUL AND HERAT

Renewed efforts are being made to assist the department of Historic Monuments of the Ministry of Culture & Youth to register key historic monuments in Kabul and Herat. Building on the work done by departmental staff to date, a total of 180 additional dossiers have been prepared with support from AKTC. As well as details of the architectural characteristics of a monument, measured drawings and historic/contemporary photographs are included. In addition to documenting surviving architectural heritage, this process aims to prevent damage to or demolition of monuments, which is a criminal offence under the provisions of the 2006 Cultural Heritage Law.

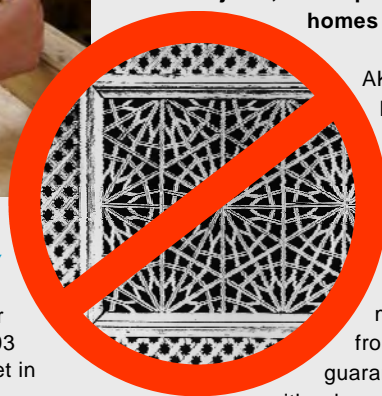


■ PLUNDERING THE OLD CITY

Along with the increased number of expatriates in Kabul since 2003 has come an upturn in the market in decorated timber objects. While surveying historic property in the old city over the past five years, AKTC has witnessed fine timber decoration on war-damaged houses being stripped. While replicas are for sale, many of the delicate lattice screens or carved panels that now grace coffee tables and other furniture might in fact be 'rendered' from

homes in the old city, whose owners are either unaware of its intrinsic value or cannot afford not to sell. By buying such original objects – no matter when the vendor claims that they come from – you risk encouraging this trade, and contributing to the destruction of the architectural heritage of Afghanistan.

We would urge any readers of this Newsletter not to be tempted to buy such objects, which properly belong in homes in the old city.



AKTC and the Department of Historic Monuments are ready to accept donations of any architectural elements that might originate from the old city, and guarantee that these will either be re-used in homes

or public buildings under restoration, or displayed in a planned Museum of the old city.

FAR LEFT: Detail drawing of tile work in Gazorgah, Herat
ABOVE LEFT: Craftsman re-assembling a timber panel
ABOVE: Detail of timber lattice screen



■ THEATRE IN BAGHE BABUR

A theatrical performance by a troupe from Gabriel High School in Herat was held in the courtyard of the *caravanserai* in Baghe Babur on 28th August, as part of the National Theatre Festival, organised by the Goethe Institute.

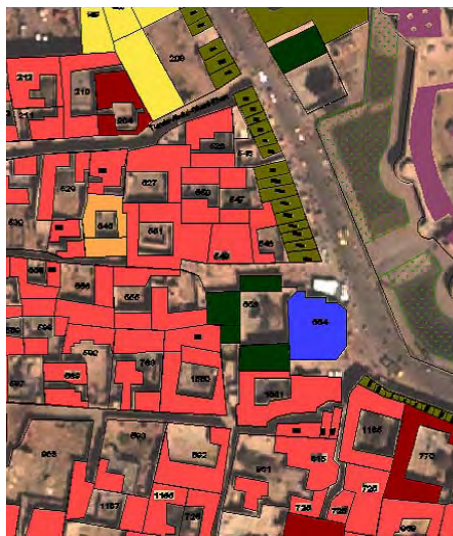
For more information about AKTC's programme in Afghanistan, contact us in Qala Moeen Afzal Khan, Gozargah Street, District 3, Kabul or Qala Ikhtyaruddin, Herat information@aktc.akdn-afg.org



■ THE SHRINE OF KHOJA ROKHBAND IN HERAT

Conservation work has started on the shrine complex of Khoja Rokhband (literally the 'master who covers his face') in the Bar Durrani quarter of the old city of Herat (photo above). This includes a summer and a winter mosque, an important graveyard and a brick-domed water cistern, whose inscription records that it was restored during the Safavid era. During the initial repairs of the winter mosque, it was found that empty clay water vessels had been built into the squinches of the domes - presumably to reduce the mass of the structure. The restoration, which is part of a wider programme of conservation in the historic quarters of Herat, is co-funded from the US Ambassadors' Fund for Cultural Preservation.

ABOVE: Masonry repairs in the winter mosque of Khoja Rokhband
LEFT: Property mapping in Bar Durrani, Herat
BELOW: Drainage upgrading in the old city of Herat



ISSUES



EVENTS



■ AKMICA STUDENTS CONCERT IN HERAT

To celebrate the first anniversary of the AKMICA Music School in Herat a concert was held on 6th September in the courtyard of Karbasi House in the old city of Herat.

■ AKTC PROPERTY SURVEY IN HERAT

Between May 2005 and July 2006, a survey was conducted of some 26,000 residential and commercial properties in the old city of Herat. A team of 14 surveyors recorded details of use/occupancy, state of repair and architectural characteristics, the results of which have been summarised in a report (available from AKTC). Residential densities of up to 350 persons per hectare were found in some areas, with two-thirds of the 62,000 residents living in poor conditions, often in poorly-maintained traditional homes. More than a third of families have no access to piped water, and there are few functioning public facilities. These results suggest that the regeneration of the historic fabric will depend as much on investments aimed at improving living conditions and generating employment, as on the conservation of specific historic buildings.

■ COMMUNITY SUPPORT FOR UPGRADING

The response to the upgrading of underground drains in Bar Durrani and Abdullah Mesri quarters of the old city has been encouraging, with residents undertaking excavation works themselves and assisting AKTC workers. Nearly 2,000 metres of drain have been repaired or re-built to date, directly benefiting some 6,000 inhabitants.