



AGA KHAN TRUST FOR CULTURE

Historic Cities Support Programme

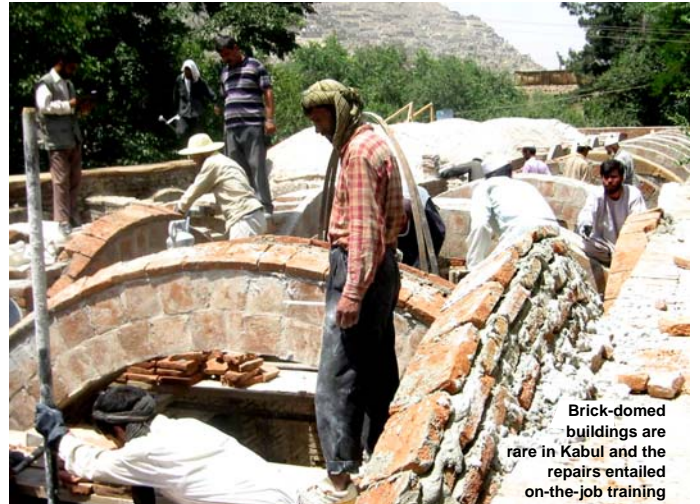
AKTC - AFGHANISTAN NEWSLETTER # 3

September / October 2006

ON-GOING ACTIVITIES



View of the courtyard elevations shaded by old mulberry trees



Brick-domed buildings are rare in Kabul and the repairs entail on-the-job training

PAKHTA FURUSHI MADRASA IN THE OLD CITY OF KABUL

The conservation of a *madrasa* associated with the important Pakhtafurushi mosque is nearing completion, with all 52 brick domes repaired and work proceeding on plastering, internal finishes and servicing. With the agreement of the Ministry of Haj & Awqaf, and generous financial support from the UK Embassy in Kabul, the leafy courtyard of the *madrasa* will by next spring again be a place for children from the old city to play and learn. Residents of the neighbourhood are keen to see the complex become a centre catering for young children, incorporating educational, health and possibly psycho-social services.

AKTC is keen to hear from groups who might be interested in entering into a partnership to realise these ideas within a unique historic building at the heart of the Old City.



View of the interior spaces of the *madrasa* during works



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



BAGHE BABUR PAVILION

With the completion of the conservation and upgrading works, the Pavilion in Baghe Babur is now available for hire. In one of most spectacular settings in Kabul, the space is ideal for small receptions, seminars or exhibitions.

For further information, contact Amanullah Sahibzada at 0799 305934



View of the restored Akhawan house during the paving of the courtyard



Embossed pattern bricks, typical of historic houses in Herat, have been restored on site by local craftsmen

■ ALI COMMUNITY MOSQUE, BAR DURRANI, HERAT

After several unsuccessful attempts by the community, in the Bar Durrani quarter in the old city, to undertake repairs of the ruined Haji Adam Khan mosque, the last wall of the old mosque collapsed in 2005. Having pooled available funds for the construction of a new mosque, community representatives approached the AKTC team for advice on the design. A traditional 6-bay brick-domed structure was agreed, with a capacity for some 80 people to pray, including a small courtyard and ablution area.

Construction work started in late 2005, and the completed mosque was formally dedicated at a ceremony in August 2006. In order to celebrate the revival of the mosque, special glazed tile panels based on Timurid calligraphic designs, copied from a panel from Abdullah Ansari Shrine, have been incorporated into the main elevation.

As well as providing space for prayer, the tiny mosque is now also the focus for religious education for girls and boys from the neighbourhood (see photograph on the right) and demonstrates how new buildings can enhance historic fabric.

■ HANDOVER OF AKHAWAN HOUSE, OLD CITY OF HERAT

In the face of widespread deterioration and demolition of historic property in the old city, AKTC continues to invest in the pilot restoration of homes whose owners are willing to invest in subsequent maintenance. The Akhawan house is an important example of how the courtyard layout, with separate summer and winter quarters (which partly bridge over the adjacent street, forming a characteristic *dalan*) and traditional construction techniques came to be adapted in the early 20th century. The house is unusual in incorporating a family *hammam* within a semi-basement. Investments have focused on repairs of the roofs, as well as restoration of external brick details, which has entailed the production of decorated bricks in a specially-commissioned kiln on the outskirts of Herat. In addition, the surviving internal plaster and painted decoration has been restored and modern steel windows replaced with timber casements that are in keeping with the original design. The restored house has now been handed back to its owners.

☞ *Since its inception in 2005, AKTC's programme in Herat has been generously co-funded by the German Federal Foreign Office*



ISSUES & CONCERNS



■ "ARCHAEOLOGY" - OLD HERAT

Despite assurances that all future redevelopment will be carefully screened, swift building permission was granted for another major commercial building in the heart of the old city in September 2006. During excavations for the new building, important pottery was unearthed, and traces of historic brick walls and channels were revealed.

Although photographed by AKTC and others, no action was taken to enable further investigations, which might have yielded significant information about the history of the site. A report on this case has been submitted to the Ministry of Information & Culture by staff of the German Archaeological Institute, who were in Herat at the time. Efforts continue to ensure that appropriate controls are in place for all development in the old city, and that proper account is taken of the historic significance of sites, where permission might be granted for new building.

EVENTS



■ Celebration of Islamic Art in New York

Within a special 'Splendour of Islamic Art' programme co-produced by the Aga Khan Music Initiative in Central Asia (AKMICA) at The Metropolitan Museum in New York, the Afghan *rubab* virtuoso **Homayun Sakhi** performed a recital of traditional Afghan music, accompanied by Toryalai Hashimi on *tabla*.

The recital was preceded by a talk by **Jolyon Leslie** on the progress and challenges of preserving the built heritage of Afghanistan.