



Aga Khan Award for Architecture

2013

WINNING PROJECTS

Rehabilitation of Tabriz Bazaar

Tabriz, Iran

Architects: Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organisation of East Azerbaijan Province, Tabriz, Iran

Clients: Iran Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organisation of East Azerbaijan Province; Bazaar Community

Project Description

Tabriz Bazaar was officially protected in 1975 and covered by special stewardship measures until 2010, when it was added to the World Heritage List. The complex covers 27 hectares with over 5.5 kilometres of covered bazaars. By the late 20th century, however, its brick buildings were crumbling due to decades of neglect, and a management framework was established, based on the participation of the “bazaar” community, together with municipal authorities and the Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organisation (ICHTO). A successful pilot restoration project was decisive in winning over shopkeepers to the advantages ensuing from an overall rehabilitation project that would conserve and revitalise the valuable heritage of the Bazaar. While in the pilot project the government contributed 85% financial coverage and the “bazaaris” contribution was limited to 15% of the cost of restoration, the “bazaar” community now provides up to 90% of the funding.



Since 2000, numerous complexes within the bazaar have been rehabilitated with the participation of the owners and tenants. Infrastructure has been improved and public facilities have been built. The sophisticated brickwork throughout – hallmark of the Bazaar – combines both structure and ornament and proved to be a challenging training ground for current experts in restoration who learned in the field from local masons as it was repaired, using traditional techniques. The unique vaulting and domes present intricate geometries and the timcheh (domed nodal crossroads) combine spatial importance with other space-covering geometries. The Tabriz Bazaar is a unique example of an urban conservation and development project in which heritage plays the role of catalyst and it has reclaimed its position as the dynamic urban centre of the city of Tabriz.



Jury Citation

“The Rehabilitation of Tabriz Bazaar, with its 5500 shops, is a remarkable example of stakeholder coordination and cooperation to restore and revitalise a unique structure. The architecture of the Bazaar is essentially brick: a singular monolithic material turned into structural and ornamental poetry. The principal expression is the unique vaulting, coordinating light, climate, structure and ornament. The structure that we see dates back 240 years but the site as a place of trade has its origins as far back as the 10th century. It is considered one of the largest brick complexes in the world. What the collaboration, under the direction of the design team, managed to achieve is to return to prominence a historic and living city artefact to the centre of the community’s lives.

“The project has contributed to the revival and transfer of lost building techniques and skills and has shed light on an important model of this essential everyday typology that challenges us about the quality of commercial space. It is a great reference and example of high-quality architecture and living urban fabric that is still in use as originally intended.”

Project Data

<i>Clients</i>	Iran Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organisation of East Azerbaijan Province, Bazaar Community, Tabriz, Iran
<i>Community Organisers</i>	Haji Hashem Madineie, Ahmad Khadem Hosseini, Tabriz, Iran
<i>Architect</i>	Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organisation of East Azerbaijan Province, Tabriz, Iran: Farhad Tehrani, director (1980s); Abdoulrahman Vahabzadeh, director (1980–93); Akbar Taghizadeh Asl, director (1993–2004); Behrouz Omrani, Saed Hodayi, deputies; Hassan Ghorayshi, architect
<i>Consulting Engineer</i>	Sakhtab Consulting Engineers, Tehran, Iran
<i>Site Engineers</i>	Majid Chatrouz, Ghassem Ellmieh, Hossein Esmaili Atigh, Hosein Esmaili Sangari, Tabriz, Iran
<i>Ethnographical Studies</i>	Ali Falsafi, Tabriz, Iran
<i>Master Masons</i>	Hassan Namaki Nasab, Saadollah Doustar, Jalil Abbasi, Allahverdi Ahmadpour, Tabriz, Iran
<i>Advisor</i>	Reza Memaran (1993–96), Tabriz, Iran
<i>Site area</i>	27 ha
<i>Lane length</i>	5.5 km
<i>Cost</i>	n/a
<i>Commission</i>	1994 – ongoing
<i>Occupancy</i>	2005 – ongoing

Iran Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organisation

The establishment of the Iran Cultural Heritage Organisation in 1986 brought together a majority of the public sector institutions involved in cultural activities under one umbrella by merging 11 research and cultural organisations. Two decades later it evolved into the Iran Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organisation (ICHTO), with a brief to assure that tourism acts in the service of culture and not vice-versa. It covers various fields such

as museums, antiquities, archaeology, conservation and restoration of historical monuments and anthropology, and has numerous research centres and bases around the country. ICHTO has a major role in promoting the built heritage through listing buildings, nominating them for inscription on the World Heritage List where appropriate, creating laws and by-laws, and educating experts. The ICHTO of East Azerbaijan is responsible for the conservation and restoration of architectural heritage in the province and its capital, Tabriz, amongst its activities.

Akbar Taghizadeh

Akbar Taghizadeh, a native of Tabriz, after graduating from Shahid Beheshti University in Tehran, began his career with the Iranian Cultural Heritage Organisation, whose approach to cultural heritage was one of revitalising historic monuments rather than of just restoring them, at a time when post-war development plans were already threatening them. During his time at ICHTO in East Azerbaijan from 1993 to 2004, a number of such buildings were successfully brought back to life in the province, such as the restoration and adaptive reuse of various buildings of Qajar era into faculties of architecture and art, a museum on nomads, and a museum on the literature and mysticism of the Qajar era. As the director of the Pardisan Project, Akbar Taghizadeh was responsible for restoration of a number of historic monuments along the Silk Routes in Iran for reuse as restaurants or guesthouses. He is currently engaged in the private sector, active in the rehabilitation of historic monuments in Tehran, Kashan and Kerman.

