



AGA KHAN TRUST FOR CULTURE

Restoring Lahore Fort's Shah Burj Gate in Pakistan



Lahore, Pakistan, 18 May 2020 - The restoration of the Shah Burj Gate, located in the UNESCO World Heritage Site of the Lahore Fort, was completed in March 2020 by the Aga Trust for Culture (AKTC). In addition to instilling national pride and identity, the project is expected to improve socio-economic conditions and tourism.

The Shah Burj Gate, which forms part of the famous Picture Wall in the Lahore Fort, is the principal entrance to the Fort complex. The gate was constructed by Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan in 1041 A.H. (1631-32) under the supervision of architect Abdul Karim Mamur Khan. The inscription on the gateway describes a “Divine Throne” that is superior in height, elegance, and purity. The structure’s 2,300 square feet exterior surface area consists of recessed panels covered with fine Kashikari (tile-mosaic) work.

“I am especially delighted with the sensitivity and great attention to detail that went into the restoration of the muqarnas spearheaded by Haider Ali, the project lead,” said Salman Beg, Chief Executive Officer of the Aga Khan Trust for Culture in Pakistan. “This is the very first time that a muqarnas in a Mughal monument has been restored in Pakistan. As some of us know, the AKTC logo is based on the muqarnas.”

Since 2007, AKTC has worked with the Government of Punjab’s Walled City of Lahore Authority (WCLA) and its precursors in the historic Walled City of Lahore to conserve monuments such as the Shahi Hammam and the Wazir Khan Mosque. In 2015, at the invitation of WCLA, AKTC engaged in the documentation of Lahore Fort and subsequently started work on conservation of the Shah Burj (Picture Wall and allied works) and the Imperial Kitchens as part of a larger “Conservation of the Lahore Fort” plan

AKTC began the restoration of the Shah Burj Gate in June 2019 with generous funding from the Royal Norwegian Embassy, the WCLA, and the AKTC. The project’s focus has been to consolidate and enhance the Kashikari work and the iconic Muqarnas (stalactite vaulting) located inside the deep-vaulted gateway. After the completion of a detailed documentation of existing conditions, the gate’s entire surface was cleaned. Restoration activities were prioritised to address issues such as detachment of tile mosaics and loss of glaze. Subsequently, the reconstruction of missing Kashikari work and Muqarnas was initiated.

The restored Shah Burj Gate sheds light on the complexity and beauty of Lahore’s historic fabric. As with its other projects, AKTC believes the Gate can not only promote pride and a sense of identity but that arts and culture in general can promote understanding and collaboration among people, both inside and outside Pakistan, and thereby contribute to peace and security.

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