



AGA KHAN TRUST FOR CULTURE

Historic Cities Programme

AKTC - AFGHANISTAN NEWSLETTER # 11

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ONGOING ACTIVITIES

REVISITING THE RESTORED SHUTURKHANA HAMMAM, KABUL OLD CITY

Nearly two years have passed since the first AKTC Afghanistan Newsletter in June 2006, when the rehabilitation of the Shuturkhana *hammam* or bath-house in the old city of Kabul, was just completed. Using resources provided by the British Embassy, the structure of the war-damaged *hammam* was re-built and services installed, before being leased by the community to a private operator, who operates two shifts – mornings for men and afternoons for women. In residential parts of the old city, where living conditions are generally poor, 20% of the inhabitants do not have access to bathing facilities, while a majority of those that do have these facilities at home face chronic shortages of water or material with which to heat it. Therefore access to a public bath-house positively impacts family health and hygiene. The Shuturkhana *hammam* is now visited by up to 250 people on weekdays, with around 400 on Fridays.

Raheema is 33 years old and she and her husband lease the Shuturkhana *hammam*. She is managing the *hammam* during the hours it is used by women. Raheema says, "Shuturkhana *hammam* is used by women, men and children from the old city but many people from district 8 are also coming here as they think this *hammam* is clean and has enough water".

Gulalai and Shafiq (picture below) live in Shashahid area in district 8 outside the old city. They have a bathroom at home but it doesn't have hot water. In Shashahid there is



Man stokes fire used to heat both the water and the hammam

only a *hammam* for men so they come to the Shuturkhana *hammam* every fortnight with their children during winter.

Sima lives in Barana neighbourhood of district 1 in the old city and comes to Shuturkhana *hammam* with her children every week because they do not have a bathroom at home. She says, "I am happy for the restoration of Shuturkhana *hammam* because earlier I went to other *hammams* located further away from my home. With this *hammam* restored I don't have to travel as long distances as before".

The proceeds of the lease of the *hammam*, are used for additional upgrading works within this neighbourhood, based on priorities set by the community. The Shuturkhana *hammam* is an example of how rehabilitated historic buildings can meet the contemporary needs of urban communities. During the course of their ongoing surveys of historic public and private buildings in the old cities in Kabul and Herat, the AKTC team will continue to try to identify appropriate uses for such structures, as part of our wider rehabilitation programme.



BAGHE BABUR TRUST

A tripartite Memorandum of Understanding that sets out arrangements for the effective operation of Baghe Babur was signed by Kabul Municipality, the Ministry of Information and Culture and AKDN in Kabul on 16th of January 2008. Following a complex 6-year programme of conservation and rehabilitation, implemented by AKTC in collaboration with its partners, this Memorandum paves the way for the formation of an independent Baghe Babur Trust, which will oversee the management and upkeep of this important historic site. With a 300% increase in visitor numbers over the past year alone, it is envisaged that the operation should achieve financial self sustainability by the end of 2012.

100 NEW MUSIC STUDENTS

100 students have enrolled in the new 18-month cycle of training in *tabla*, *rubab*, *dilruba*, *sarenda*, *sitar*, violin and voice in the AKMICA music school in Kabul (now located in the *caravanserai*, Baghe Babur) after passing exams held during February. A further 33 students graduated to the next stage of musical instruction after performing at or above expected standards.



Gulalai and Shafiq leaving Shuturkhana hammam

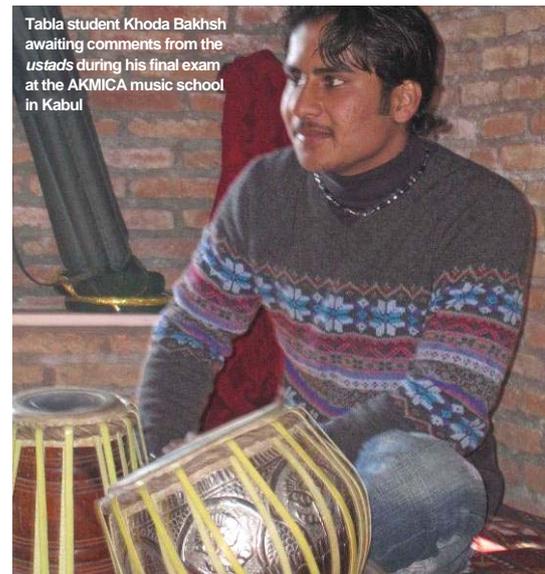


Tabla student Khoda Bakhsh awaiting comments from the *ustads* during his final exam at the AKMICA music school in Kabul

■ HAFEZJI MOSQUE, HERAT OLD CITY

During January, repair of the Hafezji mosque in Abdullah Mesri quarter in the old city of Herat was completed, using resources made available by the Cultural Emergency Response programme of the Prince Claus Fund of the Netherlands.

The traditional brick mosque, dating in its present form from the early 20th century, suffered from serious water logging as a result of failed drains and heavy rain and snow, and showed sign of structural failure when the works began.

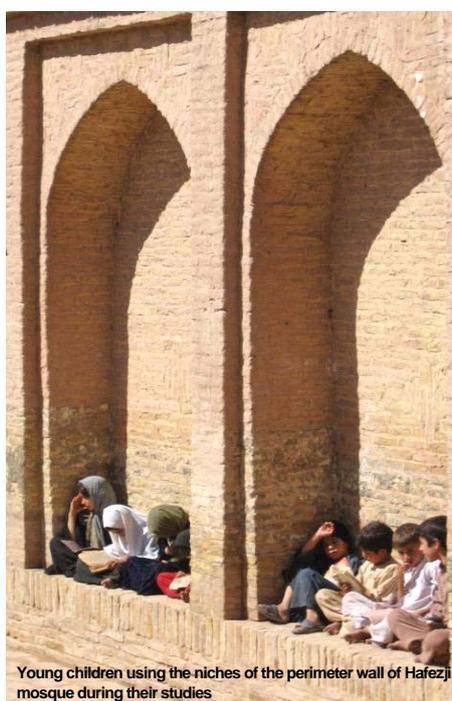
Repairs began simultaneously at the top and bottom of the mosque. A metre-thick layer of accumulated earth was removed from the roof, while the basements were dug out and drainage improved in order to address the rising damp. During the course of structural repairs to the building, traces were found of earlier stage of reconstruction, necessitated by partial collapse of some walls. It proved necessary to re-build much of the wing dedicated to ablutions, where new drains and a piped water supply were introduced, while an existing well in the courtyard of the mosque was upgraded, improving access for the community to safe water. In the eastern wing of the mosque where original windows had been removed, the traditional form of *orosi* screen-windows were re-introduced, based on patterns seen in similar buildings of this era in the old city.

Throughout the repair process, children from the neighbourhood continued to receive religious instruction from an *imam* in one of the open arcades of the mosque. Along with many similar community mosques in the old city, the repaired Hafezji mosque can again serve as a focus for social and educational life for the community, as well as being a place of worship.

Moreover, the project has contributed to the development of skills among Afghan craftsmen and professionals, while promoting an understanding of the value of traditional construction techniques, in a context where these are under increasing threat.



Eastern wing of the Hafezji mosque showing the newly produced screen-windows, *orosi*, that were traditionally used in buildings of this era in the old city. In the courtyard preparations are being made for spring planting.



Young children using the niches of the perimeter wall of Hafezji mosque during their studies

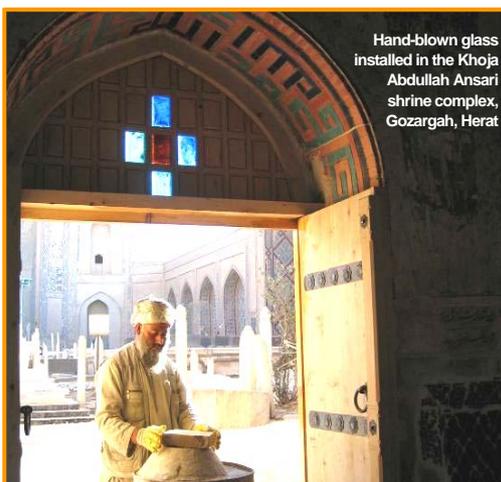
■ DOCUMENTARY RESOURCES

Since the inception of AKTC's programme in Afghanistan in 2002, efforts have been made to collect relevant printed material and photographs of historic buildings and traditional architecture in the country and wider region, as well as information on key conservation techniques and crafts. In this, we have benefited from generous donations from a range of organisations and individuals, both in Afghanistan and abroad.

Today, AKTC holdings in our Kabul and Herat offices comprise more than 700 books and reports on historic and cultural issues, as well as extensive digital material, photos and drawings. In identifying and acquiring material, we coordinate closely with the universities, Academy of Science, ACKU, AREU and DAFA to ensure that resources are shared, allowing access to key information to students and scholars.

In order to support this process, AKTC would appreciate information about or contribution of relevant material on Afghan culture, architecture and archaeology (particularly in Dari or Pashtu). Please contact Shafiq Mashal on shafiq_mashal@yahoo.com.

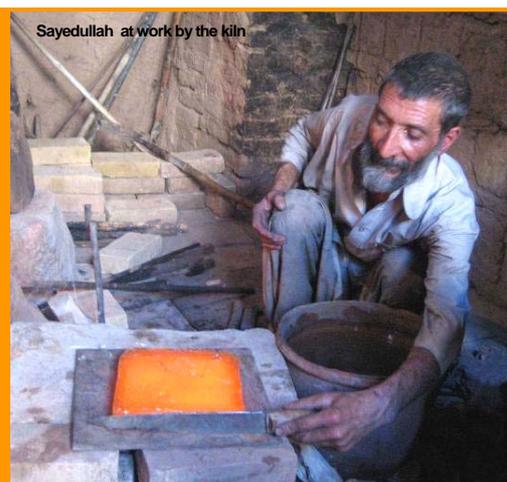
For more information about AKTC's programme in Afghanistan, contact us in Qala Moeen Afzal Khan, Gozargah Street, District 3, Kabul or Qala Ikhtyaruddin, Herat information@aktc.akdn-afg.org



Hand-blown glass installed in the Khoja Abdullah Ansari shrine complex, Gozargah, Herat

■ TRADITIONAL GLASS-BLOWING

In order to meet the need for suitable glass for use in the restoration of historic buildings in Herat, a traditional wood-fired kiln was set up in September 2007 in the Karbasi house to produce blown glass. An established glassblower, Sayedullah, is now manufacturing hand-blown glass components in this kiln, using both recycled glass and silica, for installation in traditional windows and doors.



Sayedullah at work by the kiln