

United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

Keeping History Alive

Safeguarding Cultural Heritage in Post-Conflict Afghanistan

Over the last ten years, UNESCO and its partners have actively supported the efforts of the Afghan Government, notably the Ministry of Information and Culture, to increase public awareness of Afghanistan's cultural heritage. This has been undertaken not only through the practical conservation and stabilisation work at historic monuments and archaeological sites, but also in the form of numerous publications, seminars, workshops and other international, national and provincial cultural events. These endeavours have looked to highlight the significance and contribution of culture towards broader development goals including employment, income generation, education and the promotion of a cohesive society within the context of peace and nation-building in Afghanistan.

Raw photos from 3D scanning of the Gawharshad Mausoleum ceiling in Herat
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Editors:
Brendan Cassar and Sara Noshadi

Dedicated to all the Afghan people who have worked and
continue to struggle to safeguard their cultural heritage.

Acknowledgments

The idea for this publication was first mooted in late 2011. The publication is the result of 18 months of work; a vigorous and concerted effort by contributors within Afghanistan and abroad. Our aim was nothing less than to chart the range of work being done in Culture Sector; to record the previous decade of sustained cultural heritage development initiatives and to act as a guide to cultural heritage professionals operating in other similarly charged settings. With a notable absence of publications in recent years concerned with the cultural heritage of Afghanistan, we believe that this is a much needed contribution covering a diverse range of relevant subjects and areas.

We are grateful for the breadth and extensive heritage sector experience that is reflected in the essays in this volume. Excellent contributions were submitted by national and international experts who worked on the ground in Afghanistan for many years. The diverse contributions covering many issues and areas of expertise is what makes this publication exciting and timely.

Sincere thanks goes to the Swiss government and its representatives in Kabul for their support through the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation. They did not just underwrite this publication. We appreciate their encouragement and patience and salute their involvement as capable heritage advocates in Afghanistan.

UNESCO would also like to express its deepest gratitude to the Ministry of Information and Culture in Kabul for their continued, informed and productive cooperation since 1948. In recent years that strong support has come from many individuals, but we would like to note in particular H. E. Minister Dr. Sayed Makhdoom Raheen, Mr. Omar Sultan, Special Advisor to the Ministry of Information and Culture and Mr. Omara Khan Masoudi, the legendary Director of the National Museum of Afghanistan.

A book on cultural heritage would be somewhat duller without photos to demonstrate the beauty and depth of heritage in Afghanistan, so we must thank Majid Saeedi, Jacob Simkin, John Wendle and Massoud Etemdi, Mani Meshkin Qalam, Abdullah Rafiq and Sadiq Nasiri for allowing us to re-print their photographs.

Several people at the UNESCO Office in Afghanistan contributed many hours of their attention towards improving this book. Putting it together was a team effort and the hard work of members of the Office should be acknowledged here also. Translations from Dari and French were provided by Reza Sharifi and Sara Noshadi. Salim Rafik created the graphic design and capably oversaw the layout of the publication. Wahid Amini provided further assistance on graphic design. Nazifa Noor wonderfully coordinated with authors and partners for copyright issues. Ghulam Reza Mohammadi and Ahmad Nasir Yawar provided additional photographs from Bamiyan and Herat.

UNESCO is indebted to many other friends, colleagues and heritage sector partners too numerous to mention. We are grateful for all your earnest support and constructive feedback and comments to improve the publication.

Finally, we wish to acknowledge Paolo Fontani, the UNESCO Representative in Afghanistan from 2012 to 2015, for his unwavering support and constructive advice throughout all phases of the production of this book. Without him, it would have not been possible to complete this work.





An Afghan man organizes a pile of threads after being dyed © Majid Saeedi

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Foreword

Afghanistan's Past in Afghanistan's Present

It is often said that Afghanistan is an old country inhabited by a nation of young people. Over 60% of our population is under the age of 25, and since 2001 more than seven million Afghans have graduated from high school, including more than three million young women. These graduates are entering a world that is dramatically different from the Afghanistan of the past. Afghanistan today is a country where growing numbers of people surf the Internet, chat on cell-phones, and argue about current events with friends across the region and the world.

And yet for all of its modernization, the Afghanistan that we live in today remains the product of a very long history. Afghanistan's culture of modernity is the product of an ongoing, creative negotiation between the deep structures of the past with the lived experience and perceptions of the present.

Afghan culture is embedded in our associational life, our institutions, and the physical structures and places that we inhabit. Understanding the dynamic of cultural creation in Afghanistan matters because as a matter of urgency Afghanistan must build a collective national identity and sense of common purpose in our war-torn nation. The authors of this volume have made a valuable contribution to the people of Afghanistan through their documentation and analysis of the historical origins of Afghanistan's "imagined communities" and "communities of imagination" and their contribution to modern Asia.

Afghanistan's archeology and reconstruction provide physical reminders that Afghans have been participants in the construction of the states and empires that shaped world history. The ancestors of today's citizens of Mazar-e-Sharif built the city of Balkh, a city that was already old when Herodotus called it the mother of all cities. Herat was the center of the Timurids; Kandahar of the Durranis; Ghazni of the Ghaznavids; Ghur of the Ghurid empire; Bagram and Paghman were centres of the Kushan and Bactrian empires; there is not a province or city that has not functioned as center of a local dynasty or site of a political entity. The names barely need elaboration to make the point that we, Afghans, today live in a country that made history happen.

"Whatever we were before the Holy Religion of Islam", argued Mahmud Tarzi, the founder of discourse and practice of modernity in Afghanistan, "we were". He was stating the central social fact of our existence: we define ourselves from the cradle to grave by Islam and the warp and woof of our identity is defined by Islamic discourse and practice. While the social fact is crystal clear, the historical process in making Islam our dominant cultural point of reference requires sustained inquiry. Equally important is the process of formation of our national identity, the pre-eminent sense of "being" Afghan as forged from the different historical moments that took our local identities and histories and fused them into a common national purpose as equal citizens of a state bound together and governed by our constitution.

Afghanistan's cultural history has been to be both an originator and transmitter of Asia's great intellectual traditions. As Frederick Starr has so ably shown, it was no accident that four of Islam's five great collections of hadith were compiled in Afghanistan and Central Asia, where our traditions of long-distance trade and urban manufacturing produced one of the world's great centers of literacy and publishing. Afghan scholars engaged with the scholars of India, Persia, China and even, as archeology and historical analysis are increasingly showing, with the philosophers of ancient Greece and Rome.

Despite Afghanistan's long history as one of Asia's intellectual and political hubs, by the beginning of the 20th century the dominant image of Afghanistan was that it was an isolated and backward state inhabited by "fierce tribesmen", the perennial caricature of imperial literature that justified military assaults to bring civilization to the barbarian frontier. The re-emergence of both China and India as the engines of global growth means that the prospects for Afghanistan re-covering its historical role as a central hub in an Asian civilizational and cultural dialogue have never been better. The work of the archeologists, museum curators, linguists, and the others who have contributed to this volume is an act of historical redemption that peels away the image of the "wild" Afghanistan to reveal the subtle and sophisticated culture that is Afghanistan's true inheritance.

Nation Building and Cultural Policy

Afghanistan today is at a critical historical juncture. Vast amounts of international and national resources are being devoted to building the machinery of an effective state and competitive markets. But little thought and few resources are being given to the equally critical task of rebuilding a sense of nationhood and shared identity.

Afghanistan's unity has always come from its diversity. But over five decades of conflict, Afghanistan's subordinate identities of ethnicity, language, or religion have become claims for privilege rather than the basis for exchanges that enrich and deepen each side's natural advantages. Reversing that dynamic will mean a national policy-based approach to culture that recognizes that each of Afghanistan's eight major language groups brings whole networks of connections and resources to bear on the nation-building project. These capabilities now need to be nurtured in a way that lets the overarching aspirational goal of shared Afghan citizenship set the terms through which public policy ensures people's sense of fair treatment and equal opportunity.

If the historical and political framework for guiding Afghanistan's nation-building project is clear, the anthropological and ethnographic research that would build up contemporary understandings of people's perceptions of exclusion, hierarchy, and expectations

is still missing. Afghanistan badly needs an activist research program that brings together archeology, folklore, anthropology, urbanism, and economic history in ways that abstract from daily practice the structural engagements of people's encounters with the state and which can guide public policies in ways that build a national sense of fair representation.

Where will our historical awakening take place? Today the institutional platforms that are available for a national project of rebuilding a sense of citizenship are far more diverse and accessible than ever before. Museums, television, classrooms, and the Internet are all media of mass engagement that can spark interest in our youth and make the discovery of our past in our present a collective act of national recovery.

Taking a programmatic approach to cultural policy

To begin with, a national strategy for harnessing the power of culture to the project of nation-building must recognize the individuals who are wiling to spend a lifetime deciphering potsherds, classifying coins, or digging through the remnants of an ancient city with a small brush and trowel. Without heroes such as Zamaryalai Tarzai who are willing to do the detailed, painstaking work of scientifically and systematically building up a picture of our past, cultural representations will be little more than the fanciful imaginings of politicians and ideologues. We must construct career paths ad training programs for young Afghans that can lead from university curricula to advanced training, museum careers, and professional employment.

The second requirement is that public policy must replace its tendency to move in sporadic fits and starts with a system of cultural support that can provide long-term continuity. To date the only clear thinker in this area has been Nancy Dupree, represented in this volume, who for years has been advocating for a national council on cultural creativity to provide a mechanism to guide public policy and investment. Providing a forum that can bring together government policy makers, national and international thinkers, respected leaders, and civil society organizations can help us move beyond sporadic and individual initiatives into a long-term program that encourages dialogue, directs policy, and channels support in a coherent and structured way.

The third requirement is to think about culture as an economic resource, not just as heritage. Once the security situation improves, Afghanistan's potential as a centre for tourism is large, even more so as neighboring countries such as India and China build up a curious middle class that has the means and interest to explore a region that has played such an important role in their own development. Public policy can help our artisans who produce such beautiful jewelry, pottery, carpets and other cultural productions identify markets and increase their access to value chains that would both preserve heritage and reduce poverty.

Nor should the economic potential of Afghan's own rising interest in our history be underestimated. In 2014, the Aga Khan's wonderful restoration of the Babur Gardens received over one million paying visitors, making the garden fully self-sustaining. Restored monuments can be used to host weddings and other celebrations. Preserved heritage can become the central place for stimulating broader urban development, while national support for our creative industries can revitalize and inspire the producers of tradition.

Fourth, combining the government's interest in building a national sense of citizenship with the Afghan public's interest in modern media creates new opportunities to use radio, television, and the Internet to build a virtuous circle that moves from excavations and reconstruction to national programming and performance.

Conclusions

Surveying the vast world of 14th century Islam, the great Muslim ethnologist Ibn Khaldun wrote about the encounters between tribe and state that drove historical evolution as cultures became differentiated, engaged, and overcome by new forms of social organization.

In Afghanistan, a monument can never be just a monument. It is the history of our people's encounters with other people's markets, states, technology, beliefs, and knowledge. Afghan archeology, history, folklore and ethnography reveal the extent to which we are all part of a long, lively conversation about what it means to be a citizen of Afghanistan today.

The articles in this volume provide a subtle, textured picture of Afghanistan's cultural diversity and historical legacy. But they are only a first tasting of the riches that await discovery. The beauty of the articles and commentaries that have been collected here is the awareness that, as William Faulkner wrote, not only is the past never dead, but it is never even past. Afghanistan's past is everywhere in its present. Our challenge today is to make our past guide the way to a democratic, peaceful and tolerant Afghanistan.



H.E. Mohammad Ashraf Ghani
President of the Islamic Republique of Afghanistan

Foreword

Handed down over the millennia, Afghanistan's tangible and intangible cultural heritage constitutes one of the country's most valuable resources – it is also deeply vulnerable.

The traditional performances of the Atan, the cherished national dance, the Nowruz festivals celebrating the commencement of spring, the graceful Minaret of Jam, dating back to the 12th century, the delicate 9th century stucco work on the arches of the Noh Gumbad mosque – all of these are intrinsic components of Afghan identity in the past, present and future, and so much of this irreplaceable heritage has suffered from long years of conflict.

UNESCO is convinced that safeguarding heritage and diversity is more than a cultural issue – it is a peace imperative. Keeping Afghanistan's history alive is essential to saving our collective future. To build peace tomorrow, we need to safeguard Afghanistan's heritage today, to prepare the ground for reconciliation.

Over the last ten years, UNESCO has actively supported the efforts of the Afghan Government, notably the Ministry of Information and Culture, to increase public awareness of Afghanistan's rich and diverse cultural heritage. This ambitious task has been carried out through on-site conservation measures and large-scale stabilisation operations at many historic monuments and archaeological sites throughout the country, as well as through publications, seminars, workshops and other cultural events, at the international, national and local levels. These undertakings have highlighted also the contribution of culture towards broader sustainable development - including employment, income generation, education and the promotion of social cohesion, with a view to building lasting peace.

As part of these activities, this publication highlights the rich and varied cultural resources of Afghanistan, drawing on selected projects implemented between 2002 and 2013. Contributions from a wide range of specialists offer insights into many famous historic monuments and landscapes, while highlighting aspects of some of the country's lesser-known heritage.

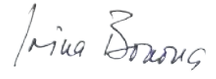
I wish to express heartfelt thanks to those who contributed to this publication. It is my hope that this collection will generate further national and international interest in safeguarding the cultural heritage of Afghanistan, to strengthen our shared resolve to tackle new challenges in the future.

In this same spirit, I thank the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation in Kabul for providing funding for this publication and for generously supporting UNESCO's conservation work in Bamiyan – particularly, the emergency stabilization and restoration programme.

Sincere thanks also go to the Government of Italy for its longstanding commitment to UNESCO's cultural programme in Afghanistan.

I am also grateful to the Government of the Republic of Korea for its generous support towards a cultural centre in Bamiyan and to the Government of Japan for its steadfast backing over the years of UNESCO's cultural activities in Afghanistan.

I am confident that continued support from all donor countries, along with the collective efforts of the professionals who contributed to this publication, will assist the Ministry of Information and Culture and the people of Afghanistan in their commitment to recognize and safeguard the nation's unique tangible and intangible heritage for generations to come.



Irina Bokova,
Director-General of UNESCO

Introduction

Brendan Cassar and Sara Noshadi

This volume came about as the result of a suggestion from Mr. Omar Sultan, the former Deputy Minister of Information and Culture several years ago, who pointed out that much of the work to support the protection and rehabilitation of Afghanistan's cultural heritage undertaken by many different organizations, individuals and the Ministry of Information and Culture since 2002, was not widely known either inside or outside Afghanistan. It was his opinion, shared by colleagues at UNESCO and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) that more needed to be done to emphasize what had been undertaken in the field since 2002 and to outline the great challenge that lay ahead for the coming decades.

Despite what could be characterized as a general lack of visibility concerning heritage issues in Afghanistan, in the last few years there has been a noticeable increase in interest amongst both the Afghan and international communities and also from Afghan and international journalists. "Culture" in its broadest sense, including cultural and creative industries such as locally produced film and contemporary art, are beginning to gain increased recognition both at home and on the international stage. There has also been an increase in national tourism in various provinces, (in addition to a small number of returning international tourists, predominantly to Bamiyan province and the Wakhan Corridor), forming a logical starting point for development of the cultural economy, jointly with conservation endeavours and community heritage education and awareness. Furthermore, the international donor community has become increasingly aware of the potential contribution of culture to development in Afghanistan and numerous new and ongoing projects that employ "culture" as a central pillar of development have support for 2015 onwards, some of which are acknowledged by various authors later in this publication. We have sought to gather together numerous national and international experts in this collection of papers who have been or continue to be active in the field of cultural heritage in Afghanistan, some working for the relevant departments of the Ministry of Information and Culture, others working for international / national non-governmental organizations, universities and foreign heritage institutions. The publication has made an attempt to provide space for as many of these active organizations and individuals as possible so that they may represent and report their work, opinions and critique of the challenges facing the sector, or effecting particular monuments and sites that are of importance to Afghanistan and the wider global community.

It would be accurate to suggest that all the contributors share the same goal of reminding communities from around the world and those within Afghanistan of the real tragedy concerning the preservation of history and national identity that has occurred over the last thirty years, and the significant steps undertaken in the last decade to address these problems. It is equally true in many respects to suggest that the tragedy of deliberate destruction is now behind us and it is what we seek to contribute from this point onwards to rectify the situation that is far more significant.

While we have attempted to be as representative as possible, the list of contributors could not possibly take account of all those individuals and organizations that have made significant contributions to Afghan heritage since 2002 and before, either intellectually or in practical terms. The work of many of those that could not be included in the present volume have been mentioned in footnotes and in the text of particular articles in due acknowledgment of their efforts. Interest and support permitting, in the future UNESCO hopes to undertake more publications of this nature focusing on specific aspects of Afghan heritage



View from Shahr-i Ghulghulah, Bamiyan © UNESCO/Ghulam Reza Mohammadi



Band-i-Amir © Jacob Simkin

and to encourage others to do the same, thereby widening the range of opinion and resources available to interested parties both inside and outside the country.

In the following sections of the introduction we will discuss current activities for the rehabilitation of cultural heritage in Afghanistan against a backdrop of illegal excavation, despoliation and sustained illicit trafficking (cf. Dupree, Cambon, and Teijgeler this volume), entrenched not only in Afghanistan's recent history but also as a result of longer-term socio-economic and political circumstances. Key issues facing the international community and the Afghan authorities in sustainable management and development of cultural heritage resources are also addressed in the course of the discussion. It is argued that if efforts to preserve cultural heritage are to be sustainable into the future, they must be considered within a broader appreciation of the development context that incorporates conceptions of intangible and tangible cultural heritage within an integrated development model. That it is to suggest that the concept of "heritage", as defined through the work of the organizations that advocate for its preservation, must be presented and linked to development in creative ways that effectively demonstrate its true value and contribution to social, economic and political progress in Afghanistan.

In practical terms this means continued integration of culturally relevant and sensitive approaches to a range of development concerns including poverty alleviation, health, education, urban planning and security to name but a few. To do otherwise is to remain on the periphery when it comes to the considerable and palpable demands and concerns facing public funds and international support in the coming years (cf. Knox, and Sultan this volume).

Afghan Cultural Heritage in Context

Afghanistan or Ancient Ariana, as many ancient Greek and Roman authors referred to the region in antiquity,[1] is recognized as a multi-cultural cradle of Central Asia, linking East and West via historically significant trade routes, that also conveyed ideas, concepts and languages as a cultural by-product of fledgling international commerce. As a result, contemporary Afghanistan is a multi-ethnic, multi-lingual society with a complex history stretching back many millennia. The numerous civilizations attested to in the archaeological record, both indigenous and foreign, constitute an extremely important account of the history and archaeology of Asia from the Middle Palaeolithic through to the Bronze Age, Achaemenid, Hellenistic, Indo-Greek, Kushan, and successive Islamic periods. At various junctures in history, Afghanistan was either a centre or a satrap of empires stretching from Europe, the Middle East, Persia and the Subcontinent, (cf. Filigenzi & Giunta, this volume). Accordingly, Afghanistan has been a locus for the development of many of the great philosophical and religious movements impacting on Asian history, including Zoroastrianism, Hellenism, Buddhism (cf. Khairzada this volume), Islam and their associated artistic traditions, (cf. Franke, and Adle this volume). Monumental and vernacular architecture, along with a plethora of archaeological sites scattered throughout the nation's 34 provinces, provide a record of this historic diversity and their world-wide significance in terms of their unique contributions to history, art and science. Afghanistan remains an important geo-strategic area within the modern world at the beginning of the 21st century and retains its multi-culturalism. Multiple threads of Afghan cultural history are still woven into the distinct

languages and cultures of the various contemporary groups that inhabit the country, within an overarching yet contrasting Islamic belief system.

This heterogeneity has bestowed upon Afghanistan an extraordinarily rich cultural legacy which can provide a strong foundation for a positive discourse concerning the advantages of cultural diversity, reconciliation and human rights to be advanced as a necessary element of the ongoing reconstruction process, and as a platform for the nation's future development.

Common connections across cultures and the predominately Indo-European languages spoken in the country are also found in long established Afghan traditions, examples being observable in poetical composition, calligraphy, story-telling and mythology, regional songs and music that manifest local diversity within universal themes, (cf. Miller and Hussain this volume). Diversity is also evident in regional clothing, headdress and artistic motifs expressed through the medium of cloth and carpet weaving amongst a range of other craft traditions stretching back centuries, if not millennia, (cf. Masoudi, Mojadidi this volume). All cultural facets, including history, art, archaeology, architecture and contemporary ethnographic diversity should be understood as significant parts of the nation's heritage, deserving of international support and national action to preserve and protect for future generations, (cf. Mojadidi, Nessar this volume).

Afghanistan is unfortunately also a nation fragmented by a history of protracted conflict, inter-factional fighting and simmering ethnic tension, exacerbated by geographic isolation for many communities and limited or unequal access to infrastructure and resources, both regionally and demographically. As a nominal starting point, the ongoing rehabilitation process in Afghanistan needs to address these issues if the nation is to unify under a common objective, fostering a veracious society free from conflict and where ethnic diversity is recognized for its social, cultural and economic benefits rather than, as is often the case, seen as a hindrance to particular developmental objectives. Part of the solution to this problem lies in the



The Mausoleum of Sultan Abdul Razzaq, Ghazni province © UNESCO/Sayed Mayal Matahar

promotion of a positive public discussion to promote inter-cultural understanding and to raise awareness of the potential that cultural development has to produce outcomes for rapprochement, peace-building and economic development in Afghanistan.

The culture sector in Afghanistan is currently well poised to make a fundamental contribution to peace and state-building initiatives through the promotion at the most basic level of a positive cross-cultural discussion, interaction, understanding and respect for cultural diversity and human rights. Cultural heritage resources can be mobilized to this end, for example, by utilizing historical monuments that galvanize community support around their historical and contemporary symbolic values; myth, ritual and religion that coalesce communities around movable, immovable, tangible and intangible heritage values. A pertinent illustration can be suggested in relation to the collections of the National Museum and the manner in which they are displayed and interpreted. Specifically tailored and designed for certain audiences, these unique artefacts can contribute at community and national levels to discussions on identity and the value of cultural diversity in all its local, national and international forms of expression. This process can in theory create a platform for a clearer understanding of a nation's origins and what it aspires to achieve in the future, (cf. Dupree, Masoudi this volume).

In recent years, concerted efforts by the international community and the Afghan authorities have attempted to address the many challenges confronting cultural heritage preservation in Afghanistan, both contemporary and historical, with varying degrees of success. However, the nation's heritage still remains under threat from numerous internal and external factors including illegal excavation, rapid and often unchecked urban development, (cf. Leslie, AKTC this volume), *ad hoc* infra-structure projects, and as a result of general physical neglect over many decades, (cf. Stevens, AKTC this volume). A brief examination of the background to these issues reveals that it is a situation that existed even before the Soviet invasion of 1979 and the subsequent civil conflict, and one that will require continued vigilance and international assistance so as to mitigate against the likelihood of leaving a negative cultural legacy for future generations.

Afghanistan's Recent History and its Impact on Sustainable Cultural Heritage Management

In February 1979 the Russian Archaeologist Victor Sarianidi and his team were hurrying back to Kabul under armed escort with perhaps one of the most unexpected archaeological finds of the 20th century (cf. Masoudi, Cambon this volume). He had begun excavating an unassuming *tepe* (mound) presumed to be a burial site for nomadic tribes that invaded Afghanistan in the second century BCE. The *tepe* was located in a remote part of Sheberghan (Jawzjan Province) in northern Afghanistan and carried the local name of Tilya Tepe. Tilya Tepe translates as "Golden Mound" in the local dialect and the excavation of six graves yielded more than twenty thousand objects fashioned from gold, comprising jewelry and other grave goods that adorned the bodies and attested to the existence of a hitherto unknown aristocracy, controlling what was already a significant and lucrative trade in the region before the Silk Route proper came into existence.[2] Sarianidi also reported leaving two graves at the site unexcavated as he left Sheberghan for Kabul amidst rumours that the Soviet Army was preparing to cross the Amu Darya, (the Oxus River of Alexander the Great), into Afghanistan in March 1979, ultimately igniting one of the most destructive chapters in the long history of Afghanistan.

That was the last legitimate archaeological excavation in Afghanistan for over twenty years and during that period of occupation the tangible heritage of Afghanistan was extensively pillaged , with a multitude of sites and buildings destroyed or extensively damaged, to say nothing of the immeasurable physical and psychological effect of the conflict on the population, and also a subsequent breakdown in the people's existing cultural traditions and institutions, (the customs, beliefs, practices and socio-political institutions we broadly understand and term "culture").

Examples of the destruction of tangible heritage during the period abound today (cf. Dupree, Leslie, AKTC this volume), though the real cost to the cultural heritage of Afghanistan may never be truly quantifiable. The two graves left by Sarianidi, for example, were looted soon after the team left and rumours emanating from both Kabul and Peshawar in northern Pakistan during the 1980's were that gold jewelry similar to that of the Bactrian Hoard had already begun to surface on the international antiquities market. The actual hoard that was removed to Kabul also disappeared some years later and was thought to have been taken by the Soviets[3] or even melted down by the Taliban at a later date, both suppositions subsequently proving to be false.

During the 1980's, other important sites were being indiscriminately ransacked as a result of the break down in the rule of law. The famous Buddhist pilgrimage site of Hadda dating from 7th century AD, near present day Jalalabad, had been excavated and become an open air museum preserving some of the most spectacular examples of Gandharan art that exquisitely displayed the best of the fusion between East and West from the fourth century BCE onwards.[4] Regrettably, this unique archaeological complex was all but completely destroyed during the course of the 1980's, though as Ball suggests, the seeds of this destruction may have been laid a decade earlier (see note 17 below).

Sculptures were simply wrenched from niches within the monastery walls and, along with the main stupa, were exported across porous international borders concealed amongst the many refugees fleeing the conflict. The riverside ancient Greek city of Ai Khanoum, one the furthest east so far discovered and at that time only partially examined, was illegally excavated over the course of many subsequent years, and now resembles an artificial moonscape formed of innumerable craters left behind by "prospectors", during both the years of conflict and all the way through to the present.[5]

It is against this backdrop of despoliation that the purposeful destruction of the Bamiyan Buddha statues

in March 2001 should be regarded, (cf. Bouchenaki, Petzet this volume). The response to this destruction from within Afghanistan and the international community highlights both the symbolic value of the monument in terms of projecting cultural identity, and the semi-anarchic state into which Afghanistan had descended over the preceding decades. It is also testimony to the inherently political nature of “culture” and “heritage” which often goes unrecognized or is underutilized in discussions concerning state and nation-building in post-conflict and development contexts. The corollary is that if something can stand as a powerful symbol through its destruction, it can equally be utilized as a powerful symbol for unity and a broad based cultural resonance through foresight and planning, possibly mitigating any likelihood of it becoming a future target in that case.

Notably, during the civil war, the capacity of the Ministry of Information and Culture (MoIC), the Ministry responsible for cultural heritage management in Afghanistan, was steadily eroded as skilled personnel continued to flee the country. As one would expect, the living and working environment became increasingly more conducive to self-preservation for those who chose to remain, rather than the safekeeping of the nation’s cultural resources. Unfortunately for the heritage sector in Afghanistan, many of these individuals are yet to return and strengthen the ranks of a few dedicated professionals in the relevant government bodies and institutions.

Looting was rampant throughout this period. The most infamous and well documented example of illicit trafficking during the two decades of conflict is the story of the National Museum of Afghanistan sporadically looted throughout the course of the 1990s before the Taliban came to power in Kabul in 1996.[6] The end of the Najibullah Government in Kabul in 1991 saw the onset of civil war between numerous Mujahadeen factions who vied for control of the capital for the next decade. The National Museum building was overtaken by military forces as a result and was shelled, ransacked



Buzkashi, a national game in Afghanistan © Massoud Etemadi



Concert by the Afghan National Institute of Music © ANIM

and occupied by the various factions that controlled this part of Kabul (The Darulaman Palace area) at different periods, (cf. Dupree, Masoudi, and Cambon this volume).

By 1998 the widely known and respected champion for the cause of Afghanistan's cultural heritage, active in the country since the early 1960s, Nancy Dupree, estimated that some 70% of the museum collection present in 1991 was unaccounted for and presumed stolen. This included such rare pieces as the ivory carvings from Begram and a collection of some 30,000 coins from various periods in antiquity, amongst other acquisitions important in the history of world art and archaeology.[7] Ongoing inventory work by the Chicago Oriental Institute begun in the National Museum during 2013 will hopefully finally clarify the existing situation regarding the nature and extent of missing items.

Nonetheless, amidst the destruction, there were glimmers of hope and acts of self-sacrifice to secure some of the most significant items from the collection. The story of the Bactrian Gold is one such example, where Museum staff clandestinely moved the collection into the vaults of the Presidential Palace during the 1980s in order to protect it from potential threats, until its re-emergence in 2003.[8]

Another was the *ad hoc* inventory and the removal of the remainder of the Museum collections in 1996 to a "safe house" (the Kabul Hotel),[9] whilst the building was under rocket fire and the Duralaman area was in dispute by Mujahadeen factions, merely weeks before the arrival of the Taliban in Kabul. There is no doubt that these acts saved much of this important material from disappearing completely or being irrevocably damaged.

There was only one international NGO working in the cultural sphere in Afghanistan during the period, the Society for the Preservation of Afghanistan's Cultural Heritage (SPACH). This charitable organization was able to achieve a measure of success through conservation projects, advocacy and awareness-raising on the issues under various governments in Kabul.[10] However, by the end of the decade and into the 2000s the situation had become abysmal and the destruction of Afghanistan's cultural heritage, specifically in terms of monumental architecture in Bamiyan, movable cultural heritage in

the National Museum, and in the MoIC storerooms, had reached new lows. This deliberate targeting of cultural heritage was a significant diversion from the original decrees of Mullah Omar in 1999 that protected all cultural heritage in Afghanistan (Islamic and pre-Islamic) under the full weight of the law.[11]

Since 2001 the general situation may actually have gotten worse, especially in regard to the illicit traffic of Afghan antiquities. There has been an increase in documented illegal excavation and destruction of significant sites and damage to important monuments in virtually every province throughout the country, (cf. Filigenzi and Giunta, Khairzada, Maeda and Adle this volume). In March 2006 British customs reported an unprecedented quantity of some four tons of antiquities identified as "Afghan" and seized at its borders over the preceding two years alone, just one small step away from distribution through the world wide illicit trade network.[12] These artefacts were primarily attributed to illegal excavations hence invalidating their archaeological or contextual integrity and any hope of assigning accurate dates or purposes from the sites which they were acquired from.

Another report from Karachi in November 2006 reported the seizure of a consignment of illegal antiquities including Gandharan material, most likely of both Pakistani and Afghan origin bound for Sharjah (UAE) in a ship container.[13] Since 2001 the MoIC has also seized many thousands of artefacts being illegally transported or sold in Afghanistan from important sites in Logar, Ghazni and Balkh in particular, but also from a range of other unknown sites.[14] One may reasonably presume that only a small fraction of the material being trafficked (mostly Buddhist material with small numbers of prehistoric and Islamic artefacts also) is ever identified and seized by customs offices, so it is clear that the illicit trade is flourishing as much as it ever was and Afghan history and archaeology, continues to be compromised at an alarming rate. Indeed, almost as soon as trenches have been dug by legitimate archaeological missions that have now returned to work in Afghanistan, they are subsequently invaded and destroyed by the illicit excavations which soon follow. We have witnessed such activities or had confirmed reports from more than half a dozen provinces across the country.

The site of Mes Aynak in Logar Province, earmarked for extensive copper extraction, is presently the subject of rescue archaeology carried out by the Ministry of Mines and Petroleum and the Ministry of Information and Culture, (cf. Bendezu-Sarmiento & Marquis, Khairzada, this volume). This site had been subject to illegal excavation for many years, occupied by various military factions in the 1990's due to its remoteness. The mining lease has brought international and national attention to the site for its cultural value also and as a result an important picture is emerging of this Buddhist community in early centuries CE that accrued wealth based on copper extraction and trade, resulting in an urban complex with numerous religious monuments, sculptures and artefacts which are now being partially recovered.

While many of the artefacts, monuments and sites damaged since 1979 have been either prehistoric or Buddhist, Afghanistan's important Islamic heritage has not escaped unscathed. Many of the Timurid monuments in and around Herat have suffered from conflict related damage, (cf. Abassi, Leslie, AKTC this volume), whilst there has been extensive illegal excavation at the World Heritage Site of the Minaret of Jam, (cf. Abassi this volume), probably the most important monument of the Ghurid period and the Islamic era in general in Afghanistan.[15] Moreover, as recently as 2006, the *mihrab* (niche in the back [qibla] wall that indicates the direction of Kaaba, Mecca) and most of the *qibla* wall of the oldest Mosque in Afghanistan (circa 10th Century), Masjid-i-Noh Gumbad in Balkh, collapsed unexpectedly under its own weight, (cf. Adle this volume). Illegally excavated pits in the adjacent Timurid cemetery are also prevalent at this site and in the nearby Bala Hissar of ancient Balkh, visited by the authors recently.

The ransacking of archaeological sites and the deterioration, through deliberate means or simply



The Buddhist reiliefs, Qala-Ahangaran, 2nd-4th Centry CE, Limestone © UNESCO/Salim Rafik



Khaneqah Awliya-i-Chisht, Chesht-e-Sharif © Oskar von Niedermayer Collection 1910

through the progress of time and neglect of monuments, has effected virtually all periods in Afghanistan's history from prehistory to the Islamic era. Furthermore, the destruction of Afghanistan's heritage is in no way limited to the period of Taliban rule as is often the misconception portrayed in the media and other forums. Indeed, as Warwick Ball points out, the process of despoliation of Afghanistan's cultural heritage was not in itself a product of war, but had been ongoing for decades before the wars began; much of Hadda, for example, disappearing long before the final catastrophe under the Soviets and much of Afghanistan's cultural wealth leaving in diplomatic bags in the sixties and seventies,[16] a sad phenomenon that still appears to continue in present times. Arguably, past conflicts have merely exacerbated an existing situation, the origins of which lie much deeper in an historical socio-economic and political milieu conducive to sustaining wholesale pillaging and overall deterioration.[17] It is within this historical context that current and future preservation efforts are presently being undertaken, and against which their impact should ultimately be evaluated.

Recent Endeavours to Preserve Afghanistan's Cultural Heritage

On a practical level, there have been significant and positive steps forward in regard to cultural heritage preservation in Afghanistan as a result of the return of the international community since 2001 and concerted efforts to address key issues and priorities by the new government. The Afghan Government, having ratified the 'World Heritage Convention' in 1979, has also now ratified the 1970 UNESCO Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property and the 1995 UNIDROIT Convention on Stolen or Illegally Exported Cultural Objects.[18] There is no doubt that strengthening the legal framework in terms of the ratification of these Conventions together with the introduction of revised national legislation to implement them has had a positive impact on the illicit traffic of antiquities and for cultural heritage preservation in general.[19] However, the implementation of the law is still in its infancy as

agencies such as UNESCO try to assist the relevant Afghan authorities through training and also encourage a culture of safeguarding movable heritage which is largely non-existent amongst the general population.

Unfortunately, the illicit traffic of antiquities and the organized looting of archaeological sites remains one of the greatest threats to Afghanistan's cultural heritage and will continue to persist for the foreseeable future within the present context of poverty, lawlessness and conflict that grips parts of the country. Notwithstanding, the new laws have certainly had a direct and positive affect on raising awareness of the problem at the government level as an important first step.[20] Gains have also been made on the policy level, although this too needs further strengthening and development on a range of issues including protecting movable heritage, preservation and promotion of tangible and intangible heritage and the protection and long-term management of historic urban heritage throughout the country.

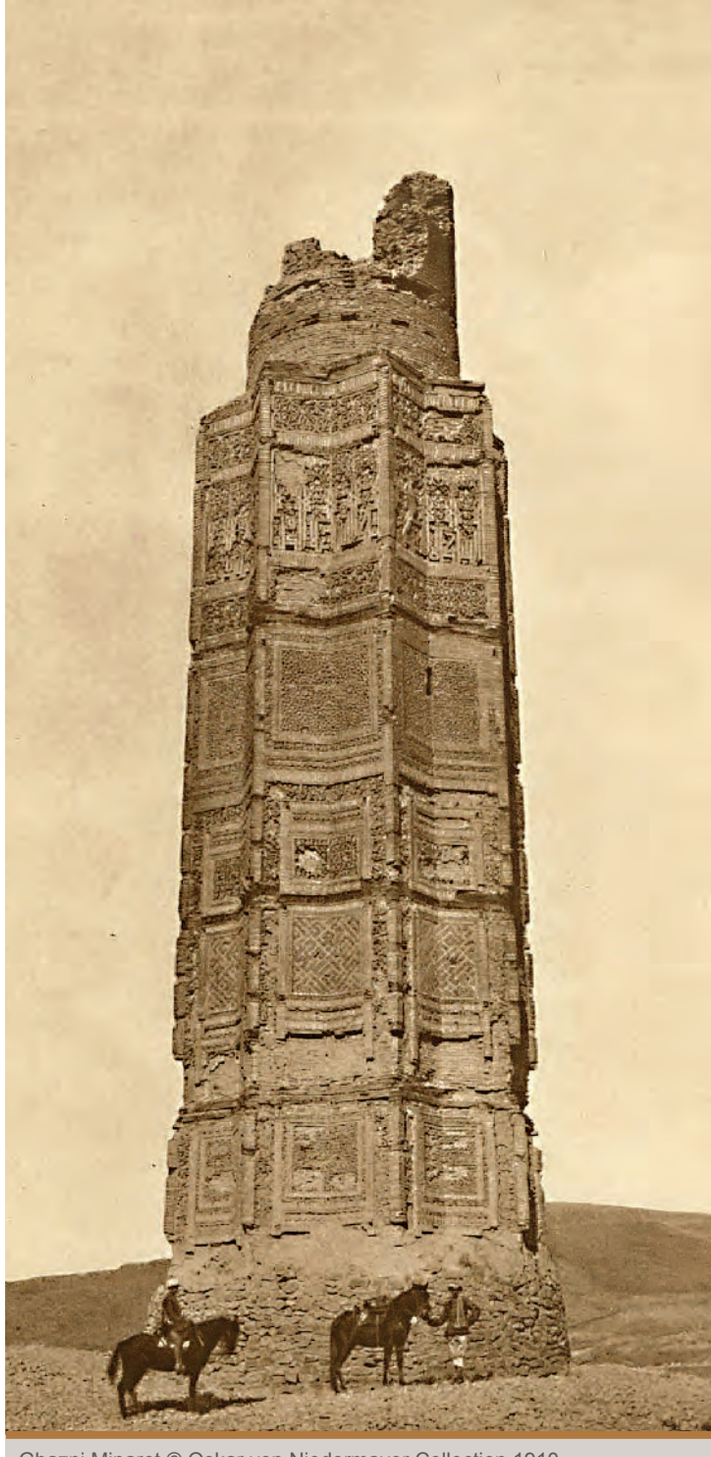
These issues have been identified in several international forums as of primary concern to the preservation of Afghanistan's cultural heritage along with a range of other important issues. For instance, the International Coordination Committee for the Safeguarding of Afghanistan's Cultural Heritage (ICC) was formed in 2002 to coordinate all international efforts for the safeguarding of cultural heritage in Afghanistan. UNESCO was requested to assist with coordination efforts by the Afghan Government and disseminated recommendations concerning the types of measures to be taken.

Recommendations from the First Plenary Session highlighted the need to stem the tide of illicit traffic that had been flowing from looted museums and unguarded archaeological sites in Afghanistan for more two decades. It was also noted that the Government needed assistance in order to implement the UNESCO Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property to which it became a State Party in 2005. Furthermore, the Afghanistan National Development Strategy and the Afghanistan Compact concluded in London in 2006, set the benchmark for the culture sector in Afghanistan and reaffirmed the responsibility of the Government and the international community to address the problem of illicit traffic together with conservation and inventory of tangible cultural heritage.[21]

In 2010 at the conclusion of the International Conference for Safeguarding Afghanistan's Cultural Heritage held in Kabul, the participants which included a wide range of government authorities from Kabul and the provinces, international organizations and the international donor community, reaffirmed their collective commitment to establishing and pursuing "culture" as a pillar of development with the ratification of the Kabul Charter for Sustainable Development. The ICC, Afghan National Development Strategy (ANDS), the Afghanistan Compact and the Kabul Charter have all called for these efforts to take place within a broader policy for cultural development in Afghanistan and these efforts have been successful in raising international awareness and financial assistance to address some of the problems.

Nevertheless, it is clear that to address these issues within the Afghan context parallel strategies are necessary: one that seeks immediate impact on the illegal trade in antiquities and the unlawful destruction of historical architecture through the implementation and enforcement of the law in spirit and in practice, including strengthening the capacity of the relevant government departments to do so, and another aimed at addressing the long-term social conditions and developmental factors that have contributed greatly to the scale of the problem over the course of many long years. It is also apparent that the problems for heritage preservation will not abate without proactive assistance from the many geographically isolated communities in Afghanistan where archaeological sites and monuments are situated and it is at this level where awareness-raising activities could perhaps make the greatest impact.

Another positive for Afghanistan has been the two sites (Minaret and Archaeological Remains of Jam and the



Ghazni Minaret © Oskar von Niedermayer Collection 1910

Cultural Landscape and Archaeological Remains of the Bamiyan Valley) admitted to the World Heritage List (in danger), which is a source of cultural pride for many Afghans. The Government is receiving financial and technical assistance with a view to their effective long-term management and preservation. In turn, these efforts are having a positive effect on building the overall capacity of Afghan heritage related institutions such as the Institute of Archaeology and the Historical Monuments Department, as well as encouraging a more coordinated effort from different Ministries of the Afghan Government through the creation of technical working groups and committees to facilitate better management of the sites.

Coordination, while important at the international level, is arguably much more important at the regional and local level where actors in the sector face very real issues on a daily basis for which they are charged to provide solutions.

Local ownership is also paramount. In this regard, H. E. Dr. Raheen, the Minister for Information and Culture, also recently established a Heritage Management Advisory Board to assist the government in specific areas of expertise in heritage management and conservation and to enhance coordination in the sector. This Board, established in 2013 and meeting regularly in Afghanistan, has already had a measurable impact on improving coordination and capacity in the culture sector to act quickly to challenges facing heritage in provinces across the country and to provide practical solutions to existing problems. Activities and initiatives such as this that can contribute to enhanced coordination, strengthening the capacities of government institutions and their ability to better preserve and manage cultural heritage into the future are worthy of maintaining and bolstering going forward.

Efforts of international organizations, most notably the Aga Khan Trust for Culture, (cf. AKTC this volume), the Délégation archéologique française en Afghanistan (cf. Bendezu-Sarmiento & Marquis this volume), as well as others such as Turquoise Mountain, (cf. Mojadidi this volume) and a host of national non-governmental organizations, such as the Afghan Cultural Heritage Consulting Organization, have also made considerable contributions to the activities of the MoIC concerning both tangible and intangible heritage related programmes, and in rebuilding civil society. Numerous conservation programmes on historical monuments, by many of the afore-mentioned organizations, are ongoing in Bamiyan, (cf. Praxenthaller this volume), Ghor, Balkh, Kabul, (cf. AKTC, Leslie this volume), Herat, Ghazni, (cf. Mayal, Abassi this volume). and Tashqurghan, thereby further contributing to practical and visible gains for the Afghan community.

Another landmark in recent years is the reconstruction of the National Museum of Afghanistan. The building, dating from the early 20th century, has now been reconstructed and can once again house the Nation's moveable cultural heritage adequately, (cf. Knox, Dupree & Masoudi this volume). Elements of the museum's collections, for years kept safely with organizations around the world, are also beginning to be returned, such as the 1423 objects (predominantly ethnographic objects), brought back to Kabul by the Bibliotheca Afghanica,[22] a further hoard of confiscated objects inventoried and returned by the British Museum including conserved examples from the Begram ivories.[23]

Discussions are also underway with other countries that are either safeguarding or have seized illicitly trafficked objects for their eventual return, (most notably those objects currently in the Hirayama 'Silk Road Museum' collection in Japan).

Furthermore, many of the National Museum's collections have been inventoried and conserved by UNESCO and others in recent years (cf. Knox & Masoudi this volume) with an ongoing initiative currently being undertaken to digitize the records in multiple languages, overseen by the Oriental Institute of Chicago in collaboration with the National Museum of Afghanistan. The Museum is steadily becoming one of Kabul's more popular attractions once again with occasional new exhibitions, such as the ongoing display showcasing finds from Ancient Bactria, along with a policy to encourage schools to visit on a regular basis. Afghanistan now also has an exhibition of the Bactrian Gold and the Ai Khanoum collections travelling the world, currently showcasing in Australia (having already toured Europe and North America), marking the heritage sector as one of Afghanistan's few current income earners at an international level, (cf. Sultan, Cambon this volume). More importantly, the exhibition helps to project a positive image of Afghanistan and educate the global community about Afghanistan in the face of the more typical media coverage that merely highlights the ongoing conflict within the country.

Although security will remain a particular challenge to be overcome for the institution before a full exhibition of the best of its collections can be safely re-installed, UNESCO has assisted the National Museum in producing policies for the safeguarding of movable heritage that elaborates practical projects and the necessary future steps towards fulfilling its institutional mandate to effectively inform and educate Afghan society. These have been taken up and a policy re - intorduced from the Museum in the 1970s to encourage regular school visits, along with the a further cultural center being implemented by UNESCO in Bamiyan province during the course of 2014 – 2016, funded by the Government of the Republic of Korea. The Museum and UNESCO also support a policy to expand this into other provinces.

Future Progress and Future Challenges

Given the recent history of Afghanistan and the longer-term problems facing cultural heritage preservation, it is clear that in the present environment the volume of funding and the expertise required exceeds the financial and institutional capacities of the Afghan authorities. Further international assistance is still required and will be needed for perhaps another generation or longer. This assistance, especially in financial terms, is of course not unlimited and will be subject to the emphasis placed on it by foreign national (donor) governments, non-governmental organizations and ultimately, the

Afghan community itself. For Afghanistan, international assistance cannot realistically solve all the problems nor preserve all heritage. Assistance will have to continue to be targeted where it can make the highest impact which is a combination of emergency intervention at sites in particular danger, (such as both of Afghanistan's World Heritage sites in Bamiyan and Ghor provinces and a range of others) and in coordination, policy development and strengthening local capacities in specific parts of the heritage sector.

Efforts to preserve cultural heritage in Afghanistan must also be seen in the context of it being placed low on the agenda of general development policies and priorities in a country with one of the lowest standards of living in the world. Therefore, a challenge for organizations working in the profession within Afghanistan is to raise awareness of the greater role that culture can play in peace and development, and to explain their projects and objectives in relation to broader goals that address a wider range of pertinent issues, such as poverty alleviation, health, education, national identity and the state-building processes.

The next step is to encourage the Afghan Government and the wider international community to be more innovative in their approaches to development and incorporate "culture" and related initiatives into both policy and broad based developmental projects. This strategy will help draw more funds into the sector, broaden its relevance and appeal to the Afghan public, but more importantly, mobilize "culture" in working towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and beyond.

In this vein, there are a succession of international standards to draw upon that make a compelling case for the interdependence of sustainable development together with recognition and acknowledgement of the diversity of peoples and cultures worldwide, such as the 1995 UNESCO Report of the World Commission on Culture and Development, the 1998 Stockholm Conference on Cultural Policies for Development, and more recently, the United Nations Creative Economy Report 2013 to name but a few.[24] Furthermore, it would be a great mistake in a developing country with the recent history of Afghanistan and considering its present developmental status, to ignore opportunities to promote cultural and creative industries in one of the fastest growing sectors in a global economy worth hundreds of billions of dollars.



Takht-e- Rustam, a stupa-monastery complex which is fully carved into the mountain rock located three km to the southwest of Samangan town © 3rd Eye/Mani Meshkin Qalam

The impact of events in Afghanistan from 1979 onwards for people's lives has been immeasurable; displacement, poverty, social and family breakdown, unemployment, insecurity and overall hardship for the vast majority of Afghans who could not easily re-establish their lives and their cultures in neighboring or distant countries. As a part of the general development framework, "culture" and "cultural heritage", if viewed as human centred rather than merely as monuments and sites, can play a highly significant role in the reconstruction



UNESCO Conservation project at Shahr-i Ghulghulah, Bamiyan © UNESCO/Mujtabah Mirzai

process in Afghanistan where funds are targeted at specific problems and constructive solutions to those problems which have relevance within the broader cultural environment.

“Culture” can and should also contribute to the state -building process in Afghanistan to help establish a more unified national identity while maintaining and promoting cultural diversity. At a minimum this requires a unified vision for the culture sector in Afghanistan that addresses the key problems that continue to hinder the sustainable management of cultural heritage resources throughout the country. In this regard, the Afghan authorities need to be further encouraged to strengthen the legal framework for heritage protection and to develop comprehensive cultural policy that aims towards these objectives. Significantly, many of these steps are being taken and are currently underway.

UNESCO Cultural Programmes in Afghanistan; 2013- 2015 and Beyond

UNESCO will continue to tackle many of the issues mentioned in this introduction, in partnership with various Afghan Government Ministries and Departments, in cooperation with a range of other UN agencies, in addition to numerous national and international specialist implementing partners and non-governmental organizations.There are four key areas or themes of focus for UNESCO’s culture programme in Afghanistan in the immediate future.

Coordination & Consultation

Assistance to the Afghan authorities on coordination of the various facilitators and donors in the heritage sector to ensure that priority areas of action are addressed as part of a strategy for the longer-term. There is certainly an ongoing and meaningful role for UNESCO to play in facilitating better coordination amongst stakeholders in the heritage sector in Afghanistan and as an independent third party with the unique mandate in supporting government’s role in managing heritage and development in Afghanistan. UNESCO’s continued support, in partnership with many organizations represented in this volume, remains a necessity.

Conservation and Safeguarding

Demonstration of what culture can contribute to peace-building and social cohesion through targeted conservation of monuments and sites, both living and historical, in sites on Afghanistan’s World Heritage List and Tentative List of World Heritage, as well as working with Government in undertaking the necessary planning for sites earmarked for potential development through extractive industries. Projects will include, but are not limited to, continued conservation work at Jam, Herat and in Bamiyan, continued support for the fight against the illicit traffic of antiquities and support for the documentation and promotion of intangible cultural heritage.

Community

UNESCO plans to construct a cultural centre in Bamiyan as an example of inclusion through cultural expression that is possible in Afghanistan. The Bamiyan Culture Centre will also focus on community economic development by providing training programs in various sectors of the cultural and creative industries. Through its conservation projects in Bamiyan, UNESCO currently employs skilled craftsmen and labourers on a variety of projects, set to increase from 2015 onwards with the planned construction of the cultural centre. In addition, further employment will come from a number of other planned conservation and stabilization programm decision making processes, as well as through em es concerning historical monuments in Bamiyan and also in Herat in the coming years. Community involvement through participation in the ployment and vocational training opportunities are key areas to ensure sustainability for heritage into the future.

Communication and Awareness-Raising

UNESCO will continue to promote cultural development for Afghanistan with the national and international communities, drawing attention to the challenges, issues and contribution that culture can make towards social, political and economic stability in the country. This will be done through a range of international and national conferences, expert working groups, publications and documentaries / educational films planned for the period 2014-2016.

Capacity-Building and Training

UNESCO will continue its support to the Afghan authorities on both institutional and individual capacity-building initiatives. These activities will focus on the development of a comprehensive database of monuments and sites, architectural and object conservation, archaeology and museum management in association with various culture and development projects. UNESCO is now placed to invest in excess of 10 million USD over the next two-three years to effectively implement the aforementioned programmes and strategies.

Concluding Remarks

To take an overview, current efforts by the Afghan Government and the international community to both acknowledge and preserve Afghanistan’s diverse cultural resources are having a positive and significant impact in many areas, especially when viewed against the historical backdrop and the raft of current political and economic challenges effecting not only the stakeholders within the cultural sphere, but the population at large.

Regrettably, ongoing military hostilities and instability in many parts of country continue to impede the reach of these activities and much of the nation’s important art and archaeology remains under great threat from illegal excavation, vandalism and neglect as a consequence. The situation therefore remains unstable more than ever and international financial and technical assistance is still required. Many of the articles contained in this volume demonstrate the activities and initiatives currently underway, or in preparatory stages, that seek to address present challenges and to improve the situation for Afghanistan with respect to the long-term safeguarding of its cultural heritage. We sincerely hope that these efforts continue and are strengthened in the years to come.

Endnotes / References

1. Notably Strabo, 1st century BCE and Pliny (the Elder), 1st century CE.

2. Cf. Sarianidi, V., 1985, *Bactrian Gold: from the Tilya Tepe necropolis in northern Afghanistan,* Aurora Art Publishers, Leningrad, Russia; and 1990, Bactria, *National Geographic Magazine*, Washington, D.C., March 1990.

3. Grissman, C., 2006, p. 64, The Kabul Museum: the turbulent years, in Juliette van Krieken-Peters ed. *Art and Archaeology of Afghanistan: its fall and Survival*, Brill, Leiden, 2006 pp. 61-75.

4. Cf. esp. the Aquatic Niche (Fish Porch) from Tapa Shotor, Hadda, described in Mustamandy, Chaibai, 1997, p. 19ff., "The Impact of Hellenized Bactria on Gandharan Art," pp. 17-27, in Raymond Allchin ed. Gandharan Art in Context: East-West exchanges at the crossroads of Asia, 1997, Regency Publications, New Delhi.

5. Ai Khanoum had been on Afghanistan's Tentative List of World Heritage, though what remains to testify to its potential Outstanding Universal Value for admittance to the World heritage List proper is now highly questionable.

6. Cf. for example, Dupree, N., 1998, Museum Under Siege, in Archaeology, *Archaeology Institute of America*, April 20 1998 (www.archaeology.org).

7. Ibid. Recent inventory work and revelations of the Museum staff who had hidden many artefacts from public knowledge suggests that this figure may have been overestimated at the time. However, no entirely accurate figure has yet been established, but certainly most of the numismatic collection is still unaccounted for. Thankfully examination of a recent publication written by Francine Tissot, Catalogue of the National Museum of Afghanistan 1931-1985, UNESCO Publishing, Paris, October 2006, reveals that only about 26 pieces contained in that particular catalogue were still missing from the National Museum. This figure does not take account of the sculptures smashed in 2001, however, and the results of the ongoing Chicago Oriental Institute inventory project in the National Museum.

8. cf. article from the Art Newspaper, September 26 2003, https://listhost.uchicago.edu/pipermail/iraqcrisis/2003-September/000391.html.

9. cf. Grissman, C., 2006, pp. 66-8, "The Kabul Museum: the turbulent years," in Juliette van Krieken-Peters ed. Art and Archaeology of Afghanistan: its fall and Survival," Brill, Leiden, 2006 pp. 61-75.

10. Cassar, B., 2004, *SPACH History*, SPACH, Kabul.

11. SPACH, 2000, Decrees of Mullah Omar, *SPACH Newsletter,* May 2000, Kabul.

12. Lamb, C., 2006, Looted Afghan Art Smuggled into UK, *UK Times Online*, March 12, 2006. Available at: http://msn-list.te.verweg.com/2006-March/004685.html

13. Daily Times, 2006, 625 antiquities stopped from reaching Sharjah, Pakistan, Sunday November 19 2006, Available at: http://www.dailytimes.com.pk.

14. cf. B. Cassar, 2004, Artefacts returned to the Ministry of Information and Culture, SPACH, Kabul. These confiscations also have the negative affect of placing increasing pressure on under resourced national institutions to inventory, conserve and store the illegal consignments appropriately. Further sporadic returns have taken place over the past 10 years (personal communication with various government officials).

15. Description of the site and criteria for listing available at World Heritage Centre website: http://whc.unesco.org.

16. Ball, Warwick, 2006, p. 41, The Archaeology of Afghanistan: a reassessment and stock-taking, *Art and Archaeology of Afghanistan: its fall and Survival*, (HdO vol. 14), Brill, Leiden 2006.

17. Cf. Dupree, N., 1973, Archaeology and the arts in the creation of a national consciousness, in L Dupree & L. Albert (eds.), 1974, Afghanistan in the 1970s, Praeger, New York.

18. Texts available at: http://portal.unesco.org.

19. *Afghan Law on the Protection of Cultural and Historical Properties,* Ministry of Justice, Official Gazette, Issue No.: 828, 21 May 2004.

20. UNESCO began a concerted effort to train customs officer's in the recently strengthened Customs Department within the Afghan Ministry of Foreign Affairs from 2013 onwards with a grant from the Government of Italy through their Italian Development Cooperation arm, with immediate results in numbers of seizures and frequency of reporting.

21. Recommendations available at: www.whc.unesco.org. Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, 2005, p. 139, Afghanistan National Development Strategy, Kabul, Af. Afghanistan Compact available at: http://www.fco.gov.uk.

22. Tang, Alisa, 2007, "1423 Afghan Artefacts Return to Kabul", *The Washington Post*, Sunday March 18, 2007.

23. BBC, 5 August 2012; *National Geographic*, 6 March 2009

24. unesco.org/culture/pdf/creative-economy-report-2013-en.pdf



One of the five Timurid minarets in Herat with the view of the city © UNESCO/ICONEM



Chehel Burj, Nimruz, An area of ruins consisting of an immense medieval fortress resting on an earlier mound dating back to Indo-Parthian period, 1st-3rd century AD © 3rd Eye/Sadiq Nasiri

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The Long-Term Protection of Afghanistan's Cultural Property and Recent International Cooperation: The Status Quo of the National Museum and Archive Services

Safeguarding Culture to Build Peace: The Commitment of the Afghan Government & the Contribution of the International Community

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After three decades of armed conflict, a measure of normality is gradually returning to many parts of Afghan life. But the aftermath of the terrible devastation of the years of war is still visible, and peace remains elusive. Yet, since 2001, decisive steps have been made to favour the transition from a culture of war to a culture of peace by actively promoting the spirit of brotherliness and a culture of forgiveness.

The Ministry for Information, Culture and Youth of Afghanistan has actively engaged to strengthen these principles through a broad range of cultural initiatives as well as popular events such as concerts, festivals, radio broadcasts and television programmes which celebrate the shared cultural heritage of Afghanistan and foster a sense of citizenship. Cultural events have the power to instil new hope and promote a culture of tolerance and mutual understanding. By supporting our cultural heritage we can help our society to overcome the consequences of three decades of war.

Under the Taliban, our works of art were destroyed and our artists persecuted or even killed. Over the last few years we have been steadily working towards a new beginning – often with lamentably limited success. We need your help more than ever to preserve and valorise our cultural heritage. Traditional music, for example, once a thriving form of art with a long and richly diverse history, has all but disappeared from many regions of Afghanistan. If we fail to protect and preserve it, it will be lost. This is also true for other forms of art such as calligraphy, tile work and painting, which have been practiced in Afghanistan for many centuries. The current generation of young Afghans has grown up amid the ravages of war, and it is now up to us to overcome its painful legacy of violence and hatred.

The preservation of the tangible and intangible cultural history of Afghanistan – museums, monuments, archaeological sites, music, art and traditional crafts – is a crucial part of the effort to strengthen a sense of cultural identity and national unity. A shared cultural heritage can bring together former adversaries, can help build bridges, promote dialogue and inspire us to cooperate in shaping our common future.

I wish to express my gratitude to our partners in the peace process who, along with their brave citizens, the soldiers of peace, continue to help pave the way towards democracy.

Since the outbreak of war in 1979, the major historical monuments and archaeological sites across the country have been threatened and damaged by a combination of fighting, looting, neglect and iconoclasm. Many historical monuments have suffered severe damage during the war and several of these are in critical need of immediate conservation and rehabilitation measures to ensure their preservation for the future. Under this point of view, the present situation of the cultural heritage of Afghanistan can be qualified as a cultural disaster.

Considering the importance of the rehabilitation and revitalization of tangible and intangible cultural heritage in our country, it is a pleasure for us to present the efforts carried out until now towards the establishment of the National Development Strategy of Afghanistan.

The Strategy aims at coping with the huge needs and expectations which have been addressed in the Afghanistan Compact, the benchmarks of which were set as follows:

- A comprehensive inventory of Afghan cultural treasures will be compiled.
- Measures will be taken to stop the illegal removal of cultural heritage.
- Professional restoration of damaged monuments and artefacts.

The Afghan Ministry of Information and Culture is working closely on this critical issue-with the UNESCO Kabul Office operating as a focal point and coordination agency among international donors, UN agencies, NGOs and other relevant authorities in order to increase the relevance, effectiveness, transparency and accountability of the Strategy, in line with the United Nations Development Assistance Framework. The safeguarding of elements of tangible and intangible heritage, including museums, monuments, archaeological sites, music, art and traditional crafts, is of particular significance in terms of strengthening our cultural identity and building a sense of national integrity.

In 2003, the Afghan government and UNESCO coordinated an International Coordination Committee (ICC), aiming at raising funds and allowing the efficient coordination of actions to safeguard the heritage of Afghanistan to the highest international standards in a number of key areas. Such areas include the development of a long-term strategy, capacity-building, the implementation of the World Heritage Convention and of the Convention on Preventing the Illicit Traffic of Cultural Property, the elaboration of national inventories and documentation, the rehabilitation of the National Museums of Afghanistan and the safeguarding of historical sites such as Jam, Herat and Bamiyan.

Currently, the preservation of the site of Bamiyan is the object of one of the most important projects in Afghanistan. For its implementation, more than five million dollars has been generously donated by the Government of Japan through UNESCO since the year 2003. The objectives of the project include the development of a Cultural Master Plan to ensure the overall preservation of the site, the conservation of mural paintings which have disappeared during the war due to neglect, theft and voluntary destruction, the consolidation of the Buddha cliffs and niches in order to avoid the imminent risk of collapse and the preservation of the fragments of the Buddha statues.

The consolidation of the inclined Minaret of Jam, inscribed on the World Heritage List, represents the core of another important project, funded by the Italian and Swiss Government and implemented in close cooperation with UNESCO. In order to remove the site from the World Heritage List in Danger, a complete documentation of the Minaret, including structural analysis, metric survey, geophysical and geotechnical analysis and research in seismic hazards, has been carried out, in parallel with archaeological research.

We have done our best to protect cultural heritage over many years and are making every effort to safeguard the Afghan cultural heritage for future generations. Our strategy is to re-establish links between the populations and their cultural history, helping them to develop a feeling of common ownership of monuments which represent the cultural heritage of different segments of society.

Our overall objectives in this respect are therefore two-fold; not only rehabilitating tangible and intangible heritage within Afghanistan, but also raising, throughout the country, public awareness of its value and of the responsibility of its protection and preservation for the future generations. It is for these reasons that we hope to improve the capacity of the institutions in our country, in order to empower them with the necessary skills and qualifications to maintain and rehabilitate our historical monuments. We acknowledge and sincerely appreciate your continued assistance in this regard.

The National Museum of Afghanistan: Poised for the Challenges of the Future

Nancy Hatch-Dupree

Executive Coordinator of ACKU, Afghan Centre at Kabul University

The National Museum of Afghanistan holds one of the richest, most opulent collections in the world. Unique in a number of ways, it contains artefacts that have no parallels elsewhere; the majority of its holdings were scientifically excavated from Afghan soil; and its collections record Afghan cultural history almost without interruption from the Lower Paleolithic to the ethnographic present. Thus it truly embodies the cultural heritage of the nation; a tangible visual manifestation of the national identity. Every Afghan should be proud of their museum. But most Afghans are scarcely aware of this treasure in their midst or the part it should play in furthering peace and unity.

This discussion recounts the transformation of a miscellany of objects displaying the whims of royalty into an acclaimed museum, the indignities heaped upon it during years of conflict and its current revival. It is written primarily to highlight the yeoman efforts Afghans took to protect these collections, and, to whet the curiosity of Afghan readers so as to stimulate a desire to acquire the museum-going habit. Some reasons why the museum hovers in the shadows of Afghan minds and goes largely unnoticed follow, together with a few observations on how the museum night gain the confidence of its purpose to take part in nation-building during the critical years that lie ahead.

Early History and Beyond

Collecting unusual objects was a royal hobby enjoyed by Amir Abdur Rahman (1880-1901) and his son, Amir Habibullah (1901-1919), who were fascinated by weapons, accoutrements inlaid with gold and precious stones, Kafir statues and old costumes. A younger brother of Amir Habibullah, Prince Nasrullah, was a discriminating collector of illuminated manuscripts. Both collections were transferred in 1919 by King Amanullah (1919-1929), the third son of Amir Habibullah, to the Bagh-i-Bala palace on a mountain top some distance outside the city. However, as tensions generated by the King's reforms began to mount, the objects were brought for safe keeping to the Arg, the citadel located in the center of Kabul. There in November 1924 they were placed in a small garden pavilion called Koti Baghcha which was officially inaugurated as the Kabul Museum. Being behind the formidable walls of the citadel, this first museum in Afghanistan was clearly out of bounds-and minds-of the public.

Prince Nasrullah's manuscripts on the other hand were placed in a former palace just outside the Arg which had been converted into a mausoleum for his father. Unlike the Kabul Museum, this collection known as the Kitab Khana-i-Milli or National Library was open to the public. During the civil unrest that unseated King Amanullah in 1929 the library was looted and many fine folios were destroyed. The dynasty that succeeded inherited King Amanullah's half-finished new city at Darulaman some eight kilometers southwest of Kabul, including the Town Hall to which the objects housed in Koti Baghcha were transferred in 1931. Still called the Kabul Museum it then opened to the public at last. Around 1965, as a steady stream of artefacts flowed in from excavations, the name was changed to the National Museum of Afghanistan in recognition of its enhanced status; new wings were added later.

Scientific archaeological research began in 1922 when King Amanullah signed a thirty-year accord giving France exclusive rights to conduct archaeological research in Afghanistan. This brought into being the Délégation

archéologique française en Afghanistan. DAFA marched in the vanguard until 1952 when a variety of countries entered the field, including, the United Kingdom, Italy, Japan, India, the USA, and the Soviet Union. Over the years increasing numbers of Afghans took up archaeology as a career. According to the agreements under which each mission worked, all unique pieces that were found at these excavations were deposited in the museum.

Each team of archaeologists came with its own interests. Many sought physical evidence of the historical descriptions given over the centuries by empire builders, including the Achaeminids from Iran, Alexander the Great from Greece, and Ashoka from India. Others tracked the accounts of Chinese pilgrims Fa-Hsien and Hsuen-Tsung and the Korean monk Hui-Ch'ao who passed through heading for sites associated with the life of the Buddha in India. The large, often lavishly decorated centers of worship for Zoroastrians, Buddhists, Hindus, and Muslims attracted others. Early descriptions by travelers of the sumptuous royal courts at 10th century Ghaznavid Ghazni and 15th century Timurid Herat focused interest in recording the spread of Islam in Afghanistan and beyond its borders.

Still others looked far into the past to the pre-historic Stone Age and upwards to find where the beginnings of the domestication of plants and animals took place in Afghanistan. They searched for the rise of towns and cities and the luxury trade routes that connected them by land and by sea. Afghan traders were famous from Alexandria to China and all across India. As the spades of the archaeologists brought history to light, the geo-political centrality of Afghanistan and the splendor of its cultural achievements came into sharp focus. With this visual evidence came the knowledge that these high cultural attainments were made possible by the fusion of creative ideas contributed by many different peoples coming from east and west, north and south. Through such melding of diverse inspirations civilizing progress prospered.

Upheavals and Desolation

So the richness of the collections continued to grow until the current conflict erupted with the coup of April 1978 followed by rural uprisings leading to the Soviet intervention of December 1979. Uneasiness over the uncertainties of the future led to the decision to remove the unique items on display at the museum to safe havens in the centre of Kabul. Thus the long saga of packing and unpacking and carting artefacts to and fro began in April 1979. This first shift was to the palatial home of .a member of the royal family gunned down during the coup. As the situation stabilized, however, these same pieces were hauled back to the museum hardly two years later in October 1980 and replaced in their original display cases. For a decade activities at the museum continued normally until the Soviet withdrawal, beginning in May 1988 and ending in February 1989, renewed anxieties. Once again objects were taken from their display cases and shifted to the Central Bank at the Arg and the upper floors of the Ministry of Information. The heavy statuary, inscriptions and other unwieldy items, however, remained in situ in the halls of the museum.

During these unsettled times the museum was used as a propaganda tool to defame both the Soviets and the mujahideen governments that followed them after April 1992. The first blast came in 1980 from an organization in the USA that accused the Soviets of spiriting away the 20,000 pieces of gold they had excavated by 1978 at Tilya Tepe in Jauzjan Province near Shibarghan instead of handing them over to the museum. To quell these rumors, pieces from this Golden Hoard were put on display in 1991 in Kote Baghcha to reassure diplomats that the treasure was safe in Afghanistan. But opposing factions within the mujahideen later spread the word that gold and silver objects from the museum were being sold by those in power to purchase ammunition for the civil war that was then unfolding. In fact, thanks to the foresight of the museum staff they were safe in the vaults of the Arg.



Hermes, Greek Divine Patron of Learning; from gymnasium at Ai Khanoum. Takhar prov.; Greco-Bactrian, 3rd century BCE; h.72cm © Louis Dupree



Burnt out interior of the Museum, May 1993 © Jolyon Lesslie

The museum itself, however, was in a frightful state. Rockets screamed over head daily, some crashing onto objects in the garden and, finally, in May 1993, one hit the roof setting it ablaze. Among other precious objects wall paintings from the Soviet excavations at Delberjin, also in the north, were lost and the stellar collection of Islamic bronzes lay in a melted heap under the burning debris. For months the staff searched for artefacts, sifting patiently through the wreckage in freezing temperatures by the feeble light of kerosene lanterns, without electricity, heat or water. Some 7,000 pieces were recovered. The museum building was riddled and vulnerable. International friends of the museum, such as UNCHS (UN Centre for Human Settlements), blocked up windows and affixed stout metal doors to the storerooms. Yet as Darulaman changed hands from one faction to the other and their guards came and went, pieces continued to disappear. Astonishingly even massive pieces of schist statuary weighing hundreds of kilos vanished.

Thus began the heyday of the plundering of archaeological sites and looting at the museum.Museum pieces in ever increasing numbers appeared in Peshawar and in the adjacent tribal areas, waiting for buyers only too ready to pay prices from thousands up to half a million US dollars. The looters ransacked the museum without the slightest sense of guilt or remorse, driven by greed and by the pressures of international traffickers of stolen art whose tactics and networks were as widespread, demanding and dangerous as those of the drug mafias. The dealers in turn catered to the greed of collectors all over the world who were obsessed with the desire to possess unique objects as well as profit from the high commercial value of these beautiful works of art. Many ended up in Europe, Britain and as far away as Japan.

To stem the flow orders were again issued to pack up and move, this time to the deserted Kabul Hotel in the center of Kabul. The meticulous tasks of measuring, describing, photographing, listing and packing were carried out from April to September in semi-darkness midst clouds of chocking dust. Finally, hundreds of trunks, crates and boxes filled with some 3,000 objects left the museum in September 1996. In October the Taliban took Kabul. Scarcely two years later they directed that the collections be shifted to the ground floor of the Ministry of Information and Culture.

During the next years, with archaeological missions shut down and the museum staff greatly reduced, work at the museum focused on cleaning up the first floor and inventorying what was left in the halls and storerooms with funds earlier received from UNESCO and assistance from the Society for the Preservation of Afghanistan's Cultural Heritage (SPACH), an advocacy group in Islamabad formed in 1994 on the initiative of Sotorios Mousouris, then the UN Secretary General's Representative in Pakistan and Afghanistan. Mullah Omar, the leader of the Taliban, issued ten decrees mandating the protection of cultural sites and relics, threatening dire punishment for those possessing or trafficking in artefacts. The Decree of July 1999 charged the Academy of Sciences with the responsibility of protecting the cultural heritage, including the Buddhas at Bamiyan.

In August of 2000 the Ministry of Information and Culture invited a large gathering of dignitaries to attend the reopening of the museum. This proved to be the lull before the storm as hardliners replaced moderates in the cabinet, overriding those loyally holding to the earlier edicts stipulating protection. It took a full day of heated argument before the new cabinet announced in February 2001 that the Bamiyan Buddhas must be destroyed. At their bidding Mullah Omar issued the decree of 26 February 2001 which was short but unambiguous: all the statues around Afghanistan must be destroyed. A chorus of international outrage followed. UNESCO dispatched representatives to Kandahar and members of SPACH met with officials in Kabul, but to no avail. The Buddhas were dynamited on the 8th and 9th of March.

And yet more was to come for later in March a team headed by the new minister of culture ransacked the collections on the ground floor of the ministry destroying objects with frenzied fervor before moving to the museum where they took sledgehammers to pulverize statues on display. The statue of the Kushan King Kanishka, which had greeted visitors for years at the entrance to the museum, was reduced to rubble and dust; a superb Buddhist Bodhisattva from Tepe Maranjan in Kabul suffered the same fate; Nuristani grave effigies were reduced to firewood. Only pieces judiciously hidden by the staff escaped the onslaught. The courageous efforts of the museum staff, laboring consistently over so many years, saved the bulk of Afghanistan's heritage at the museum. Afghans, not to mention the world at large, owe a debt without measure to these loyal Afghans who went to such great lengths to protect so much of the heritage. Numbers endured severe personal hardships for their efforts.

Revival

Once the Taliban were dispatched at the end of 2001, and electricity and water restored to the museum in 2003, a steady stream of international experts from many countries arrived to carry out a wide array of activities, including inventorying, restoration, conservation and training for the staff. As a result, the unlit, soot-encrusted interior now sparkles with an aura of elegance, its high-vaulted corridors gleaming with whitewash over flights of marble stairs.

King Kanishka, with his dignity restored once again welcomes visitors at the entrance, the Bodhisattva sits in serene contemplation and the Nuristani grave effigies stand proud. Two new galleries designed with a modern flair opened in 2011 and 2012 and new cases are added frequently. Many display looted objects returned by museums and dealers abroad. Most recently over 800 artefacts confiscated over the past two years by British customs police and safeguarded at the British Museum in London were returned. They are valued at one million British pounds. The Golden Hoard from Tilya Tepe together with a few unique pieces from other collections tours the world's museums spreading the word of Afghanistan's distinction. The whereabouts of



Ivory Furniture Bracket from Begram, Kapisa prov.; ornamented with female riding a winged leograph; import from India. Kushan, 2nd century CE; l. 30 cm. © Frances Rice

some of the most beautiful missing schist panels is known and assurances have been given that they will be returned at an appropriate time.

But what exactly has been lost? What exactly remains? These are questions often asked. The original inventories went up in flames when the roof was set ablaze in 1993; other periodic listings soon lost their relevance as objects were packed and re-packed, shifted and re-shifted, looted and destroyed. Then in April 2004, a more definitive inventory was taken after the dramatic opening of the safes and trunks stored in the Arg which established that the unique objects, including the Golden Hoard, were present and accounted for.

Now a more sustained project, initiated by the Ministry of Information and Culture and the University of Chicago in the USA calls for the creation of a technically sophisticated electronic catalogue and management system, complete with capacity-building training in museum practices and operations for the museum staff. With these new systems the museum will be well-prepared to move into new premises to be built next to the present building on 8-acres given by the Ministry of Defense. The current building that has suffered so tragically is in itself an historic part of the heritage and will probably be used for various purposes of museum administration and training.

Future Directions

This review of the physical history of the museum and its collections serves as a backdrop to the following discussion on the multiplicity of roles a museum should and can fulfill, with the hope that spaces in the new museum will accommodate some innovative activities and technologies that will enhance visitor attendance. Central to this is the need to understand and address the indifference with which most Afghans have regarded the museum over the years. This apathy towards the past obscures the fact that an understanding of the past is essential if a sense of national unity and self-confidence are to be created. Knowing about past civilizations like the Kushans who commanded respect from Rome to China, or, the courts at Ghazni and Herat that were acclaimed for their cultural sophistication, can do much to boost flagging spirits during this period when the society struggles with the exigencies of rebuilding its economy and governance systems; when today and tomorrow seem more worthy of notice than yesterday. But culture can bring peace and unity, and its legacy resides in the museum.

The scant interest in history in general is a stumbling block. Most Afghan ethnic groups are well-aware of their group's histories defined and strengthened through local genealogical epics that recount gallant episodes and heroic deeds with pride. But the history of the nation was seldom taught in an inspirational manner; drab, dull textbooks conveyed none of the dynamism and splendor of the past. Scholars wrote many an erudite monograph, but seldom in a manner sufficiently animated to generate interest among the young. Happily, the history textbooks distributed in 2011 are filled with colorful illustrations, charts and graphs and more entertaining texts. This is most timely for a good proportion of today's Afghan youth grew up outside Afghanistan in refugee camps with no opportunities to learn about their own history. They have returned with a lively interest about their recent and historic past. While in the past the museum did little to publicize its treasures, it is responding today to this new interest among the young and making an effort to fill the gap. Today one frequently encounters excited groups of school children hovering over display cases spellbound by attendants newly trained to be inspiring in their presentations as well as knowledgeable about the facts. Thus the museum has begun to play its role as a visual interpreter of history.

The challenge now is to introduce the museum-going habit into wider segments of the society. Throughout the world legions of museums using a broad range of technologies attract a wide diversity of visitors. Large and small, these museums preserve and educate as they have always done, but more importantly they are seen as institutions which solidify social cohesion within communities. By developing a sense of continuity with

the past, museums imbue individuals with feelings of pride in being a part of what has gone before, and this sharpens their appreciation of the present and gives rise to brighter expectations for the future. In Britain it is reported more people go to museums than to football matches, the cinema or the theater. In the USA there are museums dedicated to architecture, to personalities, to sports, to industries, to textiles, to battles, to outlaws, to entertainers, to clocks, to teapots, to famous culinary sauces, and to such momentous events as man's first attempt to fly. All are storehouses for collective memory; each generates community pride and is an integrated part of their surrounds. How much more so could the museum in Kabul become.

To become an active and extrovert institution the goal must be to attract visitors and for this the museum needs to confer an aura of magic by enabling visitors to establish intimate relationships with artefacts and their creators. The rapid advancement of modern technologies presents imaginative possibilities. Fitting out the museum with sophisticated innovations like video walls may be beyond financial reality at the moment, but more modest adaptations or alternatives may be devised. This means reaching out to talented communications experts of which many exist in Afghanistan, tapping resources at schools of design, advertising institutions, computer agencies and departments of graphics in universities, among a plethora of other possibilities. The importance of involving others is crucial for the world has become so highly specialized that working alone will no longer do. Museum professionals when they reach out to their colleagues in the multimedia world to jointly design innovative, affordable effects and programs using state of the arts technologies may be assured of success. Workshops to generate ideas can become a part of the museum's planning and programming.

Providing dramatic displays are perquisites for sustained visitor interest, but beyond these physical elements the study of what visitors expect to gain from a visit to the museum is equally important. What images, knowledge and ideas need to be provided so that viewers may realize that what they are seeing from the past can also be pertinent to their present daily lives? Museum goers have changed over the years as well as museums. They expect more today. Efforts to understand visitors and their expectations often do not come naturally to those who prefer to concentrate on their scholarly studies or the problems of conservation. As important as these aspects may be, it is equally important not to lose sight of the impact of exhibits on the beholder. Visitors should not be made to feel removed, belittled, intimidated or confused by obtuse explanations or inadequately labeled exhibits. If they are they will leave with feelings of dissatisfaction, even hostility, with no desire to return. On the other hand, if the museum succeeds in awakening their curiosity and involving them in exhibits, they will spread their enthusiasm and swell attendance naturally.

Offering a variety of learning opportunities therefore is highly effective. Artistic exhibits of ordinary objects made in local communities around the country would open eyes and minds to new dimensions of one's heritage and give visitors a new appreciation for the art that surrounds them, Furthermore, informed interactions between creators and viewers lead to new insights. Rows of prehistoric stone tools and broken pots are usually viewed with bored incomprehension for it is hard to understand what momentous steps prehistoric man took so that we can enjoy the high technologies of our day. But watching the hands of skilled practitioners feeling for that special creative moment deepens an appreciation of how ancient craftsmen made stone tools, turned and painted pottery, created clay toys and figurines, bored semi-precious stones for beads, and fashioned jewelry. This would be most rewarding. Also, an exhibit of objects before and after conservation with the conservators in attendance would interest even the most sophisticated visitor. The possibilities are endless for creative minds. Regular announcements of such temporary exhibits and events are bound to be good crowd pullers.

Studying the psychology of visitors, designing effective communication displays and holding stimulating events as regular fixtures on the year's cultural calendar would





Upper figure: Flint Tool from Aq Kupruk, Balkh prov.; Upper Paleolithic, ca. 15,000 BCE © Louis Dupree
Lower figure: Paited pottery goblets from Mundigak, Kandahar prov; Bronze Age.3-2 Century BCE, h.4.8 cm.
© Louis Dupree



Islamic architectural decoration, fragment of panel carved of geometric and vegetal pattern, traces of red paint 11th-12th Cenrty CE, Ghazni, Afghanistan
© UNESCO/Salim Rafik

raise the awareness of what the museum is all about. Here a lively use of public relations know-how is needed, but in this Afghanistan is well-served by an interested, supportive communications network.

Some may be over-whelmed by these suggestions and would prefer to let the complexities deter them from experimenting with innovations. This need not be. It is all too easy to say something is “too big,” “too complicated,” “not my responsibility,” or “too expensive.” Nevertheless, by sharing tasks with a wide range of community actors, while the museum acts as a catalyst, much can be accomplished.

The International Council of Museums in its Code of Professional Ethics clearly states that a museum is an institution in the service of society and its development. To address community-building objectives by disseminating knowledge of the cultural heritage without becoming propaganda tools for any group or ideology, political or otherwise, is a worthy challenge. Most important is to devise a joint strategy that involves professionals on all levels in developing and strengthening positive cultural attitudes. Working with educational institutions has already begun but these efforts can be expanded through joint programming between teachers who understand children and museologists who understand the past. Other collaborative efforts would be similarly fruitful. Even a Junior Board made up of students can conduct research among their peers and share their ideas on programming and designing displays with museum professionals.

These remarks define some of the loftier goals to which the museum might aspire. They require an understanding of the relationship between Afghans and their history. They offer individuals a chance to reflect upon and reinforce cultural identities by providing focal points around which solidarity may be built. On a less lofty but no less important level, the museum has the potential to bring a little magic into ordinary lives. This would be no mean accomplishment.

1919-2014 and Beyond: A Positive Outlook for the National Museum of Afghanistan

Omra Khan Masoudi
Director General of Museums, Afghanistan

The Idea of establishing a National Museum of Afghanistan to both protect and exhibit examples of the nation's diverse and extraordinary tangible cultural heritage was first mooted some 94 years ago. On his death in 1919, King Habibullah Khan left behind a small collection of manuscripts as well as various archives, coins, family items, weapons, miniatures and other works of art that had formed part of a private collection. Saved by the Royal Family, these objects were safely stored in various places within the Baghe Bala Quarter of Kabul. A few years later, King Amanullah Khan then transferred the collection to a more appropriate building set within the palace grounds, to then be moved in 1931 to its present home at Darulaman, opposite the palace built by Amanullah Khan in the early 1920's.

Built during the course of 1922, the new national museum complex offered an appropriate exhibition and storage space for the numerous artefacts recovered from excavations undertaken across the country by both Afghan and foreign archaeological missions. The museum was intended to provide a safe haven for the treasures of Afghan culture and by the 1950's c. 100,000 pre-Islamic and ethnographic objects were either safely stored or on display. A large number of these artefacts were initially recorded on simple inventory cards listing basic but essential details. Whilst this level of recording was adequate for the time, an update has been long overdue for this vital set of data. With this in mind, a current initiative involving select staff from the National Museum and visiting professionals from the Oriental Institute in Chicago is seeking to convert these records into a digital format over a two year period. This programme will not only facilitate a multi-lingual data base, but will also add new or forgotten data to this extensive record. It is this dedication to work undertaken by staff at the museum over the last 90 years that has enabled the unique collection of artefacts from Ancient Ariana to be seen by many thousands of people ranging from school children and education professionals to the general Afghan public, visiting foreign tourists and indeed many other groups with an interest and passion for the culture of Afghanistan and the wider region.

Nevertheless, the fate of the museum was to take a now well-documented turn for the worse as a result of the national and regional political and economic instability throughout the 1970's and 80's. The first major effects to be felt as a result of this change in geo-political circumstances was the very tangible structural damage inflicted on the National Museum, mostly occurring during the fighting associated with the coup d'état of the 27th April, 1978 and almost a year later on the 17th April 1979. In what proved in the long term to be both a scientific and cultural disaster for Afghanistan, the Kabul Museum was ordered to move its unique collection from its home in Darulaman on the outskirts of the city. The artefacts were subsequently relocated to the home of Minister Sardar Mohammad Naim Khan with this complex operation of transporting large numbers of distinctly fragile items taking more than three weeks to complete. The now empty museum was subsequently turned into an annex of the Ministry of Defense (located in the nearby Darulaman Palace), with the whole area becoming a military zone. The artefacts stored on the ground and first floors were carted away, and all underground stores were sealed off.

What subsequently ensued on the return of the collection was an 18 month concerted effort by the

conservators of the National Museum and the staff of the Archaeological Institute of Afghanistan to reopen the museum. As a result of considerable work, time and patience the collections were reinstated to their original display rooms and despite the tumultuous times in Afghanistan, and specifically Kabul during the 1980's, the museum managed to remain open for the greater part of this period.

Whilst the conflict continued to rage throughout the country during the late 1980's, the museum, and indeed the city, also remained relatively damage free. Nevertheless, the Najibullah Government deemed the museum too vulnerable to the likelihood of both damage and potential looting should fighting break out in the city on a serious scale, so once more the museum staff were informed that the objects that were on display (in the region of 600 at that time), should be prepared for removal elsewhere. In consultation with the Ministry of Information and Culture and the security forces, it was proposed that a number of select items from the collection should also be transferred to the custodianship of the then President of the Republic, Mohammad Najibullah. This proposal was accepted.

Rare objects from various collections, including artefacts from the internationally significant archaeological sites at Begram, Ai Khanum, and Hadda, as well as the precious metal jewelry from the 'Bactrian treasure' collection were discretely transferred to a vault in the Central Bank in the Arg, the presidential palace, in the centre of Kabul. Finds from Fondukistan and Bamiyan were also taken to the Ministry of Information and Culture premises. The heavy stone sculptures, fragile inscriptions and many of the artefacts in the storerooms were left in the museum building in what were deemed safe storage facilities. Unfortunately the nature of the civil war was such that those objects left in the museum suffered substantially more than those removed, with countless objects either being destroyed or removed by various factions over the years of unrest. Those taken to the Arg and the Ministry, whilst limited in their range and number, fared better and a number have survived through until 2014.



National Museum of Afghanistan during civil war in 1990's © Jolyon Leslie

Both the city and the museum suffered greatly during years of continuous conflict that ensued between 1992 and 1996. This period was sadly characterized by regular looting of the museum's surviving collections. Whilst the first documented episode of known organized theft was in 1993, it is believed that as the 'frontline' between the various fighting factions moved backwards and forwards (the Darulaman road being the nominal demarcation line), the museum was successively plundered by whichever group happened to control that particular part of the district at successive points.



Conservation of artefacts, National Museum of Afghanistan © Massoud Etemadi

On May the 12th , 1993, the National Museum, which was at the time being utilized as a military base and defensive position, was struck by a single rocket during a period of heavy fighting with the ensuing result that the museum caught fire and suffered extensive structural damage. On the evening of May 13, 1994, a BBC report declared that ‘’Afghanistan may have buried its children, but should not also be burying its culture’’ This poignant message created a great stir among both national and international cultural organizations and a worldwide alarm was raised concerning the uncertain future of the National Museum and more specifically its unique collections, their whereabouts and their present condition.

The National Museum after 1993

As a direct consequence of this awakening of the international community to the plight of the National Museum, during the first few months of 1994 the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (UNCHS) made the first concerted effort in attempting to redress the physical damage that had been inflicted on the building. Extensive work, albeit some of it temporary, was undertaken and included the weatherproofing of the top floor and roof, the installation of steel doors on the lower storerooms and the bricking up of all external windows as a further temporary security measure. The sad state of affairs prior to this international intervention by the United Nations is borne out by the fact that, fire had destroyed most of the office records (including many of the invaluable inventories), the photography room, the exquisite coloured frescoes from Delbarjin and Dashli Tepe, and many of the Islamic glass and metal objects. In addition , storerooms had been pillaged resulting in both destruction and theft of many iconic pieces in the collections and many of the museum’s 35,000 coins, (that included rare Hepthalite, Bactrian, Parthian and Sasanian examples) were also looted and in all likelihood trafficked outside of the country.

During the course of 1994, a more positive turn of events saw the establishment of The Society for the Preservation of Afghanistan’s Cultural Heritage (SPACH) (supported by UNESCO), offering a forum for both practical and technical support whilst also raising awareness both at home and abroad concerning the long-term survival of Afghanistan’s threatened cultural heritage. During the course of the following winter an international team of cultural specialists were brought in an attempt to recover and stabilize the collections on the upper floor of the museum that had suffered most damage during the previous months. In total in the region of 3,000 artefacts, consisting of pieces made from stone, ceramic and precious metals were saved and placed in storage, although many of these pieces had incurred damage of one form or another and required specialist attention.

Moving forward just two years, in the early months of 1996 staff were then able to safely return to the National Museum and set about working continuously for almost six months on this first and most difficult phase of assessing and cataloguing the surviving collections . During the course of an anxious two weeks before the eventual arrival of the Taliban in the city, more than 500 crates, trunks, and boxes of artefacts were shifted again from Darulaman to the deserted Kabul Hotel. This storage area was locked on September 28th, 1996 by the Taliban government.

Relocating the collection, 1996

During the course of the Taliban’s regime in Kabul, the crates of artefacts that had been stored in the Kabul Hotel fortunately did survive, however some of the museum’s storerooms were looted and many badly damaged. In 2000 the museum staff, now numbering only 20, were once more able to continue working on the inventory of surviving, lost and damaged artefacts. On the completion of this programme in October of that year the final total of objects that were recorded as surviving was 6,449. The museum officials alerted SPACH that stolen museum objects were for sale in the local markets, and over a period of months supporters of the organization were able to purchase objects documented to have originally formed parts of the collections from the Kabul Museum. Whilst today the museum would not generally condone the purchasing of antiquities known to have been stolen from the museum in the past, or from archaeological sites in the country (with occasional exceptions such as the return of the Buddha sculpture excavated from the village of Sarai Khuja in 1965, ‘exported’ abroad and then eventually privately purchased from a Japanese collector by a London based philanthropist). This sculpture, a great example of the Gandhara art style (at its height during the 1st – 5th century BC), was then generously donated back to the National Museum of Afghanistan via the British Museum. During the late 1990’s this was deemed necessary by all relevant stakeholders to help preserve the future of the collections in what were fraught and uncertain times.

More drama was to follow when in March 2001, the world watched in abject dismay as the Taliban, after ceasing negotiations and dialogue with the international community on the importance of Afghanistan’s pre-Islamic cultural heritage, proceeded to detonate explosives inserted in both the iconic Buddha sculptures in the Bamiyan Valley Cliffs, removing almost all trace of these 6th century masterpieces and leaving little but the silhouettes of the niches themselves.

The Taliban also damaged many significant objects held in the National Museum, including the famous collection of timber carved idols from Nuristan, whilst also vandalizing both the Ministry and Museum storerooms. By late 2001, at the request of UNESCO, the SPACH liaison officer was able to assemble duplicate copies of all Dari and English inventories made between 1996 and 2000 at the Kabul Museum, whilst also incorporating many similar cards prepared by the Délégation Archéologique Française en Afghanistan (DAFA) during the 1970s, partially burnt during the destruction of the Museum in 1993.

The tempestuous fate of the Museum’s collections did take a turn for the better during the early part of 2003, with a report from the central bank in Kabul revealing that the museum trunks deposited there in 1989 were still intact. A thorough and detailed assessment of these

surviving objects became a priority for the Minister of Culture and the inventory process began once more with the unique collection of Bactrian jewelry and precious metal artefacts recovered from a number of archaeological sites in the 1960's and 70's by the Afghan Institute of Archaeology, with the assistance of the well known Russian professor, Viktor Sarianidi. An Afghan committee was appointed to approve both the protocol of how such an important inventory process should be undertaken, and also to move forward with the instigation of the inventory process as quickly as possible.

There was great trepidation in the days preceding the opening of the trunks as the committee was very unsure as what they might reveal. Even though earlier reports from the Ministry had stated that the seals on all the trunks had remained intact over the years, there was still a degree of doubt in many minds that this would not be the case, and the panel would be faced with empty or damaged trunks. With the assistance of Viktor Sarianidi, (a Soviet-Afghan team led by him having discovered the archaeological site of Tilya Tepe in 1978) the committee was assembled so as to be able to confirm the authenticity of what Sarianidi and his team had last seen in 1982.

On the day of the opening of the vault in 2003, the Minister of Culture, along with international diplomats, many officials, and the Afghan press squeezed into the cramped temporary inventory room. Sarianidi had arrived directly from his current excavation site located deep within the deserts of Turkmenistan, and was now standing in front of the heavy vault doors that he had last seen more than 20 years before. On opening of the sealed trunks (the seals had indeed not been broken as was feared), the process of assessing the artefacts authenticity began with Sarianidi examining some of the more prominent pieces. He was even able to point out a small wire repair that he had made with his own hands, proving that as far as it was possible to tell, these were the original items and not fake substituted for genuine items during the long years that the trunks had been hidden away from public scrutiny.

By June 2004, the artefacts that had originated from the Tilya Tepe excavations had been fully recorded, and the news was released to the international press that the entire collection of Bactrian artefacts were indeed safe and not lost or damaged. This initial programme of recording was followed by further phases of inventory production as more of the trunks were removed from the secure vaults. A wide variety of unique and rare items were gradually revealed over the ensuing weeks, many from archaeological sites where it was believed no artefacts had survived. Highlights of these finds included glass ornaments, bronze decorative elements and intricately carved ivories from Begram, in addition to a number of fragile sculptures and frescoes from the ancient sites located in Bamiyan and Fondukistan.

One of the many positive outcomes resulting from the survival of such a wide selection of internationally important artefacts was that the Ministry of Information and Culture, in conjunction with the National Museum, began the process of funding and arranging a traveling exhibition with the newly recovered artefacts as its focal point. The purpose behind this initiative was to be able to actively promote the rich and fascinating history and cultural heritage of Afghanistan internationally, giving people all over the world the opportunity to further appreciate a side of Afghanistan that they may not be familiar with, or indeed thought did not exist.

After more than two years of intense preparation, a selection of some 233 items from the four famous archaeological sites (Begram, Ai Khanoum, Tilya Tepe, Tepe Fullol and Hadda) left the country for the first venue in Paris towards the end of 2006 entitled, "Afghanistan. Surviving Treasures". The travelling exhibition programme has become one of the most important cultural initiatives in recent years in terms of further raising public awareness of the importance of Afghanistan's cultural heritage, reflecting on the nation's historical achievements in a regional context whist promoting a positive image of Afghanistan both nationally and abroad. After the initial showing in Paris, the exhibition toured further in Europe including Turin, Amsterdam, London, Bonn, Stockholm and Trondheim before heading to the United States and Canada for extensive exhibition in numerous cities. As of March 2013 it is estimated that tens of thousands of people have seen the exhibition and as this paper is written the exhibition has opened to great acclaim in Melbourne, from where it will move on to be shown in Sydney and then also in South East Asia, before hopefully returning home to Afghanistan to be put on display in what we hope will be the new National Museum of Afghanistan that is currently under development.

Above all, the exhibition shows that 2000 years ago Afghanistan was a place where cultures from east and west met, interacted and benefited from sharing knowledge, ideas and skills previously unknown to each other. As a nation we wish that, after the world tour of this unique exhibition, people from both east and west will once more flock to Kabul to admire these treasures at their rightful place in the National Museum of Afghanistan.

Over the last 10 years the National Museum has benefited from the technical support and financial generosity of many other nations and the initial stages of the Museum's ongoing restoration began with donations from Greece, The United States and UNESCO in 2003, the first steps were the reconstruction of the roof and the façade with the support of SPACH.

In parallel to the initial phases of reconstruction at the Museum, conservation work was also begun on a number of the most important and fragile artefacts in the Museum's surviving collection. Initially, a team was put together by the Musée Guimet in Paris to work in collaboration with the small conservation department that forms part of the National Museum of Afghanistan in Kabul. The conservation teams' first task was to begin carefully reassembling the fragments of an extremely fragile statue of Kanishka (the 2nd century Kushan king), formerly holding pride of place at the entrance to the



National Museum of Afghanistan © UNESCO/Salim Rafik



An Afghan farmer shows what he found © John Wendle

museum, but having been deliberately broken up into many fragments sometime during the course of March 2001.

In December 2004, to great acclaim and after a long wait, the new "Nuristan Exhibition" opened in the main exhibition space on the upper floors of the building (supported by UNESCO and SPACH). This was the first exhibition in the National Museum since the civil war, and comprised fourteen of the highly damaged pre-Islamic figures carefully restored by the Museum's conservation department, under the guidance and encouragement of the respected anthropologist Max Klimburg. The work by Klimberg and also a specialist sculptor / conservator, Rindler, was undertaken as a joint effort between the Museum and the Austrian-Afghan Society and took just over a month to complete. The work initially required the matching of many individual parts and fragments of the sculptures that have predominantly been hacked apart with axes, followed by the fitting together of surviving parts, the carving of replacement sections where necessary and then the concealing of sections that were too difficult to physically repair. A fuller picture of the story behind the intricate restoration of the Nuristani idols was prepared by the Austrian-Afghan Society.[1]

Throughout 2005 the inventory of the collections from the National Museum continued, undertaken by a panel constituting professionals from the National Museum of Afghanistan and the Institute of Archaeology in addition to a number of foreign scholars, and in joint cooperation with UNESCO and SPACH. During the course of this new programme of inventory compilation, numerous artefacts were found to still be in a good state of repair and exhibiting minimal damage, including a number of figurative items that had almost been destroyed at the hands of the Talib in 2001. This project stood out as being the first project that sought to design and implement an electronic database of cultural property in Afghanistan that could be continuously added to and updated, and is now (2013) being digitally incorporated into the National Museum / Chicago Oriental Institute update of the records set to run until 2014.

In 2006 the Ministry of Information and Culture and the National Museum took steps to invite experts from the international cultural sector to make their expertise available for the further development of the Museum sector in Afghanistan. At this time, CIE (Center for International Heritage Activities, Leiden), whom along with the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Afghan Ministry of Information and Culture began work on an extensive programme of rehabilitation at the National Museum. In addition, with essential technical and logistical support provided by UNESCO, a programme of landscaping at the National Museum was completed in 2007, providing an environment in which the public could now enjoy the grounds of the Museum in addition to the attractions of the collections. The Government of Greece was primarily responsible for providing the funding that made this venture possible.

Programmes concerning the conservation of the artefacts, the database and on the restoration of the building continued on a regular basis over the ensuing years and sought to build and strengthen capacity in all fields related to the Museum's work, often with assistance from numerous international institutions and governments. In February 2009, more than 2000 stolen objects were returned to the National Museum of Afghanistan, originally having been confiscated at Heathrow Airport in London as part of the role of the Customs department of the UK Border Agency, in conjunction with the Fine Arts section of the Metropolitan Police and INTERPOL.

The retrieval of stolen artefacts from the collections of the National Museums still continues worldwide and it is testament to the dedication and commitment of the staff that, despite over quarter of a century of upheaval and instability in the country that has at every turn affected the operation of the Museum, the staff have managed to protect or retrieve approaching 90% of the National Museum's objects. This being said, the museum is still missing some 70,000 objects from its original collections kept in storage, many of these being made up of rare coin hoards.

Coming further up to date, 2010 saw the opening of a small exhibition on the history and culture of Ghazni province and the Ghaznavids, facilitated and financed by UNESCO and the German Office of Foreign Affairs. This was followed by a programme of capacity building targeting the curators of the Museum and addressing important issues relating to exhibition management, enabling the Museum to open two further small exhibitions with the financial support of the United States State Department and CIE. This precedent of putting on small exhibitions utilizing specific selections of artefacts from the Museum's collections is set to continue, and March 2012 saw the opening of a new and extensive exhibition showcasing the Buddhist Heritage of Afghanistan. Funded by the Dutch Government, the exhibition consisted of items predominantly recovered from the Buddhist monasteries throughout the country. By displaying these artefacts with detailed, explanatory captions, the National Museum of Afghanistan aims to educate the public on the history and culture of Afghanistan to both a national and international audience. All such activities are posted on the webpage of the National Museum, also launched in 2011.[2]

One of the recent offerings by the National Museum and its international partners was the opening of the Mes Aynak Exhibition that took place on March 15th, 2011 and showcased some of the first artefacts to be successfully recovered and restored from the ongoing archeological excavations.

Mes Aynak represents one of the most important sites to be discovered in Afghanistan and probably has been inhabited at least from the Bronze Age. The architecture and artefacts discovered so far date to the Kushan and Kushan-Sassanian periods, from the 2nd century AD to the emergence of Islam in the 8th century AD. The vast quantity and the high quality of the coins, ceramics, wall paintings, unbaked clay sculptures and stone reliefs make Mes Aynak comparable to such contemporary Buddhist sites as Hadda or Bamiyan and shows the richness of art and wealth of local rulers and people.[3]

During the opening ceremony, hosted by His Excellency Minister Makhdoom Raheen from the Ministry of

Information and Culture, the United States Ambassador to Afghanistan at the time, H. E. Karl Eikenberry, reiterated his nations support for the Ministry's vision for the planning, designing and construction a new museum building. This is to be realized through funding contributed by the Ministry of Information and Culture, the Ministry of Mines, and the acquisition of further international contributions. In addition, to enable construction of this complex the adjacent land is to be donated by the Afghan Ministry of Defence. As a follow up to the pledge of support from the United States Government for a new museum building at the exhibition opening, work began on the preliminary stages of this proposal in the form of announcing an 'Architectural Ideas Competition' open to all suitably qualified national and international architectural firms.

Launched in March 2012, the competition was open to international architects, engineers, planners, designers and artists to develop and visualize a proposal capable of responding to emerging challenges for a National Museum in Afghanistan. After the competition's launch more than 22,000 hits were recorded on the competitions website with interest coming from 147 nations. As a result of this exceptional international interest, 125 architectural and urban planning firms passed the pre-qualification requirements to participate in the competition. By the deadline in June 2012, a total of seventy two eligible design proposals from thirty one countries had been received and subsequently evaluated by a specialist architectural and conservation jury.

The jury, chaired by H. E. Dr. Raheen, Minister for Information and Culture and advised by Dr. Vartan Gregorian, President of Carnegie Corporation (New York), also comprised a number of Afghan and international experts in the fields of engineering, museum planning, regional architecture and cultural heritage. The jury was impressed by both the number and diversity of proposals submitted in response to the brief for the master plan of the museum site and the new museum building, eliciting many modern and traditional designs for both the building and the site drawing on influences from around the world. The jury's decision for the winning design submission was ultimately based on the clarity of the architectural concept and the degree to which it could address a number of requirements for such a site, including those relating to its proposed function, economic sustainability, technical issues and security considerations, in addition to the architectural quality of the proposed design as a whole.

The Awards Ceremony announcing the winners of the International Architectural Ideas Competition was held at the National Museum on Monday, September 17, 2012.

The successful completion of this competition and the identification of working designs for such a complex and demanding project represents a significant step forward on the path to realizing a state of the art facility in which to safely store, analyze and exhibit the rich cultural heritage that Afghanistan has to offer the world. This will also include all the recent (and future) artefacts being carefully recovered from the ongoing excavations at the Buddhist complex of Aynak, situated in the northern part of Logar Province and south of Kabul.

In parallel with the initiatives being advanced in relation to the potential design of a new National Museum, in 2012 a memorandum of understanding was signed with the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago to further develop an up to date, user friendly , digital collections database. A number of older, electronic databases records were identified and integrated into the new system, whilst the many existing non-electronic records were collected, scanned and also eventually introduced digitally into the new system. A new management policy that meets internationally recognized standards is being introduced at the museum and it is hoped that this will be in place in the near future. This year also see the start of an international awareness campaign to promote the role and significance of the museum both in its regional and worldwide context and to begin serious fund raising for the proposed new facility.

While many international donors have already contributed to numerous initiatives to revive the National Museum and considerable demonstrable progress has been made, much still remains to be done in the coming years. I am sure I speak both for the Ministry of Information and Culture and the Afghan people in every province when I say that is our sincere wish that past productive collaborations with international experts and institutions will continue long into the future, supporting Afghanistan in its transition from a culture of war so prevalent over the last 30 years, to a culture of peace, encouraging and enabling the safeguarding of the cultural heritage
of our country.

Endnotes

1. http://www.oeag.or.at/media/publikationen/kabul_museum/KabulMuseum.pdf
2. http://www.nationalmuseum.af
3. http://www.guimet.fr/en/collections-en/fghanistan-pakistan-en



National Museum of Afghanistan © Majid Saeedi

Preserving Afghan Treasures and Building a National Identity: A Strategy for the National Museum of Afghanistan

Robert Knox

Museums specialist, former Keeper of the Asian Department, British Museum

In 2007, UNESCO was asked by the Ministry of Information and Culture to prepare a strategy for the National Museum and the National Museum Sector. With the close participation of the Director General of the National Museum, Dr. Masoudi, and his staff, I drafted a report outlining such a strategy for the Museum and its collections. This paper was then integrated into the 'Framework' document, which was published in 2009 and was ratified by the Ministry of Information and Culture as the Afghan Government official policy with reference to the Museum.

The document was widely circulated and was immediately considered a straightforward and flexible tool for moving ahead with the restoration and development of the National Museum. It actually presents a strategy through which the museum can redevelop its formerly high international status, in the context of modern and progressive museum techniques and practices. It also indicates how to begin the process of revitalization and how to bring such process forward, making the necessary changes and adaptations as its implementation progresses and as need demands. The document has been designed with the intention to get local people and potential donor countries to see the building and its collections in the context of the serious need for a rapid beginning of the work and at the same time as a major support for the irreversible development of a peaceful civil society in Afghanistan. The Museum is a vital part of the whole Afghan cultural phenomenon, strategically linked to all the issues inherent in the local culture: the preservation of intangible heritage, the conservation of monuments and the valorisation of historical sites. These issues are interconnected, each reliant on the other in order to be supported and developed.

The final development process at the Museum has hardly begun, despite the considerable redecoration and display work currently in place. A strategy is not a detailed plan: it is rather an indication of the way forward for a project, while the detailed policy definitions or architectural issues still need to be worked out. The building has repeatedly remained stuck at this stage in its history.

Since 2002, thanks to the engagement and the dedication of the Director, Mr Masoudi, and of his staff, the Museum has returned very much to a serious, though limited life. The shattered and burnt out shell that greeted delegates to the 2002 conference has been restored in almost all respects and it looks again like the grand old building that it used to be, though somehow overshadowed by the ruins of old palaces and other public buildings nearby. Numerous foreign governments and individuals have widely contributed to this process over the past years. From all over Asia, Europe and North America, people and governments have provided funding for reconstruction, restoration of objects, conservation training and the refurbishment of almost every part of the building, from the roof to the reserve basements. Exhibitions of artefacts of lesser importance have been put in place in formerly terribly damaged galleries, and once again Afghan antiquities are being received in the Museum for registration and inclusion within the collections. A great exhibition of ancient Afghan gold and other valuables has been touring the world in recent years and has obtained great acclaim. A computer based registration system has

been introduced as well. However, much fundamental work still remains to be done.

The Museum needs to thrive, to prosper and to provide for the people of Afghanistan and of the world a sense of the ancient importance of this country. Afghans should not just be reminded of the universal significance of their heritage, but also to be made better aware of their cultural and ethnic richness, as well as of their identity of citizens of the same country, free from toxic division and working for their nation. The revitalization of the Museum and, in due course, of the national museum sector, must be seen to be a major part of the process of re-building the social and cultural infrastructure of Afghanistan. I do not think that a civil society anywhere can exist peacefully without its cultural foundations being secure and obvious and accessible to all. The Kabul Museum has a major role to play in the building of such a society. For that reason it needs to develop with every speed into a first class, functioning educational organ of the State, acting as a major influence for defining a national identity and for developing understanding and good will amongst the various peoples of Afghanistan.

Along with this revitalization of the National Museum, a new focus on Afghan history and culture needs to be developed at the most basic levels of public life, particularly in the schools, and the sooner the better. The Museum has a great potential to be used as a unique tool for the development of historical consciousness among the young, breaking down ethnic and political barriers in order to create a clear sense of Afghan national identity.

What has to be done to get the Museum up and running as it needs to be? It is clear that the basic broad principles in the Framework are now sufficient to get the process well off the ground and start in earnest the revival of the institution. First, the old building, a grand and irreplaceable artefact in itself, needs to be made safe and secure. It needs to be surveyed in every detail to ensure that it will last and function for a great deal more than another hundred years. Then, the Museum needs to be made as secure physically, as any such institution must in a country fraught with insecurity and danger, and as any ordinary museum anywhere. A detailed museum-specialised security survey of the building and of the safety of its staff and visitors has to be carried out. The alterations that must flow from such a study need to be executed at once. Without the building made totally safe against attacks of any kind and protected from flaws in its own structure, it cannot be used as a museum at all. The great ancient treasures of this country, held now for decades in circumstances which are far from ideal, cannot be brought back to a building that is not totally safe, and this is the case at the moment.

The collections are held in a variety of venues in the capital. They need to be assembled safely in a set of storage areas in a group of super-secure buildings at Darulaman and looked after by serious group of curators and trained conservators. The view of the Framework paper is that, with a new building in prospect and the old one made secure, there is every prospect of a rapid return of the collections to the Museum, along with the definition, design, planning and mounting of a first set of permanent exhibitions within its premises.

New plans for this redevelopment work are central to the original document and need to be prepared. Work on a holistic scheme for the security upgrade, involving every aspect of its system, could have been laid previously, but it seems not to have been carried out yet. Such a detailed inspection of the structure of the building must be made at once. The Museum cannot progress beyond its current temporary level of security and questionable physical condition until these issues have been settled.

Funding for the totality of this work will be significant, but, if compared to the huge financial resources which are being spent on other matters in Afghanistan today, all the costs for the revitalization of the Museum and of similar institutions across the country are of a derisory level. A substantial budget, based on the needs expressed in the Framework, has to be identified and secured at once. The Museum project needs real management and monitoring. Funding and mentoring are necessary, for the long-term as well. There needs to be a clear understanding of the principle that just coming and mending some sculptures and ceramics, refurbishing a conservation studio, setting up a computer system in the museum or cleaning up the reserves is not enough. It is furthermore not enough to send museum staff abroad to 'state of the art' conservation laboratories or universities where languages are unintelligible. Progress will only ever be made in the Museum when the building itself is re-defined physically and all its systems re-vamped and revived as the context for a serious way forward for museum planners, strategists and designers.

Another essential issue needs to be highlighted: the Museum project is an Afghan enterprise, entered into upon Afghan express permission and agreement and based on Afghan co-operation and constant monitoring. In the absence of such agreement and participation, any project, even the Framework, will look at best paternalist and at worst neo-colonial. These are issues that concern all projects in every sector, but in the culture area, dealing with national and individual identity and self-esteem, they are of extreme importance. Local people need to define themselves culturally to themselves and to be masters of their own identity, as modern citizens of a great nation and as the inheritors of a staggeringly interesting and important ancient history. These issues can never be the sole preserve of any outside body and it is a duty of all concerned outsiders to recognize the need for local people, at every level, to be a part of the Museum development and to make good use of it when it is completed.

The process of local ownership of the Museum building and its contents should start now and will be even only partially completed when the building and any additions to it are settled and in place. There is no time to lose. It all needs to start at once, with professionally devised, well-planned and concrete proposals and with appropriate funding. This institution will take

many years to get back to what it once was and what it must be for its important future. The time has come now to identify a strong administrative and funding source to take on the museum project. The work will take at least two or three years, but the result will be of huge importance for the nation and the outside world. Staff training and capacity-building have long been a subject dear to the of all museum strategists and planners in Kabul.

It is my strong contention that most of this training and the rest has not had the effect it was intended to have and that the capacity of the staff at Darulaman is hardly better now than it was some years ago. There is a need for a serious, well strategised system of what I would like to call 'creative mentoring', carried out by a team of committed museum specialists of all kinds from the outside world, carefully chosen for this purpose and contracted to spend long periods of time here, over many years. Such a system may represent an answer to the capacity-building process in the Museum of Kabul and in the national sector in general. Without a long and consistent period of kindly and seriously committed advisory work from serious specialists in the museum field, this capacity-building process is going to flounder.

Alongside this work, must come the introduction into the museum world of a different sort of person: young, able, interested in heritage and history and willing to sacrifice a lot to the cause of cultural revival in Afghanistan. With all this new activity, a serious training on foreign languages represents another essential need. Lack of capacity among museum staff in that very area is holding back the revitalization process in a very serious way.

The old museum is a national monument and must be preserved. However, along with the issues defined for it in the Framework and elsewhere, must come a serious plan for a new building or set of buildings on the site, acting as a strong fortress-like home for the treasures of the museums, as well as a place for new exhibitions of all types and a venue for educational and skills development training in every heritage area. Such a building would need to be staffed and managed and it is unclear if the capacity currently exists in the current system for anything like such an expansion. A new building needs to be given major consideration as a middle-term priority, and it can be a most attractive part of any funding offer, particularly to a government considering support for the project. Such a new building would need to be seriously monitored and its staff mentored for many years, so that it may be the success that it needs to be. Another essential issue should be represented by the provision for the safe storage and display of the treasures to be excavated at Mes Aynak, a major priority for any such new building.

It is also very clear that the improved Museum complex will be an active and important partner for the new Archaeological Department complex planned to be built nearby. The realisation of these two vital projects will transform the Darulaman area of Kabul into a world-class venue for Afghan heritage scholarship of all kinds.

The National Museum of Afghanistan needs to be revitalized and brought into the modern age as soon as possible. There is the need of a revived intention to get on with the job which has been outlined in the Framework document. The task will be to use the strategies which have been long in place but still not implemented, to seek funding for these purposes, to engage heavily with local museum staff in a close, mentoring sort of way and to set up a timetable for getting this project done. I would strongly favour a single, heavily funded, strong international body to quickly take charge of the matter and see it through, with possible contributions from all seriously interested parties. I envisage that this process happens soon, because, if it does not, the Museum and the National Museum Sector may run the risk to simply drift on into some sort of oblivion and the country will not be served by the real potential for nation-building inherent in these institutions and by the opportunity to create new respect for Afghanistan in the outside world.

Much time has been lost to the current development of the Museum since the Framework was released. Funding for this great project needs to be found and the detailed planning for the new Museum dispensation at Darulaman needs to be begun in earnest.

An immediate and effective implementation of this project, involving national identity, politics, national heritage preservation and the education of the Afghan people, is of the greatest urgency.



View of National Museum of Afghanistan, 2015 © UNESCO/Salim Rafik

The Role of National and International Institutions in Addressing the Illicit Traffic of Cultural Property

René Teijgeler
Cultural Heritage expert

At the crossroads of Asia — criss-crossed by invaders from Alexander the Great to Babur, the first Mughal emperor — Afghanistan has acquired one of the world's richest cultural heritages. But since the civil war in 1979, Afghanistan's heritage has been exposed to the consequences of this extended period of political and economic upheaval and instability. Architectural masterpieces, museums and archaeological sites have been damaged and a number of these also looted. It seems that the country is heading straight towards a cultural catastrophe in terms of preserving its tangible and intangible heritage. Internationally well-known is the destruction of the Bamiyan Buddha's by the Taliban in 2001 and damage inflicted upon the National Museum in Kabul. According to the director, the museum lost in the region of 70,000 objects during past decades of looting, iconoclasm, and inter-factional fighting.[1]

Less, however, is known about the looting of the archaeological sites and monuments. The government estimates that Afghanistan has 2000 - 3000 sites (no accurate data base currently exists although one is currently being designed), and that since 2001 over 100 new sites are discovered every year, states representatives from DAFA (Délégation Archéologique Française en Afghanistan).[2] It is reputed that half of the sites have been illegally excavated at some point and that artefacts with any market value have been smuggled out of the country via a number of routes.[3] In the process numerous broken objects and items of little interest have been left behind. The illegally traded artefacts are by nature not registered and represent a 'culture without context'. No one will ever know which other artefacts were found in association with the illegally excavated ones, nor will the geological layer be known or any other important contextual data. Such items become practically 'meaningless' artefacts with only esthetical value as pieces of ancient art. It seems apparent that already large areas in the north of the country have already been subject to illegal excavation by both local villagers and organised groups alike.

Much of the illegal excavating is undertaken by local residents, occasionally by people from refugee camps. Sometimes a site might be raided by former warlords or criminal gangs who chase anybody off the site, including the archaeologists. The local diggers are not so much to blame as most of them see no alternative way to support themselves. Besides, antiquities are considered as a readily available 'crop' they can easily harvest for potential substantial gain. The stolen artefacts are often traded by a network (qawm) of national and international criminal gangs, former warlords and the Taliban. For these stakeholders it does not make any difference whether they deal in stolen antiquities, drugs or weapons. INTERPOL ranks art crime as the fourth-highest-grossing criminal trade behind only drugs, arms, and human trafficking (March, 2011). In Iraq it was recognised as the third most effective source of income for the insurgents.

The first main stops on the smuggling route are Peshawar or Islamabad in Pakistan. From there the stolen items are redistributed to ports in the Middle East (Kuwait, Dubai), Europe (Switzerland, United Kingdom, Denmark, Belgium) and the United States. In February, 2011 the British government has returned 3,4 tons of stolen antiquities from Afghanistan.[4] The 1,500 items were confiscated over six years at London's Heathrow Airport and span thousands of years of Afghan culture, the oldest artefact dating to

the Mesolithic and Neolithic periods, as far back as 8,000 years. None of the Heathrow objects came from the Museum, they are from recently illegally excavated sites exported without permit. Almost all of the smugglers had Pakistan nationality. A substantial number of the artefacts confiscated every year at Heathrow airport, for example, come from Afghanistan.

In 2002 the Italian Archaeological Mission in Afghanistan gathered documentation on the Ghaznavid marbles in Afghan public collections.[5] Rumours were spreading about the dispersal of these artefacts, and with increasing occurrence marbles coming from Afghanistan were found in western and oriental collections, in addition to being up for sale at public auctions. Together with the identification of Ghaznavid marbles in the foreign collections, it has been possible to obtain recent information concerning c.70% of the 854 marbles previously known, i.e. 596 artefacts whose current location is now ascertained, while at the moment the remnant 30% (257 artefacts) are still missing.

Among the missing artefacts some have been retrieved in foreign public collections such as the Asian Art Museum in San Francisco, Brooklyn Museum of New York, Institut du Monde Arabe in Paris, Linden Museum in Stuttgart and the Reiss Engelhorne Museen in Mannheim.. Ghazni marbles are also known to be kept in private collections in Italy, Kuwait (al-Sabah Collection), Malaysia (Islamic Art 2000) and in the UK (London, Khalili collection). Other Ghazni marbles were sold at the auction houses Christie's (1994-2003) and Bonhams (2005-2008).

These two examples give only a partial insight into the complex trade in illegally excavated Afghan artefacts. In a country where the ever changing security situation and political uncertainty concerning the future stability of the country are part of daily life, it is very difficult to make out the extent of this trade. Also, because of the criminal nature of the business it is a complicated trade pattern to attempt to trace. The numbers of confiscated artefacts abroad are not very reliable either as there currently appears to be no reliable, systematic collection of data from national and international authorities. Obviously,



A tepe near the centre of the ancient complex of Balkh, dug by looters © John Wendle



A farmer in Balkh shows a high-relief Kushan stlye carving which he found while cleaning a canal © John Wendle

there is a great need for more systematic research on the illicit trade in Afghan artefacts.

A Mutual Problem

Worldwide art and cultural property crime is on the rise. It is a looming criminal enterprise with estimated losses running as high as US $6 billion annually.[6] Clearly, looting is not a minor offence but a threat to major parts of society.[7] This organized crime affects developed and developing countries alike. The source countries where the stolen object originates from are predominantly (but not always) developing countries. In particular, countries that suffer from natural disasters or conflict (short term or extended) are very vulnerable, such as Afghanistan. The market countries where the would be buyers of the stolen objects reside, are more often part of the developed world. Hence, the trade in illegally acquired artefacts is certainly not a problem specific only to Afghanistan – it is an internationally recognised one effecting people and countries all over the world.

Another important feature of this trade is that it is not a standalone activity but that it co-exists with other criminal sub-cultures, specifically smuggling drugs or weapons. The economics of illicit trade functions are not dissimilar to narcotics or diamonds as a high-value and highly profitable means of storing and transporting wealth. One tendency is that the farther an artefact travels towards its ultimate point of sale, the higher the profit. We also know that the article changes hands in source countries for a fraction of their ultimate value at an auction house or gallery. Some other facts on the illegal trade in cultural items are as follows:

- By nature the items are difficult to trace;
- The objects stay relatively anonymous; certainly the illegally dug up archaeological artefacts as they could not have been catalogued;
- The trade is partially sustained by the demand from the arts market, for some specific items.

The market countries hardly realize that the iron law of 'supply and demand' also applies to the trade in stolen artefacts. If the demand in the market countries would decrease so would the supply in the source countries. This lays a heavy burden on the market countries as they are co-responsible for the illicit trade.

Systematic Data Collection

In Afghanistan there is no systematic collection of data on the illicit trade in artefacts and/or illegal excavations on archaeological sites. On request a list of confiscated and/or returned artefacts could not be produced by the responsible authorities. Presently the only data available are scattered eyewitness accounts, newspaper and magazine articles, and TV reports. Nevertheless, some of these reports like the Belgium documentary 'Blood Antiquities' broadcasted in October 2009 do not leave much to the imagination.[8] It presented a revealing picture of the guile of traders. An undercover reporter with a hidden camera visited several antiques shops in Brussels and Knokke, discovering that some of them were selling Afghan artefacts that they realised were probably stolen, but marketing them as having been legally obtained in Pakistan.

The need for systematic data collection in Afghanistan is considerable in order for the customs department, with of course support from the Ministry of Information and Culture, to obtain a degree of control over this activity and to cooperate effectively with other Afghan ministries and foreign agencies. This collection of data by the authorities is also essential in terms of potential awareness raising and finding funding.

The situation in the market countries is not much different. The foreign authorities do not systematically keep track of the confiscated and / or returned items. Nor do they share their information with INTERPOL on a regular basis. If stolen artefacts are confiscated abroad it is not clear what the route or procedure is on how and to whom to return the stolen items to in Afghanistan.

Some scholars concentrate their research on the sale of stolen artefacts.[9] Research on this issue is not easy at all, it is not physics, and the illegal nature of the business will not make it surface easily but a number of scholars have tried to analyse data taken from internet sales or auction houses with varying degrees of success. Michael Mueller-Karpe from the Roemisch-Germanisches Zentralmuseum in Mainz, Germany, for example, proved successful in convincing the internet auction sale company e-Bay to demand that anyone who offered antiquities for sale on this site in Germany, Austria and Switzerland to list the provenance of these items as part of their required sale details.[10]

Awareness-Raising

It is clear that the local population who often undertake the illegal digging on the sites, next to organized diggings by criminal gangs, former warlords and insurgents, are often not aware of the fact that they are in a way destroying their own history. They seem not to realize that the material evidence of where they come from and who they are is crucial to recognize and take pride in their cultural heritage and national pride. Their main drive to dig is often lack of resources and income. By understanding their heritage people will value it, will care for it and help to enjoy it (Heritage Circle).[11] It is clear that a national information campaign to raise awareness of the ancient and rich history of Afghanistan among the general population, both literate and illiterate, needs to be more extensive and explicit than it currently is.

After the landing of the Coalition Forces in Iraq, 2003 and the subsequent robbing of its heritage the international community was unanimous in its public outcry. Since, many western countries ratified the relevant international heritage laws and slowly but surely measures were put in place to attempt to curb the illicit trade in Iraqi artefacts. In this course of events the illegal trading in Afghan artefacts was hardly noticed. Occasional critical reports and documentaries did not succeed to change that. The lack of international attention of the illicit trade in Afghan artefacts still appears to be substantial.

Market countries do not often realize that Art Crime is a serious one. Neither do these countries realize that in the market for illegal antiquities their citizens are the end-users in a long sequence of criminal acts. If there was no market for stolen artefacts there would be no or little illicit trade. It could be mooted that it is ultimately the responsibility of the Afghan Government to recognise and address the significance of illicit trade by making the market countries more aware of this fact, and by also adopting any appropriate restrictions or regulations that can potentially be used to hinder or prevent such trade, as employed by the European Union in relation to Iraq.[12]

The Restitution of Artefacts

In their campaigns to repatriate stolen artefacts, the source countries, including Afghanistan, frequently measure their success in terms of the recovery of individual art treasures. They forget, however, this is often preceded by the destruction of the archaeological context and the inherent need to take measures to safeguard archaeological sites from future illegal, unmonitored excavation. After all, in the process to uncover one marketable object dozens of others are damaged or destroyed, leaving the site disturbed to an extent that it can often lose all contextual value to the academic archaeologist.

Museums and private collectors that abtain illegally acquired archaeological objects are the end-users in this process and as such it could be suggested that these organisations or individuals bear that responsibility and act accordingly. The return of stolen artefacts alone is not enough and perhaps acquisition policy of museums and auction houses need to be regularly reviewed internally and more collectively to ascertain more clearly the provenance of artefacts they are considering acquiring.

Numerous repatriation claims for artefacts removed from their countries of origin before 1970 that is, before the UNESCO Convention – stagnated primarily because at the time the recovery process was too expensive.[13] As the majority of these items stem from illicit excavations there is no single registry or formal document certifying their provenance. Besides, foreign courts hardly accept

as sufficient evidence modern identification methods and techniques. The burden of proof still rests on the claimants legal proceedings and in many of these cases they can prove long, costly and often ultimately fruitless. However, the return of stolen objects can on occasions meet with success as a result of a series of actions and more protracted negotiations. The so-called ethical approach is more fruitful than the straightforward legal one, in relation to both the prompt repatriation of cultural items and better dialogue between curators and archaeologists of different countries and cultural diplomacy can open doors to all forms of agreements.

Civil Society

Around 1,300 non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are registered in Afghanistan, including 360 foreign organisations, employing 45,000 people. Only a few are working in the field of cultural heritage. Yet, globally culture and development are increasingly considered two sides of the same coin.[14] Unfortunately, this is hardly reflected in the work and the outputs of the NGOs in Afghanistan. The illicit trade in Afghan artefacts and the illegal excavations on the archaeological sites are one of many areas that form part of the multitude of socio-economic and political problems experienced today in Afghanistan. In short, when there is work and food, good governance and rule of law, there would be less need and opportunity for the people to destroy their own history.

All the heritage plans and proposals from civil society should be part of the overall Afghan development plans. Especially, the Afghan National Development Strategy (2008-2013), a strategy for Security, Governance, Economic Growth and Poverty Reduction. It is this overarching reconstruction and development policy guidance that could also be employed for assisting the heritage sector. Of course the same goes for any other Afghan sectorial plan. This is the Integrated Approach – Cultural Heritage and Development.

Lessons learned from natural disasters in Aceh and Haiti as well as from conflicts in former Yugoslavia and Iraq show a general lack of communication, coordination and cooperation between the aid agencies. This resulted in the fragmentation of aid and consequently a deceleration in rebuilding the crisis-effected society. It seems that for the same reasons the reconstruction of Afghanistan is hampered, including possibly the rehabilitation of the cultural heritage sector.

International Military Forces

Since 2001 two international military forces entered Afghanistan: International Security Assistance Force (ISAF)[15] and Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF)[16]. From the beginning OEF is a US-lead operation and since 2003 ISAF is lead by NATO. The total force comes close to 180,000 foreign troops (Oct 2010). These military forces are accompanied by a huge amount of equipment, devices and appliances that could possibly be brought into action to stop the illicit trade in artefacts and the illegal excavation.

After all, the illicit trade and illegal excavations are for a major part controlled and organized by criminal gangs and local power brokers. The revenues from these activities are utilized to continue their ‘core business’. Therefore, the international military forces should have made the fight against the illicit trade in artefacts part of their counter-insurgency strategy (COIN). In Iraq, next to the trade in weapons and kidnappings the illicit trade in artefacts was a third source of financing for the insurgents. Another reason for the military to join the debate related to trafficking of looted items is that most of the participating countries ratified The Hague Convention (1954 and 1999) and the UNESCO Convention (1970). Thus, by international law the military could consider this issue as part of their duties.

Military teams such as CIMIC (Civil-Military Cooperation) or Civil Affairs units could possibly play a significant role in the fight against illicit trade. They are the proper military institution that could provide site security by patrolling a site at irregular intervals. They could enter an insecure area and show force, areas that are inaccessible to others. With the same token the military could put to good use some of their technical capacity towards the protection of cultural heritage. Satellite imagery could provide valuable information on the most endangered sites. Comparison between the images over time could even show trends in the illegal excavation, whether it is increasing or decreasing and whether or not new sites are being targeted. It is also possible that images from surveillance drones might also be utilised in this way if the military thought this was an acceptable use of such resources.

Afghan Heritage Police

At present the approx 500 man Afghan Heritage Police are badly equipped and heavily underpaid. This police force is not housed in proper quarters and they live in tents, lack basic equipment such as helmets, flack jackets, radio communication equipment and gas for vehicles.

Also their training leaves much to be desired and there is currently no formal programme to train them for this role. In spite of the modest successes of the Afghan Heritage Police, this has also been at the cost of the loss of life of a number of its recruits over the past years.

The international community is supporting several police trainings missions such as the NATO Training Mission Afghanistan (NTM-A) and European Union Police Mission in Afghanistan (EUPOL Afghanistan).[17] The training of the Afghan Heritage Police could equally benefit from these missions. The basics in cultural heritage should be trained by local archaeologists.

Afghan Authorities

The main responsibility for the protection of cultural heritage in Afghanistan lies with the Afghan authorities themselves. The Afghan government has already taken some decisive steps to protect their cultural heritage with the formation of a small, but dedicated, heritage police formed in 2004. Today, Afghanistan’s cultural heritage is protected under the Law on the Preservation of Historical and Cultural Heritage (2004) and in the recent past Afghanistan has ratified several important



Looting artefacts is a source of income for some poor Afghans across the country © John Wendle

conventions such as the 1970 UNESCO Convention and the Unidroit Convention (1995).

It is clear that the Ministry of Information and Culture is doing whatever they can but with only 0,017% of the national budget for culture (2010 figures) there is only so much that can be done. In contrast to the global trend, the Afghans most probably still consider the concept of culture as a luxury, this perhaps includes many in the Afghan Government. Yet, many of the international political bodies and international development agencies are changing their views and consider culture and heritage as drivers for the Millennium Development Goals. That is why culture and heritage should be included in the overall development planning process. In fact, culture deserves to be a cluster in itself in Afghan development policies.

As often occurs in reconstruction in crisis-effected countries, Afghanistan suffers from uncontrolled and unregulated building activities. Some of the more well-known historic sites, like Bamiyan, are threatened by residential and industrial expansion in the surrounding area whilst it is not uncommon for historic architecture to be acquired and incorporated into the construction of new homes.

In Herat residents have re-opened a road previously blocked by UNESCO and the Afghan government to preserve some of the city's most historic monuments. The road that has been blocked twice before runs through the remaining four minarets. The causes of these uncontrolled activities are partly due to a lack of public education relating to cultural heritage awareness, and partly due to the fact that at a local level planning law in any form can be difficult to implement at the best if times.

One further notable cause of the trade in stolen artefacts is that the objects themselves are not well protected or sometimes even not protected at all. Many excavated objects on archaeological sites are left unguarded and many heritage institutions lack proper security. Thus, Afghanistan is exposed to many internal threats to their cultural heritage that, if not solved, continue to encourage the illicit trade in antiquities.

Concluding remarks

The illegal trade in antiquities in Afghanistan is considerable and has a relation to a number of other illegal activities currently being carried out within the country's borders. There is absolutely no site in this country which is unaffected'', says Philippe Marquis, the Director of DAFA.[18] With no immediate solution to the conflict in Afghanistan in sight the need to combat the illicit traffic in cultural objects is greater than ever before both at the domestic and international level.

It is apparent that the looting on Afghan soil is not only an Afghan problem but a problem that concerns us all. As long as collectors are actively seeking increasingly unusual or rare pieces, antiquities will probably continue to be illegally excavated without thought for their archaeological context, and smuggled out of Afghanistan through the afore-mentioned routes.

To improve the struggle against illicit traffic in artefacts several recommendations have been made. Not all of them will be easy to accomplish and some of them might even take a long time to realize. All the same, the recommendations have been made as close to reality as possible and the advocated steps are to assist the Afghan Ministry of Information and Culture (MoIC) and other stakeholders to implement these recommendations. The execution of a single recommendation will not solve the problem of illicit trafficking out of Afghanistan. All of them have to be regarded as part of one framework. Only working from different approaches in a concerted, integrated and organised effort will the MoIC be able to wholly or partially mitigate this on-going issue, and of course only with the assistance of the international community at large.

For Afghanistan the continuing insecurity and lack of resources is devastating for their cultural heritage. The international community should, in spite of the present financial crisis in many parts of the world, find ways to support Afghanistan in this particular issue. This can only occur through continued cooperation, partnership, goodwill and intercultural dialogue. However, ultimately there is only one possible conclusion and that is that a renewed peace along with economic and political stability are, in the long- term, the primary factors for preserving and protecting Afghanistan's heritage.

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Afghan Exhibitions, 2002–2012

Pierre Cambon
Chief Curator, Musée Guimet

One thousand years of Afghan art, Paris, 2002

In the darkest hours of Afghanistan's recent history, right in the middle of the Buddhas of Bamiyan crisis triggered by the Taliban regime in March 2001, La Caixa Foundation in Spain launched the exhibition project One thousand years of Afghan art in Barcelona. The idea was to react to the current events immediately, to remind that Culture is a value in itself and that Afghanistan did not deserve that spiral of apparently never ending violence, cynicism and terrorism. The exhibition was inaugurated not more than six months later, two weeks before the beginning of the United States military intervention in Afghanistan (Afghanistan, una historia milenaria, La Caixa Foundation, Barcelona, 2nd October – 31rst December 2001). It opened in Paris in March 2002, only shortly after the liberation of Kabul (Afghanistan, une histoire millénaire, Musée Guimet, Paris, 28th February – 27th May 2002), where it was inaugurated by French President Jacques Chirac and by temporary Head of Afghan Government Hamid Karzai. The latter expressed his surprise and satisfaction to see that for the very first time Afghanistan was approached in its entirety, and not only from a war or underdevelopment point of view. Thus Paris started developing future projects, especially with the Kabul Museum.

Yet the exhibition had been launched in a particularly difficult climate, at times when Culture was deliberately aimed at, in a background of yearning for a revolution which intended to be worldwide. However, far from wanting to stir controversy or provocation, the project simply wanted to put back into perspective the tragedy that was looming. The idea was to recreate a sort of virtual museum, an «imaginary museum», through the Afghan heritage preserved outside of Afghanistan, to bring together in one single place the most beautiful Afghan fine works of art, to evoke a rich cultural heritage, from the Bronze Age to the Buddhist period, and later, to the Islamic period. The objective was double: to show that this still poorly known heritage, except by specialists, was important to Afghanistan and to the world, and that we needed to fight in order to protect it ; and to gather the different approaches on one single territory and show the underlying logic, throughout history, to the largest audience as well as to the journalists, whilst Afghanistan had only too often been approached by means of various fields, often academic, too narrow-minded, by Greek, Indian or Persian, prehistorian experts; in short, to point out the richness of a very clearly endangered heritage, to make sure it is understood and to show its true meaning.

This is the reason why Barcelona turned to France and called upon Musée Guimet in Paris, to be in charge of the exhibition organization, immediately getting in touch with the curatorial department in charge of the Afghan collections. Musée Guimet has indeed been the sister museum of the National Museum of Kabul since the 1922 convention between France and Afghanistan, wanted by King Amanullah who was determined to lead his country towards modernity, while cherishing the exceptional richness of its past history, be it Islamic or pre-Islamic.

At the close of these agreements, the archaeological excavations were entrusted to the DAFA (French Archaeological Delegation in Afghanistan), with a clause to share future finds between Paris and Kabul, the "exceptional" finds due to stay in Afghanistan. As soon as 1929, Musée Guimet opened a gallery dedicated to the Afghan antiquities of Hadda.

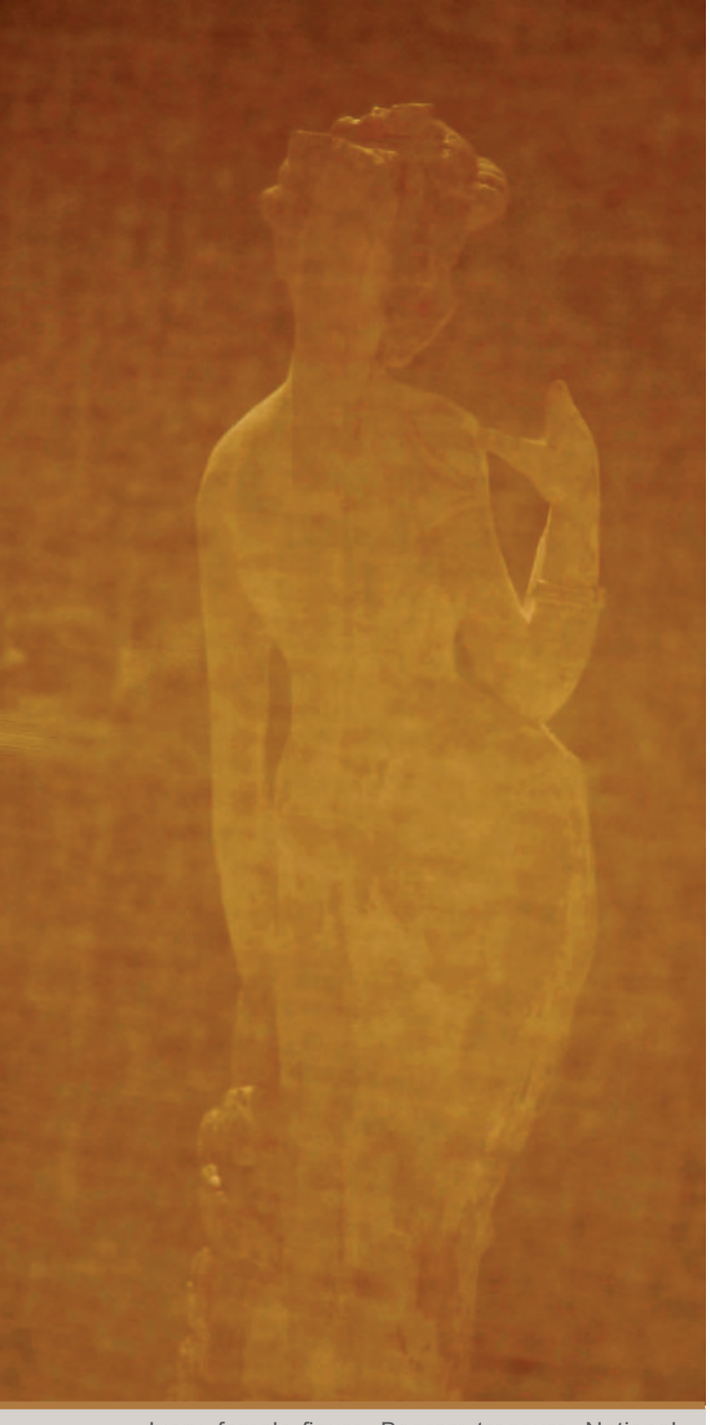
Furthermore, Musée Guimet in Paris had just re-

opened in January 2001, following the Grand Louvre project, after a complete four year renovation (from 1996 to 2000) which had allowed to reorganize the Afghan collections, such as the votive stupas sent in 1928, after the Hadda excavations, and intended for being reassembled in the Museum galleries (TK 23, TK 121, TK 95). Calling upon the collections of Musée Guimet, the exhibition project launched in Barcelona did not intend to confine itself to Paris, but to use it as a starting point. From the beginning, it also intended to call upon Russian, German, later American, and even private collections, and these loans where reinforced in Paris by those of the National Library of France, of the Louvre Museum, of the Natural History Museum and of the Museum of Man, the idea being to call upon the most beautiful collections of the most prestigious institutions around the world, in order to create a most special event, putting forward the exceptional value of the Afghan heritage.

The exhibition therefore showed a country with a tormented past, but with a surprising diversity, and a very refined aesthetics, so far from the images of terror that here then being poured out by the media, tetanised by the prevailing disaster. After Paris, the exhibition toured Tokyo, at the Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music (Afghanistan, a Timeless History, Tokyo Geijutsu Daigaku, Tokyo, 15th July – 16th September 2002) and then Houston, at the Museum of Fine Arts-Houston (17th November 2002-9th February 2003). It allowed the audience, be it Afghan or non-Afghan, to understand in concrete terms the identity of Afghanistan, its complexity, its radiance, while stressing the stakes of a country laminated by more than twenty years of war. From the Eastern or Western points of view, Afghanistan indeed appears like an essential link in the heart of Eurasia, at the gates of India, on the Silk Road, open on the steppe, on the oriental borders of the Iranian plateau, and concerns both the East and the West, a world with diverse people, nomadic and sedentary, a world where civilizations succeed to one another and are as brilliant as the Oxus civilization, between India and the Mediterranean, the Greco-Buddhist civilization, between



Moufflon (Urial), Tillya Tepe treasure, tomb IV, National Museum of Afghanistan © Thierry Ollivier / Musée Guimet



Ivory, female figure, Begram treasure, National Museum of Afghanistan © Jean-Paul Pinon

Gandhara and Xinjiang, or the Herat school, of which the painter Behzad is one of the major figures, famous in the Islamic world and elsewhere. The destruction of the Bamiyan Buddhas meant far more than the destruction of the image and of the Buddhist past, it showed the will to destroy a common culture, and thereby Afghanistan, in spite of its vicissitudes, was the perfect target. The region had always served as a bridge between the far away worlds, every time creating a different language, a new poetry.

Afghanistan: hidden treasures, Paris, 2006

The next year during December 2003, when President Karzai announced on the Afghan radio that part of the collections of the Kabul Museum had been preserved under and in spite of the darkest hours of the Taliban regime, having been safely stored away in secret crates of the Central Bank of Afghanistan by the last communist president Najibullah in 1989, the year of the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, new hopes aroused: the possibility to act and to act in concrete terms, to rebuild a past which we thought lost, to regain pride, identity, culture, through a heritage of unique beauty, throughout Eurasia. And this all the more since Najibullah, who still considered a policy of nonalignment, like Moscow and Delhi, had put together there with the collections the treasures of Tilya Tepe and the Bactrian gold, which fates had been the subject of all rumours.

At the end of the inventory work, lead in 2004 by the Afghan Ministry of Culture, with the support of National Geographic and the assistance of Musée Guimet as concerns the 1920's and 1930's DAFA excavations, and later of the Italian and German archaeological excavations missions and foreign experts, Musée Guimet put forward a concrete exhibition project, from summer 2005, when the subject found itself on the agenda in a background of multilateral consultations, gathering of opinions and UNESCO conference. If the project seemed daring in a context where stability was yet to ensure, when the country was just coming out from a deep trauma which has destabilized its entire society for about twenty years, the idea was to make sure that it would not fall into the assistantship trap, nor die in meetings with no real prospects. It was not to rush in an operation without considering the risks, but to launch a very concrete action, on a partnership and cooperation basis, with a policy of rebuilding help.

The project was ambitious, but logical. It was betting on the future and determined to show the Afghans and the face of the world that such an exhibition was possible. It reminded that, notwithstanding the divisions, archaeology in Afghanistan had always been an Afghan adventure from the beginning, from King Zaher Shah to President Karzai, or even Najibullah. It meant to fit at last into the tradition of the French-Afghan friendship that King Amanullah had wanted, and to give back its past to Afghanistan, by the means of the archives preserved in Paris. In a destroyed Afghanistan, Culture was a priority, in terms of identity and education. It was the Culture which had been targeted deliberately and taken hostage in March 2001, when a totally new kind of terrorism was threatening, a media terrorism who intended, then, to erase past history with brutality.

Yet this past was essential to the comprehension of Eurasia's history, and few people, even in Afghanistan and throughout the world, had realized this. At the time, the treasure of Tilya Tepe, excavated by a Soviet-Afghan team of archaeologists in 1978, the year of the communist coup in Kabul, had only been revealed by one single publication, of certainly very fine quality, by the Academy of Sciences in Saint Petersburg and by the National Museum of Afghanistan, but had then sunk into oblivion after the Fall of the Berlin Wall and the beginning of the civil war in Afghanistan, except when it served for disinformation purposes in a Cold War and bloc rivalry context. Yet it showed how Afghanistan had received influences from the steppe, from India, China, Greece and Rome. It showed a world of extraordinary refinement and incredible modernity, by its simplicity and by its elegance. But the treasure, immediately forgotten as soon as published, had never been shown, and remained "unknown" and almost "virtual".

Hence the idea to hold an exemplary exhibition. Unlike

the panoramic vision of One thousand years of Afghan art, it was intended this time to concentrate on a precise period, the pre-Buddhist period, from Alexander the Great to the nomadic invasions, around AD, and the most ancient periods of Afghanistan's history, concentrating on the hidden treasures, who, in their way, had allowed to shed a new light on Afghan history, but also on the whole of Eurasia's history.

As a prologue, the Tepe Fullol treasure, a chance find by local shepherds, which had revealed the existence of the Oxus civilization, north of the Hindu Kush, towards 2000-1900 BC, at the Bronze Age, a civilization which had been in very close contact with the Indus and Sumerian civilizations. As an introduction, the Greek city of Ai Khanum, the "Lady Moon" city, at the gates of the steppe, rediscovered by King Zaher Shah and excavated by the French delegation during the 1970's.

The heart of the matter, however, obviously remained the two fantastic treasures of the history of Afghan archaeology, the treasure of Tilya Tepe and the Begram treasure, dating from around AD or first century AD, embodying for one the nomadic world and for the other, the sedentary world.

The first one was almost mythical, its existence only known by a prestige publication, in which the superb photographs showed the extent of the contacts: unique revelation of the movements of the Eastern Scythians, who controlled the gold road, of Altai origin, the treasure showed close ties between this world of steppes and the Black Sea shores, China and the Indian subcontinent. The second one, the Begram treasure, discovered in 1937 and 1939, on the archaeological site of the ancient Alexandria in the Caucasus, bears witness of a world with an also impressive vastness of influences, between Greece, China and India. On one side, Tilya Tepe was the symbol of the opening on the steppes, a world opened on Eurasia, and of the Soviet-Afghan excavations; on the other, Begram showed Afghanistan at the heart of the caravan routes, and was the discovery of the French-Afghan mission. During the Ancient World, Afghanistan occupied a central position, far from being minor: when the Scythians ruled over a vast territory where Alexander the Great was defied to venture, Kabul was the centre of power of the very last of the Indo-Greek rulers Hermaios, north-west of India, distant epigone of the adventures of Alexander the Great at the gates of India, the last "Greek" to hold back the nomadic invasions, around AD, of Indo-Scythians, Indo-Parthians, Yuezhi and Kushans.

The subject was therefore a real topic from the scientific point of view, and a real topic from the political point of view. It was also a beautiful story, with extraordinary works of art, of which Afghanistan could rightfully be proud of, a humane art which showed a quality of life which had longly been unsuspected in these far away Afghan lands, from the turquoise incrusted gold of Tilya Tepe, to the glass, bronzes and carved ivories of Begram, not to forget the Hellenistic plaster medallions. To show this exceptional heritage to the entire world, to prove to Afghanistan that its past history was of absolute beauty and that the world was interested in it, to quit the spiral of despair and to take its future in hands, were also the objectives of this exhibition. It was indeed engaged, in a very concrete way, in a logic of cooperation – Musée Guimet having undertaken to restore the works of art of the Kabul Museum, at its own costs and with its own staff, and in particular the works from the Begram treasure and from Ai Khanum. It also committed to publish a catalogue which would allow a better knowledge of the Kabul Museum's collections, and a greater access for everyone, Afghans and non-Afghans.

The exhibition was about the rediscovered treasures. It was also about a regained pride and showed the world, as well as Afghanistan, another facet of the country, its true identity, a melting-pot of cultures and exchanges, that Hellenism had deeply influenced, far from the barbaric, intolerant and distressed vision that had been tried to be imposed. For a matter of fact, the Delphic maxims, which sum up the Greek philosophy ideal, had been recopied with great care in the city of Ai Khanum. The exhibition was therefore a cooperation project in the full sense of the word, from the logistic aid to putting together the project, and to its topic this is how the DAFA, which had re-opened in spring 2003, was put in charge of the Ai Khanum and Balkh sites, for Musée Guimet, and the Museum of Kabul, the two Greek capitals which were selected for the exhibition in Paris. Thus the exhibition was a multifaceted project, a scientific project, intended for the general public, a project of partnership, from the restorations to the organization of an exhibition with a foreign country, outside of its own borders.

It was also the opportunity to show another image of Afghanistan, the opportunity to gather sympathies from around the world, but also, from a pragmatic point of view, to collect funds for the rehabilitation of the Museum of Kabul, or even suggest projects, in a more or less distant future, of a future National Museum right in the heart of the city. One the stakes of the exhibition project was also the training, associating the Museum of Kabul's staff to the restorations undergoing in Paris, which had the necessary experience after the renovation of Musée Guimet and the new display of its Afghan collections. Finally, it was the proof that the National Museum of Afghanistan could embark on the adventure of an international exhibition, with Paris' support, after more than twenty years of war, and even on an ambitious project, more ambitious than the past exhibitions of the 1960's, those of Turin in Italy (L'Afghanistan, Dalla Preistoria All'Islam, Mostra Dei Capolavori Del Museo di Kabul, Turin, Galleria Civica D'Arte Moderna, 1961), or in New York in the United States (Ancient Art from Afghanistan, Treasures of the Kabul Museum, The Asia Society, New York, 1966), which, just like the exhibition "One thousand years of Afghan art", evoked Afghan heritage from a global point of view.

The exhibition was made possible thanks to the support of the highest French and Afghan authorities, to the personal involvements of Presidents Jacques Chirac and Hamid Karzai, and to the discreet support of the Father of the Nation, ex-King Zaher Shah.



Dragon Master Pendant, Tillya-tepe treasure, National Museum of Afghanistan © Thierry Ollivier / Musée Guimet

It was the Afghan presidential security which ensured the transfer of the collections from the Central Bank of Afghanistan to the airport of Kabul, as no insurance company had accepted to take the risk on such a journey where everything was possible. Then the French Air Force took charge of the boxes containing the collections, with the Afghan conveyors, from Kabul to Paris. The exhibition was also made possible thanks to the flexibility of Musée Guimet and the curatorial team, the difficulty being to adapt the Parisian agenda to the events in Kabul. It is not easy to pass from a state of war to a state of peace and to fully comprehend, beyond the local prism, the international context, seen from Afghanistan, showered then by promises of funds, help and dreams of all kind.

If negotiations were long and sometimes difficult, prone to new twists, because of inexperience, mistrust or fear, absence of view on the stakes involved, the approach being sometimes somewhat theoretical and naive, it lasted in reality just one year and a half: firstly stumbling over the insurance questions, when for some multiplying the zeros were a security guarantee, even if it endangered the project's feasibility, later stumbling over the refusal of the Parliament, to which the Afghan Ministry of Culture had submitted the project when theoretically it didn't have to. The obstacles were resolved one by one, and the project was presented again to the Parliament, brilliantly supported by the Vice Minister himself. Finally the situation eased, and quite quickly at the last minute, the boxes containing the collections arrived in Paris in October 2006, only two months before the opening of the exhibition, a very short time to deal with the restorations, the catalogue and photographs, not forgetting the set-up of the exhibition.

Afghan journey, 2007-2012

Success was immediate, in France as well as in Europe, and the waiting queues were getting longer and longer on Iena Square, in front of Musée Guimet . At the inauguration, the Afghan authorities were seduced by the delicacy of the display, by the coherence in the matter and the beauty of the works, which they really

discovered for the first time, as well as the Parisian audience. The success of the exhibition actually spread outside Paris and even outside of France, the BBC itself devoted an Internet website on the exhibition in Paris (Afghanistan, les trésors retrouvés, Musée Guimet , 5th December 2006 – 30th April 2007). After France, Italy was the second stop of a worldwide tour, in Turin, thanks to the Fondazione per l'Arte della Compagnia di San Paolo (Afghanistan, I Tesori Ritrovati, Turin, Museum of Antiquities, 25th May – 18th November 2007), the Netherlands being the third stop with the Nieuw Kierk Foundation in Amsterdam (Afghanistan, verborgen hidden, Amsterdam, De Nieuwe Kerk, 22nd December 2007 – 20th April 2008), thus finishing the first European tour, before the exhibition travelled to the other side of the Atlantic, touring four prestigious institutions in the United States, with the support of National Geographic: Afghanistan: Hidden Treasures from the National Museum, Kabul, at the National Gallery of Art in Washington (25th May – 7th September 2008), the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco (24th October 2008 – 25th January 2009), the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston (22nd February – 17th May 2009) and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York (23rd June – 20th September 2009) – an extra stop was even added, later, in Canada at the Museum of Civilizations (Québec, 23rd October 2009-28th March 2010).

King Zaher Shah beautifully wrote in the Paris catalogue: "Afghanistan has always been a land of rich civilization, from the Bronze Age to the Islamic period, and during the Greco-Bactrian, Kushan or Hephtalite periods. At the crossroads of the East and the West, it has marked the cultural and artistic history of mankind. It is largely thanks to the French Archaeological Delegation in Afghanistan (DAFA), founded in 1922 at the request of King Amanullah, that we owe the discovery of this exceptional heritage, following the excavations in Bactres, Begram, Lashkari Bazar, Surkh Kotal, Ai Khanum and many other sites. The exhibition "Afghanistan: Hidden Treasures from the National Museum, Kabul" presents the most important works of art from the National Museum of Kabul's collections, which have been miraculously saved. The visitor will therefore be able to admire the gold cups of the Fullol treasure, the Greco-Bactrian artefacts of Ai Khanum, the roman vases and Indian ivories of Begram, as well as the fabulous jewellery of Tilya Tepe."

The King added, thus highlighting the very meaning of the project: "It is for me a tremendous joy after all these years of war and of suffering to see these masterpieces of Humanity's heritage exhibited at Musée Guimet in Paris. This is the proof that civilization will always triumph over barbarism and light over darkness." The exhibition was accompanied by various versions of the French catalogue, in Italian, Dutch and English for Europe, and even in Dari and Pashto for Afghanistan, as Paris, Turin and Amsterdam had promised. In the United States, an American version of the catalogue was published by National Geographic, slightly different from the French catalogue. However, the exhibition itself was respected to the identical, in Europe as in the United States, following the Paris organization, even if each city put its mark on the exhibition layout, according to its culture and its identity, its sensibility or even its traditions. When Paris had gone for an aesthetic and pure design, the charm of the atmosphere and the internal logic, others went for a more classical or educational scenography, using 3D or even new technologies, and allowing the Afghan staff of the adventure to gain different experiences, according to the countries crossed.

However, after the United States tour, it still wasn't the end of the journey for the Afghan exhibition. As soon as 2010, it was hosted in Bonn, in the Art and Exhibition Hall of the Federal Republic of Germany (Afghanistan, Surviving Treasures (Gerettete Schätze), Bonn, Kunst Und Ausstellungshalle der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, 11th June 2010-3rd October 2010), then in London, at the British Museum, where an English version of the catalogue was made (Afghanistan, Crossroads of the Ancient World, London, British Museum, 3rd March-3rd July 2011), before going to the Museum of Ethnography in Stockholm, in Sweden (Ethnografiska Museet, 12th November 2011-25th March 2012) and later a new stop was considered in Trondheim, in Norway (NTNU, Museum of Natural History and Archaeology, 10th May – 2nd September 2012). The project has therefore been a wonderful opening on the world, allowing a "dialogue of cultures", in the full sense of the word, on an Afghan music. Moreover, other countries in Europe and elsewhere showed their interest in the project, from Greece to Japan, not forgetting Korea or Turkey. In order to talk about this beautiful adventure and to show the most beautiful works of art of the exhibition to its own audience, the Museum of Kabul, gradually being renovated, organized a photography exhibition in its own premises (1st June-31st December 2009), with the support of v in Paris (the printing of the photographs was made in France and sent via the DAFA, and the totality of the photography files, which had been made in 2006, were later given in 2011 to the National Museum of Afghanistan, via the Ministry of Afghan Culture, for exclusive use in Afghanistan). This event was the start of a series of exhibitions at the Museum of Kabul, with the presentation of the excavations of Mes Aynak in 2011, of the Buddhist antiquities from Kapisa in 2012, all this during the progressive restructuration of the Museum and of its staff.

The Afghan exhibition had indeed been the means to discover the world, to open to new experiences, to see the radiance of the Afghan culture concretely. It was the story of a regained trust, the return of a lost pride, and had shown that international cooperation was not a vain hope, on a partnership basis new experiences, at the risk of destabilizing the museum in its internal functioning, by lack of staff, in successive missions; confrontation of an Afghan system, inherited from the past, a longtime closed and heavy system, lost in internal control and supervision (See the follow-up committee of this exhibition), with more supple and opened systems, may they be European or American; the shifting, at last, of an exhibition project which had started under the sign of cooperation, towards a more and more loan fees spirited orientation, without really any relay project of any kind being considered for the coming years, as many issues that gave food

for thought and from which lessons may be learnt. The exhibition has shown that what was possible to do elsewhere was possible to do in Kabul as well. It showed Afghanistan in its true identity, to the world and to Afghanistan. It also proved that the world had a true interest in Afghan heritage and supported the country in its rebuilding. At last it proved that such a project was a source of income and allowed to consider in Afghanistan even the necessary renovations.

An action of cooperation, launched bilaterally, may later become multilateral, and King Zaher Shah paid homage in 2005 to the 1922 agreement between France and Afghanistan which had started a partnership based on respect, mutual trust, and with a share clause which did not seem absurd, in view of the twenty years of war and massive destructions. Archaeology was then part of a global project which intended to show the way to modernity, of identity and the opening to the world. The 2006 exhibition intended to respect that tradition, and Culture was the most beautiful way to express it, even if it meant reminding some forgotten truths. If the emergency is definitely the humanitarian and economic aid, Culture is nonetheless, just like education, no minor issue, as it has for example been neglected when the UN stopped all UNESCO missions intended for the Museum of Kabul, because they were considered of non-priority importance, from autumn 1995, after the taking of Herat by the Taliban, to autumn 1996, when the Taliban finally took Kabul. The disaster that happened next, the annihilation of any kind of humanity, the destruction of the dreams and of the poetry, proved the absence of foresight of such a policy.

The past refers to one's origins and realm of imagination. It is also a true freedom. It must, however, be an integral part of the present, without any mercantile approach nor desire for performance. Archaeology for itself, just as museums, has no real intrinsic meaning, except if it is part of global dynamic and foresight, or a policy which takes into account reality, society, humanity, its yearnings and contradictions- the search for meaning and beauty, the longing for a lost paradise, the need of roots, the hunger for understanding human evolution and its place in the world. As many truths that the Afghan exhibition pointed out, because past is also an important part of the reconstruction. A country with no memory is a lost country.

Paris, 31st July 2012



Some of the Bactrian gold artefacts on display at the Musée Guimet in Paris in 2007 © Thierry Ollivier / Musée Guimet

The National Archives of Afghanistan: Preserving Images, Literature and Art for Future Generations

Sakhi Muneer

Former Director, National Archives of Afghanistan - Assistant Professor at Kabul University

The historic National Archives building was originally constructed in 1892, commissioned by Amir Abdur Rahman Khan for use as an office by his son Habibullah. It was subsequently used for numerous residential and administrative purposes before falling into disrepair for decades. From 1973 -1978 the building was renovated and converted into the National Archives, with a plan to bring together various government archives which had existed prior to that date. In practice however, largely due to the lack of space in the National Archives building, the Office of the President and all government ministries retained their own archives until very recently (see below concerning the recent transfer of historical documents from the Presidential Palace). The building is particularly notable for its architecture and represents one of a decreasing number of examples surviving from the late 19th century in Kabul – it exhibits finely painted ceilings and carved decorative woodwork throughout.

The principal aim of the National Archives (hereafter referred to as NA) is to conserve the archival cultural heritage of the nation and to make its collections available for both official reference but also for private research and academic study. In 2010 the NA employed 31 staff members and incorporated two principal departments, manuscripts and historic documents. Currently (2013) we retain over 7000 documents in the manuscripts department (over 1100 of these having been produced using calligraphy of an exceptionally high standard from many renowned writers and holy men such as Sultan Mohammad Khandaan and his pupil Qasem Shah). The historic documents section holds more than 150,000 items from a very wide range of sources that include old newspapers, books and journals through to ephemera such as diaries, bank notes and even postage stamps.

The majority of the historically important documents we have in the collections are of course original, although we do have copies of many items for display purposes. Although only a small percentage of the archives are currently on public display, most of the items in the collection can be examined if enough prior notice is given by credible researchers. We have a number of notable documents in our possession worthy of specific mention including the treaty signed with the British Empire in 1919 that conclusively gave Afghanistan its full independence.

We currently believe that the oldest document and most valuable held by the National Archives is a formal letter written (and stamped for authentication), by Tamerlane, founder of the Timurid Empire (who reigned between 1370–1405). Other unique items include a number of Qur'an dating from the Durrani period (1747-1862), in addition to further copies of the Holy Qur'an written by the Third Khalife of Islam Hazrate Othman and one by the Fourth Khalife Islam Hazrate Ali. We are also fortunate to possess two other hand written Qur'ans by Imam Hosain and Imam Hasan, both produced on deer skin with a production date likely to have been sometime in the 3rd and 4th centuries.

The historical documents currently in our possession provide a fascinating insight into both the past and culture of the nation, one that we should all have great pride in. Everyone working at the NA recognizes and value the significance of these documents and our privileged role in preserving these for current and future generations. With this in mind, we have recently established a department specifically dedicated to the conservation of our collections and see this as one of our top priorities as guardians of the nation's rich and varied heritage.



A view of the manuscript library, the National Archives © National Archives

The National Archives are, however, more than just an historic building full of dusty parchments, photographs and letters but also represents a repository for the intangible side of cultural preservation the thoughts, ideas and memories of many great and inspirational people whose legacy can be seen as a great asset in the long-term promotion of peace and strengthening a pride in, and respect for, Afghan culture. Such a centre not only needs the support of the academics, students, school children and researchers that use it on a regular basis, but also from the general public who we try to encourage to visit so as to become more familiar with the nation's complicated, remarkable and often tumultuous past, as viewed through a cultural filter. We also reach out to the international community, both to encourage use of the centre by foreign researchers and tourists alike, but also for more practical assistance in keeping the centre open for the all to use and benefit from.

The board members responsible for the overall management and direction of the National Archives recognize the importance of cooperation with both national and international partners and the need for a collaborative approach to making the most of the NA's cultural assets. As an organization we are ultimately aware that it is only through mutual interest in the history and culture of Afghanistan, and a shared desire to protect and promote it, that we can do justice to the many wonderful and invaluable items that have been entrusted into our care. Here we would like to highlight briefly some of the initiatives and programmes we have been involved in or have helped developed in recent years.

Over the course of 2011 / 2012 our team have completed an extensive inventory project that has enabled us to obtain a clearer picture of exactly what the archives hold, in what medium these items exist (letters, photos, documents, music etc.) and how best to categorize them. Currently we have established 20 main subject areas of classification ranging from philosophy and mysticism to history, poetry and folktales and are in the process of defining other categories which items from our collections might fall in to. The modernization of our inventory system allows us to feel confident that in the future it will be quick and easy to access most of our material. We were also fortunate, as part of this inventory process, to obtain permission from the relevant Ministerial departments for the transfer of c. 5000 documents from the Presidential Palace into a more suitable facility at the archives.

The completion of this long overdue inventory process was also essential in helping to acknowledge the conservation needs of specific items in the collection, both in the long and the short-term. A number of the more fragile items in our collections require immediate attention to ensure their survival, whilst in the longer term, issues of suitable storage, climate control and appropriate display facilities also need to be addressed. The NA are fortunate in that there is also a longevity in commitment from staff members and many whom now possess considerable expertise in a variety of areas. Finally after 26 years in the making we now have four specialists working in very distinct technical departments. Recent years have also seen the establishment at the centre of a hall dedicated to historical manuscripts that is easily accessible as a research facility and the creation of a dedicated committee that oversees any potential purchases and new acquisitions made by the centre, and advises on how they should be curated. Indeed, over the period 2008-2009, the committee had overseen the purchase of over 80 historic or artistic items to further compliment the institution's growing collection, and with the help of outside donor funding a further 202 items were purchased in 2010.

One of the more significant areas in which we have been trying to improve our capacity relates to education and outreach. Through various means we are actively trying to make access and use of the archives more user-friendly for the Afghan general public whilst also seeking to forge technical and educational links with other national and international centers working in the field of archives and historic documentation. This can be both nationally or at an international level, such as a recent collaboration with the British Library in London, for example. On the national level we have invested time and resources in further capacity building through improving the knowledge and skills of our staff in Kabul and to expand training in archival procedures to the provinces. Currently at least 10 provinces have archives in operation and a further 5 are looking to do so before the end of 2015.

The NA has also sought to compliment this new phase of outreach through the recent production and distribution of a brochure (multi-lingual), that promotes the National Archive to a more general audience. The booklet clearly explains who we are, what we do and how anyone can access the archive material for professional purposes or simply for interest. We are grateful for the support and encouragement of Nancy Dupree in this endeavor and also for suggesting that we develop our own website which is now online.[1]

Other educative initiatives have included the facilitation of a tour of the archives for both school children and university students, the organization of a regional seminar on archiving (with an emphasis on science) that took place in late 2011 and also the facilitation of an international conference on archiving. We have also encouraged lectures by national and international experts in the fields of archiving and in related cultural topics whether it be art history, paper conservation or photography and to encourage people whom have donated valuable documents to the archives to come in and visit and to talk about the background and importance of their donations to us.

The NA was also allocated a substantial monthly budget which we have used to employ foreign consultants on a temporary basis for visits to Kabul. This has proved invaluable in offering training to existing staff and exposing them to the international world of archiving and related skills. We hope that if this training continues, we will be at a stage (funding allowing) in the not too distant future where it might be feasible to set up a

Department of Archive Studies at the Faculty of Fine Arts of Kabul University. This would offer appropriate courses to interested students and again hopefully attracting professional support from the international community and encourage visiting academics. Many of the events and initiatives the NA has undertaken in the past few years have also been filmed by our own staff, whilst we have also begun producing more general documentaries about the history, purpose and work of the National Archives during previous decades, how we will operate and what we seeks to achieve in the future.

On a more technical note, funding from the government and generous overseas donors, (notably the Embassy of the Czech Republic in Kabul), has allowed us to partially re-equip and restore a number of departments within the NA and allowed us to purchase the necessary equipment to begin a proper process of digitizing the more fragile and ancient historical documents and manuscripts in the collections. We encourage this not only as it protects the original documents from being over handled, accidentally damaged or lost, but in the long-term makes the material more accessible for everyone whether it be through the use of our in-house research facilities or eventually perhaps as an online resource.

As with all such institutions, (in what are currently difficult economic times, particularly in the cultural heritage arena), the long-term success of the NA will be dependent upon external help, both nationally and internationally. This may come in the form of logistical or technical assistance, financial donations or the loan of experts to further develop the skills and capacity of the NA, but all assistance is both welcome and necessary. At an elementary level, for the institution to grow it will be necessary to expand our resources in terms of the conservation materials and techniques that we currently have at our disposal. Indeed a dedicated conservation laboratory, (initially specializing in paper restoration and conservation), remains one of our primary aspirations for the future as we have estimated that in our collections we have c. 1050 damaged books in need of professional restoration.



A page of the Shahnama-e-Ferdawsi © National Archives

In terms of being able to adequately archive, protect and display the collections, more serious changes will need to be made to the physical fabric of the building. Currently the ventilation systems in place do not meet the standards required for the material that we are holding and there is the serious issue of effective humidity control, whether it be in display cabinets, store rooms or study areas. The primary storage areas for much of the collection does not currently meet internationally recognized standards, and whilst the material is not at any great risk in the short-term, more appropriate storage facilities will be a necessity in the not too distant future – this may require considerable external donor funding to realize.

On a more scholastic note, there is also a considerable need for the multiple translation of hundreds of the rare documents currently in our possession. Many of the unique historic items we possess are in a number of foreign languages including Turkish, Arabic, Urdu and a number of others and the NA would like to see the more historically significant items made available in Pashtu and Dari. This in itself represents a considerable task that will require a not insubstantial investment of both time and human resources to achieve.

To conclude this brief note on the role and recent achievements of the National Archives, we can perhaps best summarize our objectives and goals for the future as follows:

1. To foster a collegiate and academic atmosphere within the National Archives and to encourage serious research and analysis wherever possible.

2. To make the history of Afghanistan readily available to all those who are interested for whatever reasons, regardless of nationality, language or ethnic group and to impress upon users the importance of inter-cultural dialogue, mutual respect and cooperation.

3. To be able to offer adequate facilities and technical equipment so that national and international experts can spend extended periods of time at the archives and make the most of the collections on offer, whether it be through academic research or practical conservation of documents in the collection that are at risk.

To further extend the capacity of the staff through group and individual training (either in Kabul or abroad) so that the archives can be professionally managed for the future. As a result of this more and more people will become aware of the rich content of the collections and will also be encouraged to take up a renewed interest in the history and culture of the Afghan Nation, intricately interwoven with that of the surrounding region over many millennia.

The 157,000 items that the National Archives are currently tasked with protecting represent one of the most prominent and symbolic surviving historical collections in the country. The shear variety and quantity of unusual, rare and fascinating material is undoubtedly unique and warrants all the attention and protection that such an irreplaceable resource deserves. It is the aim of the National Archives to continue to promote the existence and the use of this archive both to the wider Afghan public and the international community. Nevertheless, it is only with the continued cooperation of our national and international partners, and the passion for Afghan culture that we have seen in the past, that this historical inheritance will endure into the future.

Endnote

1. http://www.nationalarchives.gov.af



A sample of Nastaliq calligraphy from the manuscripts section of the National Archives © National Archives



Arieal photo of Mes Aynak archaeological site, Logar Province © DAFA/ICONEM

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Archaeological Excavations and Current Research: Historic Missions and Recent Discoveries

The Italian Archaeological Mission in Afghanistan

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The Italian Archaeological Mission started working in Afghanistan more than fifty years ago, although unfortunately the political situation prevalent over that period has limited the number of seasons of fieldwork the Mission has been able to undertake. The dramatic political events that have marked the recent history of Afghanistan all but prevented international scientific engagement in the country from the late 1970s through until 2002 when the Mission was finally able to return to the country to revive its close historical partnership with the Ministry of Information and Culture. At that time, both the physical and emotional scars of war were visible everywhere. Some may have healed, while others will remain for ever as material items may be rebuilt but lives that have been lost are lost for all time. Other scars, less conspicuous but equally deep, are those that have been inflicted by the precariousness and uncertainty of the future felt by post - conflict Afghan society, which has seen an impoverishment of its human, economic and cultural resources. Now, as we write, the country has much that still needs to be physically reconstructed but also much to be restored in terms of both cultural heritage and human capacity.

When, in 1957, Giuseppe Tucci founded the Italian Archaeological Mission in Afghanistan (hereafter abbreviated to MAIA), he did so with a wider ancient world in mind known as Eurasia, which does not lend itself so well to modern political divisions. Of this world, Afghanistan represents a crossroads of great consequence, as demonstrated by the rich archaeological patrimony that local and foreign teams, among which the Italian one, have brought to light through excavation and reconnaissance activities over the past decades.

Although field work suffered a prolonged hiatus, wide -ranging studies and related scientific production continued without interruption. Even outside the country, the scientific commitment of the MAIA, as well as the unique bond formed between Italy and Afghanistan, never. Indeed, the collections of past data and the resulting scientific analysis and interpretation that has been developed over the past is priceless in providing comparative data for now assisting in untangling the complexity of ongoing archaeological investigations on current sites such as Mes Aynak and Tepe Narenj. The collection of such data over recent decades can now also assist in the scientific re-assessment of the meaning and context of Islamic archaeological materials, and in preparation for future surveys and excavations or - as in the specific case of Ghazni - the re-opening of the Rawza Islamic Musem of Art (in progress at the time of writing).

Moreover, this historical data will hopefully create a self-perpetuating circle, where the additions provided by recent archaeological field work and survey will shed new light on existing documentation and give scientific research a boost towards substantial advancements in understanding Afghan culture and history.

We are perfectly conscious that archaeology, in the face of the enormous problems Afghanistan still has to address in the coming decades, is only of relative importance. Nevertheless, we do believe that no human value, capacity or memory should be excluded from the construction of peace and social progress. Of the thousands of gestures that both build and keep such a process alive, none can be considered as being wasted. Maybe we are just adding a drop to the ocean, but after all, what is the ocean made of if not of innumerable drops?

A Short History of the MAIA

The MAIA was conceived as one of the first and foremost archaeological projects of the IsMEO (Italian Institute for the Middle and Far East), later as IsIAO (Italian Institute for Africa and the Orient). Giuseppe Tucci (1894 - 1984), one of the founders and the first President of IsMEO, was an orientalist scholar of considerable note whose primary interest was the history of religions, particularly Buddhism. Nevertheless, he was sharply conscious of the complexity of human behaviour and ideas. His insightful approach to critical understandings always made him look for a broader base of knowledge. Although not an archaeologist, as he himself often recalled, Tucci committed to archaeology the task of "filling the tremendous existing historical gaps in many parts of Asia". It is with this spirit that, in 1956, together with Alessio Bombaci – a distinguished orientalist scholar with the University of Naples "L'Orientale" – he carried out a first exploratory survey in Afghanistan. This survey specifically targeted the Dasht - i Manara plain between the citadel of Ghazni and the village of Rawza, on the route which still connects Kabul with Kandahar and eventually on in to India.

Prior to the in-depth investigations of the MAIA, very little was known of the tangible cultural heritage of Islamic Ghazni, notwithstanding that the city had been the capital of the Ghaznavids (from 977 to 1163) and later of the Ghurids (between 1173 and 1203). Tucci and his collaborators were convinced that the political role played by Ghazni with relation to such important dynasties, so well documented by literary sources, must have had an archaeological equivalent of much greater extent than the few ruined vestiges known up until that point.

The survey indicated there were substantial Islamic remains on the slopes of the hills to the north of the two well-known Ghaznavid minarets, as well as in the area of a *ziyarat* attributed by popular tradition to the Ghaznavid Sultan Ibrahim (d. 1099), father of the Sultan Mas'ud III (d. 1115), and within a few meters from the minaret of Mas'ud III. Thus, in 1957, the MAIA started the excavation of two sites in the plain (Fig. 1). Excavation in the first site revealed a private house (12th-13th Cent.) –seemingly abandoned in a hurry after some unexpected event occurred– which was named "House of the lustre ware" after the perfectly preserved lustre painted vessels that were found in a niche (Fig. 2). In the second site, a sultan's palace of the Ghaznavid period (11th - 12th Cent.) was also brought to light. Both these sites, along with the wealth of architectural decorative elements that were found reused in later religious buildings, opened a new window into the Early/ Medieval Islamic art and architecture of Afghanistan. Moreover, as later studies demonstrated, the impact of the models seemingly elaborated or refined in Ghazni had a far-reaching impact on the artistic culture of the Indian Subcontinent.

Nevertheless, as it was soon clear, the cultural past of Ghazni had a rich stratification. The same team which had launched a focused study of early Islamic culture, in Ghazni also surveyed the surrounding area in search of pre-Islamic evidence, until they found evidence that Ghazni had also at one point served as a flourishing

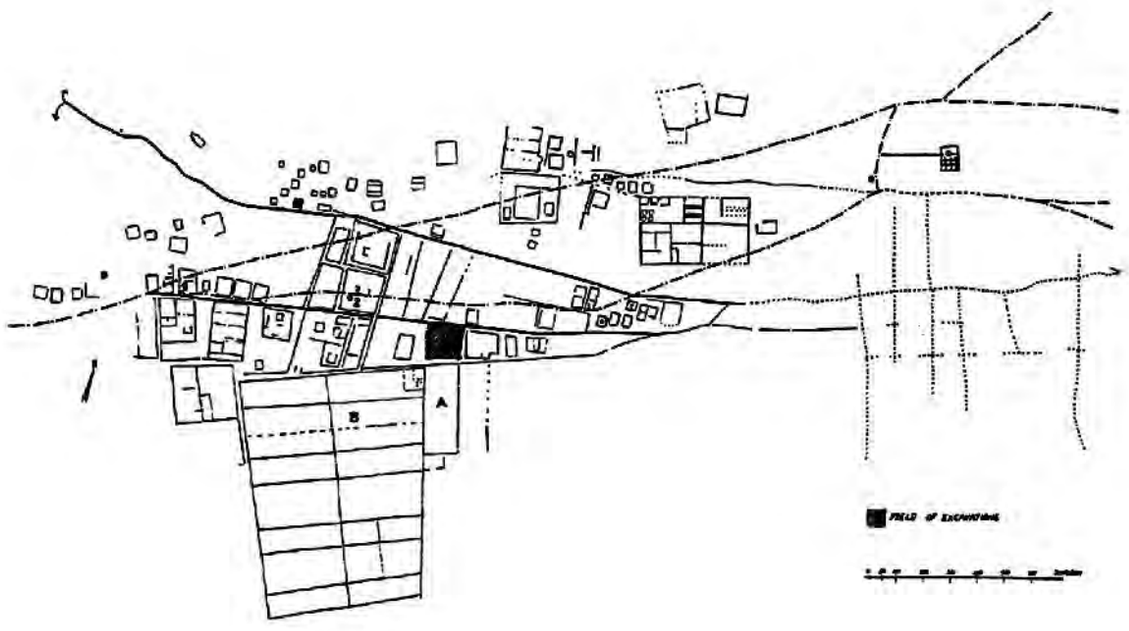


Fig. 1

Fig. 1: Map of the Dasht-i Manara plain showing some of the Islamic remains © MAIA



Fig. 2

Fig. 2: Ghazni 1957: "House of the lustre ware". The niche containing luster ceramics © MAIA

centre for Buddhism.

It was Umberto Scerrato, first assistant of Bombaci and later field director of the Islamic excavations and surveys, who recognized the importance of the Buddhist site of Tepe Sardar. After the first trial excavations carried out by Dinu Adamesteanu and Salvatore Puglisi in 1959, regular excavations began in 1967 under the direction of Maurizio Taddei.

Thus, Ghazni remained the main area of interest for the MAIA, concentrating most of its scientific activity, although explorative surveys and soundings were also carried out in other zones. Before proceeding to what we might call the 'Ghazni archaeological panorama', we would like to quickly recall a selection of the most significant discoveries.

Discoveries, Surveys, and Research Possibilities

In the first years of activity, a series of lucky discoveries contributed important information concerning the archaeological and cultural richness of Afghanistan. In 1962, after a preliminary survey led by Giuseppe Tucci the Italian team, under the direction of Salvatore Puglisi, carried out very productive explorations in Badakhshan. At Hazar Sum near Haibak the Italian team recovered precious documentation relating to periods and typologies still scarcely represented in the archaeological records of the entire Indian Subcontinent: these included evidence of the Upper Palaeolithic, the presence of megalithic monuments, and noticeable examples of urban settlements of historic period. These settlements were characterised by a mix of free standing and rock-cut architecture identified within specific delineated areas.

Moreover, a few kilometres away, the site of Darra-i Kalon revealed phases of human occupation dating back to the Late Pleistocene and Early Olocene. In particular, the presence of domesticated goats and sheep in the most recent levels constitutes one of the very few witnesses so far known of the Aceramic Neolithic in the area stretching from India to Iran.

A further enlightening discovery was the discovery of a bilingual inscription, in Greek and Aramaic, engraved on a rock at Sarpuza (Kandahar), published in 1958 by Umberto Scerrato. This well - preserved piece was an edict issued by the Mauryan King Asoka (3rd century BCE), the first ruler to unify the Indian Subcontinent and an important propagator of Buddhism. The edict is a direct witness to the inclusion of Afghanistan, or at least a part of it, in the Mauryan Empire. The discovery, besides enriching the record of ancient Indian epigraphy, added new substantial matter to the debate about the policy of unification of the Indian Subcontinent pursued by Asoka, who used the same concept of impersonal Dharma (or universal law) as established by Buddhism in order to promote cultural cohesion. Most likely, the values of universal peace and non - violence professed in the edicts (among those being that from Kandahar), do not reflect a mere personal belief but rather a pragmatic ethic which, in Asoka's vision, could provide a common basis for his variegated empire.

Moreover, the edict of Kandahar bears witness to the first contact, although perhaps ephemeral, of Afghanistan with Buddhism, a philosophical and religious system that was destined to have, in the following centuries, a tremendous impact on Afghanistan's social and cultural history. Moreover, the bilingualism of the edict opens a window into the composite nature of the economical, political and social structure of contemporary Afghanistan, where we can imagine the existence of communities well accustomed with Greek language and cultural models. These communities certainly included not only people of direct Greek origin but also others, either locals or of different ascendance, which had adopted those forms as a means of trans - cultural expression.

Further, in the frame of the explorations carried out by Maurizio Taddei and Giovanni Verardi in the 1970s, mention must be made of the discovery of Homay Qal'a in 1974, an ancient monastic complex excavated in the rock at the eastern limits of the Dasht-i Tamaki (45 km. north of Qarabagh - i Ghazni).

Return to Afghanistan

The Italian Archaeological Mission returned to Afghanistan in 2002 and immediately began systematically assessing and restoring both the archaeological sites (Tepe Sardar and the Ghaznavid Palace) and the artifacts found there in the 1960's and '70's. Although the war had caused severe damage to the sites, nearly 85% of the objects were recovered. Most had remained in the Mission's storerooms in Ghazni, while some had been transferred to the National Museum in Kabul by the local authorities. They were saved both by the care taken during the excavations and by the Afghan people's efforts to preserve them. New excavations were undertaken in 2003, with the aim of identifying the Tepe Sardar monastery's earliest phases, but the worsening of the security conditions once more caused the interruption of field work.

In 2003, the Italian Archaeological Mission also began working outside of Ghazni province.A short campaign was carried out near the Ghurid minaret at Jam, the most famous Islamic monument in Afghanistan (Thomas, Pastori and Cucco 2004; Id. 2005). Funded by the Italian government under the auspices of a larger UNESCO project aiming at reinforcing and restoring the monument, the investigation brought to light important archaeological evidence regarding the city which has been identified from literary sources as the principal capital of the Ghurid sultans.

Further, a survey of the Kharwar site in Logar, financed by the National Geographic Society, revealed the extensive evidence of an extraordinary, opulent urban settlement surrounded by Buddhist remains, unfortunately heavily looted by illegal excavaions (Figs. 3 - 4). This site, as many others in Afghanistan, calls for more systematic archaeological work. This is the only way to protect the rich artistic and cultural heritage of Afghanistan against both organised and random events of looting.

The restart of the field activities in the country was accompanied by the publication of two important

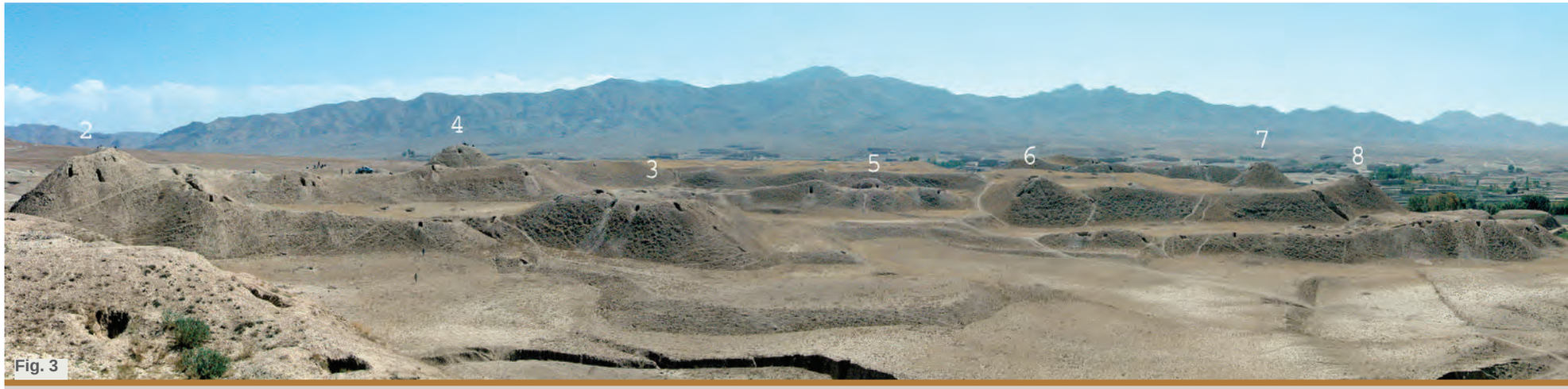


Fig. 3

Fig. 3: Kharwar: a panoramic view of the site showing illegally excavated tunnels © MAIA

monographs based on the archival documentation collected in the past. The first publication, in 2003, was *Les inscriptions funéraires de Ĝaznî (IVe-IXe/ Xe-XVe siècles)*, by Roberta Giunta, which offered for the first time an in-depth study of the peculiar marble tombstones of the town and their epitaphs, dating from the Ghaznavid period to the fall of the Timurids. The second one, in 2004, was *Buddhist Caves of Jâghurî and Qarabâgh-e-Ghaznî, Afghanistan (2004)*, by Giovanni Verardi and Elio Paparatti, which added considerably to our knowledge of Buddhist rock architecture not only with unpublished (and substantially unknown) sites but also with a critical reappraisal of the historic and cultural framework of the late phases of Buddhism in Afghanistan.

These two results were, somehow, also emblematic of a virtuous connection between the past and the future of research in Afghanistan, since they palpably witness to the enduring value of scientific documentation.

The Buddhist Site of Tepe Sardar

The careful excavation methods, the rich stratigraphic sequence, and the wealth and variety of the archaeological remains – a witness to different aspects and phases of the artistic, religious, and even political atmosphere of the time – make Tepe Sardar one of the primary reference sites for the acquisition of knowledge concerning Buddhist art in Afghanistan and Central Asia, notably with regard to its later phases.

The site consists of an organic complex of structures rising at different levels on a small hill and having its fulcrum on the Upper Terrace (Taddei 1968; Taddei and Verardi 1978; Verardi and Paparatti 2005; Filigenzi 2009a, 2009b). The prominent position and visibility in the plain of Dasht-i Manara is in itself eloquent evidence of the importance of the site. The religious and political prestige of the settlement, besides being fully evidenced by the archaeological remains, is also confirmed by two written sources. From the first one, which comes from the site itself, we are informed about the origin of the sanctuary as a royal foundation: according to an inscription found on a pot, the site was known as the *Kanika mahârâja vihâra* ("the temple of the Great King Kanishka"). In turn,



Fig. 4

Fig. 4: A polychrome clay statue from Kharwar © MAIA


Fig. 5


Fig. 6


Fig. 7

Figs. 5-6: Tepe Sardar: polychrome clay statues (Early Period) © MAIA
Fig. 7: Tepe Sardar: a polychrome clay statue (Late Period) © MAIA

this direct evidence reinforces the hypothesis that the *mahârâja vihâra* of Tepe Sardar may well correspond to the Shâh Bahâr that, according to the *Kitâb al-buldân* (an historical and geographical account written by al-Ya'qûbî in the 9th century), was destroyed in 795 CE (Taddei 1968: 109-10; Verardi and Paparatti 2004: 100; Verardi and Paparatti 2005: 410, 442).

The archaeological investigations revealed that somewhere before the final period of its life the sanctuary had suffered a devastating fire, which was tentatively related to the Muslim incursion of the 671-72, when 'Ubayd Allâh temporarily conquered the territories between Kandahar and Kabul (Kuwayama 2002: 182; Verardi and Paparatti 2005: 99). After this episode, which seems to have especially affected the Upper Terrace, the site was amply reconstructed or renovated. Thus, of the earlier phases, either hidden by the variations of the site or obliterated by the re-building, we only have a very partial picture. Nevertheless, hundreds of sculpture fragments, which were mostly found as infilling, attest the close tie of the earliest artistic production with the Gandharan tradition of North-West Pakistan (ca. 1st to 3rd/4th century CE), which was characterised by pronounced Hellenistic features (Figs. 5-6). However, in the later phases of the period preceding the fire, new artistic (and doctrinal?) trends seem to have introduced remarkable changes (Fig. 7). These are especially reflected in the emphasis put on the visibility of the cultic images, greatly enhanced by both colossal size and a number of gilded surfaces.

The Upper Terrace

The Upper Terrace, which occupies the levelled hilltop, is overlooked by the Great Stupa, one of the biggest in Afghanistan (with a length at its base of 24 m). We do not know how the Upper Terrace looked exactly like before the renovation of the Late Period. Apart from the Great Stupa (certainly restored and enlarged in the course of time) and a few minor monuments in stone, the surviving structures mostly belong to the Late Period. Among them, of special interest are the chapels in the south-west and north-east sides (respectively on the right and left side of the Great Stupa), housing a rich decorative apparatus, both painted and sculpted. Very little of this decoration was found in situ, the most part of it being witnessed only through the mass of fragments recovered from the archaeological deposits. The focal point of the chapels was the wall opposite to the entrance, where the main cultic image stood. In three of the surviving chapels (the nos. 23, 17 and 37) a colossal image of a seated Buddha was set on a tall pedestal (1,30/1,70 m), amidst a lively and animated landscape populated by Bodhisattvas, minor gods, worshippers, monstrous figures, and animals. An exception to this scheme was represented by Chapel 63 and Chapel 50, both on the left side, where the images were installed at the ground level: in Chapel 63 a colossal recumbent Buddha (i.e., a *Mahâparinirvâṇa*, or the Buddha's physical death), 15m in length; in Chapel 50 a Buddha seated in European fashion, of which only the feet remained.

A particular feature was represented by the vaulted passages at the sides of the main installations, leading to a corridor running behind the chapels. This architectural feature was meant to allow the *pradakṣinā* (ritual circumambulation) around the cult images, in the same way as it was customarily practiced around the stūpas. The pathway was marked by a mosaic strip made of pebbles set in the clay floor which formed a floral pattern.

Also the lateral walls of the chapels were richly decorated with reliefs and paintings but, with the exception of some modular patterns such as rows of arches housing meditating Buddhas with minor figures in the spaces between the arches, and rows of flying geese (Fig. 8), the original subjects cannot be any longer recomposed from the surviving fragments. Occasionally, additional colossal images were set against the lateral walls of the chapels. This is the case with Chapel 23, where an image of a bejewelled Buddha stood vis-à-vis the image of a multi-armed Durga (or Durga-like goddess) portrayed in the act of killing the demon of the Chaos, Mahisha, disguised as a buffalo (Figs. 9-10).

There is no doubt that this group of chapels was inserted in a more complex layout. In fact, on the south-east side (on the back side of the Great Stupa) five passages that once led to other rooms were wiped out by the natural erosion. We can assume also that also the north-west side, in front of the Great Stupa, was lined by a row of rooms, now only attested by the scanty remains of two walls against which a statue originally stood. In the south-east corner (not yet excavated) there probably existed a passage connecting the Upper Terrace to the lower structures. Thus, in the original layout the chapels were meant to form a kind of precinct enclosing the sacred area. In turn, they were enclosed in a massive wall with a vaulted corridor running in between, the same above-mentioned corridor serving the purpose of the *pradakṣinā*.

On two sides, opposite and right with respect to the entrance, the free space between the Great Stupa and the chapels was occupied by a row of small star-shaped stupas alternating with enthroned figures of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, standing in the open and protected by canopies. The strange asymmetry of this installation leads us to conjecture that this construction was not fully realized in terms of what was originally intended, and that it might have been extended at least to a third (the left) side.

The Upper Terrace represents the main but not the only cultic area of the complex. Other rooms or precincts have been brought to light along the slopes of the tepe. The chronological and functional relations between these secondary cultic areas and the main one are not yet completely clear. However, regardless of their mutual relations, these minor sacred spaces provide us with valuable pieces of information about some important developments and attitudes in religious practice.

Of particular interest are some monuments brought to light on the south-west side of the hill. The centre of the complex was apparently a large room (no. 49), with a cross-vaulted roof and surrounded by a corridor providing access to other rooms, housing small stûpas of

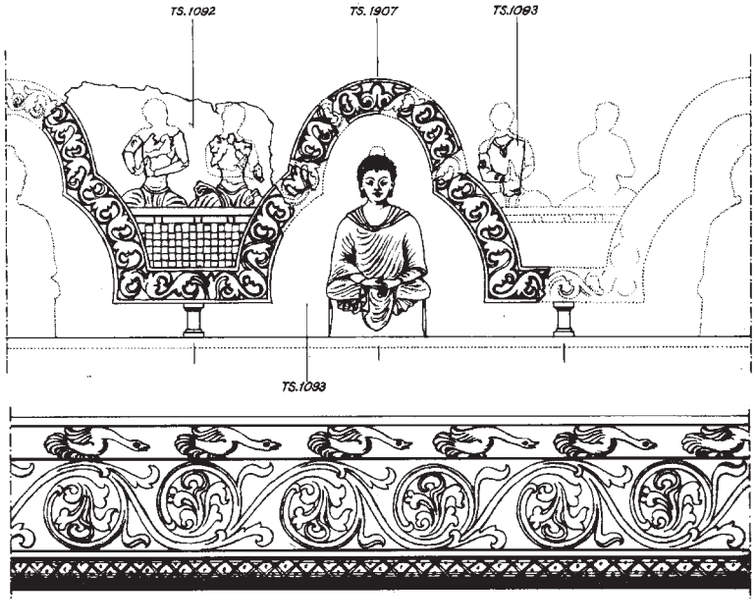


Fig. 8



Fig. 9



Fig. 10

Fig. 8: Tepe Sardar: sketch reconstruction of a wall decoration in relief (Late Period) © MAIA
Fig. 9: Sketch reconstruction of the colossal Durga image from Chapel 23 © MAIA
Fig. 10: Sketch reconstruction of the colossal bejeweled Buddha image from Chapel 23 © MAIA

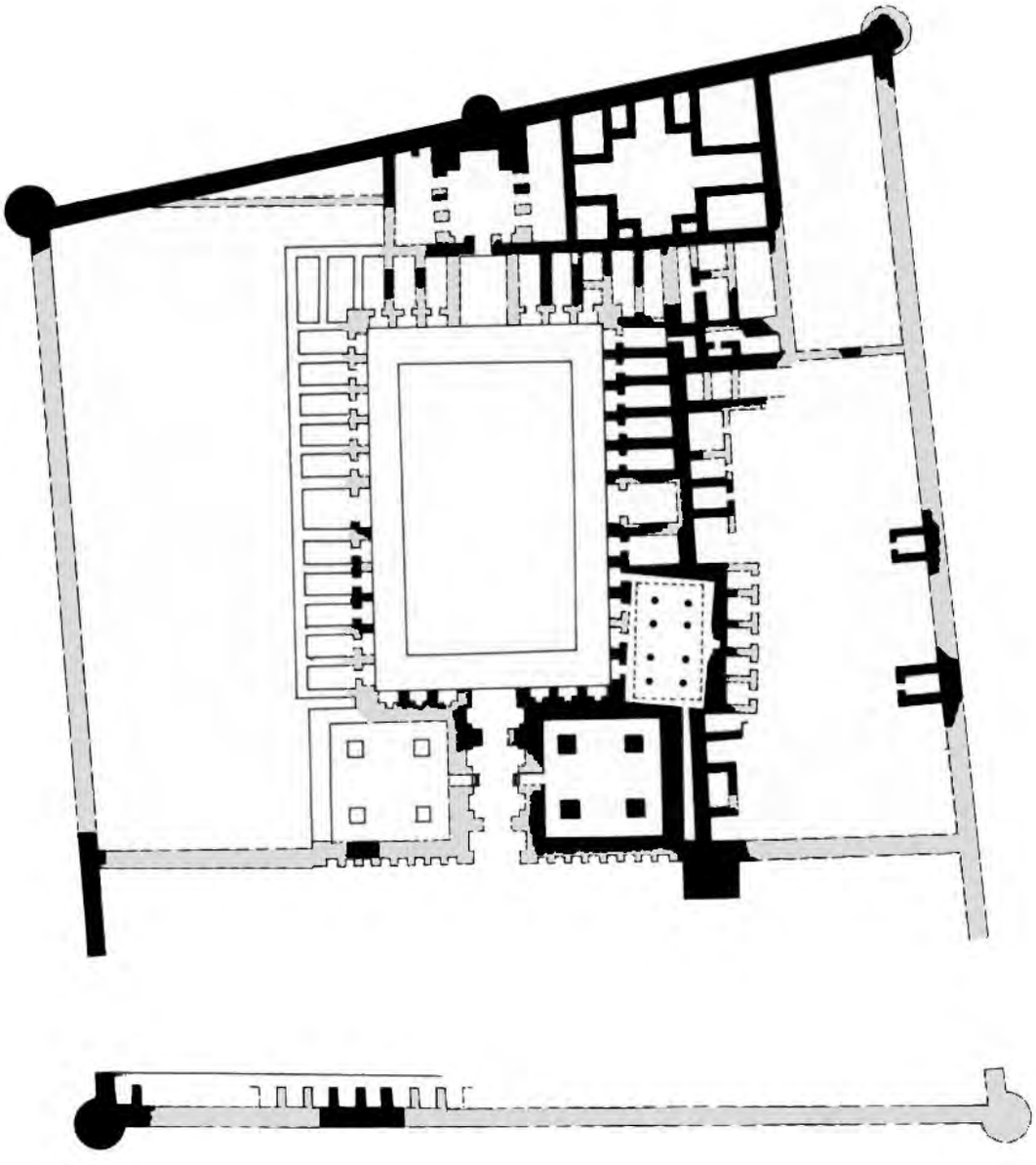


Fig. 11

Fig. 11: Ghazni, plan of the Ghaznavid Palace © MAIA

uncommon shapes and big cultic images at the corners. Communication between this complex and the Upper Terrace was provided by vaulted passageways leading directly into room 74 (still unexcavated).

Other minor monuments, which belong to the Early Period of the site, were unearthed in a trench on the north-west side of the hill. The southernmost one consists of a small open area that houses a small stûpa with quadrangular base and octagonal drum, bounded to the south and west by a low structure made of thin slabs of schist, which reproduce a fortified city wall in miniature whose front is turned towards the interior of the sacred area. On the mud floor there is a brief inscription in an unusually ornate *brâhmî* (a *mantra*?) and (only partly surviving) a *pûrṇaghaṭa* (the "vase of abundance"), both probably traced out with a stick when the mud was still wet.

As for the chronology, on the basis of palaeographic, historic, and archaeological considerations, different dates have been suggested, stretching from the 4th to the 6th century CE. The reading remains doubtful since the inscription, besides being perhaps incomplete, has no comparison as far as the script's style is concerned. The contemporary presence of so many peculiar features (the *mantra* incised on the floor, the miniature city wall which bounds the sacred space only visible in this aspect from the interior, the shape of the stûpa itself, whose octagonal body has no doubt cosmological implications connected with the orientation of the space) gives this area a highly symbolic value, although one difficult to interpret with any degree of accuracy.

A critical development of cultic and ritual practices is attested by Room 100, probably to be assigned to the end of the Early Period 2. The room is completely open towards the front, so that it resembles a large niche. This feature ensured maximum visibility to the images inside, the main one being a colossal gilded Buddha (the preserved right foot measures 160 cm) seated in European fashion. This was flanked by two smaller figures (Buddhas or Bodhisattvas) placed against the

side walls; at the corners there were some figures of donors (roughly life-size) in “Kushan” dress with a band of polychrome wall painting running behind the images.

As already mentioned above, the gigantic size and the gilding of the images inaugurate new trends in the religious and artistic expressions which were found to be fully developed in the subsequent period. Further, the presence of lay devotees – certainly typified portraits of the contemporary aristocracy – in such a conspicuous display reinforces the impression that Tepe Sardar was in some way under protection and at the political focus of the ruling dynasty.

Bringing Together the Old and the New: Tepe Sardar, Tepe Narenj and Mes Aynak.

It is certainly significant that very similar objects, iconographies and layouts have been recently found in other Afghan sites currently under excavation, such as Tepe Narenj and Mes Aynak.

At Tepe Narenj, a Buddhist site which is being excavated on the outskirts of Kabul by the Afghan National Institute of Archaeology, under the direction of Zafar Paiman, a shallow chapel sharing striking similarities with Tepe Sardar’s Room 100 was brought to light (Paiman and Alram, 2010). This coincidence cannot be considered a mere chance, especially in the light of another similarity between the two sites, i.e. the presence, around the end of the 7th/8th century CE, of a room housing a central star-like octagonal fire altar with concave sides; it is made of clay and has a shallow cavity in the centre displaying traces of burning and ashes. Notwithstanding the different ground plan (square at Tepe Sardar, circular at Tepe Narenj) both rooms are characterised by a restricted access and the lack of any cult image, which means that whatever activity was performed there (some kind of Tantric rituals or special assemblies?), the fulcrum was the altar. It might be useful to recall that roughly contemporary “fire-altars” of unclear attribution found at Tepe Skandar in Afghanistan and at Bîr-koṭ-ghwaṇḍai in north-west Pakistan warn us against reductionism and invite us to reconsider the relationship between material evidence and literary sources, trying to overcome the blind dependence of our interpretative models from these latter.

Extremely interesting connections are also surfacing between Tepe Sardar and Mes Aynak, the site which is home to astonishingly rich and numerous Buddhist settlements but also to the world’s second largest copper reserve. As the site is destined to become at some point in the future an open-cast mine, the efforts of the international scientific community need to concentrate on recording areas of the site set to be removed, and safeguarding those that lay outside the core mining zones. The site is being investigated by the Afghan Institute of Archaeology with the assistance of the Délégation Archéologique Française en Afghanistan in the framework of a rescue excavation involving many Afghan and international archaeologists from seven countries (AA.VV. 2011; Litecka et al. 2013).

Besides generic affinities of iconographic, stylistic and architectural features, very precise coincidences have been noticed, the most striking being the presence at Mes Aynak of a colossal Durga figure killing the demon-buffalo (only attested by a few but indicative remains; Engel 2013: 55; cf. here, Fig. 9) and the use of the same moulds as at Tepe Sardar for decorative devices (Filigenzi 2012: 36; here, Figs. 12-13). This opens an unexpected window into the circulation of models, techniques, material tools and, most probably, reputed itinerant artists and workshops serving prominent centres as Tepe Sardar and Mes Aynak certainly were.

Thus, like other evidence provided by cross-comparative analysis, this represents a further, invaluable piece of information to be stored in the archive of our scientific memory, until new additions become available that can help to reconstruct our incomplete picture of the religious imagery and ritual practises of the time. However, by combining evidence from these different sites, we start understanding how the propulsive force of Buddhism prompted different responses from different regional contexts which in turn contributed to the creation of a Buddhist artistic *koiné*. Moreover, we are better


Fig. 12


Fig. 13

Fig. 12: Tepe Sardar: decorative plaque in the shape of and Okeanos mask © MAIA
Fig. 13: Mes Aynak: decorative plaque in the shape of an Okeanos mask © Kabul National Museum

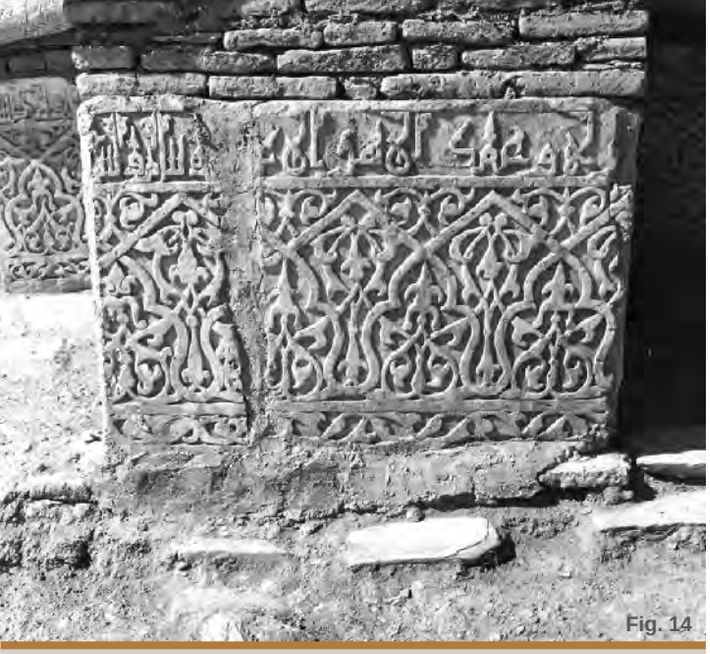


Fig. 14

Fig. 14: Marble dado panels bearing a Persian inscription in Kufic script © MAIA

able to evaluate how conspicuous that *koiné* was in Afghanistan.

Ghazni: One of Asia's Foremost Capital Cities in the 11th and 12th century

Prior to commencement of activities by the Italian Archaeological Mission in Afghanistan very little was known about Islamic Ghazni. The only reported evidence consisted of a few relics attesting the prominence and splendour of the city between the late 10th and early 13th century, namely the two baked brick minarets and some marble tombstones, notably those belonging to the Ghaznavid rulers Sebüktigin and his son Mahmud.

The first Italian excavations at Ghazni brought to light the remains of two important civic buildings: a royal palace and a private house. The palace had reached the peak of its magnificence between the end of the 11th century and the beginning of the 12th , during the rule of the Ghaznavid sultans Ibrahim and Mas'ud III; the house probably belonged to court officials from the Ghaznavid or Ghurid period (12th -13th cent.).

Along with the programme of excavations, the extensive surveys carried out by the Mission in the cemetery sites of the whole area of Ghazni since 1957 allowed the identification of a large number of religious monuments – especially tombs and *ziyarat* – very interesting from a historical point of view. These monuments were often built, re-built or simply decorated employing reused marble slabs and panels originally belonging to disappeared buildings. The large number of such artefacts, their variations in functional-morphological types and the lack of analogous finds in other contemporary archaeological sites (i.e., the famous Ghaznavid / Ghurid site of Lashkari Bazar) are indicative of the peculiarity of the Ghazni production and the local stone working tradition.

These discoveries, which enormously enriched the records of the Islamic material culture in the region, opened to archaeologists a new window into the private and ceremonial life of both the sultans and their court of politicians, poets, artists and scientists.

Ghazni: The Ghaznavid Palace

The palace, delimited by an irregular external perimeter resulting from the adaptation of pre-existing topography, was built of mud bricks and pressed clay, used side by side with baked bricks in the points requiring greater static strength, and also in the facings.

The rectangular planned residence had a monumental façade with ramparts and imposing towers, while the interior offered large spaces for court life. The core of the residence was an extensive marble-paved central courtyard surrounded by a low sidewalk on to which four *iwans* opened axially (Fig. 11). The northern and southern *iwans* were larger than the other two; the northern one followed the entrance, while the southern one gave access to the throne room, which was perhaps originally covered by a dome. A series of ante-chambers surrounded the central courtyard on four sides. The lower part of the walls of the four *iwans* and the ante-chambers were enriched with a marble dado frieze depicting, on the top, a long poem in Persian and in Kufic script (Fig. 14).

The private apartments were situated to the west of the throne room and opened onto a small courtyard centred around a marble fountain with a geometrically patterned brick pavement surround. The walls were covered with geometrical and epigraphic brick panels and a hypostyle mosque, with three naves parallel to the *qibli* wall, was located in the north-western corner of the building.

The Museum of Islamic Art in Rawza

After having restored the Timurid 'Abd al-Razzaq mausoleum in the village of Rawza (Fig. 16), in 1966 the Italian team opened the Rawza Museum of Islamic Art in the mausoleum to display the most important discoveries – mainly dating back to the Ghaznavid period – from the archaeological excavations as well as the surveys of mosques and other sanctuaries carried out around Ghazni. Closed for thirty years, thanks to funds granted by UNESCO and the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Museum has recently been restored with the assistance of the Department of Afghan Historic Monuments and work is in progress toward reopening it, in order to hand over again to the Afghan nation to showcase to the world unique artistic masterpieces which fortunately survived intact throughout several decades of internal turmoil.

It is planned that over fifty marble panels with their Kufic inscription will be displayed in central hall of the museum (Fig. 15), in order to give an idea of their original arrangement as it appeared around the courtyard of the Ghaznavid Palace. The baked brick panels will be mounted on the upper part of the walls. Other stucco, alabaster and ceramic artefacts will also be displayed in the other halls of the Museum, inside showcases or on new iron, timber or stone mountings with appropriate climate control. On the occasion of the celebrations of Ghazni as Capital of Islamic Culture 2013 for the Asian region a small booklet, titled "The Rawza Museum at Ghazni. A Brief Guide to the Islamic Collections", was prepared.

Cultural memory and Cultural Identity: Towards an Integrated Approach to Safeguarding Tangible and Intangible Heritage

Redefining cultural – or better, multi-cultural – identity is unquestionably a crucial issue for contemporary Afghanistan. This process, though an important part of the transition to a sustainable future, is neither simple nor straightforward. It requires considerable effort from institutional agencies, but also an inclusive engagement among cultural organizations. Archaeology and art history can play an effective role in promoting collective knowledge and a shared awareness of the past wherein cultural diversities can be perceived in terms of wealth rather than conflict.

Although field activity (both excavation and survey) is still constrained by the prevailing security issues in the region, much can be done for the protection, distribution and transmission of collective memories, of which objects and architectural settings from the past represent tangible forms. The restoration of artefacts, hypothetical reconstruction of monuments, and establishment of digital platforms for archiving and sharing data are important steps in this direction, especially when accompanied by support to self-regulated learning in local workplaces.

The MAIA is directly engaged in such programs. Restoration of the artefacts excavated by the MAIA is one of the main concerns, especially with regard to Tepe Sardar, where the buildings and their decoration – like at many other sites in Afghanistan – were made of clay. The plasticity and malleability of this material permitted the architects and sculptors to produce masterpieces of grace and refinement, whether on a grand or minute scale. However, unbaked clay is also very fragile becoming less stable over time, and what survives is mostly represented by masses of fragments recovered from the archaeological deposits.

Restoration is also only part of a virtuous process which starts from careful methods of excavation and proper documentation. All together, these procedures allow to attempt – even if only in part – the graphical anastylosis of the original settings, as is presently being undertaken by the MAIA both for pre-Islamic and Islamic monuments.

Dissemination of results is as important as their achievement itself. Scientific publication, either for specialist or non-specialist audience, is of course a constant strategy to be pursued but we have today at our disposal additional resources such as web-based technologies which may help in transforming old and new documents into a living repository of data, easy to transfer, update and compare in a network. Thanks to a dedicated project (Buddhist and Islamic Archaeological Data from Ghazni, Afghanistan.

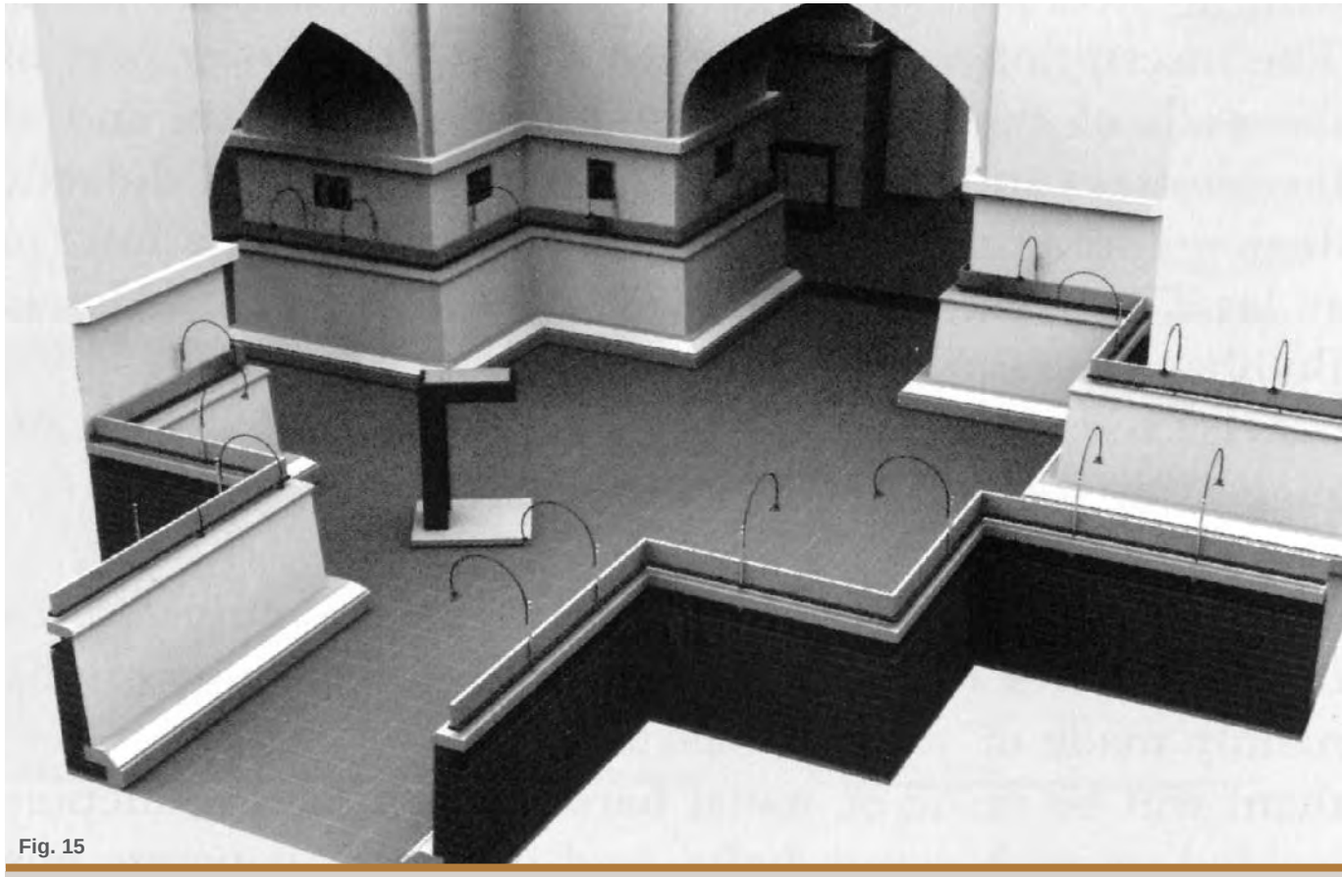


Fig. 15

Fig. 15: The Museum of Islamic Art at Rawza. Project for the exhibition of the marble dado panels in the central hall © MAIA

A multidisciplinary digital archive for the managing and preservation of an endangered cultural heritage. http://ghazni.bradypus.net/) financed by the Gerda Henkel Stiftung, the old and the new paper-based archive (inventories, pictures, drawings) are being transferred digitally and made accessible to the public, first of all to the colleagues of the Kabul Museum who are primarily called to answer the challenge for continued capacity building in 2014 and beyond.

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Fig. 16: Rawza 1966: The Mausoleum of Abd al-Razzaq after restoration © MAIA



Fig. 1: Herat, view towards Konhandez and the Musalla complex, 2004 © U. Franke

Ancient Herat and it's Cultural Heritage: New Evidence from Recent Research

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Herat, the westernmost province of Afghanistan, covers 55,000 km² and shares borders with Iran and Turkmenistan. Situated at an altitude of 1,000m and located at the foot of the Paropamisos in the fertile river valley of the Hari Rud, its location at the junction of major crossroads linking Asia with Arabia and Europe, became an important political and economic centre, at times competing with other regional centres such as Nishapur, Samarqand, Ghur, Balkh, Lashkari Bazar and Ghazna. The Silk Road, in reality an extensive network of trade routes, has become a synonym for commerce orientated around exotic goods such as silk, spices, gem stones, and other items that were in high demand in the west. Times of political peace and prosperity were succeeded by invasion, destruction and a new beginning. These processes brought along large-scale movements of people, through deportation, labour migration, or colonisation and in their wake craftsmen and artists in particular traversed large territories, fostering the transmission and merger of ideas, technologies and styles. The tangible cultural heritage that survives today is witness to this diffusion, but also reveals at the same time regional preferences and traditions.

The importance of Herat as a political, economic and cultural centre during the Islamic era is attested by numerous sites and monuments, which even today mark the outline of the city (Figs. 1-2). A number of buildings date back as far as the 15th century, when the town became capital of the Timurid empire under Shah Rukh and his wife Gawhar Shad. Historical sources and new archaeological fieldwork reveal, however, that human settlement in the city and its region is considerably older, and its rectangular plan reflects a more ancient urban pattern that is still recognizable today (Grenet 1996). In the following contribution, the cultural development based on recent archaeological exploration and historical information is outlined.

Archaeological Research Past and Present

A favourable natural environment with perennial water supply and the presence of major communication routes imply a long history of occupation in Herat, similar to the evidence from Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tadjikistan and northern Afghanistan, homelands to flourishing civilizations from the late 4th millennium B.C. onwards. However, considering the intensive phase of archaeological research conducted by numerous missions in those countries and in various Afghan provinces from the 1940's through to 1979, it is surprising that in Herat, Badghis, and Murghab, fieldwork was restricted to a brief Russian survey (Kruglikova & Sarianidi 1976), a small excavation carried out by the Afghan Institute of Archaeology around 1969 in the Hussayn Baiqara Complex, and limited archaeological exploration conducted in connection with the UNESCO project in the citadel of Herat (Bruno,1981). Some archaeological surface samples collected by DAFA were lost in the confusion and upheaval of the past decades. Instead, scholarly research strongly focussed on architecture, particularly from the Timurid era, epigraphy, arts and crafts, the latter mostly based on artwork attributed to Herat in international collections. This work, exhaustively referenced in Ball & Gardin, 1982, came to an abrupt halt in 1979 due to increased political instability and the Russian occupation.

Hence, when the excavations in Bagh-e Babur in Kabul were nearing completion in 2004, the Joint German-Afghan Archaeological Mission initiated in co-operation

with the National Institute of Archaeology and the Department of Monuments and Sites an archaeological project in Herat. Starting with a survey, followed later by excavations and surveys in Herat city, conducted in collaboration with the Aga Khan Trust for Culture and DAFA, and a regional museum project were added. These three projects supplemented each other in an ideal way, one providing spatial, the other temporal and the latter art historical information.

Documentation of Sites and Monuments in Herat Province (2004 – 2006) (Figs. 3-4)

At first, a survey aimed at the location and documentation of sites and monuments in Herat Province (2004 – 2006) was conducted. A total of 315 sites of various types were recorded in 16 districts of the province, dating from the late 3rd millennium BC through to the early 20th century. Although the resulting map still does not provide a complete picture of the ancient landscape, this figure presents a considerable increase in the known number of sites and in the quality of available information. Systematic surface surveys with random walking cannot be effectively realized in such a vast area and difficult terrain, and were also hindered by many mined areas, the lack of roads, tracks and logistic facilities. Indeed, Shindand, Farsi, Adraskan, and Kushk Kohna were not accessible at all. In addition to a large set of information concerning the physical and cultural properties of the areas surveyed, a reference collection of objects, mostly ceramics, was established. This data represents a singular set of records and facilitates thematic approaches to the cultural, political, and economic development of a landscape through time from different perspectives.

Search for the Roots of an Old City

The survey was subsequently supplemented by a project devoted to investigating the origins of Herat City through archaeological excavation and prospection in various parts of the city (2005–2009) However, such a quest is neither easy nor straightforward. In the densely populated Old City (Shahr-e Kohna) open spaces suitable for archaeological investigations are very limited and even

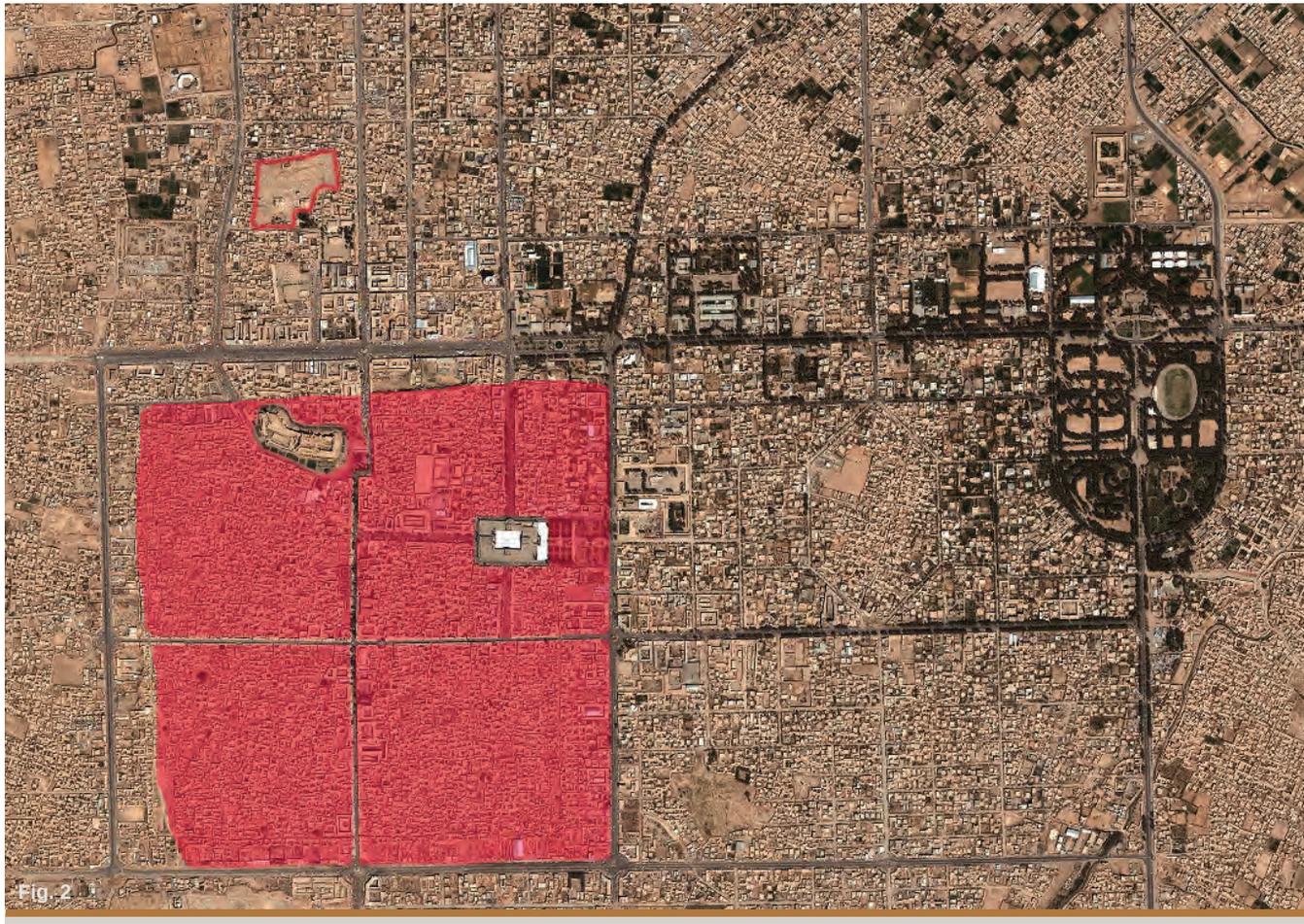


Fig. 2: Satellite image showing the area of the Old City with Qala-e Ikhtyaruddin, the Friday Mosque in the east, and Kohandaz and the Musalla complex to the north, 2004, U. Franke / Th. Urban © Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC)

the Timurid city is buried by meter-high urban debris that accumulated since the 16th century.

The search for the origins of Herat began at the site of Qohandaz, an oval-shaped, raised area north of Shahr-e Kohna, commonly thought to be the location of the oldest city in the region (Szuppe, 2004, Fig. 2). The area is crowned by the shrines of Shahzade Abu'l Qasim and Shahzada Abdullah, the buildings being completed by 1488 and 1492 respectively, probably





Fig. 3: Chist-e-Sharif, 2006 © Th. Urban
Fig. 4: Archaeological mound in Karukh, 2006 © Th. Urban

at the time of Hussayn Bayqara, but most likely with roots in the Kart period (Golombek & Wilber 1988, 312, O'Kane 1987 #37). An extensive graveyard developed around the shrines and, although the area is enclosed by a large man-made earthwork of considerable antiquity, modern habitation gradually encroached beyond this wall making excavations problematic. However, the findings showed that whilst to some of the levels of the enclosure a Timurid date could be ascribed, at the southern foot of the mound occupation layers from the 9th/10th century were excavated, built on top and into 8m high deposits of alluvial silts which buried any possible pre-Islamic layers. A second excavation conducted in 2008 further east, however, unearthed structural remains with a similar pottery inventory as uncovered previously in Qal´a-e Ikhtyaruddin. The recently obtained radiocarbon dates point to the 9th/8th century B.C. and thus correspond to the readings from the citadel.

The first phase of extensive excavations in Qal´a-e Ikhtyaruddin commenced in 2005 (Fig. 6). The citadel rises some 13m above street level with the outer wall, including battlements, running approximately 260m east-west and 60m - 80m in a north-south direction, enclosing an area of c. 18,000 m^2. The outer walls are in most places 16 m high and reinforced with 18 towers which can reach a height of c. 31m above street level in places. The interior space is divided into a lower area with garrisons and stables, which belong to the late 18th/19th c., and an upper citadel with a well, dungeons, and treasury, probably all built during the 17th/18th century, at the same time as the presently visible outer fortification wall, its towers and the wall-walks. Only some sections of the enclosure wall, from the so-called Timurid tower date back to the Timurid period and mostly only in their lowest foundations (Bruno 1981). The palace of Amir Abdur Rahman, built in the upper courtyard around 1900, marks the end of the military function of the citadel (Fig. 5). A major restoration and conservation program carried out between 1976 and 1979 by UNESCO brought forward the first substantial information about the structural history of the building (Bruno, 1981).

Excavations (Trench 1.7m x 10m) were opened in the upper courtyard, the highest and most accessible part, in 2005, with the target to obtain a long, datable sequence of habitation. Below the pavement of the palace, two levels of masonry and deep pits filled with rubble were cleared. The constant re-use and clearing of the area removed much of the archaeological evidence below the architectural levels, but the numerous finds from pits and dumps date from the 19th back to the 14th/13th centuries. The appearance of a huge mud brick platform throughout the trench area at 5m below surface was marked by a change in the material excavated. The structure extended to a depth of 12m, where alluvial silt layers appeared and were excavated for another meter. The platform is dated by comparisons using the finds and by radiocarbon samples to the 7th–5th centuries B.C., revealing for the first time what might be the earliest periods of the city, now confirmed through the excavations in Qohandaz.

Important new evidence for the structural history of Qal'a-e Ikhtyaruddin was obtained in a trench (Trench 3) on the northern foot of the citadel. Extending previous clearances of the UNESCO team (1979), the old Timurid gateway with guardrooms, built on older structures, remains of two towers with limited tile decoration, a glacis and a bridge for crossing the moat were unearthed in 2007 and 2008 (Fig. 7). The gateway possessed huge arched side rooms, whilst a winding passage leading to the interior fell out of use when the entrance hall was blocked and a new tower built on top during the late 17th/early 18th century. To prevent further decay of the brickwork and to solve stability problems of the citadel wall, the gateway was reconstructed along its historical patterns.


Fig. 5

Fig. 5: Qala-e-Ikhtyaruddin, trench 1, 2004 © U. Franke

Herat Museum & Archive

Initial observations of the newly and only briefly opened exhibition of the museum in Herat in 2005 (Franke, 2008) revealed the importance of the collection for understanding the historical development of the region. The then 1200 archaeological objects and 260 manuscripts and books provide a comprehensive insight into the regional material culture, supplementing perfectly the fragmented material gathered during the surveys and excavations previously undertaken (Fig. 8). In 2008, the documentation and conservation started, at the same time as the citadel renovation project undertaken by the Aga Khan trust for Culture (AKTC) (Fig. 10). The remit of their project and their cooperation provided us the opportunity to implement the construction of a conservation laboratory and new exhibition halls. The museum project was completed in October 2011 when 460 objects and 40 pieces of art from the late 3rd millennium B.C. through to the 19th century were put on display in the new exhibition space (Fig. 9).

As a result of these projects, Herat´s history, its material culture, chronological range, and the understanding of settlement patterns are much more clearly understood.



Fig. 6

Fig. 6: Qala-e Ikhtyaruddin, satellite image, 2001 © Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC)

This is particularly true for the newly discovered prehistoric period and the 10th–13th centuries, a time previously known through historical references, a few monuments and mostly objects being trafficked on the international art market. The museum project has provided the chance to visualize the extended history of the city and its region for both an academic and a more general, public audience.

Herat Through Time

The oldest object recorded so far in the region is a palaeolithic stone tool found in the archaeological zone south of Gazurgah. Several similar objects have been recorded from elsewhere in Afghanistan (Allchin & Hammond 1978), but this axe, now on display in the museum, is the only artefact from Herat Province. Likewise, the extensive number of antiquities in the museum dating to the Bronze Age came as a surprise. An important archaeological region for this period is located in southern Afghanistan, specifically in Kandahar and Sistan, the copper-rich desert Gardan Region. This area was settled from the early 4th millennium BC onwards. Mundigak near Kandahar is perhaps the largest recognised prehistoric mound. This cultural horizon had close links with south-eastern Iran and Balochistan, and was part of the so-called Indo-Iranian borderlands from the 4th through the early 2nd millennia. A few objects from this region have found their way to the Herat Museum.

More objects are related to the late 3rd/early 2nd millennium B.C., Bronze Age Culture, known today as the Oxus or the Bactrian-Margiana Cultural Complex. It was first observed in northern Afghanistan in the 1960's and became known to a wider public through the thousands of antiquities from looted tombs of Bactria that appeared on the art market after 1970. Today, many sites have also been excavated in Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan. They display an intriguing material culture with complex architecture and extraordinary artefacts, mirroring a wealthy, highly developed society that was economically and culturally on a par with other urban civilizations. It maintained its economic and cultural relations with Mesopotamia, southern Iran, the Arabian Peninsula and northern Balochistan, whilst links to Herat province were not available until very recently. The museum owns, however, a considerable number of alabaster vessels, stone columns and weights with handles, copper objects, and some pottery vessels. Although some items may have reached Herat from Badghis or Tashqurgan as gifts or seized objects, the discovery of a large, but pillaged site from this period in

Gulran, the north-westernmost district of Herat Province, proves the extension of this cultural horizon thus far west.

Late Iron Age through the Sasanian Era

The oldest source to mention the region is the Avesta, the holy book of the Zoroastrians, dated to the first millennium BC. In the Vendidad, the creation of 16 lands by Ahura Mazda is described. The name of the sixth land is Haroyu. A similar name is mentioned in Achaemenian cuneiform inscriptions from the 6th century B.C.: In the long list of vassals, who in the reliefs of Persepolis proceed to the throne to pay tribute to the king, the line "iyam Haraiva" = "this is the Areian" denotes a man with a short tunica, loose pants, high boots and a dagger. According to the Greek historian Herodotus, Areians served in the army of King Xerxes and fought against the Greek military around 480 B.C. Areia was administered by a satrap called Satibarzanes and was - along with Bactra (Balkh) and Kandahar - one of the three main Achaemenian centres in the east (Vogelsang 2004).

150 years later, biographers of Alexander the Great, mainly Strabo, Pliny and Arrian, describe the conquest of Artacoana, capital of Areia, after a revolt in 330 BC. Alexander established a governor and renamed the city "Alexandria in Areia". Later, Areia was a border region between the Parthian empire and invading Scythian tribes from the northern steppes. Under Sasanian hegemony (226–652 C.E.), Harēv and Hari" are listed by King Shapur I as one of twelve provincial capitals of the empire. As Balkh and Marv, Herat had a mint where Sasanian gold coins were struck. In the wake of new conflicts with the Hephthalites, also known as White Huns, the city regained strategic importance. In the 5th century it had small Christian and Zoroastrian communities. When the Arab armies arrived, Herat and Badghis were inhabited by Hephtalite and Turk tribes, who fiercely resisted the Arabs until 651/2. According to Arabian historiographers, a church and a fire temple still stood side by side in the hills north of Herat in the 10th century.

During the survey, no major Achaemenian or Hellenistic sites were found, but an Achaemenian occupation is attested in Qohandaz and on the citadel. Its exact presence in the old city cannot be speculated upon since the relevant levels must be buried by many meters of rubble and modern housing. The dearth of archaeological information about this period in the region is matched by the lack of objects in the museum. Apart from a few vessels, a small terracotta plague, a couple of Kushan, Parthian, and Sasanian coins as well as a few Sasanian seals date to this time. The small statue of a Boddhisattva, seated on a small stool in teaching attitude, must have come to Herat as a gift, or as a seized object. Both its material (schist) and the artistic expression leave no doubt that the statue derives from a workshop for Buddhist art in Gandhara, a kingdom that flourished between the 1st and 5th centuries AD and – at times – extended from central Afghanistan to the Swat Valley in Pakistan (pers. comm. Ch. Luczanits).

The Early Era of Islam to the Kartid Period

Likewise, little is known about the subsequent centuries from the arrival of the Arab army up to the early Abbasid caliphate, and the rise of regional dynasties, such as the Tahirids and Samanids. However, Herat remained a regional centre in Khorasan since 10th century A.D. chroniclers mention it as a large city with four gates, a fortification, an inner citadel, suburbs and gardens with an extensive irrigation system (Szuppe 2004). 11th century coins minted in Herat found their way along the silk route up to Sweden.

Due to its strategic location, Herat was frequently exposed to attacks by competing forces. The victorious party often intentionally destroyed or refashioned tangible remains built by their predecessors. Hence, even from the prosperous Ghurid period (1147–1206), when Herat was residence of the viceroy, summer capital, and home to the dynastic mausoleum, only a few monuments are preserved. Most famous are the Ghurid portal of the Blue Mosque, the only part of this spectacular building which, along with some stucco fiezes in the *iwans*, survived later re-embellishments and restorations, and the buildings in Chesht-e-Sharif (Figs. 3,11). Just prior to the invasion of Mongol tribes under Djinghis Khan in 1221/2, the historians Yāqūt (d. 1229) and, later, Qazvini (d. 1283) describe Herat as the largest and richest town they have ever seen, with a population in the region of 2 million inhabitants living in 400 villages of the province.

The scarcity of pre-Timurid monuments in Herat City stands out even more since many sites and monuments were found during the survey, and since the museum houses an important and large collection of pottery and metal work dated to the 10th–13th century (Fig. 7-8).

The relatively small excavations at Qohandaz recovered a good number of potsherds from the 10th and 11th centuries, and a small lobed bronze cup. The important role of Herat as both producer and consumer of luxury wares during these centuries is attested by historical records and by numerous artefacts scattered in the museums worldwide, some of them carrying signatures of a craftsman from Herat. The buildings described must have been dismantled or remodelled according to contemporary styles and to the praise of subsequent rulers, or fell prey to the levelling of ground and the urban renewal of the past decades. However, Herat was not the only city during this time. About 80 km to the west lies a huge site measuring c. 1.5 km in diameter. It was devastated during the Mongol invasion and then abandoned. Today, it is only a ruined mound, but the pottery and the architectural are testimony to its riches.

The Kartids, who ruled first as vassals of the Ilkhanid rulers and then later almost independently from Herat for almost 150 years until 1383, are credited with rebuilding the town after the Mongol devastation. Notably the city walls, the citadel, two palaces and - twice - the Great Mosque, that all survive as extant if ruinous architectural remains. Around 1333, Ibn Battuta described Herat as; "the largest inhabited town in Khoarasan. It is among the four largest of the country, Balkh and Marv being destroyed, Herat and Maisabur being inhabited."


Fig. 7


Fig.8

Fig. 7: Panoramic photo of the impressive north gate of Qala Ikhtyaruddin during the process of excavation and survey by DAI under the auspices of the MoIC. This Timurid gateway was closed when the large tower was constructed on top in the 17th or 18th century, Ancient Areia © Th. Urban
Fig. 8: Luxury ceramics, so-called Bamiyan-ware, 13th century, Herat Museum © A. Lange

The museum holds a cenotaph of exceptional quality, erected for a princely person in Sha'ban 780/end of November-December 1378. Its pieces were brought to Herat from Fusandj, as mentioned by Seljuki (1967; Franke 2015; Haase, forthcoming. Fig. 15).

Timurid Herat

The city reached its zenith as a Timurid capital under Timur's son, Shah Rukh, and his wife Gawhar Shad. The royal couple and the aristrocay commissioned many buildings, some in the old city, but mostly along the new *khiyaban* (street) linking the city with the Khwaja Abdullah Ansari Shrine in Gazurgah. Some of these monuments have been preserved and reveal a glimpse into the now mostly perished grandeur of the ornamentation (Figs. 12-13). Tamerlan (Tīmūr bin Taraghay Barlas), founder of the Timurid empire and a passionate builder, had gathered some 150,000 workers and craftsmen for the embellishment of Samarqand, the previous capital (Leisten 1995). Even if this figure is possibly exaggerated for Herat, a vast number of craftsmen must have been engaged in the restoration of the city, The citadel, the Blue Mosque, and the Khwoja Abdullah Ansari Shrine were extensively re-embellished, while the Gawhar Shad and Hussayn Baiqara Complex and many shrines along the *khiyaban* (street) were newly founded. Unfortunately, many of the buildings and most gardens mentioned in the historic records are lost or in an advanced state of decay (Allen 1983), among them the *kitab-khane* (Library) established by Prince Baysonqur in 1414, later the atelier of the famous miniature painter Kamāl ud-Dīn Beḥzād Herāwī (1460–1535). This workshop produced many manuscripts that can today be admired in many of the extensive miniature collections scattered in museums throughout the world. It is of note that the Herat museum contains surprisingly few Timurid objects – those that have survived are represented by a number of tombstones, including one attributed to Behzad, and decorative architectural pieces (fayence mosaic). Noteworthy are the large marble slabs from the minarets of the Gawhar Shad complex with intricate geometric patterns and calligraphic friezes. On the two towers of the newly excavated Timurid

gateway at the northern foot of Qala-e Ikhtyaruddin, remains of the original tile decoration were preserved, supplementing the evidence from the Timurid tower which has undergone restoration on two occasions.

A New Era: Towards Modernity

The fall of the Timurid empire after the death of Sultan Hussayn Bayqara in 1506 brought about a period of unrest and struggle. Control over Khorasan was disputed between the Shaybanids and the Safavids (1501-1722) from western Persia, who under Shah Ismail I (r. 1501-24) entered Herat in 1510. Herat was at that point the provincial capital, but all Safavid rulers from Shah Ṭahmasp I to Abbas I were also governors of "Dar al-Saltana". In 1598, the city became the political and military base of the Safavids against the Uzbeks in Bukhara and the Mughals of India. For most of the 16th and the 17th centuries, these contesting rivals tried to impose their authority upon Herat. After some neglect, the Safavids pursued an urban development policy from 1537 onwards. They kept the defences and citadel, and ordered the reconstruction of edifices and gardens. Some structures can be linked to them such as the dome of the Abu'l Qasim Shrine in Qohandez (1534), repairs to the Abdul Ansari Shrine in Gazurgah (970/1562-63; 1014/1605-06), and a couple of cisterns (e.g. Chahar Su, 1044/1634).

In 1716, an Abdali/Durrani confederation of Pashtun tribes defeated the Safavid governor of Herat. Nadir Shah Afshar, successor of the Safavids, recaptured the town, but his assassination in 1747 re-opened the struggle for power on the path towards a national state, lead by Ahmad Shah Durrani (d. 1772), Amir Dost Mohammad Khan Barakzi (d. 1863), and Amir Abdur Rahman (d. 1901). Between 1719 and 1760, Herat was under siege for 24 months and changed hands five times. At the same time, the rise of Mashhad as pilgrimage centre and the decline of trade along the Silk Road affected its economy. In addition to domestic rivalries, colonial interests were at stake: clashing interests of the British Empire, Qadjar Persia, and Tsarist Russia culminated in three Anglo-Afghan wars



Fig. 9

Fig. 9: One of the new display wings in the Herat Regional Museum, located within the lower complex of Qala Ikhtyaruddin, completed in 2011 © U. Franke

(1838–42; 1878–80; 1919), and involving a 10-months siege of Herat by the Persian army in 1838. In 1857 the Paris Treaty relinquished the 350 year long Persian claim on Herat and subsequently in 1893 the Durand line established the border between Afghanistan and British-India and on the 19th August 1919 Afghanistan was granted full independence. Under Amir Abdur Rahman (r. 1880–1901) the outer fortifications of Herat were re-enforced once more, at the cost of the destruction of a number of splendid historic monuments, in particular the Musalla complex, in order to prevent Russian advances on Herat. Later on, Herat lost its military importance and the ruler built a palace in the upper courtyard of the citadel. Around 1900, the city was described as



Fig. 10: Restoration of the lower citadel undertaken by the Aga Khan Trust for Culture from 2006-2010 © C. Gütschow

in a state of desolation, most of its suburban gardens lying in decay.

A considerable number of objects from this recent past are kept in the museum, including armour, weapons, drums, coins, and objects for daily use, such as drinking bottles, amulets, and a large metal kettle. A Torah fragment is - along with a few synagogues preserved in the Old City - rare testimony of the former Jewish population in the city.

Perspectives

The preservation of cultural heritage is one of the major challenges for the political and administrative leadership, particularly if the goal to apply for a listing as World Heritage Site is to be seriously pursued. The rapid urban growth and economic interests as well as increasing levels of traffic pose serious threats to the historic fabric of the city. The allocation of substantial funds by President Karzai for the construction of a new road, (bypassing the Musalla Complex), and a master plan which is being worked out by the Government with the help of the Aga Khan Trust for Culture and other institutions, are important steps which need to be implemented. Crucial conservation and preservation work was carried out by AKTC at a number of places in the old city of Herat and its environs. The Department of Monuments and Sites in Herat also maintains projects and undertakes emergency stabilisation works in Herat and the neighbouring regions, often in collaboration with the UNESCO, who supported the stabilization of the 5th minaret and restoration of the tomb in the Gawhar Shad Complex.

During all these projects local staff was trained in documentation techniques and the conservation of buildings as well as in various related crafts (Fig. 14). However, particularly in higher education the need for engineers and architects whom can claim to be specialists in building archaeology and conservation still needs to be addressed. Another means is archaeological prospection – building must not necessarily be stopped, but a proper assessment and documentation at the beginning of projects is a common tool to register the archaeological record. Hence, the provision of resident archaeologists in the provinces are instrumental if this is to implemented.

The transmission of the importance of cultural heritage versus economy and other primary needs of the populace is not easy. An important tool is awareness building. A promising step in this direction was the formation of the Old City Commission, a group of citizens, politicians and an administration to deal with the need of cultural heritage protection, its impact and associated problems as wells as possible benefits and opportunities. Cultural education has to take place in schools and through the undertaking of appropriate programs. The inauguration of the citadel as cultural centre and the opening of the museum now provide ideal

tools for fostering awareness among the general public, ideally promoting identity whilst also building pride. That this is possible was overwhelmingly demonstrated by the return of vast numbers of antiquities to the museum, where they are now on display, by antique dealers from around the city. Herat still is a city of artists, poets and painters – and it is hoped that its rich and complex heritage will also be preserved for the future.

Acknowledgements

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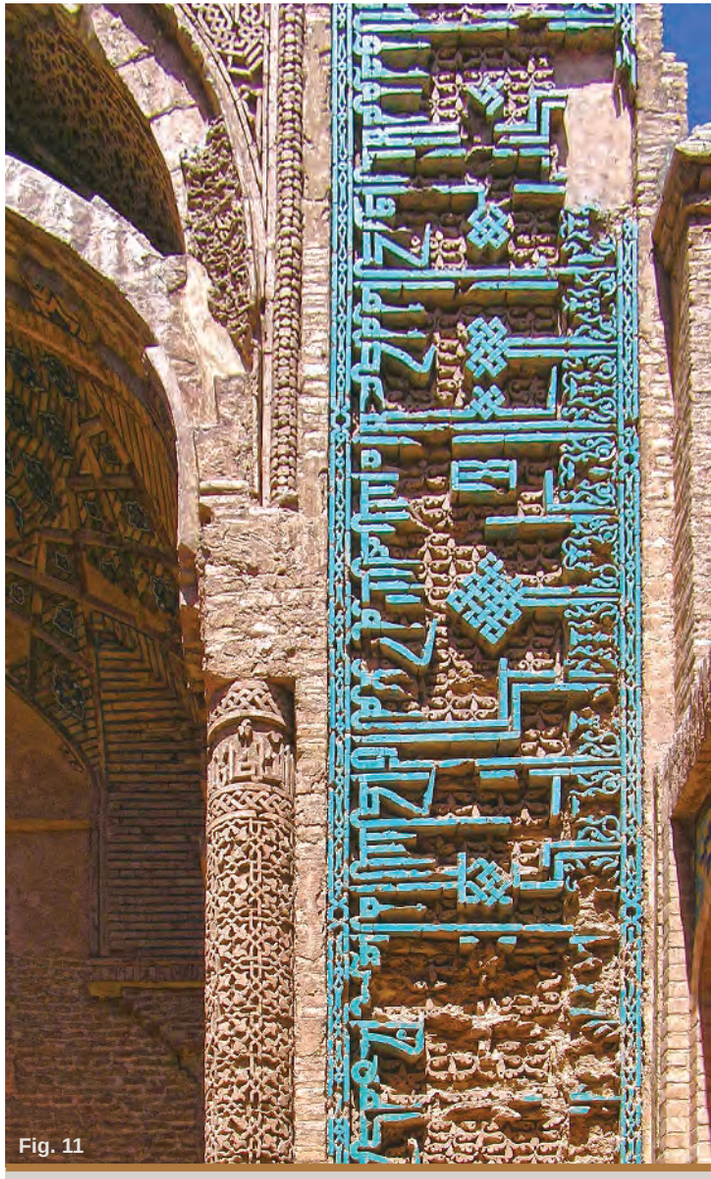


Fig. 11

Fig. 11: A section of intricate Ghurid tile work around a surviving portal in the Friday Mosque, Herat © U. Franke


Fig. 12


Fig. 13

Fig. 12: The restored internal ceiling of Gahwar Shah mausoleum, 2010 © U. Franke
Fig. 13: Gazurgah, Khwoja Abdullah Ansari Shrine, 2009 © U. Franke

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Fig. 14: Conservation class, Herat Museum, 2009 © C. Gütschow
Fig. 15: Restored cenotaph of a princely person with glazed tile decoration, dated Sha'ban 780/end of November-December 1378, Herat Museum © U. Franke

A short history of nearly a century of scientific research in Afghanistan (1922-2015)

Julio Bendezu-Sarmiento & Philippe Marquis

French Archaeological Delegtion in Afghanistan (DAFA)

Until the early twentieth century, Afghanistan is turned in on itself, hostile to any foreign presence. The little we knew of that country had been reported by a few intrepid travellers as well as by British officers of the Indian Army, that political events had momentarily driven to break into this region.

On 8 May 1919 the Treaty of Rawalpindi allows Afghanistan to regain its external sovereignty and complete independence vis-à-vis Britain. That same year Emir Amanullâh ascends to the throne, a progressive ruler who decides to launch a modernization program in his country, according to what some historians call today a forced march, coupled with institutional restructuring (constitution, family code, education, etc.), and land development (roads, dams, etc.).

This was a major training program for the Afghan elite and the Emir knew how much he needed the support of a foreign country. In this crucial moment he will then turn to the countries of Western Europe that seem to have no political or territorial ambitions: Italy, Germany and France ; and he calls upon the services of the latter for the development of the archaeological riches of his country, and of the cooperation in education with the establishment of facilities of modern educational programs. Upon request of the Afghan government, thanks to the historical distrust of Afghans against colonial England, and especially to the reputation acquired by French archaeologists in the Middle East [1], France sends to Kabul a prominent orientalist, academic and archaeologist Alfred Foucher. Arriving on May 10, 1922, he establishes the first political and cultural relations between the two countries, the talks culminating on September 19th 1922 with the creation of the French Archaeological Delegation in Afghanistan, bestowing a special concession for excavations in the whole country upon France.

Excavation exclusivity, and sharing finds

The Emir knows that permission to excavate on a blank area of investigation will be doubly symbolic for independence and state modernity. The thirty years agreement established by the Afghan government gives France the exclusive rights to prospect and excavate across all Afghan territory, exploiting chance discoveries, and acting as experts on archaeological matters.

The finds discovered during excavations will be divided equally between the two parties, and the share attributed to France is at the root of the Afghan collections of the Musée Guimet (pre-Islamic art) and the Louvre (Islamic art), at a time when archaeological finds sharing was in common use [2]. As for the research monopoly, it was advised against on behalf of the international scientific collaboration by the French scientist Alfred Foucher leading the negotiations on behalf of France, but was wanted by both the Afghan government, anxious to limit foreign presence on its soil, and by the French government who did not intend to share its new leadership position in the region.

Alfred Foucher in Bactria

The choice of Alfred Foucher (1865-1952)[3] as mediator as well as first director of DAFA was self-evident. At 57, former student of the Ecole normale supérieure and renowned Indianist, he had earned an international reputation for his work on the history of Buddhism and on the «Greco-Buddhist» style that had flourished on both sides of the modern border between Pakistan and Afghanistan at the beginning of our era.



Cheshme Shafa 2014 (Balkh), an archeological site situated on the shore of the Balkhab river and excavated by DAFA since 2007 © DAFA

Alfred Foucher arrived in Afghanistan with specific instructions from Paris: to find and excavate the Greek monuments of Bactria. This objective relied on the testimony of classical historians[4] relating the existence of a powerful Greek colonial state born of the conquest of Alexander the Great in the last three centuries BC, between the Oxus valley (Bactria) in the north, and south of the Indus. But Alfred Foucher wanted to stick to what he knew best and expand his personal research on Greco-Buddhist art to South Afghanistan, in the area of Kabul and Djellalabad[5]. However, Paris decided against his wishes and he went reluctantly to work in Bactria, where the climate is not favourable to slow work, and makes for short excavation missions.

Foucher's Bactrian expedition ended in a fiasco, leading him to compare himself to an ant doing an autopsy on the corpse of an elephant... Furthermore, he and his wife had almost died of poisoning, due to water pollution. For months in 1924 and 1925, Foucher dug trenches in the depths of the citadel of Balkh, without finding anything of the Greek establishment he imagined built of stone, whereas constructions in Central Asia are of mud brick, the stone being used for columns and decorations.

In what he calls the «Bactrian mirage», he will attribute his failure to History itself, while it was probably due more to his lack of archaeological experience. In his writings, he came to the conclusion that neither nature, nor men, nor history had met in this place favourable conditions to «shape a nation and create an original art». The future has denied these hazardous considerations of a great scientist misled by an unfortunate personal experience. Except for the negative conclusions he wrongly drew from his research in Bactria, the book in which Foucher explained his experience in Afghanistan, La vieille route de l'Inde de Bactres à Taxila (1942-1947)[6], remains a major work for the description and historical study of what was and remains the main route between the Indian world and Central Asia.

From Buddhist monuments to the Begram treasure

Having left Afghanistan in 1925, Foucher, affected by his fiasco in Bactria, was never to return. Fieldwork was pursued by various collaborators, including André Godard, Jules Barthoux, Jacques Meunié, and especially Joseph Hackin, curator of the Guimet Museum. Assisted by his wife Ria, and his architect Jean Carl, he became the man of action required by difficult, and sometimes even dangerous working conditions.

From 1925 to 1939 Joseph Hackin represented DAFA in the field, organizing several important excavations and accomplishing what Alfred Foucher had always dreamt of doing; the excavation of Buddhist monuments in Afghanistan. In Bamiyan, Hackin, Godard and Carl worked on the first inventory of Buddhist antiquities in the valley, while Joseph Hackin was trying to unravel the different kinds of influences present in the art of Bamiyan, coming from Sassanian Iran, India and hellenized Central Asia.

In another valley of the Hindu Kush, Jean Carl excavated the monastery of Fondukistan, whose graceful clay statues, conserved in the Musée Guimet and the National Museum of Afghanistan, are examples of the refinement of an indianized post-Gupta art.

The Shotorak and Païtava monasteries in the Begram plain, as well as the extraordinarily prolific excavation of Hadda conducted by Jules Barthoux between 1925-1928 near Djellalabad, and delivering numerous examples of modelled stucco and clay statues, represent the Greco-Buddhist art at its peak[7].

It is in the last years of Hackin's career that comes the sensational discovery that was to overshadow all others. In Begram (north of Kabul), in the years 1937-1940, while excavating a large residence, the French team discovered a cache, a true Ali Baba's cave, stacked with a fabulous amount of precious objects dating from the first two centuries of our era – «the treasure of Begram» – and coming from the Greaco-Roman Middle-East – stucco mouldings, glass, metal objects – from India – decorative ivory panels for wooden furniture – and from China – lacquers.

This warehouse full of luxury merchandise reflects the economic prosperity of the country under the Kushan empire, and the role in international trade of the city of Kapisi-Bagram, a colony previously founded as Alexandria of the Caucasus by Alexander the Great. It vividly illustrates the central position occupied by Afghanistan in the trade in the ancient times[8].

With World War II, the first part of the history of DAFA closes. Joseph Hackin and his wife Ria, who joined the free France in London with Jean Carl, were killed in September 1941 in the sinking of their boat. A page in the history of the DAFA was turned. R. Ghirshman, appointed to replace Hackin, has just the time to re-open excavation in Begram in 1941-1942 before being dismissed by Vichy, taking then refuge in Cairo in 1943, where he will finish to write and publish the results of his prematurely stopped research[9].

After 1945, new orientation

In 1945, the DAFA reopens with Daniel Schlumberger at its head. The new director was long familiar with the East, beginning his career as an archaeologist in Syria and Lebanon as Deputy Director of the Department of Antiquities of the French mandate. A cultivated man, his approach to archaeology is also the approach of a true historian. The 1922 agreement remained in effect, but the Afghan government imposed two modifications. The DAFA would accept the arrival of foreign teams – it was the end of the monopoly that the French archaeologists had never wanted – and it would transfer its headquarters, then housed at the Guimet Museum, to Kabul.

The transformation of the DAFA to a permanent mission proved beneficial for itself as much as for Afghanistan. While playing the role of archaeological advisor to the Afghan authorities, it could also exploit for the best the numerous chance finds multiplied by the country's modernization works, and could welcome young researchers for training periods, a lot of them to later distinguish themselves in Oriental Studies. As for the provision of shared findings that had not been

modified, its application brought such difficulties, that Paul Bernard arriving at the head of the DAFA in 1965, decided to renounce it.

Since its creation, DAFA's area of interest had been Greco-Buddhist archeology. Without completely abandoning it, it was decided to also develop other areas of research[10]. In 1948, well-preserved remains of the royal city of Lashkari Bazar, from the Ghurid and Ghaznavid dynasties (XI-XII centuries) had been discovered southwest of Kandahar by Daniel Schlumberger. Six excavation campaigns were devoted to the excavation of the castles which had housed the Ghazni sultans and their court. From 1949 to 1952, and with the assistance of the talented architect M. Le Berre, DAFA excavated this site, discovering amongst other things, frescoes depicting the Turkish guards of the Ghaznavids and Ghurid sultans.

In 1957 DAFA member André Maricq, alongside with Ali Kohzad (President of the Historical Society of Afghanistan) discovered in Jam, a remote valley of the Hindu Kush, the capital of the Ghurid Dynasty and its famous minaret, masterpiece of Islamic architecture and decorative art[11].

Excavations on the site of Mundigak, situated near Kandahar, enabled the exploration of Afghan Protohistory. Missions were conducted there from 1951-1958 by the archaeological mission of the Indus under the authority of J.-M. Casal, DAFA serving as a home base[12].

The excavations exhumed the remains of a city at its peak between 3000 and 2500 BC., and related to the contemporary civilizations of Turkmenistan and the Indus Valley.

Upon his appointment as director of DAFA, Daniel Schlumberger, who remained convinced that the Greco-Bactrian problem «outweighed all other general interest», and who judged the negative position of Alfred Foucher unfounded, launched a survey campaign in Bactria, with no conclusive results[13].



Detail of a decorative panel from the Gawhâr Shad mausoleum (Herat), made of ceramic mosaic and dated from Timurid times © DAFA/UNESCO

But it was only a postponement and we know today, thanks to recent clandestine excavations, that the surveys stopped just before reaching stone columns and pilasters from the Greek and Kushan monuments sought in vain by Alfred Foucher in the wrong place.

In 1951 came the chance discovery of a few stone blocks inscribed with Greek letters led Daniel



Interior of Noh Gonbad Mosque (Balkh). DAFA is currently studiyng its architecture and doing excavations prior to conservation mesures © DAFA/AKTC

Schlumberger on the hill of Surkh Kotal, in Bactria. This is the beginning of an excavation which will have far-reaching consequences. From 1952 to 1963, different campaigns uncover an imposing sanctuary on top of a natural acropolis, built around 125 AD by a Kushan king, a dynasty following the Greeks in Bactria and Northern India, gathering in the same empire India and Afghanistan. The inscriptions found in Sukh Kotal indicates the apparition of a new language, of the family of Iranian languages, but written using the Greek alphabet: Bactrian[14].

Although neither the cult nor the plan of the temple are Greek, the architectural decoration of stone columns and pilasters reveal the remnants of a local Greek art form. After a stammering prologue in Bactria, the outcome of the long quest for the civilization of the Greek settlers of Bactria, predicted by the excavation of Surkh Kotal, would find its conclusion in Ai Khanum, about two hundred kilometres away. Daniel Schlumberger will have a decisive role in the final act of this discovery.

Ai Khanum, Greek colony and local capital

In 1961, in the hamlet of Ai Khanum, on the border between Afghanistan and what was then the Soviet Union (actual Tajikistan), a carved stone is shown to the king of Afghanistan, Mohammed Zahir Shah, who used to hunt in the area. When the king alerts Daniel Schlumberger of the discovery, the scientist immediately recognizes a Corinthian capital of Greek type. Its provenance site could only be that of a Greek colony. A survey conducted in November 1964 immediately confirmed his intuition.

Daniel Schlumberger left at the same time the role of Director of the DAFA to the head of the French Archaeological Institute of Beirut, Paul Bernard, who was appointed to succeed him in Kabul, and it was bestowed on him to conduct the excavation of Ai Khanum which continued until in 1978.

During these fifteen years of work, the image of a great colonial power will slowly be reconstructed, displaying a monumental architecture taking its roots in the pure Greek architectural tradition, and influenced by oriental techniques, especially in the use of mud-bricks for the construction of buildings, decorated with columns and pilasters inspired from the different Greek orders. In Ai Khanum, Greek was spoken and written, manuscripts from classical authors were read, and there was a theatre for plays of the classical repertoire. The city belongs to the Hellenistic tradition, representing its easternmost manifestation, but is also inseparable from the history of Central Asian and Northwestern Indian civilizations, whose futures will also be influenced by this hellenism[15].

In 1974, in parallel with DAFA's own activities, an independent team led by Jean-Claude Gardin conducts an archaeological survey of the plains of Eastern Bactria to study settlements in this region, in relation to the development of irrigation systems, attested from the third millennium BC.[16]

The discovery and excavation of Shortugaï (1976-1979) by H.-P. Francfort,[17] an outpost of the Harappan Indus civilization in the Ai Khanum plain, brings a significant contribution to the knowledge of the Bronze Age civilizations of Central Asia, including the trade in lapis lazuli in the third millennium BC.

The advent of the communist regime in 1978 brings an end to DAFA's activities. In 1980 Jean-Claude Gardin, eminent specialist who had worked with Daniel Schlumberger in Balkh and Lashkari Bazar, succeeds Paul Bernard at the head of DAFA, where he has to organize the foreseeable withdrawal of the mission back to France. In late 1982, after managing to repatriate its scientific archives in France, DAFA is constrained to close its office in Kabul.[18]

DAFA no longer exists administratively, but research carries on, thanks to various researchers who continue their work and publish their results.[19]

The end of the Taliban and the return to Kabul

In 2002, Roland Besenval, a specialist in Central Asia and the early history of Balochistan, who was excavating in Sarazm (Tajikistan), crosses the Amu Darya charged by UNESCO to write a report on the state of the archaeological sites excavated by DAFA until 1978. He knew the area well, having worked between 1972 and 1973 on the Ai Khanum excavation, and in 1977 with Jean-Pierre Carbonel and Thierry Bertoux on mining prospection, particularly looking for copper deposits. This mission enabled him to assess the desire of his Afghan interlocutors to see DAFA resettle which had become obvious, after 25 years of war. Afghanistan, appearing plundered and ravaged in the post-Taliban period had only access to extremely limited means to face the new socio-cultural and historical constraints in rebuilding the country.

Thus, in 2003, DAFA was recreated under the directorship of Roland Besenval. The new team took possession of a house in the Shash Darak district, where the rich archaeological library was redeployed once again, an incomparable working tool unique in the East beyond Beirut and Moscow.

Reinstalling DAFA in Kabul by decision of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Development, was acknowledging the privileged position of Afghanistan from the perspective of historical and archaeological research in Central Asia, while it also showed gratitude and fidelity from France, a country that had trusted its scientists to be the first to open the doors of its past.

In 2004, Roland Besenval decided to put together a major scientific program dedicated to the study of ancient and historical occupations of the Balkh Oasis. The scope of study was broadened from the early protohistoric periods, not very well known except for some material coming from a Bronze Age looted necropolis,[20] to Islamic monuments.

This new program was not focused on a specific site or period anymore, but considered the study of an entire region, from its oldest occupations to the Timurid period, discovering (or rediscovering) with the help of Ph. Marquis (who took the leadership of the DAFA in 2009) sites such as Tepe Zargaran, the Bala Hissar and the ramparts of Balkh, or Cheshm-e Shafa. Other archaeological surveys and studies of the ancient environment were organized with major results especially with the discovery of hundreds of new archaeological sites (from all periods).

Present Activities

Today, DAFA's work and research is conducted within the framework of a Franco-Afghan cooperation agreement signed by the French Embassy in Afghanistan and the Ministry of Information and Culture of the Islamic



Alfred Foucher in 1920, shortly before the creation of DAFA © DAFA

Republic of Afghanistan. The Treaty of friendship and cooperation between France and the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, signed in 2012 and scheduled to last 20 years, strengthens the official presence of the DAFA and gives it a major position in the reconstruction of its history, through programs of training, excavation, and protection and enhancement of the archaeological heritage.

As the only permanent foreign archaeological institution in Afghanistan, DAFA benefits from a recognized expertise, and from the support of Afghan institutions, enabling it to implement cooperation programs. In this context, DAFA supports both bilateral and multilateral projects, mainly in the following fields:

- **Inventory of archaeological heritage:**
  a contribution to the establishment of a map of archaeological sites and historical monuments.

- **Archaeological research:**
  field research conducted in collaboration with Afghan institutions, and with other international partners.

- **Cultural heritage conservation and preservation:**
  the fight against the destruction of sites and antiquities trafficking, protection and restoration of museum collections and ancient monuments.

- **Training and information:**
  training of Afghan and Central Asian young professionals pursuing an activity involving cultural heritage (restoration, museology) or fieldwork (excavations, surveying, drawing,...).

- **Awareness and enhancement of cultural heritage:**
  to restore Afghan cultural heritage to its rightful place of importance within the national entity and within the world's cultural heritage.

These ongoing research programs address the needs and desires of Afghans, of international heritage institutions working in Afghanistan (UNESCO, AKTC, ACKU) and of other foreign missions, consulting scientific choices with them, to not duplicate an effort that should remain common. DAFA archaeological missions are currently ongoing in the Balkh region at the Bala Hissar, Cheshm-e Shafa, and Hadji Piada, but also in Herat at Musala, in Bamiyan at Sharh-i Gholagola, and in Logar at Mes Aynak. In addition, two Franco-Afghan archaeologists have worked or are still working, MM. Zemaryalai Tarzi and Zafar Paiman, excavating Buddhist monasteries, the first in Bamiyan (2002-2012), the second in the Kabul region (since 2004), in collaboration with the Afghan Institute of Archaeology.

Finally, since 2013, the DAFA was granted a wider regional scientific competence, extending to the former Soviet Republics such as Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. The government of Ashraf Ghani currently maintains very good relations with the Central Asian countries and is very aware of their common history, ancient and modern, which links his country to the whole of the territory north of the Hindukush.

The reality of DAFA's action since 2006 has shown that despite complicated local conditions, it was possible to organize substantial field work, and to effectively assist the Afghan authorities in giving them the ability to manage their cultural heritage. DAFA also showed it had the possibility to evolve in its functioning, so as to adapt to the evolution of this always-changing context that is modern Afghanistan.

The physical presence of the DAFA in Afghanistan for nearly a century gives full meaning to the efforts of all those who have contributed to its action, its dynamism and its international recognition.

Endnotes

1. We have to mention the precedent of the creation in 1897 of the French Scientific Delegation in Persia. The document establishing the creation of the DAFA will be largely inspired by the French-Iranian document.

2. Some examples of this sharing system include finds from Ur kept in the British Museum, finds from Babylon kept in the Berlin Museum, or finds from Dura-Europos kept at Yale University in the USA .

3. Alfred Foucher was more an explorer than an archaeologist, an excellent connoisseur of monuments as well as texts. He had significant management experience gained from various official missions, including a position at the head of the l'École française d'Extrême-Orient.

4. They were many, among the companions of Alexander as Nearchus, Aristobulus and Ptolemy, but also professional historians such as Diodorus, Arrian, Quintus quarry, or Polybius, Strabo and Justin.

5. A. Foucher had read in detail the few accounts of travellers who had visited Bactria from the nineteenth century, not noticing anything extraordinary, except for a few Islamic monuments...

6. Les Mémoires de la délégation Archéologique Française en Afghanistan (MDAFA), T.I La vieille route de l'Inde, de Bactres à Taxila, par A. FOUCHER, with the collaboration of Mme E. BAZIN-FOUCHER (2 vol., 1942-1947).

7. This was a period of collective reflection and publications, even if some volumes were published posthumously, after the death of J. Hackin:

   MDAFA, T.II, Les antiquités bouddhiques de Bâmiyân, A. and Y. GODARD and J. HACKIN (1928).

   MDAFA, T. III, Nouvelles recherches archéologiques à Bâmiyân, J. HACKIN with J.

CARL (1933).

MDAFA, T. IV, Les fouilles de Hadda. Stûpas et sites, texte et dessins, J. BARTHOUX (1933).

MDAFA, T. VI, Les fouilles de Hadda. III. Figures et figurines, album photographique, J. BARTHOUX (1930).

MDAFA, T. VII, Recherches archéologiques au col de Khair Khaneh prés de Kâbul, J. HACKIN with J. CARL (1936).

MDAFA, T. VIII, Diverses recherches archéologiques en Afghanistan (1933-1940), J. HACKIN, J.CARL et J. MEUNIE, with analysis of R. GHIRSHMAN and J.-C. GARDIN (1959).

MDAFA, T. X, Shotorak, J. MEUNIE (1942).

MDAFA, T. XII, Bégram. Recherches archéologiques et historiques sur les Kouchans, R. GHIRSHMAN (Le Caire, 1946).

8. MDAFA, T. IX, Recherches archéologiques à Bégram (chantier n°2,1937), J. HACKIN with Mme J.-R. HACKIN (2 vol., 1939).

   MDAFA, T. XI, Nouvelles recherches archéologiques à Bégram (1939-1940), J. HACKIN, with J.-R. HACKIN, J. CARL et P. HAMELIN. Comparative study, J. AUBOYER, V. ELISSEEFF, O. KURZ et Ph. STERN (2 vol., 1954).

9. MDAFA,T. XII, Bégram. Recherches archéologiques et historiques sur les Kouchans, R. GHIRSHMAN (Le Caire, 1946).

   MDAFA, T. XIII, Les Chionites-Hephtalites, R. GHIRSHMAN (Le Caire, 1948).

10. The Afghan government insisted on a reorientation of activities related to its domestic concerns, with more focus on protohistoric period, and Islamic period.

11. MDAFA, T. XIV, Trésors monétaires d'Afghanistan, Raoul CURIEL and Daniel SCHLUMBERGER (1953).

    MDAFA, T. XVI, Le minaret de Djam. La découverte de la capitale des sultans Ghorides (XIIe-XIIIe siècles), Andrè MARICQ and Gaston WIET (1959).

12. In 1936, R. Ghirshman had tried to work on the site of Nad-i Ali, but without significant results.

13. In 1947 he blindly performed several deep holes until the water table, but too narrow (1.5m). We can imagine the difficulty of working correctly in such conditions, which explains that the material



Some of the islamic monuments surveyed by DAFA in the Bamiyan's valleys since 2014 © DAFA/UNESCO

found often lacked a clear stratigraphic context.

MDAFA, T. XV, Céramiques de Bactres, J.-C. GARDIN (1957).

14. MDAFA, T. XXV, Surkh Kotal en Bactriane I : Les temples, Daniel SCHLUMBERGER, Marc LE BERRE and Gérard FUSSMAN (1983).

    MDAFA,T. XXXII, Surkh Kotal en Bactriane. Vol. II : Les monnaies. Les petits objets, Gérard FUSSMAN and Axelle ROUGEULE (1990).

15. MDAFA, T. XXI, Fouilles d'Aï Khanoum I (campagnes 1965, 1966, 1967,1968), rapport préliminaire publié sous la direction de Paul BERNARD (2 vol., 1973).

    MDAFA, T. XXII, Monuments bouddhiques de la région de Caboul. I : le monastère de Guldara, Gérard FUSSMAN and Marc LE BERRE (1976.)

16. GENTELLE, P., 1989, Données aléographiques et fondements de l'irrigation, Prospections archéologiques en Bactriane orientale (1974-1978), vol I, Mémoires de la Mission Archéologique Française en Asie Centrale, 3, Paris : De Boccard, 217 p.

    GARDIN J.-C., 1998, Prospections archéologiques en Bactriane orientale (1974-1978), Volume 3 : Description des sites et notes de synthèse, M.M.A.F.A.C., Tome IX, Paris, Editions Recherche sur les Civilisations.

17. FRANCFORT, H.-P., 1989, Fouilles de Shortughaï : recherches sur l'Asie centrale protohistorique, avec des contributions de Ch. Boisset, L. Buchet, J. Desse, J. Echallier, A. Kermorvant, G. Willcox, Paris : Diffusion de Boccard Mémoires de la Mission Archéologique Française en Asie centrale, 2 vol., 512 p.

18. An administrative structure of the Afghan cultural heritage services (Institute of Archaeology and Museum) based on a Soviet model made obsolete the presence of an institution like DAFA in the country.

19. MDAFA,T. XXIII, Les palettes du Gandhara, Henri-Paul FRANCFORT (1979).

    MDAFA,T. XXIV, Monuments préislamiques de l'Hindukush central, Marc LE BERRE with Jean-Claude GARDIN et Bertille LYONNET, Paris, 1987

    MDAFA,T. XXVI, Fouilles d'Aï Khanoum II : Les propylées de la rue principale, Olivier GUILLAUME (1983).

    MDAFA,T. XXVII, Fouilles d'Aï Khanoum III. Le sanctuaire du temple à niches indentées. 2. Les trouvailles, Henri-Paul FRANCFORT (1984).

    MDAFA, T. XXVIII, Fouilles d'Aï Khanoum IV. Les monnaies hors trésors, Paul BERNARD et Olivier GUILLAUME (1985).

    MDAFA,T. XXIX, Fouilles d'Aï Khanoum V. Les remparts d'Aï Khanoum et monuments associés, Pierre LERICHE (1986).

    MDAFA, T. XXX, Fouilles d'Aï Khanoum VI. Le gymnase, Serge VEUVE (1987).

    MDAFA, T. XXXI, Fouilles d'Aï Khanoum VII. Les petits objets, Olivier GUILLAUME and Axelle ROUGEULE (1987).

    MDAFA,T. XXXIII, Fouilles d'Aï Khanoum VIII. - La trésorerie du palais hellénistique d'Aï Khanoum. L'apogée et la chute du royaume grec de Bactriane, Claude RAPIN. plans of Jean-Claude LIGER and Georges LECUYOT (1992).

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DAFA's team on the archéological site of Shahr-i Ghulghulah (Bamiyan) during the 2014 excavations © DAFA/UNESCO

Recent Archaeological Discoveries at Mes Aynak, Logar Province

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Afghanistan's heritage as we witness it today is the consequence of a fusion of diverse, cultures, civilizations, religions, languages and ethnicities over many millennia in a region that has been a crucible for trade and exchange. Such diversity has come about as a result of extended cultural, political and economic interaction with wider Central Asia, the historic Levant and Europe. Although the term was only first coined in the late 19th century by the explorer Ferdinand von Richthofen (from the German Seidenstraße), the ubiquitous 'Silk Route' (in reality no more than an extensive network of rough caravan tracks) facilitated what was to be centuries of cross-regional interaction. As attested to by the research and evidence provided by a range of historians and archaeologists from Herodotus and Sir Aurel Stein to von Le Coq and Sarianidi, trade and communication flourished along these routes particularly in the early periods of the 5th-8th centuries and continued (in one guise or another) as far as the late 17th and 18th century. This unprecedented commercial and cultural exchange cross a vast swathe of the world left behind a myriad of tangible heritage in the form of archaeological sites and extant monuments, in addition to the more intangible such as the consequences of the assimilation of differing schools of art, language and beliefs from throughout the region.

It is surviving archaeological sites such as Aynak, along with many others in Afghanistan, that can be seen as 'narrators and communicators' of the past activities and influences upon the country and therefore we believe worthy of protection. Aynak represents an exceptional site that deserves to be scientifically excavated, documented and protected (as prevailing economic and political circumstances allow), and should not suffer the same fate as other internationally high profile cultural sites in Afghanistan such as the infamously looted archaeological site of Ai-Khamoun (the 4th century Greco-Bactrian city on the Oxus) or indeed the Greco-Buddhist site of Hadda that whilst benefitting from professional excavations by the Franco-Afghan missions in the 1930's and 70's, was subsequently looted and all but destroyed during the inter-factional fighting of the late 1980's and early 90's. Thorough scientific investigation in addition to the willingness of the authorities to more strictly protect archaeological sites from illegal excavation (organized or opportunistic) are both required for the heritage of the country to survive and to offer future generations further insights into the intricacies of ancient art, religion and culture in the region.

Logar province is situated almost due south of Kabul and is a through route to a number of other provinces with a rich history including Paktika, Khost, Paktia, Ghazni and Maidan Wardak. Logar's specific position near one of the minor or secondary historic trade routes to the east is in part the reason why many districts within the province are host to a wide variety of archaeological sites and monuments, spanning many periods and cultures.

The traveler and writer Betlimous (whom probably lived in the 2nd century CE) referred to the name of 'Logarna' as being an ancient region not too distant from Kabul. This name is not dissimilar to "Loy Ghar" that can be translated in Pashtu as referring to or meaning a 'large mountain'. It could be postulated that this refers to the site of Aynak (although there are a number of far higher peaks around Aynak than the archaeological site itself). The name "Dashtak" is also mentioned in a number of historical documents and appears to be located three

kilometers north-west of Mes Aynak. Research has led us to believe that ancient coins that were in use in Kalengar, Mashi, Kapisa, Parwan and old Kabulistan, were likely to have been minted at Aynak due to the provenance of the copper used in their production.

Some of these coins recovered are from the Kushan period, notably those depicting Kenishka and dating from the 2nd century, whilst a few of the gold and silver coins recovered date from the 4th - 5th century. It is likely that the gold coins were minted specifically for a royal court whilst those of silver for lesser noblemen, with both appearing in small quantities in the archaeological record. These coins were on the whole recovered from the excavations on Kafarya Hill and its immediate environment. A number of Vasudiva Kushan coins (2nd - 3rd century CE) were also discovered. The majority of the coins were minted from copper and were recovered during the excavation of the temple structures on site. The copper coinage appears to have been commonly used by all orders of the prevailing society at that time and hence occurs more readily in archaeological horizons. Most of these base copper coins were dateable to the 2nd-4th century.

It is hoped that the commercial extraction of the copper at Mes Aynak will take into account the cultural value of this irreplaceable site and the Institute of Archaeology, with its international partners, will be looking to make sure that this is the case. Whilst we all readily accept that commercial expansion in Afghanistan is desirable and necessary for the country's long-term development, this should not be entirely at the expense of the nation's heritage. We believe that the regions vast mineral wealth can be successfully extracted whilst also giving adequate time and resources for investigation and documentation of the archaeology.

With this in mind, initial surveys at the site were undertaken by the archaeology department of the Ministry of Information and Culture as early as 2004 and it was at this point it came to our attention that illegal excavation was already taking place on the site.



Sculpture at Mes Aynak, site 045 © Khair Mohammad Khairzada



Front side of the native stupa, Kafirya tepe, 2010 © Ketabkhan Faizi

Some equipment used by the looters were recovered from near the excavations, along with a number of historical items that had not been taken away by them, (these were subsequently sent to the National Museum for analysis and conservation).

During the course of 2009 the first of a series of excavations began at Gul Hamid Hill, (now the location of the Chinese workers camp). The programme of excavation took place over a four month period and made a number of significant discoveries as the result of thorough scientific excavation. These included the extant remains of a temple possibly dating from the 5th-8th century, adjacent cells for the monks, grain storage areas a number of other rooms some of which appeared to be used for the production of the numerous stupas and statues found on site. Many artefacts were also recovered as a direct result of the diligent excavation work including a selection of coins from different mints, elements of statues (in stone and timber), a selection of oil lamps and several rooms where the painted murals had also survived (see Filigenzi and Giunta in this volume). Close inspection of the occupation layers within the excavations also revealed an extensive fire had swept through part of the site and had probably caused considerable destruction. This could be dated to tie in with the arrival of Islam in the region, but it cannot be confirmed whether there is any actual connection between these events.

As a result of the success of the 2009 research and the acquisition of a small degree of funding, during the course of 2010 a further programme of excavation commenced. Excavation works started in Kafariat or the kafar (infidel) hill. This programme continued for over 11 months revealing further temples with differing construction dates to those seen at Gul Hamid Hill in 2009.

The main temple at Kafariat was substantial and had overall dimensions of 80m x 35m observable in a broad rectangular form. Examination of the surviving architecture and associated archaeological contexts revealed that the temple had been built in at least 3 different phases, (or had been expanded twice), over a considerable period of time.

The first phase of construction at the temple complex consisted of the erection of what appears to have been a substantial hall and the associated monk's cells ordered around the central temple space. A fire place (0.70m x 0.70m) surrounded by a seating area was excavated which was located inside a relatively small room (3.0m x 3.0m) to retain the heat and perhaps also used for some form of religious practice. There were further cells for the monks both to the east and west of this fire place. At the northern end of the large hall further excavations revealed evidence for occupation by more monks. To the west of the hall a bathing area and store were identified whilst to the east a statue of a sitting Buddha survived, with further smaller statues depicted in the action of giving gifts or offerings.

In front of the large Buddha statue there was evidence, (in the form of a few surviving steps), for access to a second floor. In this area and elsewhere further statue fragments were found, a number of which had been covered with gold leaf. The presence of gold in the area, (although whether it was being mined at Aynak or not we cannot yet say), was also confirmed by the discovery of a number of other gold artefacts including coins and items of jewelry. Along the middle of the hall coloured paint (red and white) – possibly representing pre-Islam and Islam was also recorded. The paint still appeared to be in good condition, where it had survived. These different coloured pigments would have been created by using both organic and inorganic sources, then fat processed from animal skin or bone would be used as a binding agent so the 'paint' would adhere successfully to whatever surface it was being applied to). Further architectural discoveries included a substantial raised platform in the hall that can possibly be interpreted as the focal point from which addresses were given or from where chanting was led to the assembled monks in the hall.

The temple complex was predominantly constructed from local stone and then bonded with earth and sand, all readily available close by. Some of the walls are of a pakhsa construction, with decoration also undertaken using a mixed mud and straw technique.

Within the north-east area of the central section of the temple, a room with a number of standing statues, with traces surviving of both red and white paint was identified. Some small flakes of blue paints were also found on the 'clothes' of the statues and was possibly also used for highlighting their eyes. We know from historical comparisons that red and blue paint on statues can be used tentatively to date these objects to between the 2nd - 4th centuries (the zenith of the Kushan period), whilst the white paint is mostly restricted to the 5th century and later. Unfortunately, primarily as a result of exposure to the elements over many centuries, the upper torsos and heads of the statues have not survived. However, the abdomen and legs of these statues are in a reasonable condition, although they do require immediate attention if they are to be effectively conserved and preserved for future study and display.

A particular artifact of note found within this room was a small (20cm high), seated Buddha carved from timber that had been placed between the legs of a larger stone sculpture. This is of specific interest as the use of wood in the construction of such pieces was rare in this region, (mainly due to a lack of woodland resources), and locally stone was commonly used. It has been suggested that this wood carved artifact may have been a gift to the monks of this region and was sent from elsewhere. This wooden Buddha has been provisionally dated to the 5th-7th century CE, and is now on display in the National Museum of Afghanistan in Kabul. The only other timber artefacts currently on display are the Nuristan collection - a wide selection of pre-Islamic cult figures collected from Nuristan province, where wood carving was commonly practiced, although this is not to infer that the Aynak wooden Buddha was made in Nuristan.

A further area with the local name of Shamar tepe, was also excavated during this most recent programme of works and is worthy of specific mention as the research

revealed the remains of a so far, unique stucco statue. Although only a small section of the original statue survived (the left hand), what was unusual about this fragment was that an iron framework or structure had been finely constructed, to which the stucco had subsequently been attached. Currently excavations in this area are on hold as Shamar tepe does not lie within the area of Aynak that is immediately at risk, but further research will resume at a later date, hopefully with a view to recovering more of this not often seen sculptural technique.

Looking at the second phase of the complex situated to the east, the central impressive stupa measured 11.8m x 11.0m, once more constructed from locally acquired stone with sand, earth and occasionally ash used as a mortar. It is thought that the use of this particular type of stone (predominantly schist) and the specific construction technique employed on the site is possibly more resistant to earthquake tremors, common in the region, although this has not been scientifically tested.

This type of stupa design and usage of slithers of schist can be observed elsewhere in the region including on monuments in Ghuldar Shiwaki, Kunjaki Paghman, Tepe Narinj and also in Alghta Wardak province. The structural integrity of this particular style of stupa design is very high. The architect appears to have been familiar with the differing qualities of certain types of building materials and knew when and how to employ them, however, his use of such materials for the sake of stability and longevity did not noticeably compromise the aesthetic quality of the stupas. Careful excavation also revealed that often, in the middle inner section of each stupa, there was usually a 'sacred box' or other such receptacle for retaining precious and holy items. These might include valuable coinage or indeed remnants of a deceased monk (such as hair, bones, ash and etc.). The most common item to be found in such 'sacred boxes' is often the ashes of well-respected, aged or otherwise important monks from the community.

The stupas made from schist often vary in shape and style and can be circular or rectangular in plan, or indeed a combination of both. These were always surrounded by the communal halls which would have been used daily by the monastic community for the undertaking of religious ritual and ceremony, but also by travelling monks on pilgrimage. In Bamiyan province (if the cliff face around the two Buddha niches are observed closely), hallways, stairs and corridors can be seen around both niches that would have in the past allowed pilgrims to 'walk around' the Buddha from one side to the other. This ritual of walking around the head or the body of the Buddha was undertaken in sets of seven, not unlike Muslims on Hajj circumambulating (the tawaf) seven times counter-clockwise around the Kaaba, highlighting the often shared processes undertaken at differing holy sites around the world.

In general terms the stupas were constructed, and sometimes faced, with stone, before being decorated with a mud plaster. The bricks used measured for these second phase stupas were of a differing size to earlier periods (0.36m x 0.36m) whilst the stone paved areas around the stupas where set with stone resistant to wear and tear by the many thousands of pilgrims that would have walked around them over the centuries.

During the third period of development the complex shows the construction of further rooms and other additional buildings outside of the main temple area. Again locally quarried stone was employed along with pakhsa and mud-brick, as used on the temples themselves. However, despite rigorous excavation and analysis, the team has not been able to identify other halls or the main eastern access associated with the temple complex. The eastern section of the site has been illegally excavated on a considerable scale and this may allow us to infer, in part, that the hallways or some other significant architectural features associated with the complex was present in this area.

Taking the stupas at Kunjai Paghman and Tepe Narijan as comparable examples, we can see that the steps of the temples were always built orientated towards the sunrise and this should also hold true for the stupas at Aynak, and that with each new phase of building and development, protective walls were continually added around the temples for their protection. Artefacts retrieved from this area included decorated timber work, numerous coins, ceramics and a number of well-preserved mural paintings. The highlights of the finds though were the seated wooden Buddha (discussed earlier) and the remains of the giant Buddha statues that may in their original state have been in the region of 4 - 5m high. Also of considerable interest was a surviving foot from a further Buddha statue.

The surviving foot alone had a height of 0.97m, from which experts have estimated that the full height of the statue may have reached somewhere between 9 - 10m.

Surviving ceramic evidence, in the form of both whole vessels and sherds, also showed that some of the designs had Greek influence, notably the 1st - 2nd CE goblets common during the Kushan and later periods.

As we write, excavations at Mes Aynak continue in numerous parts of the 'at risk' zone and on a daily basis we are making new discoveries about the community that lived and died over many centuries at Aynak, and the contributions they have subsequently made to the history and culture of both the province and Afghanistan as a whole.

The Institute of Archaeology is grateful for the support it continues to receive from its many international partners, both at the site and elsewhere, and to the donors currently funding this programme of scientific research. Whilst the length of duration of the project is still uncertain, we all hope that there will be time to do justice to the legacy of Mes Aynak, and that the history and the stories we uncover will inspire individuals everywhere to look again at their cultural heritage – to recognize it and to value it. We also hope that this project will ultimately prove that national economic progress and the adequate protection of a finite heritage resource are not necessarily mutually exclusive. We believe that

in time this project can serve as a valuable example for addressing similar circumstances in the future, as the areas of commercial development and cultural preservation in Afghanistan come to cross each other's paths more frequently.

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Noh Gombadân Hâji Piyâda Mosque, an Architectural Chef-d'oeuvre in Balkh Considered as a Potential World Heritage Cultural Landscape

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Balkh, in northern Afghanistan, is known as the"Mother of cities" (Omm al-Belâd). Amongst its remaining monuments, the small Noh-Gonbadân Mosque, often referred to as the Hâji-Piyâda Mosque, stands out as a priceless pearl. Its eminence as such is, nevertheless, at present restricted to a small circle of specialists. Inscription on the World Heritage List will bring to the monument its due international recognition. Above all, it will open the way, not only to World Heritage status for other monuments and sites of Balkh (ancient Bactria) but, more importantly, to the recognition of Balkh as a World Cultural Landscape. In this perspective, first the Noh-Gonbadân Mosque will be briefly presented in the light of the latest archaeological investigations undertaken there by the present author; and then, the following short exposé will seek to prove that Balkh indeed constitutes a cultural landscape and not merely a collection of dispersed monuments, ruins and sites.

I. Noh-Gonbadân/ Hâji-Piyâda Mosque

Chasing the Sassanid Emperor Yazdgerd III, the Arab invaders arrived in Balkh around 642 A.D., but the construction of the first key Islamic monument, that of the main or the Jâmeᶜ Mosque in that city, took place nearly a century later in 118/736. Some ten years had passed since the decision in 107/ 725-26 of the Muslim ruler of Khorassan, Asad b. 'Abd-Allâh Qasri, to rebuild the city of Balkh which lay in ruins in the aftermath of Arab invasion. The reconstruction was entrusted to a Barmak (Paramaka), the Superintendent whose family has been hereditarily in charge of administrating all the estates belonging to the Buddhist monasteries. These monasteries had been truly prosperous until the Islamic invasions and controlled vast domains. Under the new rulers, the recently converted Barmak Family soon became the pillar of the Islamic empire then in control of the greater part of the known world. It was Fazl the Barmakid, one the most brilliant members of that family who, as the Governor of the eastern part of the Muslim Empire, came to Balkh in 178/ 794. There, on the lands of Now-Bahâr (Nava-Vihâra) monastery and stupas administrated by his ancestors, he built the Namâzgâh of Balkh - known as Noh - Gonbadân, the future Hâji - Piyâda Mosque.

As early as 1981, the ruins of that magnificent little mosque were submitted by the Afghan government to UNESCO to be listed as a World Heritage Property. The following years of upheaval in Afghanistan interrupted the inscription procedure which was revived by the Afghan authorities and UNESCO in 2010. The author of this paper was designated to undertake the necessary studies and prepare the inscription dossier. The DAFA (Délégation Archéologique Française en Afghanistan), under the active directorship of Dr. Roland Besenval, had already resumed its decades-long investigations in Balkh in 2003, with the present author in charge of the Hâji - Piyâda site. His departure in October 2009 caused further disruption at archaeological and restoration levels-already felt in 2010 when conducting the archaeological excavations there. Future harmonious planning for the site also suffered, but it is to be hoped that resuming the inscription procedure under the authority of the Afghan Ministry of Information and

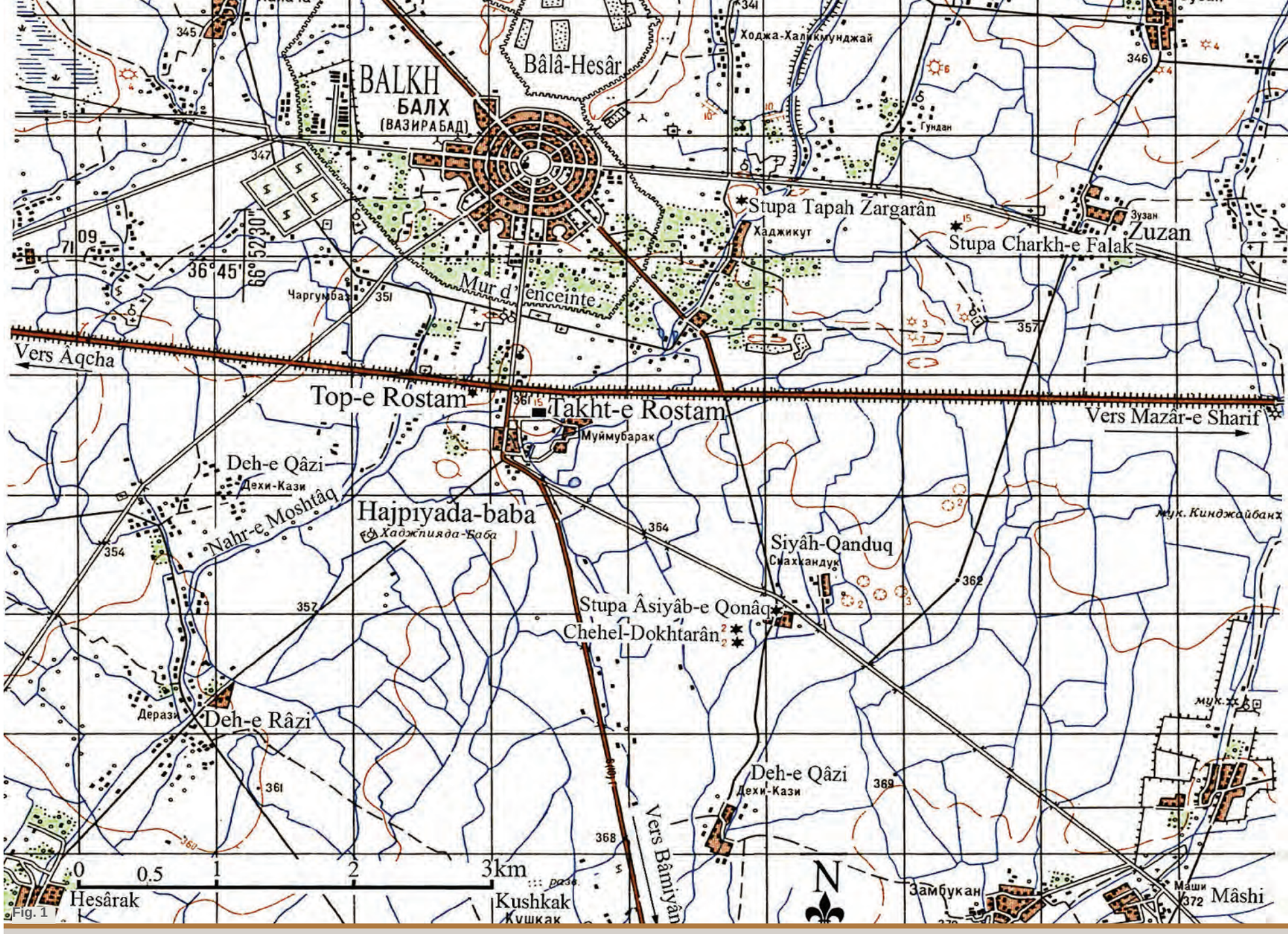


Fig. 1 Balkh city, its walls and the immediate surrounding monuments including the stupas, the Noh-Gonbadân/ Hâji-Piyâda namâzgâh mosque and the irrigation network (C. Adle, slightly modified and completed drawing based on 1/50 000 Soviet maps of Afghanistan).

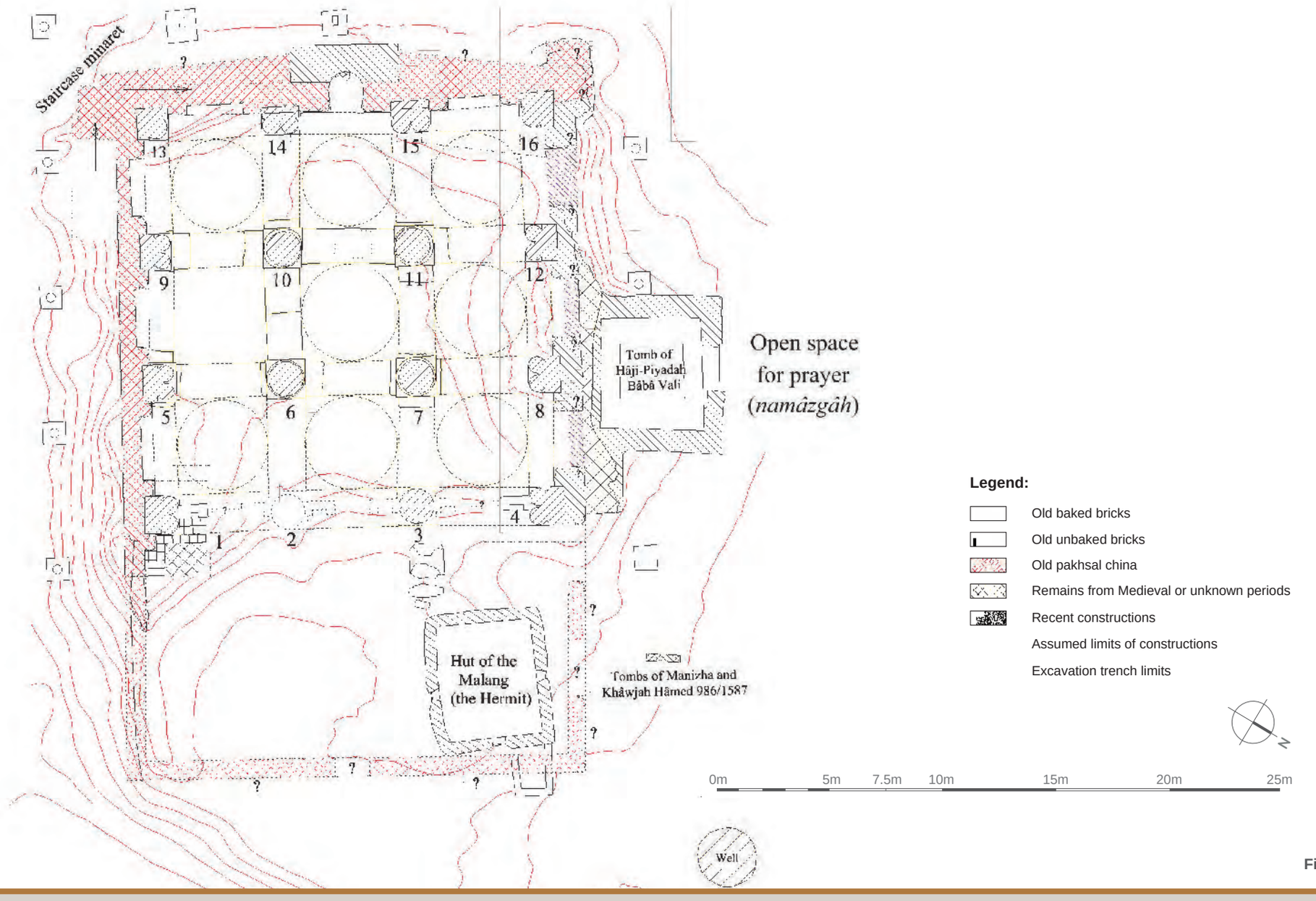


Fig. 2

Fig. 2: Balkh. Noh-Gonbadân/ Haji-Piyâda *namâzgâh* Mosque built in 178-79/ 794-95 by Fazl the Barmakid, Governor of the Eastern Abbasid Islamic empire. Plan drawn by C. Adle at the end of his 2010 archaeological excavations.

Culture with the assistance of UNESCO will clarify the situation. Above all, the inclusion of Noh-Gonbadân on the World Heritage List will focus world attention on Balkh and facilitate the launching of well thought through archaeological, restoration and revitalization programs leading to the inscription of the area on the World Heritage List as a Cultural Landscape. The registration itself will raise local and international awareness and thus greatly contribute to the safeguarding of the elements constituting the unique cultural landscape of Balkh.

The Noh-Gonbadân Mosque is situated some 5kms southwest of the present modern centre of Balkh and only 3kms from the Now-Bahâr Stupa (Top-e Rostam) and its quasi symmetrical gigantic counterpart, Takht-e Rostam (Figs. 1 and 2). They are all situated on lands having belonged in the past to the Buddhist Balkh administered by the Barmaks. As mentioned above, as of 118/ 736, in the course of reconstruction under the direction of a Barmak – Balkh was provided with a Jâme^{c} or Cathedral Mosque. However, it did not have a namâzgâh. Namâzgâh (or mosallâ as it is called outside Greater Khorassan and Transoxiana) designates a vast flat open space capable of receiving crowds of devotees gathering outside the town to perform their religious obligations. It is often marked with just a simple *mihrab* wall. This kind of collective prayer corresponds to a tradition going back to the Prophet himself and is primarily held on the occasion of the main Islamic Feasts. The function of the namâzgâh explains the plan of Noh-Gonbadân (Fig. 2): its square 20 x 20m plan is closed on two sides and open on the two others: one towards a very small, richly decorated, princely court (Figs. 2 and 5), the other towards the vast, crowded, popular open space (Fig. 2).

Inspired by local architecture - and not by imported western Islamic models as it has been assumed the original building would have had a flat roof, in all probability supported by wooden columns resting on lithic bases. A nearly similar square plan with columns dividing its inner space into nine equal squares was discovered in Balkh in 2007, during the Afghan-French excavations (Fig. 3). The construction is attributed by its excavators to the Kushano-Sassanid period and can be dated more precisely to the 5th - 7th centuries, thanks to the paintings surrounding it. This kind of flat roofed construction was however judged technically out dated by Fazl the Barmakid who surely personally ordered that it be replaced by cupolas. He belonged to a family of great builders.

The richly decorated north-eastern façade of the namâzgâh Mosque opened into a sumptuous small courtyard for the private use of Fazl and his Court (Figs. 2, 4 - 5), while the more sober one on the North - West gave way to the large public prayer ground (Fig. 2). In principle, no minaret was to be seen on this space as that fundamental religious element was to be found on the top of the mosque as a “staircase minaret”, the only known example of its kind in this part of the world. On the other hand, the public space was most probably provided with a *mihrab* wall on its south-western edge to show the crowds to which direction they should turn when praying. Perhaps future archaeological excavations, or geomagnetic investigations, will reveal the precise whereabouts of that architectural element.

The *mihrab* of the mosque itself, revealed by the excavations, not only shows a rare, if not unique, example of the horseshoe form in the region, but also exposes a masterpiece of decoration in sculptured stucco despite its ruinous state (Figs. 6-7). In fact, the sculptured stucco decor covers the entire mosque from the top to the soil surface, including the columns and the inside of the fallen cupola (Fig. 8). The adornment also embellishes the surface of the exterior wall surrounding the small princely court (Fig. 5) and the partition screen separating that court from the interior of the mosque (Figs. 5 and 8).

In postulating that the wall decorations at Samarra in Mesopotamia - the Capital city of the Abbasid dynasty from 221/ 836 to 276/ 889 - epitomized the type of adornment attributed to that city, now in ruins, many scholars have concluded that all decorations of that


Fig. 3


Fig. 4

Fig. 3: Balkh. Kushano-Sassanid square room (slightly more than 7 x 7m) provided with four columns dividing its inner space into nine equal squares. Circa 5th -7th C. Afghan-French (DAFA) excavations, 2007-08
© R. Besenval
Fig. 4: Balkh. The main façade of the Noh-Gonbadân/ Haji-Piyiâda Mosque in 1975. View looking towards the SSE taken by Pr. Deborah Klimburg-Salter. The present corrugated iron roof which now shelters the building came to exist two years later. It was constructed in 1977 by the Afghan ministry of Information and Culture
© Klimburg-Salter 1975.





Fig. 6: The remains of the horseshoe *mihrab* of the Noh-Gonbadân/ Haji-Piyiâda Mosque. The back of the *mihrab* has been destroyed by robbers, who pierced the section visible under the feet of the standing man and the plastered floor in search of buried treasure © C. Adle



Fig. 7: Noh-Gonbadân/ Haji-Piyiâda Mosque, the remains of the southern wall of the *mihrab*. The decoration in sculptured plaster is strongly reminiscent of that of Samarra, but Noh-Gonbadân, constructed by Fazl the Barmakid in 794-94, pre-dates the Capital City of the Abbasids which was in use between 836 and 889 © C. Adle



Fig. 5: Noh-Gonbadân/ Haji-Piyiâda Mosque. The joint between the richly decorated south-eastern wall of the court paved with baked bricks and the main (NE) facade of the mosque facing its court on the right (column 1 on the plan, fig. 2). The screen facade wall between column 1 and 2 is also visible on the right in the lower corner of the picture © C. Adle
Fig. 8: Noh-Gonbadân/ Haji-Piyiâda Mosque. The screen wall in the facade separating the mosque from its princely small court is visible on the right. The richly decorated big piece on the floor belongs to the fallen cupola covering this section of the building © C. Adle

type were thus at best contemporary, if not posterior to those of that city. Consequently, Noh-Gonbadân, whose style is indeed mostly similar to that of Samarra, was dated as of the mid 9th century onwards. That is to forget that a style of decoration as sophisticated as that found in Samarra or Noh - Gonbadân could not be the fruit of a spontaneous generation and that it had to come as the result of an evolution. In this case, an evolution which had its roots in Sassanid art taken up by the first Islamic buildings and later in the first Jâmec Mosque in Isfahan; or in Bagdad, the new Abbasid capital next to Ctesiphon, the center of the Sassanid empire.

In fact, the decoration of Noh - Gonbdân is not a copy of Samarra or vice versa, they both are the result of one and the same evolution, with Noh - Gonbdân being slightly anterior to Samarra. With Samarra, exemplifying this precise style, now razed to the ground, Noh - Gonbadân remains a unique standing example of one of the most glorious periods of Islamic civilization and in the world. As such, its place is nowhere but on the World Heritage Properties List.

II. Balkh as a Cultural Landscape

Article 1 of the World Heritage Convention refers to sites representing the “combined works of nature and of man”. Paragraph 47 of Operational Guideline for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention adds that cultural landscapes “are illustrative of the evolution of human society and settlement over time, under the influence of the physical constraints and/or opportunities presented by their natural environment

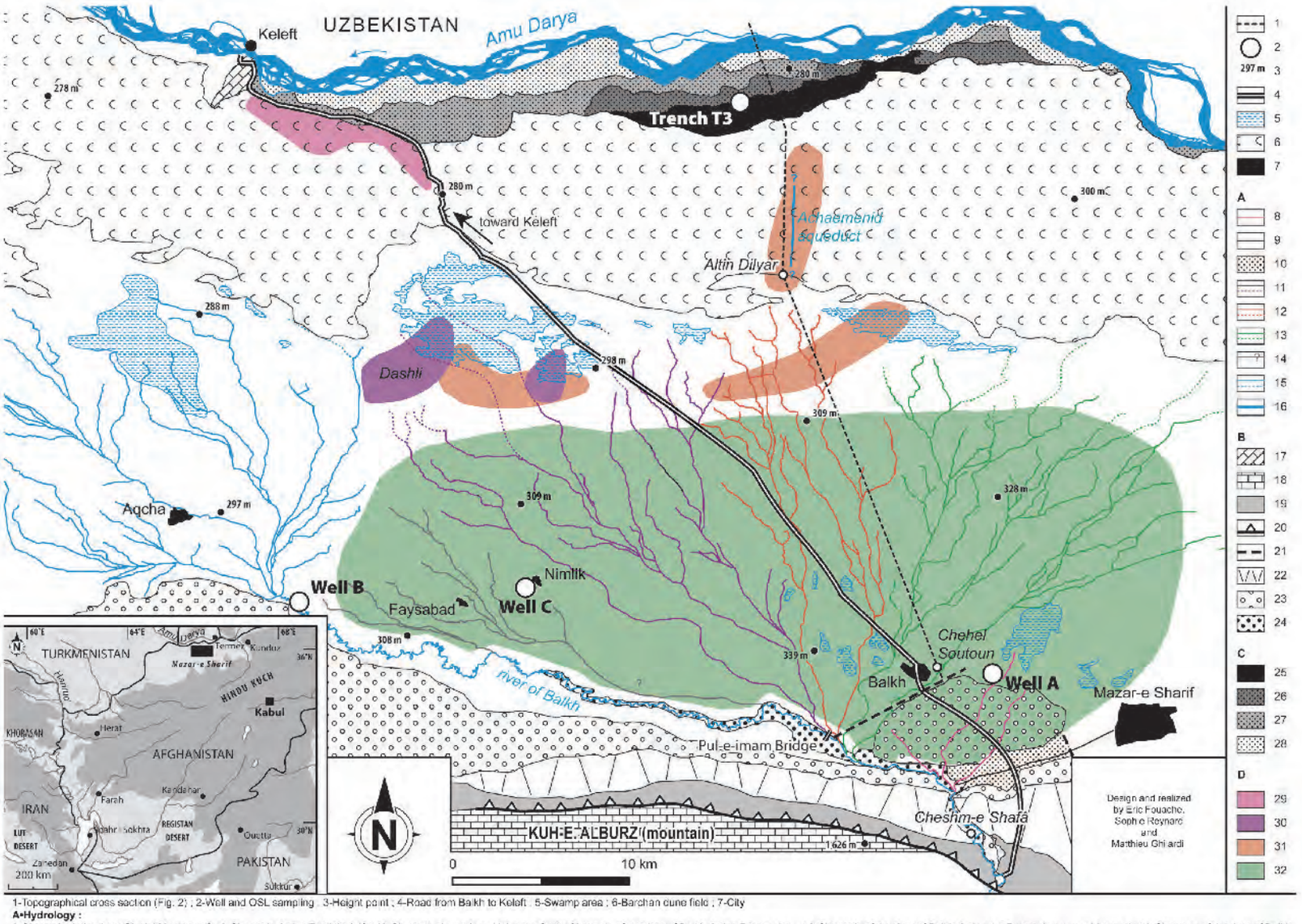


Fig. 9

Fig. 9: Geomorphological map of Balkh region covering its cultural landscape, courtesy of Prof. Eric Fouache



Fig. 10


Fig. 11

Fig. 10: Altyn Dilyar Fort floating in a sea of shifting sands, north of Balkh. Settlement attributed to the Achaemenian period (6th-4th c. B.C). The central fort - slightly longer than 100 x 100m – stands inside a roughly 200 x 200m square wall. These two constructions are in turn surrounded by a circular defensive external wall which is not visible in this picture. Its diameter measures about 700m © aerial photograph by Raphaël Dallaporta.
Fig. 11: A section of the aqueduct in the east of Altyn Dilyar settlement attributed to the Achaemenian period (6th-4th c. B.C). The aqueduct is about four meters large © aerial photograph by Raphaël Dallaporta.

and of successive social, economic and cultural forces, both external and internal." Balkh represents a cultural landscape seen as the harmonious result of interaction between man and nature within a sustainable model of development still functioning today as does Bam (Iran) already inscribed as a World Heritage Landscape property. The architectural and historical outstanding universal value of the Noh - Gonbadân/ Hâji - Piyâda Mosque, as exposed in the previous lines, appears self - evident, indeed, the same goes for most of the other cultural and natural sites situated in Balkh and its surroundings. They are representative of a clearly defined geo - cultural region and illustrate the essential as well as distinct cultural elements of Balkh. They do not correspond to a collection of scattered archaeological vestiges and ruins, but to sites born by and through the conditions imposed by nature modeled by man's hand.

Balkh displays on its lands a continuous presence of men from the Neolithic period up to now. It is indeed a true cultural landscape as, unlike for instance Susa in Iran or nearby Sumerian, Assyrian or Babylonian cities in Mesopotamia, Balkh does not show millenary layers of culture accumulated vertically, but sequential cultural periods developing mainly horizontally from the west towards the east. Thus, a panoramic, developing, cultural landscape has been formed - illustrating the beneficial consequences of sustainable interactions between men and nature for a greater advancement of scientific and cultural achievements of mankind. Furthermore, each consecutive panorama in Balkh exemplifies a different period of civilization, from an early dawn about 7000 years ago in the Neolithic period up to the present day. At the present state of archaeological research (unfortunately suspended as of the end of 2010), the Neolithic period would seem present only by lithic artefacts found next to Amu Darya (the River Oxus); if any exist along the River Balkh (Balkhâb), they are buried several meters below the present level of the Balkh Plain under the river's millenary deposits (Fig. 9).

Fixed and predetermined by the successive courses of Balkhâb and the countless manmade streams and channels branching from that river, the Bronze Age (3rd millennium – 1st half of the 2nd millennium) sites are to be found in an area north-west of the present city of Balkh (watercourses marked in purple on geomorphological map, Fig. 9). The next period, with its streams marked in orange, covers an area north-north-west of Balkh when that city became the first regional Capital of the Achaemenians in Bactria (6th c. – 4th c. B.C.). It then passed to Alexander the Great (329 B.C.) and his successors. The waves of Balkhâb in those days lapped the walls of the newly born administrative city. It was perhaps centered on the South and South-Western side of the present circular Bâlâ - Hesâr (Figs. 1, 12) in the Arg area (the Citadel). During the following periods of Kushan, Sassanid or local rulers (ending in the 1st half of the 7th C.), the active channels moved still further east before the river changed its course, perhaps sometime around the 8th century A.D. It then took its present westward direction, giving birth to the town of Aqcha and its neighborhoods. The movement of the bed(s) of the Balkh River did not necessarily mean the death of the settlements on the previous old bed(s), some could survive with a lesser water flow, others thanks to the construction of canals or other means of irrigation. The discovery of remains which are recognizable as vestiges of an aqueduct dating back to the Achaemenian period (6th c.– 4th c. B.C.) testifies to the high degree of hydraulic engineering achieved at that time.

The aqueduct belongs to the channel system directed due north and ending up in a sector densely populated during the Bactro-Achaemenian period, indicating that the aqueduct also dates back to that epoch. The extension of channels further north after the Bactro - Achaemenian fortress of Altyn Dilyar flow through a narrow band of concentration of small 1st millennium B.C. sites before reaching the Amu Dariya (Fig. 10). Satellite views of the area clearly show that the waters of Balkâb did, indeed, in those days reach the Amu Dariya (see, for instance, Google Earth). The remains of a four meter wide, linear construction, identified as Altyn Dilyar's aqueduct is to be found in that area and extend onwards over a distance of three kilometers (Fig. 11). This 2,500 year old relic,

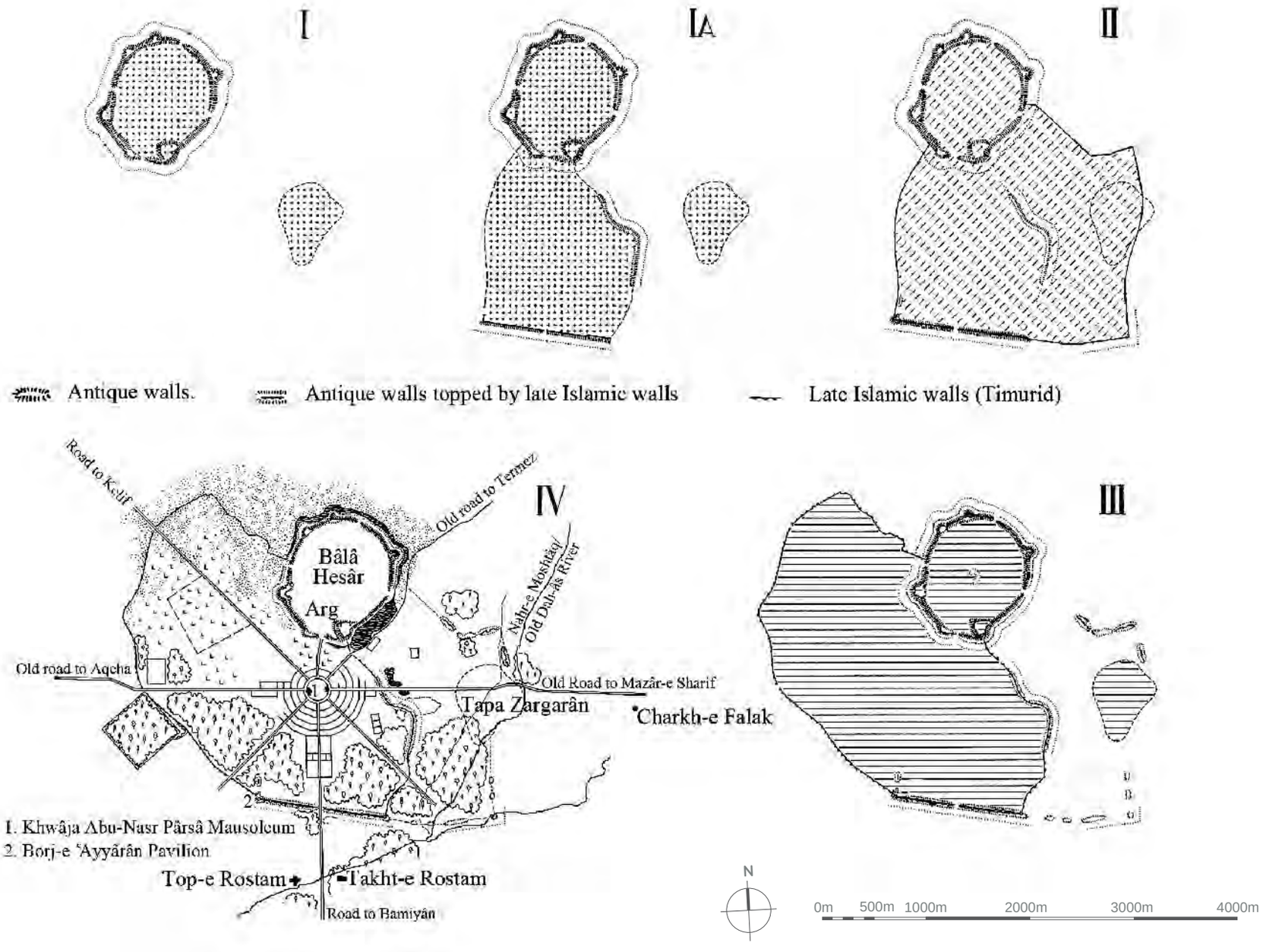


Fig. 12

Fig. 12: Tentative sketch of the evolution of Balkh and its successive walls based mainly on drawings made by Marc Le Berre (DAFA): I. Balâ-Hesâr (Acropolis), probably built on Achaemenid foundations (6th-4th c. B.C.); IA. Middle Lower City, possibly contemporary to the Period I, or/ and Hellenistic era (Seleucid/ Greco-Bactrian Kingdoms (4th – 250, 250- c. 130-125 BC.), the course of Dah-âs River/ Balkhâb in those days may have fixed the eastern winding path of that wall; II. Kushano-Sasanid extensions (4th - 5th c., built perhaps on older foundations); III. Timurid, with extensive restorations under the Shaybanids (15th -16th c.); IV. New Balkh after 1934, dominated by its circular streets and eight radial arteries.



Fig. 13. Balkh. View of its Arg (Citadel) in the southern side of the Bâlâ-Hesâr/ Acropolis. The circular walls of the Acropolis are visible in the background to the right of the picture © C. Adle



Fig. 14. Exterior view of ramparts of Balkh in South-East of Bâlâ-Hesâr. The older part of the visible wall, attributed to the Kushan period, is enveloped in an imposing early Islamic reinforcement (Pascal Mongne excavations, October 2006 © C. Adle

or fossil human - engineered waterway, is the perfect example of a tool used by men to tame a hostile nature, showing a genuine illustration of “combined works of nature and men” designated in Article 1 of the World Heritage Convention as the main characteristic of a Cultural Landscape.

One of the most astonishing features of Balkh is the ensemble formed by its immense circular Bâlâ - Hesâr (i.e. Upper Fortified Enclosure) and the ramparts surrounding the town and its ruins (Figs. 1. 12). The Bâlâ - Hesâr, or the Acropolis, in the north of Balkh’s walls, displays - in its deepest layers of occupation - probably the oldest remnants of Balkh. Achaemenid (6th-4th c. B.C.) deposits have been recorded there by DAFA during its heyday up to 2009. Its circular plan is presumably inherited from that era, while the present Timurid-founded circumference wall reuses large sections of the massive Hellenistic ramparts. Defending the capital city of the Euthydemid independent kingdom, in 208-206 B.C., it withstood the attacks and sieges of the Seleucids who were claiming for themselves the eastern heritage of Alexander the Great. The east - west sections of the walls, standing on an enormous earth embankment due south of the circular Acropolis, are thought to have been erected in the latter period of the Greek kingdom (ended c. 130 B.C); while the other walls, to the south - west, west and north - west - at present standing at ground level and not on embankments - are recognizably Timurid (15th c.). They have been much repaired under the Shaybanids in the 16th century. As to the other remains on the ramparts, and only partially visible in the north-east, east and south - east of the circular Bâlâ - Hesâr, they are attributable to the Kushans, but were probably built on Hellenistic foundations. Also from the Greek period, dates a gigantic wall built as protection against the nomadic incursions along the northern edge of the oasis, where its remains have been traced for a length of 60 kms. It is mentioned as still being in use by the historian Yacqubi (276/ 889), and it protected other important towns, particularly Delbarjin (Greek-Kushan period) and Zâdiyân-Dowlatâbâd (Saljuq period, Fig. 19).

The timid Achaemenid presence revealed to date by archaeological excavations in Balkh leads one to wonder if they used that city as their only seat of government.

Considering the weak defensive position of the town built on a flat plain, the question arises as to whether the rulers and their armies did not, in fact give at least occasionally, preference to a site close by in the area known today as Cheshma Shafâ' (Healer Spring, Figs. 9, 15-16). The unbearable summer heat in Balkh combined with an already unhealthy climate during that period, give still further grounds to believe that its population moved, at least partially, to Cheshma Shafâ' during the hot season. Until recently, when the sun blazed upon the Balkh plain, its rulers and whoever could afford it took refuge in the nearby southern mountains. In Cheshma Shafâ', only about 30kms South - East of Balkh, strongholds high up on the mountain dominate the Balkhâb river where it emerges onto the plain. They command both the road which linked Bactria to India through Bâmiyân, and a sizable fortified town spread out on the shores of the Balkhâb. Zarathustra (Zoroaster), the prophet of the "fire worshippers", is traditionally linked to Bactra - Zariaspa where it is reputed he was killed. The DAFA archaeological team, led by Roland Besenval, has discovered a monumental element sculpted out of a single piece of stone, which its discoverers claim to be a fire altar. Could Cheshma Shafâ' be Bactra - Zariaspa? The cultural landscape of Balkh reflects not only Zoroastrianism, but even more so Buddhism and, of course, Islam.

Indeed some of the most imposing monumental vestiges of Balkh's cultural landscape are its Buddhist architectural remains. New AMS 14C dating method successfully tested by the present author on unbaked bricks in Noh-Gonbadân Mosque and in Bam (Iran) with UNESCO's support should lead to precise dating of all these monuments amongst others and their classification. The best known of the Buddhist remains are the Top - e Rostam and Takht - e Rostam facing each other just south of the southern walls of Balkh (Figs. 1 and 18). Others, also in ruin, are better preserved and more explicit. Such is for instance the case of the stupa known by the Westerners as Charkh-e Falak (i.e. Revolutions of Celestial Bodies/ Carousel, reference to a windmill and its sails) 3kms east of Balkh on the old road to Mazâr-e Sharif (Figs. 1 & 17). It does not really have a name locally, but sometimes the nearby villagers refer to it as the Borj-eYak-Lenga (One Legged Tower), as if they were expecting it to have two! It is true that the asymmetrical position of the upper part of that stupa begs to be mirrored by an opposite, similar, counterbalancing one. Beside the twin stupas of Top-e Rostam / Takht-e Rostam and perhaps Charkh - e Falak (Borj-e Yak-Lenga), there are those known as Chehel-Dokhtarân (Forty Maidens) and Âsyâb - e Qonak (Qonak Windmill) about 4 kms southeast of Balkh on the old road to Bâmiyân (Fig. 1).

After the arrival of the Arab invaders at Balkh as of 642 A.D, and specially their installation within the walls of the city in 107/725-26, Islam started to gain supremacy over Buddhism. Other religious or ethnic groups were no doubt also present, but they constitute minorities. In the early Islamic centuries, two of the gates of Balkh, the Bâb Henduwân and the Bâb al-Yahud, were named after the Indians and the Jews of Balkh - attesting to the multicultural character of that city, in which "Fire Worshipers" (Zoroastrians/Mazdeists …) were also present. The first important monument to be constructed by the Muslims was the Jâmeᶜ Mosque in 118/ 736, but before that, the town was reconstructed, as has already been mentioned, by a member of the Barmakid family now converted to Islam. The Jâmeᶜ Mosque was demolished by the Mongols searching in vain for treasures supposedly hidden beneath its pillars. In 618/1221, under the command of Chengiz Khân himself, the Mongols laid to waste what had not been demolished previously by the invasion of Oghghuz nomad Turks in 548/1153. It seems that the only monument which today can be ascribed to the pre-Mongol Islamic period is the single-chambered, domed mausoleum known as Bâbâ Rawshanâ'i. It is located in the South-West of the Bâlâ-Hesâr and can be dated to the first half of the 11th century. The remains of the other pre-Mongol monuments of Balkh, if they still exist under the present town, including those of the Jâmeᶜ Mosque, have not been discovered; however, the minaret at Zâdiâyn, at about 25kms north of Balkh, is a reminder of their


Fig. 15


Fig. 16

Fig. 15: View from the flank of Kâfar-Qalᶜa stronghold, where the Fire altar stands (see the next picture), towards the North with the Balkh plain on the horizon. The remains of a fortified town cover the flat area in the valley marked by the meanders of the Balkhâb River. Cheshma Shafâ' spring and its trees stand by the river on the left of the picture © C. Adle.
Fig. 16: Achaemenid Fire altar (6th-4th c. B.C) on the heights dominating Cheshma Shafâ' and its fortified settlements © C. Adle.



Fig. 17. Stupa Charkh-e Falak, 3 kms east of Balkh. The Muslims had provided this eastern façade of the stupa with a *mihrab* transforming the Buddhist temple into a country mosque. The remains of the *mihrab* are still visible above the head of the man standing on the right © C. Adle.

magnificence in the cultural landscape of Balkh (Fig. 19). The broken, but still beautiful Saljuq minaret, was built by the vizier Abu-Jaᶜfar in 502/ 1108-09.

Centuries later, under the Timurid and Shaybanid dynasties, Balkh recovered at least partially from the ruin and destruction wrought by the Oghghuz and especially by the Mongols. Most of the monuments of that period have also disappeared, but the Green Dome (Gonbad-e Sabz), i.e. the shrine of Khwâja Abu - Nasr Parsâ, is still standing as a legacy of their magnificence (Fig. 20).

More or less intact amidst the ruins of Balkh and in the middle of the modern town, stands the great mausoleum of Khwâja Abu-Nasr Parsâ constructed in1462-63 (Fig. 20). It has seen extensive renovations and restoration programs in later periods. Parsâ (d. 865/ 1460-61) was the son and the spiritual heir of Khwâja Mohammad Parsâ (d. 1420), one of the principal disciples of Bahâ al-Din Naqshband (d. 1389). The latter being the founder of the Naqshbandiya, one of the most important Islamic spiritual mystic orders borne in Central Asia. By the mid15th century, Abu Nasr was the preeminent representative of the residents of Balkh.

The Parsâ Shrine had a considerable influence on the architectural development of Balkh. The late 16th century and early 17th centuries saw the transformation of the area of the city surrounding the Parsâ complex, with the creation of a vast educational and residential district. By the end of the 17th century, at least six large madrasas were associated with the shrine in its close neighborhood. Only one of these schools has left any traces at all other than in written reports. Beside one of its ruined gates, there are also a few pictures of the Sobhân - Qoli Khân Madrasa. These educational institutions were the following, listed in chronological order:

1. “Madresa - ye Mohit / Encircling madrassa”.

2. “Hazrat-e Khodâvandi” madrassa attributed to Abd al - Wali Parsâ (both madrassas 1 and 2 prior to mid-16th c.).

3. Abd-Allâh Khân Madrassa (Madresa-ye Âliya) built prior to 992/ 1584 near the Pârsâ shrine.

4. Nazar Mohammad Khân Madrassa constructed sometime around 1612 and facing the Madrasa-ye Âliya.

5. Allâh-Yâr Bi Qataghan Madrassa erected shortly before 1616 next to Madrasa-ye Âliya.

6. The Sobhân-Qoli Khân Madrassa, built as of 1070/ 1660, in front of the grand entry to Abu Nasr Parsâ Mazâr constructed by Abd al-Mocmen in 1590’s.

The 18th to 20th centuries witnessed the decline of Balkh, which shrunk to the rank of a large village. It lost its status as an administrative centre in 1282/1866 in favour of Mazâr-e Sharif, 20kms to the East. Mazâr-e Sharif is hallowed thanks to a magnificent mausoleum recognized by many devotees as being erected on the true spot where Ali, the First Imam of the Shiites and the 4th Caliph for the Sunnites, is buried. As to Balkh, the construction of a new town in the middle of its ruins did not really help its revitalization. The project started in 1934 under German supervision and is dominated by circular streets around a central point with eight radial arteries. Even the building of that questionable vast roundabout, or the launching of military constructions such as Takht-e Pol slightly earlier, count as important elements in the cultural landscape of Balkh. As an unfinished and pretentious piece of town planning, the radial circular place or the abandoned Takht-e Pol fort testify to a period in the evolution of the developing counties when their elites thought that by importing the external appearances of technically advanced societies they would eradicate all the evils afflicting their homeland.

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Fig. 18

Fig. 18: Tepe Rostam, the stupa of the “New Monastery” (Naw-Bahâr, from Sanskrnit *nava-vihāra*) described in the 7th century by the Chinese pilgrim Hsüan-tsang . Western view. The building represents the most monumental stupa witnessed north of the Hindu Kush. It had a square platform, 54 x 54m, provided with a cylindrical drum covered by a low dome all about 60m high
© C. Adle.

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Fig. 19

Fig. 19: Minaret of Abu-Jacfar, locally known as Minaret of Hazrat-i Abu Sâleh, at Zâdiyân in Dawlatâbâd of Balkh, dated 502/1108-09. The upper part of the minaret is missing © C. Adle.

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Fig. 20

Fig. 20: The eyvân and the green dome of the mausoleum of Khwâja Abu-Nasr Parsâ constructed in 1462-63 in the center of the city of Balkh. Together with the contemporary mosque at Anau in Turkmenistan, the monument represents one of the finest examples of late Timurid memorial architecture © R. Besenval.



Buzkashi, a national game in Afghanistan © Abdullah Rafiq

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The Nature, Role and Future of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Afghanistan

A Policy Framework for the Rehabilitation of Cultural and Creative Industries in Afghanistan

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Introduction

The phrase “suffered from decades of war” has come to define the state of Afghanistan’s experience today more than any other. Afghanistan’s long history of conflict and ethnic-based antagonisms has fragmented the country, exacerbated by its long, difficult path towards rehabilitation and reconstruction. However, significant efforts have been put towards rebuilding Afghanistan, as is evidenced in a variety of sectors including education, health, governance, municipal infrastructure in roads and electricity, women’s rights, and the arts & culture. These efforts have made modest, yet palpable, gains in helping bring about a greater degree of understanding about the need for reconciliation, reconstruction, and economic development.

Part of this understanding is a renewed sense of cultural identity for Afghanistan and its people. The historical importance of arts & crafts, and the cultural and creative industries that can stem from them, has not been lost on Afghanistan. A vibrant arts and crafts culture has existed in the country, and region, for centuries. Fine Arts such as Painting and Theater and Film have been truly active since the 1920s, while traditions in Ceramics, Woodcarving, Calligraphy, Jewelry, and Carpet - Making have been practiced and passed down through courtly workshops (Karkhanas), familial lineages, and Master - Apprentice based guilds for thousands of years. Afghanistan’s geographic location along the ancient Silk Route, connecting regions of Asia (Central, South, Southwest, and even East), made it the crossroads for ethnicities, languages, cultures, and ideas. Furthermore, in Afghanistan guilds have historically been important to the economy through demand-driven markets where artists met practical needs as well as the desires of the royalty and urban elites, which further allowed the cultural and creative industries to develop artistically and technologically.

It is important therefore to understand that preservation and development are not mutually exclusive, and this is especially so when considering art, culture, and the cultural and creative industries. Preservation of the artistic and cultural traditions of Afghanistan actually depends on the development of the cultural and creative industries in a wide range of areas including fine arts (visual and performing), film, and traditional arts and handicrafts such as ceramics, woodcarving, jewelry, calligraphy, and carpet-making. Doing so can make a significant contribution to Afghanistan’s cultural identity as a way to safeguard and expand various intangible Afghan art forms in agreement with the 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage.

Furthermore, ongoing, and intensifying discussions about the important role culture can play in achieving the Millennium Development Goals (Culture 21: Culture, local governments, and Millennium Development Goals) are incorporating culture into policy - making and development initiatives. This dialogue has brought culture to the core of a more holistic, integrated approach to sustainable development. Afghanistan and development of its cultural sector can be at the forefront of this effort through relevant and resourceful policies, allowing Afghanistan to participate amongst global communities of artisans and the artistic, creative, social, and economic exchanges that can be found through them around the world. Finally, development



Contemporary music performance at Darulaman Palace, Kabul © Majid Saeedi

of the cultural and creative industries, where traditional knowledge and skills collaborate with contemporary trends in style and practice, and the global culture market (domestically and internationally), can serve as a fundamental tool in building and supporting a more peaceful and prosperous Afghanistan.

Background

Cultural and creative industries in Afghanistan have suffered a severe blow over the last decades. Structures that may have been in place were largely destroyed, and the industry must now rebuild itself. Efforts have been made not only through organizations and institutions working on developing the skills and knowledge of cultural and creative producers, but market-oriented approaches have also made headway into the sector particularly in respect to handicrafts such as rugs, leather goods, and embroidered clothing.

However, a comprehensive approach to forming policy that addresses the range of cultural and creative industries in Afghanistan and their relationship to the current global market is still being developed. Furthermore, the role cultural and creative industries can play in economic growth, job creation, reasserting cultural identity, and respecting cultural diversity, though improving, is still undervalued in Afghanistan. Although disconnected surveys have taken place over the last several years addressing disparate production areas within the sector of cultural creative industries, there has yet to be a comprehensive, coordinated cultural mapping exercise to identify all relevant activities and organizations that contribute to this cultural, creative, and economic sector. This is an important and necessary foundation for understanding Afghanistan's cultural and creative industries, and the various sub-sectors within that, in order to create more fully informed policy.

Objectives of the Framework

This framework aims to provide a starting point, a first small step, towards beginning a more involved discourse on cultural and creative industries in Afghanistan, and how practices and policies can reflect the needs and build upon the activities currently at work within the sector. It hopes to inform practitioners and policy-makers on the current state of the sector, and provide some direction in terms of how the sector could be supported and developed. Furthermore, this framework aims to help position cultural and creative industries within broader development efforts contributing to building a peaceful and prosperous society in Afghanistan. All the answers will not be found in this framework, and indeed new questions may well be generated as a result of it. However, UNESCO's attempt to continue its efforts within the industry and begin to look more intently at how to build cultural and creative industries in Afghanistan is significant. And this framework's contribution to UNESCO's work, in collaboration and cooperation with the Ministry of Information & Culture, remains to be seen as it will rest upon the shoulders of all stakeholders (MoIC, UNESCO, NGOs, institutions both academic and vocational, etc.) to ensure its relevance.

Cultural and Creative Sectors - Fine Arts (Visual & Performing), Situational Analysis of Current State of Sector

Although perhaps not immediately apparent due to its general absence in reporting about activities in Afghanistan, Fine Arts are an active sector throughout the country. There are painters teaching students several times a week, theaters where young Afghans learn to perform Shakespearean plays, filmmakers doing both documentary and fictional film, photographers whose photojournalistic work shows artistic talent, and musicians who not only teach others but perform at a variety of events. This activity is carried out by individuals, organizations and institutions, and is not confined to Kabul alone, but rather can be found around the country such as in the provincial urban centers of Mazar-e-Sharif, Herat, and elsewhere. Through organizations and institutions such as the Center for Contemporary Art of Afghanistan (CCAA), Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC), Turquoise Mountain (TM), Maimanagi School of the Arts, Faculty of Fine Arts-Kabul University, AINA, National Institute of Music, Sanayee Arts & Vocational School, Foundation for Culture & Civil Society (FCCS), and independent schools and centers these fields are regularly producing promising works and exposing new artistic talents from across Afghanistan.

However, as in any sector of development, quantity does not always translate into quality. The Fine Arts are still greatly unconsidered and underfunded in the broader development schema for Afghanistan. This has led to a sector that has not been able to grow or develop the cultural and creative industry of which it is a part in a significant fashion during the last decade of massive aid being funneled into Afghanistan. This is not to say that work has not been done, or that no improvements can be found in the sector, but the extent to which a sustained focus of attention and funding has been directed towards this sector must still be classified as significantly disproportionate to other development sectors. Therefore, insufficient attention has been given to how Afghanistan can utilize it's artistic and cultural wealth to build creative and cultural industries that are important not only to the growth of a national and cultural Afghan identity that can counter ethnic rifts and instability, but that can serve as a way for artists and the government to generate income through participation in a global culture and market in the arts.

Recommendations & Policy Implications
General:

A survey and assessment of the various organizations and institutions that provide training in the Fine Arts (painting, sculpture, installation, theater, dance, performance art, music, and photography) should be conducted, including what structures are in place to bring the products of these arts to market through cultural and creative industries, in order to have a clearer idea of the landscape these various arts inhabit in Afghanistan. Security will hamper the reach into certain parts of the country, but this limitation is minimal as there are still significant areas that can be reached. Furthermore, the highest degree of activity is in urban centers and so these can be a starting ground for such a survey. This survey should include looking into regional structures as well (particularly India, Pakistan, Iran) that are in place

to understand better the ways in which other countries in the region with interconnected histories have been able to develop their industries in this sector. Links must be made with institutions and organizations working in this sector in other countries and the region, in order to explore ways in which collaborations may be formed with them for training, workshops, art competitions, artist exchanges, etc. to continue improving the quality of work as cultural and creative industries are further developed in Afghanistan. Raising the profile of these arts as a potential career choice with reasonable potential for earning income is another important mechanism to support the development of the sector. Potential consumer markets should be cultivated both domestically and internationally, while facilitating access and developing networks for those working in the cultural and creative industries.

Specific:
Painting, Sculpture, & Installation

The process for registering private galleries should be revisited and made more accessible for artists and art dealers to set up a space through which these three mediums may be sold. There is a current order from the Negaristan (National Gallery) that requires any private gallery that sells and makes profit from artworks to pay a registration fee to the Gallery. There are three (3) registration levels, the costs of which vary from a couple hundred dollars (Level 3) to USD 1000 (Level 1). This is an interesting approach, and can result in an income (though minimal) to the MoIC. However, the different levels and the reasons for which a particular gallery would fall into one or another level needs clarification. The criteria are not elucidated and therefore should be revisited in order to make the process more transparent.

The MoIC should indicate what paintings, sculptures, or installations it has in its possession that can be for sale, and work on preparing these items for exhibitions that could be held at the National Gallery where Nationals and Internationals are invited. Some investment will have to be made on the part of the MoIC for reframing and/repairing works, as unfortunately the level of care and protection for much of the work in the archives has been poor. There could also be online systems in place for selling artworks. This would require minimal investment, but would require a strong system for packaging and shipping the works internationally as the online galleries could be accessed from anywhere in the world. The Ministry must facilitate direct interaction between producers and consumers, be it online or otherwise, without hindering these relations through heavily bureaucratic procedures such as time-consuming “approvals” for works to be exhibited, exported, and/or sold.

Theater, Dance, & Performance Art

Regular performances of theater, dance, and performance art could be organized in a variety of venues in Kabul and elsewhere such as the MoIC itself, the French Cultural Center (CCF), or the FCCS. Variable fees can be charged for attendance to these performances, with a share going to the performers/organizations (such as Azdaar Theater, Aftaab Theater, Kabul Theater, etc.) and the rest to a fund within the MoIC for continued support of these mediums through material support (such as set production) and regular performances. Also, in the way that funding has been secured for the traveling Bactrian Gold exhibit, similarly theatrical, dance, and performance groups (particularly the Kabul Theater) could be funded to make tours (at first perhaps regionally and later potentially expanded) to perform in other countries where fees can be charged and be used as a means of generating income for not only the groups but the MoIC itself. Recordings of performances sold by the groups and the MoIC could also be ways in which a minimal, but relevant, contribution could be made to the industry.

Music

As with the above arts, regular music concerts could take place where a variable fee is charged, depending on the target audiences such as at the Babur Gardens or the Kabul Zoo where there are two different entrance fees, one for Afghan Nationals and one for Foreign Nationals. Recordings on Compact Disc could be sold at the concerts and also made available to DVD and CD stores. Again, traveling concerts could further be a way to stimulate the industry while introducing the region and the world to the talents of Afghan musicians, both traditional and contemporary. Online systems would also be relevant here where music could be purchased directly online. Much of this work could take place through the National Institute of Music.

Photography

Photography is one the fastest growing mediums in Afghanistan. Although the photographic training is largely photojournalistic, many Afghan photographers have shown a true artistic eye through their work. Furthermore, many are interested in expanding their skills into photography that is more creative and artistic. Exhibitions of photographic work are perhaps easier than many other types of exhibitions as the works are digital and only require printing and framing. There are ample venues in which to hold these exhibitions, and if sponsored by the MoIC then revenues from sales of the images could benefit both the Ministry and the photographers themselves. Traveling exhibitions should also be considered.

Capacity - Building towards Sector Development

It is necessary to improve and ensure the quality of teaching within institutions, organizations, training centers, and across the educational sector so as to develop competitive skills and talents in fine arts; this includes improving the curriculum and instruction at university departments such as the Faculties of Fine Arts in Kabul and Herat Universities. Raising the quality of teaching and fine art skills through training and education, using both Afghan and International artists to lead workshops and seminars in Afghanistan is possible. Furthermore, facilitating exchanges between art teachers, professionals, and artists, whereby Afghan artists may travel regionally for workshops and studies would greatly improve the level of skills and knowledge.

Film

Situational Analysis of Current State of Sector

After photography, filmmaking is perhaps the fastest growing field of interest in the fine arts among young Afghans. The success of Afghan-made films in recent years, such as Siddiq Barmak's "Osama" and Barmak Akram's "Kabuli Kid" has inspired many into the field. Afghan Film, the national film agency, continues to work though with an extremely limited budget. Many private filmmaking companies have been opened, though these largely focus on the rapidly growing field of video production for Afghan pop singers and producing wedding films. A recent addition to the sector is Jump-Cut Films, a collective of young filmmakers mentored by Siddiq Barmak and active in making short films. However, there is not a structure or program through which these films are shown, even if venues to screen exist. There has also been training work in the documentary filmmaking sector largely through Atelier Varan, although the killing of Severin Blanchet, the French filmmaker who led AV workshops in Kabul once a year, has set the organization's activities in Afghanistan back. Another newly formed organization, the Afghanistan Filmmaking Education Organization (AFEO) has been created to train young filmmakers, while Afghan Film continues its work towards the establishment of a National Film Institute whereby Afghan and international filmmakers will contribute to developing the curriculum and teaching courses through the Institute. However, both a lack of funding and insecurity have hindered advancement in the sector.

Recommendations & Policy Implications

Afghan Film must be provided with a workable budget in order to implement training activities and develop its infrastructure so that it can once again produce feature-length films and truly serve as the national institute of filmmaking, developing young filmmakers from across the country. Interest by foreign filmmakers and production companies to make films in Afghanistan should be welcomed, and opportunities must be provided for foreign filmmakers to come to Afghanistan not only for production of their own films, but to provide input on ways in which filmmaking could develop further. To do this, security considerations must be taken into account and can itself serve as a source of income-generation for Afghan Film and the MoIC. Restrictions on the production of films inside Afghanistan and then export of those films for showing abroad must be revisited and the process for registering one's filmmaking body with Afghan Film must be made not only more transparent but more accessible. Film sales and distribution abroad should be encouraged and facilitated, with structures in place to ensure that they will contribute to developing the film industry of Afghanistan. Foreign films coming to Afghanistan for distribution and screening in theaters should be encouraged, but with a tax system that favors Afghanistan and benefits the industry.

Capacity-Building towards Sector Development

A regular series of workshops and seminars should be scheduled through Afghan Film and other film - oriented organizations and collectives such as Afghan Filmmaking Educational Organization (AFEO), Jump - Cut Films and Siddiq Barmak, as well as Atelier Varan. Activities should be coordinated so as to avoid duplication, and ensure that the sector's capacity is being built in the most effective way possible. Improving access to educational resources and materials should also be prioritized, be this through online resources or collection of print matter on a variety of film-related subjects.

Traditional Arts/Handicrafts

Situational Analysis of Current State of Sector

Largely due to the efforts of non-governmental organizations and international trusts such as the Aga Khan Trust for Culture and Turquoise Mountain, as well as contribution by the art and vocational center of Sanayee, the traditional arts and handicrafts have seen a significant resurgence in the last several years. Schools, institutes, and training programs have provided training to hundreds of Afghans in the fields of calligraphy, woodcarving, ceramics/tile-making, and jewelry design and production. However, the market for such products is still limited and little effort has been made to integrate these products into local markets in Afghanistan or abroad. Furthermore, as the market demand is limited, these programs run the risk of saturating, over time, the pool of masters in traditional arts as was done in the rug sector and industry several years ago due to the number of organizations that were implementing income-generating programs of rug weaving for women.

However, one can see significant improvements in the quality of work by ceramicists, woodcarvers, jewelry makers, and calligraphists that will provide them with a competitive edge in an international market. The international market for Afghan traditional arts remains nascent, but has a high potential for growth. There are several collective markets where several arts and crafts producers exist beneath one roof, but the four arts discussed here have made little headway into these markets.

Recommendations & Policy Implications

General

Greater effort must be made on integrating the traditional arts back into the aesthetic psyche of Afghans, ensuring that the demand will be there locally for the supply that will result from these schools, institutions, and programs. This integration should materialize with traditional Afghan arts being found in local bazaars rather than simply the more foreigner - oriented markets. However, as internationals do purchase traditional arts in Afghanistan, a model that could work well for Afghanistan is the state-owned souvenir stores such as one finds in India and Bangladesh. These stores, in collaboration with various NGOs, provide a "one-stop shop" (such as the ones mentioned above but state - run) for buyers to find and purchase traditional arts and crafts products. These stores, space of which is rented by NGOs and private enterprises from the government, provide not only rental income, but also a secondary system for taxation on these goods that can benefit the state. Collaborations can be made with producers, and the government can back the quality so the buyer



Traditional wood carving, either as a decorative element on buildings or purely to be used as an ornamental item © Turquoise Mountain Foundation



Jewelry made by Afghan artisans inspired by ancient patterns © Turquoise Mountain Foundation

knows they are getting authentic products.

International markets do not need to be ignored, as facilitating private enterprises to set up stores in other countries such as in Europe and the U.S. could be a way to present another side of Afghan culture and the Afghan experience. Just as one may find stores selling traditional arts from India and Nepal, so it would be worthwhile to cultivate relations with entrepreneurs who may be able to make stores selling Afghan goods. Also, museum stores are a perfect market through which these creative industries can be developed; perhaps even a selection of these traditional arts being placed in stores where the Bactrian Gold will be on tour so as to create a synergy between historical, traditional, and contemporary Afghanistan. The restrictive policies in place for export of these products, however, drives those who do sell Afghan products abroad to purchase from Pakistan rather than Afghanistan, thereby not supporting the Afghan economy. These restrictions must be looked at and redeveloped in a way that benefits the state and the artists in Afghanistan. The profile of these traditional arts as industries and potential career choices with reasonable income possibilities must be raised not only in the market/economic sector, but within the education sector of Afghanistan as well. Highlighting potential consumer markets and facilitating access and developing networks for those in creative and cultural industries should also be prioritized.

Specific:
Calligraphy

Calligraphy competitions between individuals and schools could be one way of stimulating both interest among viewers (and potential buyers) and motivation among calligraphers. Exhibitions would be an easy way to display and sell calligraphy, helping nurture the market. However, as original calligraphy is often too expensive for many to purchase, prints and posters of calligraphy can be printed and sold in bookstores and other shops where traditional arts can be found. Looking at calligraphy cultures outside Afghanistan for inspiration and collaboration could also be a way of facilitating exchange and a broader understanding of Afghanistan's calligraphic history.

Woodcarving

Connections need to be made between woodcarvers and the industry of homebuilding and woodwork that is booming in the country. The new homes being built, regardless of one's own personal taste towards the aesthetic, have a lot of woodwork with doors and window frames. Carved doors and window frames could be commonplace, and help promote the traditional art of both Classical and Nuristani carving. This would also help bring this traditional art into people's homes in a more structural, rather than simply ornamental, way. The market of mosque construction should also be explored as a way of developing a domestic market for this creative industry. On a broader scale, international markets should be cultivated for small and large commission works such as wall sections, entranceways, and interiors. This will again necessitate a good packing and transport structure.

Ceramics & Tiles

There have been great advancements in the quality of ceramic bowls and cups, particularly Istalif-style ceramics. These products are now utilitarian, and can be used without risk of the glaze chipping allowing the oxide-based coloring to seep into food and drink. As supermarkets have opened in Kabul and other urban centers catering to expatriates and wealthier Afghans, these products should be incorporated into these markets where a range of dishes are sold, primarily glass dishes and cheap porcelain from China. If made available, a resurgent interest in traditional ceramics could follow. Regarding tiles, it would be useful to establish connections with construction firms contracted to build mosques. The construction of new mosques in Afghanistan, as well as the maintenance and restoration of existing mosques, could be a very important market for tile makers.

Jewelry

Jewelry stores have become overrun with items made of cheap gold and without any aesthetic tradition connected to Afghanistan. Although this is partially driven by demand, if a focus is made on identifying and opening markets for jewelry in a more traditional style (or contemporary interpretations of traditional forms) then jewelers would begin to see the potential opportunities for such products. Jewelers could also be subsidized to create authentic, traditional jewelry, or contemporary jewelry that is more reflective of Afghan traditions in style and method of production, rather than recreate or import cheap items from Pakistan, India, and China.

Capacity-Building towards Sector Development

It will be necessary to raise the quality of teaching, design, artistic and crafts skills through training and education. This can be done institutionally through improved curricula at the various institutions teaching these arts, such as the Institute for Traditional Afghan Art & Architecture and at the ministerial level through the Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET). Improving access to educational resources and design materials either through online resources or print material should also be prioritized.

Challenges and Opportunities for the Future

Where other more pressing issues exist such as basic livelihoods or water, sanitation, food, health, and education, cultural and creative industries are often naturally sidelined. In a more generally poor environment and market, favor is often given to resolving more immediate problems, or responding to more immediate opportunities (such as donor demands). Cultural and creative industries are not perceived as a 'quick win' development initiative as they demand long-term dedication on the part of individuals and organizations in order to achieve high quality production, often for a relatively limited market. Instability within the country can make effective sourcing of materials, access to equipment, and movement of products difficult; as well

as deter investment in these sectors that might seem to have a minimal return.

Lack of exposure to a wider cultural engagement both in the region and internationally, due to inhibited communications and networks, lack of travel access abroad, and lack of good quality and wide ranging resource materials within Afghanistan, all contribute to inhibiting the kind of cultural development and artistic exchange necessary in order for the cultural and creative industries of Afghanistan to develop. Furthermore, there are still limited training and educational programs in artistic and artisanal skills and even less education when it comes to entrepreneurship in creative and cultural industries.

However, as mentioned, over the last several years there have been significant efforts towards improving the quality of these various creative sectors, and the improved quality can contribute to a more competitive product on the market. Some government projects such as participation in SAARC (The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation) workshops and trainings in the arts, as well as initiatives by NGOs to develop markets for such arts provide strong foundations upon which to build policies and practices focused on the cultural and creative industries. With improved coordination between the various institutions, governmental and non-governmental, it will be possible to map out a clearer direction for the development of these industries in Afghanistan. Furthermore, UNESCO and the Ministry of Information and Culture plan a more focused effort on the development of cultural and creative industries and this can create motivation throughout the sector.

Sustainability and Fostering a Culture of Peace

Sustainability continues to be one of the greatest development challenges, regardless of the sector. Assessing regulatory capacity and powers, and then identifying which Ministries have responsibility for which aspects of regulation and oversight relevant to the industry (Ministry of Information and Culture? Ministry of Education? Ministry of Economy?) will contribute to laying out clear policy and procedures in relation to their respective roles. This will also help clarify the roles and responsibilities of the private sector, NGOs, and other institutions working in this sector.

Overall development of the cultural and creative industries will bring a measure of autonomy through local businesses that are established. It will be necessary to clearly establish an appropriate and reasonable level of autonomy for the private sector and industries, lessening the bureaucratic hoops and restrictions that can often hinder private sector development. This will necessitate clear communication systems and channels between the private and public sectors so as to ensure that each are fulfilling their obligations towards the sector's development.

In addition, development of this sector can provide training and job options for those with and without formal education, provide alternative income streams, and could potentially develop a new employment sector. Furthermore, it can respond to existing cultural norms and heritage, to the natural wealth of Afghanistan through use of local materials, and help to promote Afghanistan's commercial cultural and creative sector abroad, all contributing to the establishment of a sustainable cultural and creative industries sector. In connection to sustainability, the cultural and creative industries are understood more and more to serve as contributing forces to facilitating peace and stability. This is found in the way the various arts help in reconstructing a national and cultural identity through the promotion and development of both traditional methods and styles of production as well contemporary interpretations of them that reflect a "modern-day" Afghanistan. Not only does developing this sector provide alternative economic paths for artists and artisans across the country, it grounds the people of Afghanistan to their artistic and cultural heritage in a way that no other development industry could. With a renewed sense of cultural identity, and the potential for improved livelihoods resulting from participation in the cultural and creative industries, Afghans will begin to understand the role they have to play in promoting a peaceful environment in Afghanistan.

Conclusions

This framework has attempted to understand the current state of the arts and culture sectors and the cultural and creative industries that they are a part of in Afghanistan. Furthermore, it has addressed issues facing the sector, as well as provided recommendations on what direction the development of cultural and creative industries could take in the country. In order to fulfill its particular strategy as laid out in the broader Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS), the MoIC needs to work more closely with national and international partners in the industry to improve the nation's capacity (at the individual and institutional levels) for developing art and crafts that can competitively exist in the domestic and global markets.

It must be understood that developing this industry is not simply a matter of increased funding or more donor support, but rather it is about building capacities, enhancing opportunities, removing burdensome bureaucratic restrictions, improving governmental structures and systems where appropriate, working collaboratively, and building upon the foundations that already exist rather than trying to recreate the proverbial cultural and creative wheel. This can be done by strengthening relations not only internally within Afghanistan, but also between Afghanistan and other countries; particularly its neighbors where cultural and creative industries have been able to develop more freely without the particular difficulties of conflict experienced by Afghanistan.

It is hoped that this framework will encourage organizations, ministries, institutions, and donors to focus their collective energies towards the development of cultural and creative industries in Afghanistan and that contributions will be considerate and made with a desire to implement effective practices and policies within the sector. Although not the only need as discussed, it is further hoped that donors will begin to view the

cultural and creative industries not as a peripheral sector lacking the level of contribution to Afghanistan's reconstruction that other sectors such as infrastructure, health, education, and sanitation may have, but rather as an integral part of building an alternative system of economic growth, improving the quality of cultural and creative products, rebuilding a sense of national pride and cultural identity, and contributing to the overall prosperity of Afghanistan. Therefore donors should consider more seriously how their contributions could provide the funding necessary to build this sector into a nationally benefitting and globally competitive industry.



School-girl at the Afghan National Institute of Music © ANIM

dOCUMENTA (13) in Kabul, Bamiyan and Kassei, A Synergy of Art and Politics

Abassin Nessar

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This article represents a reflection on the contribution of (contemporary) art to a post-conflict Afghanistan and especially to a society that is deeply affected by violent conflict. The main focus is on the constructive political critical function of art and artists and the role of art as a vital mechanism to start the mental recovery of a war-torn society that longs for a peaceful alternative to conflict and violence.

The German-based contemporary art programme of dOCUMENTA (13) held in Afghanistan between 2011 and 2012 serves as an example of a mutual beneficial relationship between Arts and Politics.

Introduction

As a political scientist and programme manager of dOCUMENTA (13) art event in Afghanistan in 2011 and 2012, and most of all as an Afghan, I am intrigued by the merits and contribution of art to the present political situation of the country. The dOCUMENTA (13) art programme consisting of seminars and an exhibition between 2011 and 2012 serves as one of the most important collective expressions of art undertaken in Afghanistan that focused, amongst other things, on questions of collapse and recovery through the lens of contemporary art. Furthermore, from a thematic point of view, it took a look at the relations between art and destruction.

Art has a major role to play in social processes of reconstruction, and imagination is an important force in that process. The first dOCUMENTA in Kassel, Germany, in 1955 came after a terrible period of conflict, different and totally dissimilar to what has taken place in Afghanistan, but nonetheless in a moment of rebuilding a civil society, at the juncture of where art is felt to be of the utmost importance as an international common language and world of shared ideals and hopes.

Arts and Politics

Arts and politics as arenas of human endeavor display various familiar intersections. The dominant theory entailed that all art is political, and all art criticism is equal to political analysis. From the other end, running for office or running the government involves a host of aesthetic activities, conducted with varying degrees of effectiveness. The Shepard Fairey Obama-Hope poster captured something of the essence of Obama's intervention in American politics, both its potential to inspire and the suspicion that underneath was emptiness. I think, however, that the relation of aesthetics and politics is tighter than this might suggest, and the function of the arts as propaganda of domination or of resistance does not nearly exhaust the political significance of the arts.

As someone with a background in political science and working in the cultural field I am always interested to look beyond the intrinsic value of arts. My personal interest is to explore how art and politics are related in terms of possible positive effects of art on the collective mental state of a society which went through the total devastations and upheaval of war or is still experiencing insecurities and violent conflicts. In times of social and cultural hardships, for example during a war or in the aftermath of a violent conflict an artistic expression in public, I believe, art serves as a mental intervention and message of peace for a traumatized society.

Especially in times of war, or in post-conflict conditions,



One of the installations that formed part of dOCUMENTA (13) presence in Kabul was represented by the erection of a pakhsa (compressed mud and straw) wall in the courtyard of the Queen's Palace at Baghe Babur. This traditional building technique is used throughout Kabul and the provinces, especially in the construction of traditional Qala's (fortified walled homes) although is becoming less common in the city. This example was built and left to naturally degrade over the course of the event-100 days © dOCUMENTA (13)

art can be a form of healing. Arte Povera artist Alighiero Boetti from Turin, Italy, visited Kabul in early 1971, and decided to open a hotel called One Hotel on Shahr-e-Naw near Chicken Street, together with an Afghan called Gholam Dastahir. He spent half the year there, commissioning his embroidered Mappe from 1971 to 1977. The initial impulse for organizing a part of dOCUMENTA (13) in Afghanistan came from imagining not the scenario of war, but rather a form of continuity between the vibrant and international life of the 1970s in Kabul, during the time Boetti spent there, and our own times, rejecting the state of exception that is determined by the war, and choosing to act, as if the situation were not what it is, as if the checkpoints, cement walls, and barriers, the conflict, and militarization in Kabul, did not exist.

What is dOCUMENTA?

The contemporary art programme of DOCUMENTA (13) in Afghanistan in 2011-2012 consisting of seminars and one month lasting exhibition in the Queen's Palace, Baghe Babur, is an example of how political art can look like in an insecure and traumatized post-conflict environment aimed at presenting a cultural alternative to war and conflict. The same rationale is behind the main exhibition of dOCUMENTA that takes place every 5 years starting in 1955 in the German city of Kassel, and is perceived as the biggest and most prestigious art festival in the world.

When dOCUMENTA first began it was thought that art would be a therapeutic agent to heal the emotional wounds of the Second World War. Kassel, until then a centre for mechanical engineering and defense industry, was almost completely destroyed by Allied bombing. In 1955 a professor from the newly reopened Art Academy in the still ruinous city of Kassel, Arnold Bode, came up with the idea of supplementing the prestigious '' Bundesgartenschau'' (national garden festival) held in Kassel with an art exhibition. Bode wanted to show art that was disliked and persecuted by the Nazis: modern art. He had said: ''we wanted to say something about the lost years, 1933- 1945''. Bode turned the badly bombed and damaged Fridericianum -believed to be oldest museum on the European continent- into an exemplar of modern staging previously unseen in West-Germany. This first dOCUMENTA, titled ''Art of the XXth Century'', purposed as an one-off event, attracted 130,000 visitors. Its success led Bode to organize a second edition four years later and other versions were staged every 4 years and later every 5 years. dOCUMENTA became gradually an institution in the art world and under Bode's directorship, who led the first four dOCUMENTAs, it developed into a 'musée imaginaire', Andre Malraux's concept of a museum without walls.

Arts and Post-conflict Recovery

Whether the first dOCUMENTA exhibitions in Germany have indeed strongly contributed to the mental recovery and societal healing of traumatized post-war Kassel remains obviously unknown but that's not a shame if you consider that the diagnosis and recovery of war trauma is even today an overly neglected and hardly measurable subject. Unlike for example an empirical strand of conflict resolution the effects of art on post-conflict peacebuilding remain an open question. It is however a fact that political settlements of a conflict alone cannot alleviate the traumas and grievances of sustained war which itself can be a feeding ground for recurrence of violence. The influence of the troubles of war and violence is particularly evident in contemporary art which tends to be more literal and engaging with reality and popular culture, albeit varying from simple and explicit art to conceptual and abstract conceit. Thus, the mode of expression for contemporary artists living in Afghanistan or artists involved with Afghanistan is likely to be an accentuation of the reality rather than glorifying the reality due to the critical stance they often take against the contemporary life.

The four main positions around which the 13th dOCUMENTA programme was articulated are Siege, Hope, Retreat and Stage and correspond to four possible conditions in which artists find themselves acting in the present. These four conditions relate to the four locations in which dOCUMENTA (13) was also physically and conceptually sited—Kassel (stage), Kabul (siege), Alexandria/Cairo (hope), and Banff (retreat). The positions are not comprehensive and acquire their significance through their mutual interrelation and resonance. The dOCUMENTA (13) programme in Kabul and Bamiyan together constituted interestingly a mix of these conditions. As stated earlier the political environment and circumstances in Afghanistan are as such that here simultaneously with hope, artists frequently experience the condition of being under siege as well as that of mental withdrawal as a result of being under siege (retreat) and finally exposure (stage) through a programme such as dOCUMENTA (13).

dOCUMENTA (13) Seminars in Afghanistan

dOCUMENTA (13) included, in addition to an exhibition, a series of seminars organized at the different cultural venues in Kabul and Bamiyan, such as the National Gallery, Faculty of Fine Arts, Afghan Film, CCAA and in a Monastic Cave above the niche where the Bamiyan Buddah stood throughout spring and summer of 2012. The seminars were held with a diverse group of about 25 art students to foster discussion of key questions and subject, led by international and Afghan participants. The aim of the seminars and one of the main objectives of the dOCUMENTA (13) programme in Afghanistan was to share artistic practices with the local community and to present artistic practice through a participatory process of creation, confrontation and learning. As programme manager, I visited most of the seminars and felt that the seminars not only constituted a learning process and interaction on art but went beyond art-education. It represented to my point of view one of the most effective ways of peace education to young people who can rightly be considered as a war-generation. Teaching these talented students about how one artistically expresses their feelings, emotions and grievances related to the political circumstances of Afghanistan in terms of insecurity, war traumas, poverty, human rights etc. is a method through which students can partly mentally overcome their grievances. Moreover, the seminars enabled students simultaneously to disseminate feelings of ''hope'' towards a peaceful future

to others through for example an exhibition, media, publications etc.

The seminars were organized in partnership with several Afghan public culture institutions active in different fields, such as visual arts, music, theater and film. In the seminars “Art Histories in the Form of Notes”, held in February 2012, notions such as art, history, tradition, the contemporary, experiment, life, and imagination were examined from different points of view, taking the device of the written note to represent a condition in which concepts, ideas and memoranda are jotted down in a provisional way, which underlines their potentiality and hypothetical value. How to deal with language, translation and mediation as hypothetical switches between understanding and misunderstanding and as critical action where truth is constantly negotiated.

The seminar had an implicit socio-cultural significance beyond art as its explored how dependent ‘‘truth’’ is on interpretation which itself is biased by language and culture. How to transcend geopolitical categories of inclusion and exclusion; how to connect, in an age of frequent counter-diaspora, or members from the Afghan diaspora who have returned to Afghanistan as expatriates, and advanced digital practices, to a broader discourse, keeping in balance the criteria of belonging and change (Perspectives on the Art of Today), hosted at the CCAA-Center for Contemporary Arts Afghanistan). The main underlying issue is how Afghan art has developed in the last 3 decades of war, while many of the older generation artists have left the country and a new generation of young artists has arisen in Afghan diaspora communities all over the world. The counter-diaspora community, including me, is being confronted by ambiguous dualistic feelings about to what extent our expressions of our distinctive (sub)-culture, world view and art are relating to the experiences of our local Afghan countrymen. The most important aspect we have in common is the sense of alienation from our culture by war, which is evident as a central theme in Afghan modern art.

How to explore archives as a public site; how to connect



Textile exhibition at Queen’s Palace, Baghe Babur © dOCUMENTA (13)



The upper garden terraces in Baghe Babur, Kabul. Here the artist Giuseppe Penone placed a counter-piece to his work, Ideel di Pietra, located in Kassel's Karlsaue Park. The piece in Baghe Babur, Radici di Pietra, is represented by a marble pillar leaning against a tree and interpreted as 'growing into the heights' along with it, expanding upon his basic theme which is the intertwined relationship between nature and culture. The sculpture has been left as a permanent installation in Baghe Babur as a gift to the city of Kabul from the artist © dOCUMENTA (13)

archival material to shared public memory; how to increase the circulation of lesser-known histories while taking the archive as an operative base such as the site of Afghan Film archives where Mariam Ghani led a seminar in conserving, utilizing the archives as a basis for art and disseminating the rich collection of Afghan Film to the wider Afghan public.

The seminar was situated within the theoretical context of the Afghan Film archive, which includes thousands of reels of film that cover much of Afghanistan's twentieth-century history. The seminar leaders worked with the Afghan Film archive team to choose and digitize selected reels from the archive, primarily from the rich stock of documentary and newsreel shorts, and to organize both newly and previously digitized files within the open-source database developed by Indian specialists in media archives from Pad.ma. After this stage the seminar opened to include additional Afghan Film staff as well as participating students from the diverse pre-selected dOCUMENTA (13) student groups with interesting insights into the archival footage. This group was firstly trained in and then began the open-ended process of annotating digitized footage with information that gives it a richer context and meaning, including subtitles, production notes, personal reminiscences or responses, and standardized tags that can help people find particular films or clips in online databases.

The seminar "Acts, Gestures, Things: Material and Performance" held at the Baghe-e Babur, Institut Francais d'Afghanistan, in Istalif, and the Faculty of Fine Arts of Kabul University represented a multidisciplinary series of workshops and lectures led by the artists, Barmak Akram, Jerome Bel, Lara Favaretto and Adrian Villar Rojas.

The seminars focused on performance and sculptural materials taken from the everyday environment and referred also to recent performance-based practice in post-traumatic contexts. The first seminar was conceived as collective improvisation, driven by the Afghan French artist Barmak Akram, who for the first time was working with ceramics, exploring notions of transformation and embodiment. Additionally, artist and choreographer, Jerome Bel worked with actors in Kabul, starting as a reference point, from his piece made in 2004 for a ballerina of the Paris Opera, called Veronique Doisneau, linking the personal and the historical, the theatrical and the political, the role of the dancer and the one of the spectator. Artists Lara Favaretto and Adrian Villar Rojas shared the conception and production process of their works with the participants in their seminars, transforming them into a material and a component of the work itself.

In conjunction with the seminar programme an exhibition was held between 20th June 2012 and 19th July at the beautiful location of the Queen's Palace inside the Baghe Babur gardens in Kabul. The main exhibition comprised works mainly produced in Afghanistan, engaging the audience in a dialogue full of correspondences—between past and future, memory and fantasy, collapse and recovery, destruction and reconstruction—as well mutual evocations of the history of two cities, Kabul and Kassel (Germany), where dOCUMENTA is usually located. Both cities have witnessed destruction through war and the need for physical reconstruction and mental retrieval. Some examples of the works on display at the dOCUMENTA (13) exhibition in Kabul are stated below:

The sculptural works of Michael Rakowitz, an American born artist from Jewish Iraqi descent, remain committed to what is marginalized, gone or in danger. For his dOCUMENTA (13) exhibitions in Kassel and Kabul, Rakowitz responded to the devastation of cultural heritage that took place in World War II Germany and recently in Afghanistan. For Kassel and Kabul, Rakowitz re-created from Bamiyan stones (quarried in Bamiyan); number of books that were destroyed in a fire in the Fridericianum Museum in Kassel during allied bombings in 1941.

Born in 1964 in Kabul, the photographer Zalmai left Afghanistan for Switzerland in 1980 after the Soviet invasion. For dOCUMENTA (13) Zalmai presented an installation combining photographic images and sound that looks at the relationship between Afghans and the changing landscape surrounding them.

During 3 decades of conflict Afghan people managed to lead their daily lives while their cities and villages were re-shaped by devastation and death.

The familiar objects of war such as blown - up military vehicles, barricades, weapons and other battle equipment no longer retain their initial identity and function; they are being re-invented and re-identified. By doing this Afghans have breached and transcended the imaginary situation of "siege" imposed by the long-standing conflict.

The British artist from Polish descent, Goshka Macuga, works in an unlimited range of media through which she re-contextualizes historic events in a subjective way, suggesting that history is never written objectively and that the truth is defined by context. For her contribution to dOCUMENTA (13), the Rotunda (central crossing) in Fridericianum Museum inspired the idea of creating a twin space-consisting of 2 half circles representing possible half truths. The works consist of two tapestries on whose panoramic backgrounds many historical references are superimposed as coexisting realities. The image for the first tapestry was photographed in Kassel during the award ceremony of the Arnold Bode - Preis in October 2011. This tapestry was installed on a curved wall in one of the large spaces inside the Queen's Palace in Baghe Babur. The second tapestry that was installed in Kassel constitutes a parallel portrait of people attending a banquet in the Baghe Babur, ranging from workers and representatives of institutions like the Afghan Ministry of Information and Culture to UNESCO, journalists and intellectuals.

This peaceful garden reception became an ambiguous background for dealing with political and economic issues of collapse and recovery, artificial and truth. The two tapestries in Kabul and Kassel mirror each other in a double sceptical attempt to represent two

different truths.

Mariam Ghani's often collaborative work encompassing videos, photographs, installations, publications and conversation investigates the border zones where different phenomena intersect from post-conflict interventions to immigration laws to the increasingly fine line between natural and constructed landscapes. In her contribution to dOCUMENTA (13) exhibitions in Kabul and Kassel, titled A Brief History of Collapse, she portrays two buildings that, though built in different centuries and on different continents, share significant parallels not only in their architectural style but also in their symbolic roles within their historical and contemporary contexts. Both structures, the Fridericianum Museum in Kassel and the Darul Aman Palace in Kabul, were built as landmarks for modernity and enlightenment and became monuments to the fall of civilization through the destruction of war. While the Fridericianum is now a symbol for postwar recovery through the re-introduction of avant garde culture, the Darul Aman Palace is still a ruin. Ghani's two - channel video installation stages parallel journeys through their interiors. The subtle staging of objects in Ghani's video refers to former uses of the two buildings while a voice - over narration loops from place to place, interweaving historical fact with myth and speculation and creating a dialogue between the films.

Conclusions

This article highlighted the relation between art and politics which is based on a reciprocate interplay between both fields. Art is particularly political in an environment where a community is mentally affected by war and when an artist, as a member of that community, finds himself in the same context because he is unable to distance his ''being'' from the political sphere of war. However, the content of ar t in a situation of siege does not necessarily need an explicit political context. As the artistic director of dOCUMENTA (13), Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev concluded correctly in an interview, … ''I believe that war creates the facts but that the same is true of art''. If an art exhibition such as dOCUMENTA is organized in a traumatized region it conveys a strong message that ''we'' the people have overcome, that war is over, albeit the violence and conflict might still be occurring such as in Afghanistan presently. Cultural recovery of a community through artistic expressions marks the end of the absolutism and hegemony of war in a community that finds itself in a process of mental recovery.

The question of whether or not to engage in projects in Afghanistan was discussed at length in the development of the project. In a slippage and comparative study of different historical periods and places, some questions came to the forefront immediately: is the fact of organizing artistic projects in Afghanistan a form of denial of difficult events and times? Or is such engagement a form of alternative action keyed toward enacting and testing the potential of art to intervene effectively and decrease violence, injustice, and conflict in those places? By acting as if there is no conflict — no incredible security systems, no occupation — you can actually interfere, interrupt, and change reality through acts of imagination. This is at the core of the decision to organize a series of seminars and an exhibition of art in Kabul and Bamiyan as part of dOCUMENTA (13). The imagination and presence of artists, both international and Afghan, are in my view fundamental to this process.

The question of oblique speech adopted by dOCUMENTA (13) in Afghanistan is related to this. How do you affirm art and the freedom of artists and creative intellectuals in conditions where it is difficult to speak very openly — for example, because that might be offensive to one side or another, and the entire project would therefore collapse? When can discretion and holding one's tongue, not be an act of withdrawal but an act of bold engagement? This was, and remains still, the main struggle in many countries where contemporary art is in a nascent phase.



The opening days of the dOCUMENTA (13) programme at the Queen's Palace in Baghe Babur, Kabul. Exhibitions, workshops, events and art work took place and were presented in Kabul, Bamiyan and Kassell (Germany) as part of this famous contemporary avant garde art event that occurs every 5 years. Some 27 artists from across the world spent time in both Afghanistan as part of this event to encourage existing and up and coming Afghan artists to learn from and participate in this renowned event © dOCUMENTA (13)

Tales from the Valleys of the Wakhan and Kabul Old City: Folklore and Memory as Intangible Cultural Heritage

Khadem Hussain and Andy Miller

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“Promotion of cultural pluralism and the safeguarding of masterpieces of oral and intangible heritage, call for an international effort. This effort is to ensure preservation of cultural identity, while at the same time creating an environment conducive to cultural exchange, sharing and awareness.” Professor Anzor Erkomaichvili, Georgian State Institute for Culture.

“While fragile, intangible cultural heritage is an important factor in maintaining cultural diversity in the face of growing globalization. An understanding of the intangible cultural heritage of different communities helps with intercultural dialogue, and encourages mutual respect for other ways of life”. UNESCO, 2010

For many years the generic label of ‘cultural heritage’ has been associated with the more tangible manifestations, whether this be striking archaeological monuments such as Baalbek in Lebanon or the unique material culture in museum collections, such as the Benin bronzes from present day Nigeria . Yet in recent years there has been a concerted drive to re-define such labels, seeking to encompass the more esoteric and complex facets of both individual and collective, yet diverse ways of life that are embodied in past traditions. These might be conveyed through the vestiges of spoken history, communal social practises, the specialized abilities required to design and create certain artefacts or indeed ceremonial and religious festivals. However, the cultural expression itself is not necessarily the most significant factor when defining these elements, rather the diffusion of such expertise and competences to a wider global audience and potential future practitioners.

Defined by UNESCO (2003) Intangible Cultural heritage refers to ‘’practices, representations and expressions that are central to the lives and identities of communities, groups and individuals.’’

This can be expressed in a variety of forms and represents the cognitive processes and physical methods through which individuals behave within their own individual environments, how they understand and rationalise the world in which they live and how this in turn enables them to make a link between their present lives and the past. As clearly articulated by UNESCO (2009), cultural elements within the sphere of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) can also have either quantifiable or non-quantifiable outcomes. The fundamental difference between tangible and intangible culture is that the former are organic, living examples of human creativity, intricately woven within the fabric of a community.

Since the late 1970’s UNESCO’s policy development, targeted specifically at raising the awareness of culture within a worldwide political agenda, culminated in 2003 with the proclamation of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage.

Designed not only to raise awareness, the Convention seeks to protect cultural elements through the dissemination of the practical abilities and knowledge that both sustain and define a specific ICH element to individuals and communities outside of the area in which the practice (in all forms),was originally exercised or developed.



Buzkashi Played in the Wakhan at border of Broghil, a traditional regional sport © Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC)/Andy Miller

Afghanistan: The Need for Recognition and Revitalization

Whilst elements of intangible cultural heritage play an integral part in the daily lives of many Afghans-elements that have often been long-embedded in the psyche of the nation - the variety and quantity of examples of crafts, traditions and events that encapsulate ICH have in recent years been forgotten, or at least have fallen out of popular memory. Perhaps many aspects of what constitutes ICH and its intrinsic value have not been recognised by individuals or communities. Discernible in many forms, some not always obvious, the country is fortunate to have a plethora of examples, covering many of the three wide-ranging categories, initially defined by UNESCO as "encompassing practices, representations and expression". In recent years this has been expanded to include 5 cultural elements by a number of countries to make identification and inventory more feasible (notably in Indonesia, Japan and China, 2009). It is helpful to summarise these expanded categories with some notable examples from Afghanistan, again some more apparent than others:

1: Oral Traditions and Expression: Languages as vehicles for ICH, folk stories, ancient manuscripts, traditional games.

With as many as 14 ethnic groups recognised in the country and researchers believing that there might be as many as 40 languages spoken with over 200 dialects, there is plenty of opportunity for the expression of ICH through language in Afghanistan. Oral testimony collected the provinces including Badakhshan and the historic quarters of Kabul and Herat is also of potential significance and meaning, as are the sports of Buzkashi (shared with numerous other Central Asian countries), hawking (also a regionally recognized sport, with origins in royal courts) and the often overlooked sport of spear throwing from horseback, Naiza Baazi, originating from Ghazni.

2: Performing Arts: including the visual arts, theatre, vocal arts, music and film.

Including singing in the Kabuli Ghazal form, performances of the traditional dance the attan, playing of traditional instruments including the rubab, tabla, Delruba, Tanpura and Sarangi or indeed archival footage from Afghan cinema, ranging from the first films of 1901 – 1919, (shown in the royal courts only), to the fledgling productions of Afghan Film such as 'Faraar' and 'Hamassa e Ishg' in the 1960's.

3: Social Customs and Traditions: Rites and festivals including traditional economic systems, social organization and traditional ceremonies.

The most apparent tradition being that of the Nowruz festivals, commemorating the state of the Persian New Year - shared with Iran and 14 other of Afghanistan's regional neighbours. Other examples include the Kuch (annual seasonal migration) of the Wakhi ethinc group in the Afghan Pamirs, the traditional loya Jirga (grand assembly) or religious rites such as the 'Day of Ashura', Eid-ul Fitr and Eid-e Qurban, also practised throughout the Muslim world.

4: Knowledge and Practises: Related to the nature and universe, traditional knowledge, local genius, traditional medicine.

Encompassing a broad range of elements in Afghanistan from the skills required for traditional weaving and glass-blowing, knowledge of the historic Karez water-management systems wielded by the Miraab's, and the curing of Zardi sya (black jaundice) by the slicing of onions.

5: Traditional Craftsmanship: Including painting, sculpture, architecture, glass-blowing, dress, clothing, cuisine, modes of transportation. Within Afghanistan there is a wide range of instances in this category. We might include the Behzad school of miniature painting originating out of Herat, the carving of intricate *joli* screens in the Old City of Kabul, sheepskin coats from Ghazni, the chapan, traditional food such as ashak, mantu and the sour cheese Quroot or craft items embracing woven products such Shindand or Adraksan carpets from Herat, Baluch prayer rugs and even "War Rug" (traditionally those made in the late 1970's, 80's and 90's rather than more recently).

As can be observed from the assortment of illustrations above, a handful of these elements are common both regionally and internationally. A number, nevertheless, are unique to Afghanistan or are present in such a different form to similar regional examples, that they warrant being classed as a separate element. ICH in Afghanistan is without doubt an overlooked cultural resource, and demonstrates many elements that are by their very nature intriguing, elaborate and enigmatic. One specific element of ICH in Afghanistan that has been the subject of recent research, oral expression and the collection of folktales, will be briefly explored.

The move to make individuals and institutions more aware of the significance of ICH in Afghanistan has also been further highlighted by a number of training workshops run by the UNESCO culture unit in Afghanistan in recent years. Hosted by the National Museum of Afghanistan in Kabul and the offices of the Ministry of Information and Culture in Bamiyan, these were run as capacity building workshops with multiple interactive learning exercises. Participants were introduced to the theory and practice of intangible cultural heritage policy and the potential issues faced by heritage management, non-government and community agencies when engaging with relevant stakeholder community groups with a view to the recording of and the long-term protection of Afghanistan's ICH.

The Intensive programmes were structured as interactive workshops and facilitated by an experienced ICOM / UNESCO facilitator in the heritage field. A wide range of young heritage professionals (from the National

Museum, Ministry of Information and Culture, Institute of Archaeology as well as anthropology students from Kabul University) attended and contributed at varying levels to the workshops, based around the intangible cultural resources of their country and any specific experiences they had in relation to their professions. All of the participants, both in Kabul and Bamiyan, were able to make their own presentations and to comment on case studies and experiences from their own communities. These were mirrored by case studies from the region and further abroad where the concept of ICH is readily acknowledged and protection, in whatever form, more established. Although concentrating primarily on the policy behind the need for protecting the country's intangible cultural heritage, rather than specific practical skills, it is envisaged that future sessions will also look more closely at the identification, recording and inventorying of ICH throughout the country's thirty-four provinces.

Oral History in the Historic Quarters of Kabul

"To be human is to have an oral tradition. It is the stories, the tale, the poetry, the songs, the languages that give meaning to experience and provide continuity across the generations. Our work is to encourage that continuity. If we don't do our job, the voices of the past may be silenced and future generations may be deprived of their cultural inheritance''. Richard Kurin, Director, Centre for Folklore & Cultural Heritage, Smithsonian Institute

As a first example of the importance of ICH in Afghanistan and the ease with which such aspects of the country heritage can disappear if not recognised and protected, we can look at an innovative programme set up by the Aga Khan Trust for Culture in Kabul.

Begun in the summer of 2006 with the completion of its initial stage of research in December 2011, it possibly represents the largest structured programme of socio-anthropological research and reporting undertaken in Kabul in recent years. Although such studies are not unique within the country (for example the extensive research undertaken in Herat by Margaret Mills between 1975 – 2003 and more recently by Ahmad and Boase, 2002), it is perhaps the only study undertaken recently in the historic quarters of Kabul south of the river. Whilst the area commonly designated as the 'Old City' covers some 19 sub - districts, over 70% of the interviews took place in the areas of Asheqan wa Arefan, Chindawal, Kharabat (traditionally the musicians quarter in Kabul), Uzbeka street and Wazir street.

The initial aim of the study was to document the everyday lives of people inhabiting historic neighbourhoods and their recent histories for which very little documentary material survives. The area has been characterized by a fluctuation of populations during years of political and economic upheaval and the subsequent loss of not only physical property during years of inter - factional fighting, but also of institutional and family memory.

The oral history programme was also closely linked to the conservation and rehabilitation activities being undertaken by the Aga Khan Trust for Culture in Kabul and Herat, and sought to raise awareness among young Afghans of the value of their historic architectural heritage, traditions, practises and beliefs that helped shaped these cities over many centuries.

The Kabul Old City reveals a current social context where much of what would normally be considered common in terms of everyday documentation (such as property records, family correspondence, photos and so on), has been lost with oral traditions having also been marginalised or disappeared entirely.

It was apparent that a series of in-depth interviews could assist in promoting a renewed appreciation of the socio-historic origins of the people in these communities. The testimonies of the residents in these quarters, and of those whom migrated away but can recall their family history and key events, greatly contributes to an understanding of the evolution of the surviving fabric, both human and historical. This research had the potential to bring to life aspects of the Old City to a whole new generation of Afghans whom may be oblivious to aspects of their rich local history, as well as raising the profile of Afghanistan's oral history to a wider international audience.

Conducted intermittently over the course of five and a half years in 19 *gozars* (sub-districts) within the Old City south of the Kabul River, the team undertook 131 interviews all of which have been transcribed and translated. Three interim reports have been published, although a process of editing of this vast corpus of material is still on-going, the editing of which is being overseen by a number of internationally recognised anthropologists. Both men (93) and women (38) were interviewed predominantly in the Old City itself – recorded interviews could be as short as 15 minutes or up to an hour or more. It was necessary to try and interview respondents who formed part of the earlier or indigenous population of the Old City (rather than recent post-conflict migrants) and on occasions this necessitated interviewing people in other suburbs of Kabul as a result of family members having moved away in recent years, but were still traceable.

On a practical note, the interviews were recorded on basic handheld portable devices then transcribed, typed up and translated into English in Kabul, with further editing being undertaken by a number of international anthropologists with extensive experience of working in Afghanistan. Whilst the Old City of Kabul is still a safe and friendly area in which to conduct research, there were nonetheless a number of challenges faced by the team during the course of their data collection. Initially there was a certain degree of scepticism expressed by many of the occupants, especially some of the elders from the community, as to the actual value of recording oral testimony and how it could possibly be as useful as what might be perceived as 'real history' written in a text book. However, one of the initial issues faced was identifying the original residents of the Old City with many having been displaced to other districts of Kabul, or even farther afield during the political and economic upheavals in the country. Many of these people had not since returned to their traditional homes,



Traditional glass blowing in Herat © Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC)/Andy Miller

yet possessed first-hand knowledge or certainly were able to recall distant memories of what life used to be like in the historic quarters of Kabul. As might be expected in a city that has seen the devastation of much of the urban fabric, (and in recent years subject to mostly unchecked and unplanned urban sprawl and development), it also proved hard for the team to identify significant landmarks and buildings, many of which had long since been demolished.

The main precept behind this research was to try to explore family origins and faith, how and where they derived their livelihoods, how both individuals and groups celebrated key events in their lives, the significance of local sites or monuments and peoples' daily interaction with both monuments and within the physical framework of their homes.

The data, usually collected through one-to-one formal interviews or more informal snatches of conversation, was analysed in conjunction with an extensive mapping programme of key monuments and historic homes. The information derived from this process helped to shed light on the social and architectural history of neighbourhoods that have, in some quarters, been obliterated by conflict, displacement and, more recently, uncontrolled demolition and 'redevelopment'.

To best understand the nature of the research and the importance of the personal histories recounted by the interviewees, a few extracts from dialogues of note are related below. Not only do these short accounts provide a unique insight into the personal beliefs, cultures and traditions of this distinctive community within the Old City of Kabul, they also vividly express the richness of intangible cultural heritage present in Afghanistan. The urgent need to recognise and preserve this phenomena via an appropriate medium is very apparent, although this must be endorsed by the community itself and ultimately driven forward by them in their desire to preserve their past, with assistance from those outside the community in guiding this process.

Oral Testimony from Asheqan wa Arefan

The interviews collected below come primarily from the Asheqan wa Arefan neighborhood in Kabul. This neighborhood is named after two brothers, Asheq and Aref, the mystic and the lover, who also gave their name to the quarter's famous shrine. Located in the Old City, just south of the central bazaar, this area has a long history and important economic and political connections with both the bazaar and the nearby presidential palace.

Extracts from interviews with Amir Mohammad, caretaker of the Babaii Khudi Shrine

Hajji Amir Mohammad is the caretaker of the Babaii Khudi Shrine, where he was interviewed. He discusses how he miraculously heals various diseases by reciting Quranic verses (Quran Ayat). He is widely known in the community for healing yellow, black, and white jaundice (zardi), along with a few other miscellaneous illnesses.

Learning and Permission to Heal

''My name is Hajji Amir Mohammad. I have permission to heal zardi (jaundice) and some other diseases too. I read healing words, and God heals the sick person. My father gave me this permission to heal. Yes, my father, grandfather, and my ancestors have all been permitted to heal cough and kalla-charak (a gland infection in the throat). My father was permitted by his father, and his father by his father for seven generations we have been permitted to heal sicknesses……. My brothers are not permitted to heal, and they can't do it. If my brothers sit here [in the shrine] and read healing words, the sick person won't get better…….. If the teacher permits the student, then everything is possible. It is said, 'Don't go to the kharabat (a ruined area) without a *pir*, (Sufi Master)even if you are Alexander of Time (Alexander the Great).' Even if you are 'Alexander of Time' you can't move without a *pir*. Now where can you go without permission? …… It is like this, my dear.

Healing Words and Onions for Zardi (Jaundice)

"First of all, I read. Without reading healing words, it is impossible to be healed. And I just point to the sick body. When I read the healing words by the permission of God, that person never comes back and God heals him them. People have come here from Pakistan, London, and Germany, and they have become healthy and have returned to those places. Zardi (jaundice) is of three kinds. One is white, the other one is yellow, and the third one is black. The black kind is the most dangerous, because it very soon affects the liver. It is like this, my dear.

Each sickness has separate special words of healing……. There is just one verse of the Quran for healing all of them. I have permission to heal jaundice just by using an onion and nothing else……The bottom side of the onion is cut, and when it is cut, the jaundice is cut too. If the jaundice is black or white, it appears in the onion. It is like your computer [he means voice recorder] in which when I talk it is recorded. The onion shows whether the jaundice is black, white or yellow. The onion shows in itself what type of illness it is.

God is helpful. Otherwise we are nothing and we can't do anything. I am a human. There won't be any one found in the bazaar to be as sinful as I am. Be alive. Be healthy. Thank you very much that you have asked me many questions. You serve the people too. Shall I ask for some tea for you?"

How the People of Asheqan wa Arefan became Muslims

The people of Asheqan wa Arefan became Muslim through a miracle preformed by Asheqan and Arefan It happened like this:

"One day Asheqan and Arefan went down to a bakery and they climbed down into the tandoor (traditional bread oven). They sat in the fire for one hour. After an hour the people called them, telling them to come out, but they did not reply. The people thought they had burned to death. But when the people called to them a second time, Asheqan and Arefan came out of the

tandoor with flowers in their hands. They told the people: 'The first time you called us we were busy praying and that is why we could not come out.'…

This is how the people of Asheqan wa Arefan became Muslim – both by the miracle, and the sword."

Ustad Maroofi's Stories from the Asheqan wa Arefan Shrine

"According to the stories our elders have told us, there are many legends regarding the shrine of Asheqan wa Arefan… People say that the shrine of Asheqan wa Arefan removes all of the evil from the neighborhood of Asheqan wa Arefan. There is a famous saying among the people of Kabul. They say, "The shrine of Asheqan wa Arefan is the protector of Kabul."… Baba Nazar Gul used to tell us the following story, 'Once we buried a girl who had died in the area above the shrine of Asheqan wa Arefan. We filled in the grave and then realized that we had forgotten the chip-axe we had used to dig the grave and we had left it inside the grave.

'So we went to the *mawlavi* (mullah) at the shrine and told him, "We buried a girl and forgot our chip-axe in her grave. If you permit us, we would like to open the grave." The mawlavi gave us permission and we opened the grave. When we had opened the grave, we saw that two bunches of fresh flowers had grown out of her two toes and climbed all the way up and into her two nostrils. Then we took our chip-axe and after praying, we closed the grave again.

'But while the grave was open some evil had come out of it. That night, we saw that the hand of Fatma [figure of a hand found on many Shia shrines representing Fatma, Mohammad, Ali, Hussain and Hasan] that is above the flag on the Asheqan wa Arefan shrine had blood dripping off it.

Then Sayed Amir Aga told me, "Boys! Starting tomorrow, we will never dig graves again," and Sayid Amir Aga stopped working as a gravedigger. People said that from that night forward Sayed Amir Aga had special powers and he heard the voices of spirits at night. People say that the evil which had appeared in the old city was removed by the Asheqan wa
Arefan shrine."

Reception and Highlights

One of the many positive points experienced during the documentation process, after an initial degree of wariness, was the high level of collaboration from the community elders (sometimes referred to as the White or Greybeards). Once the importance behind the research and the nature of the data collection had been sensitively and thoroughly explained, they were happy to facilitate principal introductions and over the course of the research programme began to actively encourage other people of note within the communities to talk more openly on their lives and memories in the 19 *gozars* of the Old City. This unexpected, enthusiastic interaction between the Wakils (community representatives), and the occupants of their neighbourhoods also aided in restoring a sense of pride in the areas and the past way of life that has shaped it in every detail. The Wakils also expressed an interest in assisting with future research programmes and in the crucial process of circulating the synthesised material prepared as a result of the research.

Although not yet widely distributed within the academic realm or elsewhere, the initial results and have been well received in Kabul and many of the community elders whom were interviewed as part of the research consider it of great benefit to their tight-knit community. Numerous senior academics at Kabul University also praised the work, acknowledging the immense value of such a creative initiative at this particular time in the history of the Old City and whom understand the need and significance for keeping alive the past cultures and traditions of a historic part of Kabul that is metamorphosing on a daily basis.

Funded by the Norwegian Government, another positive outcome has been that the resources made available through this project will strengthen the ability of Afghan professionals engaged in collecting oral testimony, allowing them to edit, evaluate and present material in an accessible format, nurturing further interest among a younger generation of Afghans in the richness of their heritage.

Future Research and Publications

Whilst no extensive publications have emanated from this research so far, it is hoped that a major publication will be forthcoming in the future. In the interim, a number of short booklets have been published in Pashtu, Dari and English highlighting aspects of the research carried out over the five and a half year period, focusing on a number of interesting characters, traditions and beliefs. The first six booklets produced are entitled; Traditions in the Old City –The Power of Healing, People and their Homes in the Old City – Haji Langar Zamin's House, Flying Drums & Other Stories from the Charda Ma'soom Shrine, Marriage Customs in Kabul Old City, Stories of Miracles from the Old City and The Shrine of Asheqan wa Arefan – the Protector of Kabul and are available as PDF's to students and oral history researchers on request. The book, 'People and their Homes in the Old City' has recently been distributed to relevant Afghan institutes such as the universities, the Ministry of Higher Education other governmental institutions and to numerous residents of the Old City. In addition copies were also distributed to a number of foreign Embassies in Kabul, to interested researchers and to a selection of national and international cultural NGO's.

Concerning future research, it is hoped that the programme will continue to collect oral testimony on a wider range of issues. Whilst a wide sample of interviews were conducted, in quite specific sections of the Old City, the researchers felt that they had only scratched the surface of life in this part of the city. Many of the interviewees showed a willingness to share more information on their lives in and memories of the Old City, whilst other mitigating factors meant that many interesting residents from other quarters were not interviewed during



Young Kyrgyz boy outside the entrance to a traditional yurt © Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC)/Andy Miller

this particular research programme, but could be so in the future.

Whilst some of the results from the research were presented at Intangible Cultural Heritage workshops at the National Museum of Afghanistan at 2011, it has undoubtedly also helped raise the profile of this aspect of Afghanistan's intangible heritage to a new and enthusiastic audience. Further research would undoubtedly stimulate increased interest in ICH and also provide the opportunity for the training of other researchers in this specific field, whilst also galvanising the local community into recognising the value of their culture and way of life. The production of printed material, interaction with the media and the inscription of recognized ICH elements from Afghanistan on the UNESCO Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage, can only be a positive step forward. As one Afghan cultural professional in Kabul commented, many urban Afghans regard such areas as nothing more than a poor suburb, and this process can only help in reclaiming a place in their consciousness that there is so much more to the Old City.

Note:

Interviews were conducted in 19 *gozars* including; Asheqan wa Arefan, Baghe Qazi, Chardamasson, Chindawal, Chuqrag Street, Dewan Bigi Street, Gudri Street, Hazrat Street, Kharabat, Moii Mubarak Street, Pakhta Furushi Street, Sadwa Street, Se Dukan Street, Shor Bazaar, Uzbeka Street & Wazir Street.

Folklore and myths from the Wakhan, nothreast Afghanistan:

A second, and perhaps more challenging venture into the realms of recording aspects of Afghanistan's oral and intangible heritage was undertaken in the remote north-east provinces of the country, forming part of the 'Foklore and Archaeology of the Wakhan Corridor' Initiative. As part of a wider programme of cross-border cultural heritage initiatives in the region, a series of more than 90 interviews were conducted in the eastern-most districts of Badakhshan province. Local historians, *malangs*, itinerant story-tellers and shepherds from some 25 settlements along the main valley were questioned. Of the 25 myths and tales synthesized from the data collected, 13 have been published in booklet format alongside profiles of 14 historic buildings and archaeological sites from the same region. Short extracts from a number of the tales are included here.

The Research Area - The Wakhan Corridor

Isolated between the Hindu Kush, Karakoram and Pamir Mountain ranges in the far north-east of Afghanistan, the thin slice of geography known as the Wakhan is divided into three distinct areas – the Wakhan Corridor, The Great Pamir and the Little Pamir with peaks rising from 2500m to almost 7500m on the summit of Nowshaq, (ascended by an Afghan team in 2009).

The topography of the region has largely insulated the communities from the political events that have taken place in the surrounding region in recent times, and to some extent it was believed that elements of intangible cultural heritage, fast disappearing elsewhere in the country, might still survive in one form or another. The principal communities in the region are Wakhi pastoralists and a number, (of decreasing) extended family units of Kyrgyz nomads. The Wakhis, predominantly subsistence farmers living in the valleys, speak a dialect of Persian and are Shia Ismailis. The Kyrgyz nomads, seasonally moving through the Great and Little Pamirs in search of pastures for their livestock, are Sunni Muslims speaking a Turkic dialect.

Numerous petroglyphs bear witness to the presence of people in the Wakhan and its importance as a regional crossing point since the Lower Palaeolithic. The Wakhan is situated on a branch of the 'Silk Road', (a term only coined in 1877 by the German geographer Ferdinand von Richtofen) on the route between the trading centres in Western China and the Mediterranean. The route was extensively used for over 1700 years from the 4th century BC to the end of the Mongol Empire at the end of the late 14th century. Notably early Chinese records from the 7th century attest to the importance of the Wakhan in trade conducted by the Tang dynasty. The Chinese Pilgrim Xuan Xang who travelled through the region in the 7th century as part of a 17 year pilgrimage to India, wrote:

"The valley of the Pamirs is about 6000 li from east to west, and 100 li from north to south ….situated between two snowy mountains. The cold is glacial and the winds furious. Snow falls in spring and summer, day and night the wind rages. Grain and fruit cannot grow there and trees are few and far between. In the middle of the valley is a large lake, situated in the centre of the world on a plateau of prodigious height" Other descriptions of this remote and culturally isolated area were also recorded in Marco Polo's accounts in 1271, Mirzar Muhammad Haidar (the 16th century Mir of Kashgar) crossing from India in 1545, and by the Jesuit Benedict de Goes, travelling from China to India in the early 17th century.

By the 19th century, the Wakhan had taken on a new strategic importance, given its location on the frontline between Tsarist Russian and British Empires with a variety of Russian and British scouts and explorers venturing deep into the Wakhan, also undertaking some of the first serious research. The Anglo-Russian Pamir Treaty of 1895 ended the status of the Wakhan as a local principality and it was at this time that explorers such as Curzon, Olufsen and Stein made their names in conducting research in this foreboding territory. The Wakhan remained predominantly insulated from the revolutions in Russia and China as it did from much of the political upheaval in Afghanistan, of which it was by then a province. Today this region, the far eastern district of the province of Badakhshan, is a predominantly peaceful one with some 1400 Kyrgyz still moving seasonally between the high and low pastures of the mountains, and some 10,000 Wakhi interspersed throughout the lower and upper valleys of the Wakhan. Ground-breaking zoological research and training is being undertaken by the Wildlife Conservation Society in this pristine environment that has preserved animal species as well as cultural traditions. The Wakhan can also claim in the last few years to have seen a resurgence, all be it limited, in interest in the area as an 'adventure - tourist' destination for climbers, trekkers and wild life enthusiasts from around the world. Encouraged by the Aga Khan Foundation's tourism initiatives, this harks back to more

prosperous days of the 70's when the Wakhan was one of Central Asia's leading destinations for serious mountaineering and skiing.

The Field Work – From Ishkashim to the High Pamirs

During the course of summer and early autumn 2008 a research team from the Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC), in conjunction with student anthropologists studying at Kabul University, travelled to Badakhshan Province. A total of 95 people were interviewed in some 12 settlements located between the small town of Ishkashim at the western entrance to the Wakhan Corridor on the border crossing north to Tajikistan, and the village of Sarhad-e Broghill, the last small Wakhi settlement before the rise east into the Little Pamir Mountains and the route east to lake Chaqmaktin and the border with China beyond.

As in other parts of Afghanistan and the wider region, notably Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, storytelling remains a central part of how identity and history are passed down within close knit communities (in some instances with no formal written language), as well as providing a vital part of informal education. While a degree of academic research has been undertaken on myths and legends among Afghan communities (notably in Herat, Kabul and east of Jalalabad), such specific enquiry within the Wakhan is sparse. The collection and transcription of the stories presented as part of the 'Wakhan Folktales Initiative' sought to make a small but significant in-road into recording Wakhan culture, highlighting a further element of Afghanistan's exceptionally varied intangible cultural heritage. It was also anticipated that the subsequent publication of a small number of stories (accompanied by images related to either the story tellers themselves, or the geographical areas included in their stories), would encourage national and international visitors to the area. This publication was also intended to highlight the fragility of much ICH, particularly in the spoken form, whilst also making it clear how easily personal and institutional memories of local traditions, beliefs and ways of life, often unchanged for generations, can easily disappear.

Whereas the premise of the data collection was to locate and interview known village storytellers throughout settlements in the Lower and Upper Wakhan, it was initially surprising to find that there was no great tradition of storytelling in that part of the country as was assumed. Surrounding regions such as Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and notably Kyrgyzstan (where the epic story of Manas is told in almost every rural settlement) having a rich tradition of storytelling. Even using the many local contacts known to us in settlements ranging from tiny hamlets to medium sized villages, the traditional village story teller seemed to escape us. However, through extensive research and much travelling a small number of surviving village story tellers and the occasional 'local historian' were tracked down.

Recordings were undertaken privately in the homes of the storytellers, whilst some tales were documented in the open, in the individuals favourite local spot or on occasion with a number of listeners gathered around, often children from the local villages. Interviews were arranged in advance where possible, although by the very nature of such data collection, they often had to be undertaken on the spur of the moment as the situation arose – many of the more interesting and revealing stories were recorded when least expected, during raucous local social events, on horseback travelling between villages, or at the district Police Chiefs weekly meetings – often ending in impromptu dance and drumming sessions. There were also lessons to be learnt from not being prepared for such occasions. A wonderful rendition of 'The Witch of Ners' was given by a local story teller Kach Bek, late one evening in the small, traditional home of Chakan Bek (a guesthouse owner in the remote village of Sarhad). After several hours of traditional dancing, Kach Bek gave an animated 40 minute performance, employing multiple voices, hand actions and a myriad of facial expressions – a real performance late into the night. Sadly our recording equipment was elsewhere so at this wonderful event went unrecorded. Returning the next morning to tempt him to repeat this wonderful, richly described story, we had to make do with a lacklustre 8 minute version of the previous night's rendition, given by a very unanimated and worse for wear story-teller.

The narrators interviewed were not prompted to talk on specific themes and were generally asked to recount any local, traditional myths or legends they knew or that had been passed down to them by relatives or other story tellers. This, therefore, elicited a mixture of both local folklore and more unusual myths and legends. Certain recognisable themes and dialogues could be recognised amongst the 14 stories collected and can be very simply categorised into the following subject areas;

Those with a heavy western European influence (2), comedy (1), possible flood myth (1), miracles (2) pursuit of / trials of love (4), good fortune / loss and recovery (3), warning / morality tale (1). Whilst this is a very simple classification it helps identify the types of tale in circulation and at some point would benefit from closer analysis and classification.

Whilst a number of people interviewed provided interesting anecdotes concerning current village life and social comment on the political and economic changes that had occurred in the province over the last forty years, only a total of what we considered 25 genuine folk tales or legends were distilled from the 90+ interviews. All digital and paper records were kept but to date only a total of fourteen have been translated (from 6 storytellers / local historians), and subsequently published in English in 2009 and then Dari in 2010 in a booklet format, ''Tales from the Wakhan – Folklore and Archaeology of the Wakhan Corridor''. These 14 stories were published jointly with a short cultural inventory of 12 heritage sites in the Wakhan. As part of a wider survey in the Northern Areas in Pakistan, during 2007 a short season of field survey had been undertaken in the Wakhan and Little Pamir to identify and record surviving archaeological sites and historical monuments, a total of 100 sites being identified both from past surveys and through the identification of new sites.

Whilst the 14 stories are extensive and detailed, a few short extracts are recounted here to provide an understanding of the richness and variety of the tales collected. With widely varying themes and colourful characters, they bring out both the local influence of



Traditional land management in the village of Sarhad-e-Broghil, east areas of the Wakhan corridor © Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC)/Andy Miller

tales designed to teach certain lessons to the listener, (respect, honour, trust, piety), and in some instances show how local tales have been influenced by stories from the wider region, or where myths and legends recounted much further afield have been adapted wholesale. Although not as prolific as in other countries in terms of length or quantity, nonetheless these short excerpts are fascinating. Whilst no current plans exist for the further publication of the other stories collected during the Wakhan field trip, it is hoped that this might have inspired further research into this area of ICH in Afghanistan.

The Deo-i Sarma of the Hindu Kush

A short 'morality' tale recorded from one of the more prolific story-tellers / local historians encountered in the Wakhan, the tale is set on the Afghan side of the Hindu Kush mountain chain. The tale gives advice on how children should respect their mothers, and the consequences if this advice isn't heeded, the same going for dishonest people. The Deo-i Sarma represents an Afghan form of Tibetan / Nepali yeti and this entertaining tale describes its multi-coloured form, and how it tricks its victims (by changing shape and emanating warmth) to lure people further out into the mountains, where they eventually succumb to the cold, and then are subjected to the beast's cravings.

''For the Deo-I Sarma ('cold giants' or yeti) the winter and the summer are the same, although they prefer higher, colder climates. Mostly they are only seen by dishonest, lazy or disrespectful people, and generally someone who is not taking the advice of their mother. They do not have a specific colour. They are sometimes white but can change to other colours with their coat changing to suit the season, like a chameleon. In the villages, if a young person is disrespectful to his parents, or ignores the advice of a mother, she will often say 'If you do not respect me, then the Deo-i Sarma will carry you off into the mountains'...

When the Deo-I Sarma is about to appear, the wind picks up and blows hard. Dark clouds move in and then rain or snow will fall heavily... the beast sometimes appears as an old man dressed in a black chapan, emanating warmth and encouraging you to move closer… as the person moves closer the Deo-I Sarma moves further away. If a person is clever or honest he will turn and run and the beast will not follow. A dishonest person will continue to follow until he is so cold… the victim eventually collapses from exposure to the elements and the Deo-i Sarma then removes the kidneys to eat. The frozen remains are then found days later. The moral of this story is: Listen to your mother, or your kidneys will be eaten!

Iskander and the Angel of Lake Shewa

An interesting tale in that it alludes to the known historical travels of Alexander the Great (Iskander) on his campaigns through Central Asia, although he is not known to have passed through Badakhshan. The story offers a part fictitious account of his travels through the region and the romanticisation of an encounter with a woman he meets by Lake Shewa whilst encamped there. The woman, of incredible beauty, he discovers is 'not of this world'. Iskander falls in love, marries in secret the 'angel of the lake' (who is bound to the lake). He continues on his campaigns to the north, and upon his death (historically in 323BCE in Babylon), his body is mysteriously returned to be buried by Lake Shewa in northern Afghanistan, not Egypt or Macedonia as history dictates.

''Iskander (Alexander the Great) and his army, after many years of war and hardship in Asia were travelling north on their campaigns. One cold, clear morning, they arrive at Lake Shewa, near the village of Shewa.

Awaking early next morning and wishing for time alone, Iskander went down to the lake to bathe in its cool, inviting waters… whilst undressing he saw across the water, partially hidden by a juniper bush, a young women also undressing to bathe. She appeared very beautiful to his eyes, more beautiful than any woman he had seen in Macedonia or elsewhere. Iskander was transfixed by her beauty... a young angel, iridescent with small gilded wings.

She raised her hand to her lips to silence him and whispered, ''I know who and what you are, and what you will become''. Iskander was bewitched by this beauty… they fell in love and after many weeks married in secret … When the time came to move on Iskander begged the angel to go with him… but as protector of the lake, the angel was bound to it and with great sadness the two parted… she waited for Iskander's return, however long it might take. Many years later on his expeditions to Egypt, Iskander was poisoned by his guards and died. As he requested, his body eventually made the long trip back to Lake Shewa. There, one misty morning, dressed in his finest military outfit, he was laid upon a golden bed and floated out onto the river. To this day the body of Iskander rests in this peaceful place… The angel of Lake Shewa is said to watch over his watery grave from the mountains above, lamenting the loss of her fleeting love.

Conclusions and the Future for ICH in fghanistan

This article has taken a brief look at one small element of intangible cultural heritage in Afghanistan. Seeking to highlight the tenuousness and often fragile nature of the survival of storytelling and oral history. It also acknowledges the variety and intensity of the memory of past lives and cultural traditions in two very different regions of the country.

In the last decade an awareness of ICH, in its myriad forms, has waned. Even though recognition and appreciation have not disappeared completely, both personal and institutional memory of this finite cultural resource had almost been gradually obscured by economic, political and security related misfortunes. Nonetheless, intangible traditions and skills have not wholly been forgotten.

In the last 6 years or so there has been a noticeable move to curb fading interest and expertise in this area. A number of national and international institutions, recognising the worth of ICH within the country, have

brought about a concerted drive to revive and propagate these endangered cultural traditions and skills, through recording, training and awareness - raising both at a local level and in the wider international arena. Notable examples of on-going initiatives include the revival of traditional music skills through the training and nurturing of young men and women by a dwindling number of recognised ustads (a title of extreme respect given to master musicians). Students learn to appreciate and play such instruments as the Afghan national instrument the rubab, tabla, Delruba, Tanpura and Sarangi - all traditionally used as a musical form of accompaniment to the Kabuli Ghazal, (Persian and Pashto poetry constructed in couplets).

Extensive programmes have been funded by international donors, the Afghan National Institute of Music (ANIM) and the Aga Khan Music Initiative (AKMI) running very successful initiatives, with schools in Herat and Kabul. This resurgence in traditional musical education as an important form of ICH, has been further complemented by the sponsorship of a project in sarak-e Kharabat (the historic musicians quarter in Kabul) for the crafting of traditional instruments, whilst an innovative 'Folk Music Documentation Project' was undertaken throughout the course of 2009 to 2011 in the provinces of Badakhshan, Badghis and Herat, recording traditional music from over 60 practitioners in this neglected facet of Afghanistan's musical heritage.

Craft production and training in traditional skills, all falling within the cultural sphere of ICH, are also enjoying a current renaissance. Enterprises encompassing such areas as ceramic production, stone masonry, wood carving, glass blowing, weaving, calligraphy and miniature painting, to name but a few historical specializations, have all been the focus of the Aga Khan Trust for Culture and Turquoise Mountain as part of their programmes of historic built environment conservation and vocational training / capacity building in the historic quarters of Kabul, Herat and in the provinces.

Furthermore, as a fortunate by-product of other flourishing, resurgent industries within the cultural related sector in Afghanistan, film and documentary makers (Afghan and International) are also once more making a valuable contribution to the preservation and recognition of ICH through the visual and auditory documentation of intangible cultural traditions. Recent worthy examples include 2 short films on traditional life, ritual and culture in Badakhshan Province in the remote Wakhan Corridor and the Little Pamir Mountains, Heritage of the Wakhan (D. James, 2012) and Prisoners of the Himalayas – The Life and Fate of the Last Kyrgyz of Afghanistan, (L.Meunier, 2012), both highlighting vanishing traditions and customs of the Wakhi and Kyrgyz populations in the isolated Wakhan.

The end of 2012 also saw the release of Buzakshi Boys (S. French & A. Nasr, 2012), a short film portraying the (fictional) lives of two young Afghan boys who dream of becoming Buzkashi players, the Afghan national sport (regionally, believed to have been invented by Turkic nomads in the 10th century). Also currently in production is a series of short films documenting traditional animal droving around the world (Indus Films). One of the episodes will follow the traditional Kuch (seasonal migration), of the Wakhi population from summer to the winter pastures in the Big Pamir mountains, again in Badakhshan. Documenting the progression of the migrating Wakhi, the episode also investigates the role of animals in the Wakhan not only in contemporary day to day life, but in past rituals, beliefs and practises. It would not be unreasonable to hope that documentaries such as this will also stimulate further wide spread interest in the more intangible aspects of the country's heritage, both at home and overseas.

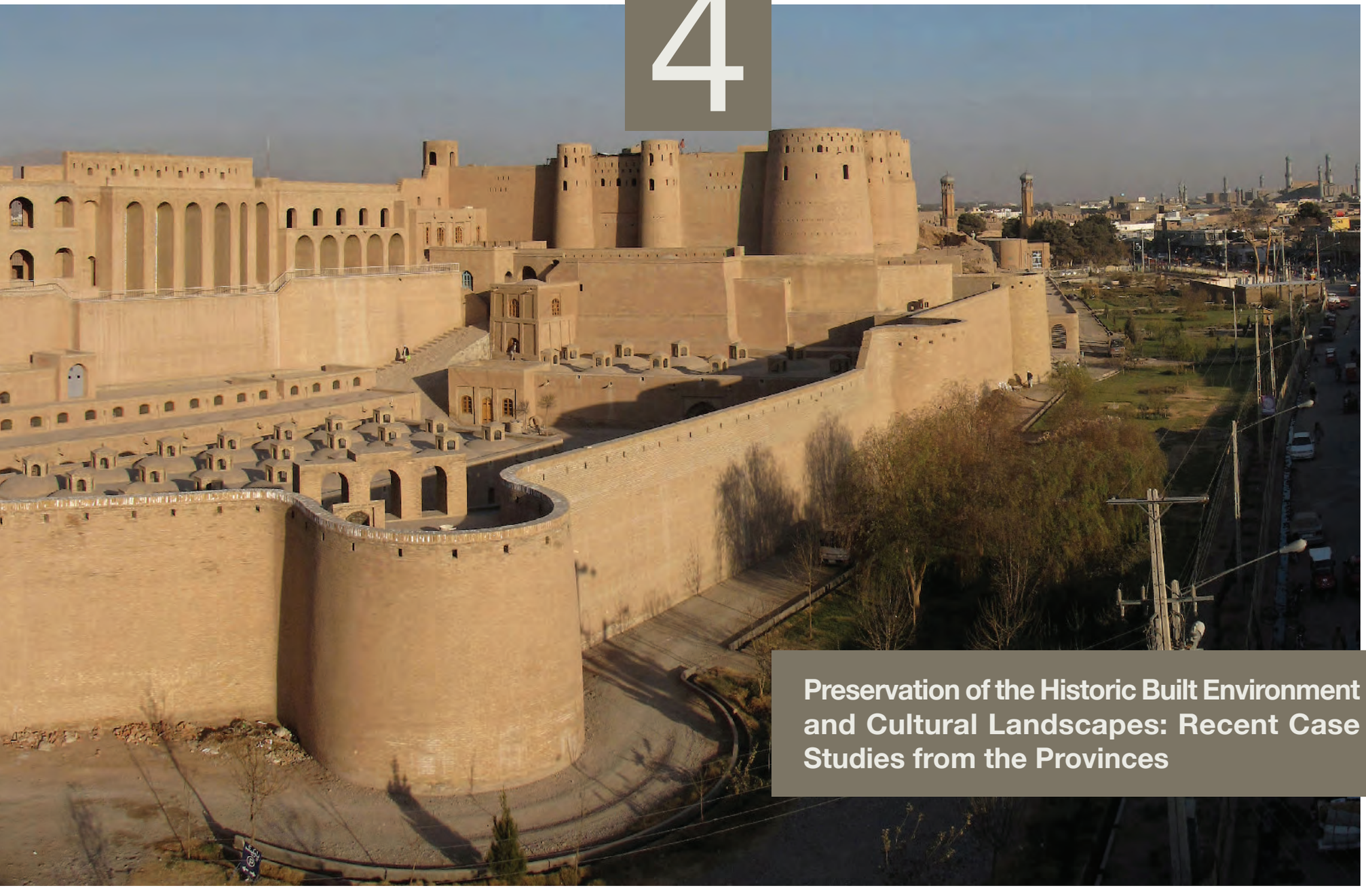
So, with the worrying prospect on the horizon of diminishing international funds being allocated for the cultural sector in Afghanistan it is of paramount importance that the enormity of ICH's role in the reclaiming of Afghanistan's heritage is accordingly recognised and afforded the attention it demands, as a limited and inimitable, universal cultural asset.

Perhaps the few examples referred to above of the revitalization of traditional skills in Afghanistan, the revival of traditional music and the importance of oral history collection will help further underline the tenuous and fragile nature of many aspects of ICH throughout the country, and act as a catalyst for further research, training, recording and protection of this valuable and unique cultural resource. There are of course considerable benefits that this can also bring to the nation - culturally, economically and in terms of further recognition and of national identity.



View of Qala-e-Ikhtyaruddin © Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC)

4



Preservation of the Historic Built Environment and Cultural Landscapes: Recent Case Studies from the Provinces

The Challenges of Safeguarding Afghanistan's Urban Heritage

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The cities and towns of Afghanistan have long been hubs of commercial, social and cultural activity, as well as sites on which political and military rivalries are played out. Traditional urban bazaars, community mosques and merchant homes serve as physical markers of the ebb and flow of their historical development. Most Afghan cities have witnessed repeated cycles of investment and destruction, as they are looted and laid waste by rivals, only to rise from the ashes under a new regime whose control is challenged in turn by others who demolish or transform the legacy of their predecessors. While the violent overthrow of rulers was somewhat less common, this process of urban transformation during the 20th century became an important projection of an image of a modern Afghan state. It is on the urban landscape that similar visions of progress continue to be played out to this day, although the wholesale transformations that are now under way risk destroying important traces of history. The challenge for Afghans today is to find a balance between safeguarding what is left of their urban heritage and enabling appropriate processes of development.

Since 2003, Afghanistan's cities have seen significant increases in population and a surge in private investments. This recovery comes after a prolonged period of conflict that resulted in destruction in some cities and a general lack of development and stagnation. At the core of some cities that are now recovering – Kabul, Qandahar, Herat, Ghazni, Balkh, Kunduz among others – stand areas of historic fabric that provide evidence of their past, both above and below ground. These 'old cities' generally comprise an area, once ringed with defensive walls, with distinct residential and commercial quarters, on whose bazaars many inhabitants depended for their livelihoods. The population of these quarters fluctuated, depending on their fortunes or need for protection. In the case of Kapisa, Ai Khanoum, Jam and Bost, which were of less strategic and commercial importance to succeeding generations, the settlement was eventually abandoned.

A brief overview of urban history illustrates how resilient cities have been, and the vital role they played in the political, economic and cultural development of Afghanistan. Among the earliest identified towns, dating from between 4000 and 2000 BC, are at Mundigak near Qandahar, and Dashli near Balkh. By 500 BC, due perhaps to changing patterns of trade, Qandahar was the primary settlement in the south, with Balkh and other settlements developing in the north. In 329 BC Alexander conquered Balkh and, during his military campaigns, strengthened the defences at Qandahar and Herat. He may also have laid the foundations on the banks of the Amu Darya river of Ai Khanoum, a city then developed by the Bactrians who inhabited the site until around 145 BC.

It was further south at Kapisa, where the Kushan dynasty built their summer capital, and where in 1939 archaeologists excavated a range of fine objects that reflect the wealth and taste of the court of Kanishka. With direct control in an area between Balkh and Qandahar, he wielded political influence much further afield. In-fighting after Kanishka's death disrupted trade and fragmented Kushan power, enabling the nomadic Hephthalites to invade and destroy cities and sites of worship across the region. Kapisa seems to have been abandoned, but Bamiyan soon recovered and prospered



Herat - Old City roof-scape looking towards the Friday Mosque, 2013 © Jolyon Leslie



The urban landscape of Kabul looking east towards the Bala Hissar, 1990 © Jolyon Leslie

from a resumption of trade and the passage of pilgrims.

The advance of Arab armies from the west in the 7th century saw Zaranj and Bost develop as garrison-towns. During the early period of Muslim influence in the region, the urban centres fell under various principalities, with Samanids in Balkh, Hindu Shahis in Kabul and other rulers in Qandahar, Bost and Ghazni. This changed dramatically in the 10th century, when Sultan Mahmud of Ghazni conquered Kabul, Bost and Balkh before moving on to raid India. Wealth generated from booty seized during these raids enabled Ghazni to become a centre of culture. Mahmud also developed a summer capital at Bost, whose triumphal arch gives a sense to this day of its grandeur. The massive, sumptuously-decorated palaces that members of the Ghaznavid court built along the Helmand river reflects their refined tastes and prosperity.

This was not, however, to last. In the 12th century, Alauddin – also known as 'Jahansuz' or burner of the world – laid waste to both Ghazni and Bost. His successor Ghyasuddin expanded the Ghorid empire, investing in Jam, Herat, Balkh and Bamiyan. Along with smaller settlements and the irrigation systems on which they depended, these cities were again destroyed in the early 13th century by Mongol armies under Genghis Khan. The case of Herat illustrates how this destruction also provided opportunities for renewal. Under the Karts, Herat was one of the first places to recover from the damage wrought by the Mongols, but this work was subsequently undone by Timur. His youngest son and successor Shah Rukh then went on to transform Herat, and Balkh, into centres of intellectual and artistic activity, of which the mausoleum of Gawharshad and the shrine of Khwaja Parsa are testament.

Kabul, which Babur occupied in 1504, was the springboard for military campaigns into India, where he laid the foundations of the Mughal empire. Being more of a gardener than a builder, it was on the landscape that Babur left his mark in Kabul and elsewhere in the region. While Afghan cities continued to benefit from trade and investments, especially to mark the visits of subsequent Mughal rulers, India was the main focus of their attention. Kabul remained little more than an outpost, while the inhabitants of Qandahar found themselves caught between the rival Mughal and Safavid empires, whose ruler Nadir Shah occupied the city in 1738. It was in Qandahar that the Sadozai, Ahmad Khan, emerged in 1747 as leader of an Afghan entity.

The centre of political power in this domain shifted when his son Timur Shah moved his capital to Kabul, to escape internecine strife. He continued to struggle with unrest across his domains through his reign, as did his successor Zaman Shah, who contended with rivals in Herat and Qandahar. Zaman was unable even to complete the brick mausoleum that he commissioned for his father, and which stands to this day in central Kabul. The ensuing power-struggles between the Barakzais and Sadozais were played out in Kabul, Ghazni, Qandahar and Herat, while Balkh and the north remained largely under the control of the Uzbeks.

Kabul was the primary stage on which the next stage of Afghan history was played out, when in 1839 the British 'Army of the Indus' marched, (via Qandahar), to overthrow Dost Mohammed. The British military cantonment – now the modern suburbs of Wazir Akbar Khan and Sherpur – was in 1841 overrun by disaffected Afghans, obliging the occupying force to retreat towards Jalalabad, along which route most were massacred. In response, during a punitive raid eight months later, the

British destroyed an important landmark and source of prosperity, Char Chatta bazaar. Again in 1897, during the British occupation of Kabul, the historic citadel of Bala Hissar was leveled to avenge the murder of the Resident. As a British witness noted at the time: 'we have left our indelible mark at Kabul'.

It was Amir Abdur Rahman who, after assuming power in 1880, left his mark on the capital by constructing the Arq palace outside of the long-established bounds of the city proper. As well as being one of several residences for the Amir, this complex represented the seat of an assertive, (and paternalistic), central government. In adopting more explicitly foreign models for his palaces in Kabul and elsewhere, his son Habibullah pursued a new phase of the cultural exchanges that have long characterized Afghanistan's built heritage.

Habibullah's son Amanullah embarked in the 1920s on a more ambitious attempt at cultural exchange when he laid out in the south of Kabul the quarter of Darulaman, where new public institutions were to be clustered. The familiar cycle of development and destruction continued, however, and the ruins of the Darulaman Palace serve today as a monument to Amanullah's reformist vision, which eventually cost him the throne. Also now in ruins, the ostentatious villas and public buildings that he built in the summer resort of Paghman presaged the garish modern villas that now vie for attention in the suburbs of Kabul and other Afghan cities.

From the 1930s, an altogether broader transformation of Afghan cities gathered pace. Having repaired the damage sustained to Kabul during the overthrow of Amanullah and the brief reign of Habibullah Kalakani, the new ruler Nader Shah commissioned many public buildings and oversaw the creation of new suburbs. In 1948, as part of measures to modernize the capital, the municipality (the first to be elected) cut a swathe through the old city to create the commercial boulevard of Jade Maiwand, whose modern facades concealed the dense historic fabric behind. A similarly ambitious act of urbanism saw the historic quarter of Mazar-i-Sharif tidied during the 1960s into a new grid-plan with the shrine at its centre. By contrast, with the focus of development primarily on their outskirts, the historic quarters of Herat and Qandahar survived largely unscathed, and their bazaars continued to be important in commercial life.

With their sights set firmly on 'modern' urban development, Afghan planners and bureaucrats came to regard these quarters as fit only for wholesale transformation. The principal tool for this was the 'master plan' which, in Kabul in 1976 envisaged the densely-packed traditional buildings and labyrinthine alleys replaced by rows of multi-storey apartment blocks set amid public parks. Fortunately, there was neither the political will nor the resources to realize this vision of modernity and the surviving historic quarters were left to further decay. With many homes subdivided and only very limited investments in public services, living conditions deteriorated to the extent that these areas were routinely dismissed by municipal officials as 'slums'. In Kabul in 1978, anti-government agitation in the old city provided a useful pretext for further roads to be driven through, destroying yet more traditional property. Even where there was no direct threat, Afghan planners who worked with Soviet advisers seemed to be at a loss as to how to deal with historic neighbourhoods which, on the master-plans for Herat and Qandahar from the late 1970s appear as a blank space.

The reality, however, is that these neighbourhoods remain vibrant. It is here that migrants seek affordable quarters in decaying traditional homes, where craftsmen continue their trades and where trade is conducted in chaotic bazaars. It is here too that an urban narrative is kept alive in the beliefs and legends associated with historic shrines and sites. The layers of history extend underground; the simple process of digging a trench to repair a water-main in the old city of Herat is likely to turn up fragments of pottery, marble, or sections of clay water pipes.

Despite the efforts at transformation by planners and their foreign advisers, Afghanistan was unique in how much of its urban heritage survived – albeit in a degraded state – until the early 1990s. Several old cities, including Herat and Qandahar, suffered direct damage during the 1980s, but the conflict largely deterred public or private investment, which spared the historic quarters from the kind of 'redevelopment' which might have taken place in more peaceful circumstances. The transformation of the historic quarters of Lahore (Pakistan) and Meshed (Iran) are examples of the impact of 'normal' urban development during the 1990s when, by contrast, most Afghan cities experienced a form of conflict-induced stagnation.

Kabul was an exception, however, when between 1992-1994 it was the focus of intense inter-factional fighting that caused widespread damage across the city, and resulted in the looting by mujahideen fighters of the National Museum. As they battled for control of the strategically-located old city, these fighters indiscriminately destroyed homes, bazaars, mosques and shrines. It took years for war-damaged historic neighbourhoods to be de-mined and for the process of resettlement and reconstruction to begin. Those owners who did invest in repairs did so cautiously, using traditional forms and materials, but much of the old city remained in ruins.

Little changed when, in 1996, the Taliban occupied Kabul and urban residents found themselves in a state of suspended animation, in both political and economic terms. As had been the case during the mujahideen era, there were few public investments and, with many property owners in exile, the historic quarters continued to decay.

Following the flight in late 2001 of the Taliban from major cities, a gradual process of recovery began. Over time, with the return of refugees and in-migration from rural areas, urban populations grew significantly, creating an intense demand for land and housing, whose value soared. Almost without exception, Afghan cities have witnessed a dramatic urban sprawl, with much of the new development on the outskirts. Given the commercial potential of central districts, where the historic quarters are situated, developers have turned their attention to these areas. It is indeed ironic that, having in part survived a protracted conflict, these quarters have in recent years

faced the very real threat of being destroyed by money.

In Kabul in 2003, a presidential decree prohibiting all new construction in the old city – ostensibly to safeguard the area – had little impact on the ground and developers continued to act with impunity, acquiring and demolishing historic property for 'redevelopment', often in collusion with municipal officials. Parallel efforts to develop and enforce regulations aimed at protecting the historic fabric and ensuring appropriate processes of development fell victim to a turf-war between municipal and ministerial officials – a situation that has proved very useful and lucrative for property speculators.

A similar situation has played out in Herat, whose old city was until recently one of the best-preserved examples of historic urban fabric in the region. It was for this reason that in 2006 UNESCO agreed with Herat municipality and others on measures to safeguard the character of the historic fabric by restricting the height and volume of new structures and specifying external finishes. These guidelines have however rarely been enforced, and demolitions and inappropriate construction continue largely unchecked in the old city. As in Kabul, property adjoining vehicular roads seem to be the most sought-after by developers who generally construct multi-storey concrete 'markets', often excavating two floors underground and thereby destroying any archaeological remains. In what was left of the old city of Qandahar, a similarly-destructive process of commercialization has taken place, while the bulk of the historic part of Charikar was recently 'redeveloped' with official sanction. Given the pace at which Afghan urban centres are growing, and the destructive nature of the transformations that are taking place, time is clearly running out for the surviving historic fabric which, as the brief outline above illustrates, represents an important part of the country's heritage.

The challenges in addressing this situation are multiple. The relevant legal provisions in the 2004 Afghan Cultural Property Law are vague and only state that 'modification of the structure of a registered monument of historic and artistic value is prohibited, without the authorization of the Ministry of Information and Culture (which)... makes proper arrangements for the protection of such monuments, (Article 12). As long as the law only applies to 'registered monuments' – it has proved difficult to get areas of historic fabric designated as such – it is clearly not an effective deterrent to the kind of destruction that is taking place in Herat, Kabul and other cities.

Both the 2004 National Urban Strategy and the urban component of the 2006 Afghan National Development Strategy draw attention to the need for protection of urban heritage, but more work needs to be done on developing effective programmes to address the legal, technical, economic and social issues in a coherent manner. Government entities that are responsible for safeguarding built heritage have limited resources and capacity, although they have facilitated externally-funded urban conservation initiatives such as those implemented by the Aga Khan Trust for Culture and Turquoise Mountain in Kabul and Herat. The modest investments made through these community- based NGO projects have resulted in the conservation of dozens of historic properties, training of craftspeople and improvements in living conditions in recent years. These achievements will however remain 'islands' in a sea of uncontrolled construction without an effective legal and administrative framework in which to operate. And any laws and regulations will only be useful if they are enforced; presently government officials show very little willingness to stand up to powerful interests engaged in property speculation in these or other urban areas. Municipal officials can be forgiven for turning a blind eye to illegal demolition or construction in historic neighbourhoods when the 'permissions' obtained by developers bear the signature of senior civil servants in Kabul who publicly lament the loss of Afghanistan's built heritage.

Even before the senseless damage inflicted by the Taliban on the Bamiyan Buddhas, there was a good deal of hand-wringing among Afghans about the loss of their cultural heritage. Most accounts of the fate of the National Museum in Kabul tend to dwell on the damage inflicted in 2001 on objects considered by the Taliban as idolatrous, but gloss over the fact that the systematic looting of the collection in 1993/4 was in fact carried out by Afghans, who in many cases sold stolen objects on to foreign dealers. It is intriguing how that this 'narrative of loss' has also come to prevail with regard to urban heritage, with officials and politicians tending to portray themselves as helpless bystanders in an inevitable process of 'development'. It is particularly ironic that this destruction is taking place during a period of prosperity for many Afghans, who arguably have the choices denied to previous generations.

What are these choices? Perhaps the most important is for Afghans to acknowledge that the ongoing process of urban transformation will, unless checked, irrevocably destroy an important part of their history. Despite the fact that the inhabitants of historic quarters are often marginal and poor, and therefore have few choices, many have a strong attachment and are protective of the environment in which they live. Their voice needs to be heard by the officials who presently make decisions on their behalf, and who in many cases seem set on a path of wholesale transformation.

If they choose to adopt development approaches that are compatible with safeguarding, Afghan planners and urban managers can draw on the experience of cities elsewhere in the region that have grown and prospered while retaining their unique historic character in certain quarters. The choice facing Afghan political and professionals leaders is between acting soon to protect their old cities or standing by as they disappear under characterless concrete. If the next generation of Afghans is to inherit a nation that is alive, today's citizens need to rise to the challenge and ensure that their culture, of which historic mosques and shrines, bazaars and merchant homes are an important component, remains alive.



Traditional urban fabric in Kabul Old City, 1991 © Jolyon Leslie

Architectural Conservation and Historic of Monuments in Ghazni Province: Highlights of the Ghaznavid Empire

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A Brief History

Ghazni has had a turbulent, fascinating and complex history that has been at the centre point of many of the main political, military and artistic exchanges in the region for centuries. Thought to have been first founded in 1500 BCE as mentioned by Ptolemy, (the famous Roman mathematician, geographer and astronomer) and called either Gazaca or Gazos at that point, it became part of the Persian Empire in the 6th century BCE. Before Islam came to the region (probably in the 9th century CE but earlier in other parts, conquered first by invading Arab forces), Ghazni was the centre of a substantial Buddhist community with many extensive monastery complexes (similar to the famous examples at Hadda in Nangarhar province today).

Ghazni's 'golden period' – and much of what was celebrated during the ISESCO nominated events of 2013 – are the 200 years of the 10th and 11th centuries CE represented by the Ghaznavid Empire.

Growing in size and strength from the wealth created by years of military campaigns in northern India, the Ghaznavids were also mostly responsible for the introduction of Islam to that country. Ghazni city fell to the Ghurids in the mid-12th century CE but rose again as a cultural centre under the Ghurids, only to be once more sacked by Genghis Khan (reigned 1206 - 1227) in the early 13th century CE. Many travelers in the 14th century noted how much of what was a great city was then largely in ruins. The late 14th – mid – 16th centuries saw the rise of the Timurid Empire in the region with the Timurid prince Babur, the ruler of Ferghana, (today located in eastern Afghanistan), and occupier of the Bala Hissar in Kabul invading North India and founding the Mughal Empire, which ruled most of North India until its decline after Aurangzeb in the early 18th century.

The First Anglo-Afghan War (1839) saw the city and citadel taken over by British military in the Battle of Ghazni, whilst some 150 years later during the inter-factional fighting of the 1990's numerous historic buildings and artefacts were damaged or removed. As a strategically important city on the way to Kabul, Ghazni has always been a prominent prize for invading or occupying forces.

The more recent history of Ghazni has seen the re-building of parts of the city by both the government and with foreign assistance, with numerous construction and education projects currently underway or planned for the future.

The Ghaznavid Empire (975 –1187 CE)

As probably the most illustrious period of Ghazni's historic past it is appropriate to make mention of the Ghaznavid Empire that ruled a greater portion of the region from Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan in the north (known historically as Transoxiana), to Iran in the west (Persia at the time) and to northwest India in the east for over 200 years. Ghazni (known then as Ghazna) was the centre of an extensive empire in the mid-12th century when the Ghurids, from modern day central Afghanistan captured Ghazni. Although the ethnic origins of the Ghaznavids were Turkic they were heavily influenced by another culture, the Samanids (from Greater Iran) adopting many of their customs, art and language. Founded by the former

Turkic slave Sebuktegin, from what became the wealthy and prosperous city of Ghazni, the Ghaznavid Empire expanded vastly, mostly as a result of the successful military campaigns into northwest India of the now famous 'son of Ghazni', Sultan Mahmud Ghaznavi. Visitors resident in Ghazni in the 12th century described the intricacy of the architecture they saw and the many great buildings present including numerous public libraries and at a later date the two commemorative stellar-planned minarets that have become symbols of the city. The royal courts and government ministries were recorded as holding lavish events and the value, nature and beauty of many objects owned by the residents of the city was also referred to. The end of the Ghaznavid Empire came after the defeat of both Mas'ud I and Bahram Shah (both descendants of Mahmud) and ultimately with the capture of their new 'second' capital in Lahore in the late12th – century by the Ghurids. However, they left a legacy of fine and spectacular art, architecture and history. Glimpses of which still survive today in modern Ghazni and are partly celebrated in this brief paper.

Historical Monuments of Ghazni – From Kushan Temples to Ghaznavid Victory Towers

Prior to the rise of the Ghaznavid dynasty in the 10th-12th centuries, (as outlined above) and the establishment of its distinct architectural style, the region had been the home to many successful Buddhist communities. These included the Kushans (30-375 CE), the Hephthalites and the Zabulids (the Shahi Kings who ruled in what is modern day Zabul between the 7th-11th centuries), all leaving their cultural mark within the region until Islam became more prominent from the early 7th century. Perhaps the best surviving testimony to pre-Ghaznavid Buddhist architecture in Ghazni Province is the well-known stupa-monastery complex of Tepe Sardar. Located 4km south-east of Ghazni, this extensive stupa-monastery complex contains elements dating from the Sasanian era (3rd-7th century CE) and the Turki Shahi period (7th – 9th century CE). The site is comprised of one of the largest stupas excavated so far in Afghanistan, surrounded on all sides by numerous chapels and votive stupas, The remains discovered in the sanctuary during excavation included numerous large Buddha statues including one massive seated Buddha and a reclining Buddha approaching 15m in length, all of which were constructed from unbaked clay. The complex also included a Hindu shrine where the remains of a massive representation of Durga, the Hindu Goddess of 'victory over evil', were observed, Although diligently excavated and surveyed with great scientific rigor between the late 1950's and the late 1970's by the Afghan Institute of Archaeology, largely in collaboration with IsMEO (Istituto italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente), the site was extensively damaged during the 1980's and 90's and has been subject to regular looting since the cessation of official research at the site.

Many of the most outstanding buildings that survive in Ghazni province and elsewhere in Afghanistan date from the Ghaznavid dynasty (366 - 582/977 - 1186) that encompassed Afghanistan, Khurasan, Baluchistan and north-western India.

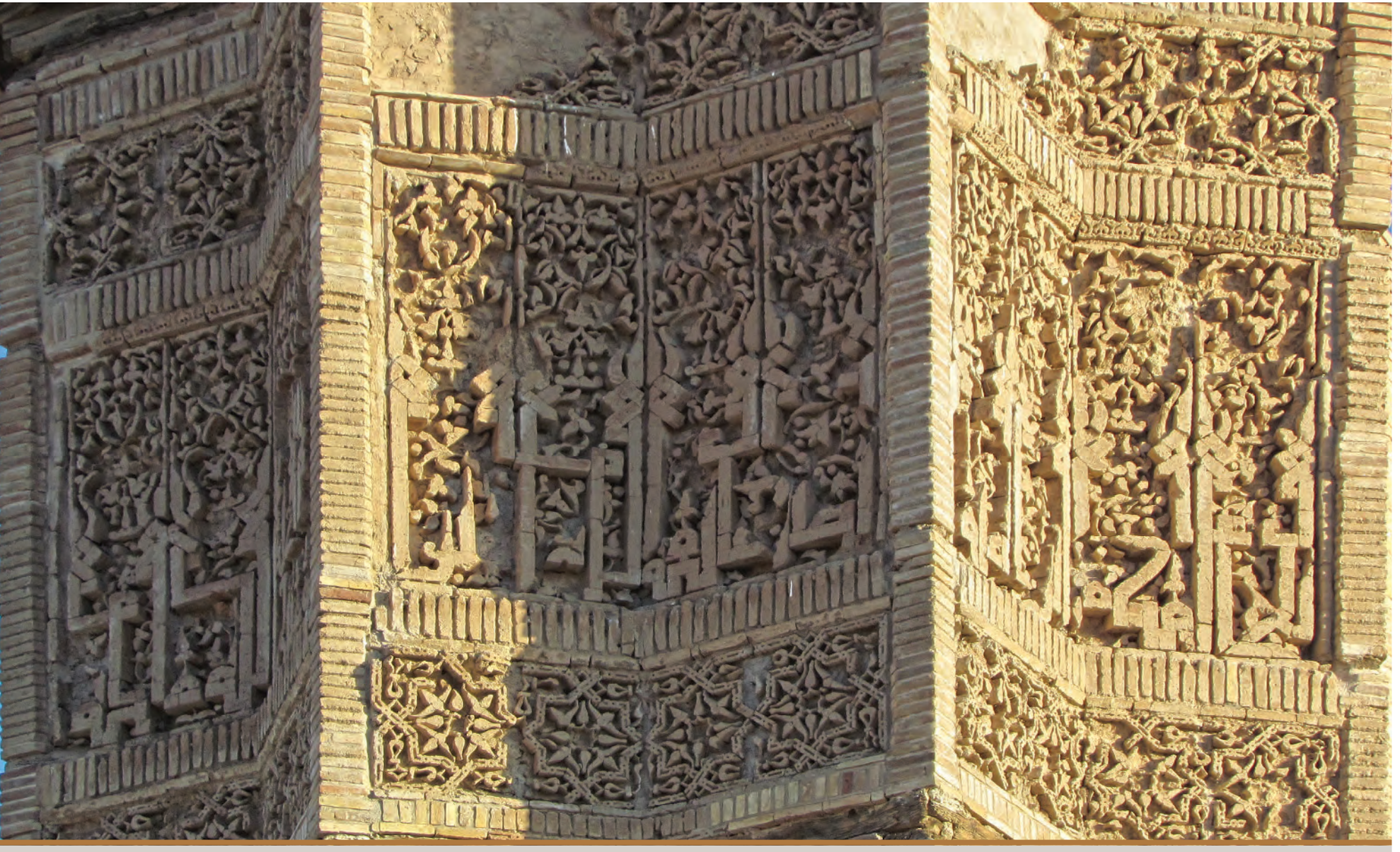
The architecture of this period often built on a massive scale (monumental) with construction usually in stone and decoration in terracotta and with Qur'anic scripts often depicted in relief. A characteristic of Ghaznavid design was also the four – *iwan* ground plan (an *iwan* is a large space with walls on three sides with only one end open, that often forms a gateway), also employed at the palace in Lahskar Gah, on the outcrop above the Helmand River in the province of the same name. Perhaps the most important and iconic historical monuments surviving from the post-Buddhist periods in Ghazni are represented by Ghazni Citadel (the Bala Hissar) and the two minarets located close by, (although note that possible evidence for the foundations of a third was tentatively identified during the course of 2011).

The Minarets of Bahram Shah and Mas'ud III

These are doubtlessly the most acclaimed of Ghaznavid structures in the province and are recognized all over the country and internationally as a symbol of Ghazni and its celebrated past. Numerous historic photos exist of



The fortress and citadel of Ghazni, Afghanistan, and the two minarets. Tribesmen with camels, horses and pack bullocks in foreground, (James Atkinson, 1839) © British Library Collection



Ghazni Minaret decorations © Sayed Mayal Matahar

these two minarets, (or 'Victory towers' some academics have suggested) and using this media we can observe how they have changed over the centuries. What we can observe today only represents the surviving lower section of the minarets and they survive to a height of circa 20m, (the pointed roofs are quite recent dating from the late19th century).

A narrower, taller section would have been built on top of the lower section – making the minarets maybe twice the height of what survives. It is possible that if they represent minarets rather than victory towers then they would indeed have had small mosques adjacent. Archaeological prospection has not as yet discovered any evidence for the remains of associated mosque strcutures, but they would have been built from mud-brick so possibly hard to re-discover once they had collapsed many years ago. It is believed that these minarets were also the inspiration for the design and construction of the 65m high minaret of Jam in Ghor Province (built by the Ghurids in c.1190).

The Minaret of Mas'ud III (also referred to as a tower) is likely to have been built prior to the construction of the other (maybe between 1099 and 1115). The surviving lower part of the building displays a unique 8-sided shape and is about 8.00m wide at its base, entirely built of baked brick, and has a staircase inside that has now mostly collapsed with many of the steps missing. However, the main feature of the minaret (apart from its unusual star-shaped plan) is the high quality and artistic integrity of the design of the brickwork on the sides of the minaret. This can be seen still in 8 different sections containing a mixture of motifs, scripts and designs that include Kufic inscriptions (developed around the end of the 7th century in Kufa, Iraq, from where it takes its name and used as the main script for copying Qur'ans until the end of the 11th century) in star patterns. There are also 8 sections of square paneling, again with Kufic inscriptions finely constructed from brick and terracotta. The panels are one the most important aspects of the structure and contain both the stylized names of Mas'ud and the Prophet (PBUH). Four of the panels contain images of flora, complex interlinked geometric shapes and the 'Victory' sura from the Quran (Sura al-Fath 48). It is probable that the brick decorations on the sides of the minarets would of been constructed in large panels elsewhere, perhaps at an artisans workshop, and then attached afterwards making the process of decoration simpler and practically more manageable.

The upper part of the minaret was last observed in 1880 (recorded in a photograph and sketches from that time), but collapsed during an earthquake in the area sometime during 1902. The minaret of Bahram Shah (the son of Mas'ud) is also a finely executed example of Ghaznavid architecture, probably built between 1118 - 1152 to commemorate his life and achievements. During the reign of Amir Habibullah Khan (1901 - 1919) a degree of stabilization work was undertaken at the base of the minarets using local stonework and the aesthetically unpleasing yet practical corrugated iron, star-shaped roofs was introduced to temporarily protect the exposed tops of the minarets. The Italian Mission, under the umbrella of IsMEO, replaced the stone foundation work during the late 1980's with a more traditional (and structurally stronger), base of baked clay and tiles, which represents the last point at which any serious conservation work was undertaken on the minarets, apart from some minimal stabilization work by the Department of Historic Monuments (DoHM) in 2011, again around the foundations.

It should be noted that during the course of 2011 the US State Department funded a full programme of technical survey on the two minarets, carried out by technical staff from the US Parks Department and the Department for the Preservation of Historic Monuments in Ghazni. This provides not only a full digital data set for the monuments (essential as part of a full condition survey and technical documentation of such significant historic buildings, and meeting international conservation standards), but will also allow the production of 3D modeling of the two buildings, again for future conservation needs. This programme of processing and interpreting the millions of points of 'cloud point data' taken by the survey teams is currently underway at the Parks Department in the United States, with the assistance of 2 architectural undergraduates from Kabul University, sponsored to assist with the programme and to acquire more technical skills. Additional research in 2011 by Polish archaeologists and the DoHM has also revealed that there may be a third minaret in the area, although further excavation needs to be completed to confirm the nature of these provisional findings.

Ghazni Citadel (Bala Hissar) & the City Walls

Although the Citadel and the city walls in Ghazni are today partly in ruins and many of the buildings, towers and walls that once formed this impressive fortress have long since collapsed, its former importance can be seen from what survives. The citadel still dominates the town below with the historic settlement of Ghazna to the west. Many of the buildings and people that would have lived clustered around the base of the citadel in the previous centuries have gradually migrated away, a not dissimilar process to that which occurred at the Bala Hissar in Kabul.

Little is known of the origins of the fortress or the surrounding walls, but it is postulated that the site was occupied many years before the existing buildings were constructed, many additions and changes having taken place over the decades. The Impressive city walls were built from a mixture of baked bricks and pakhsa (wet mud and straw bound together) presenting a formidable piece of defensive architecture with over 20 towers, ramparts and outer walls reaching to a height of 10m built on top of artificial mounds, surrounded by a ditch 5 – 8m deep. The many gates to the city walls (often mistaken as the citadel walls) were built of timber and stone and were also impressively large, the largest in the north wall flanked by two towers and covered by a domed building. The citadel itself sits on a rocky outcrop 45m above the surrounding area, defended by more high walls, towers and the near vertical slope. The Bala Hissar in Kabul is built also on a natural outcrop and it is believed that this was historically an ancient tepe. It is possible that the citadel in Ghazni was also built on what had been a settlement site continuously occupied for centuries.

The town of Ghazni (or Ghazna to give it its proper historic name), was recorded in numerous history books as being an expansive and wealthy town in the 11th century. Mahmud of Ghazni, returning from many military expeditions into India, would return with wealth to spend on the architecture of the town and new skills to facilitate this in the form of craftsmen caught during his incursions both to the east and the west. This blossoming of the city architecturally and culturally occurred in 1024 and represents the height of the 'splendour' of Ghazni with the erection of many impressive public, religious and military buildings. Although it is not known if the citadel also existed in one form at this time as references to its appearance do not appear until the 13th century.

Many parts of the city walls and the citadel itself, all once impressive, have either collapsed over time due to lack of attention and the harsh winter climate of Ghazni, and as a result of damage sustained during the many battles that have taken place for the citadel throughout history. Often remembered is the destruction of one of the main city wall gates by the British Army during the first Anglo - Afghan War (1838 - 1842), although it has undergone considerable further damage as the result of inter-factional fighting in the 20th century, and today is only a shadow of its former splendour. Currently the city walls are in a very dilapidated state of repairs, whilst parts of the citadel that survive more wholly are still used as a military camp.

As part of the 2013 celebrations for Ghazni as a Centre for Islamic Culture, the Afghan Department of Historic Monuments (with partners) endeavoured to restore elements of the ancient city walls for people to see once more and to remember the important history of Ghazni in the past as well as in the 21st century.

In the vicinity of the minarets and the citadel there are also numerous other historic monuments scattered around the plain and the hillside to the north, such as the baked clay semi-ruined monuments dedicated to Sultan Ibrahim and Sultan Holqum, amongst many others. Nonetheless, perhaps one of the most important historic sites that survives, although much is still protected below ground, is the Palace of Mas'ud III. Excavated and surveyed by the Afghan Institute of archaeology and IsMEO in the period 1956 - 1960, highlights of the findings and the palace history are detailed below.

The Palace of Mas'ud III: A Ghaznavid Royal Residence

Constructed sometime in the first quarter of the 12th century , the palace would have represented the most prominent building in the area at that time. Today it is hard to visualize, as the archaeological excavations have been re-covered to protect parts of the site for future scientific research (although many parts of it were destroyed during conflict in the 1980's and 90's).

Archaeological survey and investigation took place mainly in the 1950's and 1960's (with some nominal stabilization work also in 2003) with a large section of the central courtyard of the palace and many of the surrounding walls discovered at this time. Artefacts from the site suggest that the palace was probably built in c.1120 by Mas'ud III , son of the warrior Sultan Mahmud Ghaznavi. Several prominent horizons of ash present in archaeological layers at the site may relate to the burning of the palaces as a result of conflict with the expanding Ghorid Empire whose army's reached Ghazni in 1151, and then suffered further damage by Genghis Khan and his army, advancing through the region in the early 12th century.

The excavations revealed many aspects relating to Ghaznavid life and architecture that were not well – known before. The palace was of considerable size, rectangular in shape with walls up to 150m in length in places. The palace is so substantial that it possessed a bazaar area within its walls that stretched the length of the palace joining the gates (or portals) at either end. The central courtyard of the palace (30m x 50m) had a large arched gateway (an *iwan*) on each side with many smaller arches in between, with a grand *iwan* leading into the room where the ruler of the time might have sat. A large mosque was also discovered not far from the main throne room and was designed so the *qibla* could be aligned in the right direction. Over 500 panels of marble in the Royal courtyard were recovered (a very expensive material at the time) that exhibited extremely intricate carving in the form of floral scrolls, along with Kufic inscription similar to the minarets. The inscriptions proved of great significance and analysis revealed that the inscriptions had at some point been painted in blue (with lapis lazuli) on a background of red or gold paint (probably gold leaf was used). The writing on the marble described the good deeds and achievements of Mas'ud III's father, Mahmud Ghaznavi.

Many interesting items were also found at the palace including bronze incense burners, bowls and beautifully decorated ceramics. Many of these were moved to the mausoleum of Abd al Razzaq for safe storage in 1966 and other items to the Kabul Museum. Sadly many of the items that show off the skills of Ghaznavid craftsmen (especially parts of the marble panels that were carved to show all sorts of animals and figures) were stolen from the museum during the civil war, and probably lost forever.

Other Monuments of Historical Note

Ghazni is fortunate to possess a surfeit of both surviving historic buildings and archaeological sites albeit in a ruinous state of repairs, including a number of impressive mosques such as Masjid Baba Haji and Baba Ali. Although both are in a poor condition with completely collapsed domes, some sections of the rich interior decoration has survived. Although temporary conservation work was undertaken in the early 20th century. (the roof and domes), the buildings have not been regularly attended to and are once more in need of urgent conservation to prevent imminent collapse. In addition to these historic mosques there are at least 9 notable historic mausoleums in the region requiring preservation, although unfortunately a number have been subject to inappropriate programmes of conservation (by non-professionals) over the years that



Ghazni walls © Sayed Mayal Matahar

has compounded the damage to them. For example, the beautifully built Likhwar mausoleum, unique for the quality and variety of calligraphy decorating its interior, has in the last 30 years or so been defaced by modern graffiti and partially plastered over in failed attempts at protection / conservation. A similar fate was experienced by the Behlol Mausoleum where much of the early decorative work, (including all the primary decoration and historic tile work), was covered in cement plaster – again in a misguided attempt to 'conserve' the historic identity of the building. Some of the surviving architectural highlights date from the Timurid era (late 14th–early 16th century) and these include the Abdal Razzaq Mausoleum, the Sharif Khan Mausoleum and the Ali La La Ziarat. Perhaps the most impressive of these is the (recently restored by UNESCO) Mausoleum of Abdal Razzaq located in the ancient village of Rauzza 5 kilometres or so to the east of Ghazni.

The Mausoleum of Ulugh Beg bin Abu Said and Abd al-Razzaq - An Overview

This impressive mausoleum dates to the Timurid period (1370 – 1526 CE), located near the village of Rauzza to the east of Ghazni city and overlooks the ruins of the palace of Mas'ud III. It is an imposing monument built from plain brick and thought to have been erected as the resting place for the famous ruler and patron of the

sciences, Ulugh Beg (who governed Kabul and Ghazni from 1460 – 1501). However, Ulugh Beg was in fact buried in the mausoleum of Tamerlane in Samarkand after his assassination in 1501 and ultimately the building was used for his son, Abd al Razzaq. Abd al Razzaq only reigned for a year after his father's death before being assassinated in 1513.

The mausoleum is a fine example of Timurid architecture and is based around circular symmetry. The main section of the building is square (each side being 20m x 20m) with four circular towers at each corner rising to a great height, and four large *pishtaq* (the architectural name for a type of archway or frame) which are up to 10 metres tall. The outside of the building is also symmetrical and is divided into 9 chambers with a domed burial chamber (6.5m x 6.5 m) set at the centre. The mausoleum was constructed entirely of baked brick. The *pishtaqs* are decorated simply with niches and brick molding that may have contained mosaics in the past, and perhaps some painted plaster.

Abd al Razzaq signifies a significant architectural monument for both for the country and the international community, as it represents one of the last standing examples of a Timurid (1370 - 1526 CE) mausoleum, and has architectural links to Moghul (1528-1858 CE) buildings in India. It is believed that it was partly the inspiration for the design of the Taj Mahal mausoleum (constructed c.1632 - 1653) in India, although built on a much larger and grander scale than Abd al Razaq.

A History of Restoration and Rehabilitation, 1956 - 2012:

The Abd al Razzaq mausoleum has received considerable attention over the last 60 years and a concerted effort by the Afghan Department of Historic Monuments, IsMEO and UNESCO has ensured its survival some 500 years after it was first constructed.

During the period between 1956 - 1960 the Italian Archeological Mission (IsMEO) began the initial phases of implementing archaeological investigation in the Dashte Minar at Mass'ud III's Palace, a stone's throw from Rauzza village. It was during this time that discussions between the stakeholders highlighted the need for a storage and exhibition facility for the artefacts retrieved from the excavations, and that the Abd al Razzaq mausoleum, if appropriately restored, might beneficially serve this purpose.

With the agreement of the Afghan Department of Historic Monuments, restoration work began in the 1960's undertaken by IsMEO (now known as IsIAO) and the Afghan Department for the Preservation of Historic Monuments, with a view to it ultimately being used as a museum of Islamic art and archaeology. The main purpose of the programme was ultimately to display artefacts and sculpture from the many historic sites in the local area, notably the Palace of Mas'ud III and examples of the exquisite marble tombstones found in the large historic cemetery in Ghazni's suburbs, in addition to smaller and everyday domestic artefacts. These initial works on the mausoleum were completed in 1966 and the renovated building was handed over to the Ministry of Information and Culture.

Although this appeared to represent a successful new lease of life for the mausoleum, during the periods of occupation of the country and subsequent civil war and inter-factional fighting, the collections were deemed at risk. The artefacts were subsequently all removed to the main museum in Ghazni (and some items to the National Museum in Kabul), where they have remained under lock and key until very recently.

With the advent of civil war and a general downturn in the political stability of the country, the fabric of the building suffered once more over the following decades. Although not being subject to any direct military intervention or damage associated with this, the mausoleum nonetheless fell into a state of semi-disrepair. The Society for the Protection of Afghan Cultural heritage (SPACH) were able to undertake some temporary repair work in 2000. As part of this phase of remedial work by SPACH, the roof and the cupola had their mud coverings renewed whilst the windows and doors were also repaired. Unfortunately, after restoration (and due to the increasing levels of insecurity in the region), all the timber windows and doors were stolen, whilst the roof eventually succumbed to the elements once more. Fortunately, during the course of 2001 the Italian and Afghan governments agreed to continue the process of restoration (subject to security allowing), some 23 years after the project had first started under the former Italian team. A comprehensive survey was undertaken by the DoHM to undertake an-up-to-date condition assessment whilst a detailed topographic survey of the area was also prepared. Despite this new renewed activity at the mausoleum, once more work on site and in Ghazni generally proved difficult and advanced slowly, occasionally having to cease completely as a result of security concerns. Nevertheless, in spite of this, a direct result of the continued financial support of the Italian Government, (in collaboration with the Department of Historic Monuments in Kabul), restoration work resumed on a more permanent basis from 2009 - 2012, again under the auspices of UNESCO office in Kabul.

Restoration work initially concentrated on the exterior of the building, notably the repair of the damaged domes on the roofs, areas of the walls and impressive arched portals. Much work was required internally too, including the renewing of the electrical and drainage systems, extensive repairs to the brick and mud plaster walls, renewal of timber doors and also works in the sub-surface sections of the structure that required new venting. Particular care was required when working on some of the internal decorative plaster work of the building. An architectural feature of such Timurid monuments, the multi-facetted squinches of the central sections of the mausoleum, were also sensitively repaired and re-plastered where appropriate without damaging any of the original fabric. Although the seasonable climate of Ghazni is challenging for maintaining extensive gardens, it was decided to go ahead with the partial restoration of what would have historically been an impressive part of the mausoleum's setting, the surrounding gardens and associated buildings.

Work also concentrated on landscaping the area around the mausoleum, on the terraces and on the approaches to the monument, setting out new pathways, planting extensive flower beds and a variety of quick growing trees. The provision of parking spaces for visitors and the general public was also addressed as was a drainage and sustainable watering system for the gardens.

With the completion of both internal and external works the next stage for the project was to provide appropriate display and information facilities for the numerous artefacts currently residing in storage, collected during the course of archaeological excavations and research. Experts from the National Museum of Afghanistan, in conjunction with museum professionals from UNESCO and Istitutio Italiano per l'Africa e l'Oriente (IsIAO), worked on numerous concepts for the most appropriate display (and protection) of a wide range of artefacts from coins to decorative marble slabs, and examples of Ghazni's famous metalwork.

The work on the mausoleum, associated buildings, gardens and displays were subsequently finished in late 2011 / 2012 after many years of hard work and dedication by an extensive team of Afghans and international experts bringing skills from many different professions to the project. Regrettably, once more a general deterioration in security in the Ghazni area in 2012-2013 has meant that the beautifully restored mausoleum now resides in a suburb of Ghazni were the safety of the building, or at least anything contained within it, cannot necessarily be guaranteed. So, once again the decision has been made to move the museum exhibits to a secure government facility in Ghazni City, with the hope that this might only be a short-term measure and that one day the mausoleum may finally be able to be used as a working regional museum of Islamic Art.

In conclusion, as this collection of papers goes to print we have recntly witnessed the official events marking the culmination of ISESCO's decision (in 2007) to designate Ghazni as 'Islamic City of Culture, 2013'. This recognition celebrates the rich and varied history, culture, art and architecture of Ghazni and many of the historic monuments detailed above are a tangible part of this great history the region possesses. Whilst we can readily recognize the difficulties encountered over the years working in cultural heritage and historic building restoration in Ghazni province, whether this be funding issues, security or simply sometimes the availability of the necessary skills and materials, the Department of Historic Monuments is proud of its achievements. We seek to continue making a positive commitment to cultural heritage protection and restoration long into the future, not only in Ghazni province but far across the country into many other areas with a precious, if fragile, upstanding heritage. We would also like to acknowledge here that is had been also been through the assistance and guidance of our major partners, the Italian Government, IsIAO and UNESCO (along with SPACH and IsMEO in the past), that many of our achievements in Ghazni have been made possible. It is through such close cooperation at all levels that we hope our work will go on in Ghazni province long in to the future.

Safeguarding the Gawharshad Mausoleum: The Conservation of a Timurid Monument in Herat

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Introduction

Within the framework of UNESCO's activities for the UNESCO Kabul / Norway Funds-in-Trust project for the Safeguarding of the Gawharshad Mausoleum in Herat, the author fulfilled 6 missions to Afghanistan from 2007 to 2011. The missions were short, 2 to 4 weeks, mainly for security reasons, and therefore extremely intense. Additional time was spent in Europe on preparations before and reporting after each mission. Prior to undertaking the six missions that comprised this project, the author visited Afghanistan 3 times, although with different assignments. In 2002 and 2006, the 5th minaret at Herat was surveyed amongst other historical monuments. In 2005 the first detailed documentation on the Gawharshad mausoleum was also produced.

Gawharshad Madrassa

Today, the Gawharshad mausoleum and the nearby inclined minaret (the 5th minaret) appear as two solitary buildings. However, both belong to one and the same historical monument, the Gawharshad Madrassa. Commissioned by Gawharshad, *begum* or queen (Herat, 778 - 862AH, 1377 - 1457AD) and daughter - in - law of central Asian conqueror Timur, the madrasa was completed in circa 835AH/1432AD.

There are striking similarities between the Gawharshad and the Ghiyathiya madrasa at Khargird, Iran (AH 848/AD 1444) as noticed before by Robert Byron. Furthermore he suggests that the architect of the Gawharshad mosque at Mashad who began work on the Khargird Madrasa, Qavam ad-din of Shiraz, was also responsible for the Gawharshad madrasa at Herat.

The madrasa was situated in the north of the ancient city, standing originally in an urban extension characterized by numerous formal gardens. By the end of 19th century, the madrasa had been mostly destroyed (to offer better fields of fire) in the context of the "Great Game". Today in 2015, the ever expanding suburbs of Herat both encroach upon the site and now almost encompass it.

Gawharshad Mausoleum

The three superimposed domes are the most unique feature of the mausoleum:

1. A low inner dome rendering an intimate atmosphere to the interior of the cubic base;
2. An outer bulbous dome, resting on the drum and providing an iconic landmark on the skyline of the city (hereafter referred to as the cupola);
3. An intermediate structural dome between the drum and cupola.

The inner dome is a complex construction of structural brick masonry arches and vaults, partially doubled by thin lightweight decorative vaults of bricks and stucco, with voids in between the upper structure and the decorative lower section. The structural brick masonry is visible in the drum room. The decorative vaults of bricks and stucco make the ceiling and shape the main interior space. Structurally, three-quarters of the cupolas height is represented as a bulbous circular wall, as an elongation of the drum. This section is then bonded to 12 radiating walls resting on the intermediate dome where only one quarter of the cupola acts as a real vault.

Archival pictures, made by Robert Byron, give a clear view of the mausoleum's condition in 1933. It was at that



Musalla Complex, Herat © UNESCO/ICONEM



Gawharshad Mausoleum © UNESCO/Tarcis Stevens

time extensively damaged but still untouched by any restorative intervention. The cupola itself was severely damaged at that point in time and the roof of the basis had disappeared, exposing vaults and arches. The eastern and southern elevations are exposed interior walls with glazed *kufic*, *marak* and *haftrangi* decorations still covering much of the building.

The first known interventions in the 1950's changed the appearance of the mausoleum drastically. By the construction of an entirely new eastern façade and a partly new southern façade in front of the Timurid fabric, the Gawharshad mausoleum presents itself misleadingly as a freestanding building. In addition an authentic hexagonal *mihrab* was destroyed and subsequently replaced by a rectangular one. The cubic basis was also covered with a roof and the cupola was closed up. These interventions proved to have been of both poor quality in terms of the level of craftsmanship employed, and also used inappropriate materials. Nevertheless they were accepted as part of the building's history. In 1995 a Danish-sponsored project added further masonry to the octagonal basis of the drum and covered it, together with the cupola, with a thin layer of cement. A number of Timurid *marak*-decorations on the drum were replaced by the local tile-workshop with low quality cement-panels in 2003-2004, unfortunately without expert supervision. None of these latter interventions were documented or reported properly, although records may exist that have not yet been made available to the author.

Methodology

The methodology applied by the author for this project, as to any other conservation or restoration project, although with different emphasis according its particularities, is summarized in the scheme below. An extended and detailed documentation is followed by a further detailed analysis and diagnosis, resulting in an assessment of the values of the particular monument. Based on this assessment, a project is designed. Interventions are proposed, (with priority in action and hierarchy in treatment). However, the successful implementation of the designed project is only guaranteed when restrictions and constraints are taken into account, particularly prevalent in a country like Afghanistan.

During and after the conservation / restoration process, regular feedback is needed. Being a linear process in the short-term, this form of conservation work represents a renewable cyclical process in the longer term. Last but not least there is the human factor. Working together with people from different linguistic, cultural and religious backgrounds requires considerable patience and understanding on all sides. Taken into account its limited length, this paper aims to summarize the activities and interventions of the project and to illustrate the applied methodology.

Project Activities
Documentation

The basic documentation acquired in 2005 was refined and extended before, during and after each campaign and intervention. Documentation was carried out on different aspects of the site and at different scales including the overall site of the madrasa complex, mausoleum, structure, architectural features, details, fragments and surface finds.

Various fields of expertise were required for the successful undertaking of the project and required knowledge of topography, stability, architecture, archaeology and material science.

Different project phases were established that included survey, analysis, design, proposal and ultimately intervention. Drawings, images and textual data were all also collected as part of the process, and an extended nomenclature was set up to organise all data and to denominate each building element whether it be large or small.

Training

The training of Afghan experts in all aspects of conservation and restoration, throughout the implementation of the activities and interventions, was an important part of the project. Considerable efforts were made by the author to train Afghan officials in documentation techniques such as using a total station (EDM) or performing damage or condition assessments.

However, the transfer of knowledge and expertise is not necessarily a two way process: the author enjoyed a close collaboration with the Afghan craftsman. When spoken language became problematic we communicated remarkably effectively by means of our professional tools, namely though the use of drawings, sketches, templates, plumb line and level.

The architect, as project manager, supervisor and coordinator, not only directs the day-to-day work but also needs to demonstrate how what he requires can be practically achieved. By doing so, barriers between the team are broken down and more cooperative interaction based on mutual respect and understanding can be realized. The quality of architects, engineers and archaeologists is not measured by the way they dress themselves, but by their knowledge, experience and empathy.

Sampling and Laboratory Research

A first series of samples of historical mortars and plasters of the Gawharshad mausoleum were collected during the authors' documentation campaign of 2005.The samples were subsequently analysed by the IBAC institute at Aachen University, Germany. Research was undertaken on the binding element, the eventual presence of damaging salts and compression strength. The laboratory analysis proved that commonly a form of gypsum had been used as binder in the creation of historical mortars and plasters. During the interventions of 1995 and 2003-2004, cement had been employed as a binder. Because most cement does not bind together with gypsum mortars, it became necessary to investigate whether a potentially damaging chemical reaction had taken place between the cement mortars, used by recent interventions, and the historical building materials. Cement without increased sulphate resistance can react with gypsum, or with sulphates in particular, and produce the mineral ettringit. Absolute conditions for the formation of ettringit or SO5 chloride is water, as liquid (rainwater and melting snow) or as damp. Simultaneously low temperatures favour the production of ettringit. Ettringit itself is unstable at high temperatures (>70°C) on thermo-dynamical grounds.

A second series of samples was taken by the author and analysed at IBAC. Research by raster electron microscope and roentgen fluorescence analysis showed no ettringit, despite the fact that the historical mortars contain a very high degree of sulphate. Only in a sample of cement mortar were crystals of ettringit found and these were in limited quantity. This was surprising, as the cement mortar of this particular sample was in contact with a historical mortar with low sulphate content. There was, therefore, a high probability that no ettringit would be created because of the relatively dry conditions together with the relatively high temperatures in western Afghanistan. For this reason no sulphates could be dissolved from the historical mortars and penetrate into the cement mortars of recent interventions. Nevertheless, and as precaution, all cavities surrounding the drum panels were closed (see section chapter on masonry).

A relatively high compression strength of the cement mortar was observed during testing, compared to the low compression strength of the historical mortars. In principle the compression strength of new mortars must be adapted to the compression strength of the historical fabric. By choosing a new mortar, deformation must therefore be taken into account. A low elasticity modulus can then be achieved by an appropriate choice of binder and the grain size of the granules.

Archaeological Research

The purpose of a first phase of archaeological investigation was to find material evidence for traces of the subterranean remnants of the madrasa. The final aim would be to join the restored mausoleum and minaret in a meaningful way, making clear to the larger public that both monuments belong to one and the same historical building. With the help of the MoIC Institute of Archaeology, two test pits were made at close distance from the mausoleum. The foundation walls of the outer western façade and of the inner courtyard of the madrasa were found and exposed from top to bottom. The feet of the foundations of the outer and inner wall were found respectively at – 2,65m and – 1.70m . The walls were made of blocks of natural stones, metamorphic type, irregular in form and dimensions. No traces of brick masonry were found on top. All fragments of ceramics, found in the cultural layer, were cleaned, labelled, registered and stored.

A second archaeological phase concerned the mausoleum itself; to design and execute a new plinth and floor at the interior, a pavement on the exterior and a lasting solution against rising damp in the future, it was necessary to know more about the subterranean structure. Two pits were made in front of the northern and eastern facade. Masonry from the 1950's had been built in front of the Timurid masonry. The natural stone foundation was similar to those found at the vicinity of the mausoleum. There was no protection against rising damp, as brick courses stood in direct contact with the earth.

Evidence of pavements at various depths indicates that the immediate surroundings of the mausoleum were raised in the past, possibly to anticipate inundations. A third pit was dug in the interior of the mausoleum, parallel to and at the centre of the northern façade. The concrete tiles were partly removed. A vaulted tunnel, clearly of Timurid construction, appeared in the south-north axis of the mausoleum. The length of the tunnel could not be determined precisely but continued for several meters. The tunnel was almost completely filled with earth. Large enough to bring a corpse to a possible burial room, the tunnel was obviously part of a larger subterranean structure. The longitudinal section of the northern foundation wall showed a wide interruption, corresponding to an original doorway above ground level, filled in with masonry in the 1950's. The material

evidence of a subterranean structure and the possible presence of graves justify a thorough archaeological research in the future.

A third archaeological activity was prepared but finally performed under a different assignment and project. The aim was to collect information on the foundations of the minaret. Since an excavation near the unstable 5th minaret could be dangerous, a sensible alternative was to execute an excavation at the location of the lost twin - minaret.

Stratigraphical Research

The lower sections of the wall paintings in the mausoleum's interior are partly covered by a cement layer, applied when the ceramic plinth was removed by a previous inappropriate "restoration" campaign. Particles of this layer were removed by the author, discovering a different paint layer. Unlike the first visible layer, the image is very delicate and the paint extremely vulnerable.

Several layers of plaster had been applied as well as several layers of moulded stucco cassettes. An initial 3cm thick layer containing clearly visible granules of 2-3mm in size covers the brick masonry. This can be noticed through existing damage, perforating the overlying layers and being visible through the masonry. The rough layer was in turn covered with a thin and smooth final layer of pure gypsum.

From bottom to top, an increasing number of stucco layers were applied. An initial layer of stucco was attached to the thick and rough layer of plaster. Its thickness measured 18mm. A second layer of stucco, 8mm thick and reinforced with bamboo strips, was attached on top of the first layer. A series of arched elements, of different shapes and dimensions, were positioned next to each other. The narrow joints between each of them were covered with strips of a third stucco layer, with varying width and thickness. Finally, the whole surface was covered by an extremely thin layer of the finest plaster to carry the wall-paintings. The division into stucco cassettes is nicely repeated as a motive in the wall-painting. A painted vertical line separates 2 niches, although both belong to a single stucco cassette.

Project Interventions:
Cleaning the Drum and Cupola

The word "cleaning" is not be misinterpreted as the simple removal of superficial dirt and dust, as the quantity and variety of material encountered was extensive. The interior of both drum and cupola were covered by a layer of approximately 20cm of bird excrement, pigeon cadavers and bird nest material. The volume of material that we were required to remove was in the region of 20m³. At the cupola) and below this dirt layer) there appeared a mixture of compacted dust, sand and fragments of previous building materials. This mass of compacted debris reached a depth of 1.2m at the outer perimeter. More than 32m³ of compacted material, or the equivalent of 40m³ of loose material was eventually removed, with an estimated weight of 48 tonnes. All contextual material was left untouched. After the removal of the dirt and debris, all structural features were carefully cleaned for documentation.

The early phases of construction of the intermediate dome became visible, including tie-beams of wooden spars along the circular perimeter. The lowest tie -beams were incorporated into the radiating walls of the cupola and the rib-supporting spars were discovered and exposed. Most wooden elements at this level had already disappeared, rotten by moisture, infected by pigeon excrements and attacked by termites. At the drum, vulnerable but clear traces of a pavement were exposed. The pavement was part of the historic structure and probably intended to allow easy access. The structure of the lower dome as well as the transition from cubic basis to circular drum now became very clear. Every structural element was documented photographically and the drawings were regularly updated with new data as it arose. The removed debris from the cupola was sifted to collect fragments of wood, pieces of bricks, bricks of different sizes and pieces of glazed building ceramics. The findings were cleaned, documented, registered and stored where appropriate. The wood fragments originated from the spars used as tie-beams in the radiating walls and as supporting beams for the ribs of the cupola in the outer wall. The architectural ceramics and bricks originated from the collapsed upper vault of the cupola. Its structural and decorative material fell on the second intermediate dome and was never removed. Some of the pieces recovered are very important, amongst them a collection of glazed fragments of 3 incomplete pinnacles. These fragments are the only material testimony of how the top of the cupola was finished. Among the ceramic finds were many rectangular and square tiles. They are double-curved and originating from the ribs of the cupola. A systematic and extended investigation on the geometry of these pieces revealed types of different curve and radius, gradually changing along the length of the ribs. Loose bricks out of context, intact or slightly damaged, were cleaned, sorted by size and stored for reuse.

Cleaning the Interior

Dust and faecal material accumulated over many decades also covered the stucco and paintings in the interior. Several cleaning tests on different locations were carried out by the author. Dry and wet methods were applied, separately or combined, with different tools and different actions used in relation specific circumstances. These tests led to a better understanding of the condition of paint and stucco present throughout the interior. At a lower level, the paint and outer finishing layer proved very resistant whilst the paint on the upper parts and ceiling, especially the blue paint, proved to be extremely vulnerable surviving in almost a powder form and with very poor adhesion. The cause of the disintegration of the binding agent might be related to the moisture infiltration through the inadequate roofing prevalent.

The importance of understanding the delicacy of the paintings and the aim of cleaning was clearly acknowledged from the start of the project. In general, an attitude of restraint in approaches to such delicate

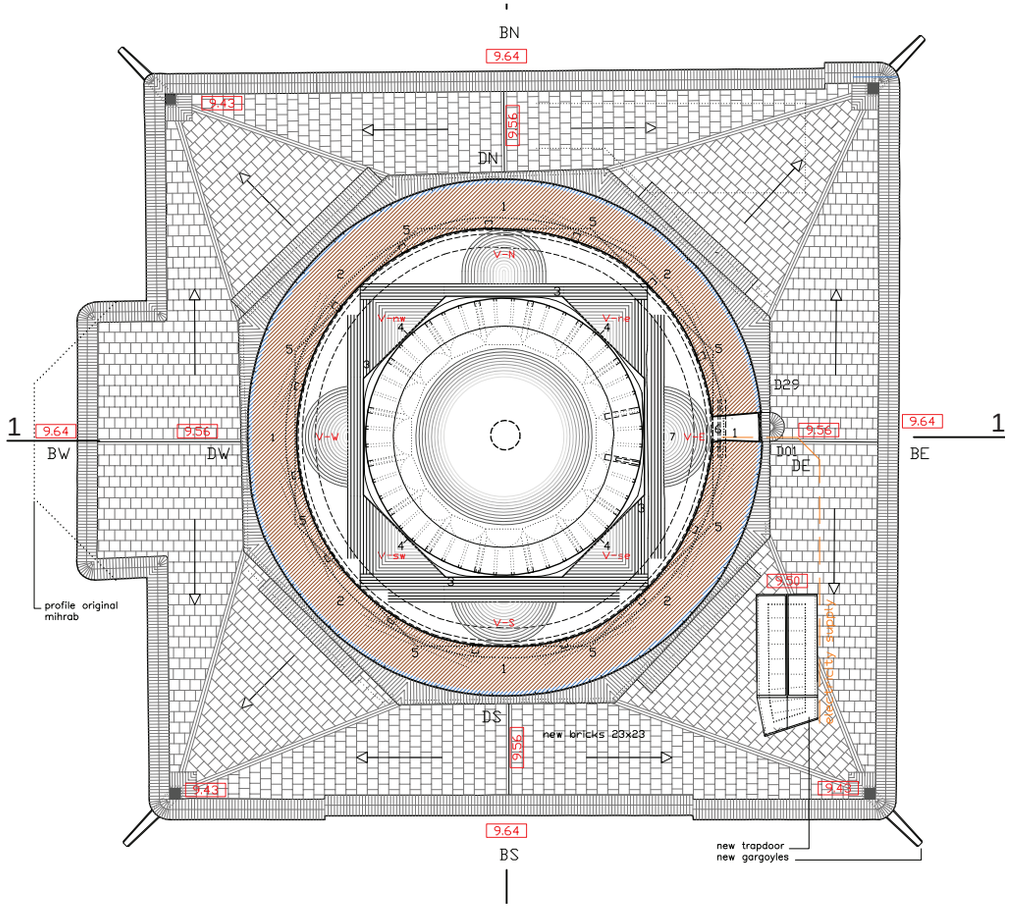
conservation should always be adhered to. In view of the particular nature of the wall - paintings, as a “reserved and careful” approach seemed more appropriate than a potentially “fast and hard” intervention. With the initial programme of testing, female labourers were showed what to do and how to do it, and more important, what not to do! The cleaning was limited to the lower sections of the paintings, without loss or in any way adversely affecting the paint or stucco. No cleaning was undertaken on the upper parts or ceiling.

Consolidation

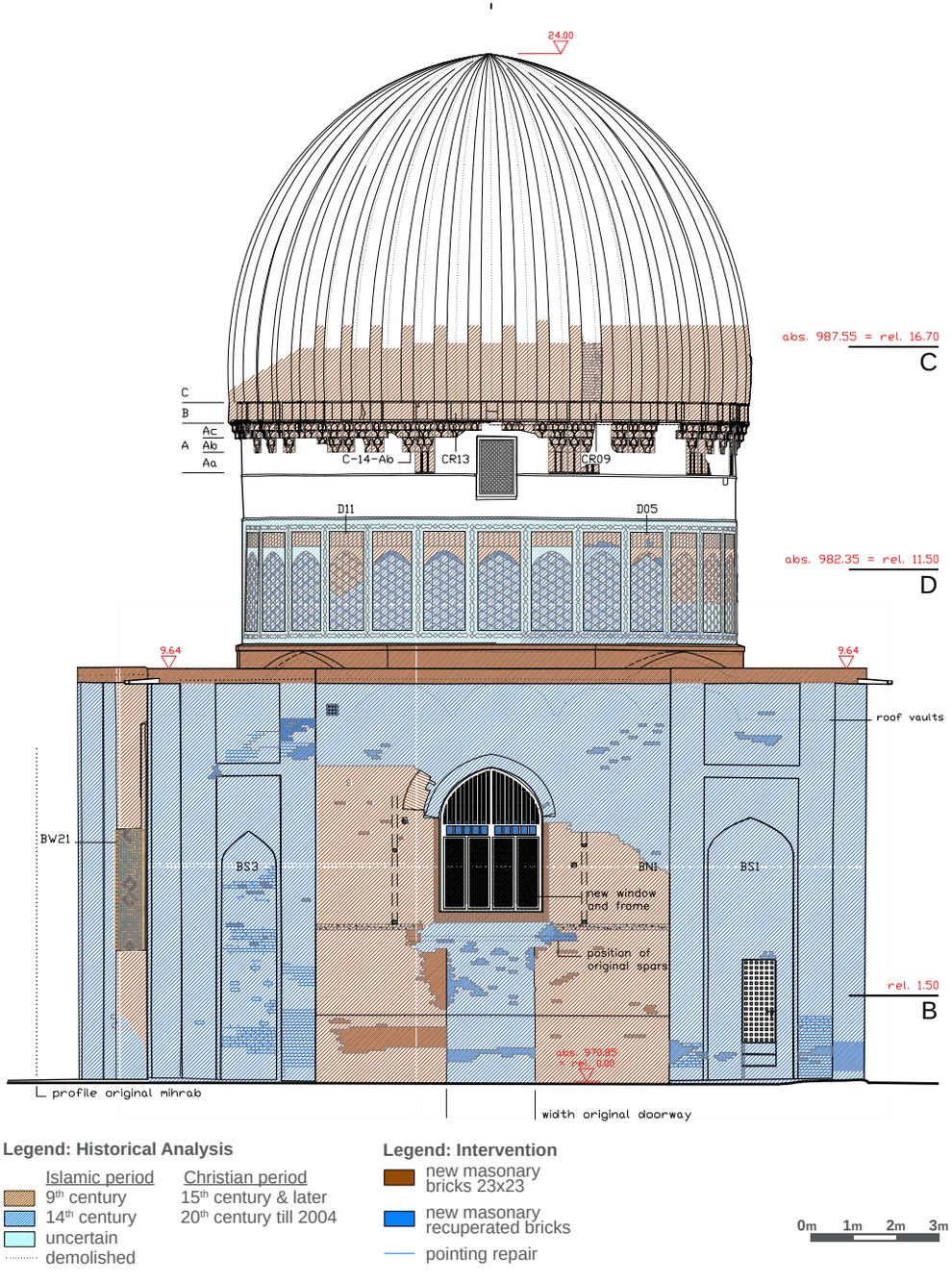
With the removal of the old roof, the eastern façade appeared disconnected from the main structure of the mausoleum. The masonry of the eastern façade, a 20th c. intervention, was never attached to the core masonry of the Timurid building. Similar structural failures of the same construction period were unattached pilasters at the northern and western elevations. As these were of no historical or architectural value, these were partially removed.

A system of 3 anchors were designed and installed to connect the eastern façade with the octagonal basis of the drum. To protect the steel components against corrosion, 2 paint layers were applied. The attachment to the masonry could be achieved in different ways:
a low-tech anchorage by incorporation into the masonry or a relatively high-tech (on a local level) chemical anchorage. The first method has the disadvantage of damaging the old fabric. The second method is less intrusive and therefore preferable from a conservation point of view.

As chemical anchorage and stainless steel rods were unavailable in Afghanistan, the author took care of their import from Europe and their application. The high temperatures at Herat forced the team to employ a systematical approach and fast execution because of the chemical hardening of the mixed components usually begins within minutes. Finally the 3 anchors were brought under tension before the grouting could take place. The ends of the anchors were covered by masonry



Drum Plan of Gawharshad Mausoleum after intervention © UNESCO/Tarcis Stevens



South Elevation of Gawharshad Mausoleum © UNESCO/Tarcis Stevens

as additional protection and to provide extra load.

As a second consolidation measure, any gaps were filled with grouting. Since the lime available in Herat was aerial lime and not hydraulic lime, the grouting mortar was a mixture of slaked lime, fine sand, water and granulates with pozzolanic characteristics. The function of such porous granulates is to contain air, allowing the enclosed mortar to bind and to harden properly. Without air, aerial lime does not bind nor harden. To this purpose, brick powder was added as a granulate. The grouting mortar employed was required to be both fine and fluid so as to be capable of infilling all cavities. Bigger granulates could possibly cause obstruction and wouldn't fill the gaps as required.

Roofing

The roof as surviving on the cubic basis of the Gawharshad mausoleum, constructed in the 1950's, was in a very poor state of repairs. The pavement of bricks was of very poor quality and value, the bricks being irregular both in form and dimensions. Due to a lack of lime, clay was used. There was also no slope to channel water properly although locally counter slopes were present, catching the water. The upper parts of the elevations showed a lot of efflorescence. The form and disposition of the edges of the roof were also of a design that did not serve its purpose.

Therefore, the complete renewal of the roof on top of the cubic basis became a priority to protect the monument, its structure and its decorations, thus providing a lasting waterproof cover against humidity and water infiltration. Small test pits were made to further elucidate an understanding of the roof composition. The material underneath the bricks was inconsistent and unstable, giving no efficient support to the pavement. Below this spoil, old vaults were also revealed.

On a high resolution archival picture of the mausoleum a similar vault was distinguishable. Also visible only on the archival pictures were the primary arches supporting the drum. No material or archival traces were left of the

original roof and its connection with the elevations.

Arguments or indicating factors to make choices in the design were decided upon after careful research of other Timurid buildings and related available archival material on these monuments. A comparative study with 12 other Timurid buildings was made, with special attention to roofs and elevations.

New roof - gutters, pavement, edges and corners were all designed. The vertical and horizontal disposition of the new roof edges, respectively in section and in plan, was of prime importance so as to be appropriate in form to the conception of the elevations and their decoration. Vertically the bottom of the new roof - edge corresponds with the top of the virtual or, eventually in the future, the real material reconstruction of the Timurid ornamentation of the façades. Horizontally the front of the new roof-edge corresponds with the remaining Timurid decoration and the initial surface of the façades. Special attention was given to the detailing of the corners and the most water-loaded areas, the gutters.

Actions undertaken were as follows:

1. The complete removal of bricks, loose mortar, sand and dust revealing the vaulting.
2. The complete removal of the cement layer and cement masonry on the octagonal basis of the drum.
3. The cleaning and storing of removed bricks.
4. The removal of debris from the site.
5. The documentation of the exposed substructures, vaults and hidden spaces.

The removal allowed drying of the damp structure over the course of a few months, before the final re-roofing began. New bricks were ordered, suitable for construction of a new pavement. In Afghanistan currently, the process of brick production and the quality of the final product are not subject to official standards therefore, quality control was performed on the site. After control, bricks were sorted on dimensions, form, color and texture. The bricks from the old roof were sound enough to be used as a sub-layer to the new roof. A substantial amount of broken brick pieces removed from roof, drum and cupola, were retained for back filling purposes. To ensure the quality of the lime, it was decided to burn, sift and slake the lime on the site. With 3 lime pits, a rotation system was installed, causing no interruption of the ongoing construction activities.

Several mortar compositions were designed with different functions according to their proposed individual usage. Fine brick powder and stamen fibers were employed as additional special additives. The more fine the brick powder is, the more watertight the hardened mortar, especially for the waterproof sub-layer and for the pointing. Stamen fibers come from a native plant, *gul-e lukh*, increase the binding capacity of lime mortar, and are highly suitable for the waterproof sub - layer.

The following preparative actions were undertaken:

1. The removal and renewal of unstable vaults.
2. The construction of additional vaults to reduce the amount and weight of backfilling.
3. The installation of a ventilation system along the vaulted spaces.
4. The cleaning and lime-washing of the vaults.
5. The backfilling with stabilized sand, mixed with lumps and chips of brick.

Simultaneous with these actions, the roof-edges were assembled, first the external perimeter of the roof above the facades, then the internal perimeter of the octagonal basis of the drum. The new roof cover consists of a package of 3 distinctive layers on top of the backfilling:

1. A first pavement of reused bricks.
2. A watertight layer of compacted lime concrete.
3. The final pavement of new bricks.

At the gutters, a supplementary protective layer of tar was applied underneath the lime concrete layer. Finally, the masonry and pavement were pointed.

Masonry and Timber

Repair masonry was executed on both the exterior and interior of the mausoleum as different types and degrees of damages became apparent, this included attending to:

1. Broken bricks, loose bricks, lost bricks, powdering bricks.
2. Cement pointing, open joints.
3. Lost or damaged wooden beams supporting masonry.
4. Inappropriate repairs from past conservation works.

The following building parts and components were also repaired:

1. 5Basis exterior facades, plinths, window and door frames, pilasters.
2. Basis interior stairs and lintel above the doorway to the staircase.
3. Drum exterior cavities above the drum panels.
4. Drum interior masonry and lost structural wooden beams lintel above the drum access semi-circular vaults.
5. Cupola interior masonry and lost radial tie-beams at the 12 radiating walls lintel above and stairs behind the cupola access.
6. Minaret – war-damage (rocket-hole at half-height of the first shaft).

Also taken into account were the different brick sizes present throughout the building. Original Timurid masonry, clearly distinguishable by brick-size and quality, was always preserved. If loose, Timurid bricks were reused at the same location. Lost or deteriorated lintels and tie-beams were replaced by spars of benaush hardwood, purchased at the local market. The bark often showed small holes of insects. The infection is typical for insects attracted only by the soft and wet cambium underneath the bark and does not affect the conservation and structural strength of the spars.

Notable war-damage could be observed on the elevation south. Bullets were found everywhere in the masonry. When the damage did not affect the whole brick, the brick was not removed. Removing all the bullet hit bricks would likely cause additional damage to the surrounding

masonry. Furthermore, by keeping the material evidence, the history of war is not denied or untold for future generations.

Carpentry – Joinery

The cupola and drum interiors were not protected by any covering. To protect the newly cleaned and restored interior of drum and cupola from pigeons, and to allow ventilation, two hardwood *mashrabiya*, or screens, were designed. A wooden model was made by the author to demonstrate the desired joinery required.

To evacuate rainwater from the new roofing, 4 gutters were designed and incorporated into the corners of the roof of the cubic basis. Screens and roof-gutters were produced by AKTC, respectively by the Kabul and Herat workshops.

The previous doors and windows at the basis of the mausoleum had a low technical, historical and architectural value and were also infested by termites. New screens, doors, windows and a trapdoor were designed in detail with functional, constructive, aesthetical and semantic considerations. All the doors, windows, window-screens and trapdoor were produced and installed by Turquoise Mountain Foundation (TMF).

Open screens allow ventilation, but keep pigeons out. They temper the harsh summer daylight and lend the interior an intimate atmosphere, suitable for a mausoleum. The screens were made to be dismountable for maintenance. The mounting screws being reachable from inside, yet preventing theft from outside.

All screens, doors and windows were made of durable archa or cedar-wood, a light-coloured wood indigenous to north-eastern Afghanistan. Beams of *caharmat* or walnut are used for the threshold of the main door, to resist daily wear and tear. Wrought iron trunnions, locks and handles for the doors were designed in detail. Appropriate to the overall concept of the windows, the design of special self-fixing wooden locks for the windows met the capacities within TMF architectural woodwork.

New doors and windows should be suitable for a Timurid monument, in its design as well as in its execution. On the one hand it is quite difficult to be inspired by Timurid carpentry by the lack of “authentic” examples surviving, on the other hand, and according to actual world conservation standards, it is perfectly acceptable to introduce a new contemporary design into a historical monument. The author prefers on such occasions to integrate a newly designed element rather than installing a ‘pseudo - representation’ of what may or may not of existed in the past. The open screens were installed in front of the windows, hiding the anachronistic modern glass panes. No screens were foreseen at the upper part of the southern and northern window. Here the glass elements are set backwards in narrow vertical chinks. The recessed disposition enhances the articulation of the windows, fitting the powerful Timurid style.

The form of the doors and windows is also loaded with meaning. Their abstract form represent fundamental conceptions. The east-west axis of the building coincides with the *qibla*. As the direction towards Mecca represents obviously a spiritual (or religious) axis, the north- south axis is chosen to be a material axis. The material axis shows 2 components, a cultural and a natural component. The spiritual or mental axis is twofold as well, with knowledge and wisdom. This concept can be summarised as follows:

The use of transparent as well as translucent glass would enhance a more vivid expression. However, the stock at the local glass workshops reflected the “modern” taste of their Afghan clients with highly reflective glass in green, blue or purple, glass many with patterns and all aesthetically unsuitable for a Timurid monument. Therefore the author decided to use transparent 4mm float glass.

Electricity and Lighting

For the lighting of the drum exterior, the cables required were inserted underneath the new roofing of the basis and into the masonry of the roof-edges. Light calculations and 3-dimensional simulations were made by a specialized light advisor in close collaboration with the author. Eight projectors were positioned on the roof of the cubic basis. To illuminate the drum panels equally, the projectors are equipped with a ‘street optic’; a special reflector which produces a widespread elliptical beam. The type of lamps are metal halide. The advantages of metal halide lamps are that they have an extended lifetime and a high light efficiency. To avoid too visible a presence, the projectors are attached to counterweight blocks of natural stone, put on the roof-pavement behind the roof-edge.

For the lighting of the drum interior, the design took advantage of small existing niches in the masonry of the cylindrical drum wall. The niches were originally made for a scaffolding, built for the construction of the intermediate dome. Prints of lost wooden spars are still visible in the lime mortar as witness to this process. Lamps will be installed alternately in 7 of the 14 niches. An initial test was undertaken to assess the likely effect of this arrangement. The bulbs and fittings were covered by a small translucent glass pane.

Future Activities and Interventions

After the protection against humidity from above (rain and snow) through the new roofing, the next priority is the protection against humidity from below (rising damp). Other possible future interventions are the conservation and restoration of:

1. The Kufic decorations of the cubic basis on the north and west elevations
2. The marak panels of the drum
3. The ceramic tiling of the cupola
4. The paintings in the interior
5. The floor and plinth in the interior
6. Both indoor and outdoor lighting

Other possible research activities might include:

1. Archaeological research on the subterranean structures / objects inside and outside the mausoleum.
2. Geophysical research on the remaining undations

of the madrasa.

3. Attracting expertise on architectural ceramics, wall-paintings and stucco.

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The radiating hexagons reflect it's pattern on the interior wall © UNESCO/Tarcis Stevens

Rehabilitating Babur's Gardens & its Surrounding Environment, Kabul

Aga Khan Trust for Culture in Afghanistan

The Garden of Babur (Baghe Babur) in Kabul was laid out in the early 16th century by the emperor Zahiruddin Muhammad Babur Padshah Ghazi – the founder of the Mughal dynasty whose rule extended from central Asia to India – and is widely believed to be the first formal Mughal garden.

Babur ascended in 1494, at the age of twelve, to the throne of the small principality of Fergana, in present day Uzbekistan. He was the scion of distinguished families, descended from Timur on his father's side and the Mongol Chengiz Khan through his mother. Like his father, Babur set his sights on extending his rule over Timur's capital, Samarkand, which he managed to occupy briefly on three occasions, before turning his attention to Kabul, which he captured in 1504.

The Legacy of Babur: History and the nvironment

A detailed account of Babur's life and conquests is chronicled in his memoirs, the Baburnama, which provide a unique insight into the ideas of the founder of a dynasty that was to dominate the politics and culture of the region for over 300 years. The memoirs also reveal the extent to which the natural landscape was central to the life of Babur's court, much of whose proceedings were conducted in gardens that he visited or established on his various travels. The Timurid gardens that he mentions visiting as a child in Samarkand, or later in life when visiting his cousin in Herat in 1507, clearly had a lasting impression and probably influenced Babur's ideas about the design of sites that he identified soon after capturing Kabul. The garden now known as Baghe Babur was one such site, which was set out under his direct supervision and used by Babur and his court to plan and launch military campaigns and celebrate victories, hold royal audiences, dispense punishments, read poetry and entertain.

Such was the significance of his favourite gardens that Babur continued to issue instructions during his campaigns in India to ensure that they were properly maintained. For example, his instructions about the upkeep of one garden were that "saplings should be planted. It is necessary to make geometrical grass plots and plant flowers with nice colours and scents and greenery around the edges of the grass". In India, Babur adapted his ideas to the unfamiliar geography and climate, while making best use of limited sources of running water. The area along the banks of the Jumna river in Agra, where a series of gardens were set out during Babur's reign, came to be known as 'Kabul' by the local population.

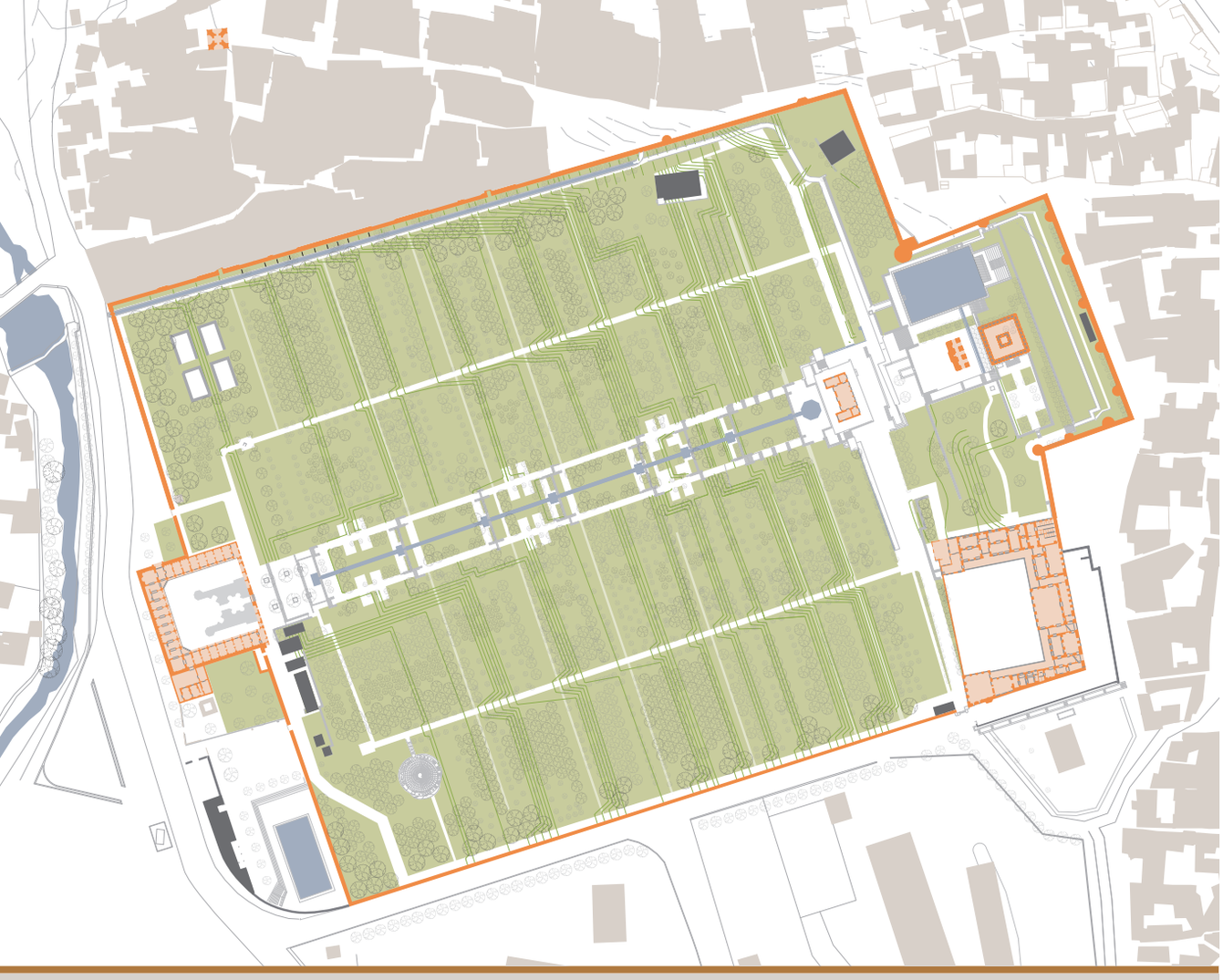
An Outline History of Baghe Babur and its Transformation

It was back in Kabul, on a fold that had captivated him on the south-western slopes of the Sher Darwaza hills, that Babur set out what might be the 'avenue' garden he describes in the Baburnama. Situated above the fertile Chardehi plain, water was diverted to the site of the garden through open channels leading from the river some 14 kilometres away to the south-east. Running water had long been a central element in formal gardens in the region, due in part to religious and symbolic associations with paradise, which might have also influenced Babur's wish to be laid to rest on this site. The layout of the garden included stepped terraces, running water, flowers and fruit trees – most of the elements that came in time to be associated with later Mughal funerary gardens, such as those of Humayun, Akbar, Jahangir and Shahjahan.

His body having been transported from Agra where he died, to Kabul, Babur was buried on an upper terrace



View of Babur's Garden following restoration, Photo by Christian Richters, 2009 © Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC)



Landscaping plan of Bagh-e-Babur, Kabul © Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC)

of the garden in around 1540. His successors came to pay their respects at the site of his grave, with Babur's grandson Akbar visiting in 1581 and 1589, and his great-grandson Jahangir instructing during the course of a visit in 1607 that a platform or chabutra be laid around the grave, an inscribed headstone be erected and that the garden be enclosed by walls. Shahjahan dedicated a marble summer mosque during a visit to the site in 1647, when he also gave instructions for the construction of a gateway at the base of the garden, which for unknown reasons was either never completed or systematically dismantled.

The site subsequently seems to have fallen into disrepair, as Kabul's political and economic importance in the region waned. When Charles Masson visited the site in 1832, and prepared a drawing of Babur's grave enclosure, he noted that "the tombs, for the truth must be told, are the objects of least attention in these degenerate days. No person superintends them, and great liberty has been taken with the stones employed in the enclosing walls…". Further damage was inflicted on the site during the severe earthquake that struck Kabul in 1842, when the perimeter walls reportedly collapsed. John Burke's photographs of 1872 show fragments of various marble grave enclosures scattered over the terraces, with the Shahjahani mosque in a poor state of repair.

As part of a wider programme of development in Kabul, Amir Abdur Rahman Khan (1880-1901) re-built the perimeter walls and constructed a number of buildings for his court, thereby transforming an environment that had until then been defined largely by trees and water. The area around Babur's grave platform was enclosed by an arcaded masonry enclosure and the level of the adjacent terrace was raised. Recent archaeological excavations revealed a system of water pipes supplying a series of fountains that were superimposed over Baghe Babur's central axis. Further transformations occurred in the 1930s, when Nadir Shah remodelled the central axis in a European style, with three fountains in stone pools. It was at this time that Baghe Babur was officially opened to the general public, and a large swimming-pool was constructed on the site of a graveyard north of the Shajahan mosque. Baghe Babur was much transformed and in a poor state of repair by the time that inter-factional fighting broke out in Kabul in 1992. The conflict quickly engulfed the area around the garden, which lay at the front-lines between factional fighters, who cut down trees to limit cover, stripped and set fire to buildings and looted the water pumps. Most inhabitants of the neighbourhood around the garden fled their homes. It was not until 1995 that mines and unexploded ordnance were cleared and water supplies to the area were restored, enabling some re-planting to take place, under the auspices of UN-Habitat.

Scope of Work

In March 2002, the Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC) signed a Memorandum of Agreement with the then Transitional Administration of Afghanistan for a comprehensive programme of rehabilitation of Baghe

Babur. The project was to be carried out through the Trust's Historic Cities Programme (HCP), with co-funding from the Federal Foreign Office of Germany. The goal of the works has been to restore the original character of the landscape and conserve key buildings, while ensuring that the garden, which is the largest public open space in Kabul, continues to be a focus for recreation for inhabitants of the city. Significantly, the garden has remained fully open to the public throughout the course of the rehabilitation work.

Baghe Babur currently comprises a walled area of just over 11 hectares, within which the principal historic structures are Babur's and other historic graves, a marble mosque dedicated in the 16th century by Shahjahan, a *haremserai* or Queen's Palace and a Pavilion that date from the late 19th or early 20th centuries. In parallel with clearance of rubble and waste from the site, the initial focus during 2002-3 was on surveys of the existing topography of the 16 terraces of the garden and of key buildings.

Conservation of Key Architectural Elements

Babur's grave has seen significant transformations since his body was brought from Agra for re-burial in Kabul, in accordance with his wishes. Apart from the carved headstone erected on the instructions of Jahangir in 1607, and which contains an elaborate chronogram that confirms the date of Babur's death in 937 AH, few original elements of the grave seemed to have survived. The dedication on Babur's gravestone (Bogdanov, 1923) reads:

"There is no deity but God;
Mohammad is the messenger of God.
The king from whose brow shone the light of God,
that was Zahiruddin Babur, the king.
Glorious, wealthy, lucky, just, equitable and pious,
he had an army of divine grace and favour,
of victory and conquest.
He conquered the worldly realm and went brightly.
For the conquest of the world of the spirits,
quick as the light of an eye.
When paradise became his abode,
the gatekeeperparadise asked for the date, I told him:
'Paradise forever is the place of Babur the king'."

The marble grave enclosure recorded in Masson's drawing had apparently collapsed by the time of Vigne's account of a visit to the garden, published in 1840, and Burke's photographs from the 1870s show fragments scattered over the grave terrace. Subsequent changes included the erection in the last years of the 19th century of an arcaded outer enclosure – subsequently demolished – and the levelling of the southern end of the grave terrace in the 1930's, when the swimming-pool was built. In the ensuing years, Babur's headstone had been enclosed in a concrete frame, and the grave itself decorated with coloured marble and onyx and covered by a framed shelter.

Based on archaeological excavations and a review of earlier documentation, the work undertaken since 2002 aimed to re-establish the original character of the grave area in a manner that conforms to international conservation practice. The level of the southern end of the terrace was lowered to restore the original elevation of the grave platform, around which the outer arcaded masonry enclosure has been reconstructed, on foundations of a 17metre square stone platform revealed by archaeological excavations, which indicated that this had been built around and above older graves.

The 31 marble fragments found in the grave area yielded important evidence as to the style and workmanship of the original enclosure around Babur's grave. While it has long been held that the enclosure dates from the time of Shahjahan, the craftsmanship and motifs on the recently-rediscovered fragments suggest that it might in fact date from soon after Babur's burial. Together with documentary material, the fragments have enabled the reconstruction of the enclosure, carved from Delhi marble, which has been erected in situ on the original grave platform. Measuring some 4.5 metre square, the elevations of the reconstructed enclosure comprise a central arched opening flanked by pairs of marble lattice or *jali* screens. Now re-planted with arghawan trees, the area between the marble screen and the outer enclosure, where Babur's son Hindal's grave survives, provides a tranquil space in which visitors can pay their respects.

The white marble mosque dedicated by Shahjahan during his visit to Babur's grave in 1647 is arguably the most important surviving Islamic monument in Kabul. The building retains a fine inlaid marble inscription reading:

Only a mosque of this beauty, the temple of nobility, constructed for the prayer of saints and the epiphany of cherubs, was fit to stand in so venerable a sanctuary as this highway of archangels, this theatre of heaven, the light garden of the God-forgiven angel king who rests in the garden of heaven, Zahiruddin Muhammed Babur the conqueror.

By the order of one filled with gratitude and affection, and praise of the throne of God, Abdul Muzaffar Shihabuddin Din Muhammed, the victorious king Sha Jahan after the conquest of Balkh and Badakhshan and the flight of Nadir Muhammed Khan from Balkh to Sheberghan pursued by an army of warriors in a battle of victorious troops on the battlefield.
And by the clemency of God, it fell to his indigent servant and the companions of this slave, who lives in awe of the munificence of God that, towards the end of the nineteenth year of his happy reign (Had this mosque built) in two years, in the year one thousand and fifty-six hijri for a sum of forty thousand rupees.

Historic photographs indicate that a number of other buildings were erected around the mosque during the reign of Amir Abdur Rahman Khan, when the structure was covered with a traditional earth roof, later replaced by a pitched roof of steel sheeting. At the same time, the original parapet of the mosque was removed and marble finials added. By the time the Italian Archaeological

Mission began conservation in 1964, it was deemed necessary to erect a structure of reinforced concrete and brick, over which the marble facing was re-assembled. Subsequent lack of maintenance, together with direct war damage, resulted in corrosion of the reinforcement and leaching of salts from the concrete, affecting both the structural marble elements and facing.

Following a detailed survey, conservation of the mosque was initiated in 2003 with the removal of the modern roofing and laying of traditional lime concrete, and replacement of cracked marble structural elements. Missing sections of the parapet were replaced with original marble elements rediscovered elsewhere in the garden, and the *mihrab* wall was re-faced, using some of the original marble pieces which had been laid as paving around the mosque. Staining on the marble elevations was cleaned, and some graffiti removed, but surface damage sustained during the fighting in the 1990's has been left visible.

The Garden pavilion, built at the turn of the century as a place for the royal family to entertain guests, partially covered a large square tank that is mentioned in accounts of Shahjahan's visit in 1638, and which also appears in 19th century prints of the garden. Remnants of brick masonry beside the Pavilion foundations suggest that a platform might have adjoined the tank. Used as a residence for an English physician to the court of Amir Abdur Rahman, the Pavilion had fallen into disrepair by the 1970's. Looted and burned during the factional fighting in 1992, repairs were initiated in 2003 by UN-Habitat and an Afghan organization DHSA. The restoration of the pavilion was completed by AKTC in 2005, and since then it has been used for a range of official functions and cultural events.

Reconstructing and Adapting the Queen's Palace

While Babur might have camped on platforms similar to that found beside the Pavilion, the *haremserai*, or Queen's Palace seems to have been the first permanent residential structure in the garden. Built in the 1890s by Amir Abdur Rahman Khan in a local style permeated by European influences, the complex provided secluded quarters for the royal family around a central courtyard open to the west, providing sweeping views of the garden terraces below it. With the building occupying the south-east corner of the site, pedestrians and horse carriages entered across the upper terraces of the garden. Historic photos show other buildings linking the haremserai to the mosque and an adjacent hammam, but these were demolished during the reign of Nader Shah. Used as a residence for the German Legation during the First World War, the complex subsequently served as a school and a military store, before being looted and burned during fighting in 1992.

Following the clearing of unexploded ordnance and mines, the collapsed sections of the *haremserai* roof were removed and the entire complex surveyed. One space to have escaped destruction was a brick-domed *hammam*, whose decorated plaster was restored in 2004. Following consolidation of the ruined structure in 2005, work began on the preparation of designs for redevelopment, on the footprint of the original and with reference to historic photographs and surviving buildings of the same era. Reconstruction work began in early 2006. While respecting the architecture of the original building, it has been possible to incorporate a range of alternative uses into the reconstructed complex and integrate new services and a range of materials. Moreover, this has provided an opportunity to develop the skills of a sizeable team of Afghan craftsmen in range of techniques, including brick vaulting, joinery, decorated plasterwork, marble flooring and stone carving. Since its restoration the *haremserai* and its large courtyard has been the focus for public and cultural events, the revenue from which has been used to meet the costs of upkeep of the garden. In 2011 alone, more than 35 events took place in the garden complex, 60 percent of which took place in the Queen's Palace.

Photographs of the garden from around 1915 show a double-storey *caravanserai* structure around a courtyard at the base of the garden. Although there was no trace of this above ground, excavations in 2003 revealed foundations of earlier structures and water channels. Traces of extensive stone footings, aligned with the central axis of the garden, were subsequently discovered and seem to correspond to the gateway "adorned with gilded cupolas, befitting that place" which, according to the account in the Padshahnama was commissioned by Shajahan.

The same passage of the Padshahnama refers to a building in which the destitute and poor should "eat their food in those cells sheltered from the hardships of snow and rain". This was the inspiration for a new *caravanserai* complex that houses the range of modern facilities required for contemporary visitors to Baghe Babur. Conveniently located at the bottom of the garden, the *caravanserai* building now serves as the main pedestrian entrance for visitors coming from the city side. Drawing on traditional built forms and brick-masonry techniques of the region, it houses an exhibition and information centre, offices, commercial outlets and public facilities.

Restoring the Character of the Historic Garden

Although it is not clear how Babur defined the extent of his garden, the perimeter walls that now surround Baghe Babur follow the tradition of enclosure of formal Persian gardens. Jahangir's instruction in 1638 that walls be built around several gardens in Kabul probably included the site now known as Baghe Babur. The scale and alignment of these walls has doubtless changed, but surviving sections of *pakhsa* (compacted earth walling laid by hand), were surveyed in 2002. With many sections found to be close to collapse, nearly 1.5 kilometres of walling (parts of which are 8 metres high and over 2 metres thick) were re-built or repaired in the traditional manner. An important secondary objective of this work was the generation of over 735,000 work-days of employment for on average 350 skilled and unskilled labourers from the surrounding communities.

In order to understand the original nature of the landscape, six seasons of joint archaeological excavations were undertaken by the German Archaeological Institute and the Afghan Institute of Archaeology. Architectural elements, from gravestones to parapets and waterfalls,



Water flows through the site in channels and tanks restored following extensive archaeology, Photo by Christian Richters 2009 © Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC)



Considered one of the finest Mughal-era buildings in Afghanistan, the Shah Jahan mosque was carefully restored during the Garden rehabilitation project, 2009 © Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC)

were found to have been re-used at random throughout the garden, suggesting a subsequent disregard for their decorative or symbolic value. The archaeological excavations found items such as coins, glass, pottery, bones – and even remains of a crab in one of the lower tanks, thus shedding light on how the garden had been used down the ages. Following archaeological excavations in Babur's grave precinct, in 2004 a marble-lined water channel (visible on late 19th century photographs) was excavated west of the Shahjahani mosque. Between this and the large octagonal tank excavated on the ninth terrace (now reconstructed) lay the 10 metre square tank which is now partly covered by the verandah of the Pavilion, and whose shape is marked in the stone paving.

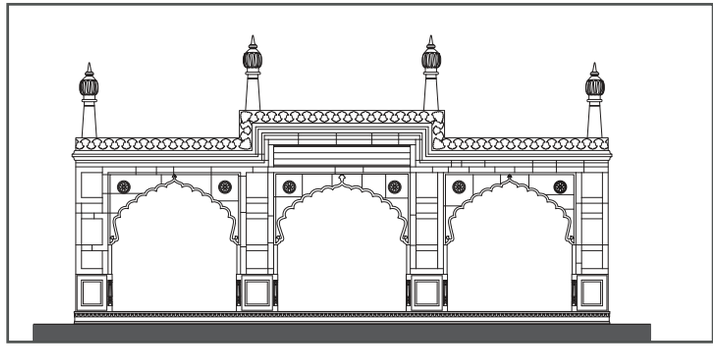
The dismantling of three 20th-century fountains enabled excavation to take place along the length of the central axis, where remains of eight rectangular tanks linked by channels, sections of terracotta pipe and stone retaining walls at the edges of terraces were found. In places, Mughal elements were found beneath more than 2.5 metres of deposits; they had been partly destroyed during the digging of a deep trench for pipes to supply the modern fountains. Fragments of 3 carved marble waterfall elements of matching dimensions, which had been re-used as gravestones, were also discovered. Together, these finds have enabled the conservation team to accurately reconstruct the central axis and its main water channel, allowing water to flow again, as it did in Babur's time. This has been achieved without significantly disturbing the surviving archaeological remains, which were backfilled after thorough documentation.

In addition to the archaeological evidence, historic descriptions and images of the garden have been used to restore the character of the landscape that originally captivated Babur. The focus has been on the key elements in the original concept – planting, grading and the restoration of running water along the spine of the garden.

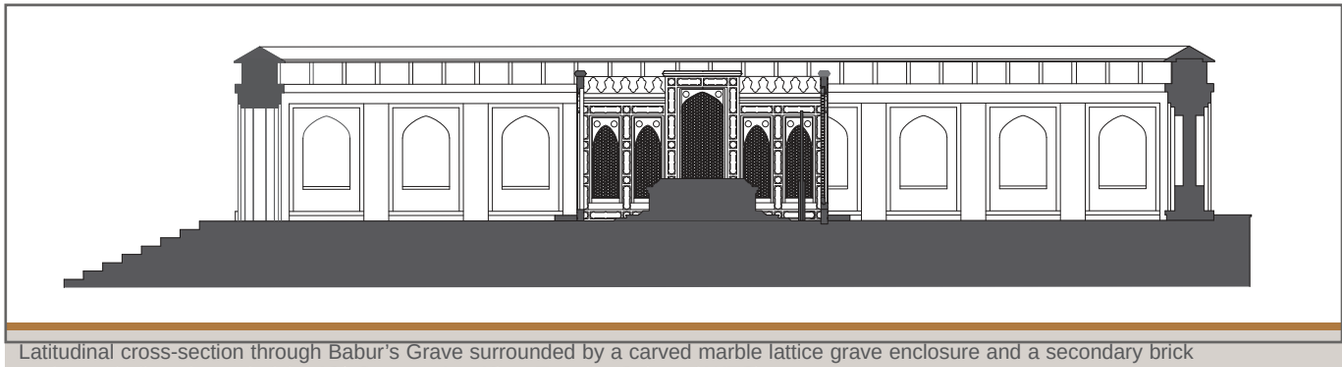
Underlying these works was the intention to provide the visitor with an exciting visual experience of the garden, as they progress up through the site. Having passed through the lower entrance on the bank of the Chardehi river, and entering the courtyard of the new *caravanserai*, the visitor glimpses the ascending garden through an arched gate in the reconstructed stone wall of the Shahjahani gateway. Passing through this, it is possible to perceive the full extent of the orchard terraces of the garden, rising more than 35 metres up the hillside. On the outer edges of this lowest terrace, copses of walnuts and plane trees provide areas of deep shade, as shown in 19th century prints of the site.

The visitor proceeds up the garden by means of pathways and flights of stone stairs on either side of the central axis, along which water flows through a series of channels, waterfalls and pools. This central water-course is flanked by an avenue of plane trees, directing views up the spine of the garden towards the Pavilion, and providing the deep shade that has long characterised the garden.

Each terrace along the central axis forms *in itself* a small garden, planted with pomegranates, roses and flowering bushes between areas of stone paving around a pool of water fed from the terrace above. From



Elevation of the Shah Jahan Mosque bearing close resemblance to other Mughal architecture of the period, Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC)



Latitudinal cross-section through Babur's Grave surrounded by a carved marble lattice grave enclosure and a secondary brick enclosure built at the end of the 19th Century, Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC)

each level, there are views and access to the lateral orchard terraces, on which some several thousand trees have been planted. Babur's memoirs have provided an invaluable source of information on the trees that he planted in gardens in and around Kabul. Based on this description, areas closest to the central axis contain pomegranates, apricots, apples, cherries (the wild "*alu balu*" being Babur's particular favourite) and peaches, between which are small grassy meadows. Outside of the longitudinal paths that run parallel to the central axis, there is a denser planting of mulberry, apricot, fig and almond trees. At the outer edge of each terrace, copses of walnut trees have been planted along the perimeter walls, over which they will in time be visible from outside the garden.

While the original water-course along the central axis would probably have also irrigated the orchard terraces through secondary channels, a separate system of underground pipes has now been installed to reduce evaporative losses. Water is supplied by gravity from the upper reservoir, built by Nader Shah, through this piped system to small stone holding tanks which regulate the flow into open channels to the orchards.

At the head of the present central axis, a large octagonal tank (replicating the original that has been preserved underground) is surrounded by a copse of plane trees between which is an area of stone paving. From this level, there are views down the central avenue, and across the plain of southern Kabul towards the Paghman mountains, just as those that Babur must himself have enjoyed. The modern swimming-pool that had encroached upon the terrace north of the pavilion was removed, and a new facility was built outside of the garden enclosure, near the lower entrance from the city. The new swimming pool was used, on average, by over 31,000 young Afghans during the spring and summer months during the years immediately following its construction.

On the level above the pavilion, the marble-clad western wall of the Shajahani Mosque represents an important visual element, as do the rebuilt dry-stone retaining walls that run across the width of this part of the garden. Cypresses have been introduced to the north of the mosque, while planes and indigenous roses have been re-planted alongside the dry trunks of the massive trees that once provided shade at this level. With the original level of Babur's grave terrace restored, the platform is now approached by stairs leading up from a formal flower garden to the south, surrounded by a circle of *alu balu* cherries. Between the outer and inner grave enclosures are, *arghawan* or Judas trees, while plane trees have been planted around the outer enclosure and along the terrace above, where they provide shade around the grave of Ruqayya Sultana Begum, against a backdrop of the towering perimeter walls.

Area Development Initiatives

In his memoirs, Babur describes how he and his entourage would hunt in the forests that extended from below Kohe Darwaza across to Paghman to the west. Early 20th century photographs of this plain show scattered clusters of traditional housing between market gardens, which were an important source of produce for the inhabitants of Kabul city which, until then was largely confined within walled settlements further north, along the banks of the Kabul River. The transformation of the environment below Baghe Babur began with the development in the 1920s of a new administrative centre in Darulaman to the south-west. In time, the fields between Darulaman and the centre of Kabul gave way to suburbs between the traditional villages that had long dotted the plain.

Areas such as these grew significantly during the 1980s, as families fleeing war-affected villages settled in the relative security of Kabul, where they had a chance of finding employment. For those unable to afford homes in established settlements, the only option was to build shelter on the hillsides that separate the different sectors of Kabul. By the early 1990s, the steep, rocky slopes above Baghe Babur were densely settled with homes, the bulk of which were built using traditional techniques of stone masonry and mud bricks, with flat roofs. The lives of those living in these homes, however, were disrupted by inter-factional fighting in 1992, resulting in widespread displacement and destruction of property and infrastructure.

By 1994, families gradually began to return to the ruins of their homes, to clear mines and ordnance, and to embark on reconstruction. Within 5 years, not only had most of the original residents around Baghe Babur re-occupied their reconstructed homes, but settlement had resumed higher up the slopes, on illegally-occupied government land, as demand for affordable housing in the city grew. Up to three-quarters of the population of Kabul now lives outside the scope of the 1978 Master Plan, which are not eligible for official investments in infrastructure upgrading.

This is the context of an area development project, initiated in early 2004, which aims at improving living conditions for the 10,000 or so people living in the immediate vicinity of Baghe Babur. Consultations were held with community representatives to identify priorities, on which basis investments have been made on improvements of storm water drainage, water supplies and access. This has, been matched by widespread private investments in housing repairs and extensions, even by owners who have no legal title for the land on which they have built. The continuing construction of homes on perilously steep hillsides, however, has put additional pressure on the rudimentary infrastructure, and increased risks to public health and the hazard of flash-floods.

In parallel with the upgrading work, mapping and baseline surveys have been conducted in a wider area, extending over 5 *gozars* or sub-districts, currently inhabited by some 28,000 people. Although there are wide variations between the living conditions in the different *gozars*, these surveys reveal acute levels of overcrowding, with three-quarters of families inhabiting only one or two rooms, and precarious livelihoods, with a quarter of able-bodied men relying on intermittent, casual labour. Access to basic services is limited, with 9 out of 10 families living in the plain reliant on unsafe water from shallow wells and only having access to



Cultural function in the Caravanserai on the lower terraces of the Garden, 2008 © Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC)

rudimentary sanitation.

The data provided by the baseline surveys, together with the mapping of the physical environment, has been used in a series of participatory initiatives aimed at identifying and analysing key 'pressure points' in the area. Involving residents, community representatives and municipal staff, this process has led to the formulation of a series of Plans of Action, which will lead to the negotiation of an Area Development Plan. An important aspect of this work has been to build the capacity of key municipal staff at the district level, so that they might be in a better position to analyse the situation and oversee current and future upgrading initiatives. It is envisaged that the Area Development Plan might not only leverage funding for upgrading on a larger scale, but also guide a broader process of physical, economic and social recovery in these *gozars*, while contributing to more effective urban governance.

Ensuring the Sustainability of Baghe Babur

Conceived of as royal property, the fortunes of Baghe Babur until the mid-20th century depended on investments made by Afghanistan's rulers. After the era of royal patronage, when the site became a public park, its gradual degradation bears out the challenge of meeting the costs of its upkeep from public funds.

Realizing that the management and operations of the restored garden posed further challenges, a tripartite 'Memorandum of Understanding' was signed in 2008 between Kabul Municipality, the Ministry of Information and Culture and AKTC, which established the independent Baghe Babur Trust (BBT). Tasked with the overall responsibility of effectively managing and maintaining the site, the 75 full-time staff of the BBT have ensured that Baghe Babur remains accessible to the more than 2.6 million Afghan and international visitors since 2008 and that revenue collected through visitations and the hire of facilities is reinvested towards the operation of the site-resulting in the financial self-sustainability of the operations since 2010. Revenue generated through these sources is crucial to the garden's sustainability; the 2-year period between 2008 and 2010, for instance, saw a 48 percent increase in self-generated revenue for the garden. Surplus of revenue coupled with additional investments by the US Embassy were used to upgrade visitor facilities and to make further investments towards the upkeep of the landscape and historic monuments. The establishment of the BBT and its successful management by an Afghan team with direct oversight by the Afghan authorities has provided an important precedent for the sustainable management and operations of historic sites across Afghanistan.

Ensuring that the historic landscape and buildings are safeguarded for future generations, the Baghe Babur rehabilitation programme has helped foster a better understanding of an integrated approach to cultural preservation and wider socio-economic regeneration. Many visitors to Baghe Babur remark on how the site represents for them a symbol of cultural recovery in Afghanistan.

The challenge is to retain the unique character of the landscape and monuments while ensuring continued access to the public.

Co-funding for the rehabilitation of Babur's Garden was provided by the Government of Germany with additional support from the Embassy of the United States.



The Queen’s Palace serves as a high-quality venue for cultural programs and social functions, 2009 © Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC)

The Herat Old City Area Development Programme: Public, Religious and Residential Buildings in the Historic Quarters

Aga Khan Trust for Culture in Afghanistan

Having already largely survived extensive periods of neglect and conflict, the Old City of Herat now faces unprecedented threats, as newfound prosperity drives a construction boom, resulting in the proliferation of uncontrolled 'development' throughout the traditional historic fabric. In the face of this damaging process of transformation, a programme was established by the Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC) in early 2005 to document the surviving fabric as a basis for initiating pilot conservation and upgrading measures in key neighbourhoods, while promoting more effective management of the urban environment. The challenge has been to find a balance between addressing poor living conditions in key 'pressure points' in the Old City and to meet urgent conservation needs, while simultaneously strengthening institutional capacity. This has required work at a variety of levels; with central government to promote administrative reform and accountability; with local government to promote effective coordination and enhance professionalism; among the wider Afghan professional community to raise awareness and build partnerships; among donors and international organizations to draw attention to both the rehabilitation needs and continuing destruction.

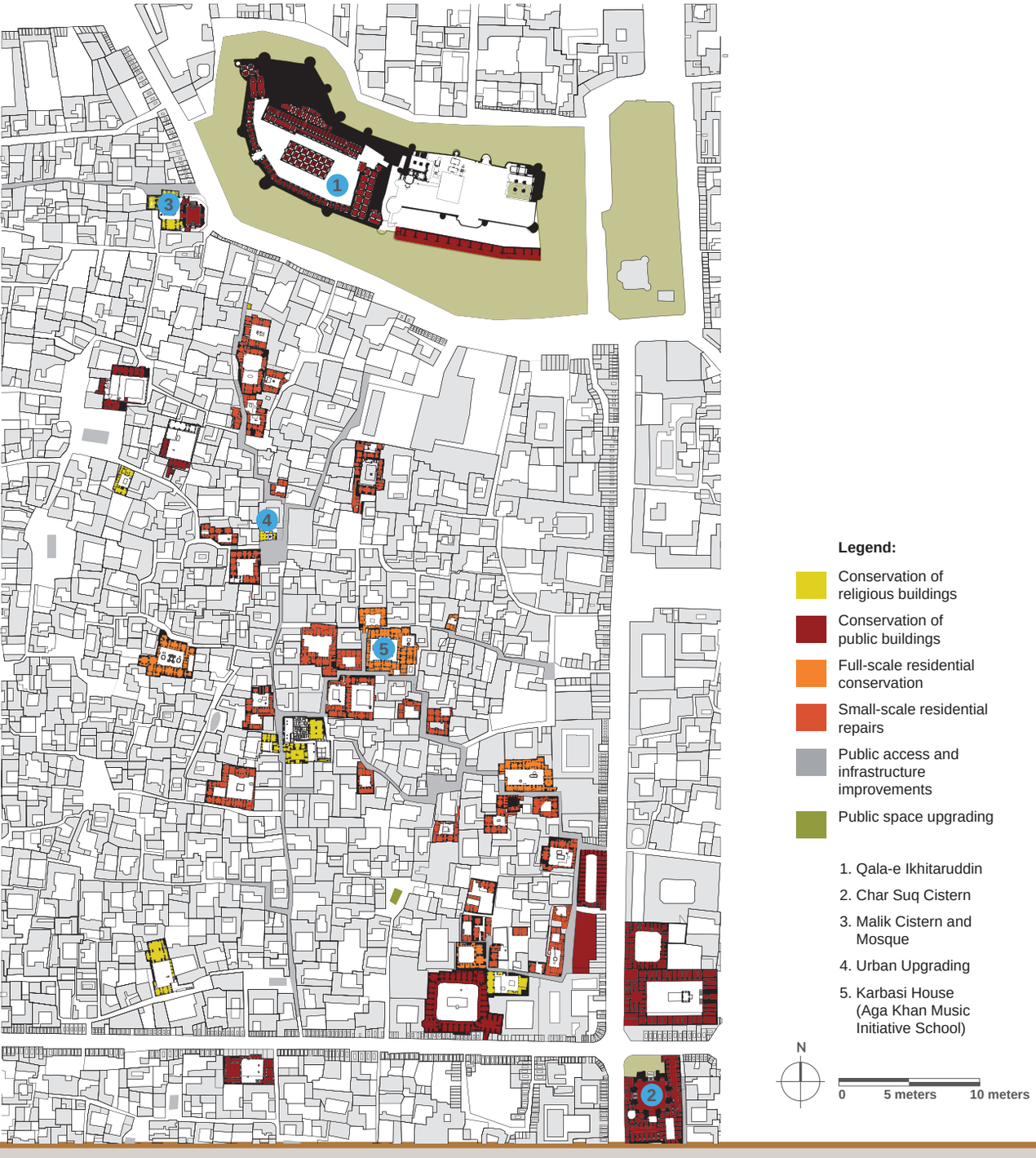
History of Herat Old City

From its origins as an outpost of the Achaemenid empire, to the setting-out of a rectilinear walled city by the Ghaznavids, the city of Herat has experienced a turbulent history. A centre for Islamic culture and learning under the rule of Timur, his son Shah Rukh, himself an important patron of the arts, included the poet Jami and the miniature painter Behzad in his court, while other members of the family commissioned the monumental buildings that made Herat renowned throughout the region. After falling into relative decline under the Mughals, Herat was ruled by the Safavids of Persia until re-establishing its status as an independent city in the mid-19th century. By 1863, it was captured by Dost Mohammed and incorporated into the emerging Afghan state. In 1885, allegedly to protect the city from an advance from Russian forces, British troops destroyed one of the most important monuments in Herat: the Musalla complex, which was built by Shah Rukh's wife, Gawharshad, and Sultan Hussein Baiqara in the 15th century.

Situated at the crossroads of regional trade and in the midst of a rich agricultural zone, Herat saw significant physical growth in the 20th century, including the construction of a new administrative centre for the region to the north-east of the Old City. As it had been the local building tradition for many centuries, homes continued to be constructed of mud-brick, with domed or vaulted roofs, and set out around secluded internal courtyards. The historic pattern of settlement within the massive earthen walls persisted, even as these fell into disrepair. Until the 1950s, when suburban life became an option for those able to afford it, many wealthy families still lived within the Old City. The style and features of many surviving homes from this era shed light on how those families continued the use of traditional materials and building techniques. While most urban growth during the 1960s took place outside of the Old City, vehicular roads were cut through parts of the traditional fabric, which radically changed the character of some neighbourhoods. The Herat Master Plan of 1978 foresaw ambitious new developments elsewhere to accommodate the anticipated urban growth, yet no specific provision seems to have been made for the Old City. The area nonetheless maintained its significance as a residential



Aerial view of the Ikhtyaruddin citadel following restoration and consolidation works, 2011 © Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC)



Plan of the Bar Durrani quarter of the Old City of Herat, showing conservation and improvements undertaken between 2005-2011, Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC)

zone and was still home to approximately 60,000 people until unrest broke out in the city in 1979.

With the onset of conflict in 1979, a front-line between government and opposition forces was established along the western side of the Old City which led to the de-population of these areas and adjoining villages on the outskirts. Their inhabitants either resettled in eastern parts of the city or fled to neighbouring Iran, which became host to more than one million Afghan refugees at the time. Traditional mud-brick domed homes of the Old City soon either fell into disrepair or collapsed, while most of the existing infrastructure was damaged or looted over the course of more than a decade of nearly continuous conflict. By 1990, surveys assessing the damage inflicted on the area indicated that more than half of the property in the western side of the Old City was derelict and only a few families lived in the ruins of abandoned homes. In 1992, with the fall of the central government in Kabul, control of Herat changed hands and the Old City became accessible for clearance of mines and unexploded ordnance. Some families began to re-build their homes and resettle in the war-affected parts after 1993, although there was still negligible access to basic services or infrastructure in an area once home to the city's wealthiest families.

An ad *hoc* process of recovery continued until 2002, by which time the war-affected areas in the Old City had been largely re-populated. With the return of refugees from Iran and increased migration from rural areas to urban centres, pressure on affordable housing in the city as a whole intensified while more owners returned to repair or redevelop their properties in the Old City. This resulted in the displacement of poor families who had occupied derelict homes during wartime, and who were then forced to move onto more marginal areas or camps for the displaced, outside of the city. By 2006, one in three families in the Old City rented residential accommodation, often rendering them vulnerable as they relied heavily on intermittent casual labour for their livelihoods. When unable to maintain rental payments, these families depended on the benevolence

of landlords and are sometimes forced into debt or are forcibly evicted without notice. After unemployment, access to adequate services is the issue most commonly cited as a major preoccupation by residents of the Old City. For those owners undertaking repairs of traditional homes, the lack of corresponding official investments in repairs or extension of infrastructure meant that living conditions remain poor, especially in densely-populated areas, where most homes are subdivided. Some better-off returnee families in the Old City, accustomed to modern homes while in exile, simply demolished their traditional homes, rather than attempting repairs or upgrading. In the absence of an effective system of building control, incongruous 2/3-storey concrete villas, complete with mirror-glass facades, are now rising above the traditionally low skyline of the Old City.

Given that commercial zones within the Old City are located along two main vehicular arteries and that demand for city-centre land has grown, the Old City is undergoing a proliferation of widespread commercial development in residential areas. The negative impact of new multi-storey 'markets', spreading along the main roads of the Old City, is as much environmental as it is visual. Most new buildings include a basement, the excavation of which takes place with little regard for the existence of archaeological remains or services such as drains or water pipes, which are instead simply blocked off. Moreover, provisions are not made for parking or waste collection, thereby exacerbating congestion and further exposing residents within the Old City to the environmental risks. With almost half of the available commercial property along one main road to the north of the Old City empty and unlet, the long-term economic viability of these 'markets' remains unclear.

Documentation and Surveys

In order to address these challenges, the programme of the Aga Khan Trust for Culture in Herat has, since 2005, involved processes of documentation, building conservation and upgrading, in parallel with measures to strengthen the capacity of and coordination between key institutions.

Given the rapid pace of change and the absence of documentation on the Old City, one of the first priorities for AKTC was to map the physical environment and to establish an appropriate system for monitoring ongoing transformations. A preliminary survey during early 2005 of historic residential property in two quarters provided a basis on which to initiate pilot repairs and upgrading works. A more detailed property survey of 25,000 residential and commercial premises was subsequently undertaken by a team of 15 AKTC surveyors. The combined surveys have yielded useful information on location, occupancy and current use, key construction and architectural characteristics, age and date of alterations, state of repair, availability of services and level of vulnerability of the property. This information served as a vital resource for broader planning initiatives, and for ongoing upgrading and conservation works.

The results of the survey illustrate the diversity of the various quarters, partially due to the combined impact of the conflict and redevelopment. Although the bulk of houses are still traditional in form and construction, two out of ten homes in the Old City are modern, compared to one in ten homes that are considered to be of social or historic importance. One in five homes in the Old City is occupied by more than one family, with indications that population density is gradually increasing in some neighbourhoods. Three quarters of commercial premises are modern, with more than 170 new shops or markets recorded as having been built over a six-year period (2005-2010), often on the site of illegally demolished homes. While subsequent surveys will have to explore in more detail the status of individual households, half of the residents were recorded to be reliant for water on shallow wells, many of which are contaminated, for their domestic needs. Most liquid waste now flows through surface channels into open sumps, posing a serious health threat to the community. The pattern of under-investment also extends to public facilities. At the time the survey was conducted, only one clinic and six small schools served an estimated 62,000 people in the Old City.

Results of these surveys suggest that the upgrading of infrastructure will be critical to the recovery of the Old City. In order to address some of the most immediate needs, AKTC provided urgent assistance to community groups tasked with organising the evacuation of liquid waste from more than 50 open sumps in the Old City, thereby helping improve the hygiene conditions in the highly congested quarters. Along with upgrading and repairs to more than 5,000 metres of underground and surface drainage channels, the collection and safe disposal of some 9,000 cubic metres of accumulated waste in the Bar Durrani and Abdullah Mesri quarters benefited half of the residents of historic quarters.

Given the density of settlement in the Old City, many pedestrian alleyways traditionally had rooms or terraces built over them, which provide shade for pedestrians during hot summer months. Constructed of fired or mud bricks, these vaulted *dalan* provide safe, covered means of access to adjacent homes, but many of these were demolished for reasons of security, while others fell into disrepair. Support has been provided by AKTC for the repair and paving of one of longest surviving vaulted *dalan* structures -approximately 200 metres in length – in the Bar Durrani quarter, as a demonstration of the potential of improvements to access routes. In a context where unemployment is a major preoccupation, upgrading activities since 2005 have generated 240,000 work-days of employment for skilled and unskilled labour, resulting in the paving of more than 6,000 square metres of pedestrian alleyways, which has improved access to more that 800 homes.

Conservation and Restoration of Public Buildings in the Old City

The focus of AKTC's conservation work has been on two clusters of historic fabric, extending across the Bar Durrani and Abdullah Mesri quarters, where investments have been made in the conservation of key public buildings – mosques, cisterns and bazaars – as well as historic houses. A system of small-scale grants and building advice was also established, aimed at enabling some fifty owners of traditional homes to

undertake basic repairs, which has further resulted in improved living conditions while protecting the integrity of the historic fabric. As well as safeguarding historic property, these projects have provided a platform for the training of local craftsmen, while demonstrating the potential of conservation and 'adaptive re-use' in a context where there is a growing tendency to demolish historic property and 'redevelop'.

In the case of Chahar Suq, the focus was initially on repairs to the covered cistern built in 1634, which functioned as a vital source of water for the inhabitants of the Old City until the 1970s. The brick dome, with a clear span of 20 metres, is the largest in the country. Built on a massive octagonal supporting structure, legend has it that the masons who raised the dome used straw-filled bags to support the facetted brick masonry during its erection. Having undergone a range of attempts at repair over the years, surveys in 2005 revealed significant settlement of parts of the superstructure, caused in part by excavations carried out by shopkeepers in the adjoining bazaars and as a result of damage sustained during conflict.

The first stage of conservation of the cistern entailed the removal of more than a metre of accumulated earth from the roof, to enable the examination of the state of brick masonry. Following restoration of damaged sections of brickwork around the dome, the roof surface was finished with traditional brick paving. Subsequent interior works included repairs to brick relieving arches under the dome and the re-opening of vaulted openings to the east and south of the main space. Following extensive discussions with relevant authorities and owners of commercial facilities, *ad-hoc* encroachments to the front of the monument were removed and an urban public plaza was restored. Since the completion of major restoration works in 2008, the cistern has been used for public and cultural functions on an *ad - hoc* basis. In addition to the main cistern space, the newly-repaired roof of the cistern and adjacent bazaars provide a large recreational area, with views over the rooftops of the Old City to the east and north. Additional conservation works were undertaken on the adjoining covered bazaars located to the east and south of the cistern. Of these, the traders of the Abreshum Bazaar (Silk Market) continue traditional trade in raw silk and also sell products woven inside the market.

Located next to what was once the main northern gate of the Old City, to northwest of the Bar Durrani quarter, the Malik cistern was used to store water for residents of the neighbourhood adjoining Qala-e Ikhtyaruddin, the citadel of Herat, until the 1970's. This site marks the centre of a cluster of conservation works in the northern part of the Old City. Following removal of waste that had for some years been dumped in the structure, surveys were made of the cistern and adjoining summer and winter mosques. Repairs were then undertaken on the brick masonry vaults and squinches that support a small brick dome spanning over the centre of a rectangular pool. The entire roof was then laid with a finish of brick paving and, in order to protect the building from traffic along the adjoining street, the original plinth surrounding the structure has been reconstructed. Work was subsequently initiated on the adjacent summer mosque, dating from the Safavid era, and comprising an open brick-arched *iwan* over a raised floor, from which modern concrete was removed and the vaulted sub-structure repaired. The arched structure over the prayer space was repaired and the original carved marble inscription fixed back in place. Removal of the modern plaster from the elevation and interior of the semi-underground winter mosque revealed sections of glazed tiling on the elevation of the modest *iwan*. This has been repaired, along with a raised prayer platform in front of the mosque and a row of vaulted study-rooms along the northern side of the courtyard. Since 2008, the Malik Cistern has been regularly used for cultural functions, including exhibitions on book design and production and modern and classical miniature painting displays. The adjoining mosque continues to be in daily use by the surrounding community.

Among other initiatives aimed at promoting the 'adaptive re-use' of historic buildings are the Karbasi House, now a school for traditional music and crafts, and the Yu Aw Synagogue, now used as a kindergarten for the local community. Thirty other public buildings in the Old City of Herat have since 2005 undergone conservation or rehabilitation measures, among them the historic mosques of Hazrat Ali and Khaja Rokhband as well as several shrines and a *hammam*. Conservation of Historic Residential Properties in the quarters of Bar Durrani and Abdullah Mesri, support has been provided for the full-scale conservation of more than a dozen homes of particular architectural importance, and which were deemed to be at risk.

Among the most significant of these dwellings is the Attarbashi House, which dates from the early 20th century and retains distinctive northern and southern ranges of rooms (for use in summer and winter respectively), arranged around a central courtyard. Entrance to the house was originally from a *dalan* over which several rooms stood, most of which had collapsed over time. At the centre of the complex is a large courtyard with a northern and southern range of rooms on two floors, including a vaulted half-basement. Walls and arches located in central domed rooms in the southern wing retain traces of fine decorated plasterwork and intricate lattice screens. The upper floors on both wings are accessed via external colonnades of timber posts decorated with plaster, behind which are *orsi* screens that open to allow natural light into internal spaces. To the east is a family *hammam*, and a small shrine located on the side of the main entrance. In the western and eastern portions of the central courtyards, there are two additional smaller courtyards leading to the kitchen and a stable for horses. Documentation of the house took place in parallel with emergency protection of vulnerable plaster decoration. Roofs were repaired and damaged rafters replaced, followed by restoration of the timber screens on both floors. Reconstruction of the domed reception space in the southern range was undertaken, drawing on the pattern of similar homes in the area. The diversity of restoration work in the Attarbashi house has enabled the development of skills among craftsmen, and contributed to efforts to raise awareness among



Following a detailed survey of the existing structure, restoration work on the Namakdan Pavilion, which dates from the fifteenth century, and the restoration of the surrounding landscape was initiated in late 2005 and subsequently completed in 2009, Photo by Simon Norfolk, 2013 © Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC)



View of the Chahar Suq cistern and market complex following restoration and removal of illegal construction. The prime focus of AKTC's conservation work has been on two clusters of historic fabric, extending across the Bar Durrani and Abdullah Mesri quarters, where investments have been made in the conservation of key public buildings – mosques, cisterns and bazaars – as well as historic houses, Photo by Christian Richters, 2009 © Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC)

the community and professionals in Herat.

In addition to full-scale conservation projects, small-scale household grants (in the form of materials, labour and on-site technical advice) have been made available to owners of some 40 traditional homes. In order to support the reversal of the trend to 'redevelop' homes in the Old City, these grants were aimed at supporting owners who showed initiative by already embarking on repairs, but who were not otherwise able to undertake these effectively or afford to complete the works.

Conservation of Large Public or Religious Monuments

Following the death of the renowned Sufi mystic Khwaja Abdullah Ansari in 1098, his grave in the village of Gazurgah, four kilometres north-east of Herat city, became an important place of pilgrimage. In time, a funerary complex developed around the grave and, in 1425, the Timurid ruler Shah Rukh commissioned an enclosure, which was subsequently repaired by the poet and patron Alisher Nawa'i after flood damage in 1499. The complex today comprises a cluster of buildings and graves around the original enclosure. The grave platform of Abdullah Ansari stands at the east end of the courtyard, facing the main entrance through an arched opening or *iwan*. On the external west elevation, this *iwan* is flanked by a series of blank arches decorated with glazed tiles and fired brickwork. Mosques with fine plaster *muqarnas* decoration on their vaults lay on either side of the main entrance. The monumental *iwan* on the west side behind the grave of Ansari retains sections of fine glazed and brick decoration.

AKTC conservation activities during 2009 focused on the repair and partial reconstruction of the roof of the shrine complex and the stabilization of the great *iwan*, which was at risk of collapse, through the construction of brick buttresses that helped stabilize the structure. Additional upgrading measures included laying brick paving in the courtyard and installing an unobtrusive system of lighting. During the course of these works, the historic graves in the courtyard were documented and the rooms hosting the famous Haft Qalam Stone (marking the grave of Shah Gharib Mirza) were rebuilt. To the southwest of the Ansari shrine lays the Zarnegar Khaneqah, or gilded room, taking its name from the rich turquoise, lapis lazuli and gilt painted decorations on the underside of its shallow brick dome. From 2006 to 2007, AKTC repaired the roof and stabilized the south side of the building, which retains several rooms with elaborate geometric plaster vaults.

Between 1490 and 1494, Bagh-e Naw a – new garden adjoining the shrine of Khwaja Abdullah Ansari – was created by Amir Alisher Nawai, the custodian of the Gazurgah site. In it he built two leisurely pavilions, of which only one survived.

The Namakdan pavilion, named after its resemblance to a traditional salt-cellar, is a twelve-sided structure with a dome spanning over a central double-height octagonal space. Around this space on the first floor runs a gallery that gives access to a series of twelve small niche-like rooms that overlook the surrounding garden. While an intervention in the 1950's saved the building from collapse, its character had been radically altered. AKTC conservation works exposed and stabilized the original Timurid structural system, adding steel ring-beams to support the brick masonry that had seriously deformed in places. This allowed repairing of the fragile brick central dome. The removal of a recently added intermediate floor uncovered a pool, along with traces of a waterfall and channel, all of which were subsequently reconstructed. Traces of *karbandi* ribbed plaster and Timurid tile work found on two elevations were stabilized and, where possible, restored. AKTC paved the existing garden pathways and planted deciduous trees in order to restore something of the character of the original Timurid garden.

The covered cistern, known as Hauz-i-Zamzam, lies in the garden to the north of the Zarnegar Khaneqah. Still filled with water drawn from the natural springs in the village of Gazurgah, this remains an important source of water for pilgrims visiting the shrine complex.

Conservation of the Ikhtyaruddin Citadel

As one of its most visible landmarks, the citadel stood witness to the turbulent history of Herat and the changing fortunes of successive empires, from the Seleucids to the Ghorids, before being laid waste by Genghis Khan in 1225. Following further destruction by Tamerlane in 1381, his son Shah Rukh re-built the fortifications and constructed new facilities within its walls. Situated on a man-made mound on the northern edge of the Old City, the citadel is approximately 250 metres long and 70 metres wide. The older, uppermost section is rectilinear in plan and contains the ruins of several sizeable buildings that once housed military officers, a treasury building and royal residences. The fortifications of the citadel are imposing; eleven projecting brick towers support massive brick walls with an external glacis – sloping surface probably built of stone slabs and fired bricks – protecting the lower reaches of the north and east facing walls.

The western part, or Lower Citadel, was originally built by the Kartid rulers of Khurassan in the 14th century. A polygonal enclosure of lower walls made of baked bricks surrounds Timurid period military structures. Only six of the nine towers survive along the south and west walls. The western end is dominated by a tall masonry tower that retains sections of Timurid glazed tile decoration with a *kufic* inscriptive band. The entire citadel was surrounded by a moat, which was drained and backfilled when a public park was created by the Herat Municipality in 2003.

The citadel was saved from demolition in the 1950's when the inhabitants of Herat petitioned King Zahir Shah to halt the destruction of the site. UNESCO then started a programme of restoration and archaeological excavation in the 1970s, which had to be abandoned in 1979 following the Herat uprising against Soviet occupation. Although damaged during the years of conflict that ensued, the partially preserved citadel survived largely intact. After centuries of military use, the Afghan army handed over the site to the Department of Historic Monuments in 2005.

With support from the Ambassadors' Fund for Cultural Preservation (AFCP) of the US Government, AKTC in 2008 began restoration and consolidation activities on the structures remaining within the citadel as well as stabilization works on the perimeter fortifications and stone glacis surrounding the site.

The final stage of works were completed in 2011 and aimed to protect key parts of the surviving structure, culminating in the restoration of several buildings in the lower enclosure that now house the National Museum and archives in Herat. Extensive archaeology of the site and the establishment of the National Museum were undertaken by the German Archaeological Institute (DAI) and the Museum of Islamic Art, Berlin, with support from the German Federal Foreign Office. The multi-year conservation of the citadel also provides appropriate spaces for temporary exhibitions and cultural events, as part of efforts to transform the citadel into a hub of cultural activity for the residents of Herat.

Urban Governance

Aside from the physical challenges facing the historic fabric and the need for additional investment to render the Old City more habitable, the issue of management in this urban environment is now more critical than ever. Despite assurances that new development will be rigorously controlled, and appropriate plans drawn up to ensure safeguarding of the unique fabric of the Old City, city officials seem unable or unwilling to act to halt demolitions or inappropriate 'redevelopment'. Given that many such officials lack the professional training or experience to effectively manage urban growth in this sensitive context, AKTC staff provided technical assistance to a Commission for the Safeguarding and Development of the Old City of Herat, comprising representatives from key institutions and professional bodies. While limited progress has been made in reforming the system of building permits and monitoring of new construction or demolitions, the Commission provided a platform for discussion between key stakeholders, and a clearing house for information. While the aim to involve communities themselves in the long-term safeguarding of historic properties has been met with mixed success, the absence of effective leadership on the part of civil servants has often handicapped these initiatives.

Most of the key historic monuments in the Old City have now been formally registered as part of an ongoing collaboration between AKTC and the Department of Historic Monuments of the Ministry of Information and Culture. In order to build local professional skills, students from Herat University have been engaged in on-the-job 'further education' through the AKTC programme, which also supports site visits and lectures about conservation, planning and urban management issues. It is hoped that this cadre of young Afghan professionals will be in the vanguard of continued efforts to safeguard and develop their city, and possibly other historic centres in Afghanistan.

Over the course of 7 years, the AKTC programme has visibly demonstrated the potential of integrating conservation initiatives within a wider area development program that addresses the poor living conditions of communities residing and working in the Old City of Herat, while simultaneously helping strengthen institutional capacity. This has required coordination with a variety of local and international stakeholders and working together with community representatives to promote conservation and suitable mechanisms for sustainable development in the face of continuous threats posed to the fragile historic fabric of the Old City of Herat. The challenge of continuing to build upon the momentum achieved through this partnership now lies with local communities and the institutions of the Afghan government, who together are ultimately responsible for the protection of Afghanistan's built heritage.

The Herat Old City Area Development Programme was co-funded by the Governments of Germany, the United States, and Norway, with additional support provided by the Prince Claus Fund.



Khwaja Abdullah Ansari shrine complex Gozargah, north-east of Herat © Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC)

Minarets and Mughal Gardens: Projects Undertaken & Supported by DoHM for the Preservation of Historical Monuments, 2002-2012

Abdul Ahad Abassi

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Afghanistan, or 'ancient Ariana', is a country with a long and rich cultural heritage that can be readily observed through the survival of a plethora of archaeological sites and outstanding historical monuments throughout all thirty four provinces.

Not only do these historic sites represent a valuable cultural resource for the Afghan people but they also serve as a magnet that in the past, and hopefully again in the future, will attract tourists, academics and renowned research institutions from around the globe. However, the history of the country and the economic and political issues it has faced over the last few decades are well documented and despite the importance of such monuments as a focal point for national pride and social cohesion, only limited attention and care has been able to be given to these invaluable historic assets thus far.

During the period of the Afghan Transitional Government little national or international funding was readily available to the Ministry of Information and Culture to undertake long-term or even emergency projects on many of the monuments that required attention, spread throughout the countryside. Indeed, only a very small number of preservation or conservation programmes were in operation at this time and were predominantly carried out by UNESCO and the Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC).

From 2004 the Department for the Protection of Historical Monuments (hereafter referred to as the 'Department' or DoHM) was, nonetheless, fortunate to be able to begin a training programme for our staff with the support of a range of countries and local institutions. One of the early important steps was an extended training workshop facilitated by The Society for the Preservation of Afghanistan's Cultural Heritage (SPACH) with technical support from the Aachen Centre for Documentation and Conservation in Germany. The training workshop was designed to assist in increasing the knowledge and to build capacity at all levels of employees within the Department. Specifically, this was undertaken with regards to the process of analysing and recording monuments, (creating both textual records and digital imagery) then employing this data to create an inventory (or register) of historic monuments. This small pilot study looked at approximately 126 sites and monuments, (mostly in Kabul) and has subsequently formed the basis for an ever increasing register of monuments across the country undertaken by the Department in collaboration with a number of other cultural NGO's based in Kabul. It was an important first step towards documenting the number and condition of built heritage and to putting in place a strategy and policy to address the needs.

While only limited funding was available for historical monument protection or preservation for most of the years between 2002-2006, nevertheless, some important activites were undertaken by the Department with its international partners. For example, a major programme of restoration and revitalisation began at the former Mughal gardens, Baghe Babur. Implemented by the Aga Khan Trust for Culture and funded primarily by the German and American governments, this was the first stage of a multi-year programme that has recently been completed and is now effectively

managed by the Baghe Babur Trust. The extensive programme of restoration on the former terraced gardens and associated buildings (including Babur's grave enclosure and the 1880's Queens Palace) were primarily undertaken by AKTC in collaboration with the Department and now represent one of the highlights of successful restoration programmes in Afghanistan. The gardens are visited by hundreds of Afghans and foreigners every week and thousands over significant events such as Nowruz (the 3 day Nowruz celebrations in 2013 attracted over 22,000 visitors for example). During this period a number of other projects were also funded, including the Mullah Mahmoud mosque and the tomb of Nadir Shah. During the course of 2003 restoration work also began on the mausoleum of Timor Shahi in Kabul, in cooperation with the Aga Khan Trust for Culture.

Other notable events during this last decade must include the inscription of "The Minaret and the Archaeological Remains of Jam" on the World Heritage List in Danger in 2002. The 65m-tall Minaret of Jam dates back to the 12th century and is notable for the elaborate brickwork that decorates it and the remarkable Kufic inscriptions on the upper part of the monument. The quality of its architecture and decoration, which represent the culmination of an architectural and artistic tradition in this region during the Ghurid period, are a few of the reasons why it is viewed as such a nationally and internationally important monument. The minaret is deemed at risk due to its slight incline (although not thought to be increasing, this is a potential cause for concern in terms of long-term structural stability) and as a result of its precarious position on the banks of the fast-flowing Hari Rud.

The Department began construction of a series of protective walls and gabions (mesh-enclosed rocks) to partially mitigate against the force of the two rivers that meet close to its base. This emergency protective work was funded via a special budget released from the Ministry of Information and Culture and from funds provided from the UNESCO office in Kabul. Implemented by the Department of Historic Monuments



Minaret of Jam © MoIC



Khaneqah Awliya-i-Chisht, Chesht-e Sharif after restoration © MoIC

and UNESCO, the initial work was successful in offering temporary protection to the minaret and its banks, but this is an on-going issue that needs to be addressed on an annual basis until a long-term solution for diverting or 'calming' the river flow can be found. The minaret is regularly monitored by the Department and a number of additional survey and consolidation programmes have taken place since this first major phase of works on the gabions. Recent projects have included a UNESCO / DoHM initiative to assess the condition of the timber and stone built spiral stairway within the Minaret. Many of the timber beams supporting the staircase, (that in turn represent an essential element in the minarets overall structural stability), have either decayed or been removed over the centuries and now require replacing. During late 2012 a further DoHM project undertaken in conjunction with the United States provided additional temporary stabilisation through the repair of the gabions. Unfortuantely, this temporary repair has also been washed away or damaged during the previous winter, making the present situation critical.

Another significant activity undertaken in relation to the Department's activities in the last ten years concerns "The Cultural Landscape and Archaeological Remains of the Bamiyan Valley," encompassing eight different architectural and archaeological sites that were also inscribed on the UNESCO list of World Heritage in Danger in 2003. These eight distinct sites stand out as exceptional examples of the artistic and religious developments, which from the 1st to the 13th centuries characterized the region, through the integration of various cultural influences including the Gandhara school of Buddhist art. The area contains numerous Buddhist monastic rock-hewn sanctuaries, as well as fortified structures from the later Islamic periods. The two impressive niches in the cliff face are also a stark reminder of the destruction of the Buddha statues during March 2001. Work over the last 10 years has chiefly concentrated on the restoration of elements of the smaller (or east) Buddha niche and more significantly on the geotechnical stabilization of the surrounding cliff. The geology of the famous reddish brown sandstone was unstable even before further physical damage was wrought by the engineered insertion of explosives. The project work has been undertaken by a number of international conservation organisations and donors under the auspices of the DoHM and UNESCO. Other substantial projects within the protected zone have included an extended phase of de-mining (with archaeological watching-briefs taking place parallel to this work) at the archaeological sites of Shahr-i Ghulghulah, Shahr-i Zuhak and in the immediate environs of the Buddha niches. The DoHM (in conjunction with UNESCO) also undertook a more extensive conservation work at Shahr-i Ghulghulah following the de-mining and this work is ongoing in 2014. Already the site has renewed interest from the local community in its protection and further development and several community events have taken place there. The restoration of a significant shrine on the Foladi Valley road in 2012 that can now once more be used extensively for worship by the local community was another aspect of this cooperation between the DoHM and UNESCO (referred to in this volume by Praxenthaler).

In the near futures will also see the commencement of the next phase of work on the large Buddha (the west niche) which requires extensive attention both internally and externally on the fragile surviving elements of the statue and the surrounding cliff face.

In accordance with the collaborative policy that the Ministry of Information and Culture continuously seeks to promote for the benefit of Afghan heritage, the DoHM has in the past worked with a number of international organisations on stabilisation and conservation programmes targeting many significant sites and buildings. This is a policy the Department hopes to actively continue in the future and openly welcomes technical support and advice from national and international colleagues and institutions. In addition to the Department's collaboration with UNESCO (as an inter-Governmental agency), we have also received considerable support from AKTC who have implemented a large number of projects in recent years. These have included restoration work in Kabul at Baghe Babur, Timor Shahi Mausoleum, the Burj-e Wazir, in Asheqan wa Arefan, and at Olia and Goldasta mosques, in addition to a number of private houses and *hammams* that have exhibited architectural value worth preserving or have been associated with archaeological or historical areas.

The Department's work is not confined solely to Kabul and since 2006 we have been actively seeking to widen our work programme into the provinces, logistical and security restrictions allowing. These initially included more accessible provinces such as Herat, Balkh and Bamiyan, but recently have been extended to areas such as Takhar, Laghman and Kandahar. The Department has also had an active programme in Ghazni province for many years and this has seen an increase in activity over the last 3 years with completion of the restoration of the Abdul Razaq Mausoleum and gardens (supported by UNESCO/Italy) and the instigation of more than 32 other smaller conservation projects. These are being undertaken in relation to Ghazni having been nominated as Islamic City of Culture for 2013 by the Islamic Scientific, Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (ISESCO). At the time of writing more than 20 of these projects have been successfully completed. Working in conjunction with AKTC the DoHM has now also successfully registered over 1200 monuments throughout the country and looks to continue this programme as funding and security allows.

Other programmes that we have been involved with over the last decade include many in Areia Antiqua, the ancient city of Herat, where several internationally award winning projects have been implemented by AKTC and UNESCO, partnering with the DoHM. To highlight a few, these have included the well-known 15th century citadel, Qala e Ikhtyaruddin, an iconic landmark on the skyline of Herat for centuries, in addition to numerous historic buildings in the Old City such as the Malek and Wazir cisterns and a number of residential and commercial *serais* (such as the Serai-e Abresham) that

exhibited considerable architectural and / or historical merit. Extensive work was also undertaken to restore and stabilize the extensive complex at Gozargah, to the north-east of Herat, which represents the impressive funerary compound of the Sufi mystic Khwaja 'Abd Allah Ansari. The Department has also been assisted by UNESCO in a mid-term programme to stabilise the structure of the madrassa and mausoleum of Queen Gawhar shad, constructed in the early to mid-15th century and part of the Musallah complex.

This extensively ruined yet internationally important grouping of buildings also includes the upstanding 5th minaret that has been temporarily prevented from collapse by the Department and its international partners. From 2014 the Department and UNESCO will begin further extensive conservation work on the complex both at the mausoleum and its environs, in addition to the implementation of a long-term solution for the stabilisation of the 5th Minaret.

Wider ranging surveys and inventory work have also been undertaken in Herat and the surrounding areas through a collaboration between the DoHM, the Institute of Archaeology and a team of German archaeologists whom together collected data on 12 historic areas in the suburbs and in excess of 430 individual monuments, including a number of more remote sites that are at risk, such as the 12th century Khaneqah Awliya-i-Chesht to the east of Herat.

The Department hopes to continue working in many other provinces where it has already been involved in a number of projects including Kundoz (the shrine of Imam Saheb) and the Bagh-e Jehan Nama Palace complex (palace and gardens) in Khulm (formerly Tashqurghan) in Balkh Province. Also within the same province the DoHM is supporting two unique restoration and stabilisation initiatives currently in progress that are being implemented by AKTC, (stabilisation work on 2 arches at the 10th century mosque Noh Gumbad notable also for its exquisite decorative stucco work, and restoration and stabilisation of the 15th–16th Century tomb dedicated to Khwaje Abu Nasr Parsa).

The DoHM has also benefitted from a number of very specialist courses in recent years that have sought to build the general technical capacity of the staff in this specialist field. Recently An initiative funded by the US State Department and implemented by AKTC, nearly 9 months of training was given to the Department using 10 historic sites from Ghazni province as a pilot study before other provinces and monuments are tackled in the future.

Running parallel to this training programme the Department, embarked upon producing standardised signage for several hundred 'registered' monuments initially within Kabul and Herat provinces. Under Article 14 of the Afghan "Law for the Preservation of Cultural Heritage (2004)," every registered monument requires a plaque displaying its name, architectural or archaeological significance, a unique registration number and contact details for the most local Ministry of Information and Culture Department in the case of emergencies relating to damage or looting at the sites. As of the end of 2012 this programme had been completed for all of Kabul and 90% of Herat, with signage gradually being introduced into other provinces. Not only does this initiative help to identify and protect the many monuments scattered around the countryside, it also offers the general public a better understanding of the significance of their cultural heritage and to value it as a finite resource.

In conclusion, whilst the Department has faced an uphill struggle over the last decade to meet the demands required of it by the public, and to reach international standards in terms of its capacity and the quality of its programme work, we believe much has been achieved within the limited resources available. In addition to the dedication of the staff of the Department often in challenging circumstances, many international donors have contributed to our successes over the last 10 years or so through the provision of funding, technical training and the loan of specialist staff for certain projects. We hope to continue this positive cooperation into the future. Afghanistan still faces political and economic challenges on the horizon, but whatever trials the next decade brings to our country, the Department of Historic Monuments will continue to promote, value and protect the exceptional variety of sites and monuments scattered across the country for future generations.

Restoration of the Timur Shah Mausoleum, Kabul

Aga Khan Trust for Culture in Afghanistan

Timur Shah Mausoleum and Area Development

As one of the largest surviving Islamic monuments in central Kabul, the mausoleum of Timur Shah not only counts as an impressive example of brick funerary architecture, but also played a significant role in the history of the modern Afghan state and the development of its capital. The conservation of the mausoleum, which involved the reclamation of the surrounding public park and formulation of a coherent redevelopment plan for the area, represents a contribution to the recovery of a historic urban quarter that, along with others in Kabul, is currently undergoing heavy development pressures and rapid, unregulated transformation.

Timur Shah and the Sadozai Dynasty

Timur Shah was the second son of Ahmad Shah Durrani of the Sadozai tribe of Kandahar. Originally a general in the service of the Persian ruler Nader Shah Afshar, for whom he conducted military campaigns into India, Durrani effectively united the territory now known as Afghanistan after having been elected in 1747 by an assembly of Pashtun chiefs to be their leader. His son, Timur Shah, was born in 1746, probably in Herat, where he served as governor before succeeding to the throne following his father's death in 1772. Having faced off a military challenge from an elder brother, who was bypassed in the succession, Timur Shah moved his capital from Kandahar to Kabul, which was located at the centre of his domain and marked the crossroads of Pashtun and Persian languages and culture.

Timur Shah's reign was dominated by the continuing turbulence between the fractious tribes of the new Afghanistan. He died in Laghman in 1793 and his fifth son, Zaman Shah, who had served as governor of Kabul, inherited the throne at the age of 23. Zaman Shah chose not to bury his father in the traditional graveyards east of the citadel, but instead initiated the construction of a brick mausoleum around 1817 in a "chaharbagh", or garden, on the southern bank of the Kabul River. Progress on the construction of the mausoleum seems to have been intermittent, due in part to continuing rivalries between the male lines of the Durrani family. During a visit to Kabul in 1839, the British traveller James Aktinson noted that, "[T]he tomb of Tymmoor Shah... is still unfinished; it is a mere shell, built of burnt brick unplastered, and without minarets or embellishment of any kind… The walls and cupola bear innumerable marks of canon-balls and shot, produced in the several insurrections that have occurred at Caubul since it was erected."

The Chaharbagh in the Context of Kabul's Development

The transfer of the court from Kandahar to Kabul meant that space had to be found for royal functions within the walled enclosure of the "Bala Hisar", or citadel, which served at that time as the principal residential quarter for the elite and merchant classes of Kabul. As the population of the capital increased, the walled residential settlements that had been established to the west expanded and in time merged into a larger metropolis along the south bank of the Kabul River. The mid-19th century re-location of the royal quarters from the Bala Hisar to a new site north of the river had a further impact on the existing gardens, some of which were incorporated into the new compound.

Photographs from the late 19th century show that the Chaharbagh in which the mausoleum of Timur Shah stood was by then much reduced in extent. In 1904, as part of efforts to modernize the capital, Habibullah Khan constructed a large secondary school, on land to the north-east of the mausoleum. The Habibia School formed part of a range of neo-classical buildings that stretched in time along both banks of the Kabul River. Although it is not clear that this was the intention, this



Timur Shah Mausoleum after restoration, Photo by Simon Norfolk, 2013 © Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC)



Timur Shah Mausoleum, during restoration, 2008 © Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC)

row of buildings effectively screened the Timur Shah Mausoleum and traditional residential quarters of the Shah-do-Shamshara area to the south, as well as the area between Jui Sher and the west bank of the river. In 1965, a section of these buildings was demolished to create a renewed open view to the mausoleum and a municipal park was created between the Timur Shah Mausoleum and the river.

These developments followed the urban transformation of the area south of the mausoleum of Timur Shah in the 1940s, when the commercial boulevard of Jade Maiwand was constructed, cutting through the heart of the historic Old City. The opening up of the historic network of alleyways to vehicular traffic allowed for the construction of multi-storey commercial depots, which replaced the traditional sprawling bazaars that once characterized this part of the Old City. In time, many of the historic homes of the Shah do Shamshara neighbourhood to the west of the mausoleum were transformed into workshops or depots. Two single-storey bazaars, selling dried fruit and pulses, are all that remains today of the traditional commercial fabric of the Old City near the mausoleum.

Timur Shah's Mausoleum and the Afghan Funerary Building Tradition

Mausoleums, whether for spiritual, military or political leaders, are an important part of the architectural heritage of the region, and in many cases were the largest and most permanent structures within settlements at the time. Such buildings were not only expressions of power or piety, but also strove to demonstrate the cultural achievements of those who sponsored them, through the hire of the best contemporary craftsmen in the area.

For instance, in commissioning a mausoleum in memory of his father, Zaman Shah drew on the tradition of mausoleums set in formal gardens. Among these are the 11th century brick-domed mausoleum erected for Sultan Mahmood in Ghazni in one of his favourite gardens in the city that was - his capital - as well as the 15th century mausoleum of Gawharshad, situated outside

the Old City of Herat. The exquisite glazed tiles and elaborate calligraphic decoration around the dome of the mausoleum of Gawharshad, which was part of the madrasa complex that she dedicated in 1447 and that was destroyed in a British raid in 1883, demonstrates the visual and cultural importance of funerary structures.

A more direct architectural comparison might, however, be drawn between the Timur Shah Mausoleum in Kabul and the mausoleum that Timur Shah built for his own father, Ahmad Shah Durrani, in Kandahar. Similar in plan and section, the elaborate internal stucco and painted decoration of Ahmad Shah's mausoleum gives an idea of the possible intentions of Zaman Shah for his father's mausoleum, had it been completed as planned. Further stylistic similarities exist in the mausoleum that Nader Shah built near Kandahar in the early 20th century over the grave of Mirwais Hotak, who declared Kandahar's independence from Persian rule in 1709. The style of the facing brick elevations and the decorated parapets on Timur Shah's mausoleum suggest that alterations were made to the monument in Kabul around this time.

The Architecture of Timur Shah's Mausoleum

The mausoleum in its current state comprises an octagonal structure with two intersecting cross-axes organised on six distinct levels, and built of fired brick. Following Iranian and Central Asian traditions, it features an outer dome constructed on a high drum above a ribbed inner dome.

The underground crypt of the mausoleum is where Timur Shah is buried. Accessible through a low brick-vaulted corridor leading from the south, the crypt is dominated by four massive brick piers, between which span shallow arches and domes, supporting the main floor of the central space. On all sides of the crypt are deep recesses, from which ventilation ducts lead up to the main external *iwans* on the level above. At the centre of the raised ground floor of the mausoleum is a square central space, surrounded by a brick masonry structure with an octagonal plan on its exterior. This structure has four deep, double-height *iwans* on both the inside and outside of the main elevations, and a series of smaller openings in the secondary facades, with eight rooms and four staircases set into the corners of the massive brick masonry. The floor of this level is about two metres above ground, with a continuous marble string-course below elevations of fired facing bricks.

Narrow brick stairs lead up from the four secondary external niches to the first floor of the mausoleum, housing 16 brick-vaulted spaces of varying sizes, encircling the central space. The smaller rooms lie at the main axes of the building, and give onto both the external double-height *iwans* and internal niches, while the larger spaces only face to the outside.

Three of the four original flights of stairs now lead up to a second floor, comprising a flat roof around the 16-sided drum supporting the domes. The brick masonry of this drum has four arched openings on the main elevations of the mausoleum and four blind arches in the internal corners, which form the transition between the square central chamber and the springing of the inner ribbed dome. The zone between the springing of the lower and upper domes is made up of a cylindrical upper drum of masonry that is more than a metre thick. Access to the upper surface of the lower dome, which is made up of a series of vaults between structural brick ribs, is by means of a single arched opening to the south.

The upper dome rises from the cylindrical drum, where a number of horizontal timber ties were found within the brick masonry. With clear evidence of extensive repair, the dome's structure is of varying thickness, narrowing towards the apex. A structure of timber joists had been erected over the upper dome, supporting a sheeted iron roof, which was in a poor state of repair.

Technical Approaches in Conservation of the Mausoleum

The mausoleum was in a poor state of repair when surveys were carred out in the spring of 2002. Part of the upper brick dome had collapsed, due primarily to war-related damage and lack of maintenance. Rainwater had penetrated parts of the drum of the upper-dome, where several small trees had taken root in the brick masonry. The flat roof around the lower drum was also in a poor condition, and ingress of rainwater had damaged the masonry vaults below. Accumulation of earth and waste in and around the base of the building had contributed to rising damp from the poorly-drained site. A complete survey was only possible after clearance of accumulated waste, and the re-location of more than a dozen of the container-shops that had occupied the site, abutting the monument.

One of the first issues to be addressed in the conservation of the mausoleum was the necessary repair of the upper brick dome, whose partial collapse was affecting the structural integrity of the entire building. Initial structural assessments undertaken in the autumn of 2002 confirmed that the damaged section of the dome could indeed be re-built. It appeared that the dome had been constructed in stages, using "skins" of brick masonry laid in relatively weak lime mortar, which had subsequently been repaired in parts. In order to plan for conservation of the dome, it was necessary to establish how the force from these layers of brickwork was transmitted to the supporting drum, which was cracked in a number of places.

The removal of the damaged roof sheeting and timber structure, as well as the mud plaster laid as part of efforts to waterproof the structure, allowed for the detailed inspection and measurement of the upper surface of the dome. This exercise confirmed that the dome had been built over a period of time, and that the masons seemed to have had difficulty completing it, as it weathered and deflected, distorting its geometry. In order to access the damaged masonry, a bamboo platform was erected over the lower dome, using apertures that had been left in the inner face of the drum at the time of the original construction. Traces were found of two timber ring-ties, virtually destroyed by dry rot, laid within the brick masonry of the drum. In order to maintain the stability of the undamaged brick masonry, two temporary belts were installed and tensioned around the outside of the drum. A reinforced concrete beam was then poured

(at a height of 15.5 metres above ground) on the inside ledge of the drum, and anchored into the brick masonry with 48 stainless steel anchors, tensioned to 20 tons.

Based on an analysis of the structure, it was decided to remove the unstable edges of the damaged section of the upper dome and part of the masonry drum, and re-build these in a manner that as closely as possible matched the original. Newly made bricks of the same size (20 x 20 x 3.5cm) as the originals and fired to a relatively low temperature (in order to match the strength of the surviving masonry) were laid in lime mortar prepared with putty from local sources that had been slaked for eight weeks. The geometry of the new section also needed to match the existing masonry, which comprised of six layers of brickwork at the springing, reducing to two at the apex. The repairs were further complicated by the fact that ring forces on which such structural membranes would normally rely on for equilibrium could not be transferred between old and new brick masonry. Experienced masons from Herat were engaged to undertake the repairs, and were made familiar with the distorted geometry and unusual characteristics of the original masonry, in order to ensure a good match.

The damaged sections of the masonry were closed at the end of October 2003, after which the exposed dome was temporarily covered for the winter. Upon inspection in the spring of 2004, joints around those bricks that had loosened due to shrinkage were again filled with lime mortar.

Given that the metal sheet roof and its supporting timber structure that had been removed from the damaged dome were not part of the original scheme, a range of alternatives were considered for the final covering, which also needed to provide an appropriate external profile. Although the team considered the construction of an upper covering dome, as exists in other mausoleums, this would have significantly increased the weight of the structure, whose performance in future earthquakes would be difficult to predict.

In order to determine an appropriate profile for the final covering, a harmonic curve was identified to match the geometry and proportions of the structure below. This geometry formed the basis for the fabrication of composite timber rafters that support a new “shell” roof, which effectively spans over the repaired dome and transfers horizontal forces only to the newly reinforced masonry at the top of the drum. A series of concrete up-stands were constructed on the upper surface of the dome in order to provide a level base for positioning a total of 32 timber rafters of varying lengths, supporting the shell roof. The tensioning belts that had been used around the drum during the dome repairs were re-positioned around three of the up-stands, to ensure compression between the old and new sections of brick masonry on the upper dome.

The design and fabrication of this lightweight structure was subject to a degree of trial and error, as it was necessary to explore the potential of locally-available materials and fixings. The rafters themselves were built of Russian pine boards laid at right angles, screwed and glued, with attached timber webs. All rafters, the largest of which measures some 13 meters in length, were hoisted by hand to the top of the building, as no crane with adequate reach was available in Kabul at that time. Once aligned and fixed in place, timber boarding was screwed in a circumferential pattern over the rafters, as a base for the fixing of galvanized sheeting.

A batten seam system of galvanised iron sheeting, which was familiar to local craftsmen, formed the final weatherproof covering of the dome. The lower edge of the shell roof was extended below the base of the rafters by means of timber boards that were bent, glued and screwed to the required radius, and fixed back to the drum masonry. This enabled protection of the drum masonry, while providing for ventilation around the entire lower edge of the roof.

In parallel with repairs to the main dome, earth was removed from the flat section of the mausoleum roof, and the two masonry vaults that had begun to collapse as a result of moisture penetration were propped and repaired. The spaces between the vaults were re-filled with crushed bricks, stabilized with cement slurry, over which a layer of lime concrete topped with waterproof isolation was laid before finishing with brick paviors laid to falls. The existing internal downpipes were repaired and lined with PVC pipe, leading under the new platform to the garden. The decorative brick finials that had been subsequently added to the building were repaired, and a new parapet built of brick masonry, replacing damaged concrete elements that were added in the 1960s.

The elevations of the lower section of the mausoleum had at some stage been finished with facing bricks, which were replaced where necessary. While the reveals of several of the external *iwans* retained traces of gypsum plaster, it was decided to remove this in order to expose the high quality brickwork, which was re-pointed in places.

In order to protect the damaged lower sections of masonry, and to facilitate public access, an octagonal brick platform was built extending some seven metres around the mausoleum, with stairs or ramps introduced on four sides, including the entrance to the vault leading to the crypt on the eastern elevation.

In recognition of the unfinished state of the interior of the mausoleum, repairs were restricted to conservation of the single small dome that showed traces of plastering, re-pointing of the soffits of masonry domes and vaults, and the brushing of accumulated dust from the wall surfaces. Internal floors were re-surfaced with brick paviors of similar dimensions to the originals.

Although there were traces of fixings for frames in only a few external openings, glass doors and windows were designed, manufactured from hardwood and fitted throughout the mausoleum, in order to render the building more useable. In addition, a network of electrical conduits was laid throughout beneath the new floor finish, on which switches and sockets were installed internally.

Area Development Initiatives around Timur Shah

In a context where public or private investment in the rehabilitation of war-damaged property or the upgrading of basic services is limited, where pressure on city-centre land

is intense, and a coherent vision for urban development in Kabul has not yet emerged, the conservation of such a landmark monument must be matched by physical rehabilitation and socio-economic development initiatives addressing the wider urban context.

Today, the mausoleum stands in an environment that leaves no traces of the *Chaharbagh* in which it was originally built. The residential quarters that encroached on the south-western end of the garden around the mausoleum have in turn fallen into disrepair, and are now largely used for small-scale manufacturing and commercial storage. Despite being earmarked in the 1964 Master Plan for comprehensive redevelopment, access is still through a network of narrow alleys and streets, which present very real problems for the commercial activities that now predominate in the area. The prevailing ban on all new construction has not deterred owners from erecting large corrugated iron roofs over their property, before tearing down the existing buildings and, in some cases, constructing new premises beneath them.

In order to better understand the process of transformation that was taking place in the Timur Shah area, a series of physical surveys and consultations were undertaken during 2003. This exercise also enabled the AKTC team to identify key issues that needed to be addressed as part of planning for revitalization of the area. Although the results of this diagnostic process were made available to counterparts, it proved difficult to gain acceptance for a locally-based, participatory approach from civil servants who had only ever dealt with centralized processes of "master-planning".

While revealing the pace of transformations, physical surveys have also enabled the identification of buildings that merit immediate safeguarding, in the light of widespread illegal development. Having assessed a range of options, support was provided for repairs to the distinctive domed roof of the Andarabi community mosque, located directly across the Kabul River from the Mausoleum. Along with the Shah do Shamshara Mosque to the north of the Kabul River, the Andarabi mosque forms part of the architectural ensemble that



An exhibition of new Calligraphy held in the main space of the Mausoleum, 2013 © Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC)

was constructed along both banks of the river in the early 20th century, but which suffered damage during the recent conflict.

This double-storey range of buildings, with workshops over shops on the street level, is an important vestige of the introduction of western concepts of urbanism to Kabul. In recognition of this, the entire frontage was surveyed, damage assessed and the ownership of the various shops and workshops registered during 2004. Support was provided in 2005 for the repair of one of the central bays, both as demonstration of the potential of the buildings and as a deterrent to municipal planners, whose proposals for widening of the street envisaged wholesale demolition of the historic frontage.

It is not only the historic buildings of the area, however, that are at risk. The park around the mausoleum had gradually been occupied by cloth-sellers and tailors, some 200 of whom had set up informal businesses in containers and stalls on the site. Consultations were held with these informal traders during the conservation work, which initially required the re-location of containers and stalls that abutted the mausoleum. Although the occupation of public open space is illegal, most of shopkeepers enjoyed tacit protection of municipal staff and the local police.

In recognition of the contribution that such informal commercial activities make to the urban economy, surveys were conducted to assess the options for enhancing the livelihoods of this community, either through re-location or some form of appropriate development. During these surveys, it emerged that the entire block to the east of the mausoleum is owned by various ministries, and that (apart from the Ayesha Durrani school) most of the property is in fact derelict. This led to a proposal for consolidation of ownership of this commercially valuable land, to enable comprehensive redevelopment of the area, including construction of low-rise, high-density commercial premises and improvements in services and access. While the response to this proposal, which envisaged a public-private partnership, was generally positive, no action was taken by the government to assess the status of their property or to realize the scheme.

As part of this redevelopment proposal, a design for reclaiming the Timur Shah Park was prepared, framing the park with lines of new commercial premises, which, it was proposed, could house a proportion of the existing small-scale businesses, along with others, on the site. Comprising two arcades of shops, inspired in part by the traditional covered bazaars that existed in the Old City, this proposal was initially accepted by the municipality who would in time derive an additional income from leases in the new premises. Following protracted negotiations about management of the development, the Mayor resolved that no construction should take place on an area designated as a park, which he proposed instead should be entirely reclaimed as a public green space. To this end, municipal staff removed 400 containers and stalls from the park area in autumn 2005.

In response to this reclamation of the public park around the Timur Shah mausoleum, whose frontage to the Kabul River was again visible, a landscaping programme was initiated in late 2005. This began with the clearance of significant amounts of waste, followed by extensive levelling and re-planting, principally with mulberry trees. Although the extent of the new park is but a fraction of the original "*Chaharbagh*" that once surrounded the mausoleum, reference has been made to historic photographs of the site. A network of stone pathways are being laid to follow the important north-south pedestrian route between the banks of the Kabul river and the busy commercial area of Mandawi behind. In order to protect from future encroachments, and ensure a degree of tranquillity in this busy city-centre environment, a brick masonry wall has been constructed around the perimeter of the park, which was re-opened to the public in the summer of 2007.

The restored mausoleum of Timur Shah and reclamation of the surrounding park are the physical outcomes of a protracted process of analysis and exploration, negotiation and action, from which important lessons have been learned for AKTC's work elsewhere in Kabul, and in the Old City of Herat. Despite the challenging physical and institutional environment in which the works were undertaken, the project stands an example of how an important historic monument can act as a fulcrum for a wider process of regeneration in a fast-changing urban setting. The conservation project generated 105,000 work-days of employment, providing valuable training and employment experience for a new generation of craftsmen and Afghan professionals.

This complex was inaugurated by President Hamid Karzai and His Highness the Aga Khan in October 2012. The Timur Shah Mausoleum and its surrounding landscape are registered Historic Monuments. A memorandum of understanding signed between the Ministry of Information and Culture and the Aga Khan Trust for Culture will enable the complex to be maintained and operated in the future, ensuring the best scenario for its sustainability through the use of the site for appropriate cultural and social functions.

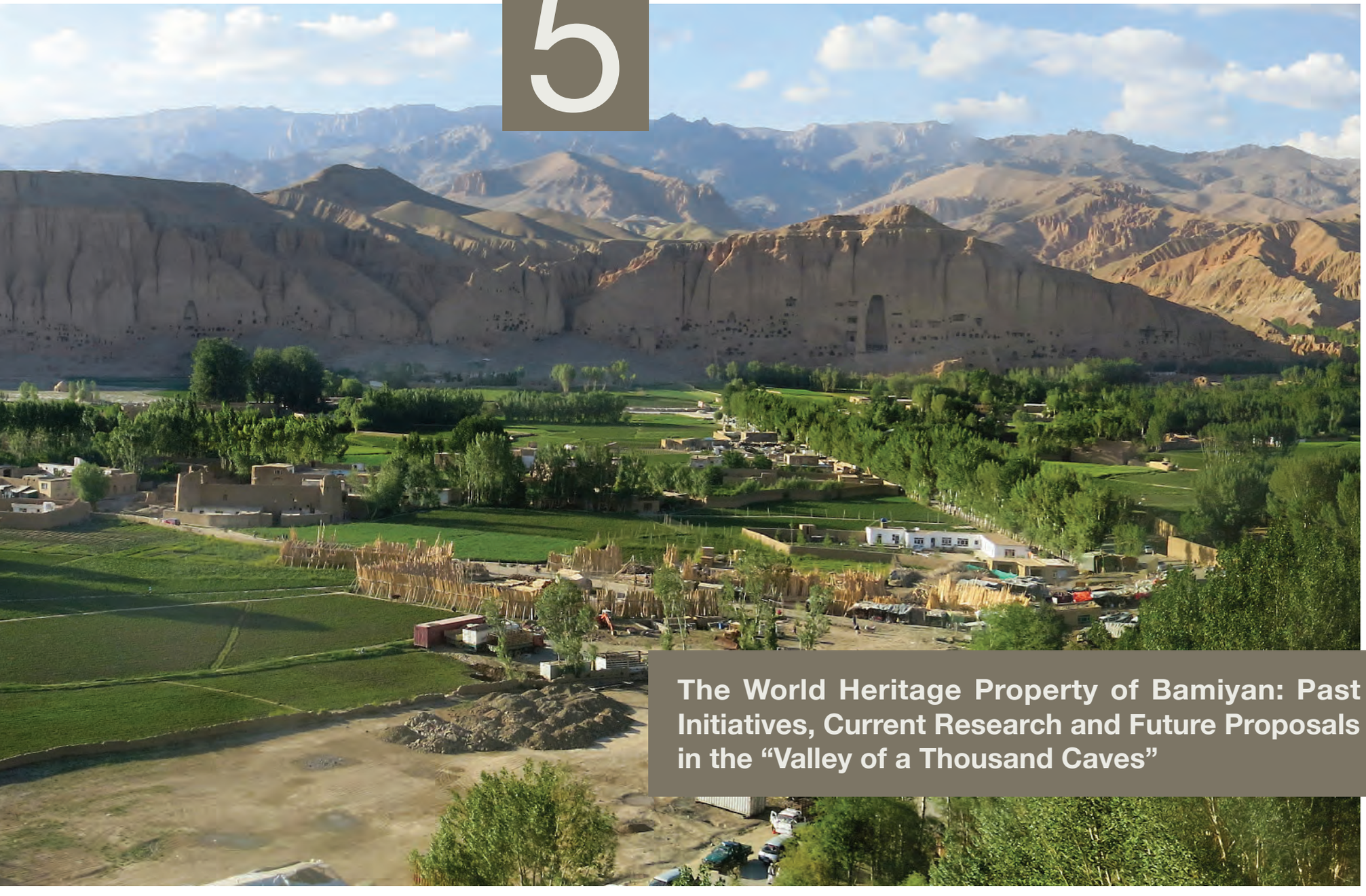


Timur Shah Mausoleum after restoration, Photo by Simon Norfolk, 2013 © Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC)



The view of Buddah cliff from the Bamiyan Cultural Center site © UNESCO/Koukaba Mojadidi

5



The World Heritage Property of Bamiyan: Past Initiatives, Current Research and Future Proposals in the “Valley of a Thousand Caves”

Safeguarding the Buddha Statues in Bamiyan and the Sustainable Protection of Afghan Cultural Heritage

Mounir Bouchenaki

Director of the Arab regional Centre for World Heritage and Special Advisor to the UNESCO Director-General

More than ten years have passed since the destruction of the Buddhas of Bamiyan, in Afghanistan. I would like to present the actions undertaken by UNESCO, at the time, to attempt to save these exceptional statues. Afghanistan, situated at the crossroads of the historic silk roads and celebrated for its unique cultural heritage, reflects a past marked by the multiple influences of Persia, Greece, Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam.

Among its numerous treasures, it includes the monumental Buddhas sculpted in the cliffs of Bamiyan, probably during the 5th century A.D. Sadly, the cultural heritage of Afghanistan has suffered cruelly from the conflicts and disasters that have wrought the country for more than a quarter of century. The irreplaceable collections of the Kabul Museum, as well as numerous historical and archaeological sites, have been the victim of pillage and vandalism. But the most dramatic destruction was the one decided by the chief of the Taliban, Mullah Omar, on 26 February 2001.

At the time, UNESCO received news through a telephone call from the Ambassador of Greece to Pakistan, then on mission to Afghanistan in order to meet with the Taliban government. I was accompanying the former UNESCO Director-General, Mr. Koïchiro Matsuura, on an official visit to Algeria, when I received a call from my colleague Ms. Lyndel Prott, Director of the Division of Cultural Heritage. She informed me of the message from the Greek Ambassador, which I immediately relayed to the Director-General.

During the return flight from Algiers to Paris, Mr. Matsuura asked me to deal with the issue and to propose rapidly a strategy for response. It was not the first time that the Afghan Taliban authorities had issued such menaces. The threat had been raised in 1998, and UNESCO, through its preceding Director-General, Federico Mayor, had called for respect of this millennial heritage. At that time, a Taliban commander had already attacked the head of the smaller Buddha and placed explosives at the base of the niches housing both Buddhas.

In July 1999, Mullah Omar issued a decree for the protection of the Buddhas. According to a journalist with the Guardian, Mullah Omar noted “that there are no more Buddhists in Afghanistan and that statues could be an example of a potential major source of income for the nation, from international visitors” (Luke Harding, The Guardian, 3 March 2001). On his return to Paris, the UNESCO Director-General, Koïchiro Matsuura, termed the new decision to destroy the Afghanistan statues a “true cultural disaster” and demanded that the Afghans instantly halt the destruction of this invaluable heritage.

He specifically stated: “To blindly destroy the statues will not alter history, only deprive the future Afghanistan of one of its riches. I ask that all those concerned, and the highest leader of the Afghans themselves, to immediately take all measures for the protection of this unique cultural heritage. The loss of any Afghan statues, and particularly the Buddhas of Bamiyan, would be a loss for all humanity”.

He added that “the authors of such an irredeemable act would bear a heavy historic responsibility to the Afghan



Buddha cliff at sunrise © Muzafar Ali

people" and concluded that "it is not in this kind of action that they will gain credibility in public opinion or in the international community".

On March 1st, the Director-General organized a number of meetings with the Permanent Delegates to UNESCO, particularly those from the Asian countries, where Buddhist communities were shocked by this news from Afghanistan, and those representing the Islamic countries. These meetings took place under added tension because the Taliban had chosen to announce their decision one week before Aïd-el-Kébir (also called Aïd el Adha), one of the most important Islamic religious festivals, commemorating the Sacrifice of Abraham. This meant that most Islamic nations were already occupied with vacation and that the pilgrimage to Mecca had begun for Saudi Arabia. Such timing with respect to the religious calendar would continue to create difficulties in the contacts between the UNESCO Secretariat and a number of authorities in the Islamic world.

Mr. Koïchiro Matsuura then formed a crisis unit at his cabinet level, gathering Ms. Françoise Rivière, Chief of Cabinet, Mr. Ahmed Sayyad, Assistant Director-General for External Relations, Mr. Francesco Bandarin, Director of the World Heritage Centre, and myself, as Assistant Director-General for Culture. The Director-General appointed me as the coordinator of the actions to respond to the order for the destruction of the Bamiyan statues.

On March 1st, I contacted the former French Ambassador to Pakistan, Mr. Pierre Lafrance, who knew Afghanistan well and spoke one of the languages of this country. He immediately accepted the proposal by the Director-General to act as his Special Envoy to Afghanistan.

In less than twenty-four hours, thanks to the support of the Minister of Foreign Affairs for France and the Minister of the Interior for Pakistan, Mr. Lafrance arrived in Kandahar, where most of the members of the Taliban government were gathered. The President of the French Republic, Jacques Chirac, sent a letter of congratulations to the Director-General of UNESCO for having chosen Ambassador Pierre Lafrance for such a delicate mission.

On March 2nd, 2001, at the opening of the International Colloquium on Central Asian Heritage, which by chance took place at UNESCO Headquarters at this time of crisis on Afghanistan, Mr. Matsuura declared "I have chosen a person who is well known and respected in the region, with great knowledge of issues in the Middle East and Central Asia." At the same colloquium, the Director-General was able to provide an update on the initiatives that had already been taken to "reverse the absurd direction that the Kabul authorities have initiated."

Within the Secretariat for the UNESCO Culture Sector, I formed a working group composed of Ms. Paola Leoncini-Bartoli, Chief of the Executive Office for the Assistant Director-General for Culture, and Mr. Christian Manhart, Progamme Specialist, who assisted me in contacts with the various Permanent Delegations and principal non-governmental organizations specialised in safeguarding cultural heritage (ICOMOS and ICOM), as well as with the Society for Protection of Afghanistan's Cultural Heritage (SPACH).

I would like to stress that this was a true race against time to respond as effectively as possible to the decision for the destruction of the Bamiyan Buddhas, before the day of Aïd el Adha, which was fixed on March 8th.

During a meeting with the media on March 6th, 2001, we listed the activities for the safeguarding of Afghan heritage that had been led or supported by UNESCO over recent years and discussed the possibility of creation of a special assistance fund for Afghan monuments. In that occasion, I insisted on the fact that the Taliban decision had encountered unanimous condemnation in all parts of the world, including both the nations with a notable Buddhist community and the Islamic nations, and that the latter had indicated that there was no serious religious argument that could serve as a basis for such an iconoclastic gest one. With the authority and support of the UNESCO Director-General, a series of actions were undertaken to mobilize political and religious personalities that could influence the Taliban. Thus, the Arab Group at UNESCO issued, at the outset of the crisis, a release calling for "international mobilization for concrete actions to end this unprecedented gesture, which concerns invaluable treasures of universal value".

I would like to note that Ambassador Pierre Lafrance had telephoned from Kandahar to inform me that, in spite of his meeting with the Minister of Culture and the Minister of Religious Affairs of the Taliban government, the decision to destroy the Buddhas was completely related to religious interpretations and that he was thus not an appropriate intervener. However, he continued his mission as the Special Envoy of the UNESCO Director-General by travelling to Saudi Arabia, a country which might have some influence concerning the Taliban behaviour, then returning to Paris to report to the Director-General.

With the support of the Arab and Muslim Ambassadors to UNESCO (particularly Iran, Morocco, Qatar, Syria), I succeeded in discussing the facts with important Islamic religious authorities, who would then go on to express a point of view contrary to that of the Afghan Taliban. I would like to note, and express my own sincere thanks, for the important role played by the Ambassadors of those countries who worked devotedly alongside UNESCO in these efforts.

H. E. Ms Aziza Bennani, Ambassador of Morocco to UNESCO, facilitated my contacts with the Secretary General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, Dr. Abdelhouahed Belakziz. H. E. Mr. Ahmed Jalali, Ambassador of Iran to UNESCO, as an expert of philosophy and Islamic thought, provided me with important bibliographic references, and in particular a text of a scholar of the XII century, called Al Biruni, who visited Bamiyan. H. E. Mr. Ali Zainal, Ambassador of Qatar to UNESCO, facilitated the contacts with Qatari Authorities arranging very rapidly a special flight to Afghanistan. H. E. the late Mr. Amine Esber, Ambassador of Syria to UNESCO, provided me with an invaluable assistance in organizing the meeting of experts in Islamic Law that

was then held in Doha in December 2001. Thanks to such support, I was able to contact Sheikh Youssef Kardaoui, in Doha (Qatar), one of the most respected presently living religious personages of the Arab world, and to persuade him to travel to Afghanistan.

Sheikh Youssef Kardaoui stated: “The statues made by the elders who came before Islam are part of a historic patrimony. When the Muslims penetrated Afghanistan, in the first century of Hijra, these statues were already there, and they were not destroyed. I advised our brothers of the Taliban movement to reconsider their decision in light of “the danger of its negative impact”.

For his part, Sabri Abdel-Raouf, Chief of the Division of Islamic Studies at Al-Azhar University (Cairo), stated that “statues intended for worship can be forbidden as contrary to Islam but statues that are not worshipped are not forbidden”.

Through intercession by Mr. Mufid Shihab, then Minister of Higher Education of Egypt, and President of the Egyptian National Commission for UNESCO, whom I implored, as a friend, to help towards a solution for the crisis, the UNESCO Director-General was able to speak by telephone with President Hosni Mubarak, who immediately accepted to facilitate the mission of a delegation of Egyptian religious authorities to Kandahar, on 8 March 2001, in order to persuade the Taliban authorities over their concerns for errors in interpreting Islamic law. I was present during this conversation in proposing “Sheikh Al Azhar”, the Rector of the oldest Islamic University in Cairo. I wish to quote President Hosni Mubarak, who replied: “Mr. Director-General, not only Sheikh Al Azhar, but also Mufti Masr would go to change the mind of the Taliban!”

With the further invaluable assistance of the Ambassador of Qatar, a religious delegation of fifteen personalities was formed, and was able to go to Afghanistan. It was headed by Dr Nasr Farid Wassel, Mufti of Egypt, and included: the Deputy Secretary General for Political Affairs of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference, Ibrahim Baker; Sheikh Youssef al-Qaradaoui, of Doha; Sheikh Mohamed al Raoui, Ulema (scholar) of the Al Azhar University; the well-known Islamic writer, Fahmi al-Hoaydi, and other specialists in Sharia (Islamic law).

This delegation was able to meet with the Taliban Minister of Religious Affairs and the Afghan Minister of Foreign Affairs, travelling by means of an aircraft provided to UNESCO by H.E. the Emir of Qatar, Hamad Bin Khalifa Al Thani. But the delegation was unable to meet Mullah Omar, nor to convince the religious authorities to renounce the application of the decree for the demolition, and the two Buddhas were destroyed between 9 and 11 March 2001, at the close of the festival of Aid el Adha.

In my effort to reach the Head of the Taliban regime in order to reverse his order, I had been given the name of an Egyptian colleague who was a civil servant of the World Health Organization and among the very few persons having approached Mullah Omar. After contacting him by phone and explaining the gravity of the situation, he kindly agreed to write a letter in Arabic to Mollah Omar and made sure it would reach him. In this letter he was trying to convince the Taliban leader that such a behavior against the cultural heritage of his own country cannot be justified by the religion. We have a copy of this letter in the UNESCO Archives.

Furthermore, I should note that I had established contact with Ms Atya Inayatullah, former Chairperson of the UNESCO Executive Board and then Minister of Social Affairs of Pakistan, with whom I raised the possibility of an intervention by President Pervez Musharaf. She had answered that, unfortunately, he was not in Islamabad and was actually in pilgrimage to Mecca. She also went to Kandahar with the Minister of Interior of Pakistan, in a last attempt to convince the Taliban. Unfortunately, even this ultimate mission failed. In conflict and post-conflict situations, heritage is the object of contradictory tensions between “sanctions” and “reconciliation”. The 17 October 2003 “Declaration concerning the intentional destruction of cultural heritage” of the two Buddhas reinforced a strong body of two pre-existing conventions



Consolidation of the Western Buddha
© UNESCO/Bert Praxenthaler

and two protocols that establish judicial requirements for protection of cultural heritage. The preparation of this Declaration during the years 2002-2003 was one of the first decisions from UNESCO after having failed to stop the destruction of the two giant Buddhas of the Bamiyan Valley.

The experience gained by UNESCO through events in Cambodia, southeast Europe, Afghanistan, Iraq, the Middle East and Timor-Leste leads to hope that a programme can be put into place for the preservation of cultural heritage, with corresponding objectives of reconstruction on one hand and dialogue and reconciliation on the other.

To respond to the numerous questions that UNESCO received after the destruction of the Bamiyan Buddhas, to end the false interpretations of Islamic law concerning cultural heritage and also to prevent such an act in the future, a conference of specialists in Islamic law was organized in Doha (Qatar), from 29 to 31 December 2001, on the occasion of the regular meeting of the Ministers of Culture of the Islamic World.

We started the preparation of this Conference immediately after what was qualified as a "crime against culture", from 15th of March onwards. Contacts were made with the most renowned specialists in Islamic Law (Sharia) from the different religious schools (Sunna and Shia) and from Morocco, in the western Islamic World, up to Kazakhstan, in its Eastern part. Several studies were presented on one item proposed for the Agenda of the Conference: Islam and Cultural Heritage.

The Doha Conference of "Ulama on Islam and Cultural Heritage" was chaired by His Highness Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, Emir of the State of Qatar, and organized by the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO), the Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (ALECSO) and by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). It was inaugurated by three Directors-General: Mr. Koïchiro Matsuura, Mr. Abdulaziz Othman Altwaijri and Mr Mongi Bousnina. It needs to be noted that the Conference was attended by twenty-seven professors and experts in Islamic Law from twenty-five countries. A delegation from Afghanistan, led by Professor Sibghat–Ullah Mojededdi, former President of Afghanistan, also participated. It also gave rise to the "Declaration of Doha", widely disseminated in the Islamic countries. The Proceedings of this Conference have been published in Arabic and English in April 2005.

In conclusion, I would like to underline that cultural heritage is increasingly perceived as a priority during post-conflict reconstruction. "The biggest challenge that UNESCO is facing" said its Director-General Koïchiro Matsuura "is to make the public authorities, the private sector, and civil society as a whole realize that cultural heritage is not only an instrument for peace and reconciliation but also a factor of development". This message dates to 2002, on the occasion of the Year of the United Nations for Cultural Heritage. Ten years later, such a statement remains a critical point of reference.

Increasingly, conflicts target symbols of culture in order to destroy the identity of a people. This destruction can often lead the international community to react. In the wake of the destruction of cultural heritage during World War II, the international community responded with the 1954 Hague Convention. Since then, the nature of warfare has changed, with conflict becoming less a matter of external belligerents and more one of internal conflict.

During these internal conflicts, warring parties often specifically target cultural heritage. The Second Protocol to the 1954 Hague Convention, dated 1999, was written to address the changing nature of conflicts, and the international community must continue to identify proper mechanisms to respond to the growing demand for the preservation of heritage badly damaged during such conflicts.



The cliff showing seated Buddha during winter © UNESCO/Ghulam Reza Mohammadi

Preserving the Fragments of the Buddha's of Bamiyan and their Future Presentation

Michael Petzet

Former president of ICOMOS International (1999-2008)

Since our first missions to Afghanistan in 2002, the role of ICOMOS Germany in the preservation of the cultural heritage of this country has been significant. In ten years, the German Foreign Office has provided ICOMOS Germany with approximately one million euros for the documentation and securing of monuments and sites in the Bamiyan Valley.

It was only in 2004, when the most endangered parts of the niches once containing the gigantic Buddha statues had been consolidated by an Italian team under the guidance of Claudio Margottini, and the back walls had been secured against rock fall by means of a steel wire mesh, that the recovery of the fragments from approximately 2000 cubic metres of rubble could begin. The giant feet of the Great Buddha (Western Buddha) were made visible again, the blocked caves in the backward part of both niches were made accessible and the blown-up partition walls in the caves of the Small Buddha (Eastern Buddha) were reconstructed. Furthermore, thousands of plaster fragments from the surfaces of both statues were recovered; from the scientific investigation of these and other remains a wealth of scientific insights was gained, helping to date the statues to the period between the mid-6th and the early 7th centuries AD. Finally, unexpected and sensational relics were found by our restorers Edmund Melzl and Bert Praxenthaler.

In 2010, ICOMOS Germany could continue the work in Bamiyan thanks to a contract established with UNESCO within the framework of Phase III of the Japan Funds-in-Trust project "Safeguarding the Cultural Landscape and Archaeological Remains of the Bamiyan Valley": the stabilisation and conservation measures on the back wall of the Eastern Buddha were largely completed at the end of July 2010. The renewal of the shelters for the Western Buddha fragments was carried out and the extensive stabilisation of the path leading up and down the niche, including the very difficult task of safeguarding the upper crossing, were also completed.

In 2012, after some minor repairs on the back wall of the Eastern Buddha niche, we succeeded in dismantling our scaffold (generously provided by the Messerschmitt Foundation). This represented a decisive step as well as a crucial precondition for setting up the first section of the planned "site museum" in caves I-V. This strategy is based upon the recommendation of the 8th Bamiyan Working Group that as a part of a "site interpretation area, some of the recovered fragments could be displayed together with written and photographic explanations in a sort of open-"air lapidarium". To this purpose, the interiors of caves I-V have been repaired and new doors and furnishings for the presentation of the selected fragments have been provided.

Apart from continuing and improving the documentation of all the rock fragments of the Eastern Buddha, temporarily stored at different sites and protected against rain, by using 3D scans and a computer-aided classification which will enable a virtual return and positioning of the fragments on the 3D model of RWTH Aachen, the most urgent concern is represented by the conservation of up to 300 stone fragments with traces of original treatment on their sculpted surfaces. The new and successfully tested procedure for stabilising these fragments by total impregnation with silica acid ester (KSE) was presented by Prof. Emmerling during the 8th Expert Working Group meeting in Munich. Furthermore, a priority matter at the Eastern Buddha seems to be represented by the adoption of measures concerning



The view of Buddha cliff, Bamiyan © Latif Azimi

the site security: after the dismantling of the scaffold, the lower gallery in front of caves 2 - 4 could be protected by a horizontal cover against particles that might fall down, following the front line of the former relief. Finally, it would be useful to reflect upon the construction of a permanent crane, which in the future would facilitate the accessibility of the consolidated rear wall for maintenance and control work.

The conservation works at the Western Buddha, which cannot be continued without considerable additional funds, are also a most urgent priority. In fact, behind the uncovered feet of the statue and in front of the entrances to the lower caves, the risk of stone fall from the not-yet treated rear wall has increased. As a first step, loose stone material should be removed by climbers abseiling from the top of the cliff – as long as this material is of no relevance for the original surface of the statue, largely lost at the Western Buddha (only on the right side a fold of the cloak of Buddha has been preserved) and traces of the silhouette with the shoulders would need



Conservation work at the eastern Buddha, 2009/10, drilling the holes for the anchors © UNESCO/Bert Praxenthaler

special attention. The clearing of the back wall should be combined with an improved survey of the damages. Especially in the lower part of the back wall, where the statue was severely damaged during previous centuries, large areas are loose and unstable and need to be consolidated. At the entrances to the lower caves some stone surfaces are loose and extremely fragile. Inside the caves, consolidation works on the preserved clay plaster surfaces will also be necessary.

The upper parts of the rear wall of the Western Buddha niche seem to be more stable so that fewer problems are likely to come up – in contrast to the difficult consolidation works on the rear wall of the Eastern Buddha, where the number of anchors had to be more than double of what had originally been planned. Besides, on the rear wall of the Western Buddha, it will not be necessary to deal with the conservation of large surfaces with original treatment. The surroundings, including the upper access, are also much simpler than at the Eastern Buddha. And the lower caves at the Western Buddha are in a comparatively good state: they only need to be repaired and conserved (thus presenting the ideal conditions for completing the “site museum”, which is planned as a round tour of both Buddha niches).

An urgent task is also to continue the documentation of all rock fragments of the Western Buddha. About 350 fragments of the Western Buddha have been salvaged and stored in temporary shelters. A few rocks, weighing between 40 and 80 tons, could not yet be moved. They have been “uncovered” and encased on site. These shelters could at least for some time be used as “display depots” and part of the round tour of the “site museum”. Besides, in order to properly prepare the different options for a future use and preservation of the salvaged fragments of the Western Buddha, a 3D documentation of all parts will be necessary. Only through such a systematic inventory of all parts with regard to their volume, surface texture and state of conservation, we will have an overview where certain fragments originally come from and what kind of conservation method will be appropriate. Documentations so far have been carried out photographically or by drawings. For the 3D documentation, all fragments will have to be taken out of the present shelters, scanned and stored carefully again. On the whole, the enormous mass of stone material from the Western Buddha statue is considerably more stable and solid in comparison to the much smaller amount of extremely fragile fragments belonging to the Eastern Buddha. Consequently, one may assume that, as long as they are protected against rain and snow, the disintegration into sand and the loss of all traces of original surface has been averted.

Until now, following the request by the Bamiyan Working Group, only urgent short-term measures have been implemented, namely those measures deemed indispensable for safeguarding the historic fabric, the rock niches and the recovered fragments of the Buddhas – which represent requirements for long-term solutions considering the presentation of the remains of

the two Buddha statues, including their possible partial "anastylosis". The method of "anastylosis", developed in the field of classical archaeology but also applicable to partially destroyed monuments of later epochs, is referred to in article VI of the Athens Charter (1931) and in article 15 of the Venice Charter: "Only anastylosis, that is to say, the reassembling of existing but dismembered parts can be permitted. The material used for integration should always be recognisable and its use should be the least that will ensure the conservation of a monument and the reinstatement of its form". This implies that, in order to be able to show original fragments on their original location and in their original context as part of an anastylosis, there is a need for more or less extensive provisional structures. The limits of anastylosis are reached when the original fragments are too sparse and would appear as a sort of "decoration" on the provisional structure. Anastylosis, an approach which can indeed help to protect original material in certain circumstances, also illustrates the special role of the fragment in archaeological heritage preservation. However, in the particular case of the Bamiyan Buddhas, we are not dealing with the normal type of an anastylosis of buildings or parts of buildings made of stone blocks, as practiced at many archaeological sites around the world, but rather with a reassembly or re-composition of huge fragments formerly belonging to two gigantic sculptures.

In the case of the Bamiyan Buddha's, the re-use of salvaged stone fragments seems to be an obvious solution, also because, before the destruction in 2001, the statues had only been partly preserved due to losses in previous centuries. Consequently, today a total reconstruction of an "original" state unknown in important details (faces, arms, etc) seems out of the question. Furthermore, this is only a matter of complementing the stone material, step by step, with the preserved fragments. There is no intention of renewing the original surface with clay plaster, which has only been preserved in *situ* in small areas of the Eastern Buddha (e.g. on the right arm). There are no plans, either, for a reconstruction of the painted surfaces of the statues, so enthusiastically described around 630 AD in a report by the Chinese monk Xuanzang, which were repaired and repainted in later times. Investigating the plaster fragments of this type of reconstruction can be done on paper: although on the whole the roughly 9,000 plaster fragments salvaged from the rubble cannot be re-positioned, they will represent important documents for future research and could be displayed in a future museum.

Furthermore, Afghanistan is not a Buddhist country where such statues may be completed in the sense of an authentic religious use. These archaeological remains rather represent outstanding testimonies and historic witnesses to the past of Afghanistan. Even in their fragmentary condition, they can play an important role as tourism attractors in the framework of the famous Silk Road, whose Nomination for the World Heritage List is being prepared by China and several neighbouring countries in Central Asia. In this sense, the conservation concept for the statues has been discussed with representatives of the Afghan government and with UNESCO since the first meeting of the Bamiyan Expert Working Group in Munich 2002, and notably in the 2005 recommendation:

"The experts welcome that the Afghan authorities acknowledge the possibility of an anastylosis as one well-established method of proper relocation of the rock fragments to their original position. In 2008, the participants recommend for the long-term preservation of all fragments, a reversible step-by-step strategy reflecting the different location and the mass of existing material: the "Big Buddha" has a large amount of massive fragments (up to 70 t), the "Small Buddha" has original plaster surfaces and rock fragments *in situ* (right arm with robe, fragments of shoulders and head). The completed identification of all fragments can be considered as a first step. A second step would be the adequate semi-permanent storage of the documented material close to the Buddha niches, considering the possibilities of reassembling. Moreover: Consider further proposals for the technical possibilities of an anastylosis (refer to Article 15 of the Venice Charter) as a method of reassembling the fragments of the Buddha sculptures based on a re-evaluation of the specific, "concrete" conditions. Different possibilities of reassembling individual fragments should be considered and be discussed, etc." (2005, Bamiyan Expert Working Group)

To this effect, at least a partial re-use of the stone fragments now safely stored in special shelters is an appropriate solution, especially because the alternative of a museum presentation does not seem to make much sense, given the gigantic masses of material. The very flexible approach followed in the discussions of the Bamiyan Working Group has opened up possibilities of a different treatment, depending on the differing condition of both statues and of their stone material. Such an approach follows the step-by-step method and divides the work into sections on the basis of the funding available. In any case, it will not be a problem if all the dreams of a total resurrection of the Buddha's of Bamiyan, found in the international media, cannot be implemented here and now. Considering the disaster of 2001, one can actually be quite satisfied with having saved what could be saved – in the constant awareness that our efforts could open up chances for future generations to continue working to complete certain parts.

Reconstruction as a reaction to a disaster was a normal approach in former centuries and in "exceptional cases", in accordance with the Operational Guidelines for the implementation of the World Heritage Convention, reconstruction is acceptable if carried out on the basis of complete and detailed documentation on the original and to no extent on the conjecture. However, in the exceptional case of the Buddha's of Bamiyan, it is not a matter of a reconstruction or a partial reconstruction of a historic building; it is a reassembling of sculptures of huge dimensions, precious remains of unique works of art from the Gandhara era. With regard to the reassembling of thousands of fragments, one could refer to other world-famous works of art, such as the Terracotta Army of the First Chinese Emperor in Xi'an, smashed by rebels more than 2000 years ago; or the mosaic-like reassembly of

fragments of wall paintings by Cimabue and other artists in S. Francesco in Assisi, crushed into tiny pieces when the vaults came down during an earthquake. Another extraordinary example is the reassembly of the statues of Tell Halaaf (Syria) from the Max Oppenheim Collection, completely smashed into 27,000 fragments by bombs during the Second World War and recovered from the rubble. The reassembly in the Pergamon Museum of Berlin was achieved in nine years by a team of restorers.

Finally, I would like to quote the preface to the Bamiyan documentation by Dr. Habiba Sarabi, Governor of Bamiyan, mentioning raising hope among Afghans for rebuilding the Buddha's, (at least one of the statues), "by using the original remaining pieces and with external materials to exhibit it as one of the memorial monuments of the historic past and as witness to the cultural journey of glory and of painful suffering, including the destruction of the Buddhas".

The traces of the destruction by the Taliban in 2001 will certainly remain visible to visitors, but hopefully they will also be able to recognise the aura and traces of the past centuries, as well as the authentic spirit of the site, with the giant statues in the middle of an exceptional cultural landscape. For these reasons, the preservation of all fragments *in situ* has been a first important step, in accordance with article 6 of the ICOMOS Charter of Lausanne (1990): "The overall objective of archaeological heritage management should be the preservation of monuments and sites *in situ*, including proper long-term conservation and curation of all related records and collections etc. Any transfer of elements of the heritage to new locations represents a violation of the principle of preserving the heritage in its original context".

The smaller fragments, some of which could be shown in the caves of the future "site museum", and the mass of fragments only temporarily stored in shelters could be used step by step *in situ* for a "reassembling" of both statues, starting with a partial reassembly of the Eastern Buddha. The partially preserved relief of the Eastern Buddha could take up the precious fragments of the original by means of (invisible) auxiliary structures. At the Western Buddha, one could consider reassembling certain fragments, thus accentuating this giant statue once again – a huge undertaking not possible without auxiliary structures and comparable in its dimensions with the measures to save Abu Simbel (even though Abu Simbel was entirely preserved and cut into stone blocks for the transferral).

ICOMOS, acting as an Advisory Body to UNESCO, can only give advice within the framework of the international principles of preservation and its experts can only identify and present the different technical possibilities. The necessary decisions on further steps are a responsibility of the Afghan government, within the framework of the Afghan monument protection law. Saving the fragments of the Buddhas of Bamiyan will only be possible in cooperation and under the guidance of Afghan authorities.

In conclusion, I would like to highlight some matters beyond the presentation of the Giant Buddhas, for instance the hope that the archaeological zones in front of the cliff – sometimes used for tournaments, festivities, for corn threshing, or playing soccer – and the area where in 2010 the ICOMOS team, by request of the local inhabitants, restored two ruinous Islamic mausoleums (Jafa Bieg and Koschkharid Bieg) will continue to be kept free from any disturbing new buildings. Furthermore, one should not forget that, in the surroundings of the Giant Buddhas, the cultural landscape – representing the "setting" for further historic monuments and for characteristic examples of the clay architecture of the area – is still threatened by decay and lack of maintenance. Finally, by referring to the cultural master plan prepared by RWTH Aachen, I would like to highlight the importance of ongoing consolidation work in the ruins of the antique town of Shahr-i Ghulghulah, as well as the necessary consolidation and repair of walls and buildings in the surroundings of the Eastern Buddha niche, not to forget the possible development of the historic centre with the old bazaar into an important area for the management of the World Heritage Bamiyan Valley. Without totally removing the ruinous character of this site, with its arcades evoking antique sites, an archaeological museum or a lapidarium of the Bamiyan Province could be installed in one of the large immured areas. In other buildings of the old bazaar, workshops for craftsmen could take place (perhaps a Bamiyan school for traditional building techniques), in order to promote not only archaeological research, but also practical work in the conservation of archaeological traces and maintenance of the Buddha niches, capacity in preparing mud-brick buildings, conservation of stone sculpture, and work of stonemasons.



Salvaging the fragments at the western Buddha, a collection of fragments of a total of ca. 280 collected and documented fragments © UNESCO/Bert Praxenthaler

The Recent Discovery of Tang Dynasty Artefacts in Bamiyan, Afghanistan

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In May of 2012, astonishing news arrived from Bamiyan. We were informed that a number of unusual bronze artefacts, perhaps a hoard, had been recovered by the MoIC from the environs of Shahr-i Ghulghulah in the centre of Bamiyan. This discovery come at an opportune time in advance of the commencement of conservation works of both the primary citadel and its watch towers, scheduled for 2013-2015. This important new phase of archaeological and architectural conservation is to be undertaken by Japanese and German professionals now that demining of the site has been completed, and represents a new and exciting phase in managing the cultural heritage resource in the Bamiyan Valley. On the basis of the initial information we received, it did appear that the bronze items are likely to have been illegally excavated from the archaeological area of Shahr-i Ghulghulah by local persons unknown, and offered up for sale in the local bazaar in the centre of Bamiyan, where they were discovered and brought to the attention of the authorities.

The story of the fall of Shahr-i Ghulghulah, an Islamic capital in the medieval period, was described vividly in the book "Landscape of the Colossus (1986)" and is well known to all those working in the Bamiyan Valley. In c.1221, when the capital was attacked by the Mongol army commanded by Genghis Khan (1162-1227), it is recorded that an arrow shot from the citadel struck and killed his favorite grandson, he being a son of Chaghatai. Khan. Enraged by the death of his young relative, he ordered that "every living creature, from mankind down to the brute beasts should be killed" (Joveyni, Ala al-Din Ata-Malek). After an extended and bitter battle the citadel was reduced to ruins and henceforth it was declared that "no living creature should dwell therein". At that point it was known as "Mavu Baligh" in Mongol, the name for a cursed city, or "Shahr-i Ghulghulah", that is the hill where the cries and groans of slaughtered people could be heard by night. This legend of tragedy has been handed down from generation to generation in the Bamiyan Valley and beyond.

Over the course of numerous research projects the Japanese archaeological team have collected extensive data sets of pottery sherds dating from the Islamic period in Bamiyan and have subsequently examined them using comparative typological analysis of ware type, form and material. This research has been published under the title of "A Study on Pottery from Bamiyan "(Recent Cultural Heritage Issues in Afghanistan, Preliminary Report Series 4, 2007). As the result of the studies of the pottery sherds, Prof. Tatsuo Sasaki and Prof. Hanae Sasaki (Kanazawa University) pointed out; "Most of the Islamic glazed potteries recovered from the area can be dated to the 10th to 13th centuries" Glazed potteries dating from the end of 13th century to 19th century were not found anywhere in Bamiyan near Shahr-i Ghulghulah. This fact may lend some degree of support to the 'folktale' of the massacre of the population at the citadel in Bamiyan sometime early in 13th century by Genghis Khan's army.

This iconic citadel that hides such a tumultuous past sits opposite the awe-inspiring niches of the former Bamiyan Buddha sculptures and the multitude of caves and sanctuaries that are scattered across the imposing cliff face. It had been previously thought that the ruins of the citadel, serving perhaps as a regional capital, dated from the Islamic period and from either the Ghaznavid or Ghurid dynasty. These suppositions were primarily based on the dating evidence provided by pottery sherds recovered from or around the site. However the history before and after the Islamic periods of the citadel still remains, to a greater degree, enigmatic. It



Fig. 1: Shahr-i-Ghulghulah © UNESCO/Ghulam Reza Mohammadi


Fig. 2


Fig. 3

Fig. 2: Eight petaled bronze mirror of the treasure of Shosoin in Japan © Kosaku Maeda
Fig. 3: Eight-petaled bronze mirror of Bamiyan © Kosaku Maeda

is however fortuitous that recently a number of bronze artefacts were found in a hoard at Shahr-i Ghulghulah, or close by, although regrettably the exact location of the excavation of these finds is unknown and this in itself represents a considerable loss for academics trying to further understand the medieval culture of Bamiyan from what is limited information. As far as we can ascertain, the bronze finds number more than ten. Among the more significant or unusual items recovered are several mirrors, a vessel for holding water or wine, an incense burner and a pair of highly decorative tips which are interpreted as constituting part of the axle of a carriage.

Here we will briefly describe these four unusual items. First of all the mirror: the patterns present on the mirror are represented by eight petals on the obverse which is not dissimilar to "an eight-petal bronze mirror with birds, beasts and flowers" known as one of the Treasures of Shoso-in, (the Shoso-in artefacts number c.9000, mostly dating from the 8th century and are predominantly associated with the Emperor Shōmu (701 – 756) and the Empress Kōmyō (701 – 760). They are currently stored in an "azekura zukuri" (a very early form of traditional Japanese warehouse or granary), in Nara City, Japan (Fig. 2).

On the decorative surface of the Shahr-i Ghulghulah mirror, a prostrate beast (of unidentifiable type) is depicted, adjacent to a number of holes set in the centre of the mirror. The inner section of the mirror shows two running beasts along with two birds (probably Phoenix) flying in a clockwise direction (Fig. 3). These specific patterns and the form of decoration can be reliably compared to a number of 'ritual mirrors' seen during the Tang period in China (circa 700 CE). It has not been possible to tell whether or not the mirror is made from cupronickel (an alloy of copper and nickel) and its actual composition awaits further metallurgical analysis.

The bronze vessel with feet styled in the form of animals and a flat bottom might have been used for containing either water or wine (Fig. 4). The object has much detail when inspected closely and on two sections of the drum a number of animals are depicted including camels, bears and tigers all represented in relief. After appropriate conservation and cleaning it may be that further details are revealed.

The third item from the hoard that we are briefly discussing is what appears to be an incense burner. This artifact exhibits relatively fine open-work as a decorative motif in a floral pattern (Fig. 5). This burner is likely to have also had a lid but this was not present with the item and was perhaps lost during the process of illegal excavation. A series of items such as these described, and found together – a mirror, a vessel for wine or water and an incense burner-might possibly imply some form of ritual use or purpose, but without having been excavated and recorded in their original archaeological context it is impossible to make any reliable interpretations on the true nature and use of these items. The pair of dragon-headed decorative terminals are likely to have been attached to the tip of the axle of a carriage, which we might also assume to have had some form of ritual use, rather than representing the property of a nobleman or other person of high status. (Fig. 6).

Comparisons and Provenance

Between the years 1972-1977, the famous archaeological site Tilya Tepe (the Hill of Gold) located to the north-west of Balkh, near Shibargan was excavated by the renowned Russian Professor of Archaeology, Viktor Sarianidi. Among the many fascinating items that were recovered from the excavations (including the gold clasps and 'crown' that are currently on display in Melbourne Museum (March 2013) as part of the traveling 'Bactrian Gold' exhibition), significant finds also included three bronze mirrors. (Fig. 7). Professor Takayasu Higuchi (from Kyoto University) examined the three mirrors and identified them as most likely being dateable to the Han Dynasty in China (c.206 BC – 220 AD). However, and judging by their characteristics and the limited analysis undertaken so far, the mirrors retrieved from Shahr - I Ghulghulah can be identified as examples of the type of mirrors produced during the

It is possible that the discovery of these bronze objects in Shahr-i Ghulghulah may lead to a breakthrough in understanding and explaining new aspects of the hidden past of Bamiyan, although this might only be possible if the exact provenance of the items can be determined, and this opportunity might have already been lost. Even so, the hoard still provides a significant insight into the type of cultural exchange taking place between East Asia and Central Asia through the corridor of the Silk Road and partially through the region we now call Afghanistan.

Historical Insights

If we look into historical Chinese sources we can possibly glean some further information that might assist in understanding the context and nature of the bronze artefacts and their possible relationships with Shahr-i Ghulghulah and the Bamiyan Valley in the 7th century, If we look at some of the works of Tang-shu (vol.221), the first classic work on the Tang Dynasty, we can observe the following:

"In Bamiyan many people use the caves for their dwellings. The King settled in La-lan City, rules his land. In the Kingdom of Bamiyan there are 4 or 5 castles. All the water in Bamiyan flows from the north and joins the Oxus River (Amu-darya)".

The King dispatched a delegation for the first time to the Emperor of the Tang Dynasty Taizong at the beginning of the Zhen Guan era (627-649). The Emperor Taizong specified that the La-lan City of Bamiyan would become an administrative city authorized by the Tang Dynasty, and appointed the King of Bamiyan as the Governor and having executive powers. After this appointment, the tributes paid to the courts of the Tang Dynasty from the Kingdom of Bamiyan "were carried out every year without any interruption". Xuan Zang and his companion Prajnakara the monk belonging to the Littre Vihicle (Hinayana) and living in Nova-Sangharama in Bactra, came over to Bamiyan across "the Great Snowy Mountain" (probably the Hindu Kush mountain) in 629. (see "The Life of Xuang Zang"). The King of Bamiyan went forth from the royal city to escort them. It is also recorded that Xuang Zang and Hwui-Sing were invited within the royal palace which was, at that time, located to the southwest of the West Giant Buddha and were welcomed by the King. The King and his families received religious offerings from Xuang Zang. Xuan Zang stayed in Bamiyan for fifteen days and visited the Buddhist *viharas* and *sangharamas*.

He (Xuang Zang) documented the places he visited which included, the King's palace, the West Giant Buddha, the old Sangharama built by the former King, the East Giant Buddha and the Giant Nirvana lying Buddha. The description of the locations of these places is on the whole correct, with the exception of the enigmatic description of the location of the sleeping Nirvana Buddha which has as yet defied discovery. However, what is strange is that in his accounts of his time in Bamiyan he does not at any point mention Shahr-i Ghulghulah, located to the southeast of the East Giant Buddha. The prominent citadel (if it existed at this time), would have been visible to everyone traveling through the Bamiyan valley as it occupies such a prominent vantage point on the plateau above the alluvial plain in front of the cliffs.

So, can we therefore explain why XuanZang neglects to mention the citadel at all? It could be tentatively suggested that if the Shahr-i Ghulghulah citadel was at that time a known military and political centre, he might have deliberately avoided referring to it in his own writings for the sake of safety or security if his journal should be lost or read, although this is of course merely supposition. Concerning the historical documents that relate to Tang su, it is possible to assume that a phase of cooperation and contact between the Tang Dynasty and the Kingdom of Bamiyan began after Xian Qin the third (658),when Xuan Zang was 59 years old and also 13 years after he returned to the capital of Tang, Changan. This was the year when Xuan Zang returned from the capital Luoyang after visiting the palaces of Luoyang in the company of the Tang Emperor Gaozong and once more began


Fig. 4


Fig. 5

Fig. 4: Bronze animal-footed vessel with a flat bottom
© Kosaku Maeda
Fig. 5: Incense burner with open-work of floral pattern
© Kosaku Maeda


Fig. 6


Fig. 7

Fig. 6: Dragon-headed decoration of the carriage © Kosaku Maeda
Fig. 7: The bronze mirror of Han Dynasity from Tillya Tepe in Afghanistan © Kosaku Maeda

to translate the *sutras* (Buddhist Scripture) at Da Cien si. However, this event occurred 28 years after his visit to Bamiyan.

The prevalent political situation of Bamiyan in the 7th century might have seemed attractive to the Emperors of the Tang Dynasty as it is recorded that for some time they had been seeking a closer relationship with Central Asia for both political and economic reasons. A hypothesis might therefore be proposed that the mirrors, the vessel and the pair of decorative axel tips could have been presented to a delegation as a gift from the third Emperor of Tang, Gaozong (his personal name was Li Zhi and he ruled from 649 to 683. Emperor Gaozong was the son of Emperor Taizong and Empress Zhangsun). The gifts were then carried to Bamiyan by the delegation and subsequently donated to the King of Bamiyan to commemorate the agreement of a new political alliance. This is however, purely supposition based on very limited data.

Despite the illegal excavation of the finds, we are perhaps fortunate that they were recovered before they were spirited away to Kabul and perhaps trafficked to overseas art-markets. Although we have lost the context of these remarkable finds we do at least have them to scientifically study and analyze.

With regards to the future, archaeological research should now focus on Shahr-i Ghulghulah, which remains a very much untouched site within the protected archaeological landscape of the Bamiyan Valley.
It is only through continued rigorous scientific research, international collaboration and a cooperative spirit that we can advance the knowledge of the history of Bamiyan and its ancient culture, whilst also taking a positive step forward to preserving this unique resource for future generations.

Note:

During the course of December 2011, the 10th Bamiyan Expert Working Group for the Safeguarding of the Cultural Landscape and Archaeological Remains of the Bamiyan Valley was held at the NRICP in Tokyo. H. E. Mr. Omar Sultan (Former Deputy Minister of Information and Culture, Afghanistan) and H. E. Ms. Habiba Sarabi (Governor of Bamiyan Municipality) raised questions concerning the establishment of a 'Bamiyan Museum for Peace', looking to encourage support both for the idea and for funding its realization. We listened to their proposals with support and an open mind and we are now in the very preliminary stages of outlining a rough framework for a plan for a potential new regional museum. This is being undertaken in collaboration with Dr. Shigeyuki Okazaki, whose team have already provided a provisional model for such a structure.

We ardently believe that the construction of a new regional museum and culture centre in Bamiyan will not only be important as a centre for site management within the Bamiyan valley, but will offer educational opportunities and a professional forum for the discussion and mitigation of problems arising from the illegal excavation of many sites in the conservation area, as exemplified by the discovery of the 'Shahr-i Ghulghulah hoard'. This museum would also represent a strong symbol to both the Afghan population and the international community showing the progress and importance of cultural revival in Afghanistan in 2015 and beyond.



Fig. 8: View of Shahr-i Ghulghulah © UNESCO/Bert Praxenthaler

The Islamic Shrines of Khoja Sabzposh: Conservation of a Living Religious Monument in Bamiyan

Bert Praxenthaler
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The Islamic shrine at Khoja Sabzposh, a short distance from the centre of Bamiyan, is just one example of many historical sites across the country that have suffered from continued collapse and structural failure over the preceding decades, due to both erosion as a result of environmental factors and a lack of maintenance and conservation. This lack of care is certainly not because of an absence of interest by the local community, indeed, the shrine and its associated buildings have been constantly used as a place of worship and pilgrimage by the surrounding villages. As in many other regions of Afghanistan, economic and political instability as a result of long years of civil unrest, and the allocation of any available financial resources to more basic rehabilitation projects, has in its own way contributed to the degradation of this once impressive mud-brick mausolea.

Re-focusing our attention on sites such as Khoja Sabzposh which are often overlooked within the context of conservation projects in Afghanistan, (but are equally in need of appropriate documentation, stabilization and restoration), will hopefully ensure their availability for long-term use by future generations. Therefore the decision by UNESCO and the donor, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), was welcomed unanimously by both the local community and the authorities: “It is always good to start working on historical sites used by the people. The shrines belong to the Islamic period and they are regularly used by the communities as a place of worship.” (Mohammad Asif Mobaligh, Deputy Governor, Bamiyan).

Furthermore, this conservation programme also provided the opportunity for developing the skills and abilities of local craftsmen in the Bamiyan region under the site management of an accomplished and respected Afghan-German restorer, who was responsible for the on-site management of the project.

The Existing State of Preservation

The mausolea complex at Khoja Sabzposh, located at the entrance to the Foladi valley, two kilometres southeast of Bamiyan centre, consists of one single mausoleum and a (former) double cupola-complex. About 150m to the east of the site there is another single mausoleum alongside the road.

On first observation, the structural state of the mud-brick buildings seemed to be precarious, so urgent preservation work was deemed necessary by UNESCO, with funding generously provided by SDC. Buildings such as these represent part of the principal cultural resource of the Bamiyan Valley and as such should be valued and protected wherever practical. Although the exact age of the mausolea complex was difficult to assess, we know for certain that at the end of the 19th century minor restoration work was undertaken on the shrine. It was also suggested that there might have been a monument of some form present for some considerable time before that, dating back as far as the Ghurid period even.

The original domes of the three buildings, which are square in plan and are situated a few meters above an irrigation channel at the bottom of a near vertical slope, had all collapsed. One single mausoleum, located directly adjacent to the road, is of an eight sided, domed roof construction that was also constructed using unbaked mud-brick.



Upper figure: The mausolea before restoration © UNESCO/Mujtabah Mirzai
Lower figure: The restored mausolea © UNESCO/Bert Praxenthaler



Mausoleums A & B, rebuilding of the cupolas © UNESCO/Mujtabah Mirzai

The main issue concerning the building complex beyond the irrigation channel had been the nature of the unstable foundations, constructed solely by using rounded river stones and mud as a binding mortar. As a result of this, numerous sections of the walls were at risk of sliding down the slope. The urgent need for a programme of stabilization work, at least for the foundations, was very apparent.

The mausoleum at the north-east, shows a rectangular floor plan with a door (pointed arch) at each side. Only those four doors provide light, as there were no windows set within any of the elevations. Each internal corner was characterized by a system of six pointed arches constructed in a stepped style, which are mostly still intact. The stepped arches transformed from a rectangular form to an octagonal one, on which the circle of the cupola rests. Outside the facade of

the building shows blind arcades with pointed arches, that were subject to considerable erosion, but the design and construction technique was still visible. Much of the debris of the collapsed domes lay inside covering the tombs.

The larger complex on the south-east was composed of two buildings originally connected by arches. The walls towards the irrigation channel were framed by the remains of two 10 or 12-sided towers at the corners. The eastern building "mausoleum B" contained remains of ornamental wall paintings and has just one window and an (original) door with a pointed arch to the channel side (south-east) and a further door to the west. Adjacent are remains of an original vaulted building, which was partially excavated, when the foundation of the building were initially being assessed.

Taken as a whole, the foundations of the primary building were extensively eroded. The walls in the lower areas were mostly intact, but had numerous cracks on the elevation extending towards the bank and the channel below. The relatively small window in the wall on the channel side had, due to excessive erosion, extended so as to become a substantial hole stretching as far as the corner ornaments, (the pendentives or "gharnes"). The remains of the window lintel were also going to collapse. Parts of the pendentives in the corners were heavily damaged, including the ornamental mural paintings and the dome here had given way many years previously.

The western part of the building complex had been designed in a symmetrical way, and "mausoleum C", exhibited the most damage. Only a few sections of the walls survived, with massive erosion present on much of the structure. Nevertheless, the most damaged part of the mausolea complex had found a new purpose and was still in regular use a multiple fireplace had been constructed against one the degraded walls and was being used by visitors and pilgrims as a form of kitchen for what we can perhaps best define as a 'ritual-religious' purpose. A hole in the remains of the western wall had a certain significance, too – on occasions elderly ladies (judging by their age presumably not the mothers) appeared with babies and proceeded to put the head of the infants through the hole so as to receive a blessing from the holy site. This is not an uncommon occurrence at many holy sites throughout Afghanistan, although not necessarily an Islamic one.

The Conservation Concept

The "conservation concept" employed in restoring the shrine included, in the first instance, conducting basic historic research on the location and socio-cultural environment in addition to further analysis on mausoleums in the region and traditional techniques of construction. The work undertaken was executed only using traditional methods and materials and on this occasion there was no need for any intervention at all using modern technologies or materials.

Undertaking work on the stabilization of the foundations was the primary focus of the project in its early phase. It was possible to construct a supporting travertine wall, between channel and buildings, so as to stabilize the foundations. As a second step to prevent future collapse or subsidence, the walls had to be competently restored. The eroded walls were carefully cleaned to reveal the original mud-brick structure. From that base, traditional mud-bricks were used to complete the process of stabilization.

The Cupolas

At the lowest level of the cupolas, the rotten sections of the timber "anchors", had to be replaced. The reconstruction of the cupolas only began after close inspection and study of the surviving original structures, and on other types of similar domed buildings present in Bamiyan. To obtain a useable, suitable clay material, some of the original material had been analysed to establish the quality of the clay and the respective mud content of the stone material. With the right combination of materials identified for producing a usable mud brick, we then proceeded to have several thousand produced locally.

The reconstruction of the cupolas for both mausolea A and B proved successful, especially for mausolea B as it was necessary to ensure that the surviving wall paintings would be adequately protected from the elements. The plan for mausoleum C was to preserve the building in its ruined state and to stabilize the walls as they were, so further erosion could not occur. It seemed most appropriate to attempt to preserve the foundations and to repair the walls up to a certain level, but not to restore the entire building and especially the cupola. This not only preserved the current use of this part of the complex as a working 'ritual' kitchen, but also allowed us to still see part of how the monument looked before restoration, and to still represent part of the mausoleums earlier history without the need to hide it.



Massoud Palace, Lashkargah © Sayed Jawed







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