



The Aga Khan
Historic Cities Programme

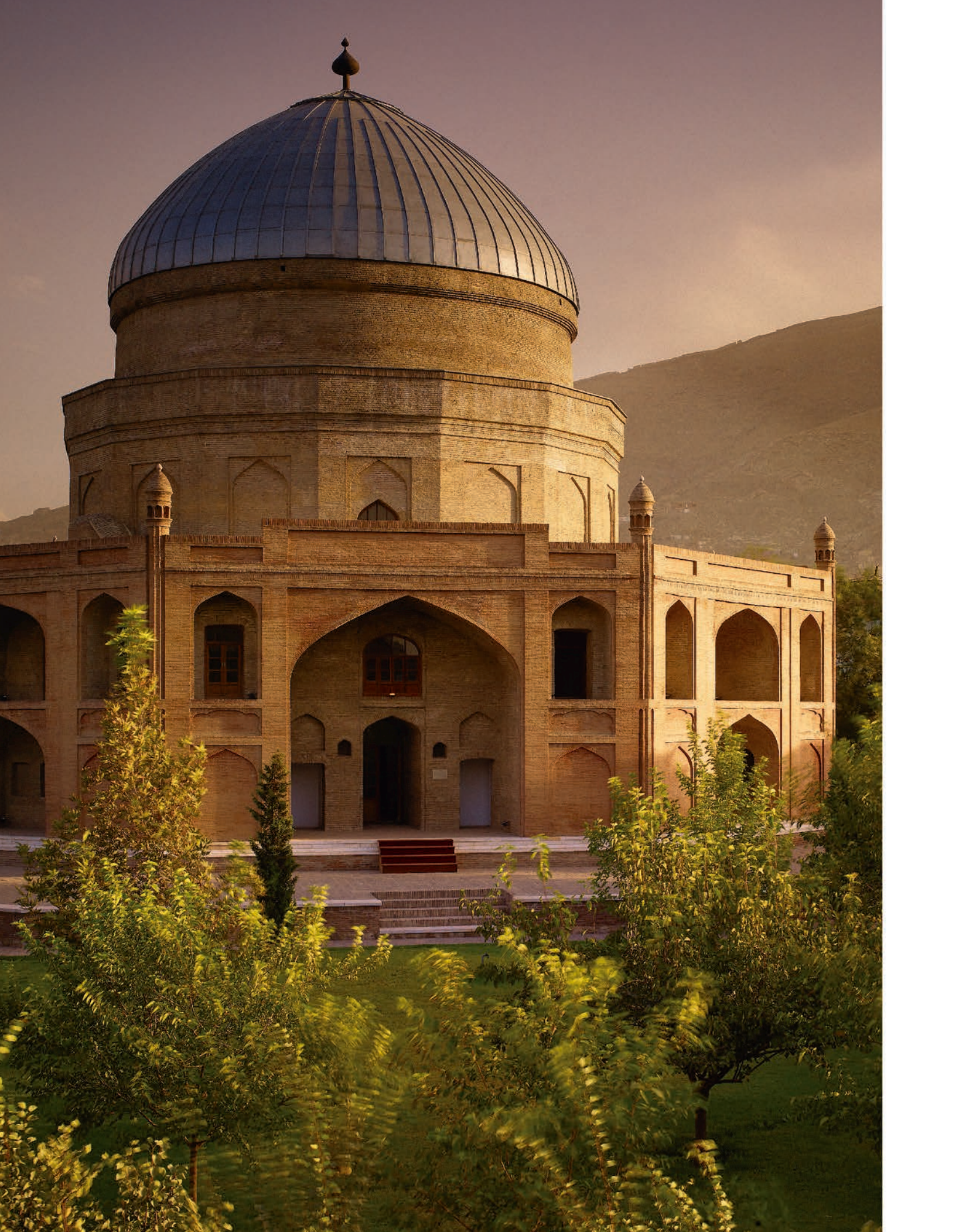
Afghanistan

Preserving
Historic Heritage

Edited by Philip Jodidio

PRESTEL

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Planning, Upgrading
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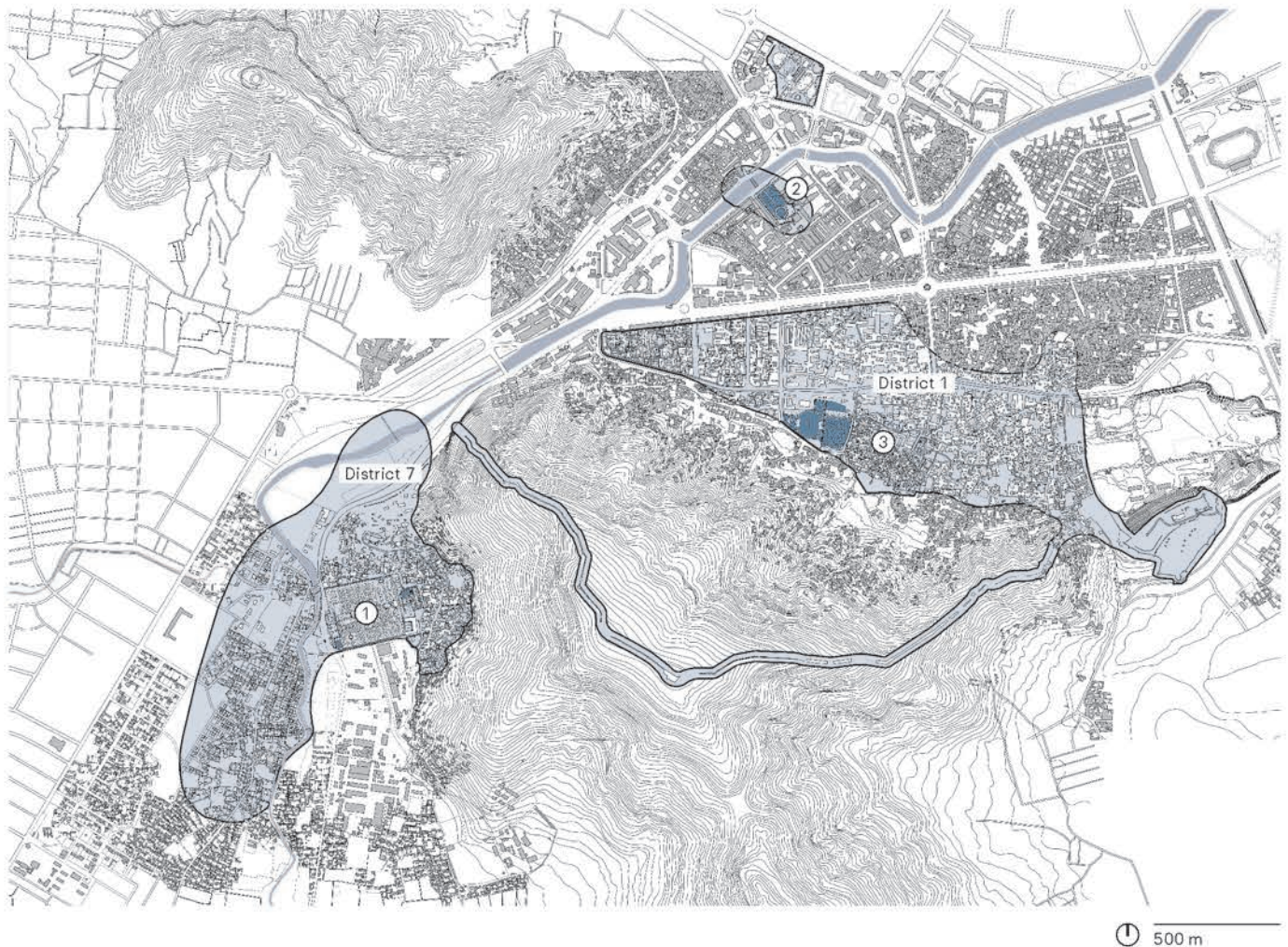
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KABUL

INTRODUCTION







AKTC Area Development Programme, Kabul.

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suburbs. A swathe was cut through the dense historic fabric in the late 1940s with the creation of the 'boulevard' of Jade Maiwand through the heart of the Old City, as part of efforts to modernize the capital. With newly established residential and commercial districts to the north and west of Kabul, many of those who could afford to relocate into more modern and larger homes left the congested centre of Kabul in the 1950s. Sustained by a period of development and growth, economic migrants relocated to the capital in search of employment and the population of the city rose to nearly 500,000 inhabitants by the 1960s. Rural migrants seeking more affordable accommodation began to relocate into rental properties in the Old City. In response to anti-government unrest in the late 1970s, historic residential areas in Chindawol and part of Shor Bazaar were punitively demolished in order to gain better access to the southern part of the Old City.

At this time, as part of the utopian master plan for Kabul, government planners envisioned that the entire historic Old City should be redeveloped with multi-storey apartment blocks between wide freeways running along the base of the Sher Darwaza Mountain. The reality on the ground, however, was of a dense traditional fabric that differed little from that described by nineteenth-century travellers. By the time that the inhabitants fled their homes in the face of inter-factional fighting in 1992, the historic quarters of the Old City were regarded by officials as little more than a slum.

It was into this 'slum' that the many families displaced by the conflict began to resettle after 1995 and, on a more significant scale, in 2002. Since then, war-damaged

parts of the Old City have witnessed an incremental process of residential reconstruction that, despite the intentions of official planners, largely follows historic patterns or that of 'informal' hillside settlements.

In this context, in 2002 AKTC commenced a multi-year partnership with the Government of Afghanistan focused on revitalizing historic quarters and public sites in Kabul. Built on more than thirty years of experience working with impoverished communities across the Islamic world, AKTC's Area Development Programmes aim to promote physical conservation as a means to improve living conditions and provide economic opportunities for communities living and working in and around historic areas. In collaboration with local authorities, AKTC's programmes have entailed extensive urban conservation, planning, upgrading and socio-economic initiatives in the Old City of Kabul, the rehabilitation of Mughal emperor Babur's Garden, and conservation of Timur Shah's Mausoleum and the reclamation of its public garden. Subsequent projects have included the restoration of the historic Stor Palace and more recently AKTC has been engaged in rehabilitating the Chihilsitoun Garden, a twelve-hectare public site in the south of Kabul. With additional projects currently in the planning stage, AKTC's reputation as one of Afghanistan's most capable international partners in the cultural sector has been built on more than fifteen years of work to safeguard Afghan heritage and improve living and socio-economic conditions.

Above, the upper terraces of Babur's Garden showing the partially collapsed perimeter wall and the Queen's Palace, 1922.

Below, Mughal emperor Babur describes constructing an 'avenue garden' in his memoirs, *The Baburnama*, believed to refer to the central water axis of Babur's Garden in Kabul.



KABUL

PHYSICAL CONSERVATION AND RESTORATION







BABUR'S GARDEN

HISTORY AND CHARACTERISTICS

In the foothills of the snow-peaked Hindu Kush mountains and the fertile alluvial plains of the Kabul River basin, Zahir-ud-Din Muhammad (“Defender of the Faith”) commonly known by his nickname “Babur” (believed to derive from *Babr*, Persian for “tiger”) — a young Uzbek prince exiled from his native Fergana region in present-day Uzbekistan — laid the foundations of an empire that subsequently became known as the Mughal dynasty. In 1495, at the age of twelve, Babur ascended to the throne of the small principality of Fergana. 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. Having unsuccessfully attempted to conquer Samarkand and losing control of his native Fergana in the process, Babur travelled south through the Hindu Kush with a small entourage of followers and captured Kabul at the age of twenty-one, in 1504.

In Kabul, on the south-western foothills of the Sher Darwaza Mountain, Babur set out what might be the ‘avenue’ garden he describes in *The Baburnama*. The layout of the garden included 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 Shah Jahan. When he died in 1530, Babur’s remains were transported from Agra to Kabul and were interred within a grave on an upper terrace of the garden around 1540. His successors came to pay their respects at this 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 (*chabutra*) be laid around the grave, an inscribed headstone erected and that the garden be enclosed by walls. Shah Jahan dedicated a marble 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 later archaeological evidence suggests was never built.

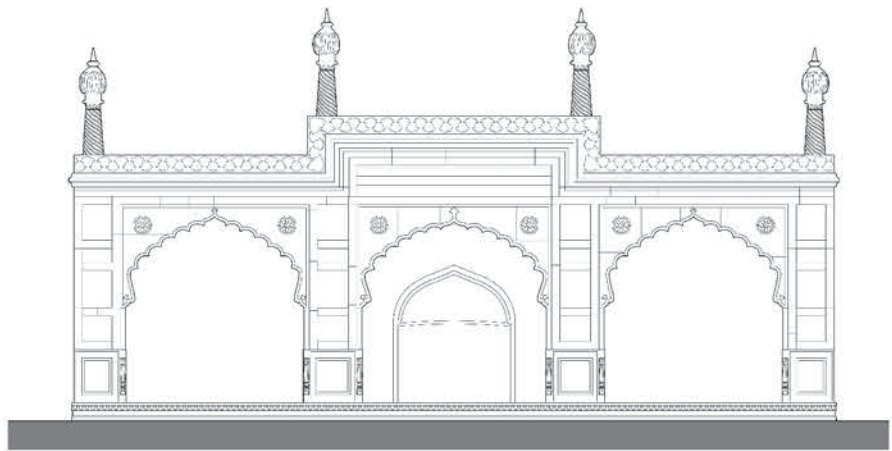
The site subsequently seems to have fallen into disrepair, as Kabul’s political and economic importance in the region was inextricably linked to the rise and collapse of the Mughal dynasty. When Charles Masson visited the site in 1832, and prepared a drawing of Babur’s grave enclosure, he noted that the tombs had been left to decline and their stones had been taken and used in the enclosing walls. As part of a wider programme of investments in Kabul, Amir Abdur Rahman Khan (r. 1880–1901) rebuilt the perimeter walls of the garden and constructed a number of buildings for his court within the site, thereby transforming an environment that had until then been defined largely by trees and water. Further transformations occurred in the 1930s, when



Preceding pages, laid out on the slopes of the Sher Darwaza Mountain, Babur’s Garden is divided into stepped terraces of sixteen levels, with his grave located near the top of the site.

Opposite page, an oasis of tranquillity surrounded by informal residential development; native species of fruit trees and flowers have been planted in the restored garden.

Above, a watercolour rendering of the central avenue of Babur’s Garden by James Atkinson, 1839.



2.5 m



1 m

Right, Shah Jahan Mosque, east elevation, and, below, Babur's grave enclosure, south elevation.

Below, the reconstruction of Babur's grave enclosure was based on visual and archaeological evidence including discovery of key sections of the original marble enclosure during archaeological excavations.



screens. Now replanted with Judas trees, the area between the marble screen and the outer masonry enclosure provides a tranquil space in which visitors can pay their respects; and here, among others, the grave of Babur's son Hindal also survives.

Immediately west of Babur's grave enclosure and visible from the site of his tomb, the white marble mosque dedicated by Shah Jahan 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 above its main elevation 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, Zahir-ud-Din Muhammad Babur the conqueror."

Historic photographs indicate that a number of other buildings were erected around the Shah Jahan 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. By the time the Italian Archaeological Mission began conservation work in 1964, it was deemed necessary to erect a structure of reinforced concrete and brick, over which the marble facing was reassembled. 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 external elevation of the *mihrab* wall was refaced, using some of the original marble pieces that had been laid as paving around the mosque. Staining on the marble elevations was cleaned and graffiti removed, but surface damage sustained during the fighting in the 1990s 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 Shah Jahan's visit in 1638, and which also appears in nineteenth-century illustrations of the garden. It was looted and burned during the factional fighting in 1992, and initial repairs were begun in 2003 by UN-Habitat and the 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.

While Babur might have camped on platforms similar to that found beside the pavilion, the Queen's Palace (*haremserai*) 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, with sweeping views of the garden terraces below and across the western plains of Kabul to the Paghman Mountains. Used as a residence for the German legation during World War I, 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. Following consolidation of the ruined structure, reconstruction work began in early 2006. While respecting the architectural character of the original building, it was possible to incorporate a range of alternative uses into the reconstructed complex and integrate



Top and middle, the Shah Jahan Mosque is considered by many to be the finest Mughal-era structure in Afghanistan.

Bottom, Babur's grave enclosure reconstructed.



TIMUR SHAH MAUSOLEUM

HISTORY

One of the largest surviving Islamic monuments in central Kabul, the mausoleum of Timur Shah marks the grave of the son of Ahmad Shah Durrani, who effectively created the modern state of Afghanistan in the late eighteenth century. Born in 1746, Timur Shah served as governor of Herat before facing off a military challenge to the throne from his elder brother, and then moved his capital from Kandahar to Kabul. After his death in 1793, his son Zaman Shah laid him to rest in a garden on the banks of the Kabul River, but it was not until 1817 that the construction of the mausoleum began. Zaman Shah was supplanted by his brother Shah Shuja and work on the mausoleum, disrupted in the battle for succession, was never completed. As a result, the final finish of the outer dome remained incomplete and small areas of internal plasterwork are the only indication that the rough internal brickwork may have originally been intended as a sub-base for a final layer of decorated plaster finish. Photographs from the late nineteenth century show that the garden (*chahar-bagh*) 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, the first in the country, on land to the north-east of the mausoleum. The Habibia College formed part of a range of Neoclassical buildings that stretched in time along both banks of the Kabul River. In 1965, a section of this range was demolished and a municipal park created between the mausoleum of Timur Shah and the river.

CHARACTERISTICS

Timur Shah's Mausoleum comprises an octagonal structure with two intersecting cross-axes organized on six levels. Above a crypt, in which the grave stands, is a square central space surrounded by an octagonal structure, with four double-height arches (*iwans*) on the main elevations. On the first floor, there are sixteen brick-vaulted spaces of varying size, encircling the central space, with a flat roof above, surrounding the sixteen-sided drum under the domes. Following the central Asian tradition, the mausoleum has an outer dome constructed on a high drum above a ribbed inner dome.

WORK UNDERTAKEN

Surveys of the structure in 2002 revealed that part of the upper dome had partially collapsed and that rainwater had penetrated parts of the supporting drum. This



Opposite page, the construction of the Timur Shah Mausoleum was abandoned at the end of the 18th century and was then damaged during the conflict, until, in 2005, it was restored by AKTC.

Above, the large square *chahar-bagh*, within which Timur Shah's Mausoleum was constructed, has been steadily built upon since the early 20th century, 1879–80.



کتابخانه عمومی
شمالی بر سر راه
مدرسه
تاریخچه
تاسیس
۱۳۷۵

سازمان
فرهنگ و تفریح



MILMA PAL MOSQUE

HISTORY AND CHARACTERISTICS

Dating from the late nineteenth century and built as part of a wider programme of work in Kabul, the Milma Pal Mosque is located within the Bagh-e Bala, a landscaped hillside area believed to have originally been laid out as a Mughal garden. Together with the Bagh-e Bala Palace, which was the favoured summer residence of Amir Abdur Rahman Khan towards the end of his life, the architecture of the Milma Pal Mosque represents a synthesis between the Afghan vernacular and European design influences that characterizes royal buildings of that era.

The building is arranged as a large open space subdivided into ten interlinking bays grouped in two rows of five bays each, with two larger central bays on axis with the prayer niche (*mihrab*). The internal painted plasterwork around the *mihrab* and on the main elevation of the building is a fine example of simplified decorative work that draws on much older patterns. Built using a combination of fired bricks (arches) and mud bricks (domes), a galvanized metal roof had been added in the mid-twentieth century.

Flash floods from the steep hillside above the mosque caused the accumulation of soil and debris behind the western *qibla* wall, resulting in the build-up of moisture in the masonry walls causing extensive damage to internal plasterwork. Compounded by the seepage of water into mud-brick masonry domes from leaks in the metal roof, which resulted in the partial collapse of the central dome, emergency consolidation and conservation work commenced in 2009 with the preparation of detailed surveys and a condition assessment.

WORK UNDERTAKEN

In order to prevent further damage to internal spaces, the first stage of work focused on repairing the galvanized metal roof of the mosque. The previous corrugated sheeting — much of which had fallen into disrepair, due to poor fixing and lack of maintenance — was stripped in phases, in order to enable a detailed examination of the uncut timber joists beneath. Repairs were carried out to strengthen the wooden sub-structure, over which new timber boarding was fixed and sections of existing and new corrugated metal roofing was reattached. Lengths of coping and corner edges around the metal roofing were redesigned to prevent penetration of water and to allow for run-off into fixed points linked to surface channels on the ground.

Once the roof of the building had been repaired, internal conservation work was carried out on the partially collapsed dome that was rebuilt with mud bricks produced



Opposite page, the main elevation of the late-19th-century Milma Pal Mosque prior to restoration.

Above, galvanized iron roofing erected over the mosque had been damaged, resulting in the collapse of one of the mosque's domes due to water seepage.

KABUL

PLANNING, UPGRADING AND ACCESS IMPROVEMENTS





HERAT

INTRODUCTION







Preceding pages, the Ikhtyaruddin Citadel as seen from the Mullah Rasoul Mosque in the Old City of Herat.

Herat Old City quarters.

- 1 Bar Durrani
- 2 Qutbe Chaq
- 3 Momandha
- 4 Abdullah Mesri

Old City of Herat: new constructions (2002-09).

- Residential buildings
- Public buildings

HISTORY

From its origins as an outpost of the Achaemenid Empire, the repeated strengthening of the citadel of Qala Ikhtyaruddin, and the setting out of a walled settlement by the Ghaznavids, the city of Herat has had a turbulent history. Situated at the crossroads of regional trade, in the midst of rich irrigated agricultural land, the area has been a prize for successive invaders. The city became a centre for Islamic culture and learning during the reign of Timur, whose successors commissioned several monumental buildings, but it then fell into decline under the Mughals. Considered part of Persia during the Safavid era, in the eighteenth century, it was not until 1863 that Herat was incorporated into the emerging Afghan state.

The distinctive rectilinear layout of the city of Herat was delineated by massive earthen walls that protected the bazaars and residential quarters that lay within. This was the extent of the city until the middle of the twentieth century, when administrative buildings were constructed outside the walls to the north-east. In time, wealthier families moved away from the densely inhabited historic fabric into suburbs that spread across what had been gardens to the north. The historic quarters remained home to some 60,000 people by the time that unrest broke out in 1979, resulting in the depopulation of the western quarters, where traditional buildings soon fell into disrepair or collapsed and infrastructure was looted or damaged. It was not until 1992 that clearance of mines and unexploded ordnance began, enabling families to re-settle in the war-affected historic quarters and begin the process of rebuilding.

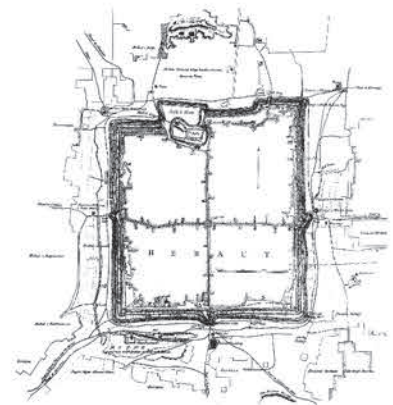
With a rapid increase in urban population since 2002, pressure on central residential neighbourhoods has intensified, even though the state of the infrastructure and the few public facilities result in poor living conditions for most inhabitants. In many cases, returning families who had become accustomed to modern dwellings while in exile have demolished their traditional homes and, in the absence of building controls, built incongruous concrete structures, dozens of which now rise above the skyline of the Old City. Residential areas that adjoin main roads are rapidly being commercialized, with the construction of multi-storey 'markets' that have a negative environmental and visual impact on the historic fabric.

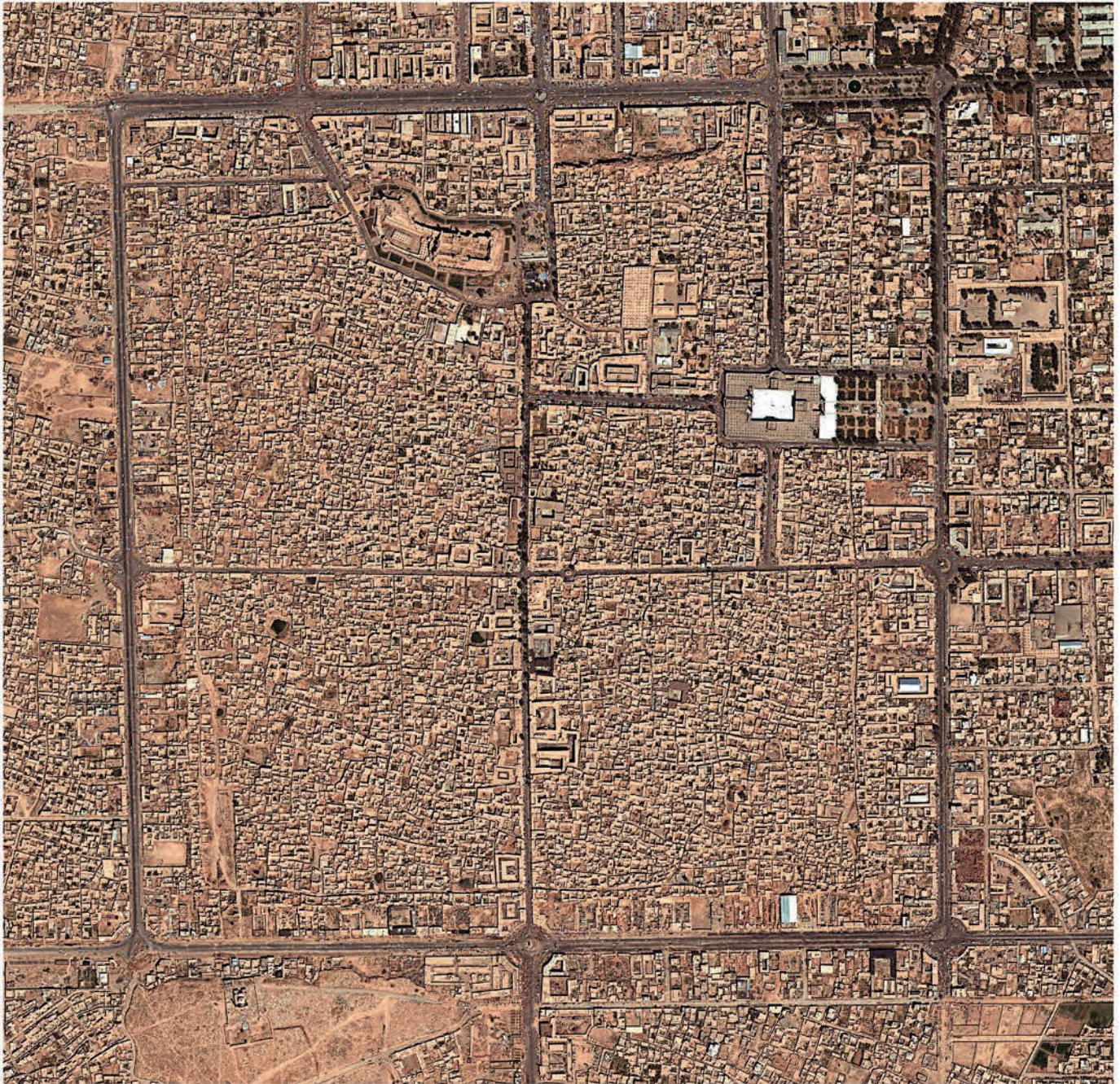
In order to address these transformations, AKTC's programme in Herat has, since 2005, involved processes of documentation, building conservation and upgrading, in parallel with measures to strengthen the capacity of, and coordination between, key institutions.



Above, view of the Old City showing residential and commercial areas, with the Ikhtyaruddin Citadel (centre) and minarets (centre-left) seen in the distance, 1916-17.

Below, mid-19th-century sketch-plan of the Old City of Herat, measuring roughly 1.5 kilometres square, prepared by the Royal Engineers of the British Army.





An aerial image of the square plan of the Old City, showing the main crossroads laid out according to cardinal directions.

community-implemented improvements in some quarters that were not covered under AKTC's urban conservation programme.

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 of the 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, municipal 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 provide 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 it has made limited progress on reform of systems of building permits and the monitoring of new construction or demolition, the Commission provides a platform for discussion between key stakeholders, and a clearing house for information. While some progress has been made in involving communities themselves in the safeguarding of historic property, the absence of effective leadership on the part of civil servants has often handicapped these initiatives.

Below, left, speculative commercial development continues unabated, seen here encroaching upon the outer fortifications of the Old City.

Right, above, historic property being demolished and replaced with a modern construction.

Right, below, a historic mosque destroyed overnight, together with any archaeology that may have remained in the area, preparing the way for a new cast-concrete construction.



Qandahari House



Above, built in several phases, the Qandahari House was in a poor state of repair prior to restoration.

Below, damaged sections of masonry and colour-glazed tile decorations were carefully repaired.

HISTORY AND CHARACTERISTICS

While the Qandahari House is said to have originally been built in the third quarter of the nineteenth century, its present form may include building extensions from a later period. The house is an important example of how the courtyard layout, with separate summer and winter quarters, and traditional construction techniques came to be adapted in the early to mid-twentieth century.

Access to the house is via a small vaulted vestibule with doors to each of the two dwellings that make up the residential complex. To the east are the large family quarters, arranged in the manner of traditional Herati homes of this period: a double-storey range of rooms faces north for use in the summer, and a single-storey south-facing range on a single storey with an arcaded veranda for use in the winter months. The north-facing elevation of this house is decorated with extensive colour-glazed tile work, unusual for a residential property and more in the manner of a religious building. All rooms in the dwelling face on to a large courtyard, which is paved with brick and has a central planted area. The adjoining single-storey dwelling, which was used to entertain and for house guests, is more modest in scale and decoration.

WORK UNDERTAKEN

Based on the physical documentation and a condition assessment prepared in 2006, conservation work on the Qandahari House has entailed focusing on structural repairs to the northern wing of the property and the replacement of large sections of the roof that had been at risk of collapse. The lower sections of load-bearing brick walls facing the courtyard, which had been damaged by water penetration, were replaced with newly produced fired bricks and repointed using lime mortar.

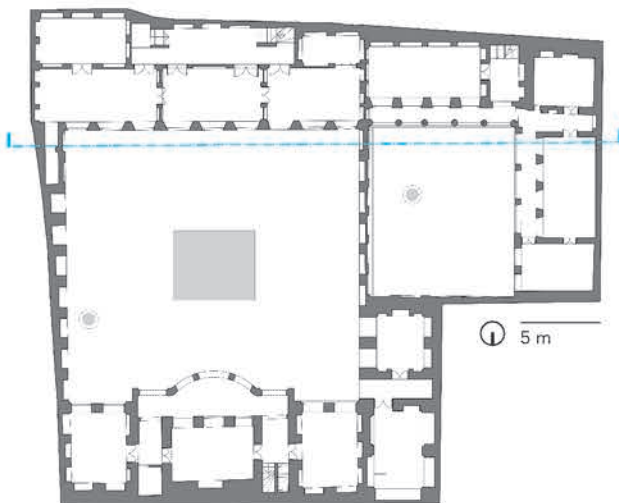
Areas of exposed brick arches in the main elevations had to be consolidated *in situ*, with newly produced colour-glazed tiles used to replace missing sections of external decoration. Subsequent to repairs of the brick paving of the courtyard, the house was returned to its owners in 2009.



Left, unique in Herat for its extensive use of colour-glazed tile decoration, the house displays a variety of architectural design influences.

Right, double-height decorated niches on a boundary wall help unify the architectural vocabulary on the courtyard elevations of the house.

Bottom, first-floor plan and section.





Above, laser-scan survey, three-dimensional model.

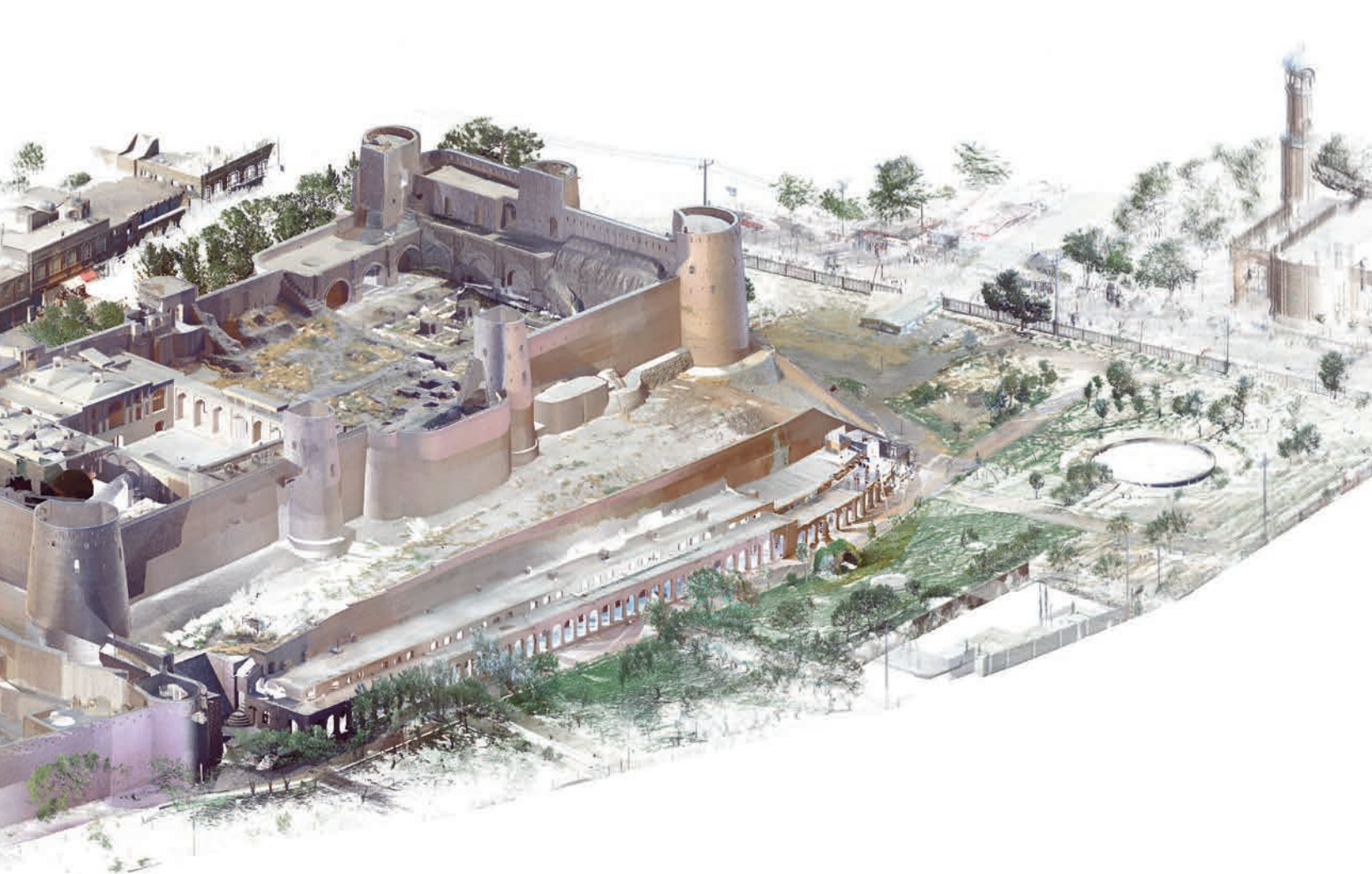
Opposite page, above, laser-scan survey, latitudinal sections and, below, section.

Following pages, the restored citadel is intermittently used for cultural programmes and has recently been opened to the public.

structures, which have potential for adaptive reuse, ensured that the site would be used for appropriate cultural and educational activities in the future.

In parallel to AKTC's conservation activities, the German Archaeological Institute (DAI) conducted archaeological excavations within the citadel. During the course of this work, plans were formulated for the establishment of a museum and conservation workshop on the site. The aim was to enable the local department to undertake basic conservation of existing objects in the collection, and to exhibit key items, including manuscripts that were stored elsewhere in the city. In collaboration with the DAI and local authorities, part of AKTC's restoration activities focused on conserving and upgrading an existing section of buildings in the lower area of the citadel for use as a permanent museum, archive and storage area for artefacts.

The conservation of Qala Ikhtyaruddin has been one of the largest preservation projects in Herat since the 1970s, offering an opportunity for the development of skills of Afghan professionals and craftsmen and the generation of significant employment. The project generated almost 70,000 man-days of work for skilled craftsmen and unskilled labour. In the context of increasing pressure for wholesale 'redevelopment' of the traditional fabric of the Old City, the restored citadel will serve as an example of the potential for adaptive reuse of public historic structures for cultural and educational functions.



20 m







Khwaja Parsa Mosque and Park



Above, the twenty-seven-metre-high ribbed tile dome of the Khwaja Parsa Mosque can be seen behind an 18th-century addition, 1959.

Below, road work undertaken prior to conservation had caused damage to the structure of the mosque.

Opposite page, work to point brick pavers laid above a reconstruction of the 18th-century mosque.

HISTORY AND CHARACTERISTICS

The Khwaja Parsa Mosque is named after Khwaja Abu Nasr Parsa (d.1460), a respected spiritual leader of the Naqshbandi Sufi order and a well-known theologian in Balkh, who is believed to be buried in an unmarked grave on a raised platform opposite the main arched portal (*iwan*) of the monument.

Late fifteenth-century texts repeatedly refer to Khwaja Parsa as a great mediator of peace and the foremost representative of the population of historic Balkh. While little is known about the cause of his death and the exact location of his grave, the mosque bearing his name was commissioned by Mir Mazid Arghun in 1467. A prominent Timurid politician and military leader, Arghun is believed to have chosen Khwaja Parsa's burial site as the location for his family mausoleum. With the construction of several madrasas near the building in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, including the expansive Subhan Qoli Madrasa, the district around the mosque became renowned for its impressive religious structures.

Little is known of developments with the building until travellers to Balkh in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, including the British travel writer Robert Byron, documented the site in a state of ruin. Historical texts refer to a massive earthquake at the end of the nineteenth century, which may have caused the partial collapse of the mosque's dome and minarets. Large-scale modernization work in the centre of Balkh in the 1930s resulted in the construction of a 'radial plan' for the town, at the centre of which the Khwaja Parsa Mosque was left surrounded by a public park. Since then, sections of the mosque have been repaired, renovated and reconstructed on at least three occasions, the most recent carried out in the 1970s by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), which partially reconstructed its masonry dome. In the 1980s two single-storey, concrete-frame buildings were built on remains of earlier structures flanking the historic mosque in order to provide additional space for prayer.

The original late Timurid-era mosque is an octagonal masonry structure, with a square internal space topped by a double-skin 'ribbed dome' with clerestory windows decorated with gypsum latticework located at the base of the external drum. The lower octagonal 'plinth' has alternating openings of different sizes on each of its faces, culminating in a double-height *iwan* on its eastern elevation. The *iwan* retains large areas of elaborate colour-glazed tiling and is flanked by two corkscrew pillars rising from bulbous vase-like shapes at its base. Together with a pair of circular minarets erected behind the *iwan*, decorated with panels of 'Kufic' religious scripts, these





