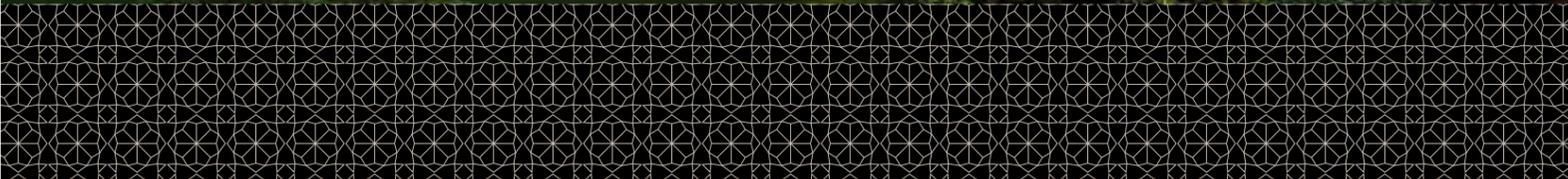




The Aga Khan Historic Cities Programme

STRATEGIES FOR
URBAN REGENERATION





Monument Conservation

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The wealth of material and tangible heritage, including monuments and their adjacent areas, is taken into account by the methods of the Historic Cities Programme (HCP) and techniques of documentation, collaboration and execution are all part of a well-defined process of conservation.

Many preservation action groups and agencies commenced their activity as a response to the threat of destruction or of damage to a specific monument of local or greater importance. Many of these struggles were successful and vindicated the investments of time, effort and expense required; others were not. The number of endangered monuments, sites and districts has increased with urbanization, with the extension of listings to new categories of landmarks, often accelerated by war or conflict, and with projects that developed without an appropriate vision. Ironically, over time, the work of conservators and preservationists has not diminished but increased. In the case of conserved projects, concern has also led to developments in the management of conservation sites.

Specialized agencies and NGOs have arisen to meet these challenges. Within the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN), the Aga Khan Trust for Culture's Historic Cities Programme has placed monument conservation as a high priority within a preservation-based community redevelopment approach to historic settlements.

Unlike other agencies that restrict themselves for internal reasons to the site of a specific monument, the Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC) intervenes not only on a monument and its site but also with its associated community or district wherever possible. This is done purposefully on the assumption that monuments without inhabitants adjacent to them are in reality barren archaeological sites. This holistic approach to conservation is based on the principles of 'Living Heritage'. Preservation of tangible heritage thus goes hand-in-hand with community development. While archaeological sites have featured in a number of AKTC's projects (the Syrian citadels, as an example), more often than not these sites are found in historic settlements (for example, Aleppo, Masyaf). At the same time, while carrying out Area Development Projects (ADPs) around key monuments, HCP has been keen to avoid the creation of districts that are actually outdoor museums, where activities are orchestrated for the visiting public but which, by the same token, lose their own intrinsic local rationale. Apart from World Heritage Sites, a maximum effort is made to develop a conservation strategy and approach that puts emphasis on a number of well-studied points, outlined below.

Research, Surveys and Planning

Architectural documentation is essential to HCP's efforts. This is the process of data collection and critical interpretation of information dealing with sources such as archives,



A north-east view of the Shrine of Abdullah Ansari in Guzargah, near Herat, reveals the extensive roof repairs that were part of the restoration process.

Opposite page:

The 14th-century Umm al-Sultan Shaaban Mosque and minaret restoration project featured stabilization of the roof and reconstruction of the top pavilion of the minaret, as well as repair of damage caused by the 1992 earthquake.



Left, the eastern facade, courtyard and wall of the Great Mosque of Mopti, after restoration.



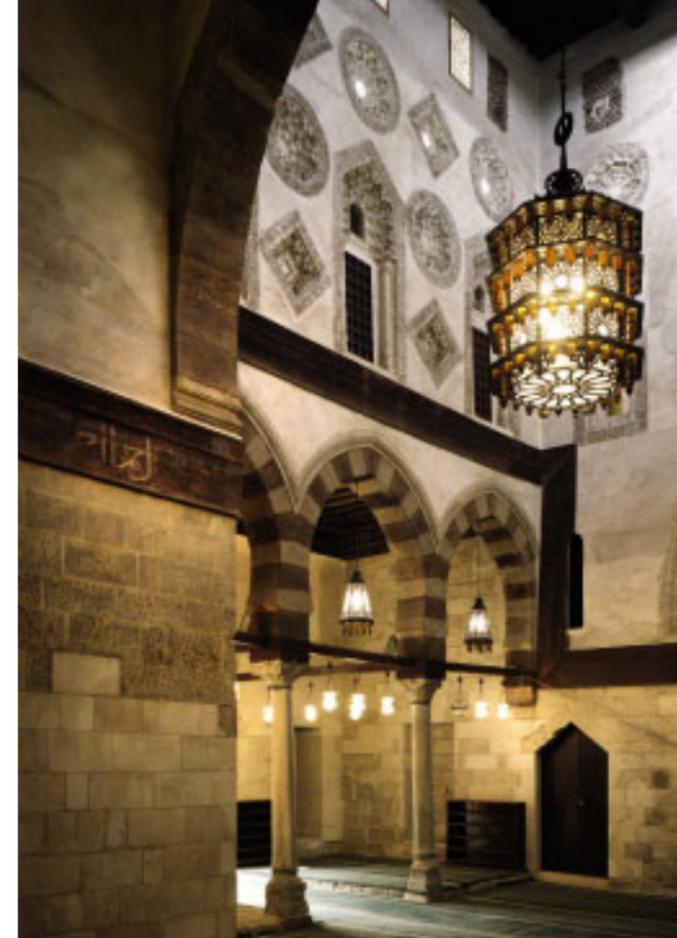
Right, houses that had encroached on the approach to the Citadel of Masyaf, Syria, were removed.

archaeological excavations and analysis, material science, architectural and structural surveys, drawings and photographs. This process is based on a multidisciplinary approach allowing for appropriate analysis. HCP has developed up-to-date documentation of sites that had never been documented before, such as the mud mosques in Mali. Methods employed include survey techniques from manually collected data, topographic measurements with optical and electronic total stations, Global Positioning Systems, photogrammetry and three-dimensional scanning.

Project documentation is instrumental in developing damage assessments and a conservation programme of work. Throughout the entire duration of a conservation project, surveys and documentation material are collected to form a source of valuable information on the building condition before work starts, the nature and areas of conservation interventions to be implemented and, finally, a set of documents describing the building in its restored status. Such technical information is provided to local archives in soft and hard formats and is being made available on a central web-accessible data bank.

Coordination with Local and International Agencies

A majority of historic cities in which the Programme is active (Cairo, Damascus, Aleppo, the Stone Town of Zanzibar) are on the UNESCO World Heritage List, as are HCP projects involving single monuments (from Humayun's Tomb in Delhi, to the Timbuktu Mosque in Mali). Local government stakeholders usually have prime jurisdiction over the historic monuments. HCP provides technical support to the authorities dealing with monument preservation and establishes references for quality of work to be replicated elsewhere. Critical to post-construction management and maintenance is ensuring the use of vacated buildings by establishing adaptive reuse plans and empowering local citizens' committees to maintain their asset. Institutional partnerships related to monument conservation also include privately funded organizations, such as the World Monuments Fund, or the American Research Center in Egypt, that have collaborated with AKTC on multi-year projects.



Conservation Strategy

In many countries, conservation activities still involve only the restoration and replication of the given historical fabric using traditional building crafts. But an increasing number of problems affecting historic buildings requires the introduction of new reinforcement techniques, calling for meticulous damage assessment and planning. From Afghanistan to Mali, the Programme has introduced a methodological approach to conservation, involving multidisciplinary strategy and inputs.

Pilot Projects

The value of experimentation in the field via pilot projects to test remedial solutions on a small scale, and to subject them to accelerated weathering process, in order to better develop suitable conservation techniques has been successfully verified in various countries. Associated with preliminary studies and damage assessment, the implementation of small-scale prototypes has proven critical in defining adequate solutions.

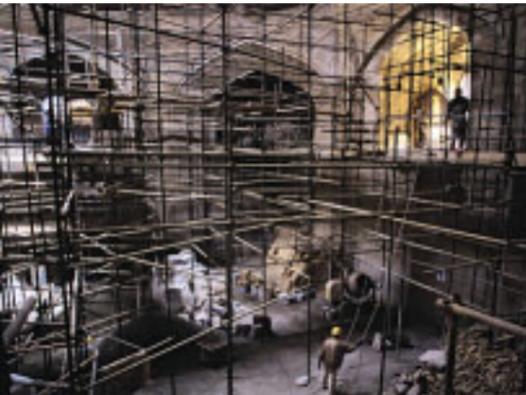


Left, Aslam Mosque in Cairo has been in constant use since its 14th-century construction and has recently undergone thorough restoration.

Right, the intricate incised plasterwork decoration on the domed ceiling of Lakkarwala Burj at Sunder Nursery in Delhi being carefully cleaned while missing portions are reinstated using traditional materials and craft techniques.



Calligraphic inscriptions being restored on an interior wall of Sunder Burj, a Mughal monument in Sunder Nursery in Delhi.



In Herat, the interior of Chahar Suq Cistern is criss-crossed with scaffolding during its restoration.

Local Professionals and International Specialists

Building the capacity of technical staff in the field is a key factor in achieving quality work and ensuring sustainability. In many countries, the field of conservation is new and local professionals need exposure to international specialists to develop their own practice. When starting a new initiative, AKTC ensures that a transfer of knowledge can ensue between international specialists and local professionals.

Site Supervision

In most locations, contractors have no qualifications or previous experience in conservation. In such cases, AKTC creates its own local team, ensures training with international experts, and builds internal services associating implementation specialists, management and back-office support, in the aim to guarantee close quality control.

Post-Conservation Maintenance

Assistance to local government agencies or community leaders includes post-conservation plans. This comprises the creation of technical maintenance guidelines manuals, training of local maintenance teams and the formation of governing bodies for cultural heritage; and it also involves the preparation of financial projections to assist in identifying solutions for sustainability.

Final Project Documentation

AKTC's mandate of preserving and promoting the local cultural expression in its material heritage finds one of its best applications in the role played by monuments to boost cultural tourism and local development. Developing visitor circuits linking restored monuments to the most important areas of interest of a historic city has a dual impact. They not only bring visibility and accessibility to neglected parts of a city but also boost the community's economy and opportunities. Permitting adaptive reuse and visitation of monuments makes education and interpretation of cultural heritage possible for a wide range of students, from school pupils to university graduates.

Due to their geographic spread, HCP's conservation projects now span numerous types of buildings and technologies, including earthen architecture; coral limestone block; heavy medieval masonry with vaults and domes; brick vaulted and domed structures adorned with decorative glazed ceramic tile; low-rise stone rubble construction with timber cribbage, and so on. No single agency can master all the requisite technologies and sub-techniques involved in the conservation of such buildings and AKTC has solicited external specialist consultants and other partner agencies in many of these projects.



The tall Ayyubid bridge, still serving as the only official entrance to the Citadel of Aleppo in Syria, leads to the fortified entrance complex, certainly one of the most spectacular examples of Islamic military architecture.