

REHABILITATING THE GARDEN OF BABUR AND ITS SURROUNDINGS IN KABUL

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A picture of Babur's grave (c.1915), taken by Oskar von Niedermayer.

The Garden of Babur (Baghe Babur) 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.

Babur ascended in 1494, at the age of 12, 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 ENVIRONMENT

A detailed account of Babur's life and conquests is provided 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 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 business was conducted in gardens that he visited or established on his various travels. The Timurid gardens that he mentions visiting in Samarkand and Herat clearly had a lasting impression, and probably influenced Babur's ideas about the sites that he identified soon after capturing Kabul. The garden now known as Baghe Babur was one such site, which was used by Babur 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'.

Left page: Mughal miniature (c.1590) showing Babur supervising the construction of one of his gardens in Kabul.



Picture of Baghe Babur, c.1915, from the east, with Nadir Shah's fountains along the central axis, taken by Oskar von Niedermayer.

Picture of Babur's grave, at the far right, taken in 1880 by John Burke.



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 a channel leading from the river 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 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 of the garden in around 1540. His successors came to pay their respects to the 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 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.

Charles Atkinson's coloured engraving of 1842 showing the central water channel and pools in Baghe Babur.

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 1880 show fragments of various marble grave enclosures scattered over the terraces, with the Shahjahan Mosque in a poor state of repair.

John Burke's picture of the Shahjahan Mosque in 1880.





Marble gravestones and fragments of grave enclosures found during the conservation work.

Wilhelm Rieck's picture of the Pavilion and Queen's Palace, c.1922.



As part of a wider programme of investments in Kabul, Amir Abdur Rahman Khan (1844-1901) 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 the old 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 immediately north of the Shahjahan 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 restored, enabling some re-planting to take place, under the auspices of UN-Habitat.

SCOPE OF WORK

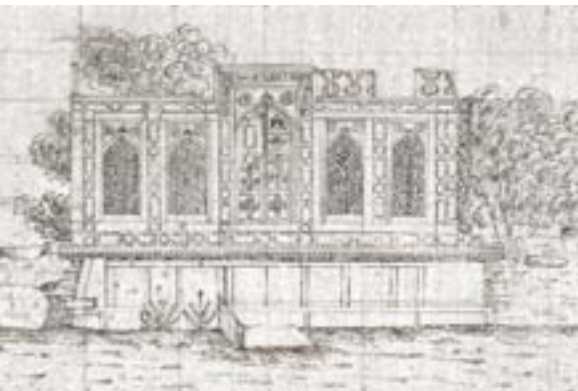
In March 2002, the Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC) signed a Memorandum of Agreement with the then Transitional Administration of Afghanistan for a comprehensive programme of rehabilitation of Baghe Babur. The project was to be carried out through the Trust's Historic Cities Programme (AKHCP), with 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 works, a fact that has been much appreciated by the residents of Kabul.



Babur's grave in 2002, prior to conservation works.

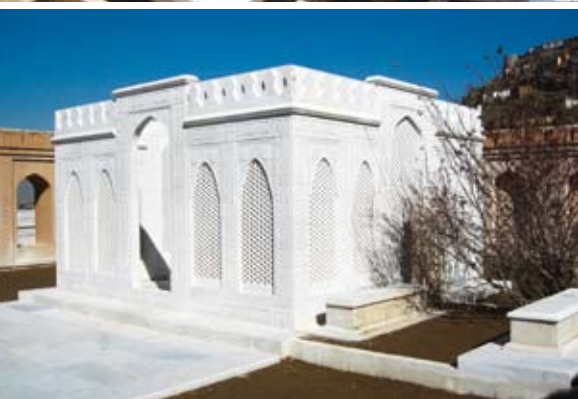
Wilhelm Rieck's picture of the upper terraces from the north of Kabul, c.1922.





Charles Masson's 1832 drawing of Babur's grave enclosure.

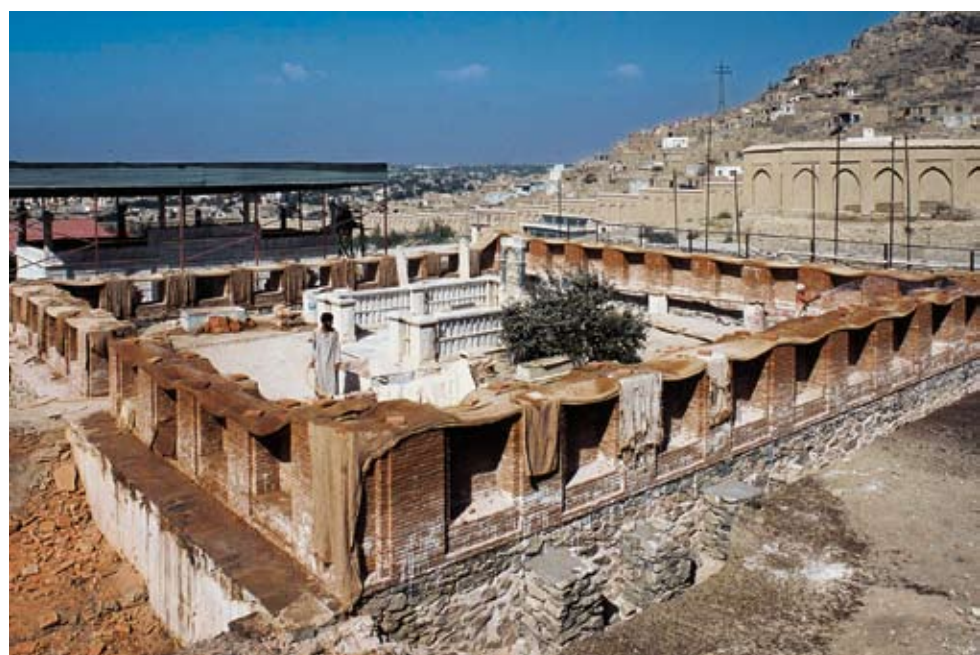
Craftsmen finishing the marble jali screens, and the completed marble inner enclosure. (See also picture, top page 24.)



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 century. In parallel with clearance of rubble and waste from the site, the initial focus during 2002-2003 was on surveys of the existing topography of the thirteen 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 (which contains an elaborate chronogramme confirming the date of Babur's death in AH 937), few original elements of the grave seemed to have survived. 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 1930s, 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 17-metre-square stone platform revealed by archaeological excavations, indicating 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



Above: Babur's gravestone within the reconstructed enclosure.

Below: The completed reconstruction from the north, with outer (brick) and inner (marble) enclosure.

Left page: The outer brick enclosure under reconstruction in 2005 on the original stone platform, which was rediscovered during archaeological excavations.





The west elevation of the Shahjahan Mosque prior to and during replacement (below) of the marble facing.



platform. Measuring some 4.5 metres 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 the grave of Babur's son, Hindal, 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 in which reference is made to the site as '*this theatre of heaven, the light garden of the angel king*'. 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 iron sheeting.

Around 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 1990s has been left visible.

Left: A mason prepares a marble structural element as part of repairs to the war-damaged roof of the Shahjahan Mosque.



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 Abdul Rahman, the pavilion had fallen into disrepair by the 1970s.

Looted and burned during the factional fighting in 1992, initial repairs were made in 2003 by UN-Habitat and an Afghan organisation, DHSA (Development and Humanitarian Services for Afghanistan). The restoration of the pavilion was then completed by AKTC in 2005, and since then it has been used for a range of official functions and cultural events. Its re-use will be closely linked to that of the Queen's Palace, which stands nearby.

The restored Shahjahan Mosque and Babur's grave enclosure from the south, with informal housing on the hillside, behind the repaired perimeter walling.

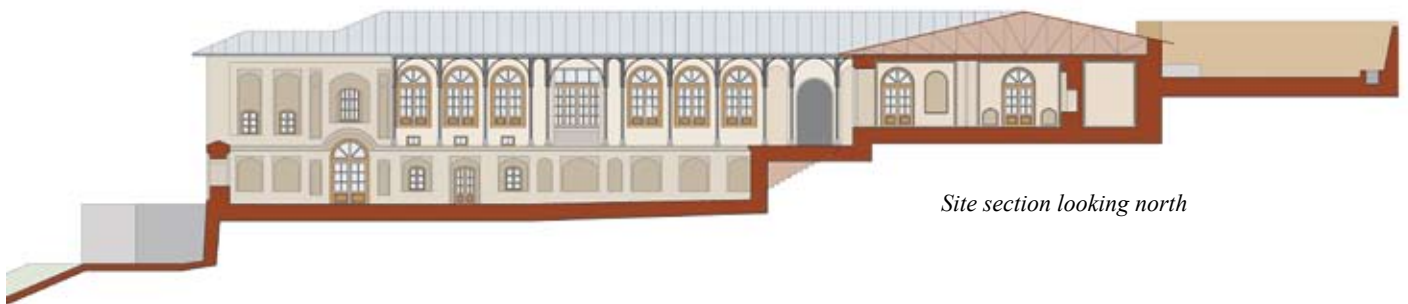


RECONSTRUCTING AND ADAPTING THE QUEEN'S PALACE

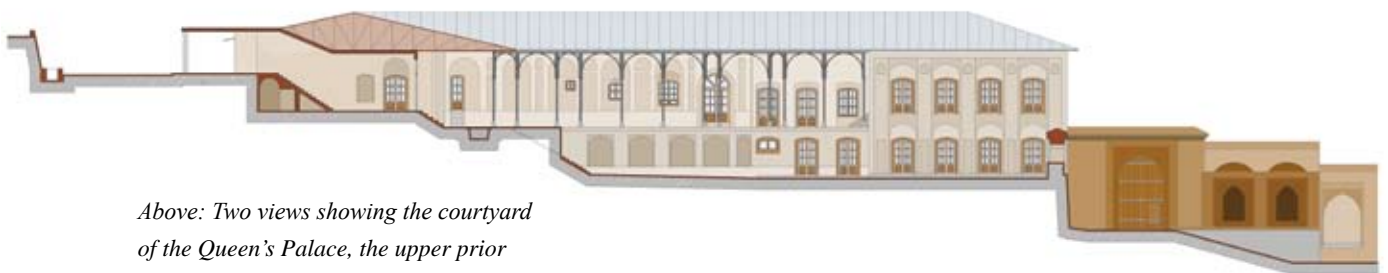
While Babur and his successors might have camped on platforms similar to that found beside the pavilion, the *haremsrai*, or Queen's Palace, would appear to have been the first permanent residential structure in the garden. Built in the 1890s by Amir Abdur Rahman Khan in a local style permeated by European influences, the complex provided secluded quarters for the royal family around a central courtyard open to the west, offering sweeping views of the garden terraces below it and the plain of the Kabul River.



With the building occupying the south-eastern corner of the site, pedestrians and horse carriages entered across the upper terraces of the garden. Historic photos show other buildings linking the *haremsrai* 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 *haremsrai* subsequently served as a school and a military store. The complex was looted and burned during inter-factional fighting in 1992, and only the ruined walls were left standing, with traces of the original plaster decoration. Following



Site section looking north



Site section looking south

Above: Two views showing the courtyard of the Queen's Palace, the upper prior to reconstruction, and the lower in 2006, during the course of the works, with a theatre performance going on.

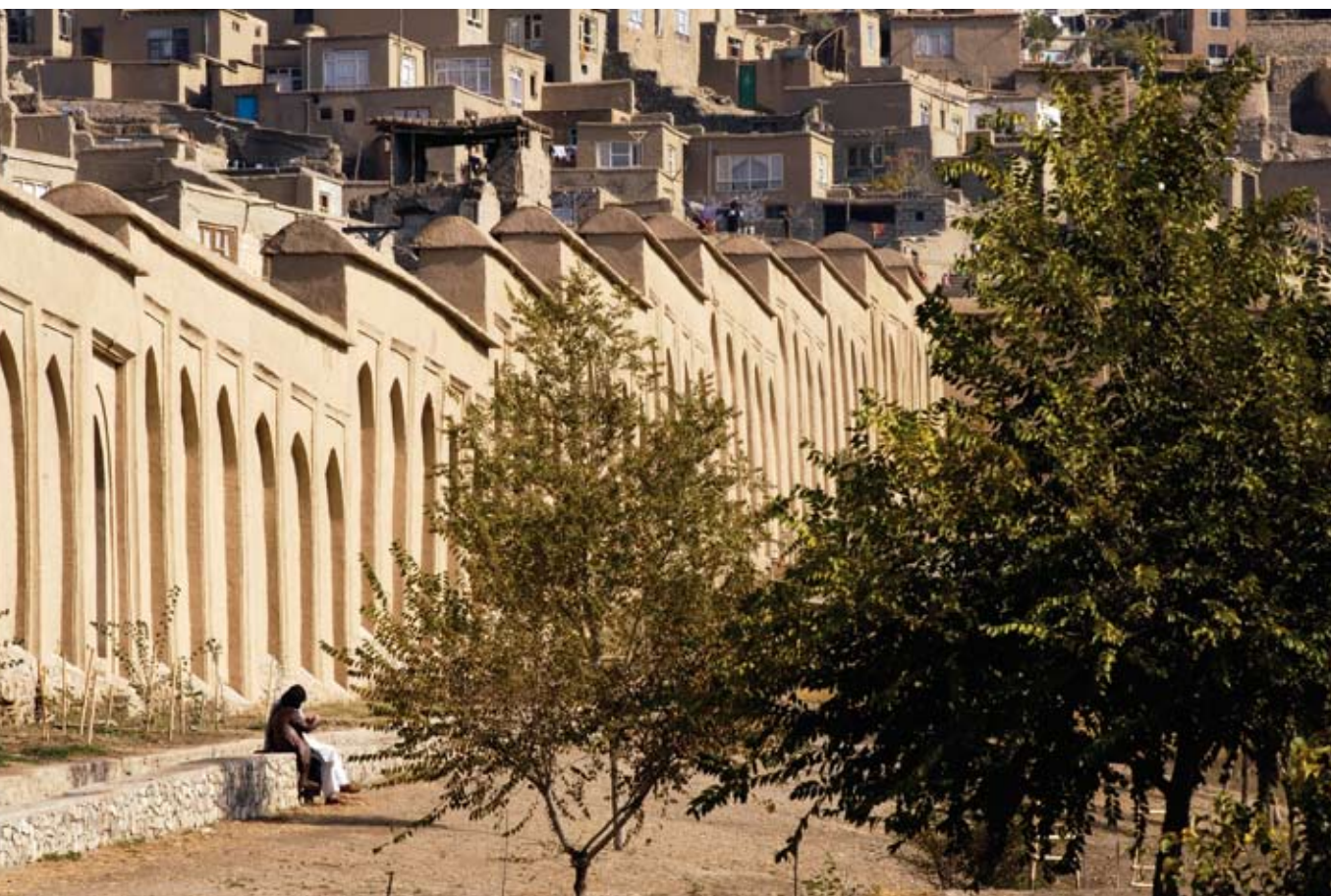


the clearing of unexploded ordnance and mines, the collapsed sections of the *haremserai* roof were removed and the entire complex surveyed. One space to have escaped destruction was a brick-domed *hammam*, whose decorated plaster was restored in 2004. Following consolidation of the ruined structure in 2005, work began on the redevelopment design, based on the footprint of the original structure and referring to historic photographs.

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. Moreover, this has provided an opportunity to develop the skills of a sizeable team of Afghan craftsmen in a range of building techniques, including brick vaulting, joinery, decorated plasterwork, marble flooring and stone carving. It is envisaged that the restored *haremserai* and its large courtyard will be a focus for public events, the revenue from which will be used to meet the costs of upkeep of the garden.



The northern verandah of the Queen's Palace nearing completion and, below, workers levelling the upper garden terraces prior to laying of turf.



Reconstructed northern perimeter wall, with informal settlement on the slopes above.

Reconstructing mud-brick arches between pakhsa piers in the perimeter wall.



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 eight metres high and over two metres thick) were re-built or repaired in the traditional manner. An important secondary objective of this work was the generation of employment among displaced families who were then returning to their homes in the neighbourhood.

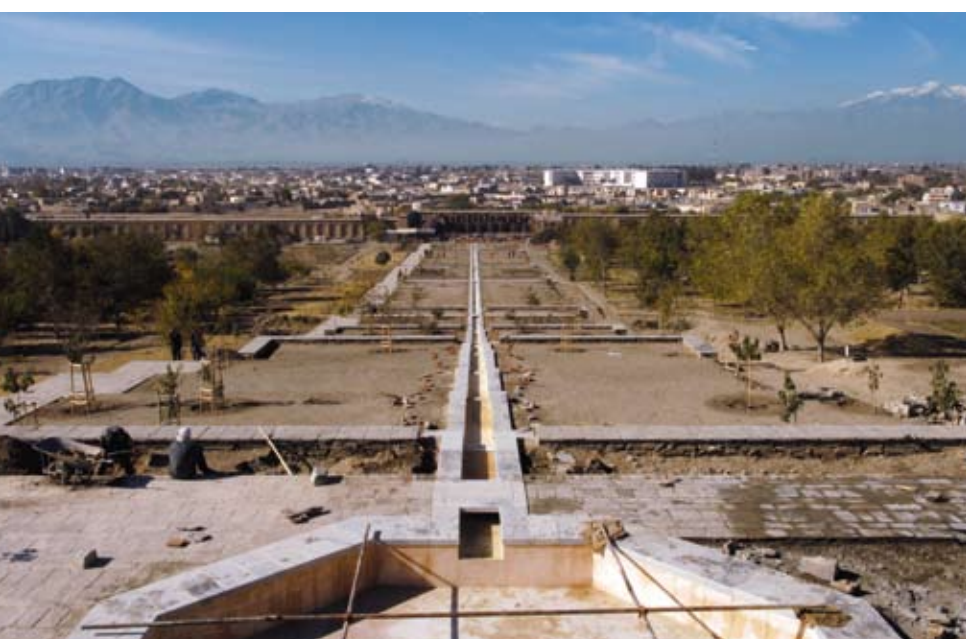
In order to understand the original nature of the landscape, six seasons of joint archaeological excavations were undertaken by the German



Archaeological Institute and the Afghan Institute of Archaeology. Architectural elements, from gravestones to parapets and waterfalls, 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 ten-metre-square tank which is now partly covered by the veranda of the pavilion but 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, and sections of terracotta drainage pipe, as well as remains of 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 three carved-marble waterfall elements of matching dimensions, which had been re-used as gravestones, were also discovered.



Above left: The central axis viewed from the east during rehabilitation, with the octagonal brick Mughal-era pool being excavated in the foreground, and Nader Shah's fountains, prior to their being dismantled.

The reconstructed octagonal pool and water channel along the central axis, with stone paving and initial re-planting under way in 2005.



Together, these finds have enabled the team to 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 one progresses up through the site. Having passed through the lower entrance on the bank of the Chardehi River, and entered 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

Workmen laying a stone pavement around one of the marble-edged tanks on the central axis and, below, the reconstructed octagonal pool on the ninth terrace.





this, it is possible to perceive the full extent of the orchard terraces of the garden, rising more than 20 metres up the hillside. On the outer edges of this lowest terrace, copses of walnuts and plane trees will 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 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

Installation of one of the marble waterfalls, carved to dimensions of fragments found on the site, and water flowing down from the upper terraces.



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.

On the level above the pavilion, the marble-clad western wall of the Shahjahani Mosque represents an important visual element, as do the re-built dry-stone retaining walls that run across the width of this part of the garden. Cypressess 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

The pavilion above the restored central axis, looking east, in the first year of planting.

The garden terraces are once again a popular place for family picnics.





The new caravanserai complex uses traditional brick-masonry techniques. Below, the building near completion.

above, where they provide shade around the grave of Ruqayya Sultana Begum, against a backdrop of the towering perimeter walls.

SUSTAINABILITY ISSUES

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. While entry charges continued to be levied by the municipality for the garden and the public swimming-pool, this revenue barely covered the wages of the gardeners, let alone the costs of maintenance of the monuments and landscape. In order to ensure that the future operation of Baghe Babur is sustainable, it will be vital to identify appropriate ways of raising adequate revenue from its various facilities. In addition to funds generated through entry charges and use of the new swimming-pool, the restored pavilion, the new *caravanserai* and



the reconstructed *haremserai* all offer opportunities for rental for suitable cultural and social functions. Based on a conservative projection of returns from all facilities, it is foreseen that the garden could, with effective management, be self-sustaining after three years of full-scale operation.

RECONSTRUCTING THE *CARAVANSERAI*

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 the 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 Shahjahan.

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. Located at the bottom of the garden, the *caravanserai* building now serves as the main entrance for visitors coming from the city side. Drawing on traditional built forms and local brick-masonry techniques, it houses an exhibition and information centre, offices, commercial outlets and public facilities.

AREA DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES

In his memoirs, Babur describes how he 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 emerging 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



The new public swimming-pool adjacent to the caravanserai, which replaced the old swimming-pool that had encroached upon the garden. Below, a stone construction detail of the facilities.





Newly built storm-water drain with pathways in the informal settlement on the slope above Baghe Babur.

Efforts have been made to improve access to safe water for the community living around the garden.



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 five 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 grew with the influx of refugees and rural migrants.

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, over the past year, been matched by widespread private investments in housing repairs and extensions, even by owners who have no legal title to 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.

In parallel with the upgrading work, mapping and baseline surveys have been conducted in a wider area, extending over five *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 nine out of ten families living in the plain being dependent on unsafe water from shallow wells and having very limited access to 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. 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.

While ensuring that the historic landscape and buildings are safeguarded for future generations, the Baghe Babur rehabilitation programme has fostered a better understanding of the needs of present inhabitants. Investments in conservation and rehabilitation continue to attract Afghan and international visitors to the garden, and have generated significant employment among the neighbouring communities, whose own investments in self-built housing have been enhanced by infrastructure upgrading. In adopting an inclusive approach towards both the conservation and planning work, efforts have been made to foster appropriate development in this highly sensitive environment. Many visitors to Baghe Babur remark on how the site represents for them a symbol of cultural recovery in Afghanistan. The challenge continues to be to find a balance between the symbolic and the actual, to retain the unique character of the landscape and monuments while ensuring access to the public for recreation and education and contributing to the recovery of the wider area around the garden.



A planning meeting, involving municipal officials and community representatives, in the pavilion.



