

# Protecting Historic Treasures

U.S. Support for  
Cultural Preservation  
in South and  
Central Asia



# Introduction

The people of South and Central Asia bring together some of the world's oldest cultures and religious traditions; their ethnic and cultural diversity reflect the changes that swept across the region over centuries. Today's national boundaries are relatively modern inventions in a land crossed by generations of traders and pilgrims, nomads and warriors. As South and Central Asia join the emerging global economy, historians and archeologists are exploring and unveiling the area's diverse intellectual and cultural heritage. Simultaneously, many ancient structures, artifacts and traditions are in precipitous decline, making preservation an urgent priority.

Americans are more concerned than ever about cultural preservation. Public and private museums, philanthropic organizations and educational institutions in the United States have made extraordinary efforts to preserve, understand and interpret South Asia's history and cultures. In addition, the American people are active partners for historic preservation in South and Central Asia through the U.S. Ambassador's Fund for Cultural Preservation. Although this booklet documents only a few of these projects, it illustrates the broad scope of these efforts and America's deep respect for this multi-cultural region's historic and contemporary achievements.

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*Performance  
of the Pally Baul  
Samaj Unnayan  
Sangtha,  
Bangladesh.*

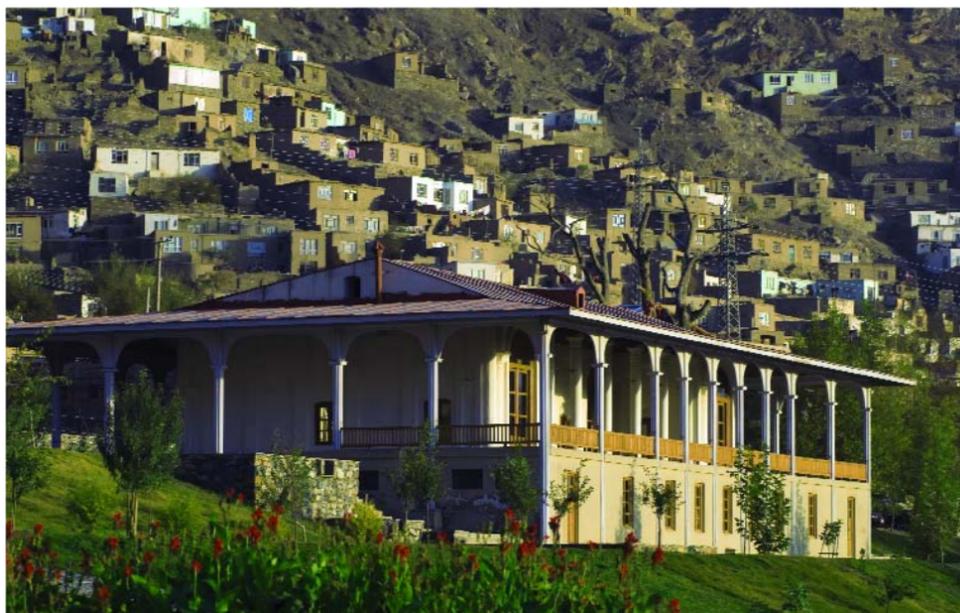
## Pavilion Restoration in the Bagh-e Babur

The Bagh-e Babur, once again one of Kabul's most popular green spaces, was constructed by Babur, founder of the Mogul dynasty that ruled much of South Asia from 1526-1857. The 11-acre "hanging garden," set on a hillside and watered by a stream from above, became the emperor's burial place after his death in Lahore in 1530. His heirs regarded the garden as a place of reverence.

At its center stands a 100-year-old pavilion, restored by the Aga Khan Trust with the help of international donations including a grant in 2002 from the U.S. Ambassador's Fund for Cultural Preservation. Jolyon Leslie, Chief Executive Officer of the Aga Khan Trust for Culture in Kabul, speculates that the late 18th century Afghan ruler Amir Abdur Rahman Khan, whose palace stands near the pavilion he built, may have used it to entertain guests. Above it sits Babur's tomb and a small, white, marble mosque commissioned by Shah Jehan, 17th century builder of the Taj Mahal, to honor his ancestor.

With the decline of the Mogul empire in Afghanistan, the garden deteriorated, and an earthquake damaged its structures in 1842. Despite restorations by Khan, and later by King Nadir Shah in the 1930s, decades of neglect, 23 years of war and four years of drought destroyed the gardens and damaged the buildings. The pavilion lost its doors, windows and roof, although the ceiling survived. Matching the surviving ceiling tiles was one of the most difficult parts of the process and they are now among the building's most eye-catching features for Kabulis who enjoy the replanted garden.

High above the Bagh-e Babur sits the Noon Gun hilltop platform. For more than 100 years, a pair of 19th century cannons were fired each day to mark the noon hour. In 2005 the U.S. Embassy provided financial support for the reconstruction of this historical site.



## Restoration of the Mullah Mahmood Mosque

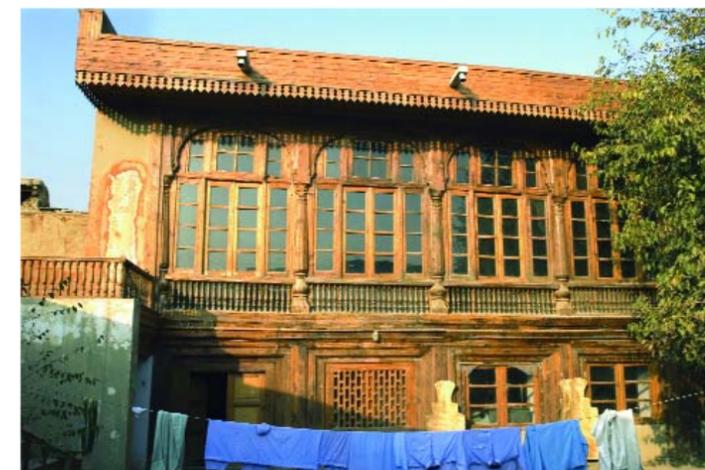
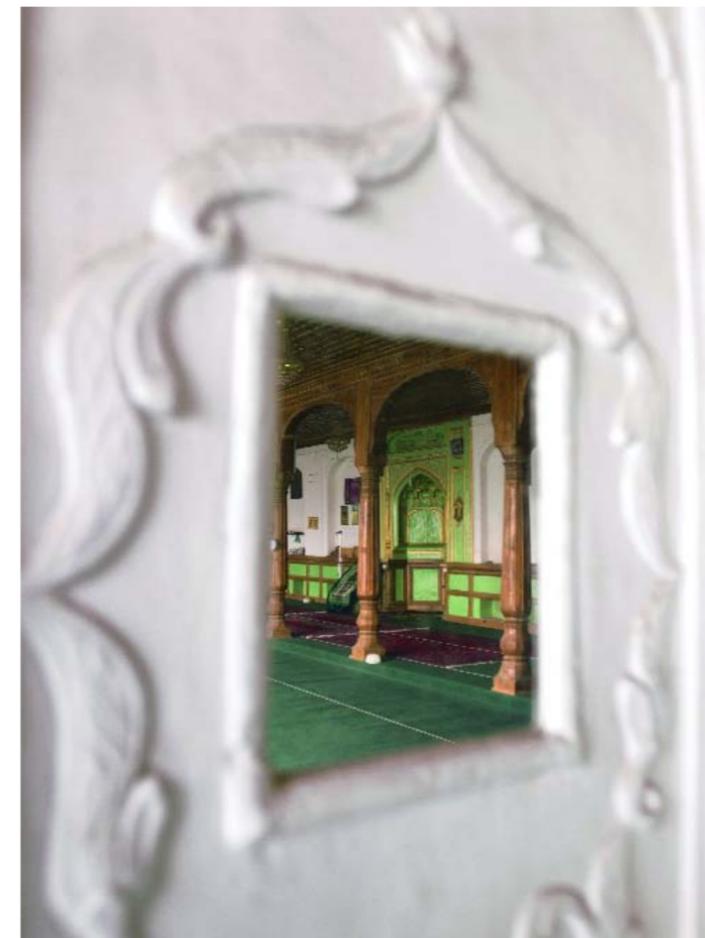
The Mullah Mahmood Mosque is a treasure brought back from the brink of oblivion. A rare 17th century wooden structure at the heart of Kabul's old city, the mosque serves ordinary Kabulis in a neighborhood still scarred by the factional conflict that tore the city apart in the mid-1990s. Doors, window frames and rare cedar paneling from the ceiling were used for firewood or blown away by gunfire and shrapnel.

Currently named for a 20th century religious leader, the mosque's original builder and year of construction remain unknown. Its two-story design includes a trapdoor so the sermon can be repeated to the congregation on the ground floor. More than 1,000 devotees can worship in the huge edifice.

Initial restoration work, to keep the structure from collapsing, was funded by a grant from the U.S. Ambassador's Fund for Cultural Preservation in 2003. An additional U.S. Embassy grant helped complete the job, and the mosque reopened in 2004.

The first task was to remove unexploded ordnance and human remains. Thousands of bricks, baked to match the originals, fit into the rebuilt floor. Gypsum plasterwork was restored based on surviving decoration. It took 45 workers more than two months just to remove 400 years of oil paint from the cedar pillars, which had also been damaged by shrapnel and bullets. Every pillar in the mosque today is original.

Workers dismantled the roof, replaced the lintels and restored the paneled ceiling, although cedar matching the quality of the original is no longer available in Kabul. They also rebuilt the heating system and cleared an underground drainage channel running all the way to the Kabul River. With the help of the United States, the historic Mullah Mahmood Mosque is again open to the public.





# BANGLADESH

## Preserving the Baul community of wandering minstrels

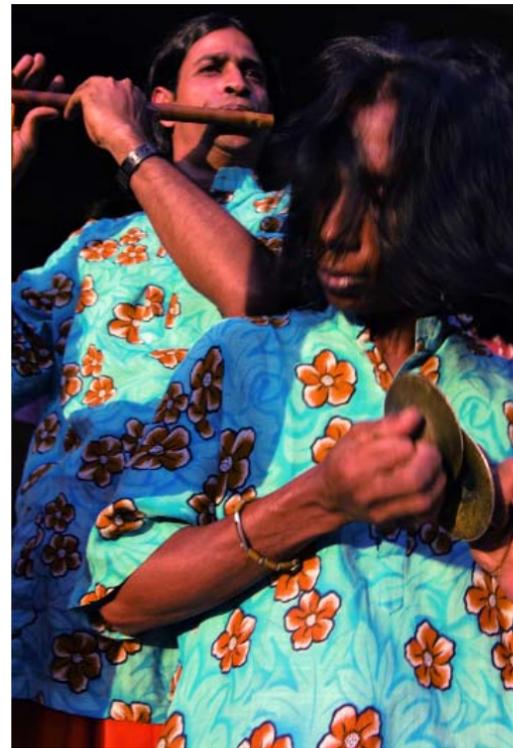
**S**ong is one of the most important expressions of Bengali culture, infusing society at all levels. It is a 1,000-year-old tradition that has been perpetuated by a sect of wandering musicians who travel from village to village singing songs of love for God.

Their repertoire also includes songs for particular events such as festivals, weddings, rice planting and husking. Embracing elements of Sufism and Hinduism, the Baul tradition pre-dates the Islamic period and embodies the pluralism which is an important element of Bengali identity.

But the indigenous music tradition of Bangladesh has become marginalized with the

arrival of satellite television, videos and the Internet. Bauls have found their services less in demand and the rich heritage of their songs is in danger of being lost.

To safeguard the community and record its oral heritage, a group of Bangladeshis formed the Pally Baul Samaj Unnayan Sangstha. The U.S. Ambassador's Fund for Cultural Preservation gave the organization a grant in 2005 to record hundreds of Baul songs and to fund a group of performers to tour schools throughout the country. The Sangstha also collected examples of Baul instruments, and used grant funds to support workshops to pass on skills to a new generation of performers.



## Preservation of metal casting traditions at Dhamrai, Bangladesh

**B**angladesh boasts a rich tradition of fine, handmade, metal casting work, producing religious statues, decorative animal figures and household utensils. But the craft has faltered due to competition from cheap, manufactured wares and the decline of the industry's custodians, the Hindu community, since partition of the Indian subcontinent in 1947.

This 2,000-year-old tradition survives in 30 villages around Dhamrai, in the Manikganj district

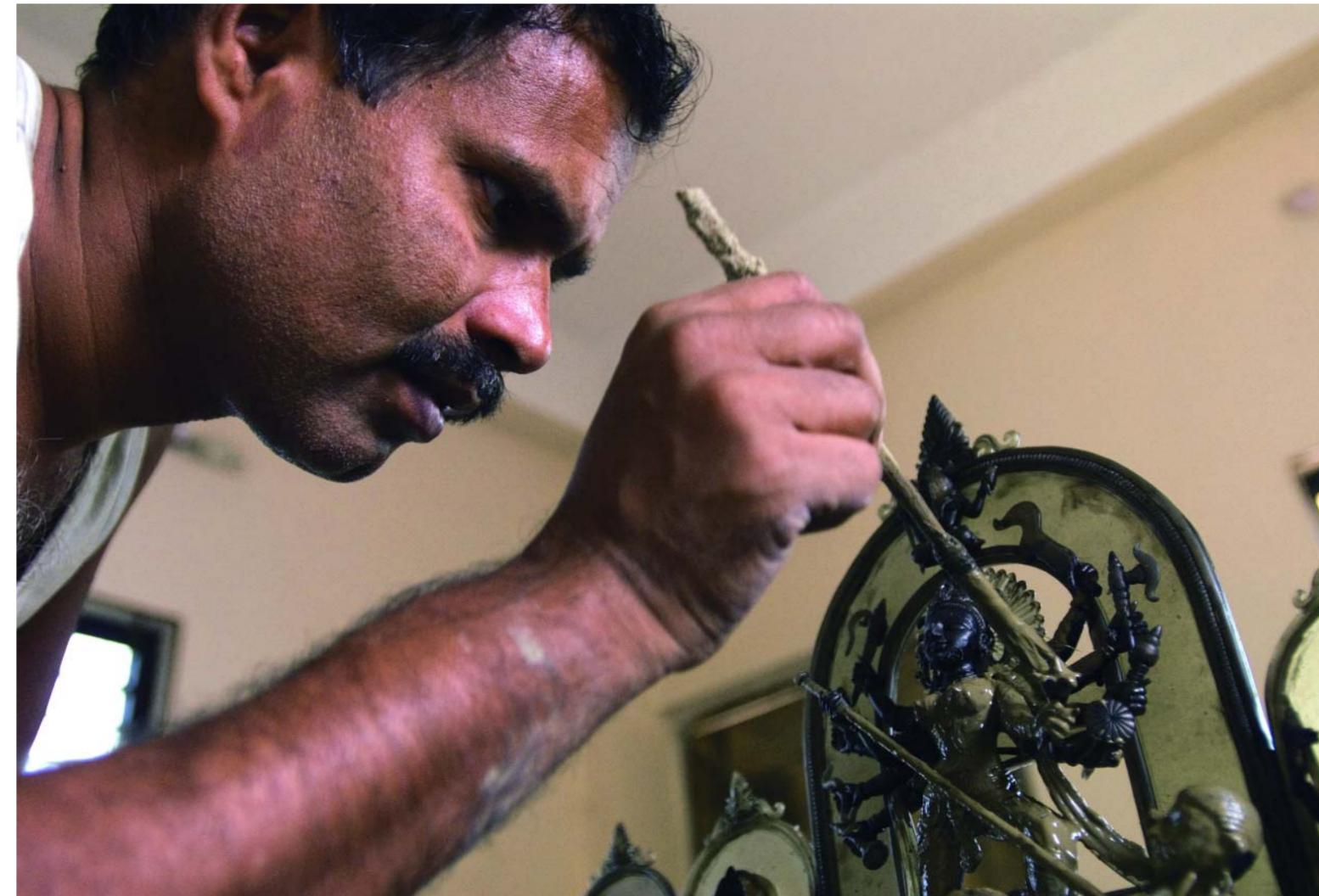
northwest of Dhaka. Here, metal crafters practice four traditional handmade processes: lost wax, clay casting, sand casting, and hammering. By the late 1990s, only a handful of artists were practicing the most demanding of these techniques, the lost wax method.

Sukanta Banik, who represents the fifth generation of a metal trading family, formed the Initiative for the Preservation of Dhamrai Metal-Casting to keep the tradition of metal casting alive in Bangladesh. A grant from the U.S. Ambassador's Fund for Cultural Preservation in 2003 helped Banik and other artisans build an apprenticeship program and a skills exchange program with metalworkers doing similar work in Nepal. The grant also helped promote the craft as an important part of the country's national heritage; Bangladesh Television broadcast a 20-minute program produced with the assistance of the American Center, and a Dhaka art gallery held an exhibition on the art form.

"After the exhibition, lots of Bangladeshis came to see our workshop," says Banik. "Before, we only had four or five artisans making small pieces, and the quality was not so good. Now the artists compete with each other to make better pieces. It's the confidence of the artists that is different now, because of the recognition."

The lost wax method of metal work has a special place in Bangladeshi culture. Sculptors first make a model of the image using a mixture of paraffin and wax. They coat the image with a layer of fine clay from a nearby riverbank, followed by two coarser layers. The mould is placed in a kiln, where the wax is allowed to melt out, and replaced with molten bronze or brass. Once the image has cooled, the craftsman removes it from the mould, files and polishes it. Because the mould has to be broken, each piece is unique.

A small image takes 15 to 20 days to produce, while a big one may take six to eight months.



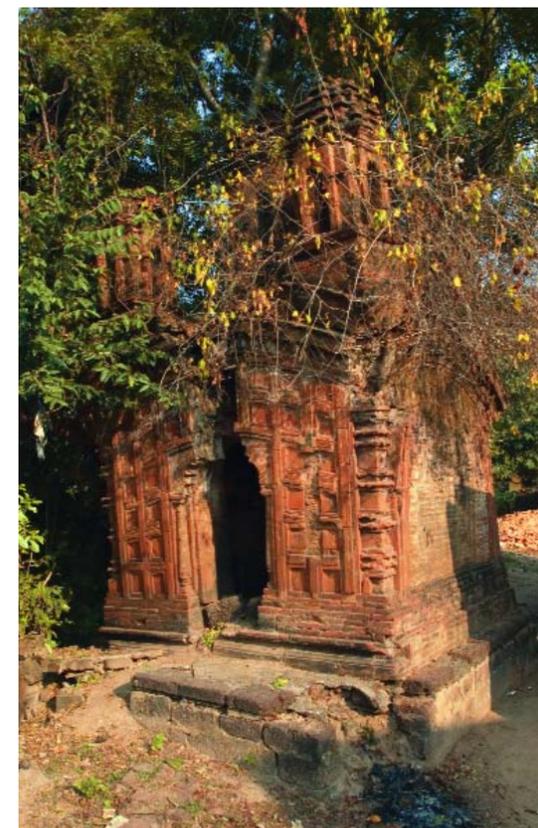
## Cultural and architectural heritage survey at Bishnupur, India

The town of Bishnupur in West Bengal is home to a rich array of unique architectural, artistic and crafts traditions that grew out of its strategic location between the coastal states of Bengal and Orissa. Historically, the Bishnupur culture fused elements of Bengali, Orissan and Islamic architecture, most strikingly manifested in the style of local temples. The terracotta and laterite structures have curving rooflines that evolved from the style of nearby wood, bamboo and straw houses. This distinctive roof is surmounted by one or more pinnacles, an innovation derived from Orissan temples. Each shrine is either fronted or surrounded by a gallery, and pierced by an entrance consisting of three arches, suggesting Islamic influence.

Some of the more eye-catching temples are covered with vividly carved terracotta panels. Artisans developed the technique of baking the area's rich red earth to make long lasting bricks or sculptures resembling stone carvings. The panels portray the life of the Hindu god, Vishnu, and his principal avatar, Krishna, as well as aspects of everyday life: bullock carts, river boats and hunting scenes.

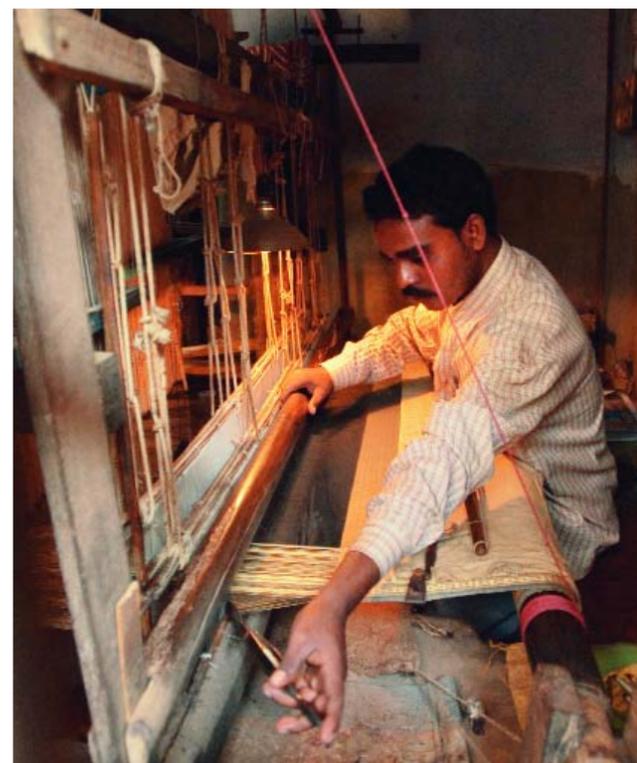
The Archaeological Survey of India manages 14 of the temples, but there has been no overall conservation plan for the town, which flourished as the capital of the Malla kingdom between 1622 and 1758. Smaller, unprotected temples dot the urban area and show signs of neglect or inappropriate alteration.

Bishnupur also gave rise to a silk sari weaving tradition that is still practiced, a classical style of music known as Bishnupur gharana, and a miniature painting school. Other local traditions include a unique game using round playing cards hand painted with pictures of deities, and the Bankura horse, a long-necked figure popular all over India, fashioned from metal or terracotta. Handicrafts are also made from bell metal and embellished with conch shell.



The town's relatively remote location, 140 kilometers northwest of Kolkata, meant that its traditions and monuments survived relatively undisturbed. But in the face of recent regional growth and change, a grant from the U.S. Ambassador's Fund for Cultural Preservation in 2005 allowed the West Bengal chapter of the Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH) to develop a comprehensive plan to preserve the architecture, arts and crafts of Bishnupur. The plan will be used to support the listing of the town as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

"Bishnupur holds a unique place in Bengal's cultural map," says architect Anjan Mitra, who coordinated the project. "It is the only historic Bengali urban complex in the true sense because nearly all other places are colonial towns."





## Renovations for the Namgyal Institute of Tibetology, Sikkim

On a leafy hillside on the edge of Gangtok, the capital of Sikkim, the Namgyal Institute of Tibetology houses 45,000 Tibetan manuscripts. It is the third largest collection of its kind in the world and thus, an important reference center for Buddhist scholarship. The institute's museum contains a rare collection of statues, ritual objects, traditional art objects, thangkas (painted, woven and embroidered scrolls) and ancient manuscripts in Sanskrit, Tibetan, Chinese and Lepcha.

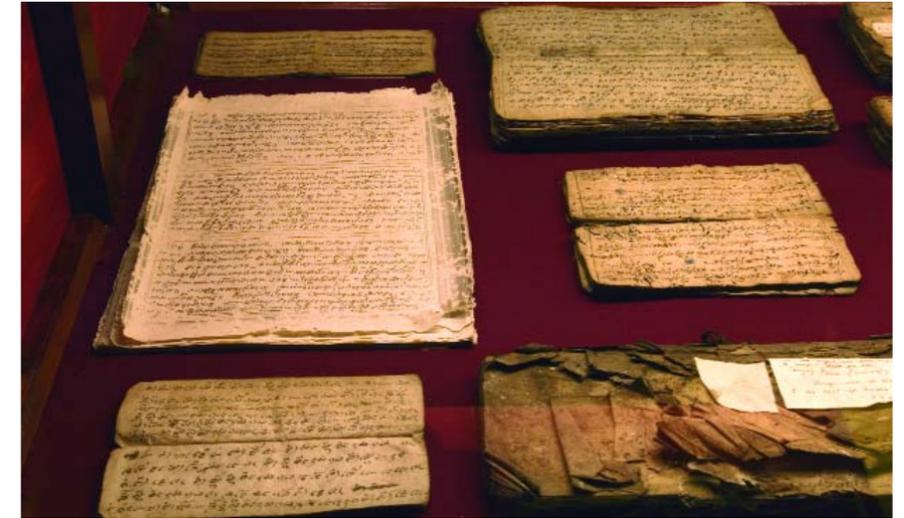
Created by the choegyal, or ruler, of Sikkim in 1958, the collection was mostly donated by the royal family. Parts of it were also donated by the government of India. "Scholars come from all over the world to use the collection," says the institute's director, Tashi Densapa. "Most of the manuscripts come from Tibet."

Bordering Bhutan and sitting astride the main route formerly connecting India with Tibet, Sikkim was a natural collection point for works of Tibetan art and literature. With the loss of much of Tibet's heritage and the recent growth of interest in Tibetan studies, the value of the collection has increased dramatically.

The three-story building also houses Tibetan Buddhist artifacts in a museum on its ground floor. These include thangka paintings, statues of gurus and deities, and tantric ritual objects.

After nearly 50 years in this heavy monsoon region and with the royal family no longer in a position to sponsor the facility, the institute was beginning to deteriorate rapidly. A grant in 2004 from the U.S. Ambassador's Fund for Cultural Preservation helped to address some of the institute's most pressing problems. In addition to waterproofing the room, the building was rewired, and dehumidifiers were installed in the library and museum.

The most visible part of the project was the redesign of the museum display to improve lighting and provide new cabinets that were built and painted in keeping with traditional Tibetan furniture design and decoration.





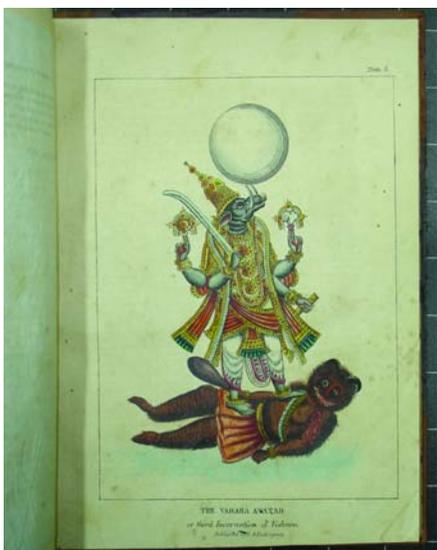
## Preservation of palm leaf manuscripts and rare books, United Theological College, Bangalore

Established in 1910, the United Theological College in Bangalore is one of India's leading institutions of religious studies. It has one of the finest religious studies libraries in South Asia, and a collection of 2,000 palm leaf manuscripts that is over 200 years old, written in several Indian languages. The manuscripts bear testimony to the rich cultural heritage of India in the 18th and 19th centuries. They include folk literature, native medicinal formulae, religious writings, astrological texts and astronomical facts. In addition, there are records of cultural practices and traditional systems of medical, veterinary and agricultural sciences. These manuscripts are impor-

tant materials for historical research and a treasure trove of ethnographic and historical information.

The college also has rare and historic written materials such as letters from Mohandas K. Gandhi; the first Tamil-language New Testament printed in India; and the writings of 18th century Tamil poet-singer Vedanayagam Sastriar of Tanjore.

In 2006, the U.S. Ambassador's Fund for Cultural Preservation awarded a grant to the United Theological College, for the preservation and micro-filming of the palm leaf manuscripts and rare books in the college's archives. This allows researchers to more closely scrutinize and use these important historic documents for the first time.



## Significant cultural landscapes along the Silk Road

The Silk Road was a vast network of routes across Central Asia that flourished during the first millennium of the current era. As much as it provided a link between China and Europe, the Silk Road also functioned as a trading network among neighboring communities and states. In terms of historical development, the movement of ideas and technology along the route was as important as the trading of goods.

The focus on Silk Road documentation to date has been on the conservation of remains of the towns that dotted the ancient trade network. But conservation architect Yelena Khorosh points out that the success of the route depended equally on the participation and cooperation of nomadic tribes who populated the desert through which the Silk Road passed. Nomadic groups were themselves important conduits for the movement of goods, information and technology in the area.

This is particularly true for Kazakhstan, where the northern Silk Road passed largely through thinly populated areas of desert and steppe. A project funded by the U.S. Ambassador's Fund for Cultural Preservation undertook a survey of cultural landscapes associated with the Silk Road in Kazakhstan, paying special attention to collecting evidence of nomadic cultures. The project, which runs from 2006 to 2007, consists of a survey of existing data and a field survey of likely sites.

Evidence of nomad cultures—such as houses, yurt platforms, burial mounds, the remains of wells, and petroglyphs—will be collected and the sites delineated and mapped to provide a basis for future protection.

Work is underway to compile an unprecedented "serial nomination" of sites associated with the Silk Road for a UNESCO World Heritage listing. Kazakhstani officials hope that the project will result in the nomination of the first trans-boundary World Heritage Site, stretching across China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan.

On the preliminary list no sites were listed for nomads, says Khorosh, who is project director for the survey, a UNESCO expert and an official at the Kazakh Scientific Research Institute on Problems of the Cultural Heritage of Nomads.

She says the concept of cultural landscape, which she describes as the common work of nature and man, needs to be more widely recognized in Central Asia, as nomads did not build monumental cultures. The current economic boom in Kazakhstan adds urgency to the need to identify and protect cultural landscapes, as mining, agriculture, housing and infrastructure projects are often launched without a preliminary archaeological survey. Many of the sites also face threats of flooding and salination due to extensive alteration of watercourses during the last century.



## Restoration and display of the Kyrgyz State Museum precious metals collection

The small vault in the basement of the Kyrgyz State Museum in Bishkek houses a remarkable collection of jewelry and artifacts that make up the funeral hoard of a Hun noblewoman who lived and died sometime between the first and fifth centuries.

Each object is highly unusual and exquisite. There is a diadem with a fringe of gold tubes, the crown still partially inlaid with semiprecious stones; a group of medallions set with cornelian once used to decorate a bridle and saddle; jade bangles; a pair of rings; and a breast ornament decorated with amber and a central figure carved out of garnet. By far the most striking object is the funeral mask, an eerie face of beaten gold with cornelian eyes and tree shaped decorations on the cheeks and nose.

Although the collection was discovered in 1958 and has been exhibited in Europe and Japan, it has never been put on display for the Kyrgyz people. Because the Kyrgyz State Museum had inadequate security and display facilities, the collection was kept sealed in the vault.

Under a 2006 grant from the U.S. Ambassador's Fund for Cultural Preservation, the Centre for Museums Initiatives, an NGO, purchased display cabinets and modern security alarms so that the Kyrgyz people could see these interesting artifacts of their cultural history. Further, the project is making precise copies of the most important pieces in the collection, so that the originals can be protected from excessive handling and changes in temperature.

In addition to the 156 objects from the Hun tomb, the museum's precious metals collection includes: ancient Scythian artifacts, including two bronze sacrificial altar supports shaped like women, and brooches of gold plated bronze decorated with Buddha figures from the eighth and ninth centuries. A bronze Buddhist statue shows clear signs of Indian influence.

In addition to underscoring the country's diverse and rich historical and religious traditions, the collection showcases Kyrgyzstan's brilliant metalworking tradition.





## Restoration of the Eid Mosque, Male', Maldives

The 18th century Eid Mosque is the most finely carved of the four coral mosques in Male', the capital of the Maldives. The unique features of the mosque, probably built on the site of an ancient Buddhist temple, reflect the history and geology of the Indian Ocean archipelago.

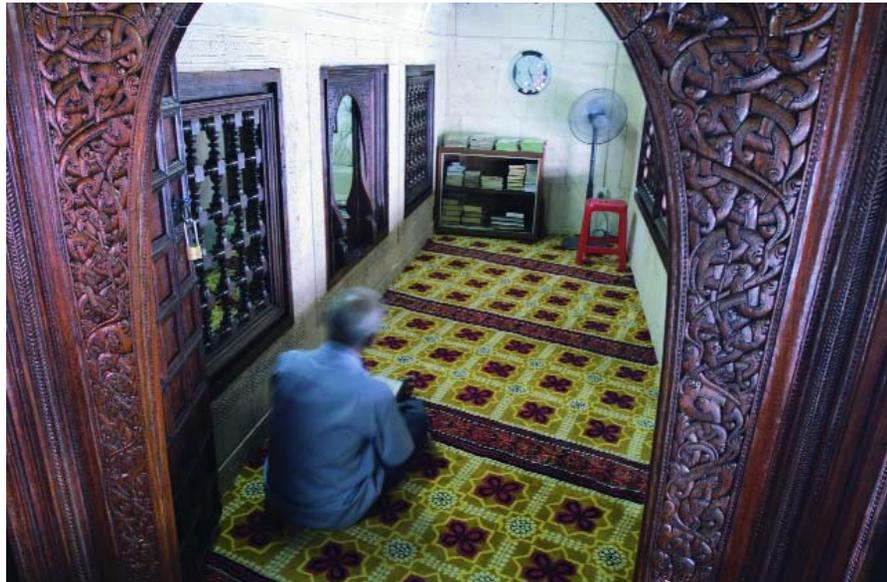
The Maldives officially converted to Islam in 1153, having previously been Vajrayana Buddhist. The Eid Mosque does not face Mecca directly, but follows the alignment of its probable predecessor temple. Lined carpet inside the mosque shows devotees the correct direction in which to pray.

Early mosque designs in the Maldives echoed the temple designs of India and Sri Lanka, and it was not until the 19th century that people were able to travel easily to Mecca and bring back more classical designs. The Eid Mosque represents the older style, in strong contrast to more modern places of worship in Male'.

Blocks of coral were used relatively commonly for construction of prestigious buildings in the Maldives. Although soft when first taken from the sea, the stone quickly hardens as it dries, making the carvings durable. Along with intricate geometric patterns, a lock and key device features prominently on the mosque's carved exterior, possibly symbolizing Islam as the key to paradise. The windows and door frames are made of finely carved wood, with verses from the Quran forming intricate lacquer decorations on the ceiling.

Coral mining has been in decline in the Maldives since a partial ban in 1999, and with no remaining crafts people skilled in the art of coral carving, the Eid Mosque was seriously deteriorating due to lack of maintenance and abuse from the elements before it was damaged further by the December 2004 tsunami.

The Mosque was restored with a grant from the U.S. Ambassador's Fund for Cultural Preservation in 2005. The main work was to clean dirt and pollution from the coral surfaces.



The woodwork had been badly damaged by insects, and had to be restored and re-lacquered. Recent tile work in the forecourt was separated from the walls to prevent contamination of the coral, but the forecourt and surrounding walls were left in place to accommodate a modern congregation that cannot fit into the tiny mosque.



## Restoration of the Kal Bhairav statue, the Kageshwar Mahadev Temple, and the Lakshmi Narayan Temple in Hanuman Dhoka Durbar Square, Kathmandu

**C**rammed with temples built under royal sponsorship since the 16th century, Durbar Square in the heart of Kathmandu has long been used for ceremonies symbolizing the power of the King. It also serves more informal purposes: as a marketplace, an area for social interaction and a venue for speeches and demonstrations.

It is also the site of three major projects under the U.S. Ambassador's Fund for Cultural Preservation.

Unfortunately, pollution, poor maintenance and unregulated development in recent decades substantially degraded Durbar Square and other monuments in the Kathmandu Valley, now recognized collectively as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The valley is also in a seismic zone; poor restoration work following major earthquakes throughout the 19th century and in 1934 left some monuments weak and vulnerable to the elements.

A comprehensive plan to restore the temples in the square, known as the Kathmandu Durbar Initiative, began in 2000. The work is managed by the Kathmandu Valley Preservation Trust, the only non-governmental organization in Nepal registered in the field of heritage conservation. With local and international support, the trust has rescued more than two dozen significant monuments, collected data and provided training in conservation.

Every day at dawn, people gather in front of the statue of the Kal Bhairav to pray, burn incense, and make offerings of flowers and rice. The black-skinned, three-meter tall demonic figure inspires awe

and devotion as he crushes a prostrate foe beneath his feet and wields a sword in one of his six hands.

"Bhairav is an incarnation of Shiva. There are many different forms of the deity, but this one is associated with justice. People would come here to resolve disputes," says Rohit Kumar Ranjitkar, the preservation trust's conservation architect, who oversaw the statue's restoration, substantially funded by a grant from the U.S. Ambassador's Fund for Cultural Preservation in 2003-2005.

The stone statue was discovered during excavation work for a water supply system in the 17th century and installed in the square by King Pratap Malla. It is believed to be about 800 years old. Part of the restoration work involved removing inappropriate recent additions to the site, including concrete and marble walls added in the 1980s. Using historic photos as a guide, restorers removed brickwork that had been done to repair damage caused by the 1934 earthquake and replaced it with more authentic stone.

The U.S. Ambassador's Cultural Preservation Fund entirely paid for restoration of the nearby Kageshwar Mahadev Temple in 2004-2005. Built in 1711 by Queen Bhuvan Lakshmi in memory of the late King Bhupalendra Malla, the temple was probably originally a pagoda-style structure in the distinctive local Newari style. Kageshwar, a Hindu deity in the form of a crow, is an incarnation of Shiva. The temple is unusual because its pagoda-style ground floor is surmounted by a Shikhari-style dome. Rohit Kumar Ranjitkar says that this was probably added after the temple was damaged in an earthquake in the early 19th century. Poor restoration work after the 1934 earthquake led to further degradation of the Temple. The timbers, roof and walls had to be renovated. Mud mortar was reconstructed to reduce vulnerability to future earthquakes, and further structural strengthening was carried out. Inappropriate red wash was removed from the walls and the original wood carvings were restored.

The Lakshmi Narayan Temple, a small shrine adjacent to the square's oldest monument, the 16th century Jagannath Temple, was also reconstructed by the U.S. Ambassador's Cultural Preservation Fund. The original temple was destroyed by the 1934 earthquake and rebuilt in a simpler style that did not match the original, so the new one was constructed according to photographic records. Particular attention was paid to the carved wood decoration on the doors, door frames and cornices.

The restoration of Kal Bhairav, the Kageshwar Mahadev Temple and the Lakshmi Narayan Temple represent a significant contribution to the rejuvenation of Durbar Square, helping preserve Nepal's rich history and identity.



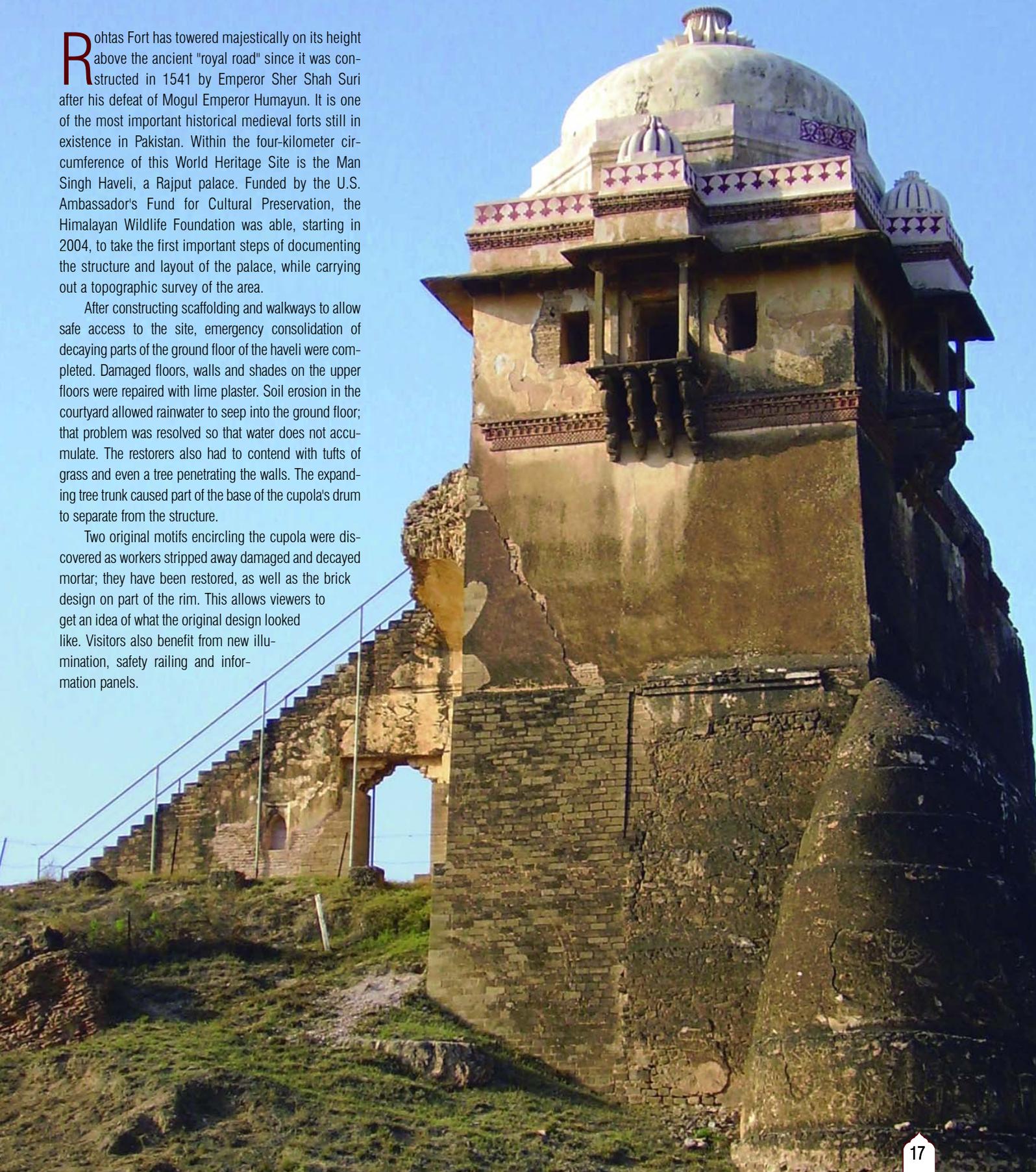
## Restoring Man Singh Haveli, the defining symbol of Rohtas Fort

Rohtas Fort has towered majestically on its height above the ancient "royal road" since it was constructed in 1541 by Emperor Sher Shah Suri after his defeat of Mogul Emperor Humayun. It is one of the most important historical medieval forts still in existence in Pakistan. Within the four-kilometer circumference of this World Heritage Site is the Man Singh Haveli, a Rajput palace. Funded by the U.S. Ambassador's Fund for Cultural Preservation, the Himalayan Wildlife Foundation was able, starting in 2004, to take the first important steps of documenting the structure and layout of the palace, while carrying out a topographic survey of the area.

After constructing scaffolding and walkways to allow safe access to the site, emergency consolidation of decaying parts of the ground floor of the haveli were completed. Damaged floors, walls and shades on the upper floors were repaired with lime plaster. Soil erosion in the courtyard allowed rainwater to seep into the ground floor; that problem was resolved so that water does not accumulate. The restorers also had to contend with tufts of grass and even a tree penetrating the walls. The expanding tree trunk caused part of the base of the cupola's drum to separate from the structure.

Two original motifs encircling the cupola were discovered as workers stripped away damaged and decayed mortar; they have been restored, as well as the brick design on part of the rim. This allows viewers to get an idea of what the original design looked like. Visitors also benefit from new illumination, safety railing and information panels.

PAKISTAN



## Restoration of arcades adjoining the Wazir Khan Mosque

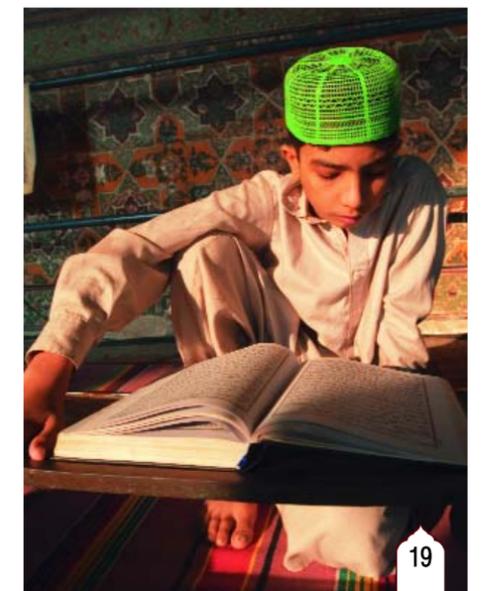
The Wazir Khan Mosque is an architectural gem hidden amid the chaos of Lahore's old city. The mosque was built by its namesake, the governor of Lahore, during the reign of the Emperor Shah Jehan in 1634-45.

"The Wazir Khan Mosque is unique in the sense that all the embellishments that were used in various Mogul monuments were employed at this one place," says Shahbaz Khan, director of the Punjab State Archaeological Department. These decorative devices include frescoes, stonework, tile mosaics and patterned brick paving. The floor of the courtyard uses 25 different brick patterns, while the walls are decorated with brilliant floral frescoes and verses of the Quran rendered in mosaic. The fine brickwork on the walls interspersed with geometric patterns in yellow, blue and green make the building appear lively and inviting.

Arcades on either side of the main gate are another unusual feature of the mosque. Originally, these were vaulted shops built in a courtyard at the entrance and rented to traders to fund maintenance of the mosque. While the main building and prayer plaza await major renovation work, the arcades have been completely restored with two grants, one in 2003 and the other in 2004, from the U.S. Ambassador's Fund for Cultural Preservation. Brick and plasterwork have been restored and repainted in the original colors, and decorative flourishes have been returned to their original condition.

The arcades serve as a pleasant entrance to one of the most exceptional monuments in Lahore and as a meeting place for regular visitors. When major renovations to the mosque are complete, the Punjab government plans to rent the stalls to traders once again.

"We want to revive the old custom," says Khan, whose department oversaw the restoration. "We want to establish a bazaar featuring Lahore's traditional crafts. Craftsmen would sit here and demonstrate their work, such as bookbinding, woodworking, metalwork and jewelry making. They could make decorative tiles like those used in the mosque, and fresco style paintings for sale."





## Restoration of the Alamgiri Gate, Lahore Fort



**B**uilt by the Emperor Akbar on ancient fortifications whose origins are unknown, Lahore Fort is one of the great Mogul structures, along with the Red Forts of Delhi and Agra in India. The massive Alamgiri Gate, which Emperor Aurangzeb added to the western side in 1673, is one of the Lahore Fort's outstanding features. It faces the Badshahi Masjid, reputed to have once been the biggest mosque in the world, and also built by Aurangzeb.

The fort, containing royal apartments, fountains, marble pavilions and a mosque, is a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and has recently been restored with funds from Pakistani and international donors. A 2006 grant from the U.S. Ambassador's Fund for Cultural Preservation helped with the restoration of the Alamgiri Gate, a familiar site to every Pakistani because it appears on the reverse side of Pakistan's 50-rupee currency note.

The central arch of the gate is large enough

for the emperor to enter the stronghold mounted on an elephant and is flanked by two enormous fluted bastions decorated with lotus devices and topped by domed pavilions.

"It's important because it's the main entry for all tourists. It symbolizes Lahore itself. It's on the cover of every book published about Lahore," says Shahbaz Khan, director of the Punjab State Archaeological Department, which directed the restoration.

The archeologists repaired damaged brickwork at the rear of the gate and restored stone carvings. But the most visible part of the project is the restoration of the original plasterwork, which was done with lime, then polished with semi-precious stones. Khan says this assures the façade of the gate will remain protected and virtually maintenance free, as the annual monsoon rains will wash off the dirt, just as the original builders had planned it.

## Finding and conserving Buddhist murals at Taxila

**T**axila, an important city on the Indus River that served as the crossroads for three major trade routes, was a cradle of Mahayana Buddhism and was a Hindu and Buddhist religious center from the 6th to the 5th centuries BCE. Alexander the Great passed through in 326 BCE, collecting from Taxila's king a supply of war elephants for the planned conquest of India. From the second century BCE, Greek religion, Zoroastrianism, Hinduism, Jainism and Buddhism were practiced in Taxila. It is now a multiple-location UNESCO World Heritage Site northwest of Islamabad.

Excavations near Taxila, at the site of a 5th century BCE monastery called Jinan Wali Dheri, took on exciting new importance when archeologists discovered rare Buddhist wall murals, the only such

Buddhist era paintings ever discovered in Pakistan.

With assistance provided by a grant from the U.S. Ambassador's Cultural Preservation Fund, conservationists working with Pakistan's Department of Archeology and Museums took measures to protect the monastery from illegal excavation, fortify structural remains, and protect moveable antiquities from further destruction, manhandling and displacement. The Fund also helped with erection of appropriate access facilities and an effective drainage system to prevent decay caused by heavy rainfall.

The project offers a valuable opportunity for researchers, archeologists and experts to engage with each other and learn preservation techniques. An additional goal of the project is to help



local communities assume stewardship of their heritage resources.

The project has preserved an important aspect of Buddhist history in a region where the rich cultural diversity of Greek, Indian and Central Asian influences merged to produce unique art forms.

## Conservation of ramparts defending Sirkap's ancient stupas

**S**irkap has a rich, cosmopolitan history. It was built by the Bactrian King Demetrius after he invaded India about 180 years before the current era. Later it became a seat of Buddhist learning and is now a UNESCO World Heritage Site, situated opposite Taxila.

In 2001, one of the first grants under the U.S. Ambassador's Fund for Cultural Preservation was

provided to conserve and restore exposed stone walls around two major Buddhist stupas among the ruins of Sirkap. Stupas are funeral mounds, usually associated with the death and nirvana of Buddha. Many of those at Sirkap show Greek artistic influences.

Sirkap and Taxila illustrate different stages in the development of a civilization on the Indus River

that was influenced by Persian, Greek and Central Asian cultures. Because Demetrius considered himself a Greek, he laid out Sirkap according to the grid plan characteristic of Greek cities. The ruins are similar to those of Olynthus in Macedonia and Halos in Thessaly. They are organized around one main avenue and 15 perpendicular streets. The surrounding wall is nearly five kilometers long.



## Survey of Matara cultural properties affected by the 2004 tsunami

The trading enclave of Matara, on the southern tip of Sri Lanka, dates from the 13th century and has a particular importance in the colonial history of the island. From the 16th to the late 18th century, first the Portuguese, then the Dutch and finally the British used Matara as an administrative center for the export of goods. Ivory and spices passed through the town on their way to Europe, and elephants were exported to the Middle East.

By the early 19th century, the ports of Galle and Trincomalee had eclipsed Matara, yet it remained an important commercial center, with a new class of Sri Lankan entrepreneurs building solid vernacular style houses on the riverbank opposite the 18th century Dutch fort, in an area known as Kumarawatunga Mawatha.

With this mixture of Dutch, Portuguese, British and indigenous architecture, Matara is considered to be of particular historic importance. In recent years the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS), in collaboration with the Centre for Heritage and Cultural Studies at the University of Moratuwa, developed a conservation plan for the area. "We were losing some of the authenticity of the heritage buildings due to ad hoc modernization," says Pali Wijeratne of ICOMOS.

To make matters worse, waves from the December 2004 tsunami engulfed buildings in the fort area, and swept upriver to hit Kumarawatunga Mawatha. Although the solid colonial structures largely survived the inundation, many were flooded with seawater and filled with sand. Furniture, vehicles and equipment were destroyed, and in many cases more recent outbuildings housing bathrooms and additional accommodation collapsed.

Based on the existing conservation plan for the district, architecture students from the Centre for Heritage and Cultural Studies conducted a survey of tsunami damage with a grant from the U.S. Ambassador's Fund for Cultural

Preservation in February 2006.

The survey covered 31 buildings, including a Dutch church, a Buddhist temple and private homes. While the church and the temple have been partly restored, homes still bear signs of tsunami damage such as salt emerging through walls. One house was demolished.

Few owners have the resources to conserve their buildings properly, and the tsunami substantially added to the challenge. The government gave small grants to some owners, enabling them to do only the most urgent work.

"We have made local property owners aware of the cultural value of their property, but they don't have the funds to do the repairs," says Wijeratne. "As a start, we have given them measured drawings of their property and an estimate of the cost of repair.

"Our project plans to renovate one or two houses, just to show how it's done," he adds. "It's critical we do something of that nature now. Otherwise, some of these historic structures may be lost."



## Survey of the Western Monasteries, Anuradhapura, Sri Lanka

Anuradhapura is a place of monumental Buddhist stupas and massive reservoirs set amid emerald rice fields, reminders of a major civilization that arose soon after Buddhism came to Sri Lanka in the third century before the current era. The culture was heavily steeped in Buddhist monastic practice, and produced at Anuradhapura some of the most important religious monuments on the island over a period of about 1200 years until its decline in the 10th century.

The scale of the development was immense. The Jethawanaramaya Stupa, 120 meters tall, is the biggest Buddhist stupa in the world and the tallest brick building ever built. Monasteries had capacity for as many as 3,000 monks and evolved sophisticated designs which included ritual, residential and service buildings.

Beginning in the sixth century, Anuradhapura was home to reclusive communities of monks. Until recently, the monasteries in which they lived remained undocumented, occupying an overgrown area on the periphery of the old city.

A survey of the Western Monasteries was

begun in 2006 under a grant to the Sri Lankan Central Cultural Fund by the U.S. Ambassador's Fund for Cultural Preservation. The survey is serving as a basis for development of a comprehensive conservation plan and contributing to the documentation of Anuradhapura, only about 25 per cent of which has been surveyed.

The architecture of the monasteries is substantially different from others at the site. The style, which emerged in the sixth century, consists of two buildings raised on twin platforms connected by a bridge. One building, always surrounded by a moat, is likely to have been residential, while its twin would have been a prayer hall. The design took advantage of existing topography, building on rock outcrops where natural depressions provided a water supply for the moat. All 13 complexes were probably built within the space of one century. "This is a completely unique style of architecture. It only exists in Sri Lanka," says Wajira Fernandez, the conservation architect in charge of the survey.

The absence of kitchens, refectories and

libraries found in other monasteries suggests that the monks practiced an extreme asceticism, living by begging and focusing on meditation rather than study, says Fernandez. Decorative carving is almost completely absent from the buildings.

Prior to the beginning of the survey in December 2006, the buildings were overgrown and in an advanced state of collapse. The project is the first comprehensive survey of the site, and includes a digital map using GPS locations, digital drawings of the monuments, photographic documentation and preparation of a technical report on the condition of the site.

Mapping boundaries and identifying encroachments are a top priority. Fernandez says that the site has suffered in recent decades from pilferage by nearby villagers. At one monastery site, all that remain are grooves in the rock showing where the building once lay.

The survey is being implemented through the Central Cultural Fund, Sri Lanka's principal heritage management body, established in 1980 with the Prime Minister as Chairman.



## Restoration of the reclining Buddha of Ajina Teppa, National Museum of Antiquities, Dushanbe

Tajikistan's State Museum of Antiquities in Dushanbe showcases the remarkable role played by the Central Asian country as a trading center and crossroads of cultures from the time of Alexander the Great through the Islamic period. Displays include artifacts from the Bactrian civilization, the Silk Road city of Panjakent and the ancient metal working center of Sarazm.

But the most remarkable piece in the collection is the 14-meter reclining Buddha of Ajina Teppa, dating from around the sixth century, which occupies a room of its own on the second floor. Restored in 2001, partly with a grant from the U.S. Ambassador's Fund for Cultural Preservation, it is the most significant Buddhist statue remaining in Central Asia.

The statue was discovered in 1966 at the archeological site of Ajina Teppa, in southern Tajikistan. While murals and smaller statues from the site were shipped to the Hermitage Museum in Leningrad, now St. Petersburg, in Russia, the Buddha was considered too large to be moved such a long distance. Instead it was cut into about 100 pieces and stored in the basement of a museum in Dushanbe.

The restored statue was revealed to the public on September 7, 2001, during Tajikistan's 10th independence anniversary celebrations and just six months after the Taliban had demolished the Bamiyan Buddhas in Afghanistan, about 300 kilometers from Ajina Teppa.

The Buddha was a product of the Kushan civilization, an empire that thrived from the first to the sixth centuries of the current era, ruling parts of what is now Pakistan, Iran, Afghanistan, Central Asia and India. The Kushans were the first to give the Buddha human representation, rather than using symbols such as the stupa or the wheel. Parts of the clay Buddha's face, robes, feet and one hand remain intact.



The U.S. grant also provided for secure display cabinets and climate control equipment in other parts of the museum, regarded as one of the finest in Central Asia.

Alongside Buddhist artifacts, the museum's collection shows how Zoroastrianism, Hinduism and Hellenistic culture found a home in pre-Islamic Tajikistan. A statue of the Hindu god Shiva and his consort Parvati, recovered from the Sogdian city of Panjakent, is the northernmost evidence of Hinduism yet discovered in Central Asia.



## Reconstruction at the Khoja Mashhad Madrassa and Mausoleum, Shahritus

At Shahritus, about 100 kilometers south of Dushanbe, the U.S. Ambassador's Fund for Cultural Preservation is supporting a three-phase project to restore the mausoleum and mosque that were once attached to the Khoja Mashhad Madrassa, built about 1,200 years ago and among the oldest Islamic sites in Tajikistan. Little is now left of the madrassa, but a surviving portico and remnants of its walls show that it was a large building. The mosque and mausoleum, twin structures at the rear of the site, are mostly intact, with fine domes and intricate brickwork.

The initial grant was used to improve drainage and strengthen the foundations of the buildings. Under the next two phases, restorers will install a new damp course and restore the above-ground structures. Work on the mosque is continuing as archeologists excavate the mausoleum, removing graves to an outside cemetery before renovating the walls and dome.

"We are not sure exactly when the complex was built, or who it was named after," says Rahmatjon Salomov, the architect in charge of the restoration. "But it was a very important site for the early spread of Islam in this part of the world. The graves inside the mausoleum may belong to early Muslim missionaries in the region. The mausoleum dates to the ninth century, and the mosque to the 11th."

The madrassa, which stood at an important site straddling the road between Iran and Afghanistan, was a center of education in the 10th century, and its students included Nosir Khusrau, a famous Tajik poet and traveler who helped to spread Islamic culture in the region. The site, which lies in a field outside the town, has long been a pilgrimage center, attracting groups every Friday and Wednesday.

"We are trying to replicate the original brickwork as far as possible," says Salomov. "We are not sure, but we think we have discovered the original technique for making the bricks." The modern version of the technique consists of mixing a certain clay with plant fiber, pressing it into bricks, sealing it in plastic for two days, then firing it for a week with coal.

Ultimately the team hopes to rebuild the madrassa that was abandoned about 200 years ago.



## Support to the Sarazm archaeological site

ying in far western Tajikistan near the border with Uzbekistan, Sarazm is one of the most important ancient sites in Central Asia. Discovered in 1976 after local farmer Ashorali Tailonov stumbled across an axe head in a field outside the modern city of Panjakent, the settlement has been under excavation for 30 years.

"This is the oldest city site in Central Asia, nearly 5,000 years old," says Abdurrauf Razzoqov, the archeologist in charge of the site. Objects found here suggest links between Sarazm and parts of what are now Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran and Turkmenistan.

With its prosperity based on agriculture and animal husbandry, the settlement developed into a major center of metallurgy, ceramics and jewelry. Mining and bronze working became important activities, utilizing nearby deposits of copper, tin, gold and silver. High quality ceramics were produced and jewelry was crafted using lapis lazuli, cornelian and shells from the Indian Ocean.

A grant from the U.S. Ambassador's Fund for Cultural Preservation to the Sarazm Archeological Museum to renovate the field museum and create new storage facilities at the site has improved conservation, augmented public understanding of the site's significance, and benefited a remote part of Tajikistan approximately 250 kilometers from the capital, Dushanbe.

The grant supported renovation of the site's field museum, which had fallen into disrepair. This included installation of display cabinets to showcase a wide range of artifacts including a bowl from Baluchistan, the neck of a jar from Iran and a hook fashioned from flint, whose use and origin are uncertain.

Some of the grant funds were used to create secure, climate-controlled storage facilities for the more than 10,000 artifacts excavated from the site after fire destroyed the previous storage facility at the city's archeological museum. "These priceless artifacts were being stored temporarily in the mayor's office," says Razzoqov. "We really needed proper storage for them."

Funds were also used to produce pamphlets, a website and a short documentary on the history of Sarazm.



## Restoration of the Sultan Tekesh Mausoleum at Kone Urgench

There is a legend that Kone Urgench, sitting at the crossroads of the ancient Silk Road, was destroyed and rose again seven times. It's a story that has some basis in fact. The trading post was conquered by Arab invaders in 712, and rose to greatness as a cultural center after becoming the capital of the Khorezm civilization in 995. The city survived a sacking by Genghis Khan's armies in 1221, only to be devastated again by Timur in 1388, its people sold into slavery and its master craftsmen shipped off to Samarkand. The last inhabitants departed when the Khivian khans moved the city to New Urgench, now over the border in Uzbekistan, during the 17th century.

Yet somehow, a collection of extraordinary monuments managed to survive the ravages of time and conquest. Towering above them all is the Kutlug Timur Minaret, at 62 meters the tallest such tower in Central Asia, built by King Kutlug Timur who reigned from 1321 to 1336. Adjacent to it, soaring 30 meters, with an unmistakable conical blue tiled roof, is the mausoleum of Sultan Tekesh, who ruled Khorezm from 1172 to 1200 and greatly expanded its reach as far as northern Iran. A lover of music and culture, Tekesh built a library, a mosque and a madrasa in the city, contributing to its fame as a cultural center as described by the Arab traveler Ibn Battuta, who visited in 1333.

With the minaret, several mausoleums and a number of other monuments still standing, the area was declared a Turkmenistan State Historical and Cultural Park in 1985, and receives about 100,000 visitors a year. The Sultan Tekesh Mausoleum is one of the most significant monuments at the site, and is an outstanding example of pre-Mongolian Central Asian architecture. One of its unusual features is its conical hipped roof rising above a coffered drum divided into 24 bays. The roof is supported by an inner dome and was originally surrounded by a frieze of inscriptions from the Quran. Only fragments survive.

Although the foundations and walls were reinforced in the early 1990s, the restoration of the dome presented particular problems. The height of the roof, the complex task of rebuilding



the dome and the recreation of decorative tiles matching the originals presented conservators with problems that had not previously been addressed in Turkmenistan.

Between the ravages of time and an inept 1928 restoration attempt, the dome was in a state of near-total collapse. In such an extensive complex with many monuments requiring restoration, resources were not available to tackle the problem. Through a grant from the U.S. Ambassador's Fund for Cultural Preservation to the Turkmenistan government's historical preservation administration, the dome was rebuilt and

repairs were done to the walls of the mausoleum. In the process, conservation staff gained valuable experience and knowledge to continue restoration projects throughout the complex.

As part of the project, the internal arch structure was rebuilt prior to reconstruction of the outer dome. Bricks were baked on site, but early experiments to match the blue glaze failed to achieve a permanent color. Majolica imported from Russia has since been used to color the bricks. During the project, students from the Turkmenistan State Academy of Arts were trained in restoration skills.

## Restoration work at the shrine of Seyit Jamal ad-Din

The shrine of Seyit Jamal ad-Din, which lies east of Ashgabat, has been a place of pilgrimage since the 15th century as the burial site of a popular saint and teacher.

Immediately behind the tomb once stood a mosque whose portico contained a highly unusual feature—a mosaic over the entrance depicting two golden dragons, a surprising inclusion given the Islamic ban on the depiction of living creatures. Legend has it that the dragons appeared to protect the site when it was under attack, centuries ago.

The mosque sustained calamitous damage when a severe earthquake hit the region in 1948, destroying the capital city. The mosque adjacent

this region was Zoroastrianism, whose adherents built small triangular-shaped towers of stones. This practice has reemerged and in addition to a small mosque behind the ruin, there are hundreds of such small structures in the area, some of which had morphed into more stable rectangles or symbolic structures. Other examples of unconventional contemporary practices can be seen, such as shrines for parents praying for the birth of children. The shrine is also used as a place of remembrance by relatives of the more than 100,000 people who lost their lives in the earthquake.

But the rubble around the shrine and on the portico made it difficult for visitors to pay their



to the shrine was devastated, with only some walls left partly standing.

The tomb of Seyit Jamal ad-Din was buried beneath rubble, and the portico collapsed from the base of the arch. The mosaic was shattered, its pieces mixed with the rubble covering the tomb. The remnants of decorative patterns made of inlaid blue tiles, still visible on the ruined walls, give a sense of the beauty that was lost.

One particularly interesting feature of the site today is the way in which traditional beliefs continue to be expressed alongside Islam. For example, one of the 15th century religions of

respects. A grant to the Turkmenistan government's historical preservation administration from the U.S. Ambassador's Fund for Cultural Preservation in 2001, paid for the rubble to be cleared from the forecourt. Visitors can now be seen touching their palms and forehead to the tomb of Seyit Jamal ad-Din before circumambulating it.

At the same time, pieces of the mosaic were rescued from the rubble and the work of art was partly reassembled. It is now on prominent display in the National Fine Arts Museum, along with paintings depicting the mosque as it stood before the earthquake.



## Restoration of the Ak Saray Ding Tower near Dashoguz

The Ak Saray Ding Tower stands about 14 meters high surrounded by graves and cotton fields in a remote part of northern Turkmenistan, five kilometers from the Uzbekistan border. The only archeological survey of the monument, in the 1950s, dated the tower to the 11th or 12th century, and speculated that it might have been a watchtower for a vanished city.

According to Turkmen legend, the tower was built by a local rich man, whose daughter died before she was able to marry. When the girl came to him in a dream and asked him to build a kejebe, a saddle with a canopy traditionally placed on a bride's camel during Turkmen wedding processions, he built over her grave the Ak Saray Ding Tower, unique in its kejebe appearance.

Thus, the tower has long been revered by locals for its associations with tragedy, a father's love for his daughter and the purity traditionally associated with a young girl. A cemetery has sprung up around it, attracting pilgrims, particularly women who come to pray for marriage or children.

At the beginning of the 12th century, a respected religious leader noticed that the tower was close to ruin and urged people to try to save it. Not knowing what else to do, they piled mud around the bottom tier, which was in danger of collapse.

The building went into rapid decline again after the 1980s, and the Institute of History under the Cabinet of Ministers of Turkmenistan in Ashgabat received a grant from the U.S. Ambassador's Fund for Cultural Preservation in 2005 to restore the tower, excavate the site and disseminate information about its history.

Excavation began in 2006, and the structure that was uncovered led archeologists to believe that it may have been an entrance to a caravanserai, a traveler's rest stop, on the Silk Road, with the high tower serving as a guide for caravan drivers and a lookout post. But evidence of alterations also suggests that the function of the structure might have changed over the centuries.

Conservation efforts began with complete reconstruction of the bottom tier after careful removal of the mud buttress, as it was discovered that the tower had been built without a proper foundation. About 20,000 mud bricks matching the originals were baked for the project and cut to size at the site, and a type of earth believed to have been used for the original structure was used to make the mortar.

The middle tier of the tower will be left in its original condition as far as possible, while the double dome will be partly rebuilt. Ilyas Paltayev, a history teacher from the area, says that local people are thrilled with the project. "I also bring my students here to teach them about their history, and to show them how tradition can be preserved," he says.

## Conservation and restoration techniques at the National Carpet Museum, Ashgabat

We have a saying, "Spread your carpet and I'll tell you what you have in your heart," says Tuvakbibi Durdieva, director of Turkmenistan's National Carpet Museum. "All the wisdom and art of the Turkmen people is represented in Turkmen carpets. Carpets are valued as more than just floor coverings, but as expressions of our history."

Turkmen carpets are considered to be among the finest in the world, with a dense symbolism using over 2,000 motifs to convey concepts such as tribal history, geography and philosophy. Seven major colors are used, with red, the predominant color, appearing in more than 200 shades.

With the desert country's population consisting largely of nomadic tribes until relatively recently, carpet production was a key aspect of domestic life, with carpets used for flooring, insulation and furnishing in traditional Turkmen huts, as well as for saddle bags, prayer rugs and gifts on ceremonial occasions such as weddings. Different regions gave rise to individual schools, with the water-rich areas of the Caspian Sea and Amu Dariya River making strong use of greens and blues.

The carpet museum, one of the few of its kind in the world, is housed in a converted shopping center in Ashgabat, and is home to about 2,000 carpets, including the oldest known Turkmen carpet woven 400 years before the current era. Many important old carpets damaged in a 1948 earthquake were collected by the museum, but the expertise and resources to restore them have been lacking.

A grant from the U.S. Ambassador's Fund for Cultural Preservation in 2005 enabled the museum to research traditional techniques for carpet restoration, to train in-house restorers and to build a facility to wash and dry the carpets.

Traditional expert weavers advised the restor-



ers to collect a desert herb called chogan and boil it in rainwater that had been allowed to stand for three days. This produced a Ph-neutral detergent that could be used to wash the carpets without causing further damage. Laundry and drying areas were constructed and several experts have been trained in restoration, a painstaking process of re-weaving damaged rugs at a rate of about half a square centimeter per day.

The museum has restored about 70 carpets, nearly half of them under the grant project. With 500-600 carpets in need of restoration, the task has barely begun. Among the carpets so far restored is one of the oldest pieces in the collection, a 13th century torba, or wall bag, from

the Ahal Teke tribe.

"We say carpet weaving is like digging a well with a needle. So you can imagine, restoration is much harder," says Durdieva. "A small piece can take four months."

Funds from the grant were also used to produce a website and a book about the collection in Turkmen, Russian and English. The museum used funds to purchase a microscope to enable researchers to document carpets according to the density of their weave; carpets in the museum's collection average between 200,000 and 340,000 knots per square meter.

Interest in carpet weaving is undergoing a revival, partly due to a resurgence of national pride



since independence and partly because weaving is one of the few sources of income in rural areas. But carpet conservation techniques were little known, and in danger of being lost. Durdieva is confident that the restoration of carpets is now on a more solid footing, with a further 12 students having received basic training from the museum's experts. She also hopes to hold classes for the general public.

"I'm confident that these skills are safe now," she says. "Our ancestors conveyed this golden heritage to us, and it would be a great shame for us to lose such art."

## Protecting a desert fortress at Kampir-Tepe

Not far from the banks of the Amu Darya River near Termez are the remains of Kampir-Tepe, a vast complex dating from the post-Alexandrian period to the Kushan era (400 to 200 years before the current era). Discovered some 35 years ago, nearly 15 hectares of the site have been excavated by Uzbek archaeologist Dr. Edvard Vasilievich Rtveladze. The work unearthed military fortifications, a citadel, dwellings, a port and even a religious complex thought to be dedicated to Zoroastrian ceremonies. The excavations helped shed light on the economic, cultural and political structures of a significant Central Asian culture.

In 2005, Dr. Rtveladze received a grant from the U.S. Ambassador's Fund for Cultural Preservation to help preserve and protect the excavated areas of this significant site. He also received funds to document the artifacts that he and his team discovered here. The work is geared toward eventually opening the site to tourists and scholars as a museum complex.





*Sample of  
restored wall  
and ceiling tiles  
at Bagh-e Babur  
Pavilion,  
Afghanistan.*



*Front cover: View of  
the Ak Saray Ding  
Tower, Turkmenistan*

*Back cover: Boy  
reciting prayers at  
the Eid Mosque in  
Male', Maldives*

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