



AGA KHAN TRUST FOR CULTURE

Historic Cities Programme



*Photo: Matjaž Kačunik*

CONSERVATION PROJECT OF THE  
ASLAM AL-SILAH DAR MOSQUE

**QUARTERLY PROGRESS REPORT**

July - September 2008

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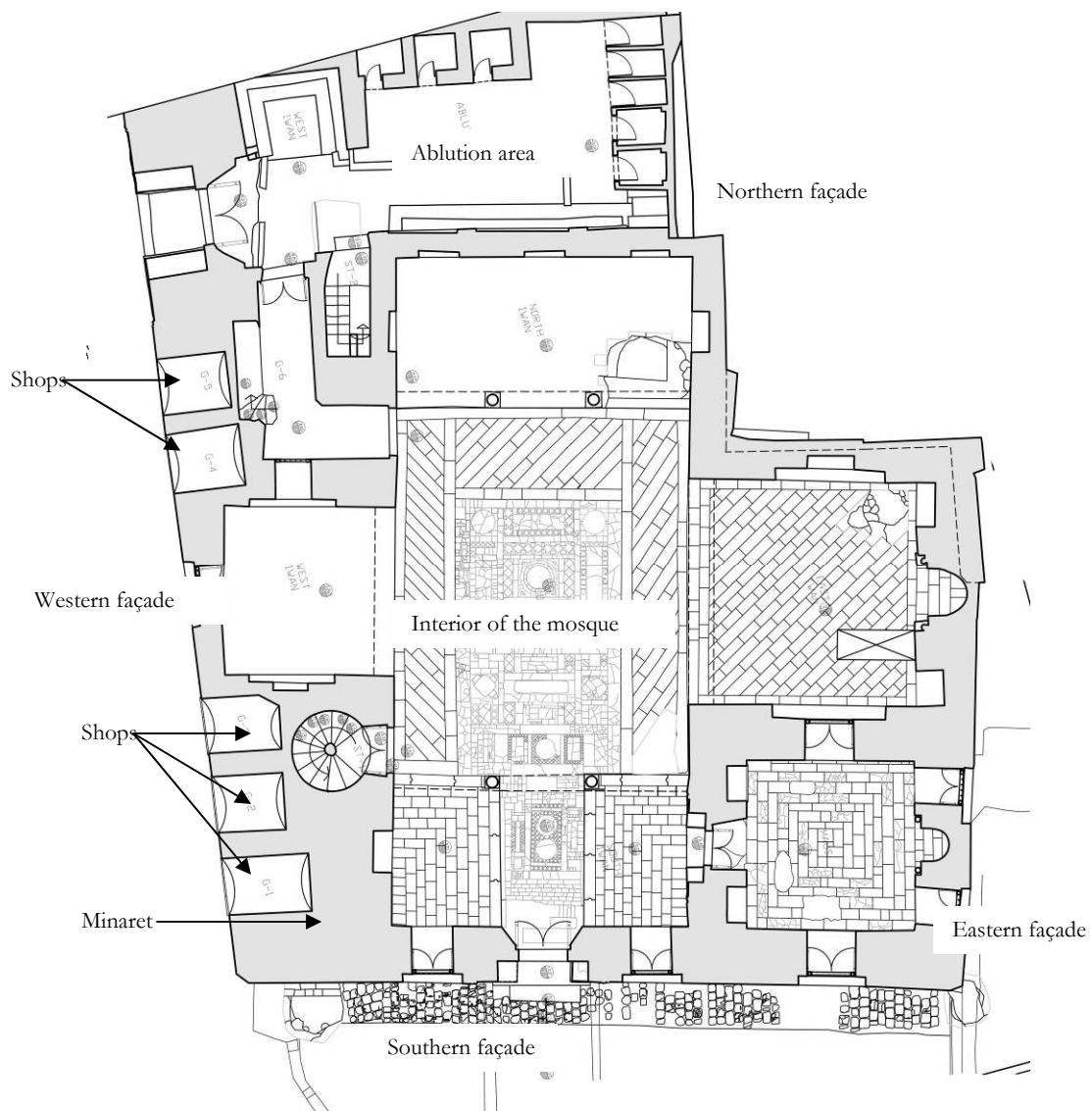
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### 1. Description of the Project's components

- |                                |  |
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| 1. The exterior elevations:    | Southern façade, eastern façade, northern façade, western façade |
| 2. The roof :                  | Roof of the mosque's courtyard, iwans and rooms                  |
| 3. The minaret:                | Minaret platforms and elevations                                 |
| 4. The interior of the Mosque: | Interior floor, elevations and ceilings of the Mosque/mausoleum  |
| 5. The ablution area:          | Ablution area and electro-mechanical items                       |



## 2. TECHNICAL REPORT

### Summary

The work is proceeding as planned in fine conservation activities in the interior of the mausoleum, the interior of the mosque's prayer area ASLAMOSQUE and in the construction of the ablution area ASLAMIDA.

The scaffolding on the southern façade was removed and a sample of the gypsum windows has been installed for another negotiation process with the SCA. Also on the western façade the remaining marble cleaning finishing was finalized and the scaffolding removed.

Work is proceeding on the sound system. The lighting scheme was decided and currently design of the metal lamps is in progress.

As for the square, the public spaces team of the Aga Khan Cultural Services – Egypt (al-Darb al-Ahmar Company) is proceeding with working on the square in terms of removing the asphalt and other layers. The design of the square is finalized and it is planned to finish the urban treatment activities of the square in parallel with the finishing of the work in the mosque.

At this stage it is also important to discuss reuse schemes of the building. The prayer area will be returned for the prayer. The rooms could be used for a variety of activities; mainly social. One of the rooms (the one overlooking the courtyard) could be used as a small exhibition space, presenting the work done and the objects found. This is also practical as it can be accessed separately from the western portal and visitors can also see the mosque from above.

On the other hand, another important aspect is the maintenance of the mosque after the handing over. These issues are being discussed now to find solution that would guarantee the sustainability of the work achieved.



*View of the main façade after removing the scaffolding and with sample of the gypsum windows*



## 2.1. THE EXTERIOR ELEVATIONS

ASLAFACA

### Work achievements during the period January – March 2008

- Northern, Southern, Western and Eastern facades

The scaffolding of the eastern (main) façade was dismantled; samples of the metal-mesh windows and the gypsum grills are placed for the Supreme Council of Antiquities to review and reevaluate their refusal of erecting gypsum windows on the façades.

The remaining marble finishing activities of the western portal were finalized; the scaffolding was removed and currently work is proceeding on the large stones of the maqsalas.



*Activities of clearing the square*

## 2.2. THE ROOFS

ASLAROOOF

### Work achievements during the period April-June 2008

None.

All roofs are insulated and no works are remaining on the roofs.

## 2.3. THE MINARET

ASLAMIN

Completed in September 2007.

## 2.4. THE MOSQUE AND MAUSOLEUM INTERIOR

## ASLAM MOSQUE

### Work achievements during the period April-June 2008

#### Mosque Interior

- Mezzanine, first floor and second floor rooms
  - Painting of all the wooden ceilings of the rooms is complete; as mentioned in the previous report the only one remaining to be painted is in room 1.4 currently used as site office.
  - Installation of the wooden windows and doors of the rooms is in process.
  - The finishing activities of the plaster layers in the rooms started and is in progress.
  - Currently, lamps for rooms are being chosen; there are several choices for that issue; possibilities are using modern lighting fittings or using more traditional designs. In all cases, it is important that these lamps provide good and strong lighting for the rooms, as it is aimed to have a reuse activity in those rooms as mentioned in the summary above.



*Room 1.1 after the plastering (still to be slightly retouched) and installing the doors and windows;*

- Mosque courtyard

All cleaning and protection activities of the stucco decoration of the courtyard were finalized and the scaffolding removed.

The reused marble columns were also cleaned; currently work will start on cleaning the column capitals.

On the 4 façades, the “windows” in the plaster left by the *Comité* were just cleaned and repointed when necessary and left as they were found. These are a testimony on what the *Comité* found for the earlier structure covering the courtyard.





*Removing the scaffolding of the mosque courtyard*



*The interior courtyard after dismantling the scaffolding;  
View showing the façades cleaned; the stucco decoration completed and the windows installed*





*Cleaning the marble columns*



*View of the courtyard while cleaning the marble columns*



## **Mosque Iwans:**

### **1. West iwan**

The cleaning of the western iwan's ceiling was finalized. Work was proceeding in the wooden inscription band. In this part of the mosque, some blue colors appeared behind the red paint. Very detailed work took place mechanically removing the red paint. The blue color appeared but it was nevertheless not possible to identify any letters of the inscriptions.

The store room was moved to this iwan in order to carry our conservation activities in the northern iwan (where earlier the store room was).

### **2. Qibla iwan**

Work was proceeding in cleaning the ceiling. As carried out on the western iwan, a first phase of removing the dust using soft brushes was carried out in a very careful manner in order not to lose any flaking paint. The flaking parts were fixed using Paraloid (less than 2 %). After all the fixation was finalized a second phase of dust removal was carried out. The ceiling was then cleaned using the wishab and the gaps filled with the balsa wood.

Tests were carried out in the areas where the shingles were covered with a brown paint; decorated paintings were discovered underneath; a lot of discussions took place concerning removing the brown paint. By comparing this ceiling with the one on the western iwan, it was noted that all spaces with shingles between the beams are decorated and none of them is simply painted with brown. Therefore it was decided to remove the brown paint and retrieve the painting underneath (even if they are the modern ones that were carried in other parts of this ceiling). Of course, tests were carried out to ensure that no older paints existed below those ones, but none was found.

As for the beams with the reddish brown paint, these were cleaned and painted for protection with a brown paint.

Currently final finishing activities are taking place in the ceiling.

Also work took place in the mihrab area to clean the plaster paint around it and inject what is about to fall.



*Activities of protecting the flaking parts of the qibla ceiling; right: sample of removing the brown paint*

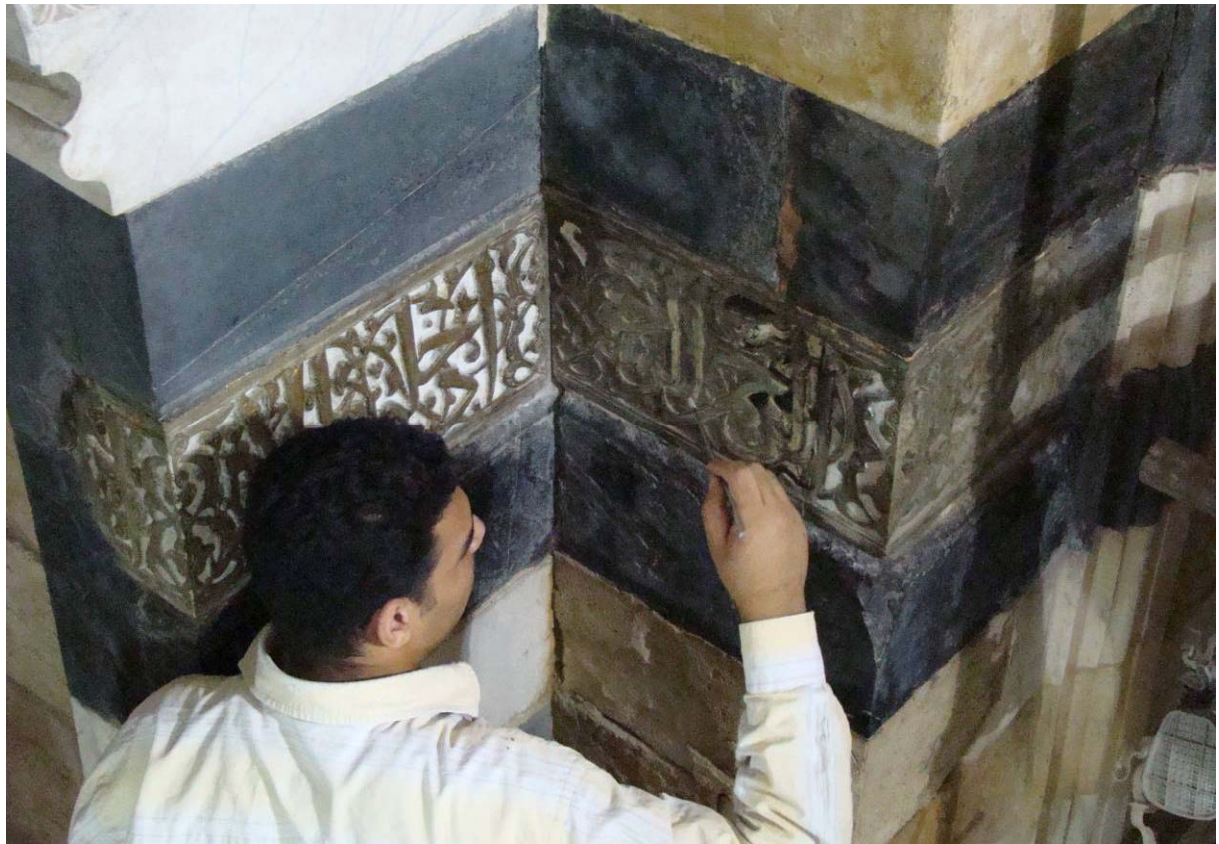


### 3. South iwan:

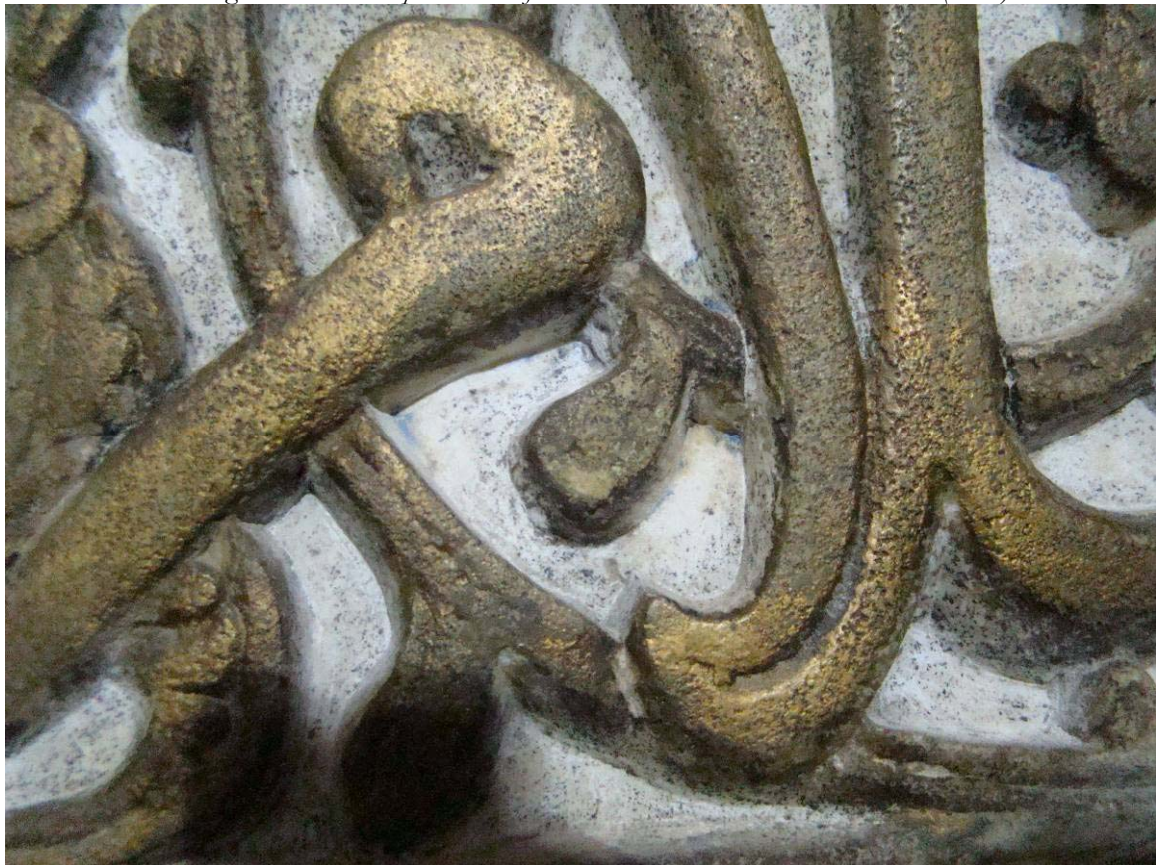
The cleaning and repointing activities of the portal of the mausoleum were finalized. Work is proceeding in the ceiling in the same manner as in the other ceilings in the mosque.

In the windows on the ground level, these have wooden shingles. These are currently being cleaned.

The electrical conduits and cables were installed.



*Cleaning the marble inscription band of the entrance to the mausoleum and detail (below)*





#### 4. North iwan:

Work proceeded on cleaning the plaster walls and the stones and carrying out repointing. As mentioned in the previous report, a team of trainees were carrying out these activities under the supervision of a senior conservator.

The electrical conduits and cables were also installed in this iwan.

Primary activities of cleaning the ceiling took place removing a great amount of accumulated the dust from between the beams.



*The walls of the north iwan showing parts before and after cleaning*



*The ceiling of the north iwan before cleaning*



### Woodwork restoration

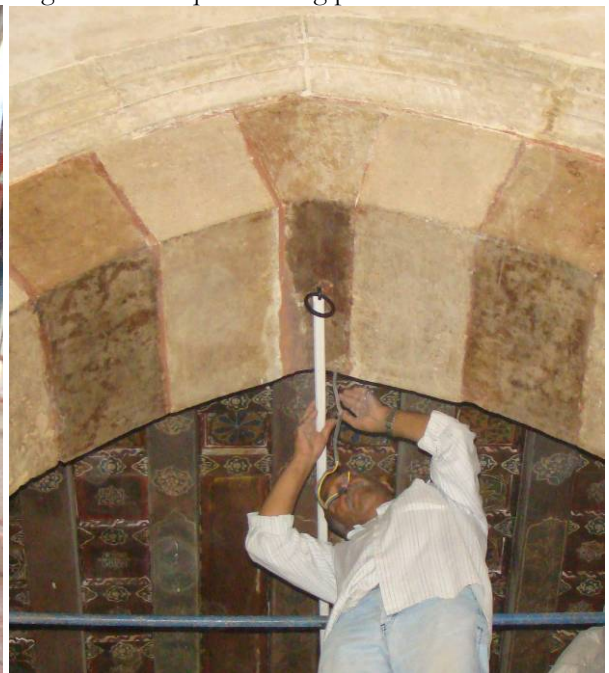
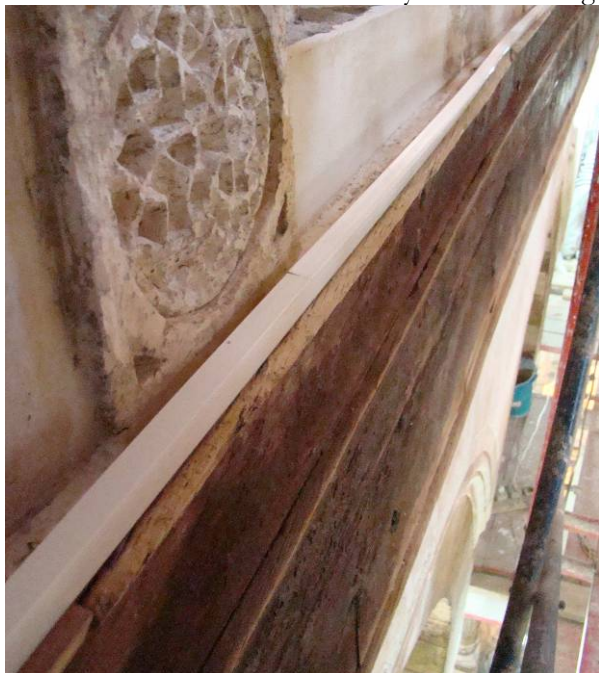
As mentioned in the previous reports, the woodwork restoration of doors, windows and shutters is currently in progress and will be proceeding during the following months. In general, depending on the state of conservation of the item, carpentry restoration takes place followed by fine cleaning and conservation of the wooden elements.



*Activities of woodwork repair and cleaning*

### Electrico-mechanical activities and Sound Systems

As mentioned in the previous reports the offers of the different sound system suppliers were studied. Nevertheless, some of the offers and designs do not correspond with the requirements of the mosque. Further offers are being studied in order to find the most suitable and appropriate for the mosque. The electrical wires for the sound system and the lighting of the mosque is taking place.



*Placing the cable trays for the electrical wires and the electrical wires*



### Interior of the dome

The cleaning of the upper inscription band was finalized.

On the lower level, all the stucco decorations around the openings as well as the grills were cleaned mechanically.

The major activity that took place during this period was the fixation of the plaster layers and the working on the cracks. In the dome several major structural cracks existed and the plaster layers were detached from the walls. A long study took place concerning what to do with the heavy plaster. Although this plaster is not historic, it was decided to protect it and keep it. But in order to fix the cracks in the bricks and also the damaged bricks, the detached plaster was cut in pieces using the grinder and kept. This was followed by working on restoring the bricks and the cracks. Then the plaster pieces were returned and fixed to the background brick walls. The completely lost parts of the plaster are being newly plastered.



*Detail of an inscription in the dome's grills*



*Detail of a roundel in the dome showing before and after cleaning*



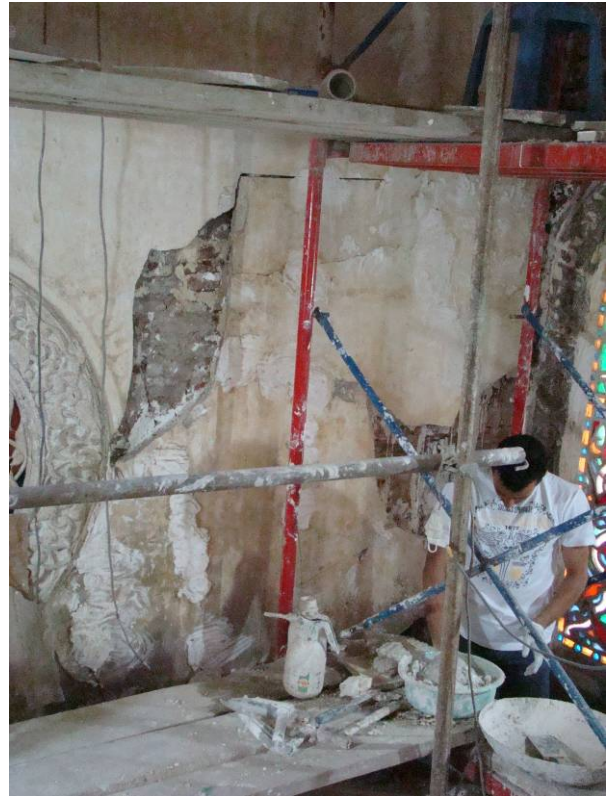


*Cracks in the interior of the dome; plaster cut to carry out repair interventions*



*Brick repair activities and returning back the moved plaster*





*Returning back the plaster pieces to the walls*



*Parts of the stucco decoration returned to their place*



## **Scope of the work in the Mosque and Mausoleum during the period October - December 2008**

### Interior of mosque rooms

Installation of wooden doors and windows. Choosing lighting fixtures and purchasing them. Finishes activities of the plaster.

### Interior of the mosque

Finalize the wooden ceiling restoration of the east, south and north iwans. Start work on the marble floor of the courtyard. Start the cleaning of wooden minbar. Finalize all protection activities of the wooden elements. Remove the scaffolding in the iwans and start working on the floor tiles.

### Interior of the dome

Start and finalize the cleaning of the marble columns. Start retouching activities of the stucco decorations. Start and finalize cleaning the wooden ceilings of the windows. Start removing the scaffolding and working on the floor tiles.

## **2.5. THE ABLUTION AREA**

## **ASLAMIDA**

### **Work achievements during the period July- September 2008**

The brick construction of the toilets were finalized. The wooden ceiling was erected, painted and prepared to be insulated. The first plaster coat was applied. The toilet fittings were installed and the ceramics tiles were put in place on the walls and marble tiles were put on the floors.

The construction of the ablution and washing system and seats was constructed and the water supply and drainage systems installed. This was followed by finishing the walls and seats with marble.

The stone slabs probably carried out by the *Comité* and discovered during the recent excavations were put back in place as they were incorporated in the design of the floor tiles. Around those stones marble floor tiles were placed.

All electrical conduits and wiring were placed.

The first plaster coat of the surrounding walls was applied.

### **Scope of work during the period October - December 2008**

Finalize the marble floor tiling. Install the sanitary and electrical fittings.

Start and finalize the design of the entrance vestibule from the western portal leading to the ablution area and to the rooms.



*Construction of the ablution (washing) area*





*Sanitary, marble and roofing activities in the ablution*



*Marble cladding activities*



## 2.6. THE SITE SUPERVISION TEAM

ASLASUPER

### Work achievements in the period July-September 2008

Concerning documentation activities, intervention drawings are being carried out.  
The daily site supervision activities are in progress.

### Scope of work in the period October-December 2008

Continue on carrying on site supervision activities of architectural, structural and fine restoration activities.

Ongoing intervention drawings indicating stone replacement, new wooden elements, etc.

### Composition of the team and responsibilities at end of December

#### The Aga-Khan Trust for Culture:

- Christophe Bouleau, Conservation architect – Project Manager
- Dina Bakhoun, Engineer - Site manager.
- Lara Iskander, Architect
- Mohamed Lashien, Architect
- Hamdi Sultan, Main Forman
- Walid Omar, Procurement officer
- Mina William, Scaffolding specialist

#### Consultant (during the reported period)

- Erico Peintner, Conservator
- Matjaž Kačičnik, Photographer

Date: 13 October 2008

Signature: Christophe Bouleau

Dina Bakhoun

