



AGA KHAN TRUST FOR CULTURE



Ibn Sina's Qanun fi'l-tibb ("Canon of Medicine") was the most important work on medicine in the Islamic world during the Middle Ages. With its transfer to the Latin west in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, it became the most important medical reference in the medical schools of Europe, almost until the beginning of modern times. The Qanun is organised into five books. The manuscript pictured above is a copy of the fifth book, on compound drugs and other aspects of pharmacopoeia. © Aga Khan Trust for Culture

The museum space will cover two floors of the building and include sections on various aspects of Indian Ocean geography, trade and culture, including the role of monsoons and ocean currents, the evolution of Arab navigation, and the travels of Ibn Battuta, Marco Polo, Ibn Majid, Zheng He, and others, from the Mediterranean, the Middle East and beyond. Other sections will recount the incursions and eventual domination of the ocean by European powers, the exploits of pirates and privateers and the importance of the great trade companies.

Historical spaces will highlight the transformation of Zanzibar as the propeller replaced the sail and cloves replaced the slave trade. Models of naval vessels, old navigation instruments and maps and other original artefacts that illustrate the history of the commercial and cultural contacts between Africa, the Middle East, the Indian sub-continent and the Far East will be featured. Indian Ocean ecology and the effects of human activity on local ecosystems will also be highlighted in interactive models and displays.

The ground floor of the Indian Ocean Maritime Museum will have educational and vocational training facilities, a cafeteria and shop, and an aquarium. The celebrated Sultan's Barge, a nineteenth century vessel complete with canopy, oars and gilded decoration, will be a major attraction for visitors, following a full restoration undertaken by AKTC.

EXHIBITION PROGRAMMES

In the period leading to its official opening, selections from the Aga Khan Museum's collections are being shown in different European locations. They allow the public in this part of the world to have a glimpse of what the Museum will contain, and at the same time bring public attention to the creation of a new institution of international standing.

Exhibitions have taken place in the following venues:

- *Splendori a Corte*, Palazzo della Pilotta, Parma, 31 March to 3 June 2007;
- *Spirit & Life*, The Ismaili Centre, London, 14 July to 31 August 2007;
- *Chefs-d'œuvre islamiques de l'Aga Khan Museum*, Louvre, Paris, 5 October 2007 to 7 January 2008;
- *The Path of Princes*, Calouste Gulbenkian Museum, Lisbon, 14 March to 6 July, 2008.

Further exhibitions will take place in Toledo (Spain); Berlin (Germany); Moscow and St. Petersburg (Russia), in 2008 – 2010.

Cover image: Detail from the Akhlaq-i Nasiri (Ethics of Nasir), a philosophical treatise on ethics, social justice and politics by the thirteenth-century medieval Persian philosopher and scientist, Nasir al-Din Tusi (d. 1274). A favourite manuscript of Emperor Akbar (r. 1556-1605), the folio may demonstrate the importance of knowledge as a form of authority. According to Verma, Khem Karan was "among the leading painters of Akbar's court," where he was active between 1582 and 1604.

For more information about the Museum Projects or the Aga Khan Trust for Culture, please visit www.akdn.org or contact the Aga Khan Trust for Culture, PO Box 2049, 1211 Geneva 2, Switzerland. Tel. +41 22 909 7200; Fax. +41 22 909 7292; Email: aktc@akdn.org



MUSEUM PROJECTS AND EXHIBITIONS

PROJECT BRIEF



A steel 'alam, a piece from the Aga Khan Museum collection, dates from sixteenth century Iran. As military emblems of power, 'alams, or standards, were often decorated with pairs of dragon heads and religious messages. The central field of this standard features pierce-work floral scroll decoration and the phrases, "O Allah!" "O Muhammad!" "O 'Ali!". At bottom, the Aga Khan Museum in Toronto appears in an artist's conception.

INTRODUCTION

Currently, the Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC) is in the process of establishing three new museums in Cairo, Toronto and Zanzibar, as part of the Trust's programme of cultural initiatives aimed at revitalising the heritage of communities in the Islamic world and contributing to their social and economic development.

Within these broader objectives, the museums are dedicated to presenting Islamic arts and culture in their historic, cultural and geographical diversity. Their aim is to foster knowledge and understanding both within Muslim societies and between these societies and other cultures.

At the same time, a series of travelling exhibitions and a programme of assistance to museums in developing countries are under way.

AGA KHAN MUSEUM, TORONTO

The Aga Khan Museum, due to open in 2011 in Toronto, Canada, will be dedicated to the acquisition, preservation and display of artefacts – from various periods and geographies – relating to the intellectual, cultural, artistic and religious heritage of Islamic communities.

Planned as a venue for large international exhibitions, the 10,000 square meter building designed by the Japanese architect Fumihiko Maki will house its permanent collection as well as major temporary exhibitions. Surrounded by a large landscaped park, the Museum will provide a forum for permanent exchanges between the Islamic and Western worlds. It will also be a major centre for education and research and for the discovery of the musical heritage of the Islamic world.

The Museum's collection contains some of the world's most important masterpieces of Islamic art, including the famous collection of miniatures and manuscripts created by the late Prince Sadruddin and his wife Princess Catherine, and objects in stone, wood, ivory and glass, metalwork, ceramics, rare works on paper and parchment. Covering over one thousand years of history, they create an overview of the artistic accomplishments of Muslim civilisations from the Iberian Peninsula to China. His Highness the Aga Khan's personal commitment to the objectives of the Museum will keep the collection growing in size and importance.

Specific educational programmes on Muslim history, arts and culture will make the Museum a unique space in North America. It will be an institution dedicated to disseminating knowledge of Islamic civilisations through outreach to the widest public – school children, students, adults and families, as well as researchers, including educational resources via the web. The building will house a large auditorium with lecture, film and concert programmes, as well as a library offering direct access to specialised documentation and information from virtual sources.

The Museum's temporary exhibitions, which will be developed in partnership with key international partners, will spotlight the diversity of Islamic arts and cultures. They will be major events that will attract the public from the densely populated areas in a 300-mile radius of Toronto. This area contains more than 76 million people.

Beyond the traditional presentation of major periods of Muslim history, original approaches will include, for example, the relationships between Islam and other cultures and the evolution of arts, sciences, religion, literature, or music in a Muslim context.

MUSEUM OF HISTORIC CAIRO

At the north end of Al-Azhar Park – which AKTC spent two decades building on a 30-hectare (74-acre) site – AKTC is now building a Museum of Historic Cairo, in cooperation with the Supreme Council of Antiquities of Egypt. The Park site, bordered by 1.5 km of the old city's Ayyubid wall on one side, and the Mamluk "City of the Dead" on the other, was a rubble dump for 500 years. Inaugurated in 2004, Al-Azhar Park is today a major attraction for tourists and Egyptians alike.

The Museum's 2,500 square meter building will be situated at the entrance to the historic city. It is designed to give both Cairenes and foreigners insights into the amazing cultural and architectural heritage of the Egyptian capital's historic area. The Museum will be complemented by exhibition spaces within the neighbouring Ayyubid wall and within major restored cultural buildings in the historic city, which visitors will be encouraged to discover, following special itineraries, as they leave the Museum.

Art and architectural elements from Heliopolis, the early settlements of Cairo, and the City's major historical periods will be on show, including the Fatimid Golden Age, the periods of the Ayyubids and Mamluks, and the era of Ottoman rule. Special rooms will recreate the atmosphere of nineteenth century Cairo. The Museum will house some of the great wealth of art and artefacts of Cairo's mediaeval heritage that are not currently on display to the public.

To conserve and restore the artefacts and artworks which will be shown in the Museum, AKTC has set up a conservation laboratory which is training young local technicians in this field. At the same time, important art and architectural elements for the Cairo Museum of Islamic Art are being restored in the same facility.

THE INDIAN OCEAN MARITIME MUSEUM, ZANZIBAR

As part of long-standing revitalisation work in Zanzibar's Stone Town, AKTC has restored several landmark buildings, one of which – the Old Dispensary – will house a museum dedicated to the Indian Ocean as a maritime space in which, since prehistory, the exchange of goods, ideas and myths took place between its diverse coastal civilisations.



Plan for the Museum of Historic Cairo (top), to be built on one corner of Azhar Park, will provide a gateway to the rich Muslim heritage of the city. A trainee technician (middle) restores a part of the cultural heritage of Cairo at a conservation laboratory supported by AKTC. The Indian Ocean Maritime Museum (bottom) in Zanzibar will showcase the commercial and cultural contacts that occurred between Africa, the Middle East and the Indian sub-continent.

