From the inception of their various conservation and upgrading activities in 1992, the Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC) and its affiliate the Aga Khan Cultural Service-Pakistan (AKCS-P) have recognised that the new economic forces associated with development and tourism, if not properly steered, could spoil the impressive natural setting and the cultural heritage which are the Northern Area’s major resource base. Whatever short-term benefits may be derived from them, in the long run economic progress and well-being will be largely dependent on preserving the outstanding cultural assets and environmental qualities of the valleys.

Unlike the conservation of individual historic monuments, which can be implemented under tightly controlled technical and administrative conditions, the rehabilitation of historic villages and their farming environments require a much more complex socio-economic and institutional approach, combined with physical planning and land-use decisions which may demand sacrifices with regard to traditional property rights. A strategy for the combined preservation and appropriate development of the built environment — including monuments, architectural ensembles, settlement structure and the man-made landscape — could not succeed without a prior change of people’s attitude towards the legacy of the past and its importance for the present — and the future. In practice, this attitude must be translated into collective decision making and corresponding internal arbitration and compensation mechanisms, and it must eventually be sanctioned by an institutional apparatus capable of legitimising such changes and social mechanisms.

It is with this background in mind that AKCS-P projects in the area have initiated a broad community-based effort to save, revive and develop local heritage — acknowledging that sustainable use of natural and cultural assets hinges on the commitment and support of local residents. In Hunza, the AKCS-P’s involvement began in Karimabad (in parallel with the restoration of Baltit fort), and was then followed up in Ganish, Altit and other, smaller villages. In Baltistan it started with the group of hamlets that constitute Shigar, and is being replicated in other valleys such as Khaplu. The resulting village rehabilitation and community development efforts aim at triggering a paradigmatic shift in the way communities relate to their physical environment — by enabling them to connect the fruits of economic development with a major revalorisation of the cultural heritage as seen in landscapes, human settlements, historic villages, and individual architectural monuments and more ordinary historic buildings. Improving the quality of life is thus to go hand in hand with enhancing the meaning of the physical environment and preserving cultural identity.

This strategy was implemented by acting simultaneously on a number of levels: first, nurturing — through the very project activities — the growth of new community-based municipal institutions and pressure groups for better management of civic functions; second, helping these institutional elements in regulat-
ing land use, preparing new infrastructure projects (roads, sanitation and refuse disposal and water supply) to alleviate the pressure of development on the historic and scenic assets of the physical environment; third, improving health and daily hygiene by introducing sanitary waste disposal systems (in certain cases without disturbing the ecological and social components of existing traditional systems), and improving environmental conditions in the collective spaces of the village by paving lanes and squares; and fourth, rehabilitating traditional homes and groups of houses and rendering them compatible with contemporary lifestyles.

The concept of integrated cultural development pursued by the AKCS-P was based on identifying elements of high cultural and historic value in the physical environment and initiating projects for their conservation, with the involvement and participation of concerned local communities. Such elements of the physical heritage have included individual buildings and monuments, architectural ensembles and other groups of buildings, vernacular settlements and villages of cultural and architectural significance, cultural ensembles and cultural landscapes (see chapter 8).

Together, these elements were considered as components of a more complex environmental and socio-economic system, into which they had to be re-integrated and to which in turn they could actively contribute. Implementing corresponding integrated project activities meant, by necessity, working closely with existing interest groups in order to address, through planning and development programmes, issues of land use, environmental management and heritage care. In response to their needs, the rehabilitation of the physical environment includes projects for clean water and sanitation, as well as physical interventions for the conservation of typical individual houses, whole streets and public spaces, and complete traditional neighbourhoods. This cooperation in turn offered the opportunity to use these projects as vehicles for establishing local institutional entities responsible for planning and environmental resource management. Restoration projects also provided employment and training for local craftsmen—an aspect then extended to wide-ranging craft revival programmes and institutions promoting enterprise development and sales of local products.

ENABLING COMMUNITIES TO MANAGE THEIR ENVIRONMENT — THE CASE OF KARIMABAD

Begun in 1992 with the intention of managing the physical and socio-economic ramifications of the conservation of Baltit fort (see chapter 9), the Karimabad project was the ground-breaking Historic Cities Support Programme (HCSP) initiative in community-based village planning and rehabilitation, and the forerunner of similar operations in the surrounding communities and, later, in Baltistan.

Until the late nineteenth century, Baltit was a tightly clustered fortified settlement surmounted by the fort. What remains today of the clusters of houses huddled together at the foot of the fort, are the ancient villages of Diramishal and Khurukshal, named after the Diramiting and the Khurukutz, two of the four ancient tribes of Baltit. In the early twentieth century, with the arrival of the British, the fortified group of villages had opened up, leading to several changes in village form and the establishment of newer villages in the farming terraces lower down in the valley. Despite these changes, the geography of the place still continued to retain a strong resonance with past ways of building habitat, making sure that agricultural land was not sacrificed to new development.
By the time the conservation project for Baltit fort was commenced in 1989, the traditional settlements at the foot of the fort were being abandoned, mostly because of the prevailing unsanitary living conditions and the inadequacy of the houses to support a desired standard of modern life. The consequence of this process was the building of new houses in the open farming terraces, where a family could create separate stables for their animals and supply itself with rudimentary sanitary waste disposal by digging cesspits. This often resulted in contaminated water percolating through the hillsides and affecting open fields and other houses. Moreover, the spectacular cultivated hillside surrounding the ‘bowl’ of Karimabad was being dotted with new construction, at the cost of the centuries-old farming terraces and orchards.

The patterns of change outlined here have accompanied Karimabad’s transformation from a secluded rural system into a semi-urban agglomeration (figs. 273, 274). They are typical for most traditional villages in the Northern Areas and involve problems of infrastructure, traffic, commercial activities and new construction modes, all of which can have a considerable impact on the physical environment. With the aim of steering the future development of Karimabad away from the potentially negative aspects of such transformations, an analysis of the current situation was initiated in 1992. This activity, implemented with the help of a local technical cell and a social organiser from the AKCS-P, involved discussions with the citizens of Karimabad about the consequences of present trends and desirable corrections. Eventually, a consulta-
ative Conceptual Development Plan was worked out to provide a strategic framework for the orderly physical growth and development of Karimabad, and for the maintenance of its environmental and cultural assets. This multi-faceted planning process had a number of corollary objectives:

- the establishment of a local institutional base, the Karimabad Town Management Society (TMS), sufficiently representative to harness community support, to resolve upcoming internal conflicts and to develop its own practices and priorities in response to local problems;
- the rehabilitation of the traditional settlements and their architectural heritage, together with the protection of the scenic environment;
- a more conscious management of land use, based on creating a balance between tourism-related economic activities and traditional occupational patterns and enabling the benefits gained from tourism to support the conservation of traditional, but less profitable activities;
- slowing down adverse trends in building construction by means of revalorising traditional settlements and planning for the growth of new settlements that were either adjacent to existing villages, or on new sites agreed within the planned land-use framework, and that were shaped by an environmentally and culturally conscious sensibility;
- establishment of an adequate road and service infrastructure base to support a well-functioning civic economy and a healthy community, and to provide the necessary incentives for appropriate land-use patterns.

While this attempt to put in place an operational TMS in parallel with a wide range of planning, conservation and physical upgrading activities is further described below, we will first dwell on the institutional and legal aspects of this complex effort. Although the zoning and building regulations embodied in the Plan for Karimabad, as first conceived in 1995, are still not enforceable by law, the Plan has increased the awareness of people about the issues at stake and helped forge a consensus on fundamental choices for ongoing and future development. This is manifest in the degree to which the people of Karimabad have adhered to it: deviations are few and far between and, despite certain key developmental components still lagging behind, the implementation of major urban sanitation projects has provided sanitary sewerage to the entire area of Karimabad, while at the same time channelling the future development into desirable directions. Through discussing and adapting land-use details with the directly concerned territorial and social
units (the tribal councils and Village Organisations – VO$s$) the development of the Plan has given birth to a participatory process at grass-roots level. This approach was instrumental in mobilising a high degree of commitment to Karimabad’s cultural and scenic resources, in facilitating the internal resolution of conflicts arising from strategic long-term development options, and in ensuring the continued access of all segments of the population to shared natural resources and their economic fall-outs, with a particular eye to the equitable distribution of economic benefits gained from the tourism industry.

The establishment of the TMS happened in a local government context which was unable to respond to the urbanisation trends discussed above. Under the Northern Areas Local Government Act, municipal councils have been created only in a few large towns, such as Gilgit, Skardu, Khaplu and Chilas, which are administered by a District Commissioner. Areas like Karimabad or Shigar have not been considered as meeting population size or urbanisation criteria that would classify them as urban communities. The Village Councils or Union Councils established under the local government law did not have any power to carry out land-use planning or prepare development projects. In Karimabad, the TMS has continued to strive for government recognition of the Conceptual Development Plan, in the expectation that the government will finally agree to create a municipal council, a Town Committee, and the TMS would move away from its civic governance functions to an oversight and monitoring role as a civil society organ. The Town Committee, created under the local government laws, would be able to enforce the land use components of the Conceptual Development Plan.\(^3\)

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**Fig. 275.** Plan of the historic area of Baltit/Karimabad.
Despite the limitations outlined above, the TMS model has been adopted by the inhabitants of other large villages and towns, such as Altit, Aliabad and Ganish in Hunza and in Shigar and Khaplu in Baltistan, where there are active and aware town management societies today. In most cases, the AKCS-P is extending specialised technical assistance as needed, but does not interfere in constitutional matters.

PROTECTION OF CULTURAL AND SCENIC ASSETS

An important initial step taken as part of the planning process was the identification of those elements of Karimabad that are of special scenic and cultural value. A conservation area was delimited, to include the historic villages of Khurukshal and Diramishal, an extension of Diramishal called Domet, the old orchards in the immediate vicinity of the historic villages, and the polo ground. Outside this zone, individual spots were earmarked as places of special environmental, social, or cultural significance. The most important scenic viewpoints were also identified, as well as a list of architecturally or historically important buildings and open spaces within and outside the contiguous conservation area (fig. 275).

Acknowledging the limitations of legal constraints, a range of strategies and mechanisms, tied to certain collectively agreed land-use principles defining the future development of housing and infrastructure, were adopted to preserve the traditional character of the landscape and the environment of Karimabad. Apart from the current practice of dialogue and conflict resolution within the village organisation, recourse was taken to regulative tools (such as planning and design guidelines), supported by appropriate incentives. At the level of the historic zone, incentives for the conservation of individual houses were offered in the form of soft loans and small grants. The provision of sanitation infrastructure, the rehabilitation of streets and public open spaces, and the conservation of individual places, buildings, and building elements of special architectural and cultural value provided further impetus for the rehabilitation of the historic area as a whole and spurred collateral private efforts (see below).

Special consideration was given to the conservation of public open spaces, as they are not only characteristic for the environmental qualities of Karimabad, but also valuable in terms of places of social interaction and collective identity. Projects included the improvement of the polo ground, the stone paving of the access way to the fort (fig. 277) as the main pedestrian spine of Karimabad, as well as the enhancement of special nodes (fig. 280) and places of gathering, such as the central jamatkhana and the himalter, the site of the former main entrance gate to Baltit (fig. 323). A similar treatment was accorded to zones of special sensory and aesthetic character in the built environment outside the historic zone, such as other villages which are now over a hundred years old, the walk along the Samarkand water channel, and points which offer spectacular views of distant natural landscapes. These points and areas are to be upgraded through modest but sensitively designed interventions.

LAND-USE, ROAD AND INFRASTRUCTURE PLANNING

The land-use plan for Karimabad (fig. 278) has evolved in a series of cycles, moving from more aggregate ways of strategising at the level of the TMS to consensus-building among the directly concerned tribes, villages and land owners. The resolution of conflicts relating to land use and equitable trade-off of economic benefits arising from tourism is seen as an internal community matter, and while the AKCS-P offered technical advice, it did not interfere in the decision making.
Through the community-based negotiation process, several objectives have been achieved: first, certain decision-making competencies have moved from the TMS to the subsidiary level of the VOs, especially concerning the identification of buildable land and the future management of collective territories. Second, issues relating to contained residential development have been articulated and first schemes for new clustered compounds have been developed through an intense planning and design dialogue. Third, owners of agricultural land which contribute to the scenic landscapes in important ways now see themselves in a more positive engagement with land-use issues, as new compensation mechanisms for better distribution of the surpluses created in the tourist industry are discussed within the VOs and the tribal councils. In regard to the Land-Use Plan for Karimabad, this latest round of grassroots discussions has also witnessed a few instances of individual violations, and there is a growing need for the Plan’s validation as a planning instrument under the local government law. With the latter undergoing radical reformulation throughout Pakistan, the Land-Use Plan of Karimabad has acquired a pivotal importance as an exemplar of planning by consensus in rapidly transforming rural communities.

Anchoring the Plan in the social and territorial realities, as well as seeking endorsement from the concerned communities, is essential to ensuring its successful implementation. Further momentum for the materialisation of the Plan principles is expected from a co-ordinated set of incentives, such as exclusive provision of feeder roads and infrastructure connections to the areas demarcated in the Plan. Controlled road construction and infrastructure investments are thus essential tools to help implement the plan. Institutional back-up under the local government legislation, in the form of new procedures and building applications never before used in the Northern Areas, should provide additional support in due time.

Traffic planning

Vehicular access is critical to the viability of historic districts, but can also be detrimental for their environmental quality, if not sufficiently controlled. Karimabad is no exception to this rule. At the beginning of the planning process, a major issue faced by the community was the impending construction of a new road through one of the historic settlements near the fort, linking the newer villages on the western side of the valley directly with the Bazaar road. This project would have destroyed nearly half of Khurukshal village,
and would have encouraged the bazaar to grow into the heart of the historic area, compromising its qualities as a quiet residential neighbourhood.

By proposing an alternate road alignment around the historic core, the planning team eventually succeeded in averting this threat. Further advantages were obtained by making the new road part of a larger planning framework, which will eventually provide a second access from the Karakoram Highway (KKH) at the bottom of the valley. The new road will also serve as a market access road for the farms and orchards in a part of the valley not yet accessible to vehicles. Through the link with the KKH, it will constitute an alternate access point to the village from the other side of Karimabad and thus help alleviate development pressures in the present bazaar district, where all the tourist hotels and most commercial facilities are currently located.

The new bypass around the historic core, completed in 1996 with the assistance of the Northern Areas Public Works Department, was the fruit of a participatory planning process and represents the first step of a comprehensive network of major roads that will condition the future physical structure of Karimabad. Small feeder access roads from the main road network will provide vehicle and infrastructure access to residential neighbourhoods, and access of agricultural machinery to the farming terraces. Provision of vehicular accessibility is closely tied to the land-use strategy for the valley, which encourages certain functions to be developed in specific locations and defines areas where no construction activity should take place in the foreseeable future.

Infrastructure

In Karimabad, traditional rural ways of disposing sanitary waste have become impractical in a context of creeping urbanisation. Sanitary sewerage has therefore been one of the most keenly felt needs of the community. Initially, as people saw water-borne disposal systems set up by the local hotels in operation, they tended to emulate these systems by setting up crude water-born cesspits for scattered individual homes – not a sustainable solution in the long run. A comprehensive sanitation project for Karimabad, based on water-borne disposal and anaerobic treatment, was proposed in 1994. The first and second phases of this project (described below) were supported by the Norwegian development agency (NORAD) and completed in 1996, with priority given to the conservation zone, including the historical settlements and the Baltit fort area, several other villages, and the bazaar and hotel area. In 2003, the third phase of Karimabad’s sanitary sewerage project was completed by the TMS, with financial assistance from the Government of Japan, and technical assistance from the AKCS-P. It provides sanitation to the remainder of the town, chiefly along its western flank, adjacent to the Hyderabad gorge. In these projects, large even by the standards of government-run projects, voluntary labour and management inputs were provided by the community. The TMS also negotiated a development/connection charge to be levied on each household, and a room charge levied on hotels.

THE REHABILITATION OF THE HISTORIC NUCLEUS OF KARIMABAD

In order to enhance the value of the historic settlements of old Baltit, it was imperative to first demonstrate that they can sustain life at contemporary standards. The approach adopted by the AKCS-P was to link increasing community awareness of the local architectural heritage with collective self-help habits, modelled on rajaki – the traditional form of voluntary labour used for the development of infrastructure such as the
historic water channels. In Khurukshal, the rehabilitation and modernisation of amenities in a single traditional house in 1993-1994, was welcomed by the residents of the village and quickly grew into a Pilot Rehabilitation and Sanitation Project covering a portion of the Khurukshal village. The community of the Khurukutz participated actively by providing leadership and organisation, unskilled labour and local materials. The Khurukshal pilot project eventually catered to a total of thirty-one houses, which rapidly underwent additions, alterations, or reconstruction as a result of the raised consciousness generated by the project. This project also foresaw the provision of sanitary sewerage in difficult mountain terrain, and the introduction of flushing toilets, connected to an anaerobic treatment tank and a soakage pit, pending the connection with a trunk sewer. In addition, it included the improvement of house exteriors, the stone paving of village lanes and cul-de-sacs, and the creation of public open spaces in the village (figs. 279, 280). Interventions by the people were closely monitored by the AKCS-P with respect to appropriate materials and building techniques, and earthquake-resistant construction techniques were promoted.

The Khurukshal pilot project helped in turning the attitudes of the people of Karimabad around, and the old settlements, on the verge of being totally abandoned, began to be repopulated. This relatively small intervention in a part of one of the historic villages resulted in multiplier effects involving the entire population and spreading into other historic villages in Karimabad. As a development model it eventually
expanded far beyond the limits of Karimabad. It created a new attitude towards the local environment, and dramatically slowed down the scattered random construction of new houses in the scenic farming terraces further down the valley. Together with new standards of health and hygiene, it has tended to revive sound building techniques based on tradition, such as those first introduced in the Baltit fort conservation project.

COMPACT RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT OUTSIDE THE HISTORIC AREA OF BALTIT
The revalorisation of traditional settlement patterns made the community understand the need for clearly defined, self-contained built-up areas, and for protecting the orchards and agricultural terraces from the sprawl of haphazard residential development. The rationale for such development policies draws on three inter-related arguments: first, only a well planned and concise new development will allow for cost-efficient provision of infrastructure, such as roads, water supply, sanitation systems and electricity; second, securing the landscape and the environmental quality of Karimabad will help continue to attract tourism and protect the population’s major economic assets; and third, conceiving the growth of Karimabad in the form of a number of villages will allow an old settlement tradition to be continued hand-in-hand with the introduction of modern amenities.

The proposed physical development will allow for careful extension of existing villages, as well as for planning and construction of new housing clusters. In the case of existing settlements, possible extensions have been identified with a ten-year perspective in mind. Where this process has been initiated, the limits of growth of each such village are being demarcated through negotiation with the affected land owners, and the demarcated areas are subjected to a physical development plan conforming to standards of density, building types and architectural guidelines. The pilot project in the village of Shinokshal was the first demonstration of this approach (figs. 281-283). It draws strongly upon a Design Manual for new houses prepared by the AKCS-P, and uses research on appropriate forms of cluster housing undertaken in cooperation with faculty and students from the Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture at the Massachusetts Institute for Technology. Apart from social and cultural factors, this research also considered earthquake resistance, passive solar heating and simple ways to improve thermal insulation.

In the case of new, separate housing clusters, suitable new development areas were selected through a dialogue involving the TMS, the AKCS-P and those VOs which wanted to create new opportunities for their members or preferred not to extend their existing village clusters. Assistance for preparing appropriate plans for layout, plot sub-divisions, alignment of access roads and allocation of public facilities, collective open spaces, and shops and guest houses, and so on, has been provided by the AKCS-P.

PROJECT REPLICATION IN GANISH AND ALTIT
The community-based village planning and rehabilitation efforts in Karimabad described above had an effect much beyond their immediate area of application. Other villages in the area realised the positive change achieved, and consequently the demand increased for similar assistance from the AKCS-P and its donors, in particular the Norwegian and Japanese bilateral aid organisations, NORAD and JICA. Replication was facilitated by a number of factors: first, the Karimabad projects had already clarified the partnership conditions between the AKCS-P and the local community; second, new demand arising from the convincing visual demonstration effect, created a ‘competitive’ situation, in which each village was bound
The local community celebrates the completion of village rehabilitation works in Altit village square, inside the gateway (himalter). Outside the gate, the community pond.

One of the horizontal residential alleyways in Karimabad, before rehabilitation. Moving animal sheds outside the village was a precondition for introducing sanitation and upgrading.

Rehabilitating a house on the steep hillside below Baltit fort.

The first of many rehabilitated old houses in Karimabad.

One of the stepped ‘vertical’ alleyways in Karimabad after introduction of sewerage channels and proper flagstone paving. To the left, a restored old mill making use of a descending water channel.

Alleyway in a rehabilitated district of upper Karimabad below Baltit fort.
Residents participate in the village upgrading works in Karimabad by digging channels for the sanitation system under the narrow alleyways, later to be covered by stone steps and flagstone pavement.

The housing renewal project in Karimabad well under way. Residents built new bathrooms and kitchens in former stables after being connected to the new sewerage system.

A rehabilitated traditional house in Karimabad, with the cooking and heating stove in the centre of the living room.
116, 117. The old *jataq* (community square) of Ganish during the community-driven rehabilitation works (below) and during one of the community events following completion of the project.

118. The rehabilitated *jataq* with the restored small family mosques surrounding it (see also fig. 126). In the background, one of the restored old watchtowers of the fortified village.
119, 120. The community pond in front of the fortified village of Ganish during the rehabilitation works (below) and after completion (above). At the far end of the pond, the newly constructed half-sunken public bathhouse. To the left the restored communal guest house (*sawab-ha*).

121. Reconstructing a dilapidated house to fill the gap in the enclosure wall of the village of Ganish, right of the *sawab-ha* (pl. 119).
122, 123. Good use of the reclaimed community space around the pond by the local youth: girls studying and boys jumping from the public bathhouse into the water.

124. The rehabilitated entry zone to the village of Ganish on the other side of the pond: a restored meeting space for the village elders (for a complete site plan of the village see pl. 64).
125-127. Community participation in the rehabilitation programme for Altit village: repairing an individual house, carrying bricks, and carrying sewerage pipes through the narrow alleyways.

128. Altit village square before rehabilitation (see also pl. 107).

129. Village elders during an informal Town Management Society meeting on the rock below Altit fort.

130. The roofs and narrow alleyways of the old Altit village as seen from the fort above, before rehabilitation (for a plan of the village see pl. 63).
131. 132. Discussing village rehabilitation projects with residents in Khaplu, and initiating stone pavement of alleyways.

133. Reviewing the packaging of local apricot kernel oil at the BEDAR office in Skardu.
134. View of a village section of Kchaplu (for a complete plan see pl. 66).

135. Drying apricots for home consumption during the winter, and for sale.
136. A lady-weaver at a promotional event of the Karakoram Handicraft Development Project in Karimabad.

137. A local silversmith with traditional jewellery.

138. Spinning the wharp for local sherma production.

139. The carpet weaving workshop of the Karakoram Handicraft Development Project.
140. Mountain trekking – one of the major tourist attractions of the Northern Areas.

141. Crossing the gorge on a rope – once a necessity, now part of an adventure trip!
to increase its own stake and participation; third, the training effect achieved in Karimabad, both with respect to the local AKCS-P staff and to local labour, made new projects more efficient and less cost-intensive.

From 1996 onwards, several immediate neighbouring communities of Karimabad, including the historic villages of Ganish and Altit, engaged in combined planning, infrastructure upgrading and housing rehabilitation projects in cooperation with the AKCS-P. As in Karimabad, the projects in Ganish and Altit gave rise to a wide range of integrated activities, from single, small building conservation to entire historic villages and large scale planning and infrastructure projects.

In the small village of Ganish, the AKCS-P started with the conservation/restoration of an intimate but spectacular architectural ensemble composed of the four family mosques of Yarikutz, Rupikut, Kuyokutz and Mamorukutz. This group of typical small wooden Hunza mosques is organised around a historic open space used by the community, the jataq — formerly the site of ritual, ceremonial and politically important happenings (figs. 286, 287). The conservation project included this historic community space, as well as other architectural and environmental features such as three other mosques, a couple of defensive watchtowers (shikaris), the historic village water reservoir (figs. 284, 285), and the village sawab-ha (guest quarters). Once full support from the community was ensured, activities were extended into a larger project, covering the conservation and rehabilitation of the remaining parts of the important historic village of Ganish, one of the oldest on the historic route of access to Western China along the Hunza river and a prized example of a traditional fortified settlement (see map in pl. 64).

Advocacy and awareness raising in the larger Ganish area resulted in a major sanitation and water supply scheme for Greater Ganish. A concealed electric supply system was installed hand in hand with new flagstone paving of the dusty old village lanes, to complete the environmental upgrading. Lastly, as a result of the intensive participation of the community of the old village in its conservation, a small social welfare society
was registered which assumed responsibilities relating to the management of the conserved village, its heritage assets and the revenues the village is now gaining from the tourist influx to the restored village.

In Baltit/Karimabad, the AKC S-P’s village upgrading initiatives had started simultaneously with the conservation of the fort, preceding community based planning and development. At that time, interventions by the government and of international tourism had already started to sharply impinge on the local context; the economic benefits were beginning to collide with the sustainability of the social order and the traditional built environment, with at least the latter a key resource in the tourism industry. The effects of investments made in the fort project had set off forces that were not easy to manage by the community in Karimabad.

In the twin community of Altit, the AKC S-P was in a position to proactively anticipate the socio-economic consequences to be expected from a tourism boom related to the conservation of the fort. In an inversion of the sequence, village rehabilitation preceded the intervention on the fort to ensure that the right community planning procedures were in place early on: fostering collective decision making through arbitrating mechanisms such as the TMS was given priority at the cost of delaying the conservation of the principal monument. This meant a longer preparatory period for community activism that would generate better adjustments to negative external pressures, while giving new heritage-related values the chance to take root more firmly.

As a result, in Altit all the interventions in the realm of village planning (figs. 288, 289) have taken place under a citizen managed land-use programme, prior to the monument conservation project, which is to gather pace in 2005 and the following years. A very interesting aspect of this work is the topographic surveys carried out by young women of Altit and its surrounding villages who were trained by the AKC S-P in plane table surveying and computer digitisation (fig. 308). The physical interventions implemented so far under this programme include the rehabilitation of historic Altit and its water pond, with sanitary sewerage and waste disposal, street paving, and building renewal and replacement (see map in pl. 63). The land use regulation process is still ongoing with several important decisions as to the location of the principal tourist-related commercial precinct still to be resolved. The conservation project of Altit fort will be the last step to materialise in this series of interventions.

MOVING INTO BALTISTAN
In late 1996, after the successful inauguration of Baltit fort and the Karimabad village improvement projects, a number of prominent citizens from Baltistan came to the office of the AKC S-P in Gilgit with resolutions from individual villages, requesting the AKC S-P to extend its activities to Baltistan. This was a tempting proposition, since the AKC S-P had been directed to become also involved in non-Ismaili areas in the Northern Region and because Baltistan has a wealth of architectural heritage no other region in Pakistan can equal (see chapter 7).

The extensive fieldwork carried out in Baltistan during a first feasibility study in 1997 provided the opportunity to establish dialogue with local communities with the local rajas’ families and the religious leaders, in order to raise public awareness and to receive feedback and active support from them. The dialogue on heritage and environmental issues was facilitated by the Aga Khan Rural Support Programme which
had greater access to local VO s and Women’s Organisations as grass-roots cells of social and economic progress (see chapter 3). Government institutions, including the two municipal bodies in Baltistan, the Northern Areas Public Works Department, as well as several local non-governmental organisations (NGOs) were also highly supportive of the proposed programme direction. These discussions resulted in a broad-based consensus that cultural heritage, the environment and sustainable development are interconnected themes, and that a partnership was needed between the community institutions, the public and private sectors, donors and development intermediaries to respond to the risks being faced by the tangible and intangible heritage and livelihood systems of Baltistan. In early 1998 a more extensive framework of activity was formulated, defining strategies and aims of a broad-based programme and identifying specific objectives.

To demonstrate the merits of heritage conservation and to engage the local communities, the AKCS-P undertook pilot restoration projects for the Amburiq mosque in Shigar (1998-1999), and the astana (mausoleum) of Sayyed Mohammad in the village of Khanqah in Khaplu (1999-2000). The fourteenth-century Amburiq mosque (figs. 291-293) is a relatively small, but unique, monument, both in its historic significance and architectural quality. It is highly valued by the local community because of the historic association of its foundation with Amir Kabir Sayyid Ali Hamadani, the first Muslim preacher in Baltistan. A predominant timber structure with cribbage and delicate carvings, the small single-roomed mosque desperately needed emergency repairs – due to the collapse of the roof and infiltration of water to the foundations in its rear. The technical complexity of the project, including jacking up the entire structure by approximately sixty centimetres in one corner (which had settled due to weak foundations) provided a good test of the technical expertise available with the AKCS-P, as well as an opportunity to demonstrate appropriate conservation techniques. The positive response of

Fig. 281. An example of new cluster housing in Karimabad inspired by traditional settlement structures.
the community towards the restoration effort was manifested in free labour and the donation of land and timber. The mosque, its new ablution annexe and its widened yard are now in extensive use. The conservation and restoration of the astana was perhaps even more dramatic for its own community in Khaplu, since that building was on the edge of total collapse when the pilot project was undertaken (figs. 294, 304).

As a consequence of these activities, the Baltistan Culture Foundation (BCF) was launched and taken up enthusiastically by local circles. Still in its formative phase, the BCF is eventually expected to protect, manage and promote cultural heritage as an integral part of sustainable overall development. With the establishment of local chapters, it will enable effective and participatory community stewardship of heritage and environmental resources and create new income and enterprise opportunities for local communities based on proactive cultural heritage management.

VILLAGE REHABILITATION IN KHAPLU

Khaplu is the capital of Ghanche, one of the six administrative districts in the Northern Areas. It therefore has a strong government presence with the usual prominent judicial/magisterial and law enforcement
functions. The area of the limits of the town is defined by a great alluvial fan which has been transformed over the centuries of human occupation into expanses of lush agricultural land and orchards interspersed with numerous small villages, some of considerable age. At the bottom of the slope, near the bazaar area and close to the river Shyok is the recently built district headquarters zone. Development initiatives on the part of the government have been focussed at the level of education and health facilities and the roads and trunk infrastructure. As a result of this and the active presence of NGO’s, the town itself is rapidly changing, and large new buildings added over the last five years compete for space among the poplar trees and apricot orchards (see map in pl. 66).

The villages and their fine-grain social and physical fabric have been affected by the impact of these sudden changes, which had achieved only marginal improvements in economic well-being, while negatively impacting the pre-existing ways of life in the traditional built environment. Without adequate guidance, the people had started building with new and unfamiliar building technology, and consequently suffered from the considerable thermal and structural inadequacies of the newer structures. The oldest historic villages were the most conspicuous examples of this disjuncture, and therefore the obvious choice for locating the first AKCS-P initiatives.

Hunduli is one of the eight old settlements in Khaplu town which are still inhabited. Originally settled by craftsmen and artisans who came to Baltistan from Kashmir and other parts of South Asia with the early preachers of Islam who built the early mosques and khanqahs, Hunduli is now home to eighty-eight families. The first step in the upgrading strategy was to select a typical house rehabilitation project, which the team did in consultation with the local VO members. The residents unanimously chose a traditional house, belonging to the poorest family of the village. In acknowledgement of this help, the family decided to donate one third of the plot for the construction of two community halls for social and ritual gatherings and education of adult women and girls, needs identified by the community.
The work over the next five years is representative of typical replication effects and the expansion of the project from more focussed to more general and collective concerns. Accordingly, in Hunduli the upgrading and improvement of aged old homes (figs. 296, 297) has become an ongoing process and by 2003 a total of twenty houses had been improved by the owners themselves. The community was led to identify specific issues of hygiene and health, such as conflicts between traditional use of water channels and waste water generated by modern piping systems, the impact of inadequately located composting latrines on the drainage system, the effects of using detergents, the need for better drainage, for more public toilets and latrines, and for bathing houses for men. Addressing these issues in the context of a heightened respect for traditional village structures has resulted in the improvement of, or the construction of, bathhouses, pit-latrines and public washing areas. Together with paving of village streets, this led to a dramatic improvement of living conditions. Funding from NORAD and the Grass-Roots Assistance programme (GRA) of the Government of Japan were the main external resources applied to this programme, apart from HCSP/AKCS-P resources and the material and human contributions of the community of Hunduli themselves.

The AKCS-P work in Hunduli duly spilled over to the neighbouring historic settlement of Banpi – comprising forty-five households. Here a further fifteen homes were improved by the owners themselves, and new and upgraded public amenities were added with GRA funding. The community in Banpi has been able to prevent the demolition of their ancient bazaar and mosque as the result of a road widening and paving project, and the community has been able to redirect the road to prevent this from happening.

Fig. 291, 292. The restored Amburiq mosque in Shigar, now being used by local young people.

Fig. 293. Survey drawing of the ruined Amburiq mosque, before restoration.
Another ‘multiplier’ effect has been the participatory involvement of the Nurbakshi community in Khaplu in a major environmental upgrading programme combined with a heritage care and community facility improvement project – that in Khanqah Sayyed Mohammad, the village named after the saint, down the slope from Banpi. It is in this village that the **astana** of Sayyed Mohammad, mentioned above among the ‘pilot demonstration projects’, is located (figs. 294, 304). With guidance from the **AKCS**–**P** the community is now pursuing a major addition to the **khanqah** with minimal change to the historic building and with appropriate and designed modifications to the village environment.

**ACTIVITIES IN SHIGAR**

The valley served by the Shigar river is dotted by numerous villages, the majority of them located on the east of the river (see map in pl. 65). In Shigar proper, there are twelve villages which send elected representatives to a Union Council. Of these, three villages – Khlingrong, Shilpa and Halpapa – form a linear continuity north of Shigar **nullah**, the rapid stream which flows out from a mountain pass in the east and disgorges into the Shigar river, beyond the main bazaar. At the easternmost extremity of this stretch of settlements is Shigar fort, to which the communities of Khlingrong and Shilpa were closely attached, providing servants, musicians, guards and other elements of a courtly retinue.

Between 1998 and 2002, the villages of Khlingrong, Shilpa and Halpapa were the subject of upgrading interventions similar to those pursued in the Khaplu region. The primary focus has been on health and hygiene issues. Community composting latrines were upgraded, relocated and new ones built, for both men and women, in Shilpa and Halpapa. Two public bathhouses each for men and women were built in Shilpa and Halpapa with facilities for hot water, and an adjoining communal cloth washing area in Shilpa.
Clean drinking water for these communities has been a major thrust of the upgrading operation. The new water filtration unit at Khlingront provides water tested at World Health Organisation standards to the communities of the three villages as well as to two villages across the nullah and to the Shigar fort facility. Connections are provided upon payment of a connection charge. In addition, a total of fourteen community taps have been provided to two of the villages, and connected to the supply mains. A total of twenty-two historic homes were rehabilitated, partly with Japanese funding, by the year 2002. And almost all the village lanes have been paved integrating surface storm-water drainage.

The AKCS-P-led upgrading of these villages (figs. 298, 299) is closely linked to the project for the conservation and reuse of Shigar fort (see chapter 10). Both activities were included in the dialogues that were held in the summer of 1998 with the members of the Shigar Union Council and with the rajas of Shigar as a prelude to the conservation project. During these dialogues the backdrop of extreme poverty faced by the residents of these villages loomed large. As compared with the people of Hunza with their runaway urbanisation and their social and economic mobility, the situation in Shigar appeared to be depressingly static. Subsistence farming, working as porters for the trekking and mountaineering groups, as domestic servants in far-off places and in low-level jobs in the government administration were the chief occupations of these people. It was still very much a barter economy, as was revealed during efforts to draw people into micro-credit mechanisms that would pay for the upgrading projects. Families could only afford to pay so many eggs per week, rather than cash. Health conditions, specially among women and children were quite dismal. The chief needs of the people communicated by their representatives were bathing facilities for the women, and improvement of their traditional composting latrines.

Village upgrading in Shigar was undertaken by the AKCS-P with the realisation that it could be more closely associated with monument conservation than at Baltit, where the operational premises had been different. Although in Baltit, too, local residents found employment in the fort conservation project, they had been employed by the building contractor. In Shigar, monument conservation and village upgrading were the consequence of a combined set of initial negotiations between an external agency and the local stakeholders. The early establishment of the Shigar Town Management Society, with both a community de-
development and planning function, and the anticipated formation of a local chapter of the Baltistan Culture Foundation (the ultimate custodians of the fort facility) brought the village upgrading operations into a far stronger relationship with the monument conservation project than at Baltit. It was from the villages of Khlingrong, Shilpa and Halpapa, where the village upgrading had been initiated, that most of the workers in the fort project were recruited. With the opening of the Shigar Fort Residence in 2004, new opportunities and occupational skills were introduced among these workers. The communities now have trained carpenters, masons, plumbers, electricians and woodcarvers among their citizens, as well as promising young talents in the service sector.

Figs. 298, 299. Paving streets with integrated water channels in Shigar village.

1 The TMS, established as a social welfare society under the Societies Act of 1891, equals a non-governmental municipality, as it were. It evolved from a group of nominees representing the pre-existing institutional ‘building blocks’ of Karimabad: leaders of the Shi’a Imami Ismaili religious institutions, the chairperson of the Union Council (the rural local government entity), the representative of Hunza in the Northern Area Council, delegates of the VOs, and local notables such as the former mir of Hunza. With the inclusion of the numberdars, the leaders of the five tribal constituencies of Karimabad, by a modification of its founding constitution, the TMS is now highly representative of the local community.

2 After the dissolution of the old system of governance under the mir, the tribal councils and the VOs represented two important aspects of community structure, the former continuing the traditional forms of social and territorial order, and the latter representing the emerging social and economic forces.

3 This effort has however not borne much fruit, and as a consequence the Karimabad TMS has continued to play its quasi-municipal role. Due to its lack of enforcement powers, the TMS has had to depend on advocacy and moral persuasion and has focussed its activities around fund-raising for and implementing development projects. The Karimabad TMS and the AKCS-P are expected to participate in the modalities of the conversion of the Development Plan into a ‘master plan’ as ordained in the Local Government Act. However, a number of areas of TMS concerns not mandated under the local government laws would continue to engage its attention. Among these are its functions as a social welfare organisation, one which would continue to play a strategic building role in relation to the conservation of the cultural landscape and the built heritage, and in relation to the difficult balance between traditional economic activities, and those occasioned by external factors such as tourism.

4 The town of Khaplu, Baltistan, has been a district headquarters of the Northern Areas administration for about two decades. As a consequence, a Town Committee exists in Khaplu, with the usual municipal powers and functions under the local government laws of Pakistan. In Khaplu a Master Plan exists, prepared under these laws by the district administration in 1997/1998. Despite this institutional precedent, the citizens have felt the need to establish a Town Management Society, which functions as a civic organisation with social welfare functions, and additionally as a pressure group for the protection and conservation of environmental and heritage assets, which are not provided for under the Local Government Act.

5 The Town Committees at Skardu and Khaplu.