

In 2003, work was completed on the rehabilitation of the town's main market, Souk Al Saghir, which is housed in a historic structure at the heart of the town of Masyaf, creating new commercial opportunities whilst ensuring the town's heritage is preserved.



#### Development Partners

The Syrian General Directorate of Antiquities and Museums  
World Monuments Fund  
Directorate of the Old City of Aleppo

carried out to modern international standards, in all phases of the conservation process that can be used as a benchmark and a reference point for future work by the Directorate of Antiquities and other agencies.

Citadel sites, including promotion of financial self-sustainability.

#### Developing local capacity

In all project locations, community participation, training of local professionals and local institution-building are essential components of HCSP's activities. The objective is to train staff members of the Directorate of Antiquities, local craftsmen and building professionals in modern conservation practice, whilst carrying out conservation work, so that high standards of conservation can be replicated at other sites. Training has been provided by experts in the field of conservation both on site and through workshops and seminars.

#### For further information

Aga Khan Development Network  
Rawda, Mahdi Bin Baraka Street  
N° 15, ground floor  
Damascus, Syria  
Tel: +963 11 334 3610  
Fax: +963 11 334 3613  
E-mail: syriainfo@akdn.org  
Website: www.akdn.org

#### Sustaining cultural heritage

Building a sustainable future for cultural heritage sites in which HCSP has invested is an important aspect of any project. In Syria, HCSP is working closely with the Directorate of Antiquities to develop management plans for the

The Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) is a group of private development agencies working to empower communities and individuals, often in disadvantaged circumstances, to improve living conditions and opportunities, especially in Africa and Asia. Its agencies work in over 30 countries for the common good of all citizens, regardless of their gender, origin or religion. Its underlying impulse is the ethic of compassion for the vulnerable in society.

© AKDN, January 2005. Information contained in this brief can be reproduced with acknowledgement to AKDN.

Photo credits: AKTC / Gary Otte

## SYRIA



### Supporting heritage conservation in Syria

*The Aga Khan Trust for Culture's (AKTC) Historic Cities Support Programme (HCSP) promotes the conservation and reuse of buildings and public spaces in selected historic sites in ways that can catalyse social, economic and cultural development. In Syria, the government approached the AKTC for assistance in the restoration of the Salah al Din, Masyaf, and Aleppo citadels. A partnership agreement was signed with the General Directorate of Antiquities and Museums of Syria in 1999. Consistent with its area development approach developed in the Old City of Cairo, AKTC is also working to improve the area around the citadel of Aleppo. The Aga Khan Agency for Microfinance programme is administering loans in several programme areas.*

**Photo above:** AKTC conservation project in Masyaf Citadel.

#### Citadel of Aleppo

The Citadel of Aleppo stands at the centre of the old city of Aleppo, which was recognised as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 1986. The earliest levels of occupation found at the Citadel go as far back as the sixteenth century BC. Most of what remains standing today was built by the Ayyubid (12<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> centuries) and Mamluk (13<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> centuries) rulers of the city who used the site for both military and ceremonial purposes. The citadel is built on top of a natural limestone hill rising some 50 metres above the level of the surrounding city and is a powerful symbol of the city's heroic past. Inside the walls, a succession of invasions, bombardments and earthquakes have taken their toll. Aleppo Citadel is one of Syria's foremost monuments, much visited by tourists, and an important place of recreation for the city's inhabitants.

In 2000, the Aga Khan Trust for Culture initiated a conservation project at the Citadel, focusing on three historically and architecturally coherent elements. These included the surrounding walls and the Ayyubid Palace Complex, which, with its fine marble-mosaic floors and elaborately carved entrance, is a major monument of Islamic architecture. The conservation programme was carried out with substantial co-funding from the World Monuments Fund. Further investments are being made in a new Visitors Centre, pathways, signage, and a new guidebook. The current programme is scheduled to be completed in early 2006.

#### Citadel of Salah al Din

The Citadel of Salah al Din is located in the coastal mountain range, close to the coastal town of Lattakia. Its natural setting is spectacular, resting high on a ridge between two deep ravines, and



Aga Khan Education Services



AGA KHAN FOUNDATION



Aga Khan Fund for Economic Development



Aga Khan Health Services



Aga Khan Planning and Building Services



AGA KHAN TRUST FOR CULTURE



AGA KHAN UNIVERSITY



University of Central Asia

AGA KHAN DEVELOPMENT NETWORK  
www.akdn.org

AKTC's work in the historic Salah al Din castle has centred on restoration of Ayyubid and Mamluk-era monuments, including the mosque, its minaret and the adjacent madrasa. The site has become an important tourist destination.



surrounded by forest. Much of what remains visible today dates from the Franks, who occupied the site around 1100 AD. The Crusader walls were breached by the armies of Salah al Din in July 1188, and it is from this victory that the castle takes its present name. Over the next hundred years, the new Muslim rulers built a mosque and a fine palace and baths at the heart of the castle complex. Later, a madrasa was also constructed. It is these Ayyubid and Mamluk sections of the Citadel that AKTC has selected for its conservation efforts.

Conservation work began in 2000 with the restoration of the mosque and its minaret and the adjacent madrasa. The minaret posed particular problems: an earthquake had broken the top of the minaret apart, causing it to partially collapse. Work at the Ayyubid Palace was preceded by a detailed archaeological survey of the ruins carried out by a team from the Sorbonne University in Paris. All conservation work was completed at the end of 2003. The Citadel of Salah al Din is already an important destination for tourism in Syria, and a new visitors' centre is being installed, together with paths and signage. Master planning for the pristine landscape surrounding the Citadel is under study.

### Citadel of Masyaf

The Citadel of Masyaf is the smallest and least well-known of the three sites. It lies on the edge of the old town of Masyaf, in a dramatic natural setting at the foot of the coastal mountains. Like the other

sites, the history of occupation at Masyaf stretches back through many phases, but it is chiefly known as the stronghold of the Ismailis under the leadership of their ruler Sinan, in the twelfth century. Much of what remains today dates from this period of occupation and matches the mountains in its rugged beauty.

Conservation work at the Citadel began in 2000 on a section of the outer wall, which had partially collapsed. A comprehensive conservation project encompassing the entire site was completed in 2004. Visitors will be provided with a minimum infrastructure to guide them around the site, including signage, information panels and lighting.

Landscaping work was completed on the newly acquired and cleared town-side of the Citadel in 2004. With this area opened up, a window has been created between the town and site, and the Citadel has been given a much bolder presence in the urban landscape.

### Urban context and area development projects

During the early stage of the Citadel restoration projects, HCSP expanded the initial scope of pure conservation work to include the contextual dimensions of the three sites. A monument's setting is an integral part of its character. Unplanned development, particularly in the tourism sector, can quickly destroy historic and natural environments. Alternatively, if managed properly, investment in historic monuments and in their environments can preserve cultural heritage and stimulate economic development.

Planning for development in the context of built heritage is a central theme of HCSP's work. A number of Area Development projects are being planned, working in collaboration with other Aga Khan Development Network agencies dealing with microfinance and tourism.

Aleppo Citadel is located in the heart of the Old City. Currently the Citadel is like an over-sized roundabout, with a constant stream of vehicles cutting off access from and into the historic town. In 2004, HCSP initiated a planning project in the perimeter of the Citadel, working in close collaboration with the Old City Directorate and Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ). The scope of the planning project includes major infrastructure improvements, traffic management plans, landscape design and proposals for reuse of key historic structures. Much of the Old City around the Citadel is residential, occupied by low income populations. The project includes stimulating housing rehabilitation, possibly through a micro-credit facility.

The historic quarter of Masyaf has been much altered over the past fifty years, but it retains a certain sense of its historic identity and position in Ismaili history. Most of what remains dates from the period of Ottoman occupation. Development pressures will only increase in forthcoming years, but an opportunity exists to combine development of commercial activity in the town with preservation of the community's built heritage. Opportunities for improvement of the small historic centre have been studied including reuse of heritage buildings and landscaping.

In 2003, work was completed on the rehabilitation of the town's main market, Souk Al Saghir, which is housed in a historic structure at the heart of the town, creating new commercial opportunities whilst ensuring the town's heritage is preserved.

During 2005, it is planned to explore new project opportunities in the Old City of Damascus, together with other AKDN agencies, combining commercial developments with investment in cultural tourism, historic building conservation, urban rehabilitation and micro-finance initiatives.

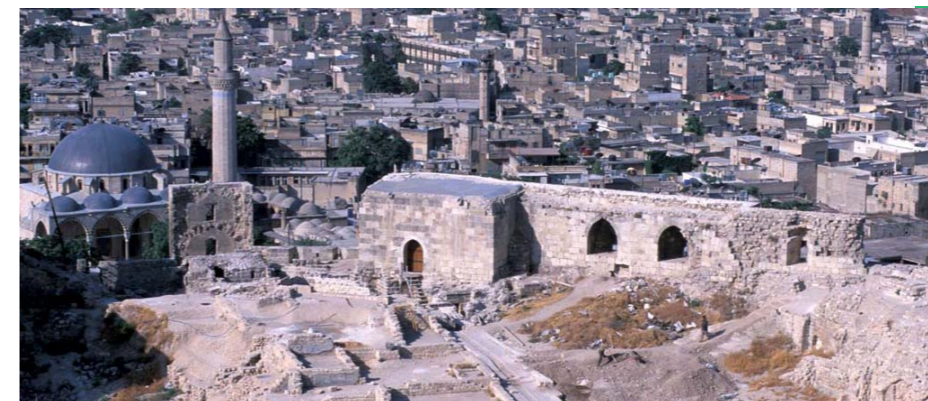
### Conservation standards

In many places around the world, it is thought that imaginative reconstructions of missing parts increased the appeal of buildings to visitors. This, however, threatens the authenticity of historic sites. In the Trust's projects, reconstruction of missing elements was replaced by proper documentation, consolidation and conservation of existing features. Some exceptions were made in cases where clear evidence existed, matching materials and techniques were available, and structural benefits could be derived from reconstruction. Instead, "virtual" reconstruction by three-dimensional models or computer simulations will be offered to visitors, whenever archaeological and historic research provides sufficient information, as part of specially designed presentations within or near the site.

A central objective of the projects is to create an example of conservation work

During the early stage of the Citadel restoration projects, Historic Cities Support Programme (HCSP) expanded the initial scope of pure conservation work to include the contextual dimensions of the three sites. A monument's setting is an integral part of its character. Unplanned development, particularly in the tourism sector, can quickly destroy historic and natural environments. Alternatively, if managed properly, investment in historic monuments and in their environments can preserve cultural heritage and stimulate economic development.

The Historic Cities Support Programme (HCSP) promotes the conservation and re-use of buildings and public spaces in historic cities in the Muslim World. HCSP undertakes the restoration and rehabilitation of historic structures and public spaces in ways that can spur social, economic and cultural development. Individual project briefs go beyond mere technical restoration to address the questions of the social and environmental context, adaptive re-use, institutional sustainability and training. In several countries, local Aga Khan Cultural Service Companies have been formed to implement projects under the supervision of the HCSP headquarters in Geneva.



In 2000, AKTC initiated a conservation project in Aleppo Citadel, which included the Ayyubid Palace Complex and surrounding walls of the Citadel. The site, which is considered a major monument of Islamic architecture, is situated at the heart of a World Heritage city.