



## Shikarpur Historic City Center

*Pakistan*

Shikarpur was founded in 1617 as a walled city and, due to its strategic location, became a main stop on the trade route between central Asia and India in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Afghans took control of the predominantly Muslim area in the mid-eighteenth century, and urged Hindu merchants to settle and carry out trade through Afghanistan to Central Asia and India. The surviving architecture reflects the prominence of the city at that time, with brick and mud-plaster houses surrounding central courtyards, decorated with timber and wrought-iron finishes. Today the spatial layout of the historic urban landscape includes a mix of narrow winding streets, which contrast with the gridiron plan from the colonial period. The large bazaar in the center of the city is thought to be the oldest and largest in the region. The construction of the railways toward the end of the nineteenth century, as well as the mass exodus of the Hindu community after the India-Pakistan divide in 1947, resulted in the gradual decline of the city and a loss of traditional community-based systems.

Shikarpur was included on the Watch in 2008 and 2010 to draw attention to the cultural significance of the city and its compromised state. Many of the traditional buildings are still threatened with demolition and others have been abandoned or neglected. Limited resources and technical support continue to be challenging; however, it is hoped that, with greater awareness and appreciation, the city center can be revitalized and the historic buildings can be reused.