

Re-localising Monuments & Heritage

Sustaining Cultural Memory &
Identity in Hasankeyf



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MArch Architectural Thesis

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*Sustaining Cultural Memory
& Identity in Hasankeyf*

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Course | MArch Architecture (Part 2)

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University of Greenwich | ARCT 1060 Architectural Thesis
2024 - 2025

Abstract

This thesis examines the displacement and transformation of Hasankeyf, a historic town in southeastern Turkey, as an expression of the broader Kurdish struggle focusing on cultural and historical preservation. While Kurdish identity has historically been suppressed through linguistic and political marginalisation, this study argues that the destruction of Hasankeyf represents a rupture in cultural memory, through complete spatial displacement, extending beyond language to the built environment. Hasankeyf, known as the 'Cradle of Human Civilisation' (Costa and Ward, 2017), was submerged in 2019 following the construction of the Ilisu Dam, prompting efforts to save the selected monuments while leaving the rest underwater.

This research critically evaluates the preservation and restoration strategies employed in response to the Ilisu Dam through four identified categories (relocation, replication, mummification, and extension), assessing their impact on cultural identity, historical authenticity and collective memory. By combining personal memory and theoretical arguments, this study examines Hasankeyf's transformation through the past, present, and evolving future. Drawing from scholars like Pierre Nora, Walter Benjamin, Jorge Otero-Pailos, and Françoise Choay, it explores the implications of the methods adopted. My personal memory of my visit to the town in 2013 serves as a lens to understand Hasankeyf's lived experience, and how its monuments and daily activities were intertwined, and shaping one another while also bridging the gap between theory and lived reality by examining the loss caused by displacement.

The methodology employed includes a study of historical and geographical analysis of Hasankeyf and an assessment of construction techniques used during the transformation phase. By doing so, the thesis aims to raise awareness and speculate on the opportunities available for the local Kurdish community to reconnect and engage with their displaced cultural legacy, arguing that heritage conservation must extend beyond the physical survival of monuments to actively engage with the displaced communities.

Keywords: *Kurds, Hasankeyf, Ilisu Dam, preservation, memory, heritage*

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Prologue

Being a Kurd myself, I deeply resonate with the sense of loss that Kurdish people across the country are experiencing. These losses often go unacknowledged in the media, as the so-called ‘Kurdish issue’ allows the broader narrative to dismiss or overshadow the destructions inflicted upon their ancestral lands.

“Kurds have no friends but mountains” is an adage that every Kurdish person has heard at least once in their life. I know I have, perhaps more than once. The saying emphasises their loneliness, forced displacements, isolation, and betrayal from other countries. As an ethnic minority struggling for independence and self-determination for hundreds of years, they rely instead on the mountains as their only true allies, both as a mythical image and a symbol of resilience (McDowall, 1997, p.2).

I will be focusing on the Kurdish people in Turkey, where the majority of them reside, because it is one of the key areas where the oppressions have led to several forced displacements, significantly disrupting their cultural and linguistic continuity. These restrictions were heightened with the banning of all Kurdish-spoken languages in public spaces in Turkey from 1924 until 1991, which had gradually been lifted since the 2000s. I have heard stories of these linguistic assimilations and restrictions on the Kurdish language first-hand from my parents and grandparents.

My grandmother, who spoke the Kurdish dialect of Zazaki Kurdish, could not converse in the Kurmanji dialect spoken by my grandfather. She moved to my grandad’s village, nestled between the mountains of eastern Turkey, where a language almost foreign of her own was spoken. Yet, this ‘foreign’ language was not spoken too far from her hometown; it was only a few villages down in the same region. In this movement, she left behind the language she conversed in from birth and adopted a ‘second language’. While Zazaki was never known to us, Kurmanji became the main dialect for my

father, and it was later passed on to me and my siblings.

Today, the towns where my grandparents once lived have become more interconnected, I would say, perhaps due to the further blending of these communities. However, for the broader Kurdish communities, the challenges and restrictions persist on the continuation of their identity and unity. As for the wider community, the forced displacement from their ancestral lands, where they had built their lives and identities, leads to their languages and customs being scattered into foreign places. In these new environments, a forced identity emerges, and a transformed dialect is shaped by forced adaptation and assimilation.

The town of Hasankeyf in Turkey is one of the key and most recent cases of this destruction and adaptation to a new life Kurds have had to endure. It is certainly not a linguistic separation or extinction but a cultural and historical one that affects the continuation of their collective identity as a marginalised community. This thesis aims to look at the transformation of Hasankeyf in a different perspective underscoring how they can thrive in spite of the cultural displacement. Throughout this thesis, I will share my memories of the old Hasankeyf from my visit in 2013 before its destruction.

My memory of the past will appear in bold red text like this.

Introduction

Kurdistan ("lands of the Kurds") is geographically divided across four significant countries in the Middle East into parts of Turkey, Syria, Iraq and Iran, with a small part extending into western Armenia, and the Zagros Mountains to the southeast (Britannica, 2019). The region is not an officially recognised state, as Kurdistan is united and defined by a shared common traditions, culture and language (Britannica, 2019). However, these nation states have long prevented the Kurds, the native ethnic group of the region, from having a governmental power or a forum to establish a political identity, leading to cycles of forced displacement and cultural erasure. Even their language is at risk of being erased and overshadowed by the dominant cultures of their host countries, as linguistic suppression and differences in dialects between the Kurds means "there is often a lack of clear understanding" and "this inability to speak to one another easily obviously renders internal cohesion more difficult" (Hannum, 1990, p.179).

The Kurdish issue has intensified in recent years as the lands they occupy have gained increasing geopolitical significance due to their rich oil and water resources, making their control a matter of national interest for the host states. As a result, the willingness to relinquish these borders has diminished more than ever (McDowall, 1997, p.8). These challenges are further compounded by the lack of visibility and acknowledgement of the cultural and historical devastations endured by the Kurdish people, leaving their identity, heritage, and rightful aspirations in a constant state of erasure and struggle.

One of the most profound examples in modern Kurdish history is the case of Hasankeyf, a historic town in southeastern Turkey. This thesis focuses on the town of Hasankeyf as a representation of the 'Kurdish Issue', exploring the forced displacements of its population and monuments due to the rising water from the Ilisu Dam, constructed in 2006 and completed in 2019 (Aydin, 2018). The Ilisu Dam displaced over 78,000 villagers, causing the breaking up of Kurdish communities and compelling many to assimilate into Turkish culture (Carle and Carle, 2013, p.80).

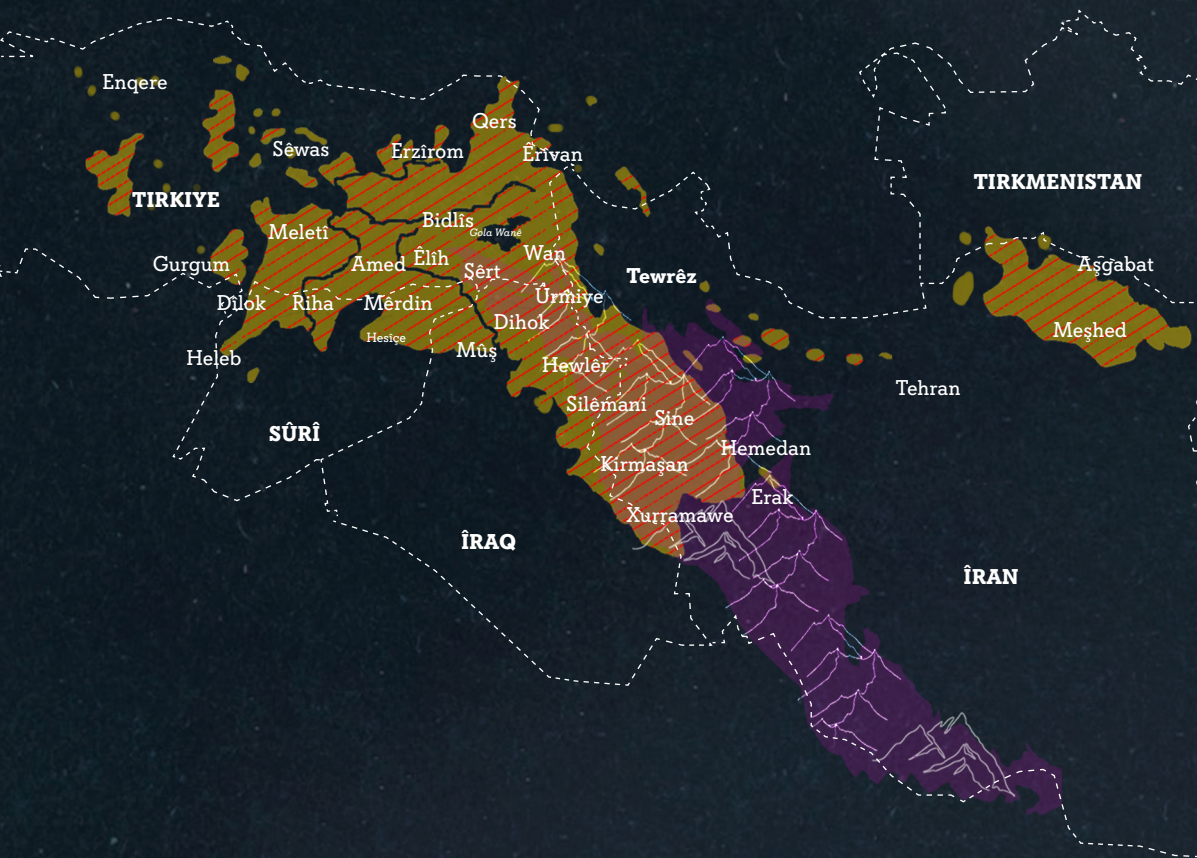


Figure 1: Map depicting the lands occupied by the Kurds, created by the author.

Hasankeyf above all serves as a valuable case study in understanding the implications of re-localisation of static and non-static entities of a community, that is the people and the monuments. The etymology of “re-localisation” refers to the late Latin concept “relocare” which is meant to “bring a thing back to its former place,” also “to let out again” (Online Etymology Dictionary, 2025). This term for the purpose of this thesis is used to describe not just the movement of physical monuments from their former to a new place but also the re-establishment of cultural continuity within a marginalised community. This study examines how relocation influences the emergence of different preservation methods and mediates the relationship between place, memory, and cultural identity, using specific monuments as case studies. It also explores the limitations and opportunities of these methods. Through exploring the limitations and opportunities of each approach, it examines how modern strategies navigate the connections between the past, present, and future.

The first chapter introduces the lands of Hasankeyf, as it is an important chapter in understanding the significance of the site and the reason behind all the methods taken to save its history despite the plans for destroying it in the first place. It explores global responses and the actions of international groups, examining both their successes and the limitations of their efforts in saving Hasankeyf.

The second chapter will delve into the first step in transforming Hasankeyf, examining the process of relocation through map studies. Pierre Nora’s concept of ‘*lieux de mémoire*’ (places of memory) from *The Realms of Memory: The Construction of the French Past*, (1996) is referenced to explore the connection between memory and place.

The third chapter will explore the process of mummification, used metaphorically to describe the

method used. This concept applies to the monuments that were preserved underwater. This process is discussed with reference to Françoise Choay, in the journal *Conversaciones...con Françoise Choay* (2020).

The fourth chapter explores the replication process, where pre-existing monuments are reproduced in a new setting to replace those that could not be physically relocated. This chapter explores the notion of authenticity and the results of duplicating historical monuments. Theoretical arguments include Walter Benjamin’s theory of ‘*Aura*’ from *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (1936), which will be applied to understand how replicas are perceived when carried out on historic buildings.

The fifth chapter explores the method of extension for the purpose of restoration, where an old monument is adapted and extended with new additions that re-introduce elements from the past, using modern building techniques and materials alongside relocated historical components. Otero-Pailos’ anthology, *Historic Preservation Theory: An Anthology: Readings from the 18th to the 21st Century* (2022), will be referenced to assess this method. Additionally, Otero-Pailos’ anthology will be cited throughout the thesis to support various arguments on the concept of historic preservation.

The thesis will utilise the outcomes of these conservation methods, assessing their effectiveness and limitations. It will critically explore the opportunities and potential of these interventions to positively shape Hasankeyf’s future, emphasising how heritage can be actively engaged rather than merely preserved. Furthermore, it will speculate and propose ways to promote engagement in the new town, to help maintain its historical significance while fostering new connections between past and present.

CHAPTER ONE:
LANDS of Hasankeyf

Hasankeyf and the Ilisu Dam



Figure 2: View of the old town from the northern bank of the Tigris River, taken before crossing the modern Hasankeyf bridge in 2013. Photograph by the author.

My memory of setting foot in the lands of Hasankeyf is as vivid as if it happened yesterday—perhaps because my memories from 2013 remain untouched, unshaken by the sight of its destruction.

As we approached the town, we stopped by the big welcome sign that read ‘Hasankeyf’, marking our entrance into its territories.

We stopped to take pictures, standing beside the sign with the vast landscape of Hasankeyf stretching behind us.

The two minarets stood tall and slim among the single storey surrounding homes in the distance. The rugged mountains in the background blended seamlessly with the earth-toned stones of the minarets.

Against the backdrop of the mountains, it was both a timeless and breathtaking sight, well worth the stop for photos.



Figure 3: Map showing the arrangement of old Hasankeyf, in 2013, during the authors visit.

Hasankeyf, a town that is located in Upper Mesopotamia in the southeastern part of modern Batman Province within Turkey, lies along the banks of the Tigris River. The lands of Hasankeyf have been home to many cultures long before the Kurdish settlement, beginning with the Assyrians, and over the centuries, it transitioned through Roman and Byzantine rule before being conquest by the Arabs in 640, earning the name 'Hisn Kaifa' meaning rock fortress (Meinecke, 1996, p.55). The town's location made it a vital regional capital at the time, eventually leading to its rule by the Abbasids, Seljuks, Artuqids, Ayyubids of Kurdish tribe, and the Ak Koyunlu Dynasty.

When the Ottomans conquered it in 1516, they shaped it into a city pattern, renaming it what we know as today, Hasankeyf (Oğuz-Kırca, 2014, p.56). The footsteps of these diverse civilisation remain imprinted on Hasankeyf's marked mountains and monumental structures, earning it the title 'Cradle of Human Civilisation' (Costa and Ward, 2017). Hasankeyf's historic lands tell a story of the past, with its architectural remains serving as both tangible heritage and a living archive of human history, preserving the oldest of our memories through time.

Beyond its physical lands, the waters of the Tigris Valley served as a natural highway for trade and transportation, carrying goods along the Silk Road. The significance of this town lies not only in its physical structures, but also in the memories of those who have lived there and passed down their cultural traditions and heritage through generations.

Today, the population of the town is primarily of Kurdish Origin, and for centuries, they coexisted with its layered history, actively accumulating and engaging with the landscape and its cultural assets. This interaction has transformed the site and its heritage, reconstructing the memories it once contained and creating new meanings for themselves.

The old town's lands are historically divided into upper city and lower city. The upper city, is home to a Roman Citadel, consisting of numerous cave dwellings carved deep into the cliffs. The lower part of the city to the south of the river showed significantly less occupation than the cave dwellings in the upper city, as most houses were gradually built around these natural and man-made caves as the population grew. In fact, most locals lived in these caves until 1965, and some still do, particularly local shepherds who prefer the upper city's fertile agricultural lands (Ishikawa, 2015, 26:12).

Despite Hasankeyf being declared a natural conservation area by Turkey's Minister of Culture in 1978, plans for the Ilisu Dam were approved in 1982 as part of the Southeastern Anatolia Project (GAP Project) (Aykan, 2018, p.11). It was well known that the dam would submerge much of the town and others along its stream, causing major impact on several predominantly Kurdish occupied cities and effectively erasing thousands of years of history. It was at this point that the old Hasankeyf, which had remained relatively unknown outside of its immediate region, captured the attention of nature conservationists, human rights activists, archaeologists, and many others with the news of its impending destruction. Groups with no personal stake in the 'Kurdish Issue' came together to help the locals save Hasankeyf. This collective movement led to its inclusion on the 2008 World Monuments Watch under the World Monuments Fund (World Monuments Fund (WMF), 2025).

Subsequently, following Hasankeyf's listing by the WMF, concerns over environmental and human rights violations associated with the dam project led several international banks to withdraw their financial support in 2009. As a result the Ilisu Dam project was halted for decades (WMF, 2025). However, financial backing from local Turkish banks eventually revived the project, prompting the launch of international campaign, including 'Save the Tigris' (Save the Tigris Foundation,

2012) and 'Hasankeyf Matters' (John Crofoot, 2012).

Hasankeyf's increasing recognition as a historically significant site led cultural heritage experts to further push for its inclusion as a UNESCO World Heritage Site through the 'Save the Tigris' campaign. A formal request was submitted to former UNESCO Director-General Irina Bokova, including ICOMOS UK and IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature), urging international heritage conventions.

Dear Irina,

We are writing to you today to draw your attention to the call for **Hasankeyf and the Iraqi marshes to become a World Heritage Site**. This letter has been posted at the same time as global demonstrations to try to draw attention to the plight of this precious area on the Tigris river, and to **put culture and nature before big business**.

The 12,000 year old town of Hasankeyf sits on the mighty Tigris river in north Kurdistan, in ancient Mesopotamia, which lies in modern-day south-eastern Turkey. **One of the oldest civilisations in the world, Hasankeyf will disappear forever** when the Ilisu dam is completed. The dam will flood or partially flood 199 villages and will **displace up to 78,000 people**. The dam is currently 90% complete.

Hasankeyf fulfills nine out of the ten criteria on the specifications to be designated a World Heritage Site, and it was one of the most important settlements in Upper Mesopotamia for a long time. Archaeological investigations are still ongoing in Hasankeyf, and **recent excavations uncovered remnants of Hurri and Mitani civilisations**. Hasankeyf is full of monuments and ancient buildings, and until recently humans still lived in many of its 5,000 caves.

Hasankeyf castle was constructed by Constantine the Great, and the area around the castle contains palaces and mosques. The Great Palace was constructed during the Roman Empire, and excavations are still continuing. The Great Mosque was built by the Ayyubids in 1325 AD and is the oldest structure of the Islamic period. The **40 metre-high minaret of the El Rizk Mosque is a wonder of engineering, and is elegantly adorned with Islamic calligraphy and engravings**. These are just a few of Hasankeyf's remarkable wonders which are threatened by the Ilisu dam.

The Iraqi marshes of Southern Mesopotamia are also under grave threat. Thousands of years of culture will be affected. The area is already subject to severe droughts, and the state of the marshes is deteriorating with each day that goes by. The Ilisu dam, and its sister dam, the Cizre dam, will create a desert and lead to the forced migration of local people from their homeland.

A UN resolution was approved in May 2015 in order to "Save Cultural Heritage in Iraq". This resolution had strong support from United Nations Deputy Secretary-General Mr Jan Eliasson and yourself, the UNESCO Director-General. We believe that the Iraqi marshes should not be ignored in this vital resolution. During this meeting of the UN General Assembly,

the Minister of State at the Federal Foreign Office of Germany, Ms Maria Böhmer, stated that "Iraq is a cradle of our common civilization... Its heritage has been entrusted to the care of all of mankind."

On September 8th 2015 you participated in an International Conference on the Protection of Victims and Ethnic and Religious Violence in the Middle East. **We strongly believe that Kurdish culture, which has been repressed for many years, and is being destroyed by Turkey's dam-building, must not be forgotten in these discussions**. The Ilisu dam is just one of 22 dams in Turkey's Southeastern Anatolia Project (GAP). The **dams will mostly affect Turkey's Kurdish population, flooding their villages, livelihood and eradicating Kurdish culture**. The Tigris and the Euphrates rivers' fragile eco-systems will also be destroyed by these dams.

For a location to become a World Heritage Site, the State Party of a country should compile a list of sites to be considered for inscription. However, **Turkey will not apply for Hasankeyf to become a World Heritage Site because it is intent on completing the Ilisu dam**. Therefore, we ask UNESCO to visit Hasankeyf and to review this unique area, **independent of an application from Turkey**. We would like to stress that the need for action is urgent, as the Ilisu dam is almost complete.

We hope that you will listen to our concerns and help us with our campaign to save Hasankeyf, the Tigris river and the Iraqi marshes before it is too late.

With regards,

Activists and environmentalists from the UK

Signed by

Corporate Watch/Peace in Kurdistan Campaign/ The Corner House/ Mark Thomas, comedian/writer/activist/ Nick Dearden, Global Justice Now/ Saskia Ozinga, FERN, UK/Doug Norlen, Senior Program Manager, Economic Policy Program, Friends of the Earth U.S./ Antonio Tricarico, Re:Common, Italy/ Regine Richter, Urgewald, Germany/ Ewa Jasiewicz, writer and activist/ Anders Lustgarten, playwright and activist/ Dr Radha D'Souza, University of Westminster/ Prof Felix Padel, author and activist/ Derek Wall, International Coordinator of the Green Party/ Dr Thomas Jeffrey Miley, lecturer in Political Sociology, Cambridge University/ Dr Johanna Riha/ Melanie Gingell, barrister/ Stephen Smellie, UNISON South Lanarkshire/ John Hunt, journalist/ David Morgen, journalist/ Harem Karem, Editor, The Pasewan/ Frances Webber, human rights lawyer/ Zaher Baher, Haringey Solidarity Group and Rojava Solidarity Group/ Trevor Rayne, editorial board/ Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism!/ Prof Khatchatur I. Pilikian, SHS; LH; LSFC/ Andreas Gavrilidis, Greek-Kurdish Solidarity, Margaret Owen, WPD/ Kurdistan National Congress (KNK) UK/ Zeynep Kurban, Kurdish activist/ Sheila Mosley, Co-chair of International/ Support Kurds in Syria Association/ Annie Crozier/ K.Lavin/ Saleh Mamon, Campaign Against Criminalising Communities (CAMPACC)/ Kurdistan National Congress (KNK) UK/ Kurdish People's Assembly/ Roj Women's Group/ Kurdish Student Union/ Kurdish Community Centre Haringey/ Halkevi Community Centre/ Arzu Pesmen/ Brighton Kurdish Solidarity/ Tom Anderson/ Lisa Butler/ Martina Gavrilidis, Un Ponte Per..., Italy/ Ismaeel Dawood, Iraqi Civil Society Solidarity Initiative/ Wiert Wiertsema, Both Ends, The Netherlands/ Heike Drillsch, CounterCurrent - GegenStromung, Germany/ Lucie Pinson, Amis de la Terre, Frances Webber/ Johanna L. RiverA, Save the Tigris and Iraqi Marshes Campaign/Iraqi Civil Society solidarity initiative

Figure 4: Open Letter to UNESCO and other authorities demanding its recognition under a heritage site (Save the Tigris, 2015).

UNESCO's Recommendation concerning the Preservation of Cultural Property Endangered by Public or Private Works (1968) states: "it is the duty of governments to ensure the protection and the preservation of the cultural heritage of mankind, as much as to promote social and economic development. (...) Preventive and corrective measures should be aimed at protecting or saving cultural property from public or private works likely to damage and destroy it..." (UNESCO, 1969, p.139)

Therefore, for a site be considered for World Heritage status under UNESCO, the State Party of the respective country, Turkey, in this case, must submit a tentative list of sites for evaluation. However, Turkey, having prioritised the construction of the Ilisu Dam, never pursued this recognition for Hasankeyf. Consequently, global efforts to save Hasankeyf were never formally acknowledged by UNESCO or other authorities. With no official nomination, the town remained excluded from international protection, and the construction of the dam proceeded as planned, leading to Hasankeyf's submersion in 2020.

Although the efforts of global campaigns and the protection under WMF may seem unsuccessful given the outcome, they played a crucial role in influencing the Turkish government's decision to protect Hasankeyf's key monuments as a condition for advancing the Ilisu Dam. As part of these agreements, the government initiated the relocation of its key architectural structures and various artefacts discovered during excavation on site, ensuring their preservation within a new nearby site, 3km away from the original site.

Today, Hasankeyf stands with the remnants of its ancient past juxtaposed against a new, modern identity shaped by monuments and residential buildings marked by preservation and conservation processes implemented. The fate chosen for this city forces us to consider what it

means to preserve heritage. While relocation of certain monuments may ensure their structural survival, can a place retain its cultural significance when re-localised to a new context, absent of the elements that originally made it meaningful, or the social activities that once defined it?

CHAPTER TWO:
RELOCATION as preservation

Relocation Process and Interventions

Three monuments greeted us on the northern riverbank: Zeynel Bey, the Artuklu Bath, and the Imam Abdullah Shrine, all in close proximity. It felt as though they were introducing us to Hasankeyf's cultural and architectural style before we ventured into the central city, showcasing the prominent use of stone and domes as their defining features.

Crossing the modern bridge into the lower city, where most residents live, we observed the remnants of the Old Bridge, partially destroyed in the Tigris River. Only its piers remain, standing as a testament to its former structure.

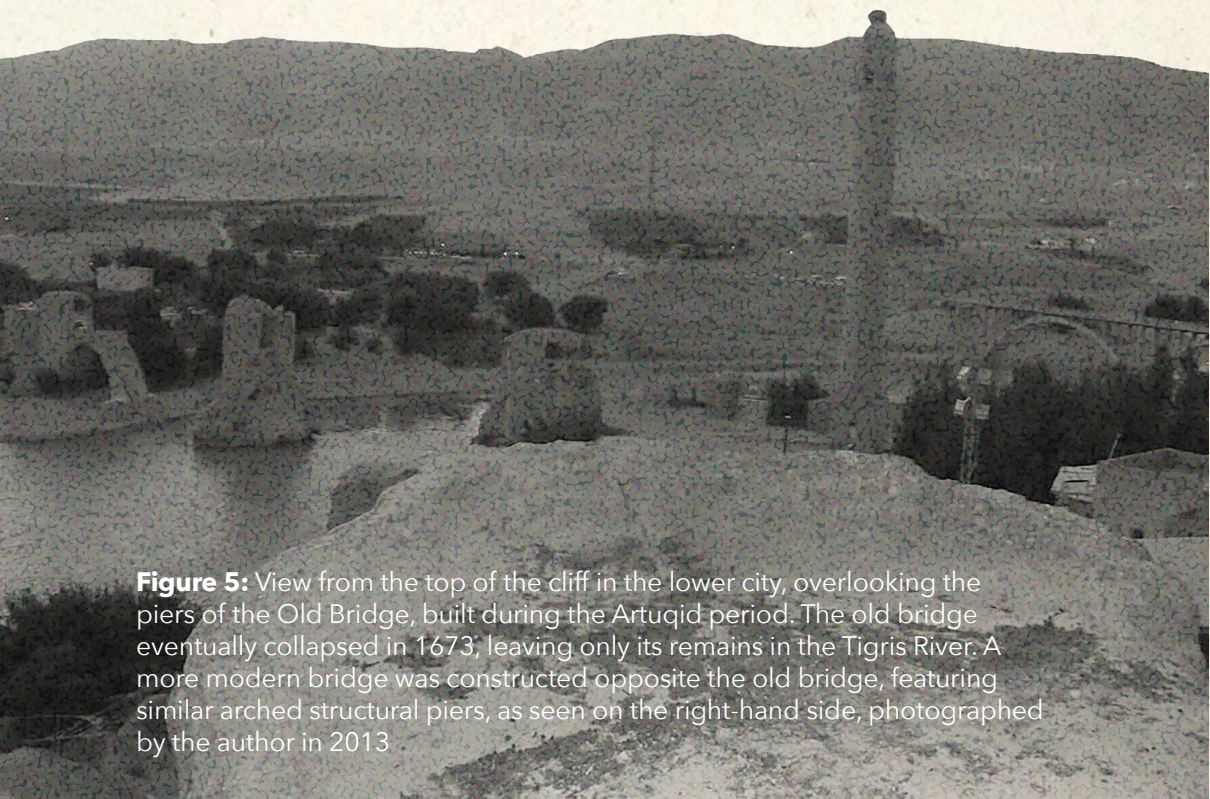
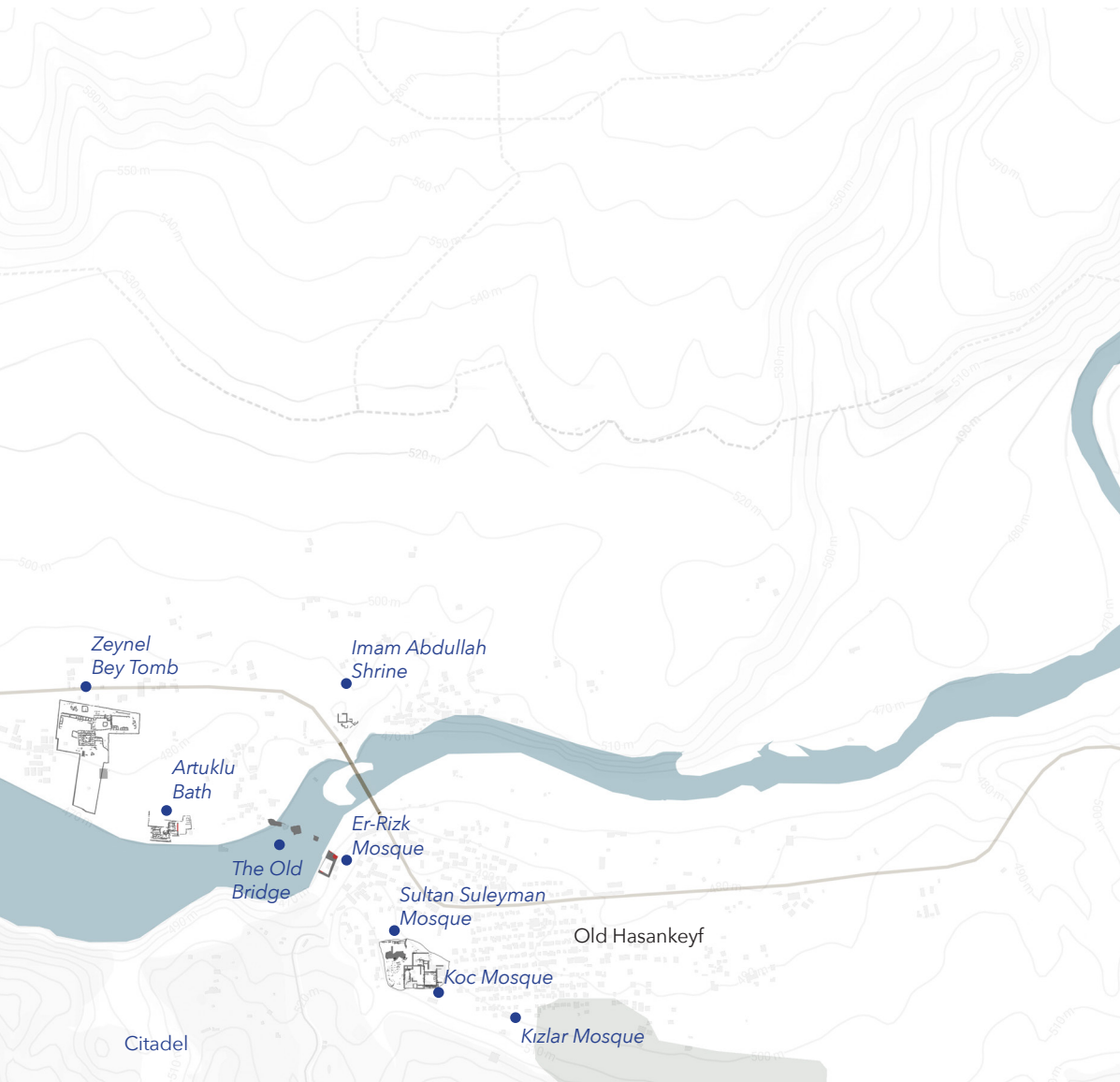


Figure 5: View from the top of the cliff in the lower city, overlooking the piers of the Old Bridge, built during the Artuqid period. The old bridge eventually collapsed in 1673, leaving only its remains in the Tigris River. A more modern bridge was constructed opposite the old bridge, featuring similar arched structural piers, as seen on the right-hand side, photographed by the author in 2013.

The Existing site Historic Buildings

■ Relocated ■ Flooded



The New site Historic Buildings

■ Relocated ■ Flooded

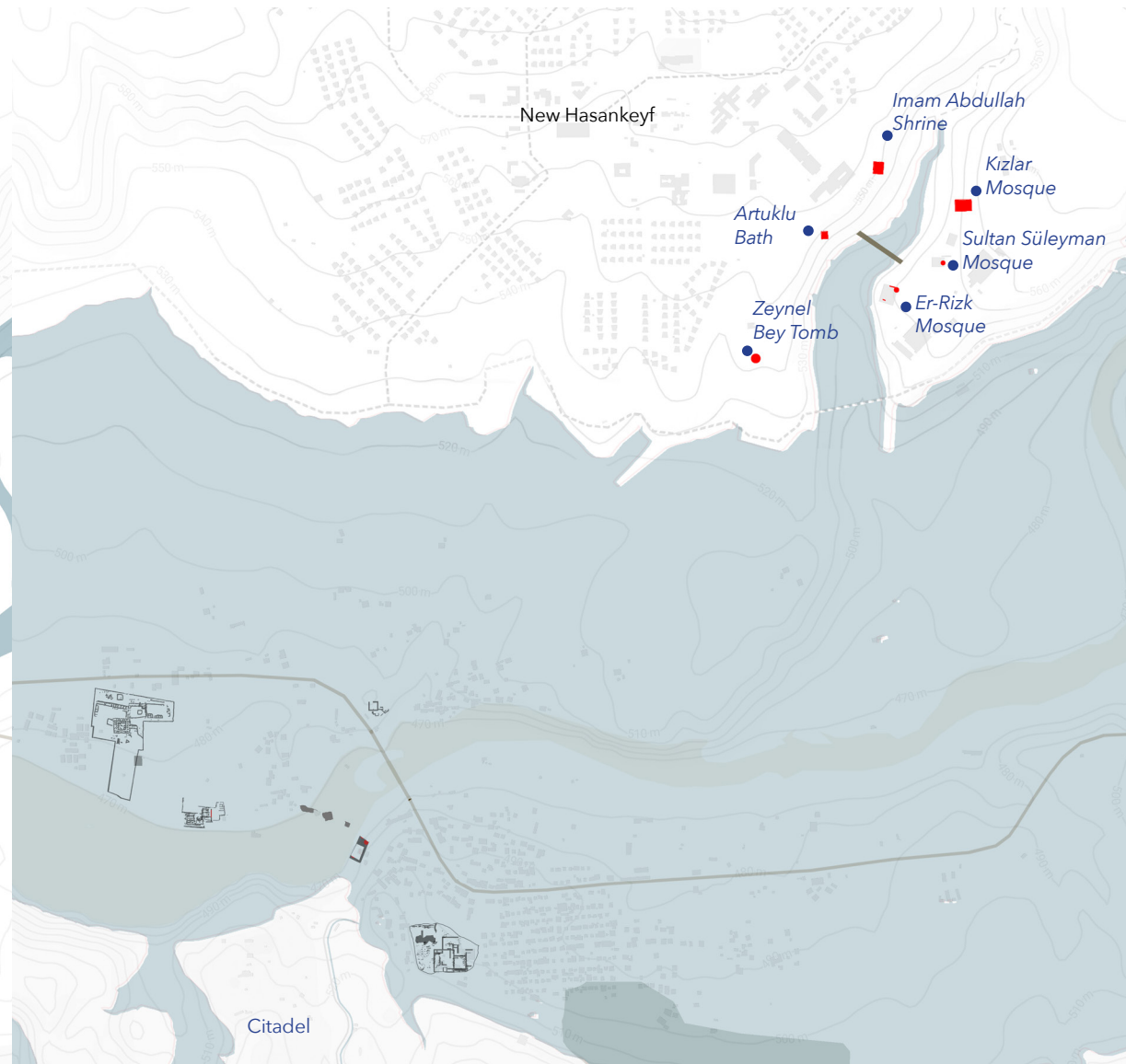


Figure 6: Map showing the relocation of monuments in Hasankeyf from their original sites in 2013 to their new locations as of 2025. Map by the author.



Figure 7: The northern facade of the Zeynel Bey Tomb, with the surrounding ruins of the complex in the foreground and the upper city's cave dwellings, in the background, photographed in 2013 (Hunbille, 2025).

Relocation, as a method of heritage preservation, involves physically moving a building from its original setting to a new environment, often due to threats from natural disasters and conflicts, or, as in the case of Hasankeyf, large-scale infrastructural projects. The strategy is often carried out for public structures to facilitate new developments (Curtis, 1979, p.1). However, its application for historic and architecturally significant structures is only justifiable if no other reasonable alternatives exist to protect them from destruction (ICOMOS, 2013).

Depending on the condition of the building, relocation can be carried out in two ways: either as a single, intact state or through disassembling and reconstruction. The former is generally seen as the most desirable for historically significant buildings, as it ensures preservation of its original fabric (Curtis, 1979, p.19). However, in the latter, it is considered that “no matter how skilled the artisans who disassemble the building, the loss factor increases with the scope of the dismantling process” (Curtis, 1979, p.19).

The relocation of monuments in Hasankeyf was overseen by the Turkish contractor Er-Bu İnşaat and undertaken by the Dutch company Bresser Eurasia. Through analysis of the existing structures and their structural integrity, engineers determined the most suitable form of transportation method for each key monument, to ensure their preservation at the new site (Yilmaz, Sevgi and Cetin, 2017, p.13). Subsequently, a total of eight historic monuments were relocated from the old site to their new locations.

The first relocation commenced in 2017 with the Zeynel Bey Tomb. This 15th century tomb was relocated in one piece, approximately 2km from its original site to a designated ‘cultural park’ within an open-air museum. This chapter focuses on the Zeynel Bey Tomb in the context of relocation because the decision to relocate it rather than leave it to be submerged



30cm reinforced concrete foundation



Separating layer around the tomb



Drilling holes to the lower base



50cm diameter holes



Installing the H-profile steel beams



Second layer of foundation



Gravel to the internal of the tomb



Installing lifting jacks



Lifting taking place



Seismic isolators at the new site



New foundations protection layer



New site ready for the tomb



Further lifting



SPMT positioned underneath for relocation



Zeynel Bey Tomb in its new location

marked the beginning of a larger effort to salvage the remaining monuments. It ultimately set a precedent for the relocation of remaining historical structures in Hasankeyf.

Zeynel Bey Tomb is arguably one of the most distinctive structures in Hasankeyf, with a unique Timurid architectural style that reflects Central Asian influences, making it unique in Anatolia. The glazed turquoise brickwork on the façade and the Kufic calligraphy are key representations of the Timurid style (Komaroff and Yalman, 2002). This mausoleum was commissioned by the Turkic ruler Uzun Hasan of the Ak Koyunlu dynasty in memory of his eldest son, Zeynel Bey, who died in the battle. Internally, the tomb has a cylindrical shape with an octagonal plan, while externally, it features a hemispherical dome resting on a high drum. The tomb was designed solely as a commemorative structure with a single entrance set within an arched niche. Its opposite opening frames the mountains, reinforcing the visual and symbolic ties to its surrounding landscape. José Villagrán García, explains in *Architecture and Monument Restoration* (1966), that “each generation draw nourishment from its ancestral past but, in so doing, it also becomes part of it, giving meaning to the present” (Villagrán García, 2022, p.286). In this sense, relocation, ensures that the future generations not only preserve the architectural heritage of their original lands but also actively integrate it into their identity for the future generations, thereby transferring its meaning into the present.

The detailed relocation of the Zeynel Bey Tomb was presented at the *Kârgir Yapılarda Koruma ve Onarım Semineri IX seminar* held in 2017 by Serap Sevgi and Murat Çetin from the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, General Directorate of Cultural Assets and Museums of Turkey (Sevgi and Cetin, 2017). In summary, the relocation process began with excavations at the original site to expose the tomb’s foundations, allowing for the construction of a 30cm thick square foundation

Figure 8: The photographs show the step-by-step process of the relocation of Zeynel Bey’s Tomb, carried out in May 2017 (Sevgi and Cetin, 2017).



Figure 9: Photography showing an aerial view of the Zeynel Bey Tomb and surrounding ruins of the social complex in their original location in 2016, with the Tigris River and the Citadel in the background (Sevgi and Cetin, 2017, p17)



Figure 10: An aerial photograph of the Zeynel Bey Tomb and replicated surrounding ruins at their relocated site in New Hasankeyf, in 2020 (TIS, 2023). The replicated complex mirrors the original ruins, which remain submerged at the old site beneath the water of the Ilisu Dam. The tomb's new position, now significantly farther from the upper city, visibly contrasts with its original proximity to the Citadel fortress.

to evenly distribute the structure's weight during transportation. To protect the historic stone fabric from contact with modern cementitious materials, a protective isolation layer was laid between the base of the tomb and the lifting foundation. Subsequent stages involve drilling 28 holes, each measuring 50cm in diameter, into the tomb's base walls. Into these cavities, 2.2-meter-long H-profile beams were inserted, cantilevered partially over the foundation while the remaining sections were embedded in the tomb's lower base walls. The beams were then integrated into a final 90cm thick reinforced lifting platform to stabilise the tomb during transport. These interventions were necessary, they highlight the fine line between preservation and alteration.

Simultaneously, preparations at the new site began with the construction of a new foundation. The tomb's proposed new location, approximately 65 meters higher than its original site and close to the hillside, increased its seismic risk. To address this, seismic isolators were incorporated to provide additional safety and ensure long-term structural stability. The lifting and transportation process involved hydraulic jacks, gradually raising the tomb by 14cm to reach the platform level of the Self-Propelled Modular Transporter (SPMT), which was equipped with 198 wheels to support the tomb's weight. To further stabilise the structure during transport, the tomb's interior was filled with compacted gravel and topped with a reinforced concrete slab. The relocation was completed using a stepwise lowering method onto its new foundation (Sevgi and Cetin, 2017, p.15-34).

Adjacent to the tomb, excavation studies conducted at the original site ahead of the relocation in 2004 revealed a social complex comprising madrasas from the Ak Koyunlu, Artuqid, and Ottoman periods, along with a bathhouse, guesthouses, and a public kitchen (Dabanlı, 2018). The complex was in a semi-ruined state before relocation, but even so, it is still possible

to understand how the connecting elements were used, their positions on-site, and the circulation paths that shaped the spaces. These ruins are sufficient to grasp the active spaces built for interaction around the mausoleum. Due to the structural fragility and complexities involved in relocating these ruins, they were preserved underwater, while a replica of the complex constructed at the new site, raising concerns about whether the new setting can maintain the tomb's historical context without its remaining elements.

The relocation of Zeynel Bey Tomb was not a community led initiative. Neither the residents nor the Mayor of Hasankeyf were consulted or informed about the plans for the new site (Ishikawa, 2015, 30:14). If the purpose of preservation is for the continuation of memory and performance of cultural heritage, does the new location truly serve the needs of the local community, or does it primarily aim at becoming a tourist attraction and a physical symbol for future generations?

Pierre Nora emphasises that when modern society shifts away from '*milieux de mémoire*' (environments of memory), where memory was once an active part of everyday life, to '*lieux de mémoire*' (places of memory), where memory is transformed into a symbolic representation of history, it results in a static preservation of the past, one that obscures the experience and the collective memory (Nora, 1996). While it could be argued that because the Zeynel Bey Tomb was relocated intact, the memories it embodies are also transferred to the new site. However, the displacement of the tomb could also result in a forced engagement with the past, rather than an organic continuation of the memory it once had.

A criticism of relocating the Zeynel Bey Tomb is that, while it ensures the tomb's physical survival, it inevitably disrupts its relationship with the landscape and the spatial memory that once defined its meaning. Nora asserts that "Lieux de memoire exist because there

are no longer any *milieux de memoire*, settings in which memory is a real part of everyday experience" (Nora, 1996, p.1). In light of this, mausoleums in Islamic architecture are often erected for religious purposes, with their locations intentionally chosen to enhance the deceased's connection to a specific place (Hillenbrand, 1994, p.253–258). The Zeynel Bey Tomb is not primarily a religious structure, but rather a memorial; its original placement on the left bank of the Tigris River, directly across from the Citadel, signifies its historical and social importance. The surrounding complex, which consists of later additions, demonstrates how the site continued to serve as a focal point for collective memory across different cultural communities. Therefore, by de-contextualising the tomb from where memory was once ingrained through traditions of gatherings shaped by its context, it replaces the real memory with a constructed setting designed as an illusion of the past. This transformation turns the monument into *lieux de memoire*, leading to forced recollection of the past rather than a natural continuation of communal memory.

Although the Zeynel Bey Tomb is not originally part of Kurdish heritage, Kurds have lived alongside this structure for centuries, creating a meaning for themselves and shaping their local identity. Ultimately, relocation as a preservation method, while allowing tangible structures to be saved, also severs the deep site-specific authenticity that once defined its existence.

If relocation is executed carefully, mimicking its orientation, transporting the monument in one piece, and maintaining its physical appearance, one might question whether such techniques minimise the impact on cultural engagement. Is a monument's meaning defined solely by its material form and geographical context, or is it more closely related to the collective memories and experiences it creates? Lewis Mumford, in *The Death of the Monument* (1937), suggests that what transforms a building into a monument is

our shared decision to recognise it as such, thereby ensuring its presence for future generations (Mumford, 2022, p.202). This could mean that both the tangible and the continuity of communal engagement are essential for the monument to remain a monument.

Furthermore, despite efforts by international groups and the desired involvement of UNESCO to protect Hasankeyf's location, such intervention would not necessarily have ensured its preservation in its original place. A parallel can be drawn with the Temples of Abu Simbel, relocated in 1964 under UNESCO's supervision to safeguard them from the rising waters of the Nile (UNESCO, 2022). While Abu Simbel's relocation was a response to a natural threat, Hasankeyf's destruction was a government-initiated decision, reflecting how political and economic priorities often dictate heritage preservation. Had Hasankeyf been designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site, its relocation would likely have been framed as the only viable option, much like the case with Abu Simbel.

Nevertheless, relocating the tomb and other monuments of similar historical significance ensures Hasankeyf's cultural heritage is not irrevocably lost. This rare engineering feat, carried out for Zeynel Bey Tomb and eight other historical monuments is unprecedented at this scale and defines the new site as a unique case study in the field of heritage preservation. Hasankeyf, is a town that relies economically on tourism, and the awareness of its history, could boost tourism to the new site. The relocated Hasankeyf and the displaced monuments ultimately become a symbol of the Kurdish struggle, embodying resilience against cultural erasure and territorial displacement. Protecting these heritage assets represents not only a technical success but also a physical display of Kurdish cultural perseverance. They become a vessel for communal memory, a way for future generations to connect with their roots and preserve the identity and resilience of their ancestors.

CHAPTER THREE: *MUMMIFICATION* as preservation

Frozen in Time & Abandoned Underwater

Strolling through the old town, we were naturally drawn toward the towering minaret of Süleyman Han Mosque, calling us to witness its history.

Koc Mosque and Sultan Süleyman Han Mosque had no barriers restricting our exploration of the ruins. As we made our way up the steep path toward the mountain peak, tall metal fences guided our way, installed to protect the remnants of past civilisations. These barriers kept us at a distance, in contrast to the open accessibility of the mosque complex.

The same metal fences lined our path toward the Citadel, where the landscape unveiled something extraordinary, as if giant hands had carved out the cliffs, leaving behind a honeycomb of deep, ancient caves.

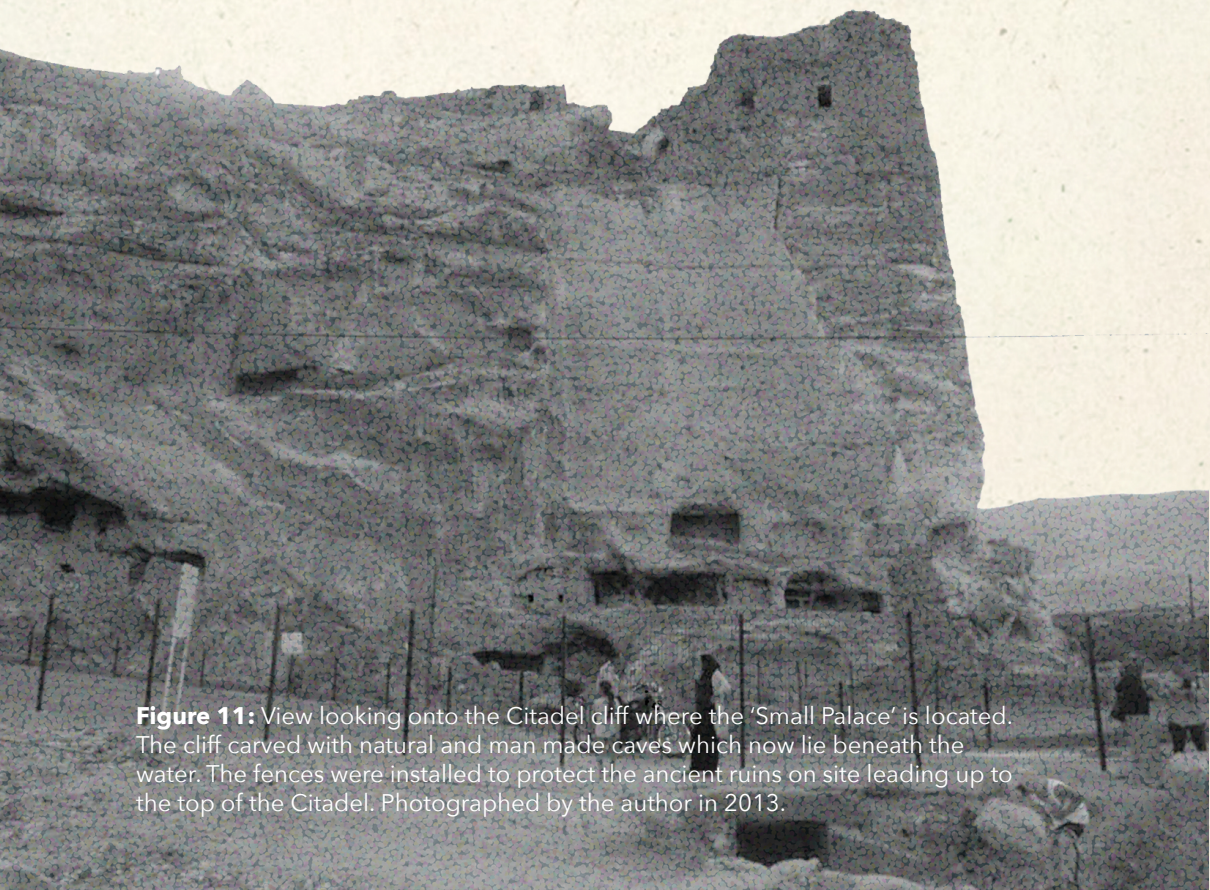


Figure 11: View looking onto the Citadel cliff where the 'Small Palace' is located. The cliff carved with natural and man made caves which now lie beneath the water. The fences were installed to protect the ancient ruins on site leading up to the top of the Citadel. Photographed by the author in 2013.



Figure 12: Northern facade of the Koç Mosque and front gate of the Süleyman Han Mosque's Complex to the right-hand side, in their original locations before being relocated and mummified in 2017 (Little, 2017).

The etymology of 'mummification' comes from the word 'mummy', referring to the preservation of a body through embalming or drying, most commonly practised in ancient Egypt to prevent decaying and maintain the body's physical form indefinitely (Cambridge Dictionary, 2025). In the context of heritage preservation, this thesis metaphorically refers to the term to describe the submersion of historical ruins in Hasankeyf in a way that 'freezes' the natural processes of ageing, deterioration, or transformation that a building undergoes over time. This process was carried out for structures that could not be relocated intact or in sections to the new site due to their fragility and the lack of necessary excavation studies for safe relocation (Sevgi, 2024). Similar to the mummification of a body, this preservation method adopted in Hasankeyf 'embalms' the ruins in their original locations, keeping them in a lifeless state rather than allowing for their organic evolution.

Several historically significant sites in old Hasankeyf were preserved under this method, including components of the Er-Rızk Mosque, the Artuqid Bath ruins, the Süleyman Han Mosque's Complex ruins, the Koç Mosque, the Kızlar Mosque ruins, the Zeynel Bey Tomb's ruins and the Imam Abdullah Zawiya's ruins. These structures were essentially preserved as architectural mummies, either partially or in their entirety (Sevgi and Cetin, 2017, p.15). In some cases, such as the Koç Mosque and Süleyman Han Complex, due to their close proximity were buried together under the same reinforced concrete shell underwater.

This chapter focuses on the Koç Mosque as a case study in the context of architectural mummification. Unlike other structures, this partially ruined mosque was left behind in its entirety, while its replica was reconstructed at the new site. The old mosque is particularly known for its carved detailed plaster decorations, featuring vegetal motifs, palmettes, and Rumi patterns alongside floral Kufic script, reflecting the stylistic influences



Figure 13: Entrance to the *iwan* of the Koç Mosque showing the temporary structural supports the load of the building (Little, 2017)

of the Great Seljuk Dynasty that ruled in Hasankeyf (Eskici, 2006, p.79). Excavation studies conducted on the site between 2000 and 2004 by Prof. Dr. M. Oluş Arık and his team documented and examined the mosque's remains for conservation. According to their study, the mosque is estimated to date from the 12th and 12th-14th centuries (Eskici, 2006, p.88). Over time, the mosque's decorations and structure suffered deterioration, prompting conservation efforts in areas displaying material loss and detachment. These areas were repaired, missing carvings were reconstructed, and the existing structure was strengthened with temporary structural supports (Eskici, 2006, p.96).

This process recalls John Ruskin's views on the restoration of historic buildings expressed in *The Lamp of Memory* (1849), where he asserts that "the greatest glory of a building is not in its stones. Its glory is in its Age (...). It is in their lasting witness against men" (Ruskin, 2022, p.71). While the restoration efforts for the mosque aimed to preserve its aesthetic survival and the appreciation of its intricate carvings, they also introduced an element of speculation, rather than imposing what the structure *should* be, instead of allowing it to express its natural process of ageing over time. However, contrary to Ruskin's theory, such restorations help sustain its architectural significance, particularly for visitors and future generations who rely on these unique details to engage with its history, unlike the current locals, who have already witnessed the mosque in its original state. In this sense, restoration can be seen as a conscious approach to securing the mosque's continuation and preserving its uniqueness for future appreciation.

For the underwater preservation of Koç Mosque and adjacent ruins, a series of engineered interventions were used to shield the structure in its place and protect it from direct exposure to water and sediment movement. The process was inspected and recorded by Serap Sevgi, leading to a research paper, *Future*



Figures 14: Koç Mosque's *iwan* facade being repaired and reconstructed during the conservation works in 2000 (Eskici, 2006, p.96)



Figure 15: Works on the ruins of the Koç Mosque in 2018 show workers casting a protective layer to prevent the ruins from moving underwater (İLKHA, 2018).



Figures 16: The Koç Mosque and Sultan Süleyman Han Complex were mummified under the same concrete shell. A photograph taken in 2018 shows the various layers applied to the ruins at the old site before they were submerged underwater (Sevgi, 2024, p.65).

Notes: Conservation Efforts of Hasankeyf Süleyman Han Complex (2024), describing the burial process for both Koç Mosque and Süleyman Han Complex. In summary, the first step in preparing the ruins for burial involved cleaning exposed surfaces of any deposits that could contribute to microbiological growth in the moist underwater environment. Later, any gaps and loose joints within the old stonework were repaired and filled to reinforce structural stability. Openings such as doorways, niches, and windows were also supported with mortared walls and steel supports to seal the structure. A protective cover was placed over the strengthened ruins to shield them from unexpected changes in water pressure. In order to construct a coffin-like enclosure for the mummification of the mosque, concrete columns were positioned along the perimeter of the ruins, following the original structures outline. These columns were placed to support the protective concrete shell that would encapsulate the monument rather than supporting them on the actual foundation of the mosque. The columns were installed by creating moulds in the soil without interrupting the existing foundations, thereby preserving the integrity of the original site. A white geomembrane barrier was then applied beneath all reinforced concrete footings and walls to act as a separating layer, as well as making sure detachments in the future is possible. Additionally, silt sand was used to regulate water pressure and stabilise the ruins against potential movement. Finally, a 50-80cm thick reinforced concrete layer was constructed to sit over the columns and the rest of the supports, effectively sealing the structure in its existing place (Sevgi, 2024, p.64-67).

A criticism of this method is that it raises concerns about accessibility and the long-term integrity of these monuments, since they are preserved in an uncontrolled environment. Additionally, mummification as a preservation method fails to sustain cultural engagement for the present and future generations. As Leopoldo Torres Balbás in *The Use of Ancient*

Monuments (1920) suggests, "A building is made to be inhabited by man or by divinity. It cannot speak to us in the same way, when we visit it once in a while, as when it is in an integral part of our life". (Torres Balbás, 2022, p.165). In this sense, mummification may prevent physical destruction through interventions to preserve it underwater, but it does so by transforming the site into a passive, inaccessible relic of the past. Although the Koç Mosque is no longer used as a religious site due to being in partial ruins, its presence in Hasankeyf reflects the layered history and continued cultural significance of the location. Without ongoing interaction, these monuments may gradually fade from collective memory.

In comparison to the relocation method, which involved physically transferring monuments to a new setting, mummification maintains the ruins in their authentic locations. However, at the same time, it signifies forced abandonment, severing these sites from ongoing cultural continuity. Françoise Choay (2001) states that "Any ancient urban fragment should be integrated into a local, regional, and territorial development plan that symbolises its relationship with present-day life [...] Next, the concept of the historic monument should not be applied to a single monument independent of the built context" (Choay, 2001 in Pane, 2022, p.383). This could suggest that architectural mummification used in Hasankeyf falls short of maintaining true integrity, as it isolates the Koç Mosque from its surrounding spatial and cultural arrangements, thereby contributing to a loss of cultural heritage. Just as a replicated version of it in the new site lacks authentic engagement, submerged monuments lose their capacity to participate in cultural memory and identity development.

Therefore, Hasankeyf's submerged sites can be understood as instances of what Andreas Huyssen (2003) terms the 'musealization of absence', where heritage is preserved in a manner that emphasises its loss rather than its continued presence (Huyssen,

2003). Without interactive engagement or alternative preservation models, Hasankeyf functions not as a site of cultural continuity but as a site of absence, a stark reminder of what has been lost rather than what has been safeguarded.

On the contrary, this form of preservation, though rare, offers a unique method of physically protecting fragile sites while maintaining their authenticity within their original context. Unlike relocation for preservation, which can sever a monument from its historical and geographical meaning, mummification in this contrast, allows these structures remain intact in their intended setting, even if temporarily inaccessible. This approach presents an opportunity to explore new conservation strategies for ruined or endangered sites, potentially serving as a precedent for future preservation efforts that prioritise both protection and authenticity of the site.

The process of burial for Koç Mosque and other submerged monuments demonstrates the contradictions inherent in this approach because while they are physically retained underwater, they are erased from contemporary cultural life. The method described as the mummification of heritage sites in Hasankeyf raises questions about their future status. Ultimately, a potential shift in preservation method may occur inevitably when Ilisu water levels drop in the future, essentially revealing these ruins as intended. When this happens, their preservation status could transition from mummification to museumification. The term museumification, which is derived from the word museum, in historical preservation, describes the static conservation of structures, focusing on restoring and retaining them as they existed in the past but also ensuring their public accessibility. This process, in theory, preserves monuments as witnesses to the past; Françoise Choay (2008) critiques the convention as "fetishistic" and a "disguised demolition" that strips heritage of its vitality and potential to engage with

present and future generations (Choay, 2008 in Pane, 2022, p.392). In contrast to Choay's argument, the museum-type conservation of Hasankeyf for buried ruins could provide an opportunity to maintain the historical significance of the original site for the Kurdish community to establish new connection and cultural meaning. These ruins, if rediscovered and unburied in the future, may mitigate the exclusion and neglect of the original lands of Hasankeyf, helping the community to remember and reconcile with its history.

CHAPTER FOUR: *REPLICATION* as preservation

Replication vs. Authenticity and Aura

Hasankeyf was not just a city of ruins; it was a living town, where history lingered in every corner. Every worn stone bore the weight of centuries, standing alongside modest block houses, seamlessly blending the ancient with the present. Life for the locals seemed to follow familiar rhythms, unchanged for generations.

People filled the streets, locals and tourists alike, weaving through narrow alleys, never knowing when the next ruin might appear. Each turn felt like an unexpected discovery, as if the past lay just beneath the surface, waiting to be unearthed.



Figures 17: My family and I inside of the caves in Hasankeyf in 2013. Photograph by the author.

In architectural preservation, replication refers to the imitation and recreation of an identical copy of an existing structure or its components, often using new or contemporary materials and fabrication techniques. This method seeks to maintain the original in form, scale, and visual details as closely as possible, either as a replacement or to preserve its appearance in a different context.

In Hasankeyf, replication as a preservation strategy was implemented because relocation was not feasible for some structures due to their fragility. Instead, the mummification approach was used to preserve these sites underwater, while a replica of it was built to sustain collective memory and cultural heritage at the new site. This process ultimately creates a duplicate of significant monuments for display at the new site while the authentic monument remains submerged underwater. Alois Riegl, in *The Modern Cult of a Monument* (1903), introduces the notion of age and historic value for monuments, suggesting that the significance of a building “would only increase in value by virtue of rarity or age” (Riegl, 2022, p.131). If the worth of the monument, as suggested by Riegl, increases with these factors, the replicas in Hasankeyf’s lack both rarity and value, as they are duplicates of the originals and are modern reproductions detached from the original material history of their sites.

The replication strategy was applied to the Koç Mosque and the ruins of the Zeynel Bey Tomb in Hasankeyf, including the Sultan Süleyman Han Complex. This chapter focuses on the Sultan Süleyman Han complex, where only parts of the complex were replicated, creating a mixture of preservation strategies that merge historical authenticity with contemporary reconstruction practices. The original Süleyman Han complex was studied ahead of the flood by an archaeological team as part of the ‘Hasankeyf Historical and Archaeological Site Research, Excavation, and Rescue Project’ under the directorship of the Abdüsselam Uluçam in 2004 (Uluçam, 2017).

The complex, also known as Şehabiye Madrasah, was built by Melikü'l Âdil Şehabeddin Gazi, a Syrian Ayyubi Kurdish tribe emir, between the years 1350 and 1354. The structure housed Şehabeddin Gazi’s tomb and his three sons who died from the Plague (Uluçam, 2020, p.41-42). Later, his surviving son, Sultan Süleyman, commissioned further additions. The construction date of these structures are also unknown. However, according to historical records and Arabic inscriptions on the base of the 36m tall minaret, the mosque was commissioned by Sultan Süleyman between 1406 and 1416 (Uluçam, 2020, p.37). This complex, as well as other Ayyubid-built structures in Hasankeyf, showcases the celebration of stone craftsmanship.

The original complex, which today lies in partial ruin, initially, when intact, functioned as an educational institution, fostering Islamic scholarship and religious teachings during the Ayyubid Kurdish rule in Hasankeyf (Uluçam, 2020, p.37). Excavation revealed that the complex, similar to the remains of the Koc Mosque, did not meet the structural criteria for relocation. As a result, the decision was made to preserve it underwater, with the tomb of Sultan Süleyman, his father and siblings also to remain, relocating only the later additions such as the minaret, courtyard gate, and fountain of the structure to the new site.

To minimise disruption of collective memory and prevent segregation between relocated components and their original structures, officials undertook a replication process to reconstruct a copy of the old complex at the new site. This process began with an analysis of the existing complex in its original location, using laser scanning, photography and survey data to document and assess its current state. Furthermore, to achieve an accurate replica of the old complex, plaster casting was applied directly over the ruins to form exact mould (Sevgi, 2024, p.65). These moulds were then used to produce a like-for-like copy at the new site, replicating the physical characteristics of the original

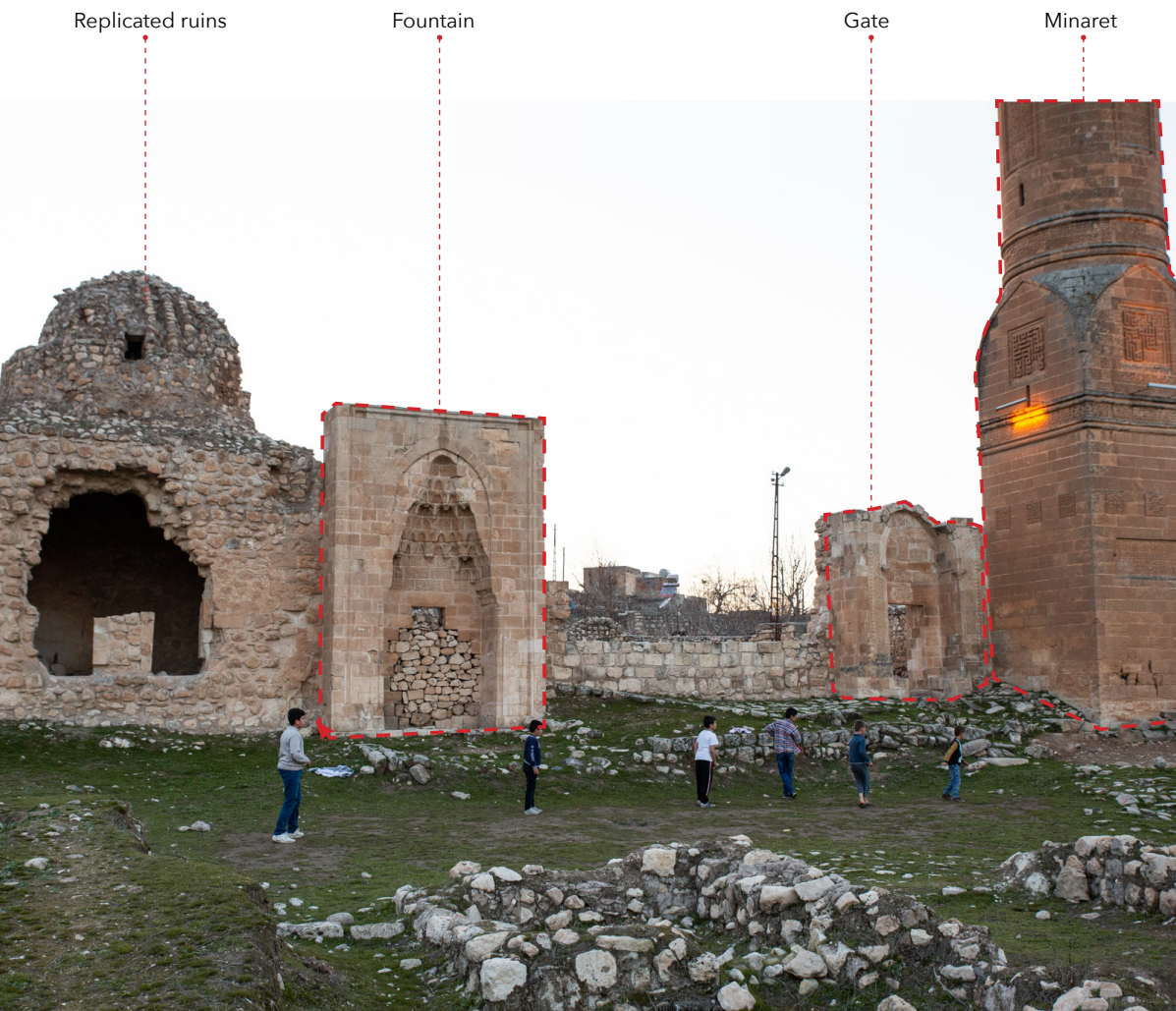


Figure 18: Sultan Süleyman's social complex shows the components selected by the officials to be relocated to the new site. The remaining ruins are preserved on-site, leading to a replication of it at the new site, photographed in 2017 (Little, 2017).

ruins. Ultimately, the aim was that when these replicated ruins are displayed alongside the original minaret, courtyard gate, and foundation, they would almost be indistinguishable in physical characteristics from submerged ruins.

Replication may aim to retain the visual and spatial identity of the lost ruins, but it raises concerns about the originality and value of copies in architectural heritage. Suppose historical buildings were subject to mass production and endless reproduction. Would this not diminish the meaning of the original, suggesting that if something can be easily recreated, it is not truly unique? In *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (1936), Walter Benjamin claims that the 'aura' of an object in the field of art, which he believes relates to not only art but any historical object, diminishes with technological reproductions. Walter Benjamin defines aura as the authenticity and authority of an original, derived from its uniqueness within a specific time and place (Benjamin, 1936, p.22). The original Sultan Süleyman Han complex, once a deeply embedded commemorative site in Hasankeyf's historical landscape, exemplifies this loss. Though the replicated version is architecturally accurate due to the intricate processes used, it remains detached from the original's materiality, lived history, and temporal layers, stripping it of its commemorative significance. Benjamin suggests that the more something is reproduced, the less it retains the historical significance and emotional depth of its original existence (Benjamin, 1936). Therefore, replication of Sultan Süleyman's social complex risks undermining its unique cultural and historical value. Original elements such as the minaret, foundation, and courtyard gate, now relocated alongside the replicated complex, lose their authentic context, further detaching them from their historical meaning.

Benjamin contends, "Even with the perfect reproduction, one thing stands out: the here and now of



Figure 19: Aerial view of the new cultural park at the new site, showing the Süleyman Han Complex with its original components outlined in red dotted lines and replicated components in blue dotted lines. To the left of the site is the new museum, and in the background is the Er-Rizk Mosque. Photographed in 2022 (Daily Sabah, 2022).

the work of art – its unique existence in the place where it is at this moment. But it is on that unique existence and on nothing else that the history has been played out to which during the course of its being it has been subject.” (Benjamin, 1936, p.5). Hence, the replicated structures in the new Hasankeyf are not merely reproductions but entirely new entities, devoid of the original meaning as a memorial site. Since architecture, like art, evolves through time, it is not just about its visual or aesthetic properties; its significance is tied to the meaning it portrays and its authenticity, which increases its value over time. Hence, no matter how accurate, a reproduction in these terms cannot carry or mechanically reproduce the lived experience and memories contained within the original. Ultimately, what is lost is the aura, the unique presence shaped by time, human interaction, and material history. Locals may find interacting with the replicated ruins unnatural since the original complex and tombs of Sultan Süleyman and his family are submerged and inaccessible. This highlights a fundamental challenge in architectural reproduction as a means of preservation because it may safeguard the memory of the original Sultan Süleyman Complex, but it cannot reproduce the value and rarity that it had.

In contrast to Benjamin’s concept of aura, Bruno Latour and Adam Lowe (2019) argue that replication does not inherently destroy authenticity but rather extends it into new contexts. As they describe once there is no difference in the production of the two “the aura begins to hesitate and is uncertain where it should land” (Latour and Lowe, 2019, p.9). The copy of the complex, when viewed alongside its originals elements, only stands out due to the clean-looking new stonework, as modern technologies were used to create a like-for-like replica of the old. From this perspective, replicating the Sultan Süleyman Han complex does not necessarily signify a loss of authenticity but rather an effort to preserve the site’s memory through alternative means, even if modern materials are involved.

Ultimately, replicating the complex does not recover the traces of past inhabitants who contributed to its historical layering over time. Benjamin's assertion that 'history is played out upon the original but not upon its reproduction' is particularly relevant here, as the new structure, no matter how accurate, lacks the lived experience and historical transformations that shaped the old one. When a community has lived alongside ruins for generations, these structures become woven into daily life, even if they are no longer in use. They hold meanings that only the local community can fully understand and relate to, shaping a shared sense of identity and heritage. Therefore, reconstructing these exact meanings is impossible; the 'falsity,' as Ambrogio Annoni describes in 'Considerations for the Building Rebirth of Milan' (1945), "would end up weighting down and obfuscating taste, sentiment, and passion" (Annoni, 2022, p.219).

Furthermore, the replication process itself further complicates the notion of craftsmanship and authenticity of historical details and techniques. The original Ayyubid-era structures of the complex were built using hand-laid stones, intricate carvings, and techniques reflective of the time period, whereas their replicas were produced through mechanical fabrication, laser scanning, and moulding techniques using new stones and construction techniques. As Latour and Lowe (2019) argue, such technological reproductions do not imply replicating the original aura, but instead create a different kind altogether (Latour and Lowe, 2019, p.8).

Although the replication process risks altering how the Kurdish community interacts with and engages in the new complex, it helps preserve the historical narratives, Ayyubid-era Kurdish craftsmanship, and its unique architectural forms are not forgotten. While the replica may embody a different aura from the original, its physical presence preserves the form and visual identity, which could aid the collective memory of the locals.

However, there remains an open question concerning the implications of this process, which is whether the replicated complex can acquire new layers of meaning in the future or if it will forever be condemned to exist as a mere representations of the past. If one follows Latour and Lowe's (2019) arguments, then a reconstructed monument may develop its own network of meanings if locals and tourists in Hasankeyf engage with it and attach new narratives to its existence.

Since the monuments were not reintegrated into the community's neighbourhoods, unlike the originals once were, they were instead positioned as part of a 'cultural park', as a form of state-curated heritage, distanced and foreign in a way. As Walter (1936) describes replicas, "The conventional is enjoyed without criticism, the truly new is criticised with aversion" (Walter, 1936, p.26). Ultimately, because of this, the replicated monuments could form a different 'aura' for tourists who have never experienced the original and a completely different one for locals who lived alongside the authentic ones for centuries. Thus, although both groups experience a transformed aura, the nature and meaning of this aura are likely to vary between visitors and the local Kurdish community.

CHAPTER FIVE
EXTENSION as restoration

Digital Reconstruction and Modern Extensions

Our first stop was the bustling market, where locals sold handmade authentic souvenirs, carpets, clothing, and many more items to remind you of this town. Among the many stalls lining the road, one caught my attention. I picked up two bracelets, one with my name engraved and a fridge magnet to remember the visit, taking a home a tangible memory of the old town.

We wandered through the long row of shops in the market, stopping at almost every one. I was intrigued by the vibrant colours and woven details of these crafted goods.

We were gradually and naturally drawn toward the towering minaret I had photographed from across the river bank. The Er-Rizk Mosque stood almost at the market's end, guiding us toward the path leading into the mountains and caves, beckoning us to explore the next bit of history the site had to offer. These monuments were a part of this community, present at every corner of the neighbourhood.



Figure 20: My collection of souvenirs from Hasankeyf's old markets in 2013 includes an engraved bracelet and a vase-shaped magnet, featuring detailed depictions of the Er-Rizk Mosque including the ruins of the Old Bridge on the Tigris. Photograph by the author.



Figure 22: Plan of the Er-Rizk Mosque in its 2003 state, before relocation. The red dotted outline indicates the surviving elements from the original 1406 design, while the areas highlighted in yellow represent the parts that were relocated to the new site (Schneider, 2012, p.5), remaining grey areas were left behind to be submerged.

The extension of historic buildings is a method adopted in Hasankeyf to maintain a building's social and functional needs. In principle, extension in architecture refers to the process of adding new structures or elements to an existing building; in this case, historic buildings or sites to increase their size, functionality or aesthetic value. It is effectively the physical and spatial expansion of a building, either respecting or contrasting with the original design, in order to meet the evolving functional and spatial needs while maintaining the original building or site as much as possible. Unlike the case studies of relocation, mummification, or replication, which aim to preserve or replace the original elements of buildings 'like-for-like' as static cultural artefacts – the extension method integrates new additions to continue the existing use and meaning the monument held in its previous site.

This strategy was applied to the Er-Rizk Mosque complex. The name "Rizk", meaning "the giving God", refers to a place of worship originally commissioned by the Ayyubid ruler al-Ādil Sulaimān, who ruled Hasankeyf from the late 14th century to the early 15th century (Deniz Beyazit and Rettig, 2012). According to the inscriptions on the mosque complex, the structures are estimated to dates back to 811 AH/1409. However, investigations by the German archaeologist Peter Schneider, who conducted early excavation studies between 2001 and 2003 at the Rizk mosque, revealed that the building's history is more complex and cannot be confined to a single date (Schneider, 2012, p.129). It was concluded that existing structures display evidence of multiple phases of construction and renovation over the years. Thus, the date of the inscription helps to trace the emergence of additional built structures on site.

The architectural style of the Er-Rizk reflects a blend of Syrian and Anatolian influences, which were evident and coexistent in Hasankeyf during that period (Schneider, 2012, p.131). Excavations in the area indicated that earlier non-religious structures existed on the site

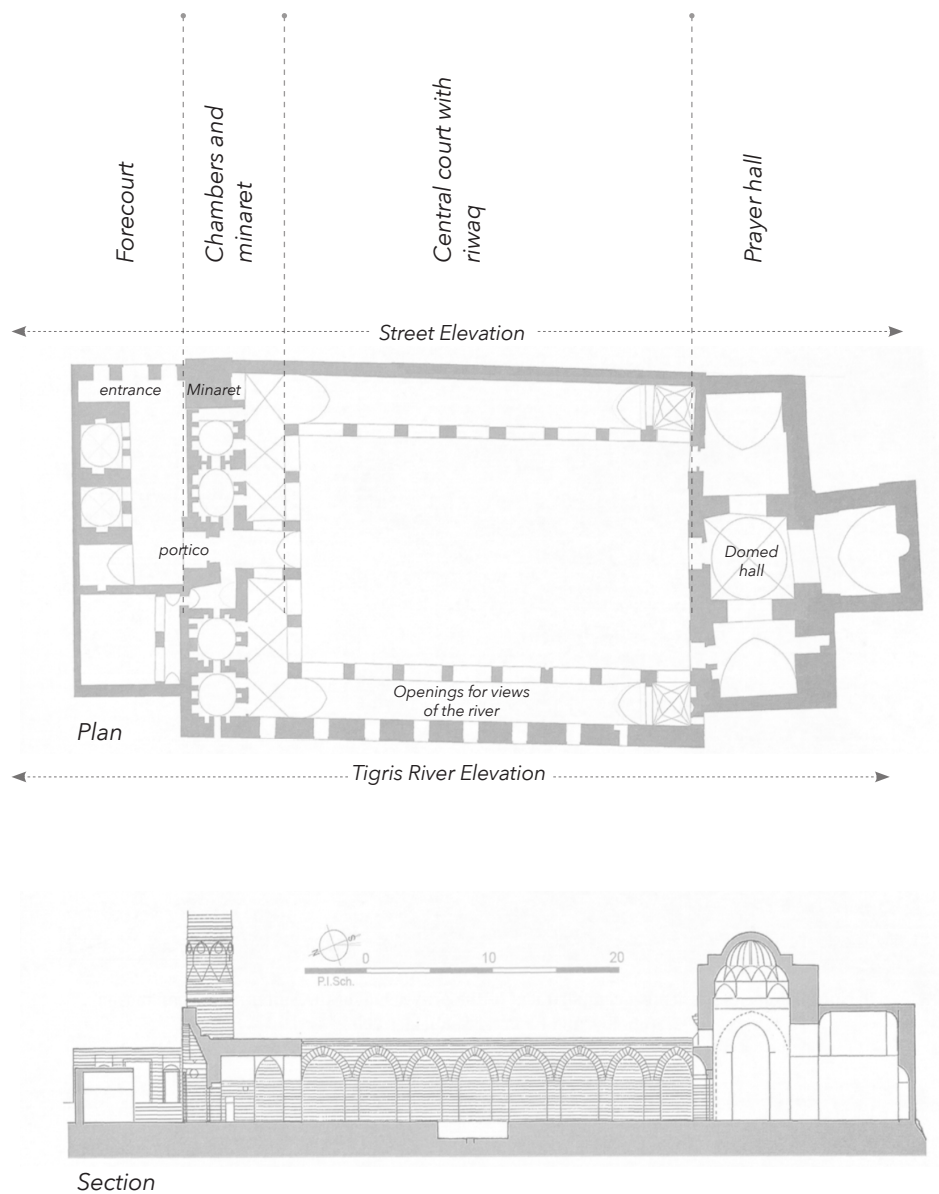


Figure 23: Plan and section through the dome and courtyard of the reconstructed Er-Rizk Mosque, as commissioned by al-Ādil Sulaimān circa 1406 (Schneider, 2012, p.5).

before the Er-Rizk was constructed. These buildings are believed to have been damaged by unstable foundations, likely caused by the earthquake reported in 1404. Despite their deterioration, the ruins are known to have influenced the shape and layout of the Er Rizk complex built under al-Ādil Sulaimān's rule (Schneider, 2012, p.129).

The Er-Rizk complex was situated on the southern bank of the Tigris River, occupying a central position on the high terrains of Hasankeyf's lower city, between the Citadel and the Tigris River. Its location was further emphasised by its vicinity to the entrance of the Artuqid Old Bridge, which once served as a crucial connection between the lower and upper city. These prominent routes reflect the Ayyubid rulers' intent to make the mosque a well-known landmark in Hasankeyf. In addition to its prime location, the 40-meter-tall minaret showcasing inscriptions in Kufic calligraphy and perched atop a cliff, ensured its visibility from afar, making it a focal point of attention.

Archaeological evidence suggested that by 1406, the western part of the site was transformed into a prayer hall, accompanied by a central courtyard and an entrance forecourt to the north. Additionally, several rooms and *iwans* were also constructed on the northern side of the complex near the entrance. These spaces are believed to have functioned as cleansing facilities for worshippers (Schneider, 2012, p.129), as it is a common architectural practice to incorporate ablution near places of worship as a ritual of purification essential for practising Islamic prayers (The Met, 2019).

Furthermore, the plans show the minaret with a square cross-section located at the eastern edge of the old sites as part of the forecourt, which is projects towards the street. All of these spaces are connected through vaulted arcades, creating a large longitudinal courtyard open for gatherings. The minaret section appears secluded from the outside with no opening, whereas



Figure 24: View of the destroyed Er-Rizk mosque. Photograph taken by Gertrude Bell in 1911 (Bell and New Caste University, 1911).

the western façade incorporates windows looking out onto the Tigris River. This seclusion likely reflects the minaret's importance as a street level landmark, which is purposed for the call to prayer, much like a bell tower or spire in a Christian church.

Gertrude Bell was the first Western scholar to document the ruins of the Er-Rizk Mosque in 1911. Her photographs captured the intact minaret alongside the remains of the arcaded courtyard walls, providing a crucial visual record of the site's condition prior to later archaeological investigations and reconstructions. Bell's images of the original complex, including the intact minaret, correspond with Schneider's 2003 studies, which examined the reconstructed complex and its remains on the western side. These comparisons highlight the architectural modifications that were made around some of the original structures, providing further evidence of the site's multiple construction phases and restorations.

In 2017, the relocation of the Er-Rizk Mosque aimed to preserve key architectural elements from the original 14th-century construction by al-Ādil Sulaimān, such as the minaret, forecourt, the façade of the prayer hall, and the northern front entrance portico. The remaining additions from the 2003 reconstruction were left submerged underwater. These submerged structures were not replicated at the new site; instead, the decision was made to reconstruct the previous version of the complex, as it appeared in 1406. The contrast in materials at the new Hasankeyf site makes the fusion of old and new clearly visible. This approach represents an attempt to reconcile historical authenticity while ensuring the use is maintained in the relocated site. However, this effort to revive the mosque's original layout can be critiqued, as the present community has no direct memory or experience of the destroyed structure from al-Ādil Sulaimān time. As a result, the reconstruction of these elements may be viewed as a entirely new addition rather than a faithful preservation



Figure 25: The existing elements of the Er-Rizk Mosque adjoins newly constructed additions at the new site. The red outline depicts the parts of the original structure that were relocated, while the remaining elements are new additions inspired by the 1406 design (Haber Merkezi, 2024).

of the past, challenging the notion of cultural continuity and authenticity.

Ambrogio Annoni (1945) offers a relevant perspective on the concept of reconstruction, suggesting that buildings damaged by war or destruction can be repurposed if a substantial portion of the original structure remains. However, he also argues that “if a building which is important for history, art, or tradition has been totally destroyed, I do not think it possible its rebirth as it was, its integral reconstruction” (Annoni, 2022, p.219). The attempt to revive most of Er-Rizk Mosque’s original structure at the new location does not truly replicate or restore what once stood at the old site. Instead, it represents a reinterpretation or symbolic ‘rebirth’ of the mosque already largely lost over time, as evidenced by Bell’s 1911 photographs.

Furthermore, Schneider’s 2003 plans of the later structures show no resemblance to the original complex by al-Ādil Sulaimān. Thus, the modern reconstruction in the new Hasankeyf is not necessarily a restoration of collective memory for the current Community. It can be understood as reimagining, incorporating original fragments of the original into an otherwise newly constructed setting. While this approach may offer a sense of continuity, it ultimately fails to preserve the historical integrity of the lost structure.

John Ruskin, one of the earliest voices in heritage conservation theory strongly opposed any alterations to historical buildings. In *The Lamp of Memory* (1849), he argued that architectural heritage should remain untouched, bearing the marks of time and decay (Ruskin, 2022, p.219). For Ruskin, such additions violated a building’s truth, stripping it of the historical narratives embedded in its deterioration. Hence, the reintroduction of architectural elements intended to restore the original mosque’s significance and form imposes a modern layer onto the relocated remnants.

Furthermore, in the discourse surrounding restoration, Eugène-Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc (1845), states that “To restore a building is not to preserve it, to repair, or rebuild it; it is to reinstate it in a condition of completeness which could never have existed at any given time” (Viollet-le-Duc, 2022, p.78). The Er-Rizk Mosque has undergone aesthetic and structural changes across time, adapting to functional needs as older parts deteriorated. Despite these changes, the mosque’s fundamental purpose as a place of worship has remained constant. Though now relocated to a cultural park in the new Hasankeyf, farther from the residential area, it still continues to serve as an active site for Friday prayers as it did in the past, as reported by the Mayor of Hasankeyf (Sabah, 2021). The resorted elements from the original 1406 complex, alongside conservation efforts and adaptation to the new site, ensure that the mosque remains an active part of the Kurdish community’s cultural and religious life. Through continued use and engagement, its value is preserved beyond mere physical restoration.

In contrast to John Ruskin’s ‘conservationist’ stance, Jorge Otero-Pailos supports a perspective closer to Viollet-le-Duc’s contemporary approach, arguing that preservation allows the architecture to become relevant and saved from obsolescence when they are “framed and reframed by preservation as culturally significant” (Otero-Pailos, 2014). The extension of the mosque’s historical elements helps sustain its religious function as an active place of worship while also encouraging the Kurdish community to engage with the surrounding relocated historical monuments within the cultural park. Thus, the reframing of the Er-Rizk Mosque through both relocation and restoration ensures that it remains as an active, living part of the cultural landscape, rather than being reduced to the status of historical ruin.

CONCLUSION

The case of Hasankeyf highlights the contradictions inherent in contemporary heritage preservation. While relocation, mummification, replication, and extension were intended to protect Hasankeyf's architectural and cultural legacy, they ultimately reveal the shortcomings of conventional preservation when applied to displaced and politically marginalised communities. For these communities, heritage should not be solely about protecting cultural assets, but about maintaining social continuity and keeping identity alive, enabling a place to sustain cultural memory and reconcile with its heritage. This becomes even more crucial when community is not directly descended from the lands they occupy, as in the case of Hasankeyf, since then disengagement could result in an irreversible loss of cultural ties and loss of sense of belonging.

Examining Hasankeyf's transformation, it becomes evident that what remains today is a fragmented collection of disaggregated materials, relocated monuments, submerged ruins, and replicas that stand disconnected from the people who once lived alongside them. Rather than safeguarding Hasankeyf's heritage, these interventions have transformed the site into a tourist attraction. Furthermore, the Turkish government's approach in initiating the relocation for only selected monuments without consulting the locals reflects a pattern of prioritising certain aspects of heritage while discarding others. This selective approach aligns with a geopolitical reality in which Kurdish cultural sites have been overlooked or erased from national heritage narratives, reinforcing state control over occupied lands. As Pierre Nora (1996) argues, states often construct *lieux de mémoire* while simultaneously erasing *milieux de mémoire*. Preservation, in this sense should aim not only at conserving physical structures, but also at sustaining memory, identity, and belonging.

The submersion of Hasankeyf's ancient caves, where generations once lived, learned trades like carpet

weaving, and formed communal identities, has severed ties with the site's cultural memory. To move beyond material preservation, heritage conservation must first embrace more dynamic, community-focused approaches, such as digital archives, 3D scanning, and virtual reconstructions. These initiatives could serve as alternative ways to experience submerged or relocated sites, ensuring that places like Hasankeyf do not disappear entirely from cultural memory. These technologies could be particularly significant for documenting and reconstructing the ancient caves, which were inhabited until recently and played a key role in the region's social history (Ishikawa, 2015). By digitally preserving these spaces and illustrating how people once lived in them, a more cohesive collective memory can be rebuilt, ensuring that both present and future generations remain connected to their heritage.

Additionally, the new Hasankeyf has introduced cultural boat rides across the river to the citadel, primarily catering to tourists. To ensure that the Kurdish community maintains engagement with their ancestral lands, where most of the original site lies submerged, free transportation could be provided, allowing them to visit whenever they wish. Moreover, activities such as carpet weaving, which remains a popular cultural tradition in Hasankeyf (Ishikawa, 2015), could be hosted in the cultural park among the replicated ruins. Active participation in these practices could create new meanings and reinforce the community's connection to the relocated heritage. By engaging in traditional crafts within the new setting, the Kurdish community can establish a sense of continuity with their past. Therefore, incorporating such community-led activities can help rebuild a stronger, more cohesive collective heritage, ensuring that cultural identity remains alive despite physical displacement.

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