

TURKEY – HERITAGE @ RISK!

In Turkey, the Ministry of Culture is responsible for the protection of monuments and sites. There are two departments in Ankara, the General Directorate of Monuments and Museums, and the General Directorate of Conservation with branch offices in major towns to carry out this responsibility. These two departments have the role to administer museums and sites, plan for research and documentation, and provide technical and financial support to state-owned museums and sites, developing projects for the conservation of cultural property.

Most archaeological sites are public property and their administration is carried out through museums. Most Islamic monuments, mosques, *medreses*, and caravanserais are *waqf* (pious foundation) property and their preservation is the responsibility of the General Directorate of Waqf, also a public institution. The municipalities are in charge of city walls, aqueducts and fountains. City councils allocate a certain amount from their yearly budget for the care of these historic buildings. Most historic houses are in private ownership and their maintenance and restoration falls on the owner. Turkish law supports the owners of historic buildings by exempting them from real estate tax. The resources for long-term loans for owners of privately-owned historic property is very limited. The care of historic buildings that belong to minorities or foreign missions falls on those groups. Some of the redundant churches and synagogues have no congregation to take care of them and they are left as ruins.

The diversity and the vast number of historic buildings and sites in Turkey make it a gigantic task on the part of the Ministry of Culture to carry out a successful program for the maintenance and restoration of historic buildings and sites. A lack of funds in the budget of the Ministry of Culture impairs its function as the leader in historic conservation. As the national survey of cultural property in Turkey is not yet completed, the demolition of unlisted buildings continues, resulting in serious losses. Legally it is not possible to sue a person who demolishes an unlisted building. It is difficult to take urgent action to save a damaged building or site due to limited funds and expert staff. Besides economic problems, natural as well as man-made damage are acting on cultural heritage places and sites. Stone surfaces decay, and trees grow on the façades and over the top of monuments, their roots causing serious damage to the masonry. Air pollution and the misuse of buildings cause further damage. The tourism industry develops near archaeological sites and spoils the landscape, also exerting pressure on ancient buildings within the site. The site of Side, on the Mediterranean coast, is a good example of such a case. New construction on and near the site spread quickly, without paying due regard to the historic and natural environment.

Rapid population growth and migration to major cities have resulted in congestion and urban sprawl in historic towns. The changes to the social composition of historic urban centres, the desertion of the site by the original settlers, leads to serious problems. When the site is deserted, it is completely neglected and falls into disrepair. When the old centre is settled by people of rural origin, the new occupants are usually poor and do not care about the maintenance of the old fabric. In many towns, the historic centres fall into disrepair and they eventually lose their



Ahi Celebi Mosque in Istanbul is an Ottoman mosque from the 15th century. It was built near the shore of the Golden Horn, on weak soil. The structure subsided, sinking slowly into the ground. It also suffered from earthquakes. For many years it has been evacuated. The foundations were consolidated but the floor is below sea level and the mosque cannot be used for prayers. The earthquake of August 1999 caused some cracks to widen. With no maintenance, the building stands as a ruin.

original character. The historic core of Tarsus and Süleymaniye in Istanbul are two typical cases.

Cultural heritage places in the countryside also suffer from urban sprawl. Ancient structures like bridges and aqueducts which grace the landscape cannot be appreciated in their natural surroundings any longer. In Istanbul, Kemberburgaz, which was once only a small village has expanded considerably. There are 16th century aqueducts in the vicinity of this village. Since 1990, garden-city type housing has been developing next to the western side of one of them – the 700 m long Uzunkemer. The new development has spoiled the rural landscape; now it is impossible to perceive the aqueduct in its pure architectural form against the landscape. The Municipality has established a garbage elimination centre nearby and during the last five years, the number of trucks passing under the aqueduct has increased considerably. The aqueduct is suffering not only from the new development but also from the vibration and pollution of heavy traffic.

Public works and engineering projects are also having an impact. GAP (Southern Anatolian Project), originally intended as a large-scale development plan for south east Turkey, is a project which incorporates several dams, such as Keban, Atatürk and Karakaya on the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. Monuments, sites and historic urban settlements are suffering badly from dams which are being built in south east Turkey. Zeugma, a Roman garrison city, an archaeological site with exquisite mosaic floors, will be partially covered by the waters of the Birecik Dam. Several prehistoric, ancient and urban sites in the region will be lost without proper documentation.

Halfeti, which shares a similar fate, is a beautiful town built in the stone tradition. Hasankeyf, which is one of Turkey's medieval sites, is also faced with the danger of being inundated.

The Ilisu Dam project was developed without giving due attention to the presence of the unique architectural heritage at Hasankeyf. In spite of objections from archaeologists, art historians, architects, environmentalists and writers, the project has not been changed or cancelled. The authorities are offering only eight more years for further research. This very short time is not enough to complete archaeological research, and several cultural layers and artefacts will not be able to receive proper attention during such haste. If the dam is built, Hasankeyf will be flooded before it is systematically studied. The loss of many important sites is arousing considerable reaction from the public.

There are other public works projects, which will create significant damage to historic and natural heritage if implemented. Proposals for building bridges over the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles are two of these; if built, they will damage exceptional urban, historic and natural sites in Istanbul and Çanakkale. In

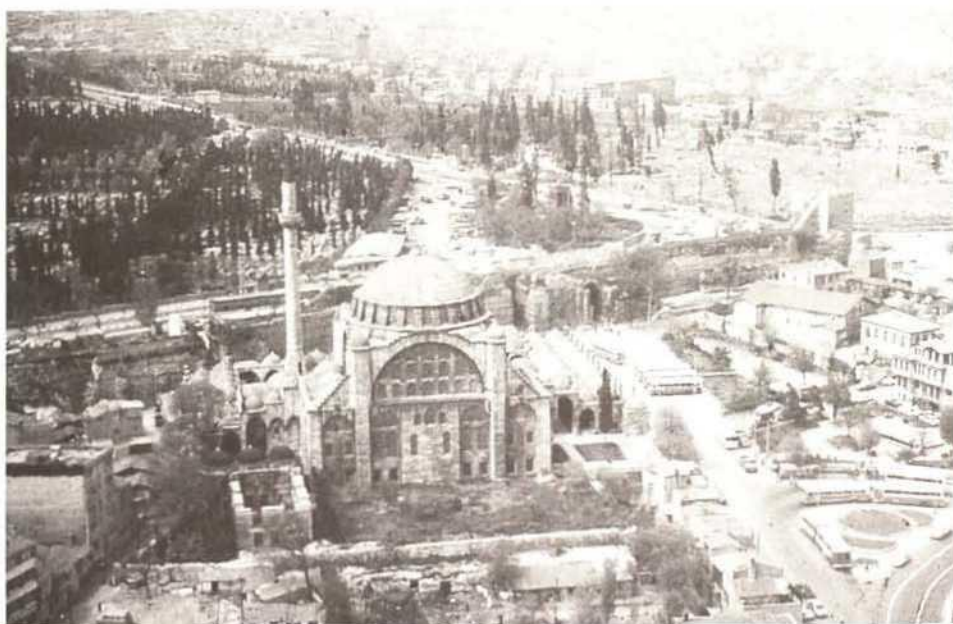
Istanbul, Arnavutköy, a small village with traditional timber houses and Kandilli, also an important urban and natural site, are at risk. At Çanakkale, the 15th century fortress of Kilid-ül Bahir and its surrounds are threatened by the proposed bridge. The Bosphorus and Historic Istanbul are also threatened by the building of several 30 m high pylons to steer oil ships sailing from the Black Sea to the Mediterranean. The proposal to build the pylons has been met with a reaction from the Monuments Council responsible for the protection of the Bosphorus and its environs.

Natural agents also threaten many monuments and sites, such as flooding, landslides and earthquakes. Recent earthquakes in Turkey have caused serious damage to many urban sites and monuments from different periods. On 17 August 1999, an earthquake with a magnitude of 7.4 on the Richter scale, shook Gölcük and its surrounds, causing damage to cul-

Süleymaniye Conservation Area. Due to legislation regarding protection of cultural heritage conservation areas could be designated only after 1973. Until then the area to the north of Süleymaniye Mosque was transformed from an urban area to an industrial one. The timber houses were demolished and reinforced concrete massive structures were raised instead. This development is an eyesore in the silhouette of the historic city and the activity taking place within these buildings are not suitable for a historic area.



Mosque of Mihrimah Sultan was damaged during the 1999 earthquake. According to historic documents it was also damaged by earthquakes in the 18th and 19th centuries. This time two of the voussoirs from the southeastern arch fell down and several cracks developed in the masonry.





House at Süleymaniye. Fires caused serious losses to the historic fabric of Istanbul which consisted mainly of timber houses. Many of the houses in Süleymaniye are made of timber; occasionally they burn and are replaced by reinforced concrete copies. This house is built of brick but it had timber floors and roof. It suffered from a fire about ten years ago and due to lack of funds stands as a ruin.



Timber House at Fındıklı. The historic districts of Istanbul are destroyed by modern development. The property values are high in central business districts and this creates great pressure on historic buildings. The property developers try to demolish low buildings and build higher modern buildings instead. The timber house in the picture shows the contrast between the old and the new created by the change in scale.

tural heritage places and other buildings in Izmit, Iznik, Bursa, Yenisehir, Istanbul, Çatalca and Tekirdag. The majority of the damaged structures were masonry buildings. Minarets fell down damaging roofs, and walls, vaults and domes cracked. In Istanbul, the Theodosian Walls, and the mosques of Fatih, Bayezid, Atik Ali Pasha, Mahmud Pasha and Mihrimah Sultan were affected. The baths of Bayezit Complex, the Medrese of Feyzullah Efendi, and the Library of Ragip Pasha are among the other significant monuments damaged by the tremors. The Municipality of Istanbul is the authority responsible for the Land and Sea Walls surrounding the Historic City. After UNESCO's declaration of the Historic Quarters of Istanbul as a World Heritage site in 1985, the Municipality initiated a project for the conservation of the Land Walls and their surrounds. Several projects were implemented between 1986 and 1994 but the Municipality has not been energetic in taking action after the last earthquake. It is essential to take preventative measures for further losses to the towers and walls. Waqf authorities and the religious community are trying to raise money for the damaged mosques.

Case Study – Hasankeyf: a Medieval Site Threatened by Ilisu Dam

Hasankeyf, which is one of the medieval sites in Turkey, is faced with the danger of being inundated by Ilisu Dam. The project was started without giving due attention to the presence of the unique architectural heritage at Hasankeyf. In spite of objections from archaeologists, art historians, architects, environmentalists and writers, the project has not been changed or cancelled. The authorities provide only eight more years for further research. This very short time is not enough to complete archaeological research; several cultural layers and artefacts will not be able to receive proper attention during the haste or will be flooded before they are systematically studied. The same is also true for several other prehistoric, ancient and urban sites in the GAP region; Zeugma, a Roman garrison city, and Halfeti, a beautiful town in the stone tradition are among significant ones sentenced to death by dam constructions.

Uzunkemer Aqueduct at Kemerburgaz has been neglected for a long time and decayed stones have started to fall onto the highway. A scaffold is set up to keep the falling stones from damaging the cars.



Kilidulbahir. A project is proposed for vehicular traffic over the Dardanelles, at the narrowest point of the strait. The 15th century castle of Kilidulbahir stands at this point and commands the waters. If built, the new bridge and the highway connecting the bridge to the highway will ruin the tranquility of the site and also insert foreign elements into the scenery.



Hasankeyf is one of the sites under the risk of being inundated by Ilisu Dam. Many archaeological sites are being threatened by the danger of being lost due to dam constructions.

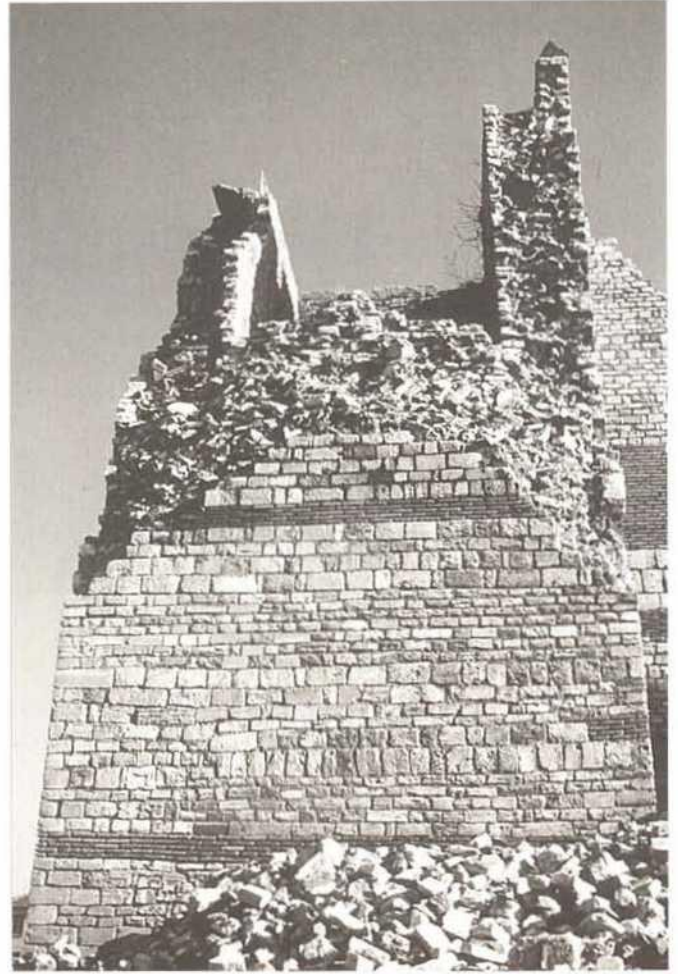




Bath of Bayezit is an early 16th century building which has not been in use for many years. During the road-widening operation in the 1950's, the street level was changed and the foundations of the south wall were exposed. A crack which had developed earlier on the dome of the dressing hall was widened by the tremors in 1999.

In Hasankeyf, the possibility of salvaging some of the monuments by transferring them to another site needs to be considered. Modern technology offers several methods for transferring masonry buildings. The most favourable from the point of conservation is the technique in which the monument is cut off from its foundations and mounted on a wheeled trolley. This sophisticated technique has been used in Europe to move cathedrals and palaces. It would be the right one for Zeynel Bey Tomb, which is a significant monument from late 15th century. The structure has a cylindrical shaft, the exterior of which is decorated with glazed bricks, laid in geometric patterns, featuring Timurid tradition and marking the strong artistic link between Anatolia and Central Asia in the fifteenth century.

Another technique which is widely adopted for moving is the dismantling of the historic building and its reassembling at the new site. After careful photographic documentation and survey, each stone block in the structure is numbered. This technique is generally applied to monuments with ashlar construction. In Hasankeyf, it can be used to transfer architectural elements like minarets and the gates of the citadel. The criticism of



Tower 89 of the Theodosian Wall. This tower was partially reconstructed about mid 20th century. The tower was hit by the 1999 earthquake and some of the modern masonry fell down. Many parts of the Theodosian Wall are cracked or there are detached parts which can fall during a strong earthquake.

this technique is that during the dismantling and the re-erection process, monuments lose some of their original details; some blocks break down or crumble. Binding elements like mortar and clamps need to be changed or replaced. The workmanship is not the same. The mounting has to be done very carefully to assure proper alignment of the members.

The rubble construction does not lend itself easily to be dismantled. Therefore, monuments having rubble masonry (Koç and Sultan Süleyman Mosques) cannot be transferred easily. The relieving system in the vaulting of Sultan Süleyman Mosque is very interesting. Yet, if such structures are forced to be transferred, almost 95% of the masonry will have to be renewed after the operation. This means that most of the historic substance will be lost during the dismantling and restoration.

When it is not viable to move a monument intact, only some sort of its important features like the muqarnas portals, the mihrab and fine details may be removed carefully and protected at a safe place, maybe within a museum. The decorations on the gypsum plaster over the transition zones and the domes of Sultan Süleyman Mosque need special care. These can be kept in a museum specially designed for Hasankeyf.

Moving monuments is a hard task. It requires a good budget, technical means and planning. One of the most important objections to the Ilisu Dam is that there is no planning for the relocation of Hasankeyf's architectural heritage. Siting and topography are very important in moving monuments or parts thereof. A relocated building seldom has the same aesthetic relationship to its new site. When monuments are cut off from their foundations and erected on a completely different site, they look very different. They are alienated/isolated and lose much of their dignity and integrity.

A similar landscape and context has to be created in order to make them impressive and meaningful again.

If no studies or preparations are made beforehand to provide a similar landscape for the monuments, the new open air-museum of "Hasankeyf" will be a failure. Yet, one has to consider the fact that it is almost impossible to create the same landscape and context for the transferred monuments. The landscape at Hasankeyf comprises gigantic natural elements and complex relations among its architectural members. It is impossible to re-create the picturesque background for monuments like the Koç and Sultan Suleyman Mosques. Furthermore, who can provide a similar site for the medieval Castle and the Palace which are perched on a high cliff?

International charters and conventions concerning protection of cultural heritage recommend that at the preliminary survey stage of engineering projects, sites of historic and archaeological importance be marked and measures taken to preserve them in-situ. UNESCO's Recommendations concerning the Preservation of Cultural Property Endangered by Public or Private Works (1968) points out the fact that "it is a duty of governments to ensure the protection and the preservation of 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..."

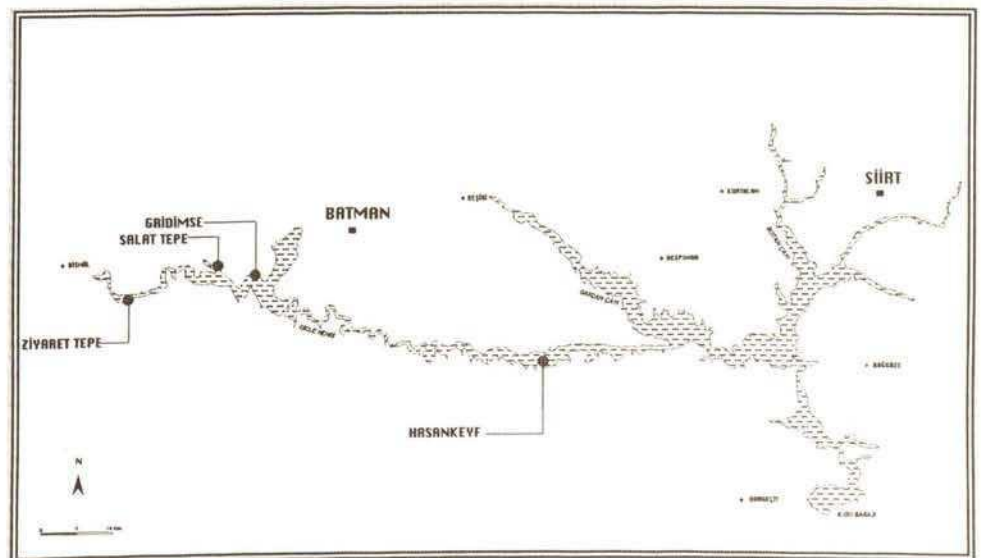
UNESCO's recommendations have been ratified by Turkey, and we must insist on the revision of the dam project in the light of this fact. Hasankeyf is a Grade I archaeological site with significant monuments. No permission is yet granted from the Monuments Council of the region for the construction of the dam. The Ministry of Culture should try to solve this problem for the benefit of Hasankeyf.

Another critical point about Ilisu Dam is its life span. Experts foresee 30-50 years of functional life for this dam. It is predicted that in a very short period of time it will be filled with rubble and not be as useful. In the long run, the dam will be a social, cultural and environmental disaster. When the very short life of the dam is set against the long history of Hasankeyf and its potential to live, one is compelled to ask the authorities "Why build Ilisu Dam?"

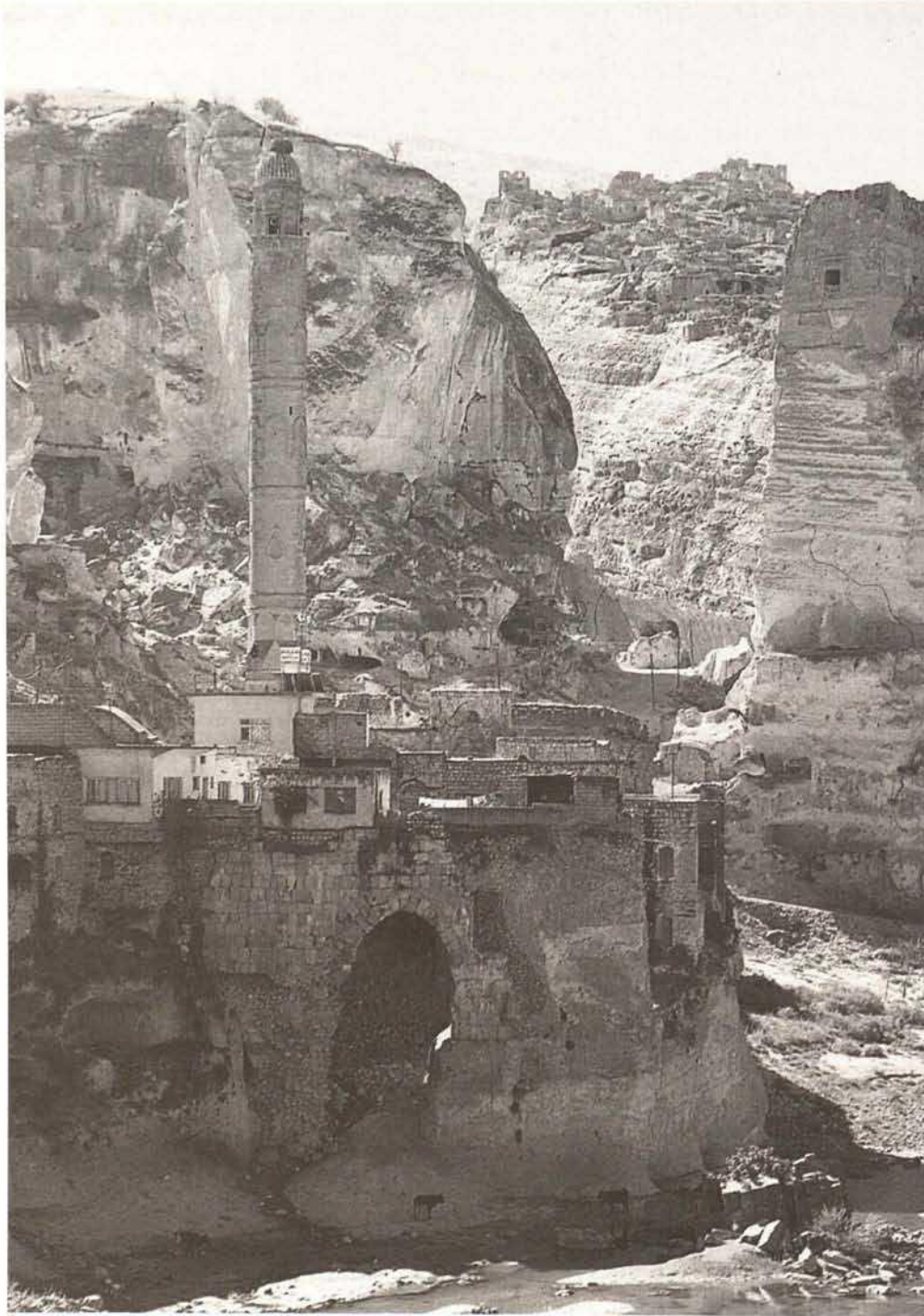
No material gain or money can bring back or reproduce a treasure like Hasankeyf. We have a great deal to learn from this site. People living there and others, who have visited it, have memories and very close ties with the site, all of which are worth more than a dam. It is predicted that about 1 million tourists will visit GAP region in the year 2005. Hasankeyf offers memorable vistas and moments for spectators. From its acropolis, it is wonderful to watch Zeynel Bey Tomb and the Tigris river flowing peacefully under the ruins of the medieval bridge. It seems absurd to bury a site which has such a great potential to attract people.

When one compares the short-term economic prosperity the dam will generate with the long-term survival of a significant site which encompasses treasures from early human settlements up to late medieval period, one without doubt makes the preference for the survival of Hasankeyf. Public opinion and scholarly concerns back up the view that shortly living dams should not be permitted to devastate culturally abundant lands. Hasankeyf should not be "Doomed by the Dam".

ICOMOS Turkey



Ilisu dam reservoir area and archaeological sites investigated in 1998



Hasankeyf, view towards the citadel, with Artukid Mosque in the foreground