

## A Conservation Assessment of Historical Mosques The Case of Sulaimaniyah, Iraqi Kurdistan

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### Abstract:

The urgency for meticulous preservation has escalated in light of the invaluable cultural and historical narratives embedded within ancient architectural structures. The article employs a multidisciplinary methodology that combines architectural, historical, and structural analyses in line with the guidelines set forth by the Venice Charter of ICOMOS. Historical area in Sulaimaniyah city is facing a demolishing process which can cause a problem in losing its identity. The research aims at comparing the conservation of the Grand Mosque and Khanaqa Mosque in Sulaimaniyah, Iraq, and comparing it to the neighboring country's mosque conservation. Our findings reveal that both mosques in Sulaimaniyah face many conservation challenges ranging from material degradation to

unauthorized restoration activities. Contrary to our initial hypothesis, the mosques' conservation strategies were incongruous with the Venice Charter's principles, reflecting a wider discrepancy in heritage management in Iraq. We propose targeted conservation measures to address these issues, such as adopting digital documentation technologies, controlled environmental settings, and community-led conservation initiatives. This paper contributes not only to the heritage management discourse in Iraq but also offers insights into the broader discussion concerning the effective preservation of historic religious edifices.

**Keywords:** Assessment, historical mosques, Venice charter, Iraqi Kurdistan.

### الملخص:

يتكون المراكز التاريخية للمدن في الشرق الأوسط من عدة طبقات من النسيج العمراني التي كانت تعيش وتهدم عبر مرور السنين، الحفاظ على المباني الأثرية في وسط المدينة وصيانتها هي هدف للحفاظ على التراثهم لكل مجتمع.

موقع المدينة السليمانية كانت مكان استمرت فيها الحياة بمرور السنين، بعد إنشاء المدينة من قبل إبراهيم باشا في عام 1784 قام بإنشاء العديد من العمارة الإدارية و الدينية، بما في ذلك المسجد الكبير، وفيما بعد تم بناء مسجد خانقا ليكون مركز ديني وتعليمي في المدينة.

الهدف من هذه الدراسة هو دراسة ومقارنة لترميم المساجد الأثرية في مدينة السليمانية بكل تفاصيله ومقارنته بمساجد في البلدان المجاورة للعراق، لمعرفة الاختلاف في جودة الترميم وإعطاء نظرة جديدة للحفاظ بشكل أفضل من خلال الالتزام ببنود Venice charter كاتفاقية دولية للحفاظ والترميم.

بعد دراسة المسجدين من خلال جمع المعلومات داخل الوثائق والصور القديمة للمدينة، و المقارنة بالمسجدين في الوقت الحاضر، هناك كثير من النقاط الضعيفة في الجودة الترميم التي لا ينبغي تغييرها مقارنةً بالوثائق القديمة، ولكن في إيران والمجر، فإن جودة الحفاظ على المساجد التاريخية احسن مقارنة بالمساجد السليمانية وفقاً للبنود ميثاق البندقية.

تقترح الدراسة باجراء التجديدات المستقبلية للمساجد وفقاً لما تبقى من وثائق وصور من الماضي، لترك معلومات حقيقية للأجيال القادمة في هذه المنطقة.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** الترميم، المسجد، المقارنة، Venice charter، السليمانية.

### پوخته:

بايه‌خدا به پاراستنى شوينه‌واره دڤرينه‌كان دمبیت له‌ژیر رۆشنايي گڭرانه‌وه كه‌لتوورى و به‌لگه‌ میژووویه‌كاندا بڤیت كه‌ ده‌بارى ته‌لارسازییه‌ دڤرينه‌كان داون. ئهم لیکۆلینه‌وه‌یه‌مان هه‌لسه‌نگاندن بۆ هه‌وله‌كانی پاراستن ده‌کات كه‌ بۆ مزگه‌وتی گه‌وره‌ و مزگه‌وتی خانه‌قا له‌ شارى سلیمانی کوردستانی عێراق کراوه‌، به‌ به‌راوردکردنیان له‌گه‌ل شوينه‌واره‌ ئایینییه‌ هاوشیوه‌كانی و لاتانی دراوسێ. بابته‌كه‌ میتۆدۆلۆژیای فره‌ پسپۆری به‌کارده‌هێنیت كه‌ شیکاریی بۆ ته‌لارسازی، میژوو و کۆلتور ده‌کات به‌گۆیره‌ی نه‌ورینمایانه‌ی كه‌ له‌لایه‌ن جارنامه‌ی قینیز له‌ ئایکۆمۆسه‌وه‌ هاتوه‌. دۆزینه‌وه‌كانمان ئه‌وه‌مان بۆ ده‌رده‌خه‌ن كه‌ هه‌ردوو مزگه‌وته‌كه‌ له‌ سلیمانی پرووه‌پرووی چه‌ندین ئاسته‌نگی پاراستن بوونه‌ته‌وه‌ له‌ تیکچوونی ماددییه‌وه‌ تا ده‌گاته‌ چالاکی نۆژمه‌کردنه‌وه‌ی بڤ زانیاری. به‌ پڤچه‌وانه‌ی گریمانه‌ سه‌ره‌تاییه‌كه‌مانه‌وه‌، ستراتیژییه‌كانی پاراستنی مزگه‌وته‌كان له‌گه‌ل بنه‌ماكانی جارنامه‌ی قینیزدا ناتهبان، ئهمه‌ش ره‌نگدانه‌وه‌ی جیاوازییه‌کی فراوانتره‌ كه‌ له‌ به‌ریوه‌بردنی میراته‌ ته‌لارسازییه‌كاندا له‌ عێراقدا هه‌یه‌ به‌ گشتی. ئیمه‌ رڤوشوینی پاراستنی زانستی وتۆژینه‌وه‌ له‌ سه‌رکراو پڤشنیار ده‌که‌ین بۆ چاره‌سه‌رکردنی ئهم پرسانه‌، وه‌ک وه‌رگرتنی ته‌کنه‌لۆژیای به‌لگه‌نامه‌ی دیجیتالی، ژینگه‌ی کۆنترۆلکراو، و ده‌ستپڤشخه‌رییه‌كانی پاراستن به‌ به‌شداری کۆمه‌لگا. ئهم تۆژینه‌وه‌یه‌ نه‌ک ته‌نها به‌شداری له‌ گوتاری به‌ریوه‌بردنی میرات له‌ عێراقدا ده‌کات به‌لکۆ تڤروانینیک پڤشکه‌ش ده‌کات بۆ باسی فراوانتر سه‌باره‌ت به‌ پاراستنی کاریگه‌رانه‌ی بینا ئایینییه‌ میژووویه‌كان.

**کليله وشه:** پاراستنی ته‌لارسازی، مزگه‌وتی میژوو، رڤکه‌وتنه‌نامه‌ی قینیسیا، کوردستانی عێراق

## 1. Introduction

A city's historical foundation comprises more than brick and stone; it also includes the memories, customs, and cultures that have formed it over the years. Religious buildings like mosques, which have endured the test of time to tell a tale of architectural evolution, religious significance, and social roles, are some of the most vivid manifestations of this cultural heritage (Jaschok & Shui, 2013; Palmer & Finlay, 2003). However, these monuments' structural and cultural integrity is frequently threatened by various conservation issues, including human interventions and natural degradation. The principles outlined in the "Venice Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites," a landmark document ratified by the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) in 1964 (Goetcheus & Mitchell, 2014), are aligned with the conservation evaluation approach used in this study. The Venice Charter, which emphasizes maintaining monuments and places' historical, architectural, and cultural integrity, establishes the global standard for conservation efforts.

Comprehensive preservation efforts for ancient structures are urgently needed in Iraq. Many historic structures are in danger due to years of strife and a lack of targeted conservation initiatives. Among them are mosques, which act as houses of worship and as significant landmarks that reflect the region's illustrious history and architectural legacy.

There is a noticeable gap in research that specifically assesses the preservation efforts of religious structures in Iraq, such as the Grand Mosque and Khanaqa Mosque in Sulaimaniyah, through the lens of the Venice Charter of ICOMOS, even though existing literature addresses the fundamentals of architectural and cultural heritage conservation. Furthermore, there is little comparative data that places the condition of these mosques in Iraq in the context of comparable religious landmarks in nearby nations, making it difficult to comprehend the unique problems and potential for region-specific conservation measures.

### *Rationale for the Selection of Mosques*

Given its historical and architectural significance, Sulaimaniyah in Iraq is a compelling setting for this inquiry. The Grand Mosque and Khanaqa Mosque are the two mosques that this study specifically examines because of their exceptional historical significance to the city. These two mosques are tangible reminders of Sulaimaniyah's rich religious, architectural, and cultural heritage. The Grand Mosque—recognized for its grand size and architectural prowess—and Khanaqa Mosque—notable for its detailed design and historical records—each present distinct conservation challenges and potential, making them perfect aspirants for a focused study.

### *Hypothesis*

Given the historical and cultural significance of these two mosques, this study hypothesizes that site-specific conservation strategies, in line with the principles of the Venice Charter, are more successful in maintaining these mosques' structural and cultural authenticity than generalized conservation approaches.

## **Objectives and Scope**

The objectives of this research paper, given the cultural and historical importance of the Grand Mosque and Khanaqa Mosque in Sulaimaniyah, Iraq, are as follows:

- To critically evaluate the current state of conservation of the Grand Mosque and Khanaqa Mosque in Sulaimaniyah compared to similar religious structures in neighboring countries, guided by the principles of the Venice Charter of ICOMOS.
- To identify and categorize each mosque's unique challenges, risks, and difficulties, ranging from structural concerns to unauthorized restorations.
- To propose targeted, feasible conservation strategies tailored to address each mosque's specific needs and vulnerabilities in alignment with international preservation standards.

These goals aim to contribute to the larger conversation surrounding heritage management and effective conservation practices in Iraq and beyond.

## **2. Literature Review**

In the Middle Eastern urban landscape, the historic cores of cities are often characterized by a stratified urban fabric that has evolved (Dhingra, Singh, & Chattopadhyay, 2017). Throughout history, this fabric has undergone various construction cycles, habitation, and demolition. The conservation and maintenance of architectural landmarks and structures within these city centers are vital for municipal governance.

The city of Sulaimaniyah lies in between the Zagros mountains. It was a living and agricultural area for the humans throughout history, this location became a city by Ibrahim Pasha in the 18th century, precisely 1784, the city has become a lively place of education and living since that day (Kopaniyas, MacGinnis, & Ur, 2015). As part of Ibrahim Pasha's vision for urban development back in the late 1700s, some landmarks such as the Great Mosque were constructed. These foundational structures become the central cityscape and gathering area for people and for city rulers, and therefore the spread of several other monumental architecture (Barrett & States, 2015). The later addition of the Khanaqa Mosque further enriched Sulaimaniyah's place as a centre for both religious observance and intellectual enlightenment. To safeguard the city's cultural heritage, it's important that the architectural and historical values of these venerable landmarks remain conserved correctly.

### **2.1 Historical Importance of Mosques in Urban Landscapes**

Mosques are traditionally revered as communal hubs where both spiritual communion and social interaction converge (Ehrkamp, 2016). In numerous age-old urban landscapes, mosques stand as striking edifices, often serving as mirrors to a community's historical architectural idiosyncrasies and cultural lineage (F. Khan, 2015). The evolutionary trajectory of mosque design has captivated scholars, leading to a plethora of studies that delve into the architectural imprints left by different epochs and civilizations (Ali & Hassan, 2018).

Mosques have historically played a significant role in urban environments, functioning as both places of worship and the core of social and cultural life (Jamei et al., 2021). People congregate in mosques in numerous cities for a range of social events, including educational sessions, social

gatherings, and even political rallies (Memluk, 2013). Mosques consequently commonly serve as links that unite people from various racial and professional backgrounds, and they therefore play a significant part in the social fabric of the communities they serve.

Historically, metropolitan regions have commonly employed mosques as identifiable landmarks. According to research like Masridin and Ismail (2022), mosques can determine an entire neighborhood's architectural and cultural styles. Their domes, minarets, and courtyards have visual value and give the neighborhoods and cities where they are located a feeling of place and identity. A mosque's prominence in architecture frequently makes it the neighborhood hub, with other significant civic structures and public spaces around it.

Additionally, mosque architecture can be a living cultural exchange and development archive. Aziz (2016) explored how mosque architecture has changed, incorporating many inspirations from various times and regions. Roman, Byzantine, Persian, and later Ottoman and Western designs may all be included in this synthesis. Each of these factors helps to create a distinctive architectural language that speaks to the historical encounters, commercial ties, and occasionally even conflicts that have molded the communities where these mosques are found.

The frequent participation of mosques in urban development and planning further enhances mosques' significance. They are regularly discussed in conversations about urban renewal, land use, and even transportation planning because they are significant monuments (De Siqueira & Al Balushi, 2020). To ensure they are approachable and that their historical and cultural significance is recognized in urban architecture, their locations and surroundings are frequently given extra care.

In essence, mosques have a far larger role in urban environments than just serving religious purposes (Asif, Utaberta, & Sarram, 2019). Their areas' social, cultural, architectural, and even urban growth narratives are influenced by them as dynamic beings. Given these many functions, keeping mosques requires maintaining a religious building and a complex symbol with varied meanings for the community it serves.

## **2.2 Conservation Efforts in Historical Religious Structures**

For many years, conservation techniques for old religious buildings have drawn attention. Research has concentrated on various topics, including preserving decorative components and structural rehabilitation (Asteris et al., 2014). The cornerstone for moral and sustainable conservation has frequently been cited as the principles of the Venice Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites (Sonkoly, 2017).

The conservation of old religious buildings has long been a hot topic in academic and practical debates (Smith, 2015). Not only are these structures used as places of worship, but they are also frequently used as historical sites, communal hubs, and even tourist attractions. As a result, preserving them presents special difficulties across technical and moral boundaries.

It is important to note that technological developments have greatly impacted conservation efforts (Agnoletti, 2014). The assessment and planning phases increasingly use methods like 3D scanning and virtual reality, bringing another level of intricacy to a sector that already crosses numerous disciplines (Boje, Guerriero, Kubicki, & Rezgui, 2020). Preserving old religious buildings is a

challenging task that calls for a multifaceted strategy that combines technical know-how with moral sensitivity and, frequently, community involvement. Due to this, communities that want to maintain their cultural and religious legacy can also benefit from the study that has already been done in this field.

Most existing studies either concentrate on the architectural elements of mosque conservation or discuss conservation efforts' social and cultural ramifications (Aygen, 2013; Farhan, Akef, & Nasar, 2022; H.-U. Khan, 2015). Additionally, there is a conspicuous lack of scholarship that explores the particulars of mosque conservation in Iraq, especially in communities like Sulaimaniyah, which have rich historical and cultural histories but have also experienced decades of conflict and neglect. The Great Mosque and Khanaqa Mosque in Sulaimaniyah, Iraq, are the subject of this study's conservation evaluation, which addresses a clear gap in the literature.

### 2.3 Venice Charter of ICOMOS

The International Council on Monuments and Sites adopted the Venice Charter, also known as the "International Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites," in Venice in 1964 (Al-Sakkaf, Zayed, & Bagchi, 2020). The charter outlines guiding principles and procedures for preserving and restoring historic structures and monuments. It has been regarded as one of the most important texts in the field of heritage preservation, giving a framework that has influenced international laws, practices, and ethical considerations.

The idea of "authenticity" is one of the tenets of the Venice Charter (Goetcheus & Mitchell, 2014). It highlights the need to preserve the historic structure's original materials, design, and workmanship in restoration or conservation work. The charter also states that any restoration work must be supported by in-depth preliminary research, which includes historical documents and site inspection. The ultimate goal is to preserve the structure's historical, cultural, and architectural assets.

The idea of "respect for original material," which dictates that as much of the original fabric should be maintained unaltered during conservation efforts (Šijaković, 2015), is another crucial component. Any new addition to a historically significant building must be compatible with the architectural and historical context and distinguishable from the original to show the building's evolution over time.

The larger social and cultural setting in which these historical sites are located is also discussed in the Venice Charter (De la Torre, 2013). It promotes their inclusion in contemporary community life and makes the case for carefully considering their surroundings during conservation. The document points out that a monument is not only a singular thing; it also exists as a part of a larger context, whether an urban or rural location.

The charter also recommends adopting contemporary technologies and materials for restoration, but only when doing so will not affect the original building's integrity and will yield outcomes that are equally attractive and useful (Earl & Saint, 2015). It also stresses the value of documenting before, during, and following restoration, advocating that all procedures be documented to produce an exhaustive archival record.



The Venice Charter has been a guiding document for many national and international conservation programs over the years, and it has been supplemented by other documents that address particular issues with cultural heritage or conservation. However, it remains the lynchpin of moral and ethical conservation methods and is frequently cited in research studies, laws, and practical restoration initiatives.

The Venice Charter has some detractors who contend that its Eurocentric outlook and its rigidity in terms of "authenticity" and "material integrity" can occasionally be restrictive when dealing with non-European or indigenous historic assets (Ahmad, 2006). However, its impact on how the world views heritage conservation cannot be overestimated.

The Venice Charter provides an internationally recognized framework of principles and norms and is a significant benchmark in heritage conservation and restoration (Ahmad, 2006). Its importance transcends simply monuments and locations in Europe and has universal applicability.

The city of Sulaimaniyah has a rich historical architecture which is facing a demolishing process which in the near future it could cause a problem in losing its identity, several historical houses are gradually disappearing in the city and is being turned into new commercial architecture, meanwhile the remaining architecture are not conserved properly in comparison with Venice charter articles.

### 3. Methodology

In order to compare the architectural conservation measures the Kurdistan area of Sulaimaniyah to those in the surrounding nations, this research paper's methodology uses a comparative study anchored in qualitative research techniques. The study focuses on religious buildings, primarily mosques, in Sulaimaniyah and uses these buildings' qualities as a yardstick for gauging the success of preservation initiatives.

#### Methodological Framework:

- Literature Review: The underlying ideas and methods of architectural conservation will be established through a thorough analysis of the academic literature, focusing on the requirements outlined in the Venice Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites.
- Data Collection: Fieldwork will be used to acquire primary information about the state of the mosques in Sulaimaniyah, including site visits, interviews with local stakeholders, and photographic documentation.
- Historical Comparison: The current state of the mosques will be compared to historical documentation, including ancient pictures, architectural blueprints, and written descriptions. The goal of this historical comparison is to find differences between the original plans for the mosques and their current conditions.
- Qualitative Analysis: The collected data will be evaluated using qualitative techniques like thematic content analysis. Coding frameworks will be created to find recurrent themes, differences, and trends in conservation efforts.
- Cross-Regional Comparison: The conservation methods used in Sulaimaniyah will be contrasted with those used in neighboring nations. Thanks to this comparative analysis, the finest methods, gaps, and areas for development in Sulaimaniyah's conservation efforts may all be found.

- Venice Charter Compliance: The conclusions will next be examined in light of the Venice Charter to determine if the mosques' present condition complies with global preservation requirements. Any noticed deviations will be meticulously recorded, and suggestions for corrective steps will be made.

By including these methodological elements, the study seeks to thoroughly evaluate the condition of architectural conservation in Sulaimaniyah while also providing policy-makers and conservationists with useful insights and recommendations.

In the context of architectural heritage within the city, this research endeavours to conduct an exhaustive examination of seven quintessential edifices, focusing particularly on their conservation status and intrinsic architectural features. These structures will be scrutinized through the lens of preservation theory, alongside an in-depth analysis of their design elements and architectural motifs.

Sulaimaniyah's city centre has been intrinsically interwoven with religious architecture since its inception in 1784. Mosques, in particular, have functioned as pivotal loci for the community's spiritual and pedagogical activities. Historically, the mosques were bifunctional, comprising a prayer hall and an adjoining Madrasa for educational pursuits. However, subsequent renovation endeavours have predominantly led to erasing the Madrasa components in most religious establishments. For this research, two historically significant mosques will be selected as case studies. Their current structural and functional statuses will be compared against their original blueprints and archival documents to evaluate the efficacy and integrity of past and ongoing conservation efforts.

Each selected mosque will be historically contextualized, drawing from archival resources such as blueprints, photographic materials, and textual accounts to understand the original design and subsequent alterations. The dual-purpose role of mosques as both places of worship and educational centers will be investigated. The spatial allocation between prayer halls and Madrasas in the original designs will be compared to their current state.

### 3.1. The Grand Mosque

The great mosque of Sulaymaniyah is the city's most important and is located in the city center to be used as a mosque and educational center for the city (Shafiq, 2018). The mosque is considered to be a complex with several architectural elements, including a madrasa, tombs, and the mosque itself (Abdelhafez, QIU, & Mishieva, 2022).

Over the course of the ensuing century, the mosque has been subjected to various restoration initiatives to preserve and modernize its architectural integrity. These restoration efforts have culminated in the renovation of the original minaret and the erection of a newer, taller minaret situated at an opposing corner of the complex (Kurdipedia, 2023) (refer to Figures 4.2 and 4.3 for visual representation).



### 3.2. Khanaqa Mosque

Khanaqa Mosque is another important city building near Khanaqa Square (Figure 14). It was built by Mahmood Pasha for Maulana Khalid Naqshbandi, a leader of the Naqshbandi Path, to expand the religion's beliefs (Kurdipedia, 2023). The construction of the mosque started in 1816 and finished in 1817.

The mosque was a center of knowledge and Education for this particular group of religions called 'Naqshbandi Path'. They had educated many people who became poets, writers, and scientists.

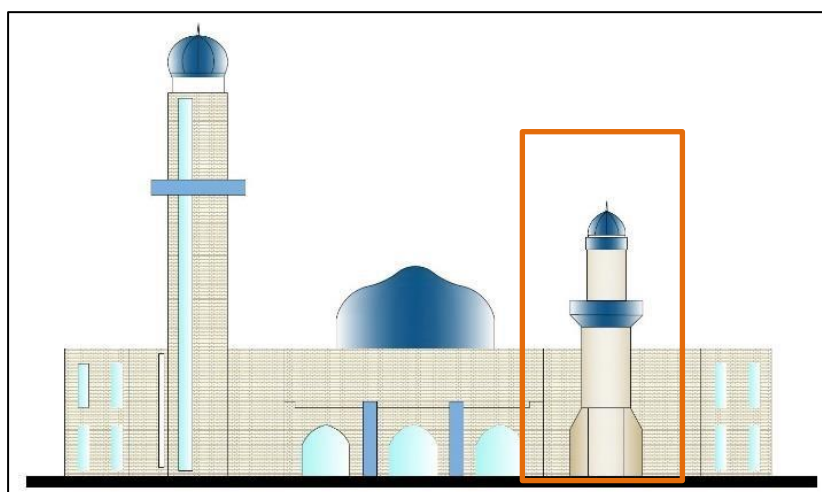
## 4. Analysis and Discussion of Mosques of Sulaimaniyah.

### 4.1. The Grand Mosque

The architectural blueprint of the mosque delineates several distinct functional zones, each serving specific ritualistic and communal purposes. The main prayer area is at the core of the layout and is characterized by a quadrilateral configuration with four semi-hexagonal extensions. Adjacent to this central prayer space and situated to its immediate right is the designated area for ablution, optimized for ritual cleansing before prayer.

At the posterior section of the complex lies a multi-purpose hall intended to facilitate various mosque-related activities and events. Additionally, the layout includes a culinary preparation area explicitly designed to cater to the nutritional needs of the indigent population. Moreover, a secondary prayer hall is incorporated into the design, intended for less formal, daily prayer rituals (refer to Figure 2 for a graphical representation of the spatial distribution).

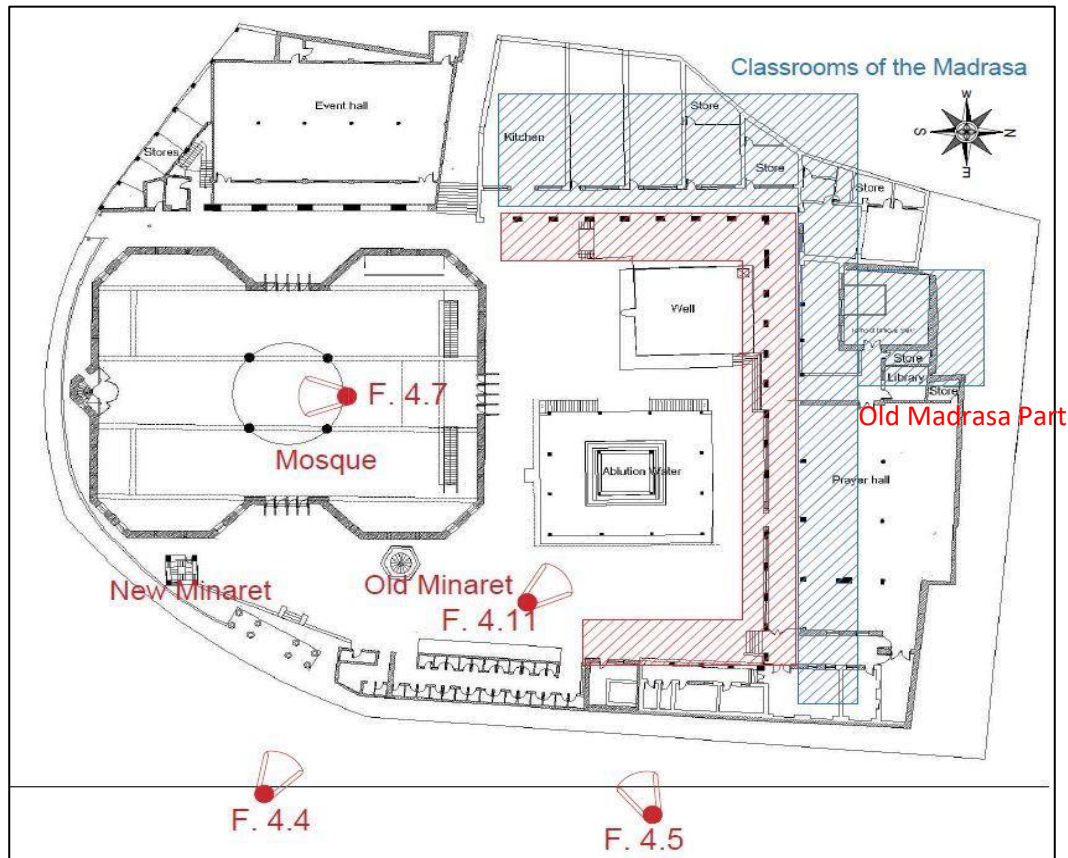
Each of these functional areas is not only integral to the day-to-day operations of the mosque but also encapsulates the diverse range of activities that the religious edifice accommodates.



**Figure 1.** Main facade of the Great Mosque showing the old minaret in the right.

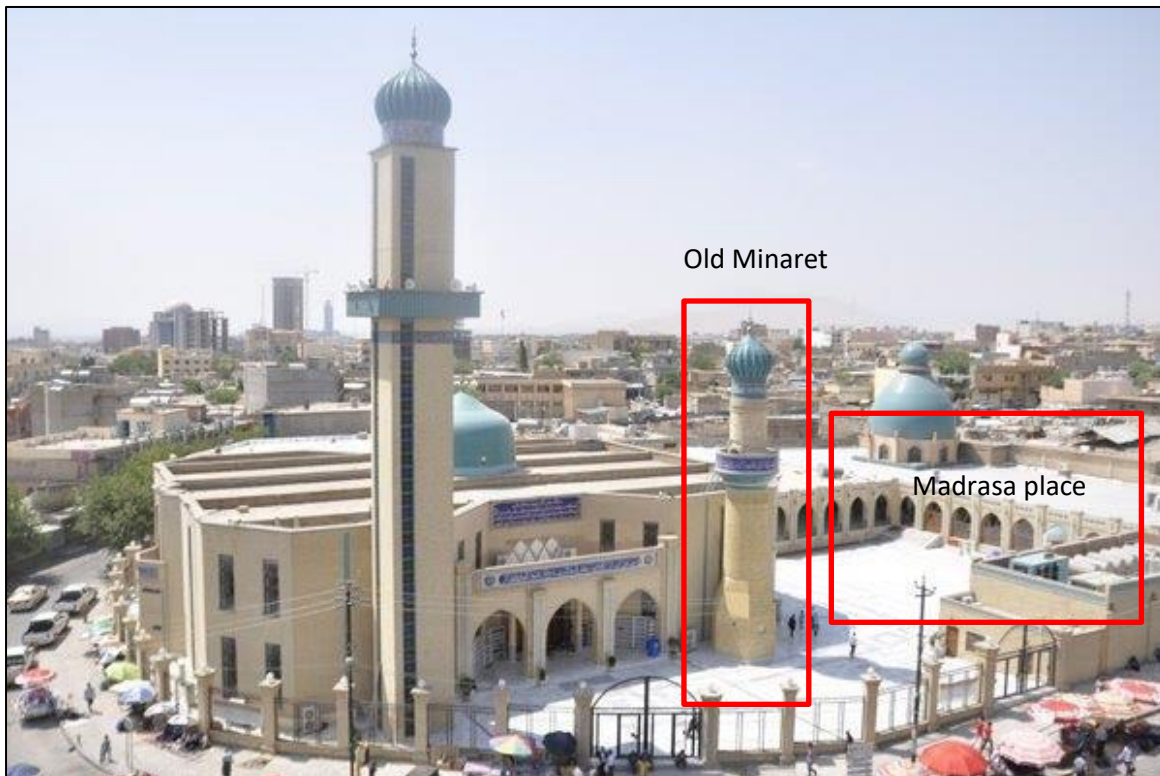
A significant architectural transformation has occurred in the primary elevation of the newly constructed mosque. The original minaret has been meticulously restored to preserve its historical features. Moreover, a subsequent addition of a taller minaret has been strategically positioned to the

left of the preexisting structure, creating a synergistic interplay between historical preservation and modern architectural elements.

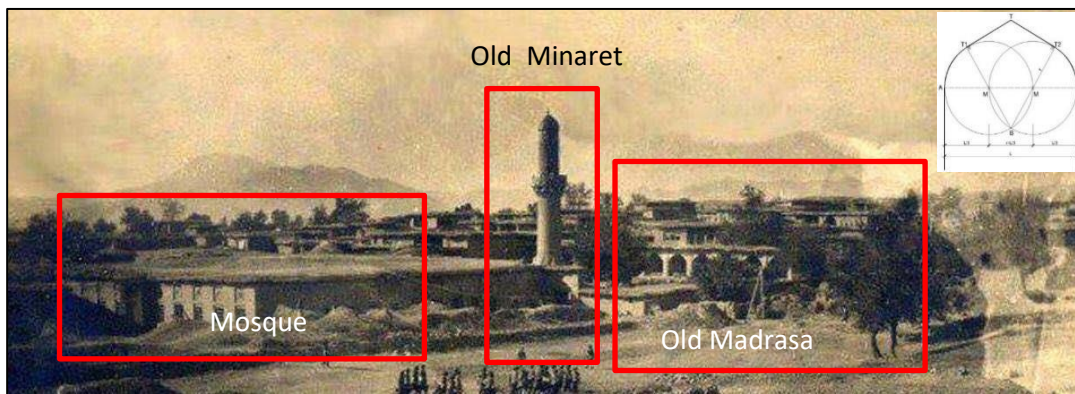


**Figure 2.** Plan of The New Great Mosque and renovated arcades around it.

Based on the salient characteristics delineated in the architectural blueprint, it is conceivable that the primary mosque was originally conceived as part of a larger, integrated complex. This complex likely encompassed a mosque for religious rituals and a madrasa for educational activities. The madrasa appears to have been situated at the posterior section of the main prayer area, thereby serving as a spatially subordinate yet functionally significant component of the overall layout (as shown in Figure 4).



**Figure 3.** The New Great Mosque Complex after restoration with the new tall minaret addition (2021), photograph taken by the author.



**Figure 4.** The Great Mosque complex, before restoration, arches on the arcade of the madrasa part can be seen (Wikitravel, 2023).



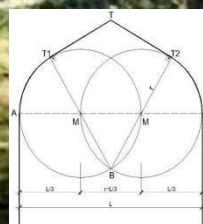


**Figure 5.** The interior of The New Mosque (2021), photograph taken by the author.



**Figure 6.** Original minaret and the Great Mosque in Sulaymaniyah (2021, 1900's) [Anonym].

The courtyard is one protected area in the mosque, which is still an important part of the ablution and secondary praying area. It is constructed with a pointed arch. However, the renovation of the mosque appears to have changed the Arch type (Figure 10)



The photograph shows the exterior of the Imam Reza Shrine in Mashhad, Iran. The building features a large, prominent green dome and a long facade with a series of arched windows and entrances. The architecture is a blend of traditional Islamic and modern styles. A geometric diagram of a dome's cross-section is overlaid in the top right corner, illustrating the dome's structure with various points and lines labeled in Persian and Arabic script.

The multifaceted religious and educational complex—comprising the mosque, the madrasa, the tomb, and an ancillary primary school located at the ingress of the courtyard—sustained significant destruction due to armed conflicts (refer to Figure 9 for visual documentation). Recent restoration efforts conducted in the year 2020 have led to a series of substantive architectural modifications. Specifically, the facade of the building has been meticulously rejuvenated, the spatial dimensions of the mosque interior have been augmented, and the front porticos of the madrasa have been conserved. The rearward section has also been spatially expanded, and the dome crowning the tomb has undergone comprehensive renewal (Al-Darraj, 2016).



In the course of these restoration endeavors, particular attention was devoted to the preservation of the porticos. However, alterations were made to the architectural arrangement of the arches adorning the diminutive minaret. A comparative analysis with historical records indicates that the current arch structures deviate from their original configurations (as substantiated by Figure 12).

In preserving the Great Mosque, adherence to the stipulations of the Venice Charter is imperative, specifically Article 6, which mandates the preservation of a monument's scale about its traditional existence. This article proscribes any additions or modifications to the architectural fabric that would compromise the structural mass relationships and traditional chromatic schemes inherent in the original design.

As such, any conservation endeavors must honor the traditional context by eschewing new constructions or excessive renovations that would perturb the coherent mass-color relationships, particularly those concerning the minaret.

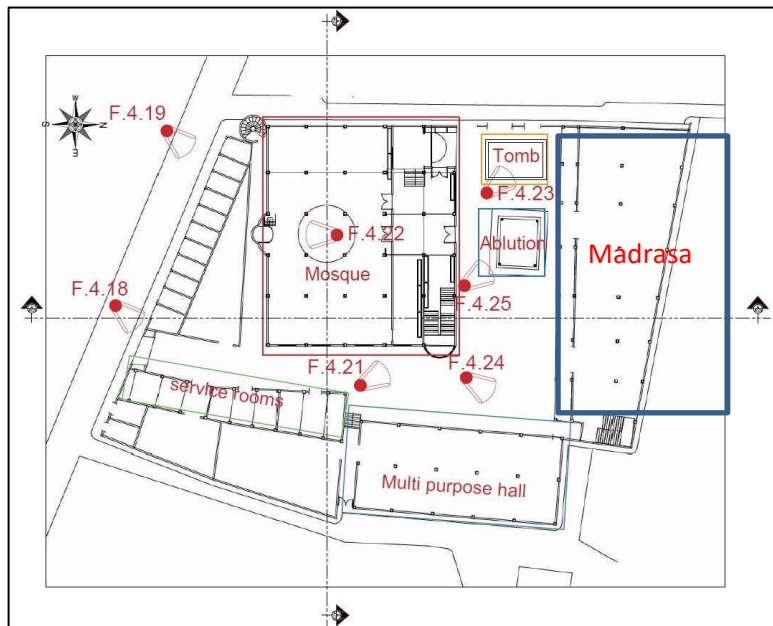
Article 1 of the Venice Charter elaborates on the broader conceptualization of historical monuments, positing that their significance may not be confined solely to individual buildings but may extend to entire districts or areas that played roles in specific civilizations. Such monuments are not limited to structures of artistic merit but can also include those imbued with historical or cultural import (Charter, 1964).

The prerogative extends to renowned architectural landmarks and lesser-known edifices that have accrued significance through their historical resonance. Instead of altering its facade, the original Great Mosque complex should have been meticulously restored, preserving its inherent historical values.

Notably, the only extant original element within the present complex is the diminutive minaret, albeit the original facade material underwent alterations during recent restoration initiatives.

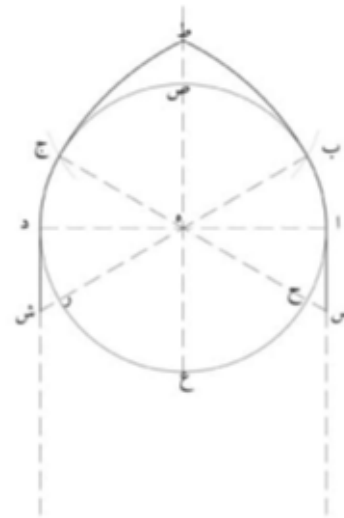
#### 4.2. Khanaqa Mosque

The architectural schematic delineates a central prayer zone designed to accommodate congregants during the primary prayer intervals. Situated within the courtyard is an open-area ablution zone with a water fountain strategically positioned to facilitate ritualistic cleansing. Additionally, the courtyard is the final resting place for individuals of historical and social significance (as visually represented in Figure 15).



**Figure 9.** Ground floor plan of Khanaqa Mosque in the current situation and how it may have been working in the past.

A secondary prayer area on the mosque's lateral western section is operational throughout the day to accommodate ongoing devotional activities. The southern quadrant of the complex is designated as a multi-functional hall, purposed explicitly for an array of activities and gatherings. This section is complemented by ancillary service rooms dedicated to the maintenance staff responsible for the upkeep of the facility (refer to Figure 15 for spatial layout).



**Figure 10.** Entrance ornamentation of Khanaqa Mosque, photograph taken by the author.

The portal leading into the mosque is embellished with intricate ornamentation, a design motif that extends into the archway. This mosque distinguishes itself under its expansive scale and elaborate decorative elements, particularly when contrasted with other religious edifices nearby. Spanning an area of approximately 1,000 square meters, the structure is organized around a central courtyard. Subsequent architectural expansions incorporated an educational facility, specifically the Mahui School of Religious Science. The most recent restoration efforts were concluded in the year 2011. Notably, this edifice holds the distinction of being the city's second-largest mosque.



**Figure 11.** Old Photograph taken of Khanaqa Mosque [6].



**Figure 12.** Side view of Khanaqa Mosque, photograph taken by the author.



**Figure 13.** Renovated courtyard of Khanaqa mosque, photograph taken by the author.

The recent incorporation of a curtain wall into the mosque's primary prayer hall constitutes an incongruous architectural intervention. Furthermore, the choice of wall cladding material, precisely the type of stone deployed, deviates significantly from the original stylistic vernacular of the building. Such alterations have contributed to an overall visual dissonance in the architectural integrity of the mosque, as illustrated in Figure 4.21.





**Figure 14.** Interior of Khanaqa mosque, photograph taken by the author.



**Figure 15.** Ablution inside the courtyard of Khanaqa mosque, photograph taken by the author.

In the context of conservation efforts for the Khanaqa Mosque, adherence to Venice Charter Article 6 is paramount. This article stipulates that the scale of a monument must be preserved in congruence with its historical context and that any additions or modifications to the structural elements, which could alter the overall mass relationships or traditional color schemes, are strictly proscribed (Charter, 1964).



In light of these guidelines, modifying the mosque's façade constitutes an erroneous reconstruction that deviates from archival records and traditional characteristics. The introduction of altered decorative elements further compromises the integrity of the mosque's original architectural features. Such interventions not only contravene the principles laid out in the Venice Charter but also necessitate rectification, with restoration to the edifice's original appearance being imperative.

### **4.3. Conservation of Mosques in Overlapping Historical Epochs**

#### **4.3.1. Gazi Kasım Pasha Mosque**

The mosque is a square-planned, single-domed building built in 1543 using the stones of the previous church, St.Bartholomew, in Pecs, Hungary. It was built by Gazi Kasım Pasha, the former governor of Budin, in 1548 (GÜLER, 2018). The building, which was used as a church after the end of Islamic rule and has undergone many additions and changes until today, took its present appearance in 1939 as a result of a project competition. In the implemented project, the square planned mosque was preserved with its original features (window proportions, mihrab), and a common “church” space was created by adding a semi-circular closed space to its north. The previous bell tower and minaret were demolished and replaced with a bell tower, a metal mechanism that could rise at any time. A contemporary understanding of conservation approaching the past periods with respect is in line with Article 11, written in the Venice Charter, and traces of the period when the building was a mosque (window arches, exterior facades, muqarnas traces, pencil works) are preserved (Kovács & Rabb, 2020).

Venice Charter; Article 11; The valid contributions of all periods to building a monument must be respected since unity of style is not the aim of a restoration. When a building includes the superimposed work of different periods, the revealing of the underlying state can only be justified in exceptional circumstances and when what is removed is of little interest, and the material which is brought to light is of great historical, archaeological or aesthetic value, and its state of preservation good enough to justify the action. Evaluation of the elements' importance and the decision as to what may be destroyed cannot rest solely on the individual in charge of the work (Charter, 1964).



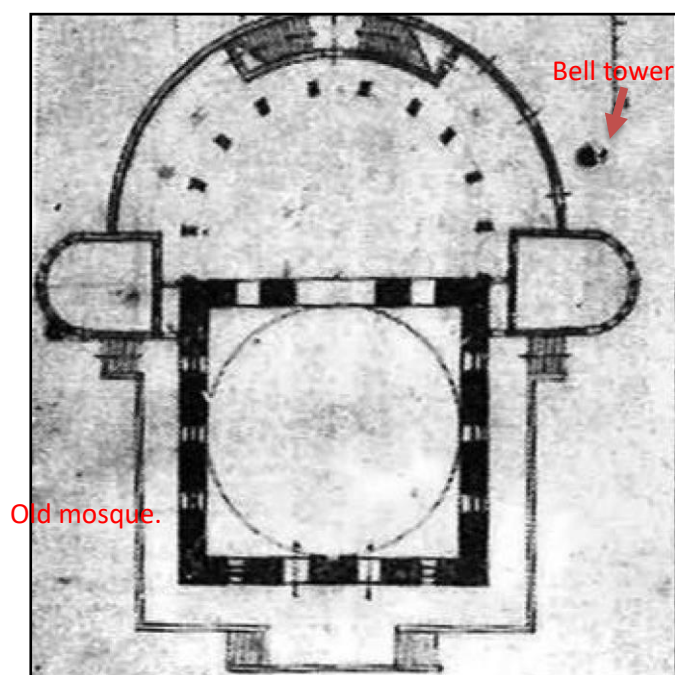
**Figure 16.** presents a visual perspective from the vantage point of the Gazi Kasım Pasha Mosque, a structure currently functioning as a church.

Situated beneath the mosque is a museum facility. Adjacent to this site, specifically beneath the administrative edifice depicted on the right-hand side of the frame, archaeological excavations have uncovered remnants hypothesized to be associated with an Ottoman-era madrasah (Kovács & Rabb, 2020).



**Figure 17.** offers an interior perspective of the Gazi Kasım Pasha Mosque.

Figure 17 focuses on the newly appended section now serving ecclesiastical functions as part of the church. While the original structural elements have been preserved, additional mural work has been integrated into the overall design scheme of the new ecclesiastical extension (Kovács & Rabb, 2020).



**Figure 18.** The renovation project was successful in the project competition in 2010.

#### 4.3.2. Maidan Iman, Isfahan.

Constructed in the 17th century under the auspices of Shah Abbas I, this monumental ensemble functioned as a pivotal cultural and social locus during the Safavid era. Situated in Isfahan, the complex encompasses a public urban square, one of the most expansive open urban spaces globally, thereby testifying to the sophistication of Persian architectural traditions. The square is flanked by the Royal Mosque, formally known as Sheikh Lotfollah Mosque, and is adjoined by a two-tiered arcade that serves as a conduit linking additional monumental structures. Notably, the western quadrant of the square houses the Ali Qapu pavilion, the presence of the Qaysariyeh portico distinguishes the northern sector, and the southern extremity features the aforementioned Royal Mosque (World Monuments Fund, 2014).

The Maidan diverges markedly from conventional Iranian urban planning paradigms, presenting itself as an anomalous, expansive square measuring 560 meters in length and 160 meters in width. This starkly contrasts the more compact, densely configured public squares typical of Iranian cities. The northern expanse of the Maidan is demarcated by the Qaysari gateway, which serves as an ingress to the 2-kilometer-long Esfahan Bazaar. On the eastern perimeter, the Sheikh Lotfollah Mosque stands as an exemplar of Iranian architectural ingenuity, originally constructed to serve the exclusive devotional needs of the royal court (World Monuments Fund, 2014).



**Figure 19.** Social interactions in the Maidan Imam area (World Monuments Fund, 2014).

Encompassing its periphery, the Maidan features a series of arcades and retail establishments. A balcony distinguishes the second level of this complex, a locus traditionally employed for musical performances and public concerts. Beyond the confines of the Ali Qapu Talar, one finds the pathway leading to the Shah's throne room, where diplomatic receptions for foreign emissaries were customarily conducted. The Royal Maidan of Esfahan has consistently functioned as an architectural manifestation of the empire's sociocultural tapestry. Nonetheless, preserving its historical and cultural significance mandates a commitment to sustainable maintenance and thoughtful development.

As articulated in multiple clauses within the Venice Charter, it is imperative to accord due respect to the contributions emanating from each historical epoch. The edifice of the future cannot be erected in ignorance of its antecedents; indeed, architectural manifestations serve as pivotal documents that attest to the idiosyncrasies of bygone civilizations. Through direct engagement, observation, and analytical scrutiny of these historically significant structures, emerging generations can attain a more nuanced understanding of past phenomena, as these edifices act as invaluable witnesses to historical events.

Per the stipulations delineated in Articles 4 through 8 of the Venice Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites, the following principles hold salient significance:

Article 4 posits that the enduring conservation of historical monuments necessitates perpetual maintenance.

Article 5 asserts that the efficacy of conservation endeavors is substantially amplified when the monument in question serves a socially beneficial function. However, any such utilization must scrupulously avoid alterations to the original architectural layout and ornamentation. Within these



constraints alone, modifications stemming from functional transformations should be considered and potentially authorized.

Article 6 emphasizes the quintessential requirement of preserving a monument within a context commensurate in scale. Should a traditional setting be extant, it must be maintained intact. Moreover, any new construction, demolition, or modifications disrupting the inherent relationships of mass and chromatic composition are strictly proscribed.

Article 7 articulates that a monument is inextricably linked to the historical narrative it embodies and the contextual environment in which it is situated. Therefore, the relocation of a monument, either in part or in its entirety, is permissible solely under exigent conditions that demand its preservation or when dictated by considerations of national or international import that are of overriding consequence.

Article 8 stipulates that components of sculpture, painting, or other decorative elements that constitute an integral facet of a monument may only be dislocated from their original context if such an action represents the solitary avenue for ensuring their preservation.

By comparing the Architectural characteristics of the existing building, it will be possible to know the best conservation quality of the mosque's. The criteria of evaluation is to write the conservation quality to be from 1 to 5, and the results will be in 5 points, then the evaluation of the mosques will have a result.

Table: Comparison point for architectural analysis

Cases analysis	Grand Mosque	Khanaqa Mosque	Gazi Kasim Pasa Mosque	Maidan Iman Mosque
Material protection	2	1	4	4
Elements	3	3	4	5
Design	3	2	4	5
Planning	2	1	5	4
EVALUATION	2.5	1.75	4.25	4.5

As a result of this analysis, the conservation quality of Khanaqa mosque and Grand mosque in Sulaimaniya is not in a very good situation compared to the past elements and characters, therefore, it's clear that the examples from bordering country is protected in a better approach and has saved the elements from the past.

Despite the initial hypothesis positing that site-specific conservation strategies, guided by the principles delineated in the Venice Charter, would prove efficacious in preserving the structural and cultural authenticity of the selected mosques, our comprehensive analysis indicates otherwise. Our findings reveal that these targeted approaches do not necessarily conform to the Venice Charter



stipulations and, consequently, are less effective than initially anticipated in preserving these religious edifices' architectural integrity and cultural significance.

We strongly advocate for the immediate cessation of restoration efforts that deviate from the historical and architectural veracity of the buildings in question. This recommendation is predicated upon the imperative of conducting exhaustive retrospective analyses that leverage historical documentation, archival photographs, and primary source material. We contend that failing to inculcate in forthcoming generations a reverence for their cultural and historical heritage risks engendering a societal ethos devoid of accountability for future actions and decisions.

## 5. Conclusion

Several significant observations can be made upon rigorous assessment of the existing architectural landmarks within Sulaymaniyah, specifically focusing on the state of preservation and the historical alterations they have undergone. Despite its prominence as a central religious edifice within the community, the Great Mosque Complex has witnessed myriad alterations that deviate from its original architectural integrity. Notably, once an educational cornerstone, the adjoining madrasa has been subsumed into the mosque's prayer area, effectively obliterating its distinct educational function. Moreover, a conspicuously high dome, absent in historical photographs, has been erected atop the tomb. While the original minaret remains intact, it is juxtaposed incongruously with a new construction featuring a disparate architectural style.

Similarly, the Khanaqa Mosque has undergone extensive renovations, essentially tantamount to a complete reconstruction. In stark contrast, the adjacent bath facility languishes in severe neglect; only its octagonal central chamber and surrounding specialized bathing spaces have managed to withstand the ravages of ill-conceived construction endeavors. Both public and administrative attitudes lack a conscientious intent to conserve these vital cultural landmarks.

In light of these findings, the initial hypothesis, which suggested that site-specific conservation charters aligned with the Venice Charter would effectively preserve the mosques' architectural and cultural attributes, is decisively refuted. It is painfully evident that not only has preservation been sidelined in Sulaymaniyah, but active efforts appear to be underway to erase the vestiges of this historical period.

Future studies should use a multidisciplinary strategy that includes historians, architects, and local stakeholders to determine the most efficient conservation solutions that align with the Venice Charter and the unique requirements of Sulaymaniyah's architectural assets. A complete digital archive of historical records and images may be created to direct restoration efforts. Community education initiatives could also be introduced to encourage a sense of ownership and responsibility among the general public for protecting these priceless cultural assets.

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