

CONFLICT & CULTURE

Understanding threats to heritage



INTRODUCTION

The success of the future builds on values inherited from the past and appreciation of cultural diversity. Inherited cultural values are better known as cultural heritage. As thoughts and things disappear with time and only a fraction survives for the future, time is the most important dimension in heritage policies. Many objects or structures gain heritage value due to their great age and their rarity. The simple fact that they unexpectedly survived and were rediscovered can turn them into unique wonders of the world.

Other remains of the past, however, are considered heritage by a community, a national state or even international society (represented by UNESCO). They are appreciated for other reasons than simply surviving by accident. They are the product of policy-making and a decision by the contemporary society. Good examples are many of the monuments inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage list with a recent history. Such a decision is almost always contested. Who has actually the right to declare objects or traditions of cultural heritage of general value?

A major reason for this debate is that cultural diversity also means different value systems. So what might be considered important heritage within one tradition might be discarded as trivial and even harmful in another. This is what happened in the destruction of monuments in Iraq and Syria in connection with the conflict between the so-called Islamic State and national governments. The result was the loss of some of the most spectacular buildings of the past, namely the temples of Palmyra and the Neo-Assyrian palaces in Nineveh, Nimrud, and Khorsabad.

This extreme situation provoked a project dealing with the conflicts associated with the construction of cultural heritage as a human value.

Scholars from the University of Copenhagen, University of Bologna, Alexandru Ioan Cuza University in Iași/Romania and the NGO Center for Research in Central and Eastern Europe/Białystok in Poland formed a research group that wanted to identify threats to heritage in which conflict situations were most central. But conflicts in the broadest sense, namely both armed conflicts and political conflicts.

The group chose a proactive approach and developed, from 2015–2018 under JPI CH funding, a typology of threats to cultural heritage which hopefully in the future may assist heritage managers and decision makers and lay men in the handling of such threat – the HeAT project. This magazine discusses some of the cases studied in the HeAT project and the theoretical thoughts behind. They cover a geographical region including the Middle East and Europe with a particular focus on Eastern Europe as here we have experienced dramatic political changes since the beginning of the 20th century and subsequent changes in attitude towards heritage. We have also included scholars from China in order to get an outside view upon our part of the world and recognizing that China has also gone through a long process of changes towards cultural heritage during the past decades.

The magazine follows a small poster presentation of some of the cases and is offered to any institution interested in displaying it. The exhibition, together with this magazine, is an attempt to reach out and include everybody in the important discussion of what is shared heritage and how do we construct and preserve it. One of our main observations, not only from the Chinese example, is that the most successful road to heritage management is through public outreach and by including the local civil society. Inclusion is sharing of knowledge with as many as possible to raise awareness and appreciation of the fragility of cultural heritage and its diversity.



ALMA MATER STUDIORUM
UNIVERSITÀ DI BOLOGNA



UNIVERSITATEA
„ALEXANDRU IOAN CUZA”
din IAȘI

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AND
THREAT



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Frontpicture: An man collects
books from the destroyed Iraqi
National Library April 17, 2003 in
Baghdad, Iraq. Martin Sullivan the
head of the presidential cultural
advisory committee resigned in
protest at the failure of U.S. forces
to prevent the wholesale looting of
priceless treasures from Baghdad's

antiquities museum. "It didn't have
to happen," Sullivan said of the ob-
jects that were destroyed or stolen
from the Iraqi National Museum in
a wave of looting that erupted as
U.S. led forces ended President
Saddam Hussein's rule. Photo by
Oleg Nikishin/Getty Images.

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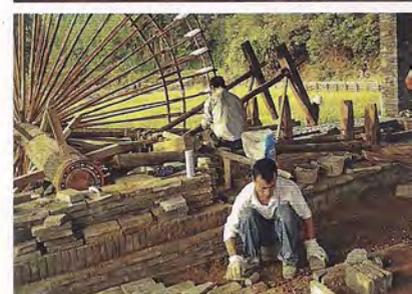
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SUBMERGING CULTURAL HERITAGE. DAMS AND ARCHAEOLOGY IN SOUTH-EASTERN TURKEY

BY NICOLÒ MARCHETTI & FEDERICO ZAINA

Since the 1960s, economic development strategies promoted by Middle Eastern governments have fostered the construction of large-scale hydraulic infrastructure, including dams, with the aim of providing short- and medium-term benefits in previously low productive regions. However, the massive modifications occurring to the riverbeds and surrounding areas involved deeply affected the natural and cultural landscape of vast regions. Combining open-access satellite imagery and archaeological data it is now possible to show the immediate impact of dams on the cultural heritage along the Turkish stretch of the Euphrates river.

FLOODED HERITAGE

Dams represent a controversial and contested tool for economic development. It is widely agreed that these massive hydraulic structures provide different types of benefits, including the production of electricity, increased farmlands and land value in previously arid areas as well

as development in fishery and water-related industry. All these factors concur to a generally increased income as often stressed by both private and public authorities.

However, the benefits brought by dams are not forever. Similar to other human-made structures, such as roads and bridges, dams require regular and expensive maintenance and have a finite lifespan. A mean life of 50–120 years is generally expected for modern dams and water reservoirs. In addition, the construction and up-filling of dams include the dislocation of thousands of people, potential international political issues when built on rivers flowing through different countries, permanent degradation of soil fertility and the widespread destruction of cultural and natural heritage.

Today, Middle Eastern and North African countries are witnessing an ever-growing number of large dam projects: new dams are currently being built in Turkey, Iraq

Fig. 1. View of Zeugma with the Birecik dam reservoir in the background.
Photo: Pressaris.



Fig. 2. The Keban dam on the Upper Euphrates. Photo: Wikimedia Commons.



and Iran, as well as in Egypt and the Sudan. Among those, Turkey represents one of the most relevant examples where development has often threatened cultural and natural heritage. Today more than 600 hundred dams are active in the country and almost 200 are under construction or in the project stage.

One of the most relevant cases is the massive program of dam constructions along the Euphrates river. Since the 1970s the Turkish government has carried out a large-scale plan called GAP project, aiming at improving the previously low income region of Southeastern Anatolia. Eight dams have been completed so far along the Euphrates river in the frame of this project and eight more are in the project or construction stage. Besides the well-advertised economic benefits, these enormous public works have caused the displacement of almost 100,000 people, the disappearance of several hundred kilometers of the Euphrates riverbed and the flooding of hundreds of

archaeological sites and monuments. Among others, many important archaeological sites, such as the famous Roman twin city of Zeugma-Apamea and the Hellenistic capital of Samosata have been submerged.

However, while a lively debate has arisen from both the expected results and the issues concerning land acquisition and resettlement, less attention has been given to the impact of dams on cultural heritage with archaeologists often avoiding political stances. The mitigations put into place by public bodies consisted of different types of archaeological survey methodologies and excavations at selected sites. However, the results are incomplete, often patchy if not completely lacking. Today no official protocols exist to safeguard endangered cultural and natural heritage threatened by the construction of hydraulic structures and decision-making is generally left to the single countries.

We started our research as part of the JPI project "HeAT – Heritage and Threat" (2015–2018 coordinated by the University of Copenhagen, which aims at systematically analysing selected and perceived threats towards cultural heritage and at developing tools and strategies to confront them. We attempted to assess the loss of archaeological heritage due to the flooding of large swathes of territory with the resulting formation of artificial basins.

MAPPING THE IMPACT OF DAMS ON CULTURAL HERITAGE IN TURKEY

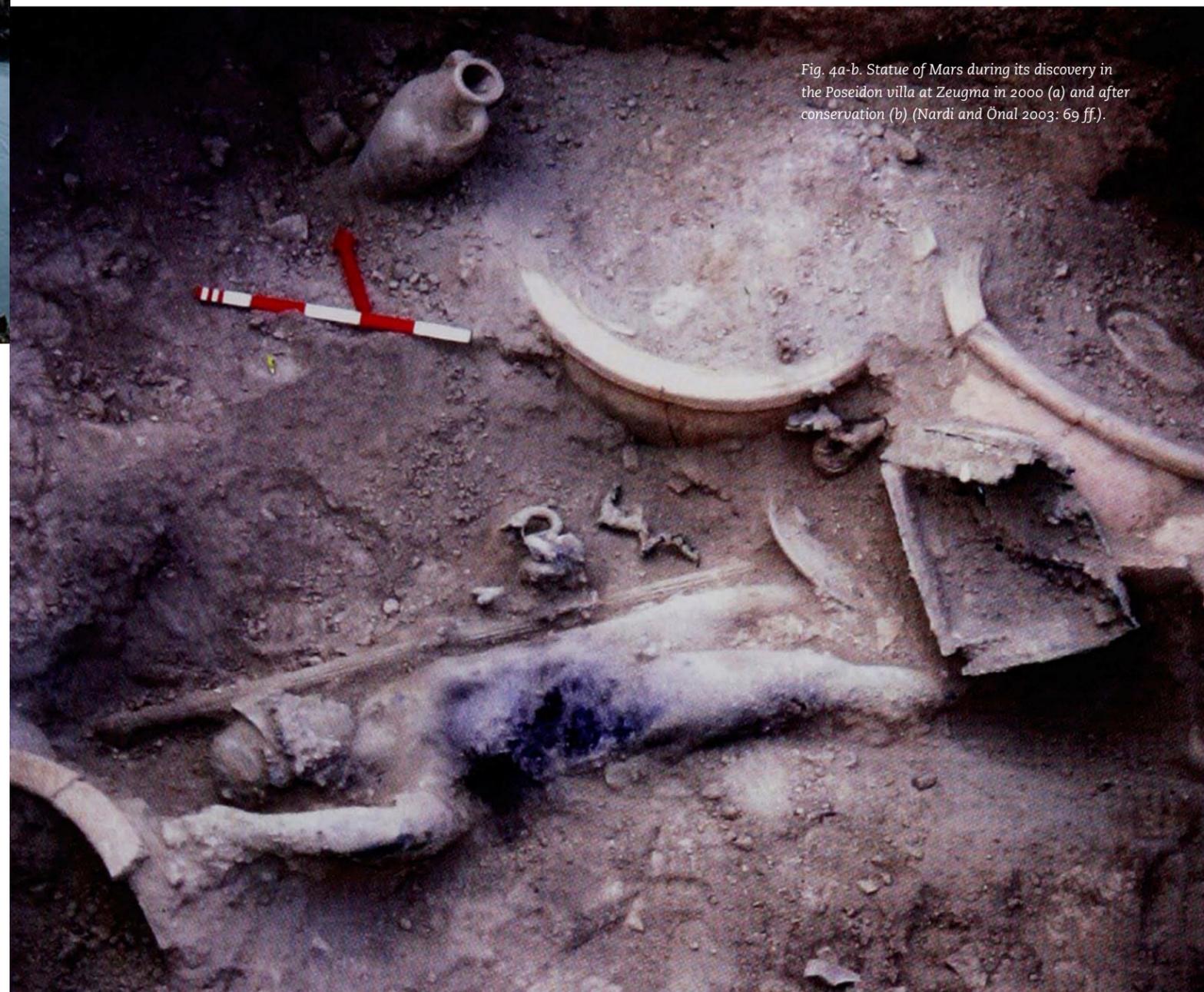
The emergence of digital technology and the growing availability of open access geographical and archaeological datasets allowed addressing new issues on the impact of economic development strategies on cultural heritage. In our research, we integrated different types of written and open-access digital sources. Archaeological data include surveys and excavations in soon-to-be-



Fig. 3. One of houses excavated at Zeugma. A large part of the ancient city was submerged by the Birecik dam reservoir. Photo: Pressaris.



Fig. 4a-b. Statue of Mars during its discovery in the Poseidon villa at Zeugma in 2000 (a) and after conservation (b) (Nardi and Önal 2003: 69 ff.).



flooded dam reservoir areas built along the Turkish Euphrates. Additional data have been retrieved from the Turkish webGIS TAY project, which also provided geo-referenced shapefiles of several archaeological sites considered in this study.

Geographical data included various spatial datasets as well as geo-referenced satellite imagery. The former were acquired from the official websites and GIS platforms of the Turkish Ministry of Forestry and Water Affairs and the F.A.O. "Aquastat project", both of which provided a large bulk of information on dams and water reservoirs.

All these sources were imported in a GIS environment in order to optimise data management and study phase. The integrated analysis allowed us to provide detailed information on each archaeological site.

The multi-temporal data representing the water surfaces of each reservoir was then integrated into the archaeological sites to detect the damaged or submerged zones due to the dam constructions and to the increase of the reservoir's extent.

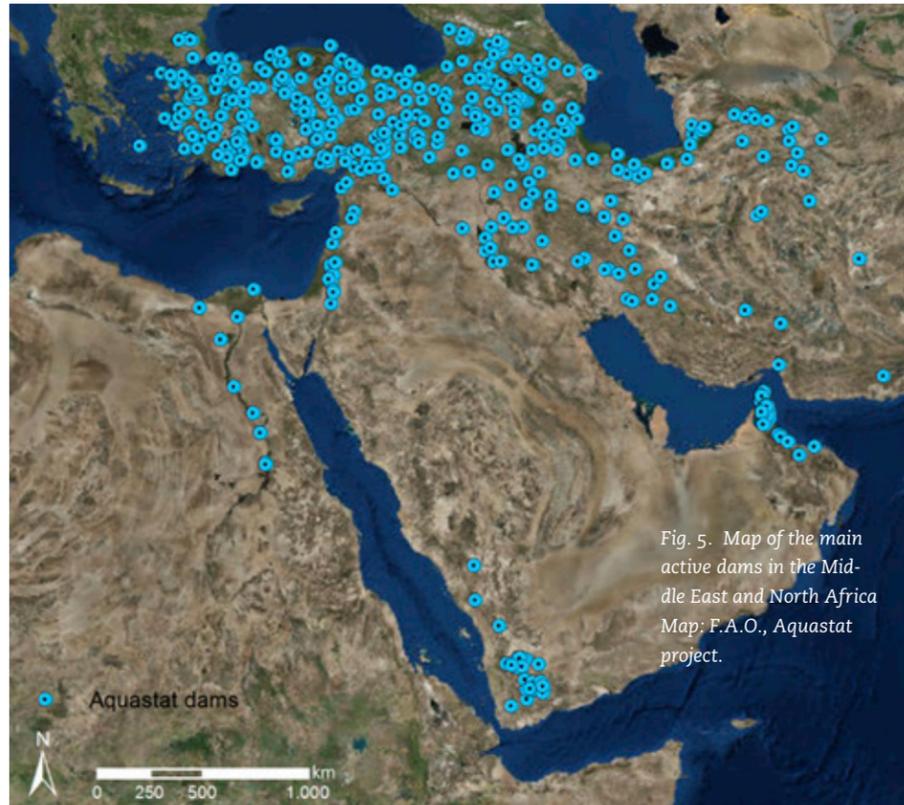


Fig. 5. Map of the main active dams in the Middle East and North Africa
Map: F.A.O., Aquastat project.

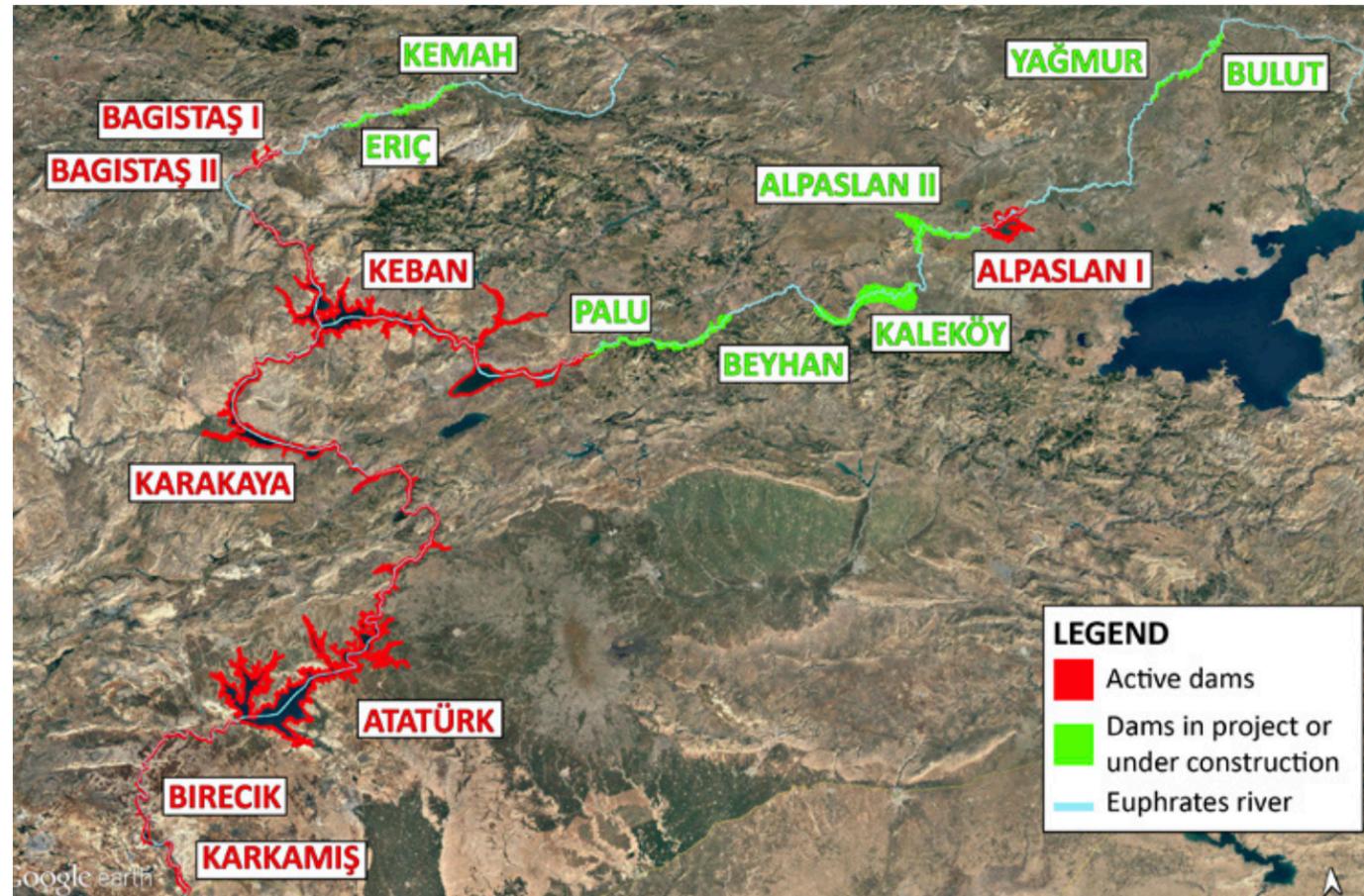


Fig. 6. Map of the current active dams, dams in construction and dams in project along the Upper Euphrates basin in Turkey. Map by the authors; D.S.I. and Google Earth.

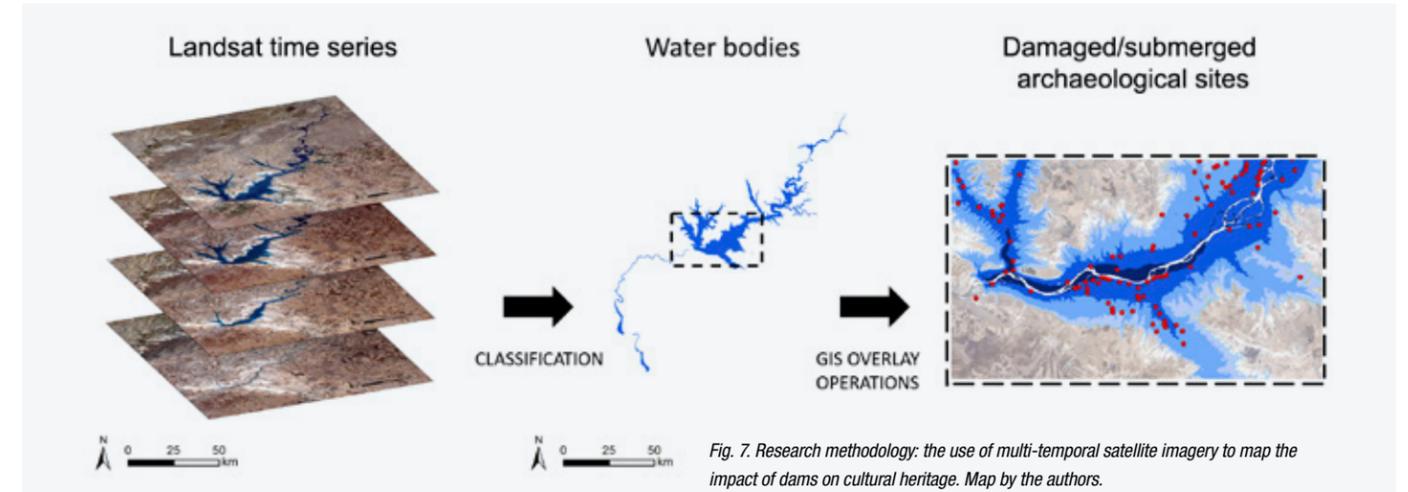


Fig. 7. Research methodology: the use of multi-temporal satellite imagery to map the impact of dams on cultural heritage. Map by the authors.

REMOTE SENSING FOR CULTURAL HERITAGE

Today satellite Remote Sensing represents a powerful tool for monitoring modifications to cultural and natural heritage on a global, regional and local scale. Indeed, it allows us to follow and to understand the changes occurring in large areas of the Earth due to natural and anthropogenic causes, and therefore to support decision makers for better management of the territory.

In the last decades, a large number of earth observation satellites, equipped with optical and radar sensors, have been launched, thus providing a huge amount of multi-temporal data. The continuous improvement of spatial, radiometric, spectral and temporal resolution has significantly increased the interest in image time series processing for an increasing spectrum of applications, approaches to the monitoring of different phenomena.

The US Landsat program has the longest history in earth observation. Landsat multi-spectral imagery provides medium-resolution image coverage with an average temporal repeatability of 16 days. The spectral bands cover visible, near infrared, medium infrared and thermal parts of the electromagnetic spectrum. After 45 years, the long-term time series derived from the Landsat archive constitutes an invaluable source of information

to reconstruct the changes to the Earth's surface over this period. Furthermore, since 2008 these images are freely available, thus significantly enlarging the potential user's audience.

Thanks to automatic or semi-automatic classification techniques, it is possible to derive from a thematic representation of land cover multispectral images, at a scale suitable for regional studies. Through a GIS, it is possible to overlay different layers with different contents for a spatio-temporal evaluation of the relationships between phenomena and facts that occurred over time.

Remote sensing has been applied in a large spectrum of applications, often with a strong multidisciplinary content. Among those, archaeology is becoming an increasingly more interesting and promising field. The applications include mapping and documenting large and sometimes inaccessible areas, discovering new archaeological sites as well as monitoring and preserving cultural and natural heritage. The analysis is sometimes integrated with old declassified satellite images like those belonging to the CORONA program.



Fig. 8. The minaret of Halfeti partially submerged by the Birecik dam. Photo: Wikimedia Commons.

EPHEMERAL DEVELOPMENT AND PERMANENT LOSS: "THE DAM TRUTH"

Despite the growing number of reports and the political rhetoric of governments to justify such large-scale projects and the benefits they bring to the local communities in terms of economic development, more and more critical voices, ranging from local communities to academic research groups, are now emerging through websites and social media. Among others, the worldwide brand Patagonia recently launched a public anti-dams campaign called "The Dam Truth". Other awareness campaigns have been promoted in the past years by the Waterkeeper Alliance NGO.

Our research provided an unprecedented overview of the destruction of cultural heritage perpetrated along one of the most important rivers of the world's history: the Euphrates.



Fig. 9. The Karakaya dam reservoir during its up-filling. Photo: Wikimedia Commons.

We identified almost 400 archaeological sites submerged or partially damaged by the dams that constituted more than 450 hectares of archaeological heritage permanently lost. However, these data are incomplete, as approximately 20% of the total area flooded by the eight active dams along the Turkish Euphrates had not been surveyed.

In addition, if we consider the Euphrates river itself, 500 km of the main branch plus 145 km of its tributaries have disappeared under the water reservoirs.

These data are even more dramatic if we consider the current development plans approved by the Turkish government, including the construction of more hydraulic infrastructure along the upper branches (Kara Su and Murat Su) of the Euphrates. No strategies for mapping, safeguarding and monitoring the cultural and natural heritage have been foreseen in these projects. This is also the result of the lack of official laws and protocols proposed by competent authorities and the international archaeological community to protect the endangered cultural heritage.

Our research would ideally contribute to raising awareness of the issue of endangered heritage due to development projects and of the related needs for documentation protocols and strategies. We can only hope that further studies and assessments on the impact of dams on cultural heritage will appear soon, and that they will benefit both policy-makers and the general public, especially in balancing long-term costs and advantages and in implementing more effective safeguarding policies. *



Fig. 10. The abandoned mosque at the village of Çobandede, Adiyaman. Before the construction of the Atatürk dam this was one of the main religious centers in the rural area. Photo by the authors.

ATATÜRK DAM

Originally referred to as the Karababa dam, and then renamed in honor of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the Atatürk dam is located on the Euphrates river, on the borders of the Adiyaman and Şanlıurfa provinces. Its construction began in 1983, was completed in 1990 and went into service in 1992 creating the third largest lake in Turkey.

According to the Turkish Directorate General of State Hydraulic Works (DSI), the dam has a height of 169 meters and vastly increased the production of energy, the irrigated area as well as water-related activities. Besides the recognised benefits, the construction of the Atatürk dam also deeply impacted the local population, and the cultural and natural heritage in an approximately 170 km long stretch of the Euphrates river valley. About 143 villages were flooded and around 50,000 people were relocated.

In addition to this, between 1975 and 1990, several projects were launched with the aim of extensively documenting the endangered cultural heritage in the area to be flooded. The largest endeavor was carried out by the Lower Euphrates Basin Archaeological Survey project (LEBS) which mapped almost 200 archaeological sites in the region. Further minor efforts by European and American teams allowed the integration of the LEBS results.

Fig. 12a-b. Archaeological researches in the Atatürk dam area. More than 180 archaeological sites documented by the archaeologists have been flooded (a). However, 40% of the reservoir area has never been surveyed (b).

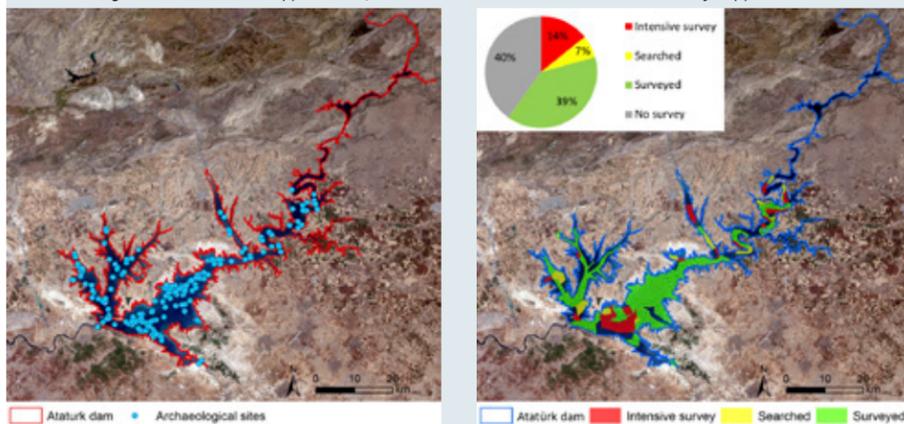


Fig. 11. Houses ruins at the village of Çobandede. Photo by the authors.

In addition, an international program of salvage excavations was carried out at 17 sites involving Turkish, European and American research institutes. With regard to the early history of the region, of paramount importance was the discovery of the Pre-pottery Neolithic (8400–8100 BC) site of Nevalı Çori. Moreover, intensive explorations were undertaken at Samsat Höyük, which was the ancient capital of the Commagene Kingdom with the name of Samosata. Many other relevant Bronze Age (3100–1200 BC) and Iron Age (1200–330 BC) sites, such as Hassek Höyük, Kurban Höyük, Lidar Höyük and Tille Höyük, were partially excavated.

These huge collaborations however, did not allow the proper mapping of the endangered heritage. Thanks to the integrated use of satellite imagery and the archaeological datasets available, we observed that almost 40% of the Atatürk dam reservoir remained unexplored and only 14% of the area had been intensively surveyed.

186 archaeological sites were partially or totally flooded, approximately corresponding to 178,54 lost hectares of archaeological area. The greater majority of them showed multiple periods of occupation, with the Hellenistic, Roman and Byzantine, as the most densely populated. Approximately 178 km of the ancient Euphrates river course have been flooded by the Atatürk lake.



Fig. 13. The main mound of the ancient city of Samsat in the process of being submerged by the raising Atatürk dam waters.

DELVING INTO ANCIENT SAMSAT

Samsat Höyük was one of the major urban centers in the Middle Euphrates valley for millennia. Located south of the Taurus range, the city grew in a large, flat and fertile area. Before modern flooding, the site consisted of a very high acropolis lying on the Euphrates banks and partially surrounded by a large lower town. In total the archaeological remains covered an area of 118 ha.

A huge although insufficient effort to explore the site was carried out by Turkish archaeologists in the frame of the large-scale archaeological salvage projects in the then expected Atatürk dam reservoir area.

Outstanding evidence for prehistoric occupation with structures and materials dating from the Ubaid (5200–3500 BC ca.) and Uruk (3800–3000 BC ca.) periods were recovered on the main mound thus testifying to the great antiquity of the site. Moreover, Samsat emerged as a major center during the Bronze (3000–1200 BC) and Iron Ages

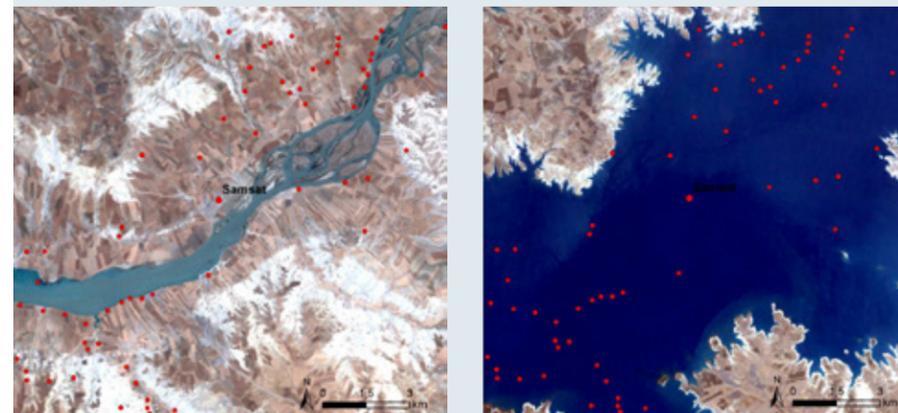


Fig. 15a-b. the Euphrates valley at Samsat before (a) and after (b) the up-filling of the Atatürk dam.

Fig. 16. A fresco painting in the Hellenistic palace excavated by Turkish archaeologists at Samsat (Özgüç 2009).



Fig. 14. The remains of the Medieval fortification of Samsat on top of the acropolis before the flooding.

(1200–530 BC) when it became the capital of the kingdom of *Hahhum*. A Middle Bronze palace and several Luwian hieroglyphic inscriptions attest to the special status of the site.

Among the most striking discoveries, the Turkish excavators brought to light part of an outstanding Hellenistic palace belonging to the kings of the reign of Commagene. Remains of the Imperial Roman period, when Samosata was the home of the Legio VI Ferrata and the Legio XVI Flavia Firma, were also discovered. The city was also a major center under the Byzantines as well as during the Islamic periods. Magnificent glazed ceramics with polychrome decorations were retrieved from the excavations at the site.

Today Samsat lies at least 60 m underwater, with both the acropolis and the lower town being subjected to slow but continuous erosion. Despite the importance of the ancient site, no projects aiming at documenting or safeguarding it have been implemented.



Fig. 17. A Middle Islamic glazed cup from the Turkish excavations at Samsat (Özgüç 2009).

Fig. 18. A Middle Islamic hoard of jewels and coins from the Turkish excavations at Samsat (Özgüç 2009).

