

CREID WORKING PAPER

Volume 2022 ♦ Number 15 ♦ October 2022

Rehabilitating Heritage After ISIS: Economic, Sociocultural, and Historical Considerations in the Case Studies of Al- Nouri Mosque, Al-Hadba Minaret, and Lalish Temple

Wafaa Sabah Khuder

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Suggested citation:

Khuder, W.S. (2022) *Rehabilitating Heritage After ISIS: Economic, Sociocultural, and Historical Considerations in the Case Studies of Al-Nouri Mosque, Al-Hadba Minaret, and Lalish Temple*, CREID Working Paper 15, Coalition for Religious Equality and Inclusive Development, Brighton: Institute of Development Studies, DOI: [10.19088/CREID.2022.004](https://doi.org/10.19088/CREID.2022.004)

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ISBN: 978-1-80470-031-0

DOI: [10.19088/CREID.2022.004](https://doi.org/10.19088/CREID.2022.004)



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Available from:

Coalition for Religious Equality and Inclusive Development (CREID), Institute of Development Studies (IDS), Brighton BN1 9RE, UK

Tel: +44(0) 1273 915704

E-mail: creid@ids.ac.uk

Website: www.ids.ac.uk/creid

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Charity Registration Number 306371

Charitable Company Number 877338

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Wafaa Sabah Khuder

Wafaa Sabah Khuder is a Lecturer in the College of Management and Economics at the University of Duhok, Iraq.

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1 Introduction

Heritage is the culture of the individual, group, society, and nation. Heritage reflects the civilisational, intellectual, and cultural achievements at local and international levels. Since the beginning of the twenty-first century, economic challenges, extremist ideologies, armament, and violence in several Middle Eastern countries, including Iraq, have exposed tangible and intangible heritages to the risk of loss, negligence, theft, and intentional destruction. This is due to the fact that the culture of pluralism and of accepting others has declined in the Middle East in general and in Iraq in particular. In 2014, the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIS) destroyed the heritage and identity of Iraqi society, especially of Iraqi minorities, who to this day still suffer from the effects of the destruction of archaeological areas, the obliteration of the identity of minorities, and cultural cleansing to name just a few. Such actions require the awareness of current and future generations and their resilience in facing these contemporary challenges at all local and international levels. In addition, it necessitates the solidarity of governmental and civil organisations to reconstruct the historic sites destroyed by ISIS because of their historic and cultural value. There is also the need to adopt policies to conserve the remaining tangible and cultural heritage, so that the residents of affected areas may receive funds for the upkeep and maintenance of the sites.

2 The research problem

Following ISIS' intentional destruction of Yazidi cultural heritage in Sinjar and the Nineveh Plain, as well as the deliberate bombing of Al-Nouri Mosque and Al-Hadba Minaret in Mosul, this research explores the financial and social implications of the destruction of heritage perpetrated by ISIS. It goes on to examine the different approaches to the reconstruction and preservation of the significant heritage in the region through the case studies of Al-Nouri Mosque, Al-Hadba Minaret, and Lalish Temple.

For all Mosul residents regardless of their religion, Al-Nouri Mosque and Al-Hadba Minaret were important sites representing the historic and cultural heritage of the city. It was from the pulpit of Al-Nouri Mosque that the leader of ISIS, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, announced the formation of the Islamic Caliphate on Friday 4 July 2014. Three weeks later, ISIS proceeded to destroy a number of significant heritage sites in Mosul including the Mosque of Prophet Yunus, Nabi Chit, and Al-Nabi Jarjis Shrine among others. On

Wednesday 21 June 2017, just prior to the defeat of ISIS in Mosul, ISIS militants set explosives to destroy Al-Nouri Mosque and Al-Hadba Minaret (Hamid 2017).

During their campaign, ISIS set out to specifically target and persecute the Yazidi community as part of their policy to destroy everything that did not fit within their idealised vision of the Caliphate. This included Yazidi religious and cultural places in Sinjar, Bashiqa, and Bahzane (OHCHR UNAMI 2016: 18–20). It is worth mentioning that 39 domes in the above-mentioned areas were destroyed. These domes have religious and heritage significance for the Yazidi. Were it not for its geographical location surrounded by mountains, ISIS would also have destroyed Lalish Temple as it is the Yazidis' most important and holy site. The geographical location of Lalish, along with the importance of the shrine to the Yezidi community, drew large numbers of Yezidis fleeing from their villages because of ISIS to settle in the areas around Lalish and to take refuge there due to the protection it afforded. The significance of the site for the Yazidi community means that it is imperative for Lalish Temple to be preserved so that it can bear witness to the presence, development, and cultural customs of Yazidis throughout history and for future generations (UNESCO 2020).

In order to conserve heritage, many policies have been applied including the regeneration and reconstruction of tangible religious and cultural sites. In some circumstances, reconstruction has involved collecting all salvageable debris from the destroyed sites and using new materials to fill in the gaps where necessary, to recreate the design of the buildings as obtained from historic documents and evidence. On the one hand, the process of reconstruction of completely destroyed sites is seen by some scholars as inappropriate, unless most of the materials that composed the original structure are salvageable. On the other hand, other scholars believe that using new building materials during reconstruction is inevitable provided that similar materials are used. From the community perspective, a majority prefer these heritage sites to be reconstructed and recreated in their original positions as they contribute to building the community's sense of place and security and enable future generations to also be aware of their heritage (Al-Allaf, Al-Omari and Al-Dewachi 2019).

This study focuses on three locations: namely, Al-Nouri Mosque, Al-Hadba Minaret, and Lalish Temple in the aftermath of the ISIS war of 2014–17 and the occupation of Nineveh governorate. This paper assesses the different approaches taken in the reconstruction of

the three sites and identifies some best practices and learnings through these comparisons to advise future reconstruction initiatives.

3 Research objective

Using the three case studies, this paper analyses the role of these sites as part of northern Iraq's heritage and the mechanisms in place for their reconstruction and preservation. The paper explores the role of the different actors and how these have influenced different understandings of heritage and therefore different responses and approaches to restoration. It argues for the role that international organisations such as UNESCO have in monitoring reconstruction processes, as well as the role of international aid in heritage protection, along with the importance of community consultations and of responding to the needs of affected communities in the rehabilitation process.

As a result, this paper explores the following two research questions:

1. What learnings from the rehabilitation of Al-Nouri Mosque and Al-Hadba Minaret can be applied to the rehabilitation of Lalish Temple?
2. What are the key considerations to take into account when rehabilitating heritage?

4 Research methodology

To answer these questions, an analytical approach was used to explore the economic, sociocultural, and historical factors influencing the rehabilitation of Al-Nouri Mosque, Al-Hadba Minaret (both overseen by UNESCO, the Iraqi Ministry of Culture, and Sunni Endowments, and funded by United Arab Emirates (UAE) and implemented by a team from Egypt – when put to tender), and Lalish Temple (with funding from the US government and donations from the Yazidi community). This included data and statistics collected from the following sources: the Department of Endowments and Yazidi Affairs in Baghdad; the Engineering Office in the Lalish Temple; World Bank reports; and online sources that dealt with the selected heritage sites.

Interviews were undertaken with the engineers in charge of the reconstruction of Lalish Temple: namely, engineer Khairy Kady; Mr Soliman' Abu Ephrin, a researcher on Yazidi heritage; and the economist and media representative of Lalish Temple, Mr Lukeman Soliman Mahmoud. In addition, interviews were conducted with consultants overseeing

the reconstruction of Al-Hadba Minaret and Al-Nouri Mosque, Professor Khairy Badel Rashid and Professor Basher El Taleb, as well as the engineer who participated in the reconstruction of the two sites: namely, Mr Masoud Hassen Khair El Deen El Amry. A total of seven interviews were conducted and interviewees were selected due to their involvement in supervising the reconstruction of the sites analysed in this study. For Lalish, undertaking these interviews was a smooth process due to the author's position within the Yezidi community and familiarity with those undertaking the reconstruction. However, for the two sites in Mosul, this information was not straightforward and involved a number of meetings in order to connect with the correct people. Additionally, financial data regarding the exact costs of rehabilitation of the sites and full accounts of the funds received for all three locations were not accessible.

5 Structure of the paper

To examine the different approaches to the reconstruction of religious and heritage sites in Iraq, the paper first provides a brief overview of each of the three selected case studies: Al-Nouri Mosque, Al-Hadba Minaret, and Lalish Temple. It then goes on to explore the reconstruction process, design, funding, and rationale for the reconstruction of Al-Nouri Mosque and Al-Hadba Minaret before comparing this with the approach and funding for Lalish Temple. Through this comparative approach the paper then makes a number of recommendations with regard to the process of reconstructing religious heritage in Iraq and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

6 Literature review

Matthews *et al.* (2020) have undertaken a study highlighting the main aspects of the present situation with regard to the destruction of archaeological sites in Iraq particularly in the city of Mosul. The study documents how preserving heritage is a human rights issue and may also be used to address inequities between different ethno-religious groups in Iraq. Moreover, it has focused upon the necessity of planning to consolidate the protection of Iraqi heritage through the availability of educational resources in schools and the development of Iraqi Museums. The study also suggested the importance of developing inventory lists that demonstrate Iraqi heritage and the fact that issues related to robbery, looting of archaeological masterpieces, illegal trading, and merchandising of

historical items should not be overlooked. This is important as it embodies the idea of effective development for heritage enhancement based upon human rights, social and cultural diversity, and the importance of living in peace. Matthews *et al.* (2020) also put forward the proposal of Iraq's cultural recovery. This requires local government and the international organisations involved to analyse the problems faced by cultural heritage sites after the conflicts of the last 50 years including the Iran–Iraq war (1980–89), the Kuwait–Iraq war (1990), and the ISIS invasion with the illegal theft of Iraqi monuments.

Al-Allaf *et al.* (2019), in their study *The Alternatives of Rebuilding Al-Hadba Minaret in Ancient Mosul*, investigated the city's reconstruction after the end of military operations in 2016 in Mosul and its liberation from ISIS control. The study sheds a light on possible policies that could deal with these damaged historical sites and which would adopt international criteria to ensure preservation measures are included in accordance with accredited international standards. According to this model, it is necessary to rebuild Al-Hadba Minaret on its original base using as much of the remaining and salvaged materials as possible and preserving the decorative features and designs engraved upon the structure. The missing parts of the minaret are then to be replaced with modern materials.

Another study by Tariq and Hussein (2017) focuses on sustainable investment in relation to heritage. This type of investment considers environmental, social, and ethical aspects in decision-making relevant to archaeological buildings through an analytical study of some Arab countries including Iraq, UAE, Egypt, Bahrain, and Palestine. This study emphasises a lack of knowledge in the area of sustainable investment and how to apply such principles to the heritage of Arab countries. The study also concluded that there is a considerable need to adopt private funding to ensure sustainable investments: this requires very substantial funds and there is great risk when there is no clear and long-term vision. Another study carried out by Chakri and Issa (2017) on the sustainable reconstruction of heritage focused on the many regional and international agreements, particularly with UNESCO. It reiterated the importance of sustainably rebuilding destroyed ancient cities by encouraging companies and businesses to develop and reconstruct those cities in an appropriate manner. Involving companies and stakeholders in such strategies is a fundamental advantage of sustainable investment because stakeholders will affect the behaviour of the companies through filing proposals that meet sustainability guidelines.

The study carried out by Al-Hayaji (2016), on the other hand, tackled the role that regional and international organisations have in protecting cultural heritage of all types in addition to any legislation issued by those organisations. The study concluded that despite all those regional and international conventions and the endorsement of UNESCO's member countries, there was little commitment due the phenomenon of smuggling antiquities that still exists and which poses threats to the archaeological heritage and reconstruction of sites.

The research of Malaukah and Bahri (2015) explores Tunisian and Algerian experiences in Tuyoot Oasis in Al-Naâma Province, which is famous for its historical background. The study highlighted the fact that the oasis is at risk of being destroyed. The research concluded that it is important to envisage an action plan that helps to develop tourism and also maintains archaeological sites in a way that respects the social aspects of that society and also the preservation of archaeological resources.

7 Al-Nouri Mosque, Al-Hadba Minaret, and Lalish Temple: a brief introduction

Al-Nouri Mosque reflects the Mosul civilisation. It is one of the most valuable Islamic mosques as it contains Al-Hadba Minaret. Al-Hadba Minaret had a unique design due to its decorative aspects and the tilted angle of the minaret which made it a tourist site that received many visitors from all over the world. The upper part of the minaret was curved and this is why it was called Al-Hadba Minaret (Yosuf, Al-Jurmaa and Mohammed 2010).

Al-Nouri Mosque was built when Nūr al-Dīn Maḥmūd Zengī arrived in Mosul, and was advised by Umar al-Malla to purchase a place in the city to build a mosque. Nūr al-Dīn Maḥmūd also purchased the houses and shops adjacent to the land in order to build a big mosque and paid compensations to the owners of those houses and shops. The mosque was finished in AD 1172–568 H (Hamid 2017). It underwent several maintenance works which included its destruction in 1939 and its rebuilding in 1944 (Rashid and Hussein 2017: 3).

As for Lalish Temple, it is the Yezidi people's main religious site. It is located in the Lalish Valley (Silence Valley) in Ain Sifini (now called Sheikhan) which is 60km northwest of Mosul City. According to Yazidi oral heritage, the Lalish site was chosen by God as the

place where the origins of creation took place and therefore it is the holiest site and the most important shrine for the Yezidis. To enter the temple complex, visitors must walk barefoot due to the holiness of the place. It also contains the shrine of Sheikh Adi ibn Musafir (Daoud 2019: 8–9).

7.1 Al-Nouri Mosque

Al-Nouri Mosque is the second oldest mosque in Mosul, the oldest being El Kawazeen Mosque. Once Islam arrived in Mosul, the Seljuk ruler Nūr al-Dīn Mohamoud Zengī ordered the establishment of Al-Nouri Mosque in 566 H, AD 1170, and it was completed in 568 H, AD 1172 (Hamid 2017: 3). Al-Nouri Mosque is a historic and architectural landmark. The minaret is in the northwestern corner while the Prayer Hall is located on the southern side of the mosque. The mosque consists of two areas. The first area is the back *musalla*¹ which is also called the winter *musalla*. In front of the back *musalla* is the second area which is called the summer *musalla*. It is less spacious compared to the first area (Rashid and Hussein 2017: 3).

The Al-Nouri Mosque space measures 90 square metres x 65 square metres, totalling 5,850 square metres (Rashid and Hussein 2017: 2). Through the centuries, the rulers of the region demonstrated the importance of Al-Nouri Mosque and Al-Hadba Minaret by continuing to maintain and preserve them. Buildings were added to Al-Nouri Mosque, but the mosque kept most of its beautiful carvings and architectural heritage, particularly in the 'Prayer Hall' (Hamid 2017: 3), the most significant feature of which is the dome with its double vault that takes the shape of a semicircle from the inside but resembles a conical polygon from the outside. The internal and external domes are separated by a space. It is the oldest conical dome in the modern era. It covers the square of the *mihrab*,²

¹ Excavations carried out by the General Authority for Antiquities and Heritage of Iraq under the prayer hall of the Al-Nuri Mosque, as part of the 'Revive the Spirit of Mosul' initiative led by UNESCO in partnership with the United Arab Emirates, revealed the ruins of the mosque dating back to the twelfth century. The excavations revealed a total of four rooms, built with stones and plaster. See <http://www.unesco.org/ar/articles/aktshaf-qaat-slat-tarykhyt-fy-jam-alnwry-balmwsl>. There is a rectangular chapel covering an area of 143 square metres. The prayer house is divided into two sections; the first contains columns (*bawak*) overlooking the courtyard, and the second is not open to the slabs. قصة جامع النوري الكبير ومبندته "الحدباء" في تسعة قرون (al-ain.com). *Bawak* is a group of consecutive columns in a straight line, connected at the top by arches that support the ceiling. This term is used mainly in religious architecture, and specifically in mosque architecture.

² The *mihrab* is the main place in the council where the wise and the great sit. There were originally four *mihrabs* in Al-Nuri Mosque. Three of them are in the closed winter hall and one is in the summer prayer house which is open onto the courtyard. The four *mihrabs* were for decorative and symbolic purposes, as each of them symbolised one of the four Islamic schools of thought. The main *mihrab* in the mosque was the one that was in the middle of the *qibla* wall, called the Shafi'i *mihrab*.

which forms part of the *qibla*³ wall and indicates the direction of Mecca and so it is used for prayer. Al-Nouri Mosque is one of the most famous landmarks in Nineveh governorate. It isn't only a place of worship but a witness to the importance and history of the city. It is also evidence of the city's rich cultural, ethnic, and religious diversity, as well as its prosperity in the fields of education and arts. Al-Nouri Mosque is significant for Shiite and Sunni Muslims as it is used for prayer which is essential for all Muslims (Al-Jamail 2017: 1–9).

7.2 Minaret

Al-Hadba Minaret is the oldest Islamic historical monument in Mosul. It was built between 566–568 H/AD 1170–1172 and is part of the complex that contains Al-Nouri Mosque and a religious school. It is one of the most famous minarets in the Arab world due to its height, the splendour of its ornaments, and its curved shape (El Lilala, Khatab and Khalil 2010: 3–4). The ornaments and unique buildings of Al-Hadba Minaret and Al-Nouri Mosque attract tourists to Mosul, and create job opportunities to accommodate these visitors within the old city.

The Minaret is also famous because it is leaning. The base of the minaret contains many cavities due to the instability of the land which led to ruptures to its foundation. Despite this instability, the minaret has maintained its curved shape (Al-Allaf *et al.* 2019). It is 47.8m high and consists of three sections. The first section is the prismatic base. It is divided into two further sections. The lower section starts from the earth's surface. The height of this section is 9.8m. It was built of plaster and lime mortar (*ibid.*: 5). In 1981, the Iraqi government contracted the Italian company FondaTel to maintain the walls and the foundations of Al-Hadba Minaret and to cover them with limestone (Yosuf *et al.* 2010: 4). The second section includes the prismatic base that is located above the lower section over the first base. This section is 17.45m high and was built with plaster, lime mortar, and bricks. It was probably added some time later when the minaret started to lean (El-Lila, Khatab, and Khalil 2010: 3–4).

As for the cylindrical section, it contains a hollow cylindrical body with an outer diameter where the lower section is larger than the upper and has a different thickness from the

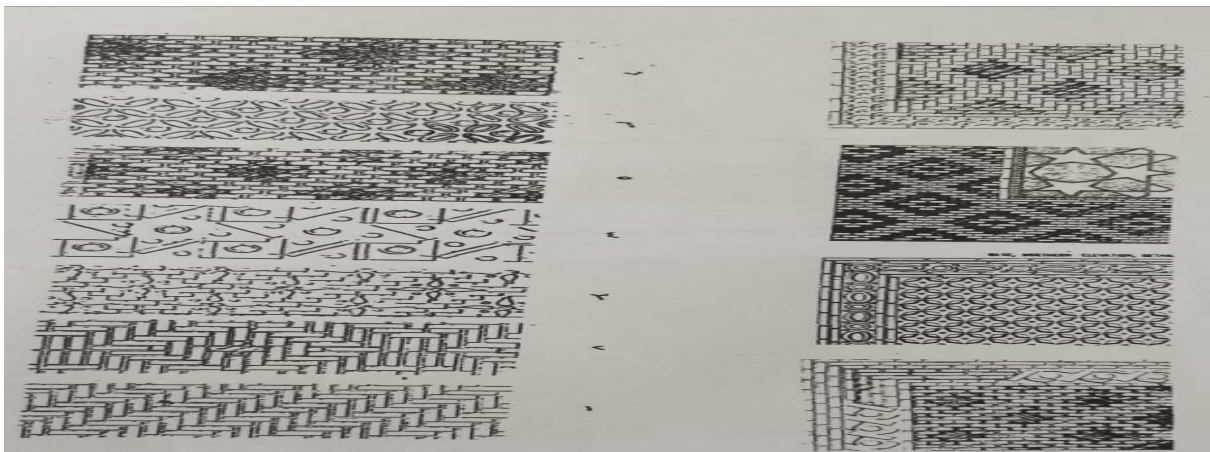
³

The *qibla* is the destination of the worshipper when praying, and for Muslims, it is the Kaaba in the city of Mecca, as the prayer is performed by laying prayer rugs towards Mecca in Saudi Arabia.

bottom to the top. There is also a cylindrical steel pillar that is called the 'essence', with a height of 9.8m and with a different diameter. It is 43.2m tall. Finally, the third section is at the top of the minaret. It consists of a hidden circular nave with a hollow cylindrical section and a hemispherical dome above it. This section was rebuilt using plaster and bricks as some sections were destroyed. It was rebuilt with a straight I shape which is very different from the curve of the minaret. It should be mentioned that maintenance work was undertaken on the minaret by the city's residents in 1920 (El-Lila *et al.* 2010).

As to the ornaments, there are seven types of ornaments surrounding the minaret, as shown in Figure 1. As well as for decorative reasons, the seven types of ornaments also have religious connotations as they are symbolic of the seven glorious heavens (Ahmed Kasem El Goma, April 2021, Mosul).

Figure 1. The seven ornaments that surround the minaret



Source: These ornaments were drawn by Professor Ahmed Kasem El Goma, Professor of Islamic heritage, Mosul. Reproduced with permission.

7.3 Lalish Temple

Lalish Temple is located 45km north of the city of Mosul and 11km north of Sheikhan, which is also called Einsifni, past the valley of Kali Khudeida. It is approximately 3,100 feet above sea level and surrounded by three mountains, Misht Mountain in the south, Hazret Mountain in the west, and Arafat Mountain in the north. The height of the three mountains is approximately 2km. The above-mentioned mountains are covered with tall trees and wild shrubs including oak trees, berries, pecans, willows, and hawthorns, while the valley itself contains olive trees along the streams. As for the importance of the temple to the Yezidi, it is their most significant religious place. The Yezidi go on pilgrimage annually during the days of the El Gamaia ceremonies; that is, from 6–13 October. In addition, it is

the centre for worshipping the sun. It is also an old heritage and civilisation centre as it contains historical ornaments of snakes and circles on the blocks and walls. It also contains pots that were used to store the olive oil extracted in Lalish. These pots are believed to date back to 4,000 BC (Al-Khtari 2011: 9–10).

The Lalish Temple is famous for its abundance of fresh-water springs. Agatha Christie, the famous author, described this temple as ‘a unique place in terms of attraction and quietness’. In order to reach it, one needs to walk over the hills which are surrounded by oak and pomegranate trees, mountain springs, and with plenty of fresh air. The place is full of natural beauty (*ibid.*).

7.4 The heritage features of Lalish Temple

Lalish Temple is a famous monument in Iraq with many unique features. Visitors from all over the world are attracted to its beauty and isolation. The temple features are as follows.

The Khan Izzi Temple is located at the beginning of the road on the right-hand side of the two streets that lead to Lalish Temple near to a camp for displaced people. This *khan* was used for rest from long trips and was a centre for religious and secular education (*ibid.*).

Figure 2. Khan Izzi, the house of Izzi



Source: Engineer Khairy Kady, the executive supervisor of the reconstruction of Lalish Temple. Reproduced with permission.

7.4.1 Conical domes

The domes consist of 12 polygon ribs with straight edges sloping from top to bottom. These 12 ribs symbolise the 12 months of the year and are resting on a circle that represents the earth according to Yazidi beliefs. The top of the dome is the sun that is descending through the ribs to the circle base which is the earth. Yazidis view the sun as holy and they face the sun during their prayers (Abboud 2006: 23) (see Figure 2).

Figure 3. Lalish Temple



Source: Engineer Khairy Kady, the executive supervisor of the reconstruction of Lalish Temple. Reproduced with permission.

The dome is attached to a platform with seven angles that are symbols of the seven angels. At the top of the temple is a globe. The Yezidis call it *el hilêl*. The globe is made of three different sized balls from which a coloured cloth representing the colours of nature may be attached. It is a symbol of the spirit.

Lalish Temple hosts the tombs of some Yezidi saints as follows:

- The dome of Sheikh Adi ibn Musafir.
- The dome of Sheikh Hassen Abi Barakat.
- The dome of Sheikh Shames El Din Ben Terizidi Amir.
- The dome of the white eye.
- The dome of Sheikh Mushaleh.
- The dome of Sheikh Moussa El Ghazaly.

7.4.2 *As-Sirat Bridge*

According to Yezidi beliefs, this bridge is controlled by spirits. When a Yezidi person passes away, his/her spirit stands on this bridge. The spirit of the dead person is asked whether his/her deeds have been good or bad. Then the spirit is moved to the knowledge market inside the temple to be interrogated. Based upon these primary interrogations, s/he accompanies siblings (the sibling at the end of time is the person who the Yezidi person, male or female, selects from the religious class to be their sibling so they can defend them when they are asked for their deeds after death). So if this person's soul was evil while living on earth, the dead person will be sent to hell or Wadi, located in the temple between Mashroqiah Mountain and Arafat Mountain. If this person has been good, s/he may go to paradise. The bridge of As-Sirat is located over the stream of the temple and is 1km away from the religious school. The bridge is 10m long, 3m wide, and 2m high (Al- Khattari 2011: 42–66).

7.4.3 *The sleeping tree*

This tree is located near the 'White Spring'. It is a healing place for those who don't get enough sleep. For example, a baby may be taken close to the tree and a bed made for them there so that they may sleep. A small piece of the tree can also be taken to be put under the child's head while sleeping. A person may take the initiative to cut from the bark of the tree. They must close their eyes and use their mouth to cut the tree. It is worth mentioning that the original tree is dead, but another tree was planted and is growing beside it (Al-Khattari 2011: 42–66).

7.4.4 *The most important springs*

- The White Spring (Kaniya Sipî): the stream that runs under Mashit Mountain, a clear stream that pours into Lalish Valley. Each Yezidi child, whether male or female, is baptised in this spring. It consists of two spaces: one for the baptism of boys and the other for the baptism of girls. The minister of the water spring, called El Magbor, is the one who baptises children.
- Zamzam water spring: located in a rock tunnel inside Zamzam Cave. It is under the Arafat Mountain. The Yezidi go on pilgrimage to this mountain and then go to Zamzam water spring and the White Spring (Al-Khattari 2011, 42–66).

7.4.5 The temple main gate (El-Kabie Gate)

El-Kabie Gate is the most significant gate in the temple. It is at the entrance of Lalish Temple. The gate contains ornaments of nine round planets (mobile stars); seven out of the nine are quite close to each other and two are far from the other planets. At the sides of the gate, there are six circles connected to each other and a chain of 24 circles, symbolising 12 sun months and 12 moon months. The chain of six circles represents the six working days and contains the crescent in the middle, which indicates the holiday. On the southern part, there is a big black snake at the top. The black snake is holy for Yezidis because it is believed to have saved Noah's Ark from sinking by coiling up to cover a leak (Al-Khattari 2011: 42–66).

8 Threats to Yezidi religious heritage

According to engineer Khairy Kady, who supervised its reconstruction, the temple of Lalish is important because of the religious and cultural rituals practised there. Before ISIS, in 2014, the temple used to receive thousands of visitors. Many rituals were performed there, including Eid Aljamaeya which always takes place from 6–13 October each year. Almost 10,000 visitors would normally visit the temple during this festival, particularly from Sinjar. There is also the Sary Sali Eid when thousands more visitors come to the temple to perform their rituals. Such festivals take place annually. During these festivals, local residents and devotees from all over the world pray and light candles. However, the genocide carried out by ISIS against the Yezidi community has threatened their heritage and practices through the slaughter of its people, the destruction of their temples, and causing mass displacement from their homes and lands.

Engineer Khairy Kady adds that,

ISIS invaded Sinjar Town on 3 August 2014. The Yazidis of Sinjar Town form 70 per cent of the Yazidi community. Due to the events in Sinjar, the majority of Yazidis living in the other areas and villages of the Nineveh Plain were displaced to Lalish Shrine, and other parts of the Kurdistan Region. In total, almost 3,000 Yazidis arrived to Lalish Shrine where food was served to them. Concomitantly, the above-mentioned rituals entirely stopped. The religious leader of Lalish at the time was Baba Jaweesh. He had collected food and wheat in special warehouses for many years because he expected a genocide against the Yazidis. He opened

these storehouses and distributed food and supplies to the displaced. Presently, he is still collecting food and other goods in Lalish Shrine for fear of murders and displacement of his people.

(Khairy Kady, April 2021)

8.1 Part 1: the reconstruction process – Al-Nouri Mosque and Al-Hadba Minaret

UNESCO has been involved in the reconstruction of Al-Nouri Mosque and Al-Hadba Minaret after consultations with the Iraqi Ministry of Culture and Sunni Endowment, who are responsible for the mosques in Iraq, particularly in the Nineveh governorate. The reconstruction process started when UAE provided US\$50m to reconstruct the above-mentioned two monuments in 2018. Many dialogues were held with local and international heritage experts to discuss the form of the reconstruction process. This was part of a significant UNESCO project, to 'revive the spirit of Mosul', focusing on the reconstruction of the old city.

The International Jury of UNESCO then announced that they would hold a contest to design the reconstruction of Al-Nouri Mosque and Al-Hadba Minaret, which was won by a group of eight Egyptian architects. It was presented by a team that consisted of four partners. The team leader is Salah El Din Samir Haridy and team members are Khaled Farid El Dieb, Tarq Ali Mohamed, and Sherif Fareg Ibrahim. There are also four designers, namely Hager Abd El Ghani Gad, Nohq Mansour Raian, Yousry Mohamed El Bahaa, and Mohamed Saad Gamal.

UNESCO then announced that a more detailed project for Al-Nouri Mosque and Al-Hadba Minaret would be prepared. This project started at the end of autumn 2021. It includes the restoration of the Prayer Hall which will be rebuilt exactly as it was before its destruction in 2017, with some modifications. The winning team will be responsible for recreating the gardens and the houses in a similar manner to how they were in the old city. These gardens will be surrounded by walls. It should be mentioned that these gardens surrounded the Prayer Hall before the design modification in 1944 (UNESCO 2021).

On undertaking the reconstruction, engineer Soud Khair El Deen, consultant team member, supervisor of the reconstruction of Nineveh, and member of the technical

committee that oversees the reconstruction of Al-Nouri Mosque and Al-Hadba Minaret, mentioned that,

There were many meetings with the Sunni Endowment district, Ministry of Culture, UNESCO, and international experts about what should be done in the reconstruction process. These dialogues lasted for six months and aimed at giving ideas about the reconstruction, how to handle the process, and select the appropriate design to reconstruct Al-Nouri Mosque and Al-Hadba Minaret. The Sunni Endowment district decided that the musalla of Al-Nouri Mosque should be rebuilt in the same place using the old design. Al-Hadba Minaret should also be rebuilt in the same site where it was before the explosion and any remains had to be maintained. However, there are differing opinions about whether heritage sites should be preserved as ruins or reconstructed in the same site. For example, the Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church, the most important church in Berlin located in the centre of the city, was destroyed in the Second World War; however, the scholars decided that it shouldn't be rebuilt in the same place. They decided that it should be preserved as ruins and that a new church should be constructed instead beside the destroyed one.

(Soud Hassan Khair Al-Din Al-Omari, April 2021, Mosul)

This was Soud Hassan Khair Al-Din Al-Omari's wish when Al-Hadba Minaret and Al-Nouri Mosque were reconstructed.

He goes on to explain,

I was the only committee member who objected to rebuilding the mosque and the minaret with the old design and in the same location. I refused because the base of Al-Hadba Minaret is still there. So, it should be considered a monument and a heritage landmark. If this were the case, the old authentic structure would not be there. A new building would be constructed instead with a different design from the one that was there 800 years ago. All committee members, except for the Italian experts disagreed with my opinion.

(Soud Hassen Khair El Deen El Amery, April 2021, Mosul)

Professor Bashar Abd El Aziz El Moteleb, the Head of the Statistics Consultancy Bureau (SCB) of the University of Mosul, who was leading the field survey to reconstruct Al-Nouri Mosque and Al-Hadba Minaret explained,

The design and shape of Al-Nouri Mosque blown up by ISIS in 2017 isn't the original one. The authentic design and shape date back to before 1944 when a reconstruction took place, funded by rich Mosul residents including El Sabonjy Family. Before 1944, the mosque had a conical dome shape [as in Figure 4]. However, the features changed completely in 1944 when it took a spheric dome shape with the addition of four small minarets that weren't there before. So, the only authentic heritage piece in Al-Nouri Mosque was Al-Hadba Minaret, which kept its heritage and inclination. It was built 850 years ago and was not reconstructed before. It just received some maintenance.

(Bashar Abd El Aziz El Moteleb, April 2021, Mosul; Rashid and Hussein 2017: 1)

Figure 4. The old design of Al-Nouri Mosque before 1944



Source: Archnet.org. [CC-BY-NC](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/).

Professor Ahmed Kasem El Gomea, the heritage consultant of UNESCO for the reconstruction of Al-Hadba Minaret and Al-Nouri Mosque, and a professor at Mosul University, who is one of the four Islamic monuments scholars in the whole world says,

I have presented a proposal for the maintenance of Al-Nouri Mosque and Al-Hadba Minaret to UNESCO before the ISIS invasion of Mosul in 2014. In addition, FondaTel, an Italian company, has maintained Al-Hadba Minaret between 1979

and 1981. It has established holes in the body of the minaret and put iron cables at its base to stabilise it [see Figure 5].

(Ahmed Kasem El Gomea, April 2021, Mosul)

Figure 5. Al-Hadba Minaret, architecture design for maintenance



Source: Ahmed Kasem El Gomea, Professor of Islamic Heritage, Mosul University. Reproduced with permission.

In 1944, Mostafa El Sabaongy, a trader from Mosul, demolished the original half sphered dome, with the pretext that it might fall. So the mosque dome took this shape and four minarets were added to it in 1944. After discussions with the experts, Sunni Endowment, and Mosul architects, the proposal of Professor Ahmed Kasem El Gomea to restore Al-Nouri Mosque to its original conical shape and to remove the four minarets was rejected. They said that people had got used to the modern spheric dome.

According to Professor Bashar Abd El Aziz El Telab, Head of the Statistics Consultancy Bureau (SCB) of the University of Mosul,

In May 2020, UNESCO asked SCB to conduct a public survey on the reconstruction of Al-Nouri Mosque and Al-Hadba Minaret. This consultation lasted for five months. A specialised team that consisted of 25 people was formed in October 2020. The survey targeted 750 respondents (meeting the minimum sample of 384 surveyees) and took three years to be finalised. It targeted all categories of individuals including Muslims, Christians, Yazidi, and all nationalities that lived in Mosul and in the suburbs, in Kurdistan; it also included Yazidis who migrated to Bashiqa, Christians who migrated to Hamdaniya and Bartella areas in the Nineveh Plain because of ISIS. The survey was finalised in January 2020.

The findings showed that 94 per cent of the population wanted to reconstruct Al-Hadba Minaret with the same decorations that it had before its destruction. Eighty-two per cent of the population wanted the minaret to be leaning while 16 per cent thought that it should be straight. In terms of Al-Nouri Mosque, 70 per cent expressed their preference to see it rebuilt as it was in 2017, before its destruction but with some improvements, provided that the essence and main volumes are preserved, while 28 per cent stated that they would rather see it rebuilt exactly as it was before the explosion. Two per cent of the surveyees didn't have a specific opinion.

(Bashar Abd El Aziz El Telab, Mosul, April 2021)

Professor Ahmed Kasem El Gomea said,

I preferred the musalla to have more space besides that dedicated to the religious school affiliated to the mosque. Now, there is a proposal to change the design. It won't be the same as the original heritage shape. The musalla will be the same as before the explosion of 2017. The dome of Al-Nouri Mosque will be reconstructed to take the spheric shape and not its original shape of 1944. I am against this modern design. The dome should take the conical spheric shape, the same it had before 1944. The minaret should be constructed as it was before the explosion. In case that the blocks collected and numbered by UNESCO weren't enough, modern pillars, blocks, and bricks are to be used. I suggest making these blocks and bricks exactly the same as the original ones before the explosion. The reconstruction process of Al-Nouri Mosque and Al-Hadba Minaret should take the heritage aspect into consideration. But this is not the case because many authorities are involved, including Sunni Endowment Authorities.

(Ahmed Kasem El Goma, April 2021, Mosul)

8.2 Funding for reconstruction

However, decisions regarding the location and style of the rehabilitation rested with the donors who were funding the rehabilitation (the UAE and Sunni Endowment district) rather than with UNESCO. The grant provided by the UAE for the rebuilding of the mosque and minaret meant that,

The central government doesn't contribute to the reconstruction of the old town. It is noteworthy to mention that UAE increased the amount of the grant. In addition, the EU provided a grant of USD 20 million between the end of 2018 and the beginning of 2019.

(Ahmed Kasem El Goma, April 2021, Mosul)

The amount of UAE grant is USD 50 million. This amount is allocated for the complex that contains Al-Nouri Mosque, Al-Hadba Minaret and the religious school affiliated to the complex. While planning the construction costs, UNESCO noted a surplus in the amount allocated for the reconstruction of the sites and informed UAE. Together they decided to use the surplus to reconstruct the churches of El Sa'a, El Tahera in El Nabi Girigis, in Mosul Old Town. It was also decided to reconstruct El Nabi Girgis Mosque. It is expected that UAE will increase the amount of the grant.

(Professor Bashar Abd El Aziz El Taleb, April 2021, Mosul; UNESCO 2021)

8.3 Beginning the reconstruction

The reconstruction process began with,

The collection and numbering of bricks and blocks, the bases of the pillars that were destroyed by the explosion of 2017 which affected the houses of the old city and the mosque. UNESCO and local residents collected these bricks and blocks from nearby small streets and the mosque as some of them were found very far from the location and some were lost. They supported the walls of Al-Nouri Mosque and Al-Hadba Minaret with wood so that the remaining walls would not collapse. They also used strong timber structures to support the mosque and the minaret [as shown in Figure 6]. The collected blocks, however, aren't enough for the reconstruction process. More blocks and bricks and alabaster will be needed according to the original design and specifications.

(Bashar Abd El Aziz El Taleb, April 2021, Mosul)

Figure 6. Al-Hadba Minaret surrounded by timber structures



Source: Professor Bashar Abd El Aziz El Taleb, Head of the Statistics Consultancy Bureau (SCB) of the University of Mosul. Reproduced with permission.

UNESCO staff have knocked on the doors of the old city residents to tell them that if they see any blocks, bricks, or alabaster on their roofs or anywhere in their neighbourhood, they have to give them to UNESCO staff. The residents of this area collected and numbered the blocks, bricks, and pillars. Residents collected 50–70 per cent of the scattered blocks. [Figures 8 and 9 are taken from Al-Nouri Mosque.] Similar bricks and alabaster pillars will also need to be made with the same shape and specifications. The convex side of Al-Hadba Minaret will be 1–1.5m high. In 2017, the convex was almost 2.45m, which made it prone to collapse. The timber structures that surround Al-Nouri Mosque and Al-Hadba Minaret were made by Injico, a Chinese company.

After the explosion of 2014, the marble pillars, bricks, and blocks were collected and numbered to start the construction process. Most of the 25 musalla pillars located at the front of the mosque were destroyed.

(Bashar Abd El Aziz El Taleb, April 2021, Mosul)

Figure 7. Collecting bricks and blocks in Al-Nouri Mosque



Source: Professor Bashar Abd El Aziz El Taleb, Head of the Statistics Consultancy Bureau (SCB) of the University of Mosul. Reproduced with permission.

Figure 8. Numbering the collected blocks of Al-Nouri Mosque



Source: Professor Bashar Abd El Aziz El Taleb, Head of the Statistics Consultancy Bureau (SCB) of the University of Mosul. Reproduced with permission.

8.4 The importance of reconstruction

Professor Khairy Badel Rashid, Member of the Statistics Consultancy Bureau (SCB) of the University of Mosul, and member of the public survey for the reconstruction of the sites says,

Reconstructing Al-Nouri Mosque and Al-Hadba Minaret is important as these two monuments are Mosul landmarks. If this process of reconstruction is completed, the spirit of Mosul will be revived, so that families that have migrated will be back to the old town.

(Khairy Badel Rashid, April 2021, Mosul)

With regard to funds being spent on the rehabilitation of Al-Nouri Mosque and Al-Hadba Minaret, he said: 'Using funds on Al-Hadba Minaret and Al-Nouri Mosque contributes to

employment creation, reviving the economy and improving the living conditions of the city residents. Moreover, it is a monument that should be conserved'.

However, he added that,

The houses are still destroyed. Most of the houses will be reconstructed by the residents with the support of international organisations. In terms of the reconstruction money spent on Al-Nouri Mosque and Al-Hadba Minaret, I wish that this money would be spent on the destroyed houses so that Mosul is repopulated. I think that the reconstruction of Al-Nouri Mosque and Al-Hadba Minaret is important, but the residents' homes are more important.

(Khairy Badel Rasid, April 2021, Mosul)

Mr Soad Hassen Khair El Deen El Amry also thinks that using funds on Al-Nouri Mosque and Al-Hadba Minaret contributes to creating job opportunities and reviving the economy but adds: 'It has an impact on the living standards of Nineveh residents. It is also an important monument. Priority should be given to preserving these monuments rather than to rebuilding the destroyed houses' (April 2021, Mosul).

The interviews undertaken as part of this research showed that there are differing viewpoints in relation to the rebuilding of heritage and its prioritisation over other essential infrastructure. Some respondents want to rebuild Al-Nouri Mosque and Al-Hadba Minaret, as these monuments symbolise Islamic history and civilisation and are located in the middle of the old city, and others want to rebuild the destroyed houses of the old Mosul city. The majority are in favour of rebuilding their heritage rather than houses. Al-Hadba Minaret has a unique design because of the decorations of its walls and for being tilted. It also encourages tourism and community development. Restoring such monuments also contributes to building a vivid flourishing city that can regain its position as a beacon of culture and civilisation.

8.5 Part 2: the reconstruction process – Lalish Temple

Although Lalish wasn't destroyed by ISIS as the militants were unable to reach the site, after the Yezidi genocide, its community and their religious heritage received increased attention. 'In 2017, ISIS was defeated by the Iraqi army and the allied forces and in 2018, the reconstruction of the shrine began, funded by some Yazidis donors [whose names can be found in Table 1]', said the engineer Khairy Kady.

Table 1. Donations given to Lalish Temple by the Yazidi community

Year	The donor	Amount donated (in Iraqi dinar, IQD)	Purpose/shrine name
2018	Ali Kundi	22,000,000	The secondary entrance
2018	Ammer Alosh	40,000,000	Box plumbing
2018	Baba Jawish and Reber	50,000,000	Different tasks
2018	The Yazidi Prince box	23,000,000	Repairing interior dome
2019	Basheer Koriya	6,600,000	Colona setyies
2019	Anwar Darwish	26,600,000	Sheikh Babeck
2019	The Yazidi Prince box, Khairy Shevan, Sheikh Shamo and Baro Kanjo	28,350,000	Arafat Mountain
2019	Khairy mahan-Nozad Bebo	28,300,000	Sheikh Shames
2019	Sherdil Samo	6,000,000	Ber hajal road
2019	Nasrat Zubair	2,800,000	In front of the basins
2019	Saeed khuder haiso	6,000,000	Kulana Zebeni
2019	Hatim Kareem	7,000,000	The main road 1
2019	Diar	1,000,000	The main road 2
2019	Jelca Clant	1,250,000	The main road 3
2019	Fareed Mado	31,000,000	Sheikh Tokal
2020	Dr Mamo Othman	27,000,000	Hassan maman
2020	Grandsons of Peer abo Bakir	10,000,000	Peer abo Bakir
2020	Ghazi Basso	25,090,000	Peer Mahmood and peer beboon
2020	Majbour-Merdin	37,400,000	Sharafdeen
2020	Meridieen	90,000,000	Nasirdeen
	Major and Meridieen	90,000,000	Sheik maind-first stage
2020	Major	26,000,000	Perbob
2020	Major and Meridieen	29,000,000	Sheikh Bakir
2021	Jasim Breem	16,475,000	King Fakhridin
2021	Baro Kanjo	9,875,000	Soka Maarefet
Total		550,740,000	

Source: Author's own.

From his own perspective, Khairy thinks that allocating money on reconstructing the temple is better than funding any other service. This shrine is an archaeological monument. It needs to be reconstructed because of the renovation that took place in the 1980s. The committee responsible for such remodelling destroyed this monument by using cement and other new materials to renovate the main features of the shrine rather than to maintain its original construction and materials. Additional rooms were added to the exterior complex of the shrine so that people could stay overnight when they came to visit – this changed its main characteristics. According to the engineer Khairy, who was part of the committee for the reconstruction of the Lalish Shrine, 'We hope to be able to demolish these rooms and turn the shrine back to a place of worship'.

In 2010–11, the German company Fosenc developed a plan to reconstruct Lalish Temple in three stages. The first stage focused on its interior, the second stage was devoted to the whole complex, and the third stage addressed the infrastructure for camps and parking lots to be located south of the shrine. These camps were meant for Yazidis and visitors to replace those rooms built in the 1980s and found inside the shrine which disfigured its archaeological features. This project did not go ahead because it would have cost US\$90m. The Kurdistan Region paid Fosnec US\$850,000 for the design.

8.6 Funding the reconstruction

According to Mr Khairi, the reconstruction operations for Lalish Temple will continue steadily. The Yazidis are collecting donations and the Iraqi government has provided funds for its reconstruction and to establish new services in the shrine. The funds allocated between 2015 and 2019 were used to create services and to provide caravans and furniture for those displaced people who have been settled in the shrine since 2014. Displaced people have mainly come from the Nineveh Plain, Bashiqa, Bahzani, and Sinjar regions. The Iraqi government has enough funds allocated in the annual budget for Iraqi religious minorities, namely Christians, Sabians, and Yezidis. Therefore part of the funds are spent on the conservation of religious shrines including the reconstruction of Lalish (Shirwan Mawia Nisan, 2021, Bashiqa, Mosul).

Mr Khairy Keddy mentioned that the shrine is old and dilapidated and therefore it should be reconstructed. A few years ago, the dome of Sheikh Uday Ben Musafir was reconstructed because water had infiltrated the roof of the dome. It is important to reconstruct the shrine as it is the oldest and most important shrine of the Yezidi people, not only in Iraq but throughout the whole world. The offerings presented by the Yezidi who come to visit the shrine are collected into a fund called Yezidi donations. Yezidi princes used these funds to reconstruct the shrine. Donations for the reconstructions are shown in Table 2. These funds are solely dedicated to the reconstruction and not to help displaced people (Khairy Keddy, April 2021, Bahzani, Mosul).

Table 2. Funds provided by the Iraqi government to Lalish Temple for the years 2008–19

Year	Income (in Iraqi dinar, IQD)
2009–2010	1.287bn
2011–12	1.008bn
2015–18	2.863bn
2018–19	300m
Total	5.458bn

Source: Authors' own. Created using data from Shirwan Muawiyah, former director of the [Yazidi Endowment in the Directorate of Religious Endowments in Baghdad](#).

According to Mr Sherwan Muawiya, the administrator of the General Directorate of Yazidi Affairs, all funds (as shown in Table 2) were provided by the Central Iraqi government for the reconstruction of Lalish Temple. Between 2009 and 2012, some funds were allocated to purchase furniture and to construct a supporting wall and the outer part of the guest house, the ceilings, reception, gardens, and guards' chambers in the shrine.

The 2018–19 funds were increased to IQD300m, and were used to reconstruct the guests' halls with the rehabilitation and furnishing of special facilities found in the shrine, such as the kitchen, the halls' front yards and electrical installations, and finally the extension of the path leading to the shrine and its fences.

The ISIS genocide of the Yezidi people took place in 2014, and in 2015–18, the government decided to help the Yezidi people by increasing the funds dedicated to them. This was possible because there is a Ministry of Endowment and Religious Affairs which collects donations from different communities which are then redistributed. However, as the Yezidi community doesn't have many resources, Mr Sherwan must request funds from the Ministry who then decides how to use them and where to allocate them.

Table 1 shows that the donations from the Yazidi community to the shrines and temples in Lalish amounted to IQD550,740,000 in 2018–20. Due to its utmost importance to the Yezidi community, they want Lalish Temple to be well preserved and maintained. There may also be in-kind donations where citizens may approach the management and ask them for suggestions as to what they require. This form of giving is not a requirement of the Yezidi faith but is due to people wanting to care for the poor and to renovate the temple; therefore, donation boxes for specific purposes are placed throughout the temple. The Yezidi religion urges people to do good deeds and so they have this motivation.

The US Consulate is responsible for the rehabilitation of the inside area of the temple and for how this might be undertaken, but outside the main shrine there are other places dedicated to different prophets, and people can choose to make donations towards the rehabilitation of any of them, according to which Shaykh they follow. As for Yezidis' donations for the reconstruction of Lalish, they have left money on the threshold of the shrine when visiting, but they do not have a say on the allocation of funds. This decision was made by the officials in Lalish Temple and religious leaders. In some cases, however, similar to the reconstruction of the Sheikh Adi ibn Musafir Shrine, for instance, some Yezidis donated funds and specified how they should be spent (Khairy Keddy, April 2021, Bahzani, Mosul).

UNESCO oversaw the reconstruction of Al-Nouri Mosque and Al-Hadba Minaret in order to preserve these monuments. Although other monuments, including Lalish Temple, are important from a cultural and heritage perspective, UNESCO has not been involved in their rehabilitation because they were not part of the destruction perpetrated by ISIS. The local community has been responsible for the reconstruction of other sites destroyed by ISIS in Sinjar and Bashiqa. Mr Sherwan Moawia, ex-Director of Yezidi Endowment in Baghdad mentioned that they filed a request with UNESCO to oversee the reconstruction of Lalish in 2017 in a meeting that was held with them in Baghdad. UNESCO stated that Lalish Temple wasn't affected by ISIS. Mr Sherwan met with them twice in 2017, asking UNESCO to reconstruct the religious places in Bashiqa and Sinjar affected by ISIS, but to date, UNESCO has not responded (Mr Sherwan Moawia, April 2021, Bashiqa, Mosul).

The American Consulate in Erbil was selected to reconstruct Lalish Temple because of the visit paid by His Excellency, the US Ambassador to Baghdad, Mathew Tueller on 18 July 2019. He asked the religious leaders to state what they needed in order to reconstruct the temple. US\$500,000 was given as an initial grant to start the reconstruction process. The US government also promised another disbursement of US\$500,000, totalling US\$1m (Khairy Keddy, April 2021, Bahzani, Mosul). This money is managed and overseen by the US government, not Lalish Temple, but there has been little progress on what has been accomplished inside the shrine. The process of reconstruction within the shrine has also been controversial, with some members of the Yezidi community feeling that certain aspects of the shrine were destroyed in the process. They also feel that if UNESCO were to oversee the works, they would act in a more

transparent way and in accordance with heritage values and norms, as will be explained in more detail next.

8.7 Beginning the reconstruction

According to engineer Khairy Keddy, the American Consulate suggested that they would reconstruct whatever the Yezidi Spiritual Council and religious leaders wanted them to, and after consultations with them, it was agreed that the inside area of the temple would be reconstructed. He then added: 'If we wanted to reconstruct the streets or any other place in Lalish, they would have agreed. The Consulate mentioned that it is our decision what to select' (Khairy Keddy, April 2021, Bahzani, Mosul). However, in contrast to Al-Nouri, where there was a public survey held, for Lalish, there was none.

Engineer Khairy Keddy also mentioned that,

Reconstructions carried out by the American Consulate-University of Pennsylvania are very slow. The process started before Covid-19 and only 5 per cent of the work has been accomplished. The only task achieved was removing the modern concrete in order to reveal the original stones. Where they could not uncover the original stones, they would procure stones similar to the original.

(Khairy Keddy, April 2021, Bahzani, Mosul)

The concrete and brick structures which are now being removed were constructed in the 1980s by the Renovation Committee. Unique stones were brought in from Maqloob Mountain in Bashiqa Village, Nineveh Province. Despite the existence of a stone factory in this mountain, it isn't possible to get stones similar to the original ones that were shaped and decorated by hand (Khairy Keddy, April 2021, Bahzani, Mosul).

Thanks to the Kurdistan Regional Government Construction Project, a two-lane main street was built that starts at the entrance and goes around the temple, at a cost of IQD637 million. The street is 2,200m long, and 7 metres wide. Its construction has been completed. An olive press was built in the temple at a cost of 80 million dinars. While Caffeine Company of the Kurdistan Region constructed an entrance gate. (Khairy Keddy, April, 2021, Bahzani, Mosul).

Khairy Keddy also said:

Reconstruction is important to preserve the cultural and archaeological heritage of the shrine, and we hope that experts will come and give us support. In this context, we would like to mention Dr Hassan's role, the director of Dohuk archaeological sites. Instead of cement and for the first time in this type of operations, he decided to use nogha – a substance similar to cement used in the construction process of ancient monuments. We now purchase this substance from Karbalaa Province. Cement is also used, but in those areas that are not visible so that it is not seen.

(Khairy Keddy, April 2021, Bahzani, Mosul)

8.8 Some perspectives on the reconstruction

8.8.1 Removing the ornaments

Mr Suleiman, who witnessed the reconstruction operations during his visits to Lalish Temple, says:

Being a researcher of Yazidi's heritage, I followed the reconstruction process. I believe that there is no reconstruction, rather destruction of the shrine. I emphasised that reconstruction should be made outside and not inside the shrine as the shrine is a Yazidi symbol. As a matter of fact, there were engravings on the stones including a pan, which has now disappeared.

(Mr Soliman' Abu Ephrin, April 2021, Bashiqa, Mosul)

Such engravings were made on the outside walls of the shrine; however, in the reconstruction process, they have been covered over and are no longer visible.

Mr Lukman Suleiman Mahmood, an economics teacher and the Director of Information on Lalish Temple, said that,

The reconstruction of the site should not be done in this way. They have used recently produced stones and removed the engraved ancient ones. This means that the old history has been lost. The reconstruction process needed to be done under the supervision of archaeological specialists. Many engraved stones were replaced with modern ones that have no heritage. This type of modern stone has a negative impact on the old shrine. The pots inside the shrine are almost 4,000 years old. It can therefore be said that the shrine is 4,000 years old, as asserted by

Mr Abdulraqeab from the Kurdistan Region, who uncovered it for the first time. He discovered that the pots found inside the shrine were similar to those used by the Babylonians and Assyrians to store extracted olive oil.

(Mr Lukman Soliman Mahmoud, April 2021, Lalish Temple, Mosul)

Figure 9. Ornament and modern blocks



Source: Engineer Khairy Kady, the executive supervisor of the reconstruction of Lalish Temple. Reproduced with permission.

Figure 10. Replacing old blocks with new ones outside the shrine



Source: Engineer Khairy Kady, the executive supervisor of the reconstruction of Lalish Temple. Reproduced with permission.

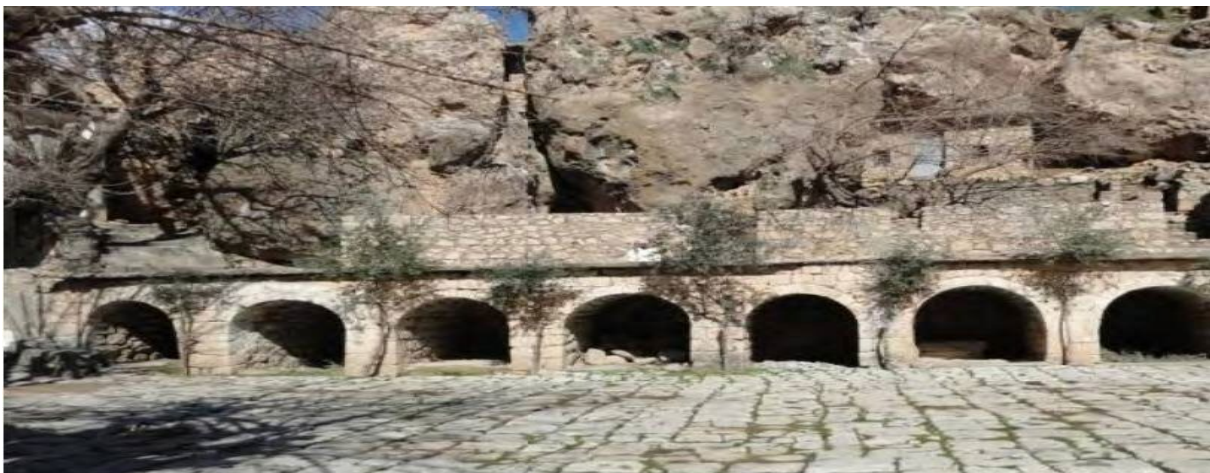
8.8.2 Changing the height of the gates

Mr Lukman Soliman Mahmoud explained that the historic ancient shrines were disfigured when some of them did not have arches as they used to in ancient times. The doors of the shrine were built in a way that one should bend one's head when entering. The door height is about 1.5m. Most of those doors were deformed during the renovation. His concern is that after the new reconstruction of the buildings, the height was no longer the same. They are now 3m high and therefore the original design has been altered which had previously ensured that people would bend as they entered as an expression of reverence through the act of bowing.

The markets that are located inside the shrine now have gates of 1.5m. The place where Baba Sheikh used to sit is located inside the shrine and was recently built to be higher. Also, this place has isolated the old archaeological building. There were supposed to be only some repairs and not a complete demolishing of the old and historical stones. The level of work undertaken is beyond my expectations.

(Luqman Soleiman Mahmoud, April 2021, Lalish Temple)

Figure 11. The market of Lalish Temple and its old gates



Source: Engineer Khairy Kady, the executive supervisor of the reconstruction of Lalish Temple. Reproduced with permission.

8.8.3 Using modern construction materials

Reconstructions were made inside the shrine using plans designed by specialists. They included concrete and bricks from the renovation in the 1980s and used new stones to cover up the walls in the shrine. The construction included the interior part of the shrine, from the main gate (which is called Alqabi Door) to the places where the 4,000-year-old oil pots were found (Lukman Soliman Mahmoud, April 2021, Lalish Temple).

Figure 12. Using modern materials for construction



Source: Engineer Khairy Kady, the executive supervisor of the reconstruction of Lalish Temple. Reproduced with permission.

8.8.4 Heritage versus houses

In terms of funding, engineer Khairy Keddy supports prioritising the reconstruction of Lalish Temple as it will take place only once and the shrine is a symbol of the Yezidi religion. Without such a shrine, the Yezidi people won't be represented in the Iraqi and Kurdish community which contributes to community unification. There are other donors who provide for displaced Yezidis.

However, Mr Soliman' Abu Ephrin expressed another point of view as he believes that caring for the displaced should be a priority for religious and community leaders. For him, providing decent homes, food, and health care and finding Yezidi girls who survived ISIS but are still missing is better than using funds for reconstruction. Priority should be given to living with dignity and to the return of displaced people to their destroyed villages. The shrine's reconstruction would therefore be the secondary priority.

The American Consulate's funds and other donations could therefore have been allocated to Sinjar's citizens who have survived genocide and have lost everything. Although Lalish is of great importance to the Yezidi community, the rehabilitation of the shrine and the site remains a contentious issue among the community: not just for the manner in which it has been undertaken but also for the other ways in which such finances could have been used, given the situation of the Yezidi people. As Mr Soliman asked, 'Why not invest in human beings rather than stones? Yazidi camps are still there, and have been since 2014' (Soliman' Abu Ephrin, April 2021, Bashiqa, Mosul).

9 Some recommendations

This study has shown that the reconstruction process of Al-Nouri Mosque and Al-Hadba Minaret was carried out with a high degree of organisation and accuracy. There were conversations with international and Iraqi heritage experts. A public survey was also carried out to find out the views of Mosul residents on the reconstruction of Al-Nouri Mosque and Al-Hadba Minaret. It showed that 94 per cent of the residents want to reconstruct Al-Hadba Minaret using the same ornaments as were there before the explosion. Also, 82 per cent of the residents mentioned that they wanted the minaret to be tilted while 16 per cent want it straight. As for Al-Nouri Mosque, 70 per cent want it to undergo minimum improvements in order to maintain the essence and the measurements of the mosque, while 28 per cent mentioned that they want it to be reconstructed as it was before the explosion (Statistics Consultancy Bureau (SCB) of the University of Mosul – upon request by UNESCO⁴).

Conversely, the Lalish reconstruction process didn't engage the Yazidi community to find out what they preferred. And there weren't any dialogues or discussions with experts. The study also shows that the government or the international community have no interest in protecting the natural and cultural heritage in Lalish. The reconstruction is done without any supervision from international authorities such as UNESCO.

For the reconstruction of sites such as Lalish to be undertaken appropriately, it would be beneficial for organisations such as UNESCO to oversee and monitor the process of reconstruction. Lalish Temple shouldn't be reconstructed unless UNESCO provides overall guidance to the American Consulate or the engineering committee of the Spiritual Council affiliated to Lalish Temple. The perspective of the Yezidi community should also be considered and a public survey carried out to find out how they would like the reconstruction to be conducted. What is their perspective? What are their preferences regarding the committee supervising the reconstruction? It is necessary to involve all community groups in the reconstruction. It shouldn't be the decision of the religious leaders or the affiliated authorities only.

4

See www.facebook.com/statisticalconsultingoffice.

In addition, financial information regarding the reconstruction of religious sites through public and private funds and donations should be publicly available through a website in order to ensure transparency and accountability with regard to the reconstruction process.

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Annexe 1 Interviews

- 1** Engineer Khairy Keddy, member of the Spiritual Council Committee, Lalish and supervisor of Lalish Temple reconstruction.
- 2** Soliman' Abu Ephrin, researcher and author in Yezidi heritage.
- 3** Lukeman Soliman Mahmoud, economics teacher and media person, Lalish Institute.
- 4** Professor Khairy Badel Rashid, member of the Statistics Consultancy Bureau (SCB) of the University of Mosul, and member of the field survey to reconstruct Al-Nouri Mosque and Al-Hadba Minaret.
- 5** Professor Bashar Abd El Aziz El Taleb, Director of the Statistics Consultancy Bureau (SCB) of the University of Mosul. Director of the public survey to reconstruct the Al-Nouri Mosque complex and Al-Hadba Minaret and Professor at Mosul University.
- 6** Soad Hassen Khair El Deen El Amry, member of the consultancy committee and supervising the reconstruction of Nineveh, and member of the technical committee that oversees the reconstruction of Al-Nouri Mosque and Al-Hadba Minaret; Civil Community Representative.
- 7** Professor Ahmed Kassam El Gomoaa, UNESCO consultant, Professor in Mosul University and one of four Islamic archaeological experts in the world.



CREID is an international consortium led and convened by the Institute of Development Studies, Brighton BN1 9RE, UK

T +44 (0) 1273 606261

F +44 (0) 1273 621202

E creid@ids.ac.uk

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