



TURKEY

Hasankeyf lost

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The Ilisu dam at the time when the waters of the Tigris were beginning to create the lake that would later flood 200 villages, including Hasankeyf. (2019)



FROM PREHISTORY TO THEME PARK

Today tourists arrive at the dock of the monumental area of New Hasankeyf, where they board replica ancient vessels replete with life-size model pirates and they venture out for a mini cruise on the water. On the hilltops they can view the surviving ruins of the ancient settlement: the rest they can only imagine.

Together with its 12 thousand year history, the town situated on the banks of the River Tigris in majority Kurdish Batman Province has now vanished beneath the water. Its destiny, together with that of a further 199 villages and their 80 thousand inhabitants, was decided by the Turkish government that turned a deaf ear to the many objections from the region's population and completed the construction of the enormous Ilisu dam 85 km to the south, a project that cost 1.3 billion euros. The goal is to produce 4,200 gigawatt hours of electricity each year to supply the Turkish population.

But this is at the expense of the local inhabitants, who were forced to leave their homes and their farmland, often without adequate compensation. Hasankeyf is emblematic of a political approach that has trampled on Kurdish rights and uprooted people from their homes. But that's not all: the project has drowned one of humanity's most ancient settlements and its relics of the Assyrians, Medes, Persians, Greeks, Romans, Byzantines, Arabs and Ottomans. At the end of 2019 all of the inhabitants had to leave the old town and in 2020 it was completely submerged beneath the waters of the reservoir, along with an important part of the history of Mesopotamia.

We began to document the situation in Hasankeyf in 2015 when the dam was 80% complete; at that time it seemed that the substantial protests against the project still had some hope of success. We returned a second time in 2019 to document the rising waters of the reservoir and the end of any hope of a change of heart from the Turkish government. Finally, we returned in August 2021 when the reservoir had been filled and the town had disappeared.



A panoramic view of Hasankeyf, the pylons of the bridge over the Tigris built in the 12th century and the wall built to protect the cliff from the arrival of the waters of the lake. (2019)



The tower that marks the entrance to the archaeological area of Hasankeyf on the hill, the only part to escape the rising waters of the reservoir created as a result of the the controversial Ilisu dam on the River Tigris. (2021)



Mehmet still lives in his cave. He is one of the few inhabitants of Hasankeyf to have kept his home after the area was submerged. (2019)



Homes in Hasankeyf destroyed by the waters of the reservoir created as a result of the controversial Ilisu dam on the River Tigris, which submerged part of the Hasankeyf archeological area. In the background is New Hasankeyf, where some of the inhabitants have been resettled. (2021)



One of the families that moved into one of the new buildings constructed in new Hasankeyf. (2019)



A life-size model of a Turkish sailor on a tourist boat that carries visitors on the reservoir created as a result of the controversial Ilisu dam on the River Tigris, which has submerged part of the Hasankeyf archeological area. (2021)



Overview of Hasankeyf with one of the pillars of the bridge on the Tigris river built during the 12th century. (2015)



Hasankeyf, the pylons of the bridge over the Tigris built in the 12th century and the wall built to protect the cliff from the arrival of the waters of the lake. (2019)



Today tourists visit Hasankeyf on mini cruises on the reservoir created as a result of the controversial Ilisu dam on the River Tigris, which submerged part of the archeological area. (2021)



The new mosque built in the modern settlement of New Hasankeyf. Some of the families whose homes were submerged beneath the waters of the reservoir, created as a result of the controversial Ilisu dam on the River Tigris, have been relocated to the new settlement. Part of the archeological area has also been submerged. (2021)

Twilight over the Tigris with the pylons of the 12th-century bridge and the premises of the old Hasankeyf, which were flooded after the activation of the Ilisu dam. (2019)





Cetim's son in their home in New Hasankeyf, where they were relocated following the flooding of their former home. (2021)



Overview of the valley along the Tigris river with the Ilisu dam. On the left, a village that was submerged after the activation of the dam. (2015)



The Ilisu dam at the time when the waters of the Tigris were beginning to create the lake that would later flood 200 villages, including Hasankeyf. (2019)



Many cafes placed their tables in the water in front of the city of Hasankeyf before the area was permanently flooded by the lake created by the Ilisu dam. (2019)



The Toy family used to live in Imcirli, one of the many villages that were submerged beneath the waters of the reservoir created as a result of the controversial Ilisu dam on the River Tigris. (2019)

Former homes in Hasankeyf submerged beneath the waters of the reservoir created as a result of the controversial Ilisu dam on the River Tigris. (2021)





The ruins of the citadel of Hasankeyf, which is located on the cliff. The citadel is the only part of Hasankeyf to have escaped the rising waters when the reservoir created by the Ilisu dam was formed. (2019)



A family of shepherds milking their herd along the bank of the Tigris river. The economy of the region, mainly based on livestock and farming, was definitely altered with the completion of the dam and the coming of the great artificial basin. (2015)



The defensive tower of the Citadel overlooking the Tigris river and the town of Hasankeyf. The citadel is the only part of Hasankeyf to have escaped the rising waters when the reservoir created by the Ilisu dam was formed. (2015)



Construction work on the wall to protect the ruins of the citadel of Hasankeyf, which stands above the cliff, from the arrival of the waters of the lake. (2019)



Mahsum Konagi, in front of what was once a house in the now submerged village of Hosgeldiniz (Sucekene) where he used to live. The village is one of 200 that were submerged beneath the waters of the reservoir created as a result of the controversial Ilisu dam on the River Tigris. (2021)



One of the cafes that has opened in the settlement of New Hasankeyf, built to replace the old town submerged by the reservoir created as a result of the controversial Ilisu dam on the River Tigris. (2021)



The ruins of the Hasankeyf archeological area located on the hills are the only parts to have escaped the rising waters of the reservoir created by the controversial Ilisu dam on the River Tigris. (2021)



A building under construction in the highest part of the village of Irmak (in Kurdish: Keferilp). This village, along with many others, was submerged by the lake which was formed by the activation of the dam of Ilisu. (2019)



A panoramic view of buildings in new Hasankeyf. (2019)



Abdurhaman Konagi's family was forced to abandon their home in the village of Hosgeldiniz (Sucekene), one of 200 villages submerged beneath the reservoir created as a result of the controversial Ilisu dam on the River Tigris. Today they live in one of the new homes built and sold by the government. (2021)



A panoramic view above the Tigris from the citadel of Hasankeyf. The citadel is the only part of Hasankeyf to have escaped the rising waters when the reservoir created by the Ilisu dam was formed. (2019)



The sun sets over the reservoir on the River Tigris seen from the hills where parts of the Hasankeyf archeological area are located. The lake submerged the settlement of Hasankeyf and part of the archeological area. The ruins located on the hillside are the only ones to survive. (2021)

