

Nevşehir Virgin Mary Church Conservation and Reuse Process

Aysegul Akşehirlioglu*¹, Pinar Arık²

¹ Erciyes University, Faculty of Architecture, Department of Architecture, Turkey, aysegul.kilic@erciyes.edu.tr

² Erciyes University, Faculty of Architecture, Department of Architecture, Turkey, pinariyildizarik@gmail.com

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Abstract

Historical buildings are symbols that reflect the cultural, social and technological characteristics of ancient civilizations, and their preservation and transfer to the future are of great importance to ensure the sustainability of cultural heritage and the continuity of social identity. One of the most preferred methods for the protection of historical buildings that cannot maintain their original function is re-functioning for conservation purposes. This study deals with the conservation and re-functioning process of Nevşehir Virgin Mary Church. The main focus of the study is to document and examine the stages of change, transformation and re-functionalization of the building, which is one of the main elements of the cultural memory of the city, and to evaluate the re-functionalization process in the context of internationally valid conservation principles stipulated by conservation science. In this study, which deals in detail with the history, structural features and periods of different functions of the Redesigned Virgin Mary Church from the perspective of conservation, the functional transformation processes and spatial interventions in the building were evaluated through literature review, archive research and on-site observations. The Church of the Virgin Mary, which has been used with different functions until today, is an important historical building located in the Cumhuriyet district and was built by the Greek community in 1849. It was used as a place of worship for many years, abandoned after the exchange in 1923 and converted into a prison in 1950. During his imprisonment, he underwent major architectural changes, and his original spatial structure and religious details were damaged. The building, which was abandoned after the closure of the prison in 1983, was listed in 2002 and reinstated in 2023. This study, which draws attention to the role of re-functioning in the preservation of historical buildings, aims to make an important contribution to the literature as one of the limited number of studies on the re-functioning of the church.

1. Introduction

Historical buildings are cultural symbols that reflect the social order, belief structures, lifestyles, technological advances, and socio-economic conditions of ancient civilizations. The preservation of these structures and their transfer to the future is of great importance in terms of preserving cultural heritage, strengthening the bond between the past and the future, and ensuring the continuity of social identity. Cultural values provide a link between the past and the future, helping to solve problems of cultural identity and strengthening the sense of belonging [1]. In support of this view, Kangal stated that the essence of the formation of historical environments lies in the interaction between man and the environment throughout history [2]. In this context, the abstract meanings they carry and carry to the present

day and the concrete functions they carry are effective in the formation of historical environments [6]. These environments, which are a bridge between the past and the future, have an important place in terms of the legibility and perceptibility of cities and create familiar and familiar environments [3]. Historical environments can be defined as settlements that preserve the events that shaped the past of a society in all or part of its physical environment [4]. While historical buildings create a link between the past and the future, they also contribute to the formation of the identity and character of the region [5]. As a reflection of the multi-layered structure of the country, churches, which are a concrete expression of the cultural richness of the society, are important elements of Anatolia's polyphonic identity [44]. For this reason, it is of great importance to protect and maintain monumental structures.

In order to protect the physical witnesses that have survived to the present day as a result of long processes and constitute the cultural basis of our identity, all practices aimed at conveying the information they contain/exhibit in a way that does not lead to misunderstanding and misinterpretation are in the nature of protection. Asatekin (2004) defines conservation as an umbrella term that includes all kinds of interventions at any scale, with different techniques [6]. Sözer (1978) stated that the concept of conservation is the handling of historical and natural values of social, economic, aesthetic and touristic importance according to the conditions of the time with contemporary planning methods and directing them to the public interest [7]. Within the framework of the World Heritage Convention, the concept of conservation includes the understanding of cultural heritage defined by monuments, building groups and sites, the provision of material protection and, when necessary, all methods used in the promotion, restoration and development processes [8].

One of the most important issues that needs to be addressed today is how to protect historical and cultural heritage. There are many different methods for the protection of monumental structures, which are among the most important of our immovable cultural heritage, from simple repair to consolidation, integration, renewal, re-function and reconstruction [9]. Since the beginning of conservation awareness, the desire to extend the functional life of the structure or object has played a decisive role [10]. Today, the most important approach in the protection of the historical environment based on the contemporary understanding of restoration is the preservation of the original functions of the buildings. However, the change in social needs and spatial requirements over time leads to the transformation of the original functions of these structures, causing them to lose their original functions and the need for re-functionalization. Since one of the most effective approaches to conservation is the "conservation by using" method, the protection of monumental structures considered as cultural heritage and their use in accordance with contemporary needs is one of the basic elements of conservation policy [11]. For this reason, in order to ensure effective protection, it is necessary to ensure that the buildings that have lost their original function are kept alive with new functions that are compatible with today's conditions and historical features [12]. This method refers to functional transformation by adapting to the physical structure and unique features of the building [13]. The re-functioning method, which is a tool for the preservation of historical buildings and their transfer to future generations [9], is also an important factor in ensuring environmental, economic and social sustainability [14, 15].

The protection of cultural heritage ensures the preservation of the common values of not only one generation, but the entire history of mankind [41]. The most effective way to effectively transfer historical buildings to future generations is to recognize them as "living beings" and to continue to use them continuously and functionally [16]. However, it is important to establish a balance between the protection and re-

functionalization of cultural property, and the purpose of reuse should be to keep the cultural property alive without losing its historical, aesthetic and originality values [17]. Mısırlısoy and Günçe (2016) state that the most successful re-functional approach in this direction is the one that respects and protects the original value of the building as well as adding value to the future [18]. In order to preserve the originality of the cultural property, it is of great importance that the changes and interventions made are compatible with the original function and that the interventions are clearly understandable [19].

Historical buildings have great cultural and historical importance not only in terms of their material assets, but also because of the historical phases they have passed from the past to the present, the transformations they have undergone in social structures and the functional changes they have undergone over time. The fact that each layer reflects the social, cultural and economic conditions of the period makes these structures valuable not only as physical structures but also as historical memory and cultural heritage. The most challenging form of heritage valuation is to give functional content to a monumental building and make it available to the community. In this process, finding the right balance between conservation and reuse is crucial. It is possible to use monumental buildings in a functional way today, to preserve their original values and qualities, and to determine new functions that are compatible with the historical features of the building [20]. As a result, the re-functioning of a building that has historical value and needs to be protected should be carried out by taking into account the spatial features and respecting the originality of the building, and in this context, the re-functional process should be meticulously planned by taking into account the relationship of the building with its surroundings and the harmony of functional and spatial requirements [21].

In the context of the preservation and transfer of assets of historical and cultural value to the future, the issue of re-functioning and contemporary additions has been shaped by different definitions and principles in international documents and texts over time and has been elaborated with the increasing awareness of the protection of historical environments, especially in the 20th century. In this context, many legal arrangements have been made and various organizations have been established both in the world and in our country for the protection of cultural heritage. The Carta Del Restauro (1931), which is the basic charter of the field of conservation and restoration, dealt with the subject for the first time and emphasized that re-functioning can be carried out in situations that do not harm the physical integrity of the building by preserving the original identity, historical and artistic values of the cultural heritage [46]. The Venice Charter (1964), one of the most important developments in the field of conservation following the Carta del Restauro, is recognized as a universal document on the protection and restoration of cultural assets [47]. The Regulation states that the basic attitude in the conservation of monuments is that the conservation should be permanent and continuous, and

that monuments should always be used for a useful social purpose. However, in this process, it is stated that changes in the plan and ornamental elements of the building will not be permitted, and only interventions that are required by the new function and do not harm the originality of the building can be accepted [48]. Following the Venice Charter, The Declaration of Amsterdam, which was drawn up as a result of the Amsterdam Congress in 1975, included in its recommendations the principle that “buildings should be given functions that meet the requirements of contemporary life without neglecting to respect their character, thus guaranteeing their survival” [49].

In parallel with the developments in the field of conservation, many international texts have addressed and emphasized the issue of repurposing. In 1987, ICOMOS prepared the Charter for The Conservation of Historic Towns and Urban Areas (The Washington Charter). According to the charter, re-functioning should be in harmony with the character of historic cities and urban areas, and the process of adding or improving the necessary technical infrastructure and services should be carried out meticulously within the scope of integrating these areas into modern life [50]. In 1994, following the Nara Conference held in Japan, the “Nara Document on Authenticity” was prepared, drawing attention to cultural diversity and differences in heritage. In this document, the values attributed to cultural heritage and the concept of authenticity, which plays a decisive role in the process of inclusion in the World Heritage List, were emphasized [51]. Accordingly, the judgment of authenticity of a monument or site is based on a wide range of sources of information, including design and form, materials and objects, use and function, traditions and techniques, location and layout, spirit and expression, and initial design and historical evolution. These sources can be found both inside and outside the work. The proper use of these sources enables the identification of the artistic, technical, historical and social dimensions of cultural heritage [51]. From this definition, it is seen that one of the main components of authenticity is function.

ICOMOS “Charter on the Built Vernacular Heritage” adopted in 1999 is another important development in the field of conservation. In the charter, the principles of conservation and implementation are explained, and the issue of new function is included in Article 5 of the implementation principles. Accordingly, in the process of adaptation and reuse of traditional buildings to new functions, their original integrity, character and form should be respected while ensuring that the buildings are raised to an acceptable standard of living. If traditional architectural forms are still in use, interventions should be carried out within the framework of ethical rules acceptable to society [52]. The Burra Charter (1999), first adopted in 1979 and revised with additions in 1999, also addressed the reuse of historic buildings, explaining that compatible use refers to a form of use that respects cultural values. It emphasized that such a use would have a minimal impact while preserving the cultural significance of the place to the maximum extent [53]. In 2003, ICOMOS adopted the “Principles for the Analysis,

Conservation and Structural Restoration of Arch. Heritage”, stating that when a change of use or function is proposed in relation to repurposing, all conservation rules and safety conditions should be taken into account, and that an integrated plan should be designed to give due weight to the different aspects of architecture, structure, installation and functionality [54]. Adopted in 2011, “The Valletta Principles for the Safeguarding and Management of Historic Cities, Towns and Urban Areas” ICOMOS Charter also includes the issue of re-functioning in detail. Under the 4th heading, “Recommendations and Strategies”, detailed explanations have been made on the subject under the sub-heading “b-New Functions”. Accordingly, new activities should not negatively affect traditional activities and the economic sustainability of local people. In this respect, it is of great importance to preserve historical and cultural diversity as well as social pluralism. Before proposing a new function for an area, its beneficiary group, duration of use, compatibility with existing functions, and potential impacts on local traditional activities should be meticulously analyzed. In addition, taking into account the fact that historic cities are unique and irreversible ecosystems, the proposed new functions should be compatible with the principles of sustainable development [55].

At this point, considering the documents, regulations, declarations and discourses of researchers in the field of conservation; considering that each building requires its own unique characteristics and conservation decisions, knowing the conservation history and functional changes that historical buildings have undergone in the process emerges as a basic necessity in choosing the right restoration method and giving the most appropriate function to the building. Today, in the studies carried out for the protection of monumental buildings, the historical processes and architectural features of these structures as well as the functional changes they have undergone should be taken into consideration. In order to accurately evaluate the evolution of monumental structures in the long term and to make sound conservation decisions, the historical process needs to be examined in detail. In addition, the identification of general conservation problems and the improvement of restoration quality at the scale of individual structures reinforce this requirement.

In this study, the conservation, repair and functional processes of the Virgin Mary Church, which was re-functioned in Nevşehir, were discussed. In this context, the Church of the Virgin Mary is one of the most striking examples of the cultural heritage in Nevşehir. The building, which was built by the Greek community in 1849 and used as a place of worship for many years, has undergone various transformations throughout history as a reflection of social and political developments. The abandonment of the building after the exchange in 1924 and its conversion into a prison in 1950 led to significant changes not only in terms of architecture but also in terms of cultural memory. The church, which underwent both a physical and symbolic transformation during its use as a prison, moved away from its original character with interventions such as reinforced concrete additions, plastering of frescoes, and changes in spatial order. These

transformations show how a structure can be reshaped not only within its physical boundaries, but also within its social and historical context. In 1983, the Church of the Virgin Mary was abandoned to its fate after the prison was emptied, and in 2002, it was taken under protection and underwent a restoration process. In this process, it was aimed to completely erase the traces of the prison period and to return the building to its original religious identity. In this context, the study aims to convey the original features of the Church of the Virgin Mary, to reveal and evaluate the changes that occur due to the functional differences of the building. In this direction, the historical and architectural features of the building, the spatial needs and interventions brought by the prison structure, and the practices carried out during the transformation process were expressed based on archival and literature researches, and evaluations were made in the light of the findings obtained in the conclusion section.

2. Method

In this study, the concept of re-functioning, which is an important approach in the protection of historical buildings, is discussed through the conservation, repair and functional transformation process of Nevşehir Virgin Mary Church, which was reused with different functions in different periods. In the study, the changes brought about by the different functions brought to the historical structure in the historical process were discussed in detail, and the importance of the harmony of these functional changes with the original spatial organization of the building was emphasized. In this direction, the study was designed in three stages. In the introductory part, which constitutes the first stage of the study, a literature search was made on the protection and re-functioning of historical buildings.

In the second stage of the study, literature review, archive review, observation and interviews were made regarding the location, historical, spatial and architectural features of the Virgin Mary Church and the functional transformations of the building according to the periods. At this stage, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, General Directorate of Cultural Heritage and Museums, Restoration Department obtained a study and publication permit for the use of survey, restitution and restoration projects, drawings, reports and photographs of the Nevşehir Virgin Mary Church, as well as literature research, diagnosis and documentation studies related to the building. In addition, researches were carried out to determine the spatial organization of the building in its original function, the changes in the use of the prison and the spatial interventions in the restoration process.

In the last stage of the study, in the light of the data obtained from the literature and field study, the conservation and repair process of the building was tried to be clarified, and the interventions performed in the building were examined and analyzed. It is aimed to reveal the different functions given to the building from the date of its construction to the present day and the spatial interventions created by these functional requirements in the building, to document the current state of the building, and to serve as an example and basis

for the subsequent studies to be carried out on the building (Fig. 1).

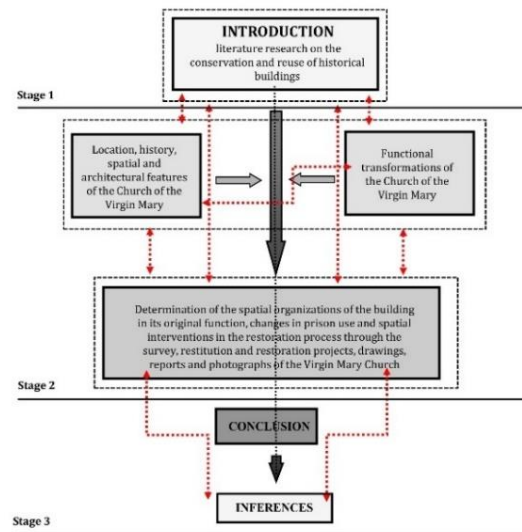


Figure 1. Stages of the method

3. Historical and Architectural Features of Nevşehir Virgin Mary Church

3.1. Construction and Architectural Features of the Original Church Building

Cappadocia and Nevşehir have rich historical, documentary, aesthetic, artistic, symbolic, social, economic, religious, and spiritual values [45]. During the Byzantine rule, Nevşehir was known as "Nissa", while during the Seljuk and Ottoman periods, it was called "Müşküre", and it is stated that it was a small village during this period [22]. During the Ottoman period, especially between 1718 and 1730, when Damat İbrahim Pasha was the grand vizier, Nevşehir, formerly known as Müşküre, became one of the most important settlements in the region. It is known that a significant number of non-Muslims lived in Nevşehir and its surrounding settlements during this period [23]. The Church of the Virgin Mary (Koimesis Theotoku Church) is located in the center of Nevşehir, in the Cumhuriyet Neighborhood, in the area formerly known as the "Church Façade". The Church of the Virgin Mary, located on a hill overlooking the city, on the east side of Kahveci Mountain, south of Nevşehir Castle, was built during the reign of the high priest Paisios and opened on October 16, 1849 and dedicated to Mary [24]. (Fig. 2).





Figure 2. General view of the Church of the Virgin Mary [25, 26].

Eyice (1977) cites a yearbook written in the Karamanlı language in Nevşehir and states that there were two church buildings in the city. Accordingly, the Hagios Georgios Church, which is located in the city center and bears no trace other than the remains of a four-storey bell tower, is the first example of buildings in the region [27]. The building, which is defined as the second church, has two inscriptions, one in Greek and the other in Turkish. The Turkish inscription reads; "May the life of Sultan Abdülmecid Khan be blessed/ Because it was built thanks to him/ This church in Nevşehir/ Kayseriya priest Paisios pir-i valia/ Naziansu Leontios ustad-ı Grekor journeyman/ Bi Hamd-Allah is completed, rest in peace/ Read the history of the town of maan entrusted to Veledetullah/ 1849" " (May it be Majid and its life be Sultan Abdul Majid Khan/ It was built thanks to Zira/ Nevşehir bu Kilisa/ Kayseriya priest Paisios pir-i valia/ Naziansu Leontios ustad-ı Grekor journeyman/ Bi Praise be to Allah, it was itmam, read it, refresh history/ It was entrusted to Waladatullah maan town/ 1849)" (Fig. 3) and the name of the owner and the master was indicated. Based on this information, it is thought that the second church building in question is the Church of the Virgin Mary [28].



Figure 3. The Inscription of the Building [29].

The Church of the Virgin Mary (Koimesis Theotoku Church) has been identified as one of the largest churches in the region, with a length of 29 meters and a width of 23.50 meters [24]. The construction dates of the churches in Nevşehir are dated between 1729 and 1889. It is known that the Church of the Virgin Mary in Nevşehir and the Church of the Twelve Apostles in Özlüce were built in the same year, 1849. Considering the Ottoman

sultans mentioned in the inscriptions or coinciding with the construction period, it is emphasized that the reign of Sultan Abdülmecid came to the fore in terms of the construction and repair of the buildings [24]. (Fig. 4).

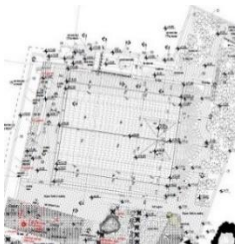
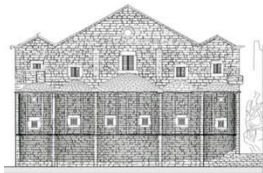
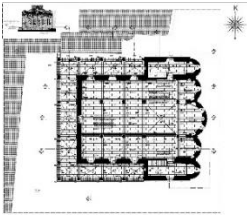
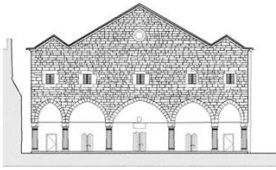
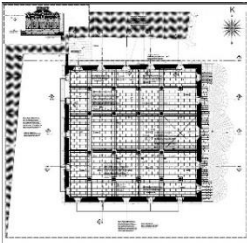
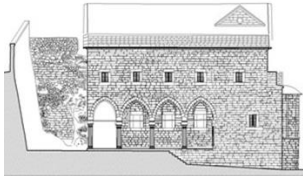
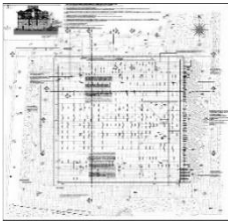
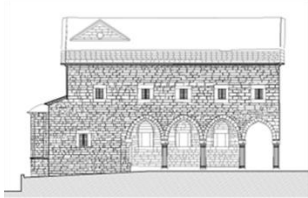


Figure 4. Old photos of the church [25].

Metropolitan Paisios of Kayseri is known as the founder of the Church of the Virgin Mary. Paisios took part in the construction of the Church of the Virgin Mary in Nevşehir, as well as the churches of Saints Georgios, Constantine and Helena in Mustafa Pasha and the Holy Cross in Cemil, and the Church of the Virgin Mary was built by an architect named Leontizu Gregor Kalfa from Nazianzus, according to the inscription that does not exist today [24]. (Fig. 4).

The church has a three-nave basilica plan in the east-west direction. The naos is divided into three naves by two rows of columns, and the central nave is twice as wide as the side aisles. The structure ends with a narthex to the west and three round apses to the east. To the northeast and southeast of the building, there are two small chapels with a rectangular plan and apse in the east-west direction. Together with the narthex (portico entrance), the chapels surround the building in a "U" shape. This five-section narthex in the west opens to the naves through three doors on the west side of the church. The "U" shaped gallery floor on the north, south and west of the upper floor of the building is located above the southern and western parts of the narthex on the lower floor of the church, as well as the portico section on the north (Table 1).

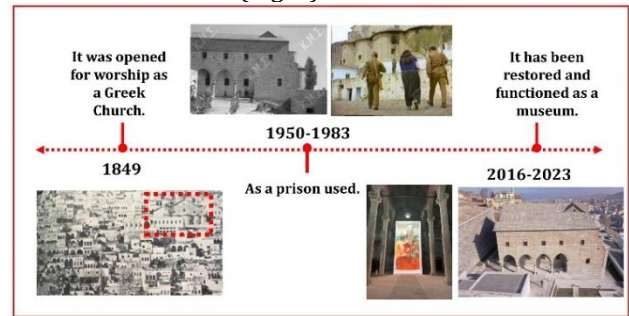
Table 1. Restoration drawings of the Church of the Virgin Mary¹ [25].

Plan	Facade
	
Site plan	Eastern Facade
	
Ground floor plan	Western Front
	
1. Floor plan	South Facade
	
Roof plan	North Facade

In the spaces located in the north and southeast of the church and considered as "chapels", access to the gallery floor is provided by stairs. There are stone stairs leading from the chapels to the upper floor. These stairs are connected to the first floor with the help of vault tunnels.

In the construction of the building, very smoothly cut local Nevşehir stone was used, and the load-bearing walls of the building were built of cut stone with the iron clamping technique. In the western part of the narthex, rubble stone can be seen on the walls built later. On the east side of the church is the main apse, on the sides are the pastophorium cells and the apses of the north and south chapels. The apse facades exhibit a common façade layout. The facades are horizontally divided into two parts by a moulding starting from a height of about 3 meters from the ground. The upper part is about twice

the height of the lower part. The naos façade, which is behind the apse facades, has double-chamfered triangular pedimented roofs, wide in the middle and narrow on the sides (Fig. 5).

**Figure 5.** Timeline of the church

The west façade of the church consists of the narthex porch on the lower floor and the gallery floor of the west façade of the naos on the upper floor. The porticoes of the narthex are supported by six columns connected by pointed arches. Of the arch openings, the one in the center is wide, the one on the sides is narrower, and the outermost arch openings are the narrowest. The south façade consists of the southern part of the narthex with a portico and the chapel and gallery facades on the upper floor. The north façade consists of the chapel in the northeast, the portico in the west and the gallery above.

3.2. Use of the Building as a Prison and Structural Interventions

The population exchange between Turkey and Greece in 1923 caused the Greek population in the region to leave the region and the church to become dysfunctional [30]. After this process, the building was abandoned to its fate in a state of disrepair for many years. Although the frescoes and stonework of the building were damaged during this period, the building continued to preserve its architectural values and symbolic importance. The church, which was one of the largest buildings identified in the Cappadocia region and abandoned after the exchange, was converted into a prison in 1950 in line with the need. The building was used as a state prison between 1950 and 1983 during the Republican period [31] (Fig. 6).



¹ The drawings were taken from the Çağ Architecture-Restoration archive, edited and tabulated by the author.



Figure 6. Photos of the use of the church as a prison [25].

During the period when the building functioned as a prison, changes occurred in the plan scheme and façade openings. In this process, new spaces were added to the building and arrangements were made in accordance with the functional requirements. A reinforced concrete mezzanine, cells, toilets and a prayer room were added to the building for prison use [28]. In addition, an outbuilding was built to the south of the church and a dungeon under the courtyard to the east [25] (Fig. 7).

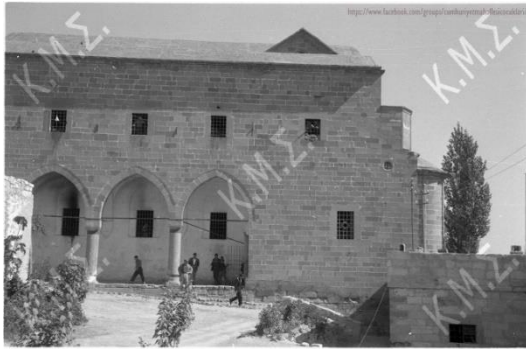


Figure 7. Photos of the use of the church as a prison [25].

The naos section of the building, which originally had three naves in the east-west direction, underwent various changes after it was converted into a prison, and the naos section was completely converted into a ward [25]. On the ground floor, except for the main entrance door on the west façade, the auxiliary entrance doors to the south and north aisles were closed. Two parallel walls built into the central nave and additional walls that cut these walls in the east direction formed the cells [24]. Naos consists of a total of six cell sections, including a narrow and long corridor extending on the east-west axis and three rectangular rooms on the north and south sides of this corridor. On the ground floor, the cell corridors ended with toilets before reaching the apses and the passage to the apses was closed. The southern half of the eastern part of the church is separated from the main and south apses by a flat wall, and the said toilet section was built. In the eastern part of this area, three adjacent square toilets of approximately the same dimensions are built. The floor of the toilet area is at a higher level and is reached by a five-step staircase. There is also a rectangular toilet to the southwest of this section [25] (Table 2).

Table 2. Periodic Functional Analysis of the Church of the Virgin Mary [25]

Original Form (FirstTerm)	Imprisonment (Second term)

Rubble stone walls were built to the west and south of the two rooms located in the north of the narthex and a rectangular space was created in the north-south direction. The eastern part of the chapel, which is located in the northeast of the church, where the apse is located, is then separated from the west by a wall in the north-south direction. The rectangular chapel to the southeast of the church is also separated from the apse in the east by a later wall in the north-south direction. This space was used as a staircase leading to the upper floor (Fig. 8).



Figure 8. Photos of the interior in prison use [25]

When you go to the upper floor with the staircase descending to the south, an "L" shaped hall opens a wide corridor in the middle. The floor of the first floor consists of reinforced concrete slabs on the body walls of the ground floor, columns and two reinforced concrete columns added later. The columns in the center are bordered by pointed arches with filled gaps between them. In accordance with the prison function, four new sections were added around this space. On the west side of the hall, there is an area divided by a briquette wall and apparently used as a prayer room [25].

Within the scope of the prison function of the building, various changes were made in the façade openings and layout plan. In this context, the two arches on the north side of the western façade of the building were closed with rubble stones to create a new space, the doors opening from the façade to the side aisles were closed, an iron railing was added to the main door, and the window on the north floor was closed due to the functional necessity on the first floor. On the south side of the building, a new door was opened on the west side, a meeting structure was built on the east side of the façade, and the polygonal bell tower on the south aisle on the east side of the façade was demolished. No significant changes were made on the east side of the building, except for the demolition of the bell tower, and a new rubble stone space was added to the west façade on the north façade for the use of the Second Period prison. The original entrance door and the window to the east were closed and a new door was opened on the ground floor [25] (Fig. 9).



Figure 9. Photos from the annex and dungeon [25]

During the prison period, additions were made to the existing walls and reinforced concrete harpushta was manufactured. During these interventions, various changes occurred in the courtyard walls. During the same period, different building units were added to the courtyard and these structures were mainly concentrated in the southwestern part of the courtyard [25]. The outbuilding, located in the southwest of the church, consists of two rectangular rooms in the north-south direction, in the east-west direction, and a long and thin space between them. In addition, a guard house and a meeting place were built on the east wall of the courtyard [25] (Fig. 10).



Figure 10. Laser scanning of the church after prison use [25].

Within the scope of the requirements of the prison function, it can be stated that functional, spatial and structural changes have been made in the building and its decorations have been lost. These changes caused the building to lose its original religious identity, but at the same time, the building gained an important place in the social memory of the period. Important names such as Aziz Nesin, Yılmaz Güney, Kemal Tahir and Fener Greek Patriarch Bartholomew were working in the prison. In addition, in 1973, the movie *Mahpus*, starring Türkan Şoray, was shot in this church [42]. In this context, the building has become an important focal point not only from an architectural point of view, but also from a socio-political point of view (Fig. 11).



Figure 11. Photos of the church after the use of the prison [25].

Although the use of the building as a prison caused some negativities, it can be said that it played a critical role in the development of the building to the present day. If the building had not been used as a prison, the process of wear and destruction that began in 1992 could have started much earlier, before 1950, and the building would have been in a much more dilapidated state today [31]. As a matter of fact, in the static report of the building, it was stated that the reinforced concrete column and beam support elements made during the use of the building as a prison limited the increase in the static problems of the building, but the existing columns were damaged during the application [25]. However, in addition to the physical preservation of the buildings, it is also of great importance to preserve their original identity and characteristics. Even if they are used for purposes other than their original purpose, they should not be subjected to changes that would impair their character [32]. This clearly shows that maintaining the functionality of the buildings is an important factor in preserving their physical existence, but the importance of the given function being compatible with the spatial, architectural and structural features of the building.

In line with international documents and studies in the field of conservation, it is essential to respect the original values of the building during the re-functioning process. It is emphasized that the new use should be in harmony with the historical, cultural and architectural identity of the building; it is also stated that the interventions should be recyclable and designed to minimize their impact on the building. In this context, the decisions taken during the refunctioning process should offer a sustainable use by preserving the physical, spatial and symbolic integrity of the building. However, the prison function is a form of use that does not coincide with the original historical and cultural identity of the building and contradicts the conservation principles stipulated by the regulations by causing permanent

changes in its spatial organization. Such a use carries the risk of damaging the architectural and artistic values of the building and has the potential to change the meaning and function of cultural heritage in terms of social memory. Therefore, when selecting the appropriate function for historic buildings, the original context of the building and conservation principles should be taken into consideration, and usage alternatives that are sustainable and support the continuity of cultural heritage should be prioritized.

3.3. Re-Functioning of the Building as a Museum and Exhibition Space

For the repurposed buildings, it is of great importance that the interventions to be made in order to adapt to the new purpose of use are planned in a way that does not harm the original spatial organization and façade character of the building. In this context, the re-functioning of the building as a museum has contributed positively to its use in accordance with its original spatial and architectural character (Fig. 12).



Figure 12. An example of the restoration drawings of the church [25].

In order for conservation practices to be carried out effectively, the first step is to carry out a thorough survey of the building or area to be protected and to prepare the measurements and drawings accurately, completely and without errors [33]. In 2016, the survey drawings, restitution, restoration projects and intervention plans of the building were carried out and approved by Çağ Restoration and Shape Architecture Restoration, and the data of these projects were used in the article in accordance with the permissions obtained. The restoration of the Church of the Virgin Mary in Nevşehir, which was carried out on behalf of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism between 2021 and 2023, was carried out under the supervision of the Kayseri Directorate of Survey and Monuments [34] (Fig. 13).



Figure 13. Photograph of the church after restoration [43].

Within the scope of the function of the building as a museum, first of all, the necessary project studies were

carried out, and within this framework, the first evaluations and analyzes of the building were carried out. In the examination, it was determined that the structure was in poor condition due to the effects of time, previous repairs and negative traces of the function. The restoration approach is designed according to the principle of "interventions that do not disturb the originality of the structure with the least intervention". In this context, restoration methods are classified as "Completion, Consolidation, Cleaning and Renewal". (Fig. 14).



Figure 14. Photograph of the church after restoration [29].

Within the scope of the restoration decisions, it was decided to dismantle and remove the walls and floors built during the prison period in accordance with the technique in a way that would not damage the load-bearing system of the building, thus making the building suitable for its original plan scheme and spatial layout (restoration report). It has been stated that the removal of the reinforced concrete carcass system and rubble stone masonry walls, which were added to the building later, will reduce the static and earthquake loads of the building, and the damages caused by the anchoring of the reinforced concrete system to the stone columns can be repaired (Static report). In addition, within the scope of the removal of the additions, it was stated that the window and door openings filled with rubble stone and stone should be removed without damaging the stone walls, and new ones should be built in their place in accordance with their original materials. (Fig. 15).



Figure 15. Photo of the church after restoration [29, 35, 36].

With the use of the building as a prison structure, the façade materials and openings that were added to the building and were incompatible with the building were restored. In the restoration works carried out throughout the building, damage assessment studies

were carried out on stone walls and vaults, intervention methods were determined, deformed stone walls, vaults, column capitals and stone moldings were cleaned and renewed. It was decided to remove the cement-based plasters on the existing retaining wall and the additional pieces made of briquette material on the upper levels of the courtyard wall and replace them with the original masonry material (basalt rubble) [25, 37] (Fig. 16).



Figure 16. Photos of frescoes before and after restoration) [25, 29].

It was determined that there were melting and surface losses in the ceiling arch and wall stones of the period stone structure in the southern part of the courtyard, and it was planned to rebuild it in accordance with the revised restoration project by dismantling the earthen mortar stone structure, which lost its bearing feature (by numbering the cut stones). The entrance of the Dungeon Room, which is located in the southeastern part of the courtyard and was decided to be a period addition, was taken to the road level under the staircase leading to the courtyard, taking into account the problems that may arise for use (Fig. 17).



Figure 17. Photo of the church after the restoration [38, 39]

It was envisaged that the screed concrete on the ground floor of the building would be removed and renewed with the original material, and in this context, it was decided to build the ground floor, narthex and mezzanine floor with lime-based mortar in accordance with the original detail of the stone flooring. The parts whose plaster was spilled or deteriorated were completed with the original lime-based plaster contents described in the plaster analysis report, and the plasters that did not comply with the original were removed from the building. The window joinery, metal railings and entrance doors were restored in accordance with the restitution project and restoration details, without damaging the stone wall [25, 37]. Damage and water leaks were detected in the andesite coatings on the roof due to snow load, puddle and seasonal temperature changes; As part of the repair, the roof covering was

removed, the sub-embankments were cleaned, hydraulic lime-based leveling, waterproofing and protective materials were applied. Rusty clamps will be refurbished and ugly stones will be relocated in accordance with the original details for water drainage [25, 37].

As Bektaş (2001) points out, bringing a building to a healthy state by expert architects, competent craftsmen and skilled workers; Repairing the roof, reinforcing the walls, plastering, whitewashing, oil painting, flooring, meticulous completion of coatings and decorations can be considered a successful intervention in terms of physical restoration [40]. But it is not enough to physically restore a building; Giving it "human warmth", in other words, keeping it alive in a functional and social context, is also an important dimension of restoration. In this context, the active use of the Church of the Virgin Mary as a museum today is of critical importance for the sustainability of the building. Active use will not only support the physical preservation of the building, but also strengthen its bond with the community, ensuring its longevity.

When evaluated in the context of conservation documents; it is essential that the interventions to be carried out in the process of re-functionalization of historical buildings are planned in a way to preserve the original spatial organization, façade character and architectural integrity of the building. In this process, it is of great importance that the new purpose of use is compatible with the historical and cultural identity of the building in order to transfer the original values of the building to future generations in a sustainable manner. In this context, the re-functioning of the building as a museum offers a functional use by preserving its original architectural qualities without harming its spatial integrity. The museum function, as a form of use that supports the historical, artistic and cultural identity of the building, demonstrates an approach that is compatible with the principles of conservation and continuity emphasized in the regulations. Thus, the building is not only physically preserved, but also continues to exist as a cultural space that contributes to social memory.

4. Conclusions and Conclusion

The current understanding of conservation emphasizes that historical buildings, which form the cornerstones of cultural heritage, should be used in a functional way in order to survive. It is important that this use serves a purpose that is as close as possible to its original function, while respecting the historical and aesthetic values of the structures. The re-functioning of buildings is part of the active conservation process and the main objective is to ensure the historical, cultural, environmental and economic sustainability of the building. However, the success and longevity of the "protection by living" approach depends on meeting the new function and user needs in the most appropriate way.

In the context of the principles established in the field of conservation, the re-functionalization of historic buildings is a multidimensional and interdisciplinary

process that requires a balanced consideration of many parameters. It is expected that the interventions to be realized in historical environments, which are evaluated in a wide context from the scale of a single building to the urban fabric, should be designed with an understanding that respects the past, but at the same time provide contemporary references to meet today's spatial and functional requirements. In this context, the interventions to be realized in historic buildings should not only be considered as a physical complementary element, but also as design solutions that support cultural continuity and give a new meaning to the historic building by preserving its original identity. However, it is of great importance that the re-functionalizations to be implemented in this process are shaped by a comprehensive analysis process that identifies the original and authentic values of the existing fabric. In line with the basic principles emphasized in the regulations, new functions should be in accordance with the spatial, structural and structural characteristics of the original building. However, in the re-functioning of historic buildings, the conservation principles set out in the regulations should be thoroughly researched and adapted to the specific historical context of each country. Among the issues commonly emphasized in international texts, there are basic criteria such as contributing to historical and cultural sustainability by taking into account the urban or structural context in which the building is located, improving the quality of the existing fabric, displaying a harmonious and respectful approach in terms of material, scale, proportion and form, and ensuring that interventions are reversible. These principles provide a guiding framework for the re-functioning projects to be realized in the historic fabric and ensure the adoption of a sustainable conservation approach.

The historical adventure of the Church of the Virgin Mary reveals that a building is not only an architectural entity, but also a document that witnesses the cultural, social and political transformations of a society. The fact that the building was built as a place of worship, abandoned after the exchange, converted into a prison, and eventually functioned as a museum reflects a multi-layered historical perspective and clearly shows how the past is embodied in physical space. This situation constitutes an important example for the evaluation of the transformations of buildings in historical continuity and the effects of these transformations on spatial memory.

The data obtained through literature reviews, archival studies, on-site observations, observations and interviews revealed that there was some loss in the original values of the building during the process when the Church of the Virgin Mary was reopened for use with different functions over time. However, it can be said that the interventions made on the material, structure, space, architecture and ornamental elements of the building during the transformation to the museum function were applied by staying true to its original features and the historical integrity of the building was tried to be preserved. In this context, the removal of reinforced concrete elements, the careful cleaning of the frescoes,

the strengthening of the stone walls and the attention paid to the selection of original materials not only increased the physical durability of the building, but also contributed to the re-visibility of its aesthetic values and to the fact that the building remained as faithful as possible to its spatial structures and elements in its original function as a church.

The example of the Church of the Virgin Mary once again reveals that reuse plays a critical role in the preservation of historical buildings and their transfer to future generations, and that the spatial layout of the building, the load-bearing system and the façade design are among the important elements to be considered in the restoration process. Interventions should be carried out in accordance with international protection standards and legal regulations. In addition, if the changes made are reversible and disassembled, it would be a good approach to preserve the originality of the building. The originality of the historical building should be preserved at the highest level, and the elements added later should be clearly distinguishable from the original elements. Conservation processes should be carried out meticulously by experts in the field and thus the historical and cultural values of the buildings should be secured.

As a result, the re-functioning of the Church of the Virgin Mary has set an important example both for the protection of Nevşehir's cultural heritage and for the re-functioning of historical buildings. However, the fact that the historical traces of the building must be fully preserved once again reveals the complexity of the restoration process, which requires the traces of different periods to be handled together. The Church of the Virgin Mary is not only an architectural structure, but also carries the traces of the past to the present through the historical and cultural layers it carries and will continue to build a bridge to the future. In this respect, it will be able to preserve its value by preserving both its physical existence and its cultural meaning.

Notification

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Author contributions

Ayşegül Akşehirlioğlu: Conceptualization, Methodology, Software, Fieldwork, Discussions, Writing-Original drafting, Writing-Review and Editing **Pınar Arık:** Conceptualization, Fieldwork, Writing and Editing

Conflicts of interest

There is no conflict of interest between the authors.

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