

Endangered Mosque Heritage in Nakhchivan: Architectural Documentation and Conservation Priorities

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Abstract

Historical monuments constitute valuable records of cultural heritage and collective memory. This study examines selected religious architectural monuments in the Nakhchivan region, focusing on mosques and shrines, to document their current preservation status and to underline the necessity of timely conservation action. Using a descriptive and comparative approach grounded in field observation and architectural analysis, the research compiles basic identification data and evaluates physical condition with particular attention to roof integrity, structural continuity, and the survival of key heritage elements. Findings indicate that several monuments located in the Kangarli and Sharur districts are in a critical state of deterioration. In particular, the Old Khok Mosque (Kangarli) and the mosques in Kurchulu and Ashagi Aralıq villages (Sharur) have largely collapsed, with only structural remnants remaining, signalling an urgent need for protective measures and systematic documentation. Given their historical and architectural significance, these monuments require professionally supervised, scientifically informed conservation-restoration planning. Accordingly, the study emphasizes that relevant institutions should prioritize immediate interventions to prevent further loss and to safeguard this heritage for future generations.

Keywords: Cultural Heritage, Mosques, Nakhchivan, Protection of Monuments, Public Awareness, Shrines.

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INTRODUCTION

The President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, has always kept the study of Azerbaijan historical and cultural monuments at the center of attention (Əliyev, 2008). The study of Nakhchivan's national architectural monuments are also relevant and highly significant from the perspective of the statehood concept of the Republic of Azerbaijan. Researching the examples of religious architecture located in the Nakhchivan region is of particular importance for understanding the developmental stages and regional characteristics of Azerbaijani architectural history. Considering that a large part of them are not preserved, uncontrolled, and unexplored, many of these monuments are already on the verge of disappearance. The preservation of architectural heritage, which embodies a part of Azerbaijan history, has been one of the crucial issues facing our state (Şəkixanov, 2023). During the Soviet period, the improper use of religious architectural monuments and the insufficient attention to their preservation, as well as the lack of scientifically grounded restoration projects (Məmmədova, 2007; Саламзаде, 1978), led to the erosion and destruction of Azerbaijan historical and cultural monuments. The national leader of the Azerbaijani people, Haydar Aliyev, always valued architectural monuments and emphasized the importance of their preservation (Məmmədova, 2023). In a speech in 1999, Haydar Aliyev stated: "What pains me is that Azerbaijani people, despite their rich history, rich culture, and deep historical roots, were unable to show it first to their own nation, and second to the world, both in previous centuries and later, including in the 20th century" (Əliyev, 2002).

Azerbaijan's rich historical and cultural heritage is not only the memory of the past but also one of the foundational pillars of national identity. Preserving this heritage and passing it on to future generations is a serious responsibility for every citizen and, collectively, for the state. Azerbaijan's historical monuments, especially religious sites such as mosques and shrines, are not only architectural examples but also living carriers of Azerbaijani history. From this perspective, Azerbaijani people must first properly understand their history and cultural heritage and recognize the importance of safeguarding it. Monuments that are deteriorating or being destroyed due to neglect may be irreversibly lost over time. This would result in a void in national memory. Therefore, the protection and study of historical monuments should be considered not only a cultural activity but also a task of strategic importance. The great leader Haydar Aliyev repeatedly emphasized the significance of this issue in his speeches and meetings with scholars and cultural figures, highlighting the necessity of studying and preserving historical and cultural heritage within the framework of a national concept. This approach exemplifies seeing history not merely as traces of the past but as the foundation of the future. Research shows that the territory of the Republic of Azerbaijan is rich in historical and cultural monuments (Şəkixanov, 2023). In particular, the Nakhchivan region is a historical land. The historical monuments there, especially mosques and shrines, play a particularly important role. Each of them tells a story about Azerbaijan history. Some of these monuments have completely collapsed over time, while others remain in a neglected state. Concrete and prompt measures must be taken both to re-examine the destroyed ones and to preserve those that still exist. The current situation requires that the approach to religious and historical monuments be not formal but scientifically grounded and result-oriented. The sustainable preservation of historical heritage reflects not only the past eras but also today's collective national interest. If we do not take measures today to maintain these monuments, tomorrow we may be forced to know them only from archival documents.

Medieval sources provide certain information about the cities of Azerbaijan and their magnificent architectural monuments (Vəlixanlı, 1974; Амензаде, 2019). Medieval authors also provided information about the architectural monuments of Nakhchivan (Çələbi, 1997). The fact that the city of Nakhchivan is referred to as "Naqshi-Jahan" in medieval sources is also related to its famous architectural monuments (Məmmədov, 1977; Məmmədova, 2008). Nakhchivan's role as an important political center of both the Atabegs and the Ilkhanids was one of the main reasons for its socio-economic development. Information about Nakhchivan's architectural monuments can be found in the works of O. Çelebi (Çələbi, 1989), J. Charden (Şarden, 1994), I. Schopen, A. Veernitsky, and others (Quluzadə, 2023). The written accounts, photographs, and plans provided by our esteemed scholars and travellers are valuable sources for the study of Nakhchivan architecture. However, it should be noted that these materials are not entirely sufficient for a comprehensive study of Nakhchivan's architecture. The architectural history of Nakhchivan is rich and full of valuable monuments. The fact that some of Nakhchivan historical architectural monuments have not been preserved to the present day, while others are under threat of destruction, underscores the importance of safeguarding this architectural heritage.

The aim of this study is to examine the religious architectural monuments of the Nakhchivan region, to identify their historical and architectural features, and to evaluate their preservation status. The research focuses on selected mosques and shrines within Nakhchivan and considers them in their historical and regional context. The study is based on the analysis of written sources, archival materials, and existing scholarly literature, supported by comparative and descriptive methods. The originality of the research lies in its systematic approach to Nakhchivan's religious architecture and in drawing attention to monuments that are either insufficiently studied or face the risk of disappearance.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Religious Architecture in Nakhchivan (Historical Context and Typology)

Architecture in Nakhchivan developed during the medieval period and following the adoption of Islam, acquired distinctive characteristics. After the Republic of Azerbaijan gained independence, favourable conditions were created for the development of architecture, as in other fields of Azerbaijan science. Research conducted in the territory of the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic revealed that the region is even richer in architectural monuments, and new architectural sites were identified. Nakhchivan's religious architecture is of considerable importance for Azerbaijan architecture as a whole. The architectural monuments of Nakhchivan have always attracted the attention of travellers and researchers visiting the region, who have provided accounts and descriptions of them. A significant group of Nakhchivan's architectural monuments consists of mosques and pilgrimage sites. Medieval authors also provided information on the religious architectural monuments of Nakhchivan.

In his book published in 1882, K. A. Nikitin provided information about the Mausoleum of Noah and recorded noteworthy facts regarding its architecture. In addition, the works of V. M. Sysoyev contain important information on the religious architecture of Nakhchivan. V. M. Sysoyev revealed significant facts about the Venand Juma Mosque, the Ordubad Juma Mosque, the Nakhchivan Juma Mosque, as well as numerous neighborhood mosques and pilgrimage sites in Nakhchivan. The studies on Nakhchivan architecture authored by Ə. V. Salamzadə and K. Məmmədzadə are also of great importance. The information they presented and the architectural plans they produced are highly valuable for the study of Nakhchivan architecture.

Conservation Approaches for Mosque and Shrine Heritage

Contemporary conservation theory considers the preservation of historical materials, the conduct of documentation, and the scientific justification of interventions as fundamental principles (Jokilehto, 1999). From this perspective, any restoration process should be accompanied by preliminary research and historical-structural analysis.

The preservation of mosques and shrines, and their proper execution, is one of the important issues. In this regard, it can be said that these cultural objects are often repaired or restored through personal initiatives. Although such restoration work, conducted outside of professional expertise, aims to improve the monuments, it often leads to both the loss of their historical value and a reduction in their lifespan. This, in turn, accelerates the deterioration of the monuments. During such restoration and repair work, the architectural features of mosques and shrines are often neglected, and their appearance is almost entirely altered. Random and unprofessional interventions, coupled with insufficient knowledge about the monument, can significantly change its historical and architectural characteristics. Of course, alongside the incorrect practice of restoring mosques and shrines through individual initiative, although the restoration of many architectural monuments is carried out at the state level, the self-directed actions of unskilled specialists have caused considerable harm to these monuments. The elements that suffer the most damage during the restoration of mosques and shrines are their mihrabs. Recently, mihrabs distinguished by specific architectural styles have been dismantled and replaced with mihrabs made of furniture materials, or, as in the case of the Ordubad Juma Mosque, covered with tiles. Mihrabs made of furniture materials can be found in the Dəstə Juma Mosque, the Vənənd Juma Mosque, and the Burcunu Mosque in Vənənd (Figure 1). Mihrabs, one of the most important architectural elements of mosques, were originally constructed with great delicacy and thoughtfulness, featuring intricate patterns, motifs, and inscriptions. In this regard, the Ordubad Juma Mosque in the Ordubad region, dating back to the 17th century, which is considered one of the architectural jewels of the region, can be cited as a significant example.



Figure 1. Mihrabs; 1- Vənənd Mosque (former); 2- Vənənd Mosque (current); 3- Burcunu Mosque (author's archive).

The lack of supervision by specialists over the restoration and repair work of Azerbaijan architectural monuments, including mosques and shrines, as well as the absence of a unified concept regarding restoration and repair activities, creates certain problems in the preservation of these monuments. This situation leads to the restoration of architectural monuments through personal initiatives and by non-professional specialists, which can result in their distortion or even destruction, an outcome that must be strictly prevented.

The determination of an object's "cultural significance" is considered a crucial step in the adoption of conservation decisions. This concept is systematically presented in the Burra Charter. According to the Burra Charter, the conservation process should begin with an analysis of the cultural value of the site, and all

interventions must serve to preserve that value (Australia ICOMOS, 2013). Prior to initiating the conservation of mosques and shrines in the significance of the area and its architectural characteristics should be thoroughly examined. The Nakhchivan architectural school is extensive, and each region and historical period exhibits distinctive features in terms of the spatial and volumetric organization as well as the structural elements of architectural monuments. Moreover, the mosques and shrines under study span the XIV–XIX centuries.

According to Feilden, interventions must ensure structural stability, new materials should be compatible with the existing ones, and, where possible, possess a reversible character (Feilden, 2003). This principle guarantees that the monument is preserved as a documented record for future generations. During the restoration process, the original condition of the monument and the materials used must be thoroughly investigated. In particular, the existing materials should be analysed in a laboratory setting to determine their composition and physico-chemical properties. Based on these studies, analogues with the same composition and characteristics should be prepared. If this is not possible, alternative materials that closely match the original should be employed. The Old Khok Mosque, Kurchulu Mosque, and Aşağı Aralıq Mosque have undergone some degree of alteration over time; however, a significant portion of their original fabric has been preserved. By scientifically analysing the original materials of these monuments, their restoration can be carried out as closely as possible to the original condition through the use of materials with similar properties. Interventions carried out without taking into account the specific characteristics of Islamic architectural heritage can damage the semantic and functional integrity of the monument. In Islamic architecture, form and space are not merely aesthetic categories but also play a crucial role in organizing religious functions (Hillenbrand, 1994). Therefore, during the conservation of mosques, the spatial layout, orientation for prayer, and hierarchical organization of spaces must be preserved. Furthermore, the social and community aspects hold particular significance in the conservation of religious heritage sites. In religious buildings, conservation is not limited to physical interventions but also encompasses strategies for continued use and community integration (Orbaşlı, 2008).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Some of the mosques and pilgrimage sites located in the Nakhchivan region have been destroyed, while others are under threat of deterioration. Although a large number of the mentioned mosques and shrines have been ruined, it is still possible to identify and describe their original spatial layouts and architectural characteristics. The selected historical religious monuments are similar to one another in terms of architectural design typical of the periods in which they were constructed. Another common feature of these mosques is that all three are located in the Sharur District. Furthermore, the pilgrimage sites mentioned have largely remained outside the focus of scholarly research to the present day.

Both the Seyidlar Pir and the Kilit Pir constitute architectural complexes. Specifically, the Seyidlar Pir consists of three separate buildings, whereas the Kilit Pir is composed of two buildings. The Seyidlar Pir complex includes two shrine structures and one rectangular-plan mosque. The Kilit Pir complex, in contrast, comprises one shrine building and one mosque structure.

To establish a structured basis for assessment, this study focuses on a selected set of mosques and pilgrimage shrines located in different districts of the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic. The cases were chosen to represent diverse religious

building types (mosque, pir, and pilgrimage complex), varying chronological ranges (16th–19th centuries), and differing levels of physical deterioration, including severely ruined examples. For each case, basic identification data (name, approximate dating, and location) were compiled together with visual documentation obtained during field recording. The resulting inventory is presented in Table 1, which summarizes the case studies and provides the corresponding figure references used throughout the findings section.

Table 1. Inventory of Case Studies (Basic Information and Visual Documentation).

No.	Site name	Building type	Dating / construction period	Location (District–Settlement)	Documentation year (photos)	Figure	Basis for dating (as stated in the text)
1	Vanand mosque	Mosque	14 th century	Ordubad District - Vanand Village	2025 (specified)	1	The colorful decorative elements on the mihrab and the architectural features characteristic of the period
2	Old Xok Mosque	Mosque	18 th century	Kangarli District - Xok Village	2025 (specified)	2	Dating based on Arabic-script inscriptions above the entrance (construction and later repair inscriptions)
3	Kurchulu Mosque	Mosque	18 th century (initial); 20 th century (later additions)	Sharur District - Kurchulu Village	2025 (specified)	3	Architectural characteristics and collected information; periodisation of later brick annex
4	Aşaqı Aralıq Mosque	Mosque	18 th -19 th centuries	Sharur District - Aşaqı Aralıq Village	2025 (specified)	4	Estimated dating based on architectural features and construction techniques; local oral accounts as supporting evidence
5	Seyids Pir Complex	Shrine / pilgrimage complex	17 th -18 th centuries	Babek District - north of Göynük Village	2025 (specified)	5,6	General architectural characteristics and historical context; multiple restoration interventions noted
6	Kilit Pir	Shrine (pir)	16 th -17 th centuries	Ordubad District - south of Kilit Village	2025 (specified)	7,8	Archaeological observations and ceramic finds in the vicinity used as chronological evidence

RESULTS

General Findings on Mosques and Shrines (Common Patterns)

The field-based documentation and descriptive comparison of the selected mosques and shrines indicate several recurring patterns regarding both architectural characteristics and preservation conditions across the Nakhchivan region. First, the cases demonstrate the continuity of regional religious architecture from the late medieval period into the 18th-19th centuries, with modest scale structures that are closely integrated into rural settlement patterns. In terms of spatial organization, the investigated mosques are generally rectangular in plan and employ relatively simple volumetric compositions, while the shrines (pirs) and the pilgrimage complex display compact building forms with interior elements associated with ritual practice, such as graves, niches, and decorated wall surfaces.

A second common pattern concerns material use and construction logic. The surveyed monuments predominantly rely on locally available masonry materials—primarily stone, supplemented by baked bricks in specific components such as wall segments, window headers, or later annexes. This mixed-material practice is observed both as an original construction strategy and, in some cases, as evidence of subsequent additions. The remains of collapsed roofs and surviving structural traces further suggest the widespread use of timber elements in roof and ceiling systems in mosques, including wooden beams and, in some examples, wooden columns that once supported flat or near-flat ceiling structures. The continuity of this timber-supported interior tradition is also consistent with previously reported regional examples of wooden-column mosque construction dating to the 17th-18th centuries.

Third, and most critically, the documentation reveals a shared vulnerability of these monuments to accelerated deterioration when routine maintenance and professional supervision are absent. Across multiple cases, the most visible indicator of advanced decay is the loss of roof integrity, which initiates rapid structural degradation. Roof collapse is typically followed by progressive wall failures, loss of masonry fabric, and the disappearance of interior architectural elements. In the most severely affected examples, the monuments have reached a stage where only partial walls or foundation-level remains survive, indicating that the threshold for urgent intervention has already been exceeded.

Another consistent observation relates to the condition of architectural and epigraphic features that carry heritage value. In several cases, inscriptions, carved wooden elements, and architecturally distinctive components (notably mihrabs in mosques) represent key carriers of historical and artistic significance. However, these elements are also among the most exposed to loss—either through physical destruction caused by collapse and weathering, or through interventions that do not adequately respect the original material and design logic. In line with the issues highlighted in the literature, the findings suggest that unprofessional repair practices can lead to a reduction in authenticity, particularly when original features are replaced with incongruent materials or altered in form and surface treatment.

Finally, the cases collectively point to the need for a systematic, evidence-based approach to preservation that goes beyond isolated repair attempts. The current condition of the monuments demonstrates that both mosques and shrines require timely documentation, technical assessment, and prioritized conservation planning. In this context, the following subsections present the case-specific results by describing each monument's architectural characteristics, dating evidence as stated in the available records and observations, and the current state of preservation as documented in the field.

The Old Xok Mosque (Kangarli District): Architectural Features and Condition Assessment

The ancient mosque located in the northern part of Xok village in the Kangarli district stands out as one of the historical-religious buildings dating back to the 18th century (Figure 2). Although the mosque is currently in an unusable condition, it is possible to imagine its original appearance based on its architectural features and remaining elements. The building is rectangular in plan and constructed in an elongated form. The entrance of the mosque is located on the south side. The roof has completely collapsed. Based on the remaining construction elements, it can be said that the roof was supported by wooden beams, and the ceiling was held up by wooden columns. The courtyard of the mosque is surrounded by a stone wall. The walls are mainly built of stone, while some parts, particularly

certain sections of the walls and window headers, are constructed with baked bricks. The window headers are completed with semicircular arches. Above the entrance door, there are two inscriptions written in Arabic script. One of these inscriptions relates to the construction of the mosque, and the other to restoration work carried out at a later period. Based on the content of the inscriptions, it is determined that the mosque was built in the 18th century. Unfortunately, this historical site has not been preserved to the present day. Currently, only the ruins of the structure remain. Such monuments are part of our national heritage, and their loss would mean the erasure of our history. Therefore, it is essential to take ownership of the mosque and implement preservation measures before it is completely destroyed.



Figure 2. Ruined state of the Old Xok Mosque (author's archive).

Kurchulu Mosque (Sharur District): Architectural Features and Condition Assessment

The historical mosque located in Kurchulu village of the Sharur district was built in the central part of the village (Figure 3). The main part of the mosque has a rectangular form and is constructed from stone materials. In later periods, an additional auxiliary building with a rectangular plan, built from bricks, was added to the structure. Two entrance doors are located on the south wall of the main building. One of these doors was intended for male visitors, and the other for female visitors. The mihrab, positioned at the centre of the qibla wall, is designed as a rectangular niche and was used to indicate the direction of prayer. A part of the mosque's partition has survived relatively well to the present day. Based on the remaining elements of the mosque in its ruined state, it can be determined that the ceiling structure was supported by wooden columns. The capitals of these columns were also made of wood, with inscriptions carved on them. Inscriptions written in Arabic script can be observed on the capitals. Based on the obtained information and architectural features, it is possible to date the initial construction of the Kurchulu Mosque to the 18th century, while later modifications and additions belong to the 20th century. This indicates that the mosque was in use for a long period and underwent functional changes over time. The internal columns of the Kurchulu Mosque have a stepped structure, similar to those in the Qıxmırlı, Qurbanlı, Xanaga, Burcunu, and Yurdcu mosques. Overall, such wooden column constructions were commonly used in many mosques built between the 17th and 18th centuries (Bayramov, 2025).

Aşağı Aralıq Mosque (Sharur District): Architectural Features and Condition Assessment

The mosque is located in Aşağı Aralıq village of the Sharur district. The historic mosque has a rectangular plan and is constructed from stone materials. The entrance is situated on the eastern side. To the left of the entrance, a later-added auxiliary building made of bricks was constructed to serve additional needs. The structure has not survived intact to the present day. The mosque's roof has completely collapsed and fallen inward. The remains of the ruined roof



Figure 3. Ruined state of the Kurchulu Mosque; 1-Entrance, 2-Auxiliary building, 3-Mihrab (author's archive).

structure, particularly the wooden beam fragments, indicate that the roof was flat (Figure 4). The doors and windows of the building are rectangular in shape. Beneath each window, there are elongated rectangular niches. The mihrab, located on the south wall, is completely destroyed, and its original location can only be determined based on its contours. There are various oral traditions among the local population regarding the construction of the mosque. These traditions can be considered an important source that reflects the role of the architectural monument in society and the way it has been valued. Based on the architectural features and construction techniques, it is estimated that the mosque was built between the 18th and 19th centuries. Currently, only the ruins of this building remain. It is among the historical-religious monuments in need of preservation and is noteworthy as part of the national cultural heritage.



Figure 4. Ruined state of the Aşaqı Aralıq Mosque (author's archive).

The Seyids Pir Complex (Babek District): Architectural Features and Condition Assessment

The Seyid Pir is a pilgrimage complex consisting of three structures built in close proximity to one another, located on a mountain slope to the north of Göynük village (Figure 5). The entrances of these structures face south, and their internal layout is organized in accordance with Islamic religious principles, featuring numerous burial sites. The interior wall surfaces are decorated with religious inscriptions, depictions associated with Islamic sacred figures, and

various illustrative elements with different narrative themes. The complex is not only a religious-functional space but also a sacred centre where significant rituals are performed within the belief system of the local population. Residents of surrounding villages visit this pir, offer sacrifices, and make vows there in the hope that their prayers will be fulfilled. Pilgrims customarily tie pieces of cloth and scarves of various colours to trees around the pir and to areas near the structures, symbolically expressing their wishes. In the northwestern part of the complex, there is also a small shrine with a rectangular plan, constructed by stacking natural rock fragments.



Figure 5. View of the three structures within the Seyids Pir Complex (author's archive).

This site, like the other structures, is associated with the tradition of pilgrimage. Existing ethnographic and architectural studies indicate that the structures forming the Seyids Pir Complex were built over the graves of sacred individuals and, in this respect, correspond to the classical concept of a pir. As the pir buildings have undergone multiple restorations, their exterior and interior appearances have been completely altered. The remains of an ancient Muslim cemetery located near the complex have survived to the present day, further reinforcing the religious and historical significance of the area. Based on its general architectural characteristics and historical context, the Seyids Pir may be dated to the 17th–18th centuries. The buildings within the pir have currently been reconstructed (Figure 6). During the renovation of the Seyids Pir in Göynük village of Babek District, restoration and repair works were carried out in a new style, without taking into account the original architectural style and construction materials of the shrines previously located there.



Figure 6. View of the three structures within the Seyids Pir Complex (author's archive).

The Kilit Pir (Ordubad District): Architectural Features and Condition Assessment

The Kilit Pir is located in a hilly area to the south of Kilid village, which is part of the Ordubad District of the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic. The entrance of the monument is situated on the eastern side. The principal structure of the pir is a small building with a rectangular plan. Small rectangular niches set into the wall surfaces emphasize both the functional and decorative qualities of the space. The placement of lamps, presumed to date to the medieval period, within these niches indicates that religious ceremonies and pilgrimage rituals were conducted at the site. The grave located at the centre of the structure most likely belongs to an individual regarded as sacred and venerated by the local population. Archaeological observations carried out in the area revealed ceramic specimens of various forms and techniques around the pir (Figure 7). On the basis of these ceramic materials, the initial construction of the Kilit Pir is dated to the 16th–17th centuries. The uncovered materials provide valuable information about both the chronological framework of the monument and the religious-architectural traditions that existed in the region. In terms of both its architectural characteristics and functional purpose, the Kilit Pir is considered one of the typical representatives of medieval pilgrimage shrines in the Nakhchivan region (Figure 8). The hilly geographical setting in which it is located further enhances the shrine's spiritual and symbolic significance.



Figure 7. Interior of Kilit Pir (author's archive)

Figure 8. Exterior of Kilit Pir (author's archive).

Comparative Summary of Case Studies (Table-Based Comparison)

This subsection synthesizes the case-specific findings presented in Sections 4.2-4.6 and provides a comparative overview of the preservation status of the investigated mosques and shrines. To enable a consistent cross-case reading, the assessment focuses on observable indicators reported in the field documentation and descriptive analyses, including roof integrity, overall structural continuity, and the condition of key architectural and epigraphic elements (e.g., mihrabs, inscriptions, niches, and interior features). The resulting summary is presented in Table 2, which consolidates the principal condition characteristics of each monument and outlines the corresponding level of urgency for conservation action based on the current state described in this study.

This table provides a qualitative classification based on the field observations and descriptive architectural reading reported in the text; the "overall condition class" and "urgency level" assessments were determined primarily by considering roof integrity, structural continuity, and the preservation status of key heritage elements.

Table 2. Condition Assessment Summary of the Investigated Monuments.

No	Site	Building type	Roof condition	Wall / structural integrity	Key elements (mihrab / inscriptions / niches)	Evidence of later interventions	Overall condition class	Urgency level
1	Old Xok Mosque	Mosque	Completely collapsed	Only ruins remain; building is unusable	Two Arabic-script inscriptions above entrance (reported); interior elements largely lost	Not specified beyond inscription indicating later repair	Ruin / near-total loss	Immediate
2	Kurchulu Mosque	Mosque	Not preserved (ruined); original timber-supported ceiling inferred from remains	Substantial ruin: some interior partition survives relatively well	Mihrab described as rectangular niche (reported); wooden column capitals with Arabic inscriptions (reported)	Brick auxiliary annex added in later period (20 th c.)	Severely deteriorated / partial survival	Immediate
3	Aşaqı Aralıq Mosque	Mosque	Completely collapsed inward	Only ruins remain; major loss of fabric	Mihrab completely destroyed; niches below windows reported	Later-added brick auxiliary building	Ruin / near-total loss	Immediate
4	Seyids Pir Complex	Shrine / pilgrimage complex	Reconstructed (present condition not described as collapsed)	Buildings currently reconstructed; original fabric and appearance altered	Interior wall surfaces decorated with religious inscriptions and depictions (reported)	Multiple restorations; reconstruction in a new style not respecting original materials/style	Physically present but authenticity compromised	Short-term (documentation and conservation control)
5	Kılıt Pir	Shrine (pir)	Not reported as collapsed	Small rectangular structure; appears standing based on description	Wall niches: lamps presumed medieval; central grave (reported)	Not specified	Standin / requires monitoring	Mid-term (preventive conservation)

CONCLUSION

Research shows that the Nakhchivan region is rich in mosques and shrines. These religious architectural monuments provide insights into different pages of our history and demonstrate that, throughout various periods, architecture in Azerbaijan, including Nakhchivan, developed and acquired its own distinctive characteristics. As tangible records of cultural continuity, they also reveal how local building traditions and regional craftsmanship were shaped by historical, social, and environmental contexts over time. The various construction techniques and ornamental details employed in these religious monuments reflect the mastery of architectural practice and refined artistic taste of Azerbaijani people. In addition to their formal and material qualities, these buildings constitute an important documentary source for architectural historiography, particularly when considered together with their spatial organization, structural solutions, and surviving decorative elements.

The inscriptions preserved on these monuments are likewise of great value for studying architectural history and for tracing the social and political developments of the periods in which they were produced or later repaired. Such epigraphic evidence contributes not only to dating and attribution, but also to understanding patronage, restoration histories, and the cultural meanings attributed to these religious spaces. In this regard, the preservation of

mosques and shrines together with their architectural styles, patterns, material integrity, and inscriptions, is of critical importance. Ensuring the protection of these monuments and providing consistent professional supervision over them remains an essential task. Accordingly, the participation of qualified specialists, the adoption of a scientifically grounded approach, and compliance with relevant regulatory standards are necessary during any restoration and repair interventions in order to prevent irreversible loss of authenticity. Each of these historical monuments represents our past and our history; therefore, their disappearance or distortion would not only weaken the continuity of cultural memory, but also pose serious problems for our future.

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