Bagdad: de Wright a Venturi
(1952-1982)
Baghdad. Images and Memories

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The name “Baghdad” evokes different impressions; some are linked with the political situation which the city is experiencing, and some are related to its historical and cultural past, not to mention its legendary nights and fairy tales. All these impressions rise from the long life of the city, which is full of great events in its far and near history, varying from golden, glorious, and prosperous periods, to periods of wars and disasters that destroyed a great deal of its urban structure, architecture, and economy. But memories of all the images of the city are kept in time, the real, and the imaginary ones, those of which traces are still standing in its streets and those which live in its culture, symbols and traditions. We will travel with Baghdad in time and space while these images unfold. The first image may be the least expected, as it not widely mentioned even in the well-known history of Baghdad.

Baghdad of Mesopotamia

It is an image of a large plot of fertile land situated in the middle of the valley of the two rivers, the Tigris and the Euphrates, in their closest point to each other, where Man and Nature linked them with small canals and waterways flowing from the Euphrates to the Tigris, in which other waterways from the eastern bank also discharge. On this plane surrounded with water, human settlements appeared, a long time ago, and as Richard Cock says in his book, Baghdad, the City of Peace, «It would be strange that this thing doesn't take place, as Mesopotamia has been inhabited by wealthy and most of its cities grew on the banks of great rivers which are the source of welfare to the country, the people of Mesopotamia always lived close to the rivers...»1. These settlements appeared clearly in the first centuries AD, so we see number of villages and small towns linked with water ways and canals on both sides of Tigris.

The huge agricultural activity and transportation of goods resulted in much movement of trade, as we find a market called Baghdad on the western bank of the Tigris mentioned in the historical writings of the early 7th century. The historian Yagut Al Hamawi writes that, «The people of Al Hira' mentioned to the Islamic leader Al Muthana Bin Haritha Al Shaibani, that there was a great market in a nearby city where merchants from Persia Madaen2 Al Sawad3 land gather ... so he went there and
conquered it» (after Al Hamawi, Jawad and Susa, 1958, p.14). This shows that the Baghdad market was not local, but regional, which confirms what the historian said about the area of Baghdad being a connection point between east and west, before the advent of sea routes, as it was on the way for convoys between India, Persia, Iraq and the Mediterranean sea (Jawad and Susan, 1958, p.16), most likely as part of the famous Silk Road.

There was another market called Al Thulatha, on the eastern bank of the Tigris, where a temporary market for the people of Kilwatha was held on a certain Tuesday of every month, into which merchants of all nearby regions used to come. Kilwatha was the name of the area in the middle of the eastern bank of the Tigris (the area covers parts of the districts of Sadoon and Kardan now).

Although the name Baghdad appears linked with certain settlements and human activities in the first centuries AD, it is far more ancient than that in time. According to historical documents, a city by the name of Baghdad has existed since Hammurabi’s time (1792-1750 BC), and a region of the name Baghdadi has been mentioned in a tablet in the time of Kassite King Nazimaruttash (1316-1341 BC), and in another tablet of the time of King Marduk-Apla-iddina (Merodach-Balabdan) (1176-1164 BC). The name (Bak-dan-dan) is mentioned in one of the campaigns of the Assyrian king Tiglath. Pilaster the first (Al Jabiri, 2002, p.20), and his son Ashared-apal-ekur, had also conquered a city named Baghdad.

In modern Baghdad, around the area of the Bab Al Muadham bridge, on both banks of the river, bricks with the engraving of the symbol of the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar the second (605-562 BC) were found. But all these signs and excavations do not give us clear idea on the type of settlement called Baghdad whether it was a city, a fortification, or just protective walls.

Despite its historical origins, the word Baghdad itself continued to be mysterious, inspiring many interpretations, as some considered it taken from Baal-dan meaning the city of Baal (the City of the Sun God), others saw it taken from a Chaldaean word (Beldad), as “Bel” is a name of the Chaldaean god and “adad” is an ancient word meaning “to destroy”. According to those historians the name denotes a big battle of King Nebuchadnezzar, while other historians see the name as Aramaic, justifying their idea by the fact that the people inhabiting the
area before the building of the round city were Aramaic, with their villages and a large number of monasteries, and accordingly the name is composed of two parts, “hr” the preposition which comes in the beginning of many Aramaic names (like Baguba, Bashiqa, etc.) meaning “house”, and “Kada” meaning sheep, so the name means house of sheep, denoting the agricultural nature of the area, where the market of Baghdad rose in which the trading of sheep was common in earlier times. Other historians saw it coming from Persian origin “Begh-dady” meaning “the idol gave me” or “Begh Dathwieh” meaning the gift of Dathwieh (Jawad et al., 1969, p. 16). However, a different theory is mentioned in the tales of English travellers, the group known by “Purchas and his pilgrimages”, which link the name with a monk who had the name Baghdad, and he, according to Bicasen, had a church in a land of the same name (Cock, 1962, p. 20).

Within the area of modern Baghdad there are sites of widely excavated Mesopotamian civilizations: the first site is situated to the south-east of the modern city in the district of Baghdad Al Jadida (new Baghdad), the site of Tel Harmal or Tel Mohamed, which was part of the kingdom of Eshnunna, spreading from Baghdad to modern day Baguba, where the capital city Eshnunna in Tel Asmar to the east of the Dyala river was located. Eshnunna was an independent state during the long rule of the old Babylonian dynasty (1894-1594 BC), and it continued to exist until the 32rd year of Hammurabi’s reign when he merged it with his own kingdom. The analysis of tablets found in Tel Harmal showed that they contained written laws; their date of origin makes them the first in history, as they are earlier than Hammurabi’s code by about 200 years, (Jawad and Susa, 1938, p.38). Other findings contained tablets with mathematical and geometrical subjects, among which is a theory related to that of Pythagoras, predating its Greek equivalent by some 1000 years. On the site of Tel Harmal there was a small rectangular city, with all its buildings, including six old southern Babylonian style temples; walls were of mud bricks, and in the temples there were statues of lions made of pottery. Many historians see Tel Harmal as a library (or cornucopia) of sorts for ancient documents because all types of documents were found there; receipts for trade, contracts, marriage contracts, checks, inheritance documents, and tax documents, beside the aforementioned geometrical and mathematical documents. In Tel Harmal advanced astrological documents were also found, which were the first to be used in history, by the people of Mesopotamia, as they used astrological information in their daily lives and transportation.7

On the western side of the Tigris is another Mesopotamian site in modern day Agaruf, belonging to the Kassite country Dur Kurigalzu, which was built in the early 15th century BC; its agricultural lands were irrigated by a canal that links the Euphrates (from southern Fallujah) with the Tigris (to the south of Baghdad); from this, several other small canals irrigated the whole agricultural land on the west bank of the Tigris in the Baghdad area. In the site of Agaruf, several conservation projects have taken place, and a large part of Agaruf’s ziggurat is still standing, with other ruins and graves nearby.

In the whole area of modern Baghdad, among the remains of former civilizations, the villages and small cities of the first centuries AD grew with great agricultural and commerce activities. This calm but active image of the area was about to face its biggest challenge in history, when it was chosen by the Abbasid Caliph Abu Jafar Al Mansoor as his capital.
Before moving on to that period of Baghdad’s history, it must be observed that most of the places and sites already existed at this point, and then developed and adapted new roles in later ages, as we will see in the coming images of Baghdad.

**Baghdad the City of Peace**

Let us move now to the time of Al Mansoor the second caliph of the Abbasid Empire, which ruled the Islamic world starting in 750 AD. The empire rose with the caliph Abu Al Abbas Al Safah who ruled for a short time before his death; then the reign of Caliph Al Mansoor began, so he returned to Al Kufa, making it the capital of the Abbasid empire. But a great empire ruling almost half of the known world should have an appropriately grand capital, so the caliph began investigating several sites, and after consulting his assistants and meeting with a number of citizens, he decided that the area of Baghdad was the most suitable. The land of a farm called Al Mubarak (meaning the blessed) was chosen to build a fortified round city, with a palace for Al Mansoor in its centre. The caliph chose the name «The City of Peace» (Madinat Al Salam) for his capital.²

Besides the political, strategic, and geographical qualities of the site justifying its choice as the new capital, a story emerges, a legendary dimension of Baghdad’s life. The story is that there were among the people whom the Caliph asked about the site some monks who told him that it was written in their old books that in this site close to their monastery a king named «Miglas» would build a great city. Al Mansoor hearing that, remembered and told the story that he as a kid was called Miglas, in reference to some childish act, and the decision of the site was final (Cock, trans. by Jamil and Jawad, 1962, p. 32).

The owners of the land were well paid, and the circumference of the city was lit by fire so that the Caliph could recognize the layout; after he saw the layout from a nearby building³ and approved it, the construction started on the 30th of July 762 AD. After all Diwans (state administrations) were moved, on the 1st of August 766 AD, to the City of Peace, it was declared the capital of the Islamic empire in its glorious age. The city was surrounded by a moat and three walls; the outer with a height of 17m; the middle, and most important, had a height of 30m with balconies and watchtowers. Then there came a circular area with radial alleys for the neighbourhoods of statesmen and army leaders; last was the third wall, surrounding an open central area with the palace of the golden door (as the palace of Al Mansoor was called due to one of its gold doors) in its centre; adjacent to the palace was the central mosque. The main feature of the palace was a huge 40m dome roofing the central two royal courts in two floors. The great walls had four bent gates, and long entrances with spaces on both sides leading to the city’s two main radial streets which intersected exactly in the centre.

The outer gates were linked with roads going to the nearby villages which grew to be urban districts; the most important of them was the Karkh village which became the commercial district having all the markets of the whole area. Among these were the markets, which were moved out of the round city as they grew noisy, causing discomfort to the fortified city. The Al Karkh district grew so large that it covered the whole area to the south of Baghdad, which denoted the area of the round city and its surroundings.

On the eastern bank of the Tigris, a new district was built by Al Mehdi (the son of caliph Al Mansoor, who later became Caliph Al Mehdi) with a palace
and a mosque more architecturally elaborate than Al Mansoor’s mosque itself: it was called Al Rusafa. Within the areas around the circular city as an urban centre, and the two big districts, large pieces of lands were given to Al Mansoor’s relatives, army leaders, statesmen; many palaces and villas were built there. Among them was Al Khuld palace which became famous due to the luxurious wedding party of Caliph Haroon Al Rasheed and Zubaída. There were also the Issa palace, belonging to Issa, Al Mansoor’s uncle, Zubaída’s own palace Al Qarar, and many other smaller palaces and villas.

With its urban components, building styles, population density (the population of Baghdad that time was around one million), and human activities, Baghdad had developed into a big metropolis, inhabited by people of different nationalities and religions within the overall authority of Arab nationality and the Islamic religion. The city continued to grow after Al Mansoor’s time, when Caliphs Al Mecht and Al Hadi ruled, and it reached its peak with the golden age of Haroon Al Rasheed.

The architectural style of Baghdad’s buildings at that time can be analyzed from their descriptions in historical documents and books; the architectural style which appeared in the city of Al Hira was based on an open central courtyard surrounded by arcades separating it from the inward looking spaces; among them, there were the iwans which are spaces larger in scale, fully open from the courtyard side, vaulted with pointed vaults (a main feature of the Abbasid style) with smaller spaces on both sides. The main features, among which were also domes covering important spaces and well-elaborated ornamentations, were all composed with the unique proportions of the Abbasid Islam.

Baghdad at that time had unique sanitary facilities and policies, for which Cock says it was better than that of the city in early 20th century, as the markets, open spaces and public areas were washed, and garbage was taken out of the city everyday (Cock, trans. Jamil and Jawad, 1962, p. 74). Gradually the name City Of Peace disappeared, and Baghdad prevailed to be the name of the whole metropolis; the west bank of the river took the name of Karkh, while the east bank took the name Rusafa.

Baghdad: Dar Al Khilafa, a New Urban Centre

In Haroon Al Rasheed’s life, a hidden struggle arose as to which of his two sons should be the crown prince, Al Amin or Al Mamooon. It was finally decided that it would be Al Amin, but as soon as he was declared the Caliph after Al Rasheed’s death in 809 AD, the struggle between the two brothers took new dimensions and reached the point of military confrontation when the army of the followers of Al Mamooon attacked Baghdad, destroying several palaces and parts of the walls of the round city; Al Amin’s army was defeated, and the Caliph himself was killed. This event marks the first destruction due to an act of war in the history of Baghdad, after which the circle ceased to be the Caliphate’s house, as Al Mamooon, being the new Caliph, decided to move to the eastern bank of the Tigris, to live in Al Hassani (Al Jafarî) palace, making it the royal palace until another was built in the same area.

Al Hassani palace became as famous as Al Khuld’s palace, due to an extremely lavish wedding party that took place there: it was Al Mamoon’s wedding to «Boran», the daughter of his minister, Al Hassan Bin Sahl. In spite of some destruction Baghdad’s buildings and walls, the urban and cultural life of the city continued to grow and develop, making it the heart of the world for centuries.

Many palaces and buildings around this palace were built, forming a royal complex called Dar Al Khilafa (house of Caliphate), which became the new urban centre of Baghdad on the eastern bank of the Tigris.

Al Mamooon died suddenly in 833 AD, and was succeeded by his other brother Al Mutasim, who wanted to establish a new capital where his army, mostly coming from Asia Minor, could dwell without bothering the people of Baghdad; so, he went north and built the city of Samarra, on a high cliff on the eastern bank of the Tigris, 60km to the north of Baghdad. Samara became the capital of the Abbasid Empire for only around half a century, as the Caliphate was brought back to Baghdad by Caliph Al Mutathed in 892 AD. The first Mutathed’s royal
At the beginning of the 10th century the new urban image of Baghdad had developed, with old neighbourhoods like Kilwatha, al Mukharam and Al Thulatha market growing around the new centre, forming districts within other new developing districts; this urban image has its traces in modern Baghdad, in what came to be the historical centre of the city.

Before the caliphate was brought back to Baghdad, Al Musta'een, one of the last caliphs to rule in Samarra, tried to return to Baghdad to get rid of the interference of army leaders and their growing authority. He did so, surrounding the whole eastern bank of the Tigris with walls, known as Al Musta'een walls, but those leaders followed him, attacked the city, destroyed the new walls, and killed the caliph. In the attack, a large part of the old district of Rusafa was destroyed also, including al Mehid's palace and mosque. In this district, there was an old Zoroastrian cemetery in which Imam Abi Hanifa Al Numaan, the founder of the Al Hanafi doctrine in Islam, who died a year after the foundation of the round city and was one of the supervisors of its construction, was buried. In the same cemetery, Al Kaizuran, Al Rasheed's mother, was also buried, after whom the cemetery was known for a short time. Later, a mosque was built with the name of Imam Abi Haifa, who was called Al Imam Al Adham (the greatest Imam); his name dominated over time, and the district which grew around the cemetery and the mosque was known as Adhamiya. This is the same Adhamiya of today.

In 799 AD Imam Musa Al Kadhum died in Baghdad as well. He was buried in a cemetery at the north of the round city that used to be called Quraisheh cemetery (or small Shona'i). In the same cemetery other famous people were buried too. Among them there was Jaafar, the eldest son of Al Mansoor, who died in 767 AD, and Zubahida, Al Rasheed's wife, who died in 831 AD. In 834 AD Imam Mohammed Al Jawad, the grandson of Al Kadhum, died and was buried with his grandfather in the same cemetery, which grew in time and through different stages to become a great shrine for the two Imams, called Al Kadhum or Al Kadhumain shrine, around which a large district
grew, taking the name Kadhumia. This is also the same Kadhumia of today. The city of Baghdad began to grow in organically around Dar Al Khilafa from three sides while it was connected with Al Karkh district on the other bank of the river by a bridge of boats.

Although the urban growth was organic in nature, it kept the basic paths and nodes which existed long before the rise of the round city. At the same time, it was appropriate with new activities and urban relationships, as Dar Al Khilafa integrated with other religious buildings (mosques and religious schools) forming a civic and religious centre, around which specialized markets developed and expanded to new areas which still exist until today, having the same land use. The most important of those markets was the *raikanen souq* (meaning perfume market), situated in Shorja district, which is one of the most important commercial districts in Baghdad.

Another urban structure had developed within the compact fabric and gradation of urban paths: the neighbourhood, having its own centre represented by the mosque and the *souq* (market), containing buildings such as schools, libraries, public baths, hospitals and the main common area composed of compact, inward looking houses in narrow alleyways.

In spite of the fact that there is nothing left of the architecture of the early Abbasid period, the basic urban structure of the city which grew out of actual needs and spatial possibilities, providing it with capability of survival until the 20th century, enables us to understand and learn of its styles and relationships, which started to change drastically with the modernity of the 20th century. Similar to the balanced urban growth of Baghdad was the urban growth of the Kadhumia and Adhamiya districts, evolving into small independent cities, re-linked with Baghdad after the establishment of the new state of Iraq.

The main features of housing at that period can easily be determined because of its continuity through the ages in the style known as the Baghdadi house, the inward looking house with three completely detached sides, and one almost solid side looking in on the narrow alley with the open central courtyard being the social and functional heart, which is surrounded by other spaces in two main vertical levels and other levels in between, like *serdabs* (basements), which are climatically more suitable to use in hot arid weather, and another level between the upper floors. Those spaces are not functionally distinguished, but typologically. For
instance, sleeping could be in the serdab, or on the roof in the summer season, and in second floor rooms in winter, while almost all the domestic activities can take place in the open courtyard.  

The main characteristics of the urban structure of the city are its mass/space relationships and path distribution. The main features of the house did not begin in the Abbasid period, but date back in time to Mesopotamian origins, especially the historic city of Ur. Additionally, the inward looking plan and tripartite layout existed in Mesopotamian building types (Warren and Fethi, 1982, p. 19).

There is in the city of Ur an excavated house which the historians and archaeologists studied and considered to be Profit Ibrahim’s house; its main features are not much different than those of the Baghdadi house. It was in these alleys and neighbourhoods that the people of Baghdad lived a prosperous and lavish life, the image of which was closer to the imagination than to the reality lived by Baghdadis when their city, called then Um Al Dunia (Mother of the World), ruled the world. Stories were told, generation after generation, of mixing imagination with reality, thus giving the city a legendary dimension conveyed to the world with the rapture of one thousand and one nights.
The Legend and beyond

Important characters participated in the drawing of the legendary image of Baghdad and its establishments; the first is Caliph Al Mansoor, an administratively strong character, whom the historians consider the real founder of the Abbasid Empire. Soon after building his new capital he reorganized the civil administrations of the state, changing the previous Umayyad ways to permanent civil service systems, with a minister being consultant to the caliph. He also initiated several Diwans (resembling ministries). The royal palace and courts had strict sophisticated ceremonies and orders, full of symbolic and religious rituals, giving an authoritative yet respectful image to the position of the caliph and the government, as Al Mansoor realized that a large empire spreading from China to Iberia must have dominant religious and civil symbols of power. So, afterwards, Al Mansoor and the caliphs ruled and consorted with people of high aristocracy, transferred from royal courts to the Baghdadi houses and lives (Cock, trans. by Jamil and Jawad, 1962, p. 32). Then comes the character linked to legendary Baghdad, the caliph who ruled when money gathered in Baghdad from all over the world, Haroon Al Rasheed.

Elaborate irrigation systems yielded crops not only to feed the citizens but also to export to other places, and the great size of the empire with no boundaries encouraged active commerce, so Baghdad’s markets were full of goods from all over the world. Urban activities accumulated in the big metropolis, and the rush toward Baghdad was at its peak, while the city’s palaces had life full of banquets and parties. Thus, it is no wonder that the stories of Arabian nights are told as having taken place in Al Rasheed’s time, when we read what was documented on his wedding party with Zubaida, «It had an unprecedented number and type of silverware, furnishings, perfumes, jewels, a vest of pearls was made for Zubaida, enormous numbers of people were invited, and gold trays were being filled with Darahim (money), perfumes and luxury goods, and distributed among guests…» (Jawad and others, 1969, p. 28). It is no wonder, either, to see gardens of gold and silver in the legendary fairy tales, reading that Dar Al Khilafa had a palace called «the Tree House», which had a tree in a pool in its garden made of silver, with 18 branches, on which there were statues of birds of gold, silver and jewels (Jawad and others, 1969, p. 32). It is no wonder also that those real characters get mixed in the stories with the imaginary characters, those who live with the Baghdadis in their stories and dreams as well as in their streets and piazzas. In the royal courts of Al Rasheed, poetry had a unique presence; the reputation of the great poets of that time competed with the reputation of the Caliphs themselves; among those was the great poet of love and wine, Abu Nuas (whose statue stands in Baghdad today in the street which holds his name). Also there was Abu Al Attahia, the poet of asceticism, both friends of Al Rasheed himself. Like poetry, music flourished in Al Rasheed’s courts. Singers like Ibrahim Al Moosily and Issac Al Moosily
performed the finest music, and from those courts, the musician Zeryab took Baghdad's melodies to Andalusia.

The age of luxury of Al Rasheed was preceded by the cultural age of Al Mamoon, whose courts were full of thinkers, scientists, and philosophers. Al Mamoon had turned a house of learning established by Al Rasheed called Dar Al Hikma (House of Wisdom) into a huge cultural centre, bringing to it all kinds of books of all languages, choosing the most experienced translators, and commissioning them to translate those works to the best of their ability; he was very generous with them as it was documented that he used to give the translators the weight of what they translated in gold. As Al Mamoon entered into relations with the emperors of Byzantium, he gave them rich gifts, while they gave him in return the books of philosophy which they had in their possession. He also brought the Indian, Chinese, Persian, and Syriac books to be translated in Dar Al Hikma.

Al Mamoon, a lover of knowledge, used to hold a saloon every Tuesday: the learned men of diverse fields were shown into a chamber, tables were brought in laden with food and drink; when the repast was finished, the servants fetched braziers of incense, and the guests perfumed themselves, and then they were admitted to the Caliph; after discussion and debates, a second meal was served. Although the Abbasid Caliphs were very strict against any thought that put their rule in danger, the overall cultural atmosphere was open minded; as a result many schools of thought arose, scientific work was encouraged, people of culture became elites of the society, and gradually culture moved from the royal courts to the Baghdad's houses, as people commissioned translators of their own.

In Baghdad's libraries and public spaces, Roman laws, Greek philosophy, Syriac theology, Chinese medicine, and Persian and Indian Sophism met. Scholars of Baghdad made original and important contributions, and corrected previous astronomical data, built the world's first observatory, and developed the astrolabe. In medicine they experienced with diet, drugs, and surgery. Doctors like Jibril and Johana became famous for their advanced medical methods. Similar contributions were made in anatomy and chemistry. Arab sailors travelled long distances, they invented the marine compass, and they could measure the earth's perimeter. From Baghdad, Al Khwarizmi pioneered the study of Algebra, introducing the sign, co-sign, and tangent to the world, and great philosophers like Al Kindi, Al Ghazali, Al Farabi (who was called the second master, keeping the first place for Plato), wrote on all philosophical subjects, while in geography the world kept teaching Al Idrissi's maps and his seven regions (Cock, trans. by Jamil and Jawad, 1962, pp. 113-119).

Baghdad was also famous for its own school of painting, pioneered by Al Wasiti. Today we find manuscripts of drawings, especially of Al Hariari magams (which are long poems describing everyday life), of the Baghdadi schools in museums all over the world, and at that glorious age, merchants, business men, and scholars rushed to Baghdad to study and work.

The Walled city

Returning to Baghdad, Caliph Al Mutathed had re-established the Diwans in Dar Al Khilafa, laid the foundation for a grand palace called Al Taj palace (the Crown), whose construction his son, Caliph Al Muktafi, carried out to become the official caliphate palace in the Dar Al Khilafa. It was situated to the south of Al Hassani palace, and its river front elevation had five vaults, looking on an open space by the river supported by retaining walls giving it a shape similar to a crown (Jawad and Susa, 1958, p. 126). Several courts roofed by domes were built in Dar Al Khilafa also, among them one called Al Himar dome (Donkey dome), because it used to be reached climbing on a donkey, on a round ramp like that of the Malwiya minaret in Samarra city. Reassuring the great image of Dar Al Khilafa, some historians said that when Al Muktafi had in his stables, before he died, 9,000 horses and camels, and later in the reign of Caliph Al Mughtader (908-932 AD) new buildings were added.
to the complex, among them the tree house described previously.

It was at that time that the Abbasid caliphate started to weaken, gradually, which made it possible to be defeated in 961 AD by the Buwayhids, led by Mu’izz ad-Dawla, who ruled the empire under the name of the Abbasid Caliphs but exercised full authority. While the Buwayhids were the real rulers of the state, the Caliphs spent their time building palaces, but unfortunately little is known of their architecture, and little was also known of the architecture of the great palace which had the name Al Dar Al Muzia (the Muzi house), built by Mu’izz ad-Dawla, to the north of Baghdad on the eastern side of the river (situated in the modern Sulaikh district). Historical information on this architecture is rare because historians recording how great a lavish building were, skipped the information on the architectural style and details (except for the historian Al Khatib Al Baghdadi who lived in the Buwayhid period but described the building of the round city in the time of Caliph Al Mansoor). What is only documented is that the steel doors of the round city were pulled off to be put in Al Muzi palace, and that many of the palaces of Samara were demolished to make use of their building materials for building the palace. Another palace was built there by the minister of Mu’izz ad-Dawla with a plaza known as Sebekatakina plaza (close to the modern Sarafiyah bridge), which later became (after many additions by prince Adhud ad-Dawla in 978 AD), the official royal Buwayhid palace. Adhud ad-Dawla, who was famous for the many buildings he made, also built a hospital known as Al Marestan Al Adhudi (Adhudi hospital) on the site of the old Al Khulul palace on the western bank of the Tigris, around which a market with the name Souq Al Marestan (Marestan market) grew. Between the years 946-974 AD several other palaces were built, such as Dar Al Tawwis (Peacock house), Al Dar Al Murabba (Square house), and Al Dar Al Muthamana, of which very little is known.
The city kept its urban structure but some new neighbourhoods rose, like the one in which the royal Buwayhid palace was built, in the northern part of Baghdad (nowadays the Waziyia district), and also there was some destruction in other places, noted by historians, especially those palaces which were demolished to make use of their building materials (Jawad and Susa, 1958, p. 149). After the reign of Adhud ad Dawla, the Buwayhids weakened and soon were conquered by the Seljuks who came from central Asia, in 1055 AD, and ruled also under the name of the Abbasid Caliphs. The Seljuks enlarged the royal palace and built new palaces to the south of it. One of them became the official palace of Sultan Malik Shah, the greatest of their Sultans, when he came to Baghdad in 1086 AD. They also built the mosque known as the Sultan Mosque in 1092 AD, but the most important of their buildings was the Al Nidhamia school, which was built in the neighborhood of Souq Al Thulatha during the reign of Sultan Alp Arsalan, Malik Shah’s father. In 1094 AD, while the state was at its weakest point, Caliph Al Mustadher began to build a wall around the whole eastern city. It was completed during the reign of Al Mutasrid (1118-1135 AD), renewed in 1229 AD, and still existed until the late 19th century. The wall had four gates, a northern one, situated in the now Bab Al Muadham district, called Bab Al Sultan (Sultan gate), but took the name Bab Al Muadham later, as did the district close by; to the south of it there was a market called Souq Al Sultan, which later expanded until it reached Souq Al Thulatha (the Haiderkhana and Bab Al Agha districts now). There was an eastern gate to the wall, called Bab Al Halaba (Race course gate), as it was close to a race course that existed in that area, (Bab Al Sheikh, Nahdha area now); the gate was called Tulusim gate, too, it was renewed by Caliph Al Nasir in 1221 AD, and a watchtower was added to it. The gate existed until 1917 when the Ottomans withdrawing from Baghdad destroyed it. To the north of Tulusim gate there was another gate called Bab Al Thufriya (Thufriya gate), known also as Bab Al Wastami (the Middle gate); it is the only gate still standing till today. The fourth gate was to the south, called Bab Al Babia (Baslia gate), and used to be called Bab Kilwatha (Kilwatha gate), as it leads to the old Kilwatha village (Jawad and Susa, 1958, p. 162). Close to it, according to historian Yaqub Al Hamawi, an Abbasid neighbourhood was built in the reign of Al Murtad, its site is known as the Bab Al Sharji area now. The gate was used by the British in their early time in Iraq as a church called St. George, but it was demolished by Amanat Al Asima (the Municipality) later, to enlarge the Tahrir square. In 1165 AD, Sheikh Abdul Qader Al Kailani, former of the Qadiri doctrine, who lived and taught in a mosque (which was a school previously), situated in the Abbasid Bab Al Azj neighbourhood, died, and was buried in the same mosque which became a shrine to him. Later in the Ottoman period a tika (a sleeping place for visitors) was added to it, and in time the neighbourhood took the name Bab Al Sheikh after him and his shrine.

The negative situation of Baghdad in the 11th century started to improve a little in the late 12th century, when the Abbasids got rid of the Seljuks, while in the early 13th century we see many reforming actions taken by the Caliphs, especially Al Nasir and Al Mustansir, who tried to bring some of its old glory back to Baghdad. However, the most important things they made were their buildings, which are now the oldest still existing architectural pieces of Baghdad: the Al Mustansirya school built...
by Al Mustansir, the Al Musanat Al Nasiriyah palace (known today as the Abbasid palace), built by Al Nasir, and the tomb of Zumurid Khutan (Al Nasir’s mother) which is mistakenly known as the Zubaiaa tomb, beside the previously mentioned minaret of Souq Al Ghazel (the minaret of Khulafa mosque).

In between the architectural style of Samarra palaces, and the architectural style of late Abbasid buildings, lay the (absent) architecture of Baghdad. In late Abbasid architecture we can see the well developed Hiri style, as the courtyards took on new scales and dimensions, proportions of pointed arches (which are unique in Abbasid architecture), iwans, entrances, elevation compositions and ornamentations have been elaborated, precisely and delicately. The cylindrical forms of minarets and their vertical components acquired their stylistic character, and the use of Arabic calligraphy and murexenes elements reached their peak. Urbanistically speaking, walling the city restricted its expansion, adding to its compactness and high building density, while vertically the buildings had two floors of height, giving the city which is situated on flat land, a horizontal skyline, penetrated only by domes and minarets, an image of Baghdad which lasted till almost the 1950s.

But, in the 13th century, in spite of the reforms by the late Caliphs, Baghdad faced its greatest event in history, when the Mongol armies, lead by Hulaku, (the grandson of Genghis Khan), reached it after sweeping through the cities of the east one by one, entering Baghdad on the 10th of February, 1258. The city then fell under different occupations for centuries, until 1921 when one of the sons of Sharif Hussain of Hijaz Faisal the First, was crowned to be the King of the modern state of Iraq. Hulaku’s attack was described by historians as a severe, drastic, merciless attack which destroyed so many buildings, and caused the burning of a large number of books. However, the real destruction lay in the moral and symbolic fall of Baghdad as a capital of the Islamic world.

The Ilkhaniid Mongols then ruled Baghdad from 1258 till 1340 when the Jalayrid Mongols took over the city. In 1392, Timurlang, descending from Turkistan, invaded Baghdad and the city once again suffered sack and ruin, which some historians considered worse than Hulaku’s (Cock, trans. by Jamil and Jawad, 1962, p. 274). In 1411, the Turkmans Qara Qoyenlo (Black Sheep) tribe, conquered the Jalayrides, and ruled Baghdad until they were defeated by another Turkmans tribe, Aq Qoyenlo (White Sheep), in 1469, who ruled until the Safavid shah Ismaiel occupied the city in 1508, but was kicked out by Prince Dhilfigar (chief of the Moslo Kalhoi Kurious tribe), in 1523,
who soon was defeated by Safawid shah Tahmosp, in 1529.

The Ottoman sultan Sulaiman Al Qanuni took over the city in 1534, but the Safawids came back for the third time in 1621 to rule until 1638 when Sultan Murad the fourth entered Baghdad, starting an Ottoman occupation that lasted for three centuries, until defeated by the British in 1917, during WW1.

In addition to the destruction through wars and occupations, the city was devastated by floods of the Tigris in 1635 and in 1637, but the worst was in 1822; it was followed by the plague in 1831, killing almost two thirds of its inhabitants. The cultural life of Baghdad kept going during the Mongol periods, but weakened with later wars and disasters. Within the walled city the urban fabric kept its basic structure, except for the disappearance of Dar Al Khilafa as a civic centre, but the later governor’s palaces resembled civic centres, while the real dominance was for the religious centres. The western part of Baghdad was reduced to an almost linear district by the river (which had clear walls in the 17th century), keeping the name Karkh, with small neighbourhoods like Sheikh Bashir and Sheikh Sandal. Both the Adhamiya and Kadhimiyia districts grew around their centres, each of them forming an independent small city re-linked with Baghdad, as mentioned previously, only in the early 20th century.

The historic documents of its buildings and cultural life are very rare during those centuries in which Baghdad was under occupation, but some of the buildings built at different times which still exist give some idea of the architectural styles that prevailed in the different periods; most important of them are the Marjania school (Marjan mosque) and Kahn Marjan, which were built in the Mongol period, although the Marjania school (except the entrance and the minaret) was demolished at the opening of Rasheed Street, and a new mosque was built instead. But, the Khan is still in good condition and was turned into a tourist restaurant in the 80s.

Baghdad’s only descriptions at that time come from the writings and drawings done by the travellers who visited it, in which we see the kind of city they expected to see, according to its legendary reputation. Wilstead writes on his visit to Baghdad in 1830:

«When the sun rose in the sky, Baghdad appeared although it was miles away as if it was in the space in front of us, the morning pink colours cover its golden domes, minarets and other luxury features of oriental houses, in fact that view was very pleasant ...I had a long look at the different shapes of the city, mixing reality with dreams ...Thousands of memories jumped to my mind when I saw the building in which the wife of Haroon Al Rasheed, the hero of the Thousand and One Night was buried...»

(Wilstead, trans. by Al Tikriti, 1984, p. 40)

Eugene Flandin who visited Baghdad in the 19th century writes:

«I had an exciting curiosity to see Baghdad, its buildings, people, their customs, and traditions... Isn’t everything linked with it stimulating because of its famous past? It has a magic and mysteriousness in the European eye, its location is in far away land among deserts hard to cross... Everything in it is new to me, life here is Arabic with its own features, the Baghdadi person whether urban or Bedouin has

Al Qishla building with the view of Baghdad looking to the south as it was in early 20th century.

his unique character which appears in every single detail... I had the thought that this city still has the memories of its golden age of the Caliphs... I expected to see in each step a trace of those wonders of that Islamic glorious age... But I did not see any of those, nor did I see anything of the memories of Sherazad's wonderful stories of the thousand nights...» (Flandin, trans. by Hadad, 2005, pp. 21-22).

In the late 19th century, Baghdad had a reforming Ottoman wali (governor) who took positive actions to improve the civil life. However, one of his main actions caused the beginning of the urban change in the city as he ordered the demolition of the defensive wall to make use of its brick in finishing the Al Qishla building, the official military centre of the Ottomans in Baghdad, keeping the gates (three of which were demolished later). Late Ottoman governors commissioned Italian and German engineers and architects to build the buildings they needed, the most important of which were the railway stations and lines, built by the German engineers; one of them became part of the Orient Express line. With the changes brought by WWI, the country went to a new situation, without which the architecture of Baghdad would have taken another directions due to German influences.

The most important architectural type of Baghdad, which continued to survive and develop during the Ottoman period, is the Baghdadi house style, which was more treated, and more suitable for the social and climatic characteristics of the city. The house is fully integrated with its urban context, especially the alley forming an active system; the house opens to the narrow alley from the upper floor through screened balconies called shanaish, which reduces the sun's heat and light, giving the needed privacy for the people inside. Except for a small door leading to the open courtyard through a bent axis and a small window, the ground floor is closed from the side of the street. Because of the narrow width of the alley the shanaish of opposite sides come close to each other, providing a shaded, comfortable path. Over time, passive climatic solutions have developed, within the mass/space layout, an air circulation is created as air passes through vertical shafts from the roof until the basement, which has openings to the courtyard, and according to the pressure imbalance between the sunny and shaded areas, the air moves out again causing a continuous circulation of the air which gains humidity passing by jars filled with water. Thus, the whole house is cooled in hot dry summer of Baghdad.
Baghdad of the twentieth century

The urban image of Baghdad with its compactness and traditional building, and some Islamic building styles which lasted for centuries, started to go through successive changes during the decades of the 20th century, commonly referred to as the 20th century architectural periods in Baghdad. But, there were certain basic moments of change in the urban and cultural structure, some linked with the political changes, some with the economic changes, and others linked with the social/demographic conditions, all causing the city to move in acceleration from one image to another.

The first of those changes took place with the British army entering Baghdad in 1917 during WWI, followed by the rise of modern Iraq in 1921, with Baghdad once again becoming a capital, but this time for a young state still under foreign mandate, but looking to build a new modern country with its physical and cultural entities.

The second major change took place in the beginning of the 50s, with a huge increase in economic resources after a new agreement between the Iraqi government and the international oil companies working in the country. Those two major changes were accompanied by what could be called urban and cultural revolutions. On the 14th of July 1958, the republic of Iraq was founded after a military revolution ended the Royal era, and started a new era of socialistic changes, causing changes in the demographic and cultural structures in the society.

Economic resources jumped once again in the 70s after the nationalization of the oil industry, resulting in a new wave of construction. But, unlike the 30s and 50s and their cultural revolutions, the country went to a situation of eight years of war, in which construction was going ahead but the society was under different pressures causing several new cultural and social status.

In winter 1991, during the second Gulf War, after the occupation of Kuwait, Baghdad was subjected to an enormous bombing which destroyed all its infrastructures, and although buildings were reconstructed, twelve years of international sanctions resulted in total destruction in the country's economy and the total exhaustion of the society. In April 2003, after another huge bombing, coalition troops lead by the USA, entered the city, which fell into complete chaos and violence, still affecting it now.

Going back to the beginning of the 20th century, looking at it architecture, we find the first buildings were designed by British architects who came with the military campaign departing from India. Those architects later occupied the position of GA (government architect), the first of whom was Wilson, who designed the buildings of Al Albait University, of which only one was built, (the Islamic university in Adhamia today). The second was Mason, who designed the civil airport in Baghdad (Al Muthana
airport, the site of the state mosque (Saddan mosque— later), and several other buildings. The last of the British architects who occupied the position of G A was Cooper, who designed the Royal cemetery on the site which was planned for the central building of Al Albait university; after Cooper, the first Iraqi architect Ahmed Mukhtar Ibrahim occupied the position.

The first changes in the traditional urban fabric came with the opening of Rasheed Street as the first modern street for automobile passage, which started in 1908 as Khalil Basha Jadasi (the street of Khalil Basha) after the Ottoman governor. Then, upon completion by the British, it took the name of New Street, which was finally changed to Rasheed. It became the centre of commercial life in the city for decades, its area passing by some of the traditional markets, like the area of Souq Al Thulatha (Bab Al Agha market) beside the old markets, which grew around Dar Al Khilafa. The buildings on Rasheed Street mainly in the 30s and 40s had a unique style which gave the street a distinguished character. New suburbs appeared in the 30s, such as Wazirya to the north, Saadoon to the south, and Salihya and Karadat Maryiam on the western bank of the river, which were planned according to western planning approaches like the garden city and grid iron planning that appeared outside the historical part (walled city), marking a clear change in the image of Baghdad, as they had a new layout which did not previously exist. Moreover, they were distinguished as being classy and luxurious neighbourhoods, while there were no socio-economic hierarchy in traditional neighbourhoods in which rich and poor people lived together. Rich people as well as foreign embassies and residencies moved to the new suburbs, leaving the traditional ones, in what is called social mobility, a phenomenon which continued to take place in Baghdad in the last century.

The architecture of houses of the new suburbs, as well as the public buildings built then, had its own character with classic European features (appearing in Baghdad for the first time), mixed with traditional crafts and building materials; sometimes a few historic Islamic elements (like the elements of the Royal cemetery building) were added as well. The
new style of planning known as the 30s type, developed by altering the old Baghdad form, featured the roofing of the central courtyard while keeping its centralized position, but in a symmetrical plan now, with the spaces having windows open to the outside. The traditional shanashil were turned into open balconies, with classic columns (mainly in Ionic order).

Architectural changes also had similar social changes, as Iraqi social scientist Al Wardi saw that the social phenomenon of Baghdadi women gradually taking off the traditional veil and going out to work was parallel in time with the architectural phenomenon of windows being gradually opened to the outside. The house of the forties was a continuation of that of the thirties, but at the beginning of the fifties, the urban/architectural and cultural image of Baghdad underwent great changes. More streets were opened in the traditional urban fabric, the new suburbs grew larger, and new master plans were put forth for the city, or parts of it.

However, the most important change in the 50s was the influence of modern thought on society; all aspects of Baghdadi life were heading towards modernity. Art galleries were filled with abstract, cubist, and expressionist works of art of Iraqi artists like Jawad Saleem, Faeq Hassan, and Hafith Al Deroobi. Young poets like Badr Shakir Al Sayab, Nazik Al Malaika, and Abdul Wahab Al Bayati experienced new trends in Arabic poetry, as did novelists, music composers, and film and TV directors (Baghdad was the first Arab city to have TV broadcasting). Social habits started to change, the thought of progress was completely linked with the modernist western model, and all these changes were associated with a fast growing number of schools, colleges, and universities.

There was a large increase in the economic resources of the country simultaneously with these cultural changes: an institution called the Development Board was established to carry out large projects such as huge factories, oil refineries, electric power stations, and dams, saving the Mesopotamian valley from the great danger of floods for the first time in its history.

In this environment, a number of the world’s greatest architects of the time were invited to design buildings in Baghdad, the city which whose past and present they carefully studied to explore unique creative ideas, which they integrated into their designs to reflect different conceptions, trying to digress from the revival of the legend of the Thousand and One Nights, and resulting in representations of the golden age of Haroon Al Rasheed included by Wright in his design for the Opera house of Baghdad and the plan he put for greater Baghdad, as well as a developed system of masses and spaces inspired from the city’s old
courtyards, which was submitted by Gropius in his designs of the University of Baghdad. Expressionism in the design of the stadium by Le Corbusier, purity of forms in the design of the ministry of planning by Ponti and the design of the art gallery by Aalto, creative climatic treatments in the design of the American embassy by Sert, and the elaboration of classic features in modern details, in the designs of the Royal palace (later the Republican palace)\textsuperscript{15} and the Parliament building (Ministry of Defense today), and modern urban planning of sectors of Baghdad and other cities submitted by Doxiadis, gave a boost to architectural activity in the city, as lectures were given, discussions took place, all giving rise to new visions and questions.

**What should the contemporary architecture of Baghdad look like?**

It is really the half-century question facing the Iraqi architects, more emphasized after the establishment of the first Iraqi school of architecture in 1959 (the Department of Architecture in the University of Baghdad), and the growing feeling for the need to keep the national identity up to par with contemporary thought and technology. Another kind of change was taking place in the 1950's; the immigration of large numbers of people from the country (especially from southern Iraq) to Baghdad and other cities, due to the opening of factories and the work opportunities offered in the city. However, the migrants with no appropriate places to live built simple mud shelters in the city's streets and open spaces, and soon the social and economic divide between Baghdad's inhabitants began to grow enormously.

With the wave of Communist thought in the world in the 50's, and the complications of the situation in the Middle East,\textsuperscript{6} strong political disturbances rose in Baghdad, ending in 1958 with a military revolution, declaring the rise of the republic of Iraq.

In the 60's the number of immigrants from the country grew much larger, so the government of Abdul Karim Qasim decided to build new suburbs to house them. Thus the suburbs of Al Thawra (Sadr city), Al Shula, and Al Hurria were built according to previous plans designed mainly by Doxiadis. With the growing number of inhabitants of those suburbs over time, the whole demographic composition of the city was changing (the population of the city of Baghdad was around half a million in the 50's, 4 million in the 70's, and 7 million in 2003). Those suburbs already lacking sufficient civil services became extra crowded with people of low income in the 80's and 90's, which resulted in a critical living situation, affecting the whole Baghdad society. Another type of new suburb developed in the 60's when the government, distributed large pieces of lands (400-800m\textsuperscript{2}) to build houses in other newly planned neighbourhoods with easy loans among its employees. The result was a fast expansion of the city with the positive result being the rise of an educated middle-class in the society.

With the increase of economic resources in the seventies, another cultural movement was about to begin. Since the beginning of the sixties, Iraqi architects started serious attempts to create a contemporary architecture to go along with the cultural and geographical environment of Iraq. Their designs had different incorporations of local building materials and traditional stylistic elements, but the attempts
grew more mature over time with the growing feeling in the 80's and 90's for the need to achieve a contemporary national identity in Iraqi architecture, a need which was activated on the one hand by the realization of the loss of a great part of the traditional fabric in the city and some superficial adaptation of historic styles in modern designs. On the other hand was the ubiquitous and ever-growing dominance of new international trends and movements of architectural thought and activity within Iraq. A good deal of research on an academic and professional level was conducted to support these efforts, and is still going on today.

In 1973 a comprehensive master plan for Baghdad was put forth by the Pole Service, in which land uses, densities, and heights were defined (these were supposed to be valid, although in the end they were disregarded in many cases). In the 80's, the JCCF (Japanese Consortium of Consulting Firms) was invited to give an updated comprehensive plan for the city; it was almost finished in 1990, but was not approved. The economically backed cultural movement in the beginning of the 80's could have brought back the image of the 50's, but instead Iraqi society suffered the effects of eight years of war; all young men were asked to give years of military service, large numbers of families lost their means of sustenance at the same time that religious extremist thoughts were starting to grow among the population.

The government was carrying on an active construction process in the 80's as well. A number of large projects were erected, and great architects were invited to design buildings in Baghdad. However, there was a big difference between the atmosphere of the 80's and that of the 50's; in the 50's the architects' lectures, discussions, and dialogues took place in art galleries and architectural societies, with young Iraqi architects participating, while in the 80's discussions were in presidential courts, with the participation of an elite of Iraqi architects. If the symposiums held on big architectural projects had not been shown on local TV (like the Symposium of the State Mosque competition and the Symposium of the Monuments for the Martyr and the Unknown Soldier), Iraqi architects would not have known what was going on in those projects. The wave of
construction started to reside at the end of the 80’s, and many designed projects were not built, as the war badly affected the country’s economy. The state mosque competition in 1982, in which many of the world’s and Iraq’s architects participated (Venturi, Bofill, Takayama, Qahtan Al Madani, Mohamed Makia, Maadh Al Alusi and Jordanian architect Rasim Badran), was repeated in 1989 but with little participation. In January 1991, after the occupation of Kuwait, a huge number of the buildings of Baghdad were destroyed in 40 days of heavy bombing, after which the country went into complete isolation from the world for twelve years, and the result was total destruction of the country’s economy and total exhaustion of the society.

In the 90's the main buildings were built by the presidential architectural department (except for the reconstruction of what was destroyed in the 1991 war), and the state mosque competition was repeated for the third time; Iraqi architects, mainly from the universities, were asked to participate. After several submissions, a final design was approved in 1997, and a 1:5 scale of the original size mosque was built to be a model for the full size mosque, which is Um Al Qura mosque today (Um Al Maerek previously). After final revisions the building of the mosque began, but stopped in 2003. The mosque’s grand columns are still standing in the site. In the 90's a new wealthy class (of merchants and those who benefited from the economic situation at the time) built lavish luxury houses, in mixed, fully decorated styles, forming a new phenomena in the city of Baghdad. However, in spite of all that, Iraqi architects kept their dream to achieve an Iraqi characterized by contemporary architecture, with serious attempts and efforts.

On Tuesday, the 8th of April, 2003, while the explosions were getting stronger, I was looking from the roof of my house to the fires and smoke rising from all sides, and the sounds of heavy military vehicles approaching the city, and all of those past and present images of Baghdad came to my mind, and I realized then that if I survived I would witness the formation of a completely new image of the city.

But the image of Baghdad for the last five years was far beyond any expectations...

Beyond what any written words could describe...

And the image of the future is still vague and indefinable...

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Notes

2 Al Hira is an Arab city in southern Iraq near Najaf, where the Arab kingdom of Al Manathira flourished before Islam.
3 Madaen, in Arabic, means “cities”, and the cities here are 30 km south of Baghdad, among which is Seleucia, the capital of Seleucia, and one of Alexander’s leaders, when he invaded Mesopotamia, and conquered the Achaemenids, 331 BC, who ended the Babylonian empire in 530 BC. Alexander had a dream of having his kingdom and settling there, but died before he could do that.
 Seleucia inherited this dream and established the kingdom, having his army settled in Mesopotamia, by conducting the largest mass marriage in history, making his whole army marry Iraqi women.
 This kingdom was conquered by the Parthians, 130 BC, defeated in turn by the Sassanians in 226 AD, whose capital was the city of Ctesiphon, another one of the group of cities.
4 Al Sawad, in Arabic, means black. Arabs used to call the land of Iraq the land of Al Sawad, due to its fertile black land.
5 Al Thulathia means Tuesday in Arabic, but historians give different interpretations to the origin of the name. Some historians considered it Arabic, because of the “Al” meaning “the” Arabic. Others see it as being of Aramaic origin, and, according to Cock, a city by the name “Thalba”, situated near modern Baghdad, was mentioned on the Ptolemy map (Cock, translated by Jamil and Jawad, 1962, p. 6).
6 The name Kilwa is given to a street in the Karada district in the 80’s, which is the street by the river that used to be called Al Sada, over-looking the Dora district from the other side of the river.
7 Several historical studies emphasize the advanced use of astrology by the Mesopotamian people, and according to the traditions of the church of Iraq, the three kings coming from the east who followed the star and witnessed the birth of Christ did actually come from Iraq. The Chaldean church defends this argument by citing the advance of astrology, in ancient Mesopotamia. Linking this fact with the fact that Christianity spread in Iraq from the middle to the south and north, the three kings could have come from an area around, close to, or within, Baghdad itself.
8 The Islamic periods started in Iraq in 636 AD, after the defeat of the Sassanians army by the Islamic army at the site of Qadisiyya in southern Iraq. The fourth Rashidun Caliph Imam Ali Bin Abi Talib was the first to leave the Arabian peninsula to make Al Kufa his capital, but with the rise of the Umayyad empire in 662 AD, Damascus became the capital until the Umayyads were defeated by the Abbasids. Al Saffah announced the rise of Abbasid empire from Kufa, but moved before his death to Hashimiyah, a city he built near Al Anbar.
9 The name «City of Peace» (Madina Al Salam) is, like other names, interpreted differently by historians. Some of them linked it with the river Tigris which was called Al Salam river, but the most common interpretation relates it to Heaven, according to the mention of Heaven in the Holy Quran as The House of Peace (Jawad and Susa, 1958, p. 45). On the other hand, historians see Tigris, (Dijla in Arabic), which appears in historical books as Taghlat, and in the Bible as Hiddekel (Le Strange, translated by Francis and Awad,
10 As historians studied the buildings which existed around the site of the round city when it was being built, they is suggested that the building from which Al Mansoor saw the layout from and later watched the building was the Kilishho (meaning Crown of Jesus) monastery.

11 The name Al Rusafa is related to the Arabic meaning “the Aligned”, due to the alignment of its streets and buildings as in camps. It was first called the camp of Al Muhdi, but the name Rusafa existed before that in the Rusafa of Al Sham (Al Sham was the Arab name used to denote the area of Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, and Palestine); many historians believe that the Rusafa of Al Muhdi was named after the Rusafa of Al Sham.

12 It is really sad that nothing from the round city exists today, not even parts of its great walls, furthermore, the real site of it is not figured precisely; the site given here comes after extensive research on the subject, but the exact site could only be stated if a good deal of excavations were to take place, because for such great high walls and great buildings which lasted for centuries there must have been deep foundations to be well excavated.

13 The palace was called Al Jaffari palace after its builder, Jaafar Al Barmaki, Al Rasheed’s minister, who was later imprisoned. Al Hassan Bin Sahil, Al Mamoun’s minister, took the palace, and the palace was renamed Al Hassan palace.

14 When Al Mutamid came back from Samarra, Boran, Al Mamoun’s wife, was still alive, though very old. It is said that she renewed the palace and left it to the new caliph.

15 The original minaret was destroyed in the Mongol attack on Baghdad by Hoqazo in 1258, but rebuilt by his son who converted to Islam later.

16 The Al Hanafi doctrine is one of the main four Sunni doctrines; the others are Maliki, Shafiei, and Hanbali.

17 Imam Musa Al Kadhmi is the seventh Imam in the Shiite Jaafari doctrine of twelve Imams.

18 According to certain texts this cemetery was actually originally Aramaic.

19 Mohammed Al Jadaw is the ninth Imam in the same doctrine of twelve Imams.

20 The name Kadhmin comes from converting kadhum into the form of two in Arabic (kadhumain) meaning two kadums), as it is common in Arabic to give the name of one of two names linked by a strong relationship in the form of two; that is why the name al Jadaw is used to refer to the shrine as well.

21 This description is for the style of house known as Baghdad house; there might have been changes in details over time, as we will see later, but the basic components are the same for ages.

22 As in their fight against the Shiite Imams, around whom people gathered.

23 The school of Al Mutazila, a rationally oriented school, was famous in Al Mamoon’s time, and he himself was close to them.

24 Historian Cock says that it was first measured in Europe 500 years after it was done in Baghdad (Cock, Trans. by Jamil and Jawad, 1962, p. 113).

25 The Buyayids are Persians; their kingdom in Shiraz was founded by three brothers in 934 AD. They eventually grew strong enough to take all of Persia, and to move to Baghdad to become its rulers.

26 Al Khatib Al Baghdadi depended on documents by masters who worked on the building themselves, most importantly a builder named Rabah Al Bana, (Lesner, Trans. by Al Ali, 1984, p. 37).

27 But unfortunately Al Baghdadi did not write about the city in his time, as documents on the Buwayhid period are rare.

28 Historians investigated the site of Niddamia School, of which nothing is left, and presented different ideas; Le Strange considered it to be near Dar Al Khilafa, while Mustafa Jadaw and Ahmed Susa saw it as near Al Mustansiyia School.

29 The gate is called the south gate in English, which is correct, while Al Sharji in Arabic means the eastern gate.

30 Sharif Hussain of Hijaz led the Arab revolution against the Ottomans in the beginning of the 20th century, and he was helped by the British.

31 Sheikh Basheer is Abu al Hassan bin Mohamed Al Zahid, and the neighborhood named after him was known as Aqaba in the Abbadid age, while Sheikh Sandal is Imad Addin bin Sandal bin Abdullah Al Habashi, who was called al Muqtasawi, according to his master Caliph Al Muqtasf, as he was the minister in Dar Al Khilafa, the neighborhood that took his name due to a mosque built after him.

32 Both built by Ojaat Amin Al Din Marjan, the Mamlook of the daughter of Sultan Aragon, the sister of Sultan Ojaeto, in 1356.

33 The building which is referred to
here is the Zumurid Kahtun tomb, known by mistake as the Zubaida tomb.

34 Ali Alwardi has studied the social changes in Iraqi society in his group of books entitled *Social Views of Contemporary History of Iraq*, but concentrated on the relation between architecture and social changes in his late writings in journals in the 90's before his death.

35 The building is the current American embassy in Baghdad.

36 The war in 1948 between the Arabs and Israel, and the revolution in Egypt in 1952.

37 The increase in economic resources came after the nationalization of oil industry.