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*Caecilia Pieri*

## BAGHDAD ARCHITECTURE, 1921-1958: REFLECTIONS ON HISTORY AS A "STRATEGY OF VIGILANCE"

*The respective phases of Baghdad's development between 1921 (the Iraqi Kingdom and British Mandate) and 1958 (the Iraqi National Revolution) remain visible today. Up until the 1940s, the aesthetics of its residential architecture was eclectic—the result of a specific process of invention linked to traditional local brickwork know-how. This eclecticism overlapped with the persistence of a habitat still characterized by a central inner space.*

*Then the revolution played the symbolic role of vector of a paradoxical identity, as it was experienced simultaneously as a break with the Western world and the integration of international modernism. Therefore the Hashemite Baghdad, with all its particularities, constitutes a brilliant case of elaboration of a modern capital; it was born of a successful hybridization of cultural traditions and the exchange of professional know-how, in which the figures of adaptation and appropriation were determining factors in the enrichment and renewal not only of urban forms, but also of urban practices.*

*This urban context constitutes a heritage for the Iraqis, since it is not only result of a composite history but also the producer of a composite identity—a fruitful basis of a project for the future. The reconstruction of Baghdad should avoid new surgical operations stemming from radical political agendas, most importantly the temptation of the tabula rasa.*

### **Introduction**

GIVEN THE CURRENT UNSTABLE political situation in Iraq and the security problems it entails, the aim and intent of documenting and interpreting the changes in the architectural and urban landscape of Baghdad over roughly a forty-year period might appear as a very hazardous enterprise. Nevertheless, despite what the constant flow of pictures flooding the world from Iraq over the last several years would have us believe—a flow that followed thirty years of censorship during which communica-

2 *Caecilia Pieri*

tion was very limited—the city of Baghdad is neither a devastated heap of ruins, nor a succession of mere concrete blockhouses. What with security problems and the ignorance of the area's character, the portrayal of Baghdad's landscape on television networks worldwide has been reduced to a series of abusively loud stereotypes that typically show rubble, concrete roadblocks and barbed wire obstacles protecting strategic places, shantytowns, and so on.

Apart from a few rare Abbasid and Persian monuments, the city of *One Thousand and One Nights* is no more thanks to the current siege-like atmosphere, coupled with the undeniable fact that the residential districts are in part rather unkempt, even somewhat deteriorated, as a result of an obsolete real estate system. Furthermore, the intrinsic quality of the twentieth century building heritage—the largely brick and wood buildings of the Ottomans and the British, and the modernist concrete of the booming 1950s—is almost never mentioned by the western missions which have followed one another in Iraq. The archaeologists, political or anthropological experts, journalists and businessmen had other interests.

**This article will consist of three complementary parts:**

First I shall briefly present the different hypotheses and the theoretical stand I adopt for the whole of my research—the study of domestic housing in Baghdad from 1921 (the beginning of the British mandate) to 1958 (the Iraqi Revolution and end of the monarchy).<sup>1</sup> My research was first brought about by the discovery of an exceptional “modern” built environment during an initial journey to Iraq in June 2003,<sup>2</sup> exceptional both in terms of quality and quantity. Indeed, the residential areas built after the end of the Ottoman Empire have remained largely intact, or at least sufficiently well preserved to allow a reading of the different phases of urban development which took place during the Hashemite period. My thesis, which is in its initial phase, will try to document and interpret the transformations of the architectural and urban landscape of Baghdad from 1921 to 1958 in its national and international context. My intention is to answer the following question: In what way is the evolution of the urban and architectural landscape of Baghdad between 1921 and 1958 the particular expression of a particular context?

In the second part I shall present the big picture of the characteristics of the architectural and urban landscape of Baghdad, as well as several aspects of its evolution from the 1920s to the end of the 1950s. I will attempt to underline its specificity, which was the result of a dynamic exchange between local and European tendencies, whether professional practices, cultural traditions or aesthetic codes.

In the third part, I will outline the potential dangers posed by the “recon-

struction of Iraq." Given the current priorities there will be no room for serene analysis. Moreover, as twentieth century heritage is often generally considered of little value or suspect for ideological reasons which have nothing to do with any professional or cultural criteria, one can fear the worst in terms of the physical destruction of the city.

### **General intent and objective**

#### *Filling in a gap: an obstacle course*

The decision to work towards a doctorate was taken after the realization that, having completed a preliminary bibliographical search in Baghdad, Paris and London, the field of study appears to be seriously incomplete, if not very irregularly documented, at least in terms of bibliographies in languages other than Arabic. In 1965, a French scholar wrote: "Thus Baghdad appears to the individual visitor having no other means of investigation than his personal observations. . . . May they constitute a useful canvas, which, hopefully, more developed research will complete, as such a capital deserves."<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, as Dr. Khaled Al Sultani wrote seventeen years later, regarding the years between the two World Wars: "There is hardly anything that has been written or documented about this period of architecture."<sup>4</sup>

Indeed, if it is true that studies about Iraq in the western world are well documented in the fields of archaeology, Islamic studies (whether Islamic schools of thought or Islamic arts), contemporary history, anthropology and political science, such is not the case for twentieth century architecture. My initial research soon led me to identify two periods within the modern era that were reasonably well covered. The first—the beginning of the twentieth century—immediately precedes my chosen period of study.<sup>5</sup> The second post-dates my period of study, covering the decades from 1960 to 1980, for indeed, Saddam Hussein's regime and General Kassem's and others' before him had launched international competitions and consultations which entailed schemes and projects which were subsequently studied and well-documented.<sup>6</sup>

However, the years of the British mandate, the first monarchy, the Independence, the years of the petrol boom, and the last decade before the Iraqi national revolution and republic in particular, seem rather less well-documented (apart from the buildings conceived and projects designed by architects of international renown).<sup>7</sup> As documentation is generally difficult to access, the present situation in Iraq justifies the object of my thesis: to produce an initial work of assessment, inventory and information-gathering on these rather sketchily-documented periods.

In France this silence is not very surprising, given the absence of historical ties between the two countries. However, this is not the case for

4 *Caecilia Pieri*

Great Britain, where it seems that only a few PhDs exist done by Iraqis themselves, most of whom came to study in universities of their ex-mandatory power.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, research problems concerning modern Iraqi architecture and urbanism meet the same obstacles as those met in other neighbouring countries. The sources (archives, various documents, and blueprints) are dispersed between the countries in question and Great Britain, where they are not being used. In the case of Iraq, the data is evidently even more fragmented, dispersed and inaccessible than in other countries, as part of the sources and studies pertaining to it are now to be found in several different countries. Either the archives themselves have been transferred, or many may be dispersed in private companies (trading, oil, banks, building, real estate, insurance) or personal collections, or the researchers are in exile. Certain data (maps, military and administrative records) can also be traced to various institutions in several countries.<sup>9</sup>

Moreover, in Iraq itself, administration has been in a state of perpetual transformation, a state that has been stressed by the rare existing critics.<sup>10</sup> For instance, construction activities between the two World Wars were divided between the Administration of General Works Affairs (a branch of the Directorate of Public Works which became the Ministry of Works and Transport), the *Waqf* Authority, the Engineering Section in the Ministry of Education, and an autonomous Railway Authority. As if this complexity was not enough, these institutions often changed names, missions and shape. Furthermore, modern domestic architecture is often anonymous and the history of buildings remains more in oral memory, itself an uncertain medium. As for the documents, when they do still exist, "most of them lack important information and precise details. Many omit the name of the architect whilst others have been signed by the contractor, which confuses the researcher as to the real role played by the architect in designing the building. Some of the plans are undated."<sup>11</sup>

Due to the current political situation and security issues, travelling between my research site and areas of data-collecting has been very difficult—a situation which, in fact, has existed for a long time. Three decades of university life have been cramped by the difficulty of exchanges, and available translations have been rare. Potential interlocutors (university professors, researchers, professionals) holding structured knowledge have often chosen exile in countries ranging from Dubai to Denmark, Jordan, Cyprus and Canada. Furthermore, architectural publications of high or even simply acceptable editorial standards have almost disappeared from Iraq as a result of thirty years of official bans and distrust of foreign publications and research; a situation aggravated by thirteen years of international sanctions and several months of

looting of libraries after the last war. As a result, despite a qualified return to normal conditions of access to information on the ground and through the internet, the accumulation of data that has not yet been digitized makes research more difficult for those not in Iraq. Since 2005 it has become extremely difficult for foreigners to access the departments and administrations holding the existing archives (the Department of Urban Design in Baghdad's municipality, the Ministry of Housing and Reconstruction, the State Secretary of Urban Planning and the district municipalities). To this day, oral information remains the most rapid way of finding data, thanks to the courage of personal contacts who, faced with a veritable obstacle course, nevertheless manage to conduct *in situ* research and surveys.

For all these reasons, it is clear that *in situ* research will have to become empirical to a degree rarely needed in other fields of enquiry with more accessible research material. In the present situation, making an assessment and inventory of the available sources constitutes a real challenge I am determined to meet, if very progressively, despite the difficulty of determining their exact contents or final reach. In a case such as this, the historian of modern times resembles the archaeologist, who sweeps the ruins of an ancient palace with his brush, hoping for the miraculous fragment that will only perhaps lead him to the room of treasure.

#### ***Providing a national context and an international approach***

In order to formulate a proper scheme for the urban and architectural landscape of Baghdad over a forty-year period which is unevenly documented, as mentioned above, my aim will be to define the main typological and functional characteristics of a mostly vernacular and residential architectural corpus. However, I shall also consider this corpus as belonging to an urban morphology, since the building of housing depended on different evolutionary phases linked to successive policies of urban planning and development.

That said, to simplify the exposé, I choose here to restrict my corpus to formal built housing. The informal or spontaneous housing (*şarîfas*) that appeared in the 1930s and began to find permanent solutions only in the 1960s (particularly with the construction of the "replacement madinas" such as Madinat Al-Thawra), constitutes a topic in itself.

These two bodies of work shall be analyzed and interpreted in reference to the national context. Indeed, I shall attempt to determine to what extent these urban and architectural forms can be addressed from multiple angles. The political and historical angle is important to examine how the national Iraqi scheme and the colonial scheme functioned, at times clashing and at others working together. Economically, oil is the

main source of the country's prosperity. The sociological and anthropological angle can be approached through the study of professional, legal and administrative practices, and the role played by the local powers and by minorities (Jewish and Armenian dynasties for instance) commissioning residences and urban extension. Finally I address the theoretical angle, whether from an external source (the international circulation of ideas, models and techniques) or domestic (the local elite's problematization).

Interpretation will also rely on a comparative approach, as regards the reception of modernity, the cross-reference processes, as well as the different types of hybridization that occurred in countries with similar situations at the same epochs in colonial areas, mainly in the Middle East but also in North Africa. This comparison will provide not only a clearer perception of the case of Iraq, but it will help highlight its specificities (*mutatis mutandis*, the phenomenon can also be observed to a lesser degree in Turkey with the works of urban planners who came from Germany, but not as colonizers). Indeed one observes a series of occurrences common to colonial empires, whether France in North Africa and the Middle East, Italy in Libya, or Great Britain in Iraq, Palestine and Egypt:<sup>12</sup> hybrid techniques, hybrid stylistics, and urban transformations occurred in irregular phases that led to a modernity linked to colonial expansion and an industrial revolution, most notably the oil industry.

The same is true concerning the evolution of domestic housing under urban pressure. Its form and the extent to which it is open to exterior influence depends on several factors: the period concerned, the colonial status of the country in question, the means of production of construction material and so on. In other words, although the modernization process is a common one, it is nonetheless subject to cultural, social, and technical variables.

#### *Some terminology issues*

Some concepts involve interpretations which one must define clearly, either to remove them or to integrate them into the core structure of the research project. For instance, at this stage of my research I have used the term "Arab capital" in a neutral descriptive way; yet at some point, I shall have to identify the specific issues inherent in the introduction of Occidental models into an Arab-Islamic region at the time of the colonial empires. In the same way, in Iraq, a country where all powers were centralized in Baghdad, the concept of "capital" takes on a particular significance.

I shall also study, in their dialectical relationships, the concepts of 'modernity,' 'modernism' and 'modernization' of a society at a given point in its history, since these concepts overlap yet do not mean the

same thing. In French, *modernité* refers to a cultural condition, whereas *modernisme* has stylistic connotations and can be linked to the “modern movement”; in English the meanings of ‘modernism’ vary between the meanings of both French words according to the context. Let us give one example taken from the ground: it was only at the end of the 1940s that Bauhaus or Corbusean-style villas were built in Baghdad; while, in the 1950s a “modernist international seaside resort style” appeared, contemporaneously with what could be observed on the Atlantic (Royan, France) and North Africa from Morocco to Libya. Thus the use of these generic terms will have to be modulated according to each specific occurrence.

### **Method**

This research will draw up a morphological-typological inventory of domestic architecture, mainly residential, yet without totally excluding particularly remarkable public buildings and community facilities. My aim is not to be exhaustive, which is absolutely impossible in the context of a thesis (and given the situation on the ground), yet I do wish to distinguish the recurrent from the exceptional. In order to do so, I shall adopt an approach which is both descriptive and analytical, proceeding by classification or sampling. I shall use archives whenever possible, and when they are lacking, resort to oral history, for instance when investigating the conditions surrounding a commission or the history of a particular building. I shall also attempt to gather documents which enable the genesis of the different strata of urbanization to be retraced, in order to obtain a representative inventory of the different modules of section and grid layout used on the urban space such as it can still be ‘read’ today.

### **Choice of the period of study**

The year 1921 was the year of the establishment of the Kingdom (August 23)—the beginning of the ‘National Era’ in Iraq.<sup>13</sup> It is also the beginning of the British Mandate. For these two reasons, it marks an essential turning point in the history of modern Iraq. The British Administration, which remained in Baghdad after the end of the First World War occupation, began public and infrastructural works to implement its rule in the country. In fact, in the wake of British rule, the consequences of political and economic modernization in architecture, urban planning and development took the form of a wish to break away from the old ways and forms that were more or less common to the Ottoman empire as a whole. Yet this initial phase of “westernization” and of openly colonial form, which one could call “British,” poses in itself the question of the definition of its limits. What criteria should determine its end? Was it the



independence obtained by King Faysal I (October, 1932), or with the construction of the international train station, for instance, an art deco masterpiece conceived and built from 1947 to 1951 by Wilson, who was British? Should one take into account the nationalities of the architects or yet again go by classifications of the built corpus in terms of its morphological or stylistic evolution?

For practical reasons and because it represents an essential landmark, my research will end with the year 1958. It is the year of the Iraqi revolution and the end of the Hashemite monarchy. After 1958, the urban look of Baghdad changed radically, since “a lot of spectacular urban works were realised after the Revolution of 14 July 1958, initiated by General Kassem.”<sup>14</sup> Then, the establishment in 1959 of the Department of Architectural Engineering at the University of Baghdad by Mohammed Makiya and others signalled the beginning of the real metamorphosis of Baghdad, as defined by several Iraqi critics in statements such as: “The 1958 Revolution created probably the most significant impact on Iraqi architecture because not only were the strong ties with the West suddenly shattered, but also it created a tremendous pride and nationalism.”<sup>15</sup>

After 1960, Baghdad underwent a radical transformation. At the level of private housing, the use of central heating and cooling for example altered the parameters of housing construction with regard to circulation, room occupation and technical conception. Moreover, the population doubled between the 1960s and the 1970s because of a massive rural exodus which considerably altered the way the city was experienced and its relationship to housing. The creation of urban ring roads destroyed many older parts of the city, and finally, the arrival of high-rise buildings typical of the 1960s throughout the world, all led to a radical and definitive break with the former “horizontal” urban extension and formal control of the built environment.

#### **Phases considered for the periodization**

One must bear in mind that the “round city,” founded in 762 AD by Mansour on the western bank of the Tigris, gradually spread to the eastern bank, until its first destruction by the Mongols in 1258. Development of the city during the following seven centuries stalled until 1869. Known then as Rusafa, it was rectangular in shape, four by six kilometres, and entirely surrounded by walls that enclosed a very dense urban fabric—*madina's zuqāq*. There was only one transverse thoroughfare, the Tigris, which divided it in its length, and had only one crossing point, on a bridge of boats.

The basic housing of this *zuqāq* was the so-called *shanāshil* house, that is, introverted housing flanked with first storey *shanāshil*, the character-

istic wooden lattice-work bay jutting out over the street, and an internal open courtyard space (*hosh*). This more or less corresponds to the traditional Arab-Islamic house<sup>16</sup> with its dual circulation and division between private spaces (for women—the *haram*) and reception spaces (for men—the *diwān khāna*), flat rooftops, *seirdāb* or *neem* for midday siesta, and so on.<sup>17</sup> In 1869, the Ottoman Midhat Pasha had the city walls torn down, which allowed a modest development towards the north-east. Then in 1915/16, the first main street, New Street (now Rashid Street) was made, running parallel to the river, and finally in 1917 a dam was built, better to protect the city against floods, and allowing the city really to begin its expansion.<sup>18</sup>

***The British mandate: A “foreign policy in architecture”***

The British made their presence felt as early as 1921 by a policy of westernization which was comparable to a colonial process, and marked a desire for institutional and economical modernization. It was a way of making a statement about a new political situation, in which a “sovereign” monarchy was assisted by an Occidental power, in an unnamed mandatory configuration fixed by a treaty signed in October 1922 between Iraq and Great Britain. Indeed, the mandate was not at all attractive to the Iraqis: “It is extraordinary to note to what extent the idea of a mandate repels the Iraqis,” reported the British High Commissioner, Sir Percy Cox.<sup>19</sup> At that time there were so many controversies (some even violent) about the word itself, that the British tried to justify it in their own way: “The obscurity in which the meaning of the word ‘mandate’ seems to be veiled is largely due to the language’s difference, and the Arabic word ‘*Intidab*’ is a bad translation . . .”<sup>20</sup> This ambiguity inspired Gertrude Bell, then Oriental Secretary to the High Commission of Iraq, with an ideal solution for the British: “A freely negotiated *treaty* would be infinitely more preferable while allowing us more freedom.”<sup>21</sup> Yet this *treaty de facto* implied Iraq was to be “assisted” by Great Britain in all the vital domains, namely the army, economy, education and public works. In 1930 it would be renewed, and non-negotiated at independence. Thus it was not, legally speaking, a mandate; the different treaties left Britain free to negotiate directly with Iraq “without referring to the international community.”<sup>22</sup>

In this context architecture, and even more so urbanism, were to be the foundations of a “foreign policy in architecture”<sup>23</sup> through the reorganization of the direction and concept of the Public Works Department, and the nomination of British personnel to key positions within it.<sup>24</sup> Some symbolic official monuments notwithstanding (such as the statue of General Maude, victor of Baghdad in 1917), this policy was based on facilities the realization of which had simultaneously to found the image

of this monarchy created under tutelage, and become an institutional, functional, economical, social and even educational model for the country.<sup>25</sup>

In the main economic centres of Basra, Kirkuk and Baghdad, the 1920s were characterized by the building of public amenities and community schemes which had not previously existed in Ottoman cities. These included ministries, clubs, train stations, bridges, military hospitals, industrial facilities, and warehouses, along with post-offices and airports ensuring good communication throughout the Empire,<sup>26</sup> as well as eminently British clubs and finally, educational institutions. In fact it is interesting to quote here James M. Wilson, the first architect named in Iraq as the head of the Public Works Department, to show the extent of what was expected, both ideologically and programmatically, from architectural works.<sup>27</sup> He spoke of

the tremendous influence that architecture can have on public life generally but especially on education. Iraq has been the home of a certain style of architecture which has influenced the rest of the civilized world. But present circumstances need a new style of building which, it is hoped, will integrate the best of the traditional decorative features. It is also intended to use natural building materials available in the country, so that what is built may truly become an Arab Renaissance.<sup>28</sup>

Since 1917 the British had their embassy at Sinak on the eastern bank, near the only bridge. To the north of the city outside the fortifications they built a quarantine building, and to the south a few kilometres away, the military camp of Hinaidi. It was to link these different points that they created an axis of urban development running parallel to the river, thus delineating a long band, along which the first checkerboard neighbourhood appeared in the 1920s—an “exported” urban model<sup>29</sup> designed to facilitate access to strategic places (such as the embassy and the Alwiya Club) and the generalization of circulation by horse-drawn coaches. On the whole, the brick housing of the 1920s preserved its overall structure and use of space, but progressively the materials used in façades changed with the construction of these first checkerboard neighbourhoods. The *shanāshīl*, having lost their original function, evolved into a balcony with canopied columns (veranda-style), then into a simple balcony. This is a transitional typological phase between traditional and western-style housing—“the modified traditional type.”<sup>30</sup>

### ***The 1930s building boom***

With the checkerboard streets pattern, two new types of housing emerged side by side with the traditional oriental house centred around

a courtyard: long bands of individual housing lots looking out to the street, and collective buildings with central courtyards housing several families. Modernization at that point only concerned the most affluent families and meant certain measures of comfort such as running water, electricity, metallic door-joints and cement flooring typical of the 1930s.

At the same time as the residential building boom, the 1930s witnessed the development of individual, low-rise housing in allotments or in single units.<sup>31</sup> In these new developments the basic element, that I would term an "urban cottage," still included a centred plan, but the open central courtyard changed into a covered hall.

The well-to-do housing also retained a traditional spatial structure, with a centred plan, dual circulation, flat roof and *sirdāb*, and a generally only a single storey. However, little by little the hall replaced the open central courtyard—that was why, whatever their size, these houses form another type, that of the "covered centred hall."<sup>32</sup> These no longer faced the street directly, and were built on around two-thirds of an allotment (an area one hundred by one hundred metres) which was delimited by an iron-grid pattern, detached or semi-detached. The measurements of street, garden, house, height, and so on, were all regulated by the Road and Building Law n° 44, Iraqi Official Gazette of June 1935.<sup>33</sup> It also imposed the *istiqma*, the straightening of allotments along the new streets according to precise norms. It is interesting to note that use of reinforced concrete for structural elements such as walls, columns and stairs coincidentally came into widespread use at this time.

A dichotomy was then created in the city—while the upper and middle classes settled in the new suburbs, building isolated houses with gardens according to the new law, the old centre became poorer. The old aristocratic houses left by influential families were now rented to rural migrants coming from all over the country in order to live and work in the booming capital. The traditional *shanāshil* house thus underwent a radical change, acquiring the double function of small shops, craft workshops and various trading activities on the ground floor, with housing on the upper floor.

The exterior decoration of the new houses, in elaborate monochrome brickwork, (relief-work, molded elements, chiselled elements, and so on), remained the prerogative of the *ustâ*, those Baghdad master masons, inheritors of a technique which can be traced back to the Assyrians. When charged with official or prestigious commissions, the British, also quite knowledgeable in brickwork, left total creative liberty in building and decorating houses to these Iraqi *ustâ*, with their local techniques. The decorations were exuberant—their inspiration coming from a series of architectural models available in catalogues of drawings imported from France, Great Britain and Italy (mainly through Armenian agen-

cies).<sup>34</sup> Thus one finds a “historicist-eclectic” combination of *muqarnas* and French classical-style ramps, geometrical and plant motifs on fluted columns with composite neo-antique capitals, stylized friezes attesting to the influence of Art Nouveau and Art Deco, balcony and terrace brick-work lattice parapets inherited from the Ottoman period and neo-Victorian iron fretwork, details in Beaux-Arts or Arts-and-Crafts style, and neo-baroque fronts, as well as neo-medieval ribbed windows.

The façade eventually lost its closed aspect, opening up progressively. Openings were pierced towards the streets, while more and more ornate and prominent balconies prolonged the decorated window fronts and decorations above the main entrance. As of the 1930s, there was often a porch-like addition or portico in front of the main entrance on the ground floor and a terrace with parapet on the first floor.

This period was also when the first main lines of the city were drawn. The initial master plan was produced in December 1936 by two German engineers, but it was never adopted.<sup>35</sup> In 1937 the historical centre, Rusafa, was cut through by a new street running parallel to the Tigris, King Ghazi Street (now Kifah Street). With its squares and crossings, this long artery generated perpendicular streets leading to the Tigris, enclosing the new neighbourhoods with two-storied housing and offices with concrete porticoes, yet its creation did not modify the adjacent urban grid. In 1944, a little further to the east in a less densely inhabited sector of Rusafa, a new parallel street was then pierced, Sheikh Omar Street.<sup>36</sup>

Last but not least, it is significant to note that the Public Works Department, which was initiated by the British immediately after their arrival in 1921, passed to Iraqi hands in 1937. The first Iraqi government architect was Ahmad Mukhtar, who was also one of the first two Iraqi students of architecture to graduate from a European university (Liverpool, the other one being Hazim Namiq, from Cardiff, UK). Seen from that angle, his participation in the building of the Iraqi pavilion at the 1937 Exposition Internationale des Arts et des Techniques in Paris is symbolic of the affirmation of a new national will and consciousness.<sup>37</sup>

#### *The 1940s: New cultural references*

The introverted and gardenless individual house had undergone quite a change since the British arrival in 1920. The open central courtyard had evolved into a centred plan—a constant element in the “urban cottages” with gardens or well-to-do housing of the 1930s. Yet it was not until the 1940s that the first compact-plan villas emerged, still adhering to the Road and Building Law. These always included a few metres of front garden with a low fence of mixed brick and wrought iron work on the street side, while the back garden was enclosed by a higher brick wall in order to maintain privacy. In some houses, however, the plan was no

longer centred: on the ground floor the different rooms communicated with one another, forming a vast surface area crossed by lateral circulation, the "central" space being relocated to the side and restricted to the widening at the top of the staircase on the landing of the first floor. On the other hand, traditional elements such as the dual circulation, the roof-terrace with parapet, the *sirdāb*, and multiple terraces and chimneys were kept because houses were not yet being designed to include central heating or air-cooling. This type of housing foreshadowed the "modern type house" with a plain façade and decor in the functionalist style.<sup>38</sup> Furthermore, as of the 1950s it would grow, particularly in the new areas built farther away from the centre of the city. As blocks of these residential allotments were built with dense, more compact low-rise housing, urbanization extended toward the south of the city along the eastern bank of the river.

Demographic transformations were taking place within society, with massive emigration of minorities (mainly Assyrians) and affluent merchant dynasties (mainly Jewish after 1948, but also Armenian). At the same time, there was a shift in artistic and cultural references as exchanges between the Iraqi and European elites increased, for instance, with the arrival of artists and architects emigrating from Poland and Germany, and the first Iraqi university students sent to Europe, mainly Great Britain (Cardiff, Manchester, Liverpool, Newcastle).

#### *The "international modernist" 1950s: A "basic training" phase?*

The expansion of Baghdad brought about by the affluence resulting from oil revenues allowed for industrialization, the modernization of facilities, and multiple development schemes including schools, factories, hospitals, roads and transport exchange hubs. At the same time, the explosion of international references brought about a stylistic pluralism that combined rationalism, Bauhaus, Corbusean modernism, regionalism, and so on. During the final years of the monarchy, famous architects were called in for major schemes of city planning and architectural design, with the aim of increasing the surface area of the city. In 1954, the Development Board appointed Constantin Doxiadis, who projected a remodelling of the entire city according to a rigid orthogonal grid, of which only a part would be completed.<sup>39</sup> Doxiadis built the first modular green allotments, in the sense of an urbanism of a series of repeated modular housing, according to hygienist concepts of a functional grid. One of these was the neighbourhood of Dhubbat, built for army officers to the east of the Tigris, and another was "western Baghdad," for a middle-class population. Prestigious amenities were designed or completed by architects of international renown (Gropius for the university, Le Corbusier for the Olympic Stadium, and Frank Lloyd Wright for an

opera house).<sup>40</sup> Last but not least, the 1950s saw the emergence of the first high-rise buildings, implanted here and there within the fabric of the older city with no link to the urban continuum. These included buildings by Abdullah Ihsan Kamil, Philip Hirst, Qahtan al Madfai, Jaafar Allawi and Midhat Ali Madloom, among others.

By the time of the revolution in 1958, Baghdad had three urban styles: *intra muros*, the old centre, Ruṣāfa, pierced by long thoroughfares for automobile circulation; *extra muros* with homogenous, well-spaced “British” iron-grid residential neighbourhoods along the Tigris; and finally a few new, functionally-inspired ‘green’ allotments. The full development of the city—an urban extension of juxtaposed grids gradually lost in the immensities of a flat desert location—only really exploded in the 1960s, and gave an effective response to the problem of the internal migration and the *ṣarīfas*.

In terms of private housing, the fantasies of private commissions often generated a juxtaposition of different models, from the most traditional to the most “modernist.” Yet one could say that in the 1950s Baghdad entered the era of the international villa, the “modern type house.” In residential neighbourhoods the compact plan house was now more often open onto a garden separating it from the street; the succession of rooms were all accessed by a corridor, living-rooms had large bow-windows, and the central space was a staircase of varying widths. These transformations occurred because the way of life was evolving. Technical improvements, but also societal changes, made certain functions unnecessary or obsolete, such as flat roofs and food cellars, or the dual circulation layout. “The extent of traditional content is declining in response to technology, wealth, education, women’s emancipation and other socio-economic factors.”<sup>41</sup>

As for the façade, the main change obviously coincided with the widespread use of concrete, not only merely as a technical base of the building but as visible decoration, a constituent of the whole. Although this is but a hypothesis for the moment, given that domestic housing of 1950s Baghdad has not been the subject of any systematic typological survey and that these buildings, if they still exist, are beyond the reach of researchers for the moment, one can nevertheless propose several explanations for this fact. The circulation of models and references of modernity were internationalized through magazines, and given the prosperity brought about by oil revenues,<sup>42</sup> trips and holidays took the middle class to the coasts of Lebanon and Syria, where French influence prevailed. Iraqi architects trained in Europe or in the United States were growing in number as well,<sup>43</sup> and exchanges between Iraqis and foreigners, in particular those coming from Eastern Europe, were multiplying. At the same time, “architecture without architects” was in full bloom,

using the principles, the forms, and often the detail of “international seaside resort” architecture. The vogue of the so-called “climatic” architecture, with its criteria of good ventilation and spatial circulation, was now being used for all buildings, with its visual characteristics of thick façades, double casing, lengthy bays, overhangs, arabesque sunscreens, and modern concrete *musharabiehs*. Finally, as blocks of flats were created, the result was an exceptional repertory of urban forms that is still standing today, although often in a somewhat derelict state.

### *Identities and paradoxes*

At the beginning of the Hashemite monarchy and British Mandate era, Baghdad was, apart from a few modernizations, little more than the quiet capital of an Ottoman *wilayat*, still closely resembling the mythic *madina* of *A Thousand and One Nights*. The different phases of the city’s development remain visible today because the city evolved in a series of extensions rather than destructions or superpositions. Beginning in the 1920s, Baghdad underwent a complete transformation which, by the 1960s, made it possible for the city to emulate any other international metropolis, be it in terms of amenities or functionality, as well as in its potentialities or defects, all the result of its unbounded enthusiasm for progress. Indeed, as was the custom everywhere in the world, the city was adapted to the car. Moreover, the checkerboard urban grid, which until the 1950s had made the best possible use of the naturally flat and well-vegetated setting, was being eaten into by the first high rise office and residential buildings. These were “architectural statements” whose intrinsic quality is not in question but which were disconnected from any contextual reflection in terms of the overall urban scheme and continuum.

As for the aesthetics of the residential buildings, they were and remained decidedly eclectic. Up until the 1940s, this eclecticism was the result of the use of traditional local brickwork with the persistence of a house plan still characterized by a central inner space. A new form of “modern” eclecticism followed, in which coated concrete took over from brickwork, both in terms of structure and ornamental motifs. Could this be read as a “basic training” phase, through which the new generation of foreign-educated Iraqi architects sought to liberate itself from the past as well as prove its dexterity and its mastery of the canons of the “international modern style”? At that point, the revolution seems to have played the symbolic role of vector of a paradoxical identity, since it would be experienced simultaneously as a break with the western world and the integration of the legacies of international modernity. The birth of “international regionalism,” as conceptualised by Rifaat Chadirji, is an example: “From the very outset of my practice, I thought it impera-



tive that, sooner or later, Iraq create for itself an architecture regional in character yet simultaneously modern, part of the current international avant-garde style."<sup>44</sup>

It is significant to note here that Iraqis were of two mindsets concerning these early decades of the twentieth century; the cross-references, stylistic pluralism and local transposition of international models were sometimes retrospectively denigrated in comparison to an authentically Iraqi building "genius" that was emerging in the wake of the 1958 revolution. According to Shirine Ihsan Shirzad, "the circumstances and opportunities made available by the Revolution for the Iraqi citizen and Iraqi architect, pave the way to create the Iraqi architecture."<sup>45</sup> It is my opinion that the "Hashemite" Baghdad, with its particularities, was not a "blind mimicry of the West."<sup>46</sup> On the contrary, it constituted a novel case of elaboration of a modern city on the other side of the Mediterranean, born of a successful hybridization of cultural traditions and the exchange of professional knowledge. It was a laboratory for the building of identity based on the re-interpretation of local traditions, in which adaptation and appropriation were determining factors in the enrichment and renewal of urban forms.

However, beyond the inventory of forms and far from implying only physical space, the urban and collective memory (the integrity of the citizen, social links, identity and imaginary landmarks) are closely interdependent. That is also why the main interest, in my opinion, of documenting and interpreting this exceptional modern heritage as a whole, studied through the processes of its transformation, is doubly urgent. Firstly to prevent the loss of an essential memory which is at risk due to past tragedies and current uncertainties, and secondly to evaluate it before history and the "reconstruction" process alter it irremediably.

**Reflections on a "reconstruction to be" for Baghdad: Vernacular architecture and urban space at the core of a 'strategy of vigilance'**

When one considers Baghdad's urban planning today, one cannot help but notice a certain failure in professional practice in urban design, architecture and planning schemes. Partly redesigned in the 1970s to adapt the city to car traffic, as were other capitals in the region such as Istanbul, Beirut and Tripoli (Libya), Baghdad experienced several partial but rough transformations in the shape of some spectacular operations led by a regime interested in leaving its mark by visible symbols. The city then suffered under thirteen years of sanctions prolonged by a period of several years of instability—with no clear resolution to this very day. All this is purely negative in terms of urban planning, and has

all but frozen any possibility of a harmonious evolution. The point is not to conserve the whole of Baghdad as an archaeological object, but to consider its centre (in an area to be defined) as a single urban object<sup>47</sup> despite the irregularities inherited from the last five decades, and to protect the rest of the city from a further breakdown into its present urban space.

***Reconstruction as a tabula rasa?***

One of the major dangers of reconstruction is certainly the use of the bulldozer—the most economical way to get rid of a relatively degraded built environment, as well as the most symbolic in erasing the traces of dictatorship to rebuild anew for better living conditions. Indeed, part of this vernacular built heritage, consisting of brick housing of the 1930s and 1940s, or concrete in the 1950s anterior to the 1958 revolution, has fallen into a state of dilapidation and misuse for a variety of reasons. Old-fashioned real estate regulations, non-application of protection regulations, successive emigrations, and rentals to those who cannot afford a correct maintenance of the property are a few examples.

However, even if this heritage has often fallen into dereliction, it belongs to an urban fabric. This urban space is not only a spatial or geographic entity—it is the very basis, the product and also the *producer* of collective memories and collective behaviours. Even if, in the case of Baghdad, these collective memories and the urban process have been largely determined by political factors, on the ground any urban policy always results, one way or another, in a human and daily appropriation of it.<sup>48</sup>

The problems a *tabula rasa* policy would engender are well known. Getting rid of the built heritage not only deprives a society of models to use, but it loses a source of continuity, which is essential. Erasing traces and marks of the past induces a crisis of the aesthetic and symbolic representation of the city.<sup>49</sup> This in turn has many negative consequences on critical analysis of the past, on projections into the future, and on relationships between individuals and groups, as well as between groups. In Baghdad, given the sectarian evolution of the situation this aspect has to be studied very carefully. It makes it more difficult, if not impossible, to formulate a scheme of urban and architectural modernity that is consistent, specific and unanimously accepted.<sup>50</sup>

The best solutions must be pragmatic. It is important to create a preliminary dialogue between the city's residents and urban planning experts. In the case of Baghdad, a city in which there were so many urban and architectural additions throughout the twentieth century, preserving a "continuity" does not only imply the formal level, but also the practical appropriation of the urban space. Baghdad's renaissance should not depend on arbitrary external criteria deciding what is beau-

18 *Caecilia Pieri*

tiful or ugly, good or bad, but on a cautious analysis of the physical needs and the mental representations of its inhabitants, balancing between objective, subjective and even symbolic data.

***Reconstruction/destruction: connotations and relations***

Any reconstruction scheme is heavily conditioned by the angle from which the past (or pasts) of the locality are seen. In the case of Baghdad there are several difficulties.

***The ambivalence of the relationship with the past***

In Baghdad, the relationship with the past is ambiguous in three ways. First is the attitude toward the Saddam Hussein era. Nearly universally hated, it is now perceived as synonymous with an era of “normal” sociability when compared to the current life under curfew, daily kidnappings, car-bombs and so on. Second is the historical perspective on the pre-revolution era. The undeniable prosperity during the monarchy and the mark of the British left a vernacular heritage which could be read retrospectively as a colonial phenomenon. Last are relations with the West which have been both fascinating and repulsive—more so since the embargo which led to a basic distrust of the West, and in some circles, provoked a withdrawal into protectionist, if not hostile, community attitudes.

***The illusion of progress through change***

Paradoxically, the values linked to the latest “Western” techniques may be seen as an easy and logical escape from a confused present. However, that escape runs the danger of falling into the trap of an illusion of progress, in which mere technique is used instead of an authentic reflection. In the long term, this can result in acculturation.

The worst is to be expected from some of the *tabula rasa* “reconstruction” projects, whose attribution and financing schemes are not yet clear, such as a four-lane ring road project through the historical centre of Baghdad.<sup>51</sup> In a later phase, for example, Abu Nuwas Street in the southern part of this project will become a motorway. It is one of the only “green” strips of Baghdad and used to be one of the highlights of the city, with its literary cafés and *mesgouf* restaurants. However, with time, Abu Nuwas became associated with other symbols. A long stretch of its southern part was chosen by Saddam Hussein to build officers’ lodgings on the riverbank facing the presidential palace and in the north, a whole sector is now forbidden because of the proximity of several international hotels. The logic is then, why should the population want to preserve this “green lung” if they have not had access to it for so long? Furthermore, people are used to having cars, and thus see the ring road project

primarily as a way to solve a massive traffic problem which has gotten much worse since the last war. It is estimated that more than two million vehicles have entered Iraq since June 2003.<sup>52</sup> Generally speaking, behind the need to modernize, there might also be hidden agendas, dubious transactions of all sorts, as well as the downright cynicism of neo-colonial business operations and highly lucrative markets.

*For a constructive and critical cultural analysis  
Reconsidering the opposition between tradition and modernity*

One must go beyond the systematic opposition between tradition and modernity, knowing that each one can serve opposite aims—tradition can reassure or symbolize a hated past that needs to be destroyed, and modernity can appear frightening or conversely as reparation. That is why a cultural approach must become critical in order to be constructive.

For instance, a systematic and historical analysis of the foundations and paradoxes of the urban history of twentieth century Baghdad should have, as its investigative axis, the complex processes of overlay of modernities coming from Europe. The idea that needs to be understood by the Iraqis themselves is that the identity of their city is the result of specific interweavings, in which appropriation and dynamic adaptation from “foreign” models created a “recomposed” local tradition, itself the source of a new authenticity and creativity which has to be documented and preserved. Any cultural work on construction and reconstruction must first look at this collective past from a critical perspective, resisting the frequent temptations to erase or rewrite it: “this alternative de-contextualises the collective urban data and thus entails a loss of its *meaning*; as a consequence, it entails a similar suppression of the content and direction of decision-making for the future.”<sup>53</sup>

*Architecture and urban planning as core elements of a  
'strategy of vigilance'*

In parallel with the concept of architecture “as a strategy of resistance” (or opposition) as defined by Kenneth Frampton, I would propose the concept of a “strategy of vigilance” or of “critical watch,” which would find its expression in architecture and urban planning embodied by three types of approach.

The first would be to avoid antagonistic, reductive attitudes such as a sentimental or nostalgic vision of a “golden age” seen as socially, aesthetically and ideally harmonious, and to drop “the myopic view of limiting the debate to merely western influence on traditional forms. Nostalgia, romanticism, reminiscence of by-gone empires and a glorious past will not suffice.”<sup>54</sup> On the contrary, the extreme option of the ratio-

nalist, determinist and functionalist stance itself (such as those derived from the Modernist Movement) must also be avoided. This attitude would only keep the demiurgic tendency of the *tabula rasa*—whose example around the world appears to be disastrously destructive.

The second would be to take the urban data as a concrete embodiment of ideologies and values in order to underscore their relativity, and then to analyze them in order to master them better. The third would be to save the technical heritage of the urban data and forms. Seen as the built trace of a heritage, the urban form becomes a concrete object which can be identified, situated and modified knowingly.

***Conclusion: the living urban memory as a sustainable societal choice***

In order to preserve a balance between material layouts and collective memory, urban form and content, it becomes imperative to study the materiality of the built environment or urban design in its various contexts. Architecture and urban planning belong to cultural systems of representation and are part of a long-term durability. Tradition should be seen as a laboratory of collective memory, so that it becomes easier to conceive of architecture and urban planning as societal choices.

Bearing this perspective in mind, I would like to insist on the necessity of adding, to the economic, social and environmental aspects, a fourth core element in any sustainable reconstruction project. That is, culture as a strategy of watchfulness or vigilance, a critical “watch/wake.” This orientation should help conceive and implement architectural and urban planning projects, by being as demanding as possible on the lucidity of the architect or urban planner with regard to the relativity of his or her own academic, professional and local culture.

The urban history of modern Baghdad (i.e. the various twentieth century strata as identified and mentioned above) is one nourished by traditions which have resulted in ways of using techniques, materials, typologies, and aesthetic and functional criteria. These traditions all contain an understanding and intelligence of the place and its culture that have survived years of violence. The city as it is now must be viewed as a part of a global urban heritage. The vernacular architecture and urban spaces which have survived twentieth century expansion should be used as the founding elements of Baghdad’s future reconstruction by teaching modernity one thing: sustainability. The reconstruction of Baghdad, an ailing city, must avoid new surgical operations. The challenges of degradation, conservation, restoration, rehabilitation and rebuilding must be related to “long-term needs of those who live in cities and to their ambition of dignity and self-perpetuation as individuals or as members of a community.”<sup>55</sup> Lastly, this grandiose challenge must incorporate what Mohammed Makiya calls the “micro-vision

[which] plays a major part in softening the aggressiveness of the large," since "it is the ideology of the human scale which gives the guiding route."<sup>56</sup>

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> This thesis is being conducted under the co-supervision of Professor Ihsan Fethi, Dean of the College of Art and Architecture, Amman Ahlia University, and Professor Jean-Louis Cohen, Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Science Sociale (EHESS), Paris.

<sup>2</sup> I had the opportunity to go to Baghdad in June, 2003 in order to meet contemporary Iraqi painters. That first journey resulted in an exhibition of Iraqi paintings in October of that year and a published catalogue: Jean-Michel Place, ed., *Baghdad Renaissance* (Galerie M: Paris, 2003).

<sup>3</sup> A short paper by the geographer Pierre Marthelot, "Bagdad, notes de géographie urbaine," *Annales de Géographie* 74 (Paris, 1965): 24-37.

<sup>4</sup> Khalid Al Sultani, "Architecture in Iraq between the Two World Wars, 1920-1940," *Ur: International Magazine of Arab Culture* 2-3 (London: Iraqi Cultural Centre, 1982): 97.

<sup>5</sup> See for example, Mithal Al Alusi, "Main characteristics of Iraqi Housing," *Al Amilon fi al Naft Magazine* 36 (Baghdad, 1965): **page numbers**; Ihsan Fethi and John Warren, *Traditional houses in Baghdad* (Worthing, Sussex: Flexiprint Ltd, 1982); Subhi Al Azzawi, "The Oriental Houses in Baghdad," *Ur: International Magazine of Arab Culture* 1 (1985): 2-13; Subhi Al Azzawi, "The Oriental Houses in Baghdad," *Ur: International Magazine of Arab Culture* 2 (1985): 30-41; Subhi Al Azzawi, "The Oriental Houses in Baghdad," *Ur: International Magazine of Arab Culture* 3 (1985): 7-21. See also Jovan Kronic, "Architectural Traditions and New Architecture in Iraq: The House of Baghdad, its Old and Modern Concept, an Examination of the Elements and Methods of a Contemporary Synthesis," *Sumer, A Journal of Archaeology and History in Iraq* 18 (Baghdad, 1962): 33-47; S. Abdulac, *Traditional Housing Design in Arab Countries. Designing in Islamic Cultures. 2: Urban Housing* (Cambridge, MA: The Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture, 1982); Neil Parkyn, "Consulting architect: Architectural Landmarks of the Recent Past—the Work of Wilson and Mason in Iraq," *Middle East Construction* 9, no. 8 (London, 1984): 37-41; Roberto Parapetti and Kajiha M. Ibrahim, "Traditional Houses in Al-Kraimat Quarter," *Mesopotamia*, **editor or volume** (Turin: Le Lettere, Università di Torino, 1999-2000), 34-5.

<sup>6</sup> Many architectural programs such as the Great Mosque, the building of Amanat Baghdad (Municipality), the housing for officers on Abu Nuwas, the New International Airport, and so on, have been published in books and magazines. See for example, Saleh Hassan Al Heeti, *The Development of Residential Function of Greater Baghdad 1950-1970* (in Arabic) (Baghdad: Dar Al Salam, 1976); *Openhouse volume (place of publication, September 1977): page numbers*; *Middle East Construction volume (place of publication, 1978): page numbers*; *Architektura volume* (Warsaw, 1979): **page numbers**; *Architektura* 9, no. 2 (Germany, Jan/Feb 1979): **page numbers**; *Mimar: Architecture in Development volume* (Singapore, Jul/Sep, Oct/Dec 1981 and Jan/Mar 1984) **page numbers**; *The Architectural Review volume* (January, February and April 1982): **page numbers**; *Landskab volume* (Denmark: September 1982): **page numbers**; *Alam Al-bina' volume* (Egypt, 1983 and December 1987): **page numbers**; *Architecture d'aujourd'hui volume* (France, September 1983): **page numbers**; *SD volume* (Japan, November 1983): **page numbers**; *Techniques et architectures volume* (France, Feb/Mar 1984): **page numbers**; *Landscape Design volume (place of publication: June 1984): page numbers*; *A&U volume (place of publication, February 1984): page numbers*; *Mur Vivant volume (place of publication, France?, 1984): page numbers*; *Airport*

*Forum* volume (place of publication, April 1984): page numbers; *Architectural Record* volume (place of publication, USA?, June 1984): page numbers; *Albinaa* volume (place of publication, Saudi Arabia?, April 1985): page numbers; *The Journal of the Indian Institute of Architects* volume (place of publication, India?, February 1991): page numbers; *Muqarnas: An Annual on Islamic Art and Architecture* 13 (place of publication, USA?, 1996): page numbers; *Journal of Architectural Education* volume (UK, February 1997): page numbers.

<sup>7</sup> See, for example, Souad Ali Mehdi, "Al 'Imara al ajnabi fi Baghdad 1900-1960," (MA, College of Engineering, Baghdad University, 1987), 216; Shirine Ihsan Shirzad, "Al 'imara al haditha fil Iraq," in *Al muhath min al tarikh al imara*, Editor(s) (Baghdad: publisher, 1987), 129-66; Aqil Nuri al Mulla Huwaysh, *Al Ijarah, al Haditha fi al Iraq* (Baghdad: Dar al Shunun al Thaqafiyah al Ammah, 1988); Sherban Cantacuzino, "Baghdad Resurgent," *Mimar* 6 (Singapore, Oct-Dec. 1982): page numbers; Mina Marefat, "Wright's Baghdad," in *Frank Lloyd Wright, Europe and Beyond*, ed. Anthony Alofsin (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 184-214; "Le Corbusier," *The Architectural Review* 100 (year): page number; *Architecture d'aujourd'hui* 228, September 1983; Suzanne Taj-Eldin, "Boîte à miracles," in *Baghdad: A Posthumous work by Le Corbusier*, editor (The Netherlands: Wonen-TA/BK, August 1983), 15; Suzanne Taj-Eldin and Stanislaus von Moos, "A gymnasium by Le Corbusier," *Archithese* 13 (Germany: May/June 1983): (page numbers).

<sup>8</sup> See particularly Khalis Al Ashab, "Urban Geography of Baghdad" (Ph.D. diss., 2 vol., Newcastle University, 1974); Ihsan Fethi, "Urban Conservation in Iraq with Special Reference to Baghdad" (Ph.D. diss., 2 vol., University of Sheffield, 1977); Layth Raouf, "Development and housing in Iraq" (Ph.D. diss., University of Sussex, 1980); Subhi Al Azzawi, "A Descriptive, Analytical and Comparative Study of Traditional Courtyard Houses and Modern Non-Courtyard Houses in Baghdad" (Ph.D. diss., Bartlett School of Architecture and Planning, University College London, 1984). See also Fāyez Al Bayrūtī, "Al-Taṭ'wir Al 'Imara lil bayt fi Baghdad 1900-1980" (Ph.D. diss., Baghdad University, 1992). All unpublished.

<sup>9</sup> Such as the IFPO (Institut Français du Proche-Orient) in Lebanon, Jordan and Syria, CEDEJ in Egypt, and numerous British institutes and research centres (National Archives, British Library, Royal Institute of British Architecture, Foreign Office, Iraqi Petroleum Company, Imperial War Museum, academic libraries and so on).

<sup>10</sup> Khalid Al Sultani, "Architecture in Iraq Between the Two World Wars, 1920-1940," *Ur: International Magazine of Arab Culture* 2-3 (1982): (page numbers).

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 97.

<sup>12</sup> Here are some examples, among many other works and publications. On Algeria: Nabila Oulebsir, "La Construction du patrimoine en Algérie, de la conquête au centenaire (1830-1930)" (Ph.D. diss., EHESS, January 2000); Jean-Louis Cohen, Nabila Oulebsir and Youssef Kanoun IFA ed., *Alger, Paysage urbain et architectures, 1800-2000* (Paris: éd. de l'Imprimeur, 2003). On Egypt: Mercédès Volait, *Architectes et architectures dans l'Égypte moderne, 1830-1950. Genèse et essor d'une expertise locale* (Paris: Maisonneuve et Larose, 2005); see also Mercédès Volait ed., *Le Caire-Alexandrie, architectures européennes, 1850-1950*, Etudes urbaines 5, (Cairo: CEDEJ/IFAO, 2001). On Iran: Papers and studies by Mina Marefat, architect, urban planner and professor, Library of Congress, Washington, about the transformation of public space in modern Iran; and Pauline Lavagne d'Ortigue, "Histoire d'une hybridation inachevée: les villes et établissements de l'Anglo Iranian Oil Company au Khuzistân (1901-1951) ou comment faire cohabiter logique industrielle et culture coloniale?" (Ph.D. diss., Lille III, forthcoming). On Lebanon: Robert Saliba, *Beirut 1920-1940: Domestic Architecture between tradition and Modernity* (Beyrouth: Ordre des Ingénieurs et Architectes de Beyrouth, 1998); Robert Saliba, "Paysage colonial et éclectisme provincial. La formation du Beyrouth résidentiel, 1840-1940" (PhD Thesis, Paris VIII, 2004); and Marlène Gho-

rayeb, "La transformation des structures urbaines de Beyrouth pendant le mandat français" (Thesis, Paris VIII, 2000). On Libya: Mia Fuller, "Building Power: Italian Architecture in Libya and Ethiopia," in *Forms of Dominance. On the Architecture and Urbanism of the Colonial Enterprise*, ed. Nezar Al Sayyad (Aldershot: Avebury, 1992) (**page numbers**); and Mia Fuller, "Edilizia e potere: l'urbanistica e l'architettura coloniale italiana, 1923-1940," *Studi piacentini* 9 (Piacenza, 1991): (**page numbers**). On Morocco: Jean-Louis Cohen and Monique Eleb, *Casablanca, mythes et figures d'une aventure urbaine* (Paris: Hazan, 1998). On Northern Africa: François Béguin, *Arabisances: décor architectural et tracé urbain en Afrique du Nord: 1830-1950* (Paris: Dunod, 1983). On Syria: Franck Friès, "Damas (1860-1946). La mise en place de la ville moderne; des règlements au plan" (Ph.D. diss., Paris VIII, 2000). On Turkey: Sibel Bozdoğan, *Modernism and Nation Building: Turkish Architectural Culture in the Early Republic* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001).

<sup>13</sup> Ihsan Fethi, "Contemporary architecture in Baghdad: its roots and transition," *Madinat Al Salaam: Baghdad 1979-1983, Process Architecture* 58 (Tokyo, 1985): 129; Shirine Ihsan Shirzad, "Al-'Imāra al-Ḥadītha fi al-'Irāq," in *Al Muhath min al Tarih al Imara*, editor (Baghdad: publisher, 1987), 128, 129-166.

<sup>14</sup> Pierre Marthelot, "Bagdad, notes de géographie urbaine," *Annales de Géographie* 74 (Paris, 1965): 31.

<sup>15</sup> Fethi, "Contemporary Architecture in Baghdad: Its Roots and Transition."

<sup>16</sup> On housing with a central space in nineteenth-twentieth century Arab-Islamic areas, see Jean-Charles Depaule, ed., *Cahiers de la recherche architecturale* (Marseille: Parenthèses, 1987), 20-1.

<sup>17</sup> On the housing of this period, see Ihsan Fethi and John Warren, *Traditional Houses in Baghdad* (Worthing, Sussex: Flexiprint Ltd, 1982), and Subhi Al Azzawi, *Ur: International Magazine of Arab Culture* (1985) 1, 2-13; 2, 30-41; 3: 7-21.

<sup>18</sup> For more about Baghdad in the Ottoman period, see Thomas Herzog, "Baghdad through the Ottoman eyes," in *The Empire in the City, Arab Provincial Capitals in the Late Ottoman Empire*, ed. Jens Hanssen, Thomas Philipp, Stefan Weber (Beirut: Orient Institut der Deutschen Morgenlandischen Gesellschaft, 2002), 310-28.

<sup>19</sup> Quoted from Jacques Dauphin, *Incertain Irak, tableau d'un royaume avant la tem - pête, 1914-1953* (Paris: Paul Geuthner, 1991), **page number**.

<sup>20</sup> Report of the British Intelligence Services, 1922. Public Record Office (UK).

<sup>21</sup> Quoted from Jacques Dauphin, *Incertain Irak*, **page number**.

<sup>22</sup> An analysis of the situation seen from the angle of international regulations can be found in Emmanuel Nolde, *L'Irak: origine historique et situation internationale* (Paris: Librairie générale de droit et jurisprudence, 1934). See also Zaki Saleh, *Britain and Iraq: Study in British Foreign Affairs* (London: Books and Books, 1995); Matthew Elliot, *Independent Iraq, The Monarchy and British Influence: 1941-1958* (London-New York: Tauris Academic Series, 1996); Samira Haj, *The Making of Iraq, 1900-1963* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1997).

<sup>23</sup> Khalid Al Sultani, "Architecture in Iraq Between the Two World Wars, 1920-1940," *Ur: International Magazine of Arab Culture* 2-3 (1982): **99 sqq.**

<sup>24</sup> Caecilia Pieri, "Entre tutelle coloniale et souveraineté nationale: Bagdad, 1921-1937," and Ihsan Fethi, "Protection et restauration de l'architecture coloniale à Bagdad: problèmes et enjeux," both in *Le Patrimoine des empires coloniaux européens* (Paris: Institut National du Patrimoine Somogy, 2006).

<sup>25</sup> On Wilson's work in Baghdad, see Pauline Lavagne d'Ortigue, "Connaître l'architecture classique et l'urbanisme colonial / Découvrir l'Orient et l'architecture islamique / Rêver d'une ville moderne et syncrétique," in *Rêver d'Orient, Connaître l'Orient*, ed. M.E. Châtelain and I. Gadoin (Lyon: ENS Editions, forthcoming).

<sup>26</sup> Precise lists of the post offices opened in the first years of the British Mandate are available in the "Archives du Levant, 1929-1941" (Paris: Quai d'Orsay, **date**).

<sup>27</sup> James Mollison Wilson, 1887-1965, was a military officer working as an engineer



with Sir Edwin Lutyens in New Delhi. For further information, see P. Lavagne d'Ortigue, "Connaître l'architecture classique et l'urbanisme colonial" in *Rêver d'Orient, Connaître l'Orient*, ed. M.E. Châtelain and I. Gadoin (Lyon: ENS Editions, forthcoming); C. H. Lindsey Smith, J.M.: *The Story of an Architect* (London: publisher, 1970).

<sup>28</sup> Quoted from Khalid Al Sultani, "Architecture in Iraq Between the Two World Wars, 1920-1940," *Ur: International Magazine of Arab Culture*, 2-3 (1982): 100-01.

<sup>29</sup> On this concept, see Joe Nasr and Mercedes Volait, ed., *Urbanism: Imported or Exported? Native Aspirations and Foreign Plans* (Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley-Academy, 2003).

<sup>30</sup> In this paper I use mainly the classification of four types of houses used first by Khalis Al Ashab, op. cit., (1974) and then Layth Raouf, in "Tradition and continuity in the Modern Iraqi House," *Ur: International Magazine of Arab Culture* 1 (1985): 15-24. This "transitional" period is precisely dated by K. Al Ashab from 1920 until 1936. For an analysis of the general perspective, see also Sherban Cantacuzino, "From Courtyard to Street: Recent Changes in the Pattern of Arab Cities," in *The Arab City: Its Character and Islamic Cultural Heritage*, ed., I. Serageldin, S. El-Sadek and R. Herbert, Proceedings of a Symposium held in Medina, (Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 28 Feb.-5 Mar., 1981), 84-92.

<sup>31</sup> The population increased from 200,000 inhabitants in 1920 to 750,800 in 1936, and the number of building permits delivered rose from 1200 between 1926 and 1930, to 3879 between 1930 and 1936. See Khalis Al Ashab, "Urban Geography of Baghdad" (Ph.D. diss., 2 vol., University of Newcastle, 1974).

<sup>32</sup> Layth Raouf, "Tradition and Continuity in the Modern Iraqi House," *Ur: International Magazine of Arab Culture* 1 (1985): 19-20.

<sup>33</sup> Layth Raouf, *ibid.* See also figures available in Fayezi Al Beirut, "Al Tat'wir Al 'Imara lil bayt fi Baghdad" (Ph.D. diss., Baghdad University, 1992), 250.

<sup>34</sup> Personal communication, Prof. Chardirji, during an informal discussion in London, (September 2006).

<sup>35</sup> "Masterplan for Baghdad, by F. Brecks and Bronowiener, from Berlin," December 1936. Quoted by Ihsan Fethi, "Contemporary Architecture in Baghdad: Its Roots and Transition," *Madinat Al Salam: Baghdad 1979-1983, Process Architecture* 58 (Tokyo, 1985): 131.

<sup>36</sup> On the global modification of the urban scheme of Baghdad see Khalis Al Ashab, "Urban Geography of Baghdad" (Ph.D. diss, 2 vol., University of Newcastle, UK, 1974); Ihsan Fethi, *Baghdad Historical Centre Rehabilitation Project: 1. Inventory of Monuments of Cultural Interest*, 80 p. 2. *Social Conditions*, 100p. 3. *Macroframe Study*, 100 p., (Baghdad, 1983; unpublished).

<sup>37</sup> On the symbolic and national status of this Pavilion in Iraqi newspapers and official texts, see Caecilia Pieri, "Entre tutelle coloniale et souveraineté nationale, Bagdad, 1921-1937, in *Le Patrimoine des empires coloniaux européens*, (Paris, Institut National du Patrimoine: Somogy, 2006).

<sup>38</sup> Layth Raouf, "Tradition and Continuity in the Modern Iraqi House," *Ur: International Magazine of Arab Culture* 1 (1985): 18-21.

<sup>39</sup> Doxiadis Associates, *Report of the Development of Baghdad: A Contribution to the Ideas for the Development of the Capital of Iraq* (Baghdad: Publisher, 1958).

<sup>40</sup> See references mentioned above in note 7 and also Bruce Brooks Pfeiffer, "Frank Lloyd Wright and Baghdad," *FLW Quarterly* 15, no. 1 (2004): 4-17.

<sup>41</sup> Layth Raouf, "Tradition and Continuity in the Modern Iraqi House," *Ur: International Magazine of Arab Culture* 1 (1985): 22-3.

<sup>42</sup> Bernard Vernier, *L'Irak aujourd'hui* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1963).

<sup>43</sup> Cf., Ihsan Fethi, "Contemporary Architecture in Baghdad: Its Roots and Transition," *Madinat Al Salaam: Baghdad 1979-1983, Process Architecture* 58 (Tokyo, 1985): 132.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. the way Rifaat Chadirji sums up this concept in "Title," *Process Architecture*

58 (Tokyo, 1985): 123.

<sup>45</sup> Shirine Ihsan Shirzad, "Al-Imāra al-Hāditha fī al-‘Irāq," in *Al Muhath min al Tarih al Imara*, **editor** (Baghdad: **publisher** 1987), 129.

<sup>46</sup> Joe Nasr and Mercedes Volait, ed. *Urbanism: Imported or Exported? Native Aspirations and Foreign Plans* (Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley Academy, 2003), xii.

<sup>47</sup> This area could be defined between Kadhmiya to Jadriya along the Tigris, including areas such as Karkh, Salhiya, Karradat Marryam and, on the other bank, Karrada, Saadoun, Battaween, Nithal, Sinak, Hafaz al Qadi, Kifah, Wasiria, Alwaziya, Aadhamiya, Maghreb and so on. However, protection also implies rehabilitation on a wider scale.

<sup>48</sup> A synthetic review of such phenomena for other capitals is available in a special issue "Public Space in the Middle-East and the Arab World: Between Urbanism and Urban Customs," *Geocarrefour* 77, no. 3 (2002).

<sup>49</sup> The representation has to be distinguished from the perception. Perception is the reaction to a visible object; the representation is the idea you have of it independently of the reality of the object, so that it can embody any symbolic or ideological purpose or connotation. Cf. the analysis, although in another context, by Myriam Ababsa, "Idéologies territoriales et pratiques urbaines des riverains de l'ancienne ligne de démarcation de Beyrouth," *Villes et frontières*, **editor** (**Place of publication**: Anthropolos, 2002).

<sup>50</sup> See the pertinent analysis of these complex relationships in Sadri Bensmail and Salwa Bougha, "Pour une récupération critique des héritages traditionnels et modernes de la ville algérienne: du colonial dans le post-colonial, du global dans le local," available online at <[www.archi-art.net](http://www.archi-art.net)>

<sup>51</sup> A double motorway on both sides of the Tigris, with feeder roads, high-rise structures and sky-scrapers, congress palaces and so on, a city of science-fiction? Some images are already available on internet, see "A Renaissance for Baghdad" in <[www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org)>

<sup>52</sup> This statement is not merely my own conjecture, but the result of several recent discussions (2004-2006) with Baghdadis still living in these areas.

<sup>53</sup> Bensmail and Bougha, "Pour une récupération critique."

<sup>54</sup> Layth Raouf, "Tradition and Continuity in the Modern Iraqi House", *Ur: International Magazine of Arab Culture* 1 (1985): 24.

<sup>55</sup> Stanislaus Van Moos, "Modern Architectures and the Construction of Identities," *Docomomo Special Issue volume or editor* (Paris, 2006): 419-20.

<sup>56</sup> Mohammed Makiya, "An Appreciation of Arab-Islamic Architecture," in *Arab Architecture: Past and Present*, **editor** (Durham, UK: Centre for Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies, 1984), 91-6.



26 *Caecilia Pieri*

