



Stele of Nebuchadnezzar I (circa 1160 B.C.), King of Babylon, relating a campaign against the King of Elam, south-western Persia. The writing is mid-Babylonian.

left bank of the Tigris, about three miles to the north of Seleucia, now known as Taq Kisra).

Dating from this period is the famous Hellenistic city of Hatra, from which recent excavations, carried out by the Iraqi Directorate-General of Antiquities, have obtained remarkable archaeological results, including a valuable collection of fine statuary and other *objets d'art*.

The rule of the Parthians in Iraq was challenged frequently by the Romans, without decisive victory for either side until the Parthian Dynasty came to an end about 226 when a new Persian house, the Sassanians, came on the scene. The Sassanians ruled for about four centuries, with Ctesiphon as their winter capital, until they were finally defeated by the victorious Arab armies.

Mediaeval and Modern Iraq

With the coming of the Arabs came Islam. Islam inaugurated a new era in the Near East. The battle of Qadisiyya, when the Sassanians were defeated in 637 A.D., laid Iraq open to the Arab conquest, which was finally achieved in 641. New garrison cities were founded at Kufa and Basrah,

Ctesiphon was abandoned. A wave of tribes moved in from the deserts and settled in the valley of the Tigris and Euphrates, developing an attachment to Iraq while retaining the tribal traditions they brought with them. The importance, in the newly established Islamic order, of these new arrivals in Mesopotamia is shown by the fact that Kufa became the capital of the fourth Orthodox Caliph.

During the Ummayyad period, Iraq was the base for Muslim expansion eastward. In spite of being the centre of constant unrest, it played a leading part in cultural activities: in Iraq, Arabic studies were initiated and developed; it was the home of great poets and produced notable jurists. Iraq was, in short, a meeting place of ideas, traditions and peoples both nomadic and settled. Doubtless the length of time for which Iraq had been the seat of important civilisations made this inevitable, but though the country was full of the remains of former cultures, the influx from the desert made the new culture predominantly Arab in tradition and outlook.

Towards the end of the Ummayyad period, Iraq became the headquarters of the Abbasid movement and the centre whence it spread eastward. With the triumph of

the Abbasids, the capital of Islam was moved to this country and the second Abbasid Caliph, al-Mansur (754-775), made Baghdad the seat of his government and set about reorganising the Islamic Empire.

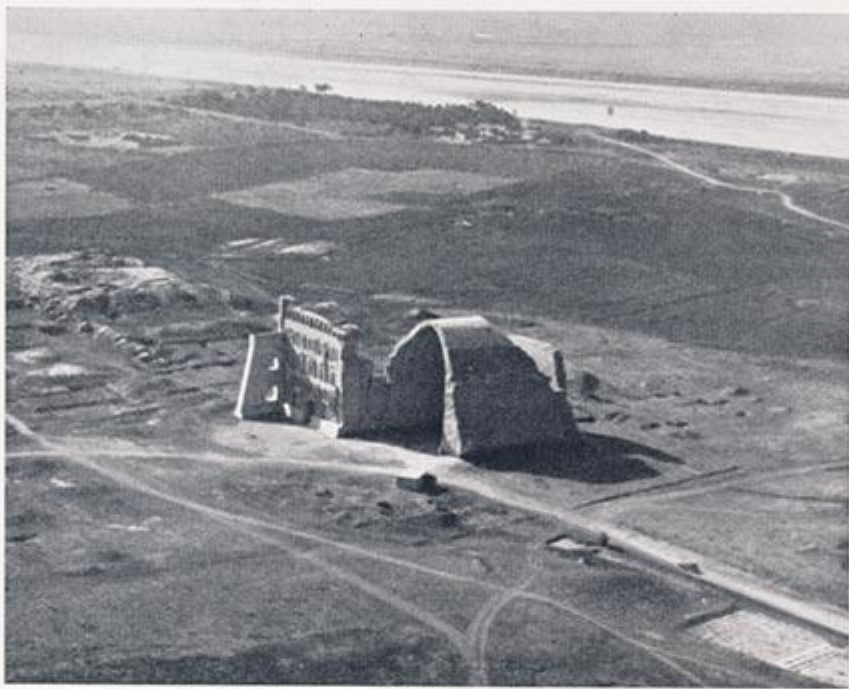
During the first eighty years (779-833), the Abbasids tried to secure the co-operation of the Persians, but failed to do so owing to Persian ambitions and internal strife. The Caliph al-Mutasim (833-842) therefore began recruiting the support of regiments of Turkish slaves. He built a new capital, Samarra, of whose magnificence there are still extensive traces in the neighbourhood of the present city.

The Turks soon began to interfere in the administration and their intrigues finally culminated in their getting rid of the Caliph al-Mutawakkil (847-861), an episode which was followed by a period of bitter struggle between the recalcitrant Turkish slaves and a series of short-lived Caliphs.

This being the state of affairs at the heart of the empire, it is hardly surprising that ambitious rebels and governors began to found independent principalities in Egypt and Persia. Confusion spread until, in the period 870-907, such energetic Caliphs as Muwaffak and Mutadid restored to the Caliphate some of its former prestige and succeeded in putting down the Zanj rebellion, in southern Iraq, and the Carmathian revolt in Iraq and Syria. Baghdad again became the Abbasid capital.

This record of political troubles, indicative though it may be of decline in the political powers of the Caliphs, must not be taken as a sign of any corresponding cultural decline. On the contrary, during the ninth and tenth centuries, Arab-Islamic civilisation reached its height in the cultural field. Arabic studies matured, the schools of Jurisprudence reached their full development, and the heightened intellectual atmosphere that is implied by such a development was not lacking. A science of Traditions, based on proving the authenticity of the sayings of the Prophet Mohammad, was evolved so that precedents and guidance in law and personal conduct could be rightly arrived at in this refined study of the Prophet's own utterances and attitude to human problems. Translations were made of scientific works, works on astronomy, medicine and philosophy, and these were followed by original studies and the Arabs' own contribution to culture. Thus, great works were compiled on history and geography, the science of government, the canons of taste and literary criticism. Popular stories multiplied, to be immortalised in a work like the "Arabian Nights"; stories that are themselves proof of the high standard of intellect and wit prevailing at the time. Baghdad became a centre of culture, thanks to the Caliphs' patronage of literature and learning.

Nor were more mundane things neglected. The Caliphs paid particular attention to irrigation, without which Iraq's agricultural wealth cannot be realised. The country was covered with a network of canals and was the granary of the empire. Iraqi merchants and ships traversed lands and oceans from Spain to distant China, bringing



The great arch of Ctesiphon, near the River Tigris.

wealth, prosperity and new cultural influences to a rising middle class in Iraq. An efficient banking system emerged to serve the needs of commerce and expanding industry. It is, therefore, no matter for surprise that all this should have been accompanied by a refinement of manners and a height of intellectual attainment rarely paralleled in the history of mankind.

Weakness became apparent during the reign of Muqtadir (907-932), owing to rivalry between ministers, the influence of the harem, a financial crisis and the supremacy of a factious army. Temporal power passed completely to the Amir al-Umara (936). In 945 the Buwaihids invaded Iraq to remain there until 1055. The Caliph became a religious figure and secular authority was vested in the Buwaihids, who lacked both administrative experience and culture. The country suffered from their family quarrels; military feudalism was introduced and irrigation neglected, so that social and economic life inevitably suffered a decline.

Conflicts with the later Buwaihids led the Caliph to establish contact with the Saljuks. These leaders of Turkoman tribes from Central Asia swept over Persia and

entered Baghdad eleven years before William of Normandy invaded England. They retained the authority while formally recognising the Caliphate. During the period of the great Saljuks (1037-1092), the political unity of Western Asia was restored and the Caliphate regained some of its former influence. Baghdad again became a great cultural centre. Later, Saljuk officers—the Atabegs—ruled over most of Iraq for a century. However, during the twelfth century, the Caliphs initiated a struggle for their independence which, during the latter half of the century, they succeeded in regaining. The reign of the Caliph Al-Nasir (1180-1225) looked like a renaissance. The Caliphate enjoyed a temporary splendour, to be finally eclipsed by the catastrophe of the Mongol invasion in 1258.

Iraq entered one of the darkest periods of its history with this invasion and its aftermath. Civilisation declined, canals were destroyed, the population rapidly decreased and nomadism spread. There was a series of dynasties: the Il-Khanids (1258-1338), the Jalayirs, under whom there was a short period of recovery, to be interrupted by another ruthless and destructive invasion, that of Timur, in 1405. Then came the Black Sheep rulers and the White Sheep Dynasty.

In 1508, Iraq became part of the dominions of the Safawid rulers, with their capital in Isfahan. 1534 saw Sulaiman the Magnificent's invasion, and the Turks stayed until 1621. Their hold on the country was weak and the tribes were uncontrolled, the cities misruled and allowed to deteriorate, while the very basis of any kind of culture or well-being in Iraq, its irrigation system, was allowed to fall into complete disrepair. After another Persian invasion (1621-1638), Murad IV occupied Iraq and the country remained an Ottoman province until the First World War. Misrule and corruption became the characteristics of this period of Iraq's history, when the country was divided into Pashaliks under governors appointed from Istanbul.

The history of these governors cannot be gone into in detail here, but, during the eighteenth century, there was short period of comparative stability when the office of governor remained for a brief spell in the family of Hasan Pasha (1704), and subsequently in the hands of this family's Georgian slaves. Nomadism increased with its corollary of increasingly disruptive and predatory activity on the part of unruly tribes, whose clashes with the central power were not infrequent. There was trouble too from the Kurdish hill-tribes in the north, where local dynasties rose and fell and quarrelled among themselves. Iraq became involved in the war with the Persian Nadir Shah and suffered much, to be rescued with the restoration of peace in 1746. As if these political and military disasters were not enough, Iraq, by this time governed by slaves and well-nigh independent of Istanbul, suffered a period of pestilence and flood, after which Daoud Pasha (1831) was expelled and Iraq returned to the Ottoman fold with a period of direct rule from Istanbul. The country was administratively reorganised into three 'wilayats' and attempts were made to introduce the regime of reform into the country that was at the time being carried out elsewhere in the Ottoman dominions. The bureaucracy and financial arrangements were brought into line with



The remains of the Friday Mosque at Samarra.



One of the gates of Babylon still well preserved.

the usual Ottoman methods of provincial administration. New laws were partly enforced and the tribes weakened though not subdued. Modern communications were introduced and, at this time, British influence began to spread with increased trade contacts.

Between 1869-72, Midhat Pasha, an enlightened reformer, ushered in the last period with land tenure reforms, an attempt at town-planning and the enforcement of modern laws. An effort was made to ensure closer administration and the disciplining of the tribes, and a more effective police system was introduced, besides a few secular schools as part of a plan to obtain a better educated civil service.

This last phase of Ottoman domination in Iraq saw the rise of an intense conflict of European imperial interests centred on this country. Iraq became an important element in the German "Drang nach Osten" policy and the section of the Berlin-Baghdad Railway between Baghdad and Samarra was completed between 1912-14.

At the same time other more local, but no less important, political forces were beginning to come to the fore; the Young Turks' policy of Ottomanisation in Iraq had led to violent opposition. The twentieth century opened with an Arab renaissance and the growth of a conscious desire for freedom and independence. Arab nationalism began in the nineteenth century, but it was not until 1908 that it became active, as hopes of autonomy within the framework of the Ottoman Empire began to wane. Societies were formed, clubs opened, and newspapers issued to spread propaganda for the cause. Finally, in 1913, at an Arab Congress in Paris, a programme was drawn up and the stage was set for the coming struggle.

In the First World War, on the understanding that their countries would be liberated, the Arabs joined forces with the Allies under the leadership of the Sherif Hussain. Arab hopes were confirmed by the promises made to them by the Allies and by Wilson's Fourteen Points. These hopes were to be dashed, however, by the proceedings at the Peace Conference. Amid conflicting interests and principles, the Mandate system was devised and applied to Iraq. It implies international control, recognises "provisional" independence of the country and stipulates that it be guided by the mandatory power until it is able to stand alone.

At the San Remo Conference (April 1925), Great Britain was given the mandate for Iraq. The Iraqis saw in the mandate another form of colonial rule. Nationalist activities increased and were supported by some of the leaders who had returned from the Arab Revolt, and by certain groups in Syria.

The British thought that a good administration and a voice in municipal and administrative affairs would conciliate the people, but this type of appeal fell on deaf ears. Rebellion broke out in the summer of 1920. Nationalism received a further impetus by assuming a religious aspect and acquiring the support of religious dignitaries, who brought the tribes in, though the big cities remained the real centres of activity.



Ruins of a Palace of the Caliphs at Baghdad.

The demands formulated were, first, the independence of the country, second, the summoning of a Constituent Assembly to decide on the form of government for the country, and third, freedom of speech and of the press.

This rebellion lasted for about a year. It showed the strength of national feeling in the country and it proved extremely expensive to the British tax-payer, so that the British Parliament and Press discussed the advisability of the occupation. In 1921, a local government with British advisers was set up, as a temporary arrangement, with the Baghdad notable, Al-Naqib, at its head.

At the Cairo Conference (called by Mr. Churchill) in 1921, the situation was surveyed and, in view of the recent events in Iraq, and in order that some of the promises might be fulfilled, it was decided to facilitate the establishment of an Arab state in Iraq.

The choice of ruler fell on Faisal, known for his devotion to the Arab cause. He was generally acclaimed in a plebiscite held on July 21st, 1921. The Ministry

decided to proclaim him king in a constitutional, democratic, representative government, and he was enthroned on August 23rd, 1921. An Arab state was thus established in Iraq some seven centuries after the fall of the Caliphate.

Relations with Great Britain were next considered. The strong Iraqi opposition to the mandate led to its replacement by a treaty, signed on October 10th, 1922, providing for a tutelary period of 20 years. This treaty, however, aroused widespread opposition. Even after the Protocol of April, 1923, had reduced the tutelary period to four years, the treaty was opposed by the Constituent Assembly, which met on March 27th, 1924, and which ratified the Treaty by a bare majority on 10th/11th June of the same year. The Assembly also agreed upon the Constitution and passed the Electoral Law.

Other points were the Mosul question, which, after futile negotiations, was finally settled by the League of Nations in 1925 in Iraq's favour. While the Mosul question was being discussed, the Turkish Oil Company concluded an agreement with Iraq (March 14th, 1925), which aroused bitter criticism. This agreement was revised by the Iraq Government and the Iraq Petroleum Company in 1952 considerably to Iraq's advantage.

The period between 1922 and 1932 may be described as a period of diplomatic and peaceful struggle. The British, resting on their treaty rights, tried to have their way through the executive, while parliament and press continued to voice national aspirations for complete independence. Public discontent expressed itself on various occasions in speeches, large gatherings of people, articles and pamphlets. King Faisal played a leading role, following a policy of "take and make new demands."

Further attempts at agreement, such as the treaty of 1926, did not improve things. The draft treaty of 1927 was strongly disapproved of and consequently withdrawn. The situation in Iraq was termed "exceptional," because of the dual system: it was the "Time of Perplexity." In contemporary words, "The Prime Minister is, on the one hand, responsible to a Parliament which does not recognise any form of outside guidance, while, on the other hand, it is his duty to conduct the administration in conformity with the treaty obligations." How exceptional and perplexing a situation it was can be judged from this comment.

National demands centred on independence, the admission to the League and the creation of a strong national army. When Britain agreed in 1929 to recommend Iraq for admission to the League in 1932, the door was open for negotiation. Negotiations started in April 1930, and led to the ratification of the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty on the 10th of June of the same year.

The Mandate was terminated by this treaty and a close alliance was established between Iraq and Great Britain, with "full and formal consultation" in matters of foreign policy. In the event of war involving either party, "the other will come to his



The old minaret at Mossul.

undertook to supply the Iraqi forces—at the cost of Iraq—with armament and essential equipment of the type used by British forces.

The treaty was criticised on both sides. It was a compromise between Iraq's national aspirations and Britain's fundamental interests. On October 1st, 1932, Iraq was admitted to the League of Nations as a sovereign state.

After 1932, consideration was given to internal problems and to foreign relations, especially with Arab countries. King Faisal put out certain lines upon which the policy of the country could be based : strengthening the Army to make it commensurate with the country's new status ; encouraging young industries and fostering new ones ; administrative reform ; reorganisation of the educational system ; building up a feeling of solidarity and a confidence in the law among various sections of the community ; and, finally, the settlement of land problems and the settlement of the tribes.

However, lack of experience and the complexity of Iraq's problems made progress slow. King Faisal's death, on September 7th, 1933, deprived the country of a figure that had the confidence of all sections of the people. The authoritative hand that had maintained a balance and kept in check the different elements of the country disappeared ; Iraq lost a great leader and a wise man. He had encouraged opposition, a policy not always followed later. The duration of ministries became, after his death, shorter than before. This, and the country's lack of resources at that time, prevented any

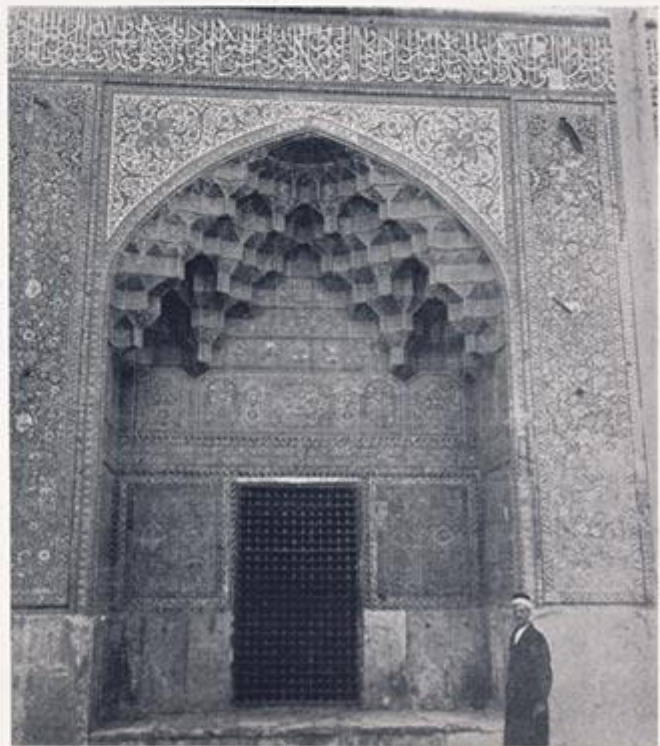
aid in the capacity of an ally." Iraqi aid was defined as giving all facilities on Iraqi territory, including the use of railways, rivers, ports, aerodromes and other means of communication. Iraq recognised that the maintenance and protection of essential communications for Great Britain was in the common interest of both parties. Therefore two sites for air bases were selected by Britain near Basrah and west of the Euphrates, as well as localities for the maintenance of troops, provided "these forces shall not constitute in any manner an occupation or will not in any way prejudice the sovereign rights of Iraq." Britain

tangible result emerging from economic or any other type of planning, and inevitably seriously endangered internal stability.

The reorganisation of the army took some time. In 1934 the National Conscription Law was passed, and then revised and enforced in 1935. Division among politicians directed the attention of some of them to arousing the tribes and thus engineering a change of government. It was not difficult to arouse the tribes, but it proved very hard to control them once the movement started. The Party System was tottering and the last party, the Ikha, was dissolved in 1935.

There were now three main political alignments in Iraq, represented by the intelligentsia—predominantly national and partly liberal, which grew larger but practically kept out of actual politics—the tribes and the growing army. The army, already popular for enforcing order, rose in prestige after putting down all risings, including those of the tribes, by 1935. The government suppressed political opposition, which some intellectuals joined. The government, relying on an army devoted to its military duties, felt secure and propagated a strong Pan-Arab policy, cultivating friendly relations with neighbouring Arab countries. The opposition turned to the army, and, as a result of the coalition between the Ahali group and the Army, the Bakr Sidqi *coup d'état* of October 1936 was achieved. The Ahali group advocated socialism, while the army officers professed nationalism and sought the eventual establishment of a military dictatorship. Conflict soon arose to the detriment of the Ahali group, and the cabinet soon became subservient to the army.

A doorway of Abbasid times at Kerbela.





A Shrine Mosque with gold minarets and domes.

The overthrow of this regime was effected by the army, which was left divided by the assassination of its leader, Bakr Sidqi, jealousy among the officers inducing each faction to support a different set of politicians. The army became the main deciding factor in the rise and fall of almost all cabinets between 1937 and 1941. This naturally led to instability in the administration and to the recurrence of military *coups d'état*.

In the meantime, Iraq became the centre of Pan-Arabism and the refuge of Arab nationalists. Clubs and societies actively propagated nationalism and the new generation was infused with the grandeur of past glory and future prospects. These activities made Iraq take a large part in Arab questions. A pact of Arab Brotherhood was concluded with Saudi-Arabia (April 1939), and then extended to Yemen, thus forming an Arab Entente.

When war broke out diplomatic relations were promptly severed with Germany, and the fact stressed that Iraq would stand by its treaty obligations. However, hesitation about getting involved in the war, military interference, Britain's delay in

offering munitions to the army, which caused ill-feeling, the division among the politicians, Nazi and Fascist propaganda—all this led to the military *coup d'état* of 1941, which opened the country to the threat of war and exposed the state to grave dangers. But the coup was an utter failure, and the country was saved by the wisdom of its ruler and the efforts of loyal politicians.

The need was felt for provision for the dismissal of undesirable cabinets and for the consolidation of parliamentary government. Many thought the Electoral Law ought to be amended to make parliament more representative: this was done in 1952, when direct elections were introduced.

In May 1942, the Constitution was amended and these words incorporated: "The King in case of necessity and when it conforms with the public interest can dismiss the Prime Minister." A solution was also found to the question of the succession to the throne. The number of the Senate was left indefinite with the provision that it should not exceed a quarter of the number of the elected deputies. The number of Cabinet Ministers was increased and a minimum of seven laid down. Following a speech by His Royal Highness the Regent, on December 27th, 1945, political parties were again formed as a means of strengthening democratic rule.

More attention was given to social, economic and educational problems. A policy of developing small land-holdings was encouraged and many new social services initiated. The increased stress on economic planning resulted in the establishment of the Iraqi Development Board.

Iraq worked for closer co-operation with other Arab countries. It took a leading part in the discussions leading to the Alexandria Protocol on October 7th, 1944, and culminating in the pact forming the Arab League on the 22nd of March, 1945. The League was formed of a Council and a number of committees. Its purpose is to promote the common interests of the member-states and to realise closer collaboration among them in the economic and social spheres, while safeguarding their independence and sovereignty.

Iraq has striven to develop friendly relations with neighbouring countries from the time of King Faisal onwards and, on July 8th, 1937, the Sa'adabad Pact was concluded between Turkey, Persia, Iraq and Afghanistan, providing for discussion of common interests and the safeguarding of frontiers. This Pact became virtually a dead letter when the Second World War broke out, but, in 1947, a treaty of friendship and good neighbourliness was signed between Iraq and Turkey.

Iraq as a modern state is young. It has great prospects in its resources, potentialities and people. It has achieved progress in all fields, yet it still has much to do in the future.