

АРХИТЕКТУРНЫЙ ОБРАЗ НОВОЙ СТОЛИЦЫ АРАБСКОГО МИРА: НЕРЕАЛИЗОВАННЫЕ ПРОЕКТЫ ЗАПАДНЫХ АРХИТЕКТОРОВ В БАГДАДЕ

**Джасим Сумайях
Лайидж** — главный инженер Отдела дизайна, Муниципалитет Багдада, Багдад, Ирак
E-mail: sumaya_arch@yahoo.com

1958 год стал исходной точкой рождения новой стратегии в развитии Багдада. Новое правительство Ирака после получения независимости страны запланировало крупные архитектурно-градостроительные проекты. Их цель состояла в том, чтобы представить Ирак мировому сообществу как прогрессивную и амбициозную страну, а Багдад как новую столицу арабского мира и крупнейший мировой город. Для выполнения проектов были приглашены всемирно известные международные архитекторы: Вальтер Гропиус (проект Багдадского университета); Фрэнк Ллойд Райт (проект Оперного театра); Ле Корбюзье (проект Олимпийского стадиона, бассейна и гимназии); Алвар Аалто (проект Главпочтамта и Музея изобразительных искусств); Джованни Понти (проект Министерства планирования) и другие. Но из-за последующих политических изменений были реализованы только три из многочисленных проектов. В статье рассмотрены проекты, реализация которых позволила бы радикально изменить городской ландшафт и урбанистическую панораму Багдада, формируя образ глобального города.

Ключевые слова: западные архитекторы, городской ландшафт, архитектура, горизонт, идентичность, образ города, арабский мир.

S.L. JASIM

THE ARCHITECTURAL IMAGE OF THE NEW CAPITAL OF THE ARAB WORLD: UNREALIZED PROJECTS OF WESTERN ARCHITECTS IN BAGHDAD

Jasim Sumayah Layij — Chief Engineer, Design Department, Baghdad Municipal, Baghdad, Iraq

1958 was the starting point for the birth of a new strategy in the development of Baghdad. After the country's independence, the new government of Iraq has planned large architectural and urban planning projects. Their goal was to present Iraq to the world community as a progressive and ambitious country, and Baghdad as the new capital of the Arab world and as the world's largest city. World renowned international architects were invited to complete the projects: Walter Gropius (project of the University of Baghdad); Frank Lloyd Wright (Opera House project); Le Corbusier (project of the Olympic stadium, swimming pool and gymnasium); Alvar Aalto (project of the Central Post Office and the Museum of Fine Arts); Giovanni Ponti (Ministry of Planning project) and others. But due to subsequent political changes, only three of the numerous projects were implemented. The article discusses projects, the implementation of which would radically change the urban landscape and skyline of Baghdad, forming the image of a global city.

Keywords: western architects, urban landscape, architecture, skyline, identity, image of the city, Arab world.

I. INTRODUCTION

Architecture can be considered as an integral live document for the cultural life of communities. So, from reading the story of a building we can draw a clear picture for that community in a certain period when that building was created. One of the important buildings stories we would like to read in Baghdad is the unrealized Projects Architecture Style of Western Architects. In 1900's, the period of declining the Ottomans Empire in the east, and rising the Western control on the area, life style in Iraq has changed in different ways¹.

In the 1950s, was the starting point for the birth of a new strategy in the development of Baghdad. After the country's independence, the new Iraqi government has planned major architectural and urban development projects. Their goal was to present Iraq to the world community as a progressive and ambitious country, and Baghdad as the new capital of the Arab world and as the world's largest city. Baghdad was central to this development programme, World renowned international architects were invited to complete the projects and to design modernist public buildings to showcase the newly oil-rich nation. The architects were actively involved in the work, but due to subsequent political changes, few of the numerous projects were implemented. The article discusses projects, the implementation of which would radically change the urban landscape and skyline of Baghdad, forming the image of a global city.

II. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Studying the work "Book of Countries", in which, Al-Ya'kubi, an Arab historian and geographer lived in the XI century, says that due to its convenient geographical location on the Tigris River, not far from the Euphrates, that is, at the intersection of roads, it favored the development of trade. When Mansour approved the site for construction on the Tigris River, the radial geometry of the Baghdad plan was envisaged, which was drawn by the workers under strict supervision. On July 30, 762, the construction of the Baghdad began, the hallmark of which was the 6.5-meter brick walls surrounding it. According to the medieval Muslim historian, author of the "History of Baghdad" Al-Khatibaal-Baghdadi, each row of masonry consisted of 452 thousand bricks — the first third consisted of 162 thousand bricks, the second third consisted of 150 thousand bricks, and, accordingly, the third part consisted from 140 thousand bricks. The height of the outer wall, crowned with battlements, and surrounded by a moat and bastions, was equal to 24 m. A large number of people from different parts of the Abbasid empire participated in the construction of the city — architects, engineers, lawyers, surveyors, carpenters, blacksmiths, excavators and ordinary workers.

Despite the fact that Al-Ya'kubi wrote the paper “Book of Countries” at the moment when Baghdad was already the de facto center of Daral-Islam, concentrating on its territory scientists, astronomers, poets, mathematicians, musicians, historians, lawyers and philosophers.

In the original structure of the urban landscape of Baghdad, the main high-altitude dominants were the Mansur Palace and the Great Mosque. Their dimensions emphasized their importance, distinguishing them from the general panorama of the city.

Mansur Palace was a remarkable building with an area of over 33,000 square meters. Most of all, it stood out with a green dome about 40 m high, it towered above the main reception hall and was visible for many kilometers around. He was crowned with the figure of a horseman with a spear in his hand. According to Khatib, it rotated like a weather vane, pointing with a spear in the direction from which the enemy could appear next time.

The Abbasids created the Imperial style — a fashion for the construction of luxurious and monumental government residences, which amazed by the scale of buildings with exotic vaults, spectacular pictorial entertainment, which conveyed the power of the ruler.

One of the main conditions of the architectural ensembles was the arrangement of regular gardens — riyads, which were to be enclosed by walls with gates. The fountain, pool or gazebo acted as the center of the composition, to which alleys and reservoirs were led along the coordinate axes or parallel to them. The beauty of nature was set off by man-made pavilions, porticos with fountains due to irrigation ditches raised above ground level.

The ideological concept of Islam was embodied in the architecture of mosques — the space for creating a mystical setting was surrounded by a large number of columns, attuning people's consciousness to obedience to the will of God and its earthly representatives — the caliphs. In architecture, octahedral shapes and plans were used, and buildings were

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1. *Baghdad Central Station — World Station*. Arch. Wilson G.M. 1948–1952. Implemented. Photo: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baghdad_Central_Station

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¹ Shatha A. Hasan. *Effect of Colonial British Architecture in the Iraqi Modern Architecture*. Baghdad: Baghdad University, 2018.

decorated with frescoes from knocking. An important distinctive feature was the use of images of animals and people in ornaments, which was prohibited by the Koran.

III. WESTERNIZATION OF BAGHDAD'S ARCHITECTURE

Many historians define 1921 as the beginning of the national era in Iraq, the year of the foundation of the Kingdom and at the same time the year of the approval of the so-called British Mandate. The British administration, which remained in Baghdad after the end of the occupation of the country's territory after the First World War, based on the experience of the colonial development of India, began major infrastructural work to realize its goals in Iraq. Architecture and urban planning were to become the foundation of British foreign policy in the country. The 1920s were characterized by the construction of public buildings that did not previously exist in Ottoman cities. These included ministries, clubs, train stations, military hospitals, industrial sites, post offices, and airports, educational institutions. Among the British architects who designed a lot for the capital of Iraq during this time, there are J.M. Wilson, H.C. Mason, J.W. Cooper.

This period can be called the starting point of the development of modern architecture in Iraq, when many significant objects were designed and built, some of which have been preserved, but most of them have been demolished by now for various reasons. Among the high-rise dominants of Baghdad, two most important architectural objects appear — the National Museum of Iraq (J.M. Wilson, 1926) and the Central Railway Station (J.M. Wilson, 1948) (Fig. 1).

Wilson sought to use Arab-Islamic traditions, local materials and decorative historical elements in his buildings, hoping, as he wrote, "to develop the Arab Renaissance in art." The implementation and a significant part of





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2. Project of the University of Baghdad in Al-Rusafa. Walter Gropius. 1957. Implemented. Photo: <http://uobaghdad.edu.iq/?p=21251>

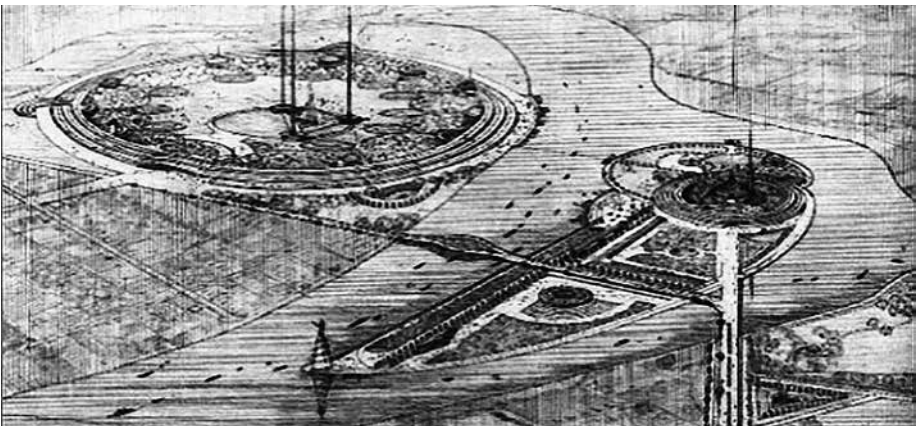
3. Opera House project on the island of Umm al-Khanja. Frank Lloyd Wright. 1957. Not implemented. Drawing: AltaieMowaffaq Jawad. Frank Lloyd Wright, Reaping Baghdad, Baghdad, 2016

4. Gymnasium. Le Corbusier. 1956. Implemented in 1980. Photo: <https://ifpo.hypotheses.org/3560>

5. Project for the Fine Arts Museum. Alvar Aalto. 1957–1963. Not implemented. Drawing: <https://hiddencities.wordpress.com/category/iraq/>

the decoration were entrusted to local master builders —“usta”, the heirs of building technologies that go back to the ancient Assyrians. However, these buildings “gently” entered the historical fabric of the city, rising above the rest of the buildings by about 15–20 m, without overlapping the traditional dominants of mosques.

The period 1921–1958 was the beginning of the reformation of the urban landscape of Baghdad with

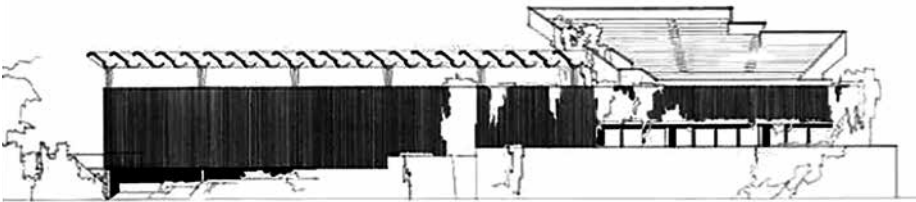




the emergence of new public objects of a secular nature (museums, train stations, administrative buildings), which, however, “did not enter into a dispute” with the existing spiritual symbols — mosques, madrassas or minarets. The stage of “westernization” of the city began in the form of British-colonial regulation of its architectural and planning development.

1958 was the starting point for the birth of a new strategy in the development of the city, and high-rise architectural dominants were to play a major role in the transformation of the urban landscape of Baghdad. After the country’s independence, the new government of Iraq has planned large architectural and urban planning projects. Their goal was to present Iraq to the world community as a progressive and ambitious country, and Baghdad as the new capital of the Arab world and as the world’s largest city. World renowned international architects were invited to complete the projects. Among those invited were:

- Walter Gropius (project of the University of Baghdad) (Fig. 2);
- Frank Lloyd Wright (Opera House project) (Fig. 3);
- Le Corbusier (project of the Olympic stadium, swimming pool and gymnasium) (Fig. 4);
- Alvar Aalto (project of the Central Post Office and the Museum of Fine Arts) (Fig. 5);



— Giovanni Ponti (Ministry of Planning project) and others.

The architects were actively involved in the work, but due to subsequent political changes, only three of the proposed projects were implemented: V. Gropius, Le Corbusier and G. Ponti.

Since the beginning of the fifties of the twentieth century, Western architects have left a distinct imprint that has become a symbol of the city and of the man impressive array of international design talent for much resulting in an architecture combining modernist ideas with interpretations of the local climate and culture². Which is still a distinctive symbol and icon in the Al-Karkh district of Baghdad and was considered the “pearl of Baghdad”³, and the architectural imprints and practices of Western architects in Baghdad continued from them.

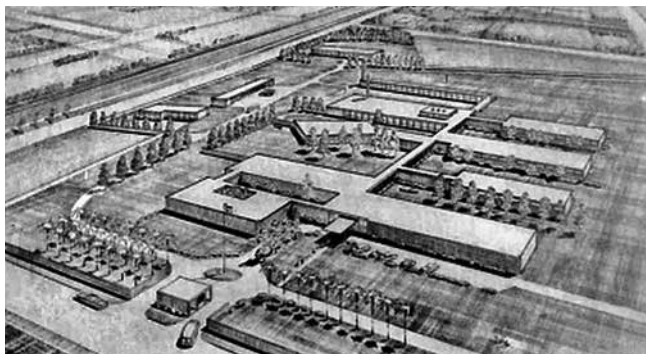
In 1954, the Iraqi Development Council decided to develop a new master plan for Baghdad, and the construction of large architectural objects of a secular nature was also planned. The first developments were entrusted to the architecture of C. Doxiadis. His group has enthusiastically embraced the concept of ekistics in the master plan of Baghdad. In general, the design solution was a rigid orthogonal planning structure superimposed on the central part of the city. The Doxiadis project envisaged the creation of a new road network based on a straight-line scheme. Residential areas were also shaped as a modular rectangular system. The general plan proposed by C. Doxiadis solved mainly the issues of territorial expansion of the

6. Sector 10 of the Partial Plan for Western Baghdad, Plan and Partial Constructio: Neighborhood of Al-Thawra (Sadr City). Doxiadis Associates. 1957–1963. Drawing: <https://hiddencities.wordpress.com/category/iraq/>

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² On View Middle Eastern Ambitions at the Center for Architecture. *The Architects* newspaper, March 16, 2012.

³ <https://starer.ru/foreign-architects-the-most-distinguished-architects-of-the-century/>



city, rational planning organization of residential modules, but the issues of high-rise construction were not raised in this document. In addition, Doxiadis completed several more projects for Baghdad. Among these projects are the following: Sector 10 of the Partial Plan for Western Baghdad, Plan and Partial Construction: 1957–1958 (Fig. 6); Neighborhood of Al-Thawra (Sadr City), Part of the Partial Plan for Eastern Baghdad, Plan 1958, Construction 196–1963 and many other projects (implemented).

The distinction of the architectural projects of western architects in Baghdad was the result of the uniqueness of the output, as most of them were not repetitive globally, but rather a unique icon that took from the environmental, social and cultural influences important elements in the production and global architectural practice, so that the architects add the self and artistic creativity to show that distinguished results and output architectural realization in time and place at the time at the level of Baghdad and Iraq in general.

We refer here, in addition to the imprint of the pioneers of architecture — foreign architects — the Iraqi imprint cannot be ignored in the outstanding architectural output, that is, the architectural local practice with the local intermediated feature for local heritage and rapid development, and the case of intermediation in expression between heritage privacy (as it cannot be denied the whole heritage or accept the whole) and the expression of the spirit of the times, in the designs of mosques, churches, palaces, administrative and commercial buildings and others.

IV. THE SITE AND THE POSITION OF UNREALIZED PROJECTS FOR WESTERN ARCHITECTS IN THE CITY OF BAGHDAD

Most of the distinctive architecture buildings for western architects were concentrated in the central business district of the city of Baghdad, and took strategic sites from the planning side to be the dominant elements of the urban landscape and have a great influence in shaping the Baghdad skyline, and it resulted from the memory of the recipient where many of these streets and sites were named after the names of the projects that were completed Western architects design it as a result of being influenced by the names of those buildings, for example in Khulafa Street and Khilani Square and others (Fig. 7).

Consequently, the architecture of the pioneers and western architects has become part of the identity and history of the city and part of the Baghdad memory that characterized Baghdad to reflect a diverse history of architecture with a diverse Baghdad horizon, reflecting the thought, politics and trends of the country in every era. We notice sometimes the tendency of architects to administrative buildings and other to religious buildings (mosques and Churches), palaces, and others to the entertainment side, which in turn



reflects the country's policy and the urban and planning trend in it⁴.

The journey of the Baghdadi citizen in the center of Baghdad moves between heritage architecture (local architecture) and the architecture of Western architects, and expresses the diversity in activities, traditional elements and forms and history (local architectural practice and Western architectural practice). At the same time, this architecture appears to be part of the city and form a local urban scene (the image of a local city), the horizon of the city of Baghdad, and at other times, Baghdad's assimilation of Western renewed thought and the formation of a global city image.

V. TALL BUILDINGS AS DOMINANT LANDMARK THE CITY SKYLINE

Tall buildings have always been a dominant landmark in the cities, visible from far, identifying the skyline and symbolizing the economic power of the community⁵. Although its origin is the North American cities, the boom moved to Asian countries including Baghdad in the last decades.

Architecture is not based on local stylistic motifs that, interpreted by foreigners, are at times naive and

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7. The site and the position of unrealized and realized projects for Western architects in the city of Baghdad

8. Model of the silhouette of high-rise landmarks for the unrealized projects for Western architects in Baghdad

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⁴ Jasim S.I. and Krasilnikova E.E. Influence of high-rise dominants on the structure of the urban landscape // Innovation and investment. 2019. No. 3. Pp. 209–212.

⁵ Pichnikova G. New century high risers in the core areas of historic cities in Russia // Procedia Engineering. 2016.No. 165. Pp. 1903–1910.

⁶ Al-Ahbabi S. and Al-Akili M. Urban Vertical Design: The Impact of Tall Buildings on the Urban Structure of a City. Babylon University Journal, Engineering Sciences, 2013, No. 3. P. 1103.

⁷ Taghlib A.H., Al Waily. Baghdad 21st. Revival of Historical City. Turath, Monreal, Canada. 2017. P. 106.

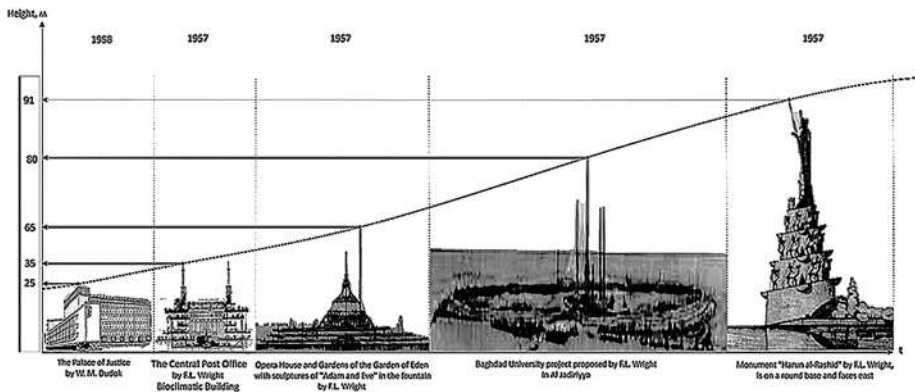
not valid. The goal of Western architects has been to contribute to the development of Iraq with a perfect building that for climatic reasons is based upon local architecture, an architecture that, for historical reasons, has not preserved genuine examples to which architects can refer. The silhouette and skyline of Baghdad has changed significantly due to the invasion of the historical landscape of the city by objects designed by Western architects⁶. The author's model of changing the parameters of the city's high-rise dominants, which have not been implemented, is given below (Fig. 8).

VI. CONCLUSIONS

The city of Baghdad is the center of the Islamic and Arab world, which has been characterized by its long history, starting from its establishment (The Round City) with a distinct architectural design, which is the first core of distinctive architecture in Iraq since the establishment of the city of Baghdad⁷.

Rereading these building make us capable to define the joint to transferring architecture from traditional to modernisms. Architecture can be considered as an integrallived document for the cultural life of communities. Merging local and foreign styles reflects the strength of local architectural elements and the resilience of the local architecture to adapted new concepts, elements, and styles. The article discusses projects, the implementation of which would radically change the urban landscape and skyline of Baghdad, forming the image of a global city and to discuss several buildings that belong to this period. Some of these buildings were demolished for many reasons and others still active until now.

Also, we explore and trace the effect of these styles on the forming the image of a global city this 1950's. These buildings were considering landmarks in Modern Iraqi Culture, we must announce as heritage building. Must be studied and analysis these building to define what elements come from outside local architecture and then modify to continue until now.



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