

**MAPIRANJE PROSTOROV MODERNISTIČNIH MEST V KONTEKSTU NAČEL  
CIAM-OVE ATENSKE LISTINE**  
MAPPING THE SPACES OF MODERNIST CITIES WITHIN THE CONTEXT  
OF CIAM'S ATHENS CHARTER



Zbornik prispevkov mednarodne konference projekta  
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Uredili / Edited by: Katarina Mohar, Barbara Vodopivec



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**1** NASTANEK IN UTEMELJITEV FUNKCIONALISTIČNEGA MESTA  
THE FOUNDATION AND ESTABLISHMENT OF A FUNCTIONAL CITY

## King Faisal II's plans for Greater Baghdad

Tanja POPPELREUTER and Lena KARIM

During the short reign of King Faisal II (1939–1958), from his coronation at the age of 18 in 1953 to his execution during the “14 July Revolution” in 1958, plans for the modernisation of Greater Baghdad were initiated. It was a large-scale and ambitious programme with the goal to improve and develop infrastructure and housing, provide essential public buildings, reform the building industries and train Iraqi architects. A central part of these plans was the invitation of internationally renowned architects whose buildings would make these modernisation efforts visible.

Among the architects who accepted the invitation were Alvar Aalto (1898–1976), Walter Gropius (1883–1969) and The Architects Collaborative (TAC), Le Corbusier (1887–1965), Gio Ponti (1891–1979), and Frank Lloyd Wright (1867–1959). Most of their designs were not executed and only the faculty tower and gateway monument to Baghdad University by Walter Gropius and TAC, and the office building for the Development Board by Gio Ponti were built. The Baghdad Gymnasium – that was part of the sports facilities that Le Corbusier worked on until his death in 1965 – was constructed in 1980 under Saddam Hussein.

The plans for Greater Baghdad have until recently received little attention. Among the literature that critically discusses the topic is the 2008 anthology *Modernism and the Middle East* by Kishwar Rizvi and Sandy Isenstadt<sup>1</sup> that contains two chapters on Baghdad and Iraq. The 2008 special edition *Bagdad* of the journal *DC papers* also contains articles on the political changes and individual commissions. The 2009 exhibition catalogue *Modernism and Iraq* and the article “A Dream we call Baghdad”<sup>2</sup> by Nada Shabout provides an analysis of the modern art movement during the 1950s.<sup>3</sup>

Monographs on invited architects occasionally discuss their Baghdad projects. Among them are Neil Levine's 1998 monograph *The Architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright* and Mina Marefat's

1 *Modernism and the Middle East. Architecture and Politics in the Twentieth Century*, (eds. Sandy Isenstadt and Kishwar Rizvi), Seattle 2008.

2 Zainab BAHRANI, Nada M SHABOUT, Wallach Art Gallery, *Modernism and Iraq*, New York 2009.

3 Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya, Departament de Composició Arquitectònica, *DC Papers. Revista de crítica y teoría de la arquitectura*, Número Extraordinario 1. Dedicado a: Especial Bagdad, 2008, <https://dialnet.unirioja.es/ejemplar/311991> (accessed 10 January 2020).



Fig. 1: Walter Gropius and the Office Tower of the University of Baghdad, 1967 (© Harvard Art Museums/Busch-Reisinger Museum, Gift of Ise Gropius, BRGA.124.7).

2006 article *Wright's Baghdad*.<sup>4</sup> Ala Younis' research on Le Corbusier's gymnasium led to an exhibition at the Guggenheim, New York and an article in 2016.<sup>5</sup> The work by Gropius and TAC was addressed by Marefat in 2008.<sup>6</sup> Limited material is, unfortunately available on the projects by Aalto and Ponti.<sup>7</sup>

Researchers offer diverse interpretations of the plans for Greater Baghdad. Magnus T. Bernhardsson in the anthology *Modernism and the Middle East* interprets them as being based on multiple pre-existing cultural identities and as a result of a harking back to the Islamic and pre-Islamic past. Cultural heritage was utilised and interpreted by local as well as Western architects in order to express a distinct new Iraqi cultural identity.<sup>8</sup> Levine, whose primary interest is in the work of Frank Lloyd, seems to support this when writing that “Wright's response ... articulates in figurative terms the problems of cultural identity and self-determination at a moment of impending change”.<sup>9</sup> Marefat argues in her article on Gropius' plans for

the University of Baghdad that they were a means to build “worthy symbols of a nation's entry onto the world stage” and as such the Baghdad University became “a linchpin in the sense of a new identity that was part of the nationalizing process”.<sup>10</sup>

4 Mina MAREFAT, *Wright's Baghdad. Ziggurats and green visions*, *Docomomo*, 35, 2006, pp. 78-86; Joseph M. SIRY, *Wright's Baghdad Opera House and Gammage Auditorium. In Search of Regional Modernity*, *The Art Bulletin*, 87, 2, 2005, pp. 265-311.

5 Ala YOUNIS, *Le Corbusier's Raised Arm Gestures a Backstroke*, *Cartha*, 3, 2016, [http://www.carthamagazine.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/03\\_CARTHA\\_2016\\_ISSUE-2\\_YOUNIS.pdf](http://www.carthamagazine.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/03_CARTHA_2016_ISSUE-2_YOUNIS.pdf) (accessed 19 January 2020).

6 Mina MAREFAT, *From Bauhaus to Baghdad. The Politics of Building the Total University*, *Tarii Newsletter*, 2-3, 2008, pp. 2-12.

7 Frederick GUTHEIM, *Alvar Aalto*, New York 1960, pp. 29-33.

8 Magnus T. BERNHARDSSON, *Visions of Iraq. Modernizing the Past in 1950s Baghdad*, *Modernism and the Middle East: Architecture and Politics in the Twentieth Century* (eds. Sandy Isenstadt and Kishwar Rizvi), Seattle 2008, p. 92.

9 Neil LEVINE, *The Architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright*, Princeton 1998, p. 383.

10 MAREFAT 2008 (n. 6), pp. 9-10.

This paper analyses the plans for Greater Baghdad in its political and socio-economic context, outlines the individual projects of architects and their aspirations briefly, and provides examples of reactions to these locally and internationally. The short period between 1953 and 1958 allows the focus to be on some of the interplaying forces that aimed to develop and modernise Baghdad and with the help of postcolonial theory it can be argued that this situation was the result of cultural hybridisation.

In Homi Bhabha's 1994 book *The Location of Culture*<sup>11</sup> hybridisation is introduced as a way to discuss and describe sociocultural interactions between diverse groups in conditions of colonialization and globalization. In an effort to understand the effects of cultural interactions Bhabha argues that languages, cultures and identities are not homogenous but instead ambivalent and the results of continuous influx and interactions. It is the latter that drives the development of culture and is a motor for cultural productivity. In the chapter "Signs taken for Wonders" Bhabha outlines the impossibility of truthful translation from one language and culture to another and uses this as an example to outline the emergence of a hybrid. Hybridity therefore is not achieved through an accumulation of elements and symbols but instead a process that can create power relationships as well as tensions and crises. Applied as a theoretical framework to the plans for Greater Baghdad it provides insights to the ways in which its modernisation was initiated and supported.

King Faisal II was a member of the Hashemite Monarchy that ruled from 1921 to 1958. It was a constitutional monarchy modelled on the example of Britain with Faisal I as the first king. It had been instated to minimise tensions but was dependent on the British military. In 1932 the Kingdom of Iraq became a sovereign state, the British mandate ended, and the country was admitted to the League of Nations. Dependency on the British, however, still remained and changing alliances between landowners, military, tribal chiefs and officials influenced and guided the regency of the monarchs.

During the early years of the Cold War, the pre-existing political relationship with Britain contributed to the formation of the 1955 Baghdad Pact. The pact was, similarly to NATO, initiated to safeguard against a feared expansion of the Soviet Union, but also stipulated mutual cooperation and protection. In addition to Iraq and Britain it was joined by Turkey, Pakistan and Iran.

The increase in the economy that subsequently enabled the plans for Greater Baghdad to be developed was due to negotiations with the British-controlled Iraq Petroleum Company (IPC) in 1952 that achieved an equitable share of oil rights and a substantial increase in Iraq's revenue.<sup>12</sup>

By 1950 – the same year Iraq began to exploit its oil fields – the semiautonomous Development Board ("Majlis al a'mar") that consisted of six members including a foreign advisor<sup>13</sup> had been founded with the directive to improve infrastructure and living conditions.

11 Homi BHABHA, *The Location of Culture*, New York 1994.

12 Stacy E. HOLDEN, *A documentary history of modern Iraq*, Gainesville 2012, p. 125; Rémi BAUDOÛI, To build a stadium. Le Corbusier's project for Baghdad, 1955-1973, *DC Papers. Revista de crítica y teoría de la arquitectura*, Número Extraordinario 1. Dedicado a: Especial Bagdad, 2008, p. 271; LEVINE 1998, (n. 9), p. 383-384.

13 BERNHARDSSON 2008 (n. 8), p. 84.

After negotiations with the IPC in 1952 the Board received a percentage of the annual oil revenue and in 1955 it established a six-year-plan with a large budget, a quarter of which was assigned for public buildings. The Board therefore commanded the funds necessary for large-scale projects. In an effort to secure authority of the monarchy and to thwart possible tensions, funds needed to be invested in urban areas where it was feared conflict would appear. The exponential increase of the population of Baghdad between 1947 and 1957 made it necessary to invest in infrastructure and housing, as well as in projects that would show visible benefits quickly – which was another way to counter opposition.<sup>14</sup>

Commissions for public buildings followed and the first ones went to the German architect Werner March (1894–1976) for the Iraq Museum and the English firm J. Brian Cooper to build the National Parliament and the Royal Palace. Swiss architect William Dunkel (1893–1980)<sup>15</sup> won the 1954 competition for the National Bank, while Constantinos Doxiadis (1913–1975) built hundreds of dwelling units by the end of the 1950s.<sup>16</sup> Josep Lluís Sert (1902–1983) was contracted by the US government to construct their Embassy in 1955.<sup>17</sup>

The first internationally renowned architect who was contacted by the Development Board was Le Corbusier in 1955. At the same time the London planners Minoprio & Spencely and PW Macfarlane drew a masterplan to lay out – among other things – sites for public buildings. This plan generated a series of discussions during which the above-mentioned world-renowned architects were commissioned for central projects.<sup>18</sup>

According to an anecdote relayed by Rifat Chadirji (1926) the selection of architects originated from his criticism of the initial group.<sup>19</sup> Chadirji was the son of the former leader of the Iraq National Democratic Party and after studying architecture at the Hammersmith School of Building and Arts & Crafts in London he returned to Baghdad in 1952. Together with Nizar Jawdat (1921–2017) and his wife Ellen<sup>20</sup> a new list of names was made. Jawdat's father had been the ambassador of Iraq to the United States and Jawdat had been a student of Gropius' at Harvard University. The influence that these young, Western educated architects might have

14 LEVINE 1998, (n. 9), p. 383; BERNHARDSSON 2008 (n. 8), p. 84.

15 The Orient Expressed?, *The Architects' Journal*, 121:3142, 1955, p. 662.

16 Panayota I PYLA, Baghdad's Urban Restructuring, 1958: Aesthetics and Politics of Nation Building, *Modernism and the Middle East. Architecture and Politics in the Twentieth Century*, (eds. Sandy Isenstadt and Kishwar Rizvi), Seattle 2008, pp. 97-115.

17 Samuel ISENSTADT, "Faith in a Better Future." Josep Lluís Sert's American Embassy in Baghdad, *Journal of Architectural Education*, 50:3, 1997, pp. 172-188; Jane C. LOEFFLER, The Architecture of Diplomacy. Heyday of the United States Embassy-Building Program, 1954-60, *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, 49:3, 1990, pp. 251-278.

18 LEVINE, 1998 (n. 9), pp. 384-386; Pedro AZARA Nicolás, City of Mirages. Baghdad, from Wright to Venturi, DC Papers. *Revista de crítica y teoría de la arquitectura*, Número Extraordinario 1. Dedicado a: Especial Bagdad, 2008, p. 253-254.

19 MAREFAT 2008 (n. 6), p. 2.

20 BERNHARDSSON 2008 (n. 8), pp. 81-96.

had on the Development Board is difficult to discern in retrospect but this anecdote illustrates that there was a group of young architects educated in the United States or Britain – Faisal II was himself schooled at the British boarding school Harrow – that formed an elite familiar with the principles of modern architecture. Their interest in modern architecture was such that in 1955 Ellen Jawdat thought possible to form a “Congrès Internationaux d’Architecture Moderne” (CIAM) group in Baghdad.<sup>21</sup>

Invitations were issued around January 1957; Oscar Niemeyer rejected it but Wright, Aalto, Gropius and Ponti accepted and also agreed to “give conferences in Baghdad that would serve as a model and support for a new generation of architects.”<sup>22</sup> This shows that the efforts of reforming and modernising the city were paired with efforts to improve the buildings industries by training Iraqi architects. In addition to this, Western architects would work collaboratively with Iraqi practices and it can be assumed that these collaborations were meant to have an “osmotic” effect whereby skill and knowledge would be imparted to local practices over the course of the projects.

This historical narrative reveals a range of interplaying internal interests regarding the plans for Greater Baghdad. The commissioning of modernist architects was supported by a complex political and cultural situation that enabled modernism to become the main expression in art and architecture. It was hoped that the modernisation efforts would help stabilise the monarchy. This also demonstrates the existence of a strong opposition and unstable conditions. Another factor was the young generation whereby a western-educated elite supported modernism.

Wright was the first to work on the project. Originally, he had been invited to contribute designs for an opera house and cultural centre but, encouraged by the flexibility of the Development Board, he changed the site from the centre of Baghdad to “Pig Island” – that he renamed “Edena” – a small island on the Tigris. By July 1957 Wright not only drew a cultural and educational complex but also – among other buildings – a university, a gallery for contemporary art, a botanical garden and an urban master plan. After General Abdul al-Karim Qassim’s (1914–1963) *coup d’état* and Wright’s death in 1959 the project came to a halt.<sup>23</sup>

From the beginning Wright was critical of all efforts towards Westernization and modernisation which he amplified in terms of (Western) “materialism” and “commercialism” and (Eastern) “spiritual integrity”. This became apparent in a talk for the Society of Engineers in Baghdad and Wright’s appeal to not be influenced by the “wrong kind of success,” to “reject [Western] commercialization” and instead to seek “contact with what is sound, what is deep in the spirit and what [is] genuinely” part of Iraqi history and culture.<sup>24</sup> Wright argued against an adaptation of modern architectural principles because to him these would deplete the historic and cultural

21 Ellen JAWDAT to Walter Gropius, 14 January 1955, MAREFAT 2008 (n. 6), p. 10.

22 AZARA 2008 (n. 18), p. 254.

23 LEVINE 1998 (n. 9), p. 387.

24 LEVINE 1998 (n. 9), p. 387.

integrity of a place: “... no architect should come here and put a [Western] cliché to work.”<sup>25</sup> Levine interprets Wright’s outlook to be that he did not regard Iraq as an underdeveloped nation to which he brought the fruits of technology, but that Wright instead wanted to preserve the character of the place. Wright found this reflected in historical and literary sources. Among them was Caliph al-Mansur who is believed to have founded Baghdad on an ideal circular plan between 762 and 766 AD. Another was the selection of tales of *Arabian Nights* that also originated in the 8<sup>th</sup> century and during the reign of Harun ar-Rashid. Wright also mentions the Garden of Eden that according to a belief was located south of Baghdad.<sup>26</sup>

The plans and drawings that Wright produced echo al-Mansur’s circular layout and are imbued in greenery to allude to the Garden of Eden. Tales of the *Arabian Nights* are, according to Levine, referred to in the design of the Opera house. Wright’s contribution was a means to support his reference-based way of design but to a significant extent a way to reject the functionalist architecture of his contemporaries.<sup>27</sup> The tenuous links to the misogynist tales of *Arabian Nights* and the reference to the Garden of Eden seem to stem from a romanticised notion of the Orient rather than from an understanding of contemporary Iraqi culture or architectural traditions.

Also in 1957 Gropius and TAC were commissioned to build the University of Baghdad. Aided by the Baghdad-based architects Medhat Ali Madhloom (1913–1973) and Hisham Munir (1930) TAC was responsible for several masterplans as well as for most of the subsequently completed buildings.<sup>28</sup>

The master plan(s) incorporated pre-existing dykes and trees and enclosed the university by a ring road. The university consisted of low-rise buildings for classrooms, lecture theatres, laboratories etc. that were grouped around a central plaza. Here, auxiliary buildings were arranged that included the library, auditorium, administration, mosque, and – in later iterations of the plans – the faculty office tower. Apart from the dome of the mosque the project was characteristic of Gropius’ designs of that time and adhered to the principles of International Style. Gropius’ remark that the plans signify: “balance of unity and diversity, of integration and differentiation in order to provide for the students the intellectual and emotional experience from both East and West”<sup>29</sup> suggests a wish for integration of diversity but little of this can be discerned in the masterplan or the executed faculty office tower. The 1958 revolution slowed down the project but did not bring it to a halt and work continued on the project until Gropius’ death in 1969. The “Open Mind” gateway to the university and the Faculty Office Tower were built after the *coup d’état* and under Qassim’s government.

25 Frank Lloyd Wright, Talk to Engineers, LEVINE 1998 (n. 9), p. 387.

26 Frank Lloyd Wright, Talk to Engineers, LEVINE 1998 (n. 9), p. 392.

27 Frank Lloyd Wright, Talk to Engineers, LEVINE 1998 (n. 9), p. 389; SIRY 2005 (n. 4), p. 265.

28 MAREFAT 2008 (n. 6), p. 5.

29 Walter GROPIUS, TAC, the University of Baghdad, *Architectural Record*, April 1959, p. 148. See also: MAREFAT 2008 (n. 6), p. 8.

Aalto was commissioned to design a Post and Telegraph Office and an Art Museum. His Museum design was determined by the climate. Cooling effects were planned with vertical louvres, roof gardens, and environment-appropriate construction. The latter consisted of a double concrete wall with an insulating air-space to support the air conditioning. The critic Frederick Gutheim summarised the project in 1960 as resulting in “the familiar Aalto combination of regularity and original architectural forms, practical nature and artistic whim...”<sup>30</sup> To Gutheim, the artistic whim might have been the cladding of the museum in dark blue ceramic tiles which created a striking effect. The familiarity that he detected was due to the very similar designs of Aalto’s unbuilt museum projects in Tallin, Estonia, and in Avesta, Sweden as well as with his completed Museum in Aalborg, Denmark.

Ponti’s office building design focussed also on technological solutions for the climate and displays similarities to his Pirelli Building in Milan. Ponti deliberately eschewed historic or regional references as he regarded attempts to implement such motifs by foreign architects as invalid and fatuous.<sup>31</sup> He therefore focussed on providing a functional solution for a more quantifiable problem such as climate control.

Le Corbusier’s commission, finally, was to design sports facilities that were to include a wave swimming pool, exercise grounds and a stadium for 50,000 spectators.<sup>32</sup> This project was also not discontinued after the *coup d’état* and Le Corbusier continued to work on it (the site however was changed and a new masterplan by Doxiadis was developed) until his death in 1965.

The initial site for the sports complex was on the bank of the Tigris and had been set aside for this purpose in the urban plan by Minoprio, Spencely and PW Macfarlane. Le Corbusier organised the buildings on a trapezoidal terrain in a way that Rémi Baudouï interprets as implementing the four functional urban principles formulated at the fifth gathering of CIAM in 1937: to dwell, to enjoy, to work, to transport.<sup>33</sup>

Plans for Greater Baghdad acquired international attention as a letter from the British Board of Trade demonstrates that was sent to a number of British architects. The letter was published by Rayner Banham in the *Architects’ Journal* in 1958, only months before the *coup d’état*. The unnamed author wished to “obtain some photographs of unusual architectural work of designs produced by British architects”<sup>34</sup> that could compete with the architects commissioned by the Iraqis. Photographs of buildings with “an exciting, bizarre or unconventional character which might stir the Iraqis” were requested.<sup>35</sup> Banham’s chagrined response focussed on the lack of ability and skill that he blamed for the omission of British architects, but he also mentioned:

30 GUTHEIM 1960 (n. 7), p. 30 and 121; BERNHARDSSON 2008 (n. 8), p. 87.

31 LEVINE 1998 (n. 9), p. 390.

32 BAUDOUÏ 2008 (n. 12), p. 271.

33 BAUDOUÏ 2008 (n. 12), p. 275.

34 Rayner BANHAM, Don’t be a Square, BoT, *The Architects’ Journal*, 127:3303, 1958, p. 921.

35 BANHAM 1958 (n. 34), p. 921.

the unadulterated cultural colonialism ... the hurt tone that the Iraqis should go out and buy the kind of architecture that they want, instead of accepting the kind that we like to hand out to them, spending all that lovely lolly from their oil-wells on “foreign architects”.<sup>36</sup>

The letter and Banham’s response recognise the wealth of Iraq and the status that modern architecture is given in the efforts of modernisation. It also demonstrates that these efforts are not quite taken seriously and are regarded merely as based on a superficial desire for the extraordinary and bizarre. The letter and Banham’s response can be regarded as examples for the ways in which the plans for Greater Baghdad were viewed externally. They show efforts of the former coloniser seeking to be included in the lucrative commissions on the one hand and the indignation of the critic on the other hand.

The ways in which the focus on the West and the invitation of modernism was regarded internally can be exemplified by a 1951 talk by modernist artist Jawad Salim. A journalist had labelled Salim’s Baghdad Modern Art Group “enemies of the people” which led Salim to explain that “at least ninety-seven percent of the people would no doubt oppose ... the modern styles that they used.”<sup>37</sup> That the execution of Faisal II in 1958 was justified with the excessive ‘Westernization’ of Iraq society furthers the recognition that there was no consensus about the modernisation of Iraq.

Bhabha’s concept of hybridity allows for an interpretation of the ways in which the plans for Greater Baghdad created tension and his theories aid in understanding the discourse not as a unilateral means to modernise Baghdad but instead as a complex interplay of competing interpretations, plans and motivations. Bhabha uses the tensions that arise between the seemingly binary system of coloniser and the colonised as object of his study. Applied to the narrative of Baghdad in the 1950s it appears that this binary system no longer existed in its original form but implications caused by colonialization have, arguably, been retained.

Political tension had been introduced by the British colonisers already in 1921 when the Hashemite Monarchy was instated and when representatives of the colonised now replaced the original coloniser. This created a political situation whereby the new king, Faisal I, became a mimicry of the “original” British king. As such, the monarchy was already a hybrid system consisting of an indigenous king ruling over a colonial political system.

Mimicry, in the context of Bhabha’s thinking is part of the measures use by colonial forces towards civilising their subjects. In the chapter “Of Mimicry and Man” Bhabha argues that “colonial mimicry is the desire for a reformed, recognisable Other as a subject of difference that is almost the same but not quite.”<sup>38</sup> In fostering mimicry, indigenous interpreters of the colonial system are created that will, however, never be the same as the colonizer. This process creates a hybrid class of people who remain interpreters of the original culture.

36 BANHAM 1958 (n. 34), p. 921.

37 BAHRANI, SHABOUT 2009 (n. 2), p. 35.

38 BHABHA 1994 (n. 11), p. 86.



Regarded in this sense, this type of mimicry and hybridisation was continued in the example of Iraq across the next generation – in Faisal II as well as the sons of leading officials who were educated in Britain or the United States. This way, the political power was in the hands of colonial representatives whose position within the complex system of coloniser and colonised was not clear. This type of mimicry is, according to Bhabha: “the sign of the inappropriate ... a difference or recalcitrance which coheres the dominant strategic function of colonial power, intensifies surveillance and poses an imminent threat.”<sup>39</sup>

To Bhabha the class of people who are almost like the coloniser but not quite the same ultimately pose a threat to the coloniser because differences and systems of classification of the “inappropriate” can no longer be applied effectively.

Conversely, applying Bhabha’s theory to the status of the “inappropriate” towards not the coloniser but the colonised, hybridisation has removed them from their previous status to which they cannot return to. In the absence of a ruling colonial power – Iraq was a sovereign state from 1932 – this “inappropriate” class of people continued with the hybridisation process across the next generations so that it shifted into the gap the coloniser left.

The commissioning of well-known Western architects was meant to reinforce the Hashemite dynasty and to impart knowledge to Iraqi architects. This utilisation of Western cultural objects as a means to impart knowledge is a fundamentally colonial method. In the chapter “Signs Taken for Wonders”<sup>40</sup> Bhabha describes this with the example of the translation of the *Bible* into Hindi. In 19<sup>th</sup> century India, the British colonisers used the *Bible* not only as a means to instruct but more importantly to reinforce the binary system between coloniser and colonised and to clarify the contours between superior and inferior.

The translation of the *Bible* into the native language led, however, to a lessening of the desired effect. This was caused by the act of translation in that it is impossible to translate a cultural artefact in its entirety – including cultural references that are needed for it to have an identical signification. Bhabha uses the example of the translation of the *Bible* to outline that the meaning of an object does not exist in the object itself but that the production of its meaning is a Western historical construct. The translation displaces this meaning and leaves a void, that is through the same system of signification imbued with new meaning, relevant to the culture it now resides in.

For the example of the plans for Greater Baghdad this passage in Bhabha’s book has two implications. Firstly, it supports the suggestion that the invitation of Western architects was a means to reinforce the supremacy of the monarchy, secondly that the designing and building of Western architecture created hybrid symbols that were imbued with new meaning and lessened the desired effect.

This process of signification can perhaps be explained best in the ways in which General Qassim

retained and continued with some of the projects. Although the new regime had fundamentally dissimilar notions of nationhood and identity some of the architectural projects continued – it was possible to alter the meaning and signification of the architectural language from constitutional monarchy to Qassim’s republic.

## Načrti kralja Faisala II. za Veliki Bagdad

### Povzetek

Med kratko vladavino kralja Faisala II., med letom 1953 in njegovo usmrtno vajo v času državnega udara leta 1958, se je sprožilo veliko načrtov za modernizacijo Velikega Bagdada. To je bil velik in ambiciozen program, katerega cilj je bil izboljšati in razviti infrastrukturo in bivališča, zagotoviti nujne javne zgradbe, reformirati gradbeno industrijo in vzgajati iraške arhitekte. Osrednji del teh načrtov je bilo povabiti mednarodno priznane arhitekte, katerih delo bi naredilo te poskuse modernizacije vidne. Med njimi so bili Alvar Aalto (1898–1976), Walter Gropius (1883–1969) in The Architects Collaborative (TAC), Le Corbusier (1887–1965), Gio Ponti (1891–1979) in Frank Lloyd Wright (1867–1959). Po državnem udaru so nadaljevali z razvijanjem večine projektov, vendar so bili zgrajeni le stolp fakultete in vhodni spomenik Univerze v Bagdadu Walterja Gropiusa in TAC ter poslovna zgradba Razvojnega odbora (1957–58) Gia Pontija. Bagdadska telovadnica, ki je bila del športnih objektov, na katerih je delal Le Corbusier vse do svoje smrti leta 1965, je bila zgrajena leta 1980 pod oblastjo Saddama Husseina. Članek analizira prizadevanja za Veliki Bagdad ter poskuša razumeti načine, s katerimi so spodbujali modernizacijo. Menimo, da so načrti za Veliki Bagdad primer kompleksnega procesa hibridizacije v času političnih napetosti.

39 BHABHA 1994 (n. 11), p. 86.

40 BHABHA 1994 (n. 11), p. 102.



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