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Genius versus Expertise
Frank Lloyd Wright and The Architects Collaborative at the University of Baghdad

Frank Lloyd Wright, The Architects Collaborative, Walter Gropius, Iraq, Baghdad

/Abstract

The growing involvement of U.S. architects in the post-oil expansion of Gulf cities after World War II corresponded to an expanding terrain of geopolitical and economic exchanges through which these firms competed for commissions. A revealing comparison of these dynamics of professional and cultural exchange can be found in the conjunction of parallel projects by U.S. architects for an Iraqi national university in Baghdad: the *University of Baghdad*, designed by The Architects Collaborative (TAC) and associated in particular with Walter Gropius as the firm's senior partner, and Frank Lloyd Wright's *Plan for Greater Baghdad* (1957), a larger cultural complex for the city, which included a university on the same peninsula where TAC received its commission in the same year. The presence of two university projects on the same site pitted two paradigmatic examples of U.S. postwar practice against each other: the self-styled genius persona of Wright against the collective body represented by TAC. While Wright's scheme offered a personal appeal to the Iraqi monarch, Faisal II, and the mythologization of his rule through a symbolic cultural landscape of historical references, TAC's University project constituted a demonstration of expertise within the developmental framework of foreign technical assistance by U.S. firms. The historiographic emphasis on singular authorship and the interpretation of each project only relative to their respective authors' creative *œuvres* has reinforced the lack of a direct comparison of the two schemes. Understood within a framework of competition between two modes of U.S. architectural practice in Iraq, however, a comparison of TAC and Wright's competing engagements in Baghdad reveals their architects' differing political and social affiliations, as well as their opposing interpretations of Iraq's cultural heritage and postwar modernization, and of the concepts of internationalism, technical assistance, and expert practice in relation to national development.

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The growing involvement of U.S. architects in the post-oil expansion of Gulf cities after World War II corresponded to an expanding terrain of geopolitical and economic exchanges through which these firms competed for commissions. As new territories were implicated as puzzle pieces within the shifting map of U.S. and Soviet influence during the Cold War, the newly post-colonial states of the Arab and Persian Gulf gained importance both as potential allies, buttressed through the developmental framework of foreign technical assistance, and as sources for the increasingly valuable strategic currency of oil. The U.S. sought to embed its influence within national modernization efforts in these states via governmental and financial aid initiatives such as the Point Four program, while pro-U.S. alignments like the Baghdad Pact competed with other transnational formations in the region, particularly the Pan-Arabist movement embodied by the rise of Gamal Abdel Nasser in Egypt. Consortia of U.S. and European oil companies extended their primary interests into the Arab and Persian Gulf states after World War II, exploiting concessions gained by U.S. and British interests in the early twentieth century; at the same time, the newly independent Gulf states contested and renegotiated the terms of these prewar concessions, generating lucrative new revenue streams that could be used to support ambitious national programs of modernization and development.

By the mid-1960s, numerous U.S. architects had gained significant commissions in the Arab and Persian Gulf states. In navigating these emerging territories for architectural work, aspects of the discursive and competitive terrain of practice that had marked prewar competition in the U.S. reasserted themselves as these offices sought to address the cultural, aesthetic, and technical concerns that accompanied these new mechanisms of exchange.

A revealing comparison for these dynamics of professional and cultural competition can be found in the conjunction of two parallel projects by U.S. architects for an Iraqi national university in Baghdad, overlapping in time and location: the *University of Baghdad*, designed by The Architects Collaborative (TAC) and associated in particular with Walter Gropius as the firm's senior partner, and Frank Lloyd Wright's *Plan for Greater Baghdad* (1957), a larger cultural complex for the city which included a university on the same peninsula in the Karada neighbourhood where TAC received its commission in the same year.[1] The project to design a university campus formed part of an extensive modernization program under the Iraq Development Board, created in 1950 to expend seventy percent of the country's expanding oil revenue on national development, first through infrastructural projects and, after 1956, through iconic cultural projects by prominent foreign architects including Gropius, Wright, Le Corbusier, Alvar Aalto, and Gio Ponti. The majority of these projects (including Wright's) ended by 1958,

1 In the comparison that follows, I rely on Neil Levine's comprehensive history of Wright's *Plan for Greater Baghdad*, and the context of the Minoprio & Spencely and Macfarlane master plan for Baghdad, within which the other Development Board projects were conceived: see Neil Levine, *The Urbanism of Frank Lloyd Wright* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015), 334–384. I am grateful to Levine for his comments on an early presentation on the University of Baghdad in his seminar on Baghdad at Harvard University in 2013, as well as in subsequent discussions, and particularly for his generosity in making available archival materials from his research on Wright and the Development Board projects to his seminar students.

when public hostility to foreign influences culminated in the *coup d'état* of 14 July, in which the U.S.- and British-affiliated Hashemite monarchy of King Faisal II was overthrown and the military general Abd al-Karim Qasim came to power. Yet TAC's commission for the University continued, proceeding in fits and starts through numerous political and economic realignments into the country's second building boom under Saddam Hussein in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

The presence of two projects for a university on the same site in Baghdad circa 1957 pitted two paradigmatic examples of U.S. postwar practice against each other: the self-styled genius persona represented by Wright against the collective body represented by TAC.[2] These two projects made vastly differing claims for agency within the Iraqi context. While Wright's scheme offered a personal appeal to the Iraqi monarch, Faisal II, and to the mythologization of his rule through a symbolic cultural landscape of historical references, TAC's University project constituted a demonstration of expertise within the developmental framework of foreign technical assistance by U.S. firms. The consequences of these differing political and cultural stakes became evident following the overthrow of the Hashemite monarchy, an event that instigated a decade of subsequent regime changes that would culminate in the Ba'th Party's rise to power after 1968. The political flexibility of TAC's work allowed the firm to continue designing the University project throughout these numerous political changes, constructing the campus into the second Iraqi building boom between 1979 to 1983, by which time TAC's work had expanded to include large-scale urban planning and architectural commissions in Baghdad, Mosul, and Basra. In contrast, the prospects for Wright's grand urban scheme had likely faded even prior to the 1958 *coup d'état*, and this disfavor may have provided the immediate impetus for the Development Board's commissioning of TAC to design a university on the Karada site.

The differences in authorship between Wright's and TAC's schemes for Baghdad have also reinforced differences in the terms on which these projects have been understood. Beyond the evident aspects of Orientalism that attach in different forms to both projects, Wright's *Plan for Greater Baghdad* has typically been placed in relation to his work through the lens of creative signature. Informed by a personal catalog of literary and cultural references, Wright drew his design from multiple periods across the pre-Islamic and Islamic history of Iraq, seeking to make these allusions legible both symbolically and spatially in the final design. By contrast, parallel attempts to interpret TAC's university as the singular work of Walter Gropius, rather than of a collaborative firm, have often led to judgments of its design as banal or derivative in creative terms, technocratic in conception and unconvincing in execution. The historiographic emphasis on singular authorship has thus precluded a discussion of these

2 The Architects Collaborative (TAC) was established in 1945 as an experiment in team-based design by seven recent graduates of Harvard, Yale, and the Cambridge School of Architecture and Landscape Architecture—Jean Bodman Fletcher, Norman C. Fletcher, Sarah Pillsbury Harkness, John C. Harkness, Robert S. McMillan, Louis A. McMillen, and Benjamin C. Thompson—together with Gropius, then chairman at Harvard after his emigration from Germany via England in 1937.

architects' opposing approaches to the changing Iraqi political context in seeking commissions, or of their fundamentally different conceptions of a new national university for the expanding capital of Baghdad. The tendency of historians to interpret each project only relative to their respective authors' creative *œuvres* has reinforced the lack of a direct comparison of the two schemes, despite their evident relationships.

Understood within a framework of competition between two modes of transnational architectural practice in Iraq, however, Wright's *Plan* and TAC's *University* immediately bear comparison as projects to develop the same basic educational program (though conceived very differently) for the same location, designed within a year of each other by the only two U.S. firms invited to participate in the Development Board program in Baghdad in these years. Furthermore, the two commissions may have been regarded as competitive by the Development Board more directly than previous accounts have suggested. Indeed, there is evidence of a significant temporal relationship between these two projects, and it is possible that the demise of one was linked to the commissioning of the other.[3]

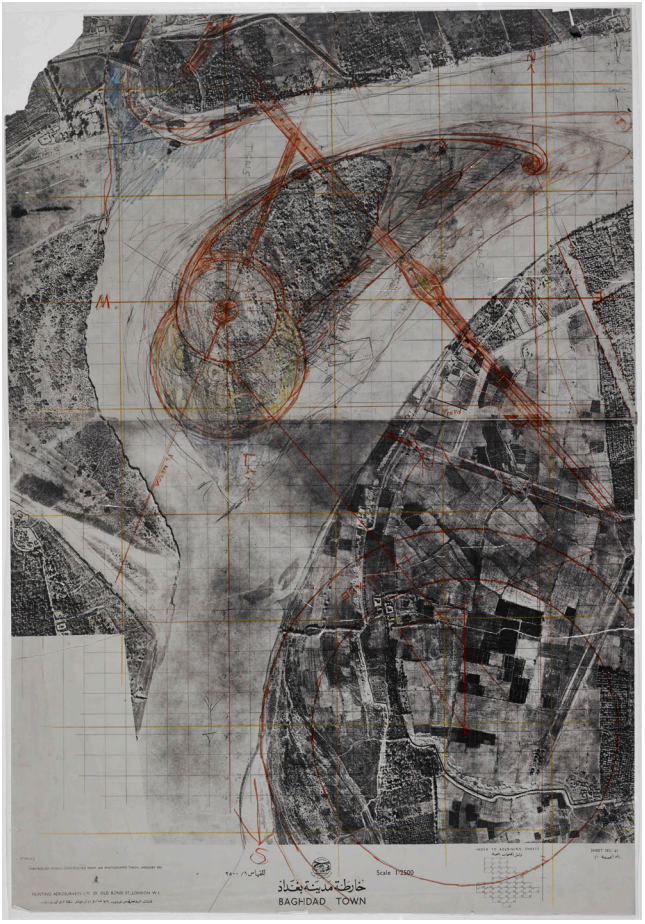
In adopting differing modes of address to the Hashemite monarchy and the bureaucratic apparatus of the Development Board, respectively, Wright's *Plan* and TAC's *University* reflected the implicit competition between projects that catered, in one case, to the monarch's desire for legitimization or to the Development Board's search for foreign expertise, on the other. In this sense, a comparison of TAC and Wright's competing engagements in Baghdad reveals their architects' differing political and social affiliations, as well as their opposing interpretations of Iraq's cultural heritage and postwar modernization, and of the concepts of internationalism, technical assistance, and expert practice in relation to national development.

The Genius University

Wright's *Plan for Greater Baghdad* was developed as a personal appeal to Faisal II, the nominal Hashemite ruler of Iraq prior to 1958 in conjunction with 'Abd al-Ilah, the crown prince and former regent before Faisal came of age in 1953, and Nuri al-Said, the powerful statesman who served multiple terms as Prime Minister in the decades prior to the 14 July *coup d'état*. In choosing the site for the project he was offered in early 1957, to design a cultural center including an opera and civic auditorium, Wright made much of the fact that he was granted two meetings with Faisal II on his first trip to Baghdad in May 1957 — the only one of the international architects invited to Baghdad to be awarded

3 The origins and timeline of the *University of Baghdad* commission have not previously been sufficiently well established to explore the question of whether these two practices were evaluated by the Development Board in direct comparison for the university site at any point. This has been due, in part, to the unavailability of the documentary material discussed later in this chapter, particularly the correspondence from Walter and Ise Gropius to Ellen and Nizar Ali Jawdat, through which a far more precise chronology of the initial development of the TAC commission can be determined.

this privilege. Furthermore, Wright's staff claimed that he was granted an aerial tour of the city in Faisal's private plane in order to select possible sites for his commission, and that the island he chose for the cultural center, then owned by the royal family, was given to him personally by the monarch. It was on this tour, Wright later recounted to the fellows at Taliesin, that he identified the island on the Tigris adjacent to the Karada peninsula, provisionally marked for a university by the Development Board, as his preferred site for a cultural center over the location he had originally been given, situated on the site of the British Trade Fair in Karkh, immediately south of the British Embassy.[4] **[Fig. 1]**



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It was rhetorically meaningful for Wright to stress that the transactions of site and program had been from one genius to another, granted to him through the hand of Faisal II as a patron. After having been notified that the unoccupied island site he had coveted from the air was owned by the royal family, Wright reported that he appealed directly to the monarch, after which "he [Faisal] put his hand on this island place on the map and looked at me with an ingratiating smile and he said, 'Mr. Wright, it is yours.'"[5] Wright reiterated the potential of "this little island the king put his hand on and gave to me specifically," then called *Pig Island*, but promptly reconceived in Wright's imaginative map as the *Isle of Edena*.[6] This contact with the ruler clearly impressed Wright—in his words: "Now that converted me to monarchy right then."[7] He subsequently dedicated his project to the king and the crown prince, declaring that "in IRAQ, monarchy has proved worthy."[8]

4 It remains unclear whether Wright actually toured the city in Faisal's private plane or if this was an artistic reimagining of his more prosaic arrival in Baghdad via commercial airline. In his talk at Taliesin upon his return, Wright did not clarify the nature of his aerial tour: "Flying over [Baghdad] I saw an island, unoccupied, practically in the heart of the city.... when I came down and looked at the map there was that island with nothing on it whatever.... So I went after that island. And they said, 'Oh no, Mr Wright, we cannot, we assure you, do anything with the island. The island belongs to the imperial household.'" As reported in Bruce Brook Pfeiffer, ed., *Frank Lloyd Wright: His Living Voice* (Fresno: The Press at California State University, 1987), 51. A contemporary article in Time implied that this aerial viewing of the site took place upon Wright's arrival: "Circling in over Baghdad by airplane, he spotted a long narrow island in the middle of the Tigris. He discovered that it was royal property, went straight to King Feisal II. Recounts Wright: 'The young king took me by the arm, smiled and said, "It is yours."'. As reported in "New Lights for Aladdin," Time Magazine, Vol. 71, No. 20 (May 19, 1958): 82. Levine cites interviews with Nezam Amery and William Wesley Peters, both of whom were with Wright in Baghdad on his May 1957 trip, as claiming that Faisal "lent him his plan so that he could see the land" (Amery) and that the site was chosen only after Wright had arrived in Baghdad, not on the flight there (Peters). See Levine, *The Urbanism of Frank Lloyd Wright*, 426, note 112.

5 "A Journey to Baghdad," transcript of Wright talk at Taliesin Fellowship, June 16, 1957, in Pfeiffer, *Frank Lloyd Wright: His Living Voice*, 51.

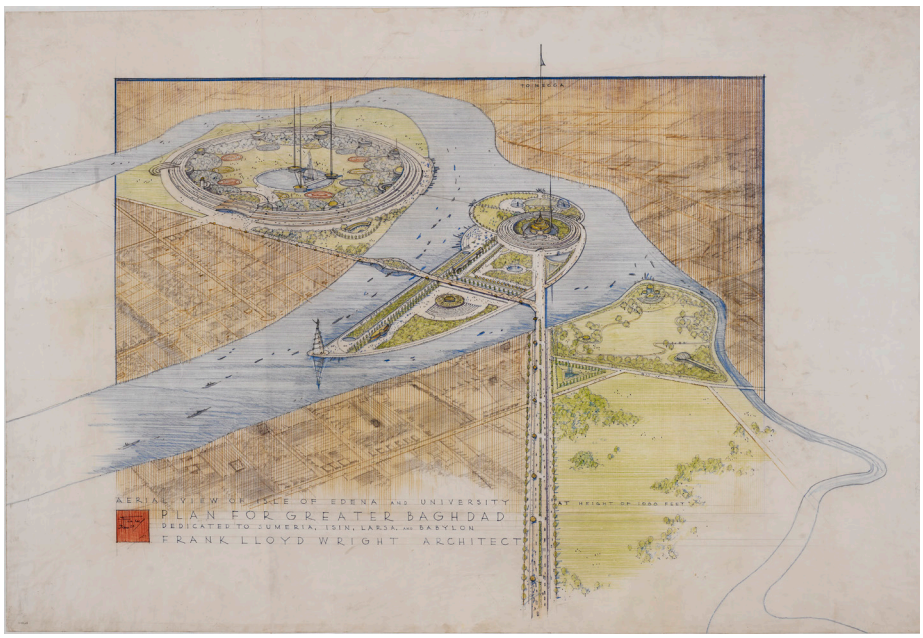
6 "A Journey to Baghdad," 50.

7 "A Journey to Baghdad," 52.

8 Frank Lloyd Wright, "Proposed—This Nine-Year Plan for the Cultural Center of Greater Baghdad," June-July 1957, MS 2401.379 M, and "Transcript of Tape Recording of Mr. Wright's Speech," typescript of the talk given to Iraqi Society of Engineers, May 1957, MS 2401.377–78 C, Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation Archive; cited in Levine, *The Urbanism of Frank Lloyd Wright*, 426, note 160.

Fig. 1

Frank Lloyd Wright, *Plan for Greater Baghdad*, 1957. Preliminary sketch plan of university and cultural center over collaged 1951 Hunting Aerosurveys aerial photographs. Courtesy of The Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation Archives (The Museum of Modern Art | Avery Architectural & Fine Arts Library, Columbia University, New York).



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Wright's claim that he had been awarded the island by the king himself—a site he soon surmounted to absorb the university planned for the Karada peninsula—legitimized the authority behind his expanding ambitions in much the same way that his design, in turn, offered a legitimization of Faisal II's rule. The *Plan for Greater Baghdad* mythologized the monarchical state by incorporating a catalog of historical references drawn from Sumerian, Babylonian, and Abbasid periods in the region's history, implicitly positioning the Hashemite monarchy as the inheritors of this fictionalized Islamic and pre-Islamic past.[9] A central symbolic element in this nexus of references was the *Round City*, built under the Caliph al-Mansur (714–755 AD), which Wright misattributed to Harun al-Rashid (763 or 766–809 AD), the fifth Abbasid Caliph, thus conflating the mythological foundation of the city of Baghdad with its flowering under the Caliphate, a period recorded in the *Thousand and One Nights*, beloved by Wright as a child.[10] The *Round City* provided the organizing pattern for the university within Wright's plan, which grafted the symbolism of the first planned architecture for the city of Baghdad onto the design of an educational complex that would implicitly usher in a new golden age of development under the Hashemite monarchy. This constructed lineage thus positioned Faisal II as the contemporary genius of Iraqi modernization, an al-Mansur (or, in Wright's imaginary, a Harun al-Rashid) for his time. [Fig. 2]

9 The Hashemite monarchy indeed claimed lineal descent from Fatima, daughter of the Prophet Muhammad. Levine cites a contemporary guide, *An Introduction to the Past and Present of the Kingdom of Iraq*, which stressed this legitimization in terms similar to Wright's: "With the establishment of the Kingdom of Iraq under King Faisal I in 1921, not only did Iraq gain her political entity… but by choosing a Hashemite as head of the State she also restored to the throne the very family from which the Abbasid Caliphs themselves had sprung." See *An Introduction to the Past and Present of the Kingdom of Iraq* (Baltimore, MD: Lord of Baltimore Press, 1946), 3.

10 Wright openly acknowledged both his personal, mythological interpretation of Baghdad's history and his projection of this literary imaginary onto the contemporary reality of the city. As he told the Taliesin fellows, "I've been very sentimental about this journey because when I was a chap, oh long before I was your age, I was enamored of Hashid [sic], Aladdin and the wonderful lamp, Sinbad the Sailor, and scores of those tales of the Arabian Nights. Of course, that was Baghdad to me. And Baghdad of course is there now, but not the Baghdad I dreamed of then." As quoted in Pfeiffer, *Frank Lloyd Wright: His Living Voice*, 50.

Fig. 2

Frank Lloyd Wright, *Plan for Greater Baghdad*, 1957. Aerial perspective of university and cultur-al center from north, showing monument to Harun al-Rashid at northeast tip of Isle of Edena. Courtesy of The Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation Archives (The Museum of Modern Art | Avery Architectural & Fine Arts Library, Columbia University, New York).

In seeking to glorify the monarchy for which the *Plan for Greater Baghdad* was produced, the stakes of Wright's project thus seemingly reinforced the political aims that underlay the Development Board's decision to invite foreign architects to design cultural buildings as public signs of national progress. This shift in priorities, inaugurated by the Development Board's second six-year plan (1955–60), reflected the government's growing need to produce visible symbols of modernization in order to pacify an increasingly unsettled urban population: the cultural superstructure to be built atop an infrastructural base of irrigation, flood control, and water storage that had been the focus of the first six-year plan (1951–56). Lord Salter, a British advisor to the Development Board, warned in 1955 that "popular resentment, caused or aggravated by the failure to devote a substantial part of the public revenues from oil to work giving widespread and visible benefits quickly, may increase political instability."[11] At the same time, however, a major cause of these public grievances was the perceived dependence of the monarchy on British, and increasingly U.S., influence, a situation that dated from the installation of the Hashemite family by the British upon Iraq's official independence from the Mandate in 1932. As reaction against foreign interference grew in the 1950s, a design like Wright's thus posed a particular problem of signification, as a project by a U.S. architect designed explicitly to legitimize the historical narrative upon which Hashemite rule was based.

For his part, Wright inveighed against the commercialism of the West and warned against its encroachment in Iraq as part of the country's development. "If we are able to understand and interpret our ancestors," Wright argued, Baghdad need not "adopt the materialistic structures called 'modern' now barging in from the West upon the East."[12] In arguing against the other foreign offices that had been given commissions by the Development Board, Wright attacked what he regarded as both the materialism of Western culture and the professionalization of its architects, an assessment for which a firm like TAC, his eventual competitor for the University, would have provided a ready example. In *Genius and the Mobocracy* (1949), Wright warned against the false community of collective architectural practice in the U.S., claiming that "professionalism is parasitic—a body of men unable to do more than band together to protect themselves."[13] Indeed, in a letter to the prime minister and the Development Board, Wright lamented that he had already "come too late to save [the country]… from the invasions of the Proffesional [sic] Architecture of the West."[14] Instead, in a talk given to the Iraqi Society of Engineers during his May trip, he appealed for Iraqis to look "deep… [into] your [own] inheritance," interpreting this heritage as encompassing both the pre-Islamic and the Islamic history of the region.[15] He

11 Lord [Arthur] Salter, *The Development of Iraq: A Plan of Action* (Baghdad: Iraq Development Board, 1955), 118.

12 "New Lights for Aladdin," *Time Magazine*, 19 May 1958, 82.

13 Frank Lloyd Wright, *Genius and the Mobocracy* (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1949), 4.

14 Wright, "To the Minister and His Development Board, City of Baghdad, Iraq" (draft), n.d. (1957), MS 2401.379 BB, Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation Archive; cited in Levine, *The Urbanism of Frank Lloyd Wright*, 426, note 118.

15 "Transcript of Tape Recording of Mr. Wright's Speech," typescript of the talk given to Iraqi Society of Engineers, May 1957, MS 2401.377–78 C, Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation Archive; cited in Levine, 426, note 114.

argued that these references offered an intrinsic connection to the *genius loci* of the place—in his words, "a genius of itself"—and demanded that "an architect should not come in and put a *cliché* to work."[16] In this formulation, the *genius loci* of the site (its spirit, life force) was bound to the genius of the architect as its interpreter (creator, generator), and to the genius of the monarch as the architect's patron (father, progenitor).[17]

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Though an educational program was never officially included by the Development Board as part of his commission, Wright's imaginative conception of a university mirrored the *ethos* of creative genius that he sought to express in the more monumental forms of the opera and cultural center on his Isle of Edena. Lacking a brief, and determined to avoid the emphasis on professionalization that typified contemporary universities in the U.S., Wright's scheme instead articulated an organic educational model that stood apart from the Development Board's narrower interest in training a class of specialists to participate in the country's modernization. Wright had outlined this holistic conception of pedagogy in the decade prior to his arrival in Baghdad, arguing in *Genius and the Mobocracy* that "until architecture, philosophy, and religion become one as they are in organic architecture," Wright claimed that "we are not going to be able to make such fruits of science as we already know in abundance, really constructive."[18] Further, he asked: "What hope have we for indigenous culture when even our 'universities' are not founded upon study of the principles and aesthetics of innate—organic—structure."[19] In Baghdad, Wright saw this "indigenous culture" as comprising a dense overlay of literary and archaeological references—a palimpsest to which the formal elements of his university and cultural center, he might well have imagined, could provide the key for the educated Iraqi citizen of the future.

The form of the university that appeared within the *Plan for Greater Baghdad* mapped this organic conception literally into a circle of faculties attached to

16 "Transcript of Tape Recording of Mr. Wright's Speech," typescript of the talk given to Iraqi Society of Engineers, May 1957, MS 2401.377–78 C, Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation Archive; cited in Levine, 426, note 114.

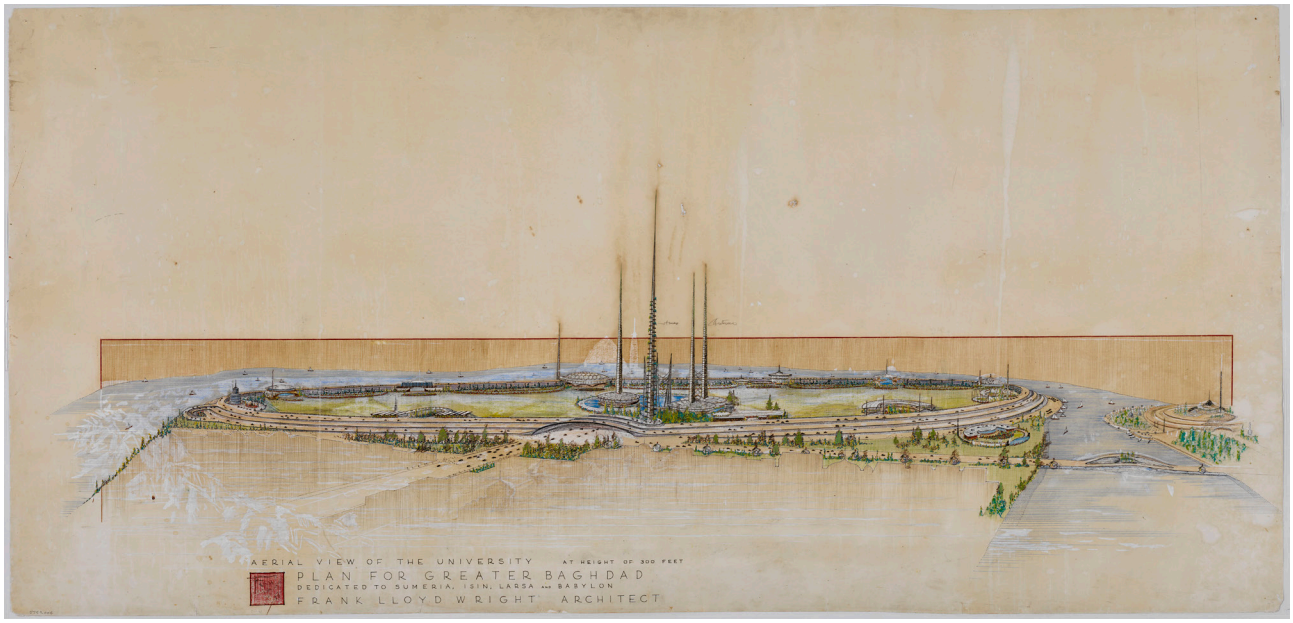
17 On the origins of the term *genius* from the Latin *gigno, gignere* (to generate, father, beget), see Darrin M. McMahon, *Divine Fury: A History of Genius* (New York: Basic Books, 2013). McMahon traces *genius loci* to the original sense of the energy, life force, divine power, or sacred presence of a place (and often connected to the idea of a presiding spirit, embodied by the sixth century BCE in the figure of the snake as a sacred creature or totem of *genius*, and later in the sense of a personal spirit, individual protector, or genie). Ibid., 21-22.

18 Frank Lloyd Wright, *Genius and the Mobocracy*, 11.

19 Wright, *Genius and the Mobocracy*, 11.

Fig. 3

Frank Lloyd Wright, *Plan for Greater Baghdad*, 1957. Site plan of university and cultural center. Courtesy of The Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation Archives (The Museum of Modern Art | Avery Architectural & Fine Arts Library, Columbia University, New York)



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a ring road, a "Ziggerat [sic] of Parking" that demarcated the boundary of the campus at the same time that it conflated a Sumerian prototype with the plan of the *Abbasid Round City of Baghdad.* Within this circular enclosure—the "curriculum," in Wrightian double entendre—the university departments were laid out in counter-clockwise fashion, proceeding (in sequence from the entrance arch at the street that connected the campus to the opera house and cultural center) from fine arts to architecture, sociology, government, law, engineering, religion, athletics, gymnasium, sciences, and agriculture. **[Fig. 3]** Unlike TAC's later proposal for the *University*, the allocation of these departments and their adjacencies was metaphorical rather than based on identifiable needs, organizing the faculties in a conceptual sequence starting from the arts, to proceed to secular and spiritual governance, and to the human, physical, and natural sciences. Given both his preference for genius and his opposition to technocratic conceptions of education, Wright may have imagined this cyclical progression from culture to nature as a diagram for the cultivation of a genius appropriate to modern Iraq, parallel to the flowering of the arts his opera and cultural center would inaugurate. A triangle of broadcasting studios for radio and television at the center of the campus suggested the dissemination of these fruits of genius to the nation, with towering profiles that celebrated the creation of the region's first Arab-controlled television network in Iraq the year prior to Wright's plan.[20] **[Fig. 4]**

Given the ineluctable association of the *Plan for Greater Baghdad* with Faisal II, it is little wonder that the project failed to win the approval of the Development Board, particularly given the rising public dissatisfaction with British and U.S. influence on the monarchy. The authorial relationship of genius architect to genius ruler that Wright proposed was politically contingent on the survival of the Hashemite monarchy, as well as on the continued lack of resistance to the

Fig. 4

Frank Lloyd Wright, *Plan for Greater Baghdad*, 1957. Perspective of university. Courtesy of The Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation Archives (The Museum of Modern Art | Avery Architectural & Fine Arts Library, Columbia University, New York)

20 See William A. Rugh, *Arab Mass Media: Newspapers, Radio, and Television in Arab Politics* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2004), 186.

foreign interests that lay behind it. Furthermore, Wright's arrogation of both the Karada site and the university program beyond the scope of his original commission made him the only one of the foreign architects invited to Baghdad to wilfully disregard the confines of the master plan for Baghdad, produced in 1956 by the British firm of Minoprio, Spencely, and Macfarlane, that governed the sites offered by the Development Board.[21] Both the university and the cultural center in Wright's scheme thus relied, each in their own way, on political and spatial conditions that failed to obtain even prior to the demise of Faisal's rule. The inability to reconcile the *Plan for Greater Baghdad* within the framework of the other Development Board projects is suggested by the Board's invitation of Hugh Spencely, a co-author of the master plan for Baghdad, to review Wright's proposed choice of both the Island and Karada sites in late September 1957, a month after Wright submitted his project. By September 7, the Development Board had apparently already decided to offer TAC the university on the Karada site, and the firm received news of the commission at nearly the same moment that Wright's plans were being reviewed.

Ambassadors Abroad

In contrast with Wright's personal appeal to Faisal II, TAC's commission for the *University of Baghdad* was gained through contacts formed in the interstices between U.S. professional training, the bureaucratic channels of the Development Board, and the emerging terrain for modernist architectural practices in Iraq in the 1950s. The key interlocutors in this transnational exchange were Ellen and Nizar Ali Jawdat, architects who had studied under Gropius at the Harvard Graduate School of Design from 1942 to 1947—a period when women and foreign students made up a significant portion of the student body during wartime—before returning to practice in Baghdad, where they became advocates of Gropius and TAC for the Development Board commissions taking shape in the 1950s.

The Jawdats epitomized the elite class of foreign-educated professionals, increasingly trained in the U.S., that comprised the generation of young Iraqi architects who began their practices after World War II. Ellen Jawdat (née Ellen Stone Coan) was born in Srinagar, India in 1921 to Janet Tyron Stone and Frank Speer Coan, then a YMCA secretary in Lahore and Hyderabad, and later the general secretary of the English-Speaking Union of the United States (1935–42) and a Near and Middle East Expert for the U.S. Office of War Information after

21 Wright may not have believed that his efforts would lead to a commission for the university on the Karada peninsula, or that his prospects for the cultural center for which he had originally been commissioned would not be adversely affected by this gambit. At the time Wright was working on the cultural center and the university, he claimed: "I do not know that there is very much hope for the Baghdad projects. This is really my proposition to them.... I sort of came in on the tail end of things [sic], so what impression I can make now, I do not know—but I am going to try." See Frank Lloyd Wright, "YOUTH OF AMERICA: THE POETIC PRINCIPLE" (Monona Terrace, State of Wisconsin, Baghdad, "Talks to Taliesin Fellowship," 23 June 1957), reel 189, 1, 7, MS 1502.258, Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation Archive; cited in Levine, *The Urbanism of Frank Lloyd Wright*, 426, note 119.

1942.[22] After receiving a degree in art history from Vassar in 1942, Ellen enrolled at the Harvard Graduate School of Design under Gropius, where she graduated in 1947. Nizar Ali Jawdat, born in Damascus, Syria in 1921, was the son of 'Ali Jawdat al-Ayyubi, then the governor of Aleppo and later Prime Minister of Iraq through rotating terms in 1934–35, 1949–50, and June to December 1957—the period in which TAC was officially commissioned to design the University.[23] During Jawdat al-Ayyubi's appointment as the first Iraqi ambassador to the U.S. from 1942 to 1947, his son Nizar Ali enrolled at the Harvard Graduate School of Design, where he and Ellen met and were married. After returning to Baghdad, Ellen began her practice as an architect—the first woman to do so in Iraq—while Nizar Ali worked as an architect for the Iraqi Railways office in fulfilment of his five years of public service, required in exchange for the government's sponsorship of his studies at Harvard. The couple practiced together intermittently on projects in Baghdad, including the *Women's Headquarters of the Red Crescent* (1948–50) and the Jawdats' own house, originally built as student housing in 1948 and modified by the couple for their private use after 1955. Ellen continued to practice architecture independently while Nizar Ali established a company as a supplier and contractor for the building industry, including the first provision of air conditioning technology in Iraq.[24] As part of her advocacy for expanded opportunities for modernist architects in Baghdad in these years, in 1954–55 Ellen organized an invited international competition for the *National Bank of Iraq*, won by William Dunkel and completed in 1956, as the first competition in the country to feature a developed brief and anonymous submissions.[25]

The correspondence between Walter and Ise Gropius and the Jawdats from 1948 to 1969 sheds considerable light on both the origins of the *University of*

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22 Ruth Coan Fulton, ed., *Coan Genealogy 1697–1982* (Portsmouth, NH: Peter E. Randall, Publisher, 1983), 346–347.

23 These terms as Prime Minister were often rotated with other political officials representing other social, ethnic, and religious constituencies within the Iraqi elite, including frequent terms by Nuri al-Said, with whom Jawdat al-Ayyubi had studied in the Ottoman military college in Istanbul prior to Iraqi independence. See Hanna Batatu, "Prime Ministers Under the Monarchy (23 August 1921 to 14 July 1958)," in *The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq: A Study of Iraq's Old Landed and Commercial Classes and of its Communists, Ba'thists, and Free Officers* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1978), 182–184 ff. Batatu identifies al-Ayyubi's class origin as "official lower-middle-class, son of a chief sergeant in the gendarmerie" (Batatu, 1978, 180-181). A Time article from 1957 described Jawdat al-Ayyubi's term in that year as a function of "the custom of summer replacements" for Nuri al-Said, his "longtime comrade in arms." See: "Out of the Heat," *Time Magazine*, Vol. 70, No. 1 (1 July 1957): 26.

24 "Out of the Heat," *Time Magazine,* Vol. 70, No. 1 (1 July 1957): 26; "Nizar Ali Jawdat," obituary, *The Washington Post*, 29 January 2017, accessed June 11, 2017, http://www.legacy.com/obituaries/washingtonpost/obituary.aspx?pid=183773232. The Jawdats' built projects together appear in Raglan Squire, "Architecture in the Middle East," *Architectural Design*, (March 1957): 96 ff., along with Ellen Jawdat's *American School for Girls* in Baghdad (1956).

25 Ellen Jawdat in an interview with the author (2013), and also Nizar Ali Jawdat and Ellen Jawdat, *Curriculum vitae*, after 1986, from the personal papers of Ellen Jawdat, Washington, D.C. Though it was not sponsored by the Development Board, Neil Levine describes the National Bank of Iraq competition as "a trial run for the Development Board's program" after 1955. See Levine, *The Urbanism of Frank Lloyd Wright*, 424, note 62. The competition was preceded by the Rafidain Bank, on Shorja [Bank] Street adjacent to the future site of the National Bank, designed by Philip Hirst and completed by 1956.

Baghdad commission and its subsequent history.[26] Following the Jawdats' return to Baghdad in 1947, the couple remained cordial with their former professor at Harvard, as evidenced by Gropius's reply in December 1948 to a letter from Nizar in that year, thanking him for sending news from Baghdad. "I am very glad indeed to hear from you," Gropius wrote, wishing the couple the "hope that you both are happy and can do some constructive work for your country."[27] The correspondence continued informally for six years until the Jawdats wrote to the Gropiuses around February of 1954, serendipitously just two months before the latter's Rockefeller Foundation-sponsored trip to Australia, the Philippines, and Japan in April of that year. In reply, Ise ventured the possibility of adding Baghdad to the list of cities to be visited on their return from Japan in August and September (the final arrangements also included Hong Kong, Bangkok, Calcutta, Karachi, Athens, Rome, and Paris).[28] The Gropiuses traveled to Baghdad from August 19th to 24th 1954, between Karachi and Athens, staying at the Tigris Hotel on the recommendation of the Jawdats.[29] Burdened by the heavy professional demands of their two months in Japan where, Ise lamented, "we can hardly manage to see the place for the hundreds of people who want to talk to [Walter]," the couple expressed the desire only to see Baghdad as tourists—as Ise wrote to Nizar, "We hope, therefore, that no news of modern architecture and W. Gropius has come to Iraq yet."[30]

Events, however, conspired to prevent the Gropiuses from the prospect of an anonymous visit and, eventually, to draw them into discussions of the projects then being planned by the Iraq Development Board. David D. Newsom, then Public Affairs Officer for the U.S. Embassy and director of the United States Information Service (USIS) in Baghdad as well as a friend of the Jawdats, was informed by Ellen of the impending visit by the Gropiuses, and wrote formally to Walter in June 1954 to suggest holding a photographic exhibition of examples of modern American architecture to coincide with his visit, suggesting he might attend the opening in lieu of a more formal lecture.[31] Newsom noted the presence

26 This correspondence first came to light during an interview with Ellen Jawdat at her home on June 24, 2013, when she provided me with a folder of letters from the Gropiuses to her and Nizar stored among her personal files. These letters corresponded closely to the extant letters sent by the Jawdats to Walter and Ise, which are preserved at Harvard University among the Walter Gropius papers, 1925-1969 [MS Ger 208, Houghton Library]. Following the interview, I worked with Ellen Jawdat and Leslie Morris of the Houghton Library to arrange for these letters to be absorbed into the Harvard collections in 2013, thus reuniting both sides of the correspondence for the first time. I am exceedingly grateful to Ellen Jawdat for providing access to these letters and for her assistance in interpreting them, as well as for her generosity in giving them as a gift to Harvard University.

27 Letter from Walter Gropius to Nizar A. Jawdat, 1 December 1948, Harvard University, Houghton f 2013M-29. In the letter, Gropius also responds to an apparent request from Nizar to join CIAM, suggesting that he writes, with Gropius as a reference, to Sigfried Giedion, then General Secretary for the group, to propose establishing a CIAM working group in Iraq.

28 Letter from Ise Gropius to Nizar and Ellen Jawdat, 2 February 1954, Harvard University, Houghton f 2013M-29. The letter alludes to a description by the Jawdats of having divided their practice in Iraq into an architectural design office (presumably run by Ellen) and a contracting office (presumably run by Nizar), which Ise likened favorably to Walter's fight against AIA rules in the U.S. preventing architects from engaging in contracting work. See Walter Gropius, "Gropius Appraises Today's Architect," *Architectural Forum*, (May 1952): 111-112, 166, 170, 174, 178, 182.

29 Letter from Walter Gropius to Ellen and Nizar Ali Jawdat, 13 April 1954; Letter from Ise Gropius to Nizar Ali Jawdat, 26 May 1954; Letter from Ise Gropius to Ellen Jawdat, 29 July 1954, Harvard University, Houghton f 2013M-29.

30 Letter from Ise Gropius to Nizar Ali Jawdat, 26 May 1954, Harvard University, Houghton f 2013M-29.

31 David D. Newsom, letter to Walter Gropius, 18 June 1954, Bauhaus Archiv, GN Kiste Nr. 3, Mappe 123.

of "an active group of young architects in Iraq who would consider it a distinct honor to have the privilege of meeting you while you are here," and hoped that Gropius's presence there "would give… the opportunity to meet some of those in the architectural and engineering world on an informal basis."[32] Photographs of the event, held on August 22nd or 23rd, show Gropius indeed giving a lecture to an assembled group of guests on the lawn of the U.S. Embassy with Ellen and Nizar in attendance, flanked by presentation boards with mounted photographs of contemporary U.S. architecture.

In arranging the exhibition and lecture, Newsom presumably hoped to appeal to the same elite, educated class of U.S.-affiliated professionals of which Nizar and Ellen were already a part.[33] The guest list named a number of young, Western-trained architects including Qahtan Awni (trained at the University of California Berkeley), Jaafar Allawi (trained at the University of Liverpool), and Rifat Chadirji (trained at the Hammersmith School of Arts and Crafts in London), described as "son of head [sic] of Socialists."[34] English and U.S. policy tracts later cited by TAC as guides to the region, like William Polk's *What the Arabs Think* (1952), similarly pointed to the importance of these "Western-educated men and women of the younger generation who are the doctors, lawyers, professors, engineers and white-collar workers of the Arab world," and, in particular, to the feeling among U.S. professionals that "they are the most vocal section of the population and to a large extent are bound to be the key to the Arab world's immediate future."[35]

By the time the Gropiuses returned to the U.S. in September 1954, their attitude had evidently shifted to a more explicit interest in participating in the building program taking shape in Baghdad. Replying for the first time on TAC letterhead rather than on personal stationery, Walter wrote to the Jawdats immediately upon their arrival home in Cambridge:

> I have been so happy in Baghdad that I would greatly enjoy, if an opportunity should arise, doing architectural work for your country. I have pondered whether it was not wrong not to have thrown overboard my itinerary and to try to go and see your King, but you can't imagine what an upheaval changes in our itinerary would have caused, particularly regarding plane reservations.[36]

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32 Newsom, letter to Walter Gropius, Mappe 123.

33 See Bauhaus Archiv, Werkverzeichnis 151, Baghdad University. That these photographs are from the August 1954 trip is confirmed by a letter from Newsom to Walter Gropius on 15 September 1954, enclosing the photographs and thanking Gropius for his "kindness in attending and speaking to the architects at our center last month." See Bauhaus Archiv, GN Kiste Nr. 1, Mappe 4.

34 Ibid. Kamil al-Chadirji was the leader of the National Democratic Party, prominent among the socialist parties that gained power under Qasim after the 14 July *coup d'état*. In a letter to the Gropiuses from Rome on October 4, 1958, following the *coup d'état*, Nizar Ali Jawdat wrote that Rifat Chadirji had replaced Mahmoud Hasan, previously Director of the Second Technical Section of the Development Board, and that "his father heads one of the major parties which are in power now," noting, "you have met him in my house." See Harvard University, Houghton Library, MS Ger 208, folder 956.

35 William R. Polk, *What the Arabs Think* (New York: Foreign Policy Association, 1952), 18. This pamphlet was cited in the bibliography of the TAC *Report on the University of Baghdad* of 1959, in which Polk, then a professor at the Center for Middle Eastern Studies at Harvard, is also cited as a consultant expert on "General Arab Conditions and the Educational Approach."

36 Letter from Walter Gropius to Nizar and Ellen Jawdat, 9 September 1954, Harvard University, Houghton f 2013M-29.

Gropius also followed up on a discussion that apparently took place in Baghdad to send promotional materials on TAC's work for the Jawdats to circulate in Iraq, offering "to send you the promised material as propaganda weapons in favor of modern architecture to be used for your King, or whoever may be interested."[37] Gropius cited the firm's proposal with I.M. Pei for *Hua Tung Christian University* in particular, as "good evidence for our capability to adapt to the conditions of foreign countries," and this project would later be invoked as a comparative precedent for the *University of Baghdad* campus plan.[38] In response, Ellen Jawdat expressed her intent to promote Gropius for a role within the architectural development taking place in Iraq:

> I can't tell you what a boost to our spirits your few days with us were. Not only we, but everybody who met you reacted in the same way—we felt as though a large window had been opened…. for all of us, your visit brought such a wealth of new ideas, wise advice and, most of all, a kind of calm optimism, that we must find some way of reviving the experience… So it was indeed refreshing to watch your instinctive understanding of the situation, in no way minimizing the problems, yet not being overwhelmed by them. We are more than ever convinced that we must find some way for you to make your contribution to this country, for, in addition to the architectural contribution, that is that immeasurable added dividend.[39]

Ellen further suggested an appeal to Faisal II directly as the means to push for Gropius's involvement in Iraq, noting that "Nizar visited him in the north a few weeks after you left, and he expressed the keenest interest."[40] This discussion would have taken place just prior to the commissioning of Minoprio & Spencely and P. W. Macfarlane by the municipality of Baghdad to develop a master plan for the city in late December, at the beginning of the development process that would proceed in earnest with the official launch of the Development Board's program of cultural buildings two years later, in December 1956.

The advocacy for Gropius's involvement in planning and architectural work in Baghdad seems to have operated not through a direct appeal to Faisal II, however, but rather via the more informal bureaucratic channels of influence that circulated around the Development Board. Possibly as early as 1952, the Jawdats prepared a short essay along with an accompanying information sheet on Walter Gropius, apparently to be circulated by Ahmed Jabbar Chelebi, a friend and the director of the Development Board, arguing for the appointment of a coordinating regional planner of international stature to oversee the Board's

37 Letter from Walter Gropius to Nizar and Ellen Jawdat, 9 September 1954, Harvard University, Houghton f 2013M-29.

38 Letter from Walter Gropius to Nizar and Ellen Jawdat, 9 September 1954, Harvard University, Houghton f 2013M-29. Hua Tung appears among the comparative plans in The Architects Collaborative, *Report on the University of Baghdad Designed by The Architects Collaborative, Cambridge, Massachusetts*, U.S.A., c. January 1959, along with Harvard, MIT, Oxford, and the University of Mexico.

39 Letter from Ellen Jawdat to Walter Gropius, 3 October 1954, Harvard University, Houghton Library, MS Ger 208, folder 956.

40 Letter from Ellen Jawdat to Walter Gropius, 3 October 1954, Harvard University, Houghton Library, MS Ger 208, folder 956.

expansive efforts.[41] "It has been suggested," the Jawdats wrote, "that with the vast amount of architectural work being undertaken by the Development Board throughout Iraq, it is essential that there be one supervisory office to co-ordinate these individual projects, and to schedule their design and construction as parts of a coherent long-range scheme for the filling of the country's architectural needs."[42] The Jawdats articulated the need for a scope of ambition that would exceed the master plans that were soon produced for individual cities in Iraq (including plans by Minorio, Spencely, and Macfarlane for Baghdad, Mack Lock and Partners for Basra, and Raglan Squire and Partners for Mosul), arguing instead for coordinated planning at a territorial scale:

> Based on reports and the advice of economists, irrigation experts, specialists in population studies, health and education authorities, etc., Iraq's building schemes should be studies with a view charting a master plan which takes into account the relation of cities to towns, towns to villages; the expansion or change of such units as they are affected by industrial or agricultural progress; the logical settlement of tribes in new villages, and the provision of adequate housing, education, medical, sanitary, and community facilities; the relation of Iraq's vast irrigation schemes to the growth of agricultural populations; and transportation links (air, rail, road, and waterways) between the various communities in the country.[43]

In proposing that these expanded planning efforts take place via the creation of "one central architectural office in the Development Board, producing work of a single high standard," the Jawdats named two international figures as the only ones capable of overseeing such a comprehensive task: Le Corbusier—whom they implied was already occupied with his work in Chandigarh, India "to fill a similar need in that country"—and Gropius, whom the Jawdats proposed as

41 Typescript of essay and information sheet written by Ellen Jawdat, n.d., personal papers of Ellen Jawdat, Washington, D.C. Ellen Jawdat later confirmed in emails to the author (2013 and 2017) that these documents were written for Chelebi, who intended to promote Gropius for the *University* project, following a visit by Nizar to his office at the Development Board "to urge him to consider what a perfect choice Gropius would be to design the University complex." Chelebi, she suggested, must have asked Nizar to prepare a written memorandum, which Ellen then wrote. It is unclear whether or how these documents were subsequently circulated; Ellen recalls that Chelebi intended to hand these in person to "a close friend," rather than to submit them more formally to the Development Board. Photocopies of this essay and the accompanying information sheet were included in Ellen Jawdat's personal file of letters from the Gropiuses prior to the absorption of this correspondence into the Harvard collections. However, the Harvard collections do not currently include these two documents.

42 Typescript of essay and information sheet written by Ellen Jawdat, n.d., personal papers of Ellen Jawdat, Washington, D.C.

43 Typescript of essay and information sheet written by Ellen Jawdat, n.d., personal papers of Ellen Jawdat, Washington, D.C. It can be argued that this expanded regional scope was taken up by the Development Board in part through the commissioning of Constantinos Doxiadis in October 1955, on the recommendation of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, to provide "a large-scale housing and community development program not just for Baghdad but for several cities throughout Iraq." See Levine, *The Urbanism of Frank Lloyd Wright*, 351. This was in contrast to the more limited scope of the master plan for the city of Baghdad by Minoprio & Spencely and P. W. Macfarlane, who was commissioned in late 1954 by the lord mayor of the municipality of Baghdad, Fakhruddin al-Fakhri, not by the Development Board. See Levine, 340.

either director of or consultant for such a coordinating office.[44]

It is unclear when discussions of Gropius's involvement first came to center on the university commission in the years between 1952 and 1957.[45] While their personal correspondence continued regularly through October of 1955, it was not until September 1957 that Walter Gropius received a letter from the Jawdats relaying that an offer of the commission to design the *University of Baghdad* campus was due to come from the Development Board. Gropius replied enthusiastically on TAC letterhead on September 20th, in a manner that suggested the news was unexpected:

> What a surprise to receive your letter! This project would indeed have the greatest interest for all of us in TAC, and I shall be glad to come over as soon as we have received the official invitation from your Development Board… The task to design a new University will be most thrilling to us and closest to my own design ambitions, particularly as it will be dedicated to education which is, in my opinion, the backbone of culture in any country.
>
> Today I write only to thank you for your decisive help, which I take from you as a most precious present.[46]

Walter Gropius and Robert S. McMillan traveled to Baghdad from November 2nd to 10th, 1957 to discuss the commission. Gropius wrote again to Ellen and Nizar upon his return to the U.S., reiterating "my most emphatic thanks for everything you have done for us in Baghdad."[47] The trip, he wrote, "could not have been more satisfactory, for we have covered a lot of ground collecting facts and data

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44 Typescript of essay and information sheet written by Ellen Jawdat, n.d., personal papers of Ellen Jawdat, Washington, D.C. The accompanying *Curriculum vitae* included in "Data Concerning Dr. Walter Gropius" listed his planning and architectural work from the founding of the Bauhaus to his "Practice in partnership with Architects Collaborative (group of six [sic] young architects under 35 yrs.)," though incorrectly giving 1948 as the date for the establishment of TAC. It also listed the following as "Personal qualifications" for Gropius:
"Adaptability: Has worked under many different conditions, and in many countries, and is primarily interested in finding building methods and styles suitable to special conditions [of] the society, climate, etc. in question.
Administrative Ability: ability to delegate authority
Extreme Modesty
Possesses great imagination, vision, and enthusiasm
Personal interest in Arab Countries and in the ways they are utilizing and developing their resources."
The personal nature of the appeal and the various errors in data both lend weight to the suggestion that the Jawdats prepared this document, rather than Gropius or TAC.

45 In an interview with the author (2017), Ellen Jawdat claimed that Gropius was discussed from the beginning only in relation to the university commission, though this recollection is at odds with the essay quoted above. An undated letter prior to 1957 from Ellen to the Gropiuses [Harvard University, MS Ger 208, folder 956] describes plans for a university scheme in Baghdad in a manner indicating that this was already known to Gropius, though noting that the project had been delayed: "The university scheme is temporarily halted until the English firm of Minoprio-Spenceley have made their recommendations for the Baghdad City plan & have settled on the site for the university center. So it sits… & we keep talking." It is unclear, however, whether this was meant to refer to Gropius's possible involvement. Neil Levine suggests that the letter dates to "prob. mid-1955" [Levine, *The Urbanism of Frank Lloyd Wright*, 424, note 71]. The letter describes two events which correlate to a letter by Ise Gropius of October 3, 1955, seemingly confirming them as having taken place before that date: a delivery of goat-hair rugs to Cambridge to explore selling such Iraqi rugs through Design Research, discussions of which had been ongoing since the Gropiuses' arrival in Athens in late August 1954 following their Baghdad trip, and the impending arrival of the Jawdats' fourth child in October (Hammad Jawdat, born November 1, 1955). See Harvard University, Houghton f 2013M-29.

46 Letter from Walter Gropius to Nizar and Ellen Jawdat, 20 September 1957, Harvard University, Houghton f 2013M-29. This was only the second letter to the Jawdats written on TAC letterhead, following the letter of September 9, 1954, in which Gropius first openly suggested his interest in architectural work in Iraq. Gropius's letter also mentions "an announcement of the Board's decision in The Iraq Times of September ninth." The article mentioned is "Board Decisions," *Iraq Times*, September 9, 1957, cited by Levine as stating September 7 as the date of the Development Board's decision to commission TAC. Levine, *The Urbanism of Frank Lloyd Wright*, 424, note 72. The letter from the Jawdats with news of the University commission appears not to have survived.

47 Letter from Walter Gropius to Nizar and Ellen Jawdat, 21 November 1957, Harvard University, Houghton f 2013M-29.

which will enable us to go ahead immediately with the design as soon as we get the green light from the Development Board."[48] Discussions of the contract and payments continued between Gropius, McMillan, and the Development Board through December, and by April 1958 Gropius reported to the Jawdats that "we are amidst the work on the University, particularly on the educational approach to the whole problem… This is a most formidable but highly interesting task."[49]

Around the time of Gropius and McMillan's departure for Baghdad in late October, Ise Gropius wondered in a letter to the Jawdats whether Frank Lloyd Wright or his staff remained convinced, as of that fall, that the university commission was still theirs.[50] In fact, the timing of the Jawdats' letter of September 20 informing Gropius of the impending Development Board commission strongly suggests a direct relationship between the official demise of Wright's *Plan for Greater Baghdad* and the decision to offer TAC the University on the Karada site. Wright submitted his completed scheme in August, and Minoprio and Spencely were asked to review the drawings in late September, just after the official decision to commission TAC was apparently made and just before, or coincident, with the Jawdats' message to Gropius. In light of this timing—and the fact that Wright's was the only one of the internationally commissioned projects for which Minoprio and Spencely were asked for comments—it is tempting to speculate either that the Wright scheme had fallen into disfavor by this time, leading to the Development Board to contact Gropius soon thereafter, or, conversely, that an impending decision to offer the University to Gropius created a conflict with Wright's attempt to absorb both the site and the program of the University into his own plans, thus necessitating Minoprio and Spencely's review as authors of the master plan that governed the distribution of these competing projects. Such a request suggests the possibility that Spencely's description of Wright's drawings as "fantastic" in his review of the project was meant, perhaps, to imply that the project was *fantastical:* that is, unable to be realized within the confines of the master plan for Baghdad or the government's developmental ambitions for the country.

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48 Ibid. In a letter from Kahtan Hassan Fahmi Al-Madfai to Ellen Jawdat on 29 September 1957, Al-Madfai confirms news of Gropius's selection for the University and offers himself if Gropius and TAC will require the services of Iraqi architects: "I heard that there is a possibility that Dr. Gropius may visit Baghdad and take over the project of the University, for which I thanked all the Oriental and the Occidental Gods." Private collection of Ellen Jawdat.

49 Letter from Walter Gropius to Nizar and Ellen Jawdat, 3 April 1958. The contract is discussed in Gropius's letter of November 21, 1957, and in a subsequent letter from Robert S. McMillan to Nizar Ali Jawdat on 12 December 1957. See: Harvard University, Houghton f 2013M-29.

50 In a letter from Ise Gropius to Ellen Jawdat on 27 October 1957, prior to Walter and McMillan's trip to Baghdad, she described unexpected visits by students to their house in Lincoln that fall including "an American student from Taliesin." Ise wrote, "I asked them how Mr. Wright had enjoyed his trip to Baghdad. I also asked what building Aalto had been asked to do ('Time' had mentioned that Aalto, Corbu & Wright were busy in Baghdad) and mentioned that Walter was just leaving to look into the planning for the Arab university. The young men looked surprised and said that Mr. Wright had already designed that as well as the building Aalto was supposed to do and we looked sort of sheepishly at each other and then laughed it off. Wonder what situation Walter will actually find when he gets there." See Harvard University, Houghton f 2013M-29.

The Expert University

In approaching the creation of the first consolidated university in Baghdad, TAC was officially responsible for planning the administrative and departmental structure of the university, in addition to the complete design of the campus and its facilities.[51] Unlike European and U.S. universities that had developed piecemeal over time (the January 1959 report gave Harvard, MIT, Oxford, and the University of Mexico as comparative examples for the Baghdad plan, along with TAC's unbuilt proposal for *Hua Tung University* in Shanghai), the commission for the *University of Baghdad* offered an "opportunity which has been given to no other similar institution" in either East or West. "For the first time," the text of the TAC report suggested, "it might be possible to plan a total university—both the physical plan and the philosophy of education—to make use of and profit from the experience of major Western universities and, at the same time, to cater to the particular needs and desires of the people of Iraq.[52] While the concept of a "total" institution here referred to the chance to unite the spatial and pedagogical structures of the *University* in TAC's design, the twin ideals of unifying the academic disciplines and synthesizing local and foreign educational models resonated with Gropius's pedagogical ideal of creative unity as the first director of the Bauhaus, as well as with his conception of "total architecture," conceived as the result of democratic collaboration by "a closely cooperating team together with the engineer, the scientist and the builder." [53]

The central question in conceptualizing this "total university" was its expected role in the country's ongoing modernization efforts, particularly through the expansion of an elite, educated class of graduates that could serve in the future tasks of national development. While its participation in the university as a technically sophisticated office of coordinating experts directly reinforced these aims, TAC cautioned in its initial report against a conception of the future university as dedicated solely to the production of technicians. The firm argued that it was crucial for the government to avoid an exclusive focus on the immediate provision of expertise, in favor of a more flexible, integrated educational program encompassing a humanistic curriculum beyond the narrow scope of professional training:

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51 The project was developed in two phases before and after the *coup d'état* of 14 July 1958, though both were officially presented to the Iraqi government only after the military general 'Abd al-Karim Qasim came into power. In this essay, I discuss the first scheme only, which was reported to be ready by late September 1958 and was submitted by TAC in its *Report on the University of Baghdad of January* 1959, in comparison to Wright's university proposal developed in a similar context prior to 1958. For a detailed discussion of the second scheme after 1959, which included significant changes to the size and organization of the university program and the architectural expression of its major buildings, see Michael Kubo, "'Companies of Scholars': The Architects Collaborative, Walter Gropius, and the Politics of Expertise at the University of Baghdad," in *Dust & Data: Traces of the Bauhaus Across 100 Years 1919-2019*, ed. Ines Weizman (Leipzig: Spector Books, 2019), 496–515.

52 The Architects Collaborative, *Report on the University of Baghdad Designed by The Architects Collaborative, Cambridge, Massachusetts*, U.S.A., c. January 1959, 1. This report listed a "group of special experts" consulted by TAC on "general Arab conditions" and regional culture, educational approach, technical issues, and Islamic art and architecture, bolstering the firm's claims of providing expertise. Special advisors listed for "educational approach" were Prof. Cyril G. Sargent and Donald P. Mitchell of the Harvard Graduate School of Education and Prof. Keyes D. Metcalf, Librarian of Harvard College, Emeritus. Ibid., 5.

53 Walter Gropius, "The Architect Within Our Industrial Society," in *Scope of Total Architecture* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1955), 80.

> It is possible that in Iraq today, there are many who think in terms of immediate needs.… Forty years ago, when America was undergoing a rapid industrial expansion and we felt strongly the need for new roads, railroads, dams, and our cities were growing higher and broader, there were many who demanded that our universities produce engineers. Today, we are still aware of our imperative need for scientists and doctors. Yet, gradually, we have come to realize that we will produce better engineers, scientists, and doctors if we give them broad education than if we simply train them in their specialties. With this in mind, it is well to emphasize that a university, above all human endowments, is a gift of the present to the future.[54]

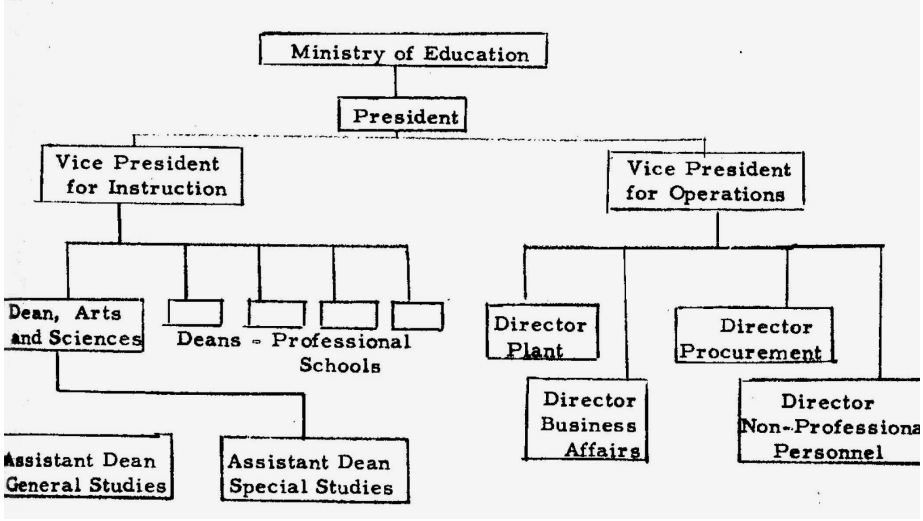
This holistic emphasis echoed Gropius's earlier Bauhaus conception of unity across creative disciplines, as reflected in Gropius's declaration upon the school's founding in 1919 that "art is not a 'profession'."[55] Instead of the tendency toward professionalization, TAC proposed a pedagogical structure that would oppose the technocratic emphasis on specialization that, in its view, increasingly plagued the culture of education in the U.S. as well. "As specialization of knowledge has increased and professional schools within a university have multiplied," the firm wrote in its 1959 *Report on the University of Baghdad*, "the concept of a unity of knowledge or of a synthesis of the great variety of specializations has been almost overwhelmed by the 'success' of specialization and analytical methods…. We would suggest, therefore, as a root concept, the balance of unity and diversity, of synthesis and analysis, of integration and differentiation."[56] Furthermore, the rapid expansion of the University's program in relation to national development and the disaggregated character of its existing facilities and departments left TAC wary of projecting the future structure of departments or facilities as a mere extrapolation of current needs for specific fields of knowledge. "In considering the problem of designing facilities for 5,000, 8,000, or 12,000 students," TAC wrote,

> we are first led to ask—In what schools or for what professional degrees? In an area that is absorbing technological facilities as rapidly as the countries in the Middle East, there may be expected to be rather rapid shifts in the number and nature of professional people needed in the various stages of development. Nor can all of these be predicted accurately at the present time…. Should engineers be given a priority over agriculturalists even though the country's future appears to indicate a continued reliance on agriculture? Might not engineers be even more important than doctors and public health officials even in the area of the control of communicable diseases? And how fast are elementary and secondary schools to be made available? The approach to a plan for a University in

54 Gropius, "The Architect Within Our Industrial Society," 3-4.

55 Walter Gropius, "Program of the Staatliches Bauhaus in Weimar" [1919], trans. in Ulrich Conrads, *Programs and Manifestoes on 20th-Century Architecture* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1964), 49–53.

56 Gropius, "Program of the Staatliches Bauhaus in Weimar", 7-8.



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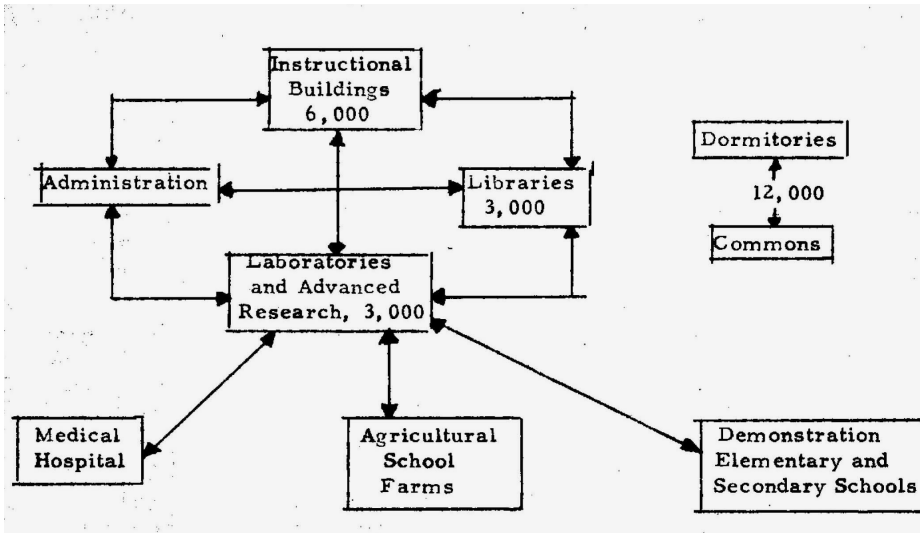

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terms of enrolments of individual colleges appears tenuous, especially as the relationship among the units of the university might well shift over a period of time.[57]

These problems of projection thus returned TAC to the question of whether to plan the university's administrative and physical structure according to departments with separate facilities, or with a more integrated structure that would allow for flexibility and change over time. Conceptually, the report asked, "Are [universities] agglomerations of college buildings per se or are they companies of scholars devoted to common professional pursuits?"[58] Partner Robert S. McMillan echoed this terminology in describing the firm's approach to the *University of Baghdad*, likening the problem to that of designing "a 'single industry town'—the industry being education."[59] In organizing the Baghdad campus around shared facilities rather than separate departments, these "companies of scholars" would become the organizing principle for the University as a whole.

57 Gropius, "Program of the Staatliches Bauhaus in Weimar", 12-14. Both the difficulties of projection and the desire for an expanded humanities curriculum beyond professional specializations were supported by a comparative table of enrollments in institutions of higher learning in Iraq in 1954 and 1957, in which the largest increase was in the College of Arts and Sciences (a nearly three-fold increase from 295 to 802 students), with more modest increases in most other departments. The only departments with decreases in enrollment were the College of Commerce and Economics (1164 to 493 students), the Law School (1000 to 562 students), and the College of Religious Jurisprudence (101 to zero students).

58 Gropius, "Program of the Staatliches Bauhaus in Weimar", 14.

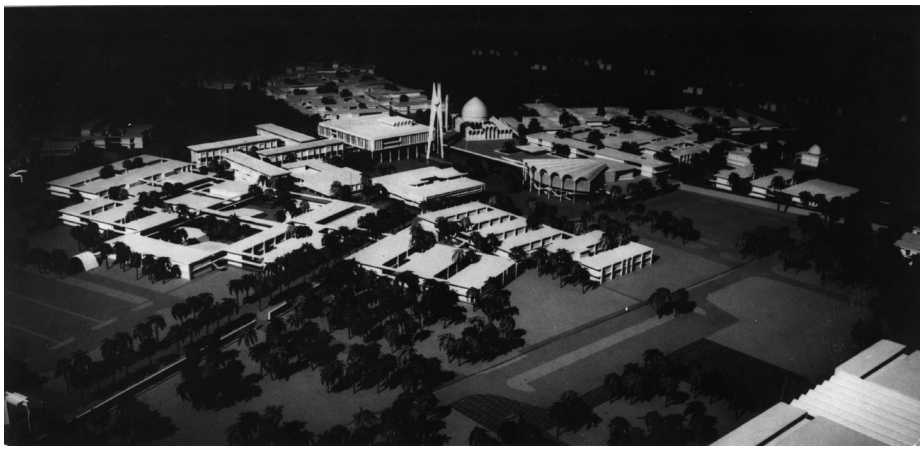
59 Robert S. McMillan, "Visual Problems in Town Planning: The 'University Town' at Baghdad," transcript of paper delivered at "The New Metropolis in the Arab World," an international seminar sponsored by the Congress for Cultural Freedom and the Egyptian Society of Engineers, Cairo, 17-22 December 1960: CAI/15, 3.

Fig. 5

The Architects Collaborative (TAC), *University of Baghdad*. Organization diagram of proposed university administration. From TAC, *Report on the University of Baghdad*, c. January 1959.

Fig. 6

The Architects Collaborative (TAC), *University of Baghdad*. Schematic concept for organization of university buildings. From TAC, *Report on the University of Baghdad*, c. January 1959.



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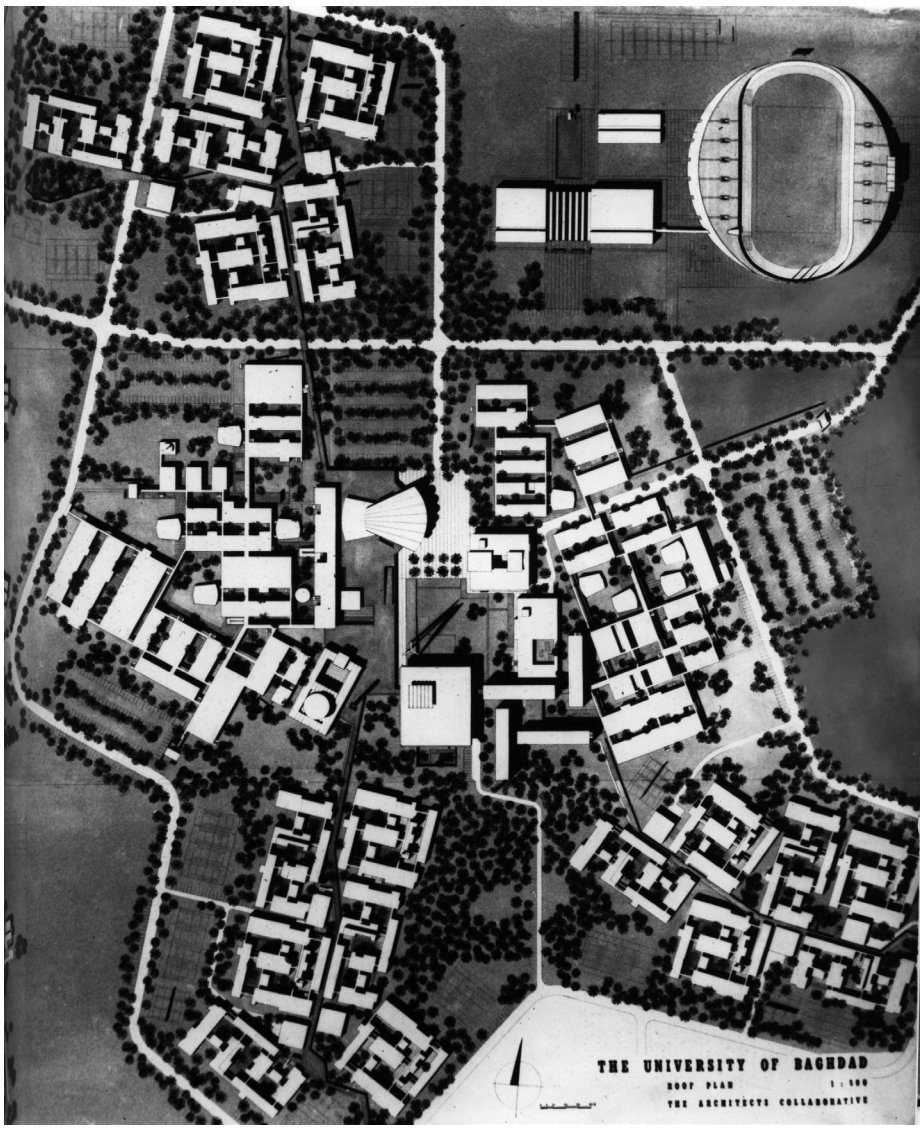


Fig. 7

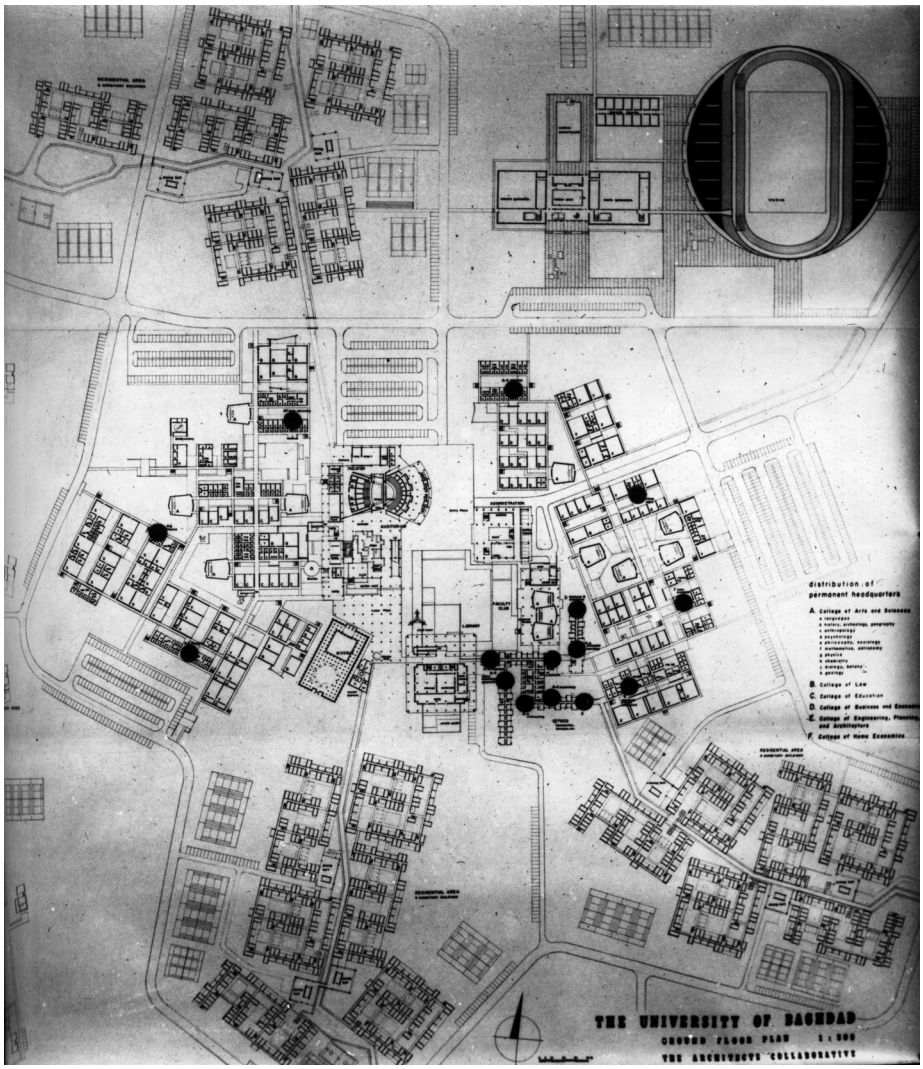
The Architects Collaborative (TAC), *University of Baghdad*. First scheme, model of campus center. From TAC, *Report on the University of Baghdad*, c. January 1959.

Fig. 8

The Architects Collaborative (TAC), *University of Baghdad*. First scheme, roof plan. From TAC, *Report on the University of Baghdad*, c. January 1959.

The terms of this conception of the university thus bore a specific parallel to the holistic creative model on which TAC itself had been established, as a collaboration among generalists rather than an organization of discrete specializations.

Diagrams of the administrative and physical organization of the university in the 1959 *Report* made clear how TAC sought to relate its pedagogical ideals to the spatial structure of its campus on the Karada site. Dividing the university



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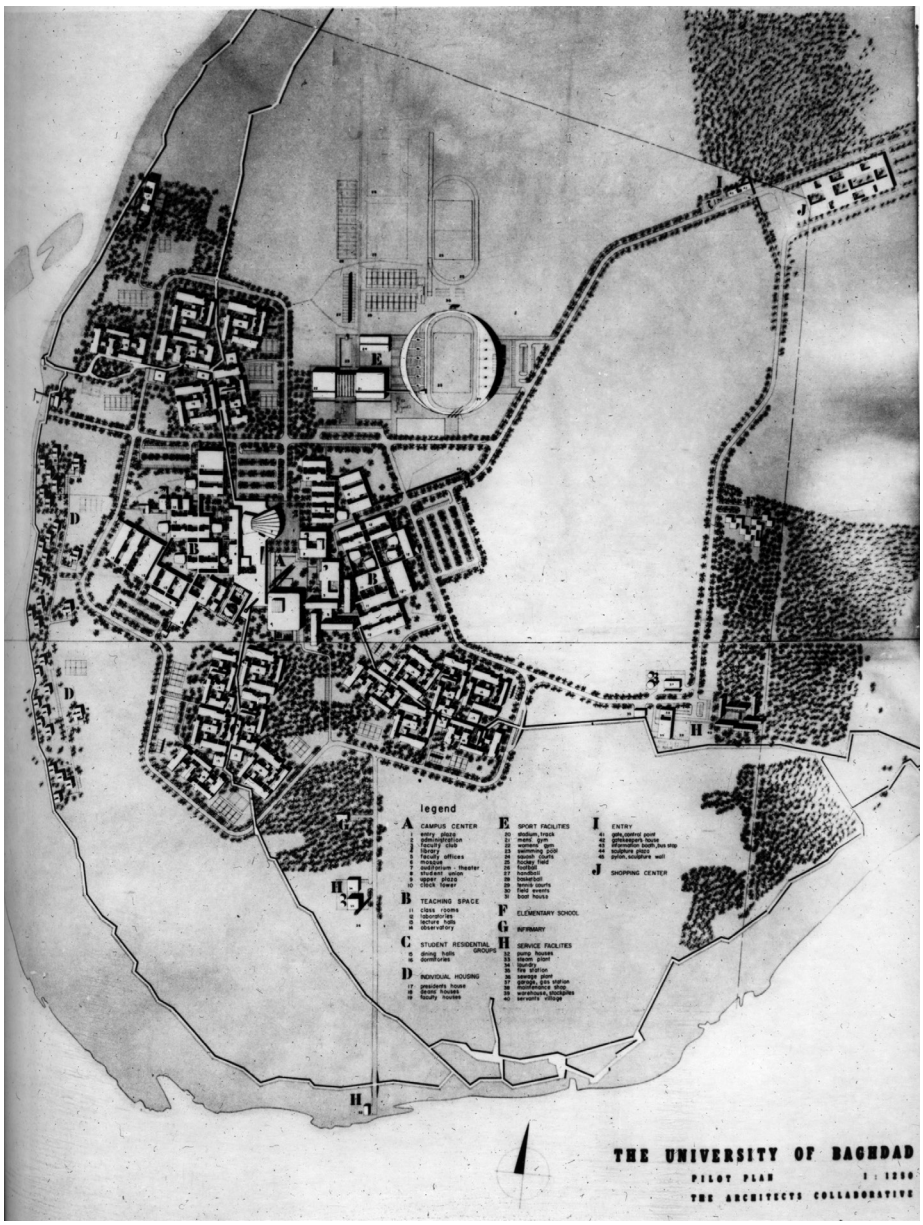
administration into two major functions, instruction and operations, the report proposed that most university instruction be placed under the aegis of a single Dean of Arts and Sciences, rather than splitting these two domains into separate deanships on the model of the typical U.S. university. The Dean would be further responsible for coordinating both general and discipline-specific studies, each supported by an assistant dean, thus avoiding the need to appoint a separate Dean of General Studies without authority over departmental faculty. [Fig. 5]

This administrative pattern corresponded to a physical structure of shared teaching facilities across departments, rather than a campus based on separate faculties in which each would have discipline-specific classrooms, libraries, and offices. [Fig. 6] Instead, the report proposed that buildings be grouped together essentially by type, in rings extending outward from a campus center toward the river on three sides. The campus center would contain the university library, theater and auditorium, central administration building, faculty club, and mosque, joined by covered passages around an open plaza. This central precinct would be surrounded by a mat of connected blocks of classrooms and laboratory spaces, respectively. [Fig. 7, 8, 9] While each school would have a permanent headquarters within this matrix—for

Fig. 9

The Architects Collaborative (TAC), *University of Baghdad*. First scheme, ground floor plan. From TAC, *Report on the University of Baghdad*, c. January 1959.



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example allowing physics, chemistry, and astronomy offices to be located closer to the laboratory areas, while the humanities and social sciences were grouped into a single office block along with education, engineering and architecture, law, business, and economics—TAC argued that this structure of shared facilities would better accommodate future changes in departmental sizes and space needs, as well as preventing the effective segregation of different schools into permanent, discrete sections of the campus over time. Teaching spaces would be surrounded in turn by three clusters of student residences served by a ring road, with individual faculty and administrative housing located along the river at the western edge of the campus. The radial pattern of housing clusters connected back to the campus center via paths based on an existing network of 10-foot high dykes that remained on the site following its reclamation, a feature that was rendered into the pilot plan as a means of providing level changes within the campus. This pattern of "spoke lines" thus provided a legible symbol of the flood control efforts that had

Fig. 10
The Architects Collaborative (TAC), *University of Baghdad*. First scheme, pilot plan. From TAC, *Report on the University of Baghdad*, c. January 1959.

marked the first phase of the Development Board's work, now incorporated as both a rhetorical device and a primary structuring element within the university plan.[60] [Fig. 10]

In contrast to such appeals to the broader humanistic character of a new university for the nation, both the Development Board and the U.S. interests that operated in Iraq prior to 1958 were aligned in the expectation that the University of Baghdad would produce an educated class of experts, in much the same terms of "immediate need" that its architects had warned against. The guests Gropius had met on his 1954 trip to Baghdad included Henry Wiens, responsible for the *Point Four program* as Director of the United States Operations Mission (USOM) to Iraq from 1954 to 1956. In a defense of the Point Four program published in the aftermath of the 14 July *coup d'état,* Wiens confirmed that, among U.S. aims "in education, emphasis was placed on technical training."[61] These efforts included the provision of advisors for a series of special technical schools established prior to 1958, as well as for governmental efforts to emphasize agricultural and technical work in the city's public schools, and the sending of Iraqi officials, technicians, and students to the U.S. for university observation and training programs. Such educational efforts were seen to be of paramount importance for economic and developmental efforts in Iraq, a country in which only twenty-three percent of the school-age population was enrolled in educational institutions and some ninety percent of the population remained illiterate as of 1950.[62]

Not least among the forms of technical expertise that would be enabled by the new university program was the first dedicated school of architecture in Iraq, established in 1959 as a separate faculty within the department of engineering, coincident with the planning and design of the consolidated University of Baghdad campus.[63] Unsurprisingly, given his pedagogical commitments from the Bauhaus to the Harvard Graduate School of Design, Gropius took a particular interest in the role of the first architectural curriculum in Iraq in addressing a national context in which "most new buildings continued to be poor imitations of modern western buildings," as "the age-old building traditions of the Middle East… [were] rapidly being replaced by new materials and construction methods which neither builders nor designers had mastered adequately."[64] According to Fuad Uthman, a member of the faculty of architecture from 1961 to 1969, Gropius expressed his thoughts on the potential creation of a faculty of

60 The Architects Collaborative, *Report on the University of Baghdad Designed by The Architects Collaborative, Cambridge, Massachusetts*, U.S.A., 32.

61 Henry Wiens, "The United States Operations Mission in Iraq," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 323 (May 1959): 142-3.

62 Phebe Marr, *The Modern History of Iraq*, 3rd ed. (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2012), 70.

63 A broader comparison of the architectural curriculum at the University of Baghdad with other forms of architectural education and training within the knowledge economy of foreign-aided national universities is beyond the scope of this paper. On universities and the "technical assistance machinery" of international urban planning after World War II, see Burak Erdim, *Landed Internationals: Planning Cultures, the Academy, and the Making of the Modern Middle East* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2020).

64 Fuad A. Uthman, "Exporting Architectural Education to the Arab World," *Journal of Architectural Education*, Vol. 31, No. 3 (February 1978): 27.

architecture in Baghdad in 1958. "Concerned about the shoddy quality of most buildings in the country," Uthman recalled, Gropius recommended that the new school would instead "deal with the development and improvement of local construction techniques," suggesting "that the country needed a school of building construction more than one of architecture."[65] This distinction echoed the Bauhaus emphasis on building (*bau*) as the highest unity of the arts, a synthesis its third director, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, affiliated with the German sense of *baukunst* (building-art) rather than *architektur* (architecture) as a tectonic rather than aesthetic pursuit.[66]

Such ambitions to foment a national building tradition that would be simultaneously indigenous and modern, however, continued to rely on models of imported expertise. Robert Mather, a professor of architecture at the University of Texas who came to the University of Baghdad in 1963 as a visiting professor, described the school's initial faculty of architecture as composed equally of U.S. and British-trained Iraqi architects.[67] Classes were conducted in English, in some cases necessitating "the development of an Arabic architectural vocabulary where none had previously existed"—a translation problem paralleled by the need to establish a positive term for the figure of the architect, or architectural engineer (*muhandis mimari*), in a context in which the engineer (*muhandis*) had traditionally represented the dominant form of building practice.[68] By 1978, of the 200 architects practicing in Iraq, some 180 had been trained at the University of Baghdad, with the remainder having studied in the U.S., the U.S.S.R., and European schools on both sides of the Cold War divide.[69] As the first faculty of architecture in the Arab and Persian Gulf states, graduates of the University of Baghdad also proceeded to populate subsequently created departments of engineering and architecture throughout the region, including the college of engineering at Kuwait University, established in 1966.

The specific U.S. model for the University's pedagogy after 1963, including the faculty of architecture, was provided by an affiliation with the University of Texas at Austin. Even prior to this official relationship, the foundational architectural

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65 Uthman, "Exporting Architectural Education to the Arab World," 27.

66 See Fritz Neumeyer, *The Artless Word: Mies van der Rohe on the Building Art*, trans. Mark Jarzombek (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991).

67 Robert Mather, "A New Program at Baghdad," *AIA Journal*, (December 1965): 57–60. According to Uthman, in his role at the University of Baghdad, Mather "addressed himself largely to the issues Gropius had raised when he was in the country." Uthman, "Exporting Architectural Education to the Arab World": 28.

68 Uthman, "Exporting Architectural Education to the Arab World": 29. Uthman describes the two primary Arabic expressions for the architect at the time the faculty of architecture was established: *muhandis mimari* (translated in English as 'architectural engineer') or *mimar* (translated as 'builder or contractor', and seen as "down the social ladder" from the engineer, or *muhandis*). He suggests that *muhandis mimari* constituted an acceptable compromise between *muhandis* and *mimar*, leveraging the association with engineering to increase the prestige of the architectural field, and that, by the time of the article in 1978, the term had "become accepted not only in Iraq but [in] most of the Arab world as the professional term for architect." See Uthman: 27. Ellen Jawdat wrote in 1957 of a growing "public appreciation of the special role of architect: a realization that his [sic] training equips him to do more than embellish the bare structure provided by a contractor and that his services include an attempt to solve the demands of climate, social function, aesthetic preferences and budget of the client." In contrast to Uthman's terminology, however, Jawdat claimed that "this model of the architect, clearly patterned on U.S. professional models, was distinct from the traditional primacy in the Arab world of the master builder [*mimar*], the synthetic figure that "serves all the categories of builder, mason, engineer and architect." Ellen Jawdat, "The New Architecture in Iraq," *Architectural Design*, (March 1957): 79.

69 Uthman, "Exporting Architectural Education to the Arab World", 30.

curriculum had been modeled on the five-year sequence of typical U.S. undergraduate architecture programs, and was drafted in 1959–60 by Hisham Munir, who had received his B.Arch. from the University of Texas in 1953, prior to attending the University of Southern California.[70] Kenton W. Keith, a USIS officer in Baghdad in the mid-1960s, later described the broader alliance between the University and its Texas counterpart in these years as "a kind of twinning relationship" that involved exchanges of both students and professors, one deep enough that "it had a life of its own and it was operating outside the context of our official relationship."[71] He noted that this exchange was encouraged on both sides as "a relationship that was of benefit to the Iraqis and of benefit to the long-range interests of the U.S." Keith further suggested a desire to continue this connection even after the Arab-Israeli war of 1967 that made any public affiliation with the U.S. government impossible in Iraq, claiming that "the Iraqis actually signaled that they would like to keep that relationship going even as they were breaking diplomatic relations."[72] Such exchanges testified to the degree to which TAC's ambitions for the educational and physical structure of the campus had succeeded in creating an expert university for the training of experts, including forms of professional training fashioned after the same U.S. models of architectural practice that were embodied in TAC's own presence in Iraq.

The desire to train technicians for national development was key among the factors that enabled TAC to continue work on the university project following the *coup d'état* that brought Qasim to power, an event that signaled the official demise of the majority of cultural projects sponsored by the Development Board during the monarchy. Among the commissions that had begun under Faisal II, only those explicitly associated with concrete governmental and social needs under Qasim were chosen to continue, while others, such as Aalto's museum and Wright's opera house and cultural center, were abandoned. The new regime proceeded with Gio Ponti's headquarters for the Development Board itself, now purged of its U.S. and British advisors and reorganized as the Ministry of Planning. So too, Le Corbusier's project for a national stadium and sports complex initially continued until the architect's death in 1965, before its eventual revival and the construction of the gymnasium portion of this complex between 1974 and 1980 by one of Le Corbusier's former associates, Georges-Marc Présenté.[73] Yet, unlike cultural programs seen to be of dubious value for post-revolutionary Iraq, like opera or art, the national tasks assigned to the university were not only continued, but significantly increased under Qasim's

70 Uthman, "Exporting Architectural Education to the Arab World", 29.

71 Kenton W. Keith, USIS Rotation Officer, Baghdad (1966-1967), interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy, 1998. The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project, Iraq Country Reader, 164, accessed January 26, 2013, https://adst.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/Iraq.pdf.

72 Kenton W. Keith, USIS Rotation Officer, Baghdad (1966-1967), interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy, 1998.

73 On the history of Le Corbusier's Olympic complex after 1958, see Mina Marefat, Caecilia Pieri and Gilles Ragot, *Le Gymnase de Le Corbusier à Bagdad* (Paris: Editions du Patrimoine, 2014); Mina Marefat, "*Mise au Point* for Le Corbusier's Baghdad Stadium," *Docomomo*, No. 41 (September 2009): 30–40 and "Le Corbusier in Baghdad," *Brownbook*, No. 55 (January-February 2016), accessed April 17, 2016, http://brownbook.me/le-corbusier-in-baghdad/, and Caecilia Pieri, "The Le Corbusier Gymnasium in Baghdad: discovery of construction archives (1974 -1980)", *Les Carnets de l'Ifpo. La recherche en train de se faire à l'Institut français du Proche-Orient* (Hypotheses.org), (May 31, 2012), accessed June 27, 2021, http://ifpo.hypotheses.org/3560.

government.[74] The TAC university proposal was the only other of the Development Board projects to continue after 1958, and the only project by a U.S. firm, a particularly difficult proposition in the pro-Soviet context of the post-revolutionary Iraqi republic.

74 Already regarded by some within the monarchy as potential sources of both leftist dissent and nationalist sentiment opposed to foreign influence, educational institutions took on expanded importance within governmental plans after 1958, modeled in part on a Soviet-style planned economy as a spur to national economic development. In December 1959, just prior to TAC's submission of its revised second scheme for the University on January 20, 1960, Qasim announced a "provisional revolutionary plan" that included significantly increased investments in education along with housing and healthcare, as forms of social welfare that were seen to be crucial to national development, in contrast to the emphasis on irrigation and agriculture that had marked the Development Board initiatives prior to 1958. These changes included nearly doubling the national budget devoted to education from almost ID 13 million ($36 million) in 1958 to ID 24 million ($67 million) in 1960. See Marr, *The Modern History of Iraq*,100. On nationalist ideology and the tradition of leftist dissent in education in Iraq prior to 1958, see Reeva S. Simon, *Iraq Between the Two World Wars: The Creation and Implementation of a Nationalist Ideology* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986).

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