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The American University in Cairo
School of Global Affairs and Public Policy

**Resurrecting Eden:
Inaugural British Narration and Policy of Iraq**

A Thesis Submitted to
the Middle East Studies Center

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Master of Arts (M.A.) in Middle East Studies

by Timothy Kennett

under the supervision of Dr. Walid Kazziha

May 2015

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School of Global Affairs & Public Policy (GAPP)

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— For my mother and father, whose endless support made this possible

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Abstract

Resurrecting Eden: Inaugural British Narration and Policy of Iraq

Timothy Kennett

The American University in Cairo
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This thesis examines Britain's use of technology in developing Mesopotamia. British imaginations of Mesopotamia as Eden or El Dorado, reified by a multiplicity of travel literature, archeological digs, and geographic societies, formed the first half of a violent dialectic that granted divine right and responsibility to the British. Instead, colonialists claimed that Mesopotamia's inhabitants squandered its primordial potential through neglect and mismanagement. These justifications fueled British attempts to develop Mesopotamia, irrigation engineers designing floodgates for the Tigris and Euphrates while agriculturalists created new strains of wheat that would flourish in its climate. But technology was more than development. It formed the foundation of a polemic leading to prolonged aerial bombardment and discipline; if modernism could resurrect the Garden, airplanes would tend and cultivate it. Therefore, the value of aircraft was not restricted to its ability for disciplining a population. Planes were physical manifestations of the British colonial project, flying articulations of the modern that sanctioned violence against the "primitive." They were the latest mechanisms to embody the narrative of English supremacy and the latest conversation topics in British high society.

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About the Documents and Comments Concerning Methodology

This thesis incorporates a large quantity of documents available at the British National Archives in Kew. A comprehensive list of archives used can be found in the bibliography. Most documents were either found from the Royal Air Force Archive (AIR) or the Colonial Office (CO). War Office (WO) and Foreign Office (FO) documents informed this thesis to lesser degree, as the Colonial Office was located in India during the period of the Mesopotamia Expeditionary Force and the War Office, located in London, was primarily responsible for the administration of the British Army rather than Air Force. During the MEF, the Royal Air Force was known as the Royal Flying Corps, part and parcel to the War Office. However, near the end of the First World War the RFC merged with the Royal Naval Air Service forming a new, distinct branch of the military. In many ways, the reorganization of Her Majesty's forces represents the philosophical schism of military doctrine that would have profound and long-lasting effects on Iraq's (mis)management.

AIR is a collection of documents containing immense amounts of correspondence, maps, memorandum, financial records, and intercepted telegraphs. However, operation records were most prolific. Operation records are brief reports detailing daily activities of the Royal Air Force. For example, if pilots attacked a village in Northern Iraq, the location, number of planes, target, and amount of bombs and small arms ammunition used, were painstakingly recorded. Portions of the archive are organized thematically, however, the vast majority has been collated by year and administrative unit. To go through the entire AIR archive would have been impossible.

Secondly are the memoirs and travelogues created by British adventurers and political elites who lived, worked, and fought in the region. These sources are meticulously detailed,

many of whiter were recorded by British officers (contemporaries of T.E. Lawrence). Particularly noteworthy is C.J. Edmonds memoir, *Kurds, Turks, and Arabs*, in my estimation the best primary source of southern Kurdistan in the 1920s. E.B. Soane's and *To Mesopotamia and Kurdistan in Disguise; with Historical Notices of the Kurdish Tribes and the Chaldeans of Kurdistan* and A.T. Wilson's, *1917-20: A Clash of Loyalties*, are also fantastic and requisite sources for any student of Iraq. As a source, their greatest strength was providing voice to archival sources that proved to be inexorably dry.

A third important source are the transcripts of lectures held by the *Royal Geographic Society* and the *Royal Central Asian Society*. Distinguished colonial administrators, archeologists, geographers, and engineers composed a highly exclusive society that acted as a sort of brain-trust. These meetings articulated the narrative of the British colonial enterprise in ways that archival sources and travelogues did not.

Several images were provided by the Aerial Photographic Archive for Archaeology in the Middle East (APAAME) and the San Diego Air and Space Archives. APAAME is a project led by Oxford University and The University of Western Australia containing thousands of aerial archeology and bombing photographs. Indeed, some of Mesopotamia's earliest images were those of archeological sites. This is particularly significant. The historical and cultural conditions are not inconsequential; Iraq became a prototype for aerial archeology and large-scale aerial policing.

Methodologically, I was uncertain where to begin or what my research would reveal. I roughly knew that my timeframe would center around the period of the Paris Peace Conference of 1919 and the Cairo Conference of 1921. Because I had a limited time and budget (and was

extremely ill), I merely dove in and waded through the plethora of British documents that comprise the National Archives in Kew, slowly navigating through vast quantities of paper and photographing those of interest. In the end, I collected several thousand images, mostly comprising security and intelligence reports from a wide variety of sources ranging from mundane operational records to the pen of Gertrude Bell.

Only after I organized, collated, and re-read my sources did I begin understanding them. Each type of document provided a unique perspective that complimented others. Even the prosaic nature of RAF operational records gave valuable insight concerning British intentions and their colonial mentality. Through the eyes of the British, I grew to understand colonizer and colonized. My research forced me to reevaluate the direction of my thesis and the original research questions: If Iraq was contrived, its political boundaries resisting reasonable contours of human geography, how had they remained coalesced? Furthermore, how is Iraq a product of a postwar modernity and to what degree?¹

Certainly, the AIR archive attested to the importance of aircraft throughout the Mandate period, but I recognized it as a piece (albeit vast) of a larger story. The language and attitudes of the colonial brain-trust, comprised of geographers, archeologists, historians, administrators, and intelligence officers, indicated such. The construction of the Royal Air Force and their use of aircraft was a narrative of power, a dialectic part and parcel to larger colonial schemes of oppression. Planes epitomized the modern era, and the modern was antithetical to British imaginaries of Mesopotamian barbarity. Thus, Iraq was the product of a strange amalgamation of

¹ With the assumption that the Sykes-Picot agreement was a shallow understanding of the historical and cultural forces composing Iraq.

ingredients: cultural memory, deconstructive imaginaries, technological innovation, and brute force.

The greatest limitation of my Masters Thesis is the lack of Arab voice. Historian Dr.

Priya Satia makes note of this, writing:

The actual experiences of Iraqis caught in the web of aerial surveillance have not, to my knowledge, been described at any length and seem a pressing topic for examination by a Middle East historian. This article is concerned with the logic of British justifications for the air control regime, particularly the source of Briton's confidence in their ability to speak for the Arab, whatever the latter's expression of protest or approval.²

Taking this to heart, I endeavored to incorporate subaltern voices to the best of my abilities but encountered many obstacles. First and foremost was the dearth of available material written in Arabic about British technological or aerial schemes. This exists for many reasons, not least of which was the Iraqi and Kurdish literary landscape and the predominance of oral tradition.

Accentuating this phenomena was the stark reality that nomadic tribes formed the foundation of resistance against British colonial rule, their accounts are even less conspicuous. The second limitation is my ignorance of Kurdish, although I am uncertain how much this would have helped. The third chapter of this thesis examines aerial campaigns in Iraqi Kurdistan, particularly close to Sulaimaniyah. However, Sulaimaniyah was far from the being the cultural capital of Kurdistan that it is today. During the 1920's it was a rather unremarkable town of approximately ten thousand inhabitants, one hundred fifty of whom were gunsmiths who could make high

² Satia, Priya. "The Defense of Inhumanity: Air Control and the British Idea of Arabia." *The American Historical Review* 111, no. 1 (February 2006): 18.

quality imitations of the British Martini-Peabody carbine. Thus, it was not the cultural capital it is today.³

But I had some success, albeit limited. The Foreign Office contained a few Arab sources, but were generally limited to treaties or correspondence between colonial administrators and ‘Ibn Saud or some other elite. Some reports were made by normal villagers acting as informants for the British, particularly concerning events surrounding Shaikh Mahmud of Sulaimaniyah. Furthermore, the library at AUC located an Arabic memoir in Iraq written by a leader of the 1920 revolt and obtained it for me.⁴

I consciously used the terms “Iraqi” and “Mesopotamia” interchangeably for particular reasons. First, and most superficially, because it was a simple literary method for breaking the monotony and repetition that would inherently occur from using a single phrase. Second and more importantly, the British used both terms interchangeably.⁵ In the beginning, I toyed with writing this entire thesis without using the term, “Iraq.” I quickly realized how the idea of Mesopotamia, a “Western” term the British used, was equally imagined - *if not more so*. In fact, this became a problem during the Armistice of Mudros of 1918 when ‘Ali Ihsan Pasha agreed to evacuate Turkish troops from “Mesopotamia” only to settle in the city of Mosul.⁶

³ Edmonds, C. J. *Kurds, Turks, and Arabs: Politics, Travel, and Research in North-eastern Iraq, 1919-1935*. London: Oxford University Press, 1957: 79-80. Mark Sykes ventured through the town in 1902, estimating that of its approximate ten thousand inhabitants, there were 750 Jews and 120 Chaldean Christians.

⁴ Al-Bazirkan, ‘Ali. *Al-Waqai' al-Haqiqiyah fi al-Hawrah al-'Iraqiyah : Risalah Tataqdammanu Munaqashah wa Tahlil li Hawadith Thawrat al-'Iraq fi 30 Huziran 1920 wa Rad ma Ulṣiqa bi ha min Muftarayāt wa Tashih ma Dara Hawlaha min Akhta*. 2nd ed. Baghdad, 1991.

⁵ Wilson, Arnold T. *Mesopotamia, 1917-20: A Clash of Loyalties*. London: Oxford University Press, 1931: 22.

⁶ Lyon, Wallace A., and D. K. Fieldhouse. *Kurds, Arabs & Britons: the Memoir of Wallace Lyon in Iraq, 1918-44*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2002: 64

Introduction and Background

*An enterprising London paper recently offered a prize of £1,000 for the best exposition of the Einstein theory, limited to 3,000 words. In undertaking to lecture for an hour on Mesopotamia, I have undertaken a scarcely less difficult task.*⁷

~ A.T. Wilson

British and Indian narratives described Mesopotamia as the land ‘between rivers’ or the fertile crescent. In the wake of post-War disillusionment, the British saw Mesopotamia as a new proving ground, the patient Eden waiting for the British to resurrect her by means of modernization and development. It was both a space to be redeemed and offer redemption.⁸ These tropes, namely descriptions of the land as barren, biblical connections, and the saving grace of technology and development, fueled British and Indian imaginaries of Mesopotamia. Such narratives were not innocuous but rather represented a particular historical moment. Timothy Mitchell writes, “Objects of analysis do not occur as natural phenomena, but are partly formed by the discourse that describes them. The more natural the object appears, the less obvious this discursive manufacture will be.”⁹ In this way, commonplace descriptions of regional or Iraqi geographies, both physical and human, cannot be seen as self-evident but rather as processes of deformation and reconstruction.

⁷ Wilson, Arnold. "Mesopotamia, 1914–1921." *Journal of The Royal Central Asian Society* 8, no. 3 (1921): 145.

⁸ Satia, Priya. "Developing Iraq: Britain, India and the Redemption of Empire and Technology in the First World War." *Past & Present* 197, no. 1 (November 2007): 211-55.

⁹ Mitchell, Timothy. *Rule of Experts: Egypt, Techno-politics, Modernity*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002: 210.

The latter half of this dialectic, “sets up the object of development as just that - an object, not a part of the study but external to it.”¹⁰ In this way, historians have until recently underemphasized the the role of technology in nineteenth-century imperialism. However, if we accept imperialism as the result of “appropriate motives and adequate means,” we have a productive point of departure.¹¹ Timothy Mitchell, Priya Satia, and Juan Cole are a few who have drawn focus on the tools of empire.

This thesis attempts to capture elements of those state-building processes through the purview of aerial discipline, attempting to answer why Iraq was deemed suitable for such Foucaultian tactics. This paper argues that Iraq became a space where geographic imaginaries and discourses of technology intersected leading to the first large-scale aerial policing in history, a precedent which can be felt today with the continued violation of vertical sovereignty throughout the Global South.¹² It would be impossible to understand Iraq within the guise of a singular framework as Wilson’s epigraph suggests. Colonial administration, interagency strife between the India Office, Colonial Office, War Office, and RAF, and the shifting aims of the British Mandate, were all factors in shaping Iraq as a complex, and more often than not, bewildering space.

Specifically, the India Office directed policy for the first two years until the War Office took control over military affairs and the Foreign Office, based in Cairo, over policy. Under the supervision of the FO, Mark Sykes led the Arab Bureau, an intelligence agency consisting of

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Headrick, Daniel R. "The Tools of Imperialism: Technology and the Expansion of European Colonial Empires in the Nineteenth Century." *The Journal of Modern History* 51.2 (1979): 234.

¹² Williams, Alison. "Hakumat Al Tayarrat: The Role of Air Power in the Enforcement of Iraq's Boundaries." *Geopolitics* 12, no. 3 (May 31, 2007): 507.

personalities such as T.E. Lawrence and Gertrude Bell. However, the India Office maintained control over the Civil Administration in Iraq.

Vague Objectives

Dialogue amongst colonial elites did not question the *raison d'être* of colonial campaign in Mesopotamia but rather its ability to protect the interests of the British Empire. The primary objective of the Mesopotamia Expeditionary Force (MEF) was originally the securitization of Iraq's southern delta for two reasons. Britain's first aim was establishing a "British Buffer State system," a sort of catch-all phrase which extended from Peshawar to the North-West frontier of Afghanistan to the Caspian sea, then towards Egypt.¹³ Mesopotamia cushioned India by providing territorial insurance while a military presence allowed India to protect its interests against the Turks, Persians, Germans, and Russians. Secondly, Basra was a vital port that connected the Persian Gulf with India. Additionally, railroads in Mesopotamia were vital communication and transportation networks that connected the rest of the Empire together.¹⁴

However, after a quick and decisive victory in the *wali* of Basra, British and Indian officers quickly turned their sites upon Baghdad. However, this force had not prepared for the military demands required for a long-term campaign to Baghdad, evidenced by the devastating defeat the MEF encountered at Kut. As Sluglett notes, "the speed with which the original

¹³ Yate, A. C. "Britain's Buffer States in the East." *Journal of The Royal Central Asian Society* 5.1 (1918): 3. This was the first time I encountered such terminology, however, Lieut.-Colonel Yate uses it freely and liberally, suggesting that this reference may be more pervasive. Western China could be included here as well. In fact, the Royal Central Asian society held a discussion about the the Mohammadian Question in Western China.

¹⁴ Yate, A. C. "Britain's Buffer States in the East." *Journal of The Royal Central Asian Society* 5.1 (1918): 3-10.

objectives enlarged is remarkable.”¹⁵ The “expansion” of “administrative machinery,” particularly the establishment of a civil administration within the Basra *wali* was counter to the narrative London and General John Nixon, Townshend’s superior, purported earlier.¹⁶ If the original objective had been Basra, why advance past Amara, never mind Cteiphon, Kut, or Baghdad? However, Nixon should have prepared British and Indian forces for an extended campaign if Baghdad had been their aim.¹⁷ This was because the objective had never been clearly communicated and Mesopotamia’s importance to the empire remained abstract. Colonel A.C. Yate commented on this ambiguity:

I have studied with care the words and acts of the Cabinet in London and the Government at Simla, and I have come to the conclusion that not a man in authority, since Lord Kitchener left India, had any conception what a campaign against the Turks in Mesopotamia really meant.¹⁸

In a frank address to the British War Cabinet, P. de B. Radcliffe, Director of Military Operations in Mesopotamia wrote, “...I wish to point out that whatever the reasons for our occupation of Mesopotamia and Persia may be - and the British taxpayer may be pardoned for wanting to know what he is getting for his 20 or 30 millions a year - it is not for any military reason that we are there.”¹⁹

Despite Yate’s criticisms of the MEF, he still believed the Berlin-Baghdad railway and policy of *Drang mach Osten* or eastward expansion was the greatest external threat to India’s

¹⁵ Sluglett, Peter. *Britain in Iraq: Contriving King and Country, 1914-1932*. New York: Columbia UP, 2007. 9.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Barker,

¹⁸ Yate, A. C. "Britain's Buffer States in the East." *Journal of The Royal Central Asian Society* 5.1 (1918): 9.

¹⁹ FO 371/5232, Memorandum, The Situation in Mesopotamia, by General P. de B. Radcliffe with covering note by Rt Hon. W.S. Churchill, 7 December, 1920. This was the only document I found that contained a divergent perspective on the colonial project in Iraq.

security.²⁰ In addition to the Baghdad-Berlin railway, another route from “Hamburg-Herat” was proposed to further cement German economic interests with India. In his book *India in Transition: A Study in Political Evolution* published in 1918, His Highness Agha Khan argued that Germany’s foreign interests threatened Arabia, Persia, and Afghanistan; therefore, Britain had an obligation to protect and develop these territories.

With this in mind, this thesis is not a comprehensive endeavor to explain why Iraq is the way it is,²¹ but intervenes to emphasize a particular layer and narrative - namely the role of technology in “resurrecting” the biblical landscape propagated by the British colonial project. Fundamentally, this thesis utilizes a framework developed previously by Stanford Historian Priya Satia and must be emphasized more in the general conceptions and historiography of Iraq, “Existing historiography does not explain satisfactorily why Iraq in particular was deemed a suitable place for such practices.”²² Each chapter aims to be less abstract than the previous, progressing from a narrative of biblically to the brutal tactics of aerial bombardment, attempting to show the existing articulations, links, and narratives permitting such behavior.

The first chapter picks up at the end of the 19th century, referring to documentation that formed the Biblical narrative manufactured by engineers, scholars, and officers. It continues through the years of 1914-18 when the Mesopotamia Expeditionary Force fought the Turkish General ‘Ali Ihsan Pasha from Basra to Baghdad and the Western Powers were entrenched in Europe. In its initial phase, the MEF was led by India as the British were primarily focused on

²⁰ Ibid, 11.

²¹ Although, this primitive question certainly lies at the foundation of my inquiry. Historians and political scientists have wrestled with this question since Iraq’s creation, even remaining with prominent Iraqi historian Hanna Batatu until his death.

²² Satia, Priya. "The Defense of Inhumanity: Air Control and the British Idea of Arabia." *The American Historical Review* 111, no. 1 (February 2006): 16.

their campaign in Western Europe. In theory, the primary objective had been the securing of Basra's port. However, the MEF continued to march north after experiencing early victory. However, after a brilliant maneuver by 'Ali Ihsan, these initial successes were short-lived as the Turks besieged a beleaguered and undersupplied force led by General Thomson. At this point, both the Turks and Brits had endured two devastating defeats - the British at Kut and Gallipoli and the Turks at Suez and Sarikamish, each side experiencing extensive losses.

The Turks were not the only nation whom the British were solicitous with. The political situation in Russia was dubious and remained a concern for the British throughout their campaign. Lenin had taken control and Russian troops formed at the British flanks, however, their intentions in the region were ubiquitous.

Fundamentally, Mesopotamia was a land at the mercy of three declining empires - the Ottomans, the Russians, and the Persians, and the envy of three European nations- the French, the British, and the Germans. In 1916, Mark Sykes and François Georges Picot negotiated a secret agreement now known as Sykes-Picot, prematurely dividing Arabia into separate artificial spaces - Syria and Lebanon under the French Mandate and Iraq under the British Mandate, with Mosul mostly in the French zone.²³ Of course, Iraq today is most unlike the Iraq envisioned by Mark Sykes, an individual T.E. Lawrence described:

Then there was the imaginative advocate of unconvincing world-movements, Mark Sykes: also a bundle of prejudices, intuitions, half-sciences. His ideas were of the outsides; and he lacked patience to test his materials before choosing his style of building. He would take an aspect of the truth, detach it from its circumstances, inflate it, twist and model it, until its old likeness and its new unlikeness together drew a laugh; and laughs were his triumphs.²⁴

²³ After the Armistice of Mudros, the British occupied Mosul. The French were unhappy after the discovery of oil and an agreement was made, splitting oil revenue roughly 75-25 to the British.

²⁴ T.E. Lawrence, *Seven Pillars Of Wisdom: A Triumph* (London: Vintage Books, 2008), pg. 57.

Despite their occupation, many of their original designs were based on Ottoman maps. Vast cadres of linguists, agriculturalists, and academics comprised the RGS, RCAS, and Cairo Office for many years. The ever popular narrative of Iraq's artificiality suggests the country was designed by several overworked and unpaid interns on a Friday afternoon.

The second chapter, "Technology as Development: British Visions and the Value of Mesopotamia," highlights the structural shifts of the British Empire after the First World War. The British developed Mesopotamia from two different perspectives. First as British and Indian cultural imaginations perceived the *natural* or *innate* characteristics of Mesopotamia - a Biblical garden from time immemorial that could be cultivated to support humanity.²⁵ Thus, cultural imagination was not innocuous. Rather, the Civil Administration articulated these notions within public policy, evident by the presence of irrigation engineers and agriculturalists. But Iraq exhibited *external* or *structural* value to the Empire. Within an atmosphere of monetary constraints, evolving technology, and a unique geographical space (a buffer zone for India), Mesopotamia furnished the empire with a territory perfectly suitable to link the colonies by air while affirming a dialectic of superiority by means of modernity.

The third chapter, titled "Technology as Discipline: How Airplanes Disciplined Shaikh Mahmud," focuses on a formative period of Kurdish and Iraqi history that is simply underemphasized. The Cairo Conference of 1922 marked a severe policy shift for the British in Mesopotamia, namely transferring military operations from the War Office to the Royal Air Force because of monetary constraints and improving technological advances. This shift had far reaching consequences and was the final articulation of technological and military superiority.

²⁵ Parfit, J. T. *Mesopotamia: The Key to the Future*. London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1917.

Thus, in light of the previous chapters, the RAF was not just an administrative body but a materialized a particular understanding of the colonial project (themselves) and temperament towards Iraq (others). For the first time in human history, extended aerial policing was used to quench the Arab Revolt of 1920 and Shaikh Mahmud, a Kurdish *agha* from Sulaimaniyah who was aided by informal Turkish forces until 1925. While the Lausanne Conference began in September 1922, both Turkey and Britain waged a proxy war that engulfed the entire North-West Frontier. More than an interrogation of colonial power, this chapter is a history attempting to fulfill voids in secondary literature by highlighting the figure of Shaikh Mahmud, who proclaimed himself “King of Kurdistan” and was instrumental in forming a Kurdish nationalism.

Technology as Divine: How a Biblical Dialectic Rendered ‘Iraq

“There is a story that Eve, when she left, wept copiously and that her tears grew into the bush, which was still growing prolifically on the Mesopotamian front. The berries on it were known as ‘Eve’s tears.’²⁶
~ British and Indian troops referred to Amara as, ‘The Garden of Tears.’

The meanings of “Iraq” and “Mesopotamia” were ambiguous in the early 20th century. Sykes-Picot and a plethora of other designs outlined its physical boundaries, but few were in agreement. Turkish and British generals would witness the effects of such ambiguity firsthand. Ottoman records never used the term “Mesopotamia,” a Greek word translating to “[Land] Between Two Rivers.” However, British travelers and orientalist had used it with regularity for over a century.

Furthermore, as the initial campaign of the Mesopotamia Expeditionary Force (1914-1918) shifted its sights northward, away from the objective to secure the port of Basra and towards Baghdad, the geography and administrative districts of Iraq morphed thereby distorting the definition of “Iraq” further. The Ottomans governed Iraq as three separate *wilayets*, Basrah, Baghdad, and Mosul. When the Ottoman Empires and the Allies signed the Armistice of Mudros, ‘Ali Ihsan Pasha signed an agreement with the British War Office that he would evacuate Mesopotamia and all hostilities would cease by noon on October 31st, 1918. However, he evacuated to Mosul with the understanding that Mosul was a separate region than Mesopotamia and hostilities nearly broke out on November 7th when the British delivered an ultimatum to ‘Ali

²⁶ Barker, A.J. *The Neglected War: Mesopotamia 1914-1918*. London: Faber and Faber, 1967, 102.

Pasha to leave or else be eradicated.²⁷ Effectively, British troops occupied Mosul illegally, forever disrupting its regional commercial and social geographies.²⁸

Of course, such confusion was not limited to physical locations but interfered with the conceptions of “who” constituted as Iraqi, a discussion that never became passé and became particularly poignant with the British evacuation of Sulaimaniyah in 1922.²⁹ Colonial records reflected such uncertainty, the RAF labeling operations under headlines such as “The Kurdish Question,” or the “Mosul Question.”³⁰ Referencing the “Kurdish Question,” in a lecture at the Royal Central Asian Society six years after operations began near the Iraq-Iran border, the former Secretary of State for Air, Lord Thomson said, “It is, of course, a very difficult thing to fix a frontier in a region like that. Administrative officers are inclined to extend their functions: no one quite knows where the frontier is.” Thus, when Kurdish refugees began flooding to Erbil and Tikrit, the British Civil Administration wrestled with the applicability of the Iraqi election law and ideas of self-determination - a question that continues to resurface until today. A telegraph from the Foreign Office dating January 31st, 1922, reads, “I [am] not quite clear what

²⁷ Wilson, Arnold T. *Mesopotamia, 1917-20: A Clash of Loyalties*. London: Oxford University Press, 1931: 16-23. Also see, Lyon, Wallace A., and D. K. Fieldhouse. *Kurds, Arabs & Britons: the Memoir of Wallace Lyon in Iraq, 1918-44*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2002: 64, Batatu, 17.

²⁸ Shields, Sarah D. "Regional Trade and 19th-Century Mosul: Revising the Role of Europe in the Middle East Economy." *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 23, no. 01 (February 1991): 19-37. Shields argues that introduction of European goods did not destroy Mosul's economy like other Middle Eastern cities. It was a rather self-sufficient city that had strong commercial ties of its neighbors. These historical geographies were disrupted by the Cairo Conference of 1920.

²⁹ CO 781/2, “Electoral Law - Application to Kurdish Areas,” September 15, 1922.

³⁰ See for example, AIR 23.

is implied of reference to ambiguity of word, “Iraqi,” and nature of risks involved, and requests explanation.”³¹

So how did the British imagine Mesopotamia, a region imbued with as much nomenclature as there are people groups? British narratives of the Orient can be traced back to the early 19th century when affluent English travelers, often steeped with a knowledge of Latin, Ancient Greek, and the histories of Herodotus, recorded their adventures in numerous memoirs. The descriptive nature of these works are imbued with the illustrations of landscapes and fauna, sketched maps, and encounters with the Orient. But such positivism did not lie dormant but set into motion newfound cultural understandings and imaginations.³² Thus, narrations of the Orient were not innocuous but rather instrumental in rendering Palestine and Iraq as Biblical, first as sites of intrigue, and later as justifications for British and Indian statecraft in Mesopotamia.

The danger of such cultural discourses were real. Bell, Soane, Lawrence, Stark, Wilson and numerous others who travelled Palestine, Persia, and Mesopotamia, intertwined racial discourse throughout their writings, not just of the Arab but the Kurd, Assyrian, Yezedi, Turkoman, Armenian, and others.³³ The Royal Geographical Society (RGS) and Royal Central Asian Society (RCAS) were composed of an intimate network of colonial administrators, geographers, engineers, and officers. Both served as an open and multidisciplinary space to exchange knowledge and updates on expeditions and campaigns.

³¹ CO 781/2 -“This anonymous statement is from the Colonial Registry rather than the correspondence itself. Both the memorandum and telegraph seemed to have been, “Destroyed Under Statute,” a status quite popular in many of the records. Listed as Memorandum 5590/FO 3058.

³² Satia, Priya. "The Defense of Inhumanity: Air Control and the British Idea of Arabia." *The American Historical Review* 111, no. 1 (February 2006): 18.

³³

Bell and Lawrence, along with many other British personnel, made Akaba to Aden legible with a myriad of scientific feats - botany, cartography, and topography to name a few. With an audience at the RGS, the Keeper of Antiquities at the British Museum, D.G. Hogarth gave a lecture titled *War and Discovery in Arabia*. Lectures focusing on the archeological exploits in conjunction with the military endeavors of the British military in Mesopotamia were commonplace in the RGS and RCAS forums. In his lecture, Hogarth praises British efforts to survey the territory between Akaba and Yeden between 1916-19; no longer was it the land of “*terra incognita*” as he affectionately called it.³⁴ He also described how Lawrence referred to the Nefud steppe as “el-Hul,” or a “barren void” that lacked any animal life or vegetation.³⁵

Consequentially, these individuals imbued their descriptions with geographic determinism, ascertaining how the physical environment shaped the minds and personalities of Mesopotamia. From *Orientalism*, “Now this attempt would have been impossible had it not also been believed - in classical empiricist terms - that mind and body were interdependent realities, both determined originally by a given set of geographical, biological, and quasi-historical conditions.”³⁶

More broadly, these geographical and quasi-historical elements are reflected in the didactic literature of J.T. Bannister’s, *A Survey of the Holy Land; Its Geography, History, and Destiny* which was published in 1844. His purpose was to address increased demand of biblical evidence with “Sacred Geography and History,” which would “elucidate the sense and display the beauties of the Sacred Text.” He did this without visiting Palestine or Mesopotamia, writing

³⁴ Hogarth, D.G. "War and Discovery in Arabia." *The Geographical Journal* 55, no. 6 (June 1920): 423.

³⁵ *Ibid*, 434.

³⁶ Said, 232.

this voluminous work on the experiences of other orientalists. Believers would benefit by *experiencing* the Bible, either personally or through the memoirs of other travelers:

With how much greater impression shall we read the narrative of the location of our first parents in Paradise, of the events which happened to them there, and their expulsion from it, when in your imagination, we can fix on a spot in the map of the earth, and say, 'There all these occurrences took place.' With how much greater impression shall we read the story of the Deluge and, when we readily recur to the country where the ark was built, can follow its course, from the point where it began to float to that which it rested, when the waters retired from it;

Bannister's work represented a growing trend and fascination among Western authors, particularly the British, with Biblical historicity in the late 19th century. This sentimentality continued through the 1920s but diverged from archiving to cultivating.

An irrigation engineer known as Sir William Willcocks was excited about Mesopotamia's commercial prospects in 1903 and made preliminary designs for improving its waterways. The Foreign Office had been dubious about the engineer's claims about its potential, but by 1904 a third-party supported his assertions and Willcocks had preliminary irrigation designs drawn by 1905.³⁷ Willcocks published a tantalizing account of his experiences surveying Mesopotamia in 1909 in a lecture at the Royal Geographical Society.³⁸ Along with his colleagues at the RGS, Willcocks spent a considerable amount of time theorizing about the exact location of the Garden of Eden. Colonel F.R. Maunsell asserted that Eden was most likely found east of Elam in the

³⁷ Cohen, Stuart. *British Policy in Mesopotamia, 1903-1914*. London: Ithaca Press for the Middle East Centre, St Antony's College, Oxford, 2008: 45, 54. The India Office originally wanted to corroborate Willcocks' designs but London refused their request. Whether this was because of continued interagency disfunction, their disbelief in Willcocks' assertions, or both, is unclear. In 1907, the Indian Marine confirmed his claims in their own survey of the Tigris.

³⁸ This lecture was held in 1910. His reputation is verified several personal memoirs. See, Lyon, Wallace A., and D. K. Fieldhouse. *Kurds, Arabs & Britons: the Memoir of Wallace Lyon in Iraq, 1918-44*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2002: 70.

A SURVEY
OF THE
H O L Y L A N D ;
ITS
GEOGRAPHY, HISTORY, AND DESTINY.

DESIGNED TO ELUCIDATE THE IMAGERY OF SCRIPTURE, AND
DEMONSTRATE THE FULFILMENT OF PROPHECY.

BY J. T. BANNISTER,

Author of "Chart of the Holy Land," "Incidents of Jewish History" &c. &c.

WITH AN INTRODUCTION

BY THE REV. W. MARSH, D.D.

VICAR OF ST. MARY'S, LEAMINGTON.

"Immensus Orientis thesauros, amplissimumque Scientiæ campum, cursumque
ad laudem patefaciet."—LOWTH.

FOURTEENTH THOUSAND.



MCCMLXXXIII

Embellished with Maps and Engravings.



LONDON :

BINNS AND GOODWIN, 44, FLEET STREET ;
AND 19, CHEAP STREET, BATH.

EDINBURGH : OLIVER AND BOYD. DUBLIN : J. M'GLASHAN.

Cover photo of Bannister's work³⁹

³⁹ Bannister, J. T. *A Survey of the Holy Land; Its Geography, History, and Destiny*. Bath: Binns and Goodwin, 1853.

southwestern Persian province of Pusht-i-Kuh while Willcocks was inclined to believe that its location lay near the juncture of the Euphrates and Tigris, near Kurna or Amara.⁴⁰ He also concluded that the poplar wood found in the Euphrates valley and was the same used by Noah to build his ark.⁴¹ In fact, the irrigation engineer was so confident and faithful in the ability of modern technology, he proclaimed, “If Noah had been a hydraulic engineer, he would have constructed the Pison river escape instead of an ark, and saved not only his family but his country as well.”⁴²

Iraq was continuously imagined as a timeless space. Such articulations teemed throughout the travelogues of English pilgrims, never becoming passé but rather fetishizing and thus, reifying the human and physical geographies of the region. In his return from a diplomatic mission from Persia 1834, James Baillie Fraser visited numerous towns and cities throughout Kurdistan and Mesopotamia. Besides commenting on their customs, dress, and hospitality, he commented mercilessly on tribal personalities and characteristics, using terms like “creature,” “dwarf,” or “monkey.”⁴³ Where many inhabitants failed to develop the region or use basic farming tools such as ploughs, it became a reflection of their character and supported the notion that time moved more slowly and spaces were empty and unpopulated.⁴⁴ Heude, Porter, Rich, Groves, Mignan, and Fraser, all travelers of Kurdistan and Mesopotamia in the early 19th

⁴⁰ Willcocks, William. "Mesopotamia: Past, Present, and Future." *The Geographical Journal* 35.1 (1910): 1-25. Also see map titled, “The Euphrates-Tigris Delta,” that maps land “capable of early development”: 22-23.

⁴¹ *Ibid*, 4.

⁴² *Ibid*, 11.

⁴³ Fraser, James Baillie. *Travels in Koordistan, Mesopotamia, &c., including an Account of Parts of Those Countries Hitherto Unvisited by Europeans. With Sketches of the Character and Manners of the Koordish and Arab Tribes*. London: Richard Bentley, 1840: 171.

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, 51.

century, were all complicit in establishing a discourse which continued throughout the mandate era.⁴⁵

Canon J.T. Parfit, known by as his friends as “the Rural Dean of the Garden of Eden,” was a parish priest living in Mesopotamia and the turn of the 20th century.⁴⁶ In 1917 he published a work *Mesopotamia: The Key to the Future* organized in sections titled: *Its Ancient Glories*, *Its Dreary Desolation*, and *Its Future Prospects*. He writes fondly about the region’s ancient past and contributions to civilization - weights and measures, astronomy, and mathematics. In the tradition of past writers, he evokes imagery from the Hebrew Scriptures, citing such locations and events as: “Nimrod,” “the Flood,” and the “plain of Shinar [and] the Confusion of Tongues.”⁴⁷ He soon contrasts Mesopotamia’s past glory with its current state of neglect, inhabited by impoverished persons who fail to cultivate the land. Frogs, insects, scorpions, and centipedes were so bountiful he contended, “Mesopotamia is now the ideal entomologists’ paradise.”⁴⁸

The exploits of Major E.B. Soane, who first began working for the Imperial Bank of Persia in 1902 and later for the Anglo-Persian Oil Company, are well documented in his memoir, *Through Mesopotamia and Kurdistan in Disguise*.⁴⁹ He ventured into Kurdistan as a Persian

⁴⁵ For a fairly comprehensive list of Kurdish, Persian, and Mesopotamian expeditions throughout the 19th century, see Edmonds, C. J. *Kurds, Turks, and Arabs: Politics, Travel, and Research in North-eastern Iraq, 1919-1935*. London: Oxford University Press, 1957: 22-28.

⁴⁶ Parfit, J. T. *Mesopotamia: The Key to the Future*. London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1917:1.

⁴⁷ *Ibid*, 2-3.

⁴⁸ *Ibid*, 13.

⁴⁹ No doubt, E.B. Soane was Britain’s preeminent Kurdish and Persian orientalist and A.T. Wilson confirms such in his memoir. He was feared by Kurds unlike any other officer, and was arch-rival with Shaikh Mahmud, who will be dealt with in Chapter 3.

returning to Shiraz after living in Europe.⁵⁰ In his travels to the Zab Rivers north of Mosul as a Captain, E.B. Soane refers to Genesis 10, “And Cush begat Nimrod: he began to be a mighty one on the earth...Out of that land went forth Asshur, and builded Nineveh, and the city of Rehoboth, and Calah, and Resen between Nineveh and Calah: the same is a great city,” while previously mentioning the “hordes of savage people” who continue to inhabit the lands near the Zagros Mountains.⁵¹

In 1921, then president of the RGS, Francis Younghusband reflected that if the oriental was not ignorant, he was lazy for not taking advantage of the resources available to him in the desert.⁵² *The Geographical Journal's* publication “The Influence of Nature on Japanese Character,” in 1924 further illustrates notions of geographic determinism that spread to the Far East and continued far later than the early exploits of the first English explorers.

Traveler and journalist Freya Stark who travelled the Hakkari Mountains by herself in 1931 made several journey's through Mosul, Hamarra, and Baghdad, waylaying at ancient sites of civilization and touring the stories of the Bible.⁵³ These later dates are important and demonstrate how compelling the Biblical narrative proved to be, despite Britain's more concrete security and commercial policies after the Great War. She commonly visited the tombs of past characters, such as Job in Nineveh or Esther and Mordecai's in Persia. From these influences, she

⁵⁰ "Braving Death in Kurdistan Disguised as a Native." *The New York Times* (New York), March 9, 1913.

⁵¹ Soane, Ely Bannister. *To Mesopotamia and Kurdistan in Disguise; with Historical Notices of the Kurdish Tribes and the Chaldeans of Kurdistan*. London: John Murray, 1912. 106-109.

⁵² See for example, then President of the RGS, Francis Younghusband's remarks in Lyons, H.G., and Hooker. "The Egyptian Wilderness." *The Geographical Journal* 58, no. 4 (October 1921): 249-76 or more broadly, and ideas of geographic determinism in the RGS such as in Weston, Walter. "The Influence of Nature on Japanese Character." *The Geographical Journal* 63, no. 2 (February 1924): 106-19.

⁵³ Freya Stark is most certainly the first foreign woman to travel the Hakkari by herself and temporarily stayed at Ser Amadiya at the bequest of an RAF post there.

wrote about Iraq's primordial past and the timeless character the region possessed. Indeed, she wrote, "Mounds of buried villages float above the mists like islands, and the horizon melts in dust to the south. Stubble blows loose in autumn over undulations whose wheat or barley once enriched the black-bearded Assyrians, and here the flocks move from morning to evening in their migrations, with one shepherd ahead of them and one behind them, under the clinging discomfort of their own dust."⁵⁴ Such descriptions were commonplace, relocating Mesopotamia within the timeless and mythological annals of ancient literature such as *Nights of Arabia*.⁵⁵

Not only did these descriptions of the Orient position populations as primitive, they were the first half of a dialectic that justified British interventionism. After numerous decades of observing and archiving their knowledge, British colonialists commenced land surveys and archeological excavations throughout the Shatt al-Arab. Commenting on a lecture presented by A.T. Wilson, Paleographer and Biblical Scholar, Sir Frederic G. Kenyon said, "I should like to say that if we take up the responsibility for a country like Mesopotamia or Palestine, we assume a responsibility for its past history as well as its present and future."⁵⁶ In this way, the British aristocracy took it upon themselves to safeguard the annals of history while simultaneously establishing their virtue. However, unique to Iraq rather than Palestine was it being Adam and Eve's home, and thus the site of original sin.

Perhaps more importantly, such descriptions were essential in establishing the moral and civic superiority of the British. Control of "subject races" should be morally defensible for

⁵⁴ Stark, Freya. *Riding to the Tigris* (London: John Murray, 1959), 2-3.

⁵⁵ Stark, Freya. *Beyond Euphrates: Autobiography, 1928-1933*. London: John Murray, 1951: 12, 116.

⁵⁶ Wilson, Arnold. "Mesopotamia, 1914-1921." *Journal of The Royal Central Asian Society* 8, no. 3 (1921): 158.

British Imperialism to spread. In fact, according to Lord Cromer, this was the “keystone” to imperial power. While the military was important for the general maintenance of the country, “deliberate oppression” or mismanagement would undo the Empire just as it had the Romans.⁵⁷ But the Brits had a secret weapon to combat egotism and other political maladies. Cromer writes, “Christianity is our most powerful ally.”⁵⁸ The Christian moral code should be spread throughout the Empire if the British were to succeed. Thus, travelogues did much to establish imagery of a Biblical Eden waiting, even beckoning, to be saved by the masculine Empire.

But the British had more tools at their disposal than the stories of English travelers. With the capture of Baghdad in 1917, the British began archeological digs under the supervision of Captain R. Campbell Thompson, a prominent Assyriologist working as an intelligence officer.⁵⁹ He began work in Nasriyah and the city of Ur, where he discovered the foundations of E-kharsag, Ê-makh, and a palace of the kings Ur-Nammu among others.⁶⁰ Another individual, Dr. H. R. Hall from the British Museum began archaeological work in December 1918, “on behalf of the Civil Administration.” Besides visiting Nippur and Babylon, he assisted administration by creating regulations for the transport of antiquities.⁶¹ His preliminary findings led to further excavations in 1925 at the site of ‘Ur, co-led and funded by teams from the British Museum and the Museum of the University of Pennsylvania.

⁵⁷ Cromer, Evelyn Baring. *Political and Literary Essays, 1908-1913*. London: Macmillan, 1913: 5-6.

⁵⁸ *Ibid*, 52.

⁵⁹ Hall, H.R. "The British Museum Archæological Mission in Mesopotamia, 1919." *Journal of The Royal Central Asian Society* 9, no. 3 (1922): 119. The Trustees of the British Museum, in conjunction with the War Office in Iraq, arranged for excavations

⁶⁰ *Ibid*, 122. Translated as “The House of the Mountain” and “The Noble House” respectively. The site of Ur-Nammu is also known as Ur-Engur, the site Leonard Woolley later focused on in 1924-5.

⁶¹ Wilson, Arnold T. *Mesopotamia, 1917-20: A Clash of Loyalties*. London: Oxford University Press, 1931: 65.

Excavations such as these were not restricted to the confines of Mesopotamia but part and parcel to a larger colonial agenda to understand and revive the ancient glories of the past. As the British Empire expanded, so to did its archeological program, both historically and temporally. Said makes reference to British biblical narratives and the accession of the oriental framework, “Reference points were no longer Christianity and Judaism, with their fairly modest calendars and maps, but India, China, Japan, and Sumer, Buddhism, Sanskrit, Zoroastrianism, and Manu.”⁶² So, while Mesopotamia offered new opportunities to reorient its efforts to reclaim the sites of Genesis, it was also a space to further British preoccupations with the occult.⁶³

To aid the efforts of the British Museum, the RAF used “air archeology” for the first time in Mesopotamia. One of the earliest instances occurred when Lieut.-Colonel G.A. Beazley led efforts to photograph and create a “six-inch survey” of the area surrounding Sammara.⁶⁴ Afterwards, surveyors would transfer the photographs to a plane-table and conduct ground surveys when necessary. These early efforts uncovered an ancient city that otherwise would have remained unnoticed. Additionally, topographers recognized a complex irrigation pattern in the landscape that further reinforced a narrative of Iraqi negligence and fall from glory.

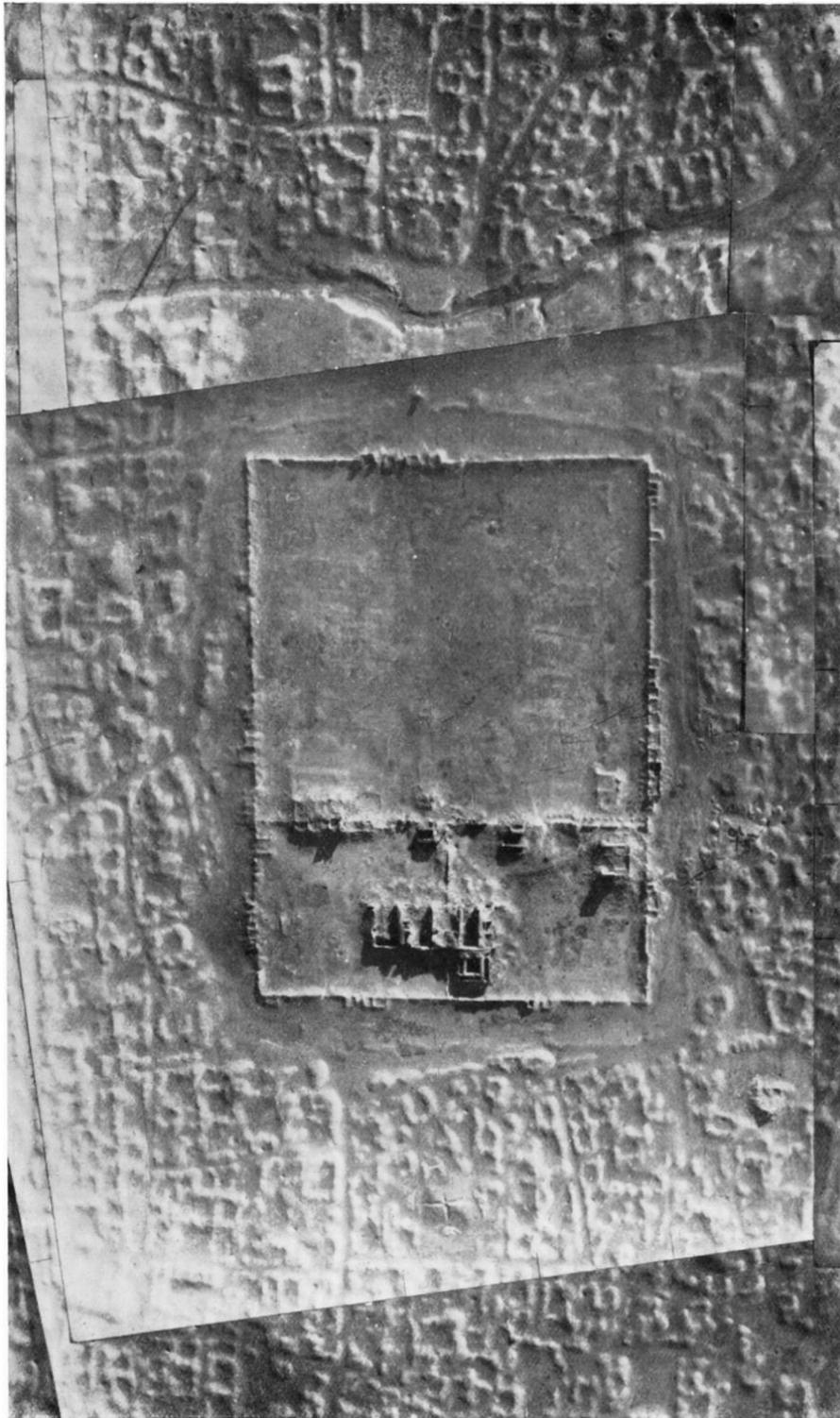
Later, O.G.S. Crawford and Dr. Hogarth approached the RAF requesting that any photographs of archeological and geographical interest should be sent to the Society of Antiquities and Royal Geographical Society.⁶⁵ Consequently, Crawford obtained thousands of

⁶² Said, *Orientalism*, 120.

⁶³ See for example, Fraser’s *Travels in Koordistan, Mesopotamia, &c.*, and preoccupation with Kurdish superstitions, 141.

⁶⁴ Beazeley, G. A. "Air Photography in Archaeology." *The Geographical Journal* 53, no. 5 (May 1919): 330.

⁶⁵ Crawford, O.G.S. "Air Photographs of the Middle East." *The Geographical Journal* 73, no. 6 (June 1929): 509.



Palace of Hatra, seventy miles southwest of Mosul. Founded sometime during the reign of Trajan. City was destroyed by Shapur I of the Sassanid Dynasty.⁶⁶

⁶⁶ Crawford, O.G.S. "Air Photographs of the Middle East." *The Geographical Journal* 73, no. 6 (June 1929): 502. Notice how the photographs are layered, capturing a grid of the ancient city.

photo negatives from the RAF for analysis, such services typifying the symbiotic relationship between the military and antiquities department throughout the Mandate era. Corroborating the effectiveness of air photography to identify archeological sites, Percy Cox said, “I have for years known ground and been over it time after time without being able to recognize any system of irrigation or line of foundation which at once became obvious from the air.”⁶⁷ For this purpose, surveyors conducted flights throughout the countryside, taking photos of sites such as Hatra, Nineveh, and Seleucia and unearthing points of interest which would, have otherwise, been unseen.

Sir O.G.S. Crawford, archeologist and pioneer of such practices concluded his lecture at the Royal Geographical Society stating:

The aeroplane, merely as a means of conveyance, is by far the best invention of man, for it is swift, safe, and comfortable. As an instrument of archaeological research it is (with a camera) second only to excavation, and sometimes even more effective. The photographs shown on the screen - a selection only from 1700, the nucleus, I hope, of a great national collection - will inaugurate a new epoch in oriental studies. The future of exploration, and not only of archeological exploration, is literally in the air.⁶⁸

As the airplane become an extension of the map with its ability to monitor populations “continuously” or “semi-continuously”⁶⁹ cartography allowed the British to perpetuate the narrative of unchanging landscapes while simultaneously monitoring tribal movements. In fact, the Royal Geography Society (RGS) and Geographical Section of the General Staff (GSGS) maintained close relationships with Military Operations 4⁷⁰ and the Arab Bureau based in

⁶⁷ Ibid, 510.

⁶⁸ Ibid, 509.

⁶⁹ AIR 23/569, Secret Letter from H.C. to Advisor, Arbil repeated Advisor, Kirkuk, 10 October 1922.

⁷⁰ MO would later evolve into Military Intelligence or MI

Cairo.⁷¹ Both Gertrude Bell and T.E. Lawrence worked intimately with the RGS for extended periods of time. Bell often made corrections and comments on Middle East map sheets and Lawrence began his career under the tutelage of David George Hogarth, RGS Councilman and Keeper of Antiquities at the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford. In fact, it was Lawrence's 1911 journey to Damascus with Hogarth, allegedly under cover as an archeology trip but really an intelligence-gathering operation on the newly planned German railway to Baghdad, that sparked his interest in the Middle East.⁷² It was also Hogarth who referenced the first aerial survey of Medina, incorporating photographs in his research.⁷³ Truly, the plane could unravel the mysteries of the Orient.

Air photography aided the map-making operations of the RGS and GSGS. Using newly developed stereoscopic plotting machines, an observer could take overlapping photos of the plane and using methods of triangulation, calculate the height and distance of either a monument or Turkish military fortifications. In this way, Mesopotamia represents a particular cultural moment for British colonialists and its use of aerial technology. With these newfound advances, British administrators, archeologists, and military strategists could test the abilities of air surveillance as both a method to monitor and render its history, land, and people. Concerning the relationship between scriptural geography and science, Aiken writes, "Science was seen as an undertaking which explained God's created world, and privileged the place of God's revealed truth in it."⁷⁴

⁷¹ Heffernan, Michael. "Geography, Cartography and Military Intelligence: The Royal Geographical Society and the First World War." *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 21, no. 3 (1996): 519.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 512-13.

⁷³ Hogarth, D.G. "War and Discovery in Arabia." *The Geographical Journal* 55, no. 6 (June 1920): 436. Two photographs show Bab el-Ambari, Medina.

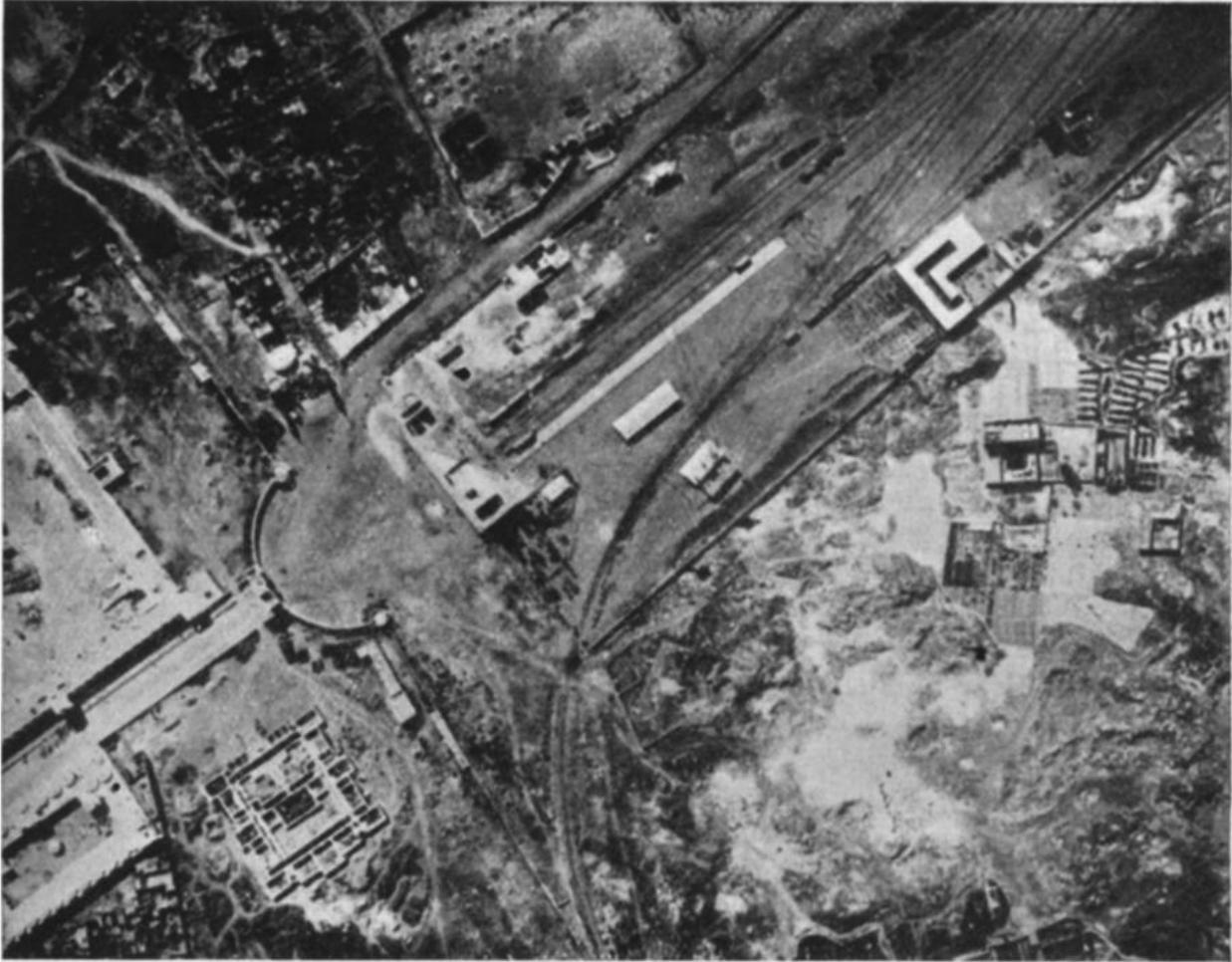
⁷⁴ Aiken, Edwin J. *Scriptural Geography: Portraying the Holy Land*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2010: 31.

By making the landscape legible, air technology and newly developed cartographic techniques unearthed the ancient glories of Iraq's primordial past thereby reifying the supremacy of the modern and the frequent narrations of neglect written by British travelers and high society.

Three years after the conclusion of the Mesopotamia Expeditionary Force in 1918, the campaign fast became burdensome. The Royal Air Force had just suppressed the Arab Revolt of 1920, setting precedent for the first extended aerial police action in human history. As Sir Michael O'Dwyer, perviously Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab, stated, "At one time we were told Mesopotamia as an El Dorado, which would revive the ancient glories of Babylon and Baghdad; a few years more and the cold fit comes on, and we are told that Mesopotamia is a millstone round our necks, and that we must clear out at the first moment."⁷⁵ The reference to "millstone" is not a coincidence. Rather, it is a reference to Mark 9:42, Luke 17:2, or Matthew 18:6, which reads, "And whosoever shall offend one of these little ones that believe in Me, it is better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea."⁷⁶ In this way, even the campaign's struggles were articulated both within a biblical and primordial framework.

⁷⁵ Wilson, Arnold. "Mesopotamia, 1914–1921." *Journal of The Royal Central Asian Society* 8, no. 3 (1921): 160. Allegedly in retribution for British and Indian colonial enterprises, an Indian Seikh assassinated Sir Michael O'Dwyer nineteen years later at the Royal Society for Asian Affairs, the same location he delivered this lecture. As Sluglett notes, O'Dwyer mentored Colonel E.B. Howell, Revenue Secretary for A.T. Wilson, and Francis Humphrys, the last H.C. of the Iraqi mandate and first British Ambassador to Iraq (page 14).

⁷⁶ King James Version



“Air Photograph of Railway Station Bab el-Ambari, Medina”⁷⁷

⁷⁷ Hogarth, D.G. "War and Discovery in Arabia." *The Geographical Journal* 55, no. 6 (June 1920): 436.

Technology as Development: British Visions and the Value of Mesopotamia

*"I do not think it possible to imagine anything more like a practical paradise than the country near Asnah. Every tree and crop must have been familiar to Adam except the cotton crop."*⁷⁸
Willcocks, Irrigation Engineer

English travelers, British officers, and colonial administrators created vast collections of literature that emphasized Mesopotamia's glorious past. It was the land of our Biblical forefathers and incubated the magnificent civilizations of old. But now it lay destitute and neglected by Turks and natives alike. If the first half of Britain's dialectic created a sublime cultural imagination, the second part appealed to Mesopotamia's potential. But it needed Britain's help, "No government can be formed in the Middle East in these days without our support and assistance..." said High Commissioner A.T. Wilson.⁷⁹ Colonel A.C. Yate concluded that the eastern portions of the British Empire, "stretching from the Shatt-el-Arab to the Suez Canal," would fail without its "mistress" - Britain.⁸⁰ But the Empire offered the saving grace of development and would restore the nation to rival - or even surpass - the achievements of its primordial civilizations.

However, such descriptions were not innocuous but rather formed the building blocks for colonial land management and population control. British colonialists saw Mesopotamia's worth from two perspectives. First, was Mesopotamia's worth as cultural imagination formed it. Thus, narratives of Eden and connections to past grandeur considerably influenced institutions like the Agricultural Development Scheme. For example, the ADS introduced new agricultural crops to

⁷⁸ Willcocks, William. "Mesopotamia: Past, Present, and Future." *The Geographical Journal* 35.1 (1910): 1.

⁷⁹ Wilson, Arnold. "Mesopotamia, 1914-1921." *Journal of The Royal Central Asian Society* 8, no. 3 (1921): 154. He immediately cites Sudan as an example. After British withdrawal, two-thirds of the population was reduced by famine and war.

⁸⁰ Yate, A. C. "Britain's Buffer States in the East." *Journal of The Royal Central Asian Society* 5.1 (1918): 17.

fulfill Mesopotamia's natural destiny as the world's garden or breadbasket (or the qualities that Britain saw to be *innate* or *internal*). A second perspective focused on the strategic importance of Mesopotamia within the *external* structural demands of the British Empire. These, of course, included rudimentary necessities like foodstuffs and oil, but then incorporated more complex abstractions like becoming an Indian thoroughfare. A British vicar stationed in Mesopotamia begins the third chapter of his monograph, "Mesopotamia: the Key to the Future," with:

It is no exaggeration to say that the whole world's peace, its progress, and prosperity hang largely upon the settlement of the many problems associated with this unique country of Mesopotamia. (1) The development of its natural resources is a matter of some importance to multitudes (2) The reopening of its ancient highways and the construction of great trunk railways to India and the Far East are matters of still greater importance, especially to the inhabitants of the Eastern Hemisphere.⁸¹

While cultural imaginations fueled British interventionism, another reality was Iraq's value as a resource-laden buffer-state that could, in theory, sustain itself and link London to Australia.

The Prospects of Development and Mesopotamia's "Natural" Characteristics

In 1909, irrigation engineer William Willcocks evaluated the watering systems of the Babylonians, attributing their prosperity to their ability to discipline nature, "From the Lamentations of Jeremiah we may gather that Mesopotamia in olden times was rich and prosperous, by reason of its irrigation works, and that it became 'a desolation, dry, and a desert' when a flood overwhelmed those works."⁸² The Tigris and Euphrates annually flooded the land "from time immemorial."⁸³ He asserted that the first priorities of any hydraulic engineer in

⁸¹ Parfit, J. T. *Mesopotamia: The Key to the Future*. London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1917: 26. Apparently Parfit's friends called him, "the Rural Dean of the Garden of Eden," pp. 1. The monograph is structured into three chapters: I) Its Ancient Glories, II) Its Dreary Desolation, and III) Its Future Prospects.

⁸² Willcocks, William. "Mesopotamia: Past, Present, and Future." *The Geographical Journal* 35.1 (1910): 15.

⁸³ Himbury, William Henry. *Iraq (or Mesopotamia) as a Source for Increasing Raw Cotton Supplies*. Manchester: British Cotton Growing Association, 1925: 18.

Mesopotamia were to protect the region from flooding and reduce the quantity of silt in irrigation water. By Willcocks' estimation, the Tigris and Euphrates carried four times as much sediment as the Nile, thus handicapping future prospects of agricultural development.⁸⁴ This concern proved prophetic as the land around Baghdad flooded in 1915, preventing farmers from their sowing crops. Even in 1916 the ground remained too moist for crops.⁸⁵

Willcocks proposed that engineers should construct flood gates on the Tigris and Euphrates. He estimated these water relief structures would cost an estimated £6,000,000. He boldly proclaimed at the Royal Geographical Society:

...[They] would by themselves double the value of every acre of land in the delta; be a godsend to Baghdad and every other town and village; and allow the Baghdad railway to traverse the cultivated land, and not, as at present proposed, cling to the deserts as Noah did his ark. The engineers who aligned the railway have shown a timidity which would have cost them their lives in the times of that arch-engineer Marduk or Nimrod. They have fled from Tiamat.⁸⁶

Accordingly, if such difficulties were overcome and managed, Mesopotamia could produce a million tons of wheat and twice that in cotton. However, even if such quantities could be grown, Willcocks wrote that merchants were concerned with their ability to move it, "Every merchant and man of business I have talked with in Baghdad is convinced of one thing, and that is what the backward state of the country is due in great part to the fact that while communication is open by river with the east, it is to the west that the whole produce of the country wants to find a way."⁸⁷ Thus, he proposed the creation of a railroad which would connect the major cosmopolitan areas, particularly those upstream from the port of Basra. This was known as

⁸⁴ Ibid, 11.

⁸⁵ *Review of the Civil Administration of Mesopotamia*. London: H.M. Stationery Off., 1920: 77.

⁸⁶ Willcocks, William. "The Garden of Eden and Its Restoration and Discussion." *The Geographical Journal* 40, no. 2 (1912): 129-48.

⁸⁷ Willcocks, William. "Mesopotamia: Past, Present, and Future." *The Geographical Journal* 35.1 (1910): 19.

“Willcocks’ Scheme,” which would connect Baghdad and the Mediterranean through Hit and Homs.⁸⁸

The imagery of the Garden of Eden and its relationship to agriculture was highly familiar to the Foreign Office. Said Archibald Sayce, Reverend and Chair of Assyriology at Oxford, in a lecture titled *The Garden of Eden and Its Restoration*, “You saw the pictures this evening - you saw the unirrigated land, and then you saw the irrigated. I visited both those sites, and that is just what you see. We want to acquire all the country between those two rivers, to make the whole length of it just one great productive garden.”⁸⁹ Additionally, the commonplace presence of archeologists at RGS meetings which detailed colonial aspirations further demonstrates a strong marriage between cultural production and development.

Elements of geographic determinism, primordialism, and the ability of technology to govern nature are present elsewhere:

All history is largely dependent upon geography, but in no part of the world is that more true than in the case of Babylonia. Babylonia was the gift of the rivers, and it was made inhabitable by the irrigation works carried on in times which we now call prehistoric by the earliest engineers of the country.⁹⁰

The antiquated glories of Mesopotamia’s past were so pervasive in British society that Sir George Cunningham Buchanan, the eventual mastermind behind the reorganization of Basra’s port, wrote a four-part series in *The Times* berating British efforts to develop it. He challenged Mesopotamia’s romanticized image and questioned the motives of the British War Office; the

⁸⁸ The British considered three different railway routes: the Tigris route, the aforementioned Willcocks’ scheme, and the Mohammera line. Each line had advantages, however, the Tigris line was chosen after complex negotiations and concessions from the Turkish government. For details, see Cohen, 81-2.

⁸⁹ Willcocks, William. "The Garden of Eden and Its Restoration and Discussion." *The Geographical Journal* 40, no. 2 (1912): 146.

⁹⁰ *Ibid*, 145.

British would need incredible amounts of capital for the protection of people and property, establishing communications, heightening agricultural development, and increasing trade. He questioned the ambitious schemes of William Willcocks, arguing that engineers should strengthen the natural lines of the Tigris and Euphrates and irrigation restored incrementally.⁹¹ However, far from a patron saint, Buchanan's discord was rooted in general disdain for the territory rather than post-colonialist critique.

Agriculture and Oil

In her memoir *Forest Venture: Conquering the Deserts of the Middle East* published in 1960, Louis Maitland recalls her husband Victor Kennard comparing Middle Eastern terrain and soils, "Now Syria is quite different; it's thinly populated and, from what I hear, there's a lot of good land. Obviously it could support a much larger population if agriculture and industry were developed."⁹² Vic, who was a forestry and soil conservation adviser with the Development Division of the British Middle East Office, praised the efforts of wheat, barley, and cotton production.

In 1919 the principal exports amounted to eleven million pound sterling, the majority of which came from dates, grain, and wool. A.T. Wilson saw value in developing Iraq as both an

⁹¹ Buchanan, Sir George Cunningham. "The Development of Mesopotamia: I. Exaggerated Hopes, An Orgy of Waste." *The Times* (London), September 23, 1919; "The Development of Mesopotamia: II. River and Railway Transport." *The Times* (London), September 24, 1919; "The Development of Mesopotamia: III. A Great Future for Basra, Work That Must Be Done." *The Times* (London), September 25, 1919; "The Development of Mesopotamia: IV. Agricultural Development, Moderate Irrigation Scheme." *The Times* (London), September 26, 1919. Buchanan was disliked by many officers who described him as arrogant and disagreeable.

⁹² Maitland, Louise. *Forest Venture: Conquering the Deserts of the Middle East*. London: Robert Hale Limited, 1960: 60-61.

exporter of agricultural and pastoral goods and as an emerging market for consumer goods such as British and Indian tea. He saw little or no potential in Iraq for manufacturing.⁹³

When the British and Indian Expeditionary Force landed in Basra on November 6, 1914, taking charge of local governance shortly thereafter, they found the population to be without cash or credit for a variety of reasons. The Turks had left a highly disorganized system that proved ineffective and highly bureaucratic. Such inefficiencies along with a particularly poor date season exacerbated the abeyance of trade towards India and Baghdad.⁹⁴

Cognizant of its success in Egypt, Mesopotamia's Civil Administration was excited about the potential of cotton.⁹⁵ But Mesopotamia differed from Egypt. Large tracks of land remained uncultivated throughout summer because of high salt, lime, and alkali content, issues less pronounced in Egypt. These decreased organic materials and nutrients in the soil. In response, agriculturalist and Major C.R. Wimshurst discovered that alfalfa and clover are attracted to lime and alkali; farmers would drastically increase organic levels if they plowed these plants under the soil before sowing cotton seeds.⁹⁶ Thus, cotton became a viable cash crop that cultivators could sow during the summertime when farms remained fallow.

The Administer of the Agricultural Development Scheme, Mr. Garbett, was in charge of all military cultivation undertaken through 1918. The ADS imported irrigation pumps to reverse the impacts of long-term drought which had befallen the region in 1915. This was originally

⁹³ Wilson, Arnold. "Mesopotamia, 1914–1921." *Journal of The Royal Central Asian Society* 8, no. 3 (1921): 150.

⁹⁴ Wilson, Arnold Talbot, and Gertrude Lowthian Bell. *Review of the Civil Administration of Mesopotamia*. London: H.M. Stationery Off., 1920. Print. 2. This report's findings regarding cotton are predicated on the findings made by representatives of the British Cotton Growing Association.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 92.

⁹⁶ Wimshurst, C. R. "Agricultural Problems in Alluvial Iraq." *Journal of The Royal Central Asian Society* 11.4 (1924): 359.

administered by Captain R. Thomas who was sent by the India Office in the capacity of Cotton Expert to the Administrative Authorities in Mesopotamia. He created an experimental farm under the supervision of the military and implemented of a large commercial production scheme. Most importantly, Thomas conducted experiments with various types of cotton to ascertain which yields were best, concluding the seed “Webber 49” produced the best cotton. The crop was renamed to Mesopotamian White or “Mesowhite” for short.⁹⁷ By 1919, the British Cotton Growing Association secured leases from A.T. Wilson to continue cotton production with the conditions that the BCGA would gin, bale, and market the crop as well. In order to achieve commercial levels of quality cotton, the council of the BCGA created a cotton-gin plant outfitted with new pneumatic presses and machinery that could spin up to six-thousand cotton bales annually.⁹⁸ Between the years 1921-24, cotton production rose from sixty bales to over 2,500 and nearly all production was overseen by the BCGA.⁹⁹

In 1919, the Agriculture Department transferred from the War Office to the Revenue Department - advantageous for several reasons. Throughout 1918 and 1919, British revenue officers carefully catalogued and archived the returns derived from duties and taxes as a way of monitoring the population. Individuals whom the British suspected to be sympathetic to Turkey had their lands sequestered. This prevented any undue remittances from reaching Turkish hands

⁹⁷ Himbury, William Henry. *Iraq (or Mesopotamia) as a Source for Increasing Raw Cotton Supplies*. Manchester: British Cotton Growing Association, 1925: 15-16. Himbury spends the first portion of the report expounding on the Biblical land of Babylonia and how cotton had been present. The entire report suggests the surveyors participated in a type of agricultural tourism. Numerous pictures of camels and artifacts lace the report.

⁹⁸ Ibid, 17.

⁹⁹ Ibid, 14.

while ensuring production was maintained and thus revenue.¹⁰⁰ Ultimately, the Mandate government saw revenue obtained through crop shares as an “outward and visible sign of the Arabs’ alleged submission. Payment of revenue is considered the measure of allegiance.”¹⁰¹ Unfortunately, some tax officials abused their authority by bullying weaker farmers to a tax they truthfully could not afford.¹⁰²

The Revenue Department served another purpose. Many inhabitants worked for the aghas, pashas, and sheikhs who could afford to purchase land but tribes dominated the rest of the country. Farmers composed a semi-nomadic feudal class that was greatly scorned by Bedouin tribes. Tribes were typically more powerful than the settled communities of the north, with exception of Baghdadis, many of whom served as bureaucrats and were loyal to the Ottomans before the British Mandate.¹⁰³ Thus, the Revenue Department was an organization that could illuminate the social construct of Iraq, “...which is so closely inter-related with the agrarian that the one cannot be understood without studying the other. Thus, the tribal system as we find it in Mesopotamia, that is to say, settled or half-settled agricultural communities, rests at bottom upon an economic basis controlled by agrarian conditions.”¹⁰⁴ If the British could successfully develop an agrarian society and increase the amount of landed peasants, Iraq could be governed more smoothly.

¹⁰⁰ Wilson, Arnold Talbot, and Gertrude Lowthian Bell. *Review of the Civil Administration of Mesopotamia*. London: H.M. Stationery Off., 1920. Print. 75, 89.

¹⁰¹ Ibid, 81.

¹⁰² Edwards, 351-352.

¹⁰³ Batatu, Hanna. *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'athists, and Free Officers*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1978: 44-152. For example the “warring” Sunni tribe, People of the Camel, disdained the sedentary lifestyle of Shi'i peasants or Marsh Arabs, known as the People of the Sheep.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, 95.

But agriculture was not Mesopotamia's only resource as the evolving objectives of the Mesopotamian Expeditionary force reflects. By March, 1917, a year after the demoralizing loss of the Kut garrison to the Turks, General Maude captured Baghdad along with the Berlin-Baghdad railhead.¹⁰⁵ Afterwards in a telegram, the Chief of the Imperial Staff, William Robertson, reiterated the goals to Maude's replacement, Lieutenant-General William Marshall as: "the establishment and maintenance of British influence in the Baghdad wilayat" and "the protection of the pipe lines and oilfields in the vicinity of the Karun river."¹⁰⁶

Despite the War Office's orders to Marshall, the extent that oil dictated initial British policy in Iraq is debatable - particularly before 1918 and the end of the India Expeditionary Force (I.E.F. D). The Indian government was not interested in protecting Persian oil fields in Abadan, confirming in 1914 if a British Petroleum agreement "contains [any] provisions imposing further responsibilities on the Government of India."¹⁰⁷ While the British understood the strategic importance of oil, particularly in the northern province of Mosul near Hit and Khaniqin, many officials in the Foreign Office believed it penultimate to agricultural production.¹⁰⁸ The emphasis on oil, or lack thereof, is summarily made by political officer C.J. Edmonds, who managed the region of Kirkuk, Erbil, and Sulaimaniyah in the 1920's:

Although the world press was wont to represent the battle as part of a gigantic struggle for the control of oil it is interesting to look back and recall how very little oil figured in our calculations, at my level at any rate; I do not remember a single document in which

¹⁰⁵ German engineers had also begun a Baghdad-Mosul connection, however work remained in its infancy.

¹⁰⁶ Wilson, Arnold T. *Mesopotamia, 1917-20: A Clash of Loyalties*. London: Oxford University Press, 1931: 2. Also see Barker, Telegram sent to Maude dated 30 September, 1916 prior to his offensive on Baghdad. Page 321.

¹⁰⁷ As quoted by, Cohen, Stuart. *British Policy in Mesopotamia, 1903-1914*. London: Ithaca Press for the Middle East Centre, St Antony's College, Oxford, 2008: 224.

¹⁰⁸ Further illustrating interagency schisms and lack of clear objective.

oil was mentioned as a factor of outstanding importance, as distinct from the general pattern of trade, both import and export, which made the three *wilayats* a single and indivisible economic unit.¹⁰⁹

Doubts remained high, first because nobody knew how much oil existed; second, they would have to invest incredible amounts of capital to extract it; third, the British would have to install an oil pipeline stretching five-hundred miles through northern Iraq and secure it.¹¹⁰ As such, the Civil Administration was hard pressed for resources and continually ran cash-deficits. The budget deficit was Rs. 45,135,407 for the fiscal year of 1920-21.¹¹¹ In the wake of the Great War, English taxpayers were still financing an Iraqi campaign that was increasingly unpopular. If the British were to address their financial plight, they would have to hedge their future on cash crops like dates and cotton. Former Secretary of State for Air, Lord Thomson was so confident in the ability of agriculture, he still believed in 1925 that the British and Iraqi governments would derive more revenue from wheat production than oil.¹¹²

But this did not prevent attempts by the British to exploit Iraq's natural resources. The Turkish Petroleum Company, Limited was converted to Iraq Petroleum Company, Limited in March of 1925 and the Deutsche Bank conceded its German holdings in the company. The Anglo-Persian Oil Company (APOC), Americans, Dutch, and French, split a £3,000,000 investment

¹⁰⁹ Edwards, 398.

¹¹⁰ Wilson, Arnold. "Mesopotamia, 1914–1921." *Journal of The Royal Central Asian Society* 8, no. 3 (1921): 151.

¹¹¹ CO 730/37, See reports, "Statement of Revenue and Expenditure Chargeable Against Revenue of the Former Civil Administration of Iraq for 1919/20" and for 1920/21, along with "Iraq Government Estimates 1921/22: Comparative Statement showing 'Actuals' of Revenue & Expenditure Against Budget Estimates for the Financial Year 1921/22." Figures are represented in rupees and do not include costs for railroads. Also refer to same sentiment echoed in 1921 by O'Dwyer in the previous chapter where he addresses Iraq as a "millstone around our necks."

¹¹² Thomson, Lord. "My Impressions of a Tour in 'Iraq.'" *Journal of The Royal Central Asian Society* 12.3 (1925): 215. Print.

equally with each party jointly owning a 23.75% share.¹¹³ However, full agreement regarding the rates, areas of concessions (APOC had lands independent of their holdings in Iraq Petroleum Company), and location of the the pipeline remained in negotiation until a supplemental oil agreement was finalized in March of 1931. France wanted the oil pipeline in French-controlled Syria while British stakeholders believed a more expensive line from Palestine to Haifa would be easier to protect from Bedouin raids.¹¹⁴ Therefore, the securitization of the Mosul *wilayet* depended on oil concessions made *later* in the campaign. Consequently security remained in flux throughout the nineteen-twenties, treated throughout British records as “the Mosul Question.”¹¹⁵ Where cultural imagination influenced agricultural policy representing the innate, natural, and quasi-historical attributes of Mesopotamia and its Biblical past, oil came to symbolize Britain’s technological prowess and increasing reliance during the second half of the mandate period.

Trains, Planes, and Automobiles - Iraq as a Throughfare

The strategic importance of the Suez Canal can not be understated as it was the primary passage from which the British could reach India. However, air routes began to challenge the

¹¹³ AIR 23/393, “Agreement Concluded on 24th March, 1931 Revising the Convention Made on the 14th of March, 1925 with the Government of ‘Iraq.’”

¹¹⁴ Ibid, Secret Report titled, “Oil Interests,” by Special Services Officer, dated August 2nd, 1931 to Air Staff Intelligence, Hinaidi. According to this report the other 5% of the original oil concession was held by an Armenian financier, Sarkis Gulbenkian.

¹¹⁵ Another important note is provided by Batatu, who argues that while much of Iraq was Shi’i, Sunnism remained dominate in the city of Mosul. This can be partially attributed, according to Batatu, to the geographic orientation of Mosul towards Syria and the Ottoman Empire, whose authority as a Sunni Caliphate was probably more readily received, pages, 17, 41-43. For a brief time, the “Basra Question” also existed. Scholars quickly point out the natural trade and geographical networks that composed the Mosul *wilayet* but Basra was also quite independent from Baghdad: “During the month of October, the Turks had been clearing their encumbered decks for action. For the better part of 25 years the peace of Basra had been rent and the slumbers of successive Walis disturbed by the activities of a member of the Sunni family of the district, Saiyab [sic] Talib, eldest son of the Naqib. In turn adherent of the Committee of Union and Progress and of its rival, the Liberal Party, Saiyad Talib’s ambitions were centered on the hope of converting the Basra *wilayet* into an independent Arab emirate with himself as amir,” Wilson, Arnold Talbot, and Gertrude Lowthian Bell. *Review of the Civil Administration of Mesopotamia*. London: H.M. Stationery Off., 1920: 10.

historical and strategic monopoly of maritime passages. As the British weened themselves from the restrictive nature of steam power in favor of oil, cities such as Basra and Mosul began to exhibit strategic importance apart from their proximity to India. The Mesopotamia Expeditionary Force's primary objective had been blocking Turkish control of Iraq's only port and the broader water basin that forms at the confluence of the Tigris and Euphrates.¹¹⁶

Throughout MEF campaign, military planners were less concerned with utilizing aircraft. The lack of a concise objective for the first two years, interagency and government competition for control, and general lack of foresight from British command, created immense disfunction and disorganization through 1916. For example, the Foreign Office guarded its role negotiating with the Ottoman Porte, even withholding information from London and the India Office as was the case during the Baghdad Railway discussions.¹¹⁷ Meanwhile, dysentery, disease, and heat-stroke plagued Indian and British troops who were ill-equipped and suffered the brunt of administrative ineptitude. Colonial administration understood a schematic and technological overhaul was sorely needed. Many of the naval vessels were too large or heavy to travel upstream towards forward developments and the port of Basra was so congested that some ships waited six-weeks to unload their cargo.¹¹⁸

The Indian Administration was the first to respond by sending shallow-hulled ships to navigate the channels of the Tigris and Euphrates. Attempting to redeem their catastrophic

¹¹⁶ Initial designs restricted the British and Indian campaign to the southern basin. However, there is evidence to suggest that preliminary objectives were less clear than advertised, as proposals for the takeover and maintenance of Baghdad seem to have been made as early as November 23, 1914, one day after India secured Basra. See, Yate, A. C. "Britain's Buffer States in the East," 10.

¹¹⁷ Cohen, Stuart. *British Policy in Mesopotamia, 1903-1914*. London: Ithaca Press for the Middle East Centre, St Antony's College, Oxford, 2008:

¹¹⁸ Barker, 308-317.

campaign at Kut, Indian nationalists were always eager to export their technocratic imperialism.¹²⁰ However, many of them were poorly constructed or cheaply outfitted boats that were piloted by inexperienced captains. George Buchanan took control of the Basra's reorganization, and slowly, with many bumps and bruises along the way, Buchanan used his port expertise to establish a sense of order in the Basra *wilayet*. In addition to increasing numbers of properly outfitted medical supply ships and the number of tugs and steamers, the campaign received newly developed weaponry - mortars, machine guns, and hand grenades - items that would give the MEF a technological edge over their Turkish opponents.¹²¹

A complex array of political, economic, budgetary, and technological factors, formed the foundations of British maintenance throughout Mesopotamia. These variables were not stagnant, but rather evolved and were in constant renegotiation with one another. Thus, aerial schemes and policing methods cannot be seen as independent or derived purely from military concerns, but rather the result of an equation which remained fluid until the British mandate ended.

Of course, the British colonialists developed rail and motor routes in conjunction with its air-routes. After the First World War, London had extravagant ideas about connecting the entire empire regardless of vehicular method. German presence in North Africa had ceased thereby creating a marvelous opportunity for the British to take advantage of their presence. Cairo was to become the Empire's transit centerpiece with rail, road, and ferryboat routes sprouting (or at least proposed) frequently.¹²² These modes of transportation created a complex network of routes

¹²⁰ Satia, Priya. "Developing Iraq: Britain, India and the Redemption of Empire and Technology in the First World War." *Past & Present* 197, no. 1 (November 2007): 234.

¹²¹ Barker, 217.

¹²² Fox, H. Wilson. "The Cape-to-Cairo Railway and Train Ferries." *The Geographical Journal* 55, no. 2 (February 1920): 73-101; Williams, Robert. "The Cape to Cairo Railway, from the Point of View of African Development." *Journal of The Royal Central Asian Society* 9, no. 3 (1922): 147-66.

heading south towards Cape Town. Eight-hundred miles of water ways connected the north and south, and twelve-hundred miles of road.¹²³ More routes headed east towards Beirut, Damascus, and eventually Baghdad. If Cairo was an important transportation node that connected London with Africa, Baghdad would become the link that united India and Australia.

The first blueprints for an overland route connecting the Mediterranean to the Persian Gulf had been designed as early as 1835 by Sir Colonel Francis Radwan Chesney. Palmerston financed the route in 1836, thinking Mehemet Ali's control of Egypt and Syria. He had proposed a route going from Alexandria to Aleppo, down the east bank of the Euphrates and towards Kuwait.¹²⁴ Willcocks echoed the need throughout his agricultural reports. If crop production increased, farmers would have to transfer their goods to international markets.¹²⁵

Germany had also understood the strategic importance of Mesopotamia and for several years developed a railway line from Constantinople to Baghdad. In 1888 the Deutsche Bank secured the trust of the Porte allowing the Anatolian Railway Company to obtain a concession to construct the railway.¹²⁶ Besides its economic advantages, train would allow the rapid transport of German and Ottoman troops east to Persia and south to the port of Basra. Prior to World War I, the German built Baghdadi railway had created incredible angst for military strategists. This fear was part and parcel of greater British misgivings toward European encroachment near its

¹²³ Wilson, Arnold. "Mesopotamia, 1914–1921." *Journal of The Royal Central Asian Society* 8, no. 3 (1921): 152.

¹²⁴ Woods, H. C. "The Baghdad Railway and Its Tributaries." *The Geographical Journal* 50, no. 1 (July 1917): 32-56. In 1857 he published his findings in, *Report on the Euphrates Valley Railway*.

¹²⁵ Willcocks, William. "Mesopotamia: Past, Present, and Future and Discussion." *The Geographical Journal* 35.1 (1910): 13.

¹²⁶ Cohen, Stuart. *British Policy in Mesopotamia, 1903-1914*. London: Ithaca Press for the Middle East Centre, St Antony's College, Oxford, 2008: 5.

Indian doorstep. It even aided the Ottomans to quell rebellions in distant parts of the empire.¹²⁷

By 1919, over nine-hundred miles of railway connected Mesopotamia, most of that between the Basra-Baghdad-Khaniqin line (most built by the Germans).¹²⁸

Domestic routes were vital for farmers to transfer crops to Iraq's metropolises. Air Minister Lord Thomson emphasized the importance of creating railway in addition to air routes. He underscored the necessity to connect Constantinople to Baghdad and Basra, in order for commercial goods and connections to be further maintained with Western India.¹²⁹ Because the British continued to develop Iraq's railways, two systems predominated - meter gauge and standard gauge. Meter gauge ran from the north to Basra, composing a primary trunk line. Several lines branched from this trunk toward Karbala and Nasariyah, yet these variances created logistical problems for the British.¹³⁰

However, the commercial and economic feasibility of rail was questionable. In order for any commercial route to work, whether it be air, road, or rail, there must be markets to support them. Installing railways was expensive and would have to traverse the Zagros mountains of Western Persia to reach India. At the end of the war the railway systems in Mesopotamia were valued at three million pounds. After years of improvements and extensions, the entire system

¹²⁷ Williams, Robert. "The Cape to Cairo Railway, from the Point of View of African Development." *Journal of The Royal Central Asian Society* 9, no. 3 (1922): 52.

¹²⁸ Wilson, Arnold. "Mesopotamia, 1914–1921." *Journal of The Royal Central Asian Society* 8, no. 3 (1921): 152.

¹²⁹ Thomson, Lord. "My Impressions of a Tour in 'Iraq.'" *Journal of The Royal Central Asian Society* 12.3 (1925): 224.

¹³⁰ Himbury, William Henry. *Iraq (or Mesopotamia) as a Source for Increasing Raw Cotton Supplies*. Manchester: British Cotton Growing Association, 1925: 36.



*Nairn Transport Company at Rutbah Wells Fort, 1937, Anbar Governorate*¹³¹

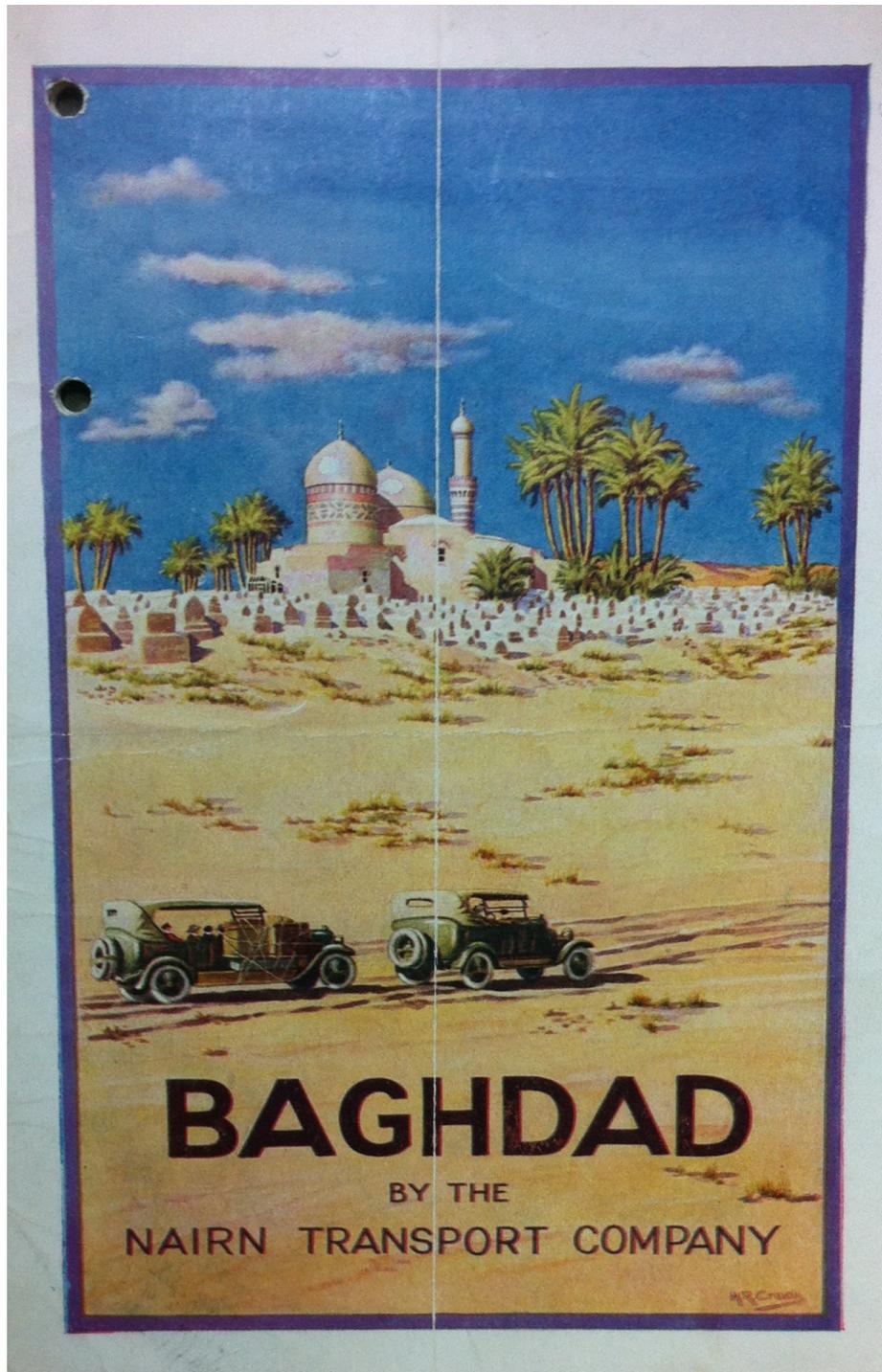
was only worth one million pounds because of the market and difficulties sustaining the line.

Profits were not high enough to cover depreciation, never mind its protraction.¹³²

Major Van Ness proposed light-rail alternatives outside the primary trunk line. They would be more commercially sustainable and their smaller gauge tracks could navigate mountainous

¹³¹ Clapp, Frederick. *Ar-Ruṭbah (Iraq), Near Eastern Transport Company Bus at Rutbah Wells Fort*. May 1937. Frederick G. Clapp Collection, American Geographical Society Library, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Libraries, Milwaukee. Accessed November 3, 2014. <http://collections.lib.uwm.edu/cdm/ref/collection/agsphoto/id/21568>.

¹³² *Ibid*, 36.



Nairn Transport advertising their road to Baghdad.¹³³

¹³³ Photo by author, CO 730/81, "Baghdad by the Nairn Transport Company."

regions more easily.¹³⁴ Despite the use of smaller gauge tracks, portions of the Zagros were still too treacherous for rail, particularly in parts of central Kurdistan near the cities of Rowanduz and Rania. Thus, the British relied primarily on automobiles and aircraft to traverse the eastern steppes.¹³⁵

The Curious Case of Rutbah Wells and the Cairo-Baghdad Air Route

Rutbah Wells exemplifies the conjoined efforts to network Mesopotamia by road and air. Other roads became important arteries linking Baghdad to Persia, and thus India. The Nairn Transport Company was famous for its pioneering services across the region.¹³⁶ Nairn owned an outfit of plush Cadillacs and Fords to make trips comfortable. It made some of the first journeys by automobile across the Syrian Desert and mostly transported along the route of Beirut-Damascus-and Baghdad. East of Baghdad, more roads connected Mesopotamia to Persia. Before the Bolshevik Revolution, Russian transport companies were active throughout northern Iran and the Brits continued road construction to Shiraz and Bandar Abbas.¹³⁷

June of 1915 marked the beginnings of the Royal Flying Corps in Mesopotamia which had, “started life with two obsolete Maurice Farmans sent down from Egypt only a few weeks before. Both had been assembled in time to reconnoitre over Qurna during Gorrings’ advance at

¹³⁴ Van Ness, W. Waters. "Light Railways in New Countries." *The Geographical Journal* 54, no. 4 (October 1919): 247-49.

¹³⁵ Mason, Kenneth. "Central Kurdistan." *The Geographical Journal* 54, no. 6 (December 1919): 338. Unbeknownst to Mason, Rania and Rowanduz would become central locations for the vestiges of Turkish resistance and the Shaikh Mahmud Rebellion of 1922-3. The mountainous territory insulated inhabitants from British power and was a perfect refuge.

¹³⁶ Keeling, E.H. "The Damascus-Baghdad Motor Route." *The Geographical Journal* 63, no. 2 (February 1924): 150-53. Here, Keeling describes how the Nairn Company traveled a route never before recorded. Another company that operated routes between Beirut and Baghdad was the Eastern Transport Co.

¹³⁷ Napier, G. S. F. "The Road from Baghdad to Baku." *The Geographical Journal* 53, no. 1 (January 1919): 15.

the end of May, but one of them, which was constantly having engine trouble, was lost subsequently during the Nasiriyeh operations. Two Caudron aircraft replaced them but were hardly much better. Maurice Farmans were troublesome aircraft that needed constant repairs, difficult to perform when there were few mechanics and even fewer spare parts. Both planes and pilots were unaccustomed to flying in tropical weather.

The large geographic discrepancies of Iraq created numerous performance problems for the RAF. Aircraft technology was still in its infancy, and Mesopotamia's climate offered a wide range of mechanical challenges. Dust and debris was always a concern, but so too were the galls sweeping in from the Hakkari Mountains of Southern Kurdistan. The sweltering summers could reach one hundred and twenty degrees or more for extensive periods of time. Person and machine became overheated and rudimentary radiators had to be improvised until tropical radiators arrived from England.¹³⁸ The arrival of Martinsyde Scouts marked a shift in aircraft technology. They were considerably more powerful than Maurice Farmans despite their meager eighty-horsepower.¹³⁹

It was during the spring and summer of 1916 that another fundamental shift occurred. To the instigation of Lt.-General Sir Percy Lakes, the War Office appointed Maude to take command of the campaign. Maude rose fast through the military chain of command, developing a reputation his efficiency and attention to detail. In addition, he saw the value of aircraft and made

¹³⁸ AIR 9/14, Confidential, The Work of the Royal Air Force in Mesopotamia, by Lt.-Gen. Sir A. Haldane, K.C.B., General Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Mesopotamian Expeditionary Force with remarks by Air Staff, 19 February, 1921.

¹³⁹ Barker, 105. The first batch of Martinsyde Scouts formed Squadron 30, one of most decorated squadrons that served in Iraq. Squadron 30's headquarters were located in Baghdad but had a forward deployment base in Mosul.

a point to fly rather than drive.¹⁴⁰ In March of 1917, Royal Air Corps tried to bomb the Baghdad-Samarrah railway, pilots landing their planes while explosive charges were attempted to be set on the train tracks (T.E. Lawrence was famous for such hollywood antics).

If the RGS and RCAS were at the forefront of imperial strategy, the creation of air routes and the general use of aircraft were, perhaps, the most prominent conversation topics. Aircraft equipped the empire with newfound degrees of communication and transportation while exemplifying the technological supremacy of the British Empire. Aerial archeology and newfound cartographic methods documented humanity's land and timescapes as never before. Speaking at the RGS (with inaugural Secretary of State for Air Winston Churchill in attendance), Control General of Civil Aviation and Major General Sir Frederick H. Sykes, who was a leading visionary and developer of imperial air routes, recognized the, "strange sequence of events whereby the problem of flight was solved just in time to assist in the conduct of war..."¹⁴¹

Concerning the ascendancy of aircraft, Sykes quotes himself:

The navies of the world will have to relinquish their present proud position; their *rôle* is that of a floating defence. The Air Service built up on joint Army, Navy, and Civilian foundations is in the foremost line. Fortresses, arsenals, dockyards, Government offices, factories of war material, are protected from the air...¹⁴²

As Sykes openly admits, the emergence aerial dominance during the First World War and the preliminary Mesopotamia Expeditionary Force empowered British administrators to clear a causeway for innovative statecraft; The minds of Britain's colonial architects, scattered

¹⁴⁰ Maude died of cholera, an infection which British doctors suspect came from suspect water that entered his milk that he put in his coffee.

¹⁴¹ Sykes, Frederick H. "Imperial Air Routes." *The Geographical Journal* 55, no. 4 (1920): 241.

¹⁴² *Ibid*, 243.



*"Weeding the Aerodrome"*¹⁴³

throughout Arabia, forged policies that matched the developments of the modern in abstraction and novelty. Before the space age there was the plane age, and Britain was in the driver's seat.

Strictly speaking, Britain was not located marvelously in the center of its empire; however, more broadly, the geographic conveniences enjoyed by the empire-at-large was

¹⁴³ Sykes, Frederick H. "Imperial Air Routes." *The Geographical Journal* 55, no. 4 (1920): 241-70. Image presented at a lecture at the Royal Geographical Society. Photo taken at unknown location in Africa. Present at the lecture was Winston Churchill, the Prince of Wales, and many other notable figures. This powerful photo captures racial discourse underlying the efforts to "develop" the Empire - an airstrip in this case.

unparalleled. With England controlling Egypt, Mesopotamia, and India, it could reach anyplace on earth by establishing wireless communication and fuel stations throughout its territory.

Thus, both the Levant and Mesopotamia became vital links of communication, not necessarily exhibiting value on their own but rather as thoroughfares. Such conceptions fueled British desires to equip Cairo with “an Empire aerial organization,” thus, “endeavouring to urge forward the latest development of our Western civilization in the new territory.”¹⁴⁴ In the same lecture, the Captain P. D. Aceland praises the efforts to develop commercial aircraft, partially through the modification of warplanes such as the Vickers-Vimy, a heavy-bombing machine that evolved into a civilian cargo and transport plane. While Frederick Sykes understood the wartime advantages of imperial air routes, he understood the importance and probable usurpation of military interests with civil.

The Royal Air Force continued to reify the strategic importance of Iraq throughout their imperial campaign throughout the 1920's. “The Cairo-Baghdad air route represents the first fruits of this policy, maintains air lines of communication between the garrisons of Egypt, Palestine, Trans-Jordania and Iraq, and constitutes an essential link in a chain which is hoped will in the future prove capable of extension first to India, and ultimately [?] via Singapore”¹⁴⁵ Air-routes would connect the entire British Empire and even Australia, London to Melbourne becoming a

¹⁴⁴ Aceland, P. D. "Communications by Air in the East." *Journal of The Royal Central Asian Society* 8, no. 2 (1921): 104-5.

¹⁴⁵ Secret Memorandum No. IRQ. 4 by the Secretary of State for Air to the Air Ministry, 12 December 1922, “Value of the air route between Cairo and Baghdad for strategic and other purposes” [AIR 9/14]

five-day journey; in comparison, the journey from Baghdad to Basra by steamboat took a week.¹⁴⁶

Of the eight hundred and thirty-three miles that formed the Cairo-Baghdadi air route, planes crossed four hundred and sixty-seven of these over the Arabian Desert. It was the first stage of an air route that would continue to India and then Australia, thus connecting the entire British Empire while simultaneously improving communication. Air-Commodore Brooke-Popham lectured on the emerging strategic importance of the air route, “Normally, a letter going from London to Bagdad travels via the Suez Canal, the Red Sea, Bombay, Karachi, the Persian Gulf, and Basra, and takes between five and six weeks, thus making Iraq, from the point of view of communication one of the furthest outposts of the Empire. The air route is altering all of this. I have seen in Bagdad a London paper only nine days old. A pilot has arrived in Bagdad eight and a half hours after leaving Cairo...A regular fortnightly mails service is now running in each direction.”¹⁴⁷

The creation of an air-route is more difficult than flying from one location to another. While aircraft technology had drastically improved since during the First World War, planes still waylaid at aerodromes to refuel. Sir Francis Younghusband asserted that the RGS would endeavor to locate the next “Liverpools” and “Portsmouths,” those places that served as the “docks and ports” of the air service, throughout the empire.¹⁴⁸ Thus in 1919, surveyors from the

¹⁴⁶Batatu, Hanna. *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'athists, and Free Officers*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1978, 16. Such primitive modes of transportation were probably contributed to the varying economic orientations of Iraq's cities - Mosul to the west and Basra to India.

¹⁴⁷ Brooke-Popham, H. R. M. "Some Notes on Aeroplanes, with Special Reference to the Air Route from Cairo to Bagdad." *Journal of The Royal Central Asian Society* 9, no. 3 (1922): 127-46.

¹⁴⁸ Sykes, Frederick H. "Imperial Air Routes." *The Geographical Journal* 55, no. 4 (1920): 264.

RAF struck across the desert in Ford motorcades to locate suitable landing locations across the desert. Each runway was located forty miles equidistant from the next, serving as stoppage points for planes flying to Baghdad from Cairo or Damascus.

In the Anbar province the British created a strategic refilling station at the site of Rutbah, more commonly known as “Rutbah Wells” because of its oil. Heading West, it was the last sizable town suitable for British transportation to resupply. In fact, during the American invasion in 2003, Major Gavrilis located the police station at Rutbah, which had been built by the British in 1927 and subsequently used as company headquarters during throughout operations in 2003.¹⁴⁹ The land and air routes coincided with one another from Baghdad to Rutbah, where automobiles and planes could conveniently land and refill “every twenty to twenty-five miles.” At Rutbah, the routes diverge - cars continuing to Damascus and planes toward Amman and Cairo. Regarding its potential, Lord Thomson lectured at the Royal Central Asian Society, “I believe that route has got infinite possibilities. I would early like to develop it, because it seems to have so much importance for the whole of our position in India.”¹⁵⁰

Mesopotamia’s evolution as a breadbasket and thoroughfare to India was not a coincidence but a reflection of the growing needs and desires of the English empire. Cash-strapped and beset with the responsibilities of other territories, the British imagined immense promise for Iraq as a self-sustaining territory - as long as efforts were maintained to manage the rivers and irrigation so wheat and cotton could flourish. But discipline comes in many forms. Surely, the Revenue Department could catalogue taxes and attempt to settle roving recalcitrant

¹⁴⁹ Gavrilis, James A. "The Mayor of Ar Rutbah." *Foreign Policy*, 20 Oct. 2009. Web. 22 Feb. 2015

¹⁵⁰ Thomson, Lord. "My Impressions of a Tour in 'Iraq.'" *Journal of The Royal Central Asian Society* 12.3 (1925): 218. Print.

tribes with the prospect of wealth, but imperial transportation routes, particularly air, held other advantages. For Britain's wrath came swift and sure on the wings of a Vickers-Vimy.

Technology as Discipline: Humanity of Aircraft and Shaikh Mahmoud

We are safe, except for risk of engine failure, for there are no enemy aircraft. But two of us, in the only other Maurice Farman, have recently crashed in front of the Turkish trenches, and are now prisoners, leaving Jumbo and me and the Flight Commander as young gods on whom Fate depends. To us three, and only to us, the past, present and future of this country is spread out like a map each morning.¹⁵¹

British imaginations of Mesopotamia as Eden or El Dorado, reified by a multiplicity of travel literature, archeological digs, and geographic societies, formed the first half of a violent dialectic that granted divine right and responsibility to the British. If resurrection was to be achieved through development and modernism, tending and cultivation would be achieved through airplanes. Therefore, the value of the plane was not restricted to its physical abilities to discipline a population. Planes were physical manifestations of the British colonial project, flying articulations of the modern that sanctioned violence against the primitive. They were the latest mechanisms to embody the narrative of English supremacy and the latest conversation topics in British high society.¹⁵²

Negotiations - An Aerial Defense Scheme Takes Shape

Despite, Gertrude Bell's warnings of rising nationalism throughout Mesopotamia, High Commissioner A.T. Wilson overestimated popular support for the British. Tribes were becoming discontent with London's patronizing attitude, colonial policy, and taxes. In a letter to Percy Cox, Gertrude Bell mentioned the failure of British administrators to create a concise political objective in Mesopotamia by 1916, "The real difficulty here is that we don't know exactly what we intend to do in this country. Can you persuade people to take your side when you are not sure

¹⁵¹ Yeats-Brown, Francis. *The Lives of a Bengal Lancer*. New York: Viking, 1930, 179.

¹⁵² As can be witnessed by transcripts from the Royal Society for Asian Affairs, which began publishing its journal in 1914.

in the end whether you'll be there to take theirs?"¹⁵³ Undoubtedly, British interest in Mesopotamia is best described as commercial and strategic. The MEF's deployment and continued expansion northward towards the Turkish border convoluted these aims.

Under Ottoman rule, Iraqis certainly had a history of semi self-governance. T.E. Lawrence noted that under Turkish rule, seventy percent of the administration was composed of Iraqis while sixty percent of the officers of the Army corps were Arab. In comparison the Civil Administration during the Mandate did not have a single local in its employment.¹⁵⁴ Frustration boiled over and In May, 1920, joint Shi'a-Sunni demonstrations commenced by conducting the *mawlund* and *ta'ziyya* together, an historic moment representing the materialization of a united Shi'i-Sunni front against the colonial forces.¹⁵⁵ Many of its leaders were former officers or officials in the Ottoman army and administration. Displays of solidarity developed into open rebellion and the Revolt of 1920, which began in Karbala and Najaf, spread through southern Iraq and Kurdistan. The British estimated over 131,000 rebels were armed and as many as 17,000 had modern repeating rifles.¹⁵⁶ It was the first time the region experienced large scale aerial bombardment; in total, pilots flew 4,008 mission hours, fired 183,861 rounds, and dropped 97 tons of bombs.¹⁵⁷ While the rebellion failed because of diminishing tribal finances,

¹⁵³ Letter from Gertrude Bell to her father, 27 April 1916, from the *Letters of Gertrude Bell* (1927), as quoted by Sluglett, Peter. *Britain in Iraq: Contriving King and Country, 1914-1932*. New York: Columbia UP, 2007. 11-12.

¹⁵⁴ Lawrence, T. E. "Arab Rights." *The Times* (London), July 23, 1920. Accessed March 23, 2015. The Times Digital Archive.

¹⁵⁵ Yaphe, 28.

¹⁵⁶ Omissi, 123.

¹⁵⁷ Glancy, Jonathon. "Gas, Chemicals, Bombs: Britain Has Used Them All before in Iraq." *The Guardian*, April 19, 2003.

divisiveness, and the Royal Air Force, it was a poignant sign that inter-religious and tribal barriers were not as formidable as thought.¹⁵⁸

C.J. Edmonds and E.B. Soane were instrumental in brokering power by providing financial and military assistance to amicable tribes.¹⁵⁹ British policy in Mesopotamia adjusted after the summer revolt and the French expulsion of Faisal in Syria.¹⁶⁰ The years 1920-22 introduced a new phase of British control in Kurdistan as disorder was constantly present at the distant periphery of Baghdad. British civil servants tried to forge political alliances with tribes in northern Iraq. However, there was a stark difference; Historically, the Ottoman's tried to weaken tribes but the British empowered them. But these arrangements divorced tribal leaders and sheikhs from their historical base of power - other townspeople and familial relations.¹⁶¹ This also lead the Europeans to depend on continuous technical innovation as tribes came in possession of their weapons.¹⁶²

Effectively, Baghdad was too far away from Mosul to maintain security. After six months of military action during 1920 London aspired to truncate its operations "to achieve political and

¹⁵⁸ Al-Bazirkan, 'Ali. *Al-Waqai' al-Haqiqiyah fi al-Hawrah al-'Iraqiyah : Risalah Tataḍammanu Munaqashah wa Tahlil li Hawadith Thawrat al-'Iraq fi 30 Huziran 1920 wa Rad ma Ulṣiqa bi ha min Muftarayāt wa Tashih ma Dara Hawlaha min Akhta*. 2nd ed. Baghdad, 1991: 200-206.

¹⁵⁹ AIR 23/563. Secret Memorandum from Ministry of Interior to Secretary of High Commissioner, 15 December, 1922. The authority between *mutasarrif* and British was highly fluid.

¹⁶⁰ Batatu traces the origins of an 'Iraqi identity to the Arab Revolt of 1920, arguing it to be the first time Shi'i and Sunni worked together to fight the British. 23

¹⁶¹ Yaphe, Judith S. "The View from Basra: Southern Iraq's Reaction to War and Occupation 1915-1925." In *The Creation of Iraq, 1914-1921*, edited by Reeva Spector Simon and Eleanor Harvey Tejirian, 19-35. New York: Columbia University Press, 2004: 25. For example, Shaikh Mahmud attempted to kill his brother.

¹⁶² Omissi, David E. "Indigenous Responses to Air Policing." In *Air Power and Colonial Control: The Royal Air Force, 1919-1939*, 107-33. Manchester [England]: Manchester University Press, 1990: 123.

military economies.”¹⁶³ In fact, the financial state of Britain was so desperate that London considered a complete withdrawal from Mesopotamia to terminate colonies from hemorrhaging its assets. The Cairo Conference responded by establishing new policies that shifted military responsibility from the army to the air force - a policy decision the army fiercely resisted. Both branches submitted multiple proposals for the future control of Iraq but consensus between offices was unattainable as most policy decisions had been.¹⁶⁴

The RAF and the British Foreign Office in India were amicable to an aerial defense scheme but the War Office staunchly resisted. In the wake of postwar debt, the British Empire was in dire economic and financial straits and an air enforcement scheme was a preferable albeit unconventional alternative. The War Office thoroughly disapproved such plans because its generals disregarded any possibility that aircraft could maintain security in Mesopotamia. These philosophical differences greatly influenced the *modus operandi* and proposals submitted by the War Staff and RAF. The Air Command schemes were more attractive to the British War Cabinet amidst a culture of monetary constraints. Thus, London did not implement a detailed air scheme until the end of 1920.

While austerity was the initial justification for a military shift, the second reason was increased capabilities of aircraft. Planes were highly effective despite pilots and navigators using rudimentary tactics during the MEF. Between May of 1916 and the end of the year, the RFC grew from five to twenty-four aircraft - mostly models B.E.2c (Blériot Experimental) and

¹⁶³ Yaphne, 32. From CO 730/38, Middle Eastern Services estimated a savings of approximately £1.5 million between the fiscal years 1922-23 to 1923-24. Defense spending in Iraq and Palestine during 1922-23 amounted to £9,096,000 while the RAF scheme projected to £7,550,000.

¹⁶⁴ CO 730/38, “Further Report of the Committee Appointed to Consider the Number and Conditions of Service of British Officials to be Appointed or Retained Under Article II of the Treaty.” Numbering only 4,500, the strengthening of a native levy to a size of 6,000 remained a priority.

Martinsnyde (Snipe and Vickers-Vernon model aircraft replaced them soon thereafter).¹⁶⁵

General Maude greatly valued their presence. Maude led the offensive on Baghdad during 1917 and used aircraft extensively. During the battle of Kut-al-Amara which began on September 26, 1917, aircraft dropped twenty-four bombs on a Turkish steamer that had been spotted during the night. Lieutenant-General N.A. Marshall's personal reconnaissance mission is, perhaps, the first record of a senior British officer flying during combat.¹⁶⁶ Maude and his senior staff increasingly relied upon the junior officers of the Royal Flying Corps despite protestations that a single squadron of poorly outfitted and antiquated aircraft was not sufficient.¹⁶⁷ While aircraft were not yet outfitted with wireless capabilities, navigators communicated with ground forces by dropping handwritten notes attached to streamers. Such was the case when one plane warned General Delamain about the Turkish General Nur-ad-din's attempt to outflank the British advance on Kut during the MEF campaign.¹⁶⁸

But not everything was positive with airplanes during the 1914 campaign. Radiators failed to cool engines and mechanics were forced to improvise until new parts arrived from Britain. The Iraqi climate had physically distorted planes designed to fly in England's more temperate climate. The heat and humidity shrank their wooden frames or even disintegrated them (Barker notes that 63 Squadron continued flying despite these set backs, conducting air-

¹⁶⁵ Barker, A. J. *The Neglected War: Mesopotamia 1914-1918*. London: Faber and Faber, 1967: 325

¹⁶⁶ Ibid, 324-6.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid, 443-4. This was one of the few times relations were poor because Maude overvalued the Royal Flying Corps. Army officers generally felt disdain for the vehicles.

¹⁶⁸ Yeats-Brown, Francis. *The Lives of a Bengal Lancer*. New York: Viking, 1930: 187. By all accounts, there was one working Martinsnyde plane working, Yeats-Brown being its navigator. For more, see Barker, 110.

photography and reconnaissance trips for mapmaking).¹⁶⁹ Since then, RAF aircraft and tactics had improved drastically. Pilots and navigators learned and perfected navigation techniques and training drastically improved. For example, when Yeats-Brown arrived from India and reported for duty he had no navigational experience. Despite this (and never notifying his superiors), he learned the simple codes of communication which consisted of firing red, blue, and white Verey lights or flares. These signals communicated the accuracy of artillery strikes to battalions in the rear. Bombers learned to glide towards their targets in order to achieve surprise.¹⁷⁰ There would be fewer limitations if the British could implement a comprehensive aerial scheme of dozen squadrons equipped with the newest weapons and best aircraft.¹⁷¹

Thus, A.T. Wilson believed the RAF were the best suited force to maintain security in Iraq. The performance of Indian and British troops had been underwhelming and loss at the Kut still stung. He wrote, “ [the RAF] alone can reinforce Mesopotamia rapidly, and afford adequate support to local forces at a distance from the centre in case of need.”¹⁷² Whatever misgivings London had about implementing an aerial control scheme were quickly assuaged by the promise of aircraft during the 1920 rebellion.¹⁷³ If London’s colonial aristocrats needed any more encouragement, they needed little persuading to adopt a defense scheme that exemplified the

¹⁶⁹ Barker, A. J. *The Neglected War: Mesopotamia 1914-1918*. London: Faber and Faber, 1967: 419.

¹⁷⁰ Omissi, David E. "Indigenous Responses to Air Policing." In *Air Power and Colonial Control: The Royal Air Force, 1919-1939*, 107-33. Manchester [England]: Manchester University Press, 1990: 120-21.

¹⁷¹ Yeats-Brown, Francis. The artillery commander had strips of cloth with letters L, X, or E communicating the commander’s orders: Observe for line, Observe for range, or repeat last signal” respectively, pg. 174.

¹⁷² Wilson, Arnold T. "Mesopotamia, 1914–1921." *Journal of The Royal Central Asian Society* 8, no. 3 (1921): 144-61. 153

¹⁷³ While showing promise, David Omissi how Colonial Administration understated losses and the success of resistance.



*The Tigris above Jizre*¹⁷⁴

modern era and depicted the racial disparities between the “civilized” Brit and “primordial” tribe.¹⁷⁵ In 1927 for instance, Wing-Commander Norman Bottomley justified the tactics of air policing at the Marlborough School for boys, “the more primitive a race is, the more it respects sheer power.”¹⁷⁶

The consequence of the Cairo Conference was a complete paradigm shift in governance and Britain’s aspirations to install a functioning Arab bureaucracy. Feisal would become king and maintain relations with Great Britain. While effective administrative governance was still

¹⁷⁴ Stark, Freya. *Riding to the Tigris*. London: John Murray, 1959.

¹⁷⁵ Omissi, David E. "Indigenous Responses to Air Policing." In *Air Power and Colonial Control: The Royal Air Force, 1919-1939*, 107-33. Manchester [England]: Manchester University Press, 1990: 109-112.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid*, 110. As quoted by Omissi. However, the author qualifies this evidence. Not every British officer believed that such racial theories were correct. John Salmond advocated his “three-stage theory,” believing every human being would react the same to aerial policing. First panic, then indifference or contempt, and finally weariness.



*Oak Forest near Rowanduz*¹⁷⁷

necessary, a comprehensive governmental scheme with developed institutions would be expensive. Thus, the RAF became the highest judicial body - administering swift, clean, and terrible punishment. As predicted, military expenditures declined drastically afterwards. In 1921 expenses exceeded £23 million. Britain spent a paltry £4 million five years later.¹⁷⁸

Traditionally, the War Staff was cautious when determining troop estimates. From a tactical perspective they desired a plethora of bases spread strategically and evenly across territory. In the event of external invasion or uprising these bases could assist and reinforce one

¹⁷⁷ Chapman, G.W. "Notes on Forestry of Iraq." *Empire Forestry Review*, Vol. 29, No. 2 (June 1950), 133.

¹⁷⁸ Glancy, Jonathon. "Gas, Chemicals, Bombs: Britain Has Used Them All before in Iraq." *The Guardian*, April 19, 2003. Refer to note 161 for counter figure. This seems to be a dramatic drop but previous savings assessment was a projection.

another; the scheme's drawback was its reliance on high troop numbers.¹⁷⁹ Relations between the Royal Flying Corps (before the RAF became its own branch the RFC reported to the army) and War Office had never been pleasant. The RAF and the War Office also disagreed about the constitution of threats and their ability to cooperate. Externally, the British were concerned with Turkish activity and highly cautious about Russian interventionism in the wake of a Bolshevik revolution.¹⁸⁰ Internally, should tribal factions become unified the British would be severely outnumbered. However, Sir Hugh Trenchard, Chief of the Air Staff in Baghdad surmised that both Kurd and Arab would remain disunited based on information available to the colonial administration in 1921.¹⁸¹

Preliminary discussions outlined strategic aerodrome locations with respect to physical and human geographies. Broadly speaking, British command identified three types of landscapes and their suitability for airplanes: "The Plain — an area of cultivation in the neighborhood of the rivers, the Desert of the West and South West, and the mountainous country of the North and East."¹⁸² British Intelligence graded each portion by their ability to be controlled. The Mesopotamia Expeditionary Force formed the foundation of this knowledge. However, the movements of the MEF were restricted to areas surrounding Basra and were inadequate to

¹⁷⁹ AIR 9/14, Secret Memorandum with Covering Minute by the Chief of the Air Staff on the Control of Mesopotamia by the Royal Air Force, May, 1920. This report submits initial cost estimates and annual reoccurring expenditures. Three year personnel estimates, pay allowances, maintenance, and transportation costs put the figure at 3,964,100.

¹⁸⁰ They basically never knew what the Russians were up to and always kept an eye on them.

¹⁸¹ AIR 9/14, Secret Memorandum with Covering Minute by the Chief of the Air Staff on the Control of Mesopotamia by the Royal Air Force, May, 1920

¹⁸² AIR 9/14, Secret Memorandum, A Preliminary Scheme for the Military Control of Mesopotamia by the Royal Air Force, 12 March, 1920.

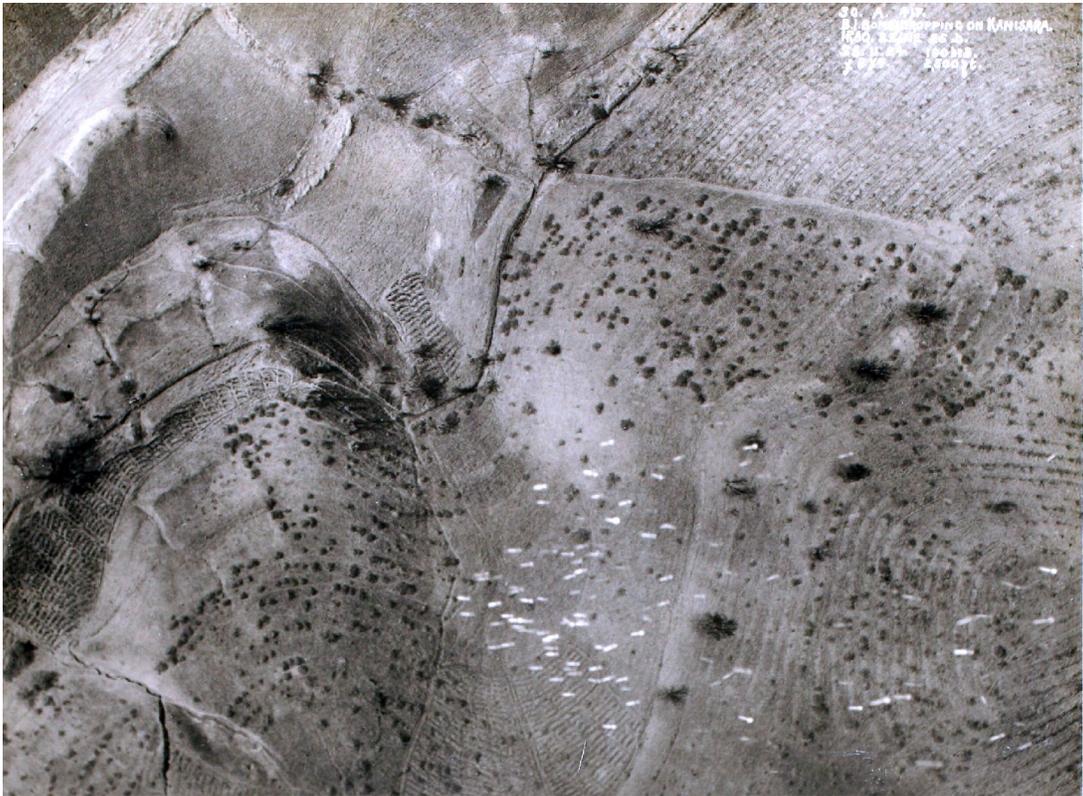
predict the future performance of aircraft which the British had not used until 1917 - one year before the MEF's conclusion.

The tall peaks of Iraq's Northern mountains were disconcerting to strategists from the outset of the occupation. Treacherous inclines and ravines cut through ridges decorated by large quantities of scrub-oaks, ash, and poplars. Large thickets of willows grew along streams, particularly in the southern reaches of the Kurdish mountains. Where trees were absent, dense scrub grew abundantly, restricting the movement of individuals or livestock. Officers deemed Kurdistan completely inaccessible to all forms of transportation, except for airplanes and portions of the Tigris which could be reached upstream by steamboat. The rocky ground created complications when identifying suitable aerodrome locations while the mountains discouraged pilots from flying at low altitudes, necessary if they were to drop propaganda or bombs. Responding to a lecture held by the Royal Society of Central Asia, Sir Arnold Wilson said that, "ground conditions in the Middle East are distinctly more unfavorable than atmospheric conditions. I am not so afraid when flying of what is in the air as of what is on the ground."¹⁸³ Navigator Yeats-Brown, who had served in the Mesopotamia Expeditionary Force was the earliest and most famous victim of ground disturbances:

Then I saw that our left wing-tip had crashed into a telegraph post. Even so, the full extent of our disaster dawned slowly on me. I could not believe that we had broken something vital. Yet the pilot was sure. The leading edge of the plane was broken. Our flying days were finished. It had been my pilots misfortune far more than his fault that we had crashed. The unexpected smoothness of the landing-ground and a rear wind that no one could have foreseen had brought about disaster. Nothing could be done. Nothing remained - except to do our job.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸³ Acland, P. D. "Communications by Air in the East." *Journal of The Royal Central Asian Society* 8, no. 2 (1921): 113.

¹⁸⁴ Yeats-Brown, Francis. *The Lives of a Bengal Lancer*. New York: Viking, 1930: 190-200.





30. 0. 131.
SITAK.
IRAQ, E/NE 250.
17.12. 24. 1015 hrs.
F10. 500 ft.

Yeats-Brown and his pilot “Australian” White were subsequently captured by the Shammar Arabs and held in Turkish captivity for two years.¹⁸⁵ Wilson echoed this sentiment at another lecture held by the Royal Central Asian Society:

The boundaries of Mesopotamia are almost as difficult to guard as its communications. The boundary-line totals almost 2,000 miles - nowhere does it follow a natural frontier. The high hills and the stony rocks of the desert are a refuge, not an obstacle, to their inhabitants. To the forces of law and order, be they Arab or British, they form an almost impassable barrier. The airplane alone can and does rise triumphant to the occasion, and enables us to attack the denizens of the desert and the hills in their lairs.¹⁸⁶

Within Iraq’s narrative, the importance of aircraft cannot be understated. “I would say that the Air Force in ‘Iraq at the present moment is like the cement in a building which keeps the bricks together.”¹⁸⁷

*Humanity of Air Policing*¹⁸⁸

The British employed a variety of aerial tactics throughout their tenure in Iraq. Pilots flew over tribal territory to passively warn “malcontents” of their displeasure. If they remained uncooperative, aviators shot or bombed sheep and cattle herds. Afterwards, they applied intense aerial bombardment on towns and villages.¹⁸⁹ While used throughout Iraq, administrators employed these disciplinary measures extensively in the mountainous regions of Iraqi Kurdistan when British presence waned during the 1920’s.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid, 196. On his captivity he writes on page 197, “I shall record only two incidents therefore: to write more would be useless, to write less would be to fort that our of fourteen thousand prisoners of war in Turkey only some three thousand returned to England. Barker also refers to this incident on page 127.

¹⁸⁶ Wilson, Arnold. "Mesopotamia, 1914–1921." *Journal of The Royal Central Asian Society* 8, no. 3 (1921): 152.

¹⁸⁷ Thomson, Lord. "My Impressions of a Tour in ‘Iraq." *Journal of the Royal Central Asian Society* 12.3 (1925): 220.

¹⁸⁸ See, Satia.

¹⁸⁹ AIR 23/569, “Telegram from Adviser, Arbil to Interior, Baghdad,” October 5th, 1922.

Speaking at the Royal Central Asian Society in 1925, Lord Thomson reminisced about the efficacy of an RAF scheme. As Amman was a small indefensible town, the Ikhwan raids of 1922-24 would have overrun Transjordan had the RAF been unavailable. The aircraft inspired a terror too appalling for their calvary. Despite sustaining heavy losses, the Ikhwani calvary would have experienced more had it not been for the awesome nature of modern aircraft:

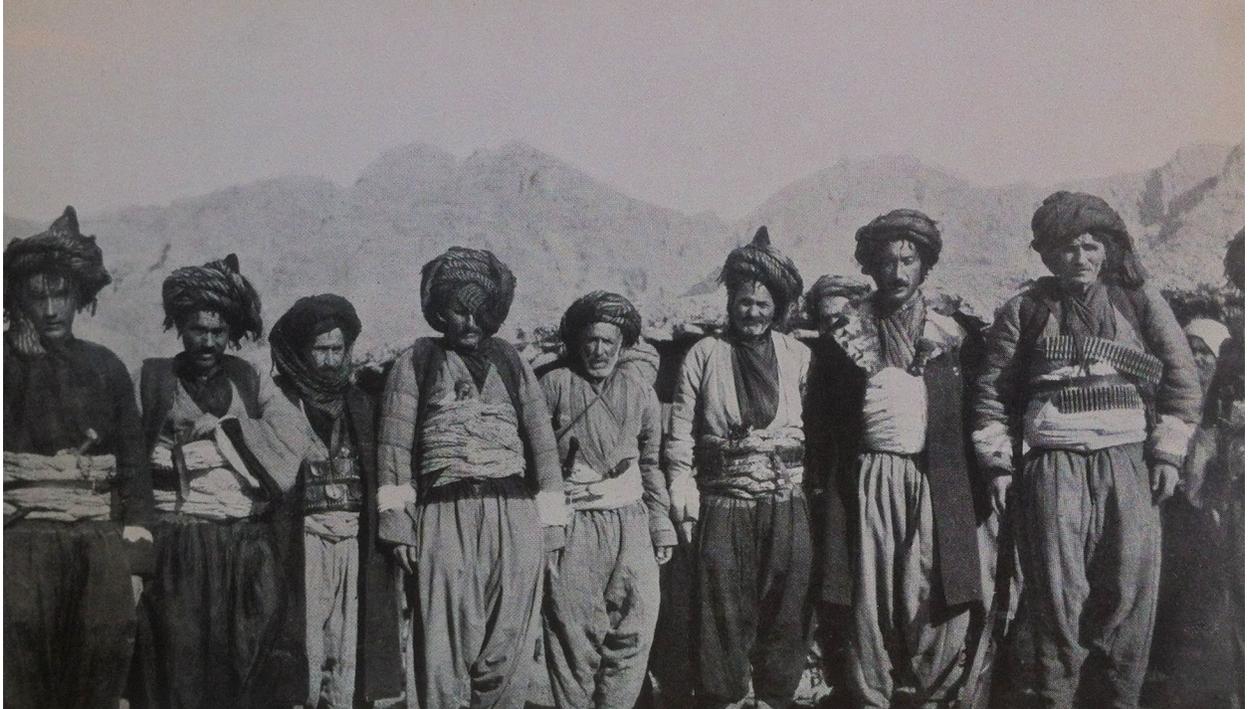
No one wishes to glory in it once it has been done; but I think you will agree with me...that unless some such punishment - as swift, as effective, as implacable, and as terrible - had been applied (if humaner and slower methods had been resorted to), the process of restoring order and making people respect frontiers in Arabia would have been long drawn out, and in the end there would have ensued a great deal more suffering to the people, and results would not have been achieved. I am inclined to think that the men who took part in that invasion will never take part in another one."¹⁹⁰

Even the self-aware Political Officer of Sulaimaniyah, C.J. Edmonds, echoed the need for displays of awesome power to control Kurds, "The Southern Kurd is easily set by the ears and will fly before or give in to overwhelming force."¹⁹¹ Such descriptions were commonplace and if not always overt, positioned the Kurd as primitive while simultaneously self-justifying aerial policing. These descriptions articulated the Kurd and Arab as sub-human, animalistic even.¹⁹² The tribes were like sheep without a shepherd and the English pilot delivered God's wrath by divine-right. Sir Arthur Harris, who served as leader of 45 Squadron believed the only thing Arabs understood was "the heavy hand." Chairman Viscount Peel, then Secretary of State for India and former Under-Secretary of the War and Air Ministry supported Thomson's sentiment:

¹⁹⁰ Thomson, Lord. "My Impressions of a Tour in 'Iraq." *Journal of the Royal Central Asian Society* 12.3 (1925): 210.

¹⁹¹ Edmonds, 336. In his defense Edmonds was, perhaps, the most self-aware and modest officer of any note. In his memoir, he quotes himself in this passage from, "Summary of Political Intelligence - Koicol Operations, 12-27th May 1923," and prefaces the quote with, "...concluded it with the following, I fear rather sententious, paragraph:..."

¹⁹² Just as early travel literature had done.



I was very much interested to hear - because one has heard it from other members of the Air Force - of the great humanity of bombing. In fact, it was explained so clearly by Lord Thomson that I believe it would even carry conviction to those persons who are suffering themselves from a deluge of bombs.¹⁹³

Stanford historian Priya Satia describes this process beautifully, “Their presence on the ground, gathering intelligence that would facilitate accurate bombardment, also convinced some of the regime’s *humanity*.”¹⁹⁴ Those boasting in the ability of aircraft were quick to advocate the technology as a “moral instrument.”¹⁹⁵ While accurate precision bombing and advanced targeting systems were still undeveloped, the discourses surrounding aerial police action are eerily similar to drone use in the Global South today.

The colonialists did not only discipline tribal populations with bombing, but designed an articulate air defense scheme that could provide many advantages over an expensive standing army. From a secret memorandum that reads like a passage from Michel Foucault’s *Discipline and Punish*, Air Staff wrote the following comments to London:¹⁹⁶

The speed and range of aircraft makes it practicable to keep a whole country under more or less constant surveillance. Frequent friendly patrols, dropping leaflets containing suitable propaganda, disseminating correct news, and preventing the willful misinterpretation of the orders of a political officer by intriguing headmen, may often prevent the seeds of unrest being sown by irresponsible agitators. It must be remembered that from the ground every inhabitant of a village is under the impression that the occupant of an airplane is actually looking at *him*, and the frequent and perhaps daily appearance of aircraft apparently overhead will do much towards establishing the impression that all their movements are being watched and reported.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹³ Thompson, 225.

¹⁹⁴ Satia, Priya. "The Defense of Inhumanity: Air Control and the British Idea of Arabia." *The American Historical Review* 111, no. 1 (February 2006): 17.

¹⁹⁵ Dodge, 146.

¹⁹⁶ Foucault, Michel. "Panopticism." In *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, 195-228. New York: Pantheon Books, 1977.

¹⁹⁷ AIR 9/14, Secret Memorandum, A Preliminary Scheme for the Military Control of Mesopotamia by the Royal Air Force, 12 March, 1920. Emphasis added.

The British prized the ability to maintain continuous or semi-continuous surveillance, a newfound dialectic and technological apparatus in response to the nomadic or semi-nomadic inhabitants of Iraq. Intelligence gathering was a two-pronged mechanism administered by the RAF which gathered hard intel while simultaneously positioning the tribes as a site of discipline.¹⁹⁸ Ultimately, these hovering threats redefined power relations between Brit and tribe for generations to come.

The seeds of a Kurdish rebellion were sown as early as the Paris Peace Conference of 1919 when the hopes of an independent Kurdish nation were pinned on the sanguine promises of British officials. Sherif Pasha had been the Kurdish representative at the conference and was not taken seriously despite protesting that the conference neglected questions of self-determination.¹⁹⁹

The Lausanne Conference began in November of 1922, where the Turks and Brits negotiated the frontier region and control of the Mosul *wilayet*. Because of diplomatic standoff, both sides agreed to exclude the “Mosul Question” from negotiations, agreeing to reconvene in a years time. If an agreement could not be made, the League of Nations would determine the outcome.²⁰⁰

Concurrent with the Lausanne discussions, Turkish troops began concentrating near Zakho, a town in the north bordering Turkey and Iraq. Secret pro-Turkish meetings were being held among Kurdish leaders who exhibited a lack of trust in the British. In the east, the towns of

¹⁹⁸ AIR 23/569, Secret Memorandum from High Commissioner to Ministry of Interior, October 10th, 1922.

¹⁹⁹ WO 33/969, Cause of the Outbreak in Mesopotamia by General Staff, October, 1920.

²⁰⁰ Edmonds, 313.

Koi Sanjaq, Rowandiz, and Ranya composed a strategic triangle near the Persian border but were evacuated by the British in August of 1922. Informal Turkish troops led by an individual named Ramzi Bey took over the towns until 1925, fighting British troops and Kurdish tribes unwilling to submit to Turkish authority.²⁰¹

After August, the British concentrated on bombing the towns composing the the strategic triangle around Lake Dukan, particularly Rowandiz. To some degree, the High Commissioner was less concerned with Turkish troops inasmuch as the “prestige” lost among the local tribes.²⁰² Cox recognized that reoccupying Koi Sanjaq would help restore their reputation but meanwhile, requested Koi to receive “aerial treatment.”²⁰³ It was under such political circumstances that the “Kurdish Question” dominated British military and political endeavors for the next two years.²⁰⁴

Shaikh Mahmud

Shaikh Mahmud was arguably the most prominent *sadah* (affluent Kurdish or Shi’i landed class) in southern Kurdistan, certainly in Sulaimaniyyah, throughout the 1920’s until his death in 1956.²⁰⁵ His father was Shaikh Sa’id of Barzinjah who, along with eighteen others, was

²⁰¹ Lyon, Wallace A., and D. K. Fieldhouse. *Kurds, Arabs & Britons: the Memoir of Wallace Lyon in Iraq, 1918-44*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2002: 43-48.

²⁰² AIR 23/569, Memorandum from Secretariat of H.E. the High Commissioner for ‘Iraq, Baghdad to Air H.Q., October 2nd, 1922. Specifically the Khushnar and Dezai tribes.

²⁰³ Ibid.

²⁰⁴ Lyon, Wallace A., and D. K. Fieldhouse. *Kurds, Arabs & Britons: the Memoir of Wallace Lyon in Iraq, 1918-44*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2002: 43-48.

²⁰⁵ Batatu, 869.

²⁰⁶ Ibid. Here, the author describes another example of the fission that existed between Kurdish tribes and Mosulites.

murdered in Mosul in 1909.²⁰⁶ He was also a revered religious figure being spiritual leader of the Qadiri brotherhood²⁰⁷ and self-proclaimed *naqib* or decedent of the prophet.²⁰⁸

He resisted British rule consistently from 1919 and was the largest internal threat to British occupation in northeast Iraq.²⁰⁹ Relations between Shaikh Mahmud Barzinjah and Britain began in 1919 and were tumultuous from the beginning. In the early years British officials attempted to coopt his support hoping they could rule Kurdistan indirectly through the Shaikh. Political Officer E.W. Noel had led these efforts. Although Noel was perceived as a brilliant political officer, the Civil Administration thought E.B. Soane's experiences and Machiavellian personality would be more successful.²¹⁰ However, in 1919 he took advantage of E.B. Soane's absence and declared himself King of Kurdistan after imprisoning Soane's officers. General Fraser engaged him in a pitched battle at the Bazyan Pass, where he was found shot in the liver by RAF officer C.J. Edmonds.²¹¹ He was tended and subsequently exiled to Kuwait until his return in 1922.²¹²

The British reinstated Mahmud because the frontier became increasingly unstable. Not only were Turkish troops being stationed around Rowandiz, the reforms of Riza Khan had

²⁰⁷ Ibid. The Qadiris followed the tenants of a certain Shaikh 'Abd-ul-Qadir al-Gailani (1077-1166).

²⁰⁸ Shaikh Mahmud can trace his ancestry to the Persian mystic poet Isa Nurbakhsh, seventh generation removed from the seventh Imam, Musa al-Kazim, Also see family tree of the Saiyids of Barzinja, Edwards 68-70.

²⁰⁹ He had also been the Kurdish leader during the 1920 Rebellion.

²¹⁰ Indeed, E.B. Soane was genuinely feared among the Kurds. A.T. Wilson describes him as one of the most remarkable men he ever knew. Fiery temper

²¹¹ Edmonds, 47-49.

²¹² Lyon, Wallace A., and D. K. Fieldhouse. *Kurds, Arabs & Britons: the Memoir of Wallace Lyon in Iraq, 1918-44*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2002: 70. Lyon incorrectly cites India.

rejuvenated the Persian army who recommenced operations against the Shikak tribe, located on the Turkish-Persian boundary and led by Isma'il *Agha* 'Simko.'²¹³ The decision had been controversial but the lack of British troops in Iraq's Kurdish regions, accentuated by the RAF command scheme adopted at the Cairo Conference, left few choices in the minds of British administrators.²¹⁴

On September 4th, the British decided to evacuate Sulaimaniyah and Koi Sanjaq due to perceived increases of anti-British sentiment spread by Turkish propaganda. Karin Fattah Beg, a local Kurdish *agha* who had recently killed two British officers, was being pursued by a column of British and Iraqi levies. With the safety of their forces in question, twenty-six airplanes began evacuating forces on the 5th.²¹⁵ Furthermore, tribes such as the Dizai began forgoing taxes or forcing the British to change rates of compensation for produce. In cooperation with armored vehicles, Divisional Adviser of Kirkuk, W.A. Lyon responded by leading aerial demonstrations through their country.²¹⁶ Ultimately, the evacuation proved a fatal decision as the British never fully reestablished their authority, for they betrayed the loyalty of Sulaimaniyah's villagers to the whims of Shaikh Mahmud.²¹⁷

²¹³ Edmonds, 305.

²¹⁴ Not only were the British attempting to resolve internal security threats, but Percy Cox was weary of a Russian attack via Persian lands in the winter of 1922-23, See CO 730/38, "Secret Telegraph from the High Commissioner for Iraq to the Secretary of State for the Colonies," January 6th, 1923.

²¹⁵ AIR 23/569, Confidential Report by Squadron Leader No 6. E.R. Manning to RAF HQ Baghdad, "Evacuation of Sulaimaniya 5.9.22." This report lists all planes used in the evacuation as 9.H.9a's besides three Bristol Fighters from Squadron No. 6 and two Vernon's from Squadron 70. All aircraft from Squadron No. 8, 30, and 55 comprise the rest.

²¹⁶ AIR 23/569, Secret Report by W.A. Lyon to Adviser to the Ministry of the Interior Baghdad, September 17th, 1922.

²¹⁷ AIR 23/564, "Royal Air Force Operations Comminque No. 9: The Evacuation of Sulaimaniya on 5th September 1922," Air Ministry, December, 1922. See also, AIR 23/569, "Report on Evacuation of Sulaimaniya (5th September 1922)," by Squadron Leader E.R. Manning with "Tables of Arrivals and Departures of Sulaimaniya." This story demonstrates Bell's concerns and warnings to A.T. Wilson.

He was also a terrifying. When he controlled Sulaimaniyah near the end of 1922 he controlled the city and greeted visitors in front of a gallows after any weapons had been confiscated. Police monitored potential dissidents including his own brother, Shaikh Qadir, who was competing for power and had the loyalty of other less powerful Shaikhs. Few could leave the city without permission and others were killed.²¹⁸

Meanwhile, negotiations between A.T. Wilson and Mahmud continued, with political officer and Major C.J. Edmonds acting as interlocutor. Both parties exchanged a series of telegrams ordering him to come to Baghdad. If he failed to comply with this order, aircraft would drop notices over Sulaimaniyah warning residents of an imminent bombing campaign.

Near the end of February, Baghdad was getting impatient and wanted to see results. They proposed an ultimatum to Mahmud requesting his presence in Baghdad via Kirkuk. The Royal Air Force threatened to bomb Sulaimaniyah if the towns leadership, specifically the members of the *maglis* who were reinstated by the British as a concessionary move, did not comply. Bristol fighters and Vickers-Vernons demonstrated over the town for several days as a show of force. Any damages or injuries incurred by Sulaimaniyah's inhabitants would lie at the hands of Mahmud.²¹⁹ Because Sulaimaniyah's population was increasingly within British, Turkish, and Kurdish crosshairs, the city's population dwindled from twenty-thousand to approximately seven hundred, refugees fleeing to neighboring towns and cities such as Tikrit, Kirkuk, and Erbil.²²⁰

²¹⁸ AIR 23/564, "Notes on the Sulaimani Situation by a Kurdish Official During the First Fortnight of December 1922." This official estimates previous loyalty among the division of 50% pro-Turk, 30% pro-British, and 20% pro-Kurd. He also claims that S.M. murdered an individual named Binvasi Jemal Beg.

²¹⁹ See Appendix for full transcript, as written by Gertrude Bell in "Secret Intelligence Report, no. 5" to Secretariat of H.E. the High Commissioner for Iraq, Baghdad, 1 March, 1923.

²²⁰ Thomson, 215. Thomson attributed Mahmud's demise to aircraft. While true, Thomson and many other British officials overstated the efficacy of airplanes and undervalued the fighting prowess of Turks, Kurds, and especially Arabs.

From the beginning, the English had hoped that Mahmud and Simko could cooperate and reclaim control from Ramzi Bey who had an estimated two-hundred and fifty troops under his command. These efforts proved futile with both Mahmud and Simko unwilling to cooperate with each other. Shortly thereafter, the British learned in captured correspondence from Rowanduz that Mahmoud's planned to instigate a revolt against them despite "fervent protestations of loyalty."²²¹ The Turks promised Mahmud an independent Kurdistan in exchange for his support. In fact, his brother-in-law, Fattah Efendi, happened to be a former captain in the Turkish Army and negotiated on behalf of both parties. When the Lausanne Conference finalized and delayed to resolve delineating the frontier region for another year, Shaikh Mahmud took matters into his own hands despite the nebulous promises of Kurdish autonomy made by the Turks.²²²

After experiencing a series of bombing raids, Shaikh Mahmud fled to Jasana Caves, a region approximately fifty kilometers west of Sulaimaniyah and established his base of operations. Jasana provided splendid cover from British bombers, easily resisting their twenty pound Cooper bombs.²²³ Over two-hundred troops were located at Jasana, along with another one-hundred at Kamchuga, fifty at Dukhan, and another forty that composed his personal retinue.²²⁴ Former levies who the British recruited and were given machine guns joined the Shaikh. Shaikh Mahmud collected taxes from tobacco and other sources in order to finance their

²²¹ AIR 23/570, Letter from Officer Nevill from Koi Sanjak to Aviation Baghdad, dated 10/5/1923.

²²² Edmonds, 318, AIR 23/570, CO 730/37. Intercepted correspondence can be found in Appendix.

²²³ "Jasana Cave." Official Site of General Board of Tourism of Kurdistan - Iraq. Web. 3 Feb. 2015. <<http://bot.gov.krd/>>. See also, Edmonds, 319. Omissi, 123.

²²⁴ Officer Pilot Basil Embry, who served under Sir Arthur Harris and later became Air Chief Marshall of the RAF said that Shaikh Mahmud's soldiers were very skilled shooters and tacticians. Omissi, 123.

resistance.²²⁵ This often meant villagers paying tax twice, once to Mahmud and again to the British.²²⁶ Mahmud even brought a printing press and perhaps began the first nationalist Kurdish publication titled, *Bang-i Haqq* or *The Call of the Truth*. The first issue contained a proclamation of *jihad*.

In sorties composed of no less than three planes, the RAF attacked his positions with several tons of bombs and fired thousands of rounds of small arms ammunition (SAA). Air staff reported every quarter-ton of explosive dropped and every bullet fired.²²⁷ And if the location of the *sadah's* troops could not be effectively bombed, pilots turned their attention towards their livelihoods: livestock. One such bombing raid was composed of twenty-six planes, which dropped exactly 52 one-hundred twelve pound bombs and 184 twenty pound bombs on unsuspecting sheep and cattle.²²⁸ This tactic was developed and frequently used against villages resisting to comply with British authority. Flocks and herds were owned collectively as Kurdish *aghas* let the semi-feudal population raise their sheep or cattle.²²⁹ Such brutal tactics worked against the Pizhdar,²³⁰ a powerful tribe located near the Persian border. Initially they supported Mahmud and were bombed. Afterwards, they refused aid in January, 1923 to Shaikh Mahmud

²²⁵ AIR 23/570, Secret Telegram from Officer Nevill from Koi Sanjak to Aviation Baghdad, dated 5/5/1923. Effectively, the residents of Erbil were paying taxes to both the Mandate government and Shaikh Mahmud, who was collecting eight rupees per load of tobacco.

²²⁶ Edmonds, 305.

²²⁷ AIR 23/563, Wireless Telegram from Aviation Baghdad to Aviation Kirkuk, 29/10/1922. This represented a time when operations were particularly less efficient, several reprimands being sent from Baghdad to Kirkuk in particular. November of 1922, the forward deployment at Kirkuk established a rhythm with respect to bombing formations and number of raids deployed.

²²⁸ AIR 23/570, Telegram from Flight Lt. to Air Headquarters Baghdad, 5/5/1923.

²²⁹ Batatu, 70-72. Here, Batatu gives a more complete explanation regarding the history of the Pishdar tribe and their reputation within Kurdistan.

²³⁰ Ibid. Also see, Soane, 109.

and retreating Turkish soldiers.²³¹

Such “concerns” with “ethical bombing” is juxtaposed by concurrent operations in the city of Sammara. A similar situation was unfolding when malcontent Shaikhs Albu Ali, Albu Alga, and Albu Hazazza of Kirkuk, Sammara, and Baqubah respectively, failed to report to their *mutasarrifs*. Pilots dropped messages warning tribes of impending military action if these individuals failed to show:

As the time in which to give the tribes final warning is short, I am to request that His Excellency the High Commissioner be moved to ask Air Headquarters to have messages too all leaders of these tribes dropped from aeroplaces [sic] on all the encampments lying North of Adhaim on both sides of the Jabbal Hamrin, including Aith.²³²

Iraqi columns would occupy the area and High Commissioner Percy Cox emphasized twice in a confidential memorandum to the Ministry of Interior:

His Excellency the High Commissioner is not aware of the nature of the military action which it is proposed to take should the tribal leaders concerned not comply with the summons to come in, *nor does he wish to criticize the measures which the 'Iraq Government may take for the preservation of law and order.*²³³

Cox effectively granted permission to both the RAF and Iraqi levies to preserve security by any means necessary, and was not concerned with the details.

At this point, government authority in the Sulaimaniyah *liwa* was near non-existent. Half-hazard political allegiances with tribal *aghas* were used to maintain a semblance of authority in

²³¹ AIR 23/570, Secret Telegram from Flight Lt. to Aviation Baghdad, 1/5/1923. This was quite possibly the Baban tribe rather than Pizhdar, which is often used as a term to describe a geographic area rather than a particular group of people. See E.B. Soane, Chapter IX, “Sulaimania,” for a history of the city and surrounding region of southern Kurdistan. This is particularly true after considering Gertrude Bell’s Intelligence Report, No. 5, March 1, 1923, citing ‘Abbas Mahmud *Agha* Pizhder as supporting Mahmud on February 23.

²³² AIR 23/564, Secret Memorandum from Ministry of Interior to High Commissioner for ‘Iraq, December 15th, 1922, with Enclosure No: 1 to Memorandum, “List of ‘Wanted’ Leaders and Sub-Leaders.” Also illuminates the fluid authority that existed between the RAF and Mutasarrifs of Kirkuk and Baqubah at this time.

²³³ AIR 23/564, Confidential Memorandum from High Commissioner to Ministry of Interior, Baghdad, December 16th, 1922. Emphasis added.

the city. Eventually, Shaikh Mahmud reoccupied the town in July of 1922 after an idle period occasionally disturbed by pitched battles and bombings. He remained there with nearly two hundred men and continued colluding with the Turks where, “action was taken to attempt to bring him to proper perspective.”²³⁴ Edmonds notes that it was against Mahmud during August 1923 that the British first used the newly developed 220 pound bomb.²³⁵ The RAF was steadily improving its tactics and technology by evaluating performance and testing new methods throughout Iraq.

Meanwhile, the British continued aerial assaults on the strategic triangle, centering much of their effort on the town of Koi Sanjak or Koi. Abbas Mahmud of the Pishdar had supported Shaikh Mahmud but “passively” allowed the British to occupy the town after Turkish soldiers retreated.²³⁶ This led to negotiations between Mahmud and the British, aiming to secure the area before winter of 1922. In addition to temporary occupying Koi, Baghdad decided to hire local levies and bomb the nearby town of Rowanduz continuously.²³⁷ A small strike-force composed of one hundred elite British soldiers and local police while Ninjak planes would cover their approach. Afterwards, the British retreated and Sowar Agha Pirani and his force of local levies would act as a deterrent force. Coordinated attacks between ground and air forces became normal and illustrates the development of air and ground tactics to work in concert.²³⁸

²³⁴ AIR 23/463, General Resume and Daily Summary of Operations Carried Out During February, 1923

²³⁵ Edmonds, 350.

²³⁶ AIR 23/569, Secret & Urgent Memo to HC from Air Vice Marshall, October 7th, 1922.

²³⁷ Ibid, Secret & Urgent Memorandum from HC to Adviser to the Ministry of Interior, October 10th, 1922.

²³⁸ Ibid, Report to Chief Staff Officer, Air HQ “Occupation of Koi Sanjak,” October 11th, 1922.

In February of 1923, five Vickers-Vernons of 70 and 45 Squadron two companies of the 14 Sikhs, which comprised 320 Indian soldiers and two British officers.²³⁹ This was remarkable for two reasons. The British intended to continue securitizing the North-West Frontier from Shaikh Mahmud and Turks in the midst of the Lausanne Conference. Any military victory would grant them an edge in negotiations, a strategy that was confirmed within intercepted Turkish correspondence.²⁴⁰ Shaikh Mahmud was bombed shortly thereafter, fleeing from Sulaimaniyah with two-hundred men and the town's treasury.²⁴¹

Additionally, this was the first time the British had transported an entire group of soldiers en masse. The conference had begun in November of 1922 and was only finalized nine months later in July of 1923. By May of 1923, both the British and Turks were at a standstill. Turkish soldiers were still present at Rowanduz and the British continued bombing the town unabatedly. Turkey's southern border was finalized and ceded the rights to Mosul and Shaikh Qadir, the rival brother whom Mahmud had attempted to kill, received support and the nomination to become a member for the Constituent Assembly of Iraq.²⁴²

Qualifying the Efficacy of Planes

A high degree of bravado exists in the memoirs of pilots and administrators. The British played God on the throes of aerial and technological advancement. Sir Percy Sykes dictated a story at the RGS about the inhabitants of Bandar Abbas, Iran and their first airplane encounter.

²³⁹ AIR 23/458, "Report on the Emplaning of Two Companies of 14th Sikhs from Kingerban to Kirkuk by Vickers Vernons of Nos. 70 and 45" from Air HQ to the Secretary of Air Ministry, March 15th, 1923.

²⁴⁰ CO 730/40, Most Secret Correspondence, Not Paraphrased from G.H.Q Constantinople to War Office, May, 1923.

²⁴¹ AIR 23/458, "General Resume and Daily Summary of Operations Carried Out During February, 1923."

²⁴² Edmonds, 366.



*Flying in Sulaimaniyah Valley*²⁴³

Allegedly, they were so fearful that they fell on their knees and confessed their sins to the pilots, believing Judgment Day had arrived.²⁴⁴ Furthermore, this chapter's epigraph points to the sense of omnipotence, omnipresence, and omniscience pilots felt. Colonial administrators subscribed to the efficacy of planes to such a degree that they often exaggerated their ability and understated the fighting prowess of the Kurds or Arabs:

Some months before our visit the activities of a certain sheikh in the neighborhood had been such that the majority of the inhabitants of this town had fled; in fact, the population was reduced to something like seven hundred of the original inhabitants, the remainder were refugees... Eventually action had to be taken against this sheikh. To put it bluntly, he was bombed; he was cleared out, and he is still living as an outlaw in the mountains.²⁴⁵

²⁴³ Photo by author, AIR 23/7397, unknown date. Probably around 1924.

²⁴⁴ Blake, W. T. "Some Difficulties in Flying Around the World." *The Geographical Journal* 61, no. 4 (April 1923): 279.

²⁴⁵ Thomson, Lord. "My Impressions of a Tour in 'Iraq." *Journal of The Royal Central Asian Society* 12.3 (1925): 215.

However, Kurdish and Arab forces developed tactics that dampened the effectiveness of planes. At this point in history, planes had little or no navigational equipment meaning that pilots flew strictly by sight. Villagers quickly learned that pilots rarely flew nighttime sorties and took advantage of these shortcomings. Thus, townspeople abandoned villages that became focal points for bombing throughout the day and returned at night.²⁴⁶ The rocky Northwest Frontier provided the perfect cover for Kurdish scouts who warned villages of an oncoming attacks with smoke signals.²⁴⁷ And sometimes aircraft proved counterproductive. In a report by the Air Staff in Baghdad, they conceded that it is “unreasonable to expect an enemy to leave his trenches while he is actually being bombed and exchange his position for one less safe...”²⁴⁸ Thus, the RAF would have to cease bombing operations and allow the enemy to evacuate their tactical position.

During the Arab and Kurd uprising of 1920, tribes destroyed eight aircraft and severely damaged another forty-two, “so badly...they had to be dismantled and rebuilt in the aircraft park...”²⁴⁹ Ignoring these statistics, a British officer proclaimed in 1923 that tribesmen would preserve their ammunition in the presence of aircraft because they were so difficult to hit.²⁵⁰ The

²⁴⁶ Omissi, David E. "Indigenous Responses to Air Policing." In *Air Power and Colonial Control: The Royal Air Force, 1919-1939*, 117. Manchester [England]: Manchester University Press, 1990.

²⁴⁷ Ibid, 121.

²⁴⁸ Air Staff Notes, Confidential report, “The Work of the Royal Air Force in Mesopotamia.” 19 February, 1921. [AIR 9/14]

²⁴⁹ Ibid, 124.

²⁵⁰ Omissi, 111.

only way to properly describe this claim is fallacious. Examples of tribesmen damaging or destroying aircraft are numerous in operation records.²⁵¹

Photos in this chapter by appearance

Stark, Freya. *The Tigris above Jizre*. In *Riding to the Tigris*. London: John Murray, 1959

Chapman, G.W. *Good quality oak forest near Ruwanduz, north-eastern Iraq*. In “Notes on Forestry of Iraq.” *Empire Forestry Review*, Vol. 29, No. 2 (June 1950), 133.

Kirkuk - Photo by author, AIR 23/7397, 1930.

Baby Incendiary Bombs in Flight - Kanisara, Iraq. May 31, 2012. Edwin Newman Collection, San Diego Air and Space Museum Archives, San Diego.

Baby Incendiary Bombs Setting Buildings on Fire - Sitak, Iraq. May 31, 2012. Edwin Newman Collection, San Diego Air and Space Museum Archives, San Diego.

Shaikh Mahmud - Wilson, Arnold T. *Mesopotamia, 1917-20: A Clash of Loyalties*. London: Oxford University Press, 1931

“Kurdistan, Pizhder and Mangur Chiefs 1919 - The two central figures are Babakr Agha, head of the Pizhder, and Agha Baiz, head of the Bilbos.” - Wilson, Arnold T. *Mesopotamia, 1917-20: A Clash of Loyalties*. London: Oxford University Press, 1931

“Flying in Sulaimaniyah Valley” - Photo by author, AIR 23/7397, unknown date.

²⁵¹ AIR 23/563. In this record alone, there is evidence of a pilot being shot and killed, and numerous aircraft badly damaged. Furthermore, the accounts of A.T. Wilson and Barker cite several examples of aircraft being badly damaged from gunfire during the MEF.

CONCLUSION

While much of this thesis addresses historical abstract concepts like Biblicality, technological innovation, and other aspects of colonial statecraft more broadly, the consequences of such policy permeates the historical (or ahistorical) consciousness of Iraq today. Such were my endeavors from the onset of this thesis - to create an historically based project addressing, in part, tangible and prevailing realities of Iraq.

A series of monumental shifts have occurred in Iraq over the course of writing this thesis. The borders drawn by Mark Sykes and François Georges-Picot remain a defining subtext in ISIL's struggle to establish a modern caliphate. Al-Hayat, the media wing for ISIL, published two videos titled, *The End of Sykes-Picot* and *Kasr al-Hudud* (its Arabic counterpart).²⁵²

An important caveat - this thesis does not argue that Iraq's borders are artificial. In fact, it claims quite the opposite. In recent years, news pundits, journalists, and even scholars have perpetuated notions of Iraq's artificiality, arguing that Iraq is the byproduct of both colonial and neocolonial forces. There is merit in such notions - to dismiss French, British, and Ottoman influence is scholarly fallacy. Indeed, the majority of this thesis highlights the visions of British aristocracy and the architects of prestigious societies such as the RGS and RCAS. However, political agents have used the myth of artificiality to justify incursions and colonial occupations for decades. In fact, these justifications fueled British occupation throughout the Mandate Period, providing further recourse for prolonged British influence in light of Iraq's heterogeneous population and geography. In 1932, the same year Iraq gained formal independence, King Faysal even made such proclamations:

²⁵² The End of Sykes-Picot. Alhayat, 2014. Accessed February 4, 2015. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i357G1HuFcI> and

In my opinion, and I say this with a heart full of sorrow, an Iraqi people does not yet exist in Iraq. There are only throngs of human beings lacking any national consciousness, immersed in religious traditions and falsehoods, disunited, susceptible to evil, inclined towards anarchy, and always prepared to rise up [against] any government whatsoever.²⁵³

Such sentiment is clearly ahistorical and fails to give agency to pro-Iraqi nationalist parties such as Haras al-Istiqlal (Guardians of Independence), Jamiyat al-Ahd (Covenant Society), among others, who aided the 1920 Arab revolt (Chapter Three). Moreover, this discourse fails to acknowledge Britain's use of Ottoman maps, which were, in fact, based on historical realities. Rather, Iraq's borders are a consequence of prolonged political negotiation, war, and violence between a myriad of different state and non-state actors.

Perhaps the most salient critique concerning Iraq's artificiality centers on the inclusion of the Mosul governorate.²⁵⁴ This is represented by the oft-mentioned phrase, "the Mosul Question" within colonial documents and the subsequent occupation of Mosul several days after the Armistice of Mudros. But current narrations fail to posit "the Mosul Question" as an *Iraqi-Turkish* issue. Instead, Mosul's inclusion sparks discussion surrounding the "unnaturalness" of Iraqi borders, frequent counter-proposals being a separate ethnocentric state for Mosul, flowing West towards Syria. Ironically, both Western pundits *and* ISIL support this ahistorical and fallacious discourse (see aforementioned videos *The End of Sykes-Picot and Kasr al-Hudud*). Anyone traveling to 18th or 19th century Mosul would be struck by its degree of heterogeneity. It had been inhabited by Sunni, Shi'i, Chaldeans, Jews, Nestorians, Yezidis, Armenians, Catholics, Protestants, Assyrians, Jacobites, and Greek Orthodox groups. In fact, far more Kurds

²⁵³ As quoted by Pursley, Sara. "'Lines Drawn on an Empty Map': Iraq's Borders and the Legend of the Artificial State (Part 2)." *Jadaliyya*, June 3, 2015. Accessed June 3, 2015. Original source, 'Abd al-Razzaq al-Hasani, *Tarikh al-Wizarat al-'Iraqiyya* (Sidon: Matba'at al-'Irfan, 1954), 3:289.

²⁵⁴ Other border disputes. Deir ez-Zor to the West in Syria, and recognition of Kuwait in 1991.

called Mosul home than Arabs.²⁵⁵ Both Ahmed Hassan al-Bakr and Saddam Hussein oversaw Arabization policies of the Mosul governorate, which included the city of Kirkuk, attempting to gain control of its oil resources.²⁵⁶ Thus, new maps of Iraq often divide it ethnographically and are, at best, rooted in spurious historical claims.

This research begins its intervention near the end of the 1910's after the end of World War I, a formative period for many places, Iraq not withstanding. Iraq captured British consciousness and became the latest symbol of British benevolence, progress, and power. Mesopotamia, as it was popularly known, gave Her Majesty's government another chance to prove its clemency in the wake of postwar disillusionment. Reviving the Garden of Eden proved the perfect excuse for an aristocracy seeking to diminish German and Ottoman influence while simultaneously ensuring a buffer zone for the Empire's crown jewel, India.

Thankfully, the tools to resurrect an Iraqi nation were available in the age of Modernism. As the second chapter shows, development was a violent process that was encompassed by racial theory and discourse. Rather, development of Iraq was not bred by British altruism but a highly complex system seeking to discipline the Nation in a highly Foucaultian manner. For example, agricultural reform and the introduction of labor intensive crops such as wheat and cotton would generate more revenue while anchoring the unruly and transitive Bedouin tribes.

Of course, modern feats of science and engineering provided the Mandate government with the means to discipline the countryside less innocuously. Aircraft capabilities had improved

²⁵⁵ Sarah, Shields D. "Mosul, the Ottoman Legacy and the League of Nations." *International Journal of Contemporary Iraqi Studies* 3, no. 2 (2009): 217-30. See also, Edmonds, C. J. *Kurds, Turks, and Arabs: Politics, Travel, and Research in North-eastern Iraq, 1919-1935*. London: Oxford University Press, 1957: 9.

²⁵⁶ Talabany, Nouri. *Iraq's Policy of Ethnic Cleansing: Onslaught to Change National/Demographic Characteristics of the Kirkuk Region*. Report. London, 1995: 30-43.

drastically throughout the Great War and continued doing so during the British occupation. Planes empowered the cash-strapped Brits to establish authority with minimal manpower. As the campaign against Shaikh Mahmud in 1924 demonstrates, these aircraft were not primitive but highly capable, equipped with a variety of bombs and incendiaries. Airbases spread throughout the northern frontier projected British power from Iran to Mosul. These campaigns proved to be antecedents for later violations of air sovereignty. In 1923, a pilot named Arthur Harris took command of 45 Squadron, which as of February that year, was based in Baghdad with a forward detachment in Mosul. He earned the nickname "Bomber" Harris, increasing the multitude of raids against recalcitrant tribes in North-West Iraq. He is credited with inventing the heavy bomber, supporter of area bombing, and later the Air Officer Commanding (AOC) during the Allied bombing of Dresden in 1945.²⁵⁷ Indeed, no country's history is more enmeshed with these birds of prey than Iraq.

²⁵⁷ Glancy, Jonathon. "Gas, Chemicals, Bombs: Britain Has Used Them All before in Iraq." *The Guardian*, April 19, 2003.

LOCATION OF SQUADRONS²⁵⁸

Where squadrons of the Royal Air Force were located as of February 28th, 1923:

Air HQ, British Forces in Iraq - Baghdad
HQ Basrah Group - Basrah
Station Commandant, Hinaidi - Hinaidi, Baghdad
Iraq Aircraft Depot - Hinaidi, Baghdad
Wing HQ - Mosul
No. 1 Squadron - Baghdad with forward detachment at Mosul
No. 6 Squadron - Baghdad with forward detachment at Kirkuk
No. 8 Squadron - Baghdad with forward detachment at Mosul
No. 30 Squadron - Baghdad with forward detachment at Mosul
No. 45 Squadron - Baghdad with forward detachment at Mosul
No. 55 Squadron - Mosul
No. 70 Squadron - Hinaidi, Baghdad
No. 84 Squadron - Shaibah
Stores Depot, RAF - Basrah
Accounts Office, RAF - Baghdad
R.E. Services, Iraq - Baghdad
Rest Camp - Basrah
RAF Prison - Basrah

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AIR 23/564
AIR 23/569
AIR 23/570
AIR 23/617
AIR 23/626

²⁵⁸ AIR 23/458, "General Resume and Daily Summary of Operations Carried Out During February 1923."

AIR 23/801
AIR 23/7386
AIR 23/7397

Colonial Office

CO 730/37
CO 730/38
CO 730/39
CO 730/40
CO 730/41
CO 730/42
CO 730/43
CO 730/44
CO 730/45
CO 730/46
CO 730/64
CO 730/81
CO 730/97
CO 781/1
CO 781/2
CO 781/3

Foreign Office

FO 141/446
FO 371/5232

Maps and Plans extracted by Public Record Office

MPI 1/643

War Office

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