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Connectivity and Creativity: Representations of Baghdad's Centrality, 3rd/9th to 5th/11th Centuries

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Tebiliğimi bitirirken, en içten duygularımla, her şeye kâdir olan Yüce Allah'tan tarihinin en sıkıntılı günlerini yaşayan Bağdat ve Irak'ın içinde bulunduğu sıkıntıları en kısa sürede gidermesini, orada yaşayan milyonlarca mazlumun hatırına, bütün Irak halkını güzel günlere kavuşturmasını diliyorum. Hepinize saygı ve hürmetlerimi sunarım.

CONNECTIVITY AND CREATIVITY: REPRESENTATIONS OF BAGHDAD'S CENTRALITY, 3rd/9th to 5th/11th CENTURIES[1]

Assist. Prof. Zayde Antrim[*]

Introduction

Al-Shāfiʿī said to me: "Oh Yūnus, have you been to Baghdad?" I said: "No". He said: "Then you have not seen the world".[2]

In an influential article, Michael Cooperson has argued that images of Baghdad's geographic, political, intellectual and spiritual centrality were among "a fairly stable set of topoi" produced and reproduced in descriptions

[1] I would like to thank the Organizing Committee for the International Symposium on Baghdad (Madīnat al-Salām) in the Islamic Civilization and its generous sponsors, the Department of Islamic History and Arts in the Faculty of Theology at Marmara University, the Organization of Islamic Conference Research Center for Islamic History, Art and Culture (IRCICA), and the Ümraniye Municipality for giving me the opportunity to present an earlier version of this paper in Istanbul in November of 2008. I would like to thank Stichting De Goeje at Leiden for permission to reproduce the map that appears below. I would also like to thank Kristin Triff, Ahmed Kanna and Xiangming Chen for reading an earlier version of this paper and Gary Reger for offering invaluable advice in revising it for publication. I would also like to thank Mona Hassan for having shared her earlier formulations of the institution of the caliphate, and by extension Baghdad, as a "mode of connectivity" analogous to the *isnād* in 2007; see Mona Hassan, "Loss of Caliphate: Trauma and Aftermath of 1258 and 1924", PhD Thesis, Princeton University, 2009, and the discussion below.

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[2] al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Taʾrīkh Baghdād*, Cairo, 1931 [hereafter referred to as *TB*], vol. I, p. 4 (variants vol. I, pp. 44-45).

of the city in Arabic literature from the medieval period on.[3] However, since the topos of centrality also occurred in representations of other cities in the Islamic world, what, if anything, was distinctive of Baghdad? For example, an Arabic phrase often used to describe Baghdad's centrality, *surrat al-dunya* (navel/omphalos of the world), may be contrasted with the phrase often used to describe the centrality of other prominent cities in the Islamic geographical imagination, such as Jerusalem and Mecca: *surrat al-arḍ* (navel/omphalos of the earth).[4] One possible explanation for this difference is that the latter phrase implies more of a cosmological claim – the omphalos of the earth is that which literally ties, or tied, the earth to its progenitor, God, and thus forms the center of creation. The omphalos of the world, *al-dunya*, on the other hand, has the sense of geographic, political, economic and cultural centrality: centrality, in other words, in the worldly world, the world of latitude and longitude, of monarchs, merchants and scholars. At a more general level, paying attention to the words and meanings attached to localities by different people at different times and places yields rich insight into the intellectual and cultural history of the early Islamic world. Written representations of localities, in particular cities and regions, were powerful vehicles through which medieval Muslims expressed a variety of loyalties. The fact that Baghdad's centrality was produced and reproduced in prose works in Arabic dedicated in whole or large part to the representation of localities, what I have called elsewhere a "discourse of place", suggests that it was useful or compelling in some way to do so.[5] Why was this sense of Baghdad's centrality so important that its literary production and reproduction occupied generations of scholars? Following the aforementioned work of Cooperson as well as the work of William Graham and Mona Hassan to be discussed in detail below, I argue that rehearsing claims to the city's centrality evoked a sense of connectivity to the Islamic *umma*

[3] See Michael Cooperson, "Baghdad in Rhetoric and Narrative", *Muqarnas* XIII (1996), p. 100.

[4] For an example of the use of the phrase *surrat al-dunyā* in conjunction with Baghdad and al-ʿIrāḳ, see *TB*, vol. I, p. 23. However, al-Yaʿqūbī calls al-ʿIrāḳ *surrat al-arḍ* and *wasaṭ al-dunyā*; see his *Kitāb al-Buldān* in the *Bibliotheca Geographorum Arabicorum*, ed. M. J. de Goeje, Leiden, 1967 [hereafter referred to as *BGA*], vol. VII, p. 233. For the use of the phrase *surrat al-arḍ* in conjunction with Mecca and Jerusalem, see Gustave von Grunebaum, "The Sacred Character of Islamic Cities", in *Ilā Ṭāhā Ḥusayn fī īd mīlādihi al-sabʿīn*, ed. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Badawī, Cairo, 1962, pp. 25-37.

[5] See my "Place and Belonging in Medieval Syria, 6th/12th-8th/14th Centuries", PhD Thesis, Harvard University, 2005.

past and present, a sense of connectivity that was useful and compelling in legitimizing creativity and authority in the Islamic world more broadly.[6]

Centrality and Connectivity in Early Arabic Geography

The most concrete way in which Baghdad was seen as central was its physical location. The earliest Arabic geographical works lavish considerable attention on the idea of physical centrality at two scales: 1. at the scale of the inhabited world broadly, and 2. at the scale of individual regions within the inhabited world. Thus, just as the world as a whole had a center, so too did each of the constituent parts into which the world could be divided. The way the world was conceived and divided differed from geographer to geographer, but the majority of them were concerned with identifying centers.[7] The earliest surviving Arabic geographical works adopt Ptolemy's theory of seven "climes" (*iḳlīm*, pl. *aḳālīm*) running parallel to the equator, six above and one below, beyond which the assumption was that human life was impossible. As the coordinates of the climes were calculated on the basis of the longest day, the central clime, the fourth, it was believed, enjoyed the benefits of temperate climate, seasonal variation and generally salubrious conditions. Other early geographical works use a method inherited from pre-Islamic Persia to divide the inhabited world into circular regions (*kishwar*) arrayed around a central circle, known as Īrānshahr, the ancient name for the area dominated by Persian imperial culture that stretched from the Euphrates River in the west to the Oxus River in the east, but which was modified in the third/ninth-century Arabic tradition to correspond to the considerably less extensive, though equally politically and culturally central, Mesopotamian region known as al-ʿIrāḳ.[8] Later geographical works tend to follow this model of using political and cultural criteria for subdividing the world, albeit without the circular schema and with an emphasis on the Islamic world in particular rather than the inhabited

[6] Cooperon, "Baghdad in Rhetoric and Narrative", pp. 99-113; William A. Graham, "Traditionalism in Islam: An Essay in Interpretation", *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, XXIII, no. 3 (1993), pp. 495-522; and Hassan, "Loss of Caliphate", pp. 24, 65-66.

[7] For discussions of the early Arabic geographical tradition, see André Miquel, *La géographie humaine du monde musulman jusqu'au milieu du 11e siècle*, Paris, 1967, vol. I; J. F. P. Hopkins, "Geographical and Navigational Literature", in *Religion, Learning and Science in the 'Abbasid Period*, ed. M. J. L. Young, J. D. Latham and R. B. Serjeant, Cambridge, 1990, pp. 301-327; S. Maqbul Ahmad, "Djughrāfiyā", *EI²nd*, vol. II, pp. 575ff.; and J. B. Harley and David Woodward, eds., *History of Cartography*, vol. II, pt. 1 (Chicago, 1992).

[8] See Peter Christensen, *The Decline of Iranshahr*, Copenhagen, 1993.

world in general. In these geographies, centrality in political and cultural terms meant Islamic centrality, and thus the central region was usually the Arabian Peninsula, home to Mecca and Medina, signaled by the author's placement of his discussion of that region first in terms of the organization of the work as a whole.

One of the earliest independent works of geography, written by a Persian bureaucrat for the ʿAbbāsid regime named Ibn Khurradādhbih and finalized in 272/885, focuses on measuring distances along well-traveled routes between localities within the *kishwar* system, earning its description as a "road-book". In his *Kitāb al-Masālik wa'l-mamālik* (Book of Routes and Realms) Ibn Khurradādhbih divides the world into four regions arrayed at compass points around the central region of the Sawād, which he describes as what "the kings of Persia called *dil Īrānshahr*, which is to say 'the heart of al-ʿIrāḳ'", an area comprising most of what is the southern 2/3 of present-day Iraq.[9] Centrality in Ibn Khurradādhbih's system is represented physically by his selection of a single site of origin from which itineraries emanate in four different directions. For the majority of the work, this site of origin is Baghdad. Thus, itineraries to the east (al-Mashriḳ) start at Baghdad and continue through al-Nahrawān in the direction of Khurāsān, eventually arriving at China. Itineraries to the west (al-Maghrib) start at Baghdad and continue through al-Anbār in the direction of Syria and Egypt, eventually arriving at Andalusia. Alternate routes to the west originate in Baghdad but track north through Baradān and then split off, one branch heading toward al-Raqqa and the other toward Mosul. To get to the northern region (al-Djarbī), Ibn Khurradādhbih starts his itinerary in Baghdad along the Khurāsān route, but then branches northward toward Azerbaijan and Armenia. Finally, to the south (al-Tayman), the route starts at Baghdad, heads toward al-Kūfa, and arrives finally at Mecca. Ibn Khurradādhbih traces alternate itineraries toward various destinations in each of the four directions, and occasionally other towns serve as points of origin, such as al-Baṣra in the section on the sea route to the east and Mecca in the section on the districts of the Arabian Peninsula. However, Baghdad dominates the "road-book" as the central hub from (and to) which all roads lead.

Of course, it was not the roads themselves that made such a compelling case for centrality – although the fact of them showed that the ruling ʿAbbāsid dynasty was strong, prosperous, and organized enough to construct and maintain such a road system – but the movement of people and goods that took place along them. This is where centrality and connectivity are linked. As a

[9] Ibn Khurradādhbih, *Kitāb al-Masālik wa'l-mamālik*, *BGA*, vol. VI, p. 5.

regional director of the postal and intelligence services (*ṣāḥib al-barīd wa'l-khabar*) for the ʿAbbāsid Caliph, to whom the work is dedicated, Ibn Khurradādhbih knew as well as anyone the intimate association between imperial power and the connectivity that allows a regime to monitor, tax, and send armies to all of the territories to which it lays claim.[10] Almost rivaling the ʿAbbāsid imperial present in the *Kitāb* is the Persian imperial past. As mentioned above, he indicates that his choice of the Sawād as the central region in his system of dividing the world derived from the ancient Persian practice of dubbing the area "*dil Īrānshahr*, which is to say the heart of al-ʿIrāḳ". He also supplies the Persian titles of the governors and other administrators of his regions and sub-regions, some of which had been retained for practical reasons into the Islamic era, and he records tax revenues as well, sometimes dating from the time of the Persian Empire and sometimes accruing to the contemporary ʿAbbāsid treasury. However, in the area of imperial intelligence and communications, he is firmly in the present; he furnishes information about the ʿAbbāsid postal relay system for several regions, especially for the regions that he describes in the most detail and with which, it is safe to assume, he was the most familiar, such as the Sawād, the Djabal, and Khurāsān. Only in supplying this information does he betray the fact that the headquarters of the ʿAbbāsid Caliph and the military elite at the time of the work's composition were actually located in Samarra, rather than Baghdad, as Baghdad represents at best an alternate point of origin for the relays (and occasionally gets bypassed completely, as in the route from Samarra north to Mosul).[11]

In addition to these lines of imperial communication and remuneration, past and present, the movement of merchants and pilgrims along the itineraries receives its share of attention from Ibn Khurradādhbih. He devotes separate sections at the end of his work to the trade routes of Jewish and Russian merchants, and peppered throughout the text are references to much-

[10] We learn that from Ibn al-Nadīm that he held this post in the region of al-Djabal (literally, "the mountain", an area northeast of the Sawād transversing the Zagros Mountains in a swath from Shahrazūr in the north to al-Ahwāz in the south and stretching as far east as the cities of al-Rayy and Iṣfahān), but nowhere is it specified for which ʿAbbāsid caliph he was so employed or to which caliph the *Kitāb al-Masālik wa'l-mamālik* is dedicated. Ibn al-Nadīm does remark that Ibn Khurradādhbih was a boon companion of the Caliph al-Muʿtamid (r. 256/870-279/892), and since the *Kitāb* reached its final form during his reign it seems likely that the work was intended for him. See Ibn al-Nadīm, *al-Fihrist*, ed. Nāhid ʿAbbās ʿUthmān, Doha, 1985, p. 283; idem, *The Fihrist*, ed. and trans. Bayard Dodge, New York, 1970, p. 326.

[11] See, for examples, *BGA*, vol. VI, pp. 41, 59, 116-117.

frequented destinations for the pious – or curious – traveler.[12] Furthermore, the section on the Arabian Peninsula reflects his concern with the multiple routes taken by pilgrims on the annual *Ḥadjdj* to Mecca, and it is in this section that Baghdad is displaced by Mecca as a center to which (and from which) all roads lead.[13] This awareness of the traffic along his itineraries is where physical centrality in Ibn Khurradādhbih's work translates into the connectivity that assigns political, economic and cultural centrality to, for the most part, Baghdad, but also to other centers, such as Mecca and Samarra.

Other geographers endow Baghdad with a sense of physical centrality, if not at the scale of the world as a whole than at least at the scale of the region. By the middle of the fourth/tenth century, a school of geographical thought had emerged that introduced a new system for dividing the world and representing those divisions graphically. Often termed the "Balkhī school" after an early fourth/tenth-century scholar whose work has not survived, the geographers who embraced this system tended to focus primarily, if not exclusively, on the regions of the world inhabited by Muslims and to portray those regions via maps as well as text. The maps themselves can be seen as studies in connectivity. As Emilie Savage-Smith has argued, the fact that these maps do not conform to today's standards of cartographic accuracy does not mean they were not perceived as useful and compelling enough to be the focus of the works in which they were featured, rather than, as is sometimes implied, amateurish supplements.[14] Savage-Smith suggests that we should look at these maps as "an aid to memory and a means of imposing order on new and complex material and *not* as a visual model of physical reality".[15] As aids to memory, the maps acted as guides to possible itineraries in each region, not unlike the way that maps of subways and bus routes do today, and thus oriented travelers "at a glance" from one town to the next, whereas more detailed information might be provided by locals or more experienced fellow travelers.

[12] For the sections on merchants, see *BGA*, vol. VI, pp. 153-155; for examples of material on curiosities and *mazārāt* (destinations for pious visitation), see *BGA*, vol. VI, pp. 64-65, 79. For further discussion of the role played by such information in the work as a whole, see James E. Montgomery, "Serendipity, Resistance, and Multivalency: Ibn Khurradādhbih and his *Kitāb al-Masālik wa-l-Mamālik*", in *On Fiction and* Adab *in Medieval Arabic Literature*, ed. Philip F. Kennedy, Wiesbaden, 2005, pp. 177-232.

[13] *BGA*, vol. VI, pp. 125-150.

[14] Emilie Savage-Smith, "Memory and Maps", in *Culture and Memory in Medieval Islam: Essays in Honor of Wilferd Madelung*, ed. Farhad Daftary, London, 2003, pp. 109-127.

[15] Ibid., p. 109.

The three most famous geographers of this school, al-Iṣṭakhrī (d. ca. 350/961), Ibn Ḥawḳal (d. ca. 367/977) and al-Muḳaddasī (d. ca. 390/1000), all provided such maps of the regions into which they divided the world, which were conceived along the lines of perceived political and cultural, as well as physical, frontiers in the mid-fourth/tenth century and thus reflected the fragmentation of ʿAbbāsid power into successor states in this period. Although all three begin their works with the Arabian Peninsula, as the religious and cosmological center of Islamic civilization, in their chapters on the region of al-ʿIrāḳ they provide maps in which Baghdad occupies a central position and which highlight the many routes that connect the people and goods moving along those routes to that center.[16]

One of the realities of Baghdad's location that fused physical centrality with connectivity was the Tigris River and the canal system linking the city to the Euphrates River as well as to various tributaries. This network of waterways dominates Ibn Ḥawḳal's map, forming the vital connection between the localities represented on the map (see figure 1).[17] To look at this map, it seems one would never need to get out of a boat to visit every town in al-ʿIrāḳ. Putting this impression into prose – and into a broader geographical context – an early geographer of a more literary style, Ibn al-Faḳīh, wrote of this river network in his work *Kitāb al-Buldān* composed around the turn of the fourth/tenth century: "From these two rivers come the treasures of most of the east, west, north, and south".[18] If this was true, then those living along the waterways of greater Baghdad had access to all of those treasures, in theory if not also in socio-economic reality. Another early geographer who composed his own *Kitāb al-Buldān* perhaps a decade or two earlier, al-Yaʿḳūbī, used the story of the city's foundation (to which we shall return below) to emphasize the centrality and resulting connectivity made possible by the rivers. When the ʿAbbāsid Caliph al-Manṣūr (r. 136/754 – 158/775) arrived at the site that

[16] For further discussion of this trend in geography, see Miquel, *La géographie du monde musulman*, vol. I, pp. 267-330; Gerald R. Tibbetts, "The Balkhī School of Geographers", in *The History of Cartography*, ed. Harley and Woodward, vol. II, pt. 1, pp. 108-129.

[17] Ibn Ḥawḳal, *Kitāb Ṣūrat al-arḍ*, *BGA*, vol. II, p. 232; for a French key to the map, see Ibn Hawqal, *La configuration de la terre*, trans. J. H. Kramers and G. Wiet, Paris, 2001, vol. I, pp. 230-231.

[18] The section of the *Kitāb al-Buldān* that deals with Baghdad has survived in a single manuscript (known as the Mashhad MS) of a later abridgment of the work as a whole. For a published version of the sections on Baghdad from the Mashhad MS, see Ibn al-Faḳīh, *Baghdād, Madīnat al-Salām*, ed. Ṣāliḥ Aḥmad al-ʿAlī, Baghdad, 1977, p. 82.

would become the city of Baghdad, he recalled a prophecy describing the new imperial city he was destined to found for his dynasty:

> An island between the Tigris and the Euphrates, with the Tigris to the east of it and the Euphrates to the west of it, will be the emporium of the world. All of what comes on the Tigris from Wāsiṭ, al-Baṣra, al-Ubulla, al-Ahwāz, Fārs, Oman, al-Yamāma, al-Baḥrayn, and what abuts to that, will be transported upstream to it and will moor at it. Likewise, what comes in the way of what is carried by ships on the Tigris from al-Mawṣil, Diyār Rabī'a, Azerbaijan and Armenia and on the Euphrates from the Diyār Muḍar, al-Raqqa, al-Shām, al-Thughūr Egypt, and the Maghrib will be transported downstream to it and alight at it. And [to it will be] a road for the people of the Djabal, Iṣfahān and the districts of Khurāsān.[19]

This passage implies that it was the destiny of Baghdad to be at the crossroads of the world, particularly of the economic world. In another passage al-Ya'ḳūbī makes explicit this economic centrality: "Merchandise is imported to [Baghdad] from al-Hind, al-Sind, China, and Tibet, from [the countries of] the Turks, the Daylam, the Khazar, the Abyssinians, and the rest of the countries, to the point that there are in Baghdad more of these goods than there are in their countries of origin".[20] This kind of centrality was defined by connectivity, and in these litanies of cities and regions of the Islamic world lay Baghdad's power to connect people and goods from the Maghrib to Khurāsān to Oman.

Centrality and Connectivity in Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī's *Ta'rīkh Baghdād*

It was not just geographers who were concerned with representing Baghdad's physical centrality in tandem with its power to connect far flung regions of the Islamic world politically, economically and culturally. By the second century after the coming of Islam, groups of religious scholars, known as *'ulamā'*, had coalesced around the goal of preserving the collective memory of the *sunna*, or the exemplary life of the Prophet Muḥammad. To do this, they collected what is known as the *ḥadīth*, or the corpus of individual reports of the actions or sayings of the Prophet on the authority of eye- (or ear-) witnesses and transmitted orally over the generations. Only by preserving the *ḥadīth* and learning from its example could they help their fellow Muslims live righ-

[19] al-Ya'ḳūbī, *Kitāb al-Buldān*, *BGA*, vol. VII, pp. 237-238. Compare with versions in al-Ṭabarī's *Ta'rīkh al-rusūl wa'l-mulūk*, ed. M. J. de Goeje et al., Leiden, 1964, ser. III, vol. I, pp. 271-276; idem, *The History of al-Ṭabarī: 'Abbāsid Authority Affirmed*, ed. and trans. Jane Dammen McAuliffe, Albany, 1995, vol. XXVIII, pp. 237-245.

[20] *BGA*, vol. VII, p. 234.

teous and virtuous lives, particularly in the many practical areas on which the Ḳur'ān was silent. Central to this task was assessing the authenticity of each *ḥadīth*, or "tradition", which depended in large part on the trustworthiness of the chain of transmitters (*isnād*) who had passed the report along over the generations.[21] Thus, the scholarly field of *isnād* analysis was born, and the composition of biographical dictionaries designed to help scholars assess the individuals past and present who were engaged in the transmission of *ḥadīth* proliferated. While the earliest of these dictionaries were organized along generational lines, soon dictionaries devoted to *ḥadīth* transmitters from specific cities and regions started emerging.[22] One of the most significant early examples of such a city-based biographical dictionary was the eleventh-century *Ta'rīkh Baghdād* by the renowned Baghdad-born *ḥadīth* scholar al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī (d. 463/1071).

At the beginning of the *Ta'rīkh Baghdād*, al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī inserts an introductory paean to the city itself, before embarking on biographical entries for all the *ḥadīth* transmitters who could be associated with it. Not surprisingly, he uses the *ḥadīth* itself as his main source of evidence for the city's virtues. Surprisingly, however, he includes in this litany of virtues a sampling of *ḥadīth* that slander the city and people of Baghdad. Why would he make his work a platform for such negative views of his hometown and its residents? Certainly, it was not because he agreed with them. Rather, he quotes an earlier authority in his field: "Which *ḥadīth* scholar has not recorded a thousand traditions on the authority of liars?"[23] There is no shame in recording weak or forged *ḥadīth*, he explains, as long as they are accompanied by an analysis of their weakness or the evidence of their forgery. In fact, it is implied that the most important contribution of a *ḥadīth* scholar is not in his/her transmission of sound traditions but in his/her elucidation of the faults of weak traditions and their *isnāds*.[24] Such a demonstration of this most important contribution on his own part sets the stage for the most important praise he lavishes on the people of Baghdad and the reason for his composition of the biographical dic-

[21] See Ignaz Goldziher, *Muslim Studies*, ed. and trans. C. R. Barber and S. M. Stern, Chicago, 1971, vol. II, pp. 126-144; and G. H. A. Juynboll, *Muslim Tradition*, Cambridge, 1983, pp. 134-160.

[22] See Franz Rosenthal, *A History of Muslim Historiography*, Leiden, 1952, pp. 142-149; and Chase F. Robinson, *Islamic Historiography*, Cambridge, 2003, pp. 66-74.

[23] *TB*, vol. I, p. 43.

[24] For more on the scholarly field of *ḥadīth* criticism as it had developed by the time of al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, see Goldziher, *Muslim Studies*, vol. II, pp. 126-144; and Juynboll, *Muslim Tradition*, pp. 161-217.

tionary in the first place: that Baghdadis are the most zealous and skilled collectors of *ḥadīth* in the world.[25]

But what made this skillful zeal so important was not just their vigilance in revealing faulty *isnāds* or their ardor for collecting sheer numbers of traditions, an enterprise that might keep them miles from their homes for long periods of time seeking out *ḥadīth* from the oldest possible transmitters (and thus those from whom they might experience the words or actions of the Prophet through the fewest possible intermediaries), but the fact that in so doing they were busy forging links back in time to the era of the Prophet.[26] This is the way in which the act of *ḥadīth* collection and preservation functioned temporally just as rivers and roads did spatially to enhance connectivity within the *umma*. And in each case, Baghdad was perceived as the center. When al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī followed up his chapter on slander with a chapter of *ḥadīth* in multiple variants with full chains of transmission praising the virtues and merits (*al-manāḳib wa'l-faḍā'il*) of his native city, we can imagine the *isnāds*, this time sound ones, radiating out from Baghdad connecting all the links in the chain stretching back to the original authority who had sat in the presence of the Prophet. Similarly, when al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī followed up his introductory paean to Baghdad with volumes of biographical entries assessing the contribution to *ḥadīth* studies of generations of scholars who lived or died in Baghdad, we can similarly imagine the city as a hub for *muḥaddithūn*, the *isnāds* they preserved emanating from Baghdad like the spokes of a wheel, connecting multitudes of Muslims concerned with keeping the words and actions of the Prophet alive in the *umma*.[27]

To be sure, the introduction to the *Ta'rīkh Baghdād* also includes what were, by that time, the standard images of Baghdad's spatial centrality, and these function to reinforce the overall representation of Baghdad's temporal centrality, the place linking past to present, and Muslim to Muslim, by means of the *ḥadīth*.[28] Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī devotes a short section to a kind of hybrid system of dividing the world, appropriating the circular regions of the old Persian *kishwar* system but using the Ptolemaic nomenclature of seven climes

[25] *TB*, vol. I, p. 43.

[26] I owe this insight primarily to ongoing conversations with Roy Mottahedeh, my dissertation advisor. See also the discussion in Graham, "Traditionalism in Islam", pp. 501-511.

[27] For a discussion of how the act of *ḥadīth* preservation acted as a substitute for the 'Abbāsid Caliphate, and by extension the city of Baghdad, after its destruction by the Mongols in 656/1258, see Hassan, "Loss of Caliphate", pp. 65-66.

[28] Cooperson, "Baghdad in Rhetoric and Narrative," p. 100.

as labels, with the fourth as the central one, the *surrat al-dunyā*, and with Baghdad as its epicenter.[29] But this physical centrality translates immediately into a kind of cultural and biological connectivity, as al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī observes that its temperate conditions (another holdover from the Ptolemaic system) produce a melting pot, in which the worst qualities of peoples of other regions evaporate and the best qualities are distilled:

> Because of [Baghdad's centrality], the complexions of its people are even [hued] and their bodies are statuesque. They are safe from the ruddiness of the Byzantines and Slavs, from the blackness of the Ethiopians and the rest of the peoples of sub-Saharan Africa, from the coarseness of the Turks, from the rudeness of the peoples of the Djibāl and Khurāsān, from the vileness of the Chinese and from those who resemble them and have similar countenances. For [the people of Baghdad] are safe from all of that, and, [in fact] the good qualities of all the peoples of the terrestrial zones are joined in the people of this part of the earth by the grace of God, and just as they are proportionate in countenance, so they are graceful in character and in the grasp of scholarship, etiquette, and the best customs...[30]

In this passage, one can imagine the interchange enabled by the many routes and rivers connecting Baghdad to all corners of the inhabited world yielding complex genealogies that distilled in the city's residents the best traits in the Islamic *umma*.

As if to reinforce this kind of centrality, al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī concludes his introductory paean to the city of Baghdad with an extended historical topography that draws from earlier sources, including the aforementioned geographies of al-Ya'ḳūbī and Ibn al-Faḳīh, to emphasize the capaciousness of the city, its ability to accumulate, accommodate, and appropriate the many peoples of the *umma*. One of the ways in which he does this is to highlight the early settlement of the city, the land grants awarded to members of the military and the ruling elite, and the continuing waves of immigration to and concomitant suburbanization of Baghdad. Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī's topography reproduces a clear emphasis in al-Ya'ḳūbī's and Ibn al-Faḳīh's earlier works, which is the enumeration of the land grants or fiefs (*aḳṭā'*), estates or suburbs (*arbāḍ*), and palaces (*ḳuṣūr*) in and around the city in the first decades after its founding in 145/762. The enumeration of these parcels of land doubles as an enumeration of names associated with the 'Abbāsid bureaucracy, military, and ruling house itself, as in this list of estates from the west bank of the Tigris:

[29] *TB*, vol. I, p. 23.

[30] Ibid.

> The Estate of ʿAbd al-Malik b. Ḥumayd, the secretary of al-Manṣūr before Abū Ayyūb.
>
> The Estate of ʿAmr b. al-Muhallab.
>
> The Estate of Ḥumayd b. Abī-l-Ḥarith, a general.
>
> The Estate of Ibrāhīm b. ʿUthmān b. Nuhayk near the Quraysh Cemetery.
>
> The Estate of Zuhayr b. al-Musayyab.
>
> The Suburb, and the Square, of the Persians, which al-Manṣūr granted to them as fiefs.[31]

Frequently al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī interrupts enumerations like this one with a *ḥadīth*, accompanied by a full chain of transmission, giving more detail about the history of the land grants and the origins of their names, as in the following (omitting the *isnād*):

> Al-Ma'mūn granted Ṭahir b. al-Ḥusayn his palace as a fief. Before him it belonged to ʿUbayd al-Khādim, a client of al-Manṣūr. Al-Baghayīn, fiefs granted by al-Manṣūr to these people extending from Darb Sawār to the end of Rabaḍ al-Burjulānīyah, where the dwellings of Ḥamzah b. Malik are located.[32]

Even the streets themselves bear such names, as in al-Yaʿḳūbī's description of Manṣūr's original walled "Round City" on the west bank of the Tigris: "From archway to archway [of the Round City] are passageways and streets known by [the names of] officers or clients of the Caliph, or [even of] the inhabitants of each street".[33] In these topographical representations of Baghdad, place names bear witness to the political and social connectivity buttressing the ʿAbbāsid regime in the first half century of its power.

Descriptions of the rapid expansion of the city in this period further underscore this connectivity. One of the ways in which Baghdad's capaciousness is emphasized in the sources is through statistics about the features of its infrastructure and the great number of services it was able to provide, signifying its ability to absorb and, in so doing, to connect vast numbers of people. The geographers Ibn al-Faḳīh and al-Yaʿḳūbī both quote statistics on the number of streets, mosques, and public baths in the city, numbers that were clearly

[31] When quoting from the topographical chapters of the *Taʾrīkh Baghdād*, I will use Jacob Lassner's English translation. Lassner, ed. and trans., *The Topography of Baghdad in the Early Middle Ages*, Detroit, 1970, pp. 67-68; *TB*, I, p. 85. See also, Ibn al-Faḳīh, *Baghdād*, pp. 45, 48-49.

[32] Lassner, p. 68; *TB*, vol. I, p. 85. See also, Ibn al-Faḳīh, *Baghdād*, 47; and *BGA*, vol. VII, p. 249. For derivations of some of these names, see Guy Le Strange, *Baghdad During the Abbasid Caliphate*, Oxford, 1900, p. 108.

[33] *BGA*, vol. VII, p. 240.

exaggerated, but the effect of which was probably intended to be superlative rather than descriptive, to make Baghdad into a mythical version of itself, a symbol of magnitude and aggregation.[34] To take as a case in point the baths, al-Yaʿḳūbī records 15,000 public baths in Baghdad at the turn of the fourth/tenth century, while his contemporary Ibn al-Faḳīh quotes an obscure author known as Yazdadjird al-Kisrawī who counters a rumored 200,000 baths with, in his estimation, the more realistic figure of 60,000.[35] He then submits this figure to various calculations involving the number of attendants at each bath and the number of households served to arrive at the wildly implausible figure of 96,000,000 for the total population of the city. Later al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, in the characteristic method of a *ḥadīth* scholar, records several reports from different sources about the number of public baths in the city ranging from 3,000 to 27,000.[36] Whatever the truth of the matter, and it is good to keep in mind that accuracy may never have been the intended goal, the repetition of such statistics, alongside calculations about the number of canals and streets, the volume of foodstuffs consumed, and the taxes levied in the city paints a picture of a massive, densely populated urban space that embodied, even necessitated, connectivity. According to Ibn al-Faḳīh, Baghdad was a place where refugees were effortlessly absorbed; Shiʿites rubbed shoulders with Sunnis; Muʿtazilites shared the streets with Kharijites.[37] Al-Yaʿḳūbī writes: "All kinds of people, both city-folk and country-folk, reside in [Baghdad]. People move to it from all countries, near and far, and all people from the provinces

[34] On Ibn al-Faḳīh's *Kitāb al-Buldān*, and in particular his treatment of Baghdad, as a kind of "mythic geography", see Anas B. Khalidov, "Myth and Reality in the *K. Akhbār al-Buldān* by Ibn al-Faqīh", in *Myths, Historical Archetypes and Symbolic Figures in Arabic Literature*, ed. Angelika Neuwirth, Birgit Embaló, Sebastian Günther and Maher Jarrar, Beirut, 1999, pp. 481-489.

[35] *BGA*, vol. VII, pp. 250, 254; Ibn al-Faḳīh, *Baghdād*, pp. 90-91. Yazdadjird's calculations are also quoted by Hilāl al-Ṣābiʾ (d. 448/1056); see his *Rusūm Dār al-Khilāfa*, ed. Mīkhāʾīl ʿAwwād, Baghdad, 1964, pp. 18-20. The exact identity of Yazdadjird al-Kisrawī is a matter of some debate, as there are no extant manuscripts of his work, but he is reported to have lived around the turn of the fourth/tenth century and to have composed at least one book in praise of the city of Baghdad, from which Ibn al-Faḳīh and Hilāl al-Ṣābiʾ drew. Others who mention or quote from Yazdadjird's work on the subject of Baghdad include Ibn al-Nadīm (d. ca. 380/990), al-Tanūkhī (d. 384/994), Yāḳūt (d. 626/1229), and Ḥadjdjī Khalīfa (d. 1659). For more on his identity, see the editor's introduction to Ibn al-Faḳīh, *Baghdād*; Lassner, pp. 38-39; and Otar Tskitishvili, "Yazddjard b. Bahandādh al-Kisrawī and Some Questions of the Inner Structure of Madīnat al-Manṣūr", *Studia Islamica*, LXIX (1989), pp. 167-175.

[36] Lassner, pp. 107-108; *TB*, vol. I, pp. 117-119.

[37] Ibn al-Faḳīh, *Baghdād*, pp. 80, 93.

prefer it over their homelands".[38] Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī opines simply that one of the main things that distinguishes Baghdad from all other cities is its capacity to accommodate a large population.[39] This capaciousness, and the diversity and connectivity it made possible, suggests that the source of the city's centrality was not only its physical location but also its ability to function as a microcosm of the *umma* at large.

From Connectivity to Creativity

While it may seem obvious that Baghdadi natives would praise their city's centrality out of pride or that ʿAbbāsid loyalists might do so in the hopes of patronage, I argue that there was another dimension to these representations of Baghdad as a center that connected Muslims past and present, near and far. The images of Baghdad that emerged in the works discussed above from the third/ninth to the fifth/eleventh centuries were compelling and useful in justifying authority and creativity at a more abstract level. In an interpretive essay on "traditionalism" in Islam, William Graham has written:

> One particular element of this Islamic traditionalism is pervasive, even indispensable: a "sense of connectedness," or to coin an Arabic neologism for this, *ittiṣālīyah* – the need or desire for personal connection (*ittiṣāl*) across the generations with the time and the personages of Islamic origins – something that has been a persistent value in Muslim thought and institutions over the centuries.[40]

For Graham, the evidence for the importance of this "sense of connectedness" to Islamic traditionalism lies primarily in what he calls the "isnād paradigm", which connects Muslim to Muslim over the generations stretching back to the time of the Prophet in the process of *ḥadīth* preservation.[41] When Graham applies the "isnād paradigm" to a political and cultural context broader than that of *ḥadīth* studies he finds that though it relies on connections to the past it does not stifle creativity and discourage innovation, but in fact makes creativity and innovation possible.[42] Mona Hassan has already built on Graham's "isnād paradigm" to suggest a connective role for Baghdad's political, religious and cultural centrality in her study of the symbolism of the city's destruction in 656/1258.[43] She argues that in the wake of the sack of Baghdad

[38] *BGA*, vol. VI, pp. 233-234.
[39] *TB*, vol. I, p. 119.
[40] Graham, "Traditionalism in Islam", p. 501.
[41] Ibid., pp. 501-502.
[42] Ibid., pp. 499, 522.
[43] Hassan, "Loss of Caliphate", pp. 28-66.

and effective termination of the ʿAbbāsid Caliphate by the Mongols the preservation of *ḥadīth*, and the connectivity it entailed, was recommended as a consolation for Muslims.[44] This recommendation can be seen as an act of creativity in its identification of a possible substitute for the "potent mode of connectivity" formerly offered by the institution of the caliphate.[45] Connectivity, therefore, evoked by a chain of transmission or the image of a river or road network, can be a powerful tool because it links the Islamic *umma* to a common project, whether that be the circulation of *ḥadīth*, the support (or loss) of a political institution, or the building of a new capital city.

In the case of Baghdad, the foundation story, which accompanied many of the aforementioned representations of its centrality and connectivity, acts in relation to those representations in the same way, I suggest, as the *matn*, or text of the *ḥadīth*, does to its *isnād*. For *ḥadith* scholars of al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī's generation, the strength of the *isnād* determined, almost completely, the strength, and thus the veracity, of the *matn*.[46] A project as audacious and ambitious as the building of a new imperial capital city required a really strong *isnād* or, in Graham's words, a "sense of connectedness" to transform it into a communal project and thus to legitimize it culturally, if not also politically.[47] Almost all of the works discussed above stress the originality, the unprecedented nature, of the founding of Baghdad by al-Manṣūr in 145/762. Al-Yaʿḳūbī's account describes the site chosen by al-Manṣūr as "ignored by my predecessors" and the "Round City" that he planned and had built on the site as "the only round city known in all the quarters of the earth".[48] Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī quotes the famous third/ninth-century litterateur al-Djāḥiẓ evoking the originality and intentionality of this "Round City", planned and executed under the detail-oriented eye of its founder: "It is as though it is poured into a mold and cast".[49] Ibn al-Faḳīh portrays the Caliph al-Manṣūr as an ambitious

[44] Ibid., pp. 65-66.
[45] Ibid., p. 24.
[46] See J. Robson, "Ḥadīth", *EI²nd*, III, pp. 23ff.; Goldziher, *Muslim Studies*, vol. II, P. 141; Juynboll, *Muslim Tradition*, p. 162; and Robinson, *Islamic Historiography*, p. 89.
[47] Fred Donner describes the role of the *isnād* in this process as "historicizing legitimation"; see Donner, *Narratives of Islamic Origins*, Princeton, 1998, pp. 112-122.
[48] *BGA*, vol. VII, p. 238. This, of course, was not true, as circular cities were an architectural convention in the territories of the Persian Empire, and this fact was probably widely-known during the time of al-Manṣūr, but the assertion of originality is what matters here. See Charles Wendell, "Baghdād: *Imago Mundi*, and Other Foundation-Lore", *International Journal of Middle East Studies* II (1971), pp. 99-128.
[49] Lassner, p. 56; *TB*, vol. I, p. 77. This is also quoted earlier in Ibn al-Faḳīh, *Baghdād*, p. 64.

and resolute leader and his city-founding project as a risky, but ultimately hugely successful, venture:

> Because of his resolve and this experience and after this ambition and extensive travels, having seen faraway countries, he judged that he would choose this site for a city, a lodging place, and an abode – all of this while Khurāsān was in turmoil, in the far reaches of Syria a group of Umayyads were trying to take power, and in Mecca and Medina some others saw themselves as the most legitimate candidates for sovereignty.[50]

The passage goes on to praise al-Manṣūr's foresight and boldness, despite the aforementioned obstacles, to choose such a strategic location for his city, the centrality of which made possible further conquests on the frontiers of the empire by his successors.

Competition from other claimants to the caliphate was not the only challenge to al-Manṣūr's plan described by the sources. There was also the matter of the pre-Islamic, or the lack of Islamic, associations with the site of his future city. The story of the prophecy that confirmed al-Manṣūr's choice is well-known, as its source, in many accounts a Christian monk, and its structure resemble similar prophecies related in biographies of the Prophet Muḥammad.[51] This "foundation myth", to use Simon O'Meara's term, endowed a site without any clear Islamic or Biblical antecedents and in dangerous proximity to the heart of the pre-Islamic Persian Empire with Islamic legitimacy; this is what O'Meara refers to as "the reversal of a prior state, or the ascendancy of Islam and salvific urban space".[52] Another act of reversal chronicled in the sources was the renaming of the site from *Baghdād*, a name of obscure derivation that was apparently used to refer to the area on the western bank of the Tigris where al-Manṣūr staked his claim, to *Madīnat al-Salām*, or "City of Peace". The exact derivation of *Baghdād* is a matter of some debate in the sources, though most of them include an ancient Persian etymology in which *Bagh* meant "idol" and *Dād* or *Dādh* meant "gift", making *Baghdād* the equivalent of "gift of the idol". Thus, it is often noted that some Muslims, especially strict

[50] Ibn al-Faḳīh, *Baghdād*, p. 88.

[51] For a discussion of these parallels, and the structure of Islamic foundation myths more broadly, see Simon O'Meara, *Space and Muslim Urban Life: At the Limits of the Labyrinth of Fez*, London, 2007, pp. 58-67; see also, Wendell, "Baghdād". For the most accounts of the foundation of Baghdad, see al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, ser. III, vol. I, pp. 271-278; idem, *History of al-Ṭabarī*, vol. XXVIII, pp. 237-247. Each of the sources discussed above also gives an account of this foundation story: Ibn al-Faḳīh, *Baghdād*, pp. 30-35; *BGA*, vol. VII, pp. 237-238; *TB*, vol. I, pp. 66-67.

[52] O'Meara, *Space and Muslim Urban Life*, p. 60.

ʿulamāʾ, preferred the name *Madīnat al-Salām*, though, at least in writing, it is clear that the name Baghdad prevailed.[53] Moreover, al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī reveals considerable controversy about the ownership and taxation of all the land of the Sawād at the time of the Islamic conquest, which made the legality of al-Manṣūr's acquisition, either by appropriation or purchase, of the site for his city a matter of some debate. It seems that the legal status of the land – in particular, its category of taxation – had to be changed (or ignored) in order to make licit al-Manṣūr's foundation.[54] These acts of reversal might also be thought of as acts of creation, and they were neither unchallenged nor unproblematic. This is why Baghdad's connectivity was so important, the *isnād* that made the *matn* of these acts legitimate, that linked them to and absorbed them into the Islamic *umma*.

An even more controversial act of reversal/creation had, in fact, preceded the founding of Baghdad by a decade or so: the toppling of the Umayyad Caliphs and the coming to power of the ʿAbbāsid dynasty, known by scholars today as the ʿAbbāsid Revolution.[55] The sources repeatedly refer to Baghdad as the city of the Banū Hāshim, the clan name of the ʿAbbāsids, an affiliation that made them more closely related to the Prophet Muḥammad than had been the Umayyads and that helped shore up support for their revolution.[56] One of the bodies of *ḥadīth* that al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī takes such pains to reproduce and then reject on the basis of weak *isnād*s can be seen as thinly veiled attacks on the legitimacy of the ʿAbbāsid revolution, in which the Prophet predicts that a city of tyrants would be built on the Tigris.[57] While al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī attacks this "slander" (*thalb*, *ṭaʿn*) with the tools of a *ḥadīth* scholar, Ibn al-Faḳīh uses geography and connectivity to justify the victory of the ʿAbbāsids and to denigrate their detractors. On the victory of the ʿAbbāsids, Ibn al-Faḳīh quotes

[53] Ibn al-Faḳīh, *Baghdād*, pp. 27-28; and *TB*, vol. I, pp. 58-62. See also Cooperson, "Baghdad in Rhetoric and Narrative," p. 102. A similar, and similarly ambivalently executed, "act of reversal" in the sources was the partial demolition of the Palace of Chosroes (*Īwān Kisrā*) at the former Sasanian royal city of Ctesiphon (al-Madāʾin) that lay 35 kilometers southeast of Baghdad. See al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, ser. III, vol. I, pp. 320-321; idem, *History of al-Ṭabarī: Al-Manṣūr and al-Mahdī*, ed. and trans. Hugh Kennedy, Albany, 1990, vol. XXIX, pp. 4-5; and Ibn al-Faḳīh, *Baghdād*, pp. 36-37.

[54] *TB*, vol. I, pp. 4-22.

[55] For a discussion of modern interpretations of this "revolution", see R. Stephen Humphreys, *Islamic History: A Framework for Inquiry*, Princeton, 1991, pp. 104-127.

[56] *BGA*, vol. VII, p. 234.

[57] *TB*, vol. I, p. 27-38. See the discussion of the criticism of variants of this *ḥadīth* by al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī and Ibn al-Jawzī in Juynboll, *Muslim Tradition*, pp. 207-213.

the aforementioned Yazdadjird observing that the Umayyad capital city of Damascus was located far enough west on the east-west axis of the Islamic world that it, as well as its rulers, lacked relevance for and the support of the population of eastern regions, namely Khurāsān.[58] In short, Damascus was not a center in geographical terms and thus lacked connectivity, undermining Umayyad legitimacy and authority. Another passage quoted from Yazdadjird sums up the centrality and connectivity, both spatial and temporal, that made Baghdad, and its rulers, legitimate:

> Countries without [Baghdad] are like limbs that do not form a healthy body except when they are attached to it and are made enriched from it. For the world is Iraq, and the people are its people. Those who defame it are defaming the best of the Caliphs; and those who defame the Caliphs are defaming the Prophets; and those who defame the Prophets are defaming the Lord of the Prophets.[59]

This, then, was Baghdad's *isnād*: from Baghdad to Iraq to the ʿAbbāsid Caliphs to the Prophets to God. All Muslims were Baghdadis, wherever they lived, and Baghdad was the world, literally in microcosm on its streets and figuratively in terms of the reach of its political and cultural authority. Without Baghdad, the lands were like limbs severed from a body, and without reverence for it, the people were like those who reject God.[60] And it seems that Muslims outside of Baghdad, even in the rival city of Damascus, agreed; evidence from a manuscript of the *Taʾrīkh Baghdād* indicates that one of the introductory chapters on the virtues of Baghdad was delivered as a lecture in 504/1110-1111 at the Great Mosque of Damascus.[61]

Like a conventional *isnād*, Baghdad's *isnād* was meant to be repeated, as it served to make alive and present the connectivity underpinning its authority. Thus, images of the city's centrality and connectivity during the first century or, even more specifically, during the first decades of its existence were emphasized in later works. The topographical information furnished by al-Yaʿqūbī dates, by his own admission, from the era of al-Manṣūr and his successor al-Mahdī (r. 158/775-169/785).[62] In a careful study of al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī's sources, Jacob Lassner finds that they date overwhelmingly from the

[58] Ibn al-Faqīh, *Baghdād*, pp. 86-87.

[59] Ibid., p. 74.

[60] This passage comes at the end of a diatribe against those who "magnify Egypt and profess preference for it over Baghdad" (Ibn al-Faqīh, *Baghdād*, p. 67), which may help explain its defensive tone.

[61] *TB*, vol. I, pp. 44-45 (note 1).

[62] *BGA*, vol. VII, p. 254.

third/ninth century, portraying the city as it had been over a century before the author's birth.[63] Michael Cooperson has interpreted such emphasis on the past in descriptions of Baghdad from the medieval period on as evidence for a generalized nostalgia about the city as a symbol of past glory, of a golden age of Islamic unity that had, by the turn of the fourth/tenth century, if not substantially earlier, certainly passed.[64] An example of this nostalgic, even elegiac, tone can be found in al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī's own words:

> It reached its highest point in buildings and population during the reign of ar-Rashīd, since there reigned quiet and the utmost prosperity in the world. Then came the civil war and continuous tribulations. The city decayed and the population departed. However even with the general decline, Baghdad in the period before our own time was different from all other cities and urban centers.[65]

While this may have been nostalgic, I suggest that it was also useful. Repeating images of the city's centrality, even if it had since vanished, acted in the present as an *isnād*, connecting the *umma* to its past. Nostalgia stems from perceptions of loss, but I argue that this was also the stuff of living memory, that repeating images of Baghdad's centrality and connectivity worked talisman-like to produce and reproduce creativity and authority in the present. To return to the idea of a "discourse of place" introduced at the beginning of this paper, Muslims between the third/ninth and fifth/eleventh centuries found representing the cities and regions of their world useful and compelling enough to bequeath to later generations a corpus of works occupied primarily with such representations. In the case of Baghdad, the images of centrality and connectivity discussed here legitimated certain acts of creation – the founding of a new capital city, the establishment of a new ruling dynasty – the repercussions of which would remain relevant for centuries. As Mona Hassan has argued, for later generations of Muslims, both in and outside of Baghdad, keeping the memory alive in prose and poetry can be seen as both an expression of the loss of the past and a commitment to connectivity in the present, even and especially in the face of such decisive rupture as the destruction of the city by the Mongols in 656/1258.[66]

[63] Lassner, p. 41.

[64] See Cooperson, "Baghdad in Rhetoric and Narrative", pp. 99-113. For a fifth/eleventh-century example of nostalgia for an even more recent past in Baghdad, see George Makdisi, "The Topography of Eleventh-Century Baġdād: Materials and Notes (I-II)", *Arabica*, VI, nos. 2-3 (1959), pp. 178-197, 281-309.

[65] Lassner, p. 109; *TB*, vol. I, p. 119.

[66] See Hassan, "Loss of Caliphate", pp. 28-66.

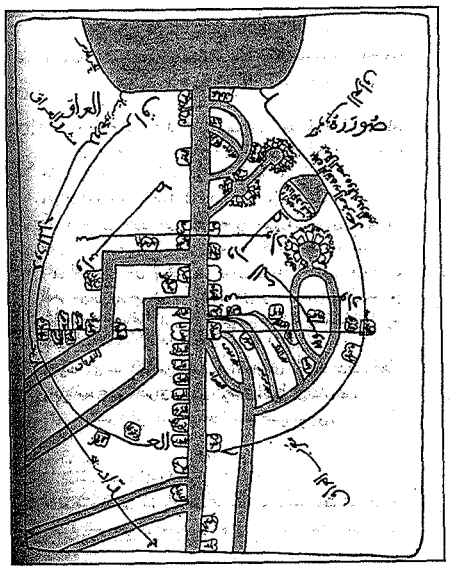

Figure 1

A map of al-'Irāḳ, reproduced from Ibn Ḥawḳal, *Kitāb Ṣūrat al-arḍ, Bibliotheca Geographorum Arabicorum*, ed. M. J. de Goeje, Leiden, 1967, vol. II, p. 232, with permission from Stichting De Goeje at Leiden.

SYMBOLISMS IN THE PLANNING OF THE ROUND CITY OF al-MANṢŪR (Madīnat al-Salām) IN BAGHDĀD

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Introduction

On 14 Ramādān 132 AH / 26 April 750 CE Abul 'Abbas al-Saffāh was proclaimed in Damascus as the first Caliph of the newly founded 'Abbasid Dynasty (132-656 AH / 750-1258 CE), (Creswell, EMA, p 2). Since Damascus was the capital city of the previous rival Umayyad Dynasty (41-132 AH /661-750 CE), the seat of Caliphate was transferred to Kūfa. The latter was the first capital city in Islam outside the Arabian Peninsula during the Caliphate (35-40 AH / 656-661 CE) of the fourth Guided Caliph, the Imām 'Alī.

During the first few years of the establishment of the 'Abbasid Dynasty (132-656 H /750-1258 CE), the first 'Abbasid Caliph, Abul 'Abbas al-Saffāh (132-136H /750-754 CE) had resided in four capital cities. The second Caliph, Abū Ja'far al-Manṣūr, had resided in three capital cities.

It should be pointed out that the name al-Hashimiya was a generic term given to the administrative capital of the Abbasid Dynasty before the building of the Round City at Baghdād; it did not refer to a single place but to the location where the caliph resided and established the seat of his caliphate. Hence, there were four locations called al-Hashimiya: first, the site of Qaṣr ibn Hubayra; secondly, the site opposite that between Kūfa and Baghdād; thirdly, at

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