

# **BAGHDAD DURING THE ABBASID CALIPHATE**

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From Contemporary Arabic  
and Persian Sources

G. Le Strange

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Volume 2

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# BAGHDAD

DURING THE

# ABBASID CALIPHATE

FROM

CONTEMPORARY ARABIC AND  
PERSIAN SOURCES

BY

G. LE STRANGE

WITH EIGHT PLANS

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TO  
STANLEY LANE-POOLE  
IN REMEMBRANCE OF WORK DONE AND  
IN EXPECTATION OF WORK  
TO BE DONE  
THIS BOOK IS AFFECTIONATELY  
DEDICATED



## PREFACE

IN the summer of the year 1883 it was my good fortune to make the acquaintance of the late Sir Henry Rawlinson, and the book which is now at length published is due to his suggestion. In the first place Sir Henry called my attention to the Ibn Serapion MS., of which the British Museum possesses an unique copy, and he urged on me the desirability, by its means, of working out the topography of mediaeval Baghdad; assuring me that, with the numerous articles on this subject contained in the great *Geographical Dictionary* of Yâkût and other early authorities, a reconstruction of the old plan of the city was quite feasible. Ibn Serapion I published in the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (January, April, and October, 1895).

Other occupations hindered the conclusion of the present work; it took much longer than I had at first imagined to sift and set in order the mass of information scattered through the voluminous writings of the Arab geographers and historians;

and even now a good deal might be added from incidental notices, other than those which I have found, in the later volumes of the Annals of Ṭabarī, if the Index to that great chronicle had been available—but unfortunately this has not yet been published.

There is indeed no lack of material, as will be seen by glancing over the names of contemporary Arab Geographers given in the accompanying Chronological Table (which the bibliographical List of Authorities completes); but the real basis of the present reconstruction of the mediaeval plan is the description of the Canals of Baghdad written by Ibn Serapion in about the year A.D. 900. By combining the network of the water system, as described by this writer, with the radiating high-roads, as described by his contemporary Ya'kūbī, it has been possible to plot out the various quarters of older Baghdad, filling in details from the accounts of other authorities, which, taken alone, would have proved too fragmentary to serve for any systematic reconstruction of the plan.

As far as I am aware, no one has yet attempted to write a complete history and draw the plan of the great metropolis of the Abbasid Caliphs. A beginning was indeed made by the late A. von Kremer in his *Kulturgeschichte des Orients unter den Chalifen* (vol. ii. pp. 47-94); but unfortunately this went no further than a single chapter, giving an account (derived from Ya'kūbī) of the original

burg, or Round City of Manşûr, which was to later Baghdad much what the City of London has come to be in relation to greater London which now encompasses it for miles on every side.

The bibliographical list of original Authorities and Editions, given at the head of this work, is as complete as I can make it, being more especially intended to serve for the references in the notes; further, in the last three chapters some account will be found of these various authors and the nature of the description which each has left us of Baghdad.

The system of transliteration adopted is that now commonly used; but for the sake of brevity I have generally omitted the Arabic article, *Al*, before the names of the Caliphs, as also in many common place-names: and for so doing the sufficient authority of Silvestre de Sacy may be cited, who has followed this system in his *Religion des Druzes* (see vol. i. *Introduction*, p. v, note 2). It has the merit of brevity, and while rendering these names less uncouth to the English ear, makes them, I think, more easily distinguishable to the eye.

In many plural names, such as Bazzâzîn, Tustariyîn, and the like, I have kept to the termination in *în* of the objective case (instead of writing Bazzâzûn, Tustariyûn) to avoid a double transcription, since this *în*-form properly occurs in the full name—e. g. Nahr-al-Bazzâzîn, the Canal of the Cloth-merchants; Rabaḍ-at-Tustariyîn, the suburb of the people of

Tustar ; further, this is the post-classical form and the one now in use. It has not been thought necessary to mark dotted letters and long vowels in the names of authors cited in the notes.

In mentioning dates, the years of the Hijrah are given, with the year A. D. following in brackets, which last is reckoned to be the year with which the major part of the Moslem year corresponds: thus A. H. 200 beginning on August 11, A. D. 815, is given as equivalent to A. D. 816.

The Map and Plans will serve to show what I conclude to be the disposition of the various quarters of the city as described in our authorities. Nobody can be better aware of the shortcomings of these Plans than I myself am, and they court criticism from any who will take the trouble of going through the evidence. The course of the Tigris has considerably changed during the last thousand years, of that there is ample proof, but it is not so easy to say where exactly, at any specified epoch, the bed of the river lay.

For modern Baghdad and its environs I have followed the great plan of the city published by Commander Felix Jones in his *Memoirs*, Bombay Government Records, No. XLIII, New Series, 1857; while the surrounding country and the course of the Tigris generally are given from the Map of Ancient Babylon, in six sheets, compiled by Mr. Trelawney Saunders from the surveys of Felix Jones, Bewsher, Collingwood, and Beaumont Selby, which was

published by Stanford in 1885 on the scale of 4,000 yards to the inch.

My plans of mediaeval Baghdad are, to a certain extent, tentative; in the main lines of roads, and the relative positions of the various quarters, however, but little question is likely to arise, since the evidence is fairly complete. What is now more especially needed is excavation on the spot to show where, on the western side of the Tigris, the great Mosque of Manşûr stood, and on the eastern bank what was the exact position of the Ruşâfah Mosque. Both these buildings appear to have been standing in the middle of the fourteenth century of our era; and, since tiles or kiln-burnt bricks were largely used in their construction, some considerable vestiges of their foundation-walls would certainly be found were the mounds of rubbish, on either bank of the Tigris above modern Baghdad, to be carefully examined.

I have many to thank for aid in the carrying through of this work, and in the notes I have in all cases acknowledged more special obligations. For general bibliographical information, however, I may take this opportunity of expressing my thanks to both Professor Lane-Poole and to Mr. A. G. Ellis, Assistant-Keeper of Oriental Books and MSS. in the British Museum, and while recalling the names of Mr. A. A. Bevan and of Mr. E. G. Browne of Cambridge, who have always afforded me their friendly advice and assistance, I must not close my preface without recording how deeply I am

indebted to Professor De Goeje of Leyden for his constant courtesy in answering many questions, and in affording me every kind of information, unstintedly, from his unrivalled knowledge of mediaeval Arab geography and history.

G. LE STRANGE.

ATHENAEUM CLUB, PALL MALL.

*August, 1900.*

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## CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE

<i>Year.</i> A.H. (A.D.)	<i>Abbasid</i> <i>Caliphs.</i>	<i>Buildings and Events</i> <i>in Baghdad.</i>	<i>Contemporary</i> <i>Authorities.</i>
132 (750)	SAFFĀḤ.	Builds Hâshimiyah.	
136 (754)	MANŞÛR.	(The First Period.) Foundation of Bagh- dad; the Round City.	
158 (775)	MAHDÎ.	Completion of Ruşâfah.	
169 (785)	HĀDÎ.		
170 (786)	HĀRÛN-AR- RASHÎD.	Ja'farî Palace founded.	
193 (809)	AMÎN.	First Siege, 197 (813).	
198 (813)	MAMÛN.	Ja'farî Palace com- pleted, and called the Ḥasanî.	
218 (833)	MU'TAŞIM.	Palace on Nahr Mûsâ. (The Second Period.) Caliphate removed to Sâmarrâ, 221 (836).	
227 (842)	WĀTHIḤ.	Sâmarrâ.	
232 (847)	MUTAWAKKIL.	Sâmarrâ.	
247 (861)	MUNTAŞIR.	Sâmarrâ.	
248 (862)	MUSTA'IN.	Returns to Baghdad. Second Siege, 251 (865).	
251 (866)	MU'TAZZ.	Sâmarrâ.	
255 (869)	MUHTADÎ.	Sâmarrâ.	
256 (870)	MU'TAMID.	Bûrân restores the Ḥasanî Palace. The Caliph returns to Baghdad, 279 (892).	<i>Ya'kûbî.</i>

## Chronological Table

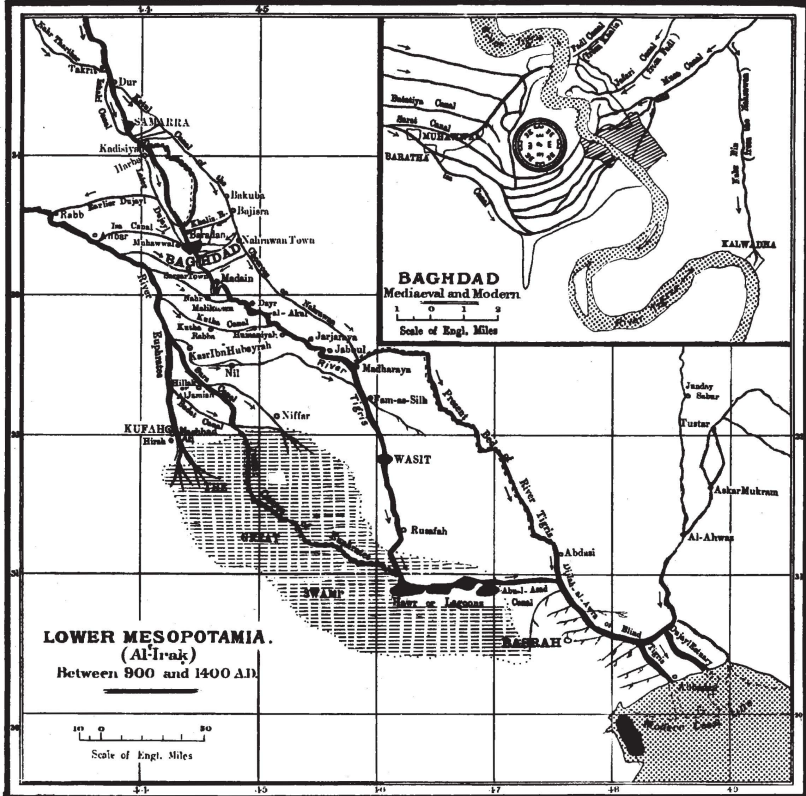
<i>Year.</i> A. H. (A. D.)	<i>Abbasid</i> <i>Caliphs.</i>	<i>Buildings and Events</i> <i>in Baghdad.</i>	<i>Contemporary</i> <i>Authorities.</i>
279 (892)	MU'TADID.	The Caliph resides in East Baghdad. Palaces of the Thurayyâ and the Firdûs built. The Tâj Palace begun. The Ḥasanî Palace enlarged.	
289 (902)	'ALÎ MUKTAFÎ.	The Tâj Palace finished. Mosque of the Caliph built.	<i>Ibn Rustah.</i>
295 (908)	MUKTADIR.	The Palace of the Tree and others. The Greek Embassy, 305 (917).	<i>Ṭabarî, Ibn Serapion.</i>
320 (932)	ḲÂHIR.	The wall of the Round City falls to ruin.	
322 (934)	RÂDÎ.		
329 (940)	MUTTAḲÎ.	Palace of the Golden Gate ruined, 329 (941). The Round City inundated.	<i>Mas'ûdî.</i>
333 (944)	MUSTAKFÎ.		
334 (946)	MUṬÎ'.	(The Third Period.) Buyids: Palace of Mu'izz - ad - Dawlah and his Dyke. The Peacock Palace, the Octagon and Square Palaces.	<i>Iṣṭakhri.</i>
363 (974)	ṬÂI'.	The 'Aduḍî Hospital.	<i>Ibn Hawḳal, Muḳaddasî.</i>
381 (991)	ḲÂDIR.		
422 (1031)	ḲÂIM.	(The Fourth Period.) Saljûks. Tughril Beg and Mâlik Shâh. The Nizâmiyah College. The inundation of 466 (1074).	<i>Khafîb.</i>
467 (1075)	MUKTADÎ.	The Mosque of the Sultan. Suburbs of the Muḳtadiyah, &c.	

## Chronological Table

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Year. A. H. (A. D.)	<i>Abbasid Caliphs.</i>	<i>Buildings and Events in Baghdad.</i>	<i>Contemporary Authorities.</i>
487 (1094)	MUSTAẒHIR.	Wall round lower East Baghdad, 488 (1095). The Rayḥānīyīn Palace.	
512 (1118)	MUSTARSHID.	The Bâb-al-Hujrah Palace.	
529 (1135)	MANŞÛR RÂSHID.	Third Siege, 530 (1136).	
530 (1136)	MUḤAMMAD MUKTAFĪ.	The Tâj Palace burnt, 549 (1154), and in part rebuilt. Fourth Siege, 551 (1157). Inundation of 554 (1159).	<i>Khakânî.</i>
555 (1160)	MUSTANJID.	(The Fifth Period.)	<i>Benjamin of Tudela.</i>
566 (1170)	MUSTADĪ.	City Wall restored, 568 (1173). Inundation of 569 (1174). Older Tâj Palace demolished. The second Tâj and Dyke built.	
575 (1180)	NÂSIR.	Inundation of 614 (1217). Talism Gate repaired, 618 (1221).	<i>Ibn Jubayr Yâqût.</i>
622 (1225)	ZÂHIR.	Restores the Bridge of Boats.	
623 (1226)	MUSTANŞIR.	Mustanşiriyah College. Mosque restored.	
640 (1242)	MUSTA'ŞIM.	Library of the Rayḥānīyīn. Last Siege: Hûlâgû, 656 (1258).	<i>Ibn Khallikân.</i>

Map I. To face page I.



Q. V. Creighton 1900

# BAGHDAD

## DURING THE CALIPHATE

### CHAPTER I

#### THE FOUNDATION OF BAGHDAD

Previous capitals of Islam. Medina and Kûfah. Damascus. The fall of the Omayyads. Need of a new capital for the Abbasid dynasty. The two Hâshimiyahs. The Râwandî insurrection. Courses followed by the Euphrates and Tigris during the Middle Ages. Manşûr chooses the site of Baghdad. An Assyrian Baghdad; Etymology of the name. Az-Zawrâ and Ar-Rawhâ. The legend of the name Miqlâş; Sûk Baghdâd. The advantages of the situation of Baghdad.

THE history of Baghdad, as a metropolis, coincides with the history of the rise and fall of the Abbasid Caliphs, for in the East it would appear to be almost a necessity of the case that every new dynasty should found a new capital. In the earlier annals of Islam the Era of the Flight (or Hijrah) commemorates the date when the Prophet Muḥammad, being forced to leave Mecca, went to take up his abode in the little hamlet of Yathrib. This change shifted the political centre of Arabia from the older commercial city to Yathrib, now to be named Medina, 'the City of the Prophet,' and which, from a small provincial town, suddenly rose to be the capital of Islam, becoming in a few years' time the seat of the theocratic government that had

imposed new laws on the desert tribes and transformed all Arabia into one nation. The first three successors (the Khalîfahs or Caliphs) of the Prophet, namely his companions Abu Bakr, 'Omar, and 'Othmân, continued to govern Islam from Medina; and among the secondary causes that brought about the fall of 'Alî, the next Caliph, is certainly to be counted his ill-advised abandonment of Medina and the Hijâz. In going to reside at Kûfah in Mesopotamia, 'Alî upset the balance of power among the Arab tribes, as established by his predecessors; also he was unable to found a strong administration in his new capital, discovering when too late that at Kûfah the majority of the population was unreliable, ever rebellious and inimical to his theocratic claims. Mu'âwiyah, who now became the rival of 'Alî in the Caliphate, had more than a score of years before this period been named governor of Syria by the Caliph 'Omar; and, foreseeing the struggle from the beginning, had made it his work to colonize Syria with relatives and dependants. The knife of a religious fanatic settled the question of who should be Caliph. 'Alî perished at Kûfah, inaugurating by his death the long line of Shî'ah martyrs, and Mu'âwiyah, first Caliph of the house of Omayyah, ruled Islam unquestioned, residing at Damascus, which thus from the capital of a province suddenly became the metropolis of the Commander of the Faithful.

Damascus was well situated to be the seat of government of the purely Arab Caliphate of the Omayyads. It lay in a most fruitful land; well within striking distance of the Hijâz, where Medina and Mecca still remained the double centre of

religious power in Islam ; further it was backed by the Arabian Desert, from whence the Caliphs drew their soldiers, and where such of their kinsmen as still clung to the nomad life roamed at pleasure, but close at hand in case of need. Damascus was also conveniently near the Byzantine frontier, and during the ninety years of the Omayyad Caliphate the Arab armies ever and again poured from the north of Syria into Eastern Asia Minor, making almost continuous raids against the unfortunate Christian subjects of the Greek Emperor. Finally, that Damascus did not stand on a navigable river was of little disadvantage during the infancy of Moslem commerce, when all the carrying trade followed the old caravan-routes over the desert, and was of such small amount as could still be borne on the backs of camels.

Of the many causes that led to the overthrow of the Omayyads, the two most potent factors would appear to have been the decay of the Arab tribal system on which the military power of the Damascus Caliphs depended, and the disaffection towards the government caused by the continued misrule of the New-Moslems, who were *not* Arabs—being mainly the subjects of the old Persian kingdom of the Chosroes—and who, both in numbers and in intellectual gifts, far surpassed their Bedawin conquerors. The Persians had accepted Islam cordially, but distinctly after a fashion of their own, which the Arab party regarded as heterodox ; and the Abbasid claims to the Caliphate were made good, to no inconsiderable extent, by trading on the inborn hatred which the Persians, already Shī'ahs, nourished against the Sunnī Caliphs at Damascus, who, though lax in

morals and given to wine-bibbing, were orthodox in faith, and, before all things, Arab in sympathy<sup>1</sup>.

The last Omayyad Caliph, Marwân II, was routed and slain in the year 132 (A.D. 750), and the first Abbasid Caliph well merited his name of Saffâh—the ‘Shedder of Blood’—he having been constantly occupied, during the four years of his reign, in hunting down and putting to death every male descendant of the house of Omayyah, save one youth only who, escaping to Spain, ultimately obtained rule there, and founded the dynasty which afterwards came to be known as the Caliphate of Cordova. In 136 (A. D. 754) Manşûr succeeded his brother Saffâh on the throne, and during the twenty-two years of his reign built Baghdad, and there organized the government of the Abbasids, which first established in power, and then suffering a long decay, was destined to last for five centuries seated on the banks of the Tigris.

A new capital for the new dynasty was indeed an imperative need. Damascus, peopled by the dependants of the Omayyads, was out of the question; on the one hand it was too far from Persia, whence the power of the Abbasids was chiefly derived; on the other hand it was dangerously near the Greek frontier, and from here, during the troublous reigns of the last Omayyads, hostile incursions on the part of the Christians had begun to avenge former defeats. It was also beginning to be evident that the conquests of Islam would,

<sup>1</sup> The causes which led to the overthrow of the Omayyads, and the revolution of which the house of ‘Abbâs skilfully profited to obtain the Caliphate, are discussed in a recent pamphlet (named in the List of Authorities) by the Dutch orientalist, G. Van Vloten.

in the future, lie to the eastward towards Central Asia, rather than to the westward at the further expense of the Byzantines. Damascus, on the highland of Syria, lay, so to speak, dominating the Mediterranean and looking westward, but the new capital that was to supplant it must face east, be near Persia, and for the needs of commerce have water communication with the sea. Hence everything pointed to a site on either the Euphrates or the Tigris, and the Abbasids were not slow to make their choice.

During the first Moslem conquest of Mesopotamia, two Arab cities had been founded there for the garrisoning of the troops—Baṣrah near the mouth of the twin rivers, and Kûfah on the Euphrates, where the desert caravan-road, from the Ḥijâz to Persia, entered the cultivated plain of Mesopotamia. The Caliph Saffâḥ, when not occupied in fighting and butchering, had lived at the Palace called Hâshimîyah (after the ancestor of his race), which he had built beside the old Persian city of Anbâr on the eastern side of the Euphrates, near to where the great canal, afterwards known as the Nahr 'Îsâ, branched off towards the Tigris. At this Hâshimîyah (of Anbâr) the first Abbasid Caliph died in 136 (A.D. 754); and his brother Manṣûr, shortly after succeeding to the throne, began to build for himself another residence called by the same name. This second Hâshimîyah, according to one account, was a town standing between the Arab garrison-city of Kûfah and the old Persian town of Ḥîrah; that is to say, on the Arabian side of the Euphrates, not far above the place where that river, in the tenth century A. D., spread out and became lost in the

Great Swamp. Another account places the later Hâshimîyah of Manşûr near the town (Madînah) of Ibn Hubayrah, which last lay close by Kûfah, and therefore must not be confounded with the Castle (Çaşr) of Ibn Hubayrah, a town of some importance lying higher up the Euphrates than Kûfah, and on its left or eastern bank<sup>1</sup>.

The exact position, however, of this town of Hâshimîyah is of little importance, since Manşûr very soon abandoned the site as most inconvenient for a capital. It was too near Kûfah, with its population of fanatical Shî'ahs, and its garrison of Arab tribesmen, who constantly rioted and otherwise gave trouble. Lastly, Manşûr took a permanent dislike to Hâshimîyah after the insurrection of the Râwandîs, when a multitude of these Persian fanatics surging round his palace had insisted on worshipping him as the Deity. The indignant Caliph had repudiated their idolatrous homage, whereupon they began a riot, attacking the guards, and Manşûr at last found himself in some danger of losing his life at the hands of those who had pretended to revere him as their God.

If the capital of Islam was to be shifted to

<sup>1</sup> Ya'kubi, 237; Tabari, iii. 271. This duplication of place-names, in the immediate neighbourhood one of the other, is one of the difficulties of mediaeval Arab geography. Dictionaries of homonyms exist—as, for instance, that of Yakut called *Al-Mushtarik*—and they are useful, though seldom affording sufficient information about places of minor importance. That there was a Hâshimîyah at Anbâr, as well as at Kûfah, is evident by the comparison of two such good authorities as the *Kitâb-al-'Uyûn*, pp. 211, 214, 236, with the passages in Tabari and Ya'kubi cited above. It is also evident from the passage in Tabari that the Madînah, or 'town,' of Ibn Hubayrah close to Kûfah, was not identical with his Çaşr, or 'Castle,' a place which, however, afterwards rose to be a town of some importance standing on the high road from Baghdad to Kûfah.

Mesopotamia, the advantages of a site on the Tigris, rather than on the Euphrates, were conspicuous. The new capital would then stand in the centre of a fruitful country, and not on the desert border, as was the case with Kûfah and the neighbouring towns, for the barren sands of Arabia come right up to the western bank of the Euphrates. By a system of canals the waters of this latter river were used to thoroughly irrigate and fertilize all the country lying in between the two great streams, while the waters of the Tigris were kept in reserve for the lands on its left or Persian bank; and thus the whole breadth of the province, from the Arabian Desert on the one side to the mountains of Kurdistân on the other, was to be brought under cultivation, and converted into a veritable garden of plenty. Lastly, the Lower Tigris before its junction with the Euphrates was more practicable for navigation than this latter river, inasmuch as the great irrigation canals, by effecting the drainage of the surplus waters of the Euphrates into the Tigris, scoured the lower course of this river, and kept the water-way clear through the dangerous shallows of the Great Swamp immediately above the Baṣrah Estuary.

To understand the problem as presented to Manṣûr in his search after a suitable place for the new capital, it must also be borne in mind that during the period of the Abbasids, neither the Euphrates nor the Tigris followed the course marked on our modern maps. From the account given by Ibn Serapion, it is evident that the main stream of the Euphrates, at a short distance above the ruins of Babylon, took the right or western

channel, and, very soon after passing Kûfah, discharged its waters into the Great Swamp, which is so important a feature in the political and physical geography of that day. The Tigris, on the other hand, when it reached the latitude of the present Kûṭ-al-'Amârah (about a hundred miles as the crow flies below Baghdad) turned due south, and passing down to Wâsiṭ by the channel now known as the Shaṭṭ-al-Hayy, shortly below this city, also entered the Great Swamp where, however, unlike the Euphrates, its course continued to be marked by a series of navigable lagoons, called *Hawr*. Finally the whole body of water collected in the Swamp, from both the great rivers, drained into a channel leading out immediately to the head of the tidal estuary, which, after passing Baṣrah, flowed into the Persian Gulf at 'Abbadân<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> At the present day the Tigris, below Kûṭ-al-'Amârah, instead of flowing down past Wâsiṭ, turns into the more easterly channel, and after making a great bend due east, takes its course south to Kurnah, where it joins the waters of the Euphrates to form the estuary of the Shaṭṭ-al-'Arab. It is still a question when this change of bed took place, for no direct evidence of the date is to hand; but the change doubtless was effected gradually, and probably during the course of the sixteenth century A. D. The western bed, going through Wâsiṭ, certainly continued to be full of water as late as the middle of the fifteenth century A. D. It is plainly thus described by all our Arabic and Persian authorities of the Middle Ages, to mention only the latest in date, by Ḥamd Allah Mastawfî in A. D. 1330, by 'Alî Yazdî, the historian of the campaigns of Timur, who took Wâsiṭ, 'on the Tigris,' in A. D. 1393, and by Ḥâfiẓ Abrû, who wrote about the year A. D. 1420. After this must have come the change, and our next authority, more than two centuries, however, later, is the Frenchman Tavernier. After visiting Baghdad in February, 1652, he describes his journey down the Tigris, which (he says) some distance below the city, divided into *two* branches, so as to enclose a great island that was traversed by numerous small canals. The western channel (the older course by Wâsiṭ) apparently was then already no longer navigable, and Tavernier did not travel by it, but describes the river here as running 'vers la

Mansûr made many journeys in search of a site for his new capital, travelling slowly up the banks of the Tigris from Jarjarâyâ to Mosul. A site near Bârimmâ below Mosul was at first proposed, where the hills called Jabal Ḥamrîn are cut through by the Tigris, but the Caliph finally decided against this, it is said because of the dearness and the scarcity of provisions. The Persian hamlet of Baghdâd, on the western bank of the Tigris, and just above where the Şarât canal flowed in, was ultimately fixed upon, and in the year 145 (A.D. 762) Mansûr began to lay the foundations of his new city.

From the discovery made by Sir Henry Rawlinson in 1848, during the low water in an unusually dry season, of an extensive facing in Babylonian brickwork, which still lines the western bank of the Tigris at Baghdad, it would appear certain that this place had already been occupied by a far more ancient city. The bricks are each stamped with the name and titles of Nebuchadnezzar, and it has since been found that in the Assyrian geographical catalogues of the reign of Sardanapalus a name very

pointe de la Mésopotamie.' The French traveller went by boat down the eastern (the present) channel, which took its course 'le long de l'ancienne Chaldée.' He was ten days going from Baghdad to Baṣrah, and after passing (Ḳûṭ-al-) 'Amârat, a clay-built fort, he mentions the villages of Satarat, Manşûri, Magar, and Gazar, when he reached Gorno (Kurnah) 'where the Euphrates and Tigris come together.' (Tavernier, i. 240.) It is evident, therefore, that the Tigris has followed its present course from Ḳûṭ-al-'Amârah to Kurnah since the middle of the seventeenth century, some time before which, but after 1420, it began to change over from the Wâsiṭ channel that it had occupied during the Middle Ages. It is curious further to notice that this present eastern course, running from 'Amârah to Kurnah, is also the channel taken by the Tigris in pre-Islamic days, namely during the Sassanian period; as has been already pointed out in a note to my translation of Ibn Serapion (*J. R. A. S.*, 1895, p. 301).