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METİN HEPER

## Iraq, art, architecture, and archaeology

**Iraq** is the site of major contributions to the evolution of Islamic **art** and **architecture**, especially in the period between the second/eighth and seventh/thirteenth centuries. In the history of Islamic **archaeology**, the city of Sāmarrā' occupies a significant position, both for its sheer scale and complexity

and for the fact that it was one of the first Islamic sites in the Middle East to be subjected to extensive excavation and survey (Northedge, Ernst Herzfeld). Archaeological research has also focused on areas of longer-term continuity, for example, after the first/seventh-century Islamic conquests, in the maintenance of the ancient irrigation systems developed in areas such as the Diyālā plains, east of the Tigris River (Adams; Morony). The art, architecture, and urban planning of Islamic Iraq drew upon the region's pre-Islamic cultures, particularly that of the Sāsānians (third to seventh century C.E.), although visual and material culture also bears witness to other influences coming from Southeast Asia, India, Central Asia, and the eastern Mediterranean.

The archaeological record provides relatively little evidence of the Muslim presence in Iraq during the first Islamic century (seventh-early eighth century C.E.). The earliest garrison settlements (*mişr*, pl. *amşār*) of Basra and Kufa both included simple mosques, although they are known only from written descriptions. The first example to survive in physical form is the mosque in the *mişr* of Wāsiṭ, constructed around 84/703 [Illustration 1]. The *dār al-imāra* (governor's residence) that was excavated in Kufa probably contains elements dating to c. 50/670, although most of the structure comes from the following century and later (Safar; Creswell, 9–15, 40–1). Islamic doctrine was also expressed through the inscriptions on the so-called Arab-Sāsānian coinage produced in Iraqi mints into the 70s/690s, and on graffiti, such as the text, dated 64/683–4, from Hafnat al-Abyaḍ, near Karbalā', naming the otherwise unknown Layth b. Yazīd and invoking the angels Jibrīl, Mīkhā'īl (Mīkāl), and Isrāfīl (Treadwell;