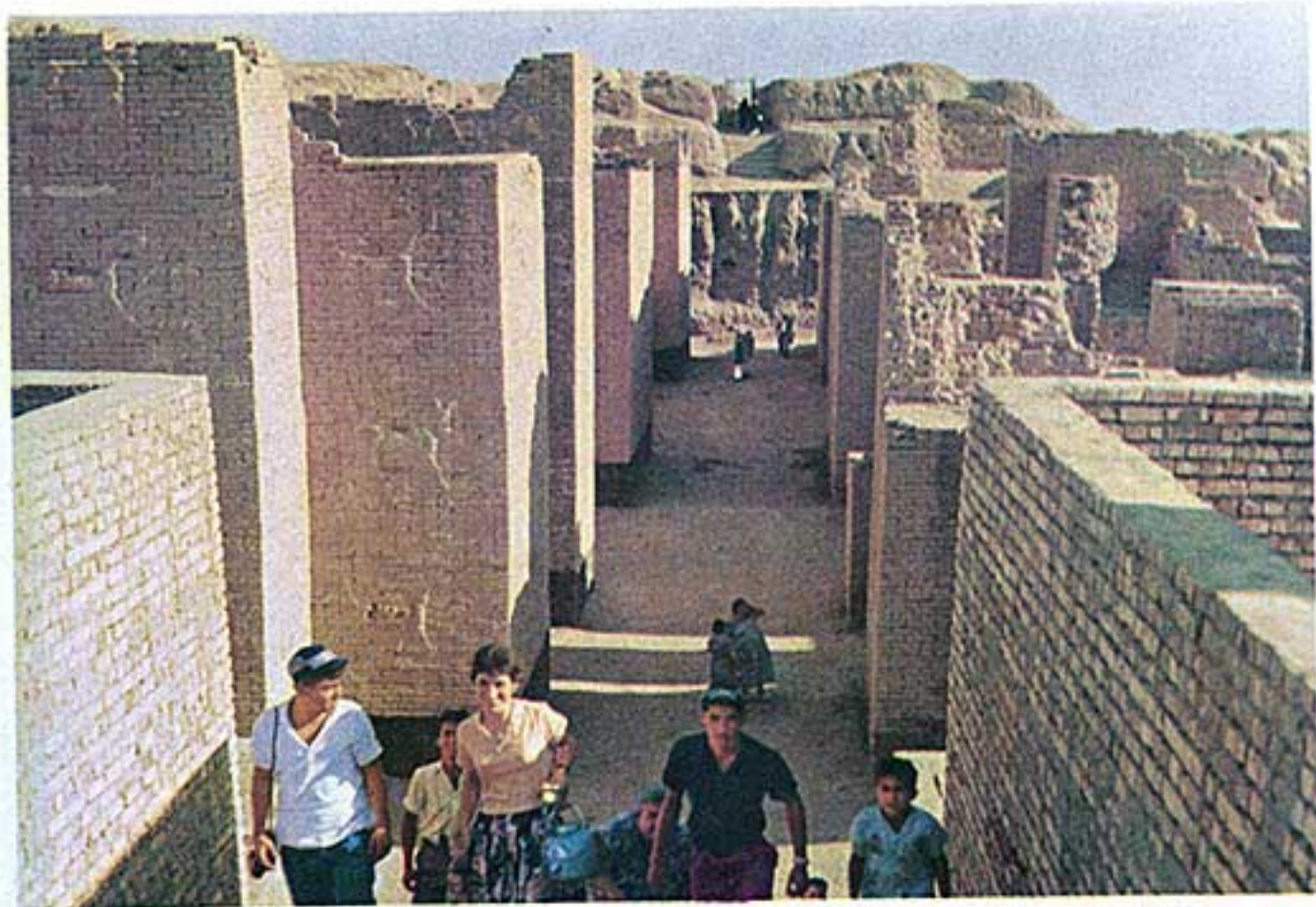


**LAND OF
ANTIQUITY**



Babylon of the Hanging Gardens, the most spectacular city of ancient times.

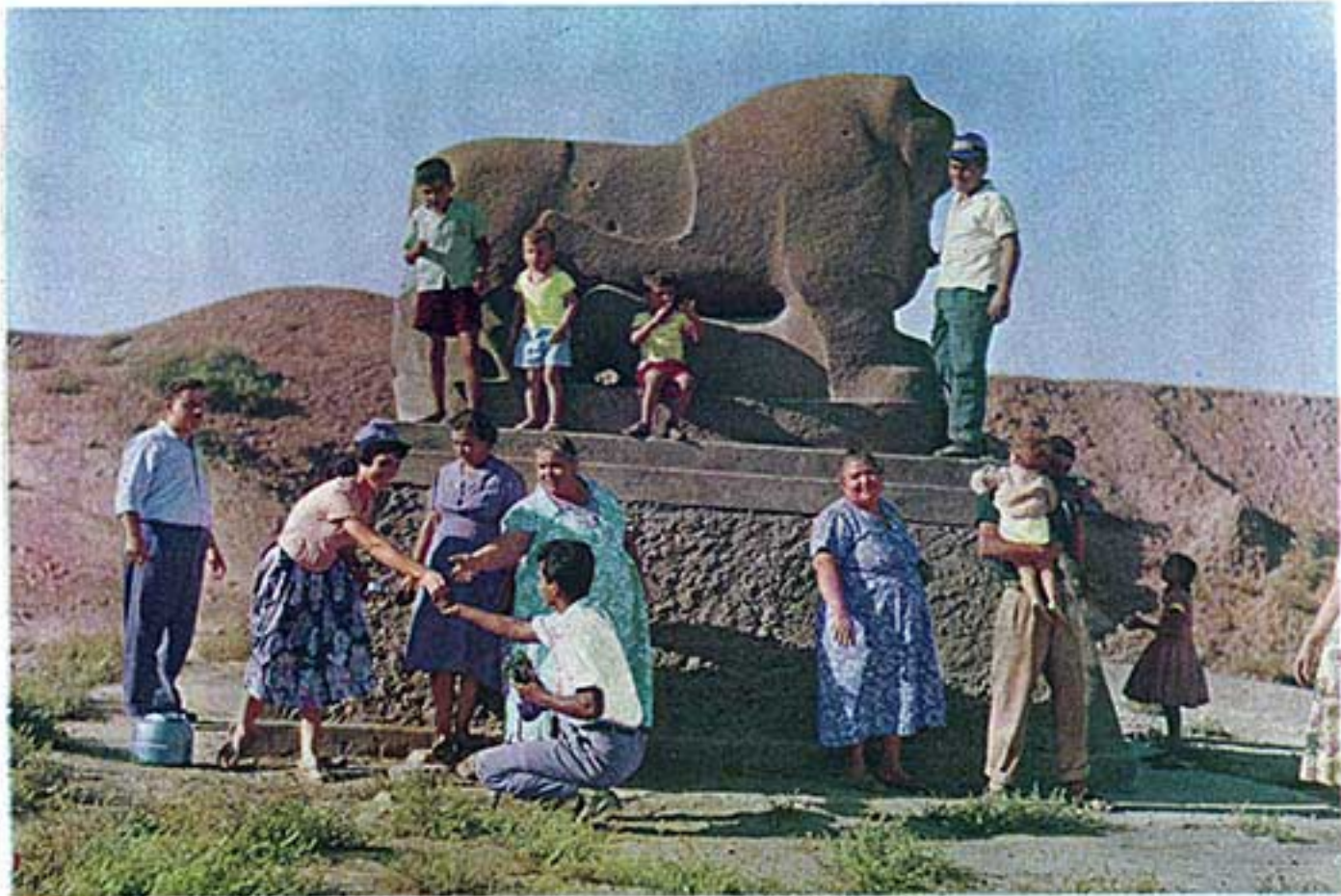
The grandeur and the shortcomings of civilization are all reflected, in one way or another, in the continuity of history in Iraq. Thanks to the devoted endeavours of archaeologists and scholars from many nations, it is now possible to trace in this land, the origin of many of the things that have gone into the building up of civilization.

The most moving of the places to visit is undoubtedly the site of ancient *Babylon* which goes back nearly 4,000 years. Here time and the elements, as well as man himself, have worn away what was probably the most spectacular city of ancient times, with its *Hanging Gardens*, its mighty walls and gates, its palaces, its crowds, its religious rites and ceremonies and all the other trappings of power. It inspires one with awe and melancholy to ponder the sad remains. Dominating the scene is the great Lion of Babylon, giving a suggestion of such ponderous and almost crushing strength as would be hard to duplicate in the sculpture of any other land.

The journey to Babylon takes only about two hours by car. There are still many things to see in Babylon :

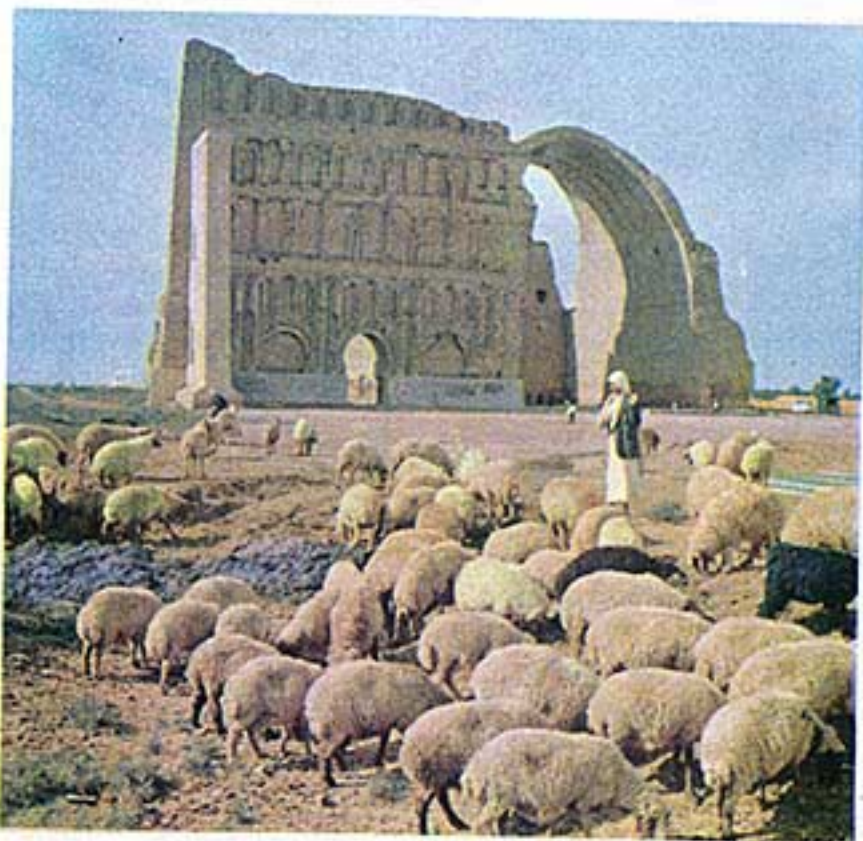
The great Street of the Processions, the Ishtar Gate with the beautiful bas-reliefs of animals so cunningly contrived as to seem almost alive, but with that quality overlaying them that will always distinguish the work of art from the natural object, the huge temples of Easgila and Etemenanki, the latter, the famous staged tower, in all probability the Tower of Babel. When you stand among the ruins you are linked in a way with Hammurabi, with Nebuchadnezzar and with Alexander the Great, to say nothing of kings who perhaps surpassed these men in power but of whom nothing now is known, except their names in the Lists that have come down to us.

Nearer to Baghdad is *Tel Harmal*, only about six miles away. Here we have a provincial capital of about 4,000 years ago. In addition to the great number of administrative records you would expect to find, there have been discovered some of the earliest mathematical calculations known, one proving a knowledge of a principle which was hitherto thought to have originated with Euclid seventeen centuries later.



The Great Lion of Babylon.

Not more than an hour's drive from Baghdad is the great arch of *Ctesiphon*, the supreme example of the catenary arch believed to be the widest single span of pure brickwork in the world. It dates from the Sassanian era, which began in the 3rd century A.D.



Arch of Ctesiphon.

Among the thrilling ancient sites to be seen in the north, one should certainly not miss the Assyrian capital of *Nineveh*, city of Sennacherib in the 7th century, B.C. Not much is left but palace mounds and crumbling walls, but who would not go out of his way to stand in this famed and ancient city. On the mound called Tel Nabi Younis is now a mosque which is believed locally to house the tomb of the prophet Jonah.

Also near Mosul is *Nimrud*. Here one may see another ziggurat or staged tower, the ruins of a great temple where two huge stone lions were discovered, as well as the remains of the palace of King Assurnasrpal, King of all Assyria, where marvellous bas-reliefs are to be found of scenes of ancient life and also the famed winged bulls.



If one can go to Arbil and Assur, to Samarra and Hatra, too, one will step back into both the very ancient past and the «intermediate» past of the Islamic period.

Hatra can be reached from Sherqat, a station on the Baghdad-Mosul railway-line, in about an hour and a half by car, or by a much longer journey from Mosul.

Hatra became known as an important place during the second century after Christ, It is then described as «a large and populous city, defended by strong and extensive walls, and containing within it a temple of the sun celebrated for the great value of the offerings». It enjoyed at the time its own kings, who were regarded as being of Arabian stock, but paid tribute to the Parthians. Its period of prosperity was from about 100 — 300 A.D., and its buildings may be considered as characteristic Parthian architecture. There were a number of historical sieges of Hatra, most of which had to be abandoned owing to the strength of the walls and the toughness of its inhabitants.



Hatra

It was a Sassanian King, Sapor 1, who eventually sacked the town in about 250 A.D. According to history he was only to do so as a result of the treachery of the daughter of King Daizan, who disclosed to him the secret of the talisman which protected her father's city. The lady herself came to a violent end, for, having first carried her off, intending

to marry her, Sapor finally became so shocked by her disloyalty to her father that he went to the extreme of tying her to the tail of a wild horse. In 363. A.D., the city is mentioned as having «for long been in ruins».

In *Samarra* there are the magnificent Friday Mosque with its fascinating spiral ramp winding outside the tower to the top, the remains of the city walls and of the Caliph's palaces, and two 13th century tombs which are pilgrimage centres to this day. In the general area of the north is the *Shanidar cave* where the 50 to 60,000-year-old skeletons have been found.



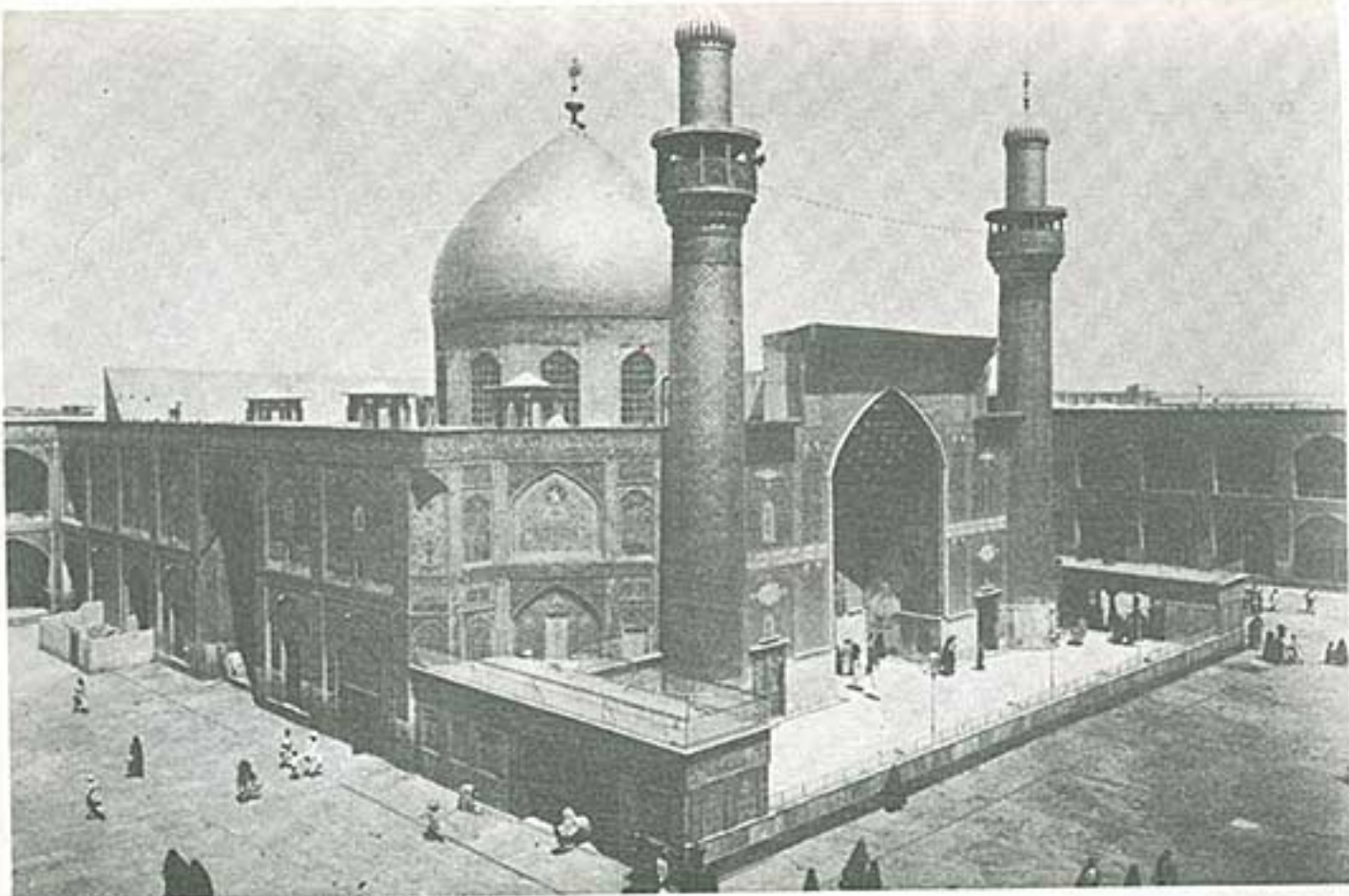
Samarra Spiral Minaret.

Also in the north is *The Spring* which is thought by some to have started the Biblical Flood. In southern Iraq, traces of the flood have dramatically supported the soundness of the history of the Old Testament.

Now in dramatic contrast go south to the holy cities of Karbala and Najaf. There, visitors to Najaf see from a long way off, the fine golden dome of the Mosque of Imam Ali, the Moslem Caliph and cousin of the Prophet, towering to the skies. The «sahn» or great hall of the Mosque is of exquisite design from both the architectural and the decorative viewpoint. In Najaf, too, are many famous schools following the traditional methods of teaching and emphasizing Moslem theology and language.

In Karbala is the Shrine of Imam El-Hussein ibn Ali. This stands in the middle of a great chamber, the golden dome of which, together with its two minarets, shine wondrously.





Mosque of Imam Ali at Najaf



Shrine of Imam El-Hussein at Karbala

There are many other attractive historical monuments in Karbala.

The outstanding monument of the 8th century is the fortress palace of *Ukhaidhir*, 30 miles south-west of Karbala, whose isolation and the dry desert climate, make it one of the best preserved and most imposing antiquities in Iraq. It was probably built by Isa ibn Musa, nephew of the Caliph Al-Mansur, who was persuaded to renounce his claim to the succession, and retired to Ukhaidhir to live the life of a millionaire recluse. The palace is enclosed by a strong outer wall, with the imposing main gateway on the north side ; this leads into the entrance hall, with a private mosque on the right, and thence into the principal courtyard of the palace, surrounded by buildings three storeys high, with the main «iwan» — reception chamber, facing the entrance. The rest of the building is taken up by the domestic quarter, and five private suites, each with its own courtyard.



Ukhaidhir Palace

One ought also not to miss Kufa Mosque, situated in *Kufa*, about ten minutes from Najaf. It was designed by the Arab hero Sa'ad ibn Abi Waqqas in the very early days of Islam.

The principal cities of the north are Mosul and Kirkuk. *Mosul* is very old and the centre of communications and commerce, in the north. In visiting Mosul, one should not miss the Museum, the old An-Nuri Mosque with its leaning tower, the Mosque of Nebi Jirgis, and the 13th century palace of *Qara Serai*.



Qara Sarai



Mosul

Kirkuk is the great oil centre of the north. It is now one of the finest and most up-to-date cities, in Iraq. It dates back to Assyrian times. The tomb of the prophet Daniel is reputed to be here. The natural gas given off by the oil wells burns constantly.



Old Kirkuk

The largest city in the south is *Basrah*, Iraq's great port and centre of date industry. It is sometimes called *Venice of the East*, because it is laced with canals. *Sindbad the Sailor*, of Arabian Nights fame, is associated with Basrah. It has been a commercial city for more than a thousand years and also a centre of scholarship.



Basrah air-port.



Forest of palm trees on Shatt-al-Arab



Basrah, Venice of the East