Orientalism in British Policymaking: Gertrude Bell and the Iraq Mandate, 1921-1932

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Abstract

In the wake of the First World War, the League of Nations established the mandate system to stabilize the territories that had, until recently, been under the control of Germany or the Ottoman Empire. It did so by assigning regions, known as "mandates," to member states, like Britain and France. The mandate system granted permission for these member states to control, influence, and administer a government in the mandated territory. This influence and occupation had a long-lasting impact, especially in the Middle East. This thesis examines how the British government employed Orientalists in order to better understand and thus dominate the people of Iraq. Of the many political officers and intelligence agents that were invaluable participants and agents of empire, Gertrude Bell was a monumental player in this endeavor and aided the British by providing reports on the region and its people. I assert that Gertrude Bell is one of the best examples of an "Orientalist," as defined by Said: an expert on the Orient aiding in its domination and exploitation. This research relies heavily on Bell's reports to the British government, letters to family, and other published writings. Many scholars have mentioned Bell or Orientalism in their work on the Iraq mandate but have failed to examine their influence critically. I aim to provide a well-rounded analysis of Bell's influence as an Orientalist by focusing primarily on her official, governmental presence, rather than her personal life and letters, which has been the focus of other works.

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Introduction

The first half of the twentieth century was a time of uncertainty and change in the British Empire. The First World War prompted questions of sovereignty and autonomy and brought with it nationalist movements across the globe. As the sun set on the raging war with Germany and the Ottoman Empire, Britain sought to maintain its control and influence in newly occupied areas in the Middle East. The Sykes-Picot Agreement of 1916, which essentially divided the Middle East between Britain and France was but the first in a continuous line of Western interference in the region. Britain established a long-lasting influence in Mesopotamia, what would eventually become the modern-day state of Iraq, but it was not until the San Remo Conference of 1920 that Britain formally accepted responsibility of three former provinces of the Ottoman Empire (Basra, Baghdad, and Mosul) in the form of a mandate from the League of Nations. As stipulated in the League of Nations Covenant, it was the responsibility of Britain to provide administrative advice and assistance that would help the Mandate for Mesopotamia transform into a self-governing and self-sufficient state. Much to the chagrin of the British, the local population of Iraq did not take well to this prolonged foreign interference, and anti-British movements in the region gained momentum and threatened the security of the political officers in the region and state-building efforts.

Over the next twelve years, Britain allowed its own desires for resources, like oil, ports, and passages to colonial territories, to overshadow the goals of the mandate system. In addition, Britain did not put forth the resources necessary to build a self-sustaining state. As the situation continued to deteriorate, air power and strategic bombing were used to quell protests and

extinguish anti-British movements.[1] Britain's physical presence in Iraq quickly dwindled and political officers, like Gertrude Bell, were left without support in their state-building efforts. Britain's involvement in Iraq lost public support and became a financial burden in a time of economic strain.[2] In order to quickly rid itself of responsibility, Britain pushed for Iraq to be declared an independent state released from the mandate system. After three years of consideration, Iraq was granted formal independence from Britain and was admitted into the League of Nations as the sovereign Kingdom of Iraq on October 3, 1932. This thesis examines how the British government employed Orientalists in order to better understand and thus dominate the people of Iraq. Of the many political officers and intelligence agents that were invaluable agents of empire, Gertrude Bell was a monumental player in this endeavor and aided the British by providing reports on the region and its people.

In the decades following the mandate, Iraq was troubled by political uncertainty, corruption, violence, and interference from outside forces, including the United States. The July 14th Revolution in 1958 overthrew the Hashemite kingdom established by the British and founded the Iraqi Republic, led by Iraqi nationalists, Muhammad Najib ar-Ruba'i and Abd al-Karim Qasim. In another July revolution ten years later, leaders of the Ba'th Party, including Ahmed Hassan al-Bakr and Saddam Hussein, ousted Prime Minister Tahir Yahya and President Abdul Rahman Arif, bringing Iraq firmly under the control of the Arab socialist party. Following Hussein's use of chemical weapons against Kurds during the Iran-Iraq War (1980-1988), the United Nations placed economic sanctions on the country. In reaction to deadly uprisings after

[1] Toby Dodge, *Inventing Iraq: The Failure of Nation Building and a History Denied* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), 131.
[2] Susan Pedersen, "Getting Out of Iraq - in 1932: The League of Nations and the Road to Normative Statehood," *The American Historical Review* 115, no. 4 (2010): 9.

the 1990 Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, the US urged the Iraqi public to revolt against Hussein, who had been pushing an anti-American stance. In response, Hussein refused to cooperate with weapon inspectors from the UN, who then could not certify that he was no longer in possession of nuclear, biological, or chemical weapons. In the aftermath of the September 11th attacks against the US, President George W. Bush declared the presence of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq and misled the American public on Iraq's involvement in the attacks. The 2003 invasion of Iraq was but one of many targets in the "Global War on Terrorism" that has left the country, and much of the Middle East, in absolute chaos. The state of Iraq today is still subjected to outside intervention and disturbances, as well as internal conflict, violence, political corruption, and sectarianism.

Biography of Gertrude Bell

Despite the formal independence granted in 1932, Iraq remained under Western economic and political influence in the years after the mandate thanks, in part, to the advice of self-proclaimed "experts" of the region, like Gertrude Bell. Born on July 14, 1868 to a well-off and politically involved English family, Bell attended school at Queen's College in London from 1883 to 1886 and then Lady Margaret Hall at Oxford University where she earned an honorary degree in Modern History in 1888.[3] She traveled widely as a young woman and completed two trips around the world in 1898 and in 1903. Bell traveled across the Middle East and Central Asia with her uncle, Frank Lascelles, after his 1892 appointment as British Minister in Tehran. As she explored the Middle East, Bell quickly developed an interest in the Arab culture. She

[3] Georgina Howell, *Gertrude Bell: Queen of the Desert, Shaper of Nations* (London: Macmillan, 2006), 31-33. Oxford did not grant women degrees until 1920, so the degree earned by Bell was honorary.

learned Arabic, Turkish, and Farsi, studied Islam and local politics, and began work as an archeologist at several sites across the Ottoman Empire. Her papers and drawings of archeological sites at Binbirkilise in what is now Turkiye are still available at the archives of the Royal Geographical Society in London.[4] In 1914, just before the war broke out, Bell returned to England and volunteered with the Red Cross from November 1914 to November 1915.

Bell's return to England was short-lived, as her knowledge and talent caught the attention of the British government. She was summoned to Cairo in November of 1915 to work with the British Military Intelligence. Throughout the First World War, Bell worked as an intelligence officer with the newly formed Arab Bureau. Under this appointment, Bell sent back reports from the Basra and was among the first to report on the Armenian Genocide in 1915.[5] In 1916, just four years prior to the establishment of the mandate system, the Colonial Office requested from Bell information on the peoples across the Ottoman Empire. Bell relied on her previous studies and selected interviews to write six reports from 1916 to 1917 that mapped out histories of different ethnic groups, details on local politics, geographic information, potential railroad paths, and more. After four years, conflict on the Mesopotamian front came to an end with the Armistice of Mudros in 1918 which ended the Ottoman Empire's involvement in the First World War and tentatively partitioned the Ottoman Empire.[6]

Even though the mandate was not created until 1920, British officials were already in place in the region and began to utilize Bell's advice and writings to better establish authority

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[4] These materials include maps of the former Ottoman Empire and descriptions of archeological sites, including detailed measurements.
[5] Janet Wallach, *Desert Queen: The Extraordinary Life of Gertrude Bell* (New York: Random House, 1996), 156.
[6] Peter Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq: Contriving King and Country, 1914-1932* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 13.

and control over the people living in Iraq. By 1920, Bell was appointed to the position of Oriental Secretary of the Mandate for Mesopotamia where she was instrumental in mapping the region, policymaking, and in the creation of the state of Iraq. Bell was a close advisor and friend to Iraq's first king, Faisal I, but by the later years of her career, Bell received criticism from the public over her perceived "pro-Arab" stance.

By 1923, Bell's advice and perspective were no longer the popularly held opinion and her allies in the colonial administration had been removed from their posts.[7] Her place as a trusted advisor to Faisal slipped away due to growing anti-British sentiments. Bell became heavily depressed and her mental and physical health deteriorated. The last years of her life were filled with loss, both of her brother, Hugo, and her beloved dog. In one of her last letters to Florence Bell, her stepmother, Bell expressed how lonely she was in Baghdad and that her life there could not "go on forever."[8] In July of 1926, Bell died of an overdose of sleeping pills, either by accident or in an attempt to end her own life. Bell's work in Iraq has been largely applauded, especially her dedication to the Baghdad Archeological Museum, which she helped found. She was incredibly influential in the creation of Iraq and has had a lasting impact on the region, in both positive and negative ways. Her views on "the Orient" were contradictory and difficult to classify. By the standards laid out by Edward Said in his 1978 book, *Orientalism*, Bell was an Orientalist, who used her knowledge of the region, Islam, and language to facilitate the British domination over them.

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[7] Percy Cox was replaced by Henry Dobbs as High Commissioner of Iraq in 1923.
[8] Letter from Gertrude Bell to Dame Florence Bell, 16 June 1926, GB/1/1/1/35/19, Gertrude Bell Archive, Newcastle University, United Kingdom. https://gertrudebell.ncl.ac.uk/l/gb-1-1-1-1-35-19

Orientalism

This thesis examines how the British government employed Orientalists in order to better understand and thus dominate the people of Iraq. Of the many political officers and intelligence agents that were invaluable agents of empire, Gertrude Bell was a monumental player in this endeavor and aided the British by providing reports on the region and its people. The British government used these reports and other writings by Bell to educate policymakers on how to make the mandate system an advantageous endeavor for the British, how to handle questions of sovereignty, and how to influence Iraqi archeology. This thesis asserts that Bell is one of the best examples of an "Orientalist," as defined by Said.

In his book, *Orientalism,* Said establishes three definitions of Orientalism: an academic field, a worldview, and a tool of domination. According to Said, the first understanding of "Orientalism" describes those that study the Middle East and Asia from a Eurocentric perspective and reinforce stereotypes of those living in the region. He argues that "anyone who teaches, writes about, or researches the Orient … either in its specific or its general aspects, is an Orientalist," including historians, anthropologists, sociologists, and philologists.[9] Secondly, Said explains that Orientalism is not just an academic field, but also the distinct phenomenon of the West conceptualizing the Middle East as the "other" and antithetical to the West. According to this theory, the West situates itself as the "Occident" and the East as the "Orient."[10] Said uses these terms to explain the perception of the West versus the East. According to Said, the West proclaims to be rational, progressive, and secular, while the East is the opposite: spiritual,

[9] Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Routledge, 1978), 2.
[10] Said, *Orientalism,* 2.

mystical, and backwards.[11] Lastly, Said claims that Orientalism is "a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient."[12] He argues that by studying and writing about the East and situating the West as the Occident and the East as the Orient, Western powers have established "legitimate" cause for the control over the East. Together, these three understandings of Orientalism can help explain how and why the British Government utilized people like Gertrude Bell to better understand the Middle East for the purpose of dominating and exploiting the region.

In some ways, Bell does not fit into the classification of an Orientalist as Said describes. Instead of adhering to "traditional learning," including the classics or the Bible, Bell was trained in modern history at Oxford and initially received attention in the British government for her archeological work, not for her study of history.[13] Additionally, Bell did not only operate within a traditional, academic sphere, but opted to travel the Middle East extensively and lived alongside locals. Said addresses this discrepancy in his book and explains that Bell and a handful of British Orientalists, like Lawrence, did not subvert Orientalism's connection to academia by not staying within its structures, but rather made it effective by putting the knowledge they received from academic institutions to action.[14] Said explains that Bell (and others) posed themselves as agents of empire *and* friends of the Orient. Seemingly oxymoronic, but accurate considering that Bell had extensive knowledge of the Middle East that she offered up to the British to aid in the domination of the very people that she also proclaimed friendships and special connections to.

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[11] Said, *Orientalism,* 42.
[12] Said, *Orientalism,* 3.
[13] Said, *Orientalism,* 202-204.
[14] Said, *Orientalism,* 224.

Bell is quoted briefly in Said's foundational text and mentioned in passing in favor of more dramatic male actors, such as TE Lawrence and Arthur Balfour. Much like Said, many historians have overlooked or downplayed Bell's influence in the mandate period either because of more exciting topics or because of her gender. Others have overemphasized her gender and used it as a defense for speculative lines of inquiry and troubling analyses of her life and work. Throughout her life, Bell appeared to be in constant conflict with her gender. Enforced societal expectations affected the way she presented herself, the reach and weight of her expertise, and her professional relationships with other political officers. Even in her death, the very fact that Gertrude Bell was born a woman continues to haunt her and the discussions of her legacy, in both positive and negative ways. Most recently, Bell has become a fashionable topic for historians of women's history, with many popular history books written on her life. Despite this, there are still very few scholarly works that emphasize her role in the mandate of Iraq.

Terminology

The act of writing history is an ever changing and evolving skill that is influenced by current events, politics, and disciplinary standards that require historians to adapt to new information and expectations. In particular, the history of the mandate period in Iraq reveals many instances where terms have changed over time to obtain new meanings that may be tricky to comprehend as twenty-first century observers. For instance, in her writings Bell frequently interchanges "Turks" and "Ottomans," despite there being nuanced differences in these terms as identifiers of peoples living in the region. "Turks" refers to people of Turkish descent, whereas "Ottomans" refers to anyone who is a subject of the Ottoman Empire. In order to achieve the clearest image of this history, there are some other terms used within this research that need to be defined.

As the mandate period began, Bell and her contemporaries used “Iraq” and “Mesopotamia” interchangeably. Historically, “Iraq” has been synonymous with the “Sawad” in Arabic, meaning “black lands” due to its fertile soil. “Mesopotamia” is a Greek word meaning “between rivers” and refers to the land between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers but can broadly describe the region from Anatolia to the Persian Gulf. Together, the terms encompass modern day Iraq, but this thesis primarily utilizes “Iraq” to describe both the mandate for Mesopotamia and the state of Iraq, unless otherwise noted. The region of northwest Iraq is commonly referred to as the “Mosul Province” or “Southern Kurdistan” in the sources. This particular issue of terminology is especially tricky due to ongoing questions of sovereignty in the region. Under Ottoman control, the region was referred to as the “Mosul Province,” but Bell refers to the region as “Southern Kurdistan” on occasion. Favoring one over the other could implicate a bias towards the question of sovereignty in the region, either favoring Kurdish or Iraqi claims to the land. I will use the terms interchangeably when each makes the most sense considering the context.

Lastly, the sources refer to the Middle East and smaller regions within it using different terms that may not be widely known to twenty-first century audiences. The “Levant” commonly refers to the countries along the Eastern Mediterranean Coast, including modern-day Lebanon, Israel, Palestine, Jordan, and Syria. Bell used this term occasionally to refer to the Middle East in general. The “Hejaz” region refers to the Kingdom of Hejaz (1916-1923) located along the Red Sea coast of the Arabian Peninsula, including the holy cities of Mecca and Medina. These two terms (Levant and Hejaz) are only used within this thesis where the sources are making a differentiation between these regions and the rest of the Middle East.

Referring to this region as the “Middle East” has implications of its own. The term, along with “Near East” and “Far East,” was first used in the mid-nineteenth century by the British

India Office. At the time, "Middle East" referred to the part of Asia that sat between the Arabian Peninsula and Persian lands in Central Asia. "Near East" identified Asian land closest to Europe along the Mediterranean and "Far East" identified lands in south and eastern Asia that were the farthest from Europe. This language is Eurocentric as it refers to the geographic location of Asian countries only in proximity to Europe. Bell used both "Near East" and "Middle East" sparingly in her writings and reports, as she most often identified regions using physical or human features as indicators of location. However, because this term is widely used and easily identifiable, "Middle East" will be used frequently throughout this thesis to refer to the region.

Lastly, in order to fully grasp the purpose of this thesis, a clear definition of "Orientalism" must be at the forefront. As previously discussed, Orientalism can be defined according to three realms: an academic field, a worldview, and a tool of domination. In this thesis, when referring to Bell as an "Orientalist," I am identifying her as an agent of these three realms. She was a scholar of Middle Eastern history and worked as an archeologist in Iraq, she subscribed to the idea that the East was somehow inferior to the West, and she acted as advisor to the British in the domination over Iraq.

Outline of Chapters

Chapter One, "Historiography of Gertrude Bell and the Iraq Mandate," surveys the most essential works on this history. The secondary texts discussed in this thesis belong to one of two categories: those written by non-historians that focus on Gertrude Bell's life or scholarly works that detail the political history of the mandate period in Iraq. This chapter examines the clear bias in the historiography of the mandate period in Iraq and Bell's place in it. It also highlights the focus on Bell's personal life instead of critical approaches to her role as an agent of empire.

Chapter Two, “Making the Mandate System an Advantageous Endeavor,” examines how the British government sought out the advice of Gertrude Bell and shaped the mandate system to be a more advantageous endeavor for themselves. This section details Bell’s discussion and advice concerning the domination of railroads, her encouragement of grabbing territory and artifacts as reward for the First World War, and her insistence on Britain’s right to exploit Iraq’s resources and markets. Bell’s 1917 reports on the region, along with other governmental memos and reports, are used to reinforce that Bell is an Orientalist and to connect her knowledge and advice directly to British policy and actions towards controlling Iraq’s resources.

Chapter Three, “A Question of Sovereignty and Motivation: The Hashemites and the Kurds,” deals with the issue of minority rights in the mandate system. This section addresses Bell’s ill-informed advice on how to balance the question of Kurdish sovereignty with promises made to the Hashemites. Bell allowed her own biases and concern for British interests to overshadow the goals of the mandate system resulting in an Iraq that favored Hashemite rule. Bell’s letters and the 1917 reports are used to highlight the ill-informed and biased advice given to the British administration in Iraq. This chapter reinforces that Bell is the ideal example of an Orientalist as she retained only British interests and control in designing Iraq through her insistence of Hashemite leadership over the rights of minorities.

Chapter Four, “Arab Nationalism and the Baghdad Archeological Museum,” examines Bell’s influence as Director of Antiquities and in establishing the Baghdad Archeological Museum. This section addresses the Arab nationalism debate and attempts to illuminate possible influences on early Iraqi identity. Bell created the Baghdad Archeological Museum to be an institution that catered to Western audiences and underemphasized Iraq’s Islamic history. Bell’s letters and writings and notable Arab nationalist scholars are used to spotlight Bell’s influence on

early Iraqi identity through the Baghdad Museum. This chapter asserts that Bell is the ideal example of an Orientalist as she sought control over Iraq's archeology in order to influence the portrayal of its history and formation of its identity to reinforce British power and control.

Chapter Five acts as a conclusion to this thesis and asserts that the British government employed Orientalists, including Gertrude Bell, in order to better understand and thus dominate the people of Iraq. Of the many political officers and intelligence agents that were invaluable agents of empire, Bell was a monumental player in this endeavor and aided the British by providing reports on the region and its people. Bell handed over reports to the Colonial Office in 1916 and 1917 that aided the British in perfecting their control of railroads, acquisition of rewards for the war, and domination over Iraq's resources. Bell's advice concerning minority rights in the mandate for Iraq was tainted by her own Orientalist views and advised the British against an independent Kurdish state to keep maintain Hashemite leadership and retain any Sunni support in the Shia-majority state. Bell held a powerful position as Director of Antiquities and her position as an Orientalist was made most clear through her decision to allow many artifacts to leave the country and in designing the Baghdad Museum to be an institution that catered to Western audiences and highlighted Iraq's pre-Islamic history.

Chapter One:

Historiography of Gertrude Bell and the Iraq Mandate

The secondary texts most relevant to the history discussed in this thesis belong to one of two categories: those written by non-historians that focus on Gertrude Bell's life or scholarly works that detail the political history of the mandate period in Iraq. At the crossroads of these two categories lies *Gertrude Bell and Iraq: A Life and Legacy* edited by Paul Collins and Charles Tripp. This work is a collection of essays from historians on Bell's influence and work in the Middle East. The chapters range from an overview of Bell's political influence in the Ottoman Empire by Peter Sluglett to those that contemplate her role in Iraqi archeology and preservation from Saad B. Eskander, former Director General of the Iraq National Library and Archives. Each of these chapters relies on a well-rounded collection of primary sources, including letters, archival and published writings from Gertrude Bell, and secondary works from prominent writers, including Edward Said, Hanna Batatu, and Toby Dodge.

In *Gertrude Bell and Iraq*, the overall attitude towards Bell's work is positive and offers little criticism. Magnus T. Bernhardsson's chapter on Bell's involvement with the Antiquities Law argues that Bell laid the groundwork during the mandate period for the influence that Iraqi history and archeology has on modern Iraqi identity. In this chapter, Bernhardsson misquotes a letter from Bell to her father detailing the passing of the Antiquities Law. In the mistake, Bernhardsson makes a change from the original letter and adds emphasis to better support his claim that Bell was almost aggressively possessive of this law and that it was solely her creation. The original letter dated July 20, 1922, states that Bell received "assistance" from King Faisal on the law, but Bernhardsson who incorrectly dates the letter to July 22, 1922, states that Bell got

"approval" from King Faisal.[15] This small alteration downplays any outside assistance Bell received on the Antiquities Law, insinuating that it was a creation from *only* her mind instead of a collaborative effort.

The options for scholarly works that are dedicated to Gertrude Bell's influence in Iraq are lacking and *Gertrude Bell and Iraq* remains the best option. Other scholarly works that focus only on Bell include Heather Gregg's *The Grand Strategy of Gertrude Bell: From the Arab Bureau to the Creation of Iraq* and Liora Lukitz's *A Quest in the Middle East: Gertrude Bell and the Making of Modern Iraq.* Unlike this thesis, neither of these works offer a critical approach to Bell's influence in the Middle East nor her position as an Orientalist.

Heather Gregg is a trained political scientist and military strategist, who specializes in religious terrorism.[16] Her brief book, *The Grand Strategy of Gertrude Bell,* focuses on Bell's political expertise in the Middle East. She argues that Bell helped shape British strategy in the region "because she was a woman, not in spite of it."[17] Gregg explains that Bell helped create stability and peace after the First World War, a lesson that the US needs to utilize in the region today. Her research relies almost exclusively on secondary works from authors like Janet Wallach, Georgina Howell, and David Fromkin. Gregg rarely uses primary sources, but does quote Bell's published travel writings, *Amurath to Amurath* and *The Desert and the Sown.*

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[15] Magnus T. Bernhardsson, "Gertrude Bell and the Antiquities Law of Iraq," in *Gertrude Bell and Iraq: a Life and Legacy,* ed. Paul Collins and Charles Tripp (Oxford: Published for the British Academy by Oxford University Press, 2017), 244. The letter incorrectly quoted by Bernhardsson is from Gertrude Bell to Sir Hugh Bell, 20 July 1922, GB/1/1/2/1/18/13, Gertrude Bell Archive, Newcastle University, United Kingdom. https://gertrudebell.ncl.ac.uk/l/gb-1-1-2-1-18-13

[16] Heather Gregg, *The Grand Strategy of Gertrude Bell: From the Arab Bureau to the Creation of Iraq* (Carlisle: USAWC Press, 2022), 45.

[17] Gregg, *The Grand Strategy of Gertrude Bell,* v.

Overall, Gregg's argument is that the US government could learn from Bell's position as a woman in her strategies to establish and maintain peace in Iraq. For this reason, her work does not offer what other works can concerning Bell's position as an Orientalist or in critically analyzing her position as an agent of empire.

Similarly, Liora Lukitz's *A Quest in the Middle East: Gertrude Bell and the Making of Modern Iraq* fails to provide a critical approach to Bell's influence in the Middle East. Lukitz holds a PhD from the London School of Economics and Political Science and was a research fellow at the Center for Middle East Studies at Harvard University. In her book, Lukitz offers up an incomplete analysis of Bell's political role in Iraq by focusing heavily on Bell's personality and personal life. She asserts that many of her political decisions were influenced by Bell's personal life, including her affair with Charles Doughty-Wylie. As discussed further in Chapter Three, "A Question of Sovereignty and Motivation: The Hashemites and the Kurds," Lukitz and others allude to a potential relationship between Bell and Faisal, insinuating this as cause for her insistence on Hashemite leadership.[18] Lukitz relies on mostly letters and personal writings of Bell, with very little governmental documents used. Neither Lukitz nor Gregg offer a critical view of Bell's political influence in Iraq nor her stance as an Orientalist, but rather dwell on her personal life and dismiss the implications of her role as an agent of empire.

There are books that focus solely on Bell but are not scholarly in nature and were written by journalists rather than historians. Despite this, biographical works like Janet Wallach's *Desert Queen: The Extraordinary Life of Gertrude Bell* and Georgina Howell's *Gertrude Bell: Queen of*

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[18] Liora Lukitz, *A Quest in the Middle East: Gertrude Bell and the Making of Modern Iraq* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2006), 80.

the Desert, Shaper of Nations, have a valid place in this research, even if they employ a lenient attitude towards Bell's role in upholding and reinforcing imperialism or utilize problematic language to describe Bell.[19] These two books act as biographies of Bell's life, rather than a history of her work in the Middle East. For this reason, they contain chapters dedicated to very personal topics, such as her love affair with Doughty-Wylie and her relationship with her stepmother after the death of her mother at a very young age. The sources used in these two texts are mostly comprised of letters and personal writings of Bell, with very little governmental documents used, resulting in a work that examines her life, with lesser focus on her official, political career.

These popular histories paint a rosy picture of Bell with the intention of inspiring readers with the story of a woman in history who did not "behave" as she ought to. This perspective, unfortunately, allows the writers to gloss over the less desirable moments in Bell's life, such as the consequences of Bell's participation in the exploitation and domination of the Iraqi people, instead painting these moments as adventures in the desert sun. In *Gertrude Bell: Queen of the Desert, Shaper of Nations*, Georgina Howell argues that Bell was an advocate for self-determination in Iraq and insists that her passion was "heartfelt, but pragmatic too."[20] She goes on to assert, inaccurately, that it was Bell that "persuaded the British Government to take on the financial risks of Iraq."[21] Bell certainly helped the British make the most of their power over

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[19] The use of titles such as "Desert Queen," "Mother of Iraq," "Gertrude of Arabia" or "Female Lawrence of Arabia" adds a layer of unnecessary gendered language. To liken Bell to the "mother" of the desert, undermines her work as a political officer and reinforces the idea that she played some sort of maternal role in Iraq, which is simply untrue. Fashioning her as the "Female Lawrence of Arabia," downplays the originality of her work in the Middle East and perpetuates the deified image of Lawrence.
[20] Howell, *Gertrude Bell,* 308.
[21] Howell, *Gertrude Bell*, 418.

Iraq, but it was not her idea to take on the mandate for Iraq. Janet Wallach's *Desert Queen: The Extraordinary Life of Gertrude Bell* takes a similar approach to Bell's life. Wallach acknowledges Bell's more troubling opinions on the Middle East but celebrates them as her "empathetic" nature and focuses heavily on her friendship with TE Lawrence.[22] Wallach asserts that Bell's womanhood allowed her to step outside the typical "sun-dried bureaucrat" and that she was "mush in the hands of the Arabs," unable to ignore the "Mesopotamians' cry for independence."[23] Overall, Wallach argues that Bell was different than other British colonialists due to her feminine empathy and rejects the idea that Bell caused harm or acted as an agent of empire. This thesis takes quite a different approach to Bell's influence in the Middle East by examining her official, political role rather than her personal life and rejecting harmful assumptions regarding Bell's "nature" as a woman and its influence in her work. Rather, this research asserts that Bell acted as an Orientalist and agent of empire to aid the British in its domination over Iraq, a fact that is often overlooked or downplayed *because* she was a woman, which is evident within these works.

The bulk of scholarship concerning the mandate period in Iraq does not focus on Bell, specifically, but instead captures an overview of the period. Just as Gertrude Bell has recently become a more popular topic in women's history, the mandate period in Iraq has grown in popularity in recent years. These scholarly histories range from earlier works that emphasize the role of individual players, like Gertrude Bell and TE Lawrence, to those more recent that focus on the actions of international organizations, like the League of Nations. This shift is in large part due to the opening of archives and the wider availability of government documents and

[22] Wallach, *Desert Queen,* 72.
[23] Wallach, *Desert Queen,* 268.

correspondence, but also due to events like the US-UK invasion of Iraq in 2003 and growing tensions in the Middle East, that have captured the attention of scholars around the world.

One of the first histories written that focused on this time and region specifically is that of Elie Kedourie. His 1956 work, *England and the Middle East*, explores British involvement in the Middle East, with a special emphasis on the work of British political officers, like T.E. Lawrence and Mark Sykes, and secretive agreements, like the Sykes-Picot Agreement of 1916 and the Hussein-McMahon Letters. This work was originally Kedourie's doctoral thesis, but in 1953 he refused to make revisions suggested by the much more conservative examiners and was denied his degree.[24] *England and the Middle East* is quite critical of the British Empire and T.E. Lawrence. Kedourie calls Lawrence "a liberal and a romantic;" the former caused him to be incapable of connecting his thoughts and policies to the brutal actions and harm they brought, and the latter caused him to believe that "political action is a passport to eternal salvation."[25] These criticisms came at a time when Lawrence was still a glorified figure with a cult of personality surrounding his work and it was not until Richard Aldington's *Lawrence of Arabia: A Biographical Enquiry* in 1955 that others would write critically of Lawrence's work.[26]

Kedourie pushes back against the traditionally Orientalist views on the Middle East and argues that the driving force behind the British Empire's failure to effectively govern in the Middle East was their own "romanticized" and overly innocent view of Arabs.[27] Much like other

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[24] M. E. Yapp, "Elie Kedourie and the History of the Middle East," *Middle Eastern Studies* 41, no. 5 (2005): 666.
[25] Elie Kedourie, *England and the Middle East* (London: Bowes & Bowes, 1956), 88.
[26] Despite being published in 1956, Kedourie's writing on Lawrence predates Richard Aldington's because of the rejection of his thesis in 1953, which pushed publication of his book back to 1956.
[27] Kedourie, *England and the Middle East,* 88.

post-modernist works, Kedourie questions the knowledge of the British. He suggests that British political officers took advantage of Arab nationalist movements that were happening in the region and pushed a Hashemite regime onto the people of Iraq.[28] According to Kedourie, this Arab nationalism was a movement that was decidedly Islamic and encouraging it in the Middle East meant pushing Islam onto a religiously diverse population, which Britain failed to recognize. The topic of Arab nationalism is explored more carefully in Chapter Four, "Arab Nationalism and the Baghdad Archeological Museum," but on this point Kedourie was not exactly accurate in his depiction or understanding of Arab nationalism. More recent scholarship, including this thesis, assert that at that point in history Arab nationalism was distinctly secular. Kedourie's background as an Iraqi Jew, born in 1926, shines through in his argument. His lived experienced in Iraq suggest that he did not necessarily feel welcomed and that Iraq was not constructed with his religious community in mind.[29]

Kedourie's sources are almost exclusively published accounts and political memoirs, like *Amurath to Amurath* by Gertrude Bell and *The Caliph's Last Heritage* by Mark Sykes.[30] This limited scope of sources was in part due to the limited availability and accessibility of government documents. In the introduction to the 1987 edition of his book, Kedourie expressed this difficulty but also explains that despite the newly available documents in the years after the first edition, this new information would not have changed his conclusions or argument.[31] A secondary explanation for his limited sources is in the structure of his argument and focus on individual players. Unlike Susan Pedersen, Kedourie did not take into consideration the

[28] Kedourie, *England and the Middle East,* 198-200.
[29] Yapp, "Elie Kedourie and the History of the Middle East," 665.
[30] Kedourie, *England and the Middle East,* 219, 222.
[31] Kedourie, *England and the Middle East,* 4.

guidelines of the mandate system and the role that international cooperation had in shaping British policy in the Middle East after the First World War, despite the scope of his book lasting into the 1920s. This omission downplays the role of the League of Nations in favor of the actions of British political officers and Arab nationalism, which is essential to Kedourie's argument.

Hanna Batatu's 1979 article, "Class Analysis and Iraqi Society," focuses on the nature of class in Iraq through the mandate period. Batatu's writing is very detailed and relies heavily on his knowledge and experience instead of thoroughly evaluating primary sources. In part, this is due to a limited availability of sources and archival collections in Iraq. Like Kedourie, Batatu wrote this piece prior to the opening of the National Archives in London in 2003, which made access to government documents and correspondence for the mandate period difficult. The nature of Batatu's work also narrows the scope of sources, as he relies heavily on economic theorists, like Max Weber and Karl Marx. However, his argument diverges from traditional communist theories of class as he argues that Iraq's class structure differs from traditional notions of class because of Britain's influence and its introduction to a more globally connected economy.[32]

Batatu suggests that during the mandate period, and into the establishment of the Kingdom of Iraq, property became the most important foundation of stratification and points to the landed sheikhs as an example of this.[33] Unlike more recent works on Iraq during the mandate period, Batatu downplays the role of the League of Nations and focuses on the nature of class in the creation of Iraq. Batatu points to Britain's economic policies as being especially influential to

[32] Hanna Batatu, "Class Analysis and Iraqi Society," *Arab Studies Quarterly* 1, no. 3 (1979): 234.
[33] Batatu, "Class Analysis and Iraqi Society," 238.

class in Iraq during this time. Before Britain's appearance, Iraq was mostly "composed of plural, relatively isolated, and often virtually autonomous city-states and tribal confederations." He argues that it was not until influence from the outside that widespread unity appeared in Iraq.[34]

Unlike the previously discussed works, Peter Sluglett's *Britain in Iraq: Contriving King and Country* provides a history that is almost exclusively focused on British colonial policy. The second edition, which was published thirty years after the first edition's publication in 1976, intertwines updated information with Sluglett's original research. He explains that a wide range of Arabic resources have become available in the years since 1976 but even then, the "only Iraqi sources easily available are secondary sources," likely due to the fractured relationship between Iraq and the West.[35] Sluglett uses mostly British archival materials and correspondence between London and the High Commissioner in Baghdad and to a smaller extent, the National Archives of India in New Delhi, which holds sources pertaining to local politics and administration in Iraq.

Sluglett focuses on British colonial policy and motives in the creation of Iraq. He argues that Britain established the mandate only to secure its "communications with India, the Empire air route, and the protection of the Persian and Iraqi oilfields."[36] Sluglett provides a very detailed account of the friction between Britain and the Iraqi public during the mandate period and into the Kingdom of Iraq. He suggests that by the middle of the 1920s, it had "become clear that no further serious resistance to British pressures was likely, or even possible" due to the stronghold the British had on Iraq.[37] Sluglett also considers British colonial policies outside of politics, like

[34] Batatu, "Class Analysis and Iraqi Society," 235.
[35] Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq,* 289.
[36] Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq*, 6.
[37] Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq*, 91.

education and the role of the Royal Air Force. In the 2007 edition, he celebrates the work of Toby Dodge and his focus on the colonial administrators and their tasks during the mandate.[38]

Much like Sluglett, Toby Dodge's 2003 work, *Inventing Iraq*, focuses heavily on British colonial policies during the mandate period. Dodge structures his book around the governing of Iraq in the twentieth century in an effort to understand the US's current policies and their potential repercussions in the twenty-first century. Dodge's work marks a shift in historiography from those being heavily influenced by the availability of sources, to more recent works that are very much influenced by contemporaneous events and politics in the Middle East. In the preface of his book, Dodge highlights this and suggests that the US is attempting to deal with a situation they know little about and makes the parallels between Britain's actions in the 1920s and 1930s and the US in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century very explicit.[39]

American politics make an appearance throughout Dodge's book, especially the role of President Woodrow Wilson, which makes sense as the League of Nations was born from his concept, an aspect that earlier histories do not discuss. He suggests that Wilson had a considerable influence on Britain's colonial policies, especially on Sir Percy Cox.[40] Despite this heavy focus on American politics, Dodge uses a wide array of archival documents from the National Archives in London, the National Archives of India in New Delhi, and the Middle East collections at Oxford and secondary sources, including each of the previously discussed histories, but still no Iraqi sources, likely due to language or political barriers. Much like Kedourie, Dodge argues that Britain relied too much on their own preconceived and Orientalist

[38] Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq*, xiii.
[39] Dodge, *Inventing Iraq,* ix.
[40] Dodge, *Inventing Iraq*, 13.

notions of Iraqi society, like their religious beliefs and tribal politics, but does not rely on Bell to make this point, instead using it as an overarching view of British policy during the mandate period.[41]

Much like Dodge's *Inventing Iraq*, Susan Pedersen's work has settled in on the role that the League of Nations played in the Middle East after the First World War. Pedersen has been a leading voice on the subject and has several articles and books published on the League of Nations. One of particular importance is "Getting Out of Iraq - in 1932: The League of Nations and the Road to Normative Statehood." In this article, Pedersen highlights the importance of international relations and politics *within* the League of Nations, which she argues has received "less attention" within the history of the mandate period.[42] Pedersen argues that this international cooperation is a unique aspect of the mandate system and directly affected the policies and actions of Britain and other mandated powers. She does identify the work of Dodge as one of the exceptions to this error.[43] In addition to her heavy focus on the international aspect of the mandate system, Pedersen also emphasizes the importance of conferences, like those in Cairo, San Remo, and Paris, and the role of the Permanent Mandate Commission (PMC) in granting independence to the mandated territories and reviewing the mandated powers.[44] She argues that the PMC was "more independent and harder to manage than anyone could have predicted," making Britain's efforts to pull out of Iraq and grant it official independence even more difficult.[45]

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[41] Dodge, *Inventing Iraq*, 45.
[42] Pedersen, "Getting Out of Iraq - in 1932," 976.
[43] Pedersen, "Getting Out of Iraq - in 1932," 976.
[44] Pedersen, "Getting Out of Iraq - in 1932," 982-992.
[45] Pedersen, "Getting Out of Iraq - in 1932," 982.

Despite this heavy emphasis on the League of Nations, Pedersen does highlight the control and sway that the mandated powers of Britain and France held over the mandated territories of the Middle East. And much like the work of Kedourie, Pedersen pays special attention to domestic political movements and the impact they had on British policies in the mandate.[46] While this takes a backseat to the importance of international relations, Pedersen does acknowledge the religious and ethnic divisions that made state-building even more complicated for the mandated powers. She suggests that Iraq's status as a mandate furthered these divisions and made them "more intractable."[47]

Pedersen's sources consist almost exclusively of British governmental correspondence, reports, and meeting minutes, all located in either the National Archives in London or the League of Nations Archives in Geneva.[48] Unlike Kedourie's work, Pedersen's work focuses almost exclusively on bigger entities rather than individuals. For this reason, her sources are mostly from official government correspondence, rather than personal histories and memoirs. Like others writing in the twenty-first century, Pedersen is very influenced by the global focus on the Middle East and rising tensions thanks to the US-UK invasion of Iraq in 2003. In the concluding paragraph of her article, Pedersen writes that the imperialist ideals of the mandate period in Iraq "are still with us."[49]

Each of these works utilize different sources and come from scholars with very different backgrounds, but they all have a common theme: Britain's involvement in Iraq after the First World War changed the course of Iraq's history for a multitude of reasons, like the introduction

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[46] Pedersen, "Getting Out of Iraq - in 1932," 979.
[47] Pedersen, "Getting Out of Iraq - in 1932," 992.
[48] Pedersen, "Getting Out of Iraq - in 1932," 978, 980.
[49] Pedersen, "Getting Out of Iraq - in 1932," 1,000.

of an international economy, as Batatu suggests, or through their mishaps in colonial governance and administration, like Dodge and Sluglett suggest. The histories written on the mandate period of Iraq range from earlier works, like Kedourie's *England and the Middle* East, that focus on individual players to those more recent, like Susan Pedersen's "Getting Out of Iraq - in 1932: The League of Nations and the Road to Normative Statehood," that focus on the actions of international organizations, like the League of Nations.

There is a clear bias in the historiography of the mandate period in Iraq and Bell's place in it. Each of these scholars and authors examine British influence in Iraq and at least mention Gertrude Bell, but most opt to dedicate more space to the "great men" of this history (Lawrence, Sykes, Cox), but only Toby Dodge's *Inventing Iraq* mentions Orientalism. Dodge argues that the British administration in Iraq relied on Orientalist notions of the Middle East and allowed their view to inform policy. Something this thesis accomplishes that Dodge does not, is connecting these Orientalist ideas to a source: Gertrude Bell. This thesis highlights Bell as an Orientalist and agent of empire, which others do not in favor of male actors or for lack of critical analysis. The popular histories and biographies from Wallach and Howell overemphasize Bell's personal life and her gender as an influence in her decision making and empathy towards Arabs. Additionally, they fail to view Bell's role as an Orientalist and agent of empire critically, instead romanticizing her life as an adventure. This thesis focuses on Bell's official, governmental presence and uses her personal writings sparingly in order to emphasize her role as an Orientalist who aided in the domination of Iraq and perpetuated Western hegemony.

Chapter Two:

Making the Mandate System an Advantageous Endeavor

In the wake of the First World War, the League of Nations established the mandate system to stabilize the territories that had, until recently, been under the control of Germany or the Ottoman Empire. It did so by assigning regions, known as "mandates," to member states, such as Britain and France. The guidelines set by the League of Nations Covenant at the Paris Peace Conference in 1921 established the mandate system and the responsibility of the mandatory powers. It clarified the relationship between the mandate and the mandatory power with stipulations that changed from region to region and recognized the difficulties these communities may have had after being thrown from their normal system of governance after the war. The first region addressed was the territory that had been a part of the recently dissolved Ottoman Empire. The territories in Africa that had been under German control were divided between Central Africa and South-West Africa, with South Pacific Islands being included with the latter. What seems peculiar here is why these regions needed individualized guidelines, but the text of the covenant gives very little context or justification behind the differing regulations from region to region. The primary reason, according to the League of Nations, seems to be the level of civilization at each of these locations, the population size of the mandated territory, or the geographic size of the territory.

According to Article 22 of the Covenant of the League of Nations, there were some local populations of the former Ottoman Empire that were developed enough to establish their own nation. The text explained that these "certain communities" had reached a "stage of development

where their existence as independent nations" could be provisionally recognized.[50] It gave no other identifier as to which communities had this right and which did not. If it was the wish of these "certain communities" to do so, then it was the responsibility of the mandatory power to assist them in the endeavor of founding their own nations. If these certain communities did not wish to create their own nations, then it was still the responsibility of the mandated power to ensure their well-being. The League of Nations Covenant asserted that it was of "principal consideration" that the wishes of these communities be considered when selecting a mandatory power for the region.[51] Again, it left out any specifics on how this would actually function in the administering of power in the former Ottoman Empire, essentially allowing the mandatory power to govern these territories according to very vague guidelines. These territories of the recently dissolved Ottoman Empire were classified as "A" mandates and received administrative advice and assistance that would help morph the mandated territory into a self-sufficient and self-governing state.

As a part of the former Ottoman Empire, the mandated territory that would later become the country of Iraq was an "A" mandate, and according to the guidelines spelled out by the League of Nations, Britain was to oversee the transformation of this territory into a self-determining state. Britain's lack of true dedication to achieving sustainable independence for the mandated territory of Iraq in favor of financial gain calls into question the true goals of the mandate system. Considering its domination over the League of Nations, Britain made the mandate system an advantageous endeavor for itself. These ulterior motives are evident from

[50] The Covenant of the League of Nations, Article 22, found at https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/leagcov.asp#art22
[51] The Covenant of the League of Nations, Article 22, found at https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/leagcov.asp#art22

Gertrude Bell's discussions and advice concerning the domination of railroads, her encouragement of grabbing territory and artifacts as reparations for the war, and her insistence on Britain's right to Iraq's resources and markets all just prior to and in the beginning years of the mandate.

Bell's influence can be seen through the request of her reports on different occasions throughout 1917. Her reports made their rounds in the British government with many requests from different offices and departments. In a September 8, 1917 telegram to the India Office, Percy Cox answers the request for Bell's reports from JE Shuckburgh on behalf of General George Macdonogh at the India Office. It appears that the reports were misplaced or never arrived and Shuckburgh requested replacements. Cox explains that the reports were first sent to the India Office, Arab Bureau, and Intelligence Bureau in June 1917. He states that the reports were being retyped and would be sent as soon as the copies were complete.[52] A memorandum on September 24, 1917 from the War Office confirms Shuckburgh's receipt of these reports as requested from General Macdonogh at the India Office.[53] These reports from Bell were in offices and on desks across the British government and advised the policymakers in decisions regarding the region before the mandate had been established.

Ruling the Railroad

In her 1917 reports, Bell discusses a variety of aspects relating to the Turkish Provinces. These reports focus on the politics, ethnic minorities, religion, geography, and history of the

[52] Telegram from Sir Percy Cox to JE Shuckburgh, 6 September 1917, IOR/L/PS/11/127, P 3616/1917, India Office Records and Private Papers Collection, British Library, London, UK.
[53] Memorandum from War Office to JE Shuckburgh, 24 September 1917, IOR/L/PS/11/127, P 3878/1917, India Office Records and Private Papers Collection, British Library, London, UK.

region. In particular, she dedicates part of her research to advising the Colonial Office on mapping out the railways in the region and the importance of railways in establishing dominance in the Middle East. After obtaining permission from the Ottoman Government, German investors established the Baghdad Railway in March 1903 and quickly began construction.[54] The original goal for the railway was to connect Berlin with Baghdad and allow Germany to establish a Persian Gulf port. As its alias, "Berlin-Baghdad Railway," and goals would suggest, the Baghdad Railway was largely constructed, designed, and funded by German investors. In particular, the Philipp Holzmann company, which funded the Anatolian Railway in the late nineteenth century, and the Deutsche Bank were the primary investors.[55]

The British were concerned with the railroad running too close to its southern oil sites owned by the Anglo-Persian Company and what problems its intimate connections with German investors and interests could cause, but they initially supported the German-backed project. However, it quickly became a source of concern and strife between Britain and Germany.[56] Because of these concerns, the British government sought out a contract under the auspices of James Mackay, Lord of Inchcape, to protect their access to these oil sites. In February 1913, Lord Inchcape, who held oil interests in the region, signed a contract with the Baghdad Railway Company that ensured the acknowledgment of the exclusive British rights to exploration and navigation of the rivers in Iraq.[57] By the end of the war, the Baghdad line had halted construction

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[54] "The War's Effects on Turkish Railways," *Current History (1916-1940)* 6, no. 1 (1917): 166.
[55] Ravinder Kumar, "The Records of the Government of India on the Berlin-Baghdad Railway Question," *The Historical Journal* 5, no. 1 (1962): 71.
[56] David Fromkin, *A Peace to End all Peace: The Fall of the Ottoman Empire and the Creation of the Modern Middle East* (New York: Henry Holt, 1989), 25.
[57] Edward Meade Earle, *Turkey, the Great Powers, and the Baghdad Railway: A Study of Imperialism* (New York: Macmillan, 1924), 259. These exclusive rights were almost instantly

300 miles short of its planned route and was under disputed control. German investors had planned, constructed, and paid for the majority of the railway, but the territory now fell into the hands of British control.[58] Construction of the Baghdad Railway did not resume until after Iraq gained independence from Britain in 1932. By 1936, the Iraqi government had bought back its railways from the British and picked up construction until its completion in 1940.

In her 1917 reports, Bell often frames her concerns and advice against the fears of a potential German and Ottoman victory. She explains that, in her opinion, the Ottoman Empire's first step in its plan for domination of the region was to establish railways for easy transportation of troops and unifying spread out provinces. She states that the linking of these provinces via railway had the potential of introducing a "windy impression of unity among peoples who are not yet ready for any very closely knit, not to say centralize[d], administration."[59] In her assessment of the rail systems in the region, Bell alludes to the German-Turkish alliance by suggesting that cries for "Berlin to Baghdad" would have easily won elections in Germany.[60] She alludes to the manipulation of Turks by suggesting that the use of their resources and land would quickly turn into the "prospect of a subservient Turkey, trained in arms under German masters to be a weapon."[61] These concerns are not completely unfounded, being that one of the goals of the

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disputed although the altered agreement turned out to be just as lucrative for Lord Inchcape as the original terms.

[58] Fromkin, *A Peace to End All Peace,* 25.

[59] Report on the Arab Provinces: the Anatolian Plateau by Gertrude Bell, 20 September 1917, IOR/L/PS/11/127, P 3878/1917, India Office Records and Private Papers Collection, British Library, London, UK (hereafter cited as Report on the Arab Provinces: the Anatolian Plateau, India Office Records and Private Papers Collection).

[60] Report on the Arab Provinces: the Anatolian Plateau, India Office Records and Private Papers Collection.

[61] A Survey of the Turkish Provinces in Asia by Gertrude Bell, 20 Sep 1917, IOR/L/PS/11/127, P 3878/1917, India Office Records and Private Papers Collection, British Library, London, UK. (hereafter cited as A Survey of the Turkish Provinces, India Office Records and Private Papers Collection).

Baghdad Railway was to connect Berlin to Baghdad and that the primary investors in this railway were German.

Bell insinuates that this German funding of the railway purposefully made the Ottomans politically subservient to the Germans and willing to act in their favor, a tactic of indirect imperialism that the British and French also employed in the region prior to the mandate system. The British held a considerable share of power over Persian oil fields with the establishment of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company in 1909 after the Anglo-Russian Agreement of 1907 brought parts of Persia into the British sphere of influence.[62] Under Napoleon Bonaparte's leadership, the French extended tremendous power and political influence in the late eighteenth century and into nineteenth century Egypt.[63] As Said established in his book, Orientalism is an academic field of study, a worldview, and a tool of domination. Considering this lens, Bell should assert that the Germans had just as much of a "right" to manipulate and exploit as the British, French, or even Russians did. Orientalism, as a worldview, details Western superiority over the East and grants these European empires permission to influence, control, and dominate these developing nations however they saw fit. It could be puzzling as to why Bell would criticize the Germans for doing exactly what the British and others were doing. Bell's criticism of Germany concerning the control over Iraq's railways must be understood in the context of the First World War. For Bell, German control of Iraq's railways could not continue because Germany was the enemy and could not overshadow British influence and superiority. Put simply, a German stronghold in the Middle East undermined British influence and power.

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[62] Fromkin, *A Peace to End all Peace,* 33.
[63] Reeva Spector Simon, *Iraq Between the Two World Wars: The Militarist Origins of Tyranny* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 7.

Bell suggests that the Ottomans' power over the region, established by its railways, was the key to counteracting British dominance in the region. For Bell, this German-Turkish alliance simply could not triumph because it was detrimental to the future of British supremacy in the Middle East. Bell evaluates recent attitudes from the British government concerning railway projects as disinterested. She states that prior to the First World War, the British government offered no encouragement towards railway projects in the Middle East, a stance she suggested they change. Bell explains that the British turned away from expansive railway projects in the region to avoid entering any agreements or pledges that could lead to "entanglements."[64] She explains that to the British, involvement in the railways was risky investment and to avoid "entanglements" British enterprises continued through other "safer channels." Bell makes it clear that to establish British dominance in the region, attitudes surrounding the importance of the railway must change, but in a way that would allow for British control under conditions that were beneficial to the Empire. She advises the British to reclaim control over these railways that had lost their "British character and assumed one which was wholly German" and to fend off Turkish (and subsequent German) power.[65] Doing this would ensure Britain's control over the region and its resources.

The reigning argument from Bell was that it is in the best interests of the local population and, more importantly, of the British Empire, to reclaim the Middle East from the hands of powers that do not have its best interests in mind. She states that recovering the region from these manipulative forces would "add immeasurably to the wealth of a universe wasted by war

[64] A Survey of the Turkish Provinces, India Office Records and Private Papers Collection.
[65] Report on the Arab Provinces: the Anatolian Plateau India Office Records and Private Papers Collection.

and provide new fields for the reviving the industries of Europe."[66] She blames both European influence and Ottoman control for the unrest in the region. Bell argues that there is "little hope of peace and security unless the government of this distracted country is taken forever out of Ottoman hands."[67] Her comments on the mishandling of the region all point to one answer to solve the unrest: British interference.

The original guidelines of the mandate system were skeletal and merely established which territories were to be placed under a mandatory power and what level of supervision would be in place ("A," "B," or "C"). Article 22 of the League of Nations Covenant did not stipulate ownership or operation rights of Iraq's railroads, but the text of the mandate was later altered in 1921 to clarify Britain's authority concerning railway usage. With this 1921 addition, Britain, as the mandatory power, was "entitled at all times use of the roads, railways and ports of Mesopotamia and the movement of troops and the carriage of fuel supplies."[68] Bell's advice was not based just in fears of German domination via Turkish control of railways, but also in access to and the protection of oil sites. Her reports from before the mandate system even existed had already placed British supremacy in the region above other concerns and advised the British to reinforce control over Iraq's railways. Those with power to make changes to policy requested Bell's reports and considered her concerns of German overstep. The changes to the text of the

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[66] Report on the Anatolian Coast by Gertrude Bell, 20 Sep 1917, IOR/L/PS/11/127, P 3878/1917, India Office Records and Private Papers Collection, British Library, London, UK (hereafter cited as Report on the Anatolian Coast, India Office Records and Private Papers Collection).
[67] Report on the Kurdish Mountains by Gertrude Bell, 20 Sep 1917, IOR/L/PS/11/127, P 3878/1917, India Office Records and Private Papers Collection, British Library, London, UK. (hereafter cited as Report on the Kurdish Mountains, India Office Records and Private Papers Collection).
[68] Minutes on Meeting to Alter Text of Mandate, 11 May 1921, CO 730/2/18, Colonial Office Records, The National Archives of the UK.

mandate took steps to not only oust German influence, but also protect the Empire's dominance over the region and its resources.

A Reward for Sacrifice

Gertrude Bell took it upon herself to act as the protector of the history of Iraq and encouraged the British Government to act accordingly through her vast knowledge of the region's history, language, and religion that she believed granted her authority in her advice. Bell's interest in the archeological prospects of the Middle East likely began from her time at Oxford University where she earned a degree in modern history in 1888 and her travels with her uncle across the Middle East. Prior to settling in Baghdad, Bell travelled the world widely and was fluent in multiple languages, including Arabic, Turkish, and Farsi. Her unofficial career as an archeologist began at Binbirkilise in the Ottoman Empire, now Turkiye, in 1905.[69] Her work at the Byzantine site allowed her to publish several articles and archival materials that are still used today at the Royal Geographical Society in London, including several notebooks that contain illustrations and dimensions of several sites. In her published work, *Amurath to Amurath,* Bell describes archeological sites and collects photographic evidence and long after her death, Bell's work in documenting Islamic archeology has been applauded.[70]

It seems contradictory, though, to advocate for the preservation and proper handling of historical artifacts and archeological sites, but then advise an outside force to come in and claim the rich history for its own museums. Here lies an important aspect of Bell's philosophy that is present through her writings: her belief in the supremacy of the British Empire over all others,

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[69] Lukitz, *A Quest in the Middle East,* 26.
[70] Roslind Wade Haddon, "What Gertrude Bell Did for Islamic Archeology," in *Gertrude Bell and Iraq: A Life and Legacy*, ed. Paul Collins and Charles Tripp (Oxford: Published for the British Academy by Oxford University Press, 2017), 121.

especially non-Western cultures. She adamantly advocated for British interference *because* she cares so much, or so she and her contemporaries would believe. Bell makes up her special connection to the land and its culture to better proclaim her authority as someone who truly cares about the preservation of its history. In reality, her stance is precisely that of an imperialist and Orientalist who uses this "special connection" and expertise to better assist in the domination and exploitation of the people and their land.[71]

The mandated territory that would become Iraq was full of archeological sites waiting to be explored and Bell was eager to continue her archeological work further south than her previous adventures. In her 1917 reports, she alludes to the rich history waiting to be properly uncovered and preserved. According to Bell, the region had been neglected by the Ottomans who had allowed these precious sites and architecture to fall into ruin and decay.[72] She shared her hopes that with better administration of funds, the archeological wonders of Mesopotamia would make their way to the rest of the world:

> One sure key to the heart of these recluses is the interest which the European archaeologist takes in their ancient buildings. I will not say that the satisfaction aroused is wholly scientific and artistic. There is a subsidiary hope that the better administration of pious endowments will serve not only to keep the buildings from decay but will also rehabilitate financially the professors who wit with their pupils in the dilapidated upper chambers; but there is also gratification that such monuments of the 14th century Arab architecture as are left in Baghdad shall not be allowed to disappear.[73]

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[71] Said, *Orientalism*, 224.
[72] Report on the Arab Provinces: Baghdad by Gertrude Bell, 20 Sep 1917, IOR/L/PS/11/127, P 3878/1917, India Office Records and Private Papers Collection, British Library, London, UK. (hereafter cited as Report on the Arab Provinces: Baghdad, India Office Records and Private Papers Collection).
[73] Report on the Arab Provinces: Baghdad, India Office Records and Private Papers Collection.

Bell's general opinion on archeological sites is that they were best handled in British care and not in the hands of the Ottomans. She believed that it was the responsibility of the British to ensure the preservation of historical artifacts and keep the history of the region alive. Bell's views concerning archeology in Iraq were especially telling of her Orientalist worldview. She believed that the artifacts uncovered were best handled by Western archeologists simply because she held that people living in the Middle East were incapable of properly understanding, caring for, and appreciating these pieces of history. Said explains that this view held by Bell is an essential trait of an Orientalist. He argues that Orientalists uphold the notion that the people in the East are "a subject race" and are to be "dominated by a race that knows them and what is good for them better than they could possibly know themselves."[74] Bell's opinions and advice concerning Iraqi archeology reinforce her position as an Orientalist. Bell suggests that in the postwar era, Mesopotamia would be the perfect region for Britain's next territory in imperialist expansion and asserting control over archeology. She explains that besides the "Turkish neglect," Mesopotamia was relatively unscathed from the war and suggests that "nowhere will the traces of battle be more speedily effaced" because "there were no permanent structures to destroy and there are, therefore, none to replace."[75]

In her book, *The Guardians: The League of Nations and Crisis of Empire,* Susan Pedersen discusses the relationship between the League of Nations and European powers and the struggle to keep their empires alive. She explores this history through the lens of the League's Permanent Mandate Commission which created the mandate system as a way for these powerful states to obtain control and influence over territory that had once been under German and

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[74] Said, *Orientalism*, 35.
[75] Report on the Arab Provinces: Baghdad, India Office Records and Private Papers Collection.

Ottoman control. The justification for this was either as payment for losses during the war or in the spirit of spreading self-determination across the globe.[76] Bell's opinions in these reports and across her other writings pointed towards the idea that the Allied Powers, or at least Britain, wanted payment for their losses in the war. From her 1917 comments, before the mandate system had been created, she had clearly already established Iraq and the rest of the Turkish Provinces as a gleaming reward for British sacrifice.

Bell explains that "nowhere in the war-shattered universe can we begin more speedily to make good the immense losses sustained by humanity."[77] Before the League of Nations even existed and the mandate system had been put in place, Bell was already suggesting Iraq as the prime spot for making up Britain's losses during the war. She argues that it had sustained little damage during the fighting, was rich with precious archeological sites and finds, and it was a new frontier for commerce and British trade. More importantly, Bell insinuates that the region's resources and history must be protected by a benevolent and competent power, like the British, because the Ottomans had mishandled it and were incapable of properly preserving their history and using its resources.

After the 1920 San Remo Conference, which awarded Britain a mandate for the territory of Iraq, it was decided by the British Government, at the recommendations of Bell, T.E. Lawrence, and others, to create a monarchal government for Iraq and to place Faisal I in the throne. At the advice of Percy Cox and in order to create a sense of cooperation, the British drafted a treaty between the two governments and after two years of bargaining, the Anglo-Iraqi

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[76] Susan Pedersen, *The Guardians: The League of Nations and Crisis of Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 2-3.
[77] Report on the Arab Provinces: Baghdad, India Office Records and Private Papers Collection.

Treaty was signed in October 1922, but ratified by the Iraqi government in 1924.[78] This treaty stipulated British control over Iraq's foreign policy while maintaining an Iraqi-led government, with close British supervision, of course.[79] This 1922 treaty also included a Law of Antiquities, which was primarily devised by Bell.

Article 14 of the treaty stipulated a Law of Antiquities based on Article 421 of the 1920 Treaty of Sèvres. It states that the Iraqi government was to "ensure equality of treatment in the matter of archeological research to the nationals of all states members of the League of Nations, and of any state to which His Britannic Majesty has agreed by treaty that the same rights should be ensured as it would enjoy if it were a member of the said League."[80] In short, this allowed foreign archeologists to work in the region and export a hefty share of the artifacts they uncovered, with special opportunities given to the UK, member states of the League of Nations, and any other country that had entered into an agreement with the British Government. Bell was the primary force behind this piece of legislation and wrote to her father in celebration of her achievement, writing:

> Today the King [Faisal I] ordered me to tea and we had two hours most excellent talk. First of all I got his assistance for my Law of Excavations which I've compiled with the utmost care in consultation with the legal authorities. He has undertaken to push it through Council…and has agreed to my suggestion that he should appoint me, if Sir Percy consents, provisional Director of Archaeology to his Govt, in addition to my other duties.[81]

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[78] Dodge, *Inventing Iraq,* 108.
[79] Anglo-Iraqi Treaty, 10 Oct 1922, FO 93/124/2, Foreign Office Records, the National Archives of the UK, London.
[80] Treaty of Sèvres, 10 Aug 1920, FO 93/110/81b, Foreign Office Records, the National Archives of the UK, London.
[81] Letter from Gertrude Bell to Sir Hugh Bell, 2 June 1922, GB/1/1/2/1/18/10, Gertrude Bell Archive, Newcastle University, United Kingdom. https://gertrudebell.ncl.ac.uk/l/gb-1-1-2-1-18-10 The "Law of Excavations" and "Law of Antiquities" are the same piece of legislation.

King Faisal did just that and appointed Bell as the Honorary Director of the newly founded Department of Antiquities. As stipulated in her antiquities law, half of the artifacts uncovered in Iraq were to stay in the state, which quickly created a backlog of fragile findings with nowhere to store them. Bell originally stored the items in a spare Government Office in Baghdad, but soon ran out of room. By the end of 1923, Bell had secured a new home for these artifacts and in 1926, the Baghdad Archeological Museum was founded.[82] Excited about her new endeavors, Bell wrote to her stepmother in March 1926, that the new museum would "be a real Museum, rather like the British Museum only a little smaller."[83]

Despite efforts to retain at least *some* of the artifacts in Iraq, Bell's Law of Antiquities allowed for a significant number of precious items to leave the region and find residence in museums around the world. Bell's stance had several critics. The most notable was Sati' al-Husri, a former Ottoman bureaucrat and influential Arab nationalist. According to al-Husri, the most important aspects in the formation of a nation were a shared language and a common history.[84] However, it is hard to establish a common national history when half of the artifacts that would have aided in the education of the public have left the country so al-Husri was not pleased with Bell's law. He reports that she approached him with a draft of the law and was "extremely annoyed" by his reservations. Bell then insisted that the Department of Antiquities, of which she was Honorary Director, would be moved to a different ministry from the Ministry of Education, of which al-Husri was Assistant Minister. Bell died in 1926 before this squabble

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[82] Magnus Bernhardsson, *Reclaiming a Plundered Past: Archaeology and Nation Building in Modern Iraq* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2005), 153.
[83] Letter from Gertrude Bell to Dame Florence Bell, 3 March 1926, GB/1/1/1/1/35/7, Gertrude Bell Archive, Newcastle University, United Kingdom. https://gertrudebell.ncl.ac.uk/l/gb-1-1-1-1-35-7
[84] Bernhardsson, "Gertrude Bell and the Antiquities Law of Iraq," 246.

could extend much further and al-Husri went on to become the first non-European Director of Antiquities in October of 1934.[85]

Bell's approach to Iraq's archeological sites is difficult to understand. On one hand, she continuously advocates for allowing foreign archeologists to come into the region and leave with half of their findings. Bell made it very clear that she thought the best protectors of the history and artifacts were British officials and their oversight. More specifically, she advocated for *herself* to be the supervisor of the new museum that she founded. On the other hand, Bell founded the Baghdad Archeological Museum and she worked tirelessly in the intense Baghdad summer heat up until her death in 1926 to sort, catalog, and properly preserve the artifacts that had been uncovered. She wrote to her father and stepmother about the museum often complaining about the chaos and heat of working on sorting through objects.[86] Bell is widely applauded for her work on preserving the history of Iraq, but it is also thanks to her that a large number of artifacts managed to be taken out of the country.[87]

Oil and Economic Monopoly

It would be remiss to discuss the history of the mandate system, especially the mandate of Iraq, without devoting space to the oil industry. Surprisingly, Bell gives very little space to the

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[85] Amatzia Baram, "A Case of Imported Identity: The Modernizing Secular Ruling Elites of Iraq and the Concept of Mesopotamian-Inspired Territorial Nationalism, 1922-1992," *Poetics Today* 15, no. 2 (1994): 282.

[86] Letter from Gertrude Bell to Dame Florence Bell, 7 July 1926, GB/1/1/1/1/35/21, Gertrude Bell Archive, Newcastle University, United Kingdom. https://gertrudebell.ncl.ac.uk/l/gb-1-1-1-1-35-21 ; Letter from Gertrude Bell to Sir Hugh Bell, 7 July 1926, GB/1/1/2/1/22/23, Gertrude Bell Archive, Newcastle University, United Kingdom. https://gertrudebell.ncl.ac.uk/l/gb-1-1-2-1-22-23 These are just two examples of her mentioning the museum in her letters, but it is a popular topic from 1922 to 1926.

[87] Paul Collins and Charles Tripp, ed., *Gertrude Bell and Iraq: A Life and Legacy* (Oxford: Published for the British Academy by Oxford University Press, 2017), 19, 73, 92, 121.

discussion of oil or potential oil sites in her reports. Apart from mentioning that oil pumps would find a "ready market" in Baghdad, she pays very little attention to the oil interests of the British.[88] Perhaps this is due to how obvious Britain's interest in oil was based on the fact that in 1912, under the leadership of Winston Churchill, as First Lord of Admiralty, the British Royal Navy shifted its naval fleet from being powered by coal to being powered primarily by petroleum. This caused some issues for the British, as coal was a resource it had, but oil would call for outside resources. British forces captured Basra at the beginning of the First World War in hopes of securing oil and persuading Arabs to the Allied cause.[89] Amongst military disasters and successes, the British remained in the Middle East through the First World War and after, which was a deliberate decision based, in part, on the presence of oil. Before the mandate system had been established, British officials had already seen the potential for oil and the great supplies of it in the Ottoman Empire.[90]

In August 1918, Cabinet Secretary Sir Maurice Hankey explained to Foreign Secretary Arthur Balfour that "oil in the future would be as important as coal now."[91] The precious nature of oil could be seen in the squabbling and bargaining that took place behind the scenes at the 1920 San Remo Conference.[92] The struggle went on for years, but by 1928 most of the rights to oil exploration and production in the region went to four large oil companies, which were

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[88] Report on the Arab Provinces: Baghdad, India Office Records and Private Papers Collection.
[89] Paul K Davis, *Ends and Means: The British Mesopotamian Campaign and Commission* (Cranbury, NJ: Associated Presses, 1994), 31-32.
[90] Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq,* 3.
[91] Comment by Maurice Hankey to Arthur Balfour, 12 Aug 1918, Add MS 51071, Cecil Papers, British Library, London, UK.
[92] Pedersen, *The Guardians,* 272.

represented in ownership by Britain, the United States, the Netherlands, and France.[93] The rights to oil exploration of Iraq eventually went to the Iraq Petroleum Company, a subset of the Anglo-Persian Company, which was controlled by the British. The IPC was to pay some money in royalties to the Iraqi government, but the sole rights belonged to the private, British-dominated company.[94]

In several of her 1917 reports Bell refers to the local population of Iraq in less than favorable terms. She calls Arabs "money-makers," which is not meant in a positive light, and essentially makes them out to be money-hungry and unintelligent in economic matters.[95] She goes on in a different report to explain that they are unable to unite themselves beyond their "tribal origins."[96] It's here that Bell position as an Orientalist is clear as she assigns a value to the organized governing style of Western countries like Britain. She suggests that outside influence, specifically from Britain, would be in the best interests of the less capable local population. As discussed in the previous section, Bell suggested that the Allied Powers were owed compensation for their losses and horrors of the war. She states that if the "main battle had to be fought in Europe the reward was to be found chiefly in Asiatic Turkey."[97] Bell goes on to question the purpose of the war if the prize afterwards was not worth it: "What then was the prize which was worth the life blood of so many thousand Pomeranian grenadiers?"[98] Obviously, the

[93] Minutes by J.E. Hall, 29 Dec 1931, 730/169/8, Colonial Office Records, the National Archives of the UK, London.
[94] Samira Haj, *The Making of Iraq, 1900-1963: Capital, Power, and Ideology* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997), 82.
[95] Report on the Arab Provinces: Baghdad, India Office Records and Private Papers Collection.
[96] Report on the Arab Provinces: Syria by Gertrude Bell, 20 September 1917, IOR/L/PS/11/127, P 3878/1917, India Office Records and Private Papers Collection, British Library, London, UK.
[97] A Survey of the Turkish Provinces, India Office Records and Private Papers Collection.
[98] A Survey of the Turkish Provinces, India Office Records and Private Papers Collection.

sacrifice of German lives would have worth it if influence over the Turkish Provinces remained in German hands.

Apart from oil, Iraq offered a new market for British goods and trading, which Bell points out had been unbalanced. She states that "the rehabilitation of the Near East may once more alter the balance, or let us establish a just balance, by recreating a market which has been for centuries in abeyance. It will add immeasurably to the wealth of a universe wasted by war and provide new fields for the reviving industries of Europe."[99] Just as Susan Pedersen suggests in her book, *The Guardians,* and as Bell suggests here, the Turkish Provinces were to be a reward to European powers for winning the war against Germany and the Ottoman Empire. Bell goes on to assert that it was Britain's desire to at "the earliest opportunity set the ball of commerce rolling. With a population which will instantly raise its standard of living and a soil the undeveloped resources of which are ample to provide for enhanced requirements, our economic future need cause no anxiety."[100] It is absolutely clear from these comments that she encouraged the British to exploit Iraqi markets for their own profit and as reward for its sacrifices in the war.

Bell was not alone in preplanning the exploitation of Iraq's economy. Percy Cox, serving as the High Commissioner of Mesopotamia, planned out the basis of laws for Iraq and economic strategy "in anticipation of a mandate being eventually passed."[101] He expressed frustration in a telegram to Winston Churchill, who was serving as Secretary of State for the Colonies at the

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[99] Report on the Anatolian Coast, India Office Records and Private Papers Collection.
[100] Report on the Arab Provinces: Baghdad, India Office Records and Private Papers Collection.
[101] Telegram from the High Commissioner of Mesopotamia to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 30 June 1921, CO 730/2/117, f 779, Colonial Office Records, the National Archives, of the UK, London.

time. Cox explains that the League of Nations was moving "too leisurely to keep pace with current activity of the states" and that it would be wise to legalize their "position in absence of any mandate."[102] Cox proposed that it would be the prime opportunity to draft a treaty with Iraq based on the Anglo-Persian Agreement, which focused on Persia's finances and the drilling rights of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company.[103] Cox wanted the British to draft and sign a treaty that was economically exploitative with a state (Iraq), whose economy was already being stifled by restrictions from the British. This created unequal footing between the British and Iraq, forcing Iraq into an agreement that allowed British control over its economy or face economic restrictions. He notes that these countries could not go on much longer with these economic restrictions, essentially indicating that Iraq would have to enter into the unbalanced agreement with the British or else their economy would continue to be suppressed by the restrictions put in place by the British Government.

Conclusion

As an empire, Britain was no stranger to occupying lands that did not belong to it and reaping the benefits of their resources, most often with little concern over domestic opinion or input. In the early twentieth century, this practice was taken to the Middle East in search of oil and laying claim to the lands of the recently fallen Ottoman Empire. Establishing control over Iraq in the form of a mandate allowed Britain to maintain and expand its control over Iraq's resources. British political officers used its dominance over the League of Nations to manipulate the mandate system, which despite its guidelines, became an unchecked force of empire thanks

[102] Telegram from the High Commissioner of Mesopotamia to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 30 June 1921, CO 730/2/117, f 779, Colonial Office Records, the National Archives of the UK, London.
[103] Fromkin, *A Peace to End all Peace,* 457.

to the lack of oversight for mandatory powers, vague definitions, and general misuse of power. Britain's desire to benefit economically from its position in Iraq calls into question the true goals of the mandate system and considering its domination over the League of Nations, Britain made the mandate system an advantageous endeavor for itself. This is evident from Gertrude Bell's advice concerning the domination of railroads, acquisition of territory and artifacts as reward for the war, and her insistence on Britain's right to Iraq's resources and markets all just prior to and in the beginning years of the mandate for Iraq.

Chapter Three

A Question of Sovereignty and Motivation: The Hashemites and the Kurds

At the Paris Peace Conference in 1920, member states of the League of Nations came together to create a charter that defined the purpose and role of the League of Nations. It included the creation of mandates (territories to be governed by authorized member states, namely Britain and France) and what the role of the mandatory power would be under this new system of governance. Article 22 of the Covenant of the League of Nations clarified that mandatory powers were "advanced nations who by reason of their resources, experience, or their geographical position can best undertake" the responsibility of governing these territories.[104] The level of authority the mandatory power should have and how involved the local population could be in their own governance were based on the classification of the mandate as an "A," "B," or "C" mandate. The League of Nations classified Iraq as an "A" mandate, meaning that the mandatory power (Britain) was to advise and assist into the development of an "independent nation."[105] The British administration of the Iraq mandate was legally obligated, by the Covenant of the League of Nations, to honor and assist in the creation of nations based on the existing, self-defined, and distinct communities present in the mandate. As a political officer and Orientalist, Gertrude Bell offered research, advice, and experience that should have aided the British in making informed decisions regarding the potential makeup and borders of an Iraqi state. However, Bell's advice was inaccurate, tinted by her own admiration for Hashemite rule in

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[104] The Covenant of the League of Nations, Article 22, found at https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/leagcov.asp#art22

[105] The Covenant of the League of Nations, Article 22, found at https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/leagcov.asp#art22

Iraq, and, most obviously, her tendency to place British interests above those of the local population.

This Orientalist perspective emerged within the ill-informed advice that the British administration followed, resulting in an Iraq that favored Hashemite rule and disregarded the wishes of ethnic minorities, specifically the Kurds in the northwestern region of Iraq. Bell ruled in favor of including Southern Kurdistan in the state of Iraq. Disregarding the wishes of the Kurds and the guidelines from the League of Nations, the British ultimately included the region in the state of Iraq. The decisions concerning the borders of Iraq have resulted in conflict and disputed sovereignty that continues to this day, over one hundred years later.

Treaties and Forgotten Promises

The period during and just after the First World War was riddled with conflicting and overlapping treaties, promises, and agreements. The subject of how to handle the territory of the former Ottoman Empire came up often. These treaties and other agreements between Britain and others created a convoluted understanding of fate of the former Ottoman Empire. The first of these promises arrived within the letters between Sir Henry McMahon and Sherif Hussein bin Ali. Beginning in July 1915, British High Commissioner of Egypt, Sir Henry McMahon, began corresponding with Sherif Hussein bin Ali on a potential alliance between the British and the Arabs that were loyal to Sherif Hussein. In exchange for rallying support amongst Arabs in Ottoman-held territory against the Ottoman Empire, the British promised to support an independent, pan-Arab state after the war. Over the course of a year and ten letters, McMahon and Hussein formulated the stipulations of the alliance. Britain agreed to support “the independence of the Arabs in all the regions within the limits demanded by the Sherif of Mecca”

and to "guarantee the Holy Places against all external aggression."[106] Obtaining the support of the Arabs not only provided immediate relief to the ongoing financial and physical burdens of the war, but it would grant Britain a lasting influence in the region's politics, trade, and in the formation of states that were loyal to the Allied Powers, rather than to the Ottomans or Germans. In exchange for this "independence" from Ottoman control and the new Arab state, Hussein agreed to initiate attacks against Turkish forces, garrisons, and ports across the Ottoman Empire.[107] The ensuing Arab Revolt began in June 1916 and continued until the end of the war in October 1918 and was successful in its attempts to ignite Arab nationalism across the empire. In the dying days of the war, other agreements and plans came to light that negated the promises made to Hussein and the Arabs.[108]

The Sykes-Picot Agreement of 1916 divided the Ottoman Empire into zones of British or French control. In his book, *England the Middle East*, Elie Kedourie explains that the Sykes-Picot Agreement acted as a plan to dissolve the Ottoman Empire. He argues that the agreement and Hussein's alliance with the British were the "first step" towards the destruction of the Ottoman Empire.[109] The Sykes-Picot Agreement, however, directly contradicted the promises made to Hussein in the Hussein-McMahon letters. The agreement between Britain and France divvied up the Middle East, which would make the creation of a pan-Arab state impossible. Kedourie argues that the agreement did not fully come to fruition not because of the contradictions, but because the agreement had lost its support within the British government. He

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[106] Letter from McMahon to Hussein, 7 March 1939, HL/PO/JO/10/10/1206/510, Records of the House of Lords, UK Parliamentary Archives, London.
[107] Pedersen, *Guardians,* 22.
[108] The Sykes-Picot Agreement, Balfour Declaration, and the League of Nations Covenant each nullified, in one way or another, these promises.
[109] Kedourie, *England and the Middle East*, 65.

claims that Hussein and his supporters were aware of the Sykes-Picot Agreement, but they believed that their continued alliance with the British and unification under an Arab nationalist front would lead to the destruction of the Ottoman Empire *and* the Sykes-Picot Agreement. Kedourie explains that Hussein and his supporters believed that their sheer dedication to an Arab state and willingness to defend the promises made by the British was enough to power their defense of their land from British and French control.[110] Either way, neither the Sykes-Picot Agreement nor the promises made to Hussein were fulfilled.

Concerning the mandate system in particular, the guidelines set by the League of Nations Covenant at the Paris Peace Conference in 1920 clarified the relationship between the mandate and the mandatory power. It created stipulations that changed from region to region and recognized the difficulties these communities may have had after losing their previous system of governance after the war. The first region addressed was the territory that had been a part of the recently dissolved Ottoman Empire. The territories in Africa that had been under German control were divided between Central Africa and South-West Africa, with South Pacific Islands being included with the latter. What seems peculiar here is why these regions needed individualized guidelines, but the text of the covenant is vague. It states that the character of the mandate differs "according to the stage of the development of the people, the geographical situation of the territory, its economic conditions and other similar circumstances."[111] There is no discussion within this text as to how territories were classified nor the details of these circumstances.

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[110] Kedourie, *England and the Middle East,* 59-65.
[111] The Covenant of the League of Nations, Article 22, found at https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/leagcov.asp#art22

According to Article 22 of the Covenant of the League of Nations, there were some local populations of the former Ottoman Empire that were developed enough to establish their own nation. The text explained that these "certain communities" had reached a "stage of development where their existence as independent nations" could be provisionally recognized.[112] It gave no other identifier as to which communities had this right and which did not. If it was the wish of these "certain communities" to do so, then it was the responsibility of the mandatory power to assist them in the endeavor of founding their own nations. If these certain communities did not wish to create their own nations, then it was still the responsibility of the mandated power to ensure their well-being. The League of Nations Covenant asserted that it was of "principal consideration" that the wishes of these communities be considered when selecting a mandatory power for the region.[113] Again, it left out any specifics on how this would function in the administering of power in the former Ottoman Empire, essentially allowing the mandatory power to govern these territories according to very vague guidelines.

The 1920 Paris Peace Conference established the King-Crane Commission at the request of President Woodrow Wilson. Initially, the commission was to be composed of British and French delegates, but French President, Georges Clemenceau, and British Prime Minister, David Lloyd George, thought the commission was "childish" and that it would be impossible to gather public opinion in the region.[114] The commission, now headed by Americans, Henry King and Charles Crane, travelled to Syria and Palestine in order to conduct surveys and interviews to

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[112] The Covenant of the League of Nations, Article 22, found at https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/leagcov.asp#art22
[113] The Covenant of the League of Nations, Article 22, found at https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/leagcov.asp#art22
[114] Fromkin, *A Peace to End All Peace,* 396.

determine the attitude of locals concerning European influence after the war.[115] The commission concluded that local populations were generally unfavorable towards the idea of a French mandate in Syria and 72.3% of those surveyed in Palestine were not in favor of the creation of a Zionist state.[116] Overall, the King-Crane Commission did not make much difference in the creation of the mandate system guidelines, but it did reinforce that the British and French Governments were not concerned with public opinion of their control over these territories.[117]

The 1920 Paris Peace Conference left many questions unanswered, specifically concerning the mandate system. To resolve these issues, representatives of Britain, France, Italy, Japan, and the US met in San Remo, Italy on April 25, 1920. The San Remo Resolution clarified the establishment of Iraq and Syria as "A" mandates that were subject to "administrative advice and assistance by a mandatory until such time as they are able to stand alone."[118] The San Remo Resolution also stated that Britain would enact the Balfour Declaration in the Palestine mandate, which meant the creation of a "national home" for Jews in Palestine, despite the results from the King-Crane Commission that suggested a large portion of the public in Palestine were unfavorable towards the creation of a Zionist state.[119] The San Remo Conference established support for agreements that would later become official in the August 1920 Treaty of Sèvres.

The 1920 Treaty of Sèvres, signed between the Allied Powers, namely Britain and France, and the Ottoman Empire, partitioned the Ottoman Empire among the Allied Powers and

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[115] Fromkin, *A Peace to End All Peace*, 397.
[116] The Report Upon Syria, Petition Summaries, The King-Crane Commission Report, 28 August 1919, found at https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1919Parisv12/d380
[117] Kedourie, *England and the Middle East,* 147.
[118] San Remo Resolution, 25 April 1920. Found at https://ecf.org.il/issues/issue/251
[119] Letter from Lord Arthur Balfour to Lord Lionel Rothschild, 2 November 1917, found at https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/balfour.asp

created zones of influence that operated alongside the mandate system.[120] The Treaty of Sèvres reinforced the dedication to create a Zionist state in Palestine as laid out in the Balfour Declaration.[121] More relevant to this chapter, the Treaty of Sèvres guaranteed "autonomy for the predominantly Kurdish areas lying east of the Euphrates, south of the southern boundary of Armenia… and north of the frontier of Turkey with Syria and Mesopotamia."[122]

The last gathering of British political officers that must be mentioned is the 1921 Cairo Conference. The purpose of the conference was to clarify the conflicting agreements and promises held within the Hussein-McMahon Letters, the Sykes-Picot Agreement, and the Balfour Declaration and to maintain British control "as cheaply as possible."[123] Attendees included, Winston Churchill (Secretary of State to the Colonies), TE Lawrence (Political Advisor to the Middle East Department), Hubert Young (Assistant Secretary to the Middle East Department), Major Edward Noel (former Political Officer for Sulaymaniyah), Gertrude Bell (Oriental Secretary for the High Commissioner of Iraq), and Percy Cox (High Commissioner of Iraq), as well as Arab officials, Jafar al-Askari (former Ottoman officer), and Sassoon Hasqail (a financial expert).[124] Churchill, Lawrence, Young, and Noel argued against keeping Southern Kurdistan in Iraq, an opposing view from Bell and Cox. Most of the decisions made at this conference were solidified in the 1922 Anglo-Iraqi Treaty, which granted Britain control over

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[120] Fromkin, *A Peace to End All Peace,* 403-4.
[121] Article 95, Section VII Syria, Mesopotamia, Palestine, Treaty of Sèvres, 10 August 1920, found at https://www.fransamaltingvongeusau.com/documents/dl1/h1/1.1.18.pdf
[122] Article 62, Section III Kurdistan, Treaty of Sèvres, 10 August 1920, found at https://www.fransamaltingvongeusau.com/documents/dl1/h1/1.1.18.pdf
[123] Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq,* 40.
[124] Saad Eskander, "Gertrude Bell and the Formation of the Iraqi State: The Kurdish Dimension," in *Gertrude Bell and Iraq: A Life and Legacy,* ed. Paul Collins and Charles Tripp (Oxford: Published for the British Academy by Oxford University Press, 2017), 219.

Iraq's foreign policy, military, and financial matters, as well as officially declaring Faisal as King of Iraq, but permitted Southern Kurdistan to be incorporated into the state of Iraq.[125]

If state-building in the post-war Middle East was based on just the League of Nations' guidelines, as clarified with the San Remo Resolution, the Treaty of Sèvres, and the Cairo Conference, "certain" minority communities in the former Ottoman Empire had a claim to the creation of their own states, namely the Kurds. According to the requirements from Article 22, the League of Nations had, essentially, made the creation of countries based on existing, self-defined and distinct communities in the former Ottoman Empire not only a possibility but a right that the British administration in the mandate had to honor, as long as these communities were in a "stage of development" that was favorable to the colonial administration.[126] The issue here was how these communities were being discussed and who had the power to define them according to this sliding scale of civilization. As they have done before on matters of the Middle East, the British turned to Orientalists, like Gertrude Bell.

The Hashemite School

Gertrude Bell's place in the Middle East and within its history, culture, and languages is incredibly contradictory and tricky to navigate. She was a passionate advocate for the preservation of Islamic archeology but drafted and pushed policies that allowed for a large number of artifacts to leave the region. She proclaimed a "special connection" to the region and culture but held and spread unbelievably racist and imperialist views about the people living there. Bell promoted and proclaimed an image of the Middle East that was backward,

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[125] Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq,* 49.
[126] The Covenant of the League of Nations, Article 22, found at https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/leagcov.asp#art22

uncivilized, and distinctly inferior to the West.[127] This is obvious from her letters, published writings, and reports to the British Government concerning the region. Bell was not just an advisor to the British Government during the mandate and concerning the mandate, she was instrumental in British military operations in the Middle East during the First World War. Along with T.E. Lawrence, Bell helped establish relationships and friendships with leaders and influenced the Arab Revolt against Ottoman rule. Most notably, Bell cultivated a close relationship with Faisal I, the son of the previously discussed Sherif Hussein, and favored Hashemite rule over all else.

As addressed in the Hussein-McMahon Letters, an Arab state in the Middle East under Hashemite rule was promised to the Arabs who aided Britain by revolting against Ottoman rule. The word "Hashemite" referred to Hussein and his sons, Ali, Abdullah, and Faisal. The Hashemites claimed, and still claim today, to be descendants of the prophet Muhammad, but more specifically of his daughter, Fatima. Hussein claimed authority in Ottoman Arabia through this lineage. In his infamous autobiographical work, *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, T.E. Lawrence explained that Hussein's claim to this Hashemite identity threatened the Ottoman government. He stated that they "regarded this clan of manticratic peers with a mixture of reverence and distrust."[128] These Ottoman suspicions of Hussein were not completely unfounded, considering that he sought to create a pan-Arab state outside of Ottoman control. The Hashemites had pull with Muslims across the Middle East and Central Asia, not just among Arab Muslims. In his

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[127] Said, *Orientalism*, 224.
[128] T.E. Lawrence, *Seven Pillars of Wisdom: A Triumph* (New York: Doubleday, 1935), 49. Manticratic is a term invented by Lawrence and refers to rule by descendants of the prophet Muhammad. It is a hapax legomenon, being used just one time by Lawrence in chapter five of *Seven Pillars of Wisdom.*

book, *A Peace to End All Peace: The Fall of the Ottoman Empire and the Creation of the Modern Middle East,* David Fromkin explains that the British were wary that the jihad declared by Sultan Mehmed V in 1914 could potentially sway their Muslim Indian soldiers to the Turkish cause or lead to a revolution amongst Muslims in British-controlled India.[129] The jihad turned out to be ineffective, but nonetheless informed the promises made within the McMahon-Hussein Letters and to Arabs in the Middle East. According to Lawrence, because of this revolt's potential to oust Turkish leadership, the Ottomans did not entrust Hussein with much power and increased Turkish influence across the Levant and Hejaz regions.[130] Hussein and his sons, in an effort to take back their proclaimed ancestral power and to push back against Turkish influence, began discussions with the British on some sort of "quid pro quo" situation, which was detailed in the McMahon-Hussein Letters.

Prior to the deterioration of the relationship between the British government and Hussein, there were many British political officers, advisors, and others who advocated for Hashemite leadership across the Middle East. This "Hashemite School," which included those at the Foreign Office and Arab Bureau, Prime Minister Lloyd George, Foreign Secretary Lord Arthur Balfour, T.E. Lawrence, and Gertrude Bell, advocated for the creation of an Arab state in the Middle East under Hashemite leadership and indirect British control.[131] Through betrayal from the British, a pan-Arab state did not come to fruition, but the Hashemites had some semblance of victory, and Hussein and his sons were placed in leadership positions across the former Ottoman Empire. Hussein declared himself King of the Hejaz and retained his eldest son, Ali, as heir to his lands

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[129] Fromkin, *A Peace to End all Peace*, 109.
[130] Lawrence, *Seven Pillars of Wisdom,* 49.
[131] Judith S. Yaphe, "War and Occupation in Iraq: What Went Right? What Could Go Wrong?" *Middle East Studies* 57 (2003): 384.

in the Arabian Peninsula. Abdullah and Faisal were first proclaimed the kings of Iraq and Syria, respectively, in March 1920 by the General Syrian Congress.[132] The General Syrian Congress, led by Hashim al-Atassi, consisted of representatives from all of Syria, including some from Lebanon and Palestine. The congress elected Faisal as king of Syria, but his reign was short-lived as the San Remo Resolution established the French Syrian mandate, making the declaration of Faisal as king invalid. After Faisal was deposed, Abdullah, as King of Iraq, threatened to invade Syria and dispel the French in order to protect his brother's claim to power.

Bell was not particularly fond of Abdullah. After the declaration of Abdullah as king of Iraq, Bell exclaimed in a letter to her stepmother that they were "in for it" and she would "need every scrap of personal influence and every hour of friendly intercourse" she had in order to keep Iraq from "falling into chaos."[133] In another letter to her father, Bell explains her advice to the British concerning Abdullah:

> What really would simplify matters would be if they would ask for Abdullah, Faisal's brother, for Amir [of Transjordan]. Abdullah is a gentleman who likes a copy of the Figaro every morning at breakfast time. I haven't any doubt we should get on with him famously. Then recall the Mesopotamians from Syria and set up your national government as quick as you can - they are some of them capable men with considerable experience. If we meet them on equal terms there won't be any difficulty in getting them to act with wisdom.

Bell's opinion of Abdullah was not positive and she much preferred leadership of Iraq to be in Faisal's hands. Fortunately for her, Abdullah rejected his role as king of Iraq and Faisal was ejected from his seat of power in Syria by the French, leaving leadership of Iraq open for Faisal.

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[132] Fromkin, *A Peace to End All Peace,* 435-8; Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq,* 33.
[133] Letter from Gertrude Bell to Dame Florence Bell, 14 March 1920, GB/1/1/1/1/29/10, Gertrude Bell Archive, Newcastle University, United Kingdom. https://gertrudebell.ncl.ac.uk/l/gb-1-1-1-1-29-10

Abdullah eventually settled in Transjordan and established himself as Emir in 1921, and later as King in 1946.[134]

At the encouragement of many, including Lawrence and Bell, Faisal was officially appointed as the King of Iraq at the Cairo Conference in March 1921. To the people of Iraq, Faisal was an outsider, but with the help of Bell and his Hashemite heritage, he campaigned to the Iraqi public and gained their trust, as a fellow Muslim and Arab. Bell had a complicated but close relationship with Faisal. She wrote of him fondly to her parents quite often, detailing their encounters in romanticized rhetoric.[135] She described a birthday party for Faisal in June 1922 in a letter to her father, Sir Hugh Bell, as a "tremendous day" and an "emotional experience."[136] In this letter, Bell explained that High Commissioner Percy Cox had told her to "look after the King" and, using an expression in Arabic, she affirmed that "wallahi" (by God!) she did it well.[137]

Bell acted as a close advisor to Faisal and had a "personal devotion" to him. Because of this close relationship and her rather detailed written encounters with Faisal, many have speculated that their relationship went beyond the professional realm. In his 2012 article, "Orientalists in Love: Intimacy, Empire, and Cross-Cultural Knowledge," Stephen Jankiewicz compares the relationship between Bell and Faisal to the relationship of Lafcadio Hearn and

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[134] Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq,* 39.
[135] Stephen Jankiewicz, "Orientalists in Love: Intimacy, Empire, and Cross-Cultural Knowledge," *Journal of World History* 23, no. 2 (2012): 354.
[136] Letter from Gertrude Bell to Sir Hugh Bell, 2 June 1922, GB/1/1/2/1/18/10, Gertrude Bell Archive, Newcastle University, United Kingdom. https://gertrudebell.ncl.ac.uk/l/gb-1-1-2-1-18-10
[137] Letter from Gertrude Bell to Sir Hugh Bell, 2 June 1922, GB/1/1/2/1/18/10, Gertrude Bell Archive, Newcastle University, United Kingdom. https://gertrudebell.ncl.ac.uk/l/gb-1-1-2-1-18-10

Setsu Koizumi. Lafcadio Hearn was a Greek-born British citizen who grew up in Dublin, Ireland and then moved to the US at age 19. Hearn is largely credited for introducing Japanese culture and literature to the West through his writings such as, *Kwaidan: Stories and Studies of Strange Things.* He moved to Japan in 1890, where he worked as a schoolteacher, and met his wife, Setsu Koizumi. Hearn later became a Japanese citizen and adopted the name, "Yakumo Koizumi."[138] Jankiewicz argues that the Bell and Hearn both "fell in love… with 'Orientals'" and that both acted as a connection between the West and the East.[139] He goes on to suggest that the construction of intimacy, desire, and power within imperialism made way for relationships and interactions that reflected an Orientalist understanding of the subject-object/active-passive relationship between the West and the Orient.[140] He points to this explanation for the seemingly close relationship between Bell and Faisal, while still insinuating that some sort of affair potentially took place between the two, even though there is no concrete evidence for this argument.

Jankiewicz's argument is not necessarily inaccurate in its assessment of Bell's Orientalist perspective on her relationship with Faisal, but the fallacy within his argument appears in his assumptions regarding her love life. Bell never married, but she did have an affair during her time in the Middle East, not with Faisal or any other Arab, but with British army officer, Charles Doughty-Wylie. Doughty-Wylie fought in the 1908 Young Turk Revolution and died early in the First World War during the Gallipoli Campaign in 1915. Bell and Doughty-Wylie began exchanging love letters in 1913 and continued until his death in 1915.[141] She wrote to him in her

[138] Jankiewicz, "Orientalists in Love," 345.
[139] Jankiewicz, "Orientalists in Love," 352.
[140] Jankiewicz, "Orientalists in Love," 348.
[141] Lukitz, *A Quest in the Middle East,* 75-100.

diaries, pretending that he was her audience.[142] The relationship between Bell and Doughty-Wylie was explicitly confirmed with their three years of love letters and in her diaries. No such evidence can be found to confirm an affair between Bell and Faisal. The speculation from historians and authors, such as Liora Lukitz, Stephen Jankiewicz, Janet Wallach, and Georgina Howell is unfounded.

It appears that instead of romantic love clouding her judgment and advice, Bell simply allowed British interests to overshadow the rights of minorities in the mandate and to determine which groups were at a stage of development conducive to self-rule. At the 1921 Cairo Conference Bell asserted her opinions on the potential borders for an Iraqi state very clearly and in a diverging direction from many others in the Hashemite school of thought.[143] She argued that the state's borders should be expanded to include the entirety of the Mosul province in northwestern Iraq. Opponents of this idea included Churchill, Lawrence, and others, who feared that including the Kurds in the Mosul region would be a source of contention. They believed that the Kurds there would push back against Arab rule and could return to Turkish sympathies and that maintaining a separate Kurdish state would operate as a buffer zone against any future Turkish nationalist threats.[144] The threat of Turkish sympathizers in an Arab state posed a serious threat to British security in Iraq and it was decided that the Kurds in the northwest region of Iraq would not be included in the new state unless they requested so. Through some questionable

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[142] Diary entry by Gertrude Bell, 16 January 1914, GB/2/15/1/1, Gertrude Bell Archive, Newcastle University, United Kingdom. https://gertrudebell.ncl.ac.uk/d/gb-2-15-1-1
[143] Saad Eskander, "Southern Kurdistan under Britain's Mesopotamian Mandate: From Separation to Incorporation, 1920-23," *Middle Eastern Studies* 37, no. 2 (2001): 153–80.
[144] Eskander, "Gertrude Bell and the Formation of the Iraqi State," 219.

efforts from Bell and High Commissioner Percy Cox, Bell's side of the Kurdish question won out and Southern Kurdistan was incorporated into the state of Iraq.[145]

Bell's Arab-centered perspective on this issue was shaped by her interactions with Kurds in this region, by her positive relationship with the Hashemites, who she believed were best suited to rule, and, most importantly, by her effort to preserve British dominance. In a letter to her father, Bell explained the disorganization of the Kurds:

> The Kurds are not anti-British; they want a Kurdish independent state under our protection, but what they mean by that neither they nor anyone else knows. For they emphatically refuse to be connected in any way with the Kurdish province of Sulaimani [Sulaymaniyah] which before the coming of Faisal had already voted itself out of the Iraq state. So much for Kurdish nationalism of which you may possibly hear a lot of tosh talked in the next few months, unless indeed Sir Percy succeeds in inducing Kirkuk to listen to reason. Arbil [Erbil] and all the Kurdish districts round Mosul have come in, realizing that their political and economic welfare is bound up with Mosul. They have bargained for and will obtain certain privileges, such as Kurdish officials. Some ask that all the teaching in the schools should be in Kurdish, a reasonable request if it weren't for the fact that Kurdish can barely be called a written language and that there aren't any Kurdish teachers and those can only be trained in Arabic, for there are no Kurdish books at all.[146]

In this instance, and others discussed in the next section, Bell insinuated that the Kurds were not unified in one opinion concerning self-rule and lacked the ability to establish their own institutions due to the lack of a written language but acknowledged that they desired an independent state. From this letter it is also apparent the limitations of Bell's knowledge concerning the Kurds. She claimed that no written Kurdish language existed, but there were two literary dialects used in Southern Kurdistan: Sorani and Kermanji.[147] From this attitude and her

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[145] Eskander, "Gertrude Bell and the Formation of the Iraqi State," 238.
[146] Letter from Gertrude Bell to Sir Hugh Bell, 14 August 1921, GB/1/1/2/1/17/27, Gertrude Bell Archive, Newcastle University, United Kingdom. https://gertrudebell.ncl.ac.uk/l/gb-1-1-2-1-17-27
[147] Eskander, "Gertrude Bell and the Formation of the Iraqi State," 223.

commitment to Faisal and Hashemite leadership, Bell stood by her opinion that Hashemite rule and British interests were more important than the rights of minorities to govern themselves, despite the League of Nations Covenant's guidelines.

The Denial of a Kurdish State

Bell dedicated one of her 1917 reports to just the Kurdish Mountain region and detailed its history, struggles, and ethnic composition. She reported having both positive and negative interactions with the people living in this region but pointed out the violent history of their involvement with the Armenian genocide, specifically the Adana massacres of 1909. Bell was amongst the first to report these mass killings of Armenians and in these reports from 1917, she provided key details and testimony that was not widely known. In her reporting, Bell acknowledged that the orders to kill were handed down by the Turkish government and were not "engendered from within," meaning that the idea to commit these crimes did not originate with Kurds.[148] She proceeded to explain that this was not an excuse for their participation in the massacre and that such violence was a crime against humanity, very similar to the death happening on the war front in Germany at the time. Bell did not seem to believe this explanation as the *only* reason for Kurds participating in the massacres of Armenian Christians, but that the Kurds were also motivated by religious intolerance and general dislike of Armenians. She wrote that the Kurds were a bit smarter than Turkish peasants, whom she likened to a "heavy-witted animal answering to the goad," thus making them smart enough to be responsible for their actions against Armenians, rather than "dumb" enough to just follow orders.[149]

[148] Report on the Kurdish Mountains, India Office Records and Private Papers Collection.
[149] Report on the Kurdish Mountains, India Office Records and Private Papers Collection.

To substantiate this claim, Bell went on for a few paragraphs on how feared the Kurds were by Christians, specifically Armenians, in the region, calling them "more dreaded by the Christians" than the Turks in even the predominantly Turkish districts. She ended her assessment of the Kurdish character by proclaiming them a "primitive civilization" with many vices and virtues, among them being the violence towards religious minorities and their social codes, but overall, decidedly not ready for self-governance. This assessment certainly lined up with the League of Nations' mission to protect religious minorities in the mandate. Thanks to the vague guidelines concerning which communities were civilized "enough" for their own state, Bell used this prejudice and violence towards Armenian Christians as proof that the Kurds were not ready for an independent state.

Additionally, Bell rejected the creation of a Kurdish state because of her concerns over the lack of unity among Kurds.[150] She believed that the Kurds were not unified enough concerning self-governance and through her selective conversations on the ground, Bell argued that a substantial number of Kurds desired to be incorporated into the future state of Iraq. Despite evidence and advice from others at the 1921 Cairo Conference that suggested otherwise, Bell insisted that the Kurds were too politically and culturally heterogenous to govern themselves and rejected Kurdish wishes for political autonomy.[151] As Bell's friendship with Faisal and the Hashemites grew, so did her insistence on retaining Kurdish lands in the Arab-controlled state of Iraq. Why, exactly, did Bell, an Orientalist with negative views on Arabs, Kurds, and Turks, come to the conclusion that the Arab Hashemites were civilized "enough" to not only rule over their fellow Arabs, but over others? Many historians have argued Bell's blind support of Faisal

[150] Fromkin, *A Peace to End all Peace*, 405.
[151] Eskander, "Gertrude Bell and the Formation of the Iraqi State," 228.

was due to her romantic infatuation with him. Others have argued that the answer is much simpler: Bell genuinely thought the Hashemites (including Faisal) *were* more "civilized" than their neighbors. Yet the most likely answer to why Bell so fervently supported the incorporation of Kurds into Iraq was not due to her secret love affair with Faisal or her genuine belief that Arabs were more "civilized" than others, but rather that the Hashemites were the safest, friendliest, and most convenient option to the British.

Bell's, and many others', belief in the Hashemites as the best-suited leaders for the region spurred from a mixture of reasons. Most obvious is the fact that Hussein and his sons were loyal to the British and friendly to the idea of British involvement, so long as they received what they wanted from the British: an Arab state. The British-Hashemite relationship cultivated by Bell and others was short-lived in Iraq, as Faisal began to pursue his own political interests that diverged from Britain's. He became a risk to British dominance in Iraq and Churchill went so far as to call him "treacherous" for making objections to the mandate in 1922 for it gave too much control to the British.[152] As Bell was a close advisor and friend to Faisal, her advice and perspective were not as popular as they once were, especially after her trusted friend, Percy Cox, was replaced as the High Commissioner of Mesopotamia in 1923.[153]

In addition to their loyalty to the British, Bell deemed Hussein and his sons as favorable options for leadership based on the idea that, somehow, they were less "backward" than others because of their religion and "purely Arab" genealogy.[154] Hussein and his sons practiced Sunni Islam, which was the minority sect of Islam in Iraq, but a majority across other many other

[152] Fromkin, *A Peace to End all Peace*, 509.
[153] Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq,* 52.
[154] Dodge, *Inventing Iraq,* 68.

regions, including British-controlled India. The divide between the Sunni and Shia Muslims is long-standing and has been violent. The British installation of a Sunni leader in a predominantly Shia region did not help to ease these tensions in Iraq. The Sunnis were relatively open to British interference because it politically empowered them vis-à-vis the Shiite majority and so they did not oppose the mandate. This Sunni minority rule became a source of tension and conflict for the Shia majority in Iraq, an issue that Bell and others quickly identified.[155] In a telegram to the High Commissioner for Palestine from the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Churchill passed along information to Lawrence and contemplated whether Faisal should attempt to appear less reliant on "exclusively Sunnis," as it could cause an upset among Shia Muslims.[156]

Bell anticipated and attempted to solve the problem that a Sunni minority rule over a Shia majority in Iraq would cause by fighting to retain the Mosul region (Southern Kurdistan) in the state of Iraq. The majority of Kurds were Sunni Muslims and by including them in Iraq, the British ensured a theoretically stronger sectarian base of support for the Sunni-led Iraqi government under Faisal's leadership.[157] Bell's adamant support for including Mosul and the Kurds in Iraq was based in her Orientalist perspective that Kurds would prioritize their Muslim identity above their national identity.[158] In hindsight, Bell's advice to install a Sunni government increased the likelihood of ethnic and sectarian tension and perpetuated an elite Sunni class over

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[155] Simon, *Iraq Between the Two World Wars,* 50-1.
[156] Telegram from the Secretary of State for the Colonies to the High Commissioner for Palestine, 5 April 1921, CO 730/14/2, f 5, Colonial Office Records, the National Archives of the UK, London.
[157] Kedourie, *England and the Middle East*, 210; Dodge, *Inventing Iraq,* 69; Myriam Yakoubi, "Gertrude Bell's Perception of Faisal I of Iraq and the Anglo-Arab Romance," in *Gertrude Bell and Iraq: a Life and Legacy,* ed. Paul Collins and Charles Tripp (Oxford: Published for the British Academy by Oxford University Press, 2017), 210.
[158] Said, *Orientalism,* 60.

a growing Shia lower class.[159] Bell's refusal to support an independent Kurdish state, then, was not solely based on levels of development, as the League of Nations requested, but rather on the need to stabilize British influence via Hashemite and Sunni control of the region.

If the Kurds were not anti-British, wanted a state of their own, and were open to it being under the guidance of the British, why was that right denied to them? Initially it was not. The attendees of the 1921 Cairo Conference left with a consensus that the Mosul region, consisting of mostly Kurds, would be left out of an Iraqi state unless the people there desired or requested to be brought into the fold. The attendees of the Cairo Conference altered the text of the mandate to include a provision in Article 16 that stated that nothing "shall prevent the mandatory from establishing such an autonomous system of administration for the predominantly Kurdish areas in the northern portion of Mesopotamia."[160] The separation of the Kurds from Iraq did not take place quickly after the conference and Percy Cox, who held the same opinions as Bell on the Kurdish question and acted as High Commissioner of Iraq, pressed that excluding the region would be devastating for the economy of Iraq and very expensive for the British. At this moment in the mandate period, British newspapers exploded with negative reactions to the costs in the Middle East and news of establishing a separate administration and military presence in Southern Kurdistan would have caused even more upset. Instead of adhering to suggestions made at the Cairo Conference or the League of Nations' guidelines concerning the rights of "certain communities" to form independent nations, Cox and Bell continued to govern the mandate as they saw fit.

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[159] Batatu, "Class Analysis and Iraqi Society;" Dodge, *Inventing Iraq*, 68.
[160] Eskander, "Southern Kurdistan under Britain's Mesopotamian Mandate," 155.

The outcome from the 1921 Cairo Conference was not what Bell had planned on, but Cairo was not the end of the discussion surrounding Mosul's incorporation into Iraq. After the conference, a referendum was held from July to August 1921 to obtain the public's approval of Faisal's position as King of Iraq. This nationwide election, which is now largely considered to be performative as the British had already placed Faisal in the role, included polling in three divisions of Southern Kurdistan: Sulaymaniyah, Mosul, and Kirkuk. In Sulaymaniyah, local Kurds rejected the offer to participate and only two thirds of Southern Kurds voted. The results showed that Sulaymaniyah refused to be under Arab rule. In Mosul, the British held considerable influence and local Kurds voted to approve Faisal on the condition that they would receive positions of status in "the fields of administration, education, customs, and legislation" as well as the right to join Northern Kurdistan should it become a state in the future.[161] Kurds in Kirkuk were unfavorable towards Arab rule and only 261 out of 31,269 of the representative voted in favor of Faisal.[162] Cox and Bell asserted that the reaction from Kurds regarding inclusion was positive except for one community, but the referendum shows a very different reality, which the British simply ignored. Cox and Bell reported that ninety-six percent of participants voted in favor of Faisal as Iraq's ruler.[163] To offset this, Cox and Bell argued, once again, that the Kurds were not unified enough to have a say as one entity, and instead of respecting the desires of Kurds to remain independent from Iraq, as the Cairo Conference recommended, the state of Iraq included Southern Kurdistan. This incorporation was not as simple as one unrepresentative

[161] Eskander, "Gertrude Bell and the Formation of the Iraqi State," 222-3.
[162] Eskander, "Gertrude Bell and the Formation of the Iraqi State," 224.
[163] Gerald de Gaury, *Three Kings in Baghdad: The Tragedy of Iraq's Monarchy* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2008), 33.

referendum, but despite many treaties, promises, and bombing campaigns throughout the mandate period, the region remained and remains in Iraq.

Conclusion

According to the guidelines set out by the League of Nations, the Kurdish requests for political autonomy and assistance in the creation of a states, independent from Iraq, were to be acknowledged and honored by the British. Gertrude Bell and others deemed that the Kurds were not unified enough to be granted this opportunity. The evidence used by Bell to assert this opinion was tainted by her own opinions concerning the violent nature of the Kurds and their lack of unity. Bell advised the British to retain Kurdish lands in the state of Iraq in order to bolster the number of Sunni Muslims present in the Shia-majority state and provide more support for the Hashemite government they had installed. Despite many powerful opponents of this idea and the guidelines from the League of Nations, the region was ultimately included in the state created by the British. The decisions concerning the borders of Iraq have resulted in conflict that continues to this day, over one hundred years later. These struggles over sovereignty and political autonomy continue in the twenty-first century thanks in large part to the decisions made by the British under advice from Orientalists like Gertrude Bell.

Chapter Four:
Arab Nationalism and the Baghdad Archeological Museum

The early twentieth century saw the birth of many nations and increasing European imperialism across the Middle East. The League of Nations mandate system allowed imperialist powers, like Britain and France, immense power in the task of nation building in the Middle East. In Iraq, specifically, the British employed the expertise of political officers, like Gertrude Bell. Gertrude Bell's position as an Orientalist is made most clear through her claim over Iraq's archeological sites and findings via the Baghdad Archeological Museum. As Director of Antiquities, Bell held a tangible element of power in her decision to allow many artifacts to leave the country and in designing the Baghdad Archeological Museum.

Bell faced resistance from many in her control over Iraq's archeological scene. Early Arab nationalist thinker, Sati' al-Husri, heavily criticized Bell's work and pushed back against British interference. Bell's work in the museum allowed her to portray Iraq's history through a Western lens, that despite his objections, adhered to al-Husri's view of early Arab nationalism and, surprisingly to some, portrayed a history of Iraq that secular nationalist movements, like the Ba'thists, and politicians, like Saddam Hussein, clung to. By emphasizing artifacts that had ties to Biblical history and ancient civilizations, Bell downplayed Iraq's Islamic history and visitors to the museum were left with a partial view of Iraq's history at a pivotal time in the formation of a nation.

The Arab Nationalism Debate

The topic of Arab nationalism is a tricky one that requires a deep and strategic dive into the history of the entire Middle East, a task that this thesis cannot commit to. The origins and nature

of Arab nationalism are heavily debated. Some, like Rashid Khalidi, argue that Arab nationalism arose in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as a response to the decline of the Ottoman Empire and the rise in European colonialism around the globe. Others, like Elie Kedourie, suggest that nationalism in the region did not develop until the inter-war period, in an anti-colonial response to British and French intervention in the Middle East. To convolute this debate even further, there are those, such as George Antonius, that stand somewhere in the middle and argue that Arab nationalism did exist prior to the inter-war period, but was shaped by religion rather than in response to the decline of the Ottoman Empire or European imperialism.

At the heart of this debate lies the contended theory of nationalism. In his notable work, *Imagined Communities*, Benedict Anderson explores nationalism as an imagined political community that acts as a "cultural artifact" and, as a concept, can be transplanted around the world to any society.[164] Anderson also pays special attention to the trouble that Marxists have with understanding and counteracting nationalism. Additionally, Anderson emphasizes the role that language and print have in establishing the idea of a nation and reinforcing community, especially in market exchanges under early capitalist practices, a feature that directly challenges Marxist theorists. The issue with blindly accepting Anderson's theory of nationalism lies in his case studies and evidence. One of Anderson's goals in his book is to disprove the widely held idea that nationalism originated in nineteenth century Europe and was then transplanted around the world via imperialism and colonization. He relies on examples from communities in Southeast Asia, Latin America, and Europe, but nearly omits any examination of the Middle East or Africa. This makes it tricky to accept his theory as truth when considering the birth of

[164] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 2016), 4.

nationalism in the Middle East, a point that Rashid Khalidi makes in his article, "Arab Nationalism: Historical Problems in the Literature."[165]

Rashid Khalidi is a Palestinian-American scholar and an essential voice on nationalism in the Middle East. Khalidi offers a nuanced approach to the Arab nationalism debate. He argues that part of the issue with understanding nationalism in the Middle East is that historians compartmentalize "along linguistic and national lines."[166] He argues that many historians of the Middle East study nationalism only within the region or group they are most familiar with. This is "unfortunate" because it does not allow historians to have a full, uninterrupted view of nationalism in the Middle East. Khalidi argues that these different types of nationalism influence each other and that other scholars have failed to fully understand these exchanges and have lost the nuances in nationalist movements across the region. Lastly, Khalidi argues that Arab nationalism arose in the late nineteenth century and that other scholars have allowed European imperialist influences too much weight in this debate, while dismissing the influence of other nationalism movements in the region.[167] In his article, Khalidi criticizes the work of Elie Kedourie, stating that his idea of Arab nationalism only examines the relationship between British officials and Iraqi elites (Hashemites).[168] He argues that these relationships are important, but fail to acknowledge the fact that Arab nationalism developed and existed elsewhere independent of British influence.

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[165] Rashid Khalidi, "Arab Nationalism: Historical Problems in the Literature," *The American Historical Review* 96, no. 5 (1991): 1363.
[166] Khalidi, "Arab Nationalism," 1363.
[167] Khalidi, "Arab Nationalism," 1364.
[168] Khalidi, "Arab Nationalism," 1371.

Elie Kedourie is one of the earliest historians on the modern Middle East. His 1956 work, *England and the Middle East*, focuses on British involvement in the Middle East and how political officers, like T.E. Lawrence, cultivated and utilized Arab nationalism to fit their agenda. Kedourie emphasizes the role of religion in Arab nationalism, arguing that Islam was inextricable from Arab nationalism and highlights that nationalism is overemphasized in the study of the Middle East.[169] His essential argument was that nationalism was an imported phenomenon, brought to the region by European imperialist forces and cultivated amongst the elite class. Kedourie rejected the idea that Arab nationalism spurred from the decline of the Ottomans in the last nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and instead argued that it was a distinctly Western idea that disrupted tribal social and political structures, an opinion that Edward Said shared. [170]

George Antonius was a Lebanese author, diplomat, and one of the first historians of Arab nationalism. His 1938 book, *The Arab Awakening*, is a landmark work in the history of nationalism across Arabia. Antonius argues that Arab nationalism began in Syria in 1847 and was heavily influenced by the Syrian Protestant College in Beirut.[171] He emphasizes the role of religion in Arab nationalism, asserting that Syrian Christians and American missionaries influenced Arabs at the college. Antonius is one of the first scholars to write about Arab nationalism using sources in both Arabic and English. The last sections of his book focus on the years after the First World War, paying special attention to the Hussein-McMahon Letters and emphasizing that the British promised Palestine to the Hashemites.[172] On this point, Antonius is

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[169] Kedourie, *England and the Middle East*, 111.
[170] Kedourie, *England and the Middle East*, 59-62.
[171] George Antonius, *The Arab Awakening* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott, 1939), 35.
[172] Antonius, *The Arab Awakening*, 228.

certain that Hussein only agreed to go to war against the Ottomans in exchange for an independent Arab state that included Palestine. His use of the Hussein-McMahon Letters in the original 1938 publication is one of the first moments the letters were published in English as the official documents were not released until the 1939 London Conference.[173]

In his book, *Orientalism,* Said does not clearly lay out his opinion on the Arab nationalism debate, but he has made contributions elsewhere, the roots of which can be seen in his pioneering book. Said agrees with Kedourie that nationalism is a Western import to the region and is far overemphasized in scholarship.[174] According to Said, the formation of nationalist movements in the Middle East was in reaction to Western influence, such as British interventions in the region. Said acknowledges the power nationalist movements had in resistance to imperialist powers, but that it was a distinctly Western concept whose power was severely limited.[175] Despite its limitations, Arab nationalism served an important role for the British by distracting Ottoman forces during the First World War, but also threatened British control and continues to make an impact in resistance to Western influence today.[176]

No matter where one stands on this nationalism debate, the impact of the arrival of Europeans during the early twentieth century cannot be denied. British political officers, like Lawrence and Bell, cultivated whatever semblance of unity that already existed in order to aid the British in their domination over the region. The agreements made between Henry McMahon

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[173] James Jankowski, "The Government of Egypt and the Palestine Question, 1936-1939," *Middle Eastern Studies* 17, no. 4 (1981): 438.
[174] Said, *Orientalism*, 231-32, 260.
[175] Edward Said, "Arabs, Islam and the Dogmas of the West," in *Orientalism: A Reader*, ed. A.L. Macfie (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 105.
[176] Fromkin, *A Peace to End All Peace,* 467-468.

and Sherif Hussein in the McMahon-Hussein Letters secured help from the Hashemites in distracting Ottoman forces, but Lawrence and Bell both played essential roles in helping nurture Arab cooperation for Britain's maneuvering against the Ottomans. Lawrence was one of many British military officers on the scene working alongside the Hashemites and their allies during the 1916 Great Arab Revolt.[177] The British relied on Lawrence's military experience and familiarity with the region to help lead a successful operation, which delivered international fame and the nickname, "Lawrence of Arabia."[178]

Despite not receiving the international accolades and lasting legacy that Lawrence did, Bell's role in the Great Arab Revolt was arguably just as vital to its success. Beginning in 1888, Bell travelled extensively, paying special attention to the Middle East, thanks to her personal interests and multiple visits to her uncle, Frank Lancelles, who served as British ambassador to Persia from 1891 to 1894. During her travels, Bell wrote about her experiences consistently in her journals and in late 1914, at the request of Wyndham Deedes, began reporting her observations to the War Office in London. These reports, although written from 1914 to 1915, informed the British during the 1916 Great Arab Revolt and were then requested for use by the Foreign Office in September of 1917.[179] Bell's writings assisted the British in distracting the Ottomans and later by helping shape the mandate system to be beneficial for the British. Unlike Lawrence, Bell did not have the opportunity to influence nationalist movements on the ground during this revolt, but

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[177] Fromkin, *A Peace to End All Peace*, 221.
[178] J.T. Laird, "T. E. Lawrence: The Problem of Interpretation," *The Australian Quarterly* 32 (1960), 94.
[179] Report on the Arab Provinces: the Anatolian Plateau India Office Records and Private Papers Collection.

her opportunity did come later in writing policy concerning artifacts and in establishing the Baghdad Archaeological Museum as an institution of Arab nationalism.

Bell and the Baghdad Museum

Gertrude Bell acted as a self-proclaimed protector of Iraq's history and archeology. In the book, *Gertrude Bell: Queen of the Desert, Shaper of Nations,* Georgina Howell argues that Bell fought to protect Iraq's archeology against looters and create a policy that would give "due weight to the rights of the nation and the excavator."[180] Howell goes on to praise Bell's efforts to preserve Iraq's history and argues that she did her due diligence in consulting local leaders. However, the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty of 1922, which stipulated that Britain would retain control over Iraq's foreign policy, included a Law of Antiquities written by Bell.[181] This Law of Antiquities that required the Iraqi government to "ensure equality of treatment in the matter of archeological research to the nationals of all states members of the League of Nations, and of any state to which His Britannic Majesty has agreed by treaty that the same rights should be ensured as it would enjoy if it were a member of the said League."[182] Essentially, this allowed archeologists from all over the world to work in Iraq and then take a large number of findings back home with them, as long as the artifacts were returning to member states of the League of Nations or other countries that were on friendly terms with Britain. Bell was heavily involved in the passing of this law and celebrated in a letter to her father in 1922, stating that Faisal had even agreed to

[180] Howell, *Gertrude Bell*, 410.
[181] Anglo-Iraqi Treaty, 10 Oct 1922, FO 93/124/2, Foreign Office Records, the National Archives of UK, London.
[182] Treaty of Sèvres, 10 Aug 1920, FO 93/110/81b, Foreign Office Records, the National Archives of the UK, London.

appoint her as "Director of Archeology."[183] As the Honorary Director of the Department of Antiquities, Bell's first task was to secure a larger location to store the large number of fragile artifacts.

The collected artifacts were originally stored in a spare room at a government office in Baghdad, but it quickly began to run out of room for the growing stack of artifacts uncovered by archeologists. By late 1923, Bell had secured a building in northern Baghdad for a new museum. She wrote in a letter to her stepmother that the new museum would be "a real museum, rather like the British Museum only a little smaller."[184] Bell worked tirelessly in the intense Baghdad summer heat up until her death in July 1926 to sort, catalog, and properly preserve the artifacts that had been uncovered, even though she had no proper training. She wrote to her father and stepmother about the museum often, complaining about the chaos and heat of sorting through objects.[185] By May of 1926, the small government office museum officially moved to its new location in northern Baghdad and was opened to the public in June.[186] On its first day of

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[183] Letter from Gertrude Bell to Sir Hugh Bell, 20 July 1922, GB/1/1/2/1/18/13, Gertrude Bell Archive, Newcastle University, United Kingdom. https://gertrudebell.ncl.ac.uk/l/gb-1-1-2-1-18-13 The "Law of Excavations" and "Law of Antiquities" are the same piece of legislation.

[184] Letter from Gertrude Bell to Dame Florence Bell, 3 March 1926, GB/1/1/1/1/35/7, Gertrude Bell Archive, Newcastle University, United Kingdom. https://gertrudebell.ncl.ac.uk/l/gb-1-1-1-1-35-7

[185] Letter from Gertrude Bell to Dame Florence Bell, 7 July 1926, GB/1/1/1/1/35/21, Gertrude Bell Archive, Newcastle University, United Kingdom. https://gertrudebell.ncl.ac.uk/l/gb-1-1-1-1-35-21; Letter from Gertrude Bell to Sir Hugh Bell, 7 July 1926, GB/1/1/2/1/22/23, Gertrude Bell Archive, Newcastle University, United Kingdom. https://gertrudebell.ncl.ac.uk/l/gb-1-1-2-1-22-23 These are just two examples of her mentioning the museum in her letters, but it is a popular topic from 1922 to 1926.

[186] Bernhardsson, *Reclaiming a Plundered Past,* 153.

operations, Wednesday, June 16, 1926, the museum at one point had fifteen to twenty visitors in the small building at once.[187]

Bell's control over the archeological fields in Iraq and the Baghdad Archeological Museum gave her immense power, not just in decision making, but in shaping Iraqi history and identity at the birth of the "new" nation. As Director of Antiquities, Bell had the ability to curate what artifacts were on display and which were left in storage. She also designed exhibits and decided how Iraq's history was told to the public. This resulted in a museum that focused on Iraq's history prior to the birth of Islam, partly due to the availability of artifacts at nearby Ur, Kish, and Babylonian sites and partly thanks to Bell's attempt to create a museum that catered to Western audiences.

In his book, *Reclaiming a Plundered Past: Archaeology and Nation Building in Modern Iraq,* Magnus Bernhardsson argues that Bell, surprisingly, did not use her power at the Baghdad Museum to reinforce the legitimacy of Hashemite leadership in Iraq. Instead of creating exhibits that focused on Islamic history, Bell focused on Iraq's pre-Islamic history, with rooms dedicated to ancient and post-Babylonian societies and only one reserved for the Islamic period.[188] He states that "unlike other national museums, it did little to venerate the current government or legitimize the current monarchy."[189] In her spare time, Bell meticulously cleaned, organized, and identified artifacts for the museum, activities that to Bernhardsson suggest that the museum was

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[187] Letter from Gertrude Bell to Dame Florence Bell, 16 June 1926, GB/1/1/1/35/19, Gertrude Bell Archive, Newcastle University, United Kingdom. https://gertrudebell.ncl.ac.uk/l/gb-1-1-1-1-35-19

[188] Bernhardsson, *Reclaiming a Plundered Past,* 156.

[189] Bernhardsson, *Reclaiming a Plundered Past,* 154.

more of a "hobby" that existed separate from her official obligations and was a "leisurely activity."[190]

From her dedication and stress over the museum, detailed in numerous letters in the last months of her life, it appears that the Baghdad Archeological Museum was much more than just a "hobby." Bell worked tirelessly in the steamy Baghdad summer to catalog thousands of items for the museum, as well as secure funds for staff and maintenance. Her position over the museum gave her considerable power over how the history of Iraq was told at an absolutely crucial moment at the birth of the "new" nation and it appears that Bell's decision to include mostly pre-Islamic artifacts was *partially* due to convenience. The findings from nearby pre-Islamic sites were piling up and, as they were the oldest and more fragile items, needed to be cataloged and properly stored with haste. However, underemphasizing the Islamic history of Iraq allowed Bell to overemphasize its Biblical ties and the artifacts that Western visitors would be most intrigued by.

Moreover, Bernhardsson's claim that Bell failed to "venerate" the monarchy put in place by the British is too simplistic of an analysis of what, exactly, would have aided the reinforcement of the newly founded Iraqi government. Considering that the British imposed a monarchy, placed a non-native king at its throne, and privileged an elite, minority Sunni class, placing more emphasis on the pre-Islamic history of Iraq and reinforcing the shared Arab heritage allowed less emphasis to be placed on what was *exclusively* Iraqi. Essentially, if Bell emphasized on the uniquely Iraqi artifacts and history, it could have highlighted just how inauthentic the leadership of Iraq was. Additionally, her attempt to overlook the Islamic history of Iraq allowed her to not

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[190] Bernhardsson, *Reclaiming a Plundered Past,* 154.

draw attention to the glaringly unequal treatment of Shiite Iraqis, as the British favored Sunni Iraqis, believing them to be "more favorable" to British influence and control.[191]

According to Said's theory, Orientalists, like Bell, viewed "the Orient" as an exotic and primitive entity that is at the same time backwards and romanticized.[192] Additionally, Said's theory regarded Orientalists as a sort of surveillant of the Orient; always watching and learning more to be able to better dominate their subjects. From Bell's observations of the inhabitants of the Middle East, she concluded, like many other Orientalists, that most people living there were uncivilized and unable to appreciate "cultured" and proper society. Activities, such as visiting museums, were for civilized audiences, and those living in the Middle East, due to their nature of being "the Orient," were not able to *fully* appreciate, or even understand, museums and the study of history.[193] Bell's decisions regarding the Baghdad Museum and creation of an attraction for Western audiences reinforce her designation as an Orientalist. For Bell, filling up the museum with artifacts that had Biblical and ancient ties made the most sense, as these items were most interesting to Western audiences and therefore were the worthiest of being displayed in the museum.

Bell's control over the Baghdad Archeological Museum allowed her to cultivate a space that told Iraq's history through the Western lens and emphasized its pre-Islamic history. Historians of the Middle East, like Bernhardsson, have argued that Bell's role was merely a hobby and that she did not influence the public's perception of Iraq's history and identity as much as she *could* have, but there were many of her contemporaries who pushed for her removal from her role as Director

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[191] Kedourie, *England and the Middle East*, 210; Dodge, *Inventing Iraq,* 69; Yakoubi, "Gertrude Bell's Perception of Faisal I of Iraq and the Anglo-Arab Romance," 210.
[192] Said, *Orientalism,* 27.
[193] Said, *Orientalism,* 230-1.

of Antiquities. Arab intellectuals, like Sati' al-Husri, believed that British imperialists, like Bell, held too much power over the cultivation of Iraq's history and developing identity.

Resistance from Sati' al-Husri

Sati' al-Husri understood just how essential history and education were to the formation of a national identity and did not want British imperialism to permeate into yet another sphere of the Middle East. Al-Husri was born in August of 1880 to a wealthy Arab family living in Yemen. Al-Husri travelled across the Middle East as a child and was educated in Istanbul, where he graduated from the Istanbul School of Political Sciences in 1900. He later worked as a teacher in the European regions of the Ottoman Empire, in modern-day North Macedonia and Greece. Al-Husri had exposure to European and Turkish strands of nationalism early on, although he was not persuaded by Turkish nationalism and believed it to be too divisive in the ethnically diverse Ottoman Empire.[194] Al-Husri initiated major reforms to Istanbul's public education system and was widely applauded as one of leading educators in the Ottoman Empire. In 1914, just prior to the start of the First World War, he was appointed as Director of Education in the Syrian Province and when the war was over, al-Husri worked briefly under Faisal in Syria until the French established a mandate and Faisal's claim to the throne was invalid. Once the British established a mandate in Iraq and Faisal as the leader, al-Husri moved to Iraq and worked as the Director of General Education from 1920 to 1927.

Al-Husri held various other positions in the Iraqi and later Syrian governments until his death in 1968, but his impact on education and Arab nationalism is profound. While working as a teacher in the Balkans, al-Husri was exposed to many different theories of nationalism at a

[194] L.M. Kenny, "Sati' al- Husri's Views on Arab Nationalism," *Middle East Journal* 17 (1963): 232.

pivotal moment in the formation of nationalism as a concept and the birth of many nations. While in Istanbul, he initially sympathized with the Young Turks, but did not to align himself with the movement, as he believed that the Turkish nationalist movement was not inclusive enough to generate support across Ottoman territories.[195] Instead, al-Husri argued that the first step toward any semblance of unity in the Ottoman Empire (and across the Middle East) resided in the recognition of a shared *Arab* identity. This Arab nationalism was rooted in a shared history and language, which he believed were the most essential aspects to the creation of a nation. However, al-Husri recognized that there were many different regions and dialects that stood in the way to true Arab unity, an issue he dealt with personally as a native Turkish speaker with a heavy accent.[196] To combat this language barrier, and in an attempt to standardize Arabic, al-Husri created the first modern Arabic language textbook that was used in public schools across Iraq while he was Director of Education. Through this push of a standardized Arabic language and history, al-Husri promoted teachings that he believed would help nurture Arab nationalism in Iraqi schools.

Al-Husri pushed against the need to tie Arab identity with Islam and argued that doing so was not enough to unify Arabs across the Middle East. He explained that the shared history and language of Arabs preceded their Islamic heritage and without this shared identity of being Arab, there would not be a shared Islamic identity or nation.[197] Due to these convictions, al-Husri's perspective on nationalism in the Middle East was not favorable to the formation of regional national identities, like with the Young Turks movement and in Iraq. According to al-Husri's

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[195] Kenny, "Sati' al- Husri's Views on Arab Nationalism," 250.
[196] Kenny, "Sati' al- Husri's Views on Arab Nationalism," 230; Tsupokyemla, "Sati' al-Husri's Contribution on Arab Nationalism," *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress* 75 (2014): 977.
[197] Bernhardsson, "Gertrude Bell and the Antiquities Law of Iraq," 246.

theory, Arabs across the Middle East needed to unite against European imperialism and Arab nationalism needed to rely on a strong Arab identity that transcended regional loyalties. His establishment of Arabic as the standard language in Iraqi education helped create this sense of unity that he believed would lead to a shared Arab, not Iraqi, identity across Iraq. Al-Husri used these same tactics later in Syria, where he created curriculum that replaced French education and influences with an Arab nationalist model in 1944.[198] Al-Husri was a staunch supporter of education and its role in the formation of a transnational Arab identity.

One might conclude that, on the surface, Sati' al-Husri could be favorable to Gertrude Bell's interpretation of Iraqi history at the Baghdad Archeological Museum. According to al-Husri, the most favorable conditions for the strengthening of an Arab nation were not reliant on a shared Islamic identity, but instead focusing on Arab heritage. Bell's interpretation at the museum did just that by highlighting the pre-Islamic history and downplaying the importance of Iraq's Islamic archeology. However, al-Husri was not favorable towards Western influence in the Arab world and viewed Bell as just another token of the British Empire's control over Iraq. Additionally, Bell allowed for a great number of artifacts to leave the country and be placed in museums around the world, mostly in Europe. Al-Husri's theory of Arab nationalism relied on a shared history, and the education of the public through the museum would be difficult if a great number of artifacts were not present.

While drafting the Law of Antiquities, Bell approached al-Husri for his opinion and, according to al-Husri, she was "extremely annoyed" by his reservations. Al-Husri supported an archeology policy that would not permit any artifacts to leave the country and all of the findings,

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[198] Kenny, "Sati' al- Husri's Views on Arab Nationalism," 232-33.

even from foreign archeologists, would belong to the state.[199] In a letter to Winston Churchill, Percy Cox explained that Bell's law was modeled after the British laws in the mandate for Palestine, but that the policy pushed by al-Husri modeled laws in the Ottoman Empire, which would not be favorable to the British.[200] Once Faisal had appointed Bell as the Director of Antiquities, she insisted that the Department of Antiquities be moved to a different ministry from its original home in the Ministry of Education, where al-Husri was Assistant Minister.[201] After Bell's death in 1926, two others served as directors of the Baghdad Archeological Museum, until 1934 when al-Husri served as Director of Antiquities and the Baghdad Museum until his exile from Iraq in 1941.

Historians that have written on Iraq's archeology during the mandate mostly agree that the Baghdad Museum had a distinctly British nature, mostly thanks to Bell's influence. Bernhardsson argues that under al-Husri's leadership from 1934 to 1941 the essence of Iraqi archeology changed to focus more on artifacts from Iraq's Islamic period, but he fails to provide substantial, if any, evidence that al-Husri enforced a more Islamic perspective at the Baghdad Archeological Museum.[202] In fact, according to Bernhardsson, under al-Husri, Room V, which had housed the Islamic period items shifted to housing items from the Sassanian period in 1937.[203] Under al-Husri, a separate museum was founded, just for Iraq's Islamic history and the Baghdad Archeological Museum became a space just for Iraq's pre-Islamic history, further isolating religion from the museum.

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[199] Bernhardsson, *Reclaiming a Plundered Past,* 121.
[200] Report on the Administration of Iraq for the period April 1923-December 1924, FO 371/9004, Foreign Office Records, the National Archives of the UK, London.
[201] Baram, "A Case of Imported Identity," 282.
[202] Bernhardsson, *Reclaiming a Plundered Past,* 163.
[203] Bernhardsson, *Reclaiming a Plundered Past,* 202.

If one considers Bell's dedication, even if inadvertent, to omitting Iraq's Islamic history and al-Husri's rejection of religion as a unifying agent in Arab nationalism, then a better interpretation of the Baghdad Archeological Museum would identify it as a British institution that promoted Arab nationalism rooted in the shared history and language, rather than a British institution that promoted Iraqi nationalism rooted in any sort of religious unity. For Bell, this decision was based on the relative abundance of ancient artifacts as well as her desire to appeal to Western visitors and archeologists by creating a "rather British" museum that did not undermine the political legitimacy of the Iraqi monarchy. For al-Husri, the decision to distance the Baghdad Museum from Iraq's Islamic period was an extension of Bell's tactics, even if he did not agree with her control over Iraq's archeological sphere, and purposefully portrayed the history of Iraq without the presence of religion to illuminate the shared Arab heritage and language.

Connecting the Ancient and the Contemporary

If Bell, other British Political Officers, and even Sati' al-Husri and Faisal, supported and cultivated Iraqi nationalism, it would have undermined their own political power and legitimacy. Calling too much attention to the right of Iraqis to govern themselves completely challenged the political power of the colonial administration, especially Faisal's position as king and al-Husri's various governmental roles, as his family's ancestry resided in Syria, not Iraq. Combined, and alongside growing resentment towards colonial rule, the actions of Bell and al-Husri influenced the nature of early Iraqi nationalism towards a version that did not emphasize religious unity, but rather a shared pre-Islamic heritage, resulting in a seemingly secular national identity that relied on the skewed history of Iraq highlighted in the Baghdad Archeology Museum.

Bell's antiquities law remained in place until 1935, but the restrictions placed on foreign archeologists were rarely enforced. It also appeared that many Iraqi government officials were uninterested in enforcing any regulations.[204] That is, until the mid-1930s when growing public interest in Iraq's archeological scene sparked the need for change. As Director of Antiquities, al-Husri proposed a policy that would protect Iraq's archeological sites and allow more findings to be retained by the Iraqi government. As the public became more interested in Iraq's archeology, so did the demand for knowledge on Iraq's history. Al-Husri's Arab nationalist push in the education system came to an end, as his control over the department did, and what replaced it was an interest in Iraq's ties to ancient Mesopotamia and the need to establish its heritage as decidedly different than just simply "Arab."

In their article, "A Case of Imported Identity: The Modernizing Secular Ruling Elites of Iraq and the concept of Mesopotamian-Inspired Territorial Nationalism," Amatzia Baram explains that Al-Husri's replacement as Director of Education, Sami Shawkat, was an ultra-nationalist, inspired by Italian fascism to create a story of Iraqi heritage that was different than the Arab nationalist approach.[205] As head of education, Shawkat pushed this unique perspective that engrained in Iraqis that they were not just Arab, but that they were direct decedents of the ancient Mesopotamians. The creation of this pre-Islamic myth helped unite Iraqis under a new identity that transcended religious sects and called upon the growing popularity of archeology, but also set them apart from other Arabs. This new Iraqi nationalism was different from what Bell and al-Husri pushed, but was nevertheless inspired by their work at the museum. Both versions called upon a pre-Islamic identity that still heavily relied on archeological evidence, but this "new"

[204] Baram, "A Case of Imported Identity," 290-3.
[205] Baram, "A Case of Imported Identity," 294.

Iraqi nationalism established a unique history that *only* Iraqis could claim, which was cause for concern for the still-in-place British-imposed monarchy under Faisal's son, Ghazi.

After the death of King Ghazi in 1939, leadership over Iraq was fraught with political instability, coups, and British military occupation. After an Iraqi nationalist coup d'état placed Rashid Ali al-Gaylani in leadership in April 1941, British forces immediately intervened in Iraq in May 1941 concerned over its access to oil supplies.[206] The British swiftly quieted the political unrest with extensive bombing campaigns, as it had previously, but remained in the country until after the Second World War had ended. The official British occupation of Iraq ended in October 1947, but British influence persisted until 1958 through the Anglo-Iraqi Oil Company and Iraq experienced continued political unrest culminating in the 1958 July Revolution. The July Revolution of 1958 was a direct result of decreasing approval of Western influences and increasing popularity of socialism and pan-Arab nationalism of the Ba'th party. Disillusioned with the British-aligned Hashemite government under King Faisal II and floundering economically, many in Iraq desired change in leadership. Change came in the form of a military coup on July 14, 1958 under the leadership of Abd al-Karim Qasim, an Iraqi nationalist and socialist, who helped establish the Republic of Iraq.

The Ba'thist party made its emergence in Iraq in 1951 and continued to gain popularity in throughout the twentieth century. The foundational ideology behind the Ba'thist movement was the need for a "rebirth" in the wake of European imperialism's occupation and influence across the Middle East. The party had socialist ties and originated in Syria in 1947 as response to the continuing French colonial influence. Behind the Ba'thist's desire for liberation was the

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[206] Majid Khadduri, "General Nūrī's Flirtations with the Axis Powers," *Middle East Journal* 16, no. 3 (1962): 328.

recognized need for a unified front against Western influence. This unified front relied heavily on Arab nationalism and socialist ideas that were distinctly antithetical to Western ideologies. Clinging to socialist ideas gave the Ba'thist movement distance from the capitalist West and made it clear that the region would not allow Western, capitalist hegemony any longer.[207]

The Ba'thist movement in Iraq emerged in 1951 and broke off from its origins in Syria by 1966 in favor of a uniquely Iraqi Ba'thist Party that highlighted the Mesopotamian myth of Iraqi identity in a shift away from its Pan-Arab origins. By clinging to the skewed history promoted by Bell and al-Husri at the Baghdad Archeology Museum, the Iraqi Ba'thist Party created a myth of Iraqi identity that set Iraqis apart from other Arabs by highlighting Iraq's pre-Islamic history, specifically the Mesopotamian connection. The birth of a distinctly Iraqi national identity lies here, where the ancient and the contemporary connect. The best example of this connection to the Mesopotamian myth is seen in Saddam Hussein's attitudes regarding history and his ancestorial claims.

Saddam Hussein was born in April 1937 and from a young age was heavily involved in politics by joining the Pan-Arab Ba'th Party in 1957 at the age of twenty. Almost immediately after joining the party, the July 1958 Revolution overthrew Faisal II and Hussein quickly became a very involved member by participating in an assassination attempt against Abd al-Karim Qasim. Hussein's powerful influence can first be seen in 1966 when he helped establish an Iraqi Ba'thist Party that was separate from the original Syrian Ba'thist party. He quickly rose in power, first serving as the Vice President of Iraq, under Ahmed Hassan al-Bakr from 1968 to 1979, and then as President of Iraq from 1979 until his death in 2003. Hussein's tenure as the

[207] John F. Devlin, "The Baath Party: Rise and Metamorphosis," *The American Historical Review* 96, no. 5 (1991): 1404.

President of Iraq was fraught with violence, authoritarianism, and increasing tensions with the West and Iraq's neighbors, but the Ba'th Party also promoted religious tolerance. One of Saddam Hussein's most powerful weapons was the insistence that Iraq was more than just an Islamic or Arab nation, but that it had a special connection to ancient Mesopotamia.[208]

To convey this uniquely Iraqi identity, Hussein made several public claims to the ancient civilizations of the Fertile Crescent. In a speech to the Iraqi public, Hussein emphasized this uniqueness by claiming that well before Islam, the "first" Iraqis established Hammurabi's laws which "set an example to others" that they were "the cradle of world civilizations."[209] Hussein was adamant that Iraq was unique from other Arab countries and sought to cultivate this ancient identity by "rebuilding" Babylon and even likening himself to King Nebuchadnezzar. This self-made analogy can be seen in commemorative medals from 1987 that show King Nebuchadnezzar and Saddam Hussein alongside each other with some cuneiform-esque writing along the edges.[210] There are countless murals commissioned by Hussein that depict him positioned beside ancient leaders, in the ruins of ancient Babylon, or even atop a horse drawn chariot, shooting down the helicopters of Western powers with a bow and arrow.[211]

The message is certainly clear: Saddam Hussein positioned himself beside Iraq's pre-Islamic history to grant his actions legitimacy. When Hussein chose to invade Iran in 1980, he sought to rebuild Babylon, a pre-Islamic and non-Arab city, as Iraqi nationalism was both pre-Islamic in nature and not *confined* by Pan-Arab nationalism. These same sentiments can be seen in Bell and

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[208] Judith S. Yaphe, "Iraq Before and After Saddam," *Current History* 102, no. 660 (2003): 7–12.
[209] Saddam Hussein, 17 February 1979, quoted in Baram, "A Case of Imported Identity," 312.
[210] Saddam Hussein medal, Money and Medals Department, The British Museum, https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/C_2008-4171-1
[211] Kanan Makiya, *The Monument: Art and Vulgarity in Saddam Hussein's Iraq* (London: I. B. Tauris & Company, 2003), 13.

al-Husri's influence at the Baghdad Archeological Museum and their sway in early Iraqi nationalism. Hussein clung to a secular, uniquely Mesopotamian form of Iraqi nationalism, which can be very clearly seen in the remnants of his rule and the speeches he left behind.

Conclusion

The power Gertrude Bell held as Director of Antiquities and the Baghdad Archeological Museum may not have been as noticeable as her influence in the early mandate period, but it is worth emphasizing. Her position as an Orientalist was made most clear through her decision to allow many artifacts to leave the country and in designing the Baghdad Museum to be an institution that catered to Western audiences and, most importantly, highlighted Iraq's pre-Islamic history, a perspective carried on by Sati' al-Husri. Together, the two held a powerful position in the birth of a uniquely Iraqi nationalism that inspired secular nationalist movements. Since the US invasion of Iraq in 2003, the Baghdad Archeological Museum, now referred to as the Iraq Museum, briefly experienced looting and frequent closures for safety. Today, the museum is under construction to expand and is still making attempts to recover artifacts that were stolen in 2003. Bell's role in the foundation of the Baghdad Archeological Museum was commemorated with a brass plaque in 1927. The Baghdad Museum has changed significantly since its creation in 1926, but this plaque and Bell's impact remain. The plaque reads:

> Gertrude Bell, whose memory the Arabs will ever hold in reverence and affection, created this Museum in 1923 being then Honorary Director of Antiquities for Iraq. With wonderful knowledge and devotion, she assembled the most precious objects in it and through the heat of the summer worked on them until the day of her death on 12 July 1926.
> King Faisal and the Government of Iraq in gratitude for her great deeds in this country, have ordered that the principal wing shall bear her name.
> And with their permission, her friends have erected this tablet.[212]

[212] Memorial to the late Miss Gertrude Bell, 1927, CO 730/124/2, Colonial Office Records, the National Archives of the UK London.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

The First World War prompted questions of sovereignty and brought with it nationalist movements across the globe. As war with Germany and the Ottoman Empire died out, Britain attempted to maintain its control over the Middle East. Secret agreements and numerous treaties allowed Britain to retain its influence over the region long after the war. The San Remo Conference of 1920 confirmed Britain's long-lasting influence in Iraq in the form of a mandate from the League of Nations. As stipulated in the League of Nations Covenant, it was the responsibility of Britain to provide administrative advice and assistance that would help the Mandate for Mesopotamia transform into a self-governing and self-sufficient state. Much to the chagrin of the British, the local population of Iraq did not take well to this prolonged foreign interference, and anti-British movements in the region gained momentum and threatened the security of the political officers in the region and state-building efforts.

Throughout their involvement in the Middle East, the British sought out advice from Orientalists in order to better understand and dominate Iraq. Gertrude Bell was but one of the many political officers the British utilized in this endeavor. Bell advised the British government through her reports on the region and its people. Several British governmental offices, like the War Office and Arab Bureau, requested these reports to inform their decisions concerning the Middle East. Bell's advice and Orientalist perspective shaped British policymaking and helped the British exploit and influence Iraq. Despite the formal independence granted in 1932, Iraq remained under Western economic and political influence in the years after the mandate thanks, in part, to the advice of Orientalists, like Bell.

Chapter Two of this thesis details how the British government sought out the advice of Bell and shaped the mandate system to be a more advantageous endeavor for themselves. Britain

was no stranger to occupying lands that did not belong to it and reaping the benefits of their resources, most often with little concern over domestic opinion or input. In the early twentieth century, this practice was taken to the Middle East in search of oil and laying claim to the lands of the recently fallen Ottoman Empire. Establishing control over Iraq in the form of a mandate allowed Britain to maintain and expand its control over Iraq's resources. British political officers used its dominance over the League of Nations to manipulate the mandate system, which despite its guidelines, became an unchecked force of empire thanks to the lack of oversight for mandatory powers, vague definitions, and general misuse of power. Britain's desire to benefit economically from its position in Iraq calls into question the true goals of the mandate system and considering its domination over the League of Nations, Britain made the mandate system an advantageous endeavor for itself. This is evident from Bell's advice concerning the domination of railroads, her acquisition of territory and artifacts as reward for the war, and her insistence on Britain's right to Iraq's resources and markets all just prior to and in the beginning years of the mandate for Iraq.

Chapter Three examines the issue of minority rights in the mandate system. According to the guidelines set out by the League of Nations, the Kurdish requests for political autonomy and assistance in the creation of a states, independent from Iraq, were to be acknowledged and honored by the British. Bell and others deemed that the Kurds were not unified enough to be granted this opportunity. The evidence used by Bell to assert this opinion was tainted by her own opinions concerning the violent nature of the Kurds and their lack of unity. Bell advised the British to retain Kurdish lands in the state of Iraq in order to bolster the number of Sunni Muslims present in the Shia-majority state and provide more support for the Hashemite government they had installed. Despite many powerful opponents of this idea and the guidelines

from the League of Nations, the region was ultimately included in the state created by the British. The decisions concerning the borders of Iraq have resulted in conflict that continues to this day, over one hundred years later. These struggles over sovereignty and political autonomy continue in the twenty-first century with continued Kurdish uprisings and the Mosul region is disputed territory, thanks in large part to the decisions made by the British under advice from Orientalists like Gertrude Bell.

Chapter Four highlights Bell's influence as Director of Antiquities and in establishing the Baghdad Archeological Museum. The power Bell held as Director of Antiquities and the Baghdad Archeological Museum may not have been as noticeable as her influence in the early mandate period, but it is worth emphasizing. Her position as an Orientalist was made most clear through her decision to allow many artifacts to leave the country and in designing the Baghdad Museum to be an institution that catered to Western audiences and, most importantly, highlighted Iraq's pre-Islamic history, a perspective carried on by Sati' al-Husri. Together, the two held a powerful position in the birth of a uniquely Iraqi nationalism that inspired secular nationalist movements, such as the Ba'thists and Saddam Hussein.

In short, this thesis provides evidence that the British sought out advice from Orientalists, like Gertrude Bell, in order to learn more about the object of their exploitation: Iraq. Bell is one of the best examples of an Orientalist, but this analytical perspective is rarely used by historians to examine her role in policymaking during the mandate period. Bell posed as an agent of empire *and* a friend of the Orient. She held extensive knowledge of the Middle East that she offered up to the British to aid in the domination of the very people that she claimed a special connection with. Despite this, Bell is only briefly quoted in Said's foundational text and mentioned in passing in favor of more dramatic male actors, such as TE Lawrence and Arthur Balfour.

There are certainly limitations to the research within this thesis. Most important is the lack of sources from Iraqi authors or those written in Arabic. The works of non-Western scholars, like Elie Kedourie and Hanna Batatu, do make an appearance in this research. These scholars relied on both English and Arabic sources for their research, providing a well-rounded perspective on this history. This research cannot utilize Arabic sources simply because of language barriers. It is important to note that this research relies heavily on Bell's writings, especially her governmental presence, which are written in English. Future research on Bell and the Iraq mandate should rely on sources in both English and Arabic to obtain a more balanced history. Additionally, future research on Bell will, ideally, not rely on analytical lenses that perpetuate societal expectations of gender, but instead acknowledge that Bell's role in the Iraq mandate allowed her to subvert gender roles and take on a position of power as an agent of empire.

This thesis combats this gendered bias and lack of critical analysis by illuminating Bell's role as an agent of empire through her official governmental documents, rather than relying solely on personal diaries and writings. Her Orientalist worldview is shown through her 1917 reports and the advice she gave the British government concerning economic endeavors, Hashemite rule, and Iraqi archeology. Many have overemphasized her gender and used it as a defense for speculative lines of inquiry and troubling analyses of her life and work. Throughout her life, Bell appeared to be in constant conflict with her gender. Enforced societal expectations affected way she presented herself, the reach and weight of her expertise, and her professional relationships with other political officers. Even in her death, the very fact that Gertrude Bell was born a woman continues to haunt her and the discussions of her legacy, in both positive and negative ways.

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