



IRAQ

Relations between Iran and Mesopotamia, the core region of present-day Iraq, can be traced back to the early waves of the westward migration of Iranian tribes in the middle of the 2nd millennium B.C.E. when the Iranian peoples came under the cultural influence of ancient Mesopotamia. With formation of the Median empire and foundation of its capital at Ecbatana (q.v.) in the 8th century B.C.E. and the defeat and the fall of the Assyrian empire in the 6th century B.C.E. the nature of these relations changed. The Achaemenids (q.v.) began to control all of Mesopotamia with Cyrus's conquest of Babylon (q.v.) in the 6th century B.C.E. This situation continued under the Arsacid and Sasanid dynasties for over 900 years, when they chose Ctesiphon, in the heart of Mesopotamia, as their capital.

The southern part of Mesopotamia, known in the early Islamic period as *del-e Irānšahr* (lit. "the heart of the kingdom of Iran"), served as the central province of the Sasanian empire as well as that of the 'Abbasid caliphate. As such, it played a significant part in the transmission of administrative and cultural elements from Sasanian Iran to the Islamic world (see Moḥammad Moḥammadi Malāyeri, *Tāriḵ wa farhang-e Irān dar dawrān-e enteqāl az 'aṣr-e Sāsāni be 'aṣr-e Eslāmi* ["Iranian history and culture in its transitional period from the Sasanian era to the Islamic period"], 5 vols., Tehran, 1993, 1996, 2000, 2001, 2003; E. Yarshater, "The Persian Presence in the Islamic World," in R. Hovannesian and G. Sabagh, eds., *The Persian Presence in Islamic World*, Cambridge, 1998, pp. 4-125). The "Persian Presence" in Mesopotamia continued until the era of the Safavids, as Persian remained the language of

most of the sedentary people as well as that of the chancery until the 15th century and thereafter, as attested by Ḥāfeẓ-e Abru (d. 1430) who said, “The majority of inhabitants of Iraq know Persian and Arabic, and from the time of domination of Turkic people the Turkish language has also found currency: as the city people and those engaged in trade and crafts are Persophone, the Bedouins are Arabophone, and the governing classes are Turkophone. But, all three peoples (*qawms*) know each other’s languages due to the mixture and amalgamation” (*eḳtelāṭ*; see Ḥāfeẓ-e Abru, *Joḡrāfiā* II, pp. 45-46). See also [AYVĀN-E KESRĀ](#) (The palace of Khosrow).

- i. In the late Sasanid and early Islamic eras.
- ii. From the ‘Abbasids to the Mongols. See [BAGHDAD](#).
- iii. From the Mongols to the Safavids.
- iv. In the Safavid period.
- v. From the Afsharids to the end of the Qajars.
- vi. The Pahlavi period, 1921-79.
- vii. Iran-Iraq War.
- viii. The Shi‘ite shrine cities of Iraq. See [‘ATABĀT](#).
- ix. Iranian community in Iraq. See [DIASPORA](#) vi.
- x. Shi‘ites of Iraq.
- xi. Shi‘ite seminaries in Iraq.
- xii. Persian schools in Iraq.
- xiii. Persian newspapers in Iraq.