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Building for Oil: Corporate Colonialism, Nationalism and Urban Modernity
in Ahmadi, 1946-1992

By
Reem IR Alissa

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
in
Architecture
in the
Graduate Division
of the
University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:
Professor Nezar AlSayyad, Chair
Professor Grieg Crysler
Professor Teresa Caldeira

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Abstract

Building for Oil: Corporate Colonialism, Nationalism and Urban Modernity in Ahmadi, 1946-1992

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Doctor of Philosophy in Architecture

University of California, Berkeley

Professor Nezar AlSayyad, Chair

Located at the intersection of oil and space, this dissertation highlights the role of oil as an agent of political, social and cultural change at the level of the everyday urban experience by introducing the oil company town as a modern architectural and urban planning prototype that has been largely neglected in the Middle East. Using the Kuwait Oil Company (KOC) town of Ahmadi as a case in point this article offers a new history of oil, architecture and urbanism in Kuwait since 1946. Apart from oil dictating Ahmadi's location and reason for being various actors were complicit in the creation and playing out of Ahmadi's urban modernity: British KOC officials, the company's architectural firm Wilson Mason & Partners, nationalism, the process of Kuwaitization, Ahmadi's architecture and urbanism, and, especially, the town's residents. I argue that Ahmadi's colonial modernity which was initially targeted at the expatriate employees of the company during the 1950s, was later adopted by KOC's Kuwaiti employees after the country's independence in 1961, and in turn mediated a drastically new lifestyle, or urban modernity, during the 1960s and 1970s. The memory of this urban modernity coupled with its gradual erosion ever since have rendered Ahmadi a nostalgic city in the nation's collective imagination.

To Sheikha, Issa,
Wahaby and Lulu

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Introduction

Oil, Architecture and Urbanism

Oil's simplicity as a three-letter word is deceptive in relation to the substantial amount of world suffering its procurement has generated as profusely illustrated across various academic disciplines, popular and news media outlets. Arguably the most precious natural resource since the seventeenth century until today, it remains the target of imperial powers with their instigation of various wars under the pretext of serving the greater good when in fact it is for this monetarily quantifiable good. Oil's hold on imperial power has never been so openly exposed as it has within the context of the ongoing Arab Spring where indigenous populations fight for their basic human rights such as freedom, justice and dignity as imperial powers struggle to maintain their foothold in this oil-rich region with dire efforts to sustain their compliant oppressive or quasi-benevolent dictators. The politics of oil, especially in the context of the Middle East, has been critically addressed in numerous academic disciplines such as history, economics, geography, political science and anthropology, however, the spatial expression of the entanglement of oil with post/colonialism or imperialism remains conspicuously absent from architecture and urbanism.

This dissertation brings to light one of the earliest spatial expressions of oil as evidenced in the form of the company town. Located at the heart of the Middle East oil empire, it uses the context of Kuwait as a case in point and explores how the discovery of oil and the urgency of its exploitation on the part of the Kuwait Oil Company (KOC) necessitated the building of an elaborate industrial infrastructure - a key element of which was the company town of Ahmadi. As a result Ahmadi's architecture and urbanism became the primary site where the Kuwaiti employees of the company experienced urban modernity in the 1960s and 1970s. In introducing the company town as a modern architectural and urban prototype this dissertation crosses the boundaries of the oil city in the Persian Gulf as a spatially bound entity which developed out of pre-oil urban sites. In doing so it starts to fill an evident gap in the study of oil architecture and urbanism in the region.

Unearthing a Missing Link in Oil Urbanism

Recent literature concerned with the unprecedented urban development and modernization of oil-rich Arab Gulf states mainly concerns itself with the city proper.¹ As such it fails to acknowledge that in this regional context modernization first occurred in oil company towns and imperial powers played an influential role in their architectural and urban development. This dissertation unearths the oil company town as a distinctive architectural and urban typology that until now has been at the periphery of architecture and urbanism.

The company town is the primary site and missing link in recent literature concerned with urban modernity in the oil cities of the Persian Gulf. The discovery of oil in Kuwait has decisively impacted the political, economic, social, cultural and built landscape. Literature regarding these changes signifies the numerous attempts of scholars across various disciplines to theorize such major societal and environmental transformations. These narratives tend to periodize timeframes affected by oil into pre-oil, on the one hand, and post-oil on the other.² This dichotomous approach not only superficially bifurcates time into one that was once pre-oil and then abruptly became post-oil, but it also dismisses the complex interstitial linkages that allowed for these transformations in the first place. These interstices are highlighted here by moving beyond the Gulf city as product of oil wealth to focus on the company town as *process* of oil wealth.

A majority of the literature concerned with the oil-fueled development of the Gulf States primarily relies on the paradigm of rentier state theory. A rentier state is one that receives proceeds from leasing or renting its land to oil companies, hence, the income received is not generated by the productive operations of the national economy. Such a state's possession of large surpluses of capital led to its increased interference in the economy and the manipulation of welfare practices that maintain the population's acquiescence under existing autocratic rule.³ Rentier state theory, for the most part, remains removed from the grounded experience in these States because of its restriction to the macroeconomic level. Bypassing the dominant discourse of rentier state theory, the attention here shifts to a new discourse of oil as an agent of political, social and cultural change at the level of the everyday urban experience.

The dialectical relationship between oil, architecture and urbanism at the moment and site of discovery has surprisingly garnered almost no scholarly attention in the fields of Architecture and urbanism. Although oil has conventionally been regarded as fueling the unprecedented urban development and modernization of its respective major cities, the oil company town remains conspicuously absent. In the case of Kuwait City, in 1964 Saba Shiber published a detailed critical account of its urbanization as the old vernacular town was razed for a modern metropolis.⁴ Likewise, more recently in 2004, Yasser Elsheshtawy wrote about the recent dramatic proliferation of Dubai's ostentatious architecture and urbanism with its incumbent social implications.⁵ However these perspectives fail to acknowledge that in oil-fueled entities urban modernity first occurred in oil company towns with imperial powers, multi-national corporations and foreign architects playing an influential role in their architectural and urban development.

One of the earliest scholarly works that focuses on the oil industry's impact on the Arab Gulf and its effect on population and distribution patterns is by labor experts Ian Seccombe and Richard Lawless.⁶ Despite its excavation of a new scholarly arena regarding oil and settlement patterns, the study remains restricted by its policy-oriented labor specialization causing an unfortunate lack in any formal or spatial analysis. Geographer Kaveh Ehsani⁷ and art historian Mark Crinson,⁸ have both contributed significantly regarding the Anglo-Persian Oil Company town of Abadan in Iran and its modernizing role. Historian Nathan Citino critically examines the export of American

values to societies outside North America viewed as “traditional” through the building of the Arabian American Oil Company (ARAMCO) enclave in Saudi Arabia.⁹ Another more critical look at ARAMCO is by political scientist, Robert Vitalis, in which he discusses the export of paternalism or welfare work in the form of housing benefits and social services on the one hand, and racism in the form of the Jim Crow system on the other, as key in keeping labor costs down and defeating efforts of unionization.¹⁰ The latest relevant publication is by historian Miguel Tinker Salas who looks at oil camps or residential communities in Venezuela, also with US-exported ideologies and forms of architecture and urbanism, as sites that helped frame the power relationships between the foreign companies and the evolving nation-state.¹¹ These are the few and recent groundbreaking contributions to the specialization of oil company towns and camps. However, since they largely come from disciplinary perspectives outside the realm of architectural and urban history, they therefore (with the exception of the articles by Ehsani and Crinson) lack the necessary spatial analysis characteristic of the fields of architecture and urbanism.

Finally an important contribution is Margaret Crawford’s singular architectural history of the life and death of the “new” American company town.¹² Although an undeniably useful source to draw from, Crawford discusses company towns of various industries except that of oil. And unlike the “new” American company town which saw its end in 1929, oil company towns still continue to exist. Therefore, from within the fields of architecture and urbanism, this dissertation addresses the need for more detailed case studies on oil company architecture and planning as exported forms of urbanism and their profound impact on social and cultural change.

Challenges and Possibilities in the Field

The primary sources relied upon fall under two major categories: archival and ethnographic. Uncovering the urban history of Ahmadi in the field and on the ground both in Kuwait and at the KOC headquarters themselves proved to be quite challenging. The most beneficial historic archive in Kuwait was the Center for Research and Studies on Kuwait (CRSK) and this is mostly due to the effort of individuals such as Dr. Abdullah Al-Ghunaim who is the director of the center. Despite this enormous resource on Kuwait’s history, it had no substantial sources on either the KOC or Ahmadi both of which played key roles in the making of the modern nation of Kuwait. Their only holdings that mentioned the KOC or Ahmadi were actually volumes of original archival material acquired and assembled by various British political organizations which covered events in Kuwait that took place when it was under British control. Otherwise most of its Arabic language holdings tend to focus primarily on Kuwait as a city and nation, and lack any critical edge as they celebrate almost every aspect of Kuwait. This is unfortunately a characteristic that is shared by research institutions in the Persian Gulf. This decades-long tradition of the commendation of such states is used as a strategy to defend and maintain the political, economic and social status quo and desist from any reforms that might compromise them. This is in no way meant to disparage institutions such as the CRSK, to

the contrary it arguably remains one of the most important research centers in Kuwait. Instead it is meant to bring forth a serious dilemma that outstanding academics such as Dr. Al-Ghunaim, as well as many critically inclined scholars in the region face, which is how to maintain a critical edge without risking the existence of the research institution - an existence which is controlled by the state.

The Publication Relations and Information Department of KOC located in the heart of Ahmadi purported to hold archival material on the history of the town. The “Store Room” there indeed housed a great amount of archival material, however as is the case in almost all information “Store Rooms” in Kuwait, it was not organized or indexed in any researchable format, nor was it protected from the desert dust that petulantly penetrates every building in Kuwait. Hence the attempt to sift through it was impractical given the amount of time required to do so. Despite this major setback, largely thanks to another individual effort, this time by Abdulrahman AlShammari, the Department’s Team Leader, took it upon himself to safeguard original bound volumes of KOC’s English-language magazine titled *The Kuwaiti* published in 1948, and its Arabic-language sister magazine titled *Al-Kuwayti* published in 1961, by locking them in his office cabinet. These magazine volumes form a substantial part of the primary evidence used in this dissertation.

KOC’s Publication Relations and Information Department also had a seemingly endless archive of digitized historic photographs. Unfortunately, the lack of any proper indexing made searching them a futile exercise especially since I was not allowed to search them myself but instead had to tell the technician what I was looking for. This, of course, is something a researcher does not know at the start of any project. Knowing that KOC was once partly owned by British Petroleum (BP) since its incorporation in 1934 until the selling of its shares in 1975, pointed towards the BP archive as a source. The BP office in Kuwait and the BP Archive at the University of Warwick in the UK also held KOC’s digitized historic photographs, but they were indexed and easily searchable and I was free to undergo the search myself. The historic records held at the BP Kuwait office were limited however to photographs, hence I found my research path transporting me to the heart of Empire, the United Kingdom. Contrary to my initial assumption of finding sources in Kuwait, it was at the University of Warwick in the UK where an abundance of sources related to the history of Ahmadi was housed.

The BP Archive in the UK also housed a profuse range of sources used in this dissertation such as KOC Board meeting minutes, company memoranda and dispatches, various development reports, development policies, company policies, maps and diagrams, annual reports and other countless types of primary evidence. This range of primary sources, the company magazines and the historic photographs were crucial in uncovering the architectural and urban history of Ahmadi as it was built over the years. These sources were heavily biased and written from certain perspectives with specific agendas and therefore a diligent degree of vigilance was required in their analysis. Here, as Brenda Yeoh mentions a “rereading” of the sources written by a privileged class (British KOC officials) was in order to help determine the silent voices of the large underprivileged classes (Indian, Pakistani and Arab KOC workers).¹³ Similarly as KOC

mouthpieces the company magazines had to be scrutinized for the verbal and graphic information they displayed. And lastly, through visual analysis the historic photographs served indispensable as primary evidence which had their own stories to tell. All of the historic photographs held at the BP archive were company-sponsored and therefore clearly biased. The fact that the photographs were taken by professionals hired by the KOC therefore elucidates much about the company's mindset as they revealed such things as: what the company was interested in visually documenting, for whom the photographs were intended, and for what purposes.¹⁴

The ethnographic appears in the form of oral histories which were recorded as open-ended interviews with former and current Ahmadi employees, residents and company officials. With the gradual nationalization of KOC and Ahmadi's diminishing expatriate population over the years, most of those interviewed were Kuwaiti. Partly due to generational survival, only a few of those interviewed consisted of the earliest Kuwaiti workers in the company. Most of the interviewees were newly educated Kuwaiti's who's tenure at the KOC coincided with the company's efforts of Kuwaitization which involved the replacement of expatriates at senior positions in the company who lived in privileged sections of the town with these Kuwaitis. Those who were interviewed were contacts suggested by current KOC employees and each interviewee lead to another new contact and although this system of selection had a certain degree of logic, it was quite random. This ethnographic inclusion of interviews conducted with the indigenous population of Ahmadi adds a depth to the research that would have otherwise been impossible by primarily relying on archival material. Most importantly, it brings forth some of Ahmadi's situated voices with their discussions of the everyday urban experience as it took place on the ground.

Introducing Ahmadi

Located adjacent to Kuwait's Burgan Oil field Ahmadi was built as a company town to house KOC staff in a barren part of Kuwait's desert in 1946. Apart from oil dictating the location and *raison d'être* of Ahmadi various actors were complicit in the creation and playing out of Ahmadi's urban modernity: KOC officials, the company's architectural firm Wilson Mason & Partners, the process of Kuwaitization, Ahmadi's architecture and urbanism, and, especially, the town's residents. I argue that Ahmadi's colonial modernity which was initially targeted at the expatriate employees of the company during the 1950s, was later adopted by the Kuwaiti employees of KOC after the country's independence in 1961, and in turn mediated a drastically new lifestyle, or urban modernity, during the 1960s and 1970s. This urban modernity was so desirable that it rendered it a nostalgic city in the nation's collective memory.

Colonial modernity in this sense refers to the everyday lived experience brought about in Ahmadi's first decade by the coupling of its modern planning principles with established colonial hierarchies. At this time Kuwait was still a British Protectorate in which local rulers were appointed and took executive political decisions that were dictated by the British government. Although not formally a colony the colonial order

was very much inscribed both socially and spatially throughout Ahmadi's urban milieu. Urban modernity on the other hand refers to that same experience without the imposition of the colonial order. In order to define modernity Berman clearly delineates between what is meant by modernization, modernism and modernity. He describes modernization as bringing the maelstrom of social processes - the industrialization of production, immense demographic upheavals, rapid urban growth, systems of mass communication, the formation of nation states and the primacy of capitalism - into being and keeping it in a state of perpetual becoming. Modernism, Berman states, consists of the visions and ideas that aim to make men and women the subjects as well as the objects of modernization "to give them the power to change the world that is changing them," in other words; it is a celebration of the process of modernization. Such celebrations were marked by various modernist movements in the arts such as Cubism and Dadaism, and architecture such as the Bauhaus school and the CIAM Athens Charter. Finally, according to Berman, modernity is the "coming to grips" with the vast history of modernity, and essentially is the experience emanating from the process of modernization and its celebration that is modernism. Berman divides the history of modernity into three phases. The first phase starts at the beginning of the sixteenth century until the end of the eighteenth century. The second phase begins with the French revolution and its reverberations starting in the 1790s. The third and final phase, according to Berman takes place in the twentieth century in which "modernization expands to take in virtually the whole world."¹⁵ This diffusionist understanding of modernity in which ideas are transferred from the West to the Rest is the phase in which Kuwait begins its incorporation into this global modernization project and the experience emanating from this process is what I describe as Ahmadi's urban modernity.

The dissertation consists of four chapters. Chapter 1, "Oil and the Making of a Modern Nation State" situates the reader within Kuwait's pre-existing architectural, urban, political, economic, cultural and social climate for a better understanding of the historic context within which the building of Ahmadi took place. Most importantly, it serves as an introduction to Kuwait's architectural and urban condition around the time of oil discovery as a counterpoint to the urban modernity experienced by the newly upgraded Kuwaiti KOC employees in Ahmadi during the 1960s and 1970s.

Chapter 2, "Urban Oasis: The Growth of a Colonial Company Town, Ahmadi 1946-1956" unveils Ahmadi as a colonial company town, a distinct formal prototype which simultaneously overlaps and diverges within the theoretical realms of company town literature and colonial urbanism. The chapter discusses the foundational role played by oil, KOC officials and the company architects Wilson Mason & Partners in the architectural and urban development of Ahmadi. In outlining Ahmadi's first planning policies KOC officials set in writing the town's *structural hierarchy*. This hierarchy reflected the company's stratified organization of its employees based on grade, ethnicity and housing provision which was a key element of the town's functioning. The execution of these planning policies in conjunction with the use of the Garden City and Abadan as urban models shaped Ahmadi's first decade of urban existence under the aegis of colonial urbanism.

Chapter 3, “Corporate Benevolence: KOC as Agent of Modernization, 1957-1961,” highlights KOC’s new public relations campaign aimed at assuaging criticisms leveled against it following the Suez War. Through various publications, particularly the KOC’s English language magazine *The Kuwaiti* and its Arabic language sister magazine *al-Kuwayti*, the company publicized and popularized its contribution to the modernization of the nation and its benevolent efforts towards the continued development of the town of Ahmadi. This publicization effort, it should be noted, was particularly focused on the benefits modernization afforded Kuwaiti employees. It also mitigated regional and local criticisms by showing support for the Kuwaitization of the labor force, that is, the progressive appointment of qualified Kuwaitis to senior positions with the eventual aim of a Kuwaiti takeover of the company.

Chapter 4, “Kuwaitizing Ahmadi: The Emergence of a Nostalgic City, 1960-1992,” shows how in the 1960s the process of Kuwaitization upended the urban structural hierarchy set up in the previous decade as Ahmadi gradually shifted from serving an expatriate population to accommodate mostly Kuwaiti and Arab residents. This chapter analyzes the different ways in which Ahmadi’s urban modernity affected the lifestyle of the newly upgraded Kuwaiti employee. The analysis focuses on the following three scales: the urban, the architectural and the social. The urban scale refers to the level of the town plan and pays particular attention to landscaping as a key element in this unfolding modernity. The architectural scale focuses on the single-family housing unit and on how its design fostered the model of a nuclear family structure and a Western sense of neighborly relations. Lastly, the social scale refers to certain codes of conduct that were sustained through both Ahmadi’s built environment and the company’s magazine *al-Kuwayti* as it instructed the new Ahmadi resident, particularly its female population, on how to act appropriately in this modern town. Lastly, this chapter explains why Ahmadi is still perceived as a nostalgic city in the collective imagination of Kuwait’s population. Drawing on oral evidence collected during interviews with former residents it focuses on two overarching themes: the juxtaposition of old Kuwait Town and Ahmadi Town in the 1960s and 1970s on the one hand, and the juxtaposition of 1960s and 1970s Ahmadi and its present urban condition on the other - both comparisons form the basis for the formulation of the former KOC company town as nostalgic. Since 1992 after the Iraqi invasion until today Ahmadi’s continued urban deterioration has served as a vehicle for its private redevelopment with the notion of nostalgia as a primary premise upon which it is based.¹⁶

1. Oil and the Making of a Modern Nation State

Kuwait Before and During Oil Discovery

The relationship between Kuwait, initially a port city and later a city-state, and Ahmadi, initially an oil colony¹ and later part of Kuwait's expanded urban landscape, is a symbiotic one in which both entities are interdependent and mutually beneficial. Ahmadi could not have come into being if not for Kuwait's pre-existence as an urban site with a unique polity with which the British Empire could collude. Similar to its oil rich neighboring states, Kuwait could not have continued to exist as an independent internationally recognized state without its oil reserves that have long served imperial powers and for which the town of Ahmadi was built. The interdependent relationship between Ahmadi and Kuwait's urbanism is one that must therefore be highlighted at the outset.

Kuwait's urban history has largely been recounted as one that with the advent of oil experienced a radical shift from a state of tradition and backwardness to enlightened modern urbanism, or laconically, a story of rags to riches. This dichotomous approach towards its description dangerously dismisses its pre-oil legacy as a flourishing urban sea port and desert terminus in a way that renders Kuwait's history and its pre-oil existence as one inextricably linked to oil. This is not to deny that oil has indeed been a major agent of urban, political, cultural and social change, but it is to stress the importance of a historical perspective and the acknowledgement of events other than oil which foreground this dichotomous relationship as nothing more than a myth.

The following account begins with describing how Kuwait came into being in the mid-eighteenth century as an independent city under the Al-Sabah rule. It then describes the circumstances behind the forging of an unbreakable bond between Kuwait and Britain at the dawn of the twentieth century. This bond was then further strengthened as Kuwait found itself in a strategic location on the Middle Eastern oil frontier where a combination of foreign corporate and political power was key in forging national borders and by virtue the Kuwait Oil Company (KOC) gained Kuwait's oil concession. With the wealth generated from its oil exports Kuwait became the target of major modernization schemes throughout the 1950s, however, for various reasons delays in these developments meant that Kuwaitis still lived in the old city while KOC expatriate technocrats enjoyed living in the freshly minted oil company town of Ahmadi, which unlike Kuwait city was the first site to experience urban modernity in the nation.

Pre-British Kuwait

Human Settlement in Kuwait goes back about four thousand years as evidenced in the archeological remains found there especially on its island of Failaka. This is largely due to its geographic location as an important transit point for trade that linked over both sea and land routes. One of the oldest known names attributed to the region was Kazima

which acted as a desert port for caravans coming from Persia and Mesopotamia to the eastern parts of the Arabian Peninsula. It also had a sea port which was the commercial link between the Indian Ocean, Syria and Europe.² It was not until the seventeenth century, however, that it saw the beginnings of its formation of what it is known today as Kuwait.

Although the exact date of Kuwait town's establishment is not known, its original name is believed to be "Grane."³ In the early to mid-seventeenth century, Grane existed as a small fortress called "Kuwait" that was built for Barrak, *shaykh* (ruler) of the Bani Khalid tribe who ruled Eastern Arabia in the seventeenth century. It was built as a summer residence for shaykh Barrak to enjoy the more moderate weather compared to his domain further south. By the end of the eighteenth century Grane then became mostly referred to as Kuwait. Grane and Kuwait are the diminutive forms of the Arabic words *Qarn*, meaning hill, and *Kut*, meaning castle or fort, indicating the smallness and insignificance of the town at the early stages of its history.⁴

Meanwhile, Escaping the droughts that hit Arabia between 1620 and 1676, several prominent families such as the Al-Khalifa, the Al-Jalahimah and Al-Sabah (Kuwait's rulers), left Central Arabia and headed towards the shores of the Gulf (figure 1). After first moving to the Wadi Duwasir then to Zubara in Qatar where they became familiar with ships and the sea they moved gradually northward in search of an area with easier conditions. By the end of the seventeenth century the Al-Sabah reached the lush greenery of Mesopotamia, at that time part of the Turkish Empire, their application to settle in the Turkish Vilayet was refused by the Turkish Wali of Basra, Ali Pasha. They then went south and found refuge in the land of Bani Khalid, the aforementioned Grane or Kuwait.⁵ These newcomers to the area were called locally the *Bani 'Atub* or *'Utub*, from the Arabic, *'atabu illal shimaal*, or the people who moved or trekked to the north by the beginning of the 18th century.⁶

The English East India Company records state that in about 1716 the Al-Sabah and two important branches of the Utub, Al-Khalifa and Al-Jalahima, occupied Grane and took control of local affairs from the Bani Khalid.⁷ The absence of strong centralized rule in Eastern Arabia made it possible for the Al-Sabah to become totally independent of the Bani Khalid. Sabah was chosen by the inhabitants of Kuwait as shaykh in 1752 to administer justice and the affairs of the town. The shaykh relied heavily on the merchants with regards to commercial interests; hence the latter had a strong voice in Kuwaiti politics as they paid most of the taxes that went directly to the ruler.

By this time Kuwait became an important port of call for desert caravans to and from Aleppo. The caravans carried goods imported by Kuwaiti vessels from India and passengers who wanted to travel from the Arabian Gulf by dessert to Aleppo.⁸ It's importance as a trade port for goods carried between India, southern and eastern Arabia and Syria, and its fishing and pearl diving economies all contributed to the town's growth.

During the latter part of the eighteenth century, Kuwait especially grew in importance as a trade port along the desert route to the English East India Company. The desert route was important to this company for forwarding mail to and from India and trading purposes. Indeed, Kuwait's first official contact with Britain occurred in 1775

when the Plague first struck after which the Persians attacked Basra and as a consequence the East India Company personnel arranged to have their mail sent from Kuwait. The East India Company also sent a ship to Kuwait to evaluate it as an alternative port for Basra and the captain noted its excellent harbor.⁹ The desert mail continued to be received and sent through Kuwait during the Persian occupation of Basra (1775-1779). The British factory at Basra even moved to Kuwait in 1793-1795 due to difficulties with Ottoman officials.¹⁰ Despite this first sign of Kuwait's potential strategic importance to the English East India Company, Britain had no genuine interest in embarking on an official relationship with Kuwait and its interaction there was limited. Britain's official political interest in Kuwait, however, came to the fore at the end of the nineteenth century.

Great Britain and Kuwait: A “Special Relationship”

In the first half of the nineteenth century the British government became more active in the region's politics and trade mainly due to competition with other rival powers. Before setting its sights on the Gulf, Britain established a foothold in Persia because of the threat to its imperial possessions in India by Napoleon's expedition to Egypt in 1798 such as French attacks on British vessels in the Indian Ocean.¹¹ The Egyptian invasion and occupation of Wahhabi territories in the west and east of the Arabian Peninsula from 1811 to 1840 threatened British dominance in the Red Sea route to Europe and the Arabian Gulf respectively as well as their associated overland trade routes between India and Europe. Also the British saw Muhammad Ali's presence in Arabia and Syria during the 1830s as a threat to their political power in India and the Gulf region.¹² In essence, therefore, Britain's interests in the Eastern Arabian Gulf were enshrined in the protection of its possessions in India and safeguarding the trade routes that connected the latter to the former.

Throughout the nineteenth century, it became British policy to sign negotiated protectorate treaties with the Arab countries of the Gulf to ensure rival powers were kept politically isolated from the region. Britain's treaty with Kuwait came rather belated however, when in addition to shaykh Mubarak's repeated requests, it became evident that other powers were increasingly becoming a major threat to Britain. In November 1899 the German's obtained an *Iradeh* (decree) from Sultan Abdul Hamid to extend the Berlin to Constantinople railway to Baghdad and Basra. The BBBB-the Berlin, Bosphorus, Baghdad, Bahn railway would benefit both Turkey and Germany by opening up undeveloped areas of the country and providing new markets in Asia Minor, Syria and Mesopotamia for German goods. Not only the Germans, but also the Russians, were seen as a threat with their interest in the acquisition of Kuwait and its deep-water port and the proposed Russian railway to the Gulf. These reasons, in addition to Kuwait's growing strategic importance, contributed to British proposals for a treaty with Kuwait in December 1898.¹³

Shaykh Mubarak Al-Sabah who ruled Kuwait from 1896 until 1915 sought to establish a protectorate treaty with Britain for a variety of reasons ranging from

independence from the Ottomans and the protection of his role as ruler of an “independent” nation. Known as *Mubarak al-Kabir* (Mubarak the Great) or *Assad Al-Jazeera* (Lion of the Island), he was considered by some local historians as the founder of modern Kuwait because of the major role he played in establishing his authority among contemporary rulers in the Gulf area in general and Arab shaykhs of Eastern Arabia in particular.¹⁴ Indeed, the most modern characteristic of his achievement is the transformation of Kuwait from a small port village to an internationally recognized nation-state, albeit a protectorate of the British Empire.

Since the early years of Al-Sabah rule, the Ottoman title of *Qa'immaqam* (governor) was bestowed on the shaykh, however, it was nothing more than an honorary title and did not signify any form of dependency or servitude.¹⁵ It was not until the rule of Mubarak the Great - which he gained by murdering his two brothers Muhammad and Jarrah in 1896 - that Kuwait's symbolic role under the Ottoman's came to an end. In addition to his brothers as threats to leadership, shaykh Mubarak had an adversary by the name of Yusuf ibn 'Abd Allah al-Ibrahim's who conspired with the Ottoman governor of Basra to rule Kuwait and planned to invade Kuwait between 1897 and 1898.¹⁶ This, coupled with the weakening of the Ottoman Empire with its territories bound to be divided between European powers, lead Mubarak to turn to Great Britain for support establishing an independent status for Kuwait.

Mubarak approached the British about an agreement in 1896 but the treaty was not signed until the 23 January 1899 when Britain realized that other powers had their eye on Kuwait in the last years of the 19th century. The French and the Russians were establishing relations and cooperating in the Mediterranean Sea. As mentioned, the Germans and Ottomans were developing a friendship in which Istanbul asked the Germans to build the Berlin-Baghdad Railway, which viewed Kuwait as the railway terminal on the Arabian Gulf. Indeed, in 1898 the political resident in Bushire, Lieutenant-colonel Malcolm J. Meade reminded Britain's Foreign Office that Kuwait had one of the best harbors in the Gulf, “Generally, I should say that even if we are not immediately getting hold of Kuwait for ourselves, we cannot afford to let it fall into the hands of any other power.”¹⁷

In 1899 shaykh Mubarak signed a treaty with the British government, known as the Exclusive Agreement, giving birth to the special relationship that would last for more than half of the twentieth century. In this agreement the shaykh of Kuwait and his successors were “not to receive the Agent or Representative of any Power or Government at Kuwait or at any other place within the limits of his territory without the previous sanction of the British Government,” and also not to concede with any part of their territory “to the Government or subjects of any other Power without the previous consent of Her Majesty's Government.” In return, unlike Britain's other Treaties in the Arab Gulf, shaykh Mubarak was shrewd enough not to sign the agreement unless Britain agreed to the protection of Kuwait in the event of a foreign attack.¹⁸ This agreement essentially gave the British government direct control of Kuwait and its foreign affairs through its Political Agent in residence, while relegating domestic concerns to the local shaykh.

With the discovery of oil in Persia in 1908, another clause was added a few years later in 1913 in which Kuwait's ruler also agreed not to award oil concessions without Britain's permission.¹⁹ Indeed the scramble for potential oil reserves in the Gulf region, following discovery in Persia, instigated Britain's interest in the region particularly the Iraq-Kuwait-Saudi area. This is evidenced in Iraq's gain as a British mandate after World War One and the British declaration of Faisal son of Husain of Hijaz as its King, and also in Najd as Abdul-Aziz Al-Saud was generously awarded financial aid and military supplies for his army to fight the Ottomans.

During this time the settlement of territorial borders in the Iraq-Kuwait-Saudi area was crucial since internationally recognized borders would render possible the signing of concessions for oil exploration.²⁰ This was most urgent for the oil companies eager to sign concessions, especially those heavily invested in by their respective governments such as the British Anglo-Persian Oil Company (APOC) and the American Arabian-American Oil Company (ARAMCO). Indeed, according to Historian Abu Hakima, the establishment of well-defined borders was more important to foreign interests than to the peoples involved.

According to the 1913 agreement between the British and the Ottomans, borders between Kuwait, Iraq and Najd were marked in which Kuwait's borders in the south extended to Jabal Munifa about 160 miles south of its present borders with Saudi Arabia. This however changed with the 'Uqair Conference. In 1922 The 'Uqair Conference was held to reach an agreement on the borders between Iraq, Najd (the part of Arabia that was lead by the British-sponsored Abdul-Aziz Al-Saud and later became part of Saudi Arabia) and Kuwait (figure 2). Here Sir Percy Cox, Iraq's British High Commissioner gave up two thirds of Kuwait's territory to please Abd Al-Aziz Al-Saud. Sir Percy explained his actions by saying that Abdul Aziz was strong and Kuwait was weak and unable to withstand serious Najdi attacks which may end by the occupation of the whole country. Regardless of the massive territory Kuwait lost, sixteen years later it would discover that its territory still maintained massive oil reserves. In fact the discovery of oil in Kuwait in 1938 was more timely than ever in the nation's history because between the 1920s and 1940s its economy suffered severely for various reasons; The Saudi embargo of Kuwait in early 1920 until the late 1930s because of the failure to reach an agreement on transit and import duties; raids from Ibn Saud's Ikhwan supporters and regular forces; and in the late 1920s the advent of Japanese cultured pearls which wiped out Kuwait's pearling industry by driving down its prices to unsustainable levels.²¹ Therefore the concurrent scramble for, and eventual discovery of, oil reserves on the part of foreign oil companies was most welcome in economically depressed Kuwait.

The Scramble for Oil

Oil first came into prominence in the nineteenth century in Russia and the USA as exemplified by the Nobels' and the Rothschild's' holdings in the former, and John D. Rockefeller's Standard Oil Company in the latter. Oil exploration began in 1872 in Baku, Russia (now Azerbaijan) and was discovered in Pennsylvania 1859 and in Texas 1901.²²

The turn of the century, however, saw the successive emergence of other major firms that came to dominate the international oil industry. Known as the “seven sisters” these included: the Gulf Oil Corporation (GOC), the Texas Company (later Texaco), the Standard Oil Company of New Jersey (later Exxon), the Standard Oil Company of New York (later Mobil), the Standard Oil Company of California (later Chevron), the Anglo-Dutch enterprise: Royal Dutch Shell, and the Anglo-Persian Oil Company (APOC later AIOC and BP).²³ The GOC and APOC (later AIOC and BP) were key in bringing the oil-rich Middle East into prominence in the early twentieth century.

The first interest in the oil potential of Persia was promoted by the travel and research of M. Jacques de Morgan, who was sent on a scientific mission by the French Government at the invitation of the Persian government in 1889. This resulted in his 1895 publication of a detailed volume in which he asserted that the geology confirmed that the region around Zuhab in the Qasr-i Shirin district of Persia was an area of potential petroleum in Persia.²⁴ It was the D’Arcy Concession to prospect for oil in Persia, however, granted to Australian business man William Knox D’Arcy in 1901 by Persian official General Antoine Kitabgi, that eventually lead to the first striking of oil in commercial quantities at Masjed-Soleyman in 1908 signifying Persia’s position as the first oil-producing area in the Middle East.²⁵ It was this significant event that lead to the formation of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company (APOC) in 1909, with 97% its shares held by Royal Dutch-Shell.

Due to financial problems Charles Greenway, one of the British founding members of APOC, turned to the British Government for support in fear that the company might fall under the control of Royal Dutch-Shell. This arrangement would not only provide the company with much needed capital but would also secure the government’s military pursuits by ensuring fuel oil supplies.²⁶ Indeed, the British Board of Trade drew up a memorandum for the Cabinet entitled, “The Future of Oil Supplies.” Firstly, the memorandum acknowledged that “the war has made clear that it is imperatively necessary for His Majesty’s government to take immediate and effective action to safeguard the future oil supplies of the British Empire.” Secondly, it declared that “the problem of supply is, therefore, no longer merely a commercial question it is an Imperial question of the first magnitude.” And two steps had to be immediately taken, firstly “to bring the British sources of supply under British control, so that their development may not be restricted by foreign concerns in the interest of their oil fields outside the Empire” and, secondly “to obtain control of as large foreign sources of supply as possible.”²⁷ And thus, in 1914 before the outbreak of World War I, Churchill decided to protect the oil supply lines which were paramount to British defense by government investment in the Anglo-Persian Oil Company (APOC) by presenting a bill to Parliament which would give the nation a 51% shareholding.²⁸ Just as BP historian R. W. Ferrier stated, oil became a decisive strategic resource on a scale inconceivable when the British government acquired its shareholding in APOC which was no longer considered a private company but a national enterprise with a national purpose.²⁹

Meanwhile just south of Persia in Arabia, D’Arcy’s counter-part, the Eastern and General Syndicate (EGS) formed in 1920 prospected for oil in places such as Eastern

Arabia (which later became part of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia), Bahrain and Kuwait. A major figure who helped set up EGS and brought Arabia into the Middle East oil frontier was New Zealand mining engineer Major Frank Holmes. Ibn Saud granted Holmes a concession for Al-Hasa in 1923 after approaching him at the Uqair conference. Seeing this as a segue to concessions over the Nejd territory, Kuwait and Bahrain, a week after receiving the Al-Hasa concession, Holmes cabled shaykh Ahmed of Kuwait not to grant oil concessions to any other company without first seeing the terms offered by his company. Indeed, after finding traces of oil in water holes which Holmes drilled in Kuwait during 1927 (which was kept confidential) he convinced GOC to take over the EGS concessions in 1927.³⁰ Since then Holmes focused on gaining an oil concession from Kuwait as GOC's agent, but he faced much difficulty due to a nationality clause which precluded any non-British participation. After much pressure by the US State department the British Government finally dropped the nationality clause in 1932. This, coupled with the striking of oil in Bahrain that same year, immediately accelerated the pace of negotiations in Kuwait instigating what would amount to more than ten years of competition between the two rival companies.³¹

GOC and APOC ultimately ended their concessionary battle by becoming equal shareholders in the newly formed Kuwait Oil Company (KOC) and were finally granted a concession by Kuwait's ruler shaykh Ahmad Al-Sabah in 1934. Although the American GOC and the British APOC jointly owned KOC, it was effectively a British-controlled company as APOC's majority shareholding was with the British government to which Kuwait was already a protectorate. Moreover, there was the political agreement between the British Government and KOC which was signed in 1934 which according to BP historian Bamberg:

Stipulated that the KOC was to remain a British company and gave the British Government significant powers, most notably that the concession, if obtained by the KOC, was not to be transferred without the consent of the British Government, which would also have rights of pre-emption over Kuwaiti crude oil and refined products in the event of war. It was, in addition, laid down that should there be any conflict between the terms of the political agreement and the commercial concession agreed between the shaykh and the KOC, the terms of the political agreement would prevail.³²

Thus Britain's bond with Kuwait, initially strategic, eventually became unbreakable with the striking of oil in 1938.³³

With World War II, however, KOC closed and cemented all its wells and staff reductions were made in 1943. Soon after the War KOC resumed oil operations at the Burgan oil field and the company began building the new town of Ahmadi in the desert to house the staff and employees near the site of operations. By June 1946 all the basic technical facilities for the shipment of oil were completed - storage tanks were built and a pipeline was laid from the oil field to the coast where oil was to be shipped from the port of Mina Ahmadi.³⁴ In 1947 major urban development and improvement schemes were launched by both by the KOC regarding its oil infrastructure and Kuwait regarding its

state infrastructure. Increasingly English personnel came to the country, not only for KOC, but also as advisors on planning, economic affairs, administration, and to staff new hospitals and nascent government bureaucracies.

Towards Building a New Nation

In 1946, the exorbitant wealth generated from Kuwait's first oil exports was directly deposited to the incumbent ruler Sheikh Ahmad Al-Jabir Al-Sabah (1921-1950). This is evidenced by the miniscule development efforts in late 1940s Kuwait, the most obvious of which were: a few new schools equipped with newly hired Egyptian teachers, a new hospital, and a street called *al-Share' al-Jadid* or the New Street that linked the customs pier with Safat Square, the town's main square.³⁵ This wide street built to accommodate automobiles faced fierce opposition as it demolished homes and disrupted the existing social and neighborhood relationships with minimal or no compensation. It was called "the year of the cut."³⁶ Meanwhile, in contrast KOC completed most of its operational construction work largely due to the relatively smaller scale involved, the urgency of oil exploitation and the advanced system of corporate governance compared to Kuwait's haphazard structure of governance. As oil royalties solely constituted the shaykh's income *he* decided if and how it would be spent.

After his death in 1950, shaykh Ahmad was immediately succeeded by shaykh Abdulla Al-Salem Al-Sabah who ruled Kuwait from 1950 until 1965. According to the 1950 Foreign Office Annual Report, shaykh Abdulla appeared to be more sincerely devoted to the interests of his people and was spending more of his large income on health and education and the nation's general development. Moreover, a major achievement of shaykh Abdulla's came a year after his ascension in the form of the 50:50 Agreement concluded in December 1951. This agreement was in fact a precedent set by a coalition consisting of the US government, the Arabian American Oil Company (ARAMCO) and King Ibn Saud who's goals were to develop Saudi Arabia's oil reserves and keep the Soviet Union at bay. The Saudi 50:50 profit-sharing principle was signed on 30 December 1950. It modified the 1933 Saudi concession and provided for ARAMCO's profits to be equally shared between it and the Saudi Government setting a precedent for concessionary revisions in other countries in the region.³⁷ Kuwait's 50:50 agreement coupled with the shut-down of Iran's oil exports due to nationalization in 1951 lead to massive increases in Kuwait's profits which were largely funneled into its development program directed by the Public Works Department.

In the beginning of 1951, General Hasted was in charge of Kuwait's development program, Colonel Crichton was in charge of the Finance department and shaykh Fahad, the ruler's half-brother, was in charge of the Municipality, the Health Department and the Public Works Department, and chairman of the Development Board. Dissatisfied with the appointment of British officials such as General Hasted, shaykh Fahad appointed Majduddin Jabri, former Mayor of Aleppo, as Chief Engineer in the Public Works Department. After much disagreement between the latter and both Hasted and Crichton, Jabri eventually became head of the Public Works and Development organization while

Hasted was relegated to a more advisory role. This formula of ruling family members with unchecked authority over government decisions and funds coupled with competing experts fighting at loggerheads lead to the squandering and waste of such funds and the drastic delay of proposed development in Kuwait for most of this decade.³⁸

One of Kuwait's major development achievements in this decade, however, was the completion of its first water distillation plant in 1953, alleviating some of the dependence Kuwait had on fresh water imports from Iraq. Another major step towards the future development of Kuwait was the commissioning of the 1951 Kuwait master plan by the British firm of Minoprio, Spencely and Macfarlane (MSP). Indeed, most experts hired during Kuwait's rush for development such as architects, departmental directors, and contractors known as the "Big Five," were British at the instruction of the Political Agency there. These first five main British contractors were legally required by the Government to have a Kuwaiti partner.³⁹ MSP, who visited Kuwait for a period of only two weeks and have had no previous overseas planning experience, requested that Hunting Aerosurvey take aerial photographs of Kuwait later that year as a planning tool.⁴⁰

Planned "in accordance with the highest standards of modern town planning" the objectives of the MSP master plan of Kuwait were:

- a. The provision of a modern road system appropriate to the traffic conditions in Kuwait.
- b. The location of suitable zones for public buildings, industry, commerce, schools, and other purposes.
- c. The choice of zones for new houses and other buildings needed in residential areas, both inside and outside the town wall.
- d. The selection of sites for parks, sports ground, school playing fields and other open spaces.
- e. The creation of a beautiful and dignified town center, particular attention being given to the treatment of the Safat and the siting of public buildings.
- f. The planting of trees and shrubs along the principle roads and at other important points in the town.
- g. The provision of improved main roads linking Kuwait with the adjoining towns and villages.⁴¹

Designed for the automobile, especially with the local abundance of fuel, the plan consisted of concentric ring roads that paralleled the old settlement's wall and these were intersected by radial roads extending through the gates and beyond the city wall (figure 3). These intersections outlined self-supporting residential areas or *neighborhood units* outside the town wall consisting of single-family detached housing and associated programs such as primary schools, secondary shopping centers, mosques and open space (figure 4). The master plan saw no major opposition because all Kuwaitis were over-generously compensated to leave their soon to be razed inner-city homes to the newly built residential subdivisions.

MSP's 1951 Kuwait master plan belonged to the prevailing urban planning discourse and profession of the time. The period between 1850 and 1960 saw a general movement in professional city planning from the piecemeal and fragmented provision of networked infrastructure to an emphasis on centralized and standardized systems.⁴² This new modernist ideal born in Europe and the USA became a model that was followed and disseminated in most parts of the world. It followed the ideals of the emerging urban planning movement during the period which was based on the idea of rational and comprehensive planning.

The urban bourgeoisie's concern at the time over disease, death rates, and the poor health and potential unrest of the working class populations imbued urban planners with the moral power to bring sanitation, cleanliness, rationality and order to the troubled and chaotic industrial metropolis.⁴³ This western modernist ideal was exported to many non-western nations, regardless of context specificities, as its adoption signified a major ingredient in the path towards development and nation-building practices.

The 1951 master plan was part of a larger development plan outlined by General Hasted in 1952 with the objective:

1. To build the finest town in the Middle East, with the best living conditions for all classes of people.
2. To develop pari-passu the commercial interests, economy, agriculture and administration of the State so that its future prosperity may rest on firm foundations.

It outlined the development of various urban infrastructural elements such as: housing, roads, the port, the airport, public buildings, water supply, husbandry, electric power and sewage.⁴⁴

Aside from the desperate need to build a modern nation for the Kuwaiti people as it leapfrogged its way to one of the world's wealthiest nations, reasons for its modernization were also: the accommodation of a rapid population explosion mostly due to the foreign workforce and, most importantly, the swift distribution of oil wealth throughout the private and the public sectors of the economy. In other words, the *tabula rasa* planning of Kuwait was an effective way for the government to quickly distribute the gigantic oil profits among its citizens. This was executed through "The Government Land Purchase Scheme" in 1951 in which owners of land and property within the city were offered deliberately inflated prices by the Government to encourage the owners to move out to the new suburbs and at the same time provide Kuwaitis with working capital. Its two aims, therefore, were to inject money into the economy's private sector and simultaneously facilitate the comprehensive reconstruction of old Kuwait city.⁴⁵

The reconstruction of Kuwait, however, was delayed to almost a decade later for a variety of reasons such as the aforementioned disagreements between experts and members of the ruling family in charge of development, disapproval of house designs, and local criticisms voiced against the Big-Five British contractors among many other hurdles. The State housing program, for example, saw little progress due to the Development Board's difficulty in agreeing to the design of houses, its disapproval of the

high costs involved in producing simple houses for lower-income groups and the high valuation placed on land sold to the State.⁴⁶ The Big Five British contractors received much local criticism and were accused of extravagance and deliberate inflation of costs as their Kuwaiti partners received half of the net profit for very little contribution. They were subsequently repatriated to Great Britain in 1955 rendering their work for Kuwait's development over the past few years futile. While plans for the modern development of Kuwait city were derailed, the development of Ahmadi as an oil company town in the Middle of Kuwait's desert was in full swing. At this time, during the 1950s, Ahmadi's British, American, Indian and Pakistani employees lived in a professionally designed urban enclave inspired by the Garden suburb while Kuwaitis for the most part remained living in Kuwait's old city.

Kuwait's Old City

Vernacular Kuwait or old Kuwait city grew in an unplanned manner based upon the needs of the residents and therefore was an example of "architecture without architects" since it was first established well over 300 years ago in the mid-eighteenth century until it reached its final urban form in the 1950s (figure 5). Old Kuwait city grew in the form of concentric half rings that centered on a small settlement facing a naturally deep-water harbor on the south of Kuwait Bay. Its development was marked over time by three town walls built to the south of this settlement (figure 6). The first wall built in 1760 enclosed a pearling town and trading outpost, the second wall in 1811 enclosed a port town and the third and final wall was built in 1920 for the protection of what became a significant commercial center and sea-based trade in the northern Arabian Gulf against neighboring tribes. This third and last wall built in 1920 enclosed the final architectural and urban formation of old Kuwait city which was completely demolished for the modern city in 1950s.

In addition to its sea-oriented livelihood on its north, Kuwait was also at the terminus of three major overland routes; to the west it connected to Jahra village which in turn connected Kuwait to Basra and Aleppo; to the south it connected to what was a major fresh water source in the desert of Shamieh which also acted as a camping ground and rest station for caravans coming from Arabia; and to the east and southeast it connected to destinations along the western coast of the Arabian Peninsula.⁴⁷

The first wall was built in 1760 to protect the early settlement from desert raids. This early settlement was very small and consisted of mud dwellings located on high ground adjacent to the harbor and occupied an area of about eleven hectares. The Principle Resident of the Dutch East India Company described the town in 1756 as a homogenous sea-oriented community of about 4000 Utub males owning and operating approximately 300 small pearling vessels.⁴⁸ The only remnants of this early settlement is a sea road and a wall road, and two main inland pedestrian routes. The first inland route linked the harbor to the Shamieh wells and the desert beyond could be considered Kuwait's main thoroughfare, the second linked the harbor to the southern coast.⁴⁹

The second wall was built in 1811 and surrounded a considerably larger settlement of about 72 hectares. The demolition of the first wall as Kuwait expanded became a clearly demarcated curving access route that contrasted with the surrounding irregular paths. The sea road continued to dominate the shoreline and the main thoroughfare perpendicular to it also grew in the direction of the wells terminating at one of the Gates on the new town wall. The latter divided old Kuwait's into two parts: the eastern quarter known as *Sharq* (East) due to its location east of the inland route connecting to the southern coast, and the western quarter known as Qibleh due to its orientation towards Mecca. Though at this point Kuwait was still a modest mud town, it saw an increase in population as a result of its success in trade as goods and ideas were exchanged between it, West Africa and India. Kuwait's success in the trade of goods between these regions was largely due to its involvement in sea-faring activities.

Seafaring activity in Kuwait was of three types. The first type consisted of smaller boats used in local traffic, including medium-sized *boums* (local Kuwaiti sailing vessel), that carried Kuwait's fresh water supply from the Shatt al Arab, and boats which carried cargo from the British India steamers anchored in the bay and the fishing fleet. The second type consisted of the ocean-going *boums*, these were much larger and used for the annual trading voyage or *sifr* which lasted six to eight months during the winter season in the Indian Ocean.⁵⁰ They would leave Kuwait in early fall to collect dates from Iraq and then either head to Cochin and Calicut where they would collect timber, or they would sail along the Arabian coast where they would sell dates to collect salt, fabric, incense and ghee and then sail to Zanzibar to collect mangrove poles used for roofing in Kuwait's houses.⁵¹ The third type of seafaring activity was pearl diving (figure 7, 8). Up until the 1920s pearling was Kuwait's most important trade but towards the end of the decade it was in decline due to cultured Japanese pearls. Pearl divers only got a small share of the profits depending on the catch, therefore no catch meant no income leaving them with a debt to the captain for supplying their provisions, thus they were bound to serve the same captain the following year. In addition, many divers died young due to the hazardous nature of diving and the illnesses associated with it. Furthermore, the pearling season lasted from mid-May to mid-September, the hottest time of the year.⁵²

The Souq of Old Kuwait

Kuwait's increasing activity in maritime trade lead to its success as one of the busiest ports on the Arabian peninsula and the goods imported eventually found there way into the progressively expanding souq of Kuwait. Indeed, the inland route which ran perpendicular to the sea road evolved into a major market street due to an increase in trade and became Kuwait's first covered pathway known as *al-Souq al-Dakheli* (internal market) (figure 9). In addition to its access to the harbor and shops handling imported goods, this market street accessed the shaykh's house, his *majlis* (audience hall), *diwan* (reception hall) and dungeon, the financial district, the main town square, the Great Friday Mosque of the souq and Kuwait's first school and coffee houses.⁵³

By 1930 Kuwait had more than fifty markets that extended from the old port area to Safat Square where the desert bedu came to sell such things as cooking oil, milk products, wood and desert plant and in exchange would buy imported goods (figure 10). The shops formed an integral part of Kuwait's life as they opened from sunrise to late evening with a few breaks throughout the day for prayers and siesta.⁵⁴ Most of the markets' ceilings were covered with straw mats, or in the late 1940s metal sheets, to protect shoppers from the sun, rain, dust and similar harsh conditions (figure 11).⁵⁵ Business activity would start in *Al-Furdah* located at Kuwait's port area where all imported goods were whole-saled to either merchants or individuals making it the busiest place in town (figure 12). Another major wholesale market was the *souq Al-Tujjar* or Merchant's Market where the offices of merchants who owned sailing ships were located and where goods they brought from India and East Africa were sold such as rice, sugar, tea, spices and clothes. Just east of the Merchant's market was the Jewish Market operated by Kuwaiti Jewish salesmen that was most active in the early twentieth century and famous for selling fabric. The Kuwaiti Jewish community was eventually expelled by order of shaykh Abdulla Al-Jabir Al-Sabah.⁵⁶ The aforementioned *Al-Souq Al-Dakhili* or inner market located in the central part of old Kuwait sold everything from meat, fish rice wheat, spices, vegetables, fabrics, dishware and utensils, plants and herbs for drugs and dates. It also had various craftsmen such as tailors, coppersmiths, cobblers and other skin product makers and confectioners. In the mid-1940s it began to sell electric appliances such as radios, refrigerators, and watches, bicycles, shoes and ready-made clothes and china imported from Hong Kong, India, Europe and the USA.⁵⁷

Old Kuwait's *Ferjaan* (neighborhoods)

Al-Souq Al-Dakhili separated old Kuwait's two dense quarters of Sharq and Qibleh which were, in turn, divided into *ferjaan* or neighborhoods in which extended families lived (figure 13). As Kuwait became relatively prosperous during this time many families migrated from neighboring Najd, Persia, Iraq and their settlement pattern can be seen in the relative position of the *fereej* (neighborhood) to the harbor. Hence, those closer to the center signified earlier settlement in Kuwait and a greater social standing. Another sign of a family's prestige in a given *fereej* was the naming of the local mosque after the donor from that family.⁵⁸

Old Kuwait's *ferjaan* housed approximately 60,000 residents by 1930 were criss-crossed by irregular paths wide enough for donkeys, horses or camels to pass through, which carried goatskins of fresh water imported from Basra, dried palm fronds for firewood, and charcoal among other merchandise (figure 14).⁵⁹ The houses built around central courtyards were for the most part one storey with a few having a single room rise above the general level of rooftops (figure 15). The wealthier or merchant households were located on or close to the sea road and the less fortunate household were mostly at the landward side of town. Beyond the south eastern limits of town were many walled *Hautas* (gardens) used by wealthy Kuwaiti males as places of recreation like country retreats. The western end of the town wall saw the juxtaposition of *Hadar* (urban

dwellers) and *Bedu* (desert nomads) as seen by the large camp of black tents just outside the wall, with some tents pitched inside the wall. Kuwait's entire sea-front on the north was lined with harbors containing boats at all stages of construction signifying Kuwait's legacy as one of the most active boat-building ports of the Gulf.⁶⁰

Old Kuwait's *bayt 'araby*

The old Kuwaiti house colloquially known as *bayt 'araby*, or Arab house, contained a central courtyard, or courtyards, with several rooms attached to them. A middle-class Kuwaiti family would usually have three courtyards: one for the *Diwaniyyah* (rooms for male-only socializing), one for *Al-Haram* (the women) or family and a courtyard for the kitchen and goats which was referred to as *thak al-Howsh* (figure 16).⁶¹ The builders of the old Kuwaiti house were lead by *al-Istaath* which translates into teacher. The *Istaath* would select whom he felt was best qualified for the building job that day and he would charge the client in one of two ways *Al-Qutoo'a* which means by contract or daily.⁶²

The *Diwaniyyah* courtyard was independent from the other parts of the house as it was strictly for males and it was attached to a main room for the *diwaniyyah* with windows often overlooking the street and a secondary room for the tea and coffee and would sometimes have a third room for guests, and of course bathroom. This courtyard had a large door which opened directly onto the street which, in turn, had a smaller door within it called *khoakha*.⁶³

The number and types of courtyards in the Kuwaiti house varied depending on the affordability and personal preference. Those who could not afford a *diwaniyyah* courtyard sufficed with the women's and the kitchen courtyard. Others who did not like the presence of animals in the house did away with the kitchen courtyard and only had the women's and *diwaniyyah* courtyard connecting the kitchen with the women's courtyard. At times even the inclusion of a *Liwan* (an arcade supported by wooden square or circular columns built around the courtyard to protect the house from the summer heat and winter rains) or *Mesbeh* (bathroom) depended on the owner's wealth.⁶⁴

The rooms of the old Kuwaiti houses were narrow because their width was limited by the standard length of the *shandal* or mangrove beams which supported the ceilings. The *shandal* beams supported a layer of woven bamboo columns or *basjeel* which was overlaid with woven sheets of reed from Iraq called *al-Barria* that was topped with an eighteen inch thick layer of mud and straw (figure 17).⁶⁵ A wind tower or *Baghdir* had wide openings as it protruded from the roof with a rectangular top, it ran the length of the walls and ended with an opening into certain rooms about 1 meter above the ground. The *Baghdir* was used as a cooling mechanism that picked up breezes and directed them into the house promoting air circulation that was much needed in the hot summers (figure 18).⁶⁶

Al-Sateh or the roof was surrounded by a mud wall the height of a person on the side facing the street or the neighbor to provide privacy and was made of *basjeel* railings that overlooked the courtyard (figure 19). It was used for sleeping outdoors on hot summer nights, for drying laundry, and drying foods for storage such as fish, shrimp, and

lamb. It was also used to collect rain water run-off through the *marazim* (drainage pipes) into the *Birka* (3 to 4 meter square hole dug into the courtyard for fresh water storage made from stones and cement) and, in addition, part of the roof acted as a toilet.⁶⁷ Grey water used for such things as cleaning, was accessible through a *jileeb* or well which was dug deep enough to hit sea water level and often placed in the Kitchen courtyard. Finally, a unique feature of the Kuwaiti house was the *firjeh* or opening in the wall shared between two neighboring houses for simplifying their access to each other without them having to exit onto the street. This was often the case with families that had very strong social ties.⁶⁸

Safat Square

Kuwait's public social life took place at Safat square, what became the town's largest and main public space especially during the 1930s and 1940s (figure 20). At the end of the nineteenth century, Safat Square located south west of Kuwait city was a deserted area with a few cemeteries and empty walled estates. Originally, the expanse was used as added protection against invaders as it was located just inside the 1920 wall. At the turn of the century, however, it progressively grew in importance as a rest point for caravans approaching from the Arab Peninsula for trading purposes and eventually all kinds of shops and cafes made from palm tree fronds were set up.

Safat square also became a major entertainment space for the Kuwaiti public especially with the introduction of the radio in its cafes which broadcasted popular Arabic songs and the latest news on the Second World War. In the 1930s it saw some of the country's first official buildings such as the Municipality Department and the Court Building. Kuwait's Municipality was established in 1930 and initially held a variety of responsibilities such as the management and inspection of the souqs eventually, and to this day, it remains the governmental body in charge of approving all developments in Kuwait. Kuwait's first broadcasting station was opened there in 1948. Movies were also played using the national security building walls as a screen. The square was also the major public space that hosted Muslim Eid and national celebrations on the one hand, and political upheavals and public executions on the other.

Safat Square was Kuwait's first area to modernize in the 1950s as old mud buildings were replaced with multiple storey concrete buildings. Built between 1948 and 1949, *al-Shar' al-Jadid* or the New Street was the first modern intervention in old Kuwait town which cut through existing narrow roads and took the form of a main vehicular road directly connecting the sea road with Safat Square. New Street contained one to two-storey modern buildings consisting of restaurants, cafes and shops that sold a variety of goods on either side. The street front facade was composed of a continuous colonnade of concrete pillars for shade and was referred to as "The Pillars Street" (figure 21).⁶⁹ There were further major architectural and urban interventions in the works following New Street throughout the 1950s as seen in the MSP master plan for Kuwait and the engagement of major contracting firms to execute much of Kuwait's Development Program.

Delays for various reasons mentioned above caused these architectural and urban interventions to move at a snails pace compared to those simultaneously taking place in KOC's town of Ahmadi. This meant that most Kuwaitis still lived in old Kuwait city which consisted of poor infrastructure while about twenty two miles south KOC's expatriate oil technocrats lived in the modern professionally planned town of Ahmadi. Though it is arguable that the comparison of Kuwait's modern planning initiatives with Ahmadi's is unfair, with the former having a much larger area and settled population to and more primitive structure of governance and the latter being much smaller with a more advanced structure of corporate governance, the fact remains that living standards for expatriates in the modern town of Ahmadi far exceeded those of locals in the old city of Kuwait during the 1950s.

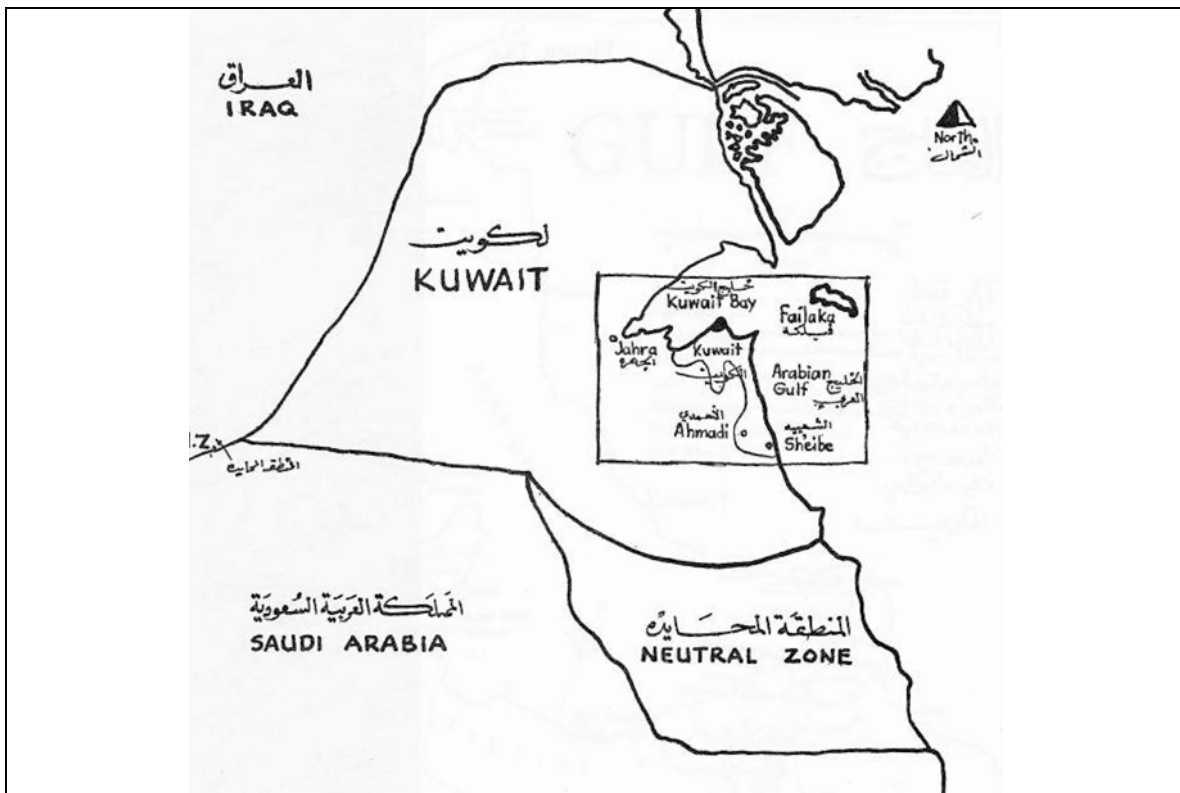


Figure 2. Map showing Kuwait's borders with Iraq to the north and Saudi Arabia to the south as demarcated at the 1922 'Uqair Conference proceedings. The Neutral zone, left undecided, was initially shared by Saudi Arabia and Kuwait but eventually was officially divided between them in 1969. (Source: Shiber)

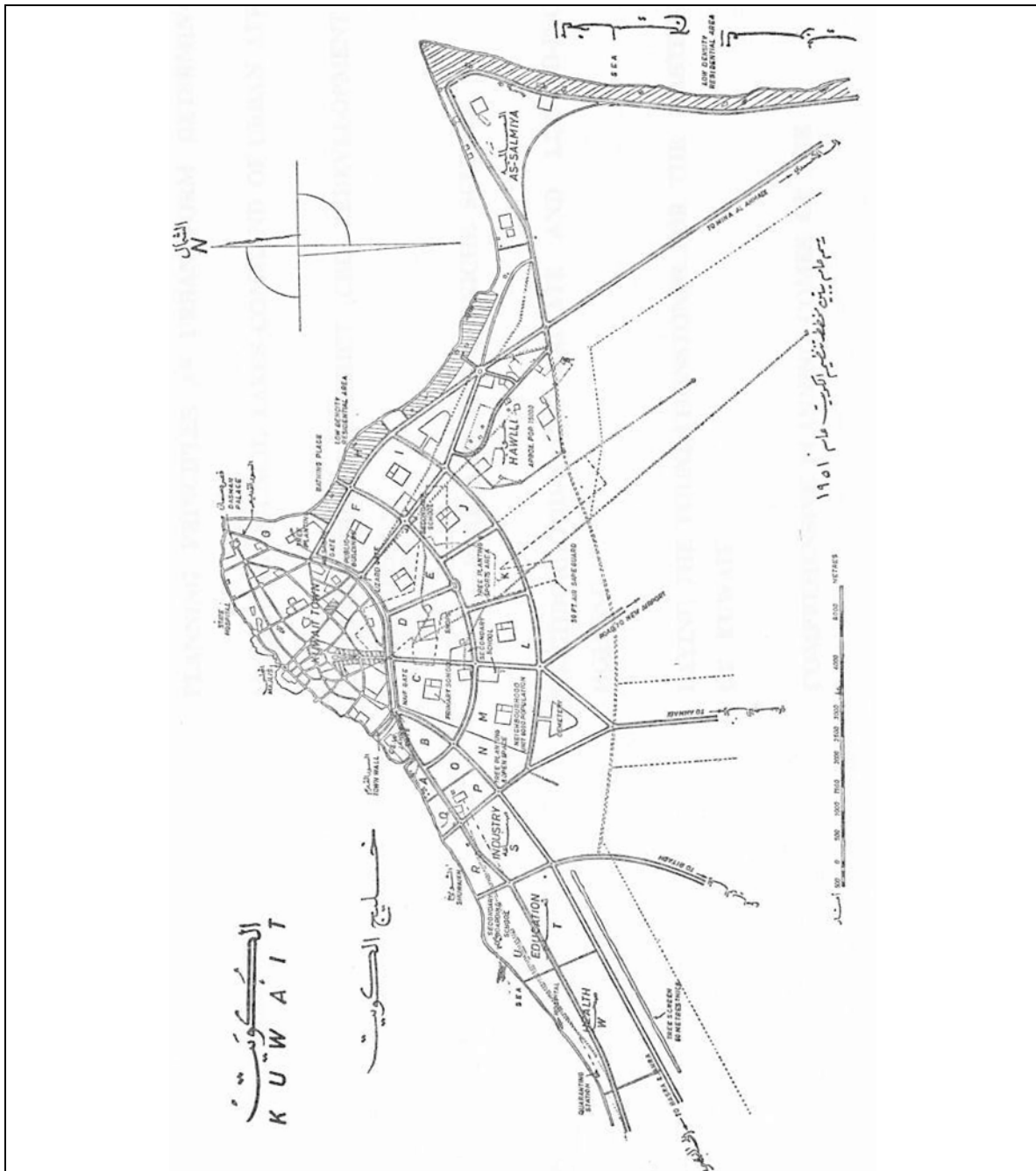


Figure 3. 1951 Master plan of Kuwait by Minoprio, Spencely and Macfarlane. The plan shows how highways were a major planning tool as they ringed around old Kuwait city concentrically with radially intersecting roads that outlined self-sufficient neighborhood units. (Source: Shiber)

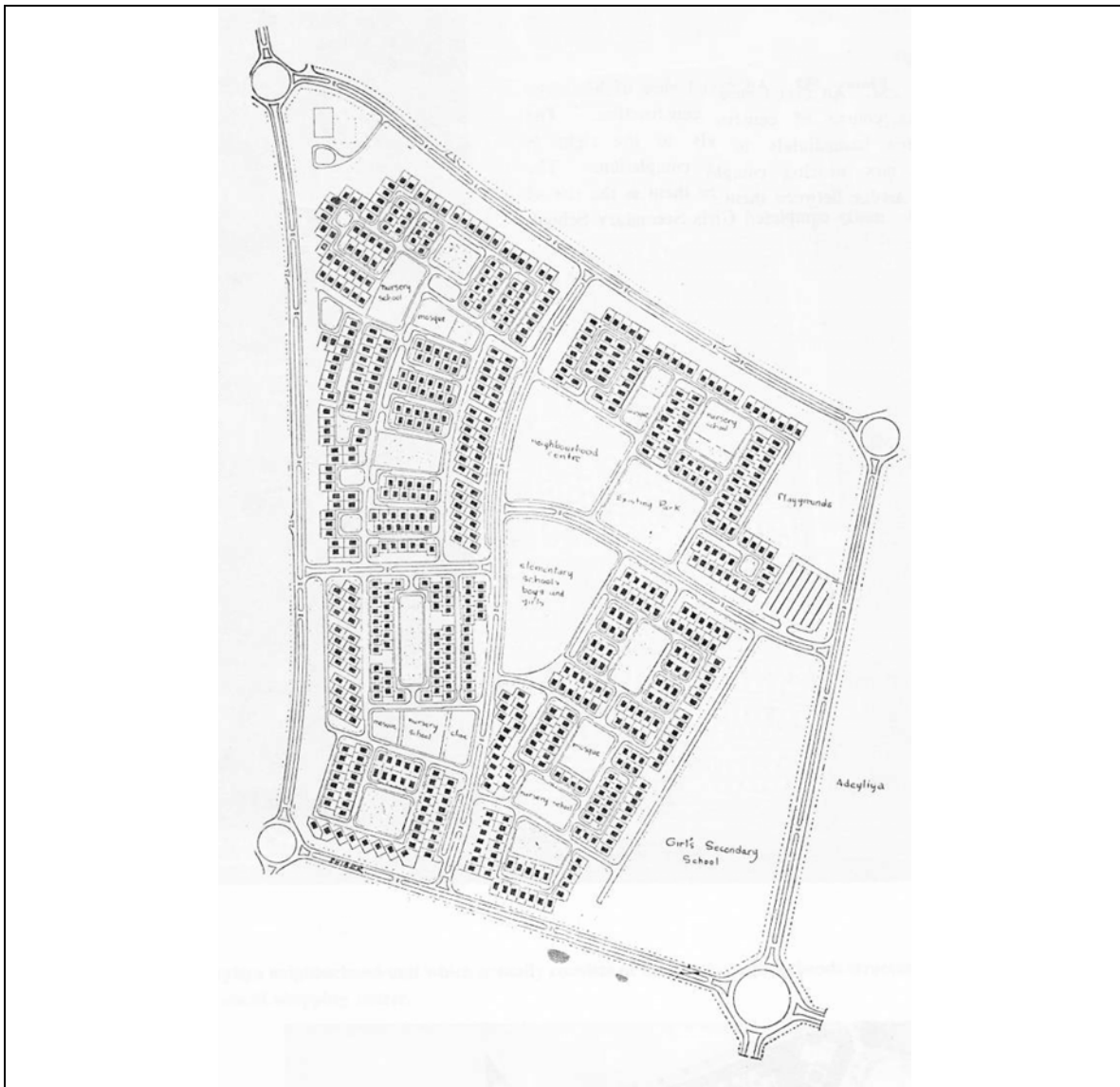


Figure 4. The plan of Khaldyya neighborhood-unit consisting of detached housing units with associated social amenities such as schools shopping and open space. (Source: Shiber)



Figure 5. 1950s Aerial of old Kuwait city. (Source: BP Archive)

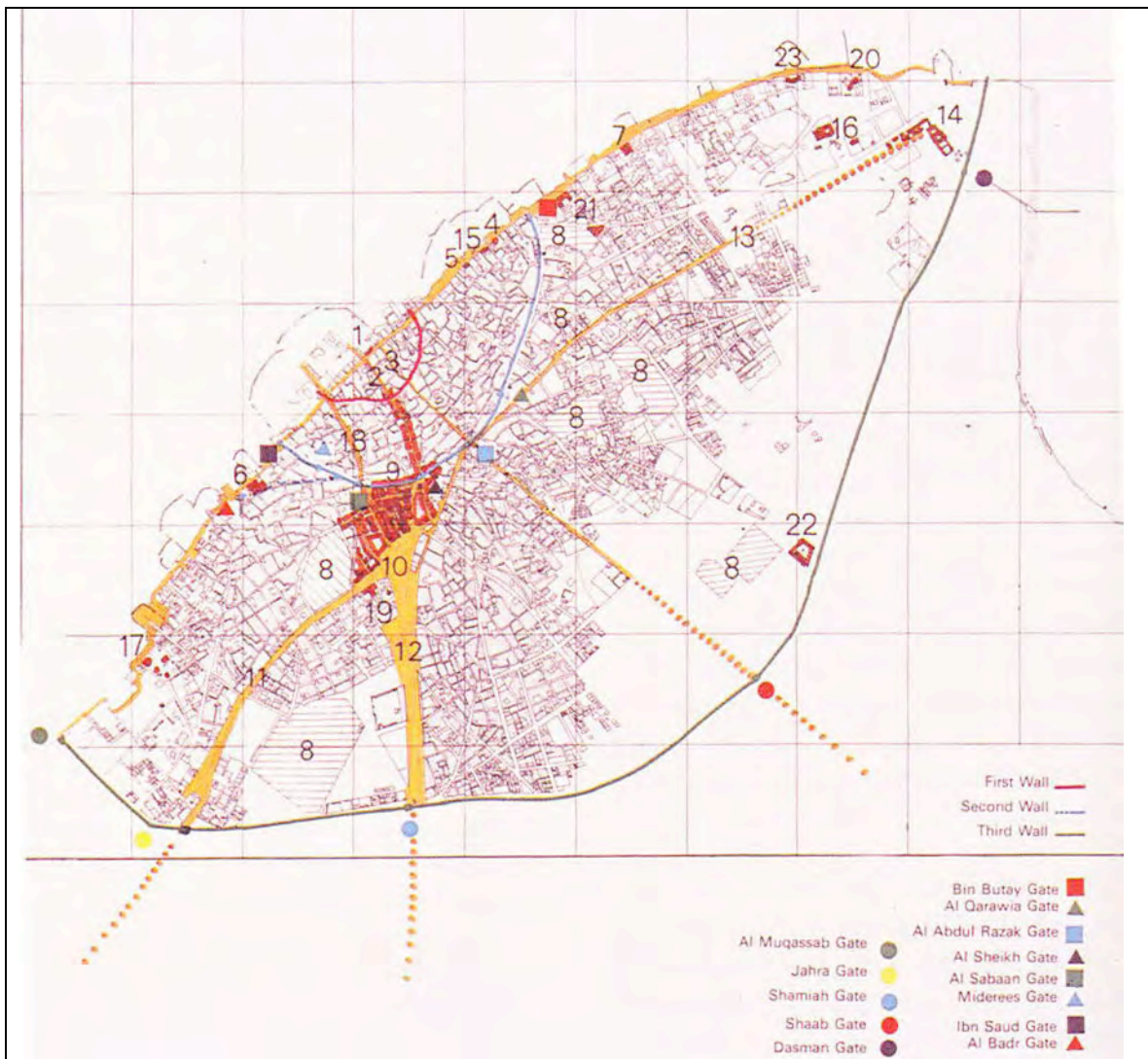


Figure 6. Map of old Kuwait city showing its semi-circular growth over time from the mid-eighteenth century until the 1950s. Its temporal growth is demarcated by the three town walls: the first town wall built in 1760 is showing in red, the second town wall built in 1811 is shown in blue and the third wall built in 1920 is shown in green. (Source: Ali)



Figure 7. Kuwaiti pearling boats preparing for pearling season in mid-May 1924. (Source: Facy and Grant)



Figure 8. Pearl divers were naked except for a loin cloth and leather protection over their fingers. They would descend rapidly to the bottom on a heavy stone which was attached by rope to the boat. Their breath was held with the aid of a wooden clip on the nose and they carried a knife to cut the oysters from the bottom and a basket around their neck for the oysters. And they would surface unaided when they can no longer stay under water. (Source: Villiers)

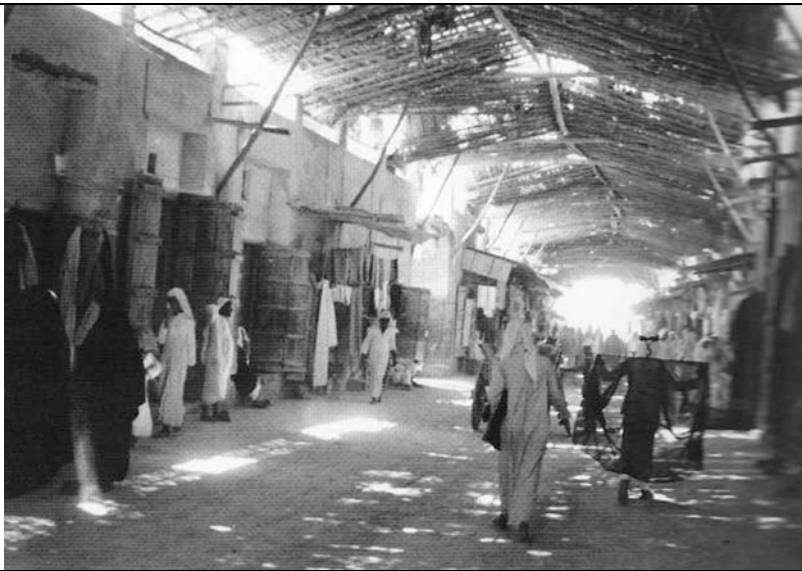


Figure 9. *al-Souq al-Dakheli* or internal market. (Source: Villiers)



Figure 10. Desert bedu (nomads) at Safat Square come to trade goods such as cooking oil, milk products, wood and desert plant in exchange for imported goods. (Source: Jamal)



Figure 11. Market ceilings were covered with straw mats, or in the late 1940s metal sheets, to protect shoppers from the sun, rain, dust and similar harsh conditions. (Source: BP Kuwait Archive)



Figure 12. *Al-Furdah* where all imported goods were whole-saled. (Source: Jamal)



Figure 13. *Al-Souq Al-Dakhili* separated old Kuwait's two dense quarters of Sharq and Qibleh which were divided into *ferjaan* or neighborhoods in which Kuwait's extended families lived. (Source: Jamal)



Figure 14. Kuwait's only source of fresh water at the time was imported from Basra, packed into goatskins and carried by donkey for sale to Kuwaiti households. (Source: BP Kuwait Archive)

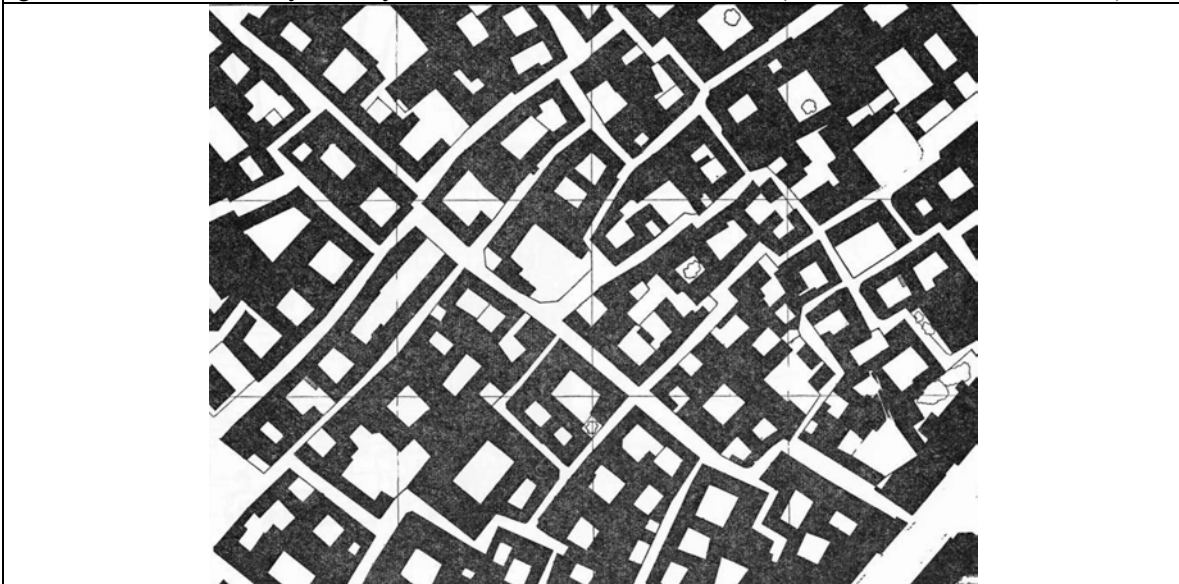


Figure 15. Figure ground of a Kuwaiti *fereej* (neighborhood) showings its irregular pathways and houses built around central courtyards. (Source: Shiber)

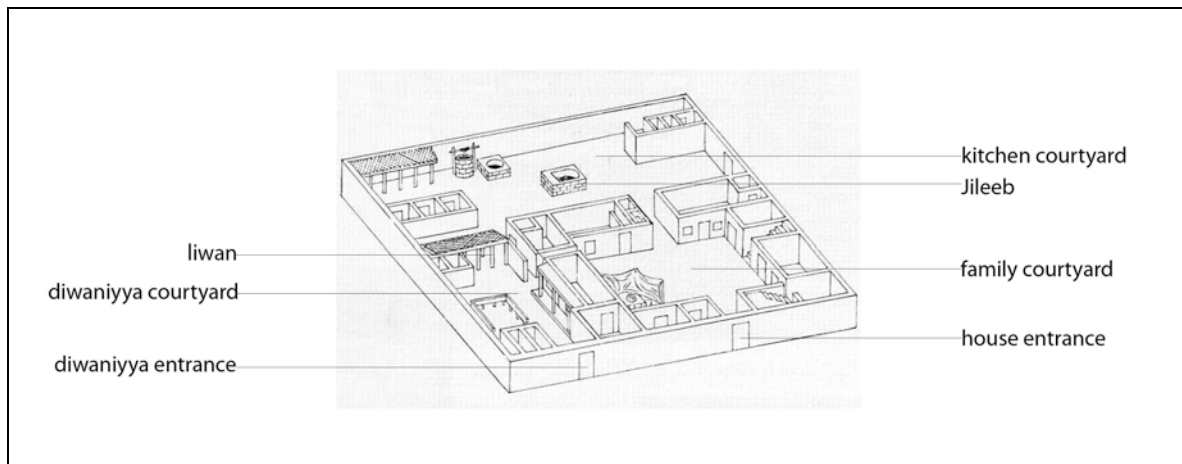


Figure 16. Axonometric plan of a bayt 'araby prototype showing the house organization around the three courtyards for the family, kitchen and diwaniyyah. (Source: Al-Agrougah and Al-Khars)



Figure 17. The bayt 'araby roof consisted of large *shandal* or mangrove beams that supported a layer of woven bamboo columns or *basjeel* which was then overlaid with woven sheets of reed from Iraq called *al-Barria*, that was topped with an eighteen inch thick layer of mud and straw. (Source: Lautrette)

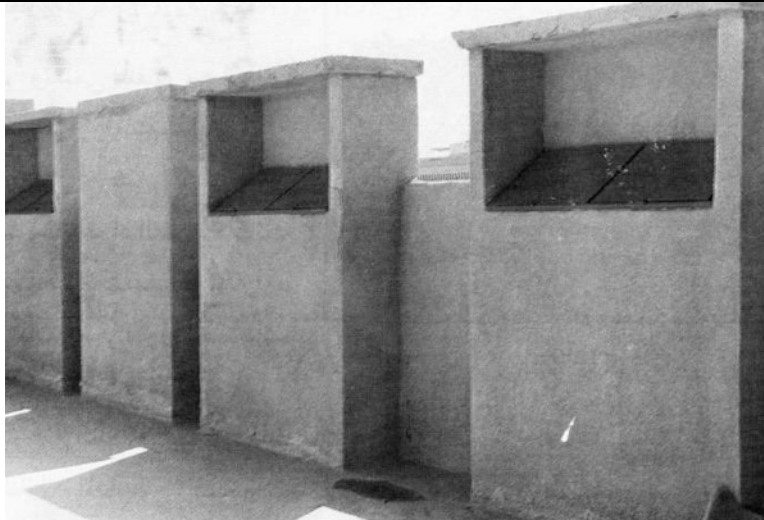


Figure 18. The *Baghdir* or wind towers that promoted air circulation. (Source: Al-Agrougah and Al-Khars)



Figure 19. *Al-Sateh* or the roof used for sleeping outdoors on hot summer nights, and for drying laundry and foods for storage such as fish, shrimp, and lamb. (Source: Al-Agrougah and Al-Khars)



Figure 20. The irregularly shaped Safat square can be seen at the bottom of this 1951 aerial showing the introduction of vehicular roads around it. (Source: Jamal)



Figure 21. *Al-Shar' al-Jadid* or the New Street, also known as "The Pillars Street," was the first modern intervention in old Kuwait city, 1948-1949. (Source: BP Kuwait Archive)

2. Urban Oasis: The Growth of a Colonial Company Town, Ahmadi 1946-1956

Overlapping Theoretical Terrains: The Company Town and Colonial Urbanism

The nomenclature used here to describe Ahmadi throughout its first decade of existence as a “colonial company town” signifies it as a distinct formal prototype which can be considered within the broader theoretical realms of the company town and colonial urbanism. Yet although Ahmadi easily intimates to these two theoretical paradigms, it cannot be entirely usurped by either precisely due to its unique formation as both. The fact that Ahmadi’s distinction, at least in its first decade, lies in its occupation of the overlapping space between these two theoretical terrains begs a thorough dissection of what this all means. Therefore, in order to better understand how Ahmadi operates as a colonial company town, its compound nomenclature must be broken down to its basic elements: the company town and colonial urbanism.

According to John S. Garner, the company town is one of the numerous settlement types which belong under the category of industrial towns. Others under this category include its predecessor the mill village, industrial communitarian settlements, corporate towns, garden cities and new towns. The company town, the focus of this study, has surprisingly not been extensively studied from within the design disciplines although it has garnered its fair share of attention from other disciplines such as economics, geography, political science, sociology, labor and social history. Garner and Margaret Crawford are the only architectural historians that have undertaken in-depth studies of the company town and their work is limited to the context of the United States where this formal model has most famously flourished throughout the nineteenth century and early twentieth century until its demise.¹

Garner defines the company town as a settlement built and operated by a single business enterprise which appeared between 1830 and 1930 during the early industrial age. It was a term coined in America in the late eighteenth century when it was first applied to mining camps in Appalachia and the Monongahela Valley.² The siting of company towns was dictated either by where the resource of interest was located or where the source of power to operate the mills was such as water. Rarely exceeding a population of a few thousand, the entire company town with all of its built components such as housing, schools, stores and churches was owned, managed and maintained by its owning business enterprise and as such its architectural features were usually of the same grain set within an attractive landscape. Furthermore Garner states that social order in the company town was a result of labor routine, isolation, and company-imposed rules or policies which, in turn created unique subcultures.³

Crawford uses the *Encyclopedia of Social Sciences*’ definition of a company town: “a community inhabited chiefly by the employees of a single company or group of companies which also owns a substantial part of the real estate and houses.”⁴ She notes

the Braintree Iron Works established the first company town in America in 1645 and explains how since then came the spread of settlements based on mining, timber-cutting and sawmilling, iron manufacturing, and rope and gun production. At the beginning of the nineteenth century the introduction of mechanized production engendered more company towns such as the textile mills of New England, the coalmines of the mid-Atlantic US, the copper mines in upper Michigan, the silver and copper mines of the Far West and the cotton mills of the south.⁵ The beginning of the twentieth century, during World War I, saw the rapid growth of suburban company towns at the edges of large manufacturing US cities. With the depression and changes in labor law came the gradual disappearance of the company town from the American landscape. This last phase of company town's evolution from a vernacular building exercise to a professional design task undertaken by architects, landscape architects and city planners between 1913-25 consist of Crawford's contribution to this body of theory with the introduction of the "new" company town. This characteristic of professionalization is what the "new" company town has in common when discussing the case of Ahmadi.

Garner and Crawford point to paternalism as being part and parcel of the company town. Paternalism is generally understood as a form of enforced benevolence that interferes with a person's freedom for her or his own good. Espousing a more positive outlook, Garner explains that some company owners took a genuine interest in the welfare of their workers with the provision of a model environment. Acknowledging that at times these owners' meddling in local affairs could be oppressive, he explains that these paternalistic measures were used to recruit or retain skilled labor and to maintain their financial investment in the town's buildings.⁶ A more critical view of paternalism is provided by Crawford when she states that although both paternalistic practices and the discourse of benevolence changed over time, it was through these practices that employers used their control over workers' daily lives to impose various types of structured dependency which ironically resulted in more agitation between these two groups. A famous example is the town of Pullman, Illinois in which residents had little control over their rented dwellings. Here the company was the sole authority over issues dealing with the maintenance, repair and aesthetics of the dwellings, and in terms of social behavior liquor was banned, tobacco smoking was restricted and a curfew was imposed. In fact it was this rising level of agitation which was expressed through labor organizing, unionization and strikes after the 1900s which lead to the design of "new" company towns as a possible solution. According to Crawford, the main aim of the "new" company town with its better living conditions, social services, parks and recreational facilities was to mitigate strikes and prevent unionization.⁷ The new company town's project of moral reform in the interest of capital accumulation is evident in the case of Ahmadi in its first decade, however, the latter differs in one major respect. Unlike the possibility of moving up the professional ranks in the company town as a reward of hard work, Ahmadi's professional ranks were spatially sealed preventing any room for upward mobility engendering an open-air prison of sorts which was very typical of colonial urbanism.

Colonial urbanism is the other theoretical terrain which Ahmadi overlaps with in its first decade. The fact that Kuwait was not a colony but instead a protectorate that was directly controlled by the United Kingdom until independence does not diminish from the presence of colonial elements within its social and urban milieu. Anthony D. King most famously theorizes colonial urbanism. He uses Emerson's definition of colonialism as "the establishment and maintenance, for an extended time, of rule over an alien people that is separate from and subordinate to the ruling power."⁸ King explains how as a political, economic and cultural process, colonialism was the vehicle by which urban planning was exported to many non-Western societies. So the notion of Ahmadi as an exported form of urban planning was a consequence of colonialism - or indirect colonialism as Kuwait was a protectorate – through which the metropolitan power extracted the raw material of oil to fuel itself. King points out that this is illustrative of what Castells calls "dependent urbanization" in which urbanization without industrialization took place in the dependent colonial society unlike in modern Western societies where urbanization was closely related to industrialization. Thus the organization of urban space in the dependent colonial society can be linked to "the internal and (especially) the external distribution of power."⁹

In order to understand where Ahmadi fits within what King calls the "modern history of export planning," one must look at the three phases he divides it into. The first period which leads up to the early twentieth century involves settlements that were laid out according to various military, technical, political and cultural principles and most importantly military-political dominance. The second period begins in the early until the mid-twentieth century with the introduction of formally stated town planning theory, ideology, legislations and professional skills in Britain which were conveyed on a selective and uneven basis to the dependent territories through the network of colonial relationships. And the third period consists of post- or neo-colonial developments after 1947 in Asia and 1956 in Africa. Here cultural, political and economic links have within a large network of global communications and a situation of economic dependence continued the process of "cultural colonialism" with the continued export of values, ideologies and planning models. In its first decade Ahmadi clearly fits into the second period as planning was implemented by the architect James M. Wilson who came from a colonial background. After its first decade Ahmadi begins to shift into King's third period as the successive chapters show.

A key aspect of colonial urbanism is socio-spatial segregation, indeed King states, "The central social fact of colonial planning was segregation, principally, though not only, on racial lines."¹⁰ As in many colonial or colonially affiliated sites Ahmadi was a town in which the indigenous population squatted on the perimeter or was confined to its "Arab Village." The combination of socio-spatial segregation (colonial urbanism) and capitalist motivations (company town theory), was a staple of urban development in other oil camps and towns as well such as those in Venezuela, Iran, Bahrain, and Saudi Arabia. Robert Vitalis and Kaveh Ehsani posit these motivations as driven by two elements: paternalism and racism on the one hand, and welfare and colonialism on the other. In his ground-breaking book *America's Kingdom* focusing on the Arabian American Oil

Company (ARAMCO) camps in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, Vitalis explains how the company used both paternalism and welfare – that is the provision of social benefits such as housing, social amenities and recreational facilities - to secure employee loyalty, and racism to prevent class solidarity and unionization.¹¹ Unlike Vitalis both Ehsani and Crinson use the notion of colonialism to explain the segregationist character of Abadan. Although the company towns discussed above were not part of colonies *per se*, like many other sites affiliated with colonial or imperial powers they were used as laboratories for the experimentation of new ideas and practices in professional urban planning that glaringly combined elements of colonial urbanism.¹²

Since its establishment in 1934 the Kuwait Oil Company's (KOC) physical presence in Kuwait began to increase. The British government owned major shares in APOC causing the British constituent in the KOC to have an overpowering influence on decision-making, especially in light of the fact that Kuwait was a British Protectorate. Oil was discovered in Bahra in 1938; however, operations were interrupted by World War II and were only able to continue in 1945. After this point, the KOC began to take major steps towards housing its workers in the form of the professionally planned town of Ahmadi. I argue that between 1946 and 1956 Ahmadi was designed and functioned as a colonial company town. The intersection of numerous factors contributed to Ahmadi's first decade of urban existence under the aegis of colonial urbanism. First was the importation of British and American employees and their subservient Indian staff and workers. Second, the employment of British company architects Wilson Mason & Partners with recent experience in Garden City-influenced Abadan. And third, were KOC's planning policies which set the stage for the towns structural hierarchy and guaranteed a superior lifestyle for the British, American and, to a lesser extent, Indian contingent. And fourth, the KOC's efforts to deny the existence of Arab labor despite it forming a majority of the company workforce.

The Birth of the Structural Hierarchy

Towards the end of World War II in 1945 the KOC was able to continue its suspended oil operations in Kuwait's Burgan oil field. A major decision was taken to move oil operations from their previous location at Magwa to the nearby Dhahar Ridge – which would soon become Ahmadi. This major shift in location was part of the 1945 Development Program (DP). In terms of oil operations, this scheme entailed a production system at Burgan, an oil storage area at Dhahar Ridge (approximately 10 miles from Burgan), and a gravity loading system from Dhahar Ridge that ran five miles of oil lines to the coast in the east where the new port of Mina Al-Ahmadi would be built with a mooring berth approximately one mile out to the sea (Figure 1).¹³ Indeed, the 400 meter elevation above sea level of the new site of operations not only saved the Company massive expenses by using natural gravity to pipe the oil to the port instead of the expense of installing pumps, but it also captured cooler breezes while simultaneously maintaining a direct view towards the Port.

Housing for Company employees during this time was of a temporary nature and scattered between Magwa, Burgan (which was to become the main center of operations) and Kuwait. In this early period, Company employees were organized according to professional grade: senior staff were exclusively British and American, junior or clerical staff and skilled labor (or artisans as KOC labeled them) were Indians and Pakistanis, and at the bottom of the scale was the Arab labor which also included Iranians. This structural hierarchy was to become the foundational organizing mechanism by which the Company maintained its stratified worker logic that was reinforced through various means such as employee grade, ethnicity, and the most visible of which was housing.

In 1945 the number of Company employees that required accommodation during the construction period was: 45 senior staff, 47 junior staff, 40 artisans and 500 labor. In addition, 250 local contract labor and American contractors labor were to be housed by their respective contracting company.¹⁴ Therefore a total of 632 employees were to be housed by KOC and 250 by the contracting company.

At first, the Company proposed the following housing at Magwa to meet this urgent demand for its workers: senior and junior staff was to be housed in Nissen huts brought from Abadan and assembled onsite (Figure 2).¹⁵ These huts were piped and fitted for water and electricity to provide water heaters and fans. Artisans were to be housed in 60 rooms in 3 blocks with electric lighting. And labor were to be housed in 6 blocks, each with 12 rooms back to back with 4 men per room 12' x 16' in size. Labor housing was to be constructed from mud brick and drum sheet roofs covered with tibbin.

The reality of the situation by early 1947 indeed saw senior and junior staff provided with Nissen huts, kitchens and restaurants with detached concrete latrine blocks provided by the Company for 152 and 144 persons respectively, however, only 240 artisans were housed in similar Nissen huts and 115 lived in blocks of concrete block or local mud-brick (figure 3), and 1000 labor in sarifas (shelters made from reeds and straw matting) and both artisans and labor were responsible for their own food provision.¹⁶ These figures show how the number of employees to be housed dramatically jumped from 632 in 1945 to 1,628 in 1947, almost tripling the recorded worker population in less than two years. Therefore it was of paramount importance that housing form a crucial component of the 1945 Development Program (DP).

For the sake of speed, housing at this time was to be built in a temporary and improvised manner and according to the 1945 DP report consisted of the following main sub-divisions:

- (i) Anglo-American Staff Accommodation: consisting of 20 pre-fabricated houses fitted with unit air-conditioners.
- (ii) Junior Staff and Artisans: Accommodation built with local mud bricks.

Indeed, in 1945 the Company ordered 10 pre-fabricated houses shipped from the USA as well as 10 Arcon houses for senior staff.¹⁷ The Aluminum house, the Arcon house and the Swedish house were some of the pre-fabricated house types imported by the company for the exclusive temporary housing of its senior staff. The Aluminum

house's main insulating material was aero-concrete and was fabricated in cubical sections to minimize site work, however its shipping specification was involved (Figure 4). The Arcon house, designed by a consortium of engineering firms, was delivered to the site in pieces, which was more affordable to ship but involved high labor construction costs. Its walls were of double asbestos cement sheeting, glass silk and wallboard. And the Swedish house was entirely made of timber (Figure 5).¹⁸

According to the 1945 DP, while "Anglo-American" senior staff would enjoy prefabricated houses with air-conditioning units, bathrooms, kitchens and separate servants quarters, only married junior staff, a small number in this early period, were allocated married quarters built with local mud bricks and the remaining were allocated Nissen huts with latrines, fans and no air-conditioning. Artizans and labor, who were not mentioned at all in the 1945 DP's aforementioned main subdivisions, were to be allocated bays (long concrete blocks) and sarifas.¹⁹

This brief glance at the 1945 DP temporary housing conditions reveals the beginnings of a structural hierarchy as the major organizational element of what was to become the company town of Ahmadi. This structural hierarchy manifested itself in three major ways: employee grade, ethnicity and housing. The first hierarchy on which the company was structured was the employee grade as illustrated in the following categories of: "Anglo-American" or senior staff, junior staff, artisan or skilled laborer, and at the very bottom "unskilled" labor. The second hierarchy that corresponded with employee grade was that of ethnicity. This is clearly stated in the labeling of the first accommodation subdivision, "Anglo-American staff." Although the latter accommodation subdivisions do not explicitly state the ethnicity of junior staff, artisans or labor, I will illustrate later how junior staff and artisans were in fact exclusively Indians and Pakistanis and labor consisted mostly of locals and other Arabs. The third hierarchy reifying these class and ethnic divisions was housing. Anglo-American staff was to receive prefabricated houses fitted with unit air-conditioners. A few junior staff was to receive local mud brick dwellings and Nissen huts. And aside from the DP's two main subdivisions of "Anglo-American Staff" and "Junior Staff and Artizans," housing for labor was not even mentioned.²⁰ These three major hierarchies of employee grade, ethnicity and housing were to be picturesquely enshrined in the town plan of Ahmadi by the Company architect Wilson Mason & Partners.

Wilson Mason & Partners: The Company Architect

The practice has developed internationally on a United Kingdom/Middle East axis. In a word, the reason is simple enough - oil.²¹

In 1947 the KOC commissioned the architect James Mollison Wilson (1887-1965), the founder of Wilson Mason & Partners, to design of the Company's town plan, head offices, staff housing and mosques.²² Sir Edwin Lutyens, also known as a "second Christopher Wren", was Wilson's mentor. Lutyens designed and restored many country houses and castles and was the architect for London's Hampstead Garden Suburb. More

importantly, Wilson worked with Lutyens in India from 1913 to 1916 as one of his first assistants on New Delhi and this experience profoundly influenced his future approaches to town planning and architecture.²³

From India he moved with the Punjab Light horse Regiment and the Indian Army to Mesopotamia where he was transferred to the Indian Engineers with the rank of major when Iraq began to emerge as a separate state in 1918. In 1921 Emir Faisal Al-Hashemi was proclaimed king of Iraq and at this time Wilson was charged with setting up the seat of government and directing the Public Works Department in Baghdad until 1926, after which he returned to Britain to set up his architectural practice.²⁴ During his period of office in Iraq, some of the important buildings he was responsible for were the University of Baghdad, the Agricultural Institute, Baghdad Museum, the hospital at Basra and King Faisal's Palace. Here, according to his partner C.H. Lindsey Smith, Wilson “produced what was considered a fine design by marrying the best of local art and craftsmanship with the modern building methods.” His design for the Palace was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1928.²⁵ Also according to the firm’s portfolio “JM's (Wilson's) style, while echoing the grandeur and monumentality of his mentor's (Lutyens), was to reflect a deeper sympathy for Islamic traditions and local materials. This can be seen in his designs for King Faisal's Palace (Figure 6), the Port Offices in Basra (Figure 7), Baghdad Railway Station (Figure 8) and some of the buildings for the British Bank of the Middle East.” These buildings show Wilson’s aesthetic sensitivity to context through his extensive use of arches, domes and the local brickwork. Wilson’s sensitivity to context through the use of certain architectural features is absent in Ahmadi because it was designed as a company town with the aim of recreating a familiar built environment for its expatriate population.

During Wilson's time in Baghdad the High Commissioner was Sir Arnold Wilson, who later became general manager of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company (APOC) and hired Wilson in 1927 for his first commission by APOC to design a general hospital in Abadan, Iran. It was not until 1944 that he was formally recognized as the Company architect.²⁶ Indeed, Wilson went on to plan and design numerous company areas such as Masjid-i-Sulaiman, Agha Sair, Gach Saran, Kermashah and Bandar Mashin in Iran; Kirkuk for the Iraq Petroleum Company in Iraq; and, of course, Ahmadi for the KOC in Kuwait.²⁷ Wilson’s town planning approach in Ahmadi was shaped by a variety of factors: KOC’s so-called Kuwait Building Program policy (1947-1951), his colonial background and experience with Lutyens in Delhi, Garden City principles, and, most importantly, his planning and design of Abadan.

The Kuwait Building Program, 1947-1951

In 1947 the KOC began to more seriously pursue the planning and construction of its oil company town on the Dhahar Ridge as part of what KOC called the Kuwait Building Program, 1947-1951. At this time the town was christened “Ahmadi” after Kuwait’s incumbent ruler Sheikh Ahmed Al-Sabah. From 1946 to 1947 temporary staff accommodation were provided in Ahmadi as a result of the oil infrastructural building

effort associated with the increase in crude-oil output. By May 1947 there were 25 Arcon huts, 8 Armour huts and 58 local huts to house 127 senior staff and 163 junior staff; and 4 Nissen huts, 12 steel roof huts, 45 tents, 26 sarifas and 14 “Miscellaneous” to house 1188 artizans and labor. 137 Nissen huts were on order to replace tent housing and 150 Standard ministry of Works huts to house 15 men each were proposed.²⁸ The Kuwait Building Program, 1947-1951, called for the provision of permanent staff housing, with a total of 1,450 houses, divided into five stages over the span of five years.

By 1947, the British architectural firm Wilson Mason & Partners hired by the KOC already visited Kuwait and prepared a town plan for Ahmadi in collaboration with the KOC Building and Civil Engineering representatives in London and Kuwait. In addition to housing, the five-year plan included the following municipal buildings and social amenities seen as essential due to the site’s isolation:

1. Guest house with restaurants and common rooms.
2. General offices and laboratory.
3. Hospital and staff quarters (50 bedded).
4. Senior and junior staff clubs (Swimming Pools).
5. Artizans Institute and hall.
6. Fire station and shopping parades.
7. Indian restaurant.
8. Schools for all grades (junior and senior).
9. Cinema and public hall.
10. Mosque.
11. Administrative building in Arab village and a dispensary.
12. Public pleasure gardens.
13. General post office.
14. Central clothes washing building (for Artizans and labor).
15. Electricity Kiosks etc.
16. Bank.
17. Church.

This list of municipal buildings and social amenities was appended with the following note “the first 10 above are in order of priority.” This note reveals the KOC’s biased planning approach which privileges the higher echelon’s of this capitalist establishment such as guests and business as seen in numbers 1 and 2, and social clubs and schools for staff only, disregarding similar institutions for labor as seen in 4 and 8. Indeed, in terms of educational amenities the Kuwait Building Program states that schools are planned for 60 Anglo-American children up to 10 years of age and for 200 children of junior staff employees while vaguely stating that “provision has also been made for local children in their village.” Indeed, it wasn’t until years after the provision of the Anglo-American school in 1951, and the Indo-Pakistani school in 1952 that the KOC provided the State with a school building for Arab children upon the State’s insistence.²⁹

The Kuwait Building Program Policy lists twelve points regarding the planning of Ahmadi. A few of these reveal what the KOC envisioned as it was moving towards a more permanent presence in Kuwait. Policy number 2 states the following,

2. Permanent housing is to be erected by the Company to cater for all classes of employees of the permanent establishment. For those whose employment, being dependent on construction programs, is temporary, temporary housing will be erected.

It can be gleaned that at this time the company was heading in a direction of planning a semi-permanent town as a large portion of the employees involved in construction were seen as a short-term population, hence the KOC at this point did not have to commit to plan for a fully permanent town.

Policy number 3 states the following,

3. All permanent housing, with a few exceptions, is to be erected at Ahmadi at which site there is to be developed, besides the estates for the British and American employees, a village for Arab employees. Temporary housing is, in general to be located to suite work locations.

This is the first time the idea of an “Arab Village,” similar in concept to “Abadan town,” is introduced by the KOC. Policy number 5 states that within a decade, training will have produced Arab artisans and other skilled workers who will ultimately be accommodated in the Arab village. Meanwhile, the artisan class, which almost entirely consists of Indians, is to have non-married accommodation for the next few years and is to be accommodated in the Arab village. Indeed as policy number 4 states, as of yet, married accommodation for employees is restricted to senior and junior staff. In addition, policy number 7 states that only senior and junior staff houses shall have air conditioning.

Policy number 9 clearly states how the KOC envisions the Arab village,

The Arab village in which it is intended all skilled and unskilled Arab employees of the permanent establishment will ultimately reside, is to develop with a certain degree of autonomy. The basis of its creation shall be a layout plan, approved by the ruler of Kuwait, and the initial erection by the Company of certain public buildings, a mosque, school, dispensary, a public health office, shops coffee houses, administrative offices, and a limited number of houses for employees. Future development and building will adhere to the aforementioned plan.

By planning in this manner the KOC insures that, just as the name “Arab Village” suggests, this part of Ahmadi would be exclusively for the Arab employees of the company doing away with their need to go to other parts of Ahmadi such as the senior staff or junior staff areas. Therefore, by planning an Arab village the KOC can pursue its policy of spatial segregation. Policy number 11 states the following regarding the motivation behind the Arab village,

In amplification of the Arab housing part of this policy, it has to be pointed out that the successful development of a new model village at Ahmadi will have far-reaching effects on the meaning of the operations in Kuwait. In the Arab Village children of company employees will be born, reared, educated and trained in

better conditions than in the town of Kuwait. The quickest replacement of those skilled workers, foreign to Kuwait, who are now being imported and who will have to be imported in increasing numbers, will be brought about as a result of the development of this model village.

In addition to introducing spatial segregation, as seen in policy number 11, the Arab village is also part of the KOC's long-term capitalist strategy cutting of costs regarding the workforce. The Arab Village is seen as a site for the birth, rearing, education and training of the children of Arab company employees who the KOC sees as replacing the currently imported foreign skilled workers. In addition, their living situation "in better conditions than in the town of Kuwait" was seen as increasing their loyalty to the Company. Therefore the motivation for the development of an Arab village is completely self-interested as the KOC seeks to produce its own cheap, local, skilled, docile and loyal workforce through this "model village." Once housing in the Arab village was available, however, it was used mostly for Indian and Pakistani workers while Arab workers remained living outside Ahmadi.

Abadan: A Model for Ahmadi

Between 1912 and 1945 Abadan grew to be one of Iran's first modern cities in a previously scarcely populated area located at the estuary where the Tigris, Euphrates and Karun rivers meet the Persian Gulf.³⁰ As Wilson's first major APOC commission, Abadan provided a model for Ahmadi. As in Abadan, Wilson replicated the structural hierarchy of the oil company at three different scales: the urban, the architectural, and the social.

At the urban scale, Ahmadi's town plan was divided into three sections: the North Section, the Mid Section, and the Arab Village which was later called the South Section (figure 9). The North section was planned to accommodate KOC's British and American senior staff, while the Mid section was designed to house Indian and Pakistani Clerical, Financial and Technical (C. F. & T.) or junior staff, and the Arab Village or South section was planned for KOC's indigenous workers: Arabs, Kuwaitis, Bedouins and Iranians. Technically speaking this urban hierarchy not only reflected KOC employee grades but also replicated the company's policy of ethnic segregation as it was apparent in the planning approach adopted by Wilson in Abadan, and before that in Delhi. Indeed, the overall urban plan of New or Imperial Delhi (1912-1930) by Lutyens and Wilson clearly set a precedent for Abadan. In his discussion of New Delhi, Anthony D. King has pointed to its hexagonal grid containing certain zones whose allocation was based on race, occupational rank and socio-economic status (figure 10).³¹ King emphatically states that "Delhi, of all Indian cities, represents a textbook case of colonial urban development."³² In Abadan socio-spatial segregation was also reinforced through the planning of small townships in four or five distinct areas with each housing specific ethnicities and employee grades.³³ According to Mark Crinson, the company considered small townships as more easily and efficiently controllable than large ones.³⁴

Wilson's planning and architectural approach in Abadan also followed the Garden Suburb model, which he applied in Ahmadi as well. The Garden Suburb was a popular model of urban planning used prolifically in the early to mid-twentieth century throughout the world, especially in Britain where the model originated. The Garden Suburb owed its inspiration to Ebenezer Howard's utopian idea of urban planning which spurred the Garden City Movement in the early twentieth century. In an attempt to solve the deplorable living conditions in British industrial cities, Howard's Garden City aimed to combine socially egalitarian work and living conditions in a town and country setting.³⁵

Wilson and British KOC employees who resided in Ahmadi introduced the garden aspect of this urban model to Kuwait through the landscaping of the company town. By means of a trial and error approach, early British residents succeeded in isolating plants which could survive in Kuwait's harsh desert environment. To encourage the landscaping of Ahmadi KOC sold seeds and plants at very low prices and held regular garden competitions that were very popular among Ahmadi residents.³⁶ Indeed, since the first tree was planted in 1948, Ahmadi grew to become a lush green oasis. In spite of Wilson's success at implementing the Garden component of Howard's model, Ahmadi's socio-spatial segregation clearly suggests that he did not conform to Howard's social ideals given the town's inegalitarian living conditions.

The architectural scale of Wilson's plans reflected this socio-spatial segregation in the hierarchical allotment of houses and lot sizes which varied in the North, Mid, and South sections of the town. Figure 11 shows a view of picturesque North Ahmadi with its spacious houses and lots in the background and the slightly smaller houses of the Mid section with the undersized orthogonal row housing for labor in South Ahmadi in the foreground. The plan of the senior staff house reveals a high standard of living: air-conditioned and fully furnished, this was a sizable detached house surrounded by a large garden. For example figure 12 shows the left portion of the house plan which includes bedrooms, a bathroom and one room for the children with services on the right side inclusive of a kitchen separated from the servant quarters by a yard. In contrast the Junior or C.F. & T. staff house was semi-detached and significantly smaller in size than its senior counterpart. Neither fully furnished nor air-conditioned, the junior house was equipped with only an oven and stove in the kitchen, and closets. Although there was a WC for servants at the back of the yard, junior staff did not have the luxury of live-in help (figure 13). The plan for the house designed for the labor force had only two rooms, an inner courtyard and a miniscule store and cooking area furnished only with a stove and a sink. With barely any outdoor space the houses were also wall-to-wall with their neighbors (figure 14). This review of the architectural scale in pre-independence Ahmadi also suggests how social segregation was deployed at the micro level of domestic furniture. A similar architectural hierarchy was used in Abadan as European senior staff were allocated large villas set in spacious gardens, workers' neighborhoods consisted of row houses with high walls and small courtyards while mid-level staff housing combined elements of both.³⁷

The social scale also reflects how KOC's ethnic inequalities became embedded in Ahmadi's colonial architecture and urbanism. An example is provided by the fact that regardless of actual professional qualifications certain groups remained confined in spatial terms to their specified grade level as one of the first Kuwaiti employees of the company recalled:

... even an English driver was senior staff. The senior staff was for the nationality not the experience. The English doctor was senior staff but the Indian doctor was junior staff. And when you are admitted in the hospital there is a ward for senior staff and a ward for junior staff. And the artisans and laborers were separate. The doctors and nurses for juniors were treating juniors as well as artisans. But the doctors in the junior staff never treated the senior staff. No, they were all British, the doctors and nurses for the seniors were all British. So British treat British, and Indians treat Indians and down the line.³⁸

As in Abadan, these ethnically segregated enclaves were also spatially policed. The North section, exclusive to British and American senior employees, was guarded by company security that prevented access to non-white residents.³⁹ In fact, non-English or non-Americans, specifically Arabs, were to be confined to their own designated space as epitomized by the labeling of their quarters inside Ahmadi as The Arab Village. The Arab Village was similar in concept to Abadan Town in that it was meant for the exclusive housing of the natives with the aim of keeping them physically and socially separated from expatriate staff areas. Unlike Abadan Town, however, which was constructed spontaneously by laborers working at the refinery and not provided housing by the company,⁴⁰ the Arab Village was part of Ahmadi's planned complex.

Reality on the Ground: The Early Plight of Indian/Pakistani Workers

At the start of the Kuwait Building Program in December of 1946, the Civil Engineering Construction Division of the Company composed of Wimpey & Co. employees was in charge of the housing construction at Ahmadi. By this time 62 Nissen huts had left the UK for Kuwait while miscellaneous temporary buildings continued to be erected at Ahmadi and Magwa from materials bought locally.⁴¹ Because of the difficulty of obtaining local building materials, two block-making plants were erected on site in 1947 considerably increasing the production of blocks.

In November 1947 the first permanent house was occupied. By January 1948 the following permanent housing was built: 23 senior staff houses completed, 19 junior staff houses partially completed and 14 artizan quarters partially completed.⁴² The levels of completion of these houses reveal a hierarchy in the prioritization of housing construction according to professional grade, for example, senior staff first, then junior staff and then artizans. During this time many Indian and Pakistani personnel had to be brought to Ahmadi due to lack of local professional expertise at the junior level as well as lack of skilled labor and the necessary amount of non-skilled labor. The influx of Indian and

Pakistani workers coupled with inadequate housing meant dire times in Ahmadi regarding their accommodation during the late 1940s and early 1950s.

The total number of Clerical Foreman & Technical staff (C.F. & T.) or junior staff at the end of November 1949 was 1,286 (80% Indians and 20% Pakistanis). On the day following their arrival they reported to a transit camp from which they were directed to their respective permanent camps. Newcomers were issued one iron bed (without a mattress), one chair, one bucket and a jug and wash basin.⁴³ At this time 409 junior staff lived in tents in all areas, 633 were in Nissen huts, 56 were in P.M.Q's (permanent married quarters) and 10 were in T.M.Q.s. (temporary married quarters) and the rest were in "other" buildings. The accommodation provided for married men was the best and highlights the company's preferential treatment towards men of a married status. Those living in tents had the worst experience and those in Nissen huts found it difficult to walk even in some of the rooms because of overcrowding.⁴⁴

Social services provided to junior staff were of an inferior quality to those given to British and American senior staff. With regards to medical needs, junior staff were treated at dispensaries and again the employment of a social hierarchy is evident here as they had priority over artisans while waiting. Serious cases were taken to the hospital but the transport arrangements were inadequate. With regards to recreational activities a social club, called Unity Club, was provided by the KOC in a Nissen hut that served junior staff. There was a small library, reading room, billiards room, table tennis, badminton and a bar and Indian and Pakistan newspapers were available. In terms of education, a kindergarten school was housed in one of the T.M.Q.s and about 25 boys and girls were taught by two Indian ladies, one taught English and Urdu, the other English and Hindi. This kindergarten was restricted to children of junior staff who were either Indian or Pakistani signifying the permeation and maintenance of both class and ethnic divisions down to the level of the company children's education.

By 1949 the majority of KOC staff was composed of 4000 Pakistani and Indian artisans and domestics in various locations within the concessional area. The artisans were mostly recruited from Pakistan, through the A.I.O.C. (Anglo-Iranian Oil Company, previously APOC) offices at Karachi and Lahore, and the domestic workers from Bombay. More than half of these workers, 2,654 of them lived in Ahmadi while others lived in other concessional locations such as Mena, Warah, Magwa and Shuwaikh.⁴⁵

Similar to the junior staff, artisans and domestics first arrived at a transit camp in Ahmadi and were then sent to their respective permanent camps assigned according to seniority in service. First arrivals shared a tent with four artisans and each man was given one wooden cot frame and rope or, gunny tape, to wrap round the frame, one hurricane lantern and one jerrican and one tin of kerosene every month. The majority of workers were housed in tents and the rest were in Nissen or mud huts. As mentioned earlier, tents were the worst to live in. The following is a description of the tents by the author of the report titled "Notes on Indian and Pakistani Personnel in Kuwait,"

Apart from hiding an abundance of filth and the miserable belongings of their occupants, the tents provide little protection from the heat of summer or the cold

winds of winter. In the absence of separate kitchens the men have to do all their cooking inside the tents on kerosene pressure stoves and the kerosene gas adds considerably to the unsavouriness of the assortment of food smells in the tents.

Regarding the hutted shelters he said the following, “people living in huts are not much better off, in this respect, but they at least have some protection against the inclemencies of the weather. There is overcrowding in the Nissen huts.”⁴⁶ Aside from the condescending tone of the former description which attributes the artisans and domestics “abundance of filth and the miserable belongings” as a problem associated with the tent conditions, the Nissen or mud huts were not any better in terms of protection from the extreme climate and had problems of overcrowding. Exacerbating this artisan housing problem was the fact that despite 200 family quarters built to accommodate artisans, once ready, many of them were actually used to house senior staff (British and American) bachelors while they waited for the availability of more senior housing pointing once again to the social injustice resulting from the omnipresent employee hierarchy.⁴⁷

In addition to the scarcity of housing suffered by artisans, there was the problem of social services that were even more inadequate than those provided to junior staff. Only clinics were provided for artisans and labor and a shortage of doctors relative to the large number of patients. Complicated cases were usually referred to the temporary hospital at Magwa, which was an adapted steel frame building previously used to house labor (figure 15).⁴⁸ However, there were no transportation arrangements for such cases rendering the whole exercise futile as the one ambulance car was used only in serious cases. Admission to the hospital depended on the beds available which themselves were very limited; 97 beds in the labor and artisan ward; 26 in the surgical ward, 43 in the medical ward; and 28 in the mixed ward.⁴⁹ However, the Artisans's Club in Ahmadi provided artisans with a welcome distraction. In addition to a fairly large number of vernacular books, it provided facilities for indoor games such as table-tennis, carrom and cards. There was also a small canteen attached to the club which served tea and soft drinks and sold a few other items at controlled prices.⁵⁰

The KOC was aware that due to the absence of labor laws, junior staff, artisans and labor would eventually seek to voice their dissatisfaction with such things as poor housing conditions and inadequate medical facilities through the formation of worker unions. In order to avoid this the author who reported all of these shortcomings suggested the formation of joint departmental consultative committees. Indeed, according to the KOC, this seemingly altruistic policy of representation would act as an outlet for staff to let out frustration, for political agitation to be easily detected and subsequently dealt with and it would enlighten the Company on matters dealing with staff welfare in a way that disciplines the employee.⁵¹ This is proof that the KOC was well aware of the dire housing conditions Indian and Pakistani staff had to contend with and instead of directly confronting these problems it chose to appease any possible future worker agitations by creating company sanctioned consultative committees that would merely act as an outlet for staff frustrations and intelligence gathering.

Senior Staff Town: Reincarnating the British-India Lifestyle

During 1949, while the junior staff, artisans and labor had to endure tent and temporary shelter living, the British and American senior staff were the first to enjoy comfortable living in permanent housing recently built for them, as well as that meant for junior staff (figure 16). In addition to this, the KOC hired the Wimpey Winter Party in 1949 and 1950 to commence work on important projects associated with senior staff such as the Main Office which needed to be expanded and located near operations in Ahmadi as opposed to Kuwait town, general shops, a dispensary and a senior staff club in Ahmadi.⁵²

The Main Office was to house the KOC's top administrative officials and their support staff and was of an "H" shaped plan with a center portion, a south wing and a north wing (figure 17). The shopping center which was restricted to senior staff comprised 6 separate lock-up shops and market, which was the British Spinney's brand (figure 18). The Staff Club would consist of a main lounge with catering facilities and a bar, ladies lounge, bowling alley, squash courts, changing rooms, a swimming and children's pool and car park - all of these were for senior staff and their families only (figure 19).⁵³ Later, the Indians and Pakistanis or junior staff were also provided with their own social clubs such as the Unity Club and the Nakhlistan Club (figure 20), and a few years later the Nadi Al-Ahmadi or Ahmadi Club was built for Arab labor. Hence this culture of clubs served as a mechanism for KOC's structural hierarchy.

Furthermore, upon arrival by the company plane at Kuwait airport the British and American employees were immediately driven to Ahmadi by-passing Kuwait city (figure 21). Ahmadi at the time was necessarily self-sufficient because Kuwait could not provide the foods and daily necessities this expatriate population was accustomed to, therefore fresh meat and produce was flown in mostly from Beirut and sold at Spinney's (figure 22). In addition, there was laundry service (figure 23), a butcher (figure 24) and a town bakery that prepared fresh bread and assorted baked goods (figure 25).

In addition to junior staff and artisans, domestic servants constituted a considerable portion of the KOC workforce imported from India/Pakistan. With the importation of this distinct group of workers from India/Pakistan to work in Ahmadi's restaurants, messes and private houses came the importation of what Anthony D. King calls "the colonial third culture."⁵⁴ According to King the colonial third culture is the distinct culture of the British in India which is neither fully representative of the metropolitan society nor of the indigenous society and as such produced distinct physical-spatial urban forms. In other words, it is the transformation of metropolitan cultural institutions as they came into contact with the culture of the indigenous society. With the first culture being that of the metropolitan society, the second as that of the indigenous society, the third culture then emerges as a result of colonialism. Dominated by a politically charged situation the colonial third culture comes to be expressed as a "dominance-dependence relationship" where unique social roles were developed. There were expectations by the company that such social roles were to be exported from British-India into the oil colony of Ahmadi as expressed in the following with regards to domestic workers,

Generally speaking, they are of an appallingly poor type...I have made inquiries from several sources in Karachi, and I think that many good Muslim waiters could be found if an effort were made. In Kuwait the restaurant servants are, in my opinion incorrectly dressed. If Muslims, they should wear achkans and puggaries and clean shoes. They should have coloured cummerbunds and puggri bands and a badge with K.O.C. initials. Long sleeves are invariably worn when serving meals in India and in the better hotels cheap but clean cotton gloves are worn.⁵⁵

The replication of certain standards of the third colonial culture of British India were expected to be replicated in Kuwait, despite the fact that India gained its independence two years preceding this report in 1947. The author of the same report also had the following to say about Bungalow servants who would work in British/American employee homes (figure 26),

Many employers of Indian servants here have no idea of how to treat them and relations between Indians and Europeans suffer much in consequence. This is easily remedied and could be attended to at once...There is, on the other hand, a distinct tendency on the part of certain persons to treat the Indian with too much familiarity. An Indian will react to this immediately and will take advantage of it and to the detriment of all concerned...I suggest that a lecture on the treatment of Indians is just as important to persons who have never been in the Middle East or India before, as is Mr. Hallows' lecture to newcomers on the Arabs and their customs. In fact, many employees seldom come into contact with Arabs at all but are in very close daily contact with Indians.⁵⁶

This quote points to the mindset of the British as still colonially entrenched as signified in their view of Indians as subjects that can be molded to behave subserviently when treated appropriately, and in effect disciplined to behave as they should. Also, the last sentence points to the fact that although these domestic workers were on close daily contact with the British (figures 27 and 28), the latter seldom came in contact with Arabs exemplifying Ahmadi's complete insulation and disconnection from the local Arab workforce. This last quote regarding restaurant and bungalow servants exhibits elements of King's third culture adding further weight to the argument that Ahmadi although not part of a colony *per se* functioned, in its early years, as a colonial company town.

Resisting the Town

At the end of 1949 KOC personnel consisted of the following breakdown; 1,501 senior staff (British, American and few Europeans) 1,298 junior staff (Indian/Pakistani); 4,789 artisans (Indian/Pakistani); and 6,672 unskilled labor (Kuwaitis, Iranians and other Arabs), bringing the total to 14,260 personnel.⁵⁷ According to these figures only 10% of this population which consisted of British, Americans and a few Europeans was accommodated with buildings of a permanent nature, while the 34% Indian and Pakistani

population was inadequately accommodated in tents and temporary shelters and the majority 56% consisting of Kuwaiti and other Arab unskilled labor were not accommodated by the KOC because they were locals and therefore considered in no need of housing.

Since the start of oil operations at Magwa and the Dhahar Ridge in 1946 until the early 1950s the KOC actively resisted Ahmadi becoming a fully-fledged town. The “Proposals for Permanent Housing 1946/1947” report states that to deal with the “problem” of housing of 400 laborers, the KOC would,

- A. Construct in small blocks barrack accommodation composed of 12’ x 12’ rooms which, in the first instance, will be used to house four men per room. The layout of these rooms to be such as to enable them to be utilized later as low grade labour married quarters.
- B. foster the expansion of a self-supporting community in Fahaheel village thus relieving the Company and the building and control of a large village community in its own area in the desert, for which all the attendant services will entirely devolve on the Company.⁵⁸

As point B clearly indicates the company was interested in fostering the development of labor housing within a “self-supporting” community in Fahaheel village which is 6 miles east of Ahmadi and “in its own area of the desert.” This company initiative was two-fold. First, by being “self-supporting” it would cut the massive responsibility and costs associated with its building and management. Second, by having it “in its own area of the desert,” as opposed to Ahmadi - KOC’s area of the desert - it would ensure a physical distance and keep it and its residents conveniently out of sight. Though point A proposed to build barrack accommodation, in reality the few of these that were built were intended for the Indian/Pakistani laborers and Arab laborers had no choice but to settle informally on the border of Ahmadi.

Another reason the KOC resisted to build a permanent town was by its estimation that, unless there is a further increase in requirements, the large drilling program would be completed by the end of 1950. It was hoped that, by then, there would be a large reduction in field personnel, and therefore a large reduction in the number of permanent houses planned.⁵⁹ Despite the fact that there was a strong chance the drilling program would continue (which it did), the KOC preferred to choose the less costly route and avoid the costs involved in building a more permanent town.

Furthermore, in a memorandum written by KOC official Mr. Elkington, he strongly presents his case against the company policy to build housing for the local population for a variety of reasons. First, he urges “the Company not to do what the State should, and can afford to do.” Second, he stated that the provision of housing at Ahmadi would create a general demand for housing at Ahmadi as the worker’s families who remained housed in Kuwait would eventually want to move to Ahmadi. This would lead to the requirement of all the amenities of a town and therefore a much greater expenditure and social responsibility on the part of the KOC would be involved. This, Elkington said, would lead “to creating the large social problems at Ahmadi with which we were familiar

at Abadan.” Third, the KOC’s authority will be subservient to the Kuwait Municipal Authorities who will require to exercise their authority.⁶⁰

In other KOC memoranda, Mr. Pattinson, another KOC official stated that since local Arab village growth adjacent to Ahmadi was stimulated by the local authorities, the later stages of the KOC’s labor housing program might not be required.⁶¹ Another, reason not to build housing for locals, according to another memorandum was that since a large number of Kuwaitis were nomads by upbringing they would not like living in the town in any case.⁶² Also, the KOC reasoned that since men showed their preference for living in neighboring Fahaheel and Shaibah in locally-built mud-brick houses without services, by 1957 the KOC may partner with the state in building houses with services in both places. “In that way they would be integrating their effort with the State and preventing the development of a single large oil Township at Ahmadi.”⁶³

The plethora of reasons posited by the company to prevent Ahmadi from becoming a large oil town such as; building self-sustaining communities physically isolated by distance from Ahmadi; reducing the number of houses planned for locals with the anticipation of an imminent end to the drilling program; the active discouragement of locals to move to Ahmadi; differing the responsibility of housing the local population to or sharing it with the state; and the Arab’s disposition to a nomadic lifestyle were motivated by a combination of capitalist and racist attitudes. The capitalist motivation wanted to cut costs at all possible corners and the racist motivation was compelled to have the local Arab population housed in a location a considerable distance away with the aim of rendering it out of sight.

Evading the Arabs

Ever Since the KOC launched its Kuwait Building Program, 1947-1951, Arab labor housing was a non-issue.⁶⁴ The KOC saw no need to house its Arab labor force since it was assumed they lived in Kuwait Town, regardless of the fact that it was about 22 miles north of Ahmadi; a considerable distance back then since they couldn’t afford cars. The KOC did provide these workers with free round-trip ground transportation between Kuwait town and Ahmadi. This, however, involved a daily one-hour drive both ways on an unpaved desert road in extreme desert weather conditions and therefore was an arduous trip for Arab labor. In fact, this back and forth daily trip was so arduous that Arab labor began to settle informally in an area located between Magwa and Ahmadi which accommodated contract labor, KOC labor, shop keepers, and families of labor.⁶⁵ This settlement was variously referred to by KOC officials as a “slum area,” “primitive area” and one that housed the “fringe population” (figure 29).

Despite the growth of this “slum area” the KOC insisted on making the case for transporting local employees from their homes in Kuwait town to Ahmadi. The KOC saw this as more economic and less costly than providing Arab labor with housing, especially with the current agreement which diverts a considerable portion of the transport cost to the state.⁶⁶ KOC’s management anticipated that this settlement would disappear or would be demolished by the Authorities once sufficient company housing was built and the

present company employees living in the settlement could eventually move into it.⁶⁷ However, by the end of 1952 this settlement housed 666 families of which 511 were company employees.⁶⁸ Because this “slum area” grew around the boundaries of the KOC’s property, especially near the main entrance which at the time was on the north senior section between Magwa and Ahmadi, it was considered a major eyesore by company officials. In addition to the fact that there was a lack of labor housing, the KOC decided on the “resettlement of the fringe population.”⁶⁹

The KOC suggested the development of an independent municipality adjacent to company operations on a site to be selected by KOC where it would lay out hard surface roads, water lines, street lights, and install latrines and incinerators in conjunction with and on behalf of the municipal authorities. The Company would have no control over the type of housing construction nor would it have a say on who might live in the village.⁷⁰ Two years later, in 1954, 1000 Arab families, 700 of whom were KOC employees, were moved from the Magwa to Ahmadi road stretch to a new camp near Fahaheel, called Badawiyyah, which is 6 miles east of Ahmadi (figure 30). The move involved the dismantling of the houses and their re-construction by the residents themselves in the new site in a mere two days with the KOC providing free moving transportation only.⁷¹ According to the KOC magazine, *The Kuwaiti*:

It is obvious, even from the photo, that the new camp site will be an improvement on the old jumble of huts that have been so familiar to people entering or leaving Ahmadi on the Magwa road. Hard surfaced roads, built by the Company, water laid on, and more generous space between houses all go to improve the conditions of the people living there.⁷²

Contrary to this statement, Badawiyyah did not improve on the poor living conditions of Arab labor and was only effective in adding physical distance between itself and Ahmadi.

Ahmadi as an Oil Colony

Towards the end of the Second World War the KOC was able to resume its rudimentary oil operations in Kuwait which took place sporadically since the firm’s establishment in 1934. At this juncture the findings of substantial oil reserves in Kuwait and the beginning of oil exports in 1946 signaled KOC’s need for a more permanent presence in Kuwait in order to maximize its financial gains. A substantial part of this move towards a more permanent position in the name of capitalist efficacy was the design and building of a town that would house company employees and workers. The architectural and urban product of this endeavor was KOC’s town of Ahmadi which not only functioned as a company town but was also an oil colony in its first decade of existence between 1946 and 1956.

Similar to its oil extractive foreign counterparts dotted throughout the world in places such as Venezuela, Persia (later Iran), Saudi Arabia and Bahrain, the KOC was built in its early years as an urban enclave that was completely disconnected from the local reality. These oil company towns or camps were meant to serve as a second factory

for the production of labor.⁷³ The most important employees were those at the senior level who were exclusively either British or American, as reflected in the ownership of the company, with a handful of Europeans. The company's paternalistic efforts were restricted to this minority as it diligently attempted to reproduce for it familiar surroundings through exported forms of architecture, landscaping and urban planning which were uniquely reproduced by the company architectural firm Wilson Mason and Partners. Wilson's experiences in Abadan and before that in Delhi were instrumental in Ahmadi as this newly designed environment was aimed at making the lives of these British and American employees much more comfortable therefore leading to their productivity. This paternalistic effort however came at the expense of the Indian/Pakistani employees and even more so at the expense of the indigenous Arab or Iranian labor.

A major organizing element in Ahmadi's functioning is what I called a structural hierarchy. Indeed, this hierarchy whose basis stems from the KOC's employee grade hierarchy subsequently corresponded with an ethnic hierarchy that was in turn enshrined spatially throughout the architecture and planning of Ahmadi. Besides spatially segregating the town through its architecture and planning according to grade and ethnicity, the KOC also employed this hierarchy throughout Ahmadi's urban milieu. For example, priority in the construction of housing, priority in moving-in to permanent housing, and even priority in waiting to receive medical treatment were all in favor of the British and American senior staff. The omnipresence of this structural hierarchy, which was inspired by racist and capitalist motivations, guaranteed a maximum level of comfort for the British and American senior employees, a minimum level of comfort for the Indian and Pakistani's employees and nothing for Arab labor. Indeed, the KOC paid not heed to the provision of housing or social services to Arab labor. Furthermore, when Arab labor had no choice but to settle informally on the town's perimeter, the company made every effort to expedite the resettlement of this "fringe population" to a location that rendered it physically, and in turn visually, out of sight. Aside from the lack of accommodations or social services to the indigenous population, their confinement to isolated sites of inhabitation categorically situates Ahmadi as a colonial company town in its first decade.

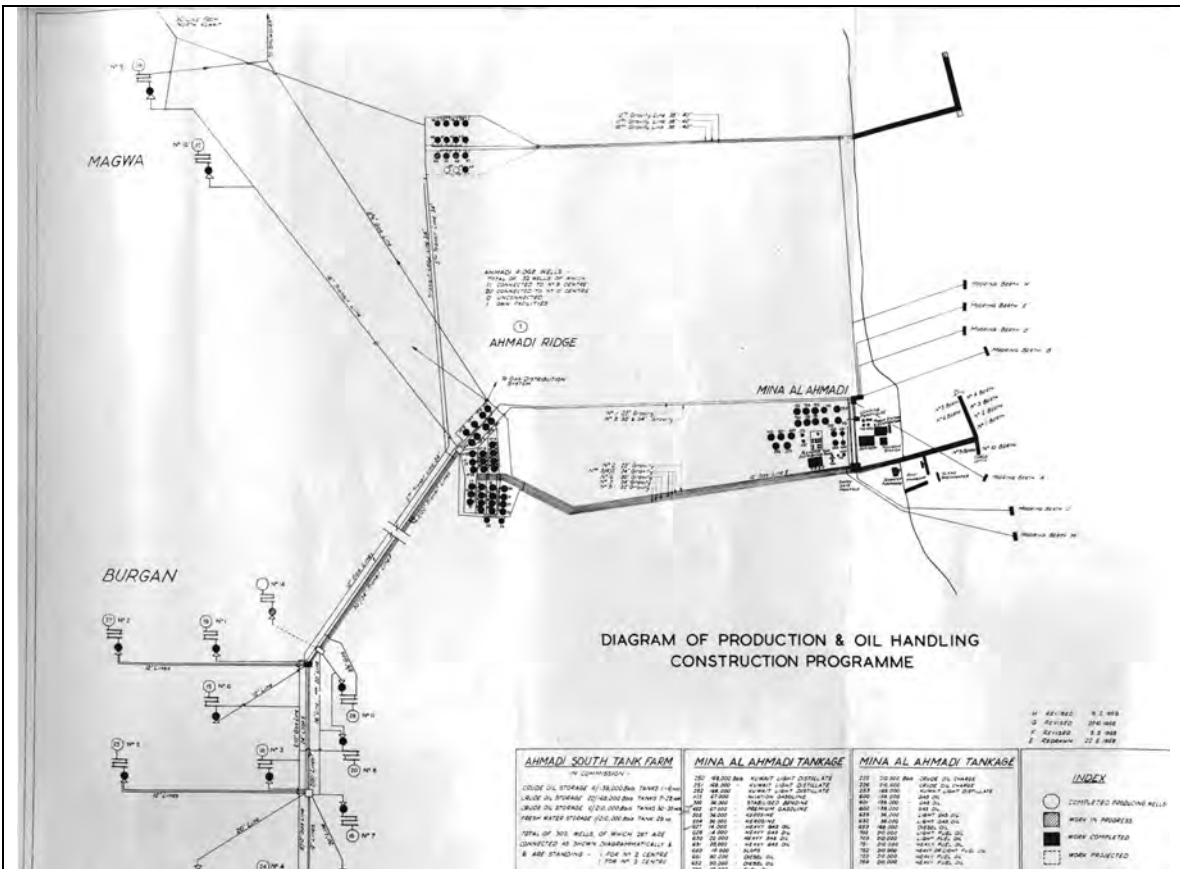


Figure 1. Diagram showing the elevated Ahmadi Ridge connected through pipelines to Mina Al-Ahmadi port to its east. Magwa is in the north-west and the Burgan oil field is to the south-west. (Source: BP Archive)



Figure 2. Nissen Huts were used to build army camps and air bases during the First World War. They were steel prefabricated structures shipped from Abadan and London. (Source: BP Archive)



Figure 3. Labor housing consisting of blocks of local mud-brick. (Source: BP Archive)



Figure 4. The Aluminum house. Temporary prefabricated housing such as this was exclusive to the British and American KOC senior staff. (Source: BP Archive)



Figure 5. The Swedish House. (Source: BP Archive)



Figure 6. King Faisal's Palace in Bagdad, Iraq, 1928. (Source: Wilson Mason & Partners)



Figure 7. Port Offices in Basra, Iraq, 1929. (Source: Wilson Mason & Partners)

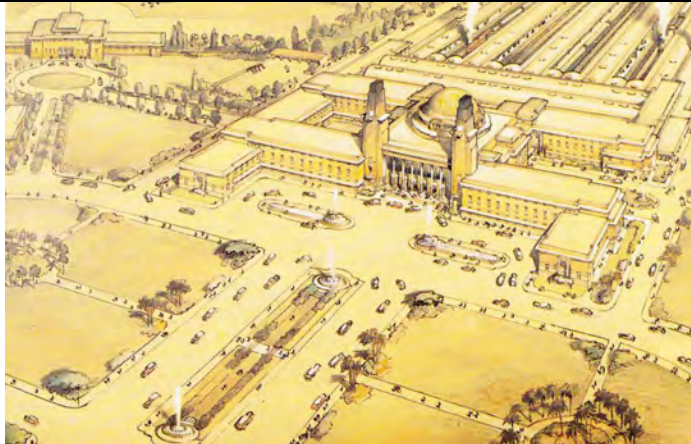


Figure 8. Baghdad Railway Station, Iraq, 1947. (Source: Wilson Mason & Partners)

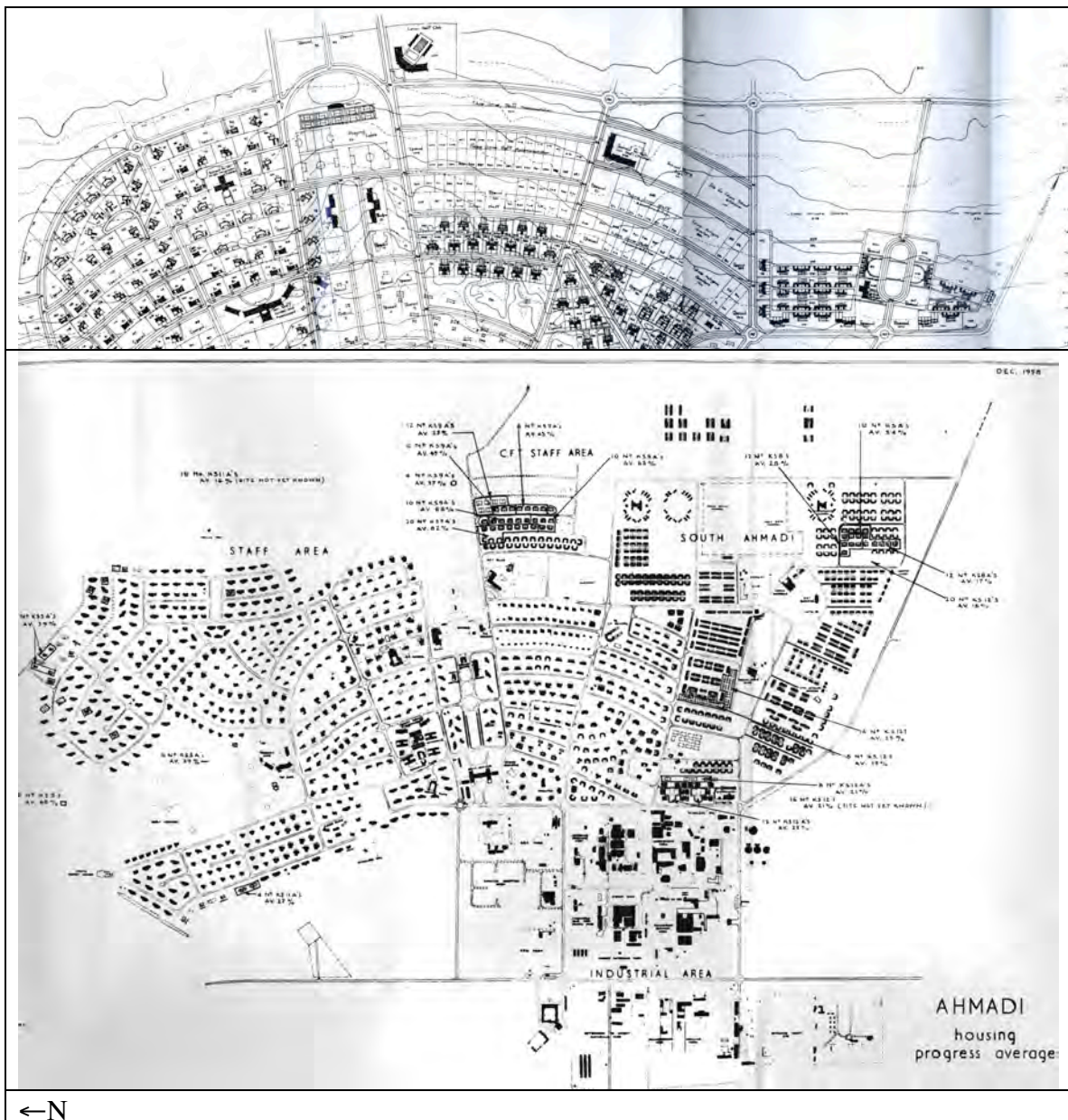


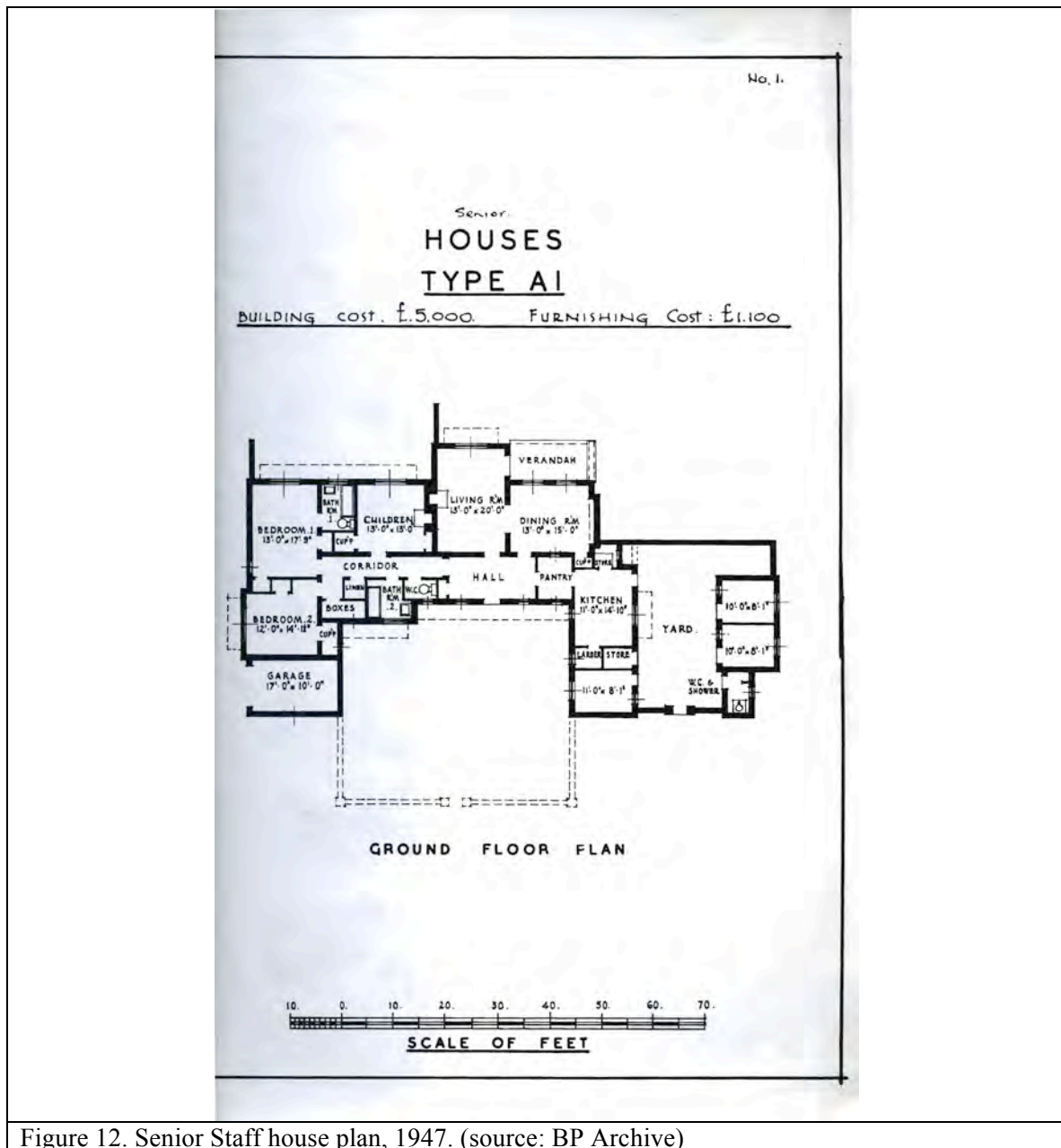
Figure 9. Above: Detail of Ahmadi Plan, 1947. Below: Plan of Ahmadi, 1958. In both plans, the picturesque streets and spacious lot size and layout of senior staff housing can be seen in the North section on the left. Lot size's and houses for junior or C.F. & T. staff decrease in size in the mid-section and they decrease even more dramatically in the south section as houses become more tightly spaced in a more orthogonal pattern for labor as seen on the right. (Source: BP Archive)



Figure 10. Map of Delhi, India showing allocation of zones based on race, occupational rank and socio-economic status. (Source: King 1976)



Figure 11. Aerial of Ahmadi, 1956. (source: BP Archive)



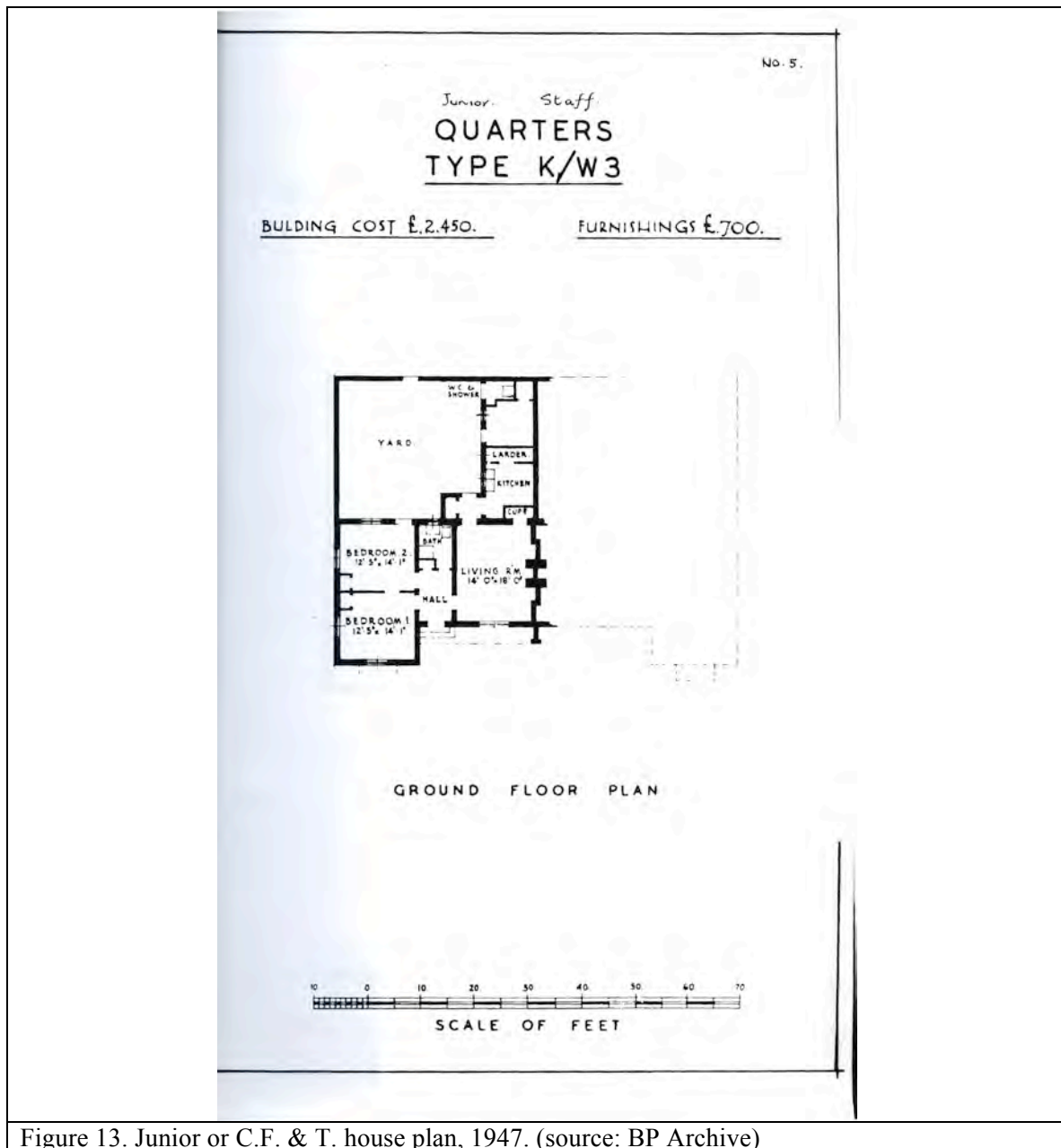


Figure 13. Junior or C.F. & T. house plan, 1947. (source: BP Archive)

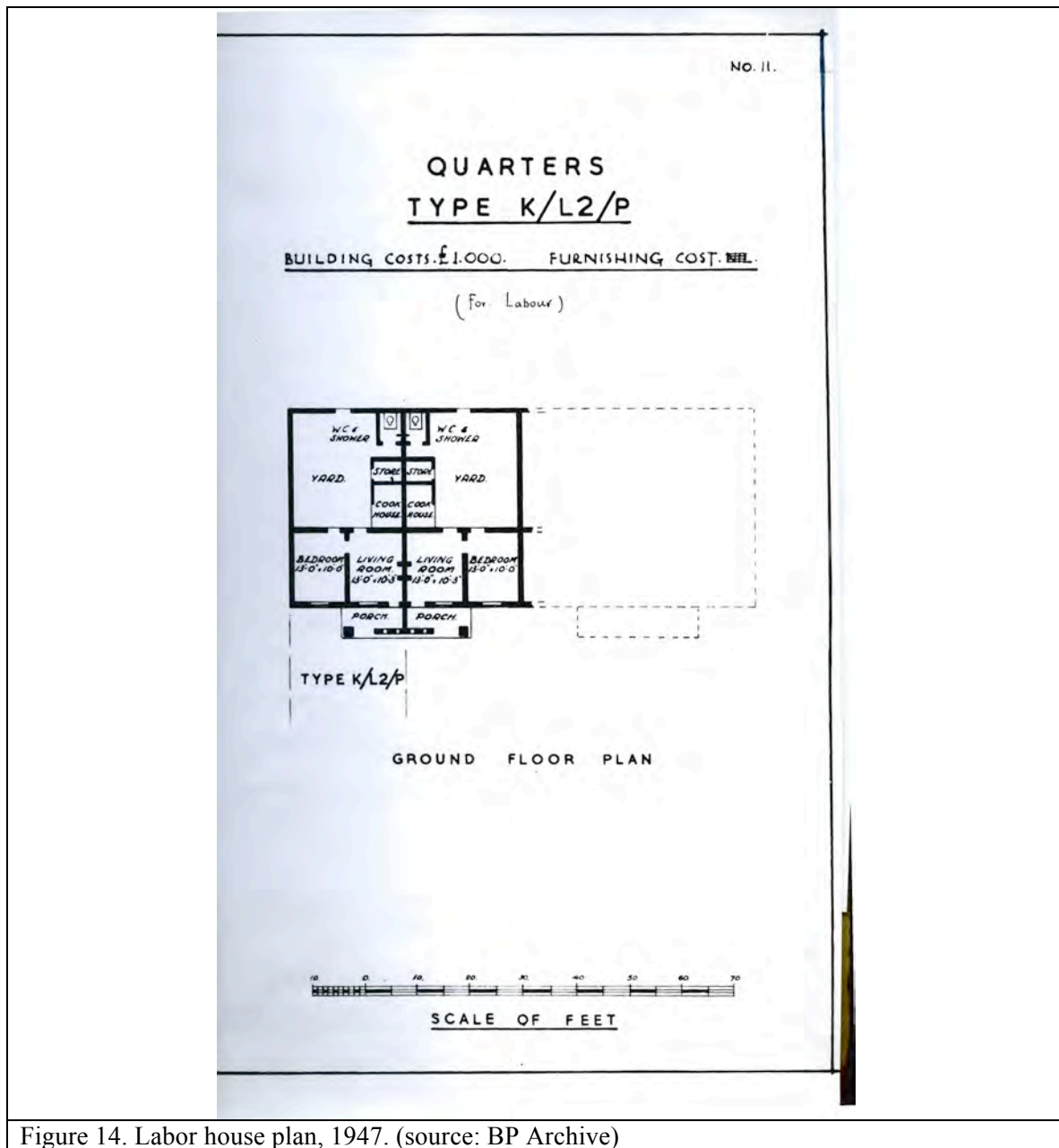


Figure 14. Labor house plan, 1947. (source: BP Archive)



Figure 15. Magwa hospital. (Source: BP Archive)



Figure 16. British and American senior staff housing. (Source: BP Archive)



Figure 17. KOC Main Office building. (Source: BP Archive)



Figure 18. Ahmadi's first shopping center. (Source: BP Archive) This posed company-sponsored photograph aims to show how the British and American senior staff were well provided for by the KOC with regards to their shopping needs.



Figure 19. This posed company-sponsored photograph shows the recreational needs of KOC's senior staff as they were accommodated in the Hubara club's main lounge. This was for the exclusive use of senior staff who were mostly British and American. (Source: BP Archive)



Figure 20. This posed company-sponsored photograph is strikingly similar to figure 19, however, it shows the junior of C. F. & T. staff's Nakhlistan club lounge. The glaring difference here is ethnicity as it was restricted to use by Indian and Pakistani employees only. This is reminiscent of the ethnic social separations enforced in British colonial urbanism and those of the US Jim Crow system of "separate but equal" which was transposed in the Dhahran oil camp in Saudi Arabia. (Source: BP Archive)



Figure 21. This company-sponsored photograph shows how upon arrival in Kuwait by the KOC's private plane British and American employees were immediately driven to Ahmadi by-passing Kuwait city and any traces of indigenous life. (Source: BP Archive)



Figure 22. This company-sponsored photograph shows how fresh meat and produce were flown in from Beirut, with other products imported from the UK, due to the lack thereof in Kuwaiti. (Source: BP Archive)



Figure 23. A company-sponsored posed photograph showing senior staff Laundry and dry cleaning services in Ahmadi attended to by Indian and Arab workers. (Source: BP Archive)



Figure 24. This company-sponsored posed photograph shows Arab butchers preparing meat cuttings for Ahmadi's senior staff. (Source: BP Archive)



Figure 25. This company-sponsored posed photograph shows Indian bakers at the Ahmadi bakery preparing baked goods catering exclusively for the senior staff's Western desert palate. (Source: BP Archive)



Figure 26. “A Bungalow Servant,” this caption title was used by KOC to describe this company-sponsored posed photograph. It shows the servant that came with the senior staff bungalow. Although the photographed building does not appear to present the formal aspects of a bungalow, Crinson points out that the introduction of the bungalow to Abadan can be seen as part of the social and spatial division of labor within colonial urban development as analyzed by Anthony D. King. The bungalow originally developed as an Anglo-Indian dwelling type in colonial India and in the 1890s arrived in Britain and later North America as a model for suburban living. It was then re-exported to locales outside of Britain where British capital and raw material exportation to the metropole took place as was the case here in Ahmadi, therefore this could possibly be labeled an Ahmadi bungalow. (Source: BP Archive)



Figure 27. Aspects of the colonial third culture such as the provision of Indian domestic servants for British and American families found their way to Ahmadi in Kuwait. (Source: BP Archive)



Figure 28. The colonial third culture also appears in other types of service-based work catering to Ahmadi's British and American senior staff such as Indian barbers. (Source: BP Archive)

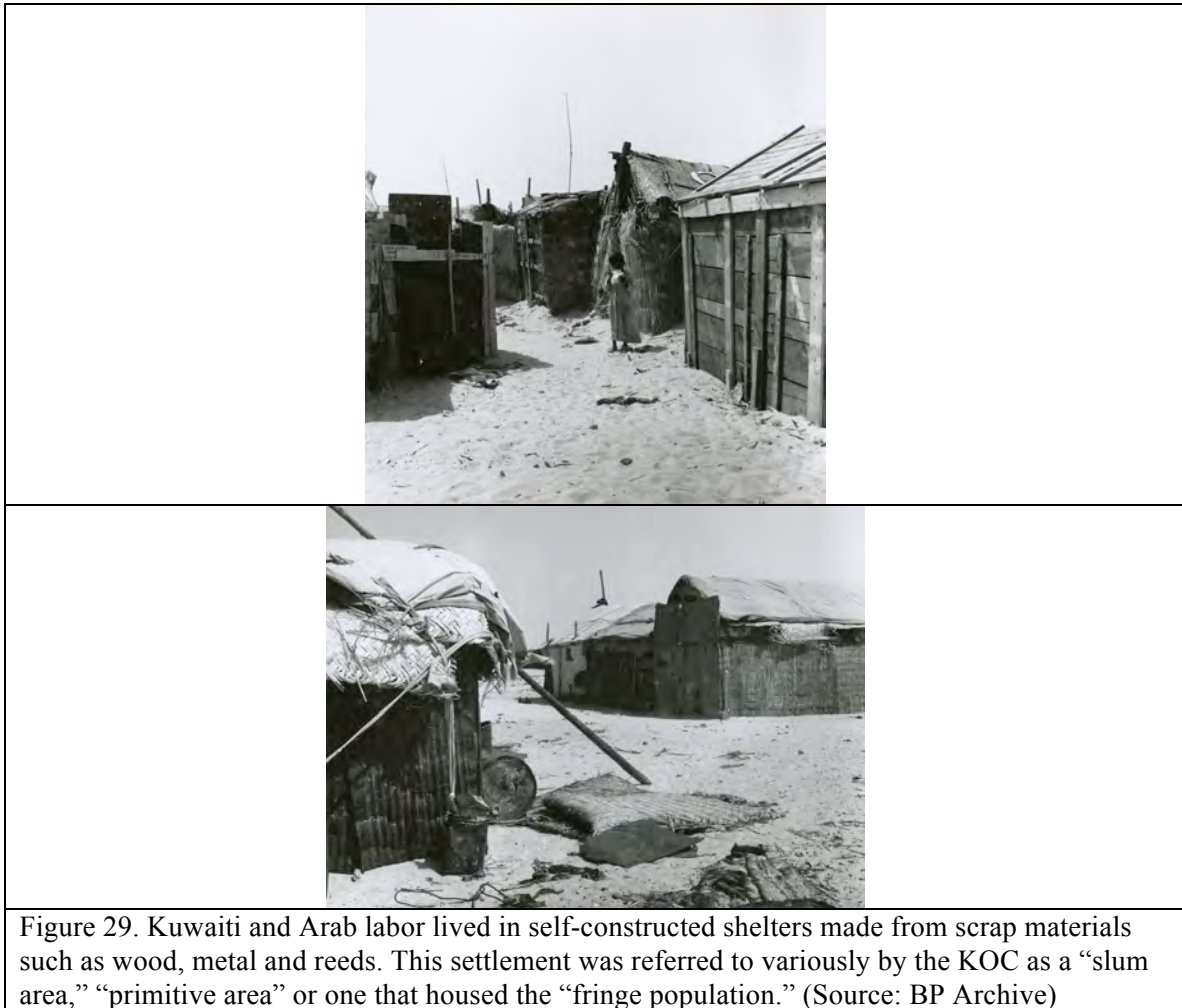


Figure 29. Kuwaiti and Arab labor lived in self-constructed shelters made from scrap materials such as wood, metal and reeds. This settlement was referred to variously by the KOC as a “slum area,” “primitive area” or one that housed the “fringe population.” (Source: BP Archive)



Figure 30. Aerial of Badawiyyah, 1954. The new site, 6 miles east of Ahmadi to which the “fringe population” was required to move. The KOC laid out roads, which can be seen, in the semi-circular patterns with intersecting radials. (Source: BP Archive)

3. Corporate Benevolence: KOC as Agent of Modernization, 1957-1961

Post-colonizing Kuwait

After the Second World War much of the so-called developing countries experienced decolonization at different historical moments in the proceeding decades. As they were reeling from this process of decolonization they were transforming themselves into independent nation states with new identities which trumped social differences existing within the indigenous population such, as religious or ethnic differences, in the interest of creating new united “imagined communities.”¹ The construction of nation states was a reactionary response directly related to the previous advent of being controlled by foreign powers, as was the case in colonialism or its affiliated formations such as mandates or protectorates. The making of a nation entailed a cultural overhaul of the existing status quo with the invention of a new identity through various mechanisms: new flags were created, certain languages were officiated, particular indigenous groups became self or externally appointed state controllers, specific national ideologies were nurtured, and most importantly modernization, especially in architecture and urbanism, came to represent the new nation. Decolonization and the postcolonial (or after colonial) process therefore were perceived and achieved with the notion that nationalism was their logical nemesis.

Kuwait experienced its iteration of this process of decolonization and modernization after gaining national independence in 1961. Although not a colony *per se*, Kuwait was a protectorate of the United Kingdom from 1899 and remained so until its independence in 1961. The pressures that lead the United Kingdom to grant Kuwait independence were largely inflected by a major event that took place in 1956 which was Egyptian president Colonel Gamal Abdel Nasser’s nationalization of the Suez Canal. This pivotal anti-imperialist political move struck a critical cord in the existing Arabist milieu and exponentially multiplied it as the prevailing Arabist ideology of the time which saw any foreign presence in Arab lands as unacceptable. In Kuwait regional and local critical reverberations made the KOC - a foreign extractive company - the target of resentment on the part of the locals. To maintain its “protector” privileges, therefore, the UK saw to it that the reasonable course of action to appease local criticisms was the granting of national independence through such things as the creation of national ministries, civil institutions, citizenship and a welfare system from which the local population would benefit while clandestinely maintaining its political control. At the same time the KOC for its part, upended its colonial presence in its first decade by shifting to a new role as a benevolent agent of modernization for the nation and Ahmadi. I argue that this modernization effort by the KOC which was portrayed as benevolent and a result of the after colonial process was in fact nothing of the sort, but instead was indicative of the postcolonial moment Kuwait experienced at that time as theoretical remnants of colonial forms of power resiliently lingered.

This section's title intentionally uses the term post-colonizing instead of decolonizing. Aside from the obvious fact that Kuwait was not a colony and hence the term decolonizing would not apply, postcolonial theory is an appropriate framework within which to understand KOC's role in Ahmadi in the latter years of the 1950s. Contrary to the implied meaning of the term "postcolonial," this body of theory rejects it as being after colonial but instead contends that the actual meaning involves the continuation of colonial processes which at times are also called neocolonial. Indeed, Jane M. Jacobs warns of the formal conditions of the term postcolonial as being prematurely celebratory stating that such a stance "denies the ongoing efficacy of imperial structures of power- the way in which the imperial desires (past and present) are in the here and now."² Furthermore, Jacobs invokes Bhabha notion which reinforces the idea that the postcolonial politics is not at all a mark of being beyond colonialism but precisely a "reminder of the persistent "neo-colonial" relations within the "new" world order."³ Indeed far from being after colonial, postcolonialism has been argued by many as being a continuation of the colonial experience, albeit under a different guise.

In this instance it is useful to revert to the two general motivations of colonialism as outlined by Nezar AlSayyad: "one self-seeking, the other liberal and beneficent. The former is concerned with the extraction of resources to improve one's own condition at the expense of others; the latter operates on the premise that there is an ethical responsibility to dominate in order to assist."⁴ In the case of Ahmadi, the first motivation was clearly illustrated during its first decade as shown in the previous chapter which discusses the colonial aspects of its physical and social formation. The second colonial motivation which AlSayyad refers to as being liberal and beneficent actually surfaces in conjunction with the first motivation in Ahmadi only after the KOC becomes critically targeted by the regional and Kuwaiti press in the late 1950s. In its desperate struggle to maintain its privileged presence in Kuwait, the KOC - a foreign company with major share holdings by the British government - tactfully assumes a new role as modernizer of not only Ahmadi but also Kuwait at large. This move is emblematic of the postcolonial experience, because although this foreign powerful entity changes its means from colonial or oppressive to liberal and beneficent, in relation to the indigenous populace, its end which is the self-serving extraction of resources remains intact. These new means are subsumed with the projection of KOC as Kuwait and Ahmadi's benevolent modernizer.

As mentioned above, decolonization or postcolonization and modernization were conceived of as two sides of the same coin. The process of modernization and especially the use of modern architecture and urbanism in the building of nations has been studied by various authors such as Sibel Bozdogan, Abidin Kusno, James Scott and Lawrence Vale.⁵ In all of these cases the new ruling orders established with national independence sought to assert themselves through the adoption of modernization and modern architecture and urbanism which were seen as symbolic of their national independence and progress. In this regard Bozdogan states, "modernism was an expression of the desire of "other cultures" to contest their "otherness" and to claim subjectivity in making their own history."⁶ For example, in the case of Turkey she shows how modern

architecture was imported in early republican Turkey as a visible symbol and effective instrument of the Kemalist regime to create a Westernized, modern and secular new nation dissociated from the country's Ottoman and Islamic past.⁷ Another example of the use of modern architecture in the service of nations is Vale's analysis of Kuwait's parliamentary complex built in the early 1980s in which he discusses how the final outcomes served some personal (architect), subnational (powerful minority), and supranational (on the world stage) interests rather than the advancement of a national identity.⁸ Modernization in the name of national independence in both the Turkish and Kuwaiti examples shows how the postcolonial or neocolonial experience is embedded within them as one specific indigenous group and ideology inherits the control of its indigenous others.

Many of the post Second World War nations found themselves grappling with self-definition in the aftermath of postcolonization by largely relying on modernization and modern architecture and urbanism to assert their independence, however the case in Kuwait was different during its early transition into nationhood. Kuwait was unique because instead of a local or indigenous group seeking the young nation's definition through modernization and modernism the latter did indeed occur but under the auspices of the foreign company: the KOC.

This chapter highlights KOC's new public relations campaign aimed at assuaging criticisms leveled against it following the Suez War. Just as Anderson points to the role of media in constructing the idea of nationhood, the KOC through various publications, particularly its English-language magazine *The Kuwaiti*, publicized and popularized its contribution to the modernization of the nation and its benevolent efforts towards the continued building of the town of Ahmadi.⁹ This publicization effort, it should be noted, was particularly focused on the benefits modernization afforded Kuwaiti employees. It also mitigated criticisms by showing support for the *Kuwaitization* of the labor force, that is, the progressive appointment of qualified Kuwaitis to senior positions with the eventual aim of a Kuwaiti takeover of the company.

Suez: the Event that Changed the KOC

Ahmadi's years as an oil colony came to an end due to the nationalization of the Suez Canal by Egypt's Colonel Gamal Abdel Nasser on 26 July 1956. This event and the subsequent Suez war famously fueled the fire of pan-Arabism and anti-imperialism throughout the Arab World. Since the Suez Canal was the major route for the movement of oil from the Middle East to Western Europe foreign oil companies like KOC whose existence depended on this lifeline had to balance their needs of Canal access with the new Arab-nationalist reality.

Although anti-imperialism and Arabism reached an all-time high with Nasser's leadership, it preceded him in many Arab states including Kuwait. In the early 1950s, a group called the Kuwait Youth expressed anti-colonial sentiments, partly due to the recent events in Palestine, and they domestically called for freedom from "'tyrannical rule, evil imperialism, oppressive feudalism and extreme poverty."¹⁰ Another group

called the Kuwait Democratic Party submitted to the ruler strong anti-imperial criticisms and demanded the ruler abolish British Protection and establish an independent national representative government.¹¹ Another group was the Graduate Club who demanded change by outlining the country's social problems. By the mid-1950s Egyptian influence was increasing in Kuwait as seen in Kuwait's Education Department which consisted mostly of Egyptian teachers bringing with them their system of education and political ideologies. Egyptian influence was disseminated in Kuwait in various ways: the Egyptian government sent teachers to help Kuwait's Education department while still remaining in the service of the Egyptian government, Kuwait's Education Department had a permanent mission of students studying in Egypt, Egyptian advisors were assigned to the other Kuwaiti departments and Egyptian newspapers and radio which were widely read and listened to in Kuwait. At that time most Arab nations, including Kuwait, saw Egypt as a model of modern independent Arab nationhood which put an end to both imperialism and traditional corrupt ruling regimes.¹²

As a result of the prevailing pro-Egyptian and, especially after Suez, pro-Nasser support in Kuwait, almost seven years after establishing schools for foreign employee children, the KOC decided it was best to provide education to Arabs in Kuwait. Indeed, "The Managing Director advised that, from the local relations point of view in Kuwait, it was most desirable that more students be educated away from the Egyptian influence and therefore, to achieve this, education should be provided in this country."¹³ In addition to this with the establishment of the British Council the British government was hoping to extend its influence in Kuwait's educational circles to counter Egyptian influence and its spread of anti-British sentiments through the large number of Egyptian teachers in Kuwait and Kuwaiti students in Egypt.¹⁴

Nasser's nationalization of the Suez Canal and the subsequent war over it inspired a number of events in support of Egypt within Kuwait. One was a strike called upon by the Clubs of Kuwait on 3 November 1956 to support the Egyptians against the British and the French. Indeed, the next day striking crowds in both Kuwait and Ahmadi were dispersed by the local security force.¹⁵ A second event was a boycott of British and French goods and customers with the shutdown of shops as anti-British and anti-French slogans appeared on the streets. There was also accompanied by a governmental approval to cancel major construction contracts with British firms. A third event took place on 10 December 1956 in which ten explosions occurred in the areas of Mina Al-Ahmadi, Ahmadi and Magwa setting one oil well on fire. However, not much damage was sustained since most of the charges failed to explode.¹⁶ In anticipation of such events the KOC distributed a circular with precautions that its European population should follow during this tense time such as, staying as inconspicuous as possible for example by avoiding loud parties, and sending servants for the shopping in Kuwait town.¹⁷ Events such as these did not cause any major disruptions in oil production as the KOC continued its usual operations unimpeded, nevertheless the company did view them as potential threats to its long-term presence as an extractive company in Kuwait especially as it became negatively targeted by the local press.

Local Agitations: The KOC becomes a Prime Target in the Press

The KOC's standing came under serious threat in the aftermath of these events with the barrage of letters of complaint sent by Kuwaiti oil workers to members of the ruling family who were often approached as a third party to readdress grievances. Strong criticism was also voiced by newly established local newspapers such as *al-Ittihad* (The Union), *al-Fajr* (The Dawn) and *al-Sha'ab* (The People). These local publications were some of Kuwait's earliest examples of grassroots newspapers. They were established by the few, mostly Egyptian-educated, Kuwaitis at the time who came to represent the nation's newly rising middle-class professional. As an educated minority, these gentlemen took it upon themselves to publicize the social injustices carried out by the KOC which was perceived as an abusive colonial entity.

An example of the letters of complaint against the KOC was addressed to shaykh Jaber Al Ahmad Al Sabah, the governor of Ahmadi at the time, from an Arab national. Here the Company was criticized for its unfair treatment of Arab employees relative to the foreign employees who receive higher pay and benefits and strong anti-colonial feelings were expressed:

There should be either complete equality in the conduct of the Company Management towards all its Staff and Labour with all their variety of nationality and religion, or a discharge of all the Company's Arab Staff and Labour, so that the Company may be revealed to Arab public opinion in particular, and to that of the world in general, as a hundred per cent foreign and colonialist Company that sucks away people's rights, the most elementary of which is to get employment equal to that of non-Arab foreigners.¹⁸

Another example was a letter addressed to the ruler shaykh Abdullah Al Salim Al Sabah by an Arab worker also listed some of the rights KOC denied them in comparison to its non-Arab workers such as the provision of Company housing to non-Arab workers with no housing provision to Arab workers and promotions granted to non-Arabs but not to Arabs.¹⁹

In conjunction to these letters of complaint and more threatening to KOC's reputation was the barrage of staunch criticisms voiced by newly established local newspapers such as *al-Ittihad* (The Union), *al-Fajr* (The Dawn) and *al-Sha'ab* (The People). In *Al-Ittihad*, published by the Kuwait Students in Egypt Association, more transparency of KOC operations was demanded in the form of a census to know exactly the quantities of oil produced, their cost and sale price so that "the Imperialist Company can not play with the people's destiny and openly steal their resources."²⁰ Likewise, *al-Fajr*, an Arab nationalist leaning newspaper published the following headlines under the issue title "A Government within a Government": "The Oil Company sells our oil in the black market," "Our balance with Britain is 250 million pounds," "30,000,000 pounds of our money is invested by Britain!" and "Stop this Company at an end." Furthermore, one section titled "This is your Petroleum, oh Jamal!" shows the extent to which Nasser's ideology influenced young Kuwaitis.²¹ Although *al-Ittihad* and *al-Fajr* were highly

critical of the KOC, the *al-Sha'ab* newspaper surpassed them as it was almost solely dedicated delegitimizing the Company.

Khalid Khalaf, the editor of *Al-Sha'ab*, was previously hired by the KOC as chief editor of its first Arab publication in 1957 *Risalat Al-Naft* (The Oil Newsletter). After he expressed to the KOC his desire to write about the attack on Suez and more critically about the company's intentions, he was immediately dismissed. Since then he established *al-Sha'ab* which, according to Khalaf, was "a free newspaper which would refute the imperialists' falsehood." Among the grievances voiced in *al-Sha'ab* was the unjust treatment of Arab teachers employed by the Education Department at the South Ahmadi School. The teachers suffered from lack of housing as few were housed and others were not forcing them to find their own housing in nearby Fahaheel. Bachelors were coupled in rooms meant for single occupancy and the problem of married teacher housing was not solved. Married teachers who were given married accommodation were not allowed to use any of the company clubs. Teachers were only allowed to use the laborer's clinic and were not permitted to enter in-door cinemas, but instead only outdoor ones open to the public. Despite all of this unjust treatment Khalaf stated that in their magazine the KOC boasted of the great help it accorded to teachers.²²

Aside from the unjust treatment of Arab teachers, perhaps the most exposing article by *al-Sha'ab* was about the living conditions in *Badawiyyah*, the new location to which the informal settlement of Arab workers was moved by order of the KOC. Here Khalaf recounted the fact that the informal settlement located at the entrance of Ahmadi in 1948 ten years ago was seen as an eyesore and therefore, he remarked sarcastically, was "removed from near that beautiful town" by KOC. The KOC provided the residents with a site called *Badawiyyah* in Fahaheel where they were ordered to re-erect their houses after dismantling them from Ahmadi themselves. He talks about the deplorable living conditions there as about 10,000 people live in 1000 "hovels" that "merely consist of four walls and a ceiling," he described them as "unhygienic" with "humans and animals living together and drinking from the same polluted water."²³ Khalaf blames the KOC for the deplorable living conditions at *Badawiyyah*.²⁴

KOC is responsible for the existence of this village, and for the illnesses therein. It was KOC who left them without hygienic houses and clean water. Such a big company which shares with the Government half of the oil profits; which pretends to help and look after its workers; and which spends a lot on the propaganda of "Ahmed recovers his health" and "Ahmed in the mechanical area!!" No, KOC, Ahmed has not recovered. Which Ahmed are you talking about? Ahmed is still living among sheep and donkeys. Ahmed is ill and has nothing but poverty, ignorance and backwardness.²⁵

Al-Fajr was also critical of the company's treatment of its Arab workers when it exposed the fact that up until the late 1950s Ahmadi's Arab Village which the KOC claimed provided housing for Arab workers was instead housing Indian and Pakistani employees while the Arab workers lived in "hovels." *Al-Fajr* demanded "the removal of these hovels and their replacement by houses for the workers, to be provided with

sanitation and with the building of schools for the worker's children.”²⁶ These damaging complaints in addition to the strikes, bombings and boycotts and bombings jettisoned by the Suez events forced the KOC to pursue completely different policies for the sake of its survival and continued resource extraction.

The KOC Strikes Back with a Public Relations Campaign

The late 1950s was a tumultuous time in the Middle East and many existing forms of power were at stake such as any colonial presence, “Royal” or ruling regimes, and the presence of foreign oil companies. Although each foreign oil company in the Middle East re-positioned itself according to its situated domestic politics, the Suez events and subsequent anti-colonial and anti-KOC backlash in Kuwait largely triggered KOC’s subsequent maneuverings. KOC attempted several times to defend itself against the accusations leveled on it by the local press, such as those mentioned above, through a few counter publications that categorically refuted these criticisms. One example is its self-defense against articles published by the Federation of Kuwaiti Students in *al-Ittihad* which stated that they were “a most malicious and libelous attack on KOC ... we should formally protest at the circulation of such slander and falsehoods.”²⁷ Another example was a letter from the KOC to the Official Representative of the Ruler of Kuwait when it categorically quoted published criticisms of it that appeared in *al-Fajr* by an “alleged” (KOC quotation marks) KOC employee and each criticism was “refuted” and “corrected” by the Company to show how inaccurate they were.²⁸ KOC stated that accusations made by these news publications, especially *al-Sha’ab*, were groundless.²⁹ Despite these efforts and regardless of whether the critics or KOC were saying the truth or not, the company had no choice but to conduct a major overhaul in order to salvage its recently publicly tarnished reputation. One of the most evident ways it did this was by initiating a major public relations campaign in Kuwait.

The recent events in Suez and the reactions in Kuwait, coupled with pressure by the state authorities to go ahead with publicizing its activities in the Middle East press lead the company to start its public relations campaign with the establishment of a public relations office in Kuwait Town in 1956.³⁰ The aim of this campaign was to polish KOC’s tarnished reputation with various initiatives pursued through the local and Arab media. For example the KOC launched its first Arab magazine *Risalat al-Naft* (The Oil Newsletter) in 1957 which provided “instruction and entertainment for the Company's Arab employees” and “was designed to spread information regarding the Company's activities among the people of Kuwait.”³¹ The KOC also began to place advertisements through local agencies in Kuwait and Beirut, and published the benefits accrued from oil as a result of the “advantageous presentation of the partnership between the Company and the State in the operation of the industry, and the welfare, health and training of Arab employees, and the encouragement of local commercial enterprise and entrepreneurship.”³² One article that appeared in the Egyptian magazine *Akher Saa’a* was in full praise of Ahmadi as a beautiful, well-planned town for KOC employees,

The features that most attract the eye in the town of Ahmadi are the extent of its streets, the orderliness of the buildings and the gardens that surround every house. These gardens are the work of the Staff and the Labour themselves. Every employee is given a free hand over his garden. He may make it a flowering paradise or leave it a barren waste. You cannot believe Ahmadi is a town in the desert. Thanks to the Kuwait Oil Company, it's the Kuwaiti Paradise.³³

In addition to publishing positive articles in the Middle East and local press, KOC planned to periodically broadcast news of various aspects of the company life and activities to appeal to the Kuwaiti people.³⁴ Furthermore, to reach young Kuwaitis who either incited or were affected by KOC criticism, the managing director suggested that lectures to counteract the lack of information about the company be given to the cultural clubs. He also suggested that a Display Center similar to the one in Ahmadi be arranged in Kuwait town.³⁵ Lastly and most importantly, the KOC dealt with its largest criticism regarding the lack of Kuwaitis and Arabs in junior and senior employee grades with its self-positioning as urban modernizer on the one hand, and champion of Kuwaitization on the other.

Making Kuwait Modern

As Kuwaitization ultimately aimed at the nationalization of the oil company the KOC made sure to publicize its various efforts towards this end. These included an increase in the sponsorship of local training programs for the Kuwaiti employees of the company, sending Kuwaitis abroad on scholarships, and promoting and appointing Kuwaiti nationals to more senior positions. In conjunction KOC fashioned itself as modernizer by building modern housing and recreation facilities for the indigenous population in Ahmadi and by contributing to the nation's wealth – all of which were well publicized in the company's English language magazine *The Kuwaiti* established in 1948 and its Arabic version *al-Kuwayti* which started to be published in 1961.

The Kuwaiti was a bi-weekly magazine circulated to KOC's English-speaking employees and affiliates. A major source of information and entertainment, the magazine's contents ranged from British, world and oil news to local community events, including social functions and sports. In 1957 *The Kuwaiti* sharply shifted its focus from international, British and Ahmadi news to articles which highlighted its contributing role to the architectural, urban and social development Kuwait City, with particular attention to oil wealth's contribution to modern state projects.³⁶ For example, an article titled "Kuwait Schools are Fine Examples of Modern Architecture" illustrated recently built state school buildings (figure 1) and had the following to say,

The story of the remarkable development of education in Kuwait is now a familiar one to everyone who is interested in this great welfare state...These schools and many others are of a type that any country in the world could be

proud of incorporating as they do beauty of line and internal organization that conforms with the most modern educational theories.³⁷

It also makes the point that “in 1946 there were 12 schools in Kuwait none which could approach these modern buildings.” 1946 is the year in which KOC resumed its operations after the Second World War thus emphasizing its role in the fruition of modern state school buildings. *The Kuwaiti* also mentions the modernization of Safat square, Kuwait City’s main public space, “with its modern aids to traffic navigation and controlled parking, (as it) presents a sharp contrast with the scene as it was a few years ago.”³⁸ (figure 2)

A couple of years later *The Kuwaiti* published more articles on the changes taking place in Kuwait, especially in its 1959 issues, when it inundated each one with featured state development projects. Examples of these include, the Al-Sabah hospital (figure 3), the Basra Road (figure 4), a new “modern” hotel (figure 5), the Municipality buildings (figure 6), the new post office building, the vegetable market, the new roads and traffic lights at Safat Square, the printing and publishing department building, community centers, the department of finance building, the social welfare department building, the courts and Awqaf building and low-income group housing. According to *The Kuwaiti*, “Roads are considered the veins which connect the various parts of a state with the neighboring countries. They are considered of utmost importance in our modern times.” Through the Basra Road project and other road endeavors, therefore, the State will bring Kuwait into “modern times.”³⁹ The Municipality designed by the architect-engineer Sami Abdul Baqi consists of three separate buildings with air-conditioning (a novelty in Kuwait) and “designed in a modern style of structure suitable for the prevailing climatic conditions which combines both beauty and interior discipline.”⁴⁰ The outpatient’s clinic designed by architect-engineer Dr. Sayed Karim will also have air-conditioning and, two elevators, another novelty in Kuwait.⁴¹

To balance the plethora of grandiose State projects *The Kuwaiti* included an article on lower income group houses for those inside the town walls and in Kuwait’s new suburbs with 600-1000 of these built by the state annually. Two designs have been used: one is an “L” shaped plan with all rooms and windows opening onto roofed verandas, and the other is of a rectangular shape with rooms looking into an inner courtyard. Both these plans draw from existing house design norms in old Kuwait with the exception of the third latest variety which follows a more Western house plan with a front and back yard.⁴² Despite this miniscule attempt at providing low-income housing, the aforementioned massive state developments, and many more, dominated Kuwait’s modernizing landscape. Before 1956 *The Kuwaiti* did not publish much about Kuwait and its existing “traditional” or “old” architecture without architects. It was only since 1956, after the Suez events, that *The Kuwaiti* suddenly began to publish these grand projects with their innovations such as electric elevators and air-conditioning emphasizing how very “modern” they were. Through its mouthpiece *The Kuwaiti* the KOC vehemently publicized the new modern Kuwait as a product of its own making. As

such the KOC appropriated Kuwait's nascent modern architecture as a means to legitimate itself and continued presence.

Kuwaitizing the Kuwait Oil Company

Political dissidence in Kuwait escalated even further in 1959 when the clubs, the Social Affairs and the Education departments made a great effort to celebrate the anniversary of the formation of the United Arab Republic (a short-lived union between the States of Egypt and Syria) on February 1st, 1958. On that day approximately 20,000 people gathered at the Shuwaikh secondary school in Kuwaiti City and Jassim Al Qatami, a leading Kuwaiti dissident, called for the Al Sabah ruling family to yield power or else have it taken away from them, but he was swiftly silenced by the government. Thereafter the clubs that had pan-Arab motivations were dissolved and the Press that published their views were suppressed and a few members of the ruling family had a change of heart regarding their recent staunch support for pan-Arabism. A British political dispatch that year acutely stated that,

The ruling family have in 1959 been faced with a more complex form of their old problem of how to preserve an independent existence among more powerful neighbors: how to reconcile Kuwait's independence with the new and powerful emotion of Arab unity and how to adapt their absolute rule to the new conditions and a more sophisticated population...(Kuwait) will continue to value her connexion (sic) with us if we allow her the show of sovereignty.⁴³

And thus came Britain's decision to nullify its status as protector and grant Kuwait full independence. In 1960 many structural changes related to its move towards independence took place in Kuwait: British jurisdiction of the foreign population came to an end, new institutions were created, reforms in the structure of government took place, Kuwait became a founding member of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and launched the Kuwait National Petroleum Company (KNPC). Although a British Foreign Office annual report for 1960 stated that "the formation of the K.N.P.C. likewise serves notice of Kuwait's aspirations (still very far off) eventually to run her own oil industry," it had no choice but to contend with Kuwaitization as Britain granted full independence to Kuwait in 1961.⁴⁴

KOC's public relations campaign which started in 1956 accelerated even further with the nation's impending independence. In addition to the publications mentioned above on Kuwait state projects, in 1961 the KOC started publishing an Arabic language sister magazine to *The Kuwaiti* magazine titled *al-Kuwayti*. This time around, however, instead of highlighting its contribution to the building of Kuwait's modern architecture and urbanism it focused on efforts directed towards the Kuwaiti employee living in Ahmadi as part of its commitment to the process of Kuwaitization. Examples of this are numerous and include Ahmadi Boy's School moving from their temporary premises in 1954 to a new building in South Ahmadi 1959 (figure 7). In the same year an article

showed the KOC's interest in accommodating the Kuwaiti employee's housing needs with posed photographs illustrating discussions of new housing designs in South Ahmadi with Kuwaiti employees for feedback (figure 8). The Nadi al-Ahmadi club for labor was moved from its two small rooms since 1954 (which accommodated its few thousand members) to its new premises in 1959 (figure 9). The KOC's new modern Southwell Hospital was completed in 1960 (figure 10). A new modern shopping center administered by the state was completed in 1961 (figure 11). And a new modern cinema (figure 12) and a new Display Center for the Kuwaiti public were completed in 1965 (figure 13).

The article featuring new housing designs in South Ahmadi displays two photographs of married senior payroll employees discussing models of proposals. The first photograph shows the group discussing the K.S. 15 model which is a semi-detached bungalow consisting of a living room; a ladies sitting room; two bedrooms; a bathroom/guest bathroom and a kitchen. This model has access to a flat roof, a feature of in the traditional Kuwaiti house that was used for sleeping especially in the hot summer months.⁴⁵ The adaptation of indigenous building features such as the ladies sitting room and roof access (due to a lack in air-conditioning which the North had) in the first model shows KOC's "cultural sensitivity" to the Kuwaiti employee while simultaneously cladding the façade with a Western aesthetic as seen in the slanted roof, in order to maintain harmony with the rest of Ahmadi's architecture. Moreover, the fact that indigenous features are incorporated in South Ahmadi (what was previously the Arab Village) and not North and Mid Ahmadi indicates, even at this time, KOC's lack of intent to house its Arab population in these sections. Nevertheless these company-sponsored and posed photographs showing the KOC discussing housing prototypes with its Kuwaiti workers was used as a public relations opportunity exemplifying KOC's benevolence.

Throughout this period *The Kuwaiti* also suddenly repeatedly published before and after aerial shots of Ahmadi's architectural and urban development throughout the years. For example an aerial taken in 1954 is compared with an aerial taken in 1957 showing how the portion behind the main office has new streets, housing and cricket fields (figure 14). And figure 15 shows an aerial of the entire town of Ahmadi taken in 1961 compared with an aerial of it in 1955. These were some of KOC's attempts to show the company's seemingly continued efforts towards the architectural and urban development of Ahmadi over the years; efforts that were in fact strongly opposed by company officials as shown in the previous chapter.

The KOC public relations campaign was not only limited to modern architecture and urban planning for the benefit of the Kuwaiti worker. In fact, *The Kuwaiti* also began publishing extensive articles on its efforts towards the professional advancement of its Kuwaiti contingent such as employee promotions, training programs and the provision of scholarships. For instance, in 1960 it publicized the appointment of the first Kuwaiti members to the KOC board of directors, Feisal Mansour Mazidi and Mahmoud Khalid Al-Adsani.⁴⁶ The KOC also published many articles devoted to Kuwaiti employees sent for training in the United Kingdom. Additionally the company illustrated its cultural sensitivity to the Kuwaiti worker by highlighting Kuwait's cultural and religious events on many of its issue covers for the first time. *The Kuwaiti*'s 1963 Christmas issue cover,

for example shows a snowy Ahmadi in the foreground with its Main office and Ridge Mosque in the background (figure 16). In the same year the Muslim celebration of Eid starts to constitute the cover whereas in previous issues only Christmas had this privilege as the former was relegated to articles. The publicization of these benevolent efforts specifically for the Kuwaiti worker by the KOC such as the architectural and urban development of Ahmadi, its various efforts towards their professional advancement and its cultural and religious sensitivity were all part of the image the company wanted to project of itself as one fully committed to the process of Kuwaitization.

Modernization and Kuwaitization

The “Suez Crises,” as it was referred to in KOC meeting minutes, and its subsequent reactions throughout the region and in Kuwait threw the company into the spotlight experiencing its most precarious time as local and regional criticisms threatened its legitimacy and continued status as a foreign extractive company. Through locally established grassroots newspapers vocal Kuwaitis, who were part of the nation’s nascent educated middle class, exposed the socially unjust nature of the KOC’s operations and in turn played a major role in Ahmadi’s emerging architecture and urbanism. The criticisms voiced by these local critics caused state authorities to pressure the company into publicizing its activities in the Middle East Press - something it has not done previously. KOC swiftly responded with a tactfully constructed public relations campaign that revealed all of its good deeds in both Kuwait and Ahmadi. This campaign involved efforts to inform the Kuwaiti public of such deeds through various means such as the opening of a public relations office in Kuwait, favorable publications in the Middle East Press, sending KOC lecturers to Kuwait’s youth clubs to discuss how the company’s positive contributions, broadcasting short films about KOC on the nascent Kuwait television channel and, most effectively, through its own publications: *The Kuwaiti* and *al-Kuwayti* magazines.

Instead of focusing on world and local Ahmadi news that was disconnected from Kuwait, *The Kuwaiti* changed its approach and suddenly began publishing its various training and scholarship programs for Kuwaitis and also published on the booming architecture in both Kuwait and Ahmadi. In the case of Kuwait, *The Kuwaiti* published articles showcasing how wealth generated by the KOC was funding Kuwait’s state projects; part of the company’s self-constructed image as the nation’s modernizer. In the case of Ahmadi, architectural projects catered primarily to the Arab worker showed the company’s commitment to Kuwaitization. In both cases the KOC successfully used architecture and urban development as a means to legitimate itself in order to secure its continued presence. KOC’s image as a benevolent modernizer and champion of Kuwaitization genuinely seeking the professional advancement of the Kuwaiti employee was strategically deployed to counter, or at least to appease, the critical regional and local reverberations following the Suez events. This course of policy was not unique to KOC but was followed by many other oil companies throughout the world as a sort of textbook recipe to quell criticisms.

This can be seen clearly in Venezuela in which foreign oil companies attempted to portray themselves as indispensable partners in the development of the Venezuelan nation. They did so by setting up programs that went beyond providing income and housing by shaping their employees' social and cultural practices. Similar to the situation in Kuwait, what began as a policy of hiring and training Venezuelan engineers and professionals in the early 1930s eventually became a formal policy of "Venezolanization" in the late 1940s promoting Venezuelans to assume daily operations while maintaining key management positions for foreigners.⁴⁷ According to Miguel Tinker Salas, the foreign companies used the framework of Venezolanization to promote the image of the model worker and the ideal public citizen equating corporate interest with the progress of the nation. Furthermore, Salas mentions how a journalist from the United States credited the magical transformation of Maracaibo in Venezuela from an old town to a modern city not to oil, but to the foreigners who were portrayed as agents of this modernization.⁴⁸

In Saudi Arabia the Arabian American Oil Company (ARAMCO) also used its newsletter *ARAMCO World* and its Arabic version titled *Qafilat al-Zayt* or *Oil Caravan* to produce and disseminate the idea of the firm-as-development-mission in response to criticisms. Robert Vitalis describes how the firm displayed its paternalism in photographs that were typically of a white man teaching a dark-skinned employee safety practices or English or baseball throughout the 1950s. Vitalis also mentions how ARAMCO's Public Relations Department mounted posters inside or near cafes where men gathered in which development and uplift themes predominated. For example, one featured Saudis hired as language teachers in the Overseas Training School, another featured the railroad built for King Ibn Saud and others constituted ARAMCO's theme for the following thirty years highlighting the industrial training and contracting opportunities for Saudi entrepreneurs-in-the-making.⁴⁹

The KOC almost prescriptively followed the examples of its foreign counterparts in dealing with the negative criticisms that threatened their existence. Despite their tremendous separation by time, space and situated politics, as in the Venezuelan and Saudi Arabian case, the KOC relied on the constructed image of itself as modernizer of Kuwait and advocate of the process of Kuwaitization. Modernization, or the process of making something modern, is best defined by Marshall Berman as the maelstrom of social processes - such as rapid urban growth, the formation of nation states and the primacy of capitalism - into being and keeping it in a state of perpetual becoming.⁵⁰ Kuwaitization, as mentioned above, is the process of training and educating the Kuwaiti citizen with the aim of her/his eventual replacement of foreign expertise in all fields particularly in the oil industry and the KOC. Although these are two distinct processes; Modernization is a process of physically and ideologically building the Kuwaiti nation state and Kuwaitization is a process of the making of a Kuwaiti human workforce, they were arguably synonymous. Modernization and Kuwaitization converged as a process which the KOC latched onto to appease its critics and hence maintain its dominance as an foreign enterprise signifying the company's subversive nature as one still rife with remnants of its, only recent, colonial presence (figure 17).



Figure 1. *The Kuwaiti* article titled "Kuwait Schools are Fine Examples of Modern Architecture." (Source: *The Kuwaiti*)



Figure 2. An image showing the modernization of Safat Square in *The Kuwaiti* “with its modern aids to traffic navigation and controlled parking, (as it) presents a sharp contrast with the scene as it was a few years ago.” (Source: *The Kuwaiti*)



Figure 3. The Al-Sabah Hospital, one of the state's modern development projects published in *The Kuwaiti*. (Source: *The Kuwaiti*)

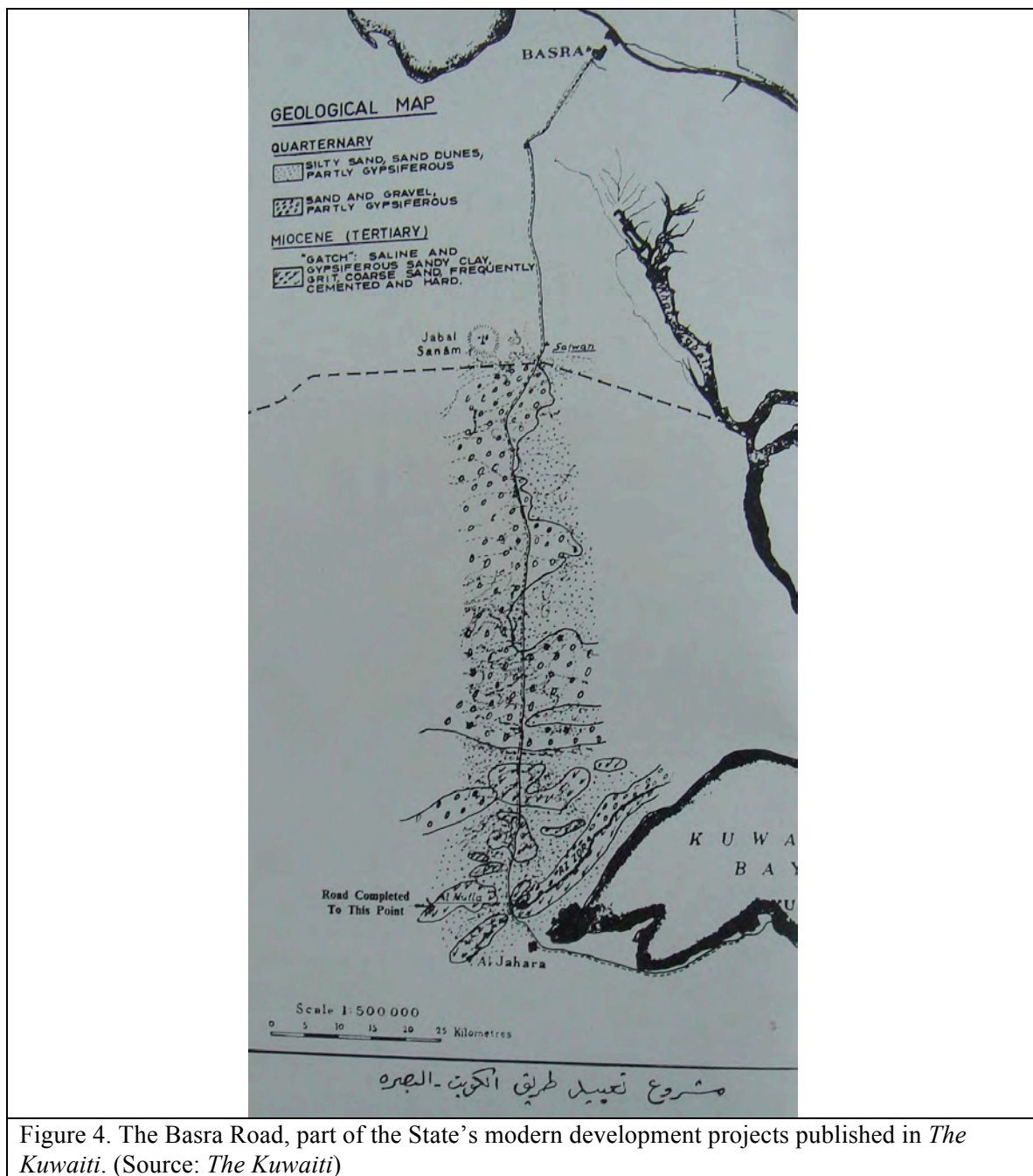


Figure 4. The Basra Road, part of the State's modern development projects published in *The Kuwaiti*. (Source: *The Kuwaiti*)

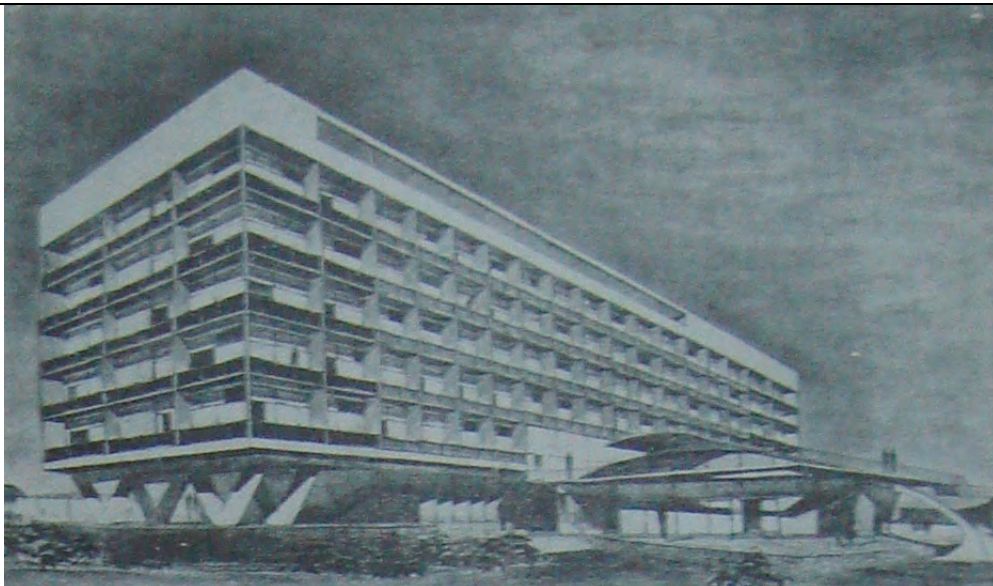


Figure 5. A new “modern” hotel, also part of the state’s modern development projects published in *The Kuwaiti*. (Source: *The Kuwaiti*)

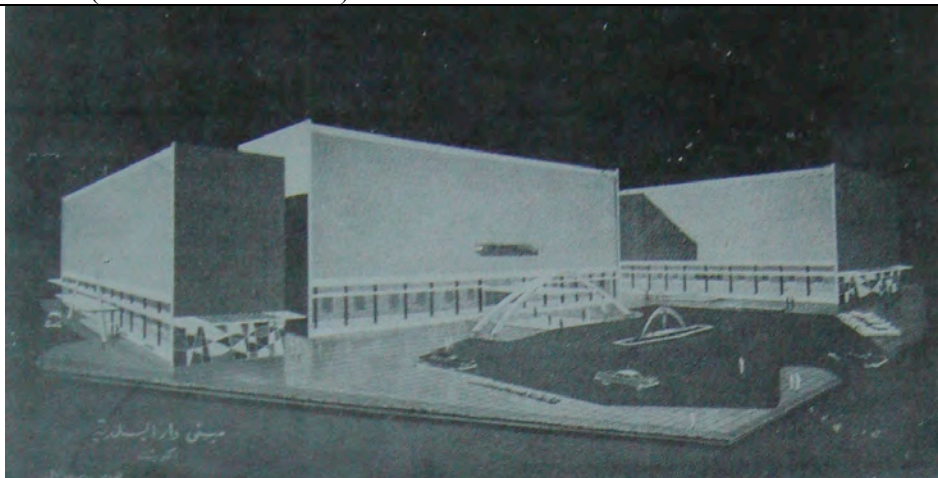


Figure 6. The Municipality, another modern state development project published in *The Kuwaiti*. (Source: *The Kuwaiti*)

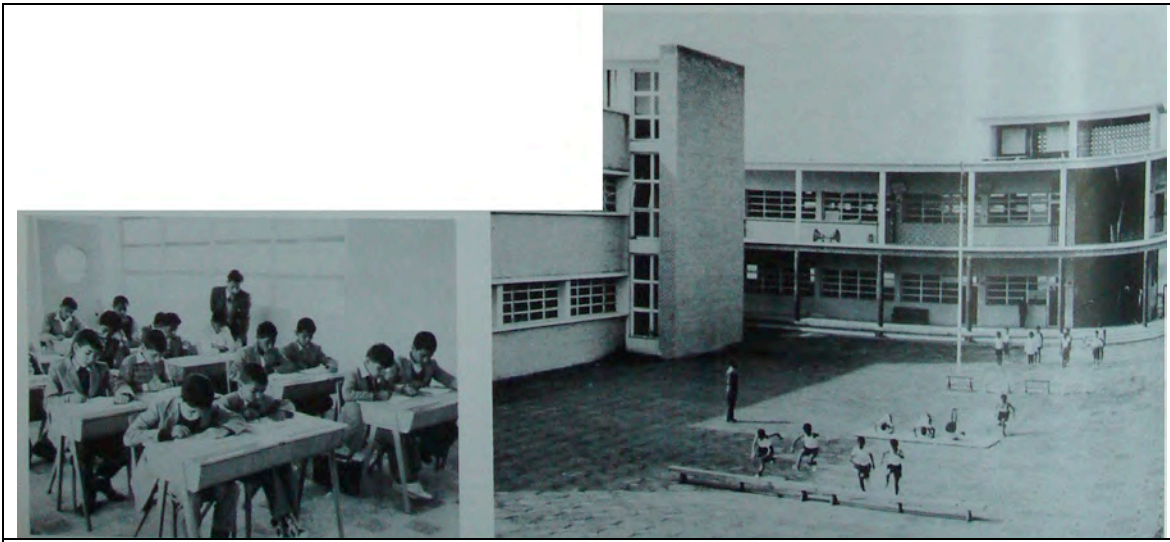


Figure 7. The new modern Ahmadi Boy's School for Arabs in South Ahmadi, 1959, as published in *The Kuwaiti*. (Source: *The Kuwaiti*)



Figure 8. A posed KOC-sponsored photograph published in *The Kuwaiti* meant to convey the company's interest in addressing the housing desires of its Arab workers in South Ahmadi through discussion. (Source: *The Kuwaiti*)

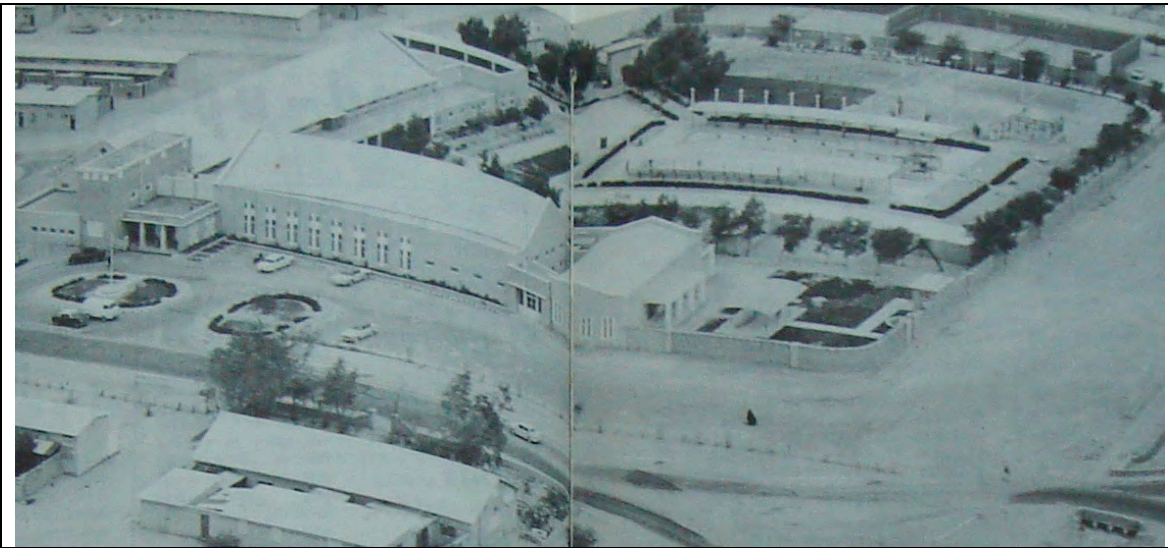


Figure 9. The new Nadi Al-Ahmadi club for Arab labor, 1959. (Source: *The Kuwaiti*)

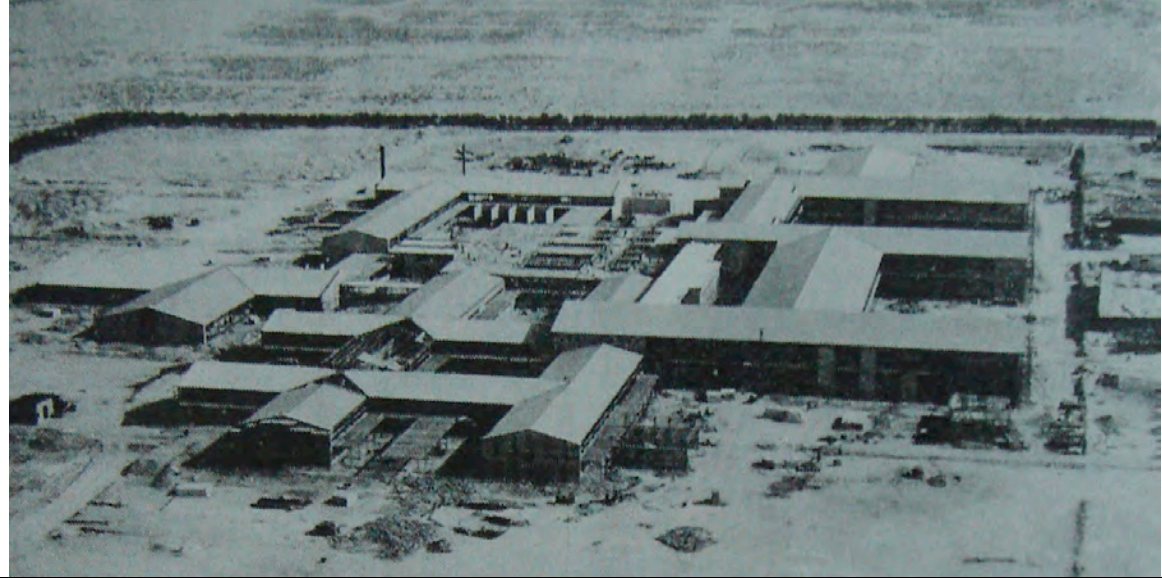


Figure 10. KOC's new Southwell Hospital completed in 1960. (Source: *The Kuwaiti*)



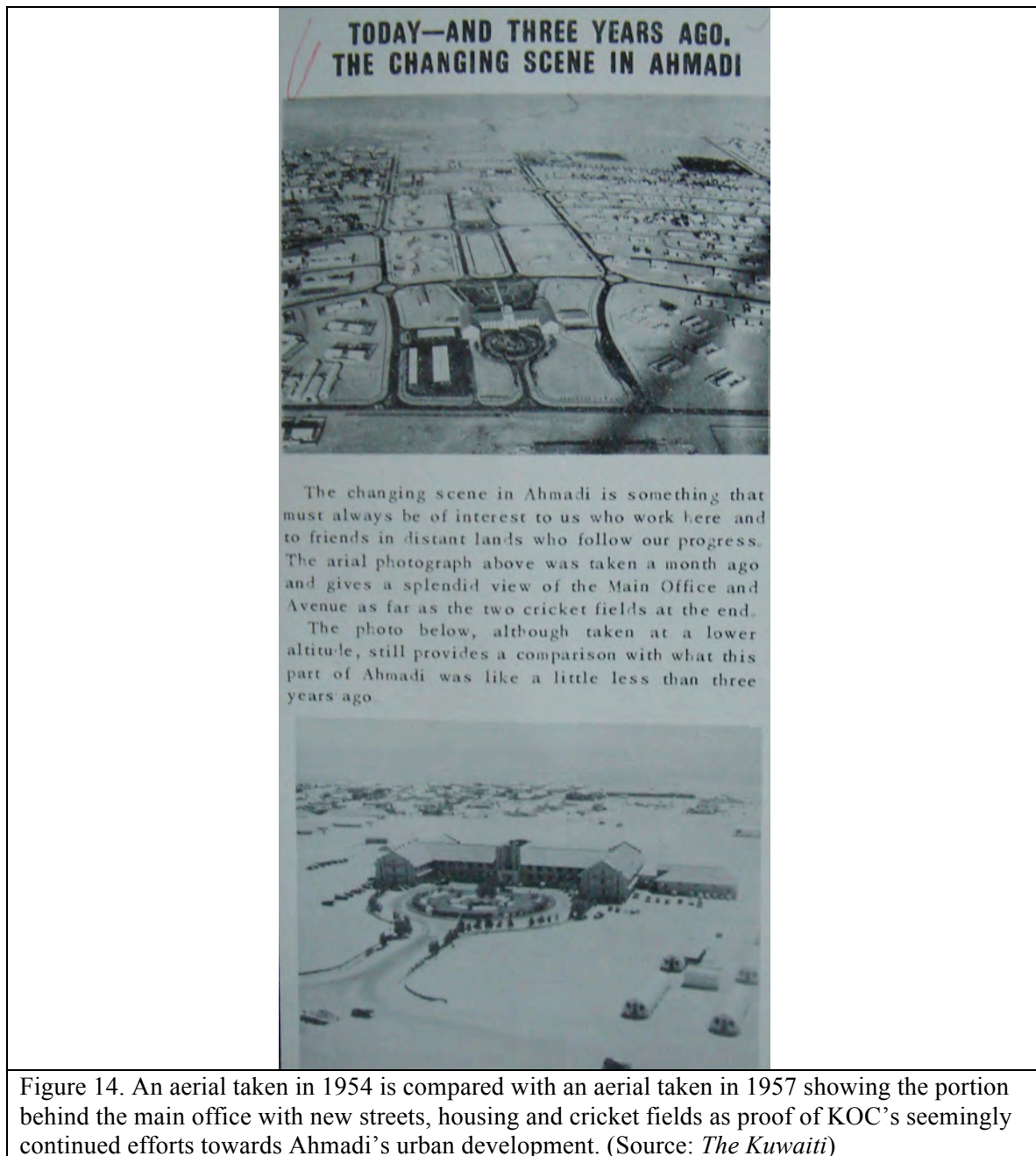
Figure 11. A new modern shopping center administered by the state completed in 1961. (Source: *The Kuwaiti*)



Figure 12. A new modern cinema, 1965. (Source: *The Kuwaiti*)



Figure 13. The new Display Center in 1965. (Source: *The Kuwaiti*)



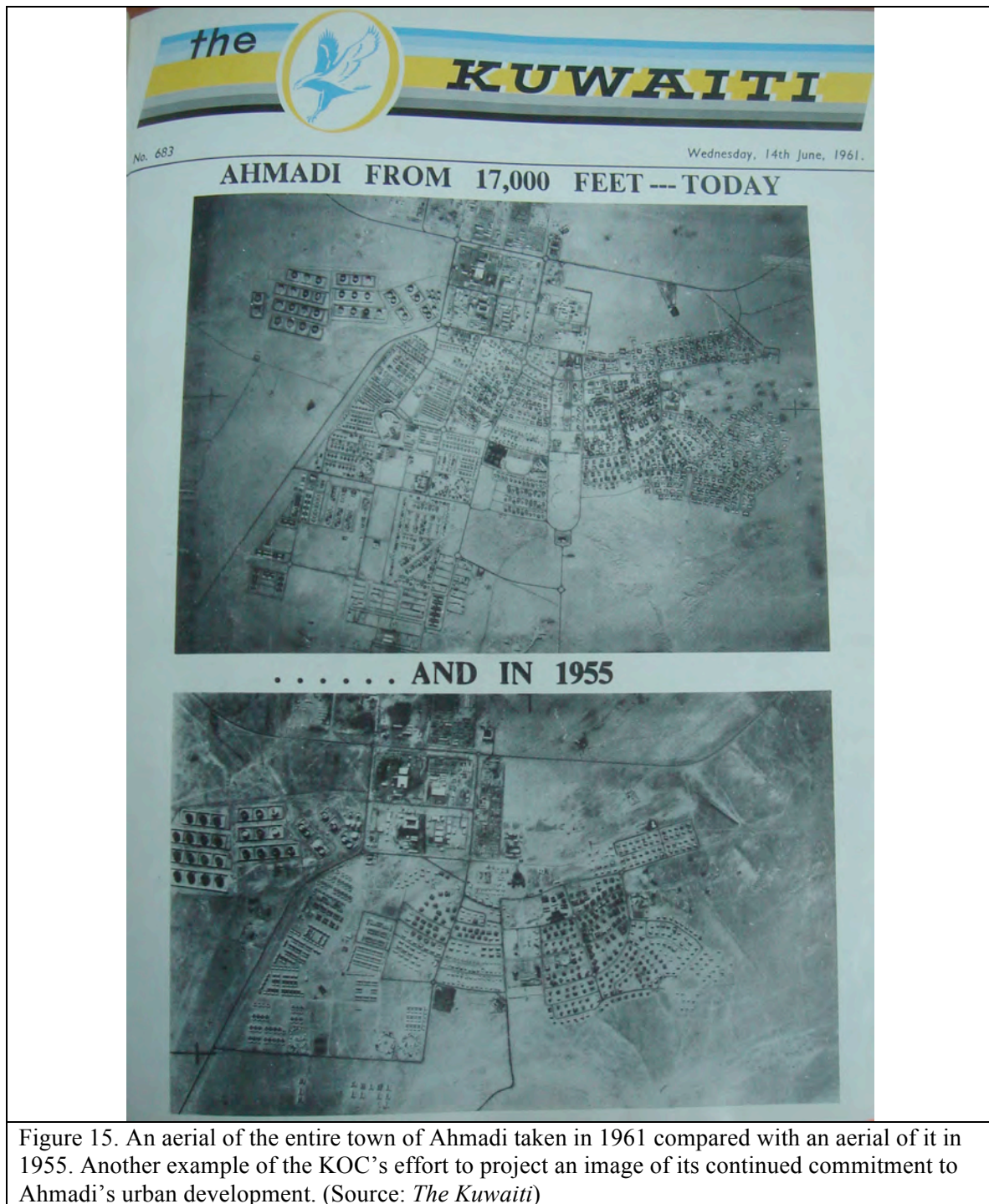


Figure 15. An aerial of the entire town of Ahmadi taken in 1961 compared with an aerial of it in 1955. Another example of the KOC's effort to project an image of its continued commitment to Ahmadi's urban development. (Source: *The Kuwaiti*)

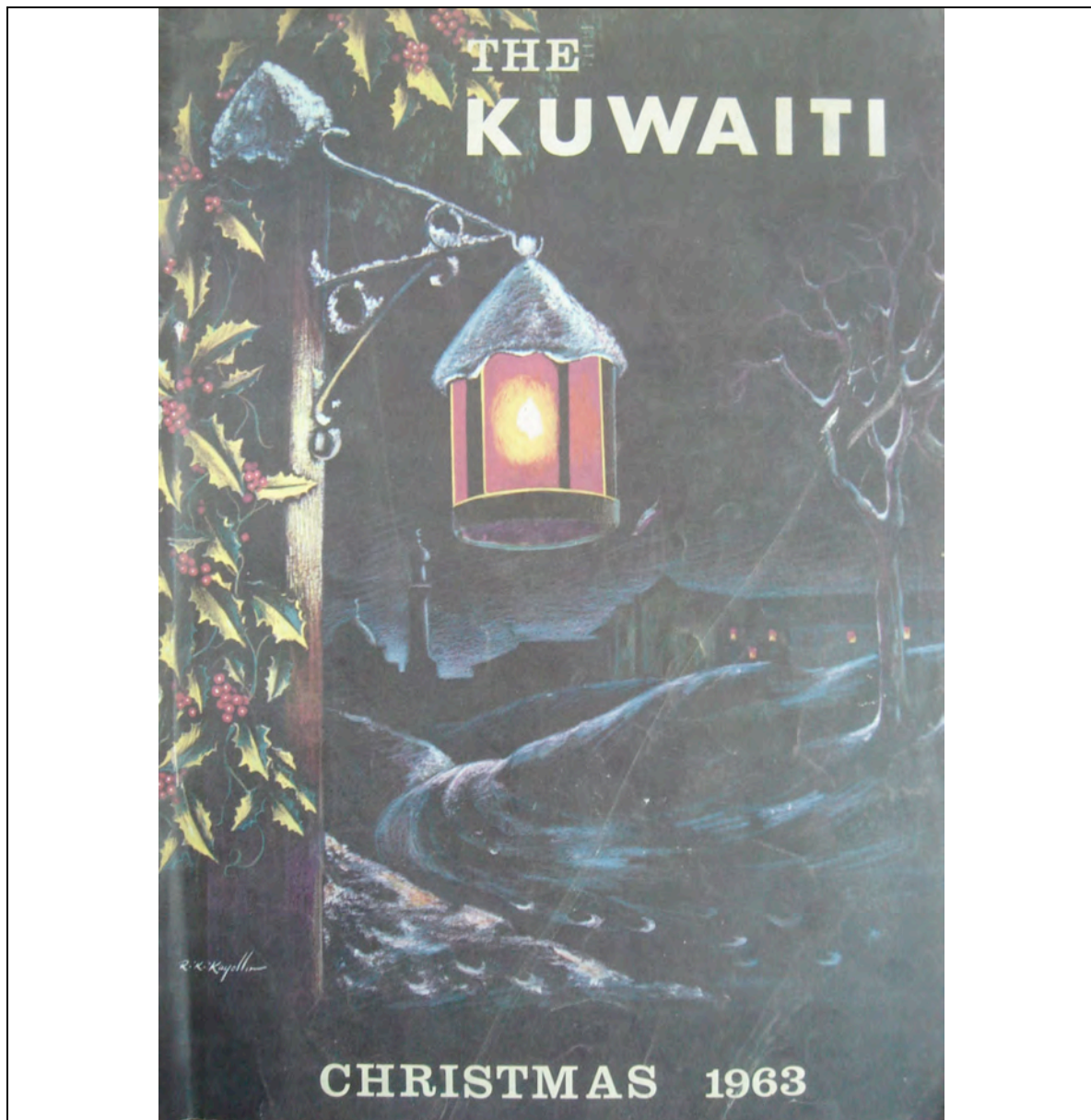


Figure 16. *The Kuwaiti*'s 1963 issue cover celebrating Christmas showing a snowy Ahmadi in the foreground with its Main office and Ridge Mosque in the background. This image illustrates the beginnings of KOC's "cultural sensitivity" towards the indigenous population through religious inclusion as represented by the mosque. (Source: *The Kuwaiti*).



Figure 17. This image of *The Kuwaiti*'s 1961 Christmas cover is symbolic of the remnants of colonialism exemplified by modernization and Kuwaitization within the KOC as the dark oil workers carrying Santa are targeted with snowballs in the face by the senior staff children. (Source: *The Kuwaiti*)

4. Kuwaitizing Ahmadi: The Emergence of a Nostalgic City, 1960 – 1992

Urban Kuwaitization and Nostalgia

Independence, modernization and Kuwaitization at the start of the 1960s played significant roles in the introduction of the Kuwaiti family to Ahmadi which only a few years prior was the exclusive urban oasis of KOC's expatriate population. These three processes combined with Ahmadi's built and social environment have decisively reformed the Kuwaiti family norms in urban living by exposing them to a unique experience of urban modernity within the backdrop of its exported form of planning and design. This radical departure in lifestyle in contrast to the status quo of old Kuwait City - from which most of the early Kuwaiti upgraded employees had recently moved - was primarily seen as more advanced and desirable than the latter rendering its urban excellence, especially in the 1960s and 1970s, as its most memorable and this, in turn, lead to the notion of Ahmadi as Kuwait's nostalgic city.

The technical definition of Kuwaitization, as mentioned in the previous chapter, is the training and education of Kuwaiti citizens with the eventual aim of their replacement of the expatriate professionals who held senior management positions, or in other words, the nationalization of the workforce. To diffuse criticisms of it and gain consensus for its continued operation as a foreign oil company in Kuwait, the KOC represented itself as strongly committed to the process of Kuwaitization. This process is largely indebted to the criticisms voiced against the company by some of Kuwait's earliest members of its nascent educated middle-class through locally established newspapers. Not only did they play a part in instigating the technical meaning of Kuwaitization, but more importantly, they played a crucial role in the urban Kuwaitization of Ahmadi, or the introduction of Kuwaiti employees at more senior levels to areas of Ahmadi that were once the private domain of an elite expatriate minority. Beyond the meanings of Kuwaitization that were discussed in the previous chapter such as the professionalization of the indigenous population or a benign remnant of the colonialism, its meaning in this chapter expands to permeate the urban milieu.

The process of Kuwaitization was actually implemented in Ahmadi in the mid-1960s, a few years after its announcement, as educated Kuwaitis and Arabs started to be appointed to more senior positions. Indeed, it was during this time that Ahmadi began to experience a sea-change in its established demographic and urban order as qualified Kuwaitis and Arabs began to gradually replace Ahmadi's British, American, Indian and Pakistanis residents in the North and Mid sections of the town. As these urban areas had been originally planned to house expatriate families, once they were occupied by a growing Kuwaiti population they became the vehicle of a new urban lifestyle which did not exist in Kuwait's old town. For the first time Ahmadi's North and Mid sections began to house Kuwaiti residents, many of whom were previously living in the Kuwait's old town. The architecture of North and Mid Ahmadi which was designed for an expatriate population was rather alien to the locals, however, the locals enjoyed it so much so, that

their desire for it surpassed that of Kuwait's existing built form. Furthermore Ahmadi has come to acquire a special place in the collective memory of Kuwaitis over the years. Attesting to this is a general consensus among Kuwaitis and non-Kuwaitis alike on the legacy of Ahmadi as a city that was extremely popular at a certain point in its past, more precisely in the 1960s and 1970s. Moreover, in the recollection of many former residents Ahmadi has become a nostalgic city they yearn for.¹

This chapter begins by analyzing the different ways in which Ahmadi's urban modernity affected the lifestyle of the newly upgraded Kuwaiti employee. The analysis focuses on the following three scales: the urban, the architectural and the social. The urban scale refers to the level of the town plan and pays particular attention to landscaping as a key element in this unfolding modernity. The architectural scale focuses on the single-family housing unit and on how its design fostered the model of a nuclear family structure and a western sense of neighborly relations. Lastly, the social scale refers to certain codes of conduct that were sustained through both Ahmadi's built environment and the company magazine *al-Kuwayti* as it instructed the new Ahmadi resident, particularly its female population, on how to act appropriately in this modern town. This glimpse at Ahmadi's urban modernity as experienced by the Kuwaiti resident is then followed by a brief account of the changing face of Kuwait City's modernizing landscape which eventually, surpasses Ahmadi's architectural qualities. This comparative framework between Kuwait City and Ahmadi is crucial in understanding the reasons behind the latter's concurrent urban deterioration and the emergence of the notion of nostalgia. The final section explains why Ahmadi is still perceived as a nostalgic city in the collective imagination of Kuwait's population. Drawing on oral evidence collected during interviews with former residents it focuses on two overarching themes: the juxtaposition of old Kuwait City and Ahmadi in the 1960s and 1970s on the one hand, and the juxtaposition of 1960s and 1970s Ahmadi and its present on the other - both comparisons form the basis for Ahmadi's formulation as nostalgic.

The Urban Scale: Ahmadi as Kuwait's Major Destination

The urban scale refers to the macro level of Ahmadi's master plan focusing specifically on landscape elements such as its garden culture and public parks. The analysis of this urban scale shows how Ahmadi as inspired by the Garden Suburb model introduced the notion of recreational landscaping to Kuwait, positioning the town as the nation's most popular green public space. After independence and with the gradual opening up of Ahmadi to the Kuwaiti population in the early 1960s and the 1970s the town served as a popular weekend destination for Kuwaitis and non-Kuwaitis alike (figures 1 and 2). According to one former resident,

When I was in High school (in the early 1970s) every Friday all of the people from *al-Deirah* (Kuwait Town as referred to by locals) would come to Ahmadi. They would cruise around the senior garden next to the Display Center, cars with girls, cars with boys and cars with families. They would cruise around a few

times then they would head to the *souk* (market). The boys and girls would stay in their cars and this cruising was like their flirting. This happened every Friday.²

In addition to cruising, droves of people came to picnic on any patch of grass they could find even if it happened to be on someone's private front garden.³ In fact, the massive gathering of crowds in Ahmadi's green spaces, both public and private, lead to a proposal by the KOC to develop a "suitable semi-formal picnic and garden area" in the Mid section in order to avert the presence of picnic-goers in the residential areas and reduce congestion in the public gardens.⁴ The following passage is translated from the *al-Kuwayti* which described such scenes in 1973 as follows: "We find families scattered here like bees to a hive. Children running, adults singing and loud music beaming from the radio, and ladies preparing food. All at a large picnic surrounded by sheer happiness."⁵ In the pre-independence period the use of Ahmadi's element of landscape was restricted to its expatriate population. After independence, however, it was suddenly open to Kuwait's public at large following, quite ironically, the principle of egalitarianism embedded in Howard's Garden City prototype.

The Architectural Scale: The Art of Modern Urban Living

Moving on to the micro level of the architectural scale this discussion will now focus on how the KOC promoted the maintenance of the aesthetic beauty of the single housing unit by targeting the female readers of the *al-Kuwayti* magazine. The KOC attempted to maintain certain codes of conduct as acceptable norms in urban living by enforcing the appropriate upkeep of the Ahmadi house. An example of this is provided by the company's focus on the maintenance of the house's aesthetic beauty as linked to the socially acceptable activities to take place within it. The following is a translated article from the column titled *Rukn al-Mar'ah* (Women's Corner) published in *al-Kuwayti* in January 1962:

Your house is an expression of yourself as it appears in the street or to your neighbors; so don't allow it to become a place for hanging your laundry. You can allow it to be a beautiful place full of roses and green leaves for your family's enjoyment, where you may drink tea or coffee with your dear guests.⁶

This is just one example of how KOC used *al-Kuwayti* as a sort of manual of urban living targeting the new Kuwaiti resident of Ahmadi. Here, domestic activities, particularly those on display throughout Ahmadi's architectural façade, were presented as the embodiment of modern urban living. Consequently, this rigorous effort on the part of KOC to maintain an orderly, clean and beautiful town was a theme that was voiced several times in interviews with former residents. Indeed, to a large extent this theme of Ahmadi as "beautiful" seems to have been a major component of the appeal the town came to command in

Kuwait. As suggested by a former male Kuwaiti employee who lived in the North section in the 1960s:

Early on, people used to be jealous of those who lived in Ahmadi because it was so quiet, well-planned, clean, aesthetically pleasing, the garbage was collected nicely, the colors of the houses were always clean and vibrant. I mean the maintenance in Ahmadi was continuous.⁷

In considering the architectural scale, the single housing unit also reformed the Kuwaiti family structure and its established norms of neighborly relations, especially in light of the fact that a majority of Kuwaiti families who had just moved into Ahmadi's North and Mid sections in the early 1960s previously lived in what is colloquially called *al-bayt al-'arabi* (the Arab house) in old Kuwait Town. *Al-Bayt al-'arabi* was the traditional housing unit that usually accommodated the larger extended family with its rooms organized around a central courtyard in which the family's social activities took place. The residential units which were originally designed for the British and American nuclear family brought to Kuwait a new housing typology which significantly impacted the Kuwaiti family both culturally and socially in two significant ways. First, the Ahmadi single family house completely inverted the plan of *al-bayt al-'arabi* in a manner that relegated its centrifugal social space to the perimeter of Ahmadi's single family house in the form of an exposed front yard and semi-exposed backyard. Second, the Ahmadi house limited the extended nature of the Kuwaiti traditional household to a nuclear one. In turn, these changes in domestic configuration decisively impacted the lifestyle of the Kuwaiti resident in two key respects. First, the socially extroverted architectural facade encouraged a strong sense of neighborly relations that transcended kin, the principle which organized urban living in the old Kuwait Town. In this connection Mrs. Z explained: "We were so far from *al-Deirah* (the colloquial name used to refer to Kuwait Town or Kuwait City) and our relatives there, so all you have is who surrounds you. So the relationships between the neighbors were very strong." And second, the primacy of the mother's role as house manager in the new nuclear family structure fostered a sense of independence as suggested by this account of a former resident:

I married and left my family's house when I was 15 years old. So I was a child just going back and forth from school and home. My family was strict. You know in those days it wasn't easy to leave the house for example to go to the cinema. So in Ahmadi I felt a sense of coming into my own, a sense of independence and a sense of being. I have my own house, my own place. It's different before I had to share everything with my sisters.⁸

The Social Scale: Manufacturing the Iconic Modern Suburban Wife

The social scale conveys how KOC was able to manufacture a certain image of Kuwaiti women now living in Ahmadi through means that aimed at molding their social behavior.

In the same way that Ahmadi introduced a new form of urbanism to Kuwait the town's environment and the *al-Kuwayti* magazine were instrumental in promoting the novel notion of the uncovered, beautiful and subservient Ahmadi wife. Here, the magazine again targeted Kuwaiti females by directly addressing them in the *al-Kuwayti* column titled *Rukn al-Mar'ah* through the publication of several articles in 1962. Unlike its English counterpart ("For Women Only") *Rukn al-Mar'ah* was instructive rather than suggestive or entertaining. For example, it included many articles which emphasized how it was a duty for women to maintain their physical beauty through make-up and physical exercise. There were also numerous articles that placed emphasis on their expected acquiescence to their husband which were accompanied by photographs of white females (figure 3). *Rukn al-Mar'ah* also repeatedly published advertisements of the latest Western fashion which markedly differed from Kuwaiti traditional female attire. Indeed, several interviews suggest that Kuwaiti females who moved to Ahmadi in the 1960s suddenly discarded the *abaya* (body robe) and *boshiya* (face and head cover) in favor of the skirts and shirts fashionable at the time in order to be commensurate with Ahmadi's urban environment. Although the same type of sartorial shift also occurred in Kuwait City, it was not as expected, fast nor as confident.⁹ Therefore, both the *al-Kuwayti* magazine and Ahmadi's designed urban environment promoted the Kuwaiti woman's adherence to the town's ideal of a modern wife - that is, one that was subservient, made-up and clad in the latest Western fashion.

Ahmadi's three scales of development - the urban, architectural and the social - variously mediated new lifestyles for the Kuwaiti employee and his family that contrasted with those of old Kuwait Town. In some instances, the Kuwaiti resident was coerced into acceptable norms of modern urban living that were directly inculcated by the company magazine. In others, it was Ahmadi's built environment which served as a backdrop for these modern lifestyles to unfold. Either way Ahmadi's urban modernity as experienced by its earliest resident Kuwaiti families and its eventual urban deterioration were crucial in the formulation of the notion of Ahmadi as a nostalgic city.

Ahmadi's Architecture in Eclipse

In the manner of a relay race, Kuwait's modernizing landscape of creative destruction began to take off since as early as the 1960s. For the past fifty years Kuwait has practiced a vicious cycle of architectural erasure and rebuilding whether due to a sea change in its economy or for reasons of war both in and outside its geographical boundaries. Focusing on Kuwait City's urban landscape which consists primarily of its downtown core and its surrounding suburbs, this section maps the unique trajectory of Kuwait's urban modernization since its advent in the second half of the twentieth century until the present. This trajectory will be traced by isolating three definitive periods rife with architectural activity. First, is the period of the 1960s, which saw the architectural productions of *Alnahdha* or the Arab Awakening. Second is the period between the early 1970s and early 1980s in which the oil embargo precipitated another series of rampant architectural activity. Third, is the post-war reconstruction effort following the First Gulf

War or the Iraqi invasion of Kuwaiti in 1991. The combination of these developments as they ebbed and flowed throughout Kuwait's journey of urban modernization collectively lead to its advancement over Ahmadi as the latter was left behind in a state of urban deterioration.

With the newfound oil wealth, Kuwait's ruling family and their British superiors had to contend with funneling the wealth to the nation and its citizenry in order to prevent any serious challenges to the existing power structure. Challenges to those in power were already evident in the growth of the local population's socio-political and intellectual awareness largely influenced by the *Alnahda Alarabia* or Arab Awakening which swarmed the region at the turn of the century, and gained momentum with Nasserism by the mid-century. This lead to the local population's demands for progress and reform, and the British government's strategic termination of Kuwait's protectorate status and its conversion to national indepedence in 1961. Like many newly independent nations in the aftermath of World War II, Kuwait turned to the modernization process and modernism's values to build its nascent nation both physically and socially. Its path towards modernization was embodied in the Development Programme which consisted of a distribution of oil wealth among all Kuwaitis, the establishment of a constitution, ambitious planning programs and a generous welfare system.¹⁰ The most important part of the Development Programme which is of concern here is the modernization of the city in the form of the 1951 master plan of Kuwait by Minoprio, Spencely and Macfarlane (see introduction for more detail).

This plan entailed the complete erasure of old Kuwait Town and provided the state with a *tabula rasa* on which to build Kuwait's new modern central business district or downtown area. This area became primarily a cultural, governmental and economic zone and beyond it were Kuwait's modern planned self-sufficient residential neighborhood units. The late 1950s and early 1960s saw the completion of some of the state's first modern buildings which radically departed in form, material and construction techniques from the old Kuwait's architecture. Indeed *al-imara al-haditha*, or the modern architecture, was brought about by the the British government as it advised the Kuwaiti government to showcase its desire in asserting itself as a newly independent modern nation through the benevolent investment of its oil wealth into its architecural development in the name of progress.

Examples of this architecture include the Municipality headquarters completed in 1963. The Cinema al-Hamra which also included a casino of the same name completed in 1958. The Andalus cinema, one of the largest cinemas in the Middle East, completed in 1961 and home to performances by some of the most influencial Arab singers such as Fareed al-Atrash, Abdulhaleem Hafiz and Umm Kalthoom (figure 4). The Carlton Hotel built in the early 1960s which was one of Kuwait's first modern hotels (figure 5). The Thanayyan al-Ghanem commercial building and the Ministry of Finance, both completed in the early 1960s (figure 6) and the Al-Salam Palace built in the early 1960s as a guest house for visiting dignitaries (figure 7).¹¹

Al-imara al-haditha was very similar to the International style with its lack of ornamentation and use of concrete, glass and steel. However it differed slightly from it

through the use of brise-soleil, louvers, overhangs and the heavy use of shaded fenestration for the purpose of climate control. These buildings were constructed using modern techniques such as standardized architectural elements, pre-cast structural members, concrete portal frames and light steel trusses.¹² Such buildings were designed by foreign-Arab architects most of whom were from Egypt and Lebanon such as Sami Abdul Baqi and Dr. Sayed Karim, who brought this unique *al-Imara al-haditha* with them from their home countries where it was prevalently practiced at the time.

Al-imara al-haditha, however, did not last longer than a decade as it saw major criticisms emerge within Kuwaiti public discourse regarding its foreign nature and contextual disconnect. A major figure who inspired this critical stance was Saba Shiber, a planning consultant who worked for the Kuwaiti government, and wrote prolifically on the subject in the early 1960s. He deeply regretted the destruction of the old town and saw it as a missed opportunity from which to derive architectural inspiration.¹³ Shiber's polemic criticism combined with the oil embargo imposed by OAPEC member countries in response to the 1973 Arab-Israeli War and the embargo's subsequent massive revenues allowed for a shift in Kuwait's architecture from *al-imara al-haditha* to one of "Arab modernism."

There were numerous projects designed by internationally known architects that reflect this shift in the late 1970s and early 1980s, the most iconic are; the Parliament Building by Danish architect Jorn Utzon, the Seif Palace by Finnish architects Raili and Reima Pietila and Kuwait Towers by Danish architect Malene Bjorn. Jorn Utzon's design for the Parliament Building began construction in 1978 and was completed in 1985. Massive curved planks of precast concrete symbolizing an Arabian tent flank its entrance pavilion and its internal organization was meant to resemble a "traditional Arabian bazaar (figure 8)."¹⁴ Raili and Reima Pietila's design for the Seif Palace commissioned in 1973 and completed in 1983 consisted of a new complex as an extension to the Old Seif Palace. The advisory committee stipulated that the complex should "demonstrate new Islamic architecture" and harmonize with the existing structure.¹⁵ The architects thus provided a progression from the traditional to postmodern forms. They harmonized with the existing building by using the "soft yellow color of indigenous housing for the buildings' exteriors walls (figure 9)."¹⁶ The Kuwait Towers by Danish architect Malene Bjorn were completed in 1977. Arguably The most iconic symbols of modern Kuwait, they contain water in a sculptural form meant to resemble traditional Arab perfume containers (figure 10). These foreign architects as well as numerous others who completed significant projects in Kuwait such as Kenzo Tange, Michelle Ecochard and Rifat Chadirji all had one thing in common: they strove to imbue their work with a sense of an identity whether it was Bedouin, Arab, Islamic or a combination of these. Such projects marked the beginnings of architectural orientalism in Kuwait as architectural features were randomly weaved together according to these foreign architects' preconceived notions.

Nezar AlSayyad makes the compelling observation that in addition to Westerners', Easterners have uncritically accepted this practice of architectural stereotyping.¹⁷ This is certainly evident the Kuwaiti suburb's contemporary residential

architecture which came into fruition over the decades since the late 1950s largely as a result of the government's *ardh wa ghardh* or land and loan program. The land and loan program entailed the handing out of land with low interest government loans through a lottery system to help Kuwaiti citizens build houses in the new suburbs as part of Kuwait's larger urban renewal. Since the start of the land and loan program and over the decades Kuwaitis have attempted to express their identity through their residential architecture. Huda Al-Bahar divides these changing architectural expression into three periods: the early post oil period in the late 1950s, The Middle post oil period in the mid 1960s-1970s and the late post oil period in the 1980s. The early post oil period is characterized by rejecting the past and the primacy of geometric forms that were purely aesthetic such as sloping roof canopies at acute angles (figure 11). The Middle post oil period is one in which the house's individual character became important as it symbolized the owner's social status. This is the period in which eclectic styles such as Neo-classical, North African, Neo-Islamic, Neo-Bedouin and so on became an architectural standard still practiced in Kuwait today (figure 12). The late post oil period in the 1980s is characterized by modern designs inspired by tradition (figure 13). Al-Bahar argues that many attempts in search of a new identity were made that had no link to the past "and rather than develop, enhance and refine the traditional character in the context of the new, they simply discarded the old and started to build the new on very shaky and superficial grounds."¹⁸

The last period Al-Bahar outlines, the late post oil period of the 1980s, was an economically and politically turbulent decade in Kuwait due to the Iran-Iraq war and the collapse of Kuwait's Stock Exchange. The Iran-Iraq war, which lasted from 1980-1988, threatened the security of Kuwait. This combined with the infamous collapse of the Kuwaiti Stock Exchange in 1982, known as *azmat souq al-manakh*, drastically halted public and private spending creating a lull in Kuwait's general architectural development scene throughout the decade. This decade's economic and political instability reached its apogee with Iraq's invasion of Kuwait on August 2nd, 1990. Under the leadership of Saddam Hussein, Iraqi troops destroyed Kuwait's natural and built environment within the seven-month period of the occupation. In addition to the plethora of various war crimes against civilians and the destruction of the natural and built environment, a number of architecturally and nationally significant buildings were dynamited and burnt such as the Kuwait Towers, the National Assembly Building, the Sief Palace, various ministries and, most importantly, the town of Ahmadi (figure 14).¹⁹ A combination of factors such as Kuwait's architectural and urban advancement relative to that of Ahmadi's over the years, the land and loan program which encouraged citizens to build their own residences in Kuwait's new suburbs, and destruction caused by the 1990-91 Iraqi invasion are some of the factors which have contributed to its current urban demise and the loss of the special aura it was famed for.

Nostalgic City: *al-Hayat Hilwah fi al-Ahmadi* (Life is Beautiful in Ahmadi)

Nostalgia is commonly understood as a sentimental longing or wistful affection for a period in the past.²⁰ It is in this sense that the word nostalgia is used here, alongside Fred Davis's key observation of nostalgia as "a past imbued with special qualities, which, moreover, acquires its significance from the particular way we juxtapose it to certain features of our present lives."²¹ Interviews with former residents reveal two overarching themes in this regard: the juxtaposition of old Kuwait Town and Ahmadi in the 1960s and 1970s on the one hand, and the juxtaposition of 1960s and 1970s Ahmadi and its current urban condition on the other. These two themes are used as a framework to argue that Ahmadi to this day remains a nostalgic city in Kuwait's collective memory.

When describing Ahmadi or discussing their recollections of it in the 1960s and 1970s many former residents compared it to old Kuwait Town. Although oil revenues began to finance grand state projects and new housing developments in the 1950s, old Kuwait Town had yet to be demolished.²² Moving into Ahmadi's North section from old Kuwait Town was a dramatic change as suggested by Mrs. X:

It was so well organized, streets were numbered, streets were asphalt, there were bicycle paths. It was like a British village. Completely organized from services, water was available to houses. In *Sharq* (a section in Kuwait Town) we had water tanks. In Ahmadi water was supplied through pipes, just like now, so was the gas. If anything went wrong, you'd call maintenance and they would come and fix it. I mean we took these things for granted. In Sharq we didn't have anything, water tanks came to supply water, and there was electricity but not at the level of Ahmadi, the wires were disorganized and out in the open. And it was quiet, it didn't have Kuwait's traffic, even when we used to visit Kuwait on the weekends, I felt so relaxed when we came back to Ahmadi.

Likewise, Mrs. Z described it as,

... different than *al-Deirah*. I mean the houses are all like the *ajaanib's* (foreigners), one storey with gardens. It's got playing fields. I mean it's like a tourist destination, a place for recreation. There were even playgrounds for children between the residences, I mean this did not exist in *al-Deirah*. We had cinemas. It had many things. Lots of activities.

Ahmadi was clearly seen as a very desirable place for living in the 1960s and 1970s. Reasons for its desirability were mostly attributed to its different and superior architectural quality and urban services in comparison with Kuwait Town. With regards to difference, Ahmadi's foreign architecture as epitomized by its description by Mrs. X as a "British village," seems to have been a major attraction. With regards to superiority, one ex-resident described it concisely in the following terms, "Ahmadi in the old times was paradise, was the good life, there's nothing like it in Kuwait because there was nothing in Kuwait at that time."²³

At the same time, almost all interviewees consistently juxtaposed Ahmadi's contemporary deterioration with its 1960s and 1970s urban glory. During these discussions two common themes were utilized to explain the divergent past and present. The first was that of architectural and urban chaos and the second urban religious and cultural conservatism. Architectural and urban chaos in present Ahmadi was largely attributed to the indiscriminate use of *wastah*, that is, of personal connections to obtain services and favors often bypassing the law. Mr. Z recalled:

The case used to be that it was impossible for residents to make any alterations to the house. One was not allowed to change the fence, or increase its height . . . paint it a different color . . . build an addition. It was against the law. But eventually this changed after the liberation (Kuwait's liberation from the Iraqi occupation of 1990-91). After that everyone did what they pleased, it was chaotic. They would bring outside contractors and make additions or extensions. Some people would even leave and rent out their house. Unfortunately these behaviors began to take over in Ahmadi. The older Ahmadi residents weren't like this.²⁴

In Ahmadi's early decades of development, from the late 1940s until the late 1970s, modifications in the built environment were not allowed without the permission of the company.²⁵ According to Mr. Z and various interviewees, this is not the case in Ahmadi at present. Illegal expansions, such as the addition of rooms and *diwaniyyat* (rooms for male social gatherings) and subletting have become the norm with a deleterious impact on the town's architectural and urban form. Illegality has also extended to social behavior as reckless driving inside the town disregarding speed limits has increased noise levels and created an unsafe outdoor environment. Furthermore, Ahmadi's architectural environment at present is exposed to continuous vandalism as evidenced in its once innovative and popular market which was hailed as a modern architectural innovation (figure 15). In most of the interviews there was a consensus that this downhill shift began in 1975 as the management of the town changed following the nationalization of the company. Furthermore, as mentioned above Ahmadi's more recent urban deterioration was attributed to the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait in 1990-91.

The architecture and urbanism of Ahmadi in the town's glorious days of the 1960s and 1970s were also juxtaposed with the contemporary suburbs of Kuwait City. Mrs. W acknowledged the latter's architectural beauty and described their houses as palaces, but as "palaces without gardens." She also criticized the houses of Kuwait City's suburbs for their lack of harmony as each one competed with the next in terms of style and grandeur without fostering a sense of town spirit which Ahmadi was known for in its early decades.²⁶ Ahmadi's contemporary lack of town spirit may be attributed to the fact that many of its current residents are no longer KOC employees but are illegally renting houses there. An additional disturbing factor is the presence of the *Bidoun* (stateless people residing in Kuwait) who started to squat in South Ahmadi's abandoned houses during the Iraqi invasion as the Iraqi army removed them from the informal settlement in Um Al-Hayman.²⁷ The company has attempted to evict them but with limited success.

Another prominent theme raised in the interviews in relation to Ahmadi's present degradation is that of religious and cultural conservatism. Several residents emphasized the transformation of Ahmadi society into one more entrenched in traditional mores. This phenomenon may be attributed to the increased connectedness of Ahmadi's urban and cultural fabric to that of larger Kuwait's over the past few decades coupled with the successive departure of its expatriate residents and their distinct urban culture. Ghunaim Al-Adwani, the team leader of Ahmadi's Community Services, had the following to say in this regard:

Unlike the past now about 80% of Ahmadi residents are Kuwaiti. Of course the culture changed, the Kuwaiti man wants a *diwaniyyah*, Kuwaitis differ largely from the *ajaanib* (foreigners), the *ajaanib* want a gathering center such as clubs and restaurants, now with the Kuwaitis the culture is completely different. We find difficulties in bringing them together, because they want their own privacy. So the clubs have become much less popular, unlike in the past, unless there are entertainment venues for children such as swimming competitions and *girgay'aan* (a children event marking the celebration of 'Id).²⁸

Some of Ahmadi's architectural elements are also suggestive of these changes. The once uniform feature of every house was its property fence referred to as *berdi*, made from compacted reeds imported from Iraq. At various instances former residents referred to it as "aesthetically pleasing" and with cooling qualities. Most importantly, the fence was below eye-level allowing for the partial exposure of the Ahmadi house thus highlighting its welcoming nature. Since this material became difficult to obtain in the early 1980s as a result of the Iran-Iraq War, KOC began using a local material called *curby* which is made from cheap corrugated metal.²⁹ Former and current residents repeatedly complained of the poor aesthetic quality of *curby* also pointing to the increased height of fences around the houses of families with conservative leanings. In effect, now the entire house and its garden have become completely masked, thus rescinding the neighborly and more sociable character of past Ahmadi urbanism (figure 16). In terms of urban life this growth in religious and cultural conservatism as discussed by Al-Adwani drastically reduced the popularity of the sporting events, parties, celebrations and social gatherings for which Ahmadi was known in the past. Indeed, various former residents criticized the few events that continue today as being sexually segregated - a social segregation largely absent in past Ahmadi.

Oil and Nostalgic Urbanism

The discovery of oil and the urgency of its exploitation on the part of a foreign company necessitated the building of an elaborate industrial infrastructure in Kuwait - a key element of which was the company town of Ahmadi. As a result Ahmadi's architecture and urbanism became the primary site where the Kuwaiti employees of the company experienced urban modernity in the 1960s and 1970s. Within the span of six decades the socio-spatial attributes of Ahmadi's architecture and urban life shifted from the colonial

to the national signposting the introduction of key elements of urban modernity to the Kuwaiti resident: landscaped public space, the nuclear family house, and a new urban environment and social attitudes.

With national independence in 1961 and Ahmadi's demographic shift from a largely expatriate population to one including almost exclusively Kuwaiti residents, the town's architecture and urbanism became the platform upon which the indigenous residents came to experience modernity. Here new forms - at the urban and architectural scale - and new norms - at the social scale - forged a novel lifestyle for the Kuwaiti resident of Ahmadi during the 1960s and 1970s. Such new forms and norms were largely viewed in a positive light: Ahmadi became a popular destination, instilled a sense of familial independence, promoted strong neighborly relations and prescribed certain mores in modern urban living. In the eyes of former residents these particular instances of urban modernity reinforced the image of Ahmadi as a nostalgic city.

The notion of nostalgia or a nostalgic city is arguably a ubiquitous trope which cuts across cultures and generations. For example, it is not unusual for a generation to consider certain features of the past as superior to the present and for their generational predecessors to think the same of aspects of *their* past and so on. Lamentations on the way things were are almost a given human pre-condition exercised as a coping mechanism for circumventing present shortcomings. Furthermore, nostalgia is highly subjective and by definition only reveals positive aspects of the past according to individual experiences while turning a blind eye to alternative or negative ones. While nostalgic recollections should always be scrutinized bearing these skepticisms in mind, their conspicuous appearance in almost all of the interviews attest to Ahmadi as having had a profound impact on the everyday urban experience of its early Kuwaiti residents.

In addition to Ahmadi's architectural defeat to Kuwait's modernizing landscape over the decades, interviews with former and current Ahmadi residents revealed various reasons for Ahmadi's urban deterioration such as the ineffective nationalization of Ahmadi's urban management which began in 1975 and the destruction caused and perpetuated by the Iraqi invasion of 1990. Regardless of such reasons the overwhelmingly constant juxtaposition, whether of old Kuwait Town and 1960s and 70s Ahmadi, or the latter's 1960s and 70s years of glory with its present; the urban modernity experienced by the Kuwaiti resident during the 1960s and 1970s period in contradistinction with these other time frames and places was key in positioning it as Kuwait's nostalgic city.

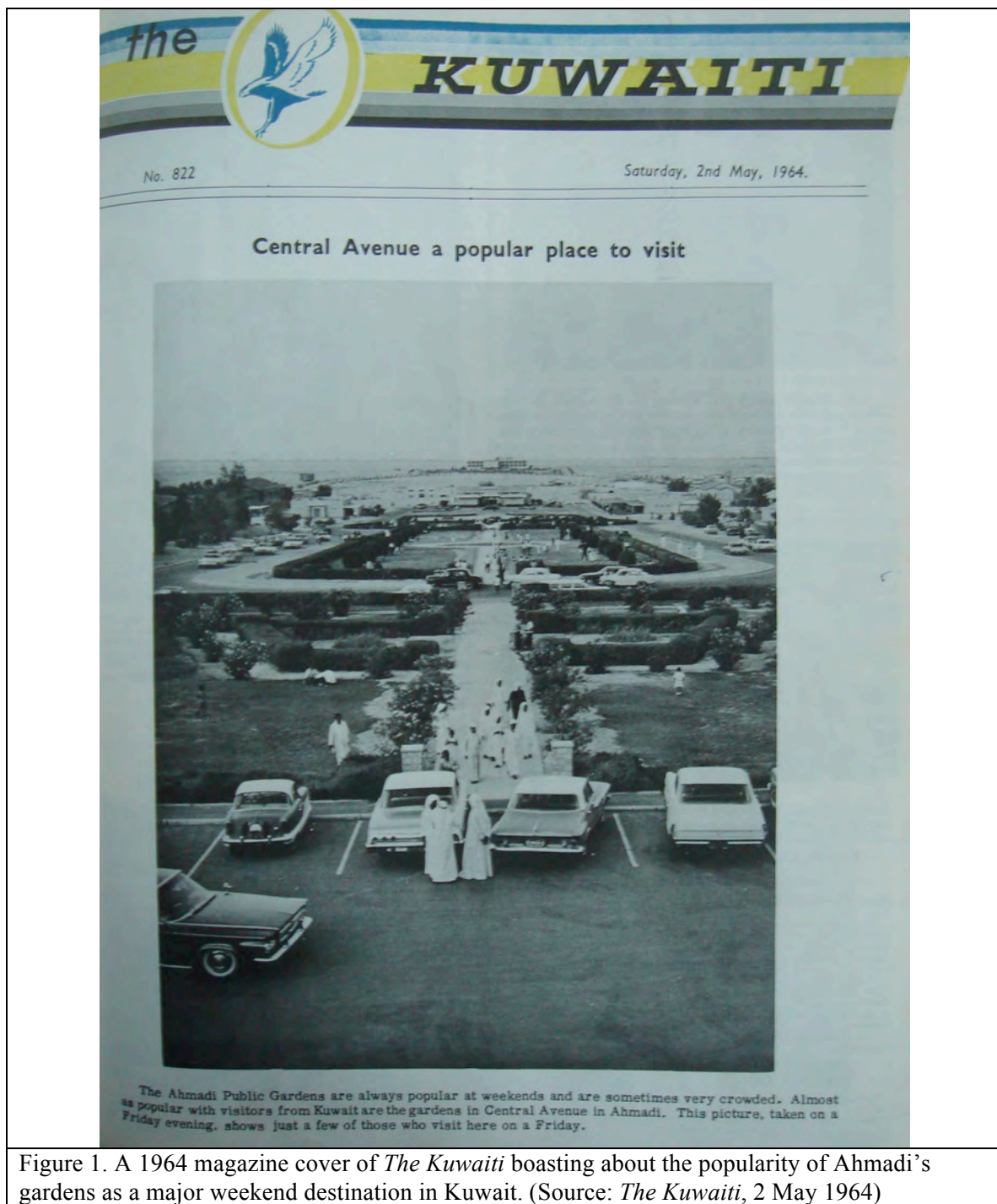


Figure 1. A 1964 magazine cover of *The Kuwaiti* boasting about the popularity of Ahmadi's gardens as a major weekend destination in Kuwait. (Source: *The Kuwaiti*, 2 May 1964)



Figure 2. Images showing of citizens and non-citizens alike flocking to Ahmadi's gardens on weekends. The crowds were so large that they picnicked on any empty patch of garden they could find whether public or private. (*al-Kuwayti*, 1973)

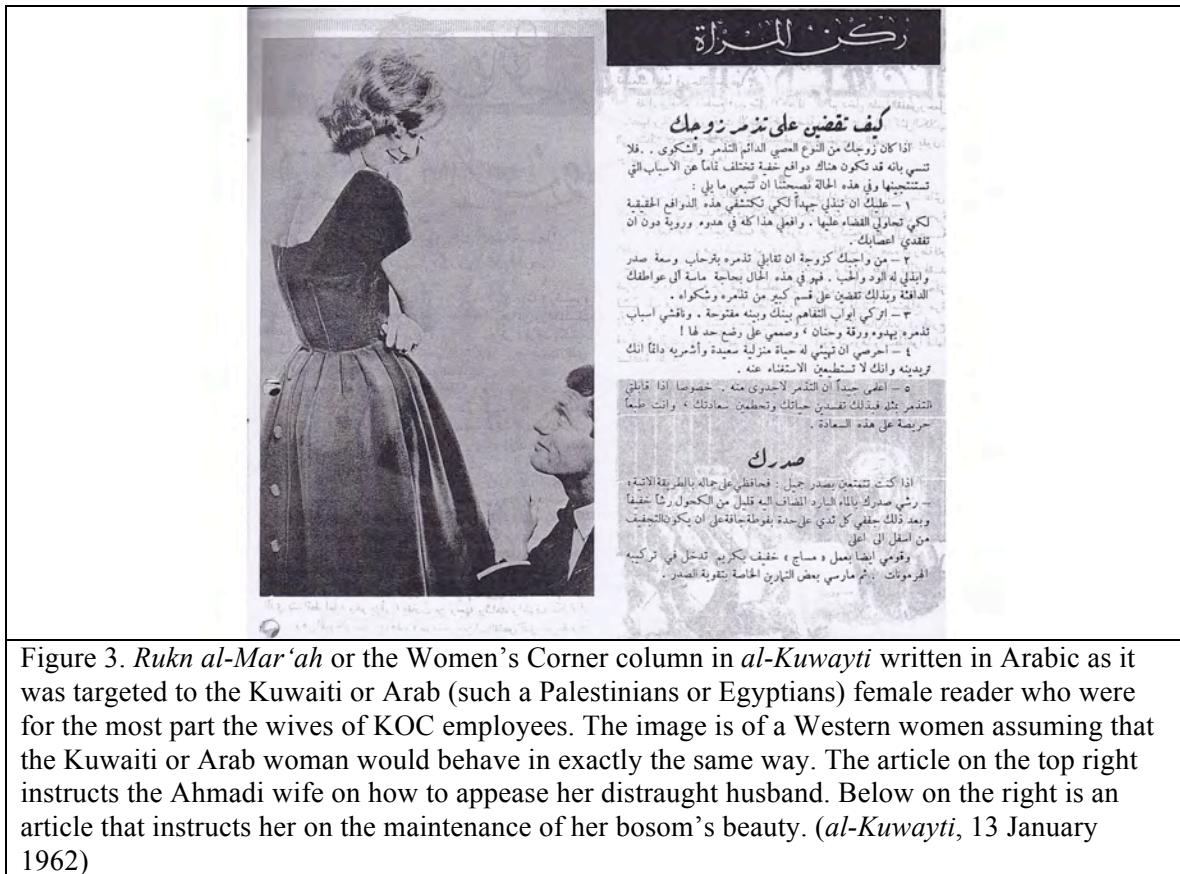


Figure 3. *Rukn al-Mar'ah* or the Women's Corner column in *al-Kuwayti* written in Arabic as it was targeted to the Kuwaiti or Arab (such a Palestinians or Egyptians) female reader who were for the most part the wives of KOC employees. The image is of a Western women assuming that the Kuwaiti or Arab woman would behave in exactly the same way. The article on the top right instructs the Ahmadi wife on how to appease her distraught husband. Below on the right is an article that instructs her on the maintenance of her bosom's beauty. (*al-Kuwayti*, 13 January 1962)



Figure 4. The Andalus Cinema, Kuwait, 1961. (Source: Rais)



Figure 5. The Carlton Hotel, Kuwait, early 1960s. (Source: Rais)



Figure 6. Right: the Thanayyan al-Ghanem commercial building. Middle: the Ministry of Finance, both completed in Kuwait in the early 1960s. (Source: KOC)



Figure 7. The Al-Salam Guest Palace, Kuwait, early 1960s. (Source: Rais)



Figure 8. The Parliament Building by Jorn Utzon, Kuwait, 1985. (Source: author)



Figure 9. The Sief Palace by Raili and Reima Pietila, Kuwait, 1983. (Source: author)



Figure 10. The Kuwait Towers by Malene Bjorn, Kuwait, 1977. (Source: author)



Figure 11. A residential example of the early post oil period or *al-Imara al-haditha* (the Modern Architecture) in which the primacy of aesthetic geometric forms dominated in the late 1950s and early 1960s. This can be seen in the sloping roof canopies and the upper storey concrete wall with circular fenestrations. (Source: BP Archive)

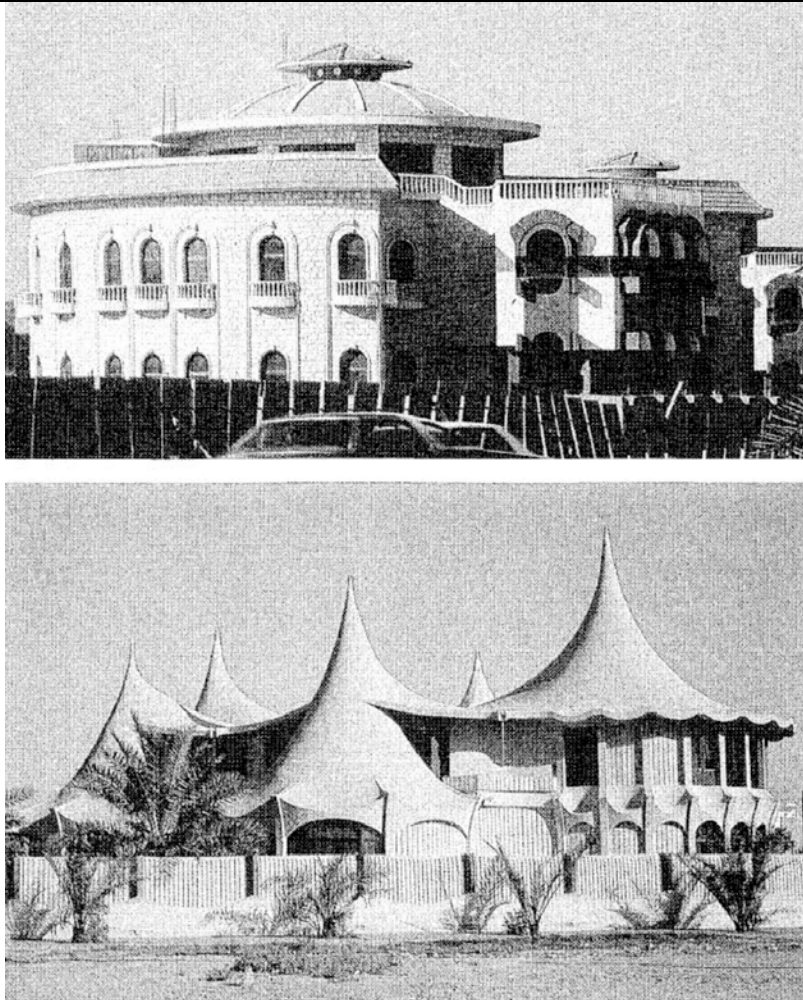


Figure 12. Residential examples of the middle post oil period, late 1960s and 1970s, Kuwait. Above is an example of the eclectic Neo-classical façade treatment as seen in the monumental flattened central dome and the arched windows with their balustraded balconies. Below is an example of what Al-Bahar calls Neo-Bedouin as each room is topped with a tent-like concrete roof. (Source: Al- Bahar)

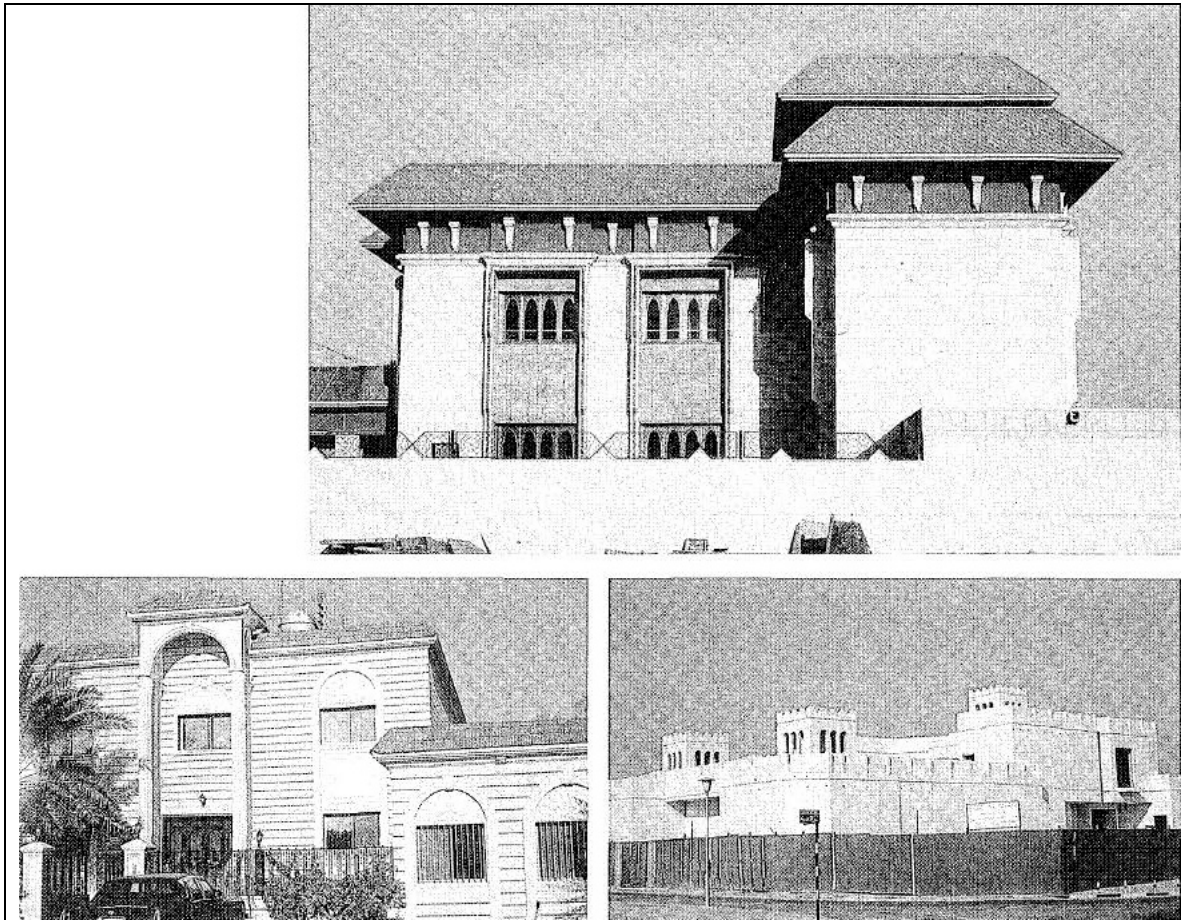


Figure 13. Residential examples of the late post oil period, 1980s, Kuwait. This period is characterized by contemporary designs inspired by tradition. Above, The façade is inspired Spanish and North African palacial architecture. Below left is an example of what Al-Bahar calls modern classicism, here the absence of balconies and the reduced fenestration are characteristic of this period. Below right, is an example of what Al-Bahar calls a “free-style” pseudo Islamic revival of the late post oil period. The jutting towers are purely aesthetic as they are reminiscent of the few wind towers that existed in Kuwait’s old town. (Source: Al-Bahar)



Figure 14. Wartime destruction to the KOC's Headquarter Main Building in Ahmadi by Saddam Hussein's army, 1990. (Source: KOC)



Figure 15. The Vandalized and derelict current state of the Ahmadi shopping center.
(Source: Author)



Figure 16. Left: *Berdi*, 1958. (source: BP Archive) Right: *Curby*, 2010. (source: Author)

Conclusion

Ahmadi came into being as a company town in the name of oil. Building for oil in this instance spanned several distinct time periods with the first encompassing an era of corporate colonialism (1946-56), the second of nationalism (1957-61), and the third of urban modernity (1960s-70s). These categorical shifts occurred within situated surrounding geopolitical contexts as one transitioned into another with the primary aim of maintaining the KOC's function of oil extraction. The segue of one period into another was sequential and consequential: the corporate colonial (or colonial urbanism) period came into being as a result of recreating a familiar Western context in the midst of a foreign other, the nationalist period involved tactics used to safeguard the company's access to oil extraction in the face of the "Suez crises," and, as a response to nationalism with its constituent process of Kuwaitization, urban modernity came to be experienced for the first time by the newly upgraded Kuwaiti employee. Ahmadi's rise to urban prominence in the 1960s and 1970s as it overcame its recent segregationist social order coupled with its gradual decline, particularly after the Iraqi invasion in 1992, lead to its desirability and nostalgic association in the Kuwaiti imagination.

This dissertation began by showing how Kuwait's existence as an independent state was inextricably linked to oil and therefore Kuwait's relationship to Ahmadi was one of mutual interdependence for one could not exist without the other. On the one hand, the project to modernize the city state of Kuwait and bulldoze its mudbrick architectural heritage (which was reminiscent of its "unmodern" poverty) was fueled by the oil wealth Ahmadi generated, and on the other hand the existence of Kuwait as an independent nation state under the auspices of Great Britain allowed for KOC's unimpeded flow of oil operations in Ahmadi.

In its first decade, 1946-1956, Ahmadi was shaped by various actors such as oil, the company architect Wilson Mason and Partners, KOC officials and KOC policies. Acknowledging the importance of a substantial on-site workforce at all professional levels, KOC planned a company town the aim of which was to provide maximum comfort to employees at the senior level who were exclusively British and American. The corporate benevolence afforded to this expatriate population during Ahmadi's first decade was spatially reflected in Ahmadi which was designed by the company architect Wilson Mason and Partners whose background as a colonial officer and work in Abadan were key in shaping his vision. Also inspired by the Garden suburb, Wilson planned and designed Ahmadi in a way that recreated familiar surroundings such gardens, bungalows, cricket fields and afternoon tea at the country club for these British and American senior staff in the midst of the harsh and foreign desert environment. This senior staff bubble was part of a structural hierarchy that spatially segregated Ahmadi's multinational population across professional and ethnic lines. At the urban scale British and American senior staff resided in the North section, Indian and Pakistani junior staff resided in the Mid section, a minority of artisans and labor who were Indian and Pakistani lived in the

South section and the majority of labor who were Arab and Iranian settled informally on the town's perimeter. The architectural scale was also accordingly segregated as senior staff enjoyed large detached houses in the midst of generously sized gardens, junior staff lived in smaller semi-detached houses and labor in row housing consisting essentially of a room. At the very bottom the majority of the labor force consisting of Arabs and Iranians fell outside this hierarchy forcing them to settle informally at the edge of the town.

During this time Ahmadi was built as a colonial company town forming an urban oasis in the middle of Kuwait's desert. As this distinct formal typology Ahmadi both overlapped and diverged from the two theoretical realms of company town literature and colonial urbanism. With regards to the company town paternalism and moral reform were major tenants the town operated by primarily for the social control of the workforce. In this instance, the more obedient and docile the worker was the larger the reward and chance to advance professionally was. Colonial urbanism to a large extent organized space according to race. Ahmadi was unique in that it did not fall neatly under these two theoretical frameworks; its uniqueness towards the company town lie in the fact that workers of certain ethnic backgrounds had no hope to advance professionally or spatially and its uniqueness towards colonial urbanism is that it was a private capital enterprise and not a colony.

The Suez event of 1956 upended this urban order bringing Ahmadi's first decade of colonial urbanism to an end. The KOC realized that in order to contend with the rising tide of Pan Arabism and anti imperialism instigated by Egypt's leader Colonel Abdel Nasser's move of nationalizing the Suez Canal in 1956 it had to undergo a complete self-refashioning. Regional criticisms and the critical vocalization of the few newly educated Kuwaitis which was targeted at the KOC in the form of grassroots newspapers and letters addressed to the ruler lead the company to shift its persona from an insular colonial one to one that was more public and pro-nationalist. Indeed, the KOC reconstructed its image as the agent of modernization of both Ahmadi and Kuwait and an advocate of the process of Kuwaitization by investing heavily in a public relations campaign that highlighted its many beneficent contributions to the local state and citizen. Suddenly the KOC profusely published its various training programs catered exclusively to Kuwaitis in its magazines, *The Kuwaiti* and *al-Kuwayti*, as part of the Kuwaitization of the company. Moreover, it illustrated the many planned modern architectural projects in Kuwait as well as the architectural projects in Ahmadi catering to the Arab worker as a product of its own making. In this instance the KOC married its paternalism with the nation-building project by using architecture and urbanism as a testament to its role as agent of modernization and Kuwaitization in the form of modern state projects in Kuwait and housing and recreational projects for the Arab worker. This public relations campaign quelled the criticisms voiced against the KOC and therefore was crucial in legitimating its continued postcolonial presence. Between the Suez event in 1956 and Kuwait's independence in 1961 therefore Ahmadi transitioned as a company town from one associated with colonialism to acquire its new role in nation building.

As a newly educated professional class of Kuwaitis emerged the KOC began to employ its members in senior positions - once the exclusive preserve of the company's white expatriate minority. It is through the habitation of an architecture and urbanism originally designed for the latter that the Kuwaiti family in Ahmadi was propelled into a new mode of urban living. At the urban scale Ahmadi became a popular destination with its planned public parks and gardens – a novelty in the young nation state - for Kuwaitis and non-Kuwaitis alike. At the architectural scale, the nuclear family home was introduced breaking the traditional more of living with extended family and allowing for a greater degree of independence. Also at this scale the *al-Kuwayti* magazine promoted the aesthetic maintenance of the Ahmadi house with the socially acceptable activities to take place within it. And at the social scale, *al-Kuwayti* manufactured the iconic modern suburban wife with the introduction of the notion of the uncovered, beautiful and subservient Ahmadi wife. Both Ahmadi's built environment and the KOC mouthpiece, *al-Kuwayti*, prescribed to Ahmadi's new Kuwaiti resident the acceptable behaviors that should take place within this modern town. Whether by virtue of the built environment in the case of the former or coercion in the latter, residents at that time viewed the new mode of living in a very positive light. In fact, it was viewed so positively that it was readily accepted and became a desired place in which to live.

The propulsion of the Kuwaiti family into a new mode of urban living in Ahmadi in the 1960s and 1970s is what I refer to as urban modernity. It can be argued that Ahmadi does not qualify as urban because it does not fit the definition of a city due to lack of the necessary population size and density. Indeed, if one espouses Louis Wirth's definition of the city as "a relatively large, dense, and permanent settlement of socially heterogeneous individuals" Ahmadi falls clearly out of its purview.¹ Ahmadi however is exemplary of Wirth's third characteristic: socially heterogeneous individuals. It is this social heterogeneity that marks Ahmadi's 1960s and 70s era as one indicative of an urban modernity. Furthermore, this urban modernity follows Berman's definition of modernity as "a mode of vital experience-experience of and space and time, of the self and others, of life's possibilities and perils-that is shared by men and women all over the world today."² Hence the notion of encounter with the other is key in understanding urban modernity in Ahmadi in the 1960s and 1970s. Berman describes people in the midst of the modernity he describes as engendering "numerous nostalgic myths of pre-modern Paradise Lost."³ Ahmadi is unique because contrary to Berman's statement the modernity here is paradise found. Ahmadi's distinction lies in the fact that its decades of urban modernity (the 1960s and 70s) in which the local and expatriate, no longer separated by the structural hierarchy, encountered one another both physically and ideologically was paradise-like effectuating its association as nostalgic.

Since its establishment in 1946 Ahmadi's architecture and urbanism were used strategically to achieve the complacency of KOC employees. Although drastic changes in Ahmadi's urban order and demography along this time continuum were choreographed by the KOC, the resultant urban modernity experienced by the Kuwaiti employee during the 1960s and 1970s was not, signifying the combination of oil and space as agent of social and cultural change. Ahmadi, therefore, was not only the first site to experience

architectural modernization in Kuwait, it was the site in which the Kuwaiti citizen would come to experience urban modernity.

As the first site to experience modern planning principles in Kuwait, especially in the 1960s when it was open to the public, Ahmadi served as a model for the modernization of Kuwait as evidenced by frequent visits by members of the Kuwaiti municipality. This however has not been the case since 1975 when the KOC was completely nationalized and Ahmadi began to deteriorate as shown in chapter four. A stark characteristic to be mindful of is how the nation state inherited the same contradiction of paternalism with racism seen in Ahmadi's first decade. Just as Arab labor had no rights and were forced to settle informally on the town's perimeter, today the non-Kuwaiti laborer (mostly from south and south east Asia) also has no rights and is forced to contend with harsh living conditions. Kuwait's planned residential neighborhood units of the 1950s were - and are - intended exclusively for Kuwaitis. As non-Kuwaitis may not own land or property, the exclusion of rental units meant the exclusion of non-Kuwaitis resulting in extreme residential segregation.⁴ Non-Kuwaiti housing is provided through the unregulated yet constrained private market, meaning that speculative rents are barely affordable and migrant worker housing barely habitable. Due to escalating rents, especially in the 1970s and 1980s, expatriates were forced to leave and find cheaper housing - congested living situations proliferated, unhealthy and unsanitary living conditions arose - especially in bachelor housing⁵ - as workers often took turns sleeping on the same bed rotating according to work schedule. In this sense Kuwait's plan has inherited the same insidious contradictions that were apparent in Ahmadi first decade.

The image of Ahmadi as a city of nostalgia in Kuwait remains so powerful that it has become the primary premise on which the Ahmadi Township Redevelopment (ATR) master plan is based. Although still at the drawing board at the time of writing, this plan is KOC's current effort towards the comprehensive urban redevelopment of Ahmadi in a manner that preserves its architectural and urban heritage, while accommodating contemporary Kuwaiti living standards.⁶ Aside from the obvious neoliberal agenda Ahmadi's redevelopment has been pursued in order to relieve KOC's responsibility as landlord. Here, the capitalization on its popular past as an aesthetic theme is deliberately used to erase and forget both the ideological and physical destruction Ahmadi suffered since after the Iraqi invasion in 1992 – the erasure of a moment that will never go away. As *the* symbol of Kuwait's wealth Ahmadi was destructively targeted by Saddam Hussein's forces in 1990 and 1991. This is a sober reminder of how oil is often used as a weapon of war. This dissertation has focused on how oil can be an agent of social and cultural change but one must always be aware that this change unlike Ahmadi's euphoric 1960s and 1970s period can easily succumb to tragedy as seen in Kuwait and other nations such as Iraq, Libya and Nigeria. Just as oil was the reason Ahmadi was built it may also be the reason for its destruction.

Postscript

Before the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990-91, Ahmadi consisted of about 3600 houses. With the invasion, however, many houses were damaged and eventually demolished bringing down the number of existing houses to about 1500. This fact combined with company projections for 2020, which estimated the number of employees to increase from 4000 to 9000, lead to KOC's plan to rebuild Ahmadi.¹

Fareeq 'amal i'aadat tadweer al-ahmadi or the Ahmadi Township Redevelopment Team (ATRT) was established in December 2006 to be in charge of Ahmadi's new master plan by acting as KOC's representative to the Build-Operate-Transfer (BOT) consortia. With the aim of stimulating development, the BOT is a project-financing mechanism in which a private developer receives land from the government to finance, design, build and operate for a contracted amount of time after which the project will "transfer" to government ownership. The mother company of the KOC the Kuwait Petroleum Company (KPC) decided to privately redevelop Ahmadi and have it maintained by the developer while remaining for the exclusive housing of KOC employees in order to absolve itself from its current urban responsibilities, which it viewed as beyond its scope of responsibility as an oil company.

The idea for the Ahmadi's Redevelopment originally started in 1998 in the form of the Ahmadi Service Group. As the idea grew over time, it eventually was endorsed by the ruler shaykh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah in September 2006.² The ATRT's main objective therefore became the comprehensive planning of Ahmadi as a "smart city" with its associated amenities. According to KOC engineer Ahmed Khalil, these include: new roads, new infrastructure, 260,000 new houses, a commercial center, offices, schools, a transport hub for buses, an oil museum, community services, a petting zoo, sports fields, playgrounds and a golf course.

ATRT's main consultants are Atkins - a corporate multinational engineering and design consultancy with offices in the Americas, Europe, Asia and the Middle East, and Gulf Consult - a major Kuwaiti engineering firm.³ Atkins worked on the entire package from design to invitations to tender and as the local consultant and Gulf Consult conducted on-site surveys and studies. The Ahmadi Township Redevelopment project consisted of three stages: stage one, according to KOC engineer Khalil, consisted of the master plan and redesigning Ahmadi in way that was up to "modern" standards. Stage two consisted of more details, feasibility studies, market soundness, a financial model, and environmental studies. As the time came to move onto stage three, however, all BOT projects in Kuwait at large were put on hold in May 2007 and since then the ATR has been shelved.

Despite the master plan's current hold status, the ATRT continues to work on routine maintenance of Ahmadi's existing infrastructure such as air-conditioning, mechanical, civil, and electrical and what engineer Khalil called "plan B." Instead of

stopping work on the comprehensive master plan, this plan involves working on its individual components in a piecemeal fashion. The ATRT essentially isolated the master plan into its elements that can be executed immediately following Kuwait's traditional way of contracting, allowing it to legally continue with the redevelopment of Ahmadi while BOTs remained on hold. An example of this is the new recently completed Ahmadi Sports Center originally part of the BOT master plan, which has been refurbished and doubled in size. More examples of the current piecemeal development of Ahmadi are: a new access road under construction, a completed office complex, a bypass road connecting the Oil Minister's house to the office complex also under construction, work on the guest house which began January 2010 and the construction of new Ahmadi hospital.⁴ The design approach to all of these piecemeal developments is to upgrade them to "modern" standards while at the same time maintaining Ahmadi's "theme" or preserving its heritage by using, as much as possible, an aesthetic language similar to its original one.

Despite the ATRT's ability to continue with a piecemeal development approach, one element of the master plan that falls strictly under the BOT category and therefore cannot be touched until the latter is approved is the crucial element of housing. When the new house designs were first unveiled as consisting of two stories to *al-majlis al-a'ala li'betroul* or the Supreme Petroleum Council headed by Prime Minister shaykh Nasser Al-Mohammed Al-Sabah in December of 2006, he objected and said he did not want to change the "theme" of Ahmadi, referring to its original single-storey house with its pitched roof and chimney. Shaykh Nasser saw Ahmadi as having an important place in Kuwait's history and heritage and his idea of preserving the latter required that design changes be made to incorporate a single-floor, a chimney and pitched roof.⁵

Apart from incorporating the shaykh's idea of architectural preservation in the form of a single-floor, a pitched roof and decorative chimney, the "theme" of the Ahmadi house has completely morphed into something quite different as the ATRT and consultants adopted the new design to current Kuwaiti residential standards. Examples of this are the increase in size, the incorporation of a *diwaniyyah*, and the new design for the property fence. The increase in size entails a four bedroom minimum per house for the average Kuwaiti family, the *diwaniyyah* or space for male social gatherings, a staple of most Kuwaiti homes, is included as a separate structure adjacent to the house and instead of the original reed fence which stood on a base of bricks, the proposed fence is to be made of translucent plexi glass standing on a base of painted concrete "for a more contemporary look."⁶ While giving the illusion of openness, the translucent plexi glass's masking nature will persist in walling of the Ahmadi house into private seclusion as the existing curby fence mentioned earlier currently does.

These new Ahmadi houses will be built after the complete demolition of all the town's existing housing stock with the exception of a "Heritage Village." This Heritage Village will be a fenced in collection of a few of old Ahmadi buildings such as old houses, and the catholic and protestant church as a sample of Ahmadi's old architecture for touristic purposes "so that visitors to Ahmadi can see the new Ahmadi smart village and old Ahmadi."⁷

Engineer Khalil kept using the word “modern” to describe Ahmadi’s redevelopment while completely disregarding the fact that it was planned with the most modern professional planning approaches prevalent at the time by the British firm Wilson, Mason and Partners – another detail the ATRT is unaware of. Furthermore, the ATRT’s current efforts to redevelop Ahmadi into a modern “smart city” in keeping with modern Kuwaiti standards are at odds with the Prime Minister’s requirement for the preservation of Ahmadi’s architectural heritage as both requirements result in a completely new hybrid architecture, that nevertheless incorporate the Ahmadi-esque single-storey, pitched roof and decorative chimney. This at the end indeed results in a “themed” architecture but one that is not true to Ahmadi’s architectural and urban heritage but to the symbolic representation of Ahmadi as an important Kuwaiti city according to the Prime Minister’s requirements and the demands of contemporary Kuwaiti living. By selectively referencing its historic architecture and planning, and doing away with the original building plans, this neoliberal redevelopment is clearly aimed at targeting current market demands rather than any genuine attempt to preserve Ahmadi’s original architecture and planning. Hence the answer to the following question remains to be seen: Will Ahmadi’s redevelopment reclaim the architectural and urban qualities that distinguish it as a nostalgic city or will it serve as a themed urban development that memorializes Ahmadi as Kuwait’s nostalgic city?

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Introduction

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1. Oil and the Making of a Modern Nation State

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²³ J. H. Bamberg, *The History of the British Petroleum Company, vol. 2, The Anglo-Iranian Years, 1928-1954* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

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²⁵ *Ibid.* According to BP historian R. W. Ferrier, The D’Arcy Concession was not the first sign of

interest in the oil deposits of Persia as seepages had been known for centuries for a variety of uses such as caulking boats, bonding bricks, setting jewelry and in flaming missiles. Also before D'Arcy a few concessions, though not successful, were granted in Persia such as the Reuter concession in 1872 and a concession granted to the Dutch firm Hotz & Co. in 1884.

²⁶ Bamberg, *The History of the British Petroleum Company*, 5.

²⁷ Ferrier, *The History of the British Petroleum Company*, 243.

²⁸ Winstone and Freeth, *Kuwait*, 125.

²⁹ Ferrier, *The History of the British Petroleum Company*, 202.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 567.

³¹ Bamberg, *The History of the British Petroleum Company*, 148.

³² *Ibid.*, 150-151.

³³ An amusing anecdote I found in several sources is the recounting of “Dickson’s Dream.” Harold R. P. Dickson, Kuwait’s favorite British Political Agent and vice versa, was appointed in his latter years as KOC’s Chief Local Representative by Shaykh Ahmed, acting as an intermediary between the company and the ruler. He kept bragging about his dream of a beautiful girl emerging alive from a tomb near a Sidr tree in Kuwait’s desert, which a local woman interpreted to be the exact location of the oil strike in Burgan.

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⁴⁵ Geoffrey E. Ffrench and Allan G. Hill, *Kuwait: Urban and Medical Ecology* (New York: Springer-Verlag, 1971), 35.

⁴⁶ Trench, *Arab Gulf Cities*, 597.

⁴⁷ Evangelia Simon Ali, “Retracing Old Kuwait,” in *Kuwait: Art and Architecture*, ed. Arlene Fullerton and Geza Fehervari (UAE: Oriental Press, 1995).

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- ⁴⁸ B. J. Slot, *The Origins of Kuwait* (Kuwait: Center for Research and Studies on Kuwait, 1998).
- ⁴⁹ Ali, "Retracing Old Kuwait," 175.
- ⁵⁰ Most Kuwaiti families which included sailors would be without a male for six months and during that time the senior female would be in charge of the household. As expected, there was great excitement and celebration upon the sailor's return from *sifr*.
- ⁵¹ Winstone and Freeth, *Kuwait*, 94.
- ⁵² *Ibid.*, 94-95. As was the case for families of sailors, the wives of men who returned from pearl diving after being away for four months hurried to the seafront in their best clothes and welcomed the boats with drums and waving banners.
- ⁵³ Ali, "Retracing Old Kuwait," 175.
- ⁵⁴ Mohammad Jamal, *Aswaq Al-Kuwait Al-Qadeema [The Old Souk of Kuwait]* (Kuwait: Center for Research and Studies on Kuwait, 2001).
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- ⁵⁶ Mohamad Al-Shaibani, *al-Aswaq al-Qadeema fi al-Kuwait [The Old Souks in Kuwait]* (Kuwait: Center for Heritage Documents and Manuscripts, 2000).
- ⁵⁷ Jamal, *Aswaq Al-Kuwait Al-Qadeema [The Old Souk of Kuwait]*, 12. Other important souqs were Souq Al-Sarrafin or Sarrafin Market which dealt with the exchange of foreign money, Souq Al-Khudra or Vegetable Market and Souq Al-Gharabally or Gharabally Market which sold various commodities such as clothes, shoes, household products, china, tobacco sugar, tea, coffee, sweets, spices, nuts.
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2. Urban Oasis

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- ¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 212.
- ¹¹ Robert Vitalis, *America's Kingdom: Mythmaking on the Saudi Oil Frontier* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), 19-20. For more on the use of paternalism and urban design in company towns to counter the influence of labor unions see Margaret Crawford, *Building the Workingman's Paradise*.
- ¹² Kaveh Ehsani, "Social Engineering and the Contradictions of Modernization in Khuzestan's Company Towns: A Look at Abadan and Masjed-Soleyman," *International Review of Social History* 48(2003), 376. For more on colonially-affiliated sites used as laboratories for the experimentation of professional urban planning see Nezar AlSayyad, ed., *Forms of Dominance on the Architecture and Urbanism of the Colonial Enterprise* (Aldershot: Avebury, 1992); King, *Colonial Urban Development: Culture, Social Power, and Environment*; Gwendolyn Wright, *The Politics of Design in French Colonial Urbanism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991); Brenda S. A. Yeoh, *Contesting Space in Colonial Singapore: Power Relations and the Urban Built Environment, Singapore* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 2003); and Paul Rabinow, *French Modern: Norms and Forms of the Social Environment* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1989).
- ¹³ The choice of site for a sea terminal, or Mina Al-Ahmadi, for the export of oil was proposed by J.A. Jamieson. He pinpointed a position midway between the coastal villages of Fahaheel and Shuaiba which had the nearest deepwater point along the mostly shallow shore.
- ¹⁴ Memorandum, "Accommodation," 1945, File 106787/006, BP Archive, University of Warwick, Coventry (hereinafter BP).
- ¹⁵ The Nissen hut was designed by Major Peter Norman Nissen during the First World War as a solution to the wartime housing problem. It consists of a half-cylindrical sheet of corrugated metal which was easily erected and transported. It was later adopted for the use of housing at major construction sites as seen in Ahmadi.
- ¹⁶ J.W. Lowdon to London, "Temporary Accommodation Provided in Kuwait During the Period 1/1/47 - 30/6/47," 10 July 1947, File 59729/001, BP.
- ¹⁷ "Kuwait Housing," 1945, File 106787/001, BP.
- ¹⁸ "Pre-Fabricated Houses," 12 September 1945, File 106787/002, BP.
- ¹⁹ "Kuwait Housing," 1945, File 106787/001, BP.
- ²⁰ In fact, there is even a hierarchy in the very first temporary accommodations provided such as tents for senior and junior staff and "improvised" accommodations such as sarifas for artisans and labor.
- ²¹ Wilson Mason & Partners, "Wilson Mason & Partners: 60th Anniversary," 1986, BP.
- ²² "Prospectus for Wilson Mason and Partners," 1976, BP.
- ²³ Mark Crinson, "Abadan: Planning and Architecture Under the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company," *Planning Perspectives* 12, no. 3 (1997).

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- ²⁴ C. H. Lindsey Smith, *J.M.: The Story of an Architect* (London, UK: Wilson Mason & Partners, 1976).
- ²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 5.
- ²⁶ Crinson, “Abadan,” 348.
- ²⁷ Smith, *J.M.*, 63.
- ²⁸ Memorandum to the Board of Directors, “Kuwait Building Programme – Housing, Municipal and Amenity Works: 1947-1951,” 1947, File 68422/001, BP.
- ²⁹ Alan Rush, ed. *Records of Kuwait, 1899-1961*, vol. 3 (Farnham Common, UK: Archive Editions, 1989).
- ³⁰ Ehsani, “Social Engineering,” 361–399.
- ³¹ Anthony D. King, *Colonial Urban Development: Culture, Social Power, and Environment* (London; Boston: Routledge & Paul, 1976), 244.
- ³² *Ibid.*, 182.
- ³³ Crinson, “Abadan,” 350-351.
- ³⁴ *Ibid.*, 350.
- ³⁵ For more on Howard’s Garden City see Ebenezer Howard, *Garden Cities of To-morrow* (London: S. Sonnenschein, 1902).
- ³⁶ Mrs. X, interview by the author, Kuwait, 30 March 2010. In response to their wishes, the identities of the former Ahmadi residents interviewed remain anonymous. They have been identified by the random assignment of different capital letters that do not appear in their actual names. These letters are preceded by the title of either Mr. or Mrs. to indicate gender and marital status.
- ³⁷ Ehsani, “Social Engineering,” 384.
- ³⁸ Mr. Y, interview by the author, Kuwait, 11 February 2010.
- ³⁹ *Ibid.*; Mr. W, interview by the author, Kuwait, 27 January 2010; and Ismaeil Ahmed (Team Leader Building Maintenance, Ahmadi Services Group), interview by the author, Kuwait, 2 November 2009.
- ⁴⁰ Crinson, “Abadan,” 342.
- ⁴¹ “Summary of Work Completed or In Hand at 31st January 1948,” 10 March 1948, File 7133/001, BP.
- ⁴² *Ibid.*
- ⁴³ More senior members of this employee grade were allowed additional furniture to bring them closer to Senior Staff allowance.
- ⁴⁴ “C.F.&T. Staff Part II,” 31 December 1949, File 52597/002, BP.
- ⁴⁵ “Notes on Indian and Pakistani Personnel in Kuwait,” 8 December 1949, File 52597/001, BP.
- ⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 3.
- ⁴⁷ *Ibid.* According to the author, this situation forced most artisans to maintain separate homes for their families in Pakistan or India at a considerable expense, aside from the mental discomfort to both sides. He states that their main objective at the Company therefore (to collect money) is being defeated and to avoid losing their “best men” (instead of worrying about their employees well-being), the problem of providing family accommodation to artisans needs to be addressed.
- ⁴⁸ “Minutes of Group Meeting,” 17 January 1949, File 67295/005, BP.
- ⁴⁹ “Notes on Indian and Pakistani Personnel in Kuwait,” 8 December 1949, File 52597/001, BP.
- ⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 9.
- ⁵¹ “Representation of Staff,” 31 December 1949, File 52597/003, BP.

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- ⁵² Memorandum by C.A.P. Southwell, "KOC Limited Capital Expenditure," 18 June 1949, File 58801/001, BP.
- ⁵³ Ibid.
- ⁵⁴ Anthony D. King, *Colonial Urban Development*.
- ⁵⁵ "Notes on Indian and Pakistani Personnel in Kuwait," 8 December 1949, File 52597/001, BP.
- ⁵⁶ Ibid.
- ⁵⁷ Memorandum by C.A.P. Southwell, "KOC Limited Capital Expenditure," 18 June 1949, File 58801/001, BP.
- ⁵⁸ "Proposals for Permanent Housing 1946/1947," 1946, File 106787/003, BP.
- ⁵⁹ General W.B. Pyron to C.A.P. Southwell, "Housing Programme at Kuwait," 1 February 1949, File 67295/004, BP.
- ⁶⁰ E.H.O. Elkington to J.M. Pattinson, "Kuwait Housing," 15 July 1952, File 59729/007, BP.
- ⁶¹ J.M. Pattinson to KOC Board, "Kuwait Housing," 15 April 1953, File 59729/002, BP.
- ⁶² Ibid.
- ⁶³ Ibid.
- ⁶⁴ At this point Arab labor refers to Kuwaiti Arabs, bedouins, as well as Arabs who have come from neighboring countries for work such as Iraq and the Gulf countries. Since Kuwaitis will only be referred to after Kuwait gains its independence in 1961.
- ⁶⁵ "Labour Transport," 1945-1953, File 59729/001, BP.
- ⁶⁶ Ibid.
- ⁶⁷ J.M. Pattinson to KOC Board, "Kuwait Housing," 15 April 1953, File 59729/002, BP.
- ⁶⁸ Ibid.
- ⁶⁹ J.M. Pattinson to D.M.S. Langworthy "Arab Housing - Kuwait," 6 March 1953, File 59729/004, BP.
- ⁷⁰ D.M.S. Langworthy to J.M. Pattinson, "Arab Housing - Kuwait," 12 March 1953, File 59729/003, BP.
- ⁷¹ "Arab Families New Camp Near Fahaheel," *The Kuwaiti*, 9 December 1954.
- ⁷² Ibid.
- ⁷³ Ehsani, "Social Engineering."

3. Corporate Benevolence

- ¹ Benedict R. O'G Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London; New York: Verso, 1991).
- ² Jane M. Jacobs, *Edge of Empire: Postcolonialism and the City* (London; New York: Routledge, 1996), 25.
- ³ Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London ; New York: Routledge, 1994), 6.
- ⁴ Nezar AlSayyad, *Forms of Dominance on the Architecture and Urbanism of the Colonial Enterprise* (Aldershot; Brookfield, U.S.A.: Avebury, 1992), 6.
- ⁵ Sibel Bozdoğan, *Modernism and Nation Building: Turkish Architectural Culture in the Early Republic* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001); Abidin Kusno, *Behind the Postcolonial: Architecture, Urban Space, and Political Cultures in Indonesia*, Architext series (London; New York: Routledge, 2000); James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998); and Lawrence J. Vale, *Architecture, Power, and National Identity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992).

- ⁶ Bozdogan, *Modernism and Nation Building*, 10.
- ⁷ Ibid., 6.
- ⁸ Vale, *Architecture, Power, and National Identity*.
- ⁹ Anderson emphasizes the role of print capitalism in the construction of what he calls “imagined communities” or modern nations in which socially and culturally distinct peoples were grouped into one blanket identity. For more see Benedict R. O’G Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 46.
- ¹⁰ Alan Rush, ed. *Records of Kuwait, 1899-1961*, vol. 3 (Farnham Common, UK: Archive Editions, 1989), 76.
- ¹¹ Ibid., 125.
- ¹² Robert L. Jarman, ed. *Foreign Office Annual Reports from Arabia, 1930-1960: Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Persian Gulf, Saudi Arabia, Yemen*, vol. 4 (London: Archive Editions, 1993), 154-155.
- ¹³ “Minutes of 71st Meeting of Directors, 17th April,” 1957, Microfiche/003, BP.
- ¹⁴ Rush, *Records of Kuwait*, 710.
- ¹⁵ Ibid., 208.
- ¹⁶ Jarman, *Foreign Office Annual Reports from Arabia, 1930-1960*, 261.
- ¹⁷ “Notes for the Guidance of Agency Staff,” 10 November 1956, File 106962/008, BP.
- ¹⁸ “Translation: Letter to Shaikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah from an Arab National,” 2 March 1957, File 106863/013, BP.
- ¹⁹ “Letter from K.O.C. workers to H.H. Shaikh Abdullah Al Salim Al Sabah,” 26 August 1958, File 106988/008, BP.
- ²⁰ Town Office Press Relations Section, “Translation: extracts from Al-Ittihad, Published by the Kuwait Students in Egypt Association,” 23 March 1957, File 106863/014, BP.
- ²¹ “Taken from “Al-Fajr” newspaper (Kuwait),” 2 December 1958, File 106988/005, BP.
- ²² “Taken from “Al-Shaab” Newspaper (Kuwait): “The Complete Story of Al-Shaab,” 25 December 1958, File 106988/002, BP.
- ²³ “Taken From *al-Sha’ab* Newspaper (Kuwait),” 25 September 1958, File 106988/005, BP.
- ²⁴ In addition to blaming the KOC for the deplorable living conditions in Badawiyya, Khalaf also blames the government for not doing anything about it. He insists that the government knows about Badawiyya because of the state sponsored clinic it set up there.
- ²⁵ “Taken From *al-Sha’ab* Newspaper (Kuwait),” 23 October 1958, File 106988/004, BP.
- ²⁶ Abu Faras, “Taken from Al-Fajr Newspaper (Kuwait): “Workers,hovels and The Oil Company”,” 6 July 1958, File 106988/011, BP.
- ²⁷ De Candole to General Manager, “Response to Article in “Al-Ittihad” Published by the Federation of Kuwaiti Students,” 28 February 1957, File 106863/015, BP.
- ²⁸ “M. Tandy to The Official Representative of H.H. the Ruler of Kuwait,” 15 July 1958, File 106988/009, BP.
- ²⁹ “Notes on Local Newspapers,” 21 September 1958, File 106988/006, BP.
- ³⁰ “Rasalat Al-Naft: Criticism and Analysis,” 1957, File 106863/005, BP.
- ³¹ E. A. V. De Candole, “Arab Magazine Meeting,” 20 April 1957, File 106863/010, BP.
- ³² De Candole to Southwell, “Publicity in Middle East Press,” 24 November 1957, File 106863/004, BP.
- ³³ “Article Translation of the Egyptian Magazine “Akher Saa”,” 26 December 1957, File 106863/001, BP.
- ³⁴ “Public Relations,” 16 April 1957, File 106863/011, BP.
- ³⁵ “Minutes of 71st Meeting of Directors, 17th April,” 1957, Microfiche/003, BP.

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- ³⁶ For example “The History of Football in Kuwait,” 24 January; “Foundations and Growth of Education in Kuwait,” 31 January; “The Progress of Physical Education in Kuwait,” 14 February; and “Kuwait Schools are Fine Examples of Modern Architecture,” 11 April; *The Kuwaiti*, 1957.
- ³⁷ “Kuwait Schools are Fine Examples of Modern Architecture,” *The Kuwaiti*, 11 April 1957.
- ³⁸ “Magazine Cover,” *The Kuwaiti*, 23 August 1956.
- ³⁹ “Kuwait State Development Projects....No. 2: The Basra Road,” *The Kuwaiti*, 15 January 1959.
- ⁴⁰ “Kuwait State Development Projects....No. 4: Municipality Buildings,” *The Kuwaiti*, 28 February 1959.
- ⁴¹ “Kuwait State Development Projects....No. 10: Outpatients' Clinic,” *The Kuwaiti*, 26 March 1959.
- ⁴² “Kuwait State Development Projects....No. 15: Lower Income Group Houses,” *The Kuwaiti*, 30 April 1959.
- ⁴³ Jarman, *Foreign Office Annual Reports from Arabia, 1930-1960*, 445.
- ⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 527. Britain also guaranteed Kuwait military support. One third of Kuwait's petroleum went to Britain and in return Kuwait invested heavily in the former. Kuwait saw a continued military association with Britain as necessary because of the continued threat it faced from Iraq. Despite receiving formal independence Kuwait still was at that time a protectorate of Britain in a different guise. Also see “Minutes of 100th Meeting of Directors,” 1961, Microfiche/005, BP, for more on how KOC helped the British troops in every way such as providing a rest camp, transport and other supplies - all of which were charged to the State. This is evidence of KOC's politically entrenched nature where political events are intimately tied to its existence.
- ⁴⁵ “Models of New Type Family Houses Discussed by Senior KOC Payroll Employees,” *The Kuwaiti*, 2 December 1959.
- ⁴⁶ “Appointments to Kuwait Oil Company Board of Directors,” *The Kuwaiti*, 17 August 1960.
- ⁴⁷ Tinker Salas, *The Enduring Legacy*, 10.
- ⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 63.
- ⁴⁹ Vitalis, *America's Kingdom*, 124.
- ⁵⁰ Marshall Berman, *All that is Solid Melts into Air: the Experience of Modernity* (New York, N.Y., U.S.A.: Viking Penguin, 1988), 16.

4. Kuwaitizing Ahmadi

¹ During field research in Kuwait, relatives, friends and acquaintances often asked me what my research was about. As soon as I explained that it was an urban history of Ahmadi, the almost universal response was “Allah! al-Ahmadi!” said in a nostalgic tone with a bright smile, even by those who had no direct relation to Ahmadi. Allah, of course, is the word for god in Arabic, however, in the Kuwaiti dialect it can also refer to a sense of awe or the equivalent of “wow” in English, as used in this instance. Curiosity as to why this was almost always the reaction led me to investigate further the notion of Ahmadi as a nostalgic city.

² Mrs. Z, interview by the author, Kuwait, 18 February 2010. In response to their wishes, the identities of the former Ahmadi residents interviewed remain anonymous. They have been identified by the random assignment of different capital letters that do not appear in their actual names. These letters are preceded by the title of either Mr. or Mrs. to indicate gender and marital status.

³ Mrs. V, interview by the author, Kuwait, 8 April 2010.

- ⁴ “Development Plan Report, 1974-1978: Additional Recreation Area-Ahmadi, 1975,” File 49284/003, BP.
- ⁵ “*al-Ahmadi multaqa lil-mutanazihin* (Ahmadi, a Recreational Destination),” *Al-Kuwayti*, 1973.
- ⁶ “*Sharfat manziluki* (Your House's Front Porch),” *Al-Kuwayti*, 20 January 1962.
- ⁷ Mr. V, interview by the author, Kuwait, 8 April 2010.
- ⁸ Mrs. V, interview by the author, Kuwait, 8 April 2010.
- ⁹ Mrs. X, interview by the author, Kuwait, 30 March 2010.
- ¹⁰ Suhair Mosully, “Revitalizing Kuwait's empty city center” (Masters Thesis, MIT, 1992).
- ¹¹ Ali Gholoum Rais, *Kuwait In Postcards* (Kuwait: Center for Research and Studies on Kuwait, 2009).
- ¹² Al-Ragam, “Towards a Critique of an Architectural Nahdha: A Kuwaiti Example.”
- ¹³ Shiber, *The Kuwait Urbanization*.
- ¹⁴ Vale, *Architecture, Power, and National Identity*.
- ¹⁵ Janice Randall, “Sief Palace Area Buildings,” *Mimar: Architecture in Development* 16 (1985).
- ¹⁶ Yasser Mahgoub, “Hyper Identity: The Case of Kuwaiti Architecture,” *IJAR: International Journal of Architectural Research* 1, no. 1 (2007).
- ¹⁷ Nezar AlSayyad, *Cities and Caliphs: On the Genesis of Arab Muslim Urbanism* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1991).
- ¹⁸ Huda Al-Bahar, “Contemporary Kuwaiti Houses,” *Mimar: Architecture in Development* 15(1985).
- ¹⁹ ———, “Kuwait's Post-War Reconstruction,” *Mimar: Architecture in Development* 11, no. 3 (1991).
- ²⁰ Oxford Dictionaries, “Nostalgia,” http://oxforddictionaries.com/view/entry/m_en_gb0565910#m_en_gb0565910 (accessed 20 May, 2011).
- ²¹ Fred Davis, “Yearning for Yesterday: A Sociology of Nostalgia,” in *The Collective Memory Reader*, eds. Jeffrey K. Olick, Vered Vinitzky-Seroussi, and Daniel Levy (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 448.
- ²² The combination of members of the ruling family having authority over government funds and experts with conflicting agendas led to the squandering and waste of these funds and to the drastic delay of proposed development in Kuwait, at least for a significant part of this decade, see Jarman, ed., *Foreign Office Annual Reports from Arabia*, vol. 4, 714. For more on the development of Kuwait City see Geoffrey E. French and Allan G. Hill, *Kuwait: Urban and Medical Ecology* (New York: Springer-Verlag, 1971); Richard Trench, ed., *Arab Gulf Cities: Kuwait City* (Chippenham, UK: Archive Editions, 1994); Evangelia Simon Ali, “Retracing Old Kuwait,” in *Kuwait: Art and Architecture*, ed. Arlene Fullerton and Geza Fehervari (UAE: Oriental Press, 1995), 173-188; H. V. F. Winstone and Zahra Dickson Freeth, *Kuwait: Prospect and Reality* (New York: Crane, Russak, 1972); and Saba George Shiber, *The Kuwait Urbanization* (Kuwait: Kuwait Municipality, 1964).
- ²³ Mr. Y, interview by the author, Kuwait, 11 February 2010.
- ²⁴ Mr. Z, interview by the author, Kuwait, 18 February 2010.
- ²⁵ Mrs. W, interview by the author, Kuwait, 27 January 2010.
- ²⁶ Ibid.
- ²⁷ *Bidoun* is the short form of *bidoun jinsiyyah* or without citizenship. This term refers to people who have resided in Kuwait since as the beginning of the twentieth century until the present but have failed to procure Kuwaiti citizenship for various reasons. For more on the Bidoun see Jill

Crystal, *Kuwait: The Transformation of an Oil State* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1992); Anh Nga Longva, *Walls Built on Sand: Migration, Exclusion, and Society in Kuwait* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1997); and Mary Ann Tetreault, *Stories of Democracy: Politics and Society in Contemporary Kuwait* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000).

²⁸ Ghunaim Al-Adwani (Team Leader Community Services, Ahmadi Services Group), interview by the author, Kuwait, 2 November 2009.

²⁹ Mr. Z, interview by the author, Kuwait, 18 February 2010.

Conclusion

¹ Louis Wirth, *Urbanism as a way of life* (Chicago, 1938), p 8.

² Berman, *All That is Solid Melts into Air*.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Rula Sadiq, "Nation Building and Housing Policy: A Comparative Analysis of Urban Housing Development in Kuwait, Jordan and Lebanon," (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 1996). In regards to these single-family structures, however, many have been converted to multiple units and rented out to more affluent expatriates causing a recent shift in the nationally homogenous residential subdivisions.

⁵ Bachelor housing is a common type of all-male migrant worker housing in Kuwait and is usually in old dilapidated and unsanitary buildings. The reason for all-male living housing is that many migrants were and are either single men or men whose families remained in their home countries.

⁶ Interview by the author, 5 November 2009. For more on the ATR see postscript.

Postscript

¹ Mohammed Ghouloum (Team Leader, Ahmadi Redevelopment Team), interview by the author, Kuwait, 5 November 2009.

² Ahmed Khalil (Senior Engineer Projects, Ahmadi Redevelopment Team), interview by the author, Kuwait, 5 November 2009.

³ Atkins Design Studio, "Atkins," <http://www.atkinsdesign.com/flash.htm>; Gulf Amana Flash Websites, "Gulf Consult," <http://www.gulfconsult.com/>.

⁴ Ahmed Khalil (Senior Engineer Projects, Ahmadi Redevelopment Team), interview by the author, Kuwait, 5 November 2009.

⁵ Mohammed Ghouloum (Team Leader, Ahmadi Redevelopment Team), interview by the author, Kuwait, 5 November 2009.

⁶ Ahmed Khalil (Senior Engineer Projects, Ahmadi Redevelopment Team), interview by the author, Kuwait, 5 November 2009.

⁷ Ibid.

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