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## BOOK PROPOSAL

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*Simplicity with dignity*

# MOHAMED MAKIYA



**Iraqi architect enters the future with a key from the past**

**From: Karen Dabrowska**

## OUTLINE

# BIOGRAPHY OF MOHAMED MAKIYA

### WORKING TITLE

Simplicity with dignity  
 MOHAMED MAKIYA  
 Iraqi architect enters the future with a key from the past

**Word count:** text: 76,755; appendices 5,156 total: 81,911

**Inside cover:** Quote from Makiya on his philosophy of architecture  
 “If architecture is to be an art exercising a positive influence towards the good, then an attempt must be made to discuss its relevance to the ethical values of society, traditional values of time and the cultural values of space: these three considerations make up the fundamental basis of comprehensive scholarly understanding needed in the face of the present chaotic mannerisms.”

Abstract Ph D thesis Studies on the effect of climatic conditions on Architectural Development in the Mediterranean region.

**Timeline:** Major events in Makiya’s life (events in Iraq/Britain)

### **Chapters:**

Introduction

1. Baghdad: where it all began
2. Studies and love in the UK
3. Return to Iraq
4. The Khulafa Mosque and the Iraqi Artists Society
5. The School and the University
6. An international architect
7. To work or not to work with Saddam?
8. The Kufa Gallery
9. Life after Kufa

Postscript

### SUMMARY OF CHAPTERS

Begin each chapter with a quote from Makiya

### **Preface**

**(Some needs to write this if we are going to have a preface)**

### **Introduction**

This chapter introduces Mohamed Makiya. Mohamed Makiya shines in three constellations of gifted men. First and foremost he was an architect, a master of incorporating traditional styles into modern architecture. Secondly he was a great teacher who inspired hundreds of students of architecture. The first Iraqi to get a Phd in architecture he was eager to pass on his knowledge and set up the Department of Architecture in Baghdad University in 1959. And thirdly he was a collector and promoter of Iraqi art which he displayed with pride and

enthusiasm in London's Kufa Gallery, an oasis of Middle Eastern culture, which he set up in 1986 to build a bridge between the east and west. It also gives an insight into his character: his love of Baghdad, his humanity, his love of life, his engaging personality and his desire to empower whoever he met and foster their positive equalities.

### **Chapter One Baghdad: Where it all began 1914 - 1935**

This chapter begins with a description of Baghdad at the end of the Ottoman empire and the beginning of the British mandate. Makiya was born at a time of great change and upheaval in Iraq which influenced his life and career. An account of the family and Makiya's early life follows: He came from a family of clothing merchants. Makiya was born in the Baghdad neighbourhood of Sabbabigh al-Aal near the Khulafa mosque. He did not know his father who died when he was very young. His mother lived with his uncle who was more in favour of seeing his nephew at work in the family business than studying. He considered becoming a petroleum engineer and chose architecture after being awarded a scholarship to the United Kingdom.

### **Chapter Two: Studies and love in Britain 1935 - 1946**

Makiya spent 11 years in Britain (1935 – 1946) as a student. During the first year (1935 – 36) he was in London preparing for the entrance exam to Northern Universities. The second period from 1936 – 1941 was spent in Liverpool University where he obtained a degree in architecture. His post graduate work was in city planning and he got top marks for the design of a church. The third period of his studies (1942 – 1946) was at Cambridge University where he was awarded a PhD. His thesis dealt with architecture and the Mediterranean climate. This chapter is about Makiya's life as student in Britain during WW2 a time of rationing and bombing. There is a description of a small village in Wales where he waited several months for the ship the Iraqi government was allegedly sending to 'evacuate' its students: the ship never arrived and Makiya continued with PhD studies. His philosophy of architecture, which guided his subsequent work, is outlined and there is reference to his multi-disciplinary approach to architecture. In 1942 he met Margaret his future wife who helped him write his PhD thesis. Their cycle trips in the English countryside and life in the United Kingdom are described.

### **Chapter Three: Return to Iraq 1946 - 1971**

This chapter describes the 25 years Makiya spent in Iraq before he was forced to leave in 1971 when he found himself on Saddam's black list. It was the start of a career which spanned five decades and included work in more than ten countries.

The chapter begins with a description of Makiya's emotional return to his family and the arrival of Margaret who taught English and history at the University of Baghdad, and traces his career in Baghdad.

His first job was with the Directorate General of Municipalities in Baghdad where he set up the first surveys and proposals for the re-planning of towns throughout Iraq. He then set up Makiya Associates and started working from a house once occupied by Freya Stark which came with Margaret's job. He always had a respect for traditional builders and worked on a number of government projects including the design of houses for the royal family.

For the Makiya's the late 50's until the early 70s, a time when Iraq looked to the West for inspiration, were their most enjoyable and prosperous years in Baghdad. The 50s were the years when Makiya entertained the world's famous architects in Iraq: Frank Lloyd Wright, Walter Gropius, Gio Ponti and Josep Lluís Sert. They came to his house in Mansour and Margaret prepared lavish meals.

#### **Chapter Four: The Khulafa Mosque and the Iraqi Artists society**

A master of incorporating traditional styles into modern architecture, Makiya's most important work was the Khulafa Mosque in Baghdad, completed in 1963. The most important commission which eventually brought him international acclaim and established his reputation as an architect who could integrate a contemporary building into its historical setting was the Khulafa Mosque project from the Ministry of Religious Affairs (Aqwaf) which wanted a mosque designed around the Al-Ghazal ruined minaret steeped in an unfathomable pool of silence and past history.

Makiya's many projects included the building of a family house where he lived from 1957 – 1970, which was expropriated by the Baathists. Always adventurous he drove from Baghdad to Moscow. He was also a patron of the arts, President of the Iraqi Artists Society and organised the first exhibition of modern art in Baghdad. Makiya did not return to Baghdad after a trip to Bahrain in 1971 when his name was placed on a black list by the Baathists for alleged Masonic connections.

#### **Chapter Five: The school and the University**

One of Makiya's cherished projects, the design of a university in Kufa, was brought to a halt by the Baathists. In 1959 he founded the first Department of Architecture in Baghdad University and was Professor of Islamic Architecture until 1968. He was responsible for the establishment of a programme of studies in architecture emphasising local culture and environmental heritage. His students were directed to engage actively with local materials and conditions and to study the Iraqi vernacular and Islamic classical sources. They also had to record buildings of artistic or historical interest in Iraq.

#### **Chapter Six: An International architect in the modern world (1971 – 1986)**

In 1967 Makiya opened an office in Bahrain and the next period of his life was characterised by numerous projects in the Gulf among them the Issa Town Gateway in Bahrain, the Kuwait State Mosque and the Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque. A number of projects were awarded through competition or received special mention or second prize. This chapter describes Makiya's work in the Gulf and the problems Makiya Associates had to face because of his outbursts of anger and total lack of managerial skills. His staff speak openly and frankly about working with Makiya and give many interesting insights into his character and provide a penetrating flash of insight into the workings of the extremely successful London office in Westbourne Grove.

#### **Chapter Seven: To work or not to work for Saddam?**

This chapter describes Makiya's engagement with the Iraqi regime when he agreed to help Saddam rebuild Baghdad in 1980. He produced a design for the Baghdad State Mosque and the parade ground in Tikrit. The decision to return to Baghdad resulted in a family feud and his son Kanan left the architectural practice and went to the USA where he became a professor of Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies at Brandeis University.

#### **Chapter Eight: The Kufa Gallery: London's oasis of Arab Culture (1986- 2006)**

In 1986 Makiya established the Kufa Gallery in London, a focus for Iraqi and Arab culture in London. He was perhaps recreating the dream of Kufa University which never materialised. Makiya recognised the need within the London Arab community for a Diwaniya – a meeting place or forum – where an East/West dialogue could take place.

This chapter describes Makiya's work in the Kufa Gallery, unique in the sense that it provided a platform where an ambience of tolerance and sensitivity encouraged lively debates and seminars on matters pertaining to the arts. It positively encouraged the promotion of Arab

and Islamic culture within a multicultural framework and built on the positive connections between East, West, North and South.

The chapter also describes Makiya's visit to Baghdad in 2006, the family's cottage in Upper Slaughter, and his political views, including his views on the 2003 invasion of Iraq.

### **Chapter Nine: Life after Kufa (2006 – 2016)**

The Kufa Gallery closed in 2006 after Makiya fell at the end of a lecture there and broke his hip. This chapter looks at the final years of Makiya's life spent in his flat in Bedford Court Mansions surrounded by his family, friends and former employees. He was devastated by the closure of the gallery and hoped to re-start a miniature version of the gallery in his flat but this never happened. He always talked about developing Iraq and of reinstating the Majlis Al Ammar an independent government department which by law took 70 percent of Iraq's oil income out of government control and invested it in building the country.

After the closure of his architectural practice and the Kufa Gallery his archive was transferred to the Aga Khan Documentation Center at MIT. His centenary was commemorated in Baghdad during the festivities of the Capital of Culture in 2014. He also received the Tamayouz Lifetime Achievement Award - Iraq's most prestigious architecture prize. The Mohamed Makiya Prize, for the individual/organisation that has made the greatest contribution to the advancement of Iraqi architecture in the past year, was announced.

Makiya co-operated with Ahmed Naji Al-Saeed in the cataloguing of more than 200 art works in his private collection. This project led to Al-Saeed writing *Contemporary Iraq art: a journey with the Iraqi architect Mohammed Makiya*.

The chapter ends with a description of Makiya's traditional Shia burial in London's largest cemetery in East Finchley and the funeral rites preceding the burial. There are comments about his love for Baghdad and Iraq and the regret of mourners that he was buried in exile with Baghdad still in turmoil.

### **Postscript (2016)**

Makiya became a national hero after his death. His son Kanan speculates on why he was turned into an iconic figure. His memory lives on. There is a description of Baghdad: a far cry from the city Makiya dreamed of helping to create after the 2003 war to oust Saddam. The resolutions of the centenary conference of 2014 were implemented by the Makiya Committee: a street has been named after him, he is on a commemorative stamp, the Makiya Heritage Centre is being set up and the Kufa Gallery and works from his art collection will be transferred to Baghdad when it is safe to do so. Makiya continues to be mentioned with respect and admiration at architectural conferences, among them the conference of the Al Kindi Society of Iraqi Architects held in London in January 2016. The sale of the Mohamed and Margaret Makiya library evoked much controversy and criticism. Makiya is an inspiration to the next generation. He proved that it is possible to be a practising Shia and a proud Iraqi while at the same time learning from the West and assimilating the most positive aspects of western and eastern traditions in a happy symbiosis which produced a unique style of architecture.

### **Biography**

#### **Appendix:**

1. A summary of Makiya's PhD thesis
2. Article by Mohamed Makiya: Arab architecture past and present
3. Main architectural projects

## 4. The programme of the Kufa Gallery

**Index****SOURCES****Books**

Arabic books (relevant information translated)

*The Arab Village, The architecture of Baghdad* by Mohammed Makiya

*Biography of an Architecture* - Rashid Khayoum

*Mohammad Makiya: A Century of Architecture and Life* by Khalid al-Sultani

*The architecture of Mohammad Makiya: an analysis of his life and thought* by Dr Ali Thwaini.

*Mohammad Makiya and contemporary architecture* by Dr Hussain al-Hindawi.

'The Development of the Art of Architecture in Baghdad' and 'The Heritage of Baghdadi Painting', in Mustapha Jewad, Ahmed Sousa, Mohamed Makiya and Naji Maruf, eds, *Baghdad: An Illustrated History* (Iraqi Engineers Association, Baghdad, 1969)

English books/ academic publications

*Calamities of Exile* by Lawrence Weschler

*Post-Islamic Classicism: A visual essay on the architecture of Mohammed Makiya* by Kanan Makiya

*Contemporary Iraqi Art: A Journey with the Iraqi architect Mohammed Makiya* by Ahmed Naji Al-Saeed.

*Architecture and the Mediterranean Climate*, Makiya's PhD thesis

*Arab Architecture Past & Present* in Transactions 6 Journal of RIBA vol 3 no 2 London 1984

MIT archive – especially personal letters

Articles

*An Iraqi Solzhenitsyn* in What's Left by Nick Cohen

*Deeply Baghdadi* Bedoun magazine interview by Guy Mannes-Abbott

**Interviews:**

- Kanan Makiya, Mohammed Makiya's son.
- Hind Makiya, Mohamed Makiya's daughter.
- Amal Makiya, Makiya's niece
- Naseem Makiya, Makiya's grandson
- Ali Moussawi, one of Makiya's best students, now director of AMBS Architects
- Ahmed Naji Al-Saeed: author of *Contemporary Iraqi Art; a journey with the Iraqi architect Mohamed Makiya*
- Akram Ogeily who worked on the Kuwait State Mosque and spoke at Makiya's centenary celebrations in Baghdad
- Iain Jackson, Deputy Head of the School of Architecture at Liverpool University
- Dia Kashi, a family who takes care of the family's affairs in London

- Subhi Azawi Iraqi masterbuilder
- Attared Sarraf, one of Makiya's students at the School of Architecture in Baghdad
- Ghada Al Silq professor at the School of Architecture at Baghdad University
- Mustafa Al-Khademi, an Iraqi journalist who accompanied Makiya on his trip to Iraq in 2006.
- Khalid Al Sultani author of *Mohammad Makiya: A Century of Architecture and Life*
- Khalid Kashtiny, Iraqi author
- Stephen Kite, Professor Welsh School of Architecture
- Zina Allawi, architect and manager at Makiya Associates
- Godfrey Heaps architect/draughtsman at Makiya Associates
- Ghassan, Makiya who established his own private consultancy in Doha, M/s Ashraf Establishment
- Gary Martin, Director Makiya Associates
- Diddi Malek, Makiya's historical/culture researcher
- Rose Issa, first director of the Kufa Gallery
- Hussein Sikafi, a photographer at the Kufa Gallery
- Yasmine Allawi, Makiya's office assistant
- Fran Hazelton, Mesopotamian story teller who performed at the Kufa Gallery
- Dr Abdul Rahim Hassan, Makiya's friend
- Mahdi Ali, Makiya's carer
- Lamia Gailani, Iraqi archaeologist

## **INTRODUCTION**

*I entrust Baghdad to you. Listen to her. Listen to her voice repeatedly. You will discover it in the movement of the trees and date palms, in the flow of the river water, in the pure laughter.*

Mohamed Makiya (1914 – 2015) was one of the Middle East's greatest architects. He lived to the ripe old age of 101. When he was born the Ottoman Empire, of which Iraq was a part, disintegrated and Iraq became a British colony. During the colonial period, when the British installed a monarch, he studied in the UK then returned home where he set up Makiya Associates. The firm grew from strength to strength but in 1971 he became the victim of a Baathist conspiracy theory and was forced into exile. His architectural practice thrived in the Gulf. In 1981 all was forgiven and he was welcomed back to Baghdad to modernise the capital. When the lucrative contracts from Iraq and the Gulf dried up, Makiya set up the Kufa Gallery an oasis of Middle Eastern culture in London. When the gallery closed in 2006 he retired to his palatial flat in central London where he continued to make plans for a glorious and prosperous Iraq which he never saw.

Mohamed Makiya shines in three constellations of gifted men. First and foremost he was an architect, a master of incorporating traditional styles into modern architecture and a form giver to Middle Eastern architecture. His most important work was an extension to the Khulafa Mosque in Baghdad, completed in 1963, in which the old and new mosques were integrated in a harmonious design featuring a minaret from the ninth century. There was a traditional continuity in all his work executed with modern materials. His architecture was a link between the old and the new. He metamorphosed dead Abbasid forms into living modern architecture. For him Islamic architecture was the architecture of freedom and of the future.

In a public lecture to the Royal Institute of British Architects in 1984 he stated that unity in diversity and simplicity with dignity are the basic characteristics of Arab architecture and Islamic urbanism when they are at their very best. The continuity of tradition as a “living dimension” was the justification for his work.

Secondly he was a great teacher who inspired hundreds of students of architecture. The first Iraqi to get a PhD in architecture, he was eager to pass on his knowledge. He was a hard task master demanding nothing but the best from those he taught, but they loved him as a father and spoke affectionately of him as if they were his sons. In 1959 he set up the first Department of Architecture in Baghdad University and produced generations of Iraqi architects who were very much in tune with Iraqi architectural heritage and also in tune with modern architecture. His students from the period of his professorship in Baghdad represent almost as impressive a legacy as his buildings. In his memory the Mohamed Makiya Prize for Architecture is awarded every year to the individual or organisation that has made the greatest contribution to the advancement of Iraqi architecture.

And thirdly, he was a collector and promoter of Iraqi art which he displayed with pride and enthusiasm in London’s Kufa Gallery, an oasis of Middle Eastern culture which he set up in 1986 to build a bridge between the East and the West. He incorporated calligraphy into his buildings, he opened a gallery in his office in Baghdad and as the first president of the Iraqi Artists Society he ensured the arts were patronised both by the monarchy and by Abdul Karim Qassim’s government which overthrew the monarchy in 1958. He was always looking at orientalist paintings and was intrigued by how building form was created in a typical Middle Eastern environment.

Apart from his wife there were three great loves in his life: Baghdad, humanity and the Shia culture and traditions. Makiya composed a heart-felt message to participants in a one-day conference *The Centenary of the Iraqi architect Mohamed Makiya* held in conjunction with the Baghdad Capital of Culture festivities in 2014. At the age of 100 it was not possible for him to travel to Baghdad for the centenary but he was there in spirit when he addressed the conference participants as dear friends.

*Dear friends and loved ones in Baghdad who are of the soul and conscience of this great city it is my honour to address you. Even though I am 100 years old I would have liked to meet you and I would have found comfort in seeing your faces and hearing your words.*

*Baghdad, My dear friends, is a pearl of the pearls of the age. It might become ill and tired, moan of illness, but it doesn’t get old, for the time of great cities is different to our modern understanding of time.*

*Cities have souls, and these are tangible souls that can be sniffed and sensed, in every place. Baghdad is dear and priceless. When we were forced to leave it, many years ago, we knew that some of our soul stayed there on the banks of the Tigris, in the city’s alleyways, coffee-shops, balconies and squares. We knew that we had part of Baghdad with us. It grew with us like our children. We grew old and to a ripe old age. This centenary is on its way out, but that thing, that part of Baghdad, will not grow old. It is not going to get to a ripe old age. It is united with our dreams, our dialect, our way of thinking. It climbs the walls of our houses. It metamorphoses into a kind*



*Iraqi sun that is warm in the severe cold winter days and provides a nice cold breeze from the Tigris during summer days.*

*Cities are our doubles. They leave their imprints on our souls. But not all cities do that, only some - and Baghdad is one of them.*

*Architecture, in its essence, is intimately related to place, history, function, people. The place gives us part of itself and that means that we should always think for its own sake, be creative for its own sake, and be proud of belonging to it. It is regrettable that Baghdad has been disfigured for decades. It is regrettable that the architecture did not always belong to that authentic relationship with the river, its banks and the soul that is living between them.*

*I entrust Baghdad to you. Listen to her. Listen to her voice repeatedly. You will discover it in the movement of the trees and date palms, in the flow of the river water, in the pure laughter. Contemplate her colour. You will find it in the bricks, in the wood, in the blue colour of the water, in the brown colour of our people.*

*Al-Kufa Gallery, with all of the heritage and history which it had recorded over decades, belongs to Baghdad. That is why I request that Al-Kufa Gallery should be returned to its natural place in Baghdad. And because my hundred years will not enable me to realise this task myself, I have asked my son, Kanan to work with you on this matter.*

*I send you, my friends sons and grandsons, all my love, respect and gratitude. Take care of Baghdad so that Baghdad will take care of you. Take care of Iraq which gave us a lot, despite all the pain.*

Makiya was always very seduced by the idea of working in Iraq. It was his beloved Iraq and he was going to make it better no matter who the client was. The work in the Gulf was secondary. His dream was to create a modern Baghdad that makes reference to the past while being grounded in the present, a city whose buildings reflect history and memory.

He was overjoyed when he had the opportunity to present a design for one of the grandest architectural competitions ever sponsored in a country of the Third World. The brief was for a State Mosque. It was commissioned by Saddam Hussein and Makiya refuted criticism of working for Saddam with the comment: "This is for history. It's not for the people there now [the Baathists]. It's got nothing to do with them – they'll be gone. This is for the future."

Makiya could not let Baghdad go. In notebooks, on random scraps of paper, on a napkin, a tablecloth, he jotted down his schemas and sketches. Until the end of his life he was expanding from the point where his state mosque proposal had left off. He was reconceiving the entire city, concocting new plans for entire neighbourhoods, contriving new conceptions of the relation of courtyard to home and home to neighbourhood and neighbourhood to township, of river to city, of walkers to roadways. "A Thousand and One Images of Baghdad" he titled a manuscript into which he kept pouring these visions – visions that night after night were keeping him up.

As a perfectionist he had no favourite building or scheme and said all his jobs were incomplete. For him the design process, the formulation of an idea was an end in itself. He cherished the design of the Kufa University. "The Kufa proposal was for a city. For a complex, complete university, with living and everything in it. It was a university town, not a university institute. And within it there would have been another city, which would be called Pilgrimage City and Traveller's city and another, Economic City. There were many

universities being built at that time for the Baathists – Rashid University in Baghdad and one in Arbil,” Makiya explained. He was overjoyed when he was given the chance to start the project and one of his greatest disappointments was when it was brought to an abrupt end by the Baathists who were paranoid about what they thought was a Shia university. “Whatever you create, you are nothing,” Makiya said. “Your creativity is entirely subjected to your intent – respect for God, earth, water and sky, natural resources. You live with them, you respect them.”

Makiya’s generosity, be it to his family, students, his employees and his friends, was one of his most endearing traits. He never really said “no” to his children. He loved sharing his encyclopaedic knowledge. Many of his students regarded him as their second father. He was a lot more than a teacher, he took an interest in their lives, he celebrated their birthdays, marriages and birth of their children with lavish parties and bought a kuzi (whole sheep).

He was a socialiser, the life of the party, and he took an interest in people and everyone from the Aga Khan to his drivers loved him. In the words of Rudyard Kipling he could talk with crowds and keep his virtue and he would walk with kings and not lose his common touch. He was always humble and compassionate. *He had the intelligence of the heart and the intelligence of the eye.* Humility and vitality beyond all imagination characterised Makiya’s personality and these qualities were transferred to those who came into contact with him.

Makiya loved his food. He was constantly asking his daughter Hind to bring him Sheikh Mahshi, a stuffed lamb in aubergine casserole. When Zina Allawi, one of his employees, made dolma for the staff he wrote her a special thank you note. When he worked in Westbourne Grove in West London the staff and their friends were treated to lunch - usually at a Persian restaurant. And he was partial to vodka which he sampled liberally on his trips to Paris and later in the Cafe Rouge near his central London flat. He loved going out, travelling, seeing new cities and enjoying the night life. He dressed elegantly and tastefully and his pipe, on which he puffed thoughtfully, became his trademark.

His daughter Hind remarked that he could dance. “I haven’t seen him dance with my mother much. But he danced with me: in Baghdad, in London, in the Cotswolds and finally at my wedding in Islington in London and at the Marroush Restaurant.”

In his professional work Makiya was quick of vision, swift in action, outspoken and straightforward. He was tough to work for and very critical. Nothing but the best was good enough. Research was very important to him and took the form of tear sheets – bits of information found anywhere and everywhere and put into files to inform the design. Whenever architecture was involved he was highly opinionated, implacable, unidimensional and intolerant with the architects who were under him. Many project managers left and his son Kanan decided he could never work as an architect alongside his father and for a time became a manager of Makiya Associates. There were problems which dogged his company: his explosive temper, his inability to let go of the design stage of the project which led to changes at the last minute, and his total lack of management skills and organisation ability. He never spoke from lecture notes, he wanted to be spontaneous and let the creativity flow in a continuous stream of consciousness. He was a thinker, a creator, an innovator, his mind always bubbling with ideas, and he became frustrated when he had to put these ideas forward and convert them into designs which then became buildings. Everyone had to work at his pace and share his enthusiasm. His staff had a hard time providing the back up and ensuring

his creations materialised, deadlines were adhered to, clients were satisfied, the bills were paid and a network of offices in the Gulf ran smoothly.

“Oman’s mosque is a beautiful mosque because Makiya allowed others to take care of the details,” Ali Moussawi, one of his best students and employees, commented. “He is a master, he is a philosopher. He developed the concept of the mosque. He is a scholar more than a pure architect but when it comes to details he gets too involved.”

Some of the best descriptions and analysis of Makiya’s architecture can be found in the book *Post-Islamic Classicism* by his son Kanan, which focuses on the Khulafa Mosque, the Kuwait State Mosque and Baghdad State Mosque. He states: “In the terminology I have coined, Makiya’s architecture is post-Islamic because it is cut off from the original sources of its inspiration by a chasm of at least 1,000 years. Yet the forms express a deep nostalgia, a longing to continue where they left off. The nostalgia turns into artistic romanticism because of the fact that the chasm is ineradicable.” (1)

Makiya was a great talker and spontaneous lecturer. He could put up a slide and talk about it for an hour in a deep, meaningful and broad way. But he was not a writer. He could not have written his PhD thesis without the help of his wife who edited his articles until the 1970s when depression set in. His son and daughter took over where she left off and Didi Malek, his heritage researcher, wrote his speech to the Royal Institute of British Architects.

Makiya loved being a Shia Muslim. He was proud of it. He embraced the Muslim religion and culture and loved the holy cities of Najaf and Kerbala because of their heritage and architecture. But he was a “light Muslim”, he did not pray five times a day, he enjoyed a drink, respected other faiths and celebrated Christmas at the family cottage in the Cotswolds. He wanted to bring the Shia imams into the 21<sup>st</sup> century and commented that their turbans had closed their thinking. “The can cover their head but not their brain,” he said with a mischievous grin.

According to Ahmed Naji Al-Saeed, author of *Contemporary Iraqi Art; a Journey with the Iraqi Architect Mohamed Makiya*: “When you meet Makiya you are meeting somebody who is truly Baghdadi: “The words he uses, his tone, the facial expression the warmth he exudes. Whenever he meets someone he would always make that person feel important and feel that he is welcome. When people went to Makiya they knew they were going to one of the greatest architects Iraq ever had. He did everything that many people aspired to do. Many people who visited Makiya expected such a famous man would be too busy to give them the time of day. But when you go and see him it is the complete opposite. He is interested in you. He wants to know what you are studying and doing, what you aspire to do, and what your future plans are. He would not try to put you in a certain bracket and treat you accordingly. He would try to empower people and he would do this, casually for everyone: Iraqi, non Iraqi, Arab, European. This was the great attribute of people of his generation; they had a progenitor attitude to build a nation.

“For Makiya there was always something better that the present generation could do for the future. ‘You should not just be happy and satisfied with the status quo,’ he would say. You should always find something that will inspire the next generation. He is a man from a medieval city living in modern times. He lived in this turning point of time when cultures meet, when the British were in Iraq and he was an Iraqi in Britain. That is what helped to shape his character and his thinking,” Al-Saeed believes.

Makiya was a man with many lives: several Baghdad lives, a life in Liverpool and Cambridge, a Bahrain life with a Dubai and a Muscat component, a London life and a life in the village of Upper Slaughter in the Cotswolds where the family bought a cottage.

Makiya's mother used to say that her son was born the year the British entered Baghdad. They entered in 1917. This was 100 years before 2014 by the lunar calendar. It was here that Makiya learned to respect other cultures and religions and the traditional houses.

His devoted mother, who was widowed when her two sons were very young, lavished all her affection on Makiya and his brother and this love sustained him during his childhood and teenage years. She also nurtured his love and respect for the Muslim faith. She could read the Quran and taught it to the children in the neighbourhood. But she also respected other religions and encouraged Makiya to run errands for their Jewish neighbours on a Saturday.

“At the time, I didn't think of my father's house. It was only later that I came to appreciate it. It was a masterful study of space. How could an area of less than 200 metres house five families? There was a central court and a *diwan* (salon) and a basement. There was a bent entrance and within it a place to sit so that somebody could read the Quran if they wanted to. Above, there were five rooms, but the roof was a sleeping space. I learned then that the sky is a roof itself. The whole idea of the house was very important to me,” Makiya emphasised.

By 1932 the British had left, leaving a king named Faisal to steer a country awkwardly cobbled together from three far-flung regions of the Ottoman Empire. By 1935 Makiya, a brilliant student, had gone to the UK to study architecture on a coveted state scholarship. First he had to master English, no easy task but he rose to the occasion. In 1941 he received a degree in architecture and in 1942 a degree in civic design from Liverpool University. He completed his studies at Kings College in Cambridge with a PhD in 1946.

It was in the United Kingdom that he met his wife, Margaret Crawford. His marriage was no less fascinating than his innovations in architecture. Throughout his life, Margaret was his backbone. Without her he would never have become a famous, internationally respected architect. Her family disowned her for marrying an Arab and she turned her back on her past, embraced Arab culture, spoke the Iraqi dialect and helped Makiya write his dissertation and later articles and speeches. Together they journeyed through the English countryside on bicycles, assembled an amazing book collection, had two children, Kanan and Hind, and witnessed the agony and turmoil of Iraq.

When Makiya returned to Iraq in 1946 after 11 years in England he found a country which was moving from the medieval ages to the modern age. The monarchy was weak and revolution came in 1958 placing Iraq at the centre of a pan-Arab movement that spanned Egypt, Syria, Lebanon and beyond.

His qualifications were not appreciated. He spent six difficult years in the Directorate of Municipalities and eventually set out on his own with the setting up of Makiya Associates, an architectural consultancy which grew from strength to strength. It was in Baghdad that he created his greatest masterpiece, the Khulafa Mosque, which was an inspiration and reference point for his future work. He rubbed shoulders with the monarchy, King Faisal II came to an exhibition he organised when he was President of the Iraqi Artists Society, and he was on good terms with Abdul Karim Qasim who overthrew the monarchy. Qasim appreciated his

views on the development of Baghdad and passed a law forbidding the cutting down of palm trees on Makiya's recommendation.

By the late 1960s the Arab world was in a state of shock after its defeat by the Israelis. Iraq's ruling Baath Party, which came to power in the 1968 coup, routinely arrested what it described as fifth columnists, British spies, Jews, or other perceived conspirators.

While he was working in Bahrain in 1972, Makiya's name ended up on a black list as a Freemason. He never found out why but it was time for the family to leave the country as the brutality of Saddam's regime was increasing day by day. The Makiyas – Mohammed, his British wife Margaret, and their two children Kanan and Hind – were forced into exile. At first they lived in Bahrain where Makiya designed the famous Issa Gateway pictured on the country's stamps. Work in Oman on the restoration of the old city followed. They finally settled in London and Makiya carried on his work from the heart of the city.

Then the regime which had exiled him embraced him. Saddam prayed in the Khulafa mosque and invited its creator to Iraq. Makiya took one of the most agonising decisions of his life, which led to a temporary estrangement from his son, and decided to accept the invitation. He worked on a design for the Baghdad State Mosque and Tikrit parade ground, riverfront schemes for Baghdad and university campuses. The financial drain of the Iran-Iraq War made it impossible for Saddam to continue with his grandiose architectural projects and Makiya Associates started winding down its activities.

Saddam invaded Kuwait in 1990. At that time a mysterious individual exposing his heinous crimes appeared. His pen name was Samir Al-Khalil, author of the best seller *Republic of Fear*. He hid his face in television interviews but finally revealed himself as Makiya's son Kanan who, at the time, supported the 2003 invasion.

His father was busy running the Kufa Gallery, an oasis of Arab culture in London, and enjoying his country cottage in the picturesque village of Upper Slaughter where the family spent every Christmas. In 2006 Makiya visited his beloved Iraq and received a hero's welcome at the Department of Architecture in Baghdad University. But disaster struck on his return to London. After giving a lecture at the Kufa Gallery he fell and broke his hip. The gallery closed after 20 years and Makiya retired to his flat in central London where he continued sketching and devising plans for the development of Baghdad. He was visited by friends and former colleagues and he loved to sit in the Cafe Rouge near his home and watch the world go by. Towards the end of his life at the age of 101, he received the Tamayouz Lifetime Achievement Award - Iraq's most prestigious architecture prize.

In a tribute to Makiya, Akram Ogeily who worked on the Kuwait State Mosque and spoke at his centenary celebrations in Baghdad described him as a pioneering professor and the godfather of many Iraqi architects: "We respect his intellectual and architectural achievements as well as his academic work. He was a real encyclopaedia of architecture and spared no effort in guiding his students to consolidate their architectural vision. He was always looking forward to creative architectural achievements which did not resemble past work. Humility and vitality beyond all imagination characterised Makiya's personality and these qualities were transferred to his students and all who met him. Today we see what they call 'creative chaos' in Iraq. Reform will only succeed when we emerge from this bleak state and establish a sincere action plan far from sectarian interests to achieve a dignified life for the Iraqi people and the secure country and beautiful city which Makiya believed in."

This biography is an attempt to tell the story of Dr Mohamed Saleh Makiya's life. He was a visionary and a dreamer and many of his dreams - the restoration of the Khulafa mosque and minaret, the setting up of the Department of Architecture at Baghdad University, the establishment of the Kufa Gallery came true. His philosophy and his humanity crossed all border, all cultures and all continents.

He cannot just be described as an architect. He was a scholar, a philosopher, a connoisseur of art but above all he was a humanitarian who cared about the welfare of his fellow human beings. His life story is intrinsically connected to the story of Baghdad and Iraq. Only time will tell when and if the blast walls disappear and it will become the city of peace Makiya saw in his dreams. He never lost hope. But who was Mohammed Makiya?

**Notes:**

1. Kanan Makiya, *Post Islamic Classicism, A Visual Essay on the Architecture of Mohamed Makiya*, Saqi Books, London 1990, p. 123.

**SAMPLE CHAPTER**