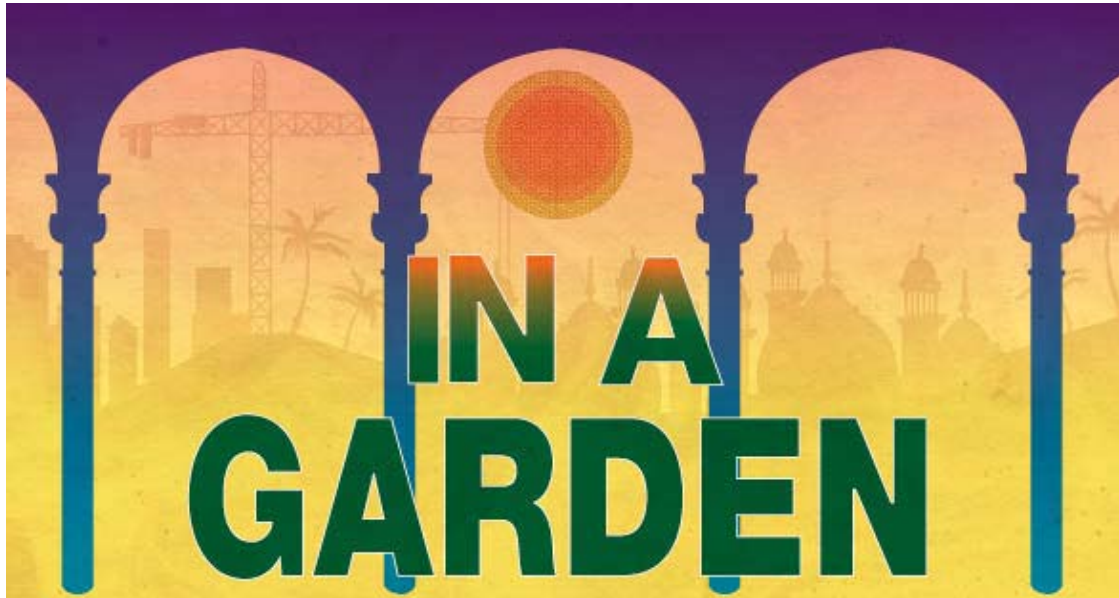


South Coast Repertory



by **Howard Korder**

directed by **David Warren**

**Expanded Timeline
and Historical Context**

Timeline/Historical Context

The nation of Aqaat is a fictional amalgamation of areas in the Middle East but is based in the reality of turmoil there. Aqaat aligns most closely with Iraq's history, although it is a fusion of places in the area. While the majority of people in the Middle East are Muslim, there are countless tribes, factions, and sects. This timeline details the actual conflicts in the Middle East during the span of the play.



Ancient History

The history of the area is rich and diverse. In ancient times, the area surrounding the Tigris and Euphrates rivers in Iraq was known as Mesopotamia or the Fertile Crescent. The earliest known civilizations in this area were the Sumerians in 3000 B.C. In the early eighth century, the Muslims established their first dynasty, the Umayyad, with their capital at Damascus in Syria. By 750 conflicts led to the establishment of the Abbasid dynasty in Iraq, with its capital at Baghdad. The Abbasid dynasty ruled from 750 to 1258, a period during which Arab-Muslim culture thrived. Many Greek and Roman philosophical and scientific works were translated into Arabic and at times were synthesized with Islamic values and concepts. The area was pillaged by the Mongols in 1258 and through the 18th century was the object of Turkish and Persian competition.

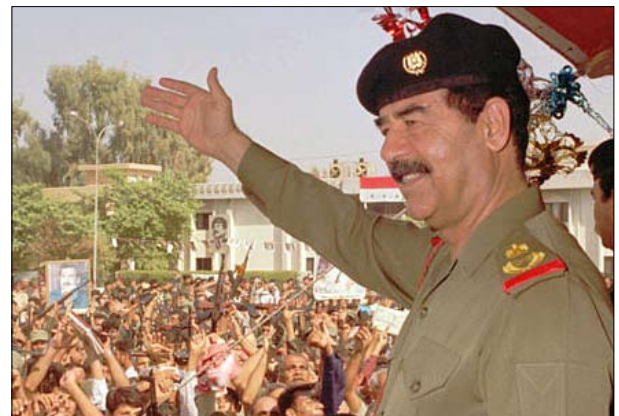
Modern Times

The Ottomans (Turks) ruled the area until World War I. Upon collapse of the Ottoman Empire, the British took over and decided to unite the three Ottoman provinces of Baghdad, Mosul, and Basra into one nation-state called Iraq (a name borrowed from the medieval past of the region) despite the significant religious, linguistic, ethnic, and

tribal divisions running through Iraqi society. Iraq gained full independence as a monarchy in 1932. The king and crown prince were assassinated in 1958 in a coup that ended the monarchy and brought a military junta to power. Power was transferred in a series of coups, including the Baath Party, which eventually won control in 1968. Following the 1968 Baathist coup, close family, clan, and tribal ties bound Iraq's ruling Sunni elite. Most notable was the emergence of Tikritis Sunni Arabs from the town of Tikrit northwest of Baghdad related to President Ahmad Hasan al Bakr. Saddam Hussein, a key leader behind the scenes, was a Tikriti and a relative of al Bakr. Since the mid-1970s, the Baathist regime's efforts to overcome Iraqi divisions and bring the various ethnic and religious communities under effective central control have included military campaigns against the Shia and Kurds, social and economic incentives, and the attempted creation of a unifying national ideology.

Rise of Saddam Hussein

On July 16, 1979, President Bakr of the Baath Party was succeeded by Saddam Hussein, whose regime steadily developed an international reputation for repression, human rights abuses, and terrorism. In 1980, a long-standing territorial dispute over control of the Shatt-al-Arab waterway between Iraq and Iran broke into full-scale war and Iraq invaded western Iran. Sunni-Shia tensions peaked following this and the 1979 Islamic Revolution. During this period, the regime also increased its control by relying on tribal loyalties among both Sunni and Shia Arabs. The majority of the current ruling elite come from Saddam Hussein's Al-bu Nasir tribe and its allies in the Tikrit region. Sunni tribes that closely support the regime include: the Dulaym, Jubbur, Ukaydat, Mulla, Sa'idat, and Shammar.



1988: Iran accepts U.N.-drafted cease-fire plan to end eight-year war with Iraq. Kurds flee to Turkey as rebellion is crushed in Northern Iraq. The Palestinian National Council declares an Independent Palestinian state.

1989: The last Soviet troops leave Afghanistan after the 1979 invasion and occupation.



1990: Iraq invades Kuwait. U.S. leads a multi-national coalition called Operation Desert Shield to deter Iraqi attack. The U.N. Security Council authorizes the use of force if Iraq does not withdraw by January 15, 1991.

1991: Operation Desert storm liberates Kuwait. Retreating troops set hundreds of oil wells on fire, causing an environmental disaster. The U.N. Security Council requires Iraq to give up all chemical, biological, and potential nuclear weapons and provide access to all sites to monitor disarmament.

1992: After Saddam Hussein's Republican Guards brutally crush Shiite and Kurdish rebellions, Allied forces begin enforcing a "no-fly" zone in Southern Iraq, preventing Iraqi air attacks against them. Harsh economic sanctions are imposed on Iraq.

1993: The Oslo accords provide for Palestinian self-rule to be phased in over several years in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

1994: Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) assumes authority in the Gaza Strip and in the town of Jericho. Turkey invades Northern Iraq in pursuit of Kurds rebelling against Ankara.

1995: Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin is assassinated by a Jewish religious extremist.

1996: Saddam Hussein accepts the U.N.'s "oil for food" program after Iraqis starve from U.S. led sanctions.



1998: U.S. and British warplanes bomb Iraq in Operation Desert Fox to force compliance with inspection agreements. Following the attack, Iraq refuses to readmit U.N. weapons inspectors.



2001: September 11 occurs. U.S. leads military action in Afghanistan to remove Taliban from power.

2003: The "Bush Doctrine" of preemptive striking leads to an attack on Iraq. Saddam Hussein is ousted and later captured.

2004: U.S. hands sovereignty to interim government headed by Prime Minister Iyad Allawi.

Sunni versus Shia at a Glance

(From: http://www.religionfacts.com/islam/comparison_charts/islamic_sects.htm)

	Sunnah	Shia (or Shi'ah)
adherents called	Sunnis	Shiites, Shi'i
meaning of name	"well-trodden path" or "tradition"	"party" or "partisans" of Ali
current adherents	940 million	120 million
percentage of total Muslims	90%	10%
primary locations	most Muslim countries	Iran, Iraq, Yemen
subjects	none, but four major schools of Muslim law are recognized	Ithna 'Ashariyah (Twelvers; the largest), Isma'iliyah and Zaydiyyah
origins	c. 632 CE; theology developed especially in 10th cent.	c. 632-650 CE; killing of Ali's son Husayn in 680 CE is major event
did Muhammad designate a successor?	no	yes
true successor of the Prophet	Abu Bakr, father of the Prophet's favoured wife, 'A'ishah (elected by people of Medina)	'Ali ibn Abi Talib, husband of the Prophet's daughter Fatimah (designated by the Prophet)
qualifications for ruler of Islam	tribe of the Prophet (Quraysh); later, any qualified ruler	family of the Prophet
current leaders	imams	mujtahids
identity of imams	human leaders	infallible manifestations of God and perfect interpreters of the Qur'an
Al Mahdi	will come in the future	was already on earth, is currently the "hidden imam" who works through mujtahids to interpret Qur'an; and will return at the end of time
religious authority other than the Qur'an	ijma' (consensus) of the Muslim community	infallible imams

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