For more than half a century, one of the most distinguished contributors to the understanding of the Islamic city and its institutions was the late L. Massignon, whose topographical studies covered such diverse locations as al-Fās, al-Kūfah, al-Baṣrah, Ukhaydir, and most relevant to the present study Baghdad ¹). Guided largely by his experiences in cities of the Near East around the turn of the century, Massignon based his methodology from the outset on “un fait constant et général, la fixité de la répartition topographique des corps de métiers dans un cité islamique déterminée à partir du moment de sa fondation.” It is, of course, true that the topography of a city may be altered by given historical circumstances; but this will reflect only the changing surface of the city—its monuments rather than its geographical setting. As this position was rigidly held for all Islamic cities, regardless of their historical development, the picture of Baghdad, implicit in Massignon’s view, is that of an integrated city covering a land surface which must, of necessity, be limited by the distance of any populated location from the services of its single set of markets; for there can be no large urban occupation in the absence of these institutions ²).

It is this particular position which is the basis of Massignon’s controversial views on Baghdad, leading him to disagree with LeStrange on such fundamental questions as the location of certain markets, the

¹) This article is based on a large work on the topography of Baghdad which was recently completed.

disposition of the city bridges, and supposed shift of the East Side in the eleventh century 1). Subsequent remarks on the history of the city generally reflect this difference of opinion. Thus Herzfeld agrees with Massignon on the shift and presumably the fixity of the markets 2). Canard favors LeStrange on the shift, but Massignon on the markets 3), and Makdisi follows LeStrange on the shift—but for reasons other than those cited by him—and Massignon on the markets with certain reservations 4). The city plan, as rendered in the maps of Duri 5),

2) E. Herzfeld and F. Sarre, Archäologische Reise im Euphrat und Tigris Gebiet, Berlin (1921), v. 2, pp. 147-148.