ALCOHOL
From Mesopotamia To Modern Iraq

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Alcohol in Ancient Mesopotamia

Sumerian tablet of beer ingredients ~3000 BC

Babylonian tablet of erotic beer drinking ~2000 BC

Sumerian tablet showing social drinking from vase ~2600 BC
Islam and Alcohol

“You who believe: intoxicants and gambling, idolatrous practices, and [divining] arrows are repugnant acts of Satan’s doing – shun them so that you may prosper. With intoxicants and gambling, Satan seeks only to incite enmity and hatred among you, and to stop you remembering God and prayer. Will you not give them up?”

The word khamr is also the root of takhmeer (fermentation), it has the root kh-m-r which is also the root of Arabic terms including: covering, clouding, hatred or enslaving.
In Islamic Medicine

“To give wine to youths is like adding fire to a fire already prepared with matchwood. Young adults should take it in moderation. But elderly persons may take as much as they can tolerate.”

-Ibn Sina (Avicenna)
Demographics

All census data are based on estimates

Upper middle income country

50%+ are under 24

Existing studies about alcohol in Iraq

2006 – Iraqi Mental Health Survey

Lifetime alcohol use: 6.82% (male) 0.58% (female)
Current alcohol use: 2.93% (male) 0.41% (female)

2015 – Survey of Substance Abuse in Iraq

Lifetime alcohol use: 16.7% (male) 0.6% (female)
Current alcohol use: 6.7% (male) 0.11% (female)
Pricing and Availability in Iraq

Limit for import of alcohol into Iraq = 1 Litre (for Muslims + non-Muslims)

Pack of cigarettes = 50 cents
Can of Beer = $2 (black market)

Just in! Production, import & sale of alcohol banned!

“This article of the law goes against the constitution, which guarantees the freedoms of minorities…This law will put people out of jobs, drug consumption will rise, the economy will be affected”
- Yonadam Kanna (Christian MP)

“The constitution says you cannot approve a law that goes against Islam…The effects of alcohol on society are great, and include depravation, terrorism and social problems…As for the people who will lose their jobs, new jobs can be found for them”
- Ammar Toma (Muslim MP)

Pluralist Secular Iraq vs Islamic Republic
Policy Implications

Iraq & Alcohol

Media & Censorship

Culture & Family

History & Religion

War & Sanctions

Policing & Taxation

Health & Privacy

Thank you!

Questions?

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