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Virtual Palaces, Part II.

Lost Palaces and their Afterlife. Virtual Reconstruction between Science and Media

International Workshop

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Organized by ESF Research Networking Programme PALATIUM

Scientific Report

1. Purpose of the visit:

The main motivation for participating in the Munich workshop has been the broadening of my methodological approach to my research field and the exchange with scholars who deal with a similar thematic complex. Even if my doctoral thesis on the lost Khawarnaq palace is located in another geographical context (Mesopotamia, modern Iraq) and set in an earlier chronological time frame (late antique and early Islamic art history) the problems my investigations deal with are quite similar to those of European art historians and therefore highly relevant to my work. An essential part of the work carried out will consist in a visual approach of an otherwise lost architectonic structure, namely the Khawarnaq palace. Since there are two scholarly localization attempts for the palace a three dimensional visualization could shed new light on the more probable identification as both buildings have completely different layouts. One looks more residential, the other more defensive. As a consequence a virtual reconstruction will be an essential tool for identifying the *real* Khawarnaq.

2. Description of the work carried out during the visit:

In order to participate in the Munich workshop I had to prepare a presentation, which

could give contemporaneously an overview of my topic and an introduction to my specific research related problems. The title of my paper was *Khawarnaq: Topos and Reconstruction of a Lost Early Islamic palace*. As a matter of fact I was very interested in every single presentation and took key notes enabling me to follow the discussions and argumentations. The most interesting part consisted in the subsequent personal conversations. Bringing together people with similar interests and different methodological approaches is always very inspiring for your own work. In my opinion the personal and professional exchange is of primordial importance for achieving a broader view of facts and the basis of science in a strict dialectic sense.

3. Description of the main results obtained:

It was very enlightening to see how many different philosophies exist regarding virtual reconstruction of a lost building (e.g. sharpness vs. uncertainty). Beside that the variety of programs used for that purpose is overwhelming. On the other hand I also had to realize that most art historians and archaeologists cooperate with specialists that deal exclusively with virtual reconstruction. So in my case that would make sense as well and I will look for somebody specialized in that field. But being personally interested in 3D reconstruction I also found out about two programs that are used by scholars and easy to learn: Google SketchUp and Generative Modeling Language (a program developed by Technische Universität Graz). I decided to take a look at both programs and advance my own reconstructive hypotheses before consulting a specialist.

4. Future collaboration with host institution:

From a personal and a professional point of view it would be very interesting to collaborate with the European Science Foundation in the future because of the implications that my research field brings with it. The relevance of Near Eastern culture for Europe is more than evident to most scientists and we have proof of reception of the *Khawarnaq topos* in at least two places in Southern Europe, firstly in Muslim Spain (Al-Andalus) and secondly in Norman Sicily. In addition to this a dialogue between two different cultures principally starts with an analysis of common features and the acceptance of distinctive elements. From its very beginning the

Islamic world has developed a deep interest in Europe and vice versa the Near East has always been a focus of European cultural and political ambitions.

5. Projected publications/articles resulting or to result from the grant:

As a natural consequence of the Munich workshop an article bearing the same title as the presentation will be provided by myself within the next months. Prof. Dr. Krista de Jonge, chair of Palatium, has offered the participants of the event this possibility and I will be honored to follow her invitation.

6. Other comments:

Finally I would like to thank the European Science Foundation, Palatium (Prof. Dr. Krista de Jonge and Dr. Pieter Martens from the University of Leuven), Prof. Dr. Stephan Hoppe from Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München and Prof. Dr.-Ing. Stefan Breitling from Otto-Friedrich-Universität Bamberg for their warm welcome and perfect organization of the Munich event. I enjoyed it very much and learned a lot for my future studies!