



ABSTRACT SUBMISSION

The Royal Palace of Babylon: cultural biases in the study of ancient architecture

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Abstract

The South Palace of Babylon is one the best known ancient buildings of West Asia. Considering the palace's fame, the wide-ranging interest in what happened in its confines, and its well-preserved floorplan, one might have expected a lively discourse on its architecture to have emerged. However, beyond the studies of Koldewey and Heinrich, the South Palace has been studied only rarely.

This paper argues that this hiatus is reflective of the cultural biases with which ancient West Asian architecture tends to be studied. These have often relied on typological studies that focus on replication and adaptation rather than emphasizing specificity, creativity, or originality.

The architectural typology used for the South Palace is mostly based on small-scale domestic architecture. Forcing such typology onto palace has not worked as the typology has nothing specific to say about monumental architecture such as palaces. This paper aims to highlight the Modernist biases and their Enlightenment roots implicit in such approaches and to reflect on the possible architectural sensibilities of its Babylonian architects.

Keywords

Architecture, Babylon, Iron Age

Session

7. Characterizing culture ?

Type of paper

Oral presentation