

bulbous dome. Behind, it was to have one single dome over the floor (this semi spherical building/dome was substituted by a more complex parabolic section. In the end, the mosque was not constructed in the original location, and the original design of a dome supported by three points was not followed either. Perhaps because of the typology chosen, a domed mosque, the building was never used as a place of worship). A second ring was to house the separate student dorms, and the third was to house athletic facilities (the stadium originally proposed by Gropius was never built, and was replaced by a sports complex).

The windows of the classrooms face north and south, and water should have run through some tiles and walls (but in fact only runs through the floor) to lower the temperature. The preoccupation for protecting against the climate (light and temperature) in Iraq was so important that it was the central topic of discussion in the two conferences that Gropius gave in the Society of Engineers and North American embassy. All the buildings were built close together in order to shade one another, and were organized around patios with fountains and ponds to avoid having to be under the harsh sun, which constituted a big change in the way Gropius planned the project. He found himself „confronted with “the qualities of lightness, slimness and linearity, apparently proceeding from the first European influences, from Gropius himself as well as Bauhaus (...), the University of Baghdad was an inflection point, considering the mass, center of gravity, and size, the opposite of linearity. A large part of this esthetic change was attributed to being in response to the climate of Baghdad, and the need to be protected from the sun...” (CURRIE, Leonard J. and Virginia M.: “TAC: Principles, Process and Product”, *Op. Cit.*, p. 44). The project underwent alterations, additions and substitutions, due to Hisham A. Munir. Various buildings designed by Gropius were not built, and, according to Al Tai (who is very critical of Munir’s work), only the tallest building was constructed following the original plans, and was incorporated in 1959 upon the express request of the new president³.

Notes

- 1 From the project memoirs, sent by Hisham Al Madfaai from Baghdad.
- 2 “Planning the University of Baghdad”, *Architectural Record*, February, 1961, ps. 110, 112-113, and 115.
- 3 MAREFAT, Mina: “Bauhaus in Baghdad. Walter Gropius Master Project for Baghdad University”, *Docomomo*, 35, September, 2006, p. 84.

POLICE HEADQUARTERS, PALACE OF JUSTICE, PROPERTY REGISTER (CIVIC CENTER) (1957-1959)

Willem Marinus Dudok

In 1958, Dudok sent a letter to *Time* magazine complaining that in the recently published article, “New Lights for Alladin”¹, dedicated to the work of great Western architects in Baghdad, the authors ignored the projects being carried out in the Iraqi capital². His complaint, however, could have been extended until actuality³. The three projects that Dudok designed, though did not build, in the Civic Center of Baghdad (planned by the English firm of Minoprio, Spencely and P. W. Macfarlane, who also designed the General Plan for Baghdad), are hardly mentioned today, while Aalto’s design (Fine Arts Museum, and the Post and Telegraph Office), located in the same center, which were not built either, are more often mentioned.

The choice of Dudok (by the *Development Board*, and in Dudok’s own words), may surprise some, given that at the end of the fifties he was already advanced in age, and was not the most well known European architect, especially when compared with Le Corbusier, Aalto, and Doxiadis (in those years), but his experience in large municipal and state buildings may have been a determining factor in his being named for the project⁴.

The *Development Board* assigned him three buildings: The General Police Headquarters, the Palace of Justice, and the Property Register and General Settlement Headquarters. These three buildings were to be built where the authors of the design indicated, in the upper area of the Civic Center, next to Aalto’s buildings.

Even though the relationship between the Iraqi government and Dudok began tensely (the government was surprised that Dudok’s first response to the commission was not to inquire, like the rest of the architects, about the fee he would receive), Dudok accepted the job in February of 1957, and traveled to Baghdad in April.

The three projects were designed quickly, even though they were confronted by changes in the plan which incorporated new functions and increased security regulations, and they had to be revised many times after the coup d’etat (“Things are rather complicated in Baghdad”, Dudok wrote to Minoprio in September of 1959). Moreover, the plans seemed to arrive “at a dead end”, as the Dutch architect explained in a letter to the Ministry of Public Works and Housing in December, 1962. Since then, correspondence was interrupted.

Dudok, like the other architects (except for the astute Doxiadis) never received his full fee.

The three buildings, two of which, the Palace of Justice and the General Settlement Headquarters, are linked by a covered passageway, are in a line in the upper part of the Civic Center, constituting its northwestern faade, which was bordered by the then named King Ghazi Street. Dudok played most with the shapes and sizes of the constructions, placed in an L shape or around a patio imitating parking spots and the helicopter landing pad in the General Police Headquarters. And the main facades advance and retreat, while the distribution of the floor plan follows the "standardization" of the rooms so they could be adapted to the different programs. The Palace of Justice was the central building, with a twelve floor tower made to impose and dominated the surroundings, like an allegory of Justice, who was given shelter: "We have tried to express the spiritual value of the building by giving it an impressive appearance of massive construction and an imposing silhouette. It does not only need to dominate the immediate surrounding, rather it should be seen as one of the most important buildings in all the capital."⁵ An open space in front of the main facades, with ponds and lush but isolated trees, framed the project.

"Brise-soleils" prefabricated from cement covered in mosaic, more discretely employed than in other Western projects in Baghdad so as not to interfere with the view, and the color, over a base of horizontal strips of white marble and gold and blue mosaic panels, enlivened the facades and adapted them to the oriental image, as in stories and legends (the drawings also evoked Persian miniatures) that perhaps Dudok had. In any case, what he was trying to do was "to help renovate the splendor of the city, already remembered for its brilliant past."

Notes

- 1 "New Lights for Alladin", *Time*, Monday, May 19th, 1958. <http://www.time.com/magazine/article/0,9171,864376,00.html> (last consulted: Wednesday, March 19th, 2008)
- 2 In her answer on June 11th, 1958, Sarah Winter, on behalf of the editorial team, asked forgiveness for this absence, due to the lack of space, and which also affected Sert and Doxiadis (the letters were found in the Netherlands Architecture Institute in Rotterdam, DUDO 0130, 212M.124). All the information included was found in the archived documentation from said institute (correspondence between the Iraqi authorities and the architects of Minoprio, Aalto, and Sert, memoirs of the project, newspaper reports, notes, etc., with the register number cited earlier).
- 3 The bibliography on Dudok in Baghdad is very scarce: only two articles of length, one quite old, published during the architect's life, and another more recent (FRIEDHOFF, Gijsbert: "W.M. Dudok 1884-1959", *Bouwkundig Weekblad*, Amsterdam, 1951, p. 321;

BERGEIJK, Herman van: *Willem Marinus Dudok. Architect-Stedebouwkundige 1884-1974*, V+K Publishing/Inmera, Naarden, 1995, pgs. 318-319)

- 4 Dr. Herman van Bergeijk, from the University of Delft (whom I must thank for his consideration), believes that Dudok had many contacts in the Middle East (and in Turkey, in particular), was a close friend of the Persian Princess Fatemah Khanoum de Katchaloff, and his public architectures was viewed as the incarnation of Western democratic values (e-mail from March 19th, 2008).
- 5 DUDOK, W.M.: Letter D/1745, from September, 1958, to the Development Board in Baghdad, Iraq.

PROJECT FOR THE FINE ARTS MUSEUM IN BAGHDAD (CIVIC CENTER) (1957-1963)

Alvar and Aino Aalto

Despite the fact that his participation, by invitation (September 25th, 1954), in the contest for the National Bank of Iraq building went virtually unnoticed (a contest in which Gio Ponti also participated, and which was deservedly won by the Swiss William Dunkel), the Development Board invited Aalto to travel to Baghdad in 1957 to receive two interrelated projects, which were never built due to the political changes after the assassination of the monarch: The Mail and Telegraph building, and the Museum of Fine Arts, both located in the Civic Center of Baghdad, designed by the English firm of Minoprio, Spencely and Macfarlane, and coordinated by Anthony Minoprio himself (who, after the coup, was let go and replaced by Jos  Luis Sert, who never signed any contract¹). The Civic Center (219, 317 square meters), still exists, (but the design director did not respect the plan from the fifties), included various historic Mosques and was to include the W.M. Dudok designed Palace of Justice and the Police Headquarters of Baghdad, though they were never built.

After getting the security of "a certain feeling of freedom"², Aalto enthusiastically accepted the job: "It is something exciting. Since the first moment, I discovered that, for a Nordic architect, like myself, a certain simplicity is possible here, a simplicity that does not habitually exist in the European climate, where, on occasion, winter destroys even the proportions of the buildings."³

"The objective of the building is to promote cultural activities and to help the development of the arts in Iraq. It should offer a meeting place for the artists and the public, presenting their creations of painting, sculpture, jewelry etc. as well as music, recitations and movies."⁴ The museum should also welcome the extremely rich collection of Calouste Gulbenkian