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The assembled palace of Samosata: object vibrancy in 1st C. BCE Commagene

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The Assembled Palace of Samosata.

Object Vibrancy in 1st c. BCE Commagene.

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Foreword

I write this foreword sitting at a the balcony of my apartment of the Netherlands Institute in Turkey (NIT), looking out over the Bosporus, where large cargo ships, on their way to the Black Sea or Mediterranean, are steered cautiously through the narrow waters. Not unlike these cargo ships, I have navigated this dissertation through a five year trajectory of sometimes dangerously shallow waters and treacherous shores. Like the helmsman who, still shaking, realizes he made it through, I now look back with sweaty hands and a combined sense of relief and disbelief about the fact that the manuscript is finally finished. This would not have been possible without a large amount of 'crew members' that assisted me throughout the years, and that I wish to express my gratitude to here.

First and foremost, my thanks go out to prof. dr. Miguel John Versluys, without whose critical guidance, creative force and unceasing enthusiasm this dissertation would not have existed. One could simply not wish for a kinder and more trusting *Doktervater.* The many inspiring conversations we had during our walks through Amsterdam, Leiden, Rome, Alexandria and Commagene I remember with great fondness and I look forward to the collaborations that lie ahead. My second supervisor, prof. dr. Michael Blömer, has also been of crucial importance to this PhD, providing many detailed and critical comments on the manuscript. I cannot thank him enough for his great generosity in sharing his profound knowledge of the archaeology of ancient Northern-Syria and I am excited to continue working together with him on the excavations of Doliche.

The 'Innovating Objects' VICI project within which this thesis emerged brought me in close contact with a range of wonderful colleagues and an eclectic mix of continental traditions from which I learned a lot. First of all, I am grateful to dr. Stefan Riedel, with whom I have spent long, warm days in the depot of the Archaeological Museum of Adıyaman, and whose archaeological expertise and kind heart I feel fortunate to have been accompanied by. Eleni Fragaki and Cécile Harlaut, who made up the 'French-Alexandrian' branch of our project, have been invaluable in their generous support and informed opinions throughout the years. I thank my dear colleague and friend dr. Rebecca Henzel for our joyful collaborations as well at the many stimulating conversations in the Van Steenis office. Her 'predecessor', dr. Sander Müskens, was of crucial help in the starting-up process of this PhD research; I am very grateful for his assistance.

The Commagene-branch of the VICI project relied entirely on its cooperation with the *Forschungsstelle Asia Minor* (Westfälische Wilhelms Universiteit Münster), to which I am greatly indebted. Prof. dr. Engelbert Winter has been crucial in setting up the framework of this dissertation and I have benefitted tremendously from his help, both in Münster and Doliche.

Furthermore, I cannot express enough my gratitude to Dilek Çobanoğlu, who has been indispensable in acquiring the permissions in Ankara and Adıyaman, and for teaching me a lot about Turkey in the meantime. Special thanks go out to prof. dr. Aliye Öztan and prof. dr. Tayfun Yıldırım for permitting Stefan and me to study and publish the documentation of Nimet Özgüç's Samsat excavations. I would furthermore like to express my profound gratefulness to the director of the archaeological Museum in Adıyaman, Mehmet Alkan, whose unceasing support, hospitality and friendly assistance have been of invaluable importance. I also thank the friendly staff of the museum for their important help and their patience with my very limited Turkish. A special word of thanks goes out to Muzaffer Özçiris, my good friend, who has been a crucial anchor and guide during all my activities in Adıyaman.

Before thanking the rest of the Doliche team, I would like to especially express my gratitude to dr. Werner Oenbrink, who has assisted me tremendously with critical remarks and suggestions for the descriptions and discussions of the pieces of architectural decoration presented in chapter 5 of this dissertation. The fantastic *kazı ekibi* furthermore consists of Uli, Eda, Sophie, Fynn, Eva, Katharina, Laura, Veronika, Julia, Birgül, Katinka, Constanze, Margherita, Gönülnur, Gamze, Günay, and my *arkadazzo* Torben. Without exaggeration, I can say that standing in the sunlit trenches of Keber Tepe, eating *Antep Fıstık* while excavating *Ausbruchgruben*, and working together with this team has been one of the greatest gifts that this dissertation gave me. The fantastic Turkish team of excavators from nearby villages has taught me much, and I thank them from the bottom of my heart for their hospitality and mildness.

At the Faculty of Archaeology of Leiden University, I have been incredibly fortunate to have shared an office with my dear friend and colleague Suzan van de Velde, with whom I shared the struggles, insecurities, frustrations and, also, joys of PhD life; I am very grateful for the many laughs, drinks and conversations that we had over the years and look forward to those that are still to come! I would furthermore like to thank my dear Leiden colleagues dr. Marike van Aerde, dr. Aris Politopoulos, dr. Mark Locicero and Riia Timonen for the many stimulating conversations and delightful distractions. A special word of thanks goes out to Josephine Say, whose kind assistance has been of invaluable importance through the years.

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support. My journey in Mediterranean archaeology started at the University of Amsterdam, where prof. dr. Marijke Gnade, dr. Gert-Jan van Wijngaarden, and Jitte Waagen were important and inspiring teachers. The Royal Netherlands Institute in Rome greatly supported me throughout my studies and thereafter; I wish to express my thanks to prof. dr. Gert-Jan Burgers, dr. Jeremia Pelgrom and dr. Arthur Weststeijn for their advice and support.

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To Jo van Eikeren, in loving memory

'Never think the earth void or dead –
It's a hare, awake with shut eyes:
It's a sauce-pan, simmering with broth –
One clear look, you'll see it's in ferment.'

Jalal al-Din (Rumi)

'Where are we to put these hybrids? Are they human? Human because they are our work. Are they natural? Natural because they are not our doing. Are they local or global? Both.'
Latour 1993, 50

'*People are no longer the driving forces of history; instead they are one element of a set of relationships of swirling materials and forces that come together in the world, and allow for certain kinds of action and not others. Archaeological sites are excavated not just to understand the people who lived there but to look at the materials that were transformed there as historical actors in their own right.*'

Cipolla and Harris 2017,
148.

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