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RECENT EXCAVATIONS AT BABYLON

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Through the pages of its *Mittheilungen*, of which 55 numbers appeared prior to 1915, the German Orient Society has kept its members informed concerning the excavations which since 1899 it has been conducting in the East. The more technical details have from time to time appeared in the *Wissenschaftliche Veröffentlichungen* issued by the Society. That Assyria and Babylon have been a field of special attractiveness seems natural for a Society the inception and direction of which have been in large measure the work of the eminent Assyriologist Friedrich Delitzsch. It is due to his enthusiasm that the Society has secured such large financial support that it could project and execute plans on a scale and with a degree of thoroughness not seen before in the Babylonian-Assyrian territory. The friendly relations between the German and Turkish governments have likewise greatly eased the path of the explorer.

The two sites which have received most attention have been Babylon and the Assyrian capital, Asshur. The work at Babylon lacks of course the interest that belongs to the excavations of the French at Khorsabad and Tel-loh or of the English at Nineveh and Calah, but this is no fault of the explorer. The literary and art remains of Babylon were for the most part less well preserved than those of the other sites named.

But Babylon has an interest, apart from its ruins, peculiarly its own. It is the site of the Tower of Babel, the home of the power which destroyed the Jewish State,

the scene of Daniel's triumph and of Belshazzar's feast, and it occupies a large space in the utterances of Hebrew prophets. Greek and Roman writers describe at length its greatness and splendor in the period just prior to its sudden fall, and especially its palaces, temples, fortifications, bridges, quays, and hanging gardens, built by Nebuchadnezzar. The native records which we have from this monarch never weary in dealing with these subjects. Impressed on clay cylinders and tablets from many of the ruins of Babylonia, and carved on stone slabs at Babylon and even on the steep sides of the mountains of Lebanon, these records give us much information about the city at the time of its greatest power and magnificence. Cyrus has informed us with what joy the Babylonians welcomed his victorious entry into the city. With its change of masters Babylon became one of the capitals of the Persian empire, but it declined greatly during the Persian period. Alexander had the intention to make it the capital of his new world-empire, and actually began preparations for its rebuilding, but sudden death put an end to his brilliant dream.

Through all the centuries of decay the ancient name has been preserved on the spot. It is now attached to the most northerly of the three mounds on which the larger buildings of the city stood. This mound, Babil by name, contains the remains of one of the palaces built by Nebuchadnezzar. Amran, the most southerly mound, is the site of Marduk's temple Esagil, the most famous temple of Babylon. Between Babil and Amran is the mound called by the natives Kasr, wherein lie the remains of the chief palace of Nebuchadnezzar. These three mounds are all on the eastern side of the Euphrates. But the course of that stream has suffered many shifts, and it appears at one period to have run to the east of the Kasr. If this be the case, it would, as pointed out by Robert Koldewey, director of the German excava-

tions at Babylon, explain the statement of Greek historians that the two palaces of Nebuchadnezzar were on opposite sides of the river.

For several centuries the site of Babylon has been known to the western world. It has in modern times been repeatedly visited, and in the past century was the scene of a certain amount of superficial excavation. Various considerations have tended to discourage exploration at this spot. Among these are the vastness of the ruins, the ill success of the initial tests, and the comparative ease and success of exploration elsewhere. What Koldewey's predecessors accomplished is accordingly relatively insignificant. No one of them was in a position to lay plans commensurate with the largeness of the undertaking. Even Koldewey, with the large resources of money and time at his command, has scarcely half completed the task. Certain large results have been achieved, but many smaller problems still await their solution by the spade. The excavations have been confined almost entirely to the mounds, wherein the ruins of the larger buildings lie. The lower levels, burying the streets and houses of the successive periods of the city, are still largely untouched by the excavator.

Koldewey's book, which in the original bears the title *Das Wieder Erstehende Babylon*, appeared in 1913, and reports what was accomplished at Babylon between March, 1899, and May, 1912. In this period the work went on almost without interruption.

The book contains in its preface an epitomized diary of the work. The record of the excavations is given in 52 sections. This is followed by an appendix with extracts from the writings of Herodotus and other classical historians, a table of contents, and a list of the illustrations. The translation into English¹ adds an index of

¹ The Excavations at Babylon, with 255 Illustrations and Plans. Robert Koldewey. Tr. by Agnes S. Johns. Macmillan & Co., 1914. Pp. xx, 335. \$5.25.

seven pages, a list of the publications of the Orient Society, and an important note concerning a cuneiform description of the great temple Esagil.

About one half of the book is devoted to the Kasr, the central mound, the site of Nebuchadnezzar's chief palace. This mound is about 600 metres north and south and about 500 east and west. Here were unearthed the palace, the Procession Street, and the temple of the goddess Ninmach. In places only foundations remained, in other places portions of the massive walls were in position. Here as everywhere else in the ruins enormous damage has been done to the buildings by the modern natives, who dig out the bricks for present use, the building of houses, and making of dams.

The palace on the mound consisted of two parts, a southern and a northern. The enclosing wall of the southern half forms a trapezium, with sides measuring approximately 280, 320, 190, and 125 metres. Here stood once the palace of Nebuchadnezzar's father, which the son rebuilt, enlarged, and adorned. The main entrance seems to have been on the east, where a massive gateway leads into a court about 40 by 60 metres in size. Across this court is a passage into a second court about 40 by 35 metres, and beyond this a third about 50 by 60 metres near the centre of the great complex of buildings. On the south side of this third court are three doors leading into the largest and finest hall in the ruin, a room about 53 by 18 metres. Here were found richly colored tiles with elaborate ornamentation representing figures of columns, garlands, and animal forms. Koldewey thinks that this was Nebuchadnezzar's throne room. A recess or niche in the southern wall of the room may have been the spot where the royal throne stood. The rest of the southern half of the Kasr is occupied by a great number of passage-ways, halls, and chambers. The chambers were doubtless the sleeping apartments, offices,

and store-rooms of the palace. A massive group of vaults in the north-east corner of the enclosure is believed by Koldewey to be the substructions of the hanging gardens.

The northern half of the mound was excavated only in small part, but enough was done to show that it contains the large extension of the palace in this direction of which we learn in the records of Nebuchadnezzar.

Running north and south on the eastern side of the palace, and extending as far south as the temple of Esagil, is the most celebrated street of Babylon, the so-called Procession Street of Marduk, along which the chief god of Babylon was at times borne in stately procession. This street is paved with blocks of breccia, and the walls enclosing it on either side were decorated with enamelled tiles representing lions, bulls, and dragons. Near the corner identified with the hanging gardens the street passes through the most elaborate gateway of Babylon, the Ishtar gate, often mentioned in the records of Nebuchadnezzar. The massive pillars of this gateway are likewise decorated with similar figures. The dragons have the body of a beast covered with the scales of a serpent, the fore feet of a beast, the hind feet of a bird, and the head and tail of a serpent. Koldewey estimates that there were several hundred of these animal figures.

On the eastern side of the Procession Street and near the Ishtar gate lie the ruins of the temple of Ninmach, which may have served as the palace temple. In size it is about 50 by 30 metres, and it is not quite rectangular. The entrance is in the northern wall, and the adytum is near the opposite southern wall of the temple. In front of the outer door was a small altar built of brick. A vestibule, with a porter's room on the left, leads to a central court about 20 by 14 metres. Beneath the floor of the court is a well. On the south side of the court is a

room about 12 by 5 metres, with a smaller chamber or closet at one end. Passing through the larger chamber we enter another of the same size. This is the adytum. Facing the door is the platform on which the statue of the god had stood or sat. There had been three of these platforms, one above the other, necessitated by successive elevations of the floor. Two of these were still in place. Underneath the lowest was a brick receptacle containing a clay statuette in human form with a thin staff of gold in one hand. Grouped around the temple court are several chambers, also certain long corridors of uncertain use. A foundation record of Assurbanipal's found in the temple shows that this Assyrian king had restored the building while his brother was ruling at Babylon. From inscriptions of Nebuchadnezzar we know that he also built the temple anew.

In addition to the temple just described three other temples were excavated besides Esagil. All were more elaborate than the temple of Ninmach, but the arrangements of the interior were much the same. Others still await discovery, for we read in the inscriptions the names of several not yet found.

A reminder of the Persian period of Babylon is found in the ill-preserved remains of a Persian building which stood on one side of the Kasr mound. The identification is based on the architectural features of the building, which repeat those of the Persepolitan palaces. It is confirmed by the discovery of fragments of stone with several letters in the Persian cuneiform script. Koldewey thinks that he recognizes in them part of the name of Darius.

Some 1700 metres north of the Kasr lies Babil, an imposing mound, the site of Nebuchadnezzar's second palace. Though the excavation was only partial, inscriptions found there leave no doubt as to the identification. The mound is nearly square, with approximately 500 metres

to the side. In the records of Nebuchadnezzar the name Babil ordinarily means the city, but sometimes the citadel or what is now the Kasr. This double use of the name is the source of some confusion in the interpretation of the inscriptions. Particularly has that been the case in regard to two great walls of Babylon, Imgur Bel and Nimitti Bel. The excavations have shown that these were walls in connection with Babil in the narrower sense — the Kasr palace — and not the more northerly mound now known as Babil. What led to the transfer of the name from one mound to the other we do not know.

About 3000 metres south of Babil is the large mound Amran, of irregular shape, the site of Marduk's temple Esagil. This temple, for many centuries the most important building at Babylon, was an object of reverent care to Babylonian and Assyrian kings from the days of Hammurabi. With all the other buildings at Babylon it suffered destruction at the hands of Sennacherib in or about the year 689 B.C. Esarhaddon restored the city, and Assurbanipal devoted much attention to Esagil. During the reign of the latter the statue of Marduk, which had been taken by Sennacherib as a trophy to Assyria, was restored to its shrine in Esagil. But naturally no Assyrian ruler would give to Babylonian temples such care as would a native king residing in the city. We find accordingly that Nabopolassar devoted special attention to Esagil. But it was under his son Nebuchadnezzar that this temple saw its most glorious days. Hardly any of his numerous records fail to describe at length or briefly his works of restoration. They tell us much about the temple proper, the bricks of its walls, the cedar of its roofing, the gold and silver with which it was adorned. They tell of its four imposing gates and of its three shrines, one to Marduk, one to his spouse Zirpanit, and one to their son Nabu, all brilliantly em-

bellished. They describe Marduk's elaborate procession-boat, in which the god was borne on certain festive occasions. They give long lists of the sacrifices and describe the Chamber of Destiny, in which annually in the new-year period the gods assembled around Marduk to declare the destinies for the year. They devote special attention to the temple-tower, on the top of which stood another shrine to Marduk.

But unfortunately these records and those of the succeeding kings do not furnish the data for a reconstruction of the plan of the temple. While telling of laying foundations as deep as the water-level, of building walls as firm as the mountain-rock, and of rearing the top of the tower mountain high, they give neither dimensions nor directions. The impression received from these descriptions is of large, massive, solid, and lofty structures, lavishly adorned. Perhaps naturally one thinks of the tower and the shrines as forming a group of buildings surrounded by a lofty wall entered through massive gateways. Nothing in the record tells us what was the form of the tower nor how the shrine at its top was reached, whether by stairway or by inclined plane, whether from within or without.

Herodotus, fortunately, answers some of our questions. True it is that he came after the decline of Babylon had set in, but it is not likely that the tower had undergone any radical change of form, and if it had, a correct tradition may well have survived. According to Herodotus the tower consisted of a series of eight stages or blocks, each smaller than the one below it, and the ascent was on the outside. The lowest stage was square in plan, each side measuring a stadium. The shrine at the top contained no image, but there was another temple lower down, that is, on the ground, with altars and a large golden image of the god. The temple precincts in this account formed a quadrangle, each side measuring two stadia.

Koldewey carried his excavations down to water-level at a depth of 23 metres below the surface, but what he found in the Amran coincides not at all with the tower and temple described by Herodotus. What the explorer identifies as Esagil is a structure in two parts, an eastern and a western. The western measures about 85 by 80 metres. The sides face the cardinal points, and each side near the middle has an entrance conducting into the large court in the central space. Six floors were recognized, representing six successive elevations of the floor-level. Two of these were from Nebuchadnezzar and two from the Assyrian king Assurbanipal. The uppermost floor was reached only after digging through $18\frac{1}{2}$ metres of débris. The enclosing walls of the building were six metres thick. Three shrines were recognized, on the west, south, and north sides respectively, one of them being that of Marduk.

The eastern portion of this temple covers about 90 by 115 metres. Four gates and several smaller openings lead into the interior. The excavations were not carried far enough to determine the details of the plan of this building, but inscriptions of Esarhaddon and Assurbanipal found at the floor-level seem to leave no doubt that it is a part of the great temple of Esagil. So great is the accumulation of débris at this point that to reach the floor involved the removal of 30,000 cubic metres of rubbish.

One may well ask whether this great structure in two parts is really Esagil, as Koldewey holds, or only an annex to the great temple. The main reasons for the doubt are that it is not inside the great enclosure where the remains of the tower lie, and particularly that the Procession Street does not skirt its wall as it does in the case of the enclosure. Elsewhere in Assyria and Babylonia the tower, the so-called *ziggurat*, is in close proximity to the temple, and we get the impression from Nebu-

chadnezzar and from Herodotus that this was the case with Esagil also. If this criticism is correct, Koldewey did not find the central part of Esagil at all. What remains of it is still to be sought in the unexcavated portion of the great enclosure.

The southern limit of this enclosure lies about 100 metres north of the buildings just described. The enclosure is nearly rectangular, measuring about 400 by 450 metres, and the walls are very massive. There are twelve gates. Built against the walls on the inside are many chambers, in all probability storerooms, apartments of temple-attendants, and, as Koldewey thinks, lodging-rooms for pilgrims.

A tower near the south-west corner of the enclosure, about 90 metres square, is held by the explorer to be Etemenanki, the celebrated tower of Esagil. This opinion is supported by several inscribed bricks of Assurbanipal and Nebuchadnezzar from the ruin relating to the reconstruction of Etemenanki. Leading up to this tower and perpendicular to its southern line is a steep stairway, from which Koldewey concludes that this was the only method of ascent, and that the current view is erroneous. This view, based on Herodotus, represents the ascent as made by passing around the tower in rising from one stage to the next higher. This view is supported by what the French explorers found in excavating the city of Sargon in the ruins of Khorsabad. Here was a tower altogether like what Herodotus describes at Babylon. Koldewey thinks that there was no such tower found at Khorsabad but that the French explorers, misled by Herodotus, saw what was in reality not in the ruins at all. But is not such an opinion an excess of scepticism? To justify his doubt it was necessary for Koldewey to question also the accuracy of a report of George Smith that he had seen in Paris a cuneiform tablet describing Marduk's temple at Baby-

lon and agreeing essentially with Herodotus as to the form of the tower. A note appended to the translation of Koldewey's book calls attention to the fact that this tablet, long lost to sight, has reappeared, and has been made the subject of an elaborate study by two competent French scholars. This study seems to show that Koldewey is in the wrong in his strictures on George Smith, the French explorers, and Herodotus. Indeed, notwithstanding all the excavation carried on in this enclosure, but little new information has been gained regarding Esagil and Etemenanki, and it is much to be feared that these buildings have suffered so greatly that no degree of excavation will ever be able to add much to our knowledge. Some of the dimensions given by Herodotus are doubtless exaggerations, but there seems to be no reason to doubt the general accuracy of his descriptions.

Marduk's Procession Street, coming from the Kasr in the north, skirts the great enclosure on the east and on the south, and crossed the Euphrates on a bridge near the south-west corner of the enclosure. Though the river has shifted its course, a depression in the ground shows where it formerly ran, and seven of the brick piers by which the bridge was supported were excavated. The piers are 21 metres long and 9 metres in width, and the seven cover a space 123 metres long. Along the ancient river bank running north and south from the end of the bridge are the remains of a wall erected by Nabunaid, the last native king of Babylon.

Some 500 metres east of the Kasr lies an extensive mound composed entirely of the débris of burned bricks. This débris seems to have come from the ruins of Etemenanki at the time when Alexander caused the site to be cleared away with the intention of rebuilding the tower. In this mound were excavated the remains of an extensive Greek theatre. The seats, which numbered about 30

rows, have a semicircular form with an extreme diameter of about 66 metres. Though very badly damaged, enough of the theatre remained to make possible a restoration of its plan. According to a Greek inscription in four lines, perfectly preserved except at the ends of the lines, this theatre was erected or restored by a certain Dioskouri(der). The original construction may well belong to the time of the occupation of the city by Alexander.

In the triangle formed by lines connecting the Kasr, Esagil, and the Greek theatre, lies a section of the ruins now known as Merkes. Here were excavated some of the streets and private houses coming from various periods of the history of the city. In the surface-layers, the first two or three metres, were found the sparse remains of houses of the Parthian period. The next four metres are from Greek, Persian, and late Babylonian times. The narrow streets run north and south, east and west. The houses are thickly crowded together, have massive walls made of sun-dried bricks, and good brick floors. Wells are frequent. One of the larger of the houses, apparently from the time of Nebuchadnezzar, contains 24 chambers grouped around two courts. It is somewhat irregular in shape, about 40 by 40 metres, and consists of two halves. The arrangement of the rooms suggests that part of the house was used as a dwelling and part for business purposes.

At a lower level, in the period 1400–1300 B.C. as appeared from dated tablets found at this level, the houses were less crowded. One metre below water-level were reached the ruins of the city of Hammurabi (about 2100 B.C.) and his successors. The houses have walls of sun-dried bricks resting on foundations of burned bricks. They are closely crowded together and less massive than those of the time of Nebuchadnezzar. The Babylon of a still earlier period lies now entirely under water, owing to the gradual rise of the river bed, the surface of the ter-

rain, and the water-level. The space in which these houses were excavated was in ancient times slightly higher than the general level of the city, with the result that in the lower sections the remains are buried still deeper below the water-level.

A section of the city wall on the north-east side was investigated. The wall is double, an inner and an outer, that is, with a space between filled in with earth. The inner wall, of sun-dried bricks, is about seven metres thick, with towers at frequent intervals; the outer, of burned bricks, about eight metres thick; and the intervening space about 12 metres. The whole wall has thus a thickness of about 27 metres. The original height could not be determined. Outside and close to the wall was the moat wall, three and a half metres thick. The moat itself had not been examined, nor had any of the city gates been found when Koldewey's book was written.

The ruins described by Koldewey lie all on the east side of the river. Assuming the correctness of the statement of Herodotus that the city lay on both sides of the river, Koldewey estimates that the circumference was about 18,000 metres. This is somewhat more than a fourth of that given by Ktesias and somewhat less than a fourth of the figure named by Herodotus. Finding no evidence of remains of walls enclosing a vastly larger area, Koldewey concludes that the statement of the ancient authors is an exaggeration.

While the chief attention of the explorers was devoted to the examination of the great buildings of Babylon, especially palaces and temples, it was their good fortune to discover a multitude of small objects, such as cuneiform tablets, statuettes and figurines, pottery, etc.

Thanks to these excavations we can now form a better picture than ever before of the city which so profoundly influenced the history of the world and so deeply impressed the imagination of ancient writers. But though much

has been done, much still remains to be done, not only in the depressions where the houses of the people lay, but also in the great mounds, not one of which has been fully explored.

Koldewey's book is entertainingly written, and is profusely illustrated with plans, sketches, and half-tone reproductions. Seven of the half-tones are reproduced in color, and give a fine impression of the brilliancy of the ancient decoration. The book is full of details, but is not overloaded with them. For the student of history or the Bible it is a work of the deepest interest and importance.

A word remains to be said about the translation. On the whole this is well done. In several instances errors of the original are corrected without comment, as "eastern" for "western" (p. xii, n. 36, and p. 214), "south-east" for "south-west" (p. 2, line 16), and "76" for "46" (p. 32, line 7). On the other hand "Nebuchadnezzar" for "Nabopolassar" (p. xvi, n. 144, and p. 232) seems to be a slip of the translator. The name is correctly given on p. 225, line 9. Inasmuch as Professor Güterbock of the Orient Society read the translation in proof, one suspects that some of the divergences from the German may be due to his hand. This would seem to be the case at least in the suppression of acknowledgment of indebtedness to him (p. vi of the German edition). In many cases the translation adds to or takes from the emphasis of the original, as "a number" (p. 6, line 4) for "many" (*viele*), and "many" (p. 164, line 18) for "several" (*mehrere*). Some of the translations are only approximations, as "strengthened our decision" (p. vi, line 10) for "helped to reach the decision" (*trugen mit zu dem Entschlusse bei*); "strip" (p. viii, line 4) for "corner" (*Ecke*); "only" (p. 3, line 12) for "scarcely" (*kaum*); "unfinished state" (p. 1, line 3) for "insignificance, small amount of" (*Geringfügigkeit*). Occasionally

the translation misrepresents the original, as p. 5, last sentence: "We shall later turn more in detail from the testimony of the ancient writers to the evidence of the ruins themselves." Read: "We shall later *return* more in detail *to* (the subject of) the relation of the ancient writers to the ruins themselves." On p. 5, line 15, for "There are other overwhelming considerations which we shall investigate later," read "Other considerations are decisive; we shall try to present them further along." On p. 5, line 16, for "even in circumference," read "already in circumference as we have now established it." On p. 5, line 19, for "which in other respects rivalled Babylon," read "which certainly approaches Babylon" (i.e., in size).

While these lists of infelicities of rendering might be much enlarged, not many cases have been noted in which the sense is seriously affected. Both translator and publisher have rendered valuable service in promptly making this important publication accessible in an English dress.