

ANCIENT BABYLON: FROM GRADUAL DEMISE TO ARCHAEOLOGICAL REDISCOVERY

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INTRODUCTION

The Neo-Babylonian Empire was founded under the rule of Nabopolassar (Nabû-apla-ušur), who reigned from 626-605 B.C. For several hundred years prior to his rule, Babylon had been a vassal state under the rule of the Assyrians to the north, and had suffered destruction by Assyrian king Sennacherib in 689 B.C.¹ Following the death of the Ashurbanipal in 627 B.C., the Assyrian Empire rapidly decreased in power until finally in 612 B.C. the great city of Nineveh was defeated by the combined forces of the Babylonians, Medes and Scythians.

Under the rule of Nabopolassar's son, Nebuchadnezzar II (Nabû-kudurri-ušur, 605-562 B.C.), the Neo-Babylonian Empire reached the zenith of its power. However, by 539 B.C., the Babylonians were defeated by the armies of Cyrus the Great, king of the Medes and Persians. The city of Babylon itself was not destroyed in 539 B.C., but continued to thrive and remained a key city of the Persian Empire for many years. It even became part of the richest satrapy in the empire and was regarded by Herodotus (*Histories* 1.178) as the world's most splendid city. Under the Persian King Darius, it even received some improvements including an arsenal, a palace for the crown prince and an *apadana*, i.e. a hall supported by columns, in the Persian style (Roux 1992: 409).

In 482 B.C., Babylon revolted against Xerxes. This led to the destruction of Babylon's fortifications and temples, as well as the melting down of the golden image of Marduk, Babylon's primary deity. From classical authors,² we know that Xerxes captured the rebellious city after a siege of several months. After being sacked, its fortifications were demolished, the great temple of Marduk and others were burnt to the ground, and the statue of Marduk was carried away as a spoil of war (Oates 1986: 138). Xerxes dealt with the Babylonians quite severely. He abolished the

satrapy and incorporated it with that of Assyria, though western portions were made a separate unit. Some large landed estates were confiscated, and the country in general was heavily taxed. In terms of its temples, it is probable that some of them fell into ruin through lack of maintenance in the following centuries rather than through violent destruction, in that Esagila and other sanctuaries are mentioned in later texts (Roux 1992: 409).

Despite this setback destruction, Babylon continued to flourish until Alexander the Great defeated the Persians. His victory at the battle of Gaugamela, on October 1, 331 B.C., opened the road to Persia and Babylon. Alexander was warmly welcomed by the citizens of Babylon, and after making sacrifice to Marduk he ordered the restoration of Esagila and resolved to make Babylon his eastern capital.³ His plans were cut short by his death in Babylon in 323 B.C. in the ancient palace of Nebuchadnezzar. By the time of his death, he had actually begun rebuilding the great ziggurat, but was only in the initial stages of its restoration.⁴ As a result of Alexander's death, Babylon effectively saw the end of its role as a capital city.

Following Alexander's death, his generals struggled for control of his empire, and eventually Seleucus (a former satrap of Babylon) gained control of the Asian province that contained the city. The prestige of Babylon was significantly reduced when Seleucus ordered the founding of a new city, Seleucia-on-the-Tigris, about 90 km north of Babylon.⁵ Antiochus I (281-261 B.C.), the successor to Seleucus, made Seleucia the royal city, and then ordered that the civilian population of Babylon be moved there. Seleucia-on-the-Tigris (Tell 'Umar, probably on the site of Upâ (Opis) opposite Ctesiphon), was the largest city of the whole Seleucid kingdom, with a population of about 600,000 (Roux 1992: 415). Had Babylon remained the Seleucid cap-

ital city, her prestige would have had a greater chance of survival. Although a remnant of people still inhabited the ancient site, the city's importance never recovered. Nevertheless, some efforts were made by the Macedonian rulers to revive its half-ruined state. A royal inscription of Antiochus I (281-260 B.C.) has been found on which he calls himself "provider of Esagila and Ezida," and like the Chaldean kings, also claims to have brought the first bricks of these temples from "Hatti" (Syria). A tablet dated in the reign of Seleucus III (225-223 B.C.) further indicates that regular offerings were made to a number of Babylonian gods in their own shrines (Roux 1992: 416, 420). Archaeologists have discovered the remains of Hellenistic architecture on the mound of Bâbil as well as the site of Nebuchadnezzar's palace. During the reign of the Antiochus IV (175-164 B.C.), Babylon received a gymnasium and a splendid Greek theater which was later enlarged by the Parthians (Witzel, Schmidt and Mallwist 1957: 3-21). The religious functions of Esagila and a college of priests (the 'Anu-Enlil priesthood) were still in operation late in the Seleucid period (Oates 1986: 142).

After the Parthians conquered Babylonia in 126 B.C., the Seleucid kingdom was greatly reduced. At that time, Artabanus II assumed control over the Tigris-Euphrates valley, and Babylon remained under Parthian control for quite some time, except for two brief periods of Roman occupation under Trajan (A.D. 98-117) and Septimius Severus (A.D. 193-211). The repression following the revolt of Hymeros in 127 B.C. and the civil war between Mithridates II and Orodes in 52 B.C. may have brought about irreparable damage to Babylon, perhaps even more so than at the hands of Xerxes (Roux 1992: 421).

The Greek geographer and historian Strabo (*Geography* 16.5) described Babylon as empty and desolate for the most part. In the first century B.C., Diodorus Siculus (*Bibliotheca Historica* 2.9) indicated that Esagila along with the royal palaces had sunk into ruins and that only a small area of the city was still inhabited. There was some continuance of a Babylonian city and people even until the first century A.D., though of very little importance. Pliny (*Naturalis Historia* 6.30) suggests that Esagila was still in existence.

In A.D. 115 or 116, the Roman Emperor Trajan wintered in Babylon during his campaign against the

Parthians, though he found little there except for mounds, stones and ruins (*Dio Roman History* 68.30.1). However, Pausanias (*Descriptio Graeciae* 8.33.3) wrote that the temple of Bel (Marduk) and the city walls were still standing, though most of the city was abandoned. According to Septimius Severus (A.D. 193-211), the site was deserted by A.D. 200. The Parthian kingdom finally fell under Sassanian domination in A.D. 227. But traces of Parthian occupation have been found in the excavations of Babylon, as well as numerous other sites in southern Iraq. Subsequently, the site of Babylon remained virtually lost until the seventeenth century.

Early Explorers

Ibn Hawkal, a tenth-century A.D. Islamic geographer, was one of the first to rediscover the ancient site of Babylon and describe its remains. He noted that Babel was a small village, yet one of the most ancient in all Iraq. He says that the "whole region is denominated Babel from this place," and the "kings of *Canaan* [*sic* Chaldea] resided there; and ruins of great edifices still remain" (Maurice 1816: 6).

Benjamin Bar Joanna, a learned Jewish merchant of Tudela (in the kingdom of Aragon in Spain), traveled to the Ancient Near East in A.D. 1160 and made significant notes on Nineveh and Babylon. He appears to have confused the site of Babylon with Borsippa, which is slightly to the south, seeing the Tower of Babel in the massive ruins of the ziggurat of Borsippa. His interest was more with the Jews in the vicinity and their synagogues than with Babylon itself. Nevertheless he made two important observations. He reported that ten thousand Jews lived in the village of Al Hillah, six miles from Babylon, and noted that they had an active synagogue in Babylon, one mile from the ruins of Nebuchadnezzar's temple, probably the temple of Marduk (Adler 1905:514-30).

A German physician and explorer named Leonhard Rauwolff traveled to Baghdad about 1575 and claimed to have seen the ruins of Babylon, though from his remarks it appears that he was confused regarding the true location (Wellard 1973: 21). In 1583 the English merchant John Eldred also traveled to the region of Babylonia, though he appears to have mistaken the Tower of Babel for another located at the Kassite city of 'Aqar Quf (ancient Dur Kurigalzu)

(Hakluyt 1965).

Pietro della Valle was an Italian nobleman who visited Babylon in 1616 and Ur in 1625. Several earlier travelers had attempted to identify the site of Babylon, but thought it lay elsewhere. Pietro della Valle correctly identified the site of Bâbil in 1616. He noted that villagers were mining and selling Babylon's kiln-fired bricks. He brought back some bricks to Europe on which were inscribed writing in certain unknown characters.⁶ He was apparently the first to send copies of cuneiform inscriptions back to Europe and the first to engage in limited rummaging among the ruins of Babylon with the aid of a pick (Vos 1979: 263). His chief interest was in the ancient writing of the region. Saggs (1995: 9-10) reports, "In a letter in 1621 he gave copies of some of the signs, composed of groups of wedges, and in 1625 he was commenting on wedge-shaped inscriptions on bricks he had collected from ruins at a site identified centuries later as ancient Ur." There was already a word used to express the sense of wedge-shaped, the Latin-derived word "cuneiform" used by the science of Anatomy, and from 1700 onward this word was adopted as the standard term in English for this kind of writing.

Karsten Niebuhr (1733-1815) also equated Bâbil with Babylon, as had Emmanuel Ballyet in 1755. In 1761, Niebuhr (fig. 1) had been sent out by the king of Denmark, Frederick V, on a scientific mission to gather as much information as possible on various subjects, including archaeology. When he found numerous inscribed bricks lying around the great mounds at Hillah on the Euphrates, he deduced that the site was probably Babylon itself. However, he, like others before him, mistakenly believed the ruins in Borsippa were those of the Babylonian tower (Klengel-Brandt 1997: 251). Nevertheless, the numerous inscriptions that his team copied from Persepolis were made available to philologists to study.

Joseph de Beauchamp, a distinguished French abbé and astronomer was the papal vicar-general at Baghdad. During the years 1780 and 1790, he made visits to the ruins of Babylon and conducted what are believed to be the first minor excavations of the site. He cut the first archaeological trenches in the mounds of Hillah and El Kasr (the Castle), the latter being the mound on which Robert Koldewey would later make



Fig. 1. Karsten Niebuhr (Pope 1999: 95).

some of his greatest discoveries. He collected inscribed bricks and other small artifacts that were brought back to France. He also made detailed and accurate accounts of Babylon, and noted the existence of massive inscribed cylinders though he was unable to obtain one. Unfortunately, the interest in inscribed bricks may have caused greater discoveries to be overlooked. Workmen were employed to dig for bricks in the Hillah mound. In the course of doing so, however, they found large, thick walls and rooms containing clay vessels, engraved marbles, and bronze statues. One room was said to be decorated with figures of cows on varnished bricks (reference evidently to the enameled bulls later found by Koldewey along the length of the Processional Way). According to the

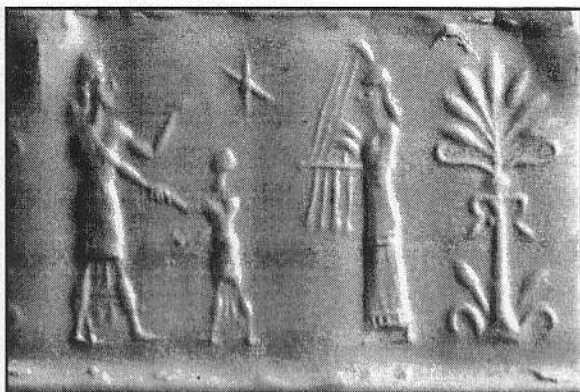


Fig. 2. Seal found by Rich (Saggs 1995: 12).

workmen, other bricks showed pictures of lions, the sun, the moon, and so forth. Yet all these artifacts were thrown aside as worthless to the builders, who simply wanted the hard, kiln-baked bricks (Wellard 1973: 23).

Nevertheless, his reports led to an interest in antiquities by the British East India Company circles of London. The latter authorized representatives in Baghdad to conduct archaeological prospecting.

ARCHAEOLOGY AT BABYLON

Claudius James Rich (1787-1821) served as resident of the British East India Company in Baghdad from 1808 until his death about the year 1821 (from cholera). He was fluent in several oriental languages including Turkish and Arabic, and wrote some informative memoirs on Babylon, Nineveh and other Mesopotamian sites. He made surface explorations of Babylon in 1811-12 and again in 1817, producing the first accurate plan of the site of Babylon, which was published in 1815. Through him, the first antiquities including some cylinder seals (fig. 2) found their way to Europe, to both the Louvre and the British Museum. Thomas Maurice (1816: 30), a contemporary of Rich, lamented that the famous ancient walls of Babylon still remained a mystery. He wrote, "... although we have doubtless ascertained the site, and from evidence both external and internal, many of the public edifices of Babylon; yet the actual extent of the circumference of that great city, from the varying accounts of the ancient historians, remains still disputable, and must ever do so, unless the vestiges of its

vast walls shall hereafter be accurately traced by still more assiduous local research."

Minor Explorations

Following the work of Rich, there were several minor explorations at the site of Babylon in the first half of the nineteenth century. Robert Ker Porter, an English painter, mapped the ruins of Babylon, recorded his impressions, and illustrated them with romantic views of the ruins in 1818. Yet he identified the Tower of Babel with Birs Nimrud. In 1827 James S. Buckingham and Mellino made further surface explorations of the site. In 1828 Robert Mignan made soundings. He cut a shaft and removed a number of clay tablets, as well as an inscribed clay cylinder. In 1841, Coste and Flandin made further maps of the ruins.

Henry Creswicke Rawlinson (1810-1895) is not noted for archaeological work at Babylon, but he made some significant contributions to the decipherment of the Akkadian language utilized by the Babylonians, an achievement which would prove invaluable for archaeologists after him who would undertake a thorough excavation and study of the site. Rawlinson (fig. 3) himself was an excellent linguist.



Fig. 3. Henry Rawlinson (Pope 1999: 110).

Having served as an intelligence officer in the East India Company in India, he was posted as a military adviser to Persia in 1835. By the end of 1843, he was appointed British Resident and Consul in Baghdad, and in the ensuing years played a major role in the decipherment of the famous trilingual Behistun inscription. By the autumn of 1846, he was able to make sense out of many of the cuneiform inscriptions on bricks from Nebuchadnezzar's Babylon (with about 50% accuracy). By 1850 with the help of a Kurdish boy he was able to publish his decoding of the cuneiform script. Rawlinson returned to England in 1855, and there devoted himself to the translation and publication of cuneiform texts.

Henry Austen Layard (1817-1894) was famous for his archaeological work at Nimrūd (biblical Calah) and Nineveh. He was commissioned by the British Museum to direct their work in Mesopotamia. In 1847, he removed two of the most spectacular finds from Nimrud, a colossal bull and lion, for display in the British Museum. In the same year, he managed to publish an account of his excavations in the form of a travel journal that quickly became a best-seller. He also published a volume containing the principal cuneiform texts as well as drawings of his finds. A second expedition to Mesopotamia was conducted during the years 1848-51. During this time he alternated between digs at Calah and Nineveh and concentrated on Sennacherib's palace at Nineveh and the ziggurat of Calah. His work at Kuyunjik (Nineveh) was particularly rewarding, and included a group of ten colossal bulls which formed the grand entrance to a palace, as well as some fine bas-reliefs depicting battle scenes, among them the siege of biblical Lachish by Sennacherib described in 2 Kings 18:13-17 (Saggs 1995: 15). More important, however, was the discovery of a major archive of cuneiform tablets, part of a library collected by Assyrian kings, chiefly Ashurbanipal in the seventh century B.C. Layard's successor, Hormuzd Rassam, went on to excavate the site in 1853. The tablets from Kuyunjik, now in the British Museum, remain one of the most important sources for cuneiform studies.

In 1850, Layard (fig. 4) was able to take soundings at Babylon. He dug into three mounds (including the mound of Babel and the hill of Kasr) but soon concluded that the place was not worth his time.

A French counsel and orientalist by the name of

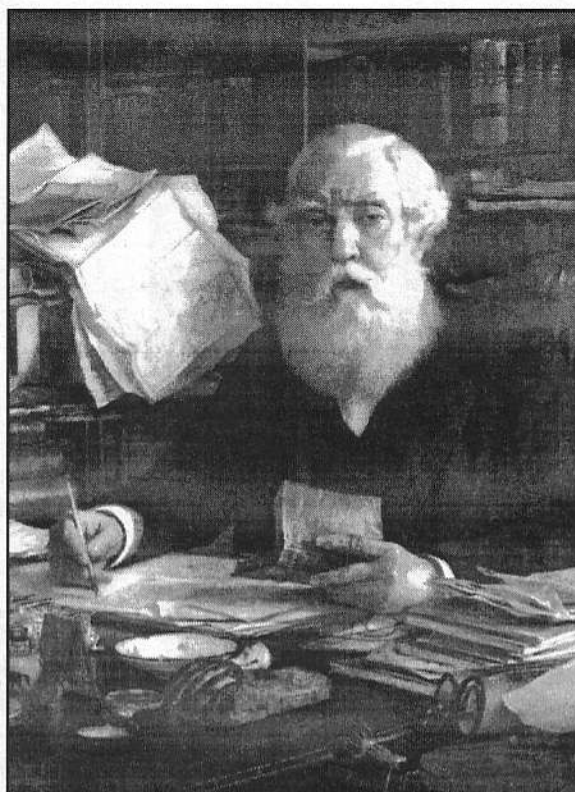


Fig. 4. Austen Layard (Saggs 1995: 14).

Fulgence Fresnel, along with the German Assyriologist Jules Oppert and an architect named Felix Thomas, made the first systematic excavations of Babylon in July-November of 1852. Based on their work, Oppert (1859) published the first relatively detailed map of Babylon. They found numerous inscriptions, though unfortunately their finds (41 crates) were lost when a boat containing them foundered at Qurna on the Tigris in May 1855. By 1869, however, Oppert recognized that the third language of the Behistun inscription was Elamite.

Hormuzd Rassam (1826-1910), a native from Mosul, had been the assistant to Layard during the time of their work in Assyria, and succeeded him during the 1850s. He was the brother of the locally born British Consular representative in Mosul and eventually became the Supervisor of Excavations for the British Museum. Rassam (fig. 5) became famous in his own right for his work at Nimrud, and was commissioned to reopen excavations in Babylon in 1876. In the course of his work, he unearthed a large collec-

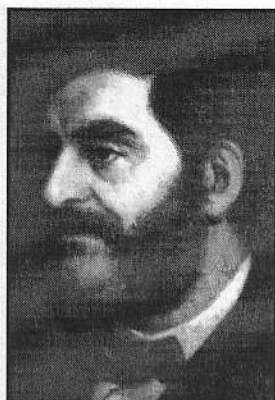


Fig. 5. Hormuzd Rassam (Roaf 1996: 152).

tion of business documents of the house of Egibi and the famous Cyrus Cylinder.

During the latter part of the 1800s, the site continued to be damaged (Klengel-Brandt 1997: 252). In addition to the continual plundering of the baked bricks from the ruins, the local population also took stone monuments, which they burned for gypsum. As a result, many important buildings were so thoroughly destroyed that it was later impossible to identify their ground plans.

THE EXCAVATIONS OF ROBERT KOLDEWEY

Following the work of E. Sachau (minor excavations in 1897-98), the newly-formed German Oriental Society (*Deutsche Orient-Gesellschaft*) took over responsibility for the excavations of Babylon (Margueron 1992: 563). Robert Koldewey (1855-1925) was then put in charge and carried out scientific excavations throughout the years 1899-1917. His goals included the uncovering of the city plan, the investigation of Babylonian architecture, and a definitive identification of the Tower of Babel. Although the high ground-water levels prevented them from reaching the Old Babylonian strata, they were successful in exposing layers from the Neo-Babylonian period.

Koldewey (fig. 6) began his career as a field archaeologist in Assus of western Turkey in 1882. In 1887, he worked with Robert Moritz at Surgul and al-Hiba in southern Iraq. There he gained experience in preparing surveys, maps, drawings, and refined tech-

niques for following mudbrick walls, following foundation trenches and observing soil colors and other advanced methodologies for the time. After a teaching stint in Görlitz, Germany, he chose the site of Babylon in 1897 for a major excavation and was able to obtain the backing of the German Oriental Society (Fagan 1997: 303). For nearly 18 years he carried out his archaeological work at Babylon with very little interruption, until forced in March of 1917 to close down his excavations by the approach of the British Expeditionary Force under General Maude, though his projected labors were far from finished.

Koldewey started work at the site on March 26, 1899, when his team cut an exploratory trench on the east side of Kasr, a mound of 1.6 km near the Euphrates River (Parrot 1958: 21). By 1900, his team had worked on the Processional Way, the temple of Ninmach (a goddess of the dead), the palaces, and the center of the mound Amran ibn Ali, where the site of the famed Esagila (Temple of Marduk) was found. The excavation of the Ninurta temple in 1901 and the Ishtar gate in 1902 soon followed. Other major efforts were directed at the Persian buildings (1906/07), Merkes (1908), and the rest of the Kasr (1911-12). The outer walls of the temple of Esagila were identified in late 1910 and early 1911. In the



Fig. 6. Robert Koldewey (Harris 1995: 100).



Fig. 7. Istar Gate (Oates 1986: 145)

course of his excavations, Koldewey discovered cuneiform inscriptions, statues, stelae, terra-cotta reliefs, cylinder seals, pottery, glassware, and jewelry.

Koldewey was able to locate most of the eight major city gates, each of which was dedicated to one of the principal deities worshiped by the Babylonians. The names of these gates are known by virtue of descriptions of the city found on cuneiform documents (Oates 1986: 152). To the east were the Gates of Marduk and Ninurta, god of hunting and of war; to the south was the Gate of Urash, an old Akkadian deity of the holy city of Dilbat not far south of Babylon (Campdor 1958: 145). He was able to iden-

tify four other gates with reasonable certainty. To the north was the Gate of Sin, the moon god, with the Gates of Enlil, the sky god, and Shamash, the sun god to the south. On the west was the Gate of Adad, the Storm god. The most famous of these was the Ishtar Gate (fig. 7), located on the north side of the city, which he excavated along with three others.

Excavation of the site posed several challenges for Koldewey, not the least of which was the weather. Working year-round proved a grueling task, as summer shade temperatures often reached as high as 50°C. The river and water levels also complicated his task. The present course of the Euphrates River is

different than that of ancient times. It presently flows farther west of its original location, which divided the inner city into two sectors. The bulk of the excavation work was largely concentrated in the older eastern sector, where most of the principal buildings were located. Much less is known of the area that originally lay west of the river, and which is now partly beneath its bed. Because of the proximity to the river, the excavators encountered serious limitations to their work. Campdor (1958: 125) notes that at forty feet down lay ruins dating to the time of Hammurabi and the First Dynasty of Babylon. However, due to the rise in the water level it was impossible to investigate below these ruins. In addition to these difficulties, there was also the immensity of the ancient city that had to be considered, and the mounds themselves were widely scattered (Parrot 1958: 22-23). The ruins of Babylon extend over an area of some 850 hectares and constitute the largest ancient settlement in Mesopotamia (Oates 1986: 144). By way of comparison, greater Nineveh is about 750 hectares, and the mound of Ur only 55 hectares.

When approaching the site from the north, the Bâbil mound (also called Mujelibe) is the first to be encountered. Rising about 22 m above the level of the plain, it is roughly square with sides approximately 248 m long. A great quantity of the bricks had already been removed for building material elsewhere before the archaeologists even arrived. Fortunately, due to inscriptions, it was possible to identify the remains of the summer palace of Nebuchadnezzar II (605-562 B.C.). This had been protected by a wall, parts of which still remained on the north and east. About a mile or more to the south on the site now known as the Kasr, the primary gateway to the ancient city is located. From here the city extends for more than a kilometer along the bank of the river.

The famous Processional Way (about 250 m. long and 20-24 m. wide) led to the Ishtar Gate. From the Ishtar Gate, it ran to the southern corner of Etemenanki. From there, it curved in the direction of the Euphrates, where a large bridge (spanning over 120 m.) crossed the river.

The complexes of Esagila and Etemenanki formed the heart of the ancient city of Babylon. Of

primary importance was the temple precinct of Esagila, lying under the mound of Amran ibn Ali, in which stood the cult rooms of the chief god Marduk, of Ea (god of water and wisdom), of Nabu (god of the scribal craft), and of other gods and goddesses (Klengel-Brandt 1997: 254). Just to the north of Esagila was the temple precinct of Etemenanki, which housed the remains of the fabled Babylonian ziggurat. It consisted of six tiers of steps, each one set back from the one below it. At the top, as the seventh tier, stood a high temple to the cult of Marduk.

Despite the interference brought on by World War I, Koldewey's excavations at Babylon were nevertheless highly successful (cf. Koldewey 1914), and stand as one of the great archaeological achievements of all time.

SUMMARY OF NEWER EXCAVATIONS

From 1955 to 1968, the Iraq Department of Antiquities carried out further clearances. Under Heinrich J. Lenzen, the German Archaeological Institute conducted further brief excavations in 1956 at the Greek theater. In 1958, they began work on restoring the Emakh temple, part of the Ishtar Gate, the Processional Way and the palace complex. They also built a half-size model of the complete Ishtar Gate (fig. 8) at the entrance to the site. Much of the vast, extraordinary palace of Nebuchadnezzar with its massive throne room (ca. 54.86 m x 60 m), located just southwest of the Ishtar Gate, has now been reconstructed with financial support from the Iraqi government. In 1966, H. J. Schmidt carried out excavations at the site of Etemenanki. In 1978, the temple of Nabu-sa-hare, which bordered on the Etemenanki precinct and contained a large library, was uncovered. A museum and rest house have been built on the site, which is also partially covered by the village of Djumdjumma at the southern end. In May of 2001, when the present writer last visited the site of Babylon, the Iraqi government was working diligently to reconstruct many of the walls and ancient buildings, and in other ways to make the site accessible to visitors.



Fig. 8. Ishtar Gate Reconstruction (photo by J. P. Tanner).

NOTES

¹Klengel-Brandt (1997: 251) points out that the earliest mention of the tower (or ziggurat) in a historical inscription comes from the records of Sennacherib, in which he claims to have destroyed Esagila and the temple tower. Sennacherib's son, Esarhaddon (680-669 B.C.), rescinded his father's policy and undertook the rebuilding of Babylon, though retaining the image of Marduk in Assyria that Sennacherib had removed.

²Herodotus (*Histories* 1.183) says that Xerxes took the colossal golden statue of Marduk from Esagila. Arrian (*Anabasis* 7.17.2), Ctesias (*Persia Epit.* 52-53) and Strabo (*Geography* 16.1.5) suggest that the city walls were dismantled and the temples razed to the ground.

³In the first century A.D., Quintus Curtius Rufus wrote a history of Alexander the Great (*Historia Alexandri Magni*). This account included Alexander's exploits in Babylon and the monumental intentions that he planned for the city.

⁴The tower itself had been torn down in the time of Alexander the Great with the intention of rebuilding it (Klengel-Brandt 1997: 254).

⁵Regarding Seleucia, LaSor (1988: 385) notes, "it was

built largely with material brought from Babylon and its founding marks the end of Babylon's political significance. Seleucia was populated with Macedonians and Greeks and also included many Jews and Syrians. Avidius Cassius burned Seleucia in A.D. 164, and when Septimius Severus passed through the region on his Parthian campaign of 198 the site was completely abandoned."

⁶By the time of C. J. Rich (roughly 200 years after della Valle), this practice of carting off the bricks had taken a heavy toll on the archaeological site. Regarding the mound of Amran which included Esagila, Rich wrote, "... the greatest supplies have been and are now constantly drawn from it, they appear still to be abundant. But the operation of extracting the bricks has caused great confusion, and contributed much to increase the difficulty of deciphering the original design of this mound, as in search of them the workmen pierce into it in every direction, hollowing out deep ravines and pits, and throwing up the rubbish in heaps on the surface. In some places they have bored into the solid mass, forming winding caverns and subterranean passages, which, from their being left without adequate support, frequently bury the workmen in the rubbish" (quoted in Thomas Maurice 1816: 22).

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