An Inside Story of the German Excavations at Babylon (1899-1906): The Accounts of Robert Koldewey and Walter Andrae, and Turkish Perceptions*

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Almanların Bâbil Kazılarının Bir İçyüzü (1899-1906): Robert Koldewey ve Walter Andrae'nin Tanıklıkları, Türklerin Kazıya ve Almanlara Yönelik Algıları

Öz ■ Almanların bugünkü Irak/Hillah'ta 1899 yılında başlattıkları kazıların, bilhassa geç Osmanlı arkeolojisinin/müzeciliğinin ve antik eser algısının gelişimi ve Avrupalı araştırmacıların İmparatorluk topraklarındaki misyonerlik faaliyetleri sahalarında yürütülen çalışmalar için oldukça besleyici bir doğası olmalıdır. Zira kazıların liderliğini üstlenen Alman arkeolog Robert Koldewey, yardımcısı Walter Andrae ve kazı ekibindeki birçok diğer araştırmacının bizzat kaleme almış olduğu tanıklıklar, bugüne dek herhangi bir alımlama çalışmasına konu olmamış, perspektif kazandırıcı cinsten pek çok detay barındırmaktadır. Bu detaylar, sürece dair Osmanlı Arşivleri'nin bize sunduğu belgeler ile birleştirildiğinde, yukarıda sayılan sahalardaki güncel bilgimize hatırı sayılır bir katkı sunacak, oldukça tamamlayıcı bir Bâbil Örneği ortaya çıkmaktadır. Bu çalışma işte bu Bâbil Örneğinin detaylı bir sunumundan ibaret olup, Bâbil kazıları boyunca Osmanlı denetiminin performansı, ortaya çıkan eski eserlerin akıbeti, Almanların Osmanlı kurumlarına ve yerel halka yönelik, Osmanlıların ise Almanlara yönelik izlenimleri ve nihayet dönemin Türk-Alman siyasi ilişkilerinin kazının gidişatına etkileri olmak üzere dört temel noktaya odaklanacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Almanların Babil Kazıları, Alman Şarkiyat Cemiyeti, Robert Koldewey, Walter Andrae, Geç Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Avrupalı Misyonerler, Osmanlıların Eski Eser Algısı, Osmanlı Arkeolojisi, Babil Arkeolojisi.

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* The early version of this essay was submitted to the University of Exeter as an assignment for an MA module titled "Themes in Archaeological Theory and Practice" in 2023. I am grateful to Professor Timothy Insoll for reading it through and sharing his invaluable insights. Also, many thanks to a dear friend and colleague, Yunus Yiğit, for helping me with the transliteration of the texts from the Ottoman Imperial Archives (BOA).

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Introduction

If you were a 6th-century Babylonian and took a night walk down the roughly 2.5-kilometre stretch of the processional street that runs between Gilgameš's hometown of Kullab and the Kadingirra districts, all the way to the northern exit of the city, you would be greeted by an overwhelmingly beautiful gate at the very end. This 50-metre-high gate,[1] flanked by lion reliefs on the inner walls of the processional street, connects to the city's colossal walls averaging 20 metres in thickness. Unlike the walls, though, it is crafted from baked bricks in a mesmerising lapis lazuli blue, with reliefs of dragons (*mušḫuššu*) and bulls (*rîmu*) on them.[2] Proud showcase of the king *Nabû-kudurrî-uṣur II*[3] (or as commonly known by its Hebrew rendering, Nebuchadnezzar II) (605 to 562 BCE), *Ištar-sakipat-tebiša* in his own naming, this is what is commonly referred to as the Ištar Gate. It is suggested that during the reign of his father, *Nabû-apla-uṣur*[4] (or Nabopolassar) (626 to 605 BCE), the original structure was nothing more than an unbaked mudbrick double gate. Around 569 BCE, Nebuchadnezzar II commanded its grand reconstruction. In the king's later years, the gate suffered several demolitions and rebuildings due to revisions of the ground, along with the processional street and the walls behind it.[5]

In order to have the most authentic experience today, one would have to wander through the ruins in modern-day Hillah (Iraq) first and then visit its full-scale reconstruction in the Pergamon Museum in Berlin,since much of the original material comprising the Ištar Gate was excavated and transported to the museum in the early 20th century. Responsible for this transportation are two

1 Olof Pedersén, "The Ishtar Gate Area in Babylon: From Old Documents to New Interpretations in a Digital Model", *Zeitschrift für Orient-Archäologie*, 11 (2018), p. 169.

2 Nebuchadnezzar II seems to be ahead of all the scholars in providing the initial technical information: "I placed wild bulls and fearsome dragons at the frames of its gates. Unlike any previous king, my ancestor enclosed the city with two layers of trench walls made of asphalt and bricks" declares he in the East India House Inscription (also known as *Steinplatten*). Stephen Herbert Langdon, *Die neubabylonischen Königsinschriften* (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1912), p. 73. (German translations are on my own.)

3 *Protect my heir, Nabû*.

4 *Protect the son, Nabû*.

5 Pedersén, "The Ishtar Gate Area in Babylon", p. 165; Paul-Alain Beaulieu, *A History of Babylon: 2200 BC-AD 75* (Hoboken, New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, 2018), p. 230; Anita Di Chiara et al., "An Archaeomagnetic Study of the Ishtar Gate, Babylon", *Plos One*, 19/1 (2024), pp. 10-11.

men: The German architect and archaeologist Robert Koldewey (1855-1925), known for his significant work on sites of Mytilene, Zincirli Höyük (*Sam'al*), and Ezine (*Neandreia*), and his assistant Walter Andrae (1875-1956), an architect and draftsman, later the director of the Pergamon Museum's Department of Ancient Near East (*Vorderasiatische Abteilung*). As a seasoned Deutsche Orient-Gesellschaft (henceforth DOG)[6] representative funded by Kaiser Wilhelm II himself, Koldewey arrived at Hillah where this gate lay buried in 1899 and launched an 18-year-long work that was unarguably the most extensive and closest to today's archaeological standards among those of all the earlier "Westerners" at the site.[7] The excavations eventually brought to light the city's vast Neo-Babylonian past, a small portion of which had already been known through the Classical corpus, and much, long forgotten.

This constitutes the broader importance of the German excavations. Its importance for this essay is that it has certain *untold* moments that hold great potential to contribute to the burgeoning scholarship on the smuggling of ancient artefacts by European antiquarians/archaeologists across the Ottoman domains, the Empire's legal/cultural fight with this, and its perception of these Europeans, as well as of its own ancient heritage. These moments are hidden within Koldewey and Andrae's accounts of the early years of the excavations, as well as the miscellaneous records from the Ottoman Imperial Archives (BOA). This essay aims to present *an* inside story of the German excavations at Babylon by drawing on a primary dataset of the individual accounts of the excavation leaders and other members, their letters and reports to the DOG, excavation permits, correspondence between the Sublime Porte (*Bâb-ı Âlî*), the Ministry of Education (*Nezâret-i Maʿârif-i Umûmiyye*), the Imperial Museum (*Müze-i Hümâyun*), local governors in Baghdad and the excavation commissioners — a prelude that indeed makes this essay more of a reception work than anything regarding archaeology.

The choice of "an" over "the" comes from three solid reasons. The first is none other than a very simple hermeneutic law that the number of my dataset and what it has to say can and should never be limited only to what my humble prefrontal cortex has been able to pick. The second reason is that the German

6 *German Oriental Society.*

7 Nicole Chevalier, "Early Excavations (pre-1914)", *A Companion to the Archaeology of the Ancient Near East*, ed. Daniel T. Potts (Chichester, West Sussex: John Wiley & Sons, 2012), pp. 60-61.

excavations at Babylon have been the subject of recent scholarship, though strikingly few in number and with a different (or rather, broader) focus.[8] The third and last reason is the limiting nature of the sources: the German excavations in Hillah spanned 18 years (1899-1917), yet the ability, so to speak, of both German sources and Ottoman archival records to provide insights into the *reception* aspect of the excavations begins, almost as if in a silent agreement, to atrophy dramatically around 1906. Entitled to speak as much as the firsthand sources speak, this essay will thus cover the first 7 years of the excavations only (1899-1906). That is not to say, however, that the data from the above primary dataset falls short of handling the topic within its original 18-year timeframe in any way, which can well be a significant further contribution to the Babylon Case any future study might want to take on, but rather to say that research carried out under circumstances where this ability of the primary dataset resonates as closely as possible with the core (reception) aspect of the excavations would inherently be much healthier and give the reader cover against either the brutal horde of hypothetical deductions or a boring number of hedges otherwise all inevitable. With such a methodological take, then, this essay will share certain observations on a decent amount of interesting *moments* that occurred between the Turks and the last Westerners at Babylon (*Bâbil şehr-i kadîmi*),[9] most, if not all, of which should provide stimulating insights for any researcher in the same field. These are, namely, how after all the reforms, institutionalisation

8 See İsa Güler,"Osmanlı Dönemi'nde Yabancı Arkeologlar Tarafından Babil Harâbelerinde Yürütülen Kazı Çalışmaları" (Master's Thesis), Istanbul: Marmara University, 2022 for one good example. Important to note here though that unlike Güler's effort, which appears to be more of an exhaustive listing of BOA records on the excavations, this essay is a reception work that does not limit its primary dataset to BOA alone but rather draws extensively from the *Mitteilungen der Deutschen Orient Gesellschaft* publications from 1899 to 1906 and the personal accounts of the most prominent German figures at the site, as well as both English and German secondary scholarship on the excavations. It aims not only to bring up and discuss details that Güler has not addressed but also offer either alternative or complementary perspectives on the ones he has already discussed, which is particularly the case for the matter of Teššub stele under the last heading. For more inclusive work on various excavations across Mesopotamia, including those in Babylon, also see Hâmit Zübeyr Koşay et al., *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu ve Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Çağlarında Türk Kazı Tarihi, Cilt 5: Ortadoğu* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2013).

9 The famous epithet for the ruins in Hillah that frequently shows up in the Imperial Archives, meaning the "Ancient City of Babylon" literally. Another variation is *Bâbil Harâbe-i Atîkası*, meaning the "Ancient Ruins of Babylon."

efforts, and bylaws introduced for the sake of more professional and modern archaeological practice across the Empire domains, the Empire was still in its infancy in this regard as late as the early 1900s; how profoundly its political and economic turmoil contributed to this phenomenon; how deeply "traumatised" the Ottoman ruling elite was in its overall perception of the Germans, and by extension, how actively this affected the performance of the Ottoman supervision at the site; and finally, how strongly intertwined the Germans' negative view of the Sublime Porte and the local people was with their desire to take away the antiquities.

Towards the 1900s: The Legacy of Early Westerners, the Kaiser's Role, Preparations

Babylon, of course, is far more than just a gate: the citadel complex of Nebuchadnezzar and Nabopolassar alongside the processional street; opposite them, the temple of the goddess Ištar (Inanna), Gilgameš's platonic lover; further south, the temple of Ninmaḫ (Bêlet-ilî), Enkidu's creator, in Merkes; across from it, the seven-tiered ziggurat (é-temen-anki),[10] long associated with the Tower of Babel in the Old Testament; the famed Lion of Babylon at el-Kasr; the Greek theatre at Homera; and finally, the city walls stretching along the banks of the Euphrates. Most dating to its tenth dynasty (*palê Ḫarran*), these monuments have long given Babylon its *legendary* status, fueling the exaggerated measurements and anecdotes of many Classical storytellers and travelers.[11]

By the 16th century, the remnants of this once towering civilisation lay scattered beneath the mounds of Tell Amran ibn Ali, Tell Babil, Birs Nimroud (or Borsippa), el-Kasr, Homera, and Merkes around modern-day Hillah. These remains included inscriptions carved into the walls and hundreds of tablets dating from the reigns of kings ranging from Nebuchadnezzar II to Cyrus the Great, all

10 *The temple which is the foundation of heaven*, literally.

11 Herodotus and Pliny measure the city's complete circuit at 480 Stades, which seems quite exaggerated given that the actual length of the inner wall is only 8.4 km (Herodotus, *Histories* 1.178.2; Pliny, *The Natural History* 6.30.2). Strabo seems a bit more reasonable on this point: 385 Stades. Yet again, both he and Herodotus estimate the base of the *é-temen-anki* at 1 Stade (roughly 200m), which is only 91m in truth (Herodotus, *Histories* 1.181.3; Strabo, *Geography* 16.1.5). Also see Aristophanes' joke: Aristophanes, *Aves* 550-552. For up-to-date and detailed measurements of the ziggurat and the surrounding temples, see Mohammed S. Mahan, and Ghassan Muslim Hamza, "The Ancient City of Babylon", *Journal of Education College Wasit University*, 2/40 (2020), pp. 617-656.

awaiting rediscovery. The first European visits to these mounds began in the early 16th century, with quite non-academic European individuals like Cesare Federici (1530-1600/03), Leonhardt Rauwolff (1535-1596), Álvaro da Costa,[12] Nicolau de Orta Rebelo (1570-1645), Fray Gaspar de São Bernardino,[13] and Pietro della Valle (1586-1652). More artists and travellers than scholars as they were, their visits were part of a tradition that connected them to the slightly more professional antiquarians of the 18th and 19th centuries and set them apart from the much more superficial visits of Benjamin of Tudela in 1165-70. What drove them was a fascination with the myth of the Tower of Babel and its references in the Classical and biblical corpora, as well as a periodic urge to counter one another's postulates on every new discovery at the site.[14] They left vivid stories, sketches, and discoveries that inspired a later wave of Westerners. The visits of the 18th and 19th centuries, on the other hand, while carrying their fair share of the customary obsession with the Tower of Babel, were somewhat more scholarly and professional in nature. The visits of German cartographer and mathematician Carsten Niebuhr (1733-1815)[15] in

12 Although it is known that he lived in the 17th century, there is no clear information about his birth and death dates. The details he provides in his unpublished work *Tratado da Viagem*, which recounts his journey through Mesopotamia, are also very limited in this regard. On Álvaro da Costa and his explorations across various Mesopotamian sites, see Saúl Martínez Bermejo, "Álvaro da Costa's Journey to Persia and Turkey (1611), the Ruins of Babylon, and the Riddles of Globalization", *Culture & History Digital Journal*, 12/1 (2023), pp. 1-15.

13 Likewise, while it is known that the Portuguese priest lived in the late 16th and early 17th centuries, his exact birth and death dates remain unknown. Another Portuguese, not a priest but a soldier, Nicolau de Orta Rebelo, accompanied him on his journey through Mesopotamia. Juan Luis Montero Fenollós, "The Tower of Babel Before Archaeology. The Ziggurat of Babylon According to European Travellers (XII-XVII centuries)", *Journal of Ancient History*, 2 (2011), pp. 37-38.

14 Bart Ooghe, "The Rediscovery of Babylonia: European Travellers and the Development of Knowledge on Lower Mesopotamia, Sixteenth to Early Nineteenth Century", *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 17/3 (2007), p. 239; Bermejo, "Álvaro da Costa's Journey to Persia and Turkey (1611)", p. 8. For more on the Tower of Babel of the Book of Genesis and its relation to *é-temen-anki*, see Andrew R. George, "The Tower of Babel: Archaeology, History and Cuneiform Texts", *Archiv Für Orientforschung*, 51 (2005), pp. 75-95; Juan Luis Montero Fenollós "Imagining the Tower of Babel in the Twenty-First Century: Is a New Interpretation of the Ziggurat of Babylon Possible?", *Receptions of the Ancient Near East in Popular Culture and Beyond*, eds. Lorenzo Verderame and Agnès Garcia-Ventura (Atlanta: Lockwood Press, 2020), pp. 269-286.

15 See Carsten Niebuhr, *Reisebeschreibung nach Arabien und den umliegenden Ländern*, vol. 2 (Copenhagen: Nicolaus Möller, 1778).

1765; French diplomat and astronomer Pierre-Joseph de Beauchamp (1752-1801)[16] in 1780; three important British antiquarians, Claudius James Rich (1787-1821),[17] Robert Mignan (1803-1852),[18] Austen Henry Layard (1817-1894)[19] in 1811, 1830 and 1850 respectively; two Frenchmen Fulgence Fresnel (1795-1855), Jules Oppert (1825-1905)[20] in 1851; and Hormuzd Rassam (1826-1910)[21] in 1879 were all of that kind. Most likely as a result of the unstoppable surge of Assyriology as a scholarly discipline in Western Europe at the time, they were particularly interested in the Neo-Babylonian past of the ruins. It was this interest that paved the way for their discoveries of the Lion of Babylon, the Cyrus Cylinder, the incantation bowl inscribed with Aramaic text, and hundreds of steles and enamelled bricks with the king's instructions carved on them.

Despite all these precious artefacts they amassed for European museums, countless more still lay in ruins, yet to be fully unearthed. Koldewey saw Hillah as the ideal location for a large-scale excavation in the late 19th century, which, in fact, traces back to an exploratory journey he undertook across various

16 See Marie-Liesse Pierre and Lycée Claude Mathy, *Pierre-Joseph Beauchamp (1752-1801): missionnaire, astronome, géographe, diplomate* (Lycée Claude Mathy, 1990).

17 See Claudius James Rich, *Memoir on the Ruins of Babylon* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1818). Of all the tablets brought by Rich, no doubt the most significant is the inscribed stele of the late Babylonian king Nabonidus, which is currently on display in the British Museum. Michael Seymour, "Images of Babylon in Early Modern Europe", *The Allure of the Ancient: Receptions of the Ancient Middle East, ca. 1600–1800*, eds. Margaret Geoga and John Steele (Leiden: Brill, 2022), p. 46.

18 See Robert Mignan, *Travels in Chaldaea, Including a Journey from Bussorah to Bagdad, Hillah and Babylon, Performed on Foot in 1827*, vol. 12 (London: Colburn and Bentley, 1829).

19 See Austen Henry Layard, *Discoveries in the Ruins of Nineveh and Babylon; with Travels in Armenia, Kurdistan and the Desert: Being the Result of a Second Expedition Undertaken for the Trustees of the British Museum* (New York: Putnam, 1853).

20 See Jules Oppert, *Expédition scientifique en Mesopotamie: Exécutée par ordre du gouvernement de 1851 à 1854 par MM. Fulgence Fresnel, Félix Thomas et Jules Oppert*, vol. 1 (Paris: Imprimerie impériale, 1863).

21 Upon his arrival, Rassam was quite surprised to see how the brick-diggers had control over the site through a black market for the bricks and he himself had to strike a deal with one of the diggers. According to the deal, the latter would take all the bricks found during the work while only leaving the other artefacts to Rassam. Hormuzd Rassam, *Asshur and the Land of Nimrod: Being an Account of the Discoveries Made in the Ancient Ruins of Nineveh, Asshur, Sepharvaim, Calah [etc.]* (Cincinnati: Curts and Jennings, 1897), p. 263.

Mesopotamian ruins as early as 1887. On his two separate visits to Hillah on June 3, 1887, and December 29, 1897, accompanied by German philologist Eduard Sachau (1845-1930) and under the auspices of the Ottoman government, Koldewey came across several of those enamelled bricks just east of the el-Kasr mound. These bricks (*uqnû*)[22] were of the most abundantly found types across the ruins and often traded by local dealers at the time, so he was interested in bringing a few back to Berlin. Together with Richard Shöne (1840-1922), then the general director of Königliche Museen[23] (the Royal Museums), Koldewey and Sachau later examined those bricks and solidified the museum's choice of the ruins as a promising candidate for future Mesopotamian excavations.[24] This could well be considered the Germans' first smuggling activity in the region before their excavations began. The bricks often bore animal reliefs or inscriptions of kings, and even after some three millennia, they gleamed boldly in daylight. This is what gave them high aesthetic and archaeological value for any outsider, and for this reason, the smuggling of Babylonian bricks to Europe by outsiders was hardly a new phenomenon but rather a characteristic of 19th-century Westerners' visits, one could say. What was really a phenomenon, however, was that despite the well-grounded and professional articles of the 1884 bylaw (*Üçüncü Âsâr-ı Atîka Nizamnâmesi*),[25] the Sublime Porte always struggled to curb both the

22 Which literally means *lapis lazuli* but usually refers to the blue enamelled bricks in the inscriptions of Nebuchadnezzar II.

23 Today *Staatliche Museen zu Berlin*.

24 Robert Koldewey, *Das wieder erstehende Babylon: Die bisherigen Ergebnisse der deutschen Ausgrabungen* (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1913), pp. III-IV, 27. For more technical information on these bricks, see Olof Pedersén, "The Glazed Bricks That Ornamented Babylon – A Short Overview", *Glazed Brick Decoration in the Ancient Near East: Proceedings of a Workshop at the 11th International Congress of the Archaeology of the Ancient Near East (Munich) in April 2018*, eds. Anja Fügert and Helen Gries (Berlin: Archaeopress, 2020), pp. 96-122. Their 1897 journey was hardly a routine trip where they just came across some bricks. The German embassy's telegram to the Sublime Porte, sent a few weeks before their trip, for example, reported that the two would be bringing along a large amount of excavation and photography equipment, and that they were also planning to carry out some excavations. The embassy asked for no interference to be made with the team's work on the site. BOA, İ.HR. 357/5, 21 Recep 1315/ 16 December 1897.

25 Unlike the 1874 bylaw, this new one with 37 articles was quite clear on the ownership of artefacts unearthed at excavation sites. The practice of leaving only one-third of the artefacts to the Imperial Museum and another third to the landowner was abolished. Instead, all materials were guaranteed to be handed over to the Museum (Articles 3 and 12),

dealers' trade of the bricks and the clandestine activities of outsiders with equal professionalism. We find Ahmed Bedreddin, later the commissioner of the German excavation, for example, sending a telegram to the Porte within the fourth year of the bylaw (suspiciously right after Koldewey's initial visit), reporting rumours of Europeans smuggling the bricks to Europe and urgently calling for their confiscation and transfer to *Dersa'âdet* (Istanbul).[26] Indeed, the Ottoman Imperial Archives are fraught with similar records of quarrying or black market trade for Babylonian bricks, most being exchanges between the Imperial Museum and excavation commissioners or the Hillah district authority, confirming details about the sale of bricks, the Hindiyah Dam, or relevant rumours.[27]

Later Koldewey and the DOG's excavation project in Hillah took shape with direct backing from Wilhelm II himself, and this secured the Germans' place as the "very last Westerners" at Babylon.[28] What lay behind the German Kaiser's personal involvement was not the legacy of Alexander or Nebuchadnezzar II, but rather something that connected him to the early Westerners such as Della Valle, Federici, and Rauwolff in a way that makes sense: the Old Testament. As himself puts it quite plainly: "It appeared to me that Assyriology was important, since from it might be expected an elucidation and vitalizing of the Old Testament, and, hence, of the Holy Scriptures. (…) I had much to do with those at the head of it (German Oriental Society), and caused detailed reports to be made to me of the excavations at Nineveh, Aššur, and Babylon, in Egypt and in Syria, for the

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and heavy penalties were imposed for the smuggling or trade of ancient artefacts (Article 34). BOA, A.DVN.MKL. 25/45, 29 Zilhicce 1301/ 20 October 1884. For the articles of the 1884 bylaw, see Burcu Kutlu Dilbaz, *Osmanlı Devleti'nin Arkeoloji Politikası* (İstanbul: Okur Tarih, 2018), pp. 119-128.

26 The report particularly mentions the name of the renowned British philologist and British Museum representative E. A. Wallis Budge (1857-1934), known for his tablet hunting in Egypt, Sudan, and Iraq. It says that he was reportedly planning to visit the region to purchase these bricks from local antiquities dealers, and urges that steps be taken to prevent this. BOA, MÜZ.ARK. 5/2, 12 Temmuz 1304/ 27 July 1888.

27 See BOA, MÜZ.ARK. 50/7, 18 Rabiulevvel 1314/ 30 May 1898; 5/28, 16 Eylül 1315/ 28 September 1899; 5/42, 1 Mart 1316/ 14 March 1900; 5/79, 15 Mayıs 1317/ 28 May 1901; 6/4, 21 Haziran 1318/ 4 July 1902; MF.MKT. 447/23, 21 Zilhicce 1316/ 2 May 1899; 472/7, 12 Cemazeyilahir 1317/ 18 October 1899; 561/40, 18 Safer 1319/ 6 June 1901; 1123/38, 5 Cemaziyelevvel 1327/ 25 May 1909 and so on.

28 Olof Pedersén, *Archive und Bibliotheken in Babylon: Die Tontafeln der Grabung Robert Koldeweys 1899-1917* (Saarwellingen: Saarländische Druckerei und Verlag, 2005), p. 2.

protection and facilitation of which I often personally brought influence to bear on the Turkish Government."[29]

Koldewey then assembled a top-tier team of philologists and Assyriologists and set off for Baghdad. Among the team was Walter Andrae (1875-1956) as his assistant, whose memoir, *Lebenserinnerungen eines Ausgräbers*, stands as a unique witness to the excavations. Chosen from sixteen applicants, Andrae's entry into Koldewey's team was not without a hint of the latter's scepticism. In a letter to his colleague Otto Puchstein (1856-1911), dated January 6, 1899, with whom he had conducted joint excavations across Southern Italy and Sicily, Koldewey's notes on the young man have a rather ambivalent tone. He criticises Andrae's inexperience with a kind of "paternal" exasperation, remarking that he did not know right from wrong. So inexperienced he was, he says to his friend, "he only knew of a wolf from hearsay!" He does not forget to give him his due in the end, though: "But he is fantastic at watercolouring and drawing."[30]

Image 1: Robert Koldewey. December 1919. Photograph: L. Jessen[31]

29 *The Kaiser's Memoirs: Wilhelm II, Emperor of Germany, 1888-1918*, trans. Thomas R. Ybarra (London: Harper & Brothers 1922), p. 203.

30 Robert Koldewey, *Heitere und ernste Briefe aus einem deutschen Archäologenleben* (Berlin: Grote, 1925), pp. 134-135.

31 Koldewey, *Heitere und ernste Briefe*.

At the age of twenty-four, Andrae embarked on a long journey to take part in the excavations, which he would later call the turning point of his life, and arrived with the others in Damascus during Christmas of 1898. Staying there for a while, the team moved on to the ruins of Baalbek in Lebanon on December 30.[32] Wilhelm II had tasked Koldewey and his team with groundwork at the ruins and personally requested excavation permission from Abdülhamid II. This was completed in two weeks, and around this time, permission for Babylon also came through,[33] and Koldewey set out from Beirut towards Aleppo with his team. In Beirut, they were joined by renowned Assyriologist Bruno Meißner (1868-1947), who had taught at the Universities of Breslau and Berlin.[34] After a brief stay in Aleppo, they moved on and finally reached the ruins at Hillah. Excavations began on March 26, 1899, at the mound of el-Kasr, located north of the Ištar Gate, where the palace complex of Nabopolassar and Nebuchadnezzar once stood.[35]

Into the 1900s: German and Turkish Perceptions, Local Quarrying, Koldewey's Controversies

Much like many Westerners before them, the German team relied heavily on local labour; an average of 220 workers were on-site, digging day and night. The local villagers, particularly those involved in the excavation, were eager participants, much to the Germans' surprise — an eagerness that the generous tips they received must have had a way of sparking, one could say. Even with this industrious effort, though, Koldewey knew that the work here would be a grueling one, as the ruins of Babylon came with unique challenges: city walls as thick as 17 to

32 Walter Andrae, *Lebenserinnerungen eines Ausgräbers* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1961), pp. 2-4, 29.

33 BOA, İ.MF. 5/34, 2 Ramazan 1316/ 14 January 1899.

34 Andrae, *Lebenserinnerungen eines Ausgräbers*, p. 34. Also see Bruno Meißner, *Babylonien und Assyrien*, vol. 2 (Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitäsbuchhandlung, 1925) for his translation and commentary of the tablets unearthed during his work at Babylon.

35 Deutsche Orient-Gesellschaft, *Mitteilungen der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft zu Berlin*, 2 (1899), p. 3; Koldewey, *Das wieder erstehende Babylon*, p. IV; Andrae, *Lebenserinnerungen eines Ausgräbers*, pp. 37, 50, 52. Andrae notes that during their break in Kifri, the governor visited them and, with charming audacity (*mit liebenswürdiger Unverfrorenheit*), borrowed two bottles of alcohol and a deck of cards from them. He particularly mentions that Schnapps was the most sought-after item among the Turks. Andrae, *Lebenserinnerungen eines Ausgräbers*, pp. 42-43.

22 metres and mounds towering around 18 metres high, nearly double the measurements of what could be found in any ancient ruins around the world. Nevertheless, they carried on, mobilising as much manpower and effort as they could muster.[36]

Image 2: The excavations start at el-Kasr with the Processional Street (March 26, 1899)[37]

Koldewey and Andrae's quarters, a "barn," as the former puts it, were set up with a village between them and the ruins. A local horse trainer named Ahmed, a servant named Selim, and a cook moved in after a while. The Porte had assigned two guards to stay with the Germans for security. Ironically, these staff served as a sort of "cultural buffer" between the Germans and the locals for the most part. Any time the team went out without the guards or staff, Andrae notes, they would almost instantly draw a crowd of overly curious locals, who would follow them for hours.[38] An odd memory he recounts about a man named Kögel further shows just how intense this attention could get at times: he was a German tourist with a penchant for cycling across various countries, and he decided to stop by their "barn" on his way and met the team. "The man has had some experiences!" Andrae remarks, "From Aleppo to Baghdad, he was the first cyclist ever to ride that route. People along the way thought he was a devil, tried to hold onto his

36 Koldewey, *Das wieder erstehende Babylon*, pp. III, 23; Andrae, *Lebenserinnerungen eines Ausgräbers*, p. 60.

37 Koldewey, *Das wieder erstehende Babylon*, p.27.

38 Koldewey, *Heitere und ernste Briefe*, p. 137; Andrae, *Lebenserinnerungen eines Ausgräbers*, pp. 51, 73.

bike, and chased him as if possessed, so much so that he had to 'work' with a rubber whip, as he puts it."[39]

This curiosity, though on a less startling scale this time, seems to have extended to the behaviour of their staff as well. "We Europeans," says Andrae, "had stepped over the natives in a way and believed we had the right to sit *above* them on the first floor of the house. We had no political claim. Still, we were called Beg —prince— and treated like princes, sometimes to the point of prostration, especially when someone had 'messed up' and thus lost their job with us, which meant the loss of regular payment, a rarity in this country!" [40]

Things were not always so innocent with this curiosity, though. Both Andrae and Koldewey speak of thieves in Hillah, noting that the crime rate was so high, especially in the streets at night, that it required the team members to carry weapons.[41] At one point, Koldewey would even find himself caught in the middle of a shootout between rival tribes.[42]

Such hardships did not of course hold the Germans back from their work at the site. In the first few months, excavations at el-Kasr and its surrounding area revealed the section of Processional Street extending to the northeastern tip of the Principal Citadel. Many of the colourful bricks inscribed with walking lions were identified, though survived in fragmentary form, along with the walls on either side of the street. On the northeastern side of the mound, a stele measuring approximately 1.25 metres in height, astonishingly well-preserved and inscribed in Hittite, was discovered. While Andrae mentions that they carried the two valuable idols to their quarters with the help of over 100 men using ropes, he avoids providing any further information about the idols themselves.[43] He uses the term *Götzenbilder*, which is quite similar in meaning to the word *stele*, yet this does not change the fact that he preferred the former over the latter. Thus, both this word choice and the lack of further information about the artefacts make it risky

39 Andrae, *Lebenserinnerungen eines Ausgräbers*, p. 62.

40 Andrae, *Lebenserinnerungen eines Ausgräbers*, p. 72.

41 Koldewey, *Heitere und ernste Briefe*, p. 156; Andrae, *Lebenserinnerungen eines Ausgräbers*, p. 74. And well aware of the situation, the government had already granted such permission to the Germans months before. BOA, BEO. 1257/94246, 5 Ramazan 1316/ 17 January 1899.

42 DOG, *Mitteilungen*, 15 (1902), pp. 22-23.

43 Koldewey, *Das wieder erstehende Babylon*, pp. IV, 162; Koldewey, *Heitere und ernste Briefe*, pp. 139-140; Andrae, *Lebenserinnerungen eines Ausgräbers*, pp. 52, 60; BOA, MÜZ.ARK. 5/67, 25 Mart 1317/ 7 April 1901.

enough to answer the question of whether they are in any way related to this Hittite-inscribed stele.[44] Regardless, in the scenario where the 1884 bylaw was already in force, this innocent-sounding act of "carrying to quarters" must have either occurred under the supervision, thus the approval, of the Imperial Museum's excavation commissioner, Ahmed Bedreddin, or been done covertly. The official excavation permit explicitly stated that any artefacts unearthed during the excavations were to be stored in a secure location determined by the government and that the excavation team had no right to interfere with these artefacts.[45] However, certain details in Bedreddin's report of August 2, 1899, regarding the work at el-Kasr, not only betray that Koldewey and his team were boldly reluctant to comply with the law but also introduce the bizarre possibility that he may have engaged in behaviours such as harbouring criminals, which makes any optimistic prediction on the fate of the said idols almost impossible. The commissioner notes:

"Apart from the said artefacts, over two thousand brick fragments with colourful glazes on their sides have appeared so far, all of which are broken and evidently coming from the debris of the palace buildings. He (Koldewey) has had these fragments wrapped in paper and placed in crates, which is no doubt an early preparation for transporting them to Berlin in the future. Since my duty requires me to report every development during the excavations to your esteemed Office, I informed Monsieur Koldewey of my intention to send two of the glazed brick fragments to Istanbul to be kept under my care and presented for your consideration. But for reasons unknown, this made him angry, and he threatened to report me to Berlin, claiming that my actions were against the procedure…"[46]

In what follows, Bedreddin harshly complains about Koldewey and his team to the Directorate of the Imperial Museum, listing his requests to prevent the potential smuggling of the artefacts to Germany:

"Monsieur Koldewey wants to assert his authority over the excavation site and the artefacts found there, as well as his staff, whom he considers to be under

44 There is a lengthy debate from the summer of 1906 regarding the smuggling of a Hittite stele in the Imperial Archives. See the heading "1905-1906: A New Bylaw, Changes in Supervision, and What Became of Teššub's Legacy" for both the photograph and discussion.

45 BOA, MÜZ.ARK. 5/15, 21 Temmuz 1315/ 2 August 1899.

46 BOA, MÜZ.ARK. 5/15, 21 Temmuz 1315/ 2 August 1899. (Ottoman Turkish translations are on my own.) Koldewey's threat betrays how much influence the Königliche Museen might have had over the excavation process indeed, which we will get back to in the following pages.

his protection as if they were German. (…) For example, when the government sent police officers to arrest some of the Arab murderers he had been harbouring at the excavation site and in his house, he refused to hand them over to the authorities, declaring: 'These are my men, and I will not hand them over to the government without knowing the reasons.' He even went as far as to question Hillah District Office regarding their arrest, thus allowing the said murderers to escape the government's grasp. (…) I humbly request that an appropriate and secure place be arranged for storing the artefacts under the knowledge and approval of the local governorship, that Baghdad Province be informed of the situation, that instructions and warnings be issued even to your servant (referring to himself) regarding this matter, that the excavator be notified of the necessity to comply with legal regulations and that the needed warnings be issued to him through the appropriate means…"[47]

This was not the only friction between Koldewey and Bedreddin. In the following two months, excavations also began at the 25-metre Tell Amran ibn Ali mound, just south of Étemenanki, where the Ésagila Temple (É-SAG-ÍL.LA[48]) was buried. As the number of artefacts unearthed from both mounds increased, Bedreddin wanted to photograph them, only to meet Koldewey's aggressive objections once again. He then reported him to the Imperial Museum once again, asking for actions to be taken.[49]

It is not hard to see the reason behind Koldewey's aggressive manner. The notes both he and Andrae made during the early months of the excavation reflect their deep discomfort with the uncontrolled chaos and neglect at the site. People casually entering the ruins, digging and quarrying bricks, thus inflicting permanent damage on the topography, were observations of quite a morale-sapping kind for the German team from the beginning. Koldewey criticises the damaged condition of the Tell Babil mound particularly, the highest mound of the ruins, believed to be the site of Nebuchadnezzar's Summer Palace, which had been caused by the ongoing quarrying. He mentions the numerous deep pits that had scarred the landscape over time. In fact, the custom of removing bricks from the

47 "*…müteharrînin ahkâm-ı nizâmiyyeye mütâvaʿata mecbûr olduğunu icâb eden vâsıta ile müteharrî-i mümâ-ileyhe de ihtârât-ı lâzimenin icrâsı husûsları mücerred reʾy ü irâde-i aliyye-i efhâmîlerine menûd ve mütevakkıf bulunmuş olmağla…*" BOA, MÜZ.ARK. 5/15, 21 Temmuz 1315/ 2 August 1899.

48 *Temple with a lofty top* literally.

49 BOA, MÜZ.ARK. 5/27, 22 Eylül 1315/ 4 October 1899.

walls of this Summer Palace for use in local construction projects goes as far back as Roman times, and as Koldewey himself acknowledges, this custom had significantly decreased compared to earlier centuries. But then, the Hindiyah Dam issue flared up.[50] This Dam's construction is very closely linked to Babylonian bricks and the government's budget management policies indeed. Most of the materials needed had been brought from Europe for the construction then, and this had prompted the authorities at some point to seek cost-saving alternatives such as utilising the abundant and sturdy ancient bricks in Hillah. Tenders had been issued, and special contractors had been hired to excavate the Hillah bricks.[51] Even in the very early months of the excavation, when the oversight was entirely in the hands of the Germans and the Imperial Museum, bricks and trees in the area continued to be removed for local construction projects like schools.[52] As a result, the topography of Tell Babil had changed in the direction Koldewey complains about over the last 10 to 20 years, and the ongoing dominance of the notorious local brick-diggers and contractors, which Rassam notes with a hint of disbelief in his book, had only worsened the situation. Koldewey notes:

"From the very start of the excavations, I had made efforts to stop it, but I only succeeded in the Kasr area, while at Babil, the looting still went on. Even at the Kasr, I had to pull the workers out of their pits. We then employed the people in our excavations, because, to the Arab, it makes little difference how he earns his small amount of money. The main objectors were the contractors, through whose hands the stones were being sold for the construction of the Sedde

50 Hillah and Hindiyah are the two branches the Euphrates splits into. Hindiyah flows all the way down to Shinafiyah, splitting into two branches on the way, Kufa and Shamiyah. The first canal in the area was constructed in the 1780s by Asaf-ud-Daula, the Vizier of India, to bring water to Najaf. Over time, however, the channel's bed expanded, reducing its effectiveness. The issue remained on the Ottoman agenda for a long time, and various dam projects were proposed. In 1890, experienced French engineer Paul Schoendoerffer was brought from France to handle the matter. He persuaded the government with his plan, and so started the year-long construction of the Hindiyah Dam. Quarrying bricks from the ruins at Hillah was a part of the project. Nesrin Şahin, "Osmanlı Dönemi (19 ve 20. Yüzyıllar) Irak Vilâyetlerinde Sulama Projeleri: Sir William Willcocks ve Sir John Jackson Şirketi'nin Faaliyetleri" (Master's Thesis), Istanbul: Marmara Üniversitesi, 2019, pp. 33-37; Isacar Bolaños, "Water, Engineers, and French Environmental Imaginaries of Ottoman Iraq, 1868-1908", *Environmental History*, 27/4 (2022), pp. 787-788.

51 Şahin, "Osmanlı Dönemi", p. 36.

52 BOA, MÜZ.ARK. 5/10, 18 Zilhicce 1316/ 29 April 1899.

dam. These same individuals even attempted an attack on the Tower of Borsippa quite recently, but their barbarous attempt was prevented in time by the Turkish authorities."[53]

This Dam indeed continued to cause problems for the Germans in the following years; Arnold Nöldeke (1875-1964), another architect on Koldewey's team and later the leader of the German excavations at Warka (*Uruk*), complains that they sometimes had to pause their work as the government was using most of the local labour force in Hillah for the project.[54] On the other hand, we do have the frequency of Bedreddin's critical reports in the Archives faded towards the end of 1899 (only to resurface later on, of course). So, despite all these setbacks, it seems, the negative atmosphere was eventually brought under control to a level that at least satisfied the German side and allowed the work to continue smoothly once more. And it just so happens, in that very same year — in fact, during the very same time of the year — an agreement was made between Abdülhamid II and the Germans. Just before leaving Istanbul to attend the ceremonial opening of the excavations at Miletus in late September, Marschall von Bieberstein (1842-1912), the German ambassador in Istanbul, met with the Sultan in person and expressed Berlin's interest in transferring and exhibiting the finds of the excavations, which Kaiser Wilhelm II was also personally invested in. Reportedly pleased with the Kaiser's interest, the Sultan assured him that half of the finds would be handed over to the Germans and issued the necessary orders afterwards. The process took about a month and a half, and on November 15, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs notified the German Embassy of the Sultan's decision, officially approving the division of the finds: half to remain in Istanbul, and half to be shipped to Berlin.[55]

In the meantime, central parts of the Ninmaḫ Temple at Merkes and the Principal Citadel at el-Kasr were thoroughly excavated by the summer of 1900,

53 Koldewey, *Das wieder erstehende Babylon*, pp. 10-11. In his letter to Puchstein, he gives a more detailed account of the damage caused by quarrying at el-Kasr, for which see Koldewey, *Heitere und ernste Briefe*, p. 136.

54 DOG, *Mitteilungen*, 26 (1905): p. 11.

55 BOA, HR.İD. 1446/33, (11 Recep 1317)/ 15 November 1899, p.1; Sebastian Willert, "The Invention of 'National Antiquities' in the Late Ottoman Empire. Archaeological Interrelations Between Discourses of Appropriation, Preservation and Heritage Construction", *Diyâr*, 2/2 (2021), pp. 310-311. However, this agreement would later lose its validity with the enforcement of the bylaw of 1906, largely due to Osman Hamdi's persistent efforts.

with a substantial part exposed. By November, work on the Ésagila Temple at Tell Amran ibn Ali was also completed, though the southwestern portion of el-Kasr was still under examination, and it would take an additional two years to finish uncovering the Processional Street.[56] The walls (*kisû*) surrounding the Ninmaḫ Temple, made partially of enamelled bricks, were in a rather poor state due to this brick quarrying problem. Nevertheless, the team managed to uncover a significant number of inscribed bricks with firsthand accounts from Nebuchadnezzar II detailing the construction of the temple and its walls.[57] According to Bedreddin's report, a total of 59 artefacts were unearthed by July 1900. Most of these came from Amran, with a smaller portion from el-Kasr, covering a wide range of artefacts from different eras, including coins from the Hellenistic era (*meskûkât-ı Yunanîyye*) and other items of varying sizes and historical significance. The most notable was a well-preserved 13-zîra (9.85 metres) cylinder inscription belonging to Aššurbânipal (c. 685-631 BCE), unearthed at el-Kasr. After reporting these details to the Museum, Bedreddin also made sure to preempt any doubts as to why work was still continuing at el-Kasr after the discoveries had already been reported and so noted that it was just a technical undertaking aimed at mapping the structures on the mound.[58]

The following years proved to be the most productive for the Babylon excavations. Between 1900 and 1901, excavation plans were drawn up for the southwest part of el-Kasr, and work began at Ishin Aswad and Birs Nimroud mounds as well, located just behind Amran and parallel to Merkes. Inscriptions from the kings Ešarhaddon (681-669 BCE), Sardanapalus, and Nebuchadnezzar, all in fair condition, were uncovered, as was the bridge in front of the dockside wall. By February 1902, extensive work also started at the Ištar Gate, continuing throughout the year and yielding an impressive array of valuable artefacts.[59] Several enameled bricks were also found in the pits of Birs Nimroud. Andrae spent most of his time sketching both the mounds and imagined reconstructions of the structures, as well as cataloguing the artefacts.[60] His enthusiasm for his part of the work there was so great that it might even have fuelled his obsessive, anxious thinking towards the condition of the ruins, which he had already been sharing with his

56 Koldewey, *Das wieder erstehende Babylon*, p. IV.

57 Koldewey, *Das wieder erstehende Babylon*, p. 61.

58 BOA, MÜZ.ARK. 5/53, 5 Temmuz 1316/ 18 July 1900.

59 Koldewey, *Das wieder erstehende Babylon*, pp. IV, 182-184.

60 Andrae, *Lebenserinnerungen eines Ausgräbers*, p. 96.

colleagues from the beginning. Indeed, there is a fascinating ebb and flow in his narrative, so to speak. One can see through the lines his purpose for being at the site oscillating like the "moody" skies of Scandinavia between the fresh-faced innocence of an eager intern at the start of his career and the intense resolve of an ambitious, seasoned DOG missionary. He notes:

"It is magnificent, and the world will be astonished! Here, the full grandeur of Nebuchadnezzar's architectural vision and artistic mastery is revealed. People may call us rag-pickers a dozen times over, complain about the lack of impressive finds, or criticise our silence, but once we have set up those colourful animals and ornaments on the walls of the Berlin Museum, perhaps no one will grumble anymore. (…) Once we are gone, no one will dare to approach these ruins again, which is why we are excavating them as thoroughly as possible, according to the architectural principles that have proven successful so far."[61]

Artefacts unearthed at the el-Kasr and Amran mounds kept stacking up quietly in the Germans' inventory as a result of this ambition. We can infer from Bedreddin's update of March 1901 (more of a "disclaimer" than an update, actually) to the Museum that little to no action had been taken following his earlier report on some artefacts being stored away in crates:

"… as evidenced by the reports I have previously sent, I have faithfully and carefully carried out my duties from the beginning of the excavations until this date and submitted the records of noteworthy artefacts discovered during the excavations, along with photographs of some of them, to your esteemed Office without delay. As for the proper preservation of the artefacts since the start of the excavation under my supervision, it is possible to preserve large pieces properly in every respect. However, since it is neither suitable nor appropriate for the researcher to hold the key to the place where the smaller pieces are stored and this situation is against the provisions stated in the regulations and the permit he holds, the continuation of this practice would likely lead to misuse or complications in the future."[62]

The term "researcher" (*müteharrî*) likely referred to Koldewey, but this detail does not matter much. What matters is that this figure, whether a high-ranking member of the German excavation team or a temporary DOG representative at the site, was not from the Ottoman government and wielded enough power to

61 Andrae, *Lebenserinnerungen eines Ausgräbers*, p. 102.

62 BOA, MÜZ.ARK. 5/63, 12 Mart 1317/ 25 March 1901.

disregard the responsibilities demanded by the permit granted to him, despite Bedreddin's repeated complaints. It is then hardly surprising to see an anxious and insistent tone in the latter's reports to the Museum on the matter. Exactly 13 days later, taking advantage of another report of his regarding photographs of a previously discovered Hittite-inscribed idol, he repeated his concerns on the same matter and requested "prompt action" from the Museum. About a month and a half later, the Museum's response arrived:

"To Bedri Bey, one of the officials of the Imperial Museum in Baghdad,

(…)

The photographs ordered to be sent have been fully received. With this, your diligent fulfilment of duties has been proven, for which we express our gratitude. (…)[63] A formal appeal will be made to the embassy to ensure that Monsieur Koldewey is instructed to cease his conduct against the regulations and procedures. Since the noble decree of His Majesty the Sultan clearly stipulates that the ancient artefacts discovered during the excavations must be recorded by the commissioner and preserved under his supervision, Monsieur Koldewey has no right at all to counter this."[64]

Considering Wilhelm II's involvement extended well beyond just Baalbek to show a personal interest in the Babylon excavations, with occasional direct participation,[65] it is indeed hard to dismiss the idea that political leverage played a role in the Museum's lack of punitive action or permit issues for Koldewey and his team, even though they assured they would be appealing to the German embassy regarding the matter. Later, the team's permit was extended at the request of the German embassy due to expire around that time, let alone any issues occurring, and *hâfir*[66] Koldewey, having been informed directly by the Hillah District governor himself, carried on with his excavation with particular focus on Ištar Gate.[67]

63 This part is crossed out.

64 BOA, MÜZ.ARK. 5/75, 30 Nisan 1317/ 13 May 1901.

65 See footnote 29.

66 Koldewey's occasional epithet in the Imperial Archives, meaning *the excavator* literally.

67 DOG, *Mitteilungen*, 8 (1901), p. 8; BOA, MÜZ.ARK. 5/77, 15 Mart 1317/ 28 March 1901; İ.DUİT. 116/64, 8 Muharrem 1319/ 27 April 1901. The extension permits were typically granted for one year (up to a maximum of two), as stipulated by Article 17 of the 1884 bylaw. Dilbaz, *Osmanlı Devleti'nin Arkeoloji Politikası*, p. 123.

One can reach a twofold conclusion from such an ending: either the word of the Kaiser and the DOG held enough sway over their Ottoman counterparts to push the latter to make certain concessions, or the knowledge of the Porte and Imperial Museum as to how the legal and administrative aspects of a professional archaeological excavation should be handled simply lagged somewhat behind that of their European counterparts. Or perhaps both. The first option is plausible, since this personal involvement of the Kaiser's is way beyond question now, as already shown. A further example could be the 15th issue of *Mitteilungen,* starting with the DOG's special thanks to him for securing the Sultan's permission for the excavations at Qal'at Sherqat (*Aššur*).[68] Elsewhere, we have Koldewey's letter to his friend (November 27, 1901), where he mentions that the Ottoman government had yet to decide on the continuation of the excavation and that diplomatic negotiations were underway.[69] Both examples may thus serve as *prima facie* evidence to see the government's later decision in favour of continuing the excavations as a result of the German side's effective role in swaying the Turkish hesitation.[70] The second option also makes sense. Indeed, there exists a strange ambiguity in most of the Ottoman correspondence presented so far, particularly regarding matters of preservation of the artefacts, monitoring the Germans' compliance with permit regulations, and maintaining order in unexpected situations. In fact, the procedure was clear in theory, as the 1884 bylaw was unequivocally explicit on it. And yet, the oversight was often ambiguous in the field, and actions were frequently delayed. The option of "perhaps both" thus seems most likely.

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68 "*Der huldvollen allergnädigsten Fürsorge Seiner Majestät des Kaisers verdanken wir es ferner, dass Seine Majestät der Sultan die Genehmigung zur Ausgrabung des in Seinem Privatbesitz befindlichen Gebietes von Kal'at-Schirgat der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft erteilt hat*," DOG, *Mitteilungen*, 15 (1902), p. 1.

69 Koldewey, *Heitere und ernste Briefe*, p. 144.

70 The extension also required Koldewey to cover Bedreddin's salary and travel expenses, as stipulated by Article 21 of the 1884 bylaw. Dilbaz, *Osmanlı Devleti'nin Arkeoloji Politikası*, p. 124. Another noteworthy detail here is that Koldewey pointed to the poor condition of the mounds as an excuse for requesting the extension. Andrae, *Lebenserinnerungen eines Ausgräbers*, p. 97; BOA, MÜZ.ARK. 5/61, 8 Mart 1317/ 21 March 1901; 5/72, 15 Nisan 1317/ 28 April 1901; BOA, İ.DUİT. 116/64, 8 Muharrem 1319/ 27 April 1901. Though it should not be much of a surprise, as we do find Fredrich Wetzel, another scholar on Koldewey's team, pointing out a similar issue. Friedrich Wetzel, *Die Stadtmauern von Babylon* (Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs, 1930), p. 2.

Image 3: Enamelled reliefs at the Ištar Gate (April 1, 1902)[71]

Returning to the excavations, the team saw some changes in the following years; Assyriologist Bruno Meißner had finished his part of the work here and returned to Germany some time ago, he was then replaced by another Assyriologist, Friedrich Weißbach.[72] Meanwhile, in the summer of 1902, Koldewey moved to the ruins of Tell Fara (Šuruppag^{KI}), about 150-160 kilometres south of Hillah, the legendary home of the immortal Ûtanapišti, the Sumerian Noah of the *Epic of Gilgameš* (or *iškâr gilgâmeš*[73] in its Akkadian original). Andrae joined him there a few months later, only to find things as chaotic as Hillah: overwhelmingly curious people, groups profiting through illegal methods, and tribes rallying around

71 Koldewey, *Das wieder erstehende Babylon*, p. 46.

72 DOG, *Mitteilungen*, 5 (1900), p. 22; Andrae, *Lebenserinnerungen eines Ausgräbers*, p. 109.

73 *The Series of Gilgameš* literally.

various sheiks...[74] So much so that "the Turkish government could hardly achieve anything, although it is already doing everything" for them, he notes.[75] After assisting with the excavations at the site for a while, Andrae returned to Babylon in January 1903, so relieved to be back from that chaos that in a letter to his family, he referred to the Babylonian king as if he were an old friend from college: "At last, I am back with Nebuchadnezzar! It was high time — but I am safe and sound."[76]

Shortly after, on February 1, 1903, he left Babylon for the military service. In 1904, at the age of 28, he was appointed by the DOG to the excavations at the ruins of Qal'at Sherqat, not as an assistant this time but as a leader. Over the next ten years, the results of the excavations tracing Aššur's ancient legacy from 3000 BCE to 260 CE would prove immensely productive for the Germans.[77] Andrae's Aššur expedition also marked the close of the Babylonian chapter of his life, as his Babylon memories in *Lebenserinnerungen eines Ausgräbers* end here.

1905-1906: A New Bylaw, Changes in Supervision, and What Became of Teššub's Legacy

The excavations in Hillah under Koldewey's lead ran as smoothly as possible up until 1905. Significant progress was made at the Ištar Gate, where much of the enamelled reliefs on either side of the gate were uncovered. Work also began on the Homera mound, located west of the city and known for its Hellenistic ruins, where the layout of Alexander's buried theatre was mapped.[78] From the handful of idols found in the first months, hundreds began to stack up. In the temple of Ninib, Epatutila (E-PA-TU-TI-LA), a cylinder belonging to Nabopolassar was

74 Andrae, *Lebenserinnerungen eines Ausgräbers*, p. 112. See pages 164-166 in *Heitere und ernste Briefe* for Koldewey's own account of the excavations at Fara. Also see Ernst Heinrich, *Fara: Ergebnisse der Ausgrabungen der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft in Fara und Abu Hatab 1902/03* (Berlin: Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, 1931) for a more exhaustive account.

75 Andrae, *Lebenserinnerungen eines Ausgräbers*, pp. 119-122.

76 Andrae, *Lebenserinnerungen eines Ausgräbers*, p. 128.

77 DOG, *Mitteilungen*, 16 (1902-1903), pp. 1-2; DOG, *Sechster Jahresbericht* 6 (1904), p. 3; Andrae, *Lebenserinnerungen eines Ausgräbers*, pp. 130, 143, 146. For information on the finds from Aššur see Andrae's reports to the DOG in: DOG, *Mitteilungen*, 21-54 (from 1904 to 1914) and his work, Walter Andrae, *Die Festungswerke von Assur* (Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs, 1913).

78 Koldewey, *Das wieder erstehende Babylon*, p. IV.

discovered.[79] As the volume of enamelled bricks grew, most broken again, the Porte came up with the solution of allowing Germans to transport them to Berlin (Vorderasiatischen Museum) for reassembly on the condition of their immediate return to Istanbul afterwards, and Abdülhamid authorised the transportation. *Mitteilungen der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft zu Berlin* celebrated the Sultan's decision on the first page of its November 1902 issue.[80]

By the summer of 1905, the excavations came to a halt as the Germans' latest permit extension expired.[81] This pause differed from the previous ones as the government was occupied with drafting the fourth bylaw on antiquities, *Dördüncü Âsâr-ı Atîka Nizamnâmesi*, at the time.[82] Both Baghdad and the Germans were informed of the government's decision beforehand that the excavations would not resume until the new bylaw was enacted.[83] It went into effect on April 24, 1906, and preserved much of the former bylaw, only filling several gaps more professionally: the definition of antiquities was somewhat broadened, with clearer distinctions regarding movable and immovable artefacts (Article 5), and stricter rules on their preservation, collection, and ownership were set up. The Imperial Museum became the sole and ultimate institution overseeing all archaeological matters across the Empire's domains (Articles 4 and 10). Unlike the previous bylaws, artefacts with an Islamic background were also placed under protection by this new 35-article bylaw (Article 5).[84] To claim that tensions between Koldewey and Bedreddin and the latter's "less-than-stellar" oversight of the excavations played no part in the timing of the bylaw would be optimistic at best. In fact, since Bedreddin often opened his reports with disclaimers about properly fulfilling his duties, one might even be tempted to link his later replacement by

79 Koldewey, *Das wieder erstehende Babylon*, p. IV.

80 BOA, Y.PRK.BŞK. 68/18, 4 Şubat 1318/ 17 February 1903; DOG, *Mitteilungen*, 16 (1902-1903), p. 1. Also see Kai Kaniuth, "Spätbabylonische Glasurziegelreliefs aus Borsippa", *Mitteilungen*, 145 (2013), pp. 53-82 for a detailed archaeometric handling of the matter of such broken pieces transported to the Vorderasiatischen Museum at the time.

81 Koldewey, *Das wieder erstehende Babylon*, p. IV.

82 One that would remain in effect until 1973.

83 BOA, MÜZ.ARK. 6/75, 22 Mart 1321/ 4 April 1905.

84 For the articles of the bylaw, see BOA, ŞD. 220/70, 18 Zilhicce 1323/ 13 February 1906; Halit Çal, "Osmanlı Devleti'nde Âsâr-ı Atîka Nizamnâmeleri," *Vakıflar Dergisi*, 26 (1997), p. 393; Dilbaz, *Osmanlı Devleti'nin Arkeoloji Politikası*, pp.128-141. The increased sensitivity towards Islamic artefacts in the bylaw is particularly linked to the case of the Mshatta Façade. See footnote 110.

Ahmed Haydar to this very performance of oversight. Still, such an inference without further solid evidence would be quite a leap, too.

Regardless, at the end of 1905, Ahmed Haydar was appointed commissioner of the Babylon excavations in Bedreddin's place, and the Imperial Museum informed Baghdad of his appointment, requesting that he receive all necessary support. They also expanded Haydar's authority, as if drawing lessons from the previous issues regarding the storage and preservation of the artefacts, and assigned him responsibility for monitoring the province's certain activities.[85] Receiving 50 Ottoman Liras for his travel expenses from the German embassy, he set off for Hillah.[86] Unfortunately, Koldewey and Andrae's accounts provide very little information on Haydar himself, his relationship with them, or his work at the site. So we have to turn to the Imperial Archives, which, fortunately, provides the last few records that shed a good deal of light on the subsequent developments in 1906.

Haydar arrived at the excavation site and met *Alman hey'et-i hifriyesi*.[87] Observing for a while, he sent his report to the Museum, in which he noted that the unearthed artefacts were being handled appropriately by the Germans and securely crated but that this setup had raised some security concerns with the Baghdad authorities, suggesting the artefacts should either be transferred to the Museum or, if not feasible, stored safely within the province.[88] These *security concerns* were far from as usual or formal as they might seem. They had been rather about arguably the most consuming case for both the Hillah governorship, Baghdad province, the Museum, and even the Porte throughout the entire course of the excavations. Some four months after the new bylaw went into effect, on August 14, an unusual telegram arrived at the Museum from Mirliva[89] Hasip, the deputy district governor of Hillah. It was about this long-buried national trauma of the Empire, the obvious *causa essendi* of the bylaw(s) on antiquities, and spoke of something that placed Bedreddin's newly appointed colleague under a heavy accusation:

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85 "*…mümâ-ileyh mezkûr hafriyâttan mâ'adâ Müze-i Hümâyun'un âsâr-ı atîkaya müte'allik vilâyet-i celîlelerince ba'zı husûsât-ı sâireyi takîp ve ifâya dahi me'mûr edilmiş olmağla…*" BOA, MÜZ.ARK. 6/82, 22 Teşrinisani 1321/ 5 December 1905.

86 BOA, MÜZ.ARK. 6/87, 22 Teşrinisani 1321/ 5 December 1905.

87 *The German Excavation Team* literally.

88 BOA, MÜZ.ARK. 6/101, 22 Ağustos 1322/ 4 September 1906).

89 Brigadier General.

"(…) It has been understood from the content of the report provided by the appointed special officers that, during the Babylon excavations, a statue[90] of one of the Babylonian kings, holding a dagger in one hand, an axe in the other, wearing a headdress on his head, a tunic with fringed hems, and bearing a sign of anklet on one foot, measuring one metre in height, with a full diameter of fifty centimetres and a radius of twenty-five centimetres, is currently held in the residence of the German excavation team. A copy of it was previously examined without drawing the attention of the German state and the excavation team. As the commissioner who was appointed to properly preserve this (statue) as well as similar artefacts and prevent their unauthorised removal has not been in constant attendance since the start of the excavation, it is now likely that the artefacts that were unearthed so far or currently being unautorised and deemed important will be removed. In order to prevent such situations, to ensure the safeguarding of the said statue of critical importance, and to properly fulfil his duties, the prompt dispatch of a private commissioner is dependent upon your prudent consideration and gracious assistance."[91]

After receiving this telegram, the Museum contacted Haydar, inquiring about the statue and the rumours. About two weeks later, on August 28, Haydar issued a firm response. He explained that so far only two "relief stones" — one Hittite and one Babylonian — had been discovered, that both discovered several years earlier, and that each requiring at least 30 people to move. He assured that they remained under his careful supervision, and contrary to the deputy's claims, that there was no recently discovered statue of a Babylonian king under German supervision. The statue in question, he clarified, was one of those two relief stones. He then formally requested that the Museum impose the necessary legal sanctions against the deputy for issuing such a confusing telegram based entirely on false claims. In short, he reported him.[92]

11 days later, the Porte issued an order to the governorship, instructing them to verify the existence of such a statue. If it is verified that it was not one of the relief stones Haydar had mentioned but rather one recently unearthed now in

90 While the term "statue" is generally used in the correspondence, the most accurate description of the artefact would be "stele."

91 BOA, MF.MKT. 962/50, 1 Ağustos 1322/ 14 August 1906, p. 1.

92 "*…bu bâbdaki iş'ârı asılsız bir takım tefevvühât ve ihbârât-ı âdiyeye müstenid olmağla teşvîş-i efkârı istilzâm eden hilâf-ı hakîkat iş'ârdan dolayı hakkında muktezi mu'âmelenin icrâsı…*". BOA, MF.MKT. 962/50 R 15/06/1322 (28/08/1906), p.1.

German hands, they were to report it immediately and secure the artefact.[93] Another 11 days after that, this time the governor of Hillah himself, Mehmed Ali, replying with a telegram on September 19, provided the requested information and indirectly cast blame on Haydar through his own testimony:

"…on the blessed day of celebration for the felicitous accession of His Majesty to the throne, taking advantage of the Babylon excavators' visit to the governorate for the ceremonial congratulations, I humbly paid a visit there (Germans' residence). Viewing some artefacts there, I observed what was described in the said report with my own eyes in the courtyard of the house where the excavation officials reside. (…) Given the well-known importance of these Babylonian ruins, and with excavations ongoing, the absence of the excavation commissioner on site is likely to lead to various potential risks. Further, the statue, although a replica, can be removed at any time. It is thus essential for a private commissioner to investigate the matter…"[94]

As this telegram seriously undercut Haydar's credibility, further correspondence between authorities continued. The Baghdad governor, Abdülmecid Hulûsi, getting involved, sent a new telegram to the Ministry of Education in early October, attaching a report from two undercover agents. According to the report, it was Captain Kemal and Hillah's Evkâf Director Eşref who had visited the Germans' quarters in disguise to secretly inspect the artefact. Pretending to be a curious antiquities enthusiast from Istanbul, Kemal managed to inspect the statue firsthand. Then talking to the Germans about its fate, he had learned that a replica had already been sent to Germany, yet they had no intention of taking away the original and were simply waiting for the official order to send it to Istanbul.[95] In his note below the report, the governor backed Mehmed Ali's claim, implicitly putting the blame on Haydar: "Based on the procedures conducted so far, it has become clear that the excavations and the preservation of the unearthed artefacts are proceeding in a manner that does not align with the necessary standards of trust and security."[96]

93 BOA, MF.MKT. 962/50, 15 Ağustos 1322/ 28 August 1906, p. 1.

94 BOA, MF.MKT. 962/50, 6 Eylül 1322/ 19 September 1906, p. 1.

95 BOA, MF.MKT. 962/50, 10 Eylül 1322/ 23 September 1906, p. 1.

96 BOA, MF.MKT. 962/50, 20 Eylül 1322/ 3 October 1906, p. 2.

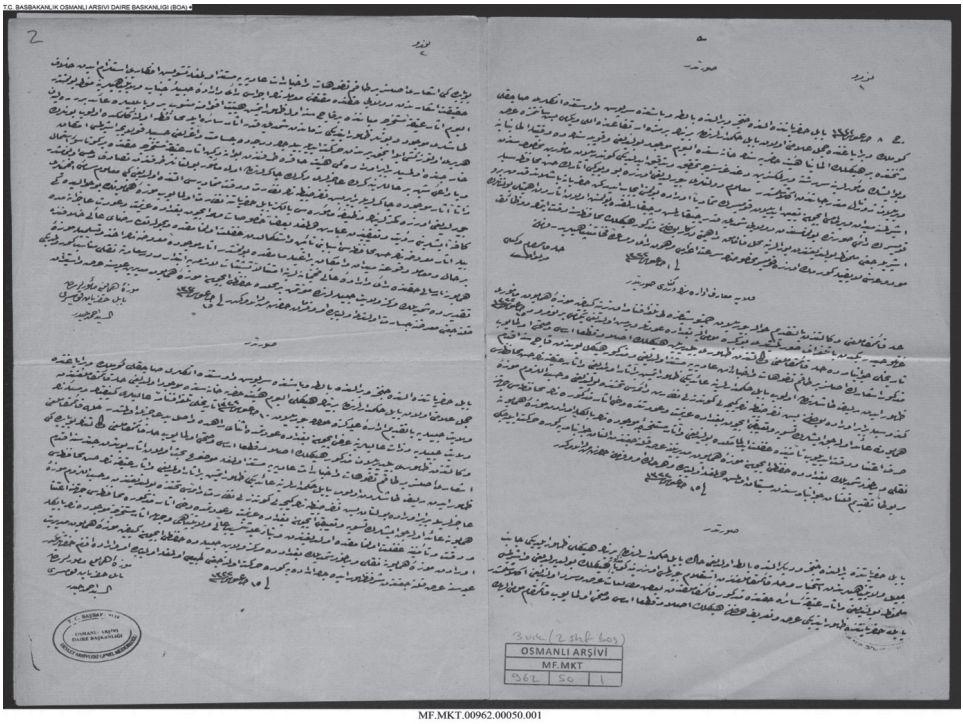

Image 4: Mirliva Hasip's telegram and the defence of Haydar.[97]

The testimonies of Kemal, Eşref, and the governor himself left Haydar with almost no way to shake off suspicions that he had mishandled his oversight of the excavation. Despite his several defences to both the Museum and the Ministry, Haydar failed to convince anyone that the statue at stake was none other than one of the previously unearthed relief stones, already under his care. On November 8, with the testimonies and reports in hand, the Ministry deemed that Haydar had not adequately fulfilled his duties at the site and directed Hamdi, the Museum Director, to initiate an investigation.[98] The Museum then launched a full-scale inquiry into the case. Yet, in an ironic twist, after a 36-day investigation, they eventually stood by their official, deeming Haydar's account credible after all the testimonies against him. In a telegram to the Ministry, Hamdi said:

"To the Esteemed Ministry of Education,

(…)

97 BOA, MF.MKT. 962/50, 6 Eylül 1322/ 19 September 1906, p. 1.

98 BOA, MÜZ.ARK. 6/100, 26 Teşrinievvel 1322/ 8 November 1906.

As a result of the investigations, it has been determined that no relief artefacts (referring to the statue) have been discovered since Haydar Bey, the current commissioner of the Babylon excavation, began his duties at the site a year ago. (…) and the relief that the Province mentions is known to myself and believed to be one of the artefacts discovered several years ago during earlier excavations. Regarding the matter, the order and command rest with Your Excellency." [99]

In the end, the case was closed without escalating into any larger issue either within the Ottoman institutions or in their dealings with the DOG, with Haydar managing to clear his name. While we do not have any record exclusively detailing the stele's transfer to Dersa'âdet, we do know that it is now on display in the Istanbul Archaeological Museums, right beside the reconstruction of the Ištar Gate. The question of whether the testimonies or Haydar's defence held the truth, however, is up for debate. These details, which even the officials involved at the time failed to establish with enough certainty, can only be trusted to the extent that the records they left behind choose to be generous with us. And this should translate to "speculating" in our scholarly terminology. *Ergo*, what follows are some speculations on the case.

In his letter sent to his friend on October 1, 1899, Koldewey feverishly shares the discovery of the Hittite stele I first mentioned under the heading "Into the 1900s", and the photograph of which you can see below. His descriptions of this stele both in this letter and another account largely align with those of the "statue" in the telegrams written against Haydar.[100] There are two discrepancies only: (1) While the correspondents insist that the figure is one of the Babylonian kings (an assumption likely rooted in a limited understanding of the ancient Near Eastern history and literature), Koldewey identifies it as either the storm god Teššup or possibly Marduk *Lugal-dimmer-ankia*,[101] the chief deities of the Hurri-Hittite and Babylonian pantheons, respectively. (2) Quite often we come across the stock portrayal of the figure having "a sword in one hand and an axe in the other" (*bir elinde hançer ve diğer elinde balta*) in the correspondences, whereas Koldewey describes the figure as holding an axe in one hand and rays of lightning in the other, with the sword at his waist. The fact that only those who examined the

99 BOA, MF.MKT. 962/50, 8 Kanunuevveel 1322/ 21 December 1906, p. 5.

100 Koldewey, *Das wieder erstehende Babylon*, p. 162; Koldewey, *Heitere und ernste Briefe*, pp. 139-140. He reports in his letter to the DOG that it was discovered on August 22, 1899. DOG, *Mitteilungen*, 3 (1899), pp. 6, 8.

101 *The king of all gods.*

stele at the German quarters personally (Kemal and Mehmed Ali) use the word "waist" (*belinde*) instead of "hand" (*elinde*) and provide a description that perfectly matches what is in the photograph below,[102] while everyone else insists on using the term "hand" for the sword, might be telling us something (though fuzzily). Then it would not be far-fetched to think that the testimonies of those who went to the quarters are accurate and that the "statue" they referred to is indeed none other than the Hittite stele in the photograph, discovered in 1899, or a direct copy of it, which in fact Mehmed Ali already admits himself (*kabartma tasvîrin her ne kadar ecsâm-ı taklîdden ise de…*).

Image 5: The Hittite stele (obverse left and reverse right)[103]

102 "*…bir metre irtifâ' elli ve yirmi beş santimetre arz ve sihanında bazalt taştan menşûr şeklindeki taşın büyük cebhelerinden birinde hekk sûretiyle kabartmış yetmiş santimetre tûlünde ve kâ'imen duran ve sağ elinde bir balta ve avuçları ucu içinde toplu diğer avuçları yekdiğerinden mütebâ'id hergenî'ş-şekl üç hattan mürekkeb bir alâmeti sol elinde tutar başında serpuş üstünde etekleri saçaklı bir gömlek üstünde bir de ince bir kuşak ve bir ayağında hacl belinde bir kama bulunur tasvîr-i mezkûrun…*"

103 Koldewey, *Das wieder erstehende Babylon*, p. 162. For a full description by Friedrich Delitzsch (1850-1922), the co-founder of the DOG, see DOG, *Mitteilungen*, 3 (1899), p. 12.

So, is Haydar unjust? It is hard to say. If the "statue" is accepted as either the original Hittite stele or a replica, his claim that it did not exist seems a bit odd. Yet he also states in the same telegram that this statue was one of the relief stones of several years ago, and the figure was not a Babylonian king, which contradicts his earlier statement but is likely correct. Since we have no record of another Hittite stele with the same features discovered before 1906, it seems unlikely that Haydar refers to any artefact other than the one in the photograph. So, when saying, "*heykelin asla ve kat'a esâs ve sıhhati olmayup*" ("*the statue has absolutely no basis or authenticity*"), he must have been denying either the presence of the original stele in the quarters or the impression that it had been *recently* discovered. This, however, means accepting the existence of the stele's replica, though indirectly. While he assures that all artefacts were under his and his assistants' constant care, he does not disclose the whereabouts of the original Hittite stele.[104] What this all goes to say is that if there was indeed no bad blood between Haydar and the local authorities at the time, a replica of the stele must have been kept in the Germans' quarters for quite a long time. We already know the Germans employed such a "method" both from the relevant parts in Andrae's account, Koldewey's reports to the DOG, as well as the content of Bedreddin's initial reports. Koldewey, for example, speaks of the enamelled bricks from Birs Nimroud: "We cannot leave them out there. We will have to remove them and carefully pack each brick, which will add a large number of crates to our already cramped house, and since we already have over 180 crates filled with glazed bricks, it seems wise to request permission from the Turkish authorities for their transportation (to Germany)."[105] Then there are grounds for believing that both Haydar and Bedreddin were aware of the existence of this copy in the quarters. This is also evident from the content of Haydar's report to the Museum on 04/09/1906, as well as the telegram sent to the Ministry by the Museum regarding the investigation's outcome on 21/12/1906. Lastly, although no one seems to be clear about it (which is as odd), the original stele must have been transferred to Dersa'âdet within the first few years, and the presence of the copy in the quarters, on the other hand, should have served rather a scholarly purpose, such as studying the inscription behind it.

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104 Which is what Güler points out too. Güler, "Osmanlı Dönemi'nde", p. 26. However, as noted above, the stele ultimately found its way to the Istanbul Archaeology Museums, one way or another.

105 DOG, *Mitteilungen*, 12 (1902), pp. 16-17.

These records are the last of the few "forthcoming" materials from BOA on the excavations. What the German sources have to say regarding this inside story does not go much beyond the DOG's regular archaeological updates in *Mitteilungen* from 1906 on either. After this point, the excavations seem to have run relatively more professionally in many aspects and likely with fewer issues up until 1917, and while the outbreak of World War I brought about extraordinary conditions for the Babylon excavations, just as it did for perhaps everything else, this would have to be the subject of another study.

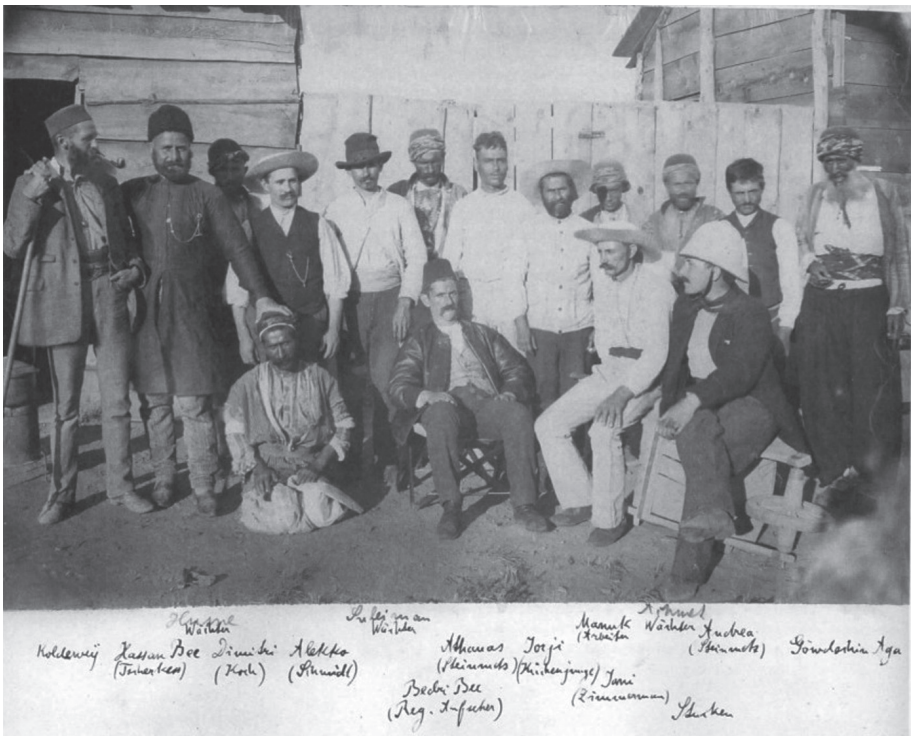

Image 6: A group photo from the excavations at Zincirli Höyük, Gaziantep (1890). Koldewey (standing at the far left) and Bedreddin (seated in the middle, wearing a fez).[106]

106 Ralf B. Wartke, *Auf dem Weg nach Babylon: Robert Koldewey - Ein Archäologenleben* (Mainz: Verlag Philipp von Zabern, 2008), p. 50.

Conclusions

The arc of the Ottoman Empire's progress in its perception of antiquities throughout the late 19th and early 20th centuries is nothing so much as that famous spear hurled by legendary Diomedes, son of Tydeus, during the Trojan War, which kills Pandarus in a harrowing scene. It began all of a sudden and surged forward with a divine sense of will as it closed in on its target. It is not Osman Hamdi, however, as might be strongly expected, or any particular Ottoman Sultan who Diomedes in this simile refers to. Quite the opposite, and ironically enough indeed, this spear-thrower would be none other than a European (and Eurocentric) perception of antiquities that has been shaped into its final form by the *symbiosis* of European missionaries' centuries-long activities across the Empire domains and a certain museum ethos incrementally forged by tons of materials (whether smuggled or not) those very missionaries brought back. And Çelik takes it from here already: "Ottoman appropriation of the past was, to a great degree, a response to the ever-growing European drive to possess the antiquities on Ottoman lands, as well as to the European metaphor that equated their ruinous state with the decline of the empire."[107]

The German excavations at Babylon took place at a time when that spear, so to speak, should have been at its zenith. It also saw the final, most comprehensive, and definitive bylaw of 1906 that the Porte passed on antiquities. Then one could easily suggest even before looking at the Imperial records that the process must have been handled far more professionally than it was in the cases of Lord Elgin (1801/2) or Charles Fellows (1841).[108] Indeed, this professionalism we do

107 Zeynep Çelik, "Defining Empire's Patrimony: Late Ottoman Perceptions of Antiquities", *Scramble for the Past: A Story of Archaeology in the Ottoman Empire, 1753-1914*, eds. Zainab Bahrani et al. (Istanbul: Salt, 2011), p. 447.

108 For a critical handling of the case of Lord Elgin and his removal of porphyry stones from Istanbul, see Edhem Eldem, "From Blissful Indifference to Anguished Concern: Ottoman Perception of Antiquities, 1799-1869", *Scramble for the Past, A Story of Archaeology in the Ottoman Empire, 1753-1914*, eds. Zainab Bahrani et al. (Istanbul: Salt, 2011), pp. 281-330. For the case of Fellows and Xanthian Marbles, see his own account, Charles Fellows, *The Xanthian Marbles: Their Acquisition, and Transmission to England* (London: John Murray, 1842). In both cases, the artefacts were taken away with the Sultan's permission. Although we know that the practice of the Ottoman Sultans' giving away the ancient artefacts discovered by European antiquarians gradually faded away from around 1869 onwards, the reign of Abdülhamid II stands out as an exception for political reasons. Two of the best examples may be the gift of a significant portion of the artefacts unearthed

see, to a degree, during the German excavations in both theoretical and practical terms. On the theoretical side, for example, the bylaw of 1906 filled the gaps left by that of 1884 through a swift adoption of Western standards of professionalism. The firmans and miscellaneous permits granted to Koldewey also seem to have made a habit of imposing conditions regarding various technical aspects of the excavations, which must have required a certain level of progress in getting familiar with the standards of archaeological practice of the time. On the practical side, the traditional binary, top-down interactions of the past between the Sultan (or the Porte) and European missionaries (or the relevant institutions they represented) seem to have been replaced by more of a polygonal sphere where intermediary institutions such as the Imperial Museum equipped with technical know-how stepped in and took on an exclusive role in overseeing any archaeological work. Nevertheless, even with these attempts, the records we have examined betray the fact, at least in the Babylon case, that the Ottomans as late as the early 20th century were still in their infancy with this quest of adaptation. Then the most problematic aspects of the Ottoman supervision of these excavations can be boiled down to four key points, all of which have already been discussed sporadically above: (1) a noteworthy lack of both institutional and individual know-how regarding the archaeological and legal nuances of storing unearthed artefacts, whether at the excavation site or within the province, (2) delays in responding to unexpected situations, (3) breakdowns in communication (or possibly conflict?) between the Museum/its commissioners and the local officials of the region, making it harder to confirm rumours and certain events, and (4) occasional failures to assert authority in the relationships between the Museum commissioners and the excavation leader/team.

At the end of the day, these lacks seem to stem, quite arguably and in a bit of a stray-off-the-main-path kind of way, from two major reasons. The first is that the Turks at the time had not yet fully reaped the rewards of the academic and

by the Austrians at Ephesus in 1895 to Emperor Franz Joseph I, and of the Mshatta Façade, discovered by the Germans in Syria, to the German Kaiser in 1903. Andrae's expectation regarding the fate of the Baalbek ruins is hardly surprising then: "For future excavations, the conditions will be ideal. The people are strong and hardworking, and you are treated with great respect. The Kaiser will likely receive the ruins as a gift from the Sultan. Currently, they are leased to an ignorant man for 800 thalers, who charges every respectable person an entry fee of one thaler, but otherwise, the place is crawling with people, and they are free to commit all manner of mischief with the beautiful sculptures." Andrae, *Lebenserinnerungen eines Ausgräbers*, p. 31.

legal advancements necessary to leave behind this "blissfully indifferent" perception of theirs, in Eldem's terms,[109] of antiquities as high-value diplomatic tools for good.[110] Osman Hamdi, for example, was undoubtedly a fruit borne at just the right time in this regard, yet the "semi-professional" tradition he introduced to the ruling elite failed to gain momentum both in scholarly and practical planes. In fact, very much like those transitional forms in the evolution of species X to Y, uniquely bearing traits of both, Osman Hamdi was a transitional period caught (or perhaps, *commuting*) between a completely indifferent attitude towards the ancient past and one indeed as obsessed with it as the West, thus uniquely both professional and amateur, knowledgeable and clueless, successful and flawed all at

109 Eldem, "From Blissful Indifference to Anguished Concern", p. 283.

110 What became of the Mshatta Façade perhaps offers the best example to understand why the word "fully" is preferred here. It is the decorated outer wall of the 8th-century Umayyad residential palace Qasr al-Mshatta and now on display at the Pergamon Museum. Its original fragments (459 stone blocks exactly) were gifted by Abdülhamid II to the Kaiser in the summer of 1903, following nearly a year of intense bureaucratic negotiations. This political gesture of the Sultan's was indeed a long-term source of strain among the Museum officials and bureaucratic elite, who were just beginning to develop a much stronger sense of ownership over antiquities within the Empire at the time. Osman Hamdi attempted to prevent Berlin's initiative to remove the Façade but was then sidelined by the persistent efforts of Hans von Wangenheim (1859-1915), the First Secretary of the German Embassy, and the Sultan's later decision to give the fragments as a personal gift. One phrase from the Grand Vizier's memorandum, which was sent to the Ministries of Education, Foreign Affairs and Domestic Affairs to inform them of the Sultan's decision on the removal of the fragments of the Façade, is particularly telling and may well be seen as a reflection of this lingering indifference towards antiquities that managed to persist well into the first quarter of the 20th century — an indifference that only did not make room for those with Islamic background, it seems. In the memorandum, the Grand Vizier refers to the Façade as "certain stones from the said ancient building, which bear no Islamic inscriptions and contain some curvatures and images…" (…*sâlifü'l-beyân binâ-yı kadîmden hutût-ı İslâmiyye'den 'ârî ve bir takım tekavvüsü ve teşâvîri hâvî ba'zı tâşların*…). For the relevant correspondence starting from the German embassy's request for an initial inspection in early 1902 all the way to the memorandum authorising the transportation of the Façade's fragments to Berlin, see: BOA, DH.MKT 577/36, 10 Cemazeyilahir 1320/ 14 September 1902; İ.HUS 106/124, 4 Rabiulevvel 1321/ 31 May 1903; 106/64, 5 Rabiulevvel 1321/ 1 June 1903; BEO 2089/156633, 15 Rabiulevvel 1321/ 11 June 1903. Also see Volkmar Enderlein, "Die Erwerbung der Fassade von Mschatta", *Forschungen und Berichte*, 26 (1987), pp. 81-90; and Willert, "The Invention of 'National Antiquities' in the Late Ottoman Empire," pp. 304-328 for further details on the removal and transportation of the fragments.

once in its unfortunate nature. Then the Germans' timing for their excavations at Babylon turns out to be a wrong one to wish for Ottoman supervision free of the above flaws, as more seasoned as it may have proven itself compared to the past.

The second reason was no doubt the financial and political crisis (or weakness) the Empire was neck-deep in at the time. As noted earlier, despite the tensions between Bedreddin and Koldewey, the latter's occasional disregard for both the terms of his granted permit and the broader requirements of Ottoman supervision, and the Imperial Museum's clear acknowledgement of all this, he faced no significant legal or political obstacles throughout his work at Babylon — sort of phenomenon that cannot simply be reduced to Abdülhamid's very well-known rapport with the German Kaiser. The solutions the Porte came up with in the cases of the Hindiyah Dam project and the broken enamelled bricks may serve as secondary evidence of this phenomenon. Another event worth noting at this point is the warning that the Ministry of Education sent to Koldewey and his team in September 1905, insisting that the newly unearthed artefacts be transferred to the Imperial Museum. The German Embassy, responding to the Ministry on behalf of the team just nine days after that warning, stated that the artefacts were currently under a thorough examination (*tedkikât-ı amîka*) by the team and that moving them to Istanbul at this stage would not only be "unfair" (*muvâfık-ı ma'delet olamaz*) but also hinder the team's scientific work there, with the Ottoman side later complying.[111] Having said that, whether it serves as secondary evidence for the point about the political crisis or is nothing more than an ordinary and unremarkable piece of correspondence must be left open.

Finally, while not as ruthless as Lady Elizabeth Craven, who had once condemned the Turkish attitude towards antiquities as "wanton," or Conder, who branded Turks as "ignorant,"[112] the Germans' negative perception of the local people and the general condition of the ruins is evident in the undertones of Koldewey and Andrae's testimonies. It would not be an exaggeration to say that there were several moments when their lives were at stake; Koldewey's memory was already mentioned above (see footnote 42). He also reports elsewhere that

111 BOA, HR.İD. 2122/89, 10 Eylül 1321/ 23 September 1905.

112 Lady Elizabeth Craven, *A Journey Through Crimea to Constantinople* (London: G.G.J. and J. Robinson, 1789), p. 257; Michael Greenhalgh, *Plundered Empire: Acquiring Antiquities from Ottoman Lands* (Leiden: Brill, 2019), p. 25. For an exhaustive collection of both early and late travellers' perceptions of the ruins across the Empire, see Greenhalgh, *Plundered Empire*.

Andrae barely escaped being shot during his visit to the ruins of Tell Abu Hatab.[113] But they were particularly critical of the antiquities black market that had flourished for ages around the mounds before their arrival, as well as the deteriorated state of the ruins as a result of this and the Porte's weakened authority, which in return, as already discussed, must have fuelled in one way or another the anxious and missionary zeal apparent in Andrae's arguments about the fate of the artefacts. Fair to say that the Porte, the Museum, and local authorities were as anxious in their view of the Germans and their excavations at times. The tone of the correspondence regarding the case of Teššub stele and the fact that the issue eventually reached the Porte clearly shows just how traumatised the Ottoman reflexes were at even the mere thought of smuggling. Bedreddin's occasional warnings to the Museum about such smuggling and his almost constant disclaimers that it was his duty to report these concerns may further serve as secondary evidence for this traumatised mindset at the Ottoman end. Thus, the final portrait we are now looking at is one where the Germans, who in the end managed to secure a considerable share of the vast ancient heritage of Babylon and Aššur after all Osman Hamdi had done for the sake of a more professional and centralized framework for archaeological practice across the Empire domains, are posing with their Turkish colleagues, who most likely concluded this division through a friendly *bargain* that (and arguably once again) the political factors must have played a role in shaping. Indeed, such is the finale the protagonist leaves us with:

"Then came the division and transportation of the excavation finds. The Istanbul Museum of Antiquities had delegated Bedri Bey, the former excavation commissioner in Babylon, as the division commissioner. Together with him and the commissioner for Aššur, Abdülkadir Efendi Patschatschi, a solution was reached to this rather challenging issue that satisfied both sides: around seven hundred crates of antiquities had to be divided, and these did not even represent the entire collection, as the finds from the first year of excavation had already been transported to Istanbul."[114]

This division took place right after the Aššur excavations ended in 1914, and the finds were shipped to Berlin.[115] However, a large portion of the original pieces from the Processional Street and the Ištar Gate, especially the glazed bricks with

113 DOG, *Mitteilungen*, 16 (1902-1903), p. 11.

114 Andrae, *Lebenserinnerungen eines Ausgräbers*, p. 220.

115 Andrae, *Lebenserinnerungen eines Ausgräbers*, p. 220.

dragon figures, had to remain stored in hundreds of crates in Hillah until as late as 1926 due to political complications. Chief among these were the chaotic atmosphere World War I brought about and the Iraqi government's resistance to the transportation. With the long-awaited arrival of these bricks in Berlin, the Germans finally secured the last pieces of their Babylon and Aššur collection, and the far-famed reconstruction of the Ištar Gate at the Pergamon Museum thus began in 1929.[116]

An Inside Story of the German Excavations at Babylon (1899-1906): The Accounts of Robert Koldewey and Walter Andrae and Turkish Perceptions

Abstract ■ The excavations the Germans launched in 1899 in Hillah should be of great use to the scholarship on the late Ottoman archaeology/museology, its perceptions of antiquities, and the missionary undertakings of European archaeologists across the Empire domains. Indeed, the accounts of Robert Koldewey, the excavation leader, and Walter Andrae, his assistant, as well as of several other members of the team, are bursting with details, so to speak, of a kind that is perspective-shifting and have yet to be appreciated in any reception work to date. Blending these with the relevant records from the Ottoman Imperial Archives, we acquire a uniquely complementary Babylon Case, of which this essay aims to provide an in-depth presentation. Key to such an effort will be four main aspects, namely the performance of Ottoman supervision, what became of the artefacts unearthed, the Germans' perceptions of Ottoman institutions and locals and vice-versa, and finally, the role Turkish-German politics played in shaping the course of the excavations.

Keywords: German Excavations at Babylon, German Oriental Society, Robert Koldewey, Walter Andrae, European Missionaries in the Late Ottoman Empire, Ottoman Perceptions of Antiquities, Ottoman Archaeology, Archaeology of Babylon.

116 Joachim Marzahn, *Das Ištar-Tor von Babylon. Die Prozessionsstraße: Das babylonische Neujahrsfest* (Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, 1992), pp. 14-15, 25.

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