

Orientalist Gazes

Reception and Construction of Images
of the Ancient Near East since the 17th Century



Edited by

Kerstin Droß-Krüpe, Agnès Garcia-Ventura,
Kai Ruffing and Lorenzo Verderame

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wEdge

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Orientalist Gazes: Reception and Construction of Images
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wEdge 3

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**“Die Mitternacht zog näher schon.
Man trinkt noch Hofbräu in Babylon ... und später
wird man in selbiger Nacht von seinem Knecht ins Bett
gebracht!” – some insights into the guest book
of the German excavations in Babylon¹**

Georg Neumann

Babylon has always been considered something mystical and an allegory of scholarship. It was home to some of the largest and most impressive buildings of the ancient Near East. This city inspired wonder and admiration on the one hand, and on the other hand it often arouse a certain uneasiness because of its supernatural greatness and magnificence.

Described by Herodotus in his *Histories* (1.178.2–199) as the most beautiful and wondrous city in the world,² and characterized by the Bible (e.g. Jes 13–14, 21; Jer 25, 50–51; Offb 17–19) as a city full of decadence and sin,³ Babylon became the symbol of a culture that ruled over much of the Ancient World for thousands of years. For all its power and glory, it was lost in the mists of history.

The German excavations in Babylon, that began more than a hundred years ago, are a milestone in the study of the ancient Near East as in excavation techniques. They have provided us with outstanding information about this city. The excavations are inextricably linked to Robert Koldewey (1855–1925), who held the position as field director from March 1899 until the end in March 1917.⁴ During this entire time he only visited Germany three times, in 1904, 1910, and 1914.⁵ Sven Hedin (1865–1952), the Swedish geographer and author, put it quite neatly when he stated that “Babylon became the great love of his life”.⁶ It should be noted that Koldewey, when he died on February 4, 1925 in Berlin, was unmarried, had no children, and lived in the home of his younger sister, Louise, who looked after him.⁷ One of his assistants was Walter Andrae (1875–1956), who later directed the excavations in the Assyrian capital of Ashur from 1903 to 1914.⁸

¹ This project received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme (grant agreement No. 101001619, Governance in Babylon [GoviB]). The guest book will be published by Hans Neumann and myself on behalf of the Deutsche Orient-Gesellschaft (DOG). We would like to express our gratitude to the board of the DOG for the opportunity to quote the relevant content here and for permission to publish the images from the guest book. I sincerely thank Jessica Baldwin, M.A. for correcting my English.

² Cf. Henkelmann et al. 2011: 449. For the Babylonian Logos of Herodotos cf. *ibid.*

³ Cf. García Recio 2008.

⁴ Cf. Seymour 2008. According to the excavation documentation, the team left Babylon on March 7, 1917.

⁵ Cf. Marzahn 2008: 10.

⁶ “Babylon ist die große Liebe seines Lebens geworden” (Hedin 1918: 229).

⁷ Cf. Marzahn 2008: 11.

⁸ Cf. Andrae und Boehmer 1989: 17–25 (in German) and 106–114 (in English).

Robert Koldewey

But who was Robert Koldewey? Born on September 10, 1855 in Blankenburg in the Harz Mountains as the son of a customs officer, he studied architecture, art history, and archaeology in Berlin, Vienna, and Munich. Since the 1880s he participated in excavations of classical sites such as Assos (1882–1883) on the southern Troad coast and on the island of Lesbos (1885–1886). There he also worked at the sites of Mytilene, Methymna, and Eresos.⁹ At the time, it was not possible to study Ancient Near Eastern Archaeology at German universities, and thus much of the archaeological training focused on Greek and Roman culture.

In 1886 Koldewey travelled to Mesopotamia for the first time to excavate at Surghul and al-Hiba, ancient Lagash.¹⁰ Three years later, the ethnologist and physician Felix von Luschan (1854–1924)¹¹ asked him to work at Zincirli, ancient Sam'al, in what is now southeastern Turkey. This project was the first large-scale German excavation in the Middle East. Koldewey himself worked at this site in the years 1890, 1891, and 1894.¹² By recording the excavated building structures phase by phase, he laid the foundation for the following excavations in Babylon, Ashur, and Uruk. This technique was adopted by his colleagues and students.

For the next three years, after his work at Zincirli was temporarily halted in 1894, Koldewey taught architectural history in Görlitz¹³ and simultaneously worked on the final publication of the Assos excavations in Boston.¹⁴ In 1897 he travelled to Mesopotamia, together with Eduard Sachau (1845–1930),¹⁵ professor and director of the “Seminar für Orientalische Sprachen” at the University of Berlin, and Walter Andrae (1875–1956). Their mission, funded by James Simon (1851–1932)¹⁶ on behalf of the “Königliche Kommission für die wissenschaftliche Erforschung der Euphrat- und Tigrisländer”,¹⁷ consisted of exploring sites suitable for large-scale excavations. The group of the so-called “Vorexpedition ins Zweistromland” visited sites such as Telloh, ancient Girsu, Warka, ancient Uruk, and Fara, ancient Shuruppak.¹⁸ But only one site was of particular interest to Koldewey. It was a site where he could still see the remains of bluish-glazed brick buildings. Those were the ruins of Babylon.

In 1898 Koldewey's proposal to work at ancient Babylon was accepted by the Deutsche Orient-Gesellschaft and its advisory board, despite opposition from Eduard Sachau, who wanted to start excavations at Qalat al-Sherqat, the ancient As-

⁹ Cf. Marzahn 2008: 11–16; Rheidt 2018.

¹⁰ Cf. Hansen 1970: 244 with n. 5 and Huh 2008: 745–832 (= Appendix 4: Die Ausgrabungen Robert Koldeweys 1886/1887 in Surgul und el-Hibā, den Ruinen von NINĀ und LAGAŠ. Bearbeitet von Arndt Haller. Mit einem Beitrag von B. Kienast).

¹¹ Cf. Wartke 2005: 53–56 with n. 59 (with further literature).

¹² Cf. Wartke 2008.

¹³ On Koldewey's stay in Görlitz cf. Olbrich 2018.

¹⁴ Cf. Quatember and Bankel 2018: 167, n. 17.

¹⁵ Koldewey mentions the planned journey in a letter to Otto Puchstein (10/02/1897, cf. Quatember and Bankel 2018: 179–180) and describes it in several letters from November 16, 1897 to March 10, 1898 (cf. Quatember and Bankel 2018: 181–184).

¹⁶ Cf. Salje 2008: 126 and Matthes 2000: 207.

¹⁷ This commission, made up of members of the Academy of Sciences and the Royal Museums of Berlin, was founded in 1897 on behalf of the Prussian Minister of Education; on the commission cf. Althoff / Matthes 1998.

¹⁸ Cf. Andrae 1952: 82–87 and Kohlmeyer et al. 1991: 19–23.

syrian capital of Ashur.¹⁹ The excavations at Babylon were largely funded by the German Emperor Wilhelm II, who acted as a patron of archaeological sciences and considered himself a kind of scientist. As a result of his self-assessment, money was donated to fund excavations and expeditions, particularly after the founding of the Deutsche Orient-Gesellschaft (DOG) in Berlin in 1898.²⁰ His enthusiasm for the history of the ancient Middle East was so great that he initiated a re-make of his grandfather Wilhelm I's favorite ballet, *Sardanapalus*, as a "historic pantomime".²¹ For this he engaged, e.g., the assyriologist Friedrich Delitzsch (1850–1922). Even the props were made with the help of Delitzsch (figs. 1–2) and with full bodily engagement of his assistant, Leopold Messerschmidt (1870–1911), an assyriologist and later copyist of cuneiform texts from Ashur (fig. 3).²² The stage sets were drawn by Walter Andrae.²³ The performance itself was characterized by the wife of Bruno Güterbock (1858–1940), the former treasurer of the Deutsche Orient-Gesellschaft, Grete Auer (1871–1940) in her memoirs as follows:²⁴

Es wurde ein Ballettabend, der für Wissenschaftler gewiß seinen großen Reiz hatte, aber dem großen Publikum nur langweilig erschien, trotz der lehrreichen Erklärungen auf dem Theaterzettel. Die Handlung war allzu dürrig, und Kulthandlungen wie Aufzüge nahmen einen allzubreiten Raum ein. Die Aufführung musste auf Wunsch des Kaisers mehrere Male wiederholt werden und ergab jedesmal ein leeres Haus. (G. Auer, Wenn ich mein Leben betrachte ... [1995] 274).



Figs. 1–2: Furniture for *Sardanapalus* designed by F. Delitzsch. The furniture was made by the carpenter E. Quaglio (1857–1942) in Berlin; Delitzsch 1909: figs. 13f.

¹⁹ For the decision to excavate in Babylon with Koldewey as director, cf. Matthes 2000: 229–232.

²⁰ The Prussian House of Representatives funded the excavations of the Deutsche Orient-Gesellschaft on the initiative of Wilhelm II with about 1,843,800 Mark (1900–1916) (cf. Matthes 2000: 222–223), and even the Emperor himself donated 415,000 Mark from his private purse (ibid.: 226). See also Matthes 1996: 181–182 with n. 29.

²¹ Cf. Delitzsch 1908. On *Sardanapalus* and Wilhelm II cf. Kohlmeyer et al. 1991: 13–19; Freydank 2011 and Hartmann 2020.

²² Cf. Salonen 1963: 21 n. 1 and Delitzsch 1909: 28–30, figs. 13–15.

²³ Cf. Freydank 2011: 150 with figs. 6–7 and Andrae / Boehmer 1989: 21 with figs. 132–133.

²⁴ On the premiere (September 1, 1908) and the reactions of the press cf. Andrae / Boehmer 1989: 21 with n. 34.



Fig. 3: Messerschmidt wearing the “uniform” of an Assyrian Soldier; Wilhelm 1998: 6, fig. 3a–b.

The beginnings of the excavations in Babylon

The excavations began on March 26, 1899.²⁵ However, only a small part of the Babylonian capital could be excavated considering that the inner city area of Babylon measured more than 3.2 km². But the results were overwhelming, consisting of gigantic palaces decorated with colored tiles, the Processional Way, and the monumental structures of the Ishtar Gate. In addition, Koldewey could provide evidence of the Tower of Babel.²⁶

Thus has – as Joachim Marzahn remarked – “Das mythische Babylon (...) durch Koldewey seinen Weg zurück in die historische Realität gefunden”,²⁷ and he goes on to write, that “[e]ine Arbeitspause war nicht vorgesehen, Urlaub gab es gar nicht oder selten, Frauen waren auf der Grabung verpönt (“mulier taceat in excavationibus”) – Gäste dagegen sah man gern”.²⁸

A guest book from the excavations in Babylon provides rich testimony of these guests. The book – now owned by the Deutsche Orient-Gesellschaft in Berlin – comprises more than 270 pages with entries from 1899 to 1917. It provides a unique insight into the eventful history of the Middle East in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The entries in the guest book itself are as varied and diverse as the people who visited Babylon.

²⁵ Cf. Marzahn 2008: 19.

²⁶ Cf. Schmid 1995: 28.

²⁷ Marzahn 2008: 20.

²⁸ Marzahn 2008: 19.



Fig. 4: First page of the guest book with drawings by Walter Andrae and text by Carl Richarz.

The document consists of loose sheets of paper, partially bound with twine into individual volumes, each covering about a year's time span. Furthermore, it contains entries in French, English, Italian, Arabic, Hebrew, Ancient Greek, Hungarian, and German. Even some notes written in cuneiform can be found. Almost every visitor to the ruins of Babylon either wrote a multi-page, partially rhyming entry or simply left his signature, the visitors' presence confirmed by the excavation diary of Babylon. In addition to the texts, many drawings and watercolors are preserved in the guest book, either as multi-page comic strips or as illustrations for the entries. Two pages with drawings by Walter Andrae, who was Koldewey's assistant from 1899 to 1903²⁹ and later head of the excavations in Ashur from 1904 to 1914,³⁰ serve as an example of the sometimes very humorous pictures. The texts are by Carl Richarz, who was the German Consul in Baghdad from 1894 to 1907.³¹

The following is written on the first page of the guest book (fig. 4):

Die Mitternacht zog näher schon, Man trinkt noch Hofbräu in Babylon
 ... Und später wird man in selbiger Nacht von seinen Knechten ins Bett
 gebracht!³² Am frühen Morgen und nach dem Vorabend der Abreise.
 26.10.99 Richarz

This humorous passage is illustrated by an ink drawing by Walter Andrae, which shows men celebrating on the left, drinking a, probably, goodly amount of German beer, the so-called "Hofbräu". After this event – illustrated on the right – these men had to be carried to bed by their servants as they could no longer walk on their own.

The second example belongs to an entry by Richarz, again combined with an ink drawing by Walter Andrae, dated to November 15, 1900, commenting on the discovery of clay cylinders (fig. 5):

Fremdling, der Du, nach Ost gewandt,
 Durch Tempel- und Palast-Ruinen
 Hierher ziehst ins Zweiströmeland,
 Lass dies zum guten Rath Dir dienen:
 Fehlt Dir ein Sonntagshut, so wandre
 Nach Babylon zum Koldewey
 Der dort Cylinder gräbt mit Andrae;
 – Vivant et crescant alle zwei! –

The illustration showing Koldewey and Andrae during the excavation unearthing cylindrical clay objects was also drawn by Walter Andrae. Koldewey wrote about him in a letter from Baalbek in January 1899, that this 24-year-old man was excellent at watercolors and illustrations, while unable to recognize a mortise and had never seen a wolf before.³³ In his defense it is worth noting that when Andrae

²⁹ Cf. Andrae / Boehmer 1989: 6–17 (in German) and 95–106 (in English).

³⁰ Cf. Andrae / Boehmer 1989: 27–25 (in German) and 106–114 (in English).

³¹ Cf. Neumann 2010: 5.

³² Loosely based on the first two lines of Heinrich Heine's famous poem Belsazar from 1820: "Die Mitternacht zog näher schon / In stummer Ruh lag Babylon"; cf. Heine 1827: 71–73.

³³ "Wie unverdorben dieser sonst sehr nette und offenbar gute 24jährige Jüngling [W. Andrae] ist, magst Du daraus ersehen, dass er keine Ahnung davon hatte, was Stemmlloch ist! Auch den Wolf kannte er nur vom Hörensagen! Aquarelliren und Zeichnen thut er

joined the excavation team in 1899, he had almost no experience or education in archaeology.

These cylindrical objects, distributed to the elegant gentlemen by Koldey and Andrae, are, from an Assyriological point of view, clay cylinders with cuneiform writing, but by using a play on words Richarz references the German term “Zylinder” meaning top-hat, which was usually worn on Sundays in Germany at the time. The person with the spade is Andrae.

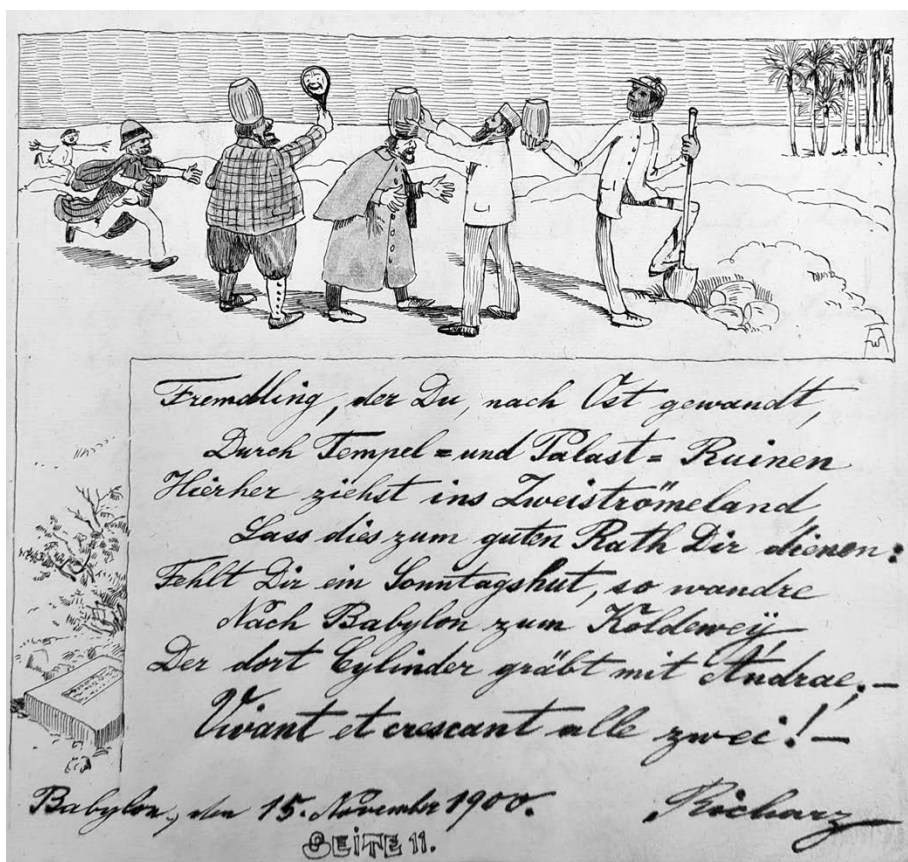


Fig. 5: Guest book entry by C. Richarz with a drawing by Walter Andrae. Guest book p. 11.

An entry dated to June 2, 1902, which tells the story of three men on the way to Oheimir, the ancient city of Kish, also shows that there was no lack of humor during the excavation or in the evening after work (figs. 6–7):

Es zogen drei Reiter zum Thore hinaus,
Sie wollten besiegen der Wüste Graus
Der erste war stolz auf seinen Teint

famos.” (Letter to Otto Puchstein from Baalbek 5th or 6th January 1899), cf. Quatember and Bankel 2018: 202.

Der zweite auf seiner Beine Läng
 Der dritte auf seinen Sonnenhut
 So ritten sie in der Sonnenglut
 Und kam ein wässriges Hindernis
 Sie nahmen es kühn mit Schneid und Schmiss
 Der erste sprang, weil das Pferd es kunnt
 Der zweite hieb ihm die Weichen wund
 Der dritte liess es in Kummer und Gram
 Allein, weil's so besser herüberkam,
 In einer Wirtschaft kehrten sie ein
 Sie lag im lieblichen Sonnenschein
 Nach Kühlung lechzte der hitzige Sinn
 Da streckten sie sich auf den Boden hin
 Den ersten beschattet ein Weizenhalm
 Den zweiten sein Cigarettenqualm
 Der dritte stand sich selbst im Licht
 War also im Schatten und schwitzte nicht
 Zur Forschung treibt sie Wissensdurst
 Der Sonnenschein ist ihnen Wurst
 Der erste nimmt sich Ziegel mit
 Der zweite sammelt Koproolith
 Der dritte stand hinterm Berg allein
 Und versenkte den Sinn in die Flasche hinein
 (page 2)
 Die Sonne brennt, die Luft riecht heiss
 Sie denken heimatwärts im Schweiss
 ‚Jetzt so'ne Weisse!‘ der erste ruft
 Der zweite: ‚Dazu etwas Lindenduft!‘
 der dritte hingegen sanft-zärtlich schreit,
 ‚Nu bloss noch die Hebe im reinlichen Kleid!‘
 Die Weisse, die Linde, die Kellnerin
 Die blieben in und bei Berlin.
 Doch am Kanal der erste nippt
 Der zweite grosse Becher kippt
 der dritte ‚trinkt‘, o Schreck u. Graus
 Das Wasser auf dem Bauche aus.
 Und als sie kamen nach Haus zurück
 Da hatt' sie verändert der Sonnenblick.
 Dem ersten glänzte die Nase fein
 beim zweiten stellten sich Streifen ein
 Beim dritten war der Schaden groß:
 Der ganze Kopf ein Sonnenspross.
 Ritt nach Oheimir, 2. Juni 1902.

The three people pictured here are – from left to right – Walter Andrae himself and two young men who joined the excavation in 1902, Hermann Baumgarten and Arnold Nöldeke (1875–1964).³⁴

³⁴ On Nöldeke and his life cf. Weber-Nöldeke / Nöldeke 2003. For his stay in Babylon *ibid.*: 37–73. For the guest book entry cf. Kohlmeyer et al. 1991: 36–37. H. Baumgarten,

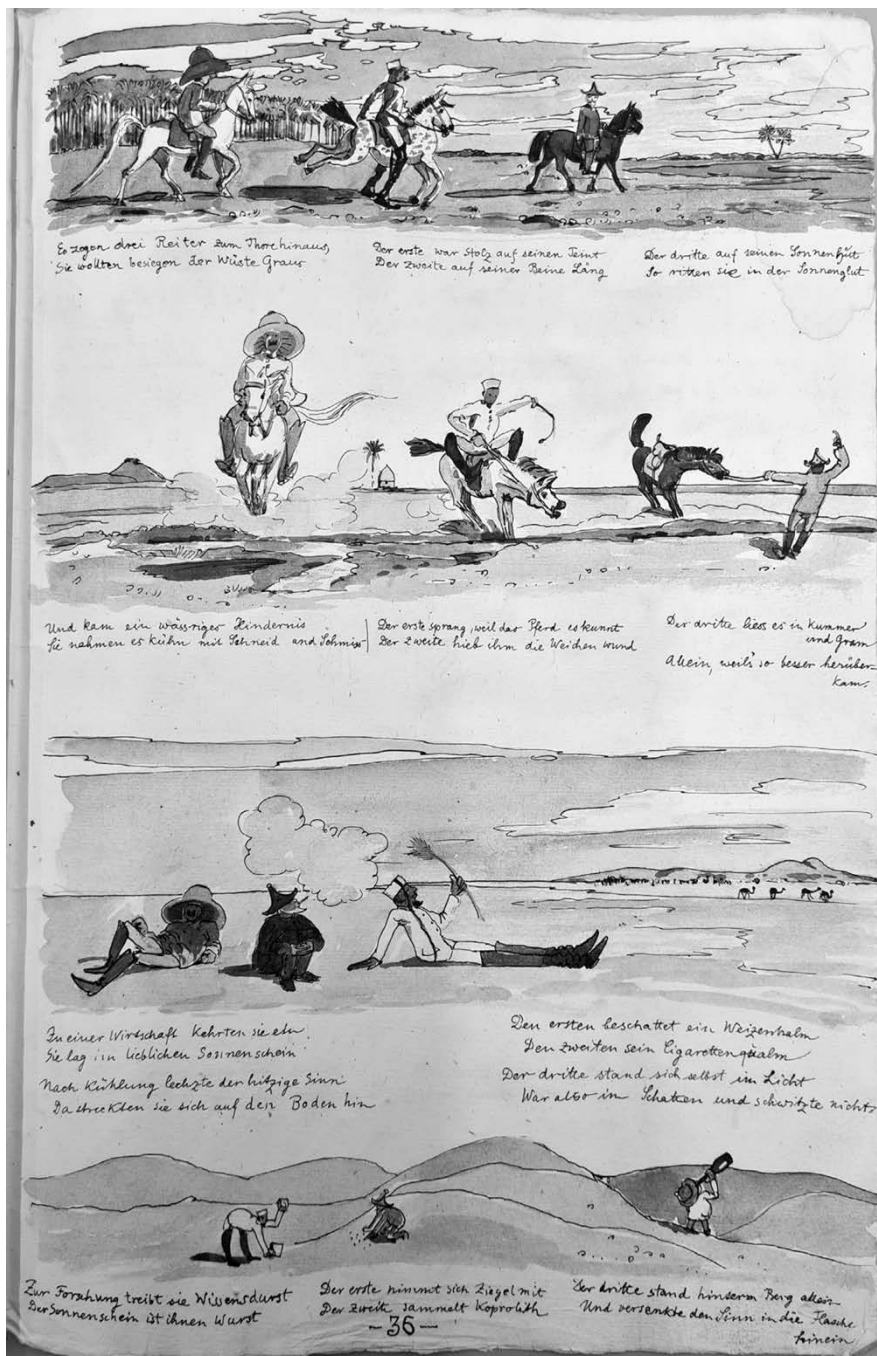


Fig. 6: Guest book entry by Walter Andrae. Guest book p. 36.

an architect from Dresden (Germany), worked in Babylon and Fara from 1902 to 1903. On March 26, 1903, he had to leave the excavation due to an illness; cf. excavation diary entry of March 26, 1903 and Anonymous 1902–1903: 2.

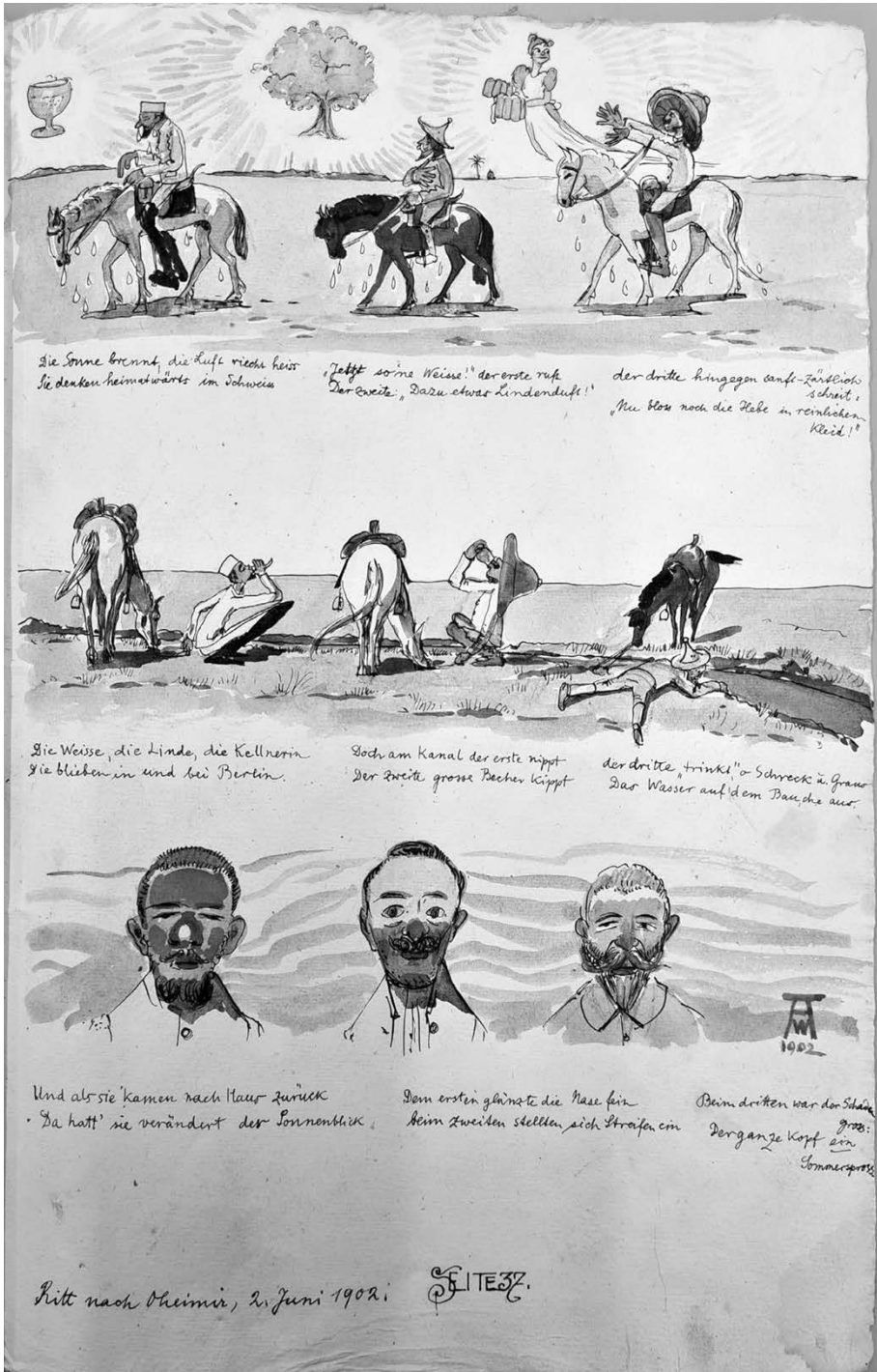


Fig. 7: Guest book entry by Walter Andrae. Guest book p. 37.

But not only the consul in Baghdad or Walter Andrae left entries in the guest book. Among the visitors to the site were also other archaeologists, such as Jacques de Morgan (1857–1924),³⁵ a trained mining engineer and prehistorian, who, from 1897 to 1907, undertook excavations in Susa, the former capital of the Ancient Elamite Empire. He expressed his gratitude, wished good luck for the ongoing excavations, and expressed his desire for a cordial relationship between the French and German excavation teams (fig. 8):

J'espère que les bonnes et Cordiales relations
qui naissent aujourd'hui entre la Mission Allemande
et la Délégation française ne cesseront qu'avec les Travaux
archeologiques dont nous sommes chargés pour plus d'
années que nous n'en vivions tous.
Babylone le 16 Nov. 1899.
J. de. Morgan

In addition to the visitors mentioned above, laypeople with an interest in history and the Bible visited the excavation. Some of these people, for example, were missionaries or engineers of the Baghdad railway, which was then being built to connect central Anatolian Konya with Baghdad. These visitors often spent a day or more with their families, friends, or alone at the famous biblical site of Babylon. Some visitors were part of the British military of various ranks, usually en route to or from Pakistan and India. And last but not least, some guests of Koldewey and his team were, as we call them today, tourists.

One of these tourists was Friedrich Gustav Kögel (1860–1947),³⁶ who – as noted in the excavation diary – was “Meisterschaftsfahrer der Welt” – world champion cyclist, who captioned his guest book entry of November 16, 1899 – quite modern with the slogan: “Die Welt ist mein Feld!” – The world is my track! And he wrote a short poem (fig. 8):

Die Freude winkt auf allen Wegen,
Die durch dies Pilgerleben geh'n
Sie bringt uns selbst dem Kranz entgegen,
Wann wir am Scheidewege steh'n.
O, wunderschön ist Gottes Erden
Und werth, darauf vergnügt zu sein,
Drum woll'n wir, bis wir Asche werden,
Uns dieser schönen Erden freu'n³⁷
F. G. Kögel
aus Leipzig
„Meisterschafts-Fusstourist der Welt“
(z.Z. per Rad um die Erde.)
Babylon, den 16.11. '99

³⁵ On J. de Morgan and his life cf. Jaunay 1997.

³⁶ On Gustav Kögel and his travels cf. Schepp 2015.

³⁷ This short poem is a quotation of L. Ch. H. Hölty „Aufmunterung zur Freude“ written in 1783. On Karl May see the contribution of Friedhelm Pedde in this volume.

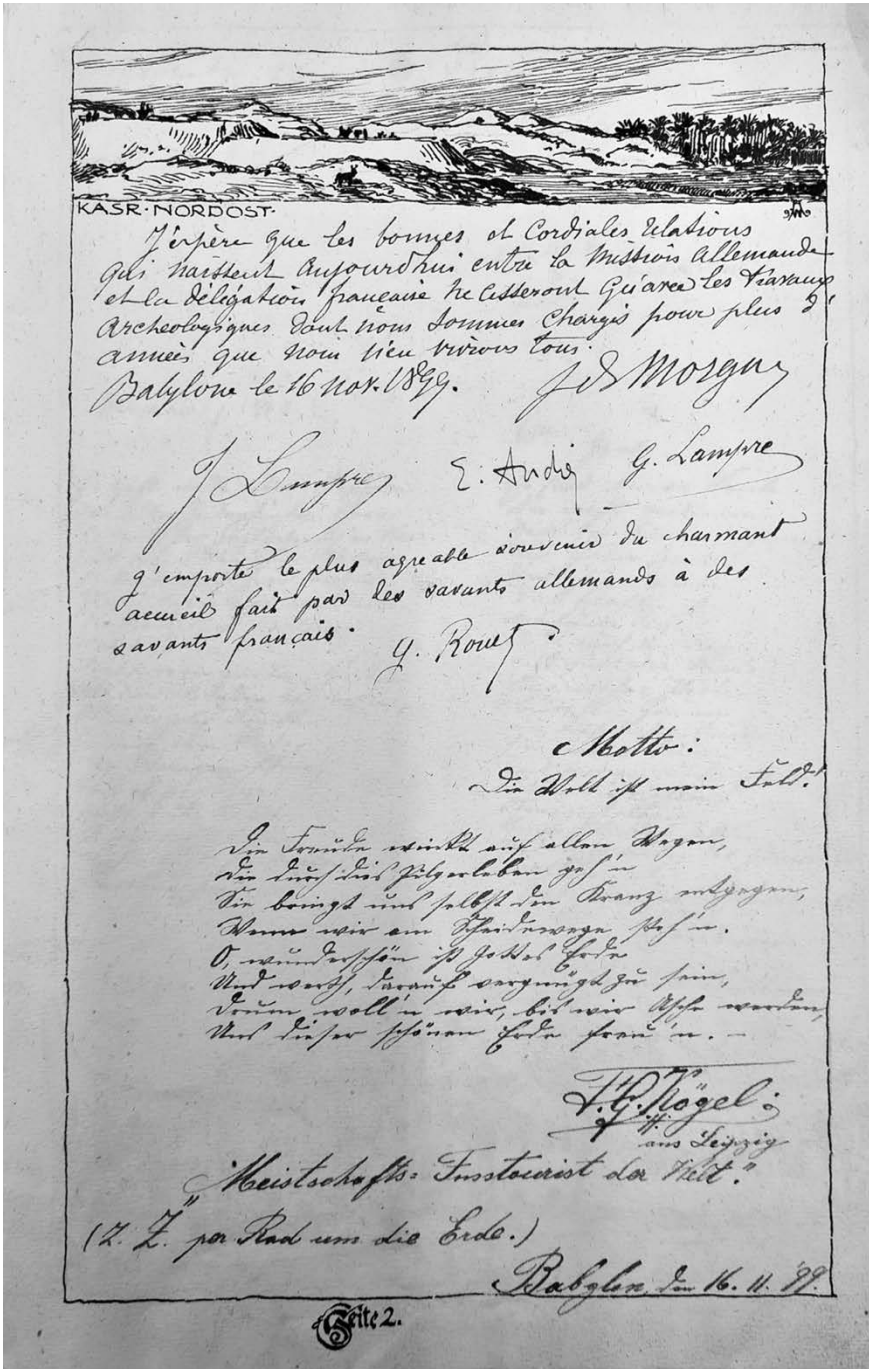


Fig. 8: Guest book entries from top to bottom: J. de Morgan with the signatures by J. and G. Lampre and E. Andry (all French mission in Susa), J. Rouet (French Consul in Baghdad), and F. G. Kögel ("Meisterschafts-Fusstourist") (all November 16, 1899). Guest book p. 2.

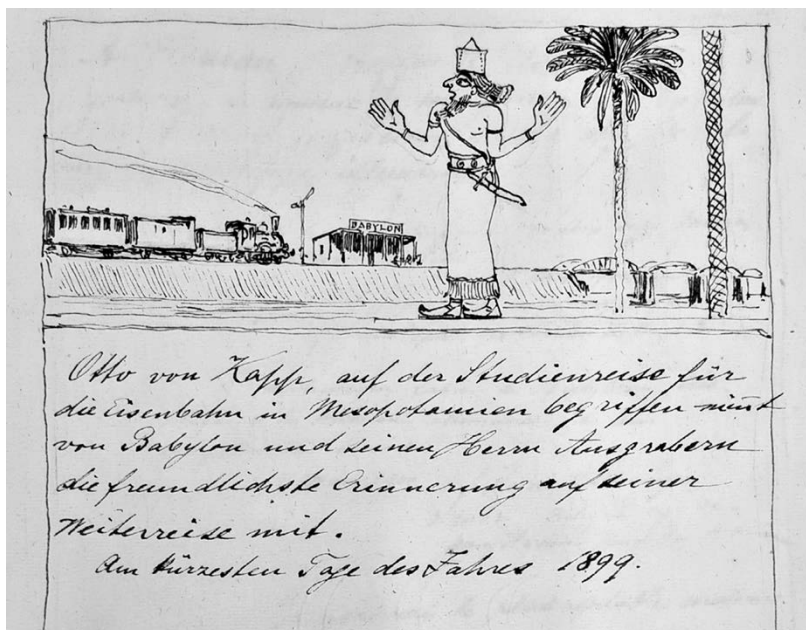


Fig. 9: Guest book entry by Otto Kapp von Gültstein (December 21, 1899).
Drawing probably by the author. Guest book p. 4.

From 1894 to 1896, Kögel was the first person to travel around the world on foot. On his (later) travels he met the famous German writer Karl May (1842–1912) in Beirut in June of 1900, who dedicated a short poem to him:

Geh hin; fahr hin, und sieh die Welt,
Die schöne, herrliche, und lerne.
Schau auf zu dem, der fest sie hält
Am Himmel seiner lichten Sterne.

Sieh dir der Menschheit Völker an,
Ihr Hoffen, Wünschen, Dichten, Trachten,
Und hast du es gesehn, sodann
Sag mir, ob sie es richtig machten.

Du wirst dann meiner Meinung sein
Und ihr auch deine Worte leihen:
»Die Welt ist groß, der Mensch so klein;
Gott hat ihm viel, viel zu verzeihen!«

Berut,
d. 15./6. 00 Karl May³⁸

Kögel himself is quoted in The New York Times of June 19, 1904 regarding his visit to Babylon: "From there [Baghdad] I visited the ruins of Babylon, the city in

³⁸ Guntermann 1970: 178–179.

which the Jews spent their captivity. I saw the tower which, according to the Bible, was to be built so as to reach the sky. Here I met a party of German explorers who were excavating the palace of Nebuchadnezzar and had just made important discoveries which have since been deciphered and have stirred the world of science.”³⁹

Another engineer of the Baghdad railway is Otto Kapp von Gültstein (1853–1920). He directed the works on the Corinth Canal in 1887 and also built, on behalf of the Anatolian Railway Company, the railway from İzmit to Ankara, a section of the route between Istanbul and Konya, from 1888 to 1898.⁴⁰ Kapp visited the excavation on December 21, 1899 as part of a reconnaissance trip for the Baghdad railway project (fig. 9):

Otto von Kapp, auf der Studienreise für
die Eisenbahn in Mesopotamien begriffen nimmt
von Babylon und seinen Herrn Ausgräbern
die freundlichste Erinnerung auf seiner
Weiterreise mit.

Am kürzesten Tage des Jahres 1899.

One of the most famous entries dates from January 14, 1901. It was probably written by Joseph Thomas Parfit (1870–1953), who was chaplain in Beirut and Lebanon, canon of St. George’s in Jerusalem, and missionary in Baghdad (fig. 10).⁴¹

The title of the entry reads: “A Fragment from É.DINGIR.RA”.⁴²

The text is written exactly as the title suggests, as a fragmentary document. Therefore, the end of each line is missing:

On the 14th day of the 1st month of the 1st year of the New century there
came to the
White Palace of the great genius Prince Koldewey, finder of my homes,
Restorer
Of my temples, King of hospitalities; in a reeling chariot ...
GREAT KAM-^dE-RAH, King of Inventions, Conqueror of Rays ...
And his bearer [... FIT] to make obeisance to my Throne ...
To impress my [... ION], to sacrifice in my Temples ...
Whose mysteries I would know, whose c... tents I would shake, ...
Whose springs (sources) I espied, whose aims I frustrated ...
To the lordly board of ... I brought his bearer in peace [wi ... pieces] +
He was rested (laid to rest?) by my skilful Duke André, Father of
Pencils, Lord of Parchments, Master of Pictures, Friend of Travellers ...”
As deciphered by a grateful
visitor: Jos. T. Parfit
C.M.S.⁴³

Baghdad

³⁹ Anonymous 1904.

⁴⁰ On Otto Kapp von Gültstein cf. Götzen 1999.

⁴¹ Cf. Parfit 1917, title page.

⁴² Probably a misreading of KÁ.DINGIR.RA, the logographic writing for Babylon.

⁴³ Church Mission Society.



Fig. 10: "A Fragment from É.DINGIR.RA". Guest book entry by J. Th. Parfit (January 14, 1901). Guest book p. 14.

The text is illustrated with ink drawings showing Nebuchadnezzar trying to use the enigmatic object called “KAM-E-RAH”. The drawings are usually said to be by Walter Andrae. However, since the style of the drawing differs greatly from his other works and the picture is unsigned, it can be assumed that the drawing was also made by Mr. Perfit. He probably saw the excavators using this very modern technique on the excavation and was inspired to write his short text. It is indeed remarkable how many photos were taken during the excavation. The photo journal lists 3836 photos.

After the texts described above, one might get the impression that each guest wrote long and humorous entries. Unfortunately, this was not the case, as the passages written by Gertrude L. Bell (1868–1926)⁴⁴ show, for example. This famous woman was born on July 14, 1868 at Washington New Hall near Newcastle, County Durham, the daughter of an industrialist. From the age of 15 she studied at Queen’s College, London, a prestigious all-girls school and then at Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford where at just 18 she became the first woman to graduate with first class honours in Modern History. It is said that her questions troubled the examiner more than his questions her. Bell then entered the diplomatic service in 1904 and studied archaeology with Salomon Reinach in Paris.⁴⁵ She took part in some archaeological missions in Asia Minor and northern Syria and directed an excavation in Binkirkilise (1907) with Sir William Ramsay,⁴⁶ but never thought of herself as a real archaeologist. She summed it up when she said: “I have had the most delightful day today playing at being an archaeologist.”⁴⁷

Gertrude Bell visited the Babylon excavation three times, first from April 1 to 4, 1909. After this visit, she wrote, in Arabic, a verse of the famous Arabic poet and contemporary of Muhammad, Labīd Ibn Rabi’ah (560–661), in the guest book (fig. 11):

We wither away but they wane not, the stars that above us rise; The mountains remain after us, and the strong towers when we are gone.

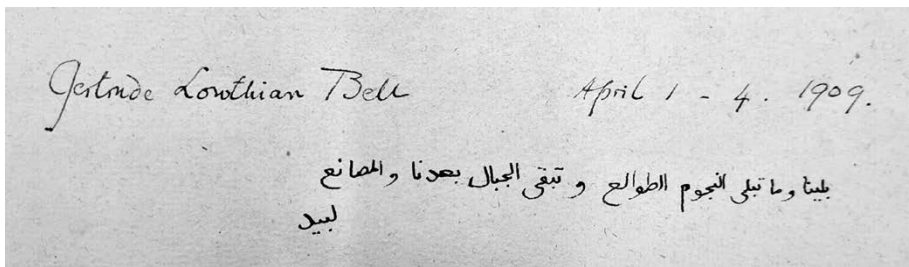


Fig. 11: Guest book entry by Gertrude L. Bell (April 1–April 4, 1909). Guest book p. 148.

⁴⁴ On Gertrude L. Bell cf. for example Cooper 2016; Collins / Tripp 2017.

⁴⁵ On her education cf. Howell 2012: 28–42.

⁴⁶ Cf. Jackson 2017.

⁴⁷ Letter of Gertrude L. Bell to her stepmother Florence Bell, April 2, 1905 (Gertrude Bell Archive – Newcastle University; http://gertrudebell.ncl.ac.uk/letter_details.php?letter_id=1511, last accessed 27 September 2022).

The emotions which thrill one are of a sincerity many and varied as you stand amongst the ruins of an ancient glory and try any form, in your mind's eye, a conception of the splendour of the wonderful palace and court of Nebuchadnezzar; the wonders of which, the present magnificent ruins, so ably brought to light by the Professor & his colleagues, give such grand testimony. If the spontaneous hospitality of ancient Babylon was similar to that dispensed by the German Missions in Babylon of today, well might the weary traveler cry out with joy on first decyphering the walls of the city from afar.

Mr H Earle Blunt.
April 3, 1909.

Fig. 12: Guest book entry by H. Earle Blunt (April 3, 1909). Guest book p. 149.

The same verse prefaces her 1924 book “Amurath to Amurath. A Journey Along the Banks of the Euphrates”.⁴⁸

With these famous Arabic words, Bell expresses her great familiarity and affinity with Arabic culture. The verses of Labīd are known as the most beautiful and eloquent of the Middle East. He was one of seven outstanding poets whose verses were inscribed on the Kaaba in Mecca. Unfortunately, we learn nothing more from the guest book of Babylon about the events of the first visit of this famous woman, known throughout the East.

But at the same time there were two other visitors in Babylon, a certain Miss Halliwell and an American dentist, named Harry Earle Blunt (1877–1968). In a diary entry dated April 2, 1909, Gertrude Bell mentions both of them and describes them, not very kindly, as “dull people”.⁴⁹ Miss Halliwell left no entry in the guest book, however, Mr. Blunt did (fig. 12):

The emotions which thrill one are of a sincerity moving and varied as you stand amongst the ruins of an ancient glory and try any form, in your mind's eye, a conception of the splendour of the wonderful palace and court of Nebuchadnezzar; the wonders of which, the present magnificent ruins, so ably brought to light

⁴⁸ Bell 1911: v.

⁴⁹ Letter of Gertrude L. Bell to her stepmother Florence Bell, April 2, 1905 (Gertrude Bell Archive – Newcastle University; http://gertrudebell.ncl.ac.uk/letter_details.php?letter_id=1511, last accessed 27 September 2022).

by the Professor + his confrères, give such grand testimony. If the spontaneous hospitality of ancient Babylon was similar to that dispensed by the German Mission in Babylon today, well might the weary traveler cry out with joy on first descrying the walls of the city from afar.

Mr. H. Earle Blunt.

April 3 1909.

Similar entries are probably still written in guest books today. The presence of other guests in Babylon at the same time that Gertrude Bell was there is not surprising. But in this case it becomes more interesting as the dentist Harry Earle Blunt published his travel experiences in a book he called "An American dentist's unique experiences in foreign lands".⁵⁰ There he also wrote about his visit to Babylon and what happened during Gertrude Bell's visit. That is, a feast in the ruins of Nebuchadnezzar's palace in honor of Gertrude Bell. He describes this feast as follows:

The entire floor of Nebuchadnezzar's banqueting hall had been excavated, and as an honor for Miss Bell, dinner was being served there the following evening. After dinner, we were all given long chairs on which to recline, the lights were put out, and for fifteen minutes we were asked to close our eyes and try to imagine what the scene had been like on this same floor during one of Nebuchadnezzar's banquets. Then the lights again appeared, and we spent the rest of the evening exchanging ideas of what those scenes must have been like. They were really fantastic.⁵¹

It is highly questionable whether it really happened as he describes it, since Gertrude Bell wrote in her diary for the evening of April 2, when this sumptuous banquet allegedly took place in the palace:

I spent another peaceful and delightful day at Babylon, photographing the ruins in the morning, studying my Tigris route in the excellent library and riding out in the afternoon to see the remains of the Greek theatre, built, as usual, with Nebuchadnezzar's tiles.⁵²

The feast arranged in honor of her presence remains unmentioned, even in the diary entries of the following days.

On her second visit, she stayed in Babylon from March 9 to 11. Only her signature, address, and the dates of her visit are recorded in the guest book.⁵³ During this stay she worked on the plans of Ukhaidir.⁵⁴

⁵⁰ Blunt 1963.

⁵¹ Blunt 1963: 90.

⁵² Cf. Gertrude Bell Archive – Newcastle University; http://gertrudebell.ncl.ac.uk/letter_details.php?letter_id=1511, last accessed 27 September 2022.

⁵³ In her entry she writes that she stayed in Babylon from March 9 to 10. The excavation diary notes that she left early on March 11. Entry in guest book p. 186.

⁵⁴ Cf. Bell 1914.

At the end of her third and last visit to the Babylon excavations just before the start of the First World War on April 1, 1914, Gertrude Bell wrote the following in the guest book (fig. 13):

I come to Babylon, to the home of my friends,
 a[nd] carry away with me the grateful memories
 which only friends can provide.

Gertrude Lowthian Bell

95 Sloane Street – London S.W.

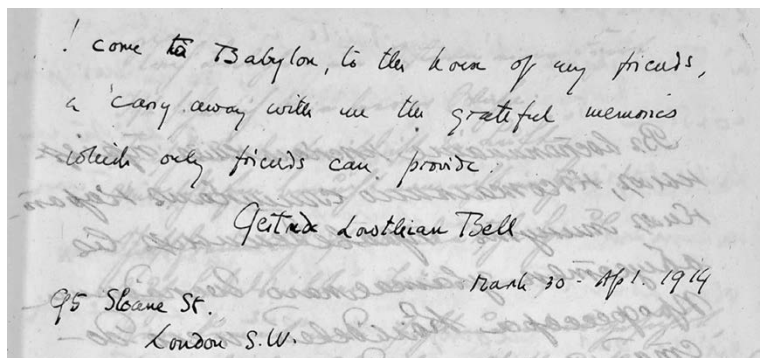


Fig. 13: Guest book entry by Gertrude L. Bell (March 30–April 1, 1914). Guest book p. 239.

She wrote in her diary – alongside a detailed description of the ruins of Babylon, combined with remarks on the guided tour by the excavators: “One of the cats is called after me.”⁵⁵

In the following war years there are hardly any entries that were not written by Germans. The cosmopolitan, warm and familiar atmosphere, that had accompanied the excavation for more than 10 years fell victim to the war.

Two short entries as examples of German entries from the time of World War I are presented below. The first was written by Walter Andrae himself on June 2, 1916. This time he did not visit as an archaeologist, but as a captain of the Imperial German Army, which is also expressed in his entry (fig. 14):

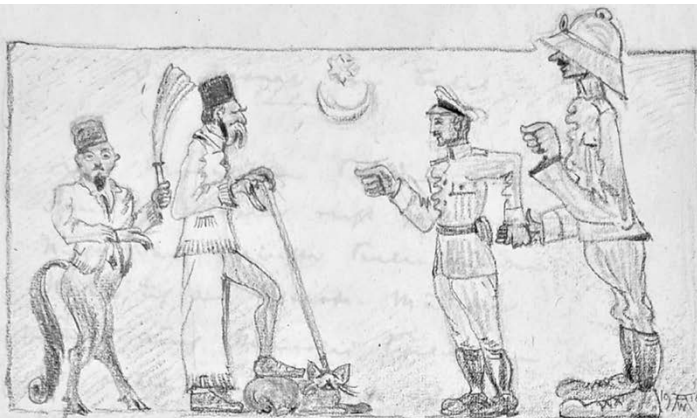
Zu alten Göttern zogen alte Fürsten,
 Ihre Heldenkehlen beide dürsten.
 Adorierend nahen sie der Cella,
 Wo der Dämon treu bewacht die Quelle.
 Freundlich Bel zu Babel winkt Gewährung:
 Gern doch zögernd bringt herbei zur Leerung
 Wundersame Tränke Eabani,⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Cf. Gertrude Bell Archive – Newcastle University; http://gertrudebell.ncl.ac.uk/diary_details.php?diary_id=1177, last accessed 27 September 2022.

⁵⁶ Meant is Enkidu, the companion of Gilgamesh. For Enkidu cf. Black / Green 2014: 76 and 89–91.

Gläser schäumten wie bei Peras Jani.
 Und es zaubert aus den Tränken, aus den Klaren,
 Bel Erinnerung aus vielen tausend Jahren.
 Weiten Blicks betrachten nun die Fürsten
 – Ihre beiden Heldenkehlen dürsten –
 Neubegeistert Welt und Schützengraben
 Und bedanken sich für diese Göttergaben.

W. Andrae
 Als Hauptmann
 Julius Jordan, Oberl. d. R.



Babylon 1/2. Juni 1916

Zu alten Göttern zogen alte Fürsten,
 Ihre Heldenkehlen beide dürsten.
 Adorierend nahen sie der Quelle,
 Wo der Dämon treu bewacht die Quelle.
 Freundlich Bel zu Babel winkt Gervährung;
 Geon doch zögernd bringt herbei zur Leerrung
 Wundersame Fränke Eatani,
 Gläser schäumten wie bei Peras Jani.
 Und es zaubert aus den Tränken, aus den Klaren,
 Bel Erinnerung aus vielen tausend Jahren.
Weiten Blicks betrachten nun die Fürsten
 – Ihre beiden Heldenkehlen dürsten –
 Neubegeistert Welt und Schützengraben
 Und bedanken sich für diese Göttergaben.

W. Andrae
 als Hauptmann.

Julius Jordan, Oberl. d. R.

Fig. 14: Guest book entry by Walter Andrae and Julius Jordan (only signature)
 (June 1–June 2, 1916).

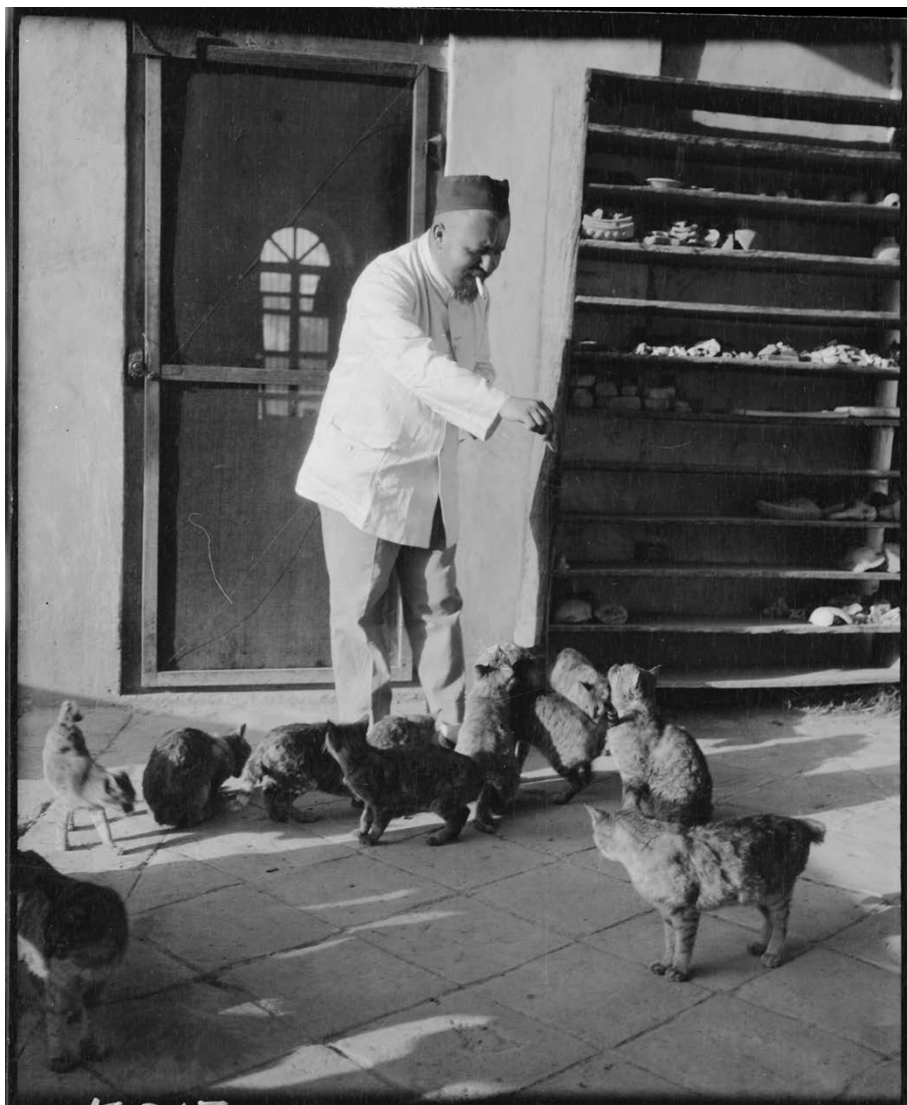


Fig. 15: Photograph of F. Wetzel feeding the cats of Babylon (April 1909). Taken by Gertrude L. Bell © Gertrude Bell Archive, Newcastle University K_217.

The accompanying picture – drawn by Walter Andrae – illustrates the short text. On the right it shows two people in German uniforms in a typical Ur III or early Old Babylonian presentation scene (ca. 21st to 18th century BCE).

The “introducing deity” is Walter Andrae, the worshiper Julius Jordan (1877–1945),⁵⁷ who began excavations at Uruk in 1912 together with Conrad Preusser (1881–1964).⁵⁸

⁵⁷ On the life of Julius Jordan cf. Raulwing 2020.

⁵⁸ The architect Conrad Preusser worked in Ashur until 1912 and in Uruk until 1913.

Both face the new god of Babylon, Robert Koldewey, in his typical white clothing. One of his feet rests on his symbolic animal, a so-called “Knotenschwanzkatze” (knotted tail cat). These cats lived in Babylon at that time. Standing behind him is Gottfried Buddensieg (1877–1960), Koldewey’s assistant in Babylon from 1904 to 1917. He is portrayed as a human-headed bull with a whisk.

At the beginning of 1916 another interesting group visited the excavations: These were Duke Adolf Friedrich von Mecklenburg (1873–1969)⁵⁹ accompanied by Captain of the Cavalry Franz Heinrich Schoelvinck (1870–1951) and the geographer and travel writer Sven Hedin (1865–1952). In his travel report “Baghdad, Babylon, Nineveh” Hedin describes in detail the long and sometimes arduous journey during which a couple of robbers attempted to board the small river boat on which the group travelled to Babylon. But according to Hedin, the robbers gave up after realizing that their intended victims were Germans.⁶⁰ He also describes the small group’s arrival in Babylon at 8 o’clock in the morning – the exact time was noted in the excavation diary – on May 16, 1916. Furthermore, he recounts the moment and impression they had meeting Robert Koldewey for the first time. According to Sven Hedin the professor – at that time Koldewey had been working in Babylon for more than 12 years – in his white suit, the black sheepskin hat and “mit seinem dichten, graugesprenkelten Bart gleicht so den Gestalten, die man auf den assyrischen Reliefs abgebildet findet.”⁶¹ Presumably on the next day Koldewey guided the group through the ruins. On May 18 the three travelers continued their journey to Samarra, but not without writing an entry in the guest book (fig. 16):

Babylon 16/18. Mai 1916.

In Babel gibts viel’ schönen Plunder,
 Jedoch das grösste, der dortigen Wunder
 Ist Robert Professor Koldewey.
 Der mit Kenntnis ohne viel Geschrei
 Das alte Babylon wieder fand.
 Was schon ganz aus der Menschen Gedächtnis schwand
 Und sich selbst, damit ein Denkmal setzt.
 Das auch uns und die späteste Nachwelt ergetzt
 Gleich geschätzt, als Erzähler, Forscher, Wirt steht er da
 Der Robert, drum ihm ein dreifach dankbar
 Hurra!
 Lang. Lang soll er leben
 Und sein Budden-Sieg daneben!

This was written by von Mecklenburg’s personal adjutant Schoelvinck. Such texts, which can only cautiously be called poems, are often found in the guest book. They are of variable literary quality and often characterized by a lack of literary imagination. This is frequently associated with a certain helplessness on the part of the visitors who attempted to write something in the guest book. On June 10, 1906, a visitor, Paul Behrens, summed it up quite well (fig. 17):

⁵⁹ On his life cf. Bindseil 1992; Pade 2001.

⁶⁰ Cf. Hedin 1918: 215–216.

⁶¹ Cf. Hedin 1918: 229.

Babylon 16/18. Mai 1916.

In Babel gitts viel 'schönen Plünder,
 Jedoch das grösste, der dortigen Wünder
 Ist Robert Professor Koldewey,
 Der mit Kenntnis ohne viel Geschrei
 Das alte Babylon wieder fand.
 Was schon gang aus der Menschen Gedächtnis schwand
 Und sich selbst, damit ein Denkmal setzt,
 Das auch uns und die spätesten Nachwelt ergetzt.
 Gleich geschätzt als Erzähler, Forscher, Mit-Steher da
 Der Robert, drum ihm ein dreifach dankbar
 Kurra!
 Lang, lang soll er leben
 Und sein Finden, lieg daneben!

Sind jüri 1894 - Babylon 1916. Sind die,
 Sajan may El Sajan! Sajan die sten Ka-
 jingman: was stündt. 100 Dank
 für die Gephylkeit und die Gephylkeit
 Sajan. Adolf Friedrich von Mecklenburg.

Rittmeister Schoelvinck
 persönl. Adjutant S. Hohes Herzog
 Adolf Friedrich zu Mecklenburg.

Mit herzlichem Dank für
 unvergessliche und lehrreiche
 Stunden in Babylon
 S. Hedén

Fig. 16: Guest book entries from top to bottom: F. H. Schoelvinck (his signature is below the entry of A. F. von Mecklenburg), A. F. von Mecklenburg, and S. Hedin. Guest book p. 248.

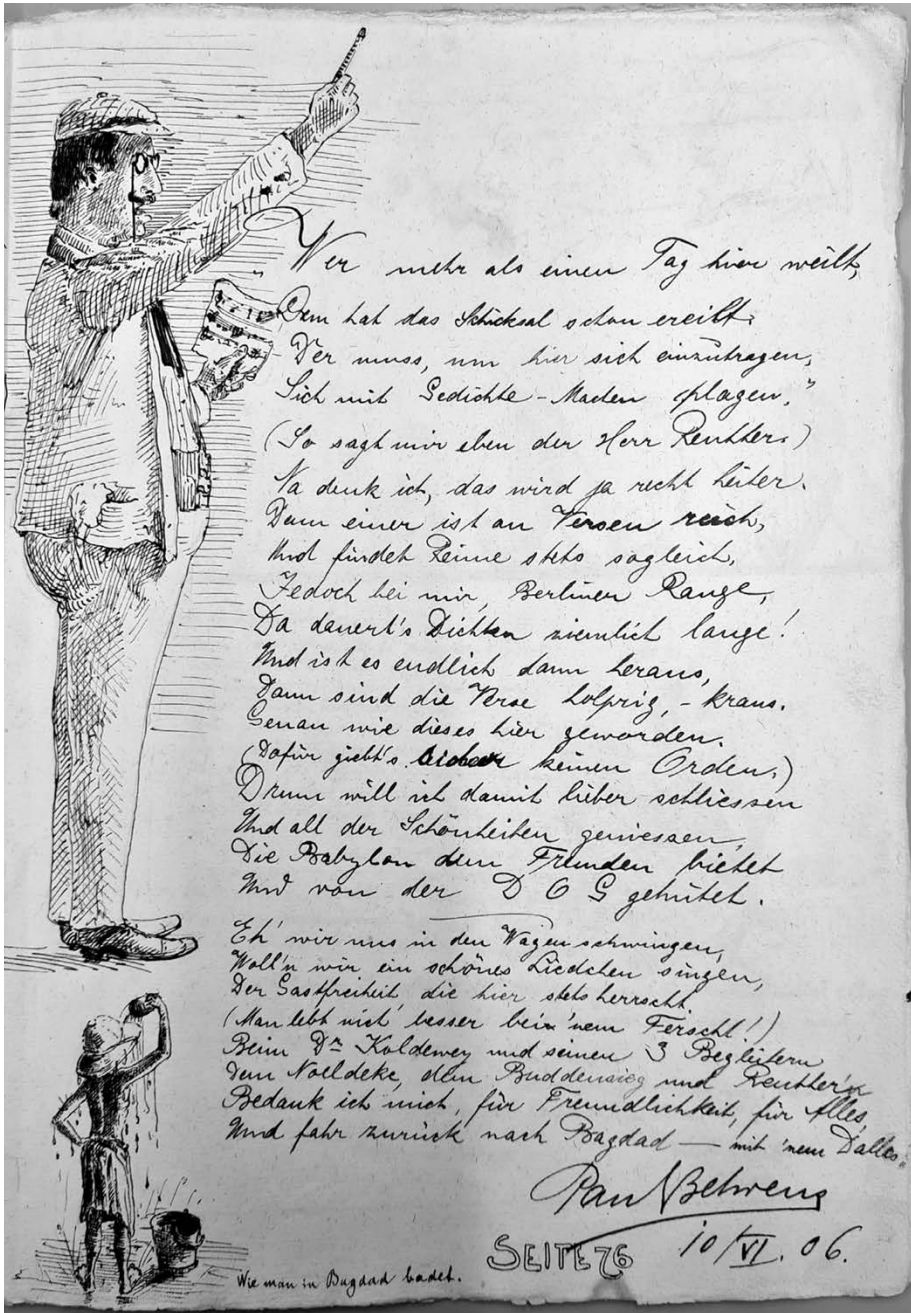


Fig. 17: Guest book entry by P. Behrens (June 6, 1906).
 Guest book p. 76.

Wer mehr als einen Tag hier weilt,
 Den hat das Schicksal schon ereilt.
 Der muss, um hier sich einzutragen,
 Sich mit Gedichte-Machen plagen.“
 (So sagt mir eben der Herr Reuther)
 Na denk ich, das wird ja recht heiter.
 Denn einer ist an Versen reich,
 Und findet Reime stets sogleich,
 Jedoch bei mir, Berliner Range,
 Da dauert's Dichten ziemlich lange!
 Und ist es endlich dann heraus,
 Dann sind die Verse holprig, – kraus.
 Genau wie dieses hier geworden.
 (Dafür gibt's sicher keinen Orden.)
 Drum will ich damit lieber schliessen
 Und all der Schönheiten geniessen,
 Die Babylon dem Fremden bietet
 Und von der DOG gehütet.
 Eh' wir uns in den Wagen schwingen,
 Woll'n wir ein schönes Liedchen singen,
 Der Gastfreiheit, die hier stets herrscht.
 (Man lebt nich' besser bei'nem Ferscht!)
 Beim Dr. Koldewey und seinen 3 Begleitern
 Dem Noeldeke, dem Buddensieg und Reuther⁶²
 Bedank ich mich, für Freundlichkeit, für Alles,
 Und fahr zurück nach Bagdad – mit 'nem Dalles.

Below the small picture showing a man pouring water over his head is the comment: “Wie man in Bagdad badet”.

Adolf Friedrich von Mecklenburg also left an entry in the guest book (fig. 16):

Sindjerli 1894 – Babylon 1916. Wieder-
 sehen nach 22 Jahren! Befund des oben Be-
 sungenen: unverändert. 1000 Dank
 für die Gastlichkeit und die lehrreichen
 Stunden. Adolf Friedrich Herzog zu Mecklenburg.

This brief entry tells us that he and Koldewey had previously met in Zincirli, ancient Sam'al, where Koldewey's work in the Middle East began.

The last entry is written by Sven Hedin and his contribution to the guest book is unfortunately not in the same style as his famous and exiting travel memoirs (fig. 16):

Mit herzlichem Dank für
 unvergessliche und lehrreiche
 Stunden in Babylon Sven Hedin.

⁶² The architect Oscar Reuther (1880–1954) worked in Babylon from 1905 to 1912. For Reuther cf. Heinrich 1954–1956 and Petschel 2003: 769.

Conclusion

In summary, it can be said that the guest book of the excavations in Babylon is a unique document that provides insight into the early decades of the 20th century in the Middle East and the changing political climate around and during the First World War. By connecting the different entries to each other and to the authors' biographies, it is possible not only to reconstruct daily life on an excavation, but also to open a window into the time of these early excavations, and revive the personalities of the people traveling and working in the Middle East.

And it reminds us that even on such large-scale excavations that greatly influenced our understanding of the ancient Near East, the atmosphere was lively, humorous, and familiar, and that in this a guest book can be much more than just a collection of short sayings.

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