

*BREVIA.*

**Recent Discovery of Cuneiform Tablets at Tell el Amarna.**—The beginning of last winter was signalized by a discovery which may prove of the greatest importance in estimating the relations between the ancient civilizations of Babylonia and Egypt. Some Egyptian fellahin were engaged in the lucrative pursuit of searching for relics among the ruins of Tell el Amarna, the temporary residence of the heretical Egyptian king of the eighteenth dynasty, Amenophis IV., and they had the good fortune to light upon a considerable number of clay tablets inscribed with the well-known Babylonian cuneiform signs. Some of these tablets passed into the possession of the Boulak museum under the present supervision of M. Grébaut; but an energetic German, Herr. Theod. Graf, obtained the larger number of these valuable documents, and they have since been secured for the royal collections in Germany. Mr. Pinches informs me that another portion has been secured for the British Museum. The fragments, after being pieced together, form altogether about 160 tablets, some of which are of unusual size. The spot where the discovery was made shows, in Prof. Erman's opinion, that the tablets belong to the end of the eighteenth dynasty, since Tell el Amarna, from all the evidence we possess, did not survive the reign of Amenophis IV. It is important to observe that along with the clay records were discovered a clay seal of this monarch and some alabaster tablets containing the name of his father, Amenophis III. The decipherment of the tablets fully bears out these indications. They contain letters from Asiatic kings addressed to two kings of Egypt, Nimmurija and his son Napchururija (Amenophis III. and IV.). Evidently we have in these clay documents a portion of the archives of the eighteenth dynasty. A notice in hieratic Egyptian proves that the letters addressed to Amenophis III. were originally preserved in Thebes, but that they were carried away along with other documents when the imperial residence was transferred to Tell el Amarna, and were probably thrown into a heap at the time of the destruction of the royal palace.

Among the foreign princes who corresponded with the Egyptian

Pharaohs we find a king Burnaburiaš, of Babylon, who is represented by five epistles. The existence of a close friendship between princes of such widely distant regions as Babylon and Egypt is in itself a remarkable fact, and its importance for chronology may be estimated by the conclusion we are able to establish, *viz.* that Kurigalzu, the father and predecessor of Burnaburiaš was a contemporary of Amenophis III., while Burnaburiaš himself lived at the same time as Amenophis IV.

The chief correspondent of Amenophis III. is King Dušratta, of Mitanni, who calls himself father-in-law of the former. In the correspondence, which appears to have been pretty active, the chief topic was the marriage of the daughter of the Babylonian monarch with Pharaoh. In the notice, written by the Egyptian keeper of the archives, which stands upon a letter from the ruler of Mitanni, a memorandum is made as to the date when this "letter from *Naharina*" arrived. We conclude therefore that Mitanni was the native name of the large state which the Egyptians call *Naharina* (comp. Schrader's *Cuneif. Inscr. and O.T.*, vol. i. p. 100, and footn. \*\*\*). According to Dr. Winckler, the land Mitanni is frequently named in connection with the land Ḥanigalmit, which Dr. Schrader has shown to be situated on the upper right bank of the Euphrates (*Keilinschriften und Geschichtsforschung*, p. 151). Tiglath Pileser I. in his inscriptions speaks of the closely neighbouring Arazik (p. 228) as *ina pan mât Hatti*, "before the land Chatti" (or land of the Hittites). This powerful kingdom Mitanni, which Amenophis calls a neighbouring country, played among the kings of the eighteenth dynasty the same part that the empire of the Cheta (Egyptian for the Assyrian Chatti or Hittites) assumed in later times among the sovereigns of the nineteenth dynasty. It was the dominant power among the regions situated by the Northern Euphrates, a power with which the Pharaohs had to struggle in their contest for supremacy over Syria.

A large number of the tablets come from people who bear no princely title and style themselves servants of Pharaoh. The towns mentioned in the letters are situated in Syria and Phœnicia. We may suppose the writers to have been officers or vassals of Pharaoh, who administered for him the Asiatic possessions of Egypt. Thus we have letters from Byblos (Gebal), Simyra (*Sumura*, Assyr. *Šimira*)=𐤒𐤏𐤍, Megiddo (*Makida*), Akko (*Akka*,

Assyr. *Akkú*) and Ashkelôn (*Aškaluna*). Comp. Schrader, *COT.*, vol. i., pp. 89, 153, 156.

This discovery would lead us to the conclusion that the Babylonian language and script in the fifteenth century B.C. played a similar part in Egypt to that assumed by the language and script of Aramæa during the Persian dominion. It is therefore not surprising that the Egyptians were not satisfied with learning the contents of these documents from foreign interpreters, but Egyptian scribes took pains to master this complicated mode of writing. Evidence of this is to be seen in one curious tablet which contains a mythological text. Here one portion of the words are divided by points of black and red Egyptian ink. It is clear that an Egyptian scribe had used this extract for reading lessons, and, in order to lighten his difficult task, had divided the words.

The above remarks are based on the statement of Prof. Erman contained in the Transactions (*Sitzungsberichte*) of the Royal Prussian Academy of Sciences at Berlin, 1888. To that statement Prof. Schrader has added some interesting information. Details are given by the Assyriologist exhibiting the genuine character of the cuneiform records. Thus Egypt is designated (*mât*) *Miṣir*, as in Babylonian, instead of (*mât*) *Muṣur*, as in Assyrian; (comp. *COT.*, vol. i. p. 71, foll.) There are moreover some curious divergences in the Egyptian tablets from the prevailing Babylonian and Assyrian modes of writing cuneiform. The sign for *pi* bears the unwonted phonetic value *ma*, perhaps owing to a confusion. There are likewise linguistic as well as graphic peculiarities, showing that the writer was not resident in Babylonia. Thus we have *anuki* (𐎠𐎢𐎩) for the Babylono-Assyrian *anaku*, due probably to Canaanite influence.

Dr. Winckler, who has busied himself with these documents, points out the interesting fact that the prince of Mitanni (Mitâni) according to one of the tablets gave the messenger who was charged to convey the clay document to the Egyptian king, an interpreter (*targumânu*) whose office it was to translate the cuneiform. This word is of Aramaic origin. Aramaic, as is well known, has a verb, ܦܫܬܢܐ, "to interpret" (from which the word Targum is derived). The word for "interpreter" is ܦܫܬܢܐ, or ܦܫܬܢܐ<sup>oo</sup>ܝܢ<sup>y</sup>. On the other hand, the usual Assyrian word is *bîl lišani* (ܒܝܠ ܠܝܫܢܐ). See Schrader, *COT.*, vol. ii. pp. 91, 217 (glossary under ܒܝܠ).

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Before closing this paper, I shall advert to a single point of special biblical interest. In my February article (p. 134) I made reference to Fried. Delitzsch's explanation of the enigmatic term, אַבְרָךְ (Gen. xli. 43), as an official title and Babylono-Assyrian loan-word, *abarakku*. This view was first put forward by Delitzsch in 1880 (*Parad.*, p. 225). Both Nöldeke and Schrader (see *COT.*, vol. i. p. 139) had considered this explanation of a specifically Egyptian title or term as a Babylonian loan-word (*abarakku*), to be highly improbable. Delitzsch, however, has persisted in his view against all objections (see his *Prolegomena zu einem neuen Hebräisch Aramäischen Wörterbuch*, p. 145 and footnote); and it must now be confessed that the recent discoveries, exhibiting an active intercourse between Babylonian regions and Egypt, as well as the culture in Babylonian language and literature existing in Egypt in the fifteenth century B.C., have placed Fried. Delitzsch's combination in a much more favourable light. This is acknowledged by Prof. Schrader. It is far from improbable that such a word may have been introduced into Egypt two centuries earlier, and existed as a Babylonian loan-term alongside of a large number of words of Semitic origin that have found their way into the ancient Egyptian speech.

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