Cuneiform Texts

From

Babylonian Tablets, &c.,

In the

British Museum.

Part XXII.

(50 Plates.)

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Part XXII. of "Cuneiform Texts from Babylonian Tablets, etc.," contains texts from about two hundred and sixty-four tablets and fragments in the various Babylonian Collections of the British Museum.

The texts comprise:

1. A large and important series of private letters written during the Neo-Babylonian and Persian Periods, i.e., between about B.C. 600 and B.C. 450. These letters are not of great interest historically, but the information derived from them supplements that obtained from the commercial and legal contracts of the period, and throws new light on the transactions carried on between the official and commercial classes of Babylonia during a critical period in its history, especially on those which concerned the city of Sippar (Abû Ḫabiba). The linguistic value of the letters is very high, for they contain colloquial expressions and "vulgar" forms of verbs and nouns which would be sought for in vain in the dignified and stereotyped phrases wherein historical exploits were recorded, and in the religious compositions of the priesthood which were drawn up in ancient and traditional forms of speech. They also add a number of new words to the Babylonian Vocabulary. Three of the letters (Nos. 25676 (Plate 1), and 38493 (Plate 46), and 51082 (Plate 47), probably belong to an older period than the rest of the series. The first, of which we have a duplicate copy (No. 25678), is a letter of "the king" to a certain Shadûm, ordering him to have made copies of a number of magical texts. The "king" here mentioned may well have been Ashur-bani-pal, king of Assyria, B.C. 665-625; and, if this be so, we are justified in assuming that the copies of the magical texts were required for the Royal Library at Nineveh.

2. A Babylonian geographical tablet, whereon is inscribed a Mappa Mundi, which makes Babylon to occupy the centre of the earth.

3. Plan of Tuba, an Elamite (?) city.

4. Portion of a map of Northern Babylonia.

5. Portion of a map of the city of Babylon, wherein is shown the site of the famous temple of Bel, standing on the "principal street."

The selection of the texts, the greater number of which are now published for the first time, was made by Mr. L. W. King, M.A., F.S.A., assisted by Mr. R. Campbell Thompson, M.A., Assistants in the Department, during a comprehensive examination of the Babylonian Collections in the British Museum some years ago. The copies have been made by Mr. R. Campbell Thompson, and the Descriptive Index, etc., by Mr. L. W. King.

E. A. WALLIS BUDGE.

Department of Egyptian and Assyrian Antiquities, British Museum.

May 12, 1906.
I.

DESCRIPTIVE INDEX.

I. NEO-BABYLONIAN LETTER-TABLETS.

On Plates 1-47 are published the texts of a series of letters of the late Babylonian period, which are mainly of interest for the light they throw on the social and commercial condition of the country, and on the common forms of expression and grammatical idiom in use at the time. One letter is written by the king to a high official, and gives directions for the copying and collection of certain magical works (No. 1), while two others are written by military officers to the king, and deal with military operations (Nos. 247 and 248). But with these three exceptions the letters are of a more private nature, and deal with the social, and commercial, and agricultural life of the people; a large section concerns the every-day business of the great temples of Sippar, many of the writers or their correspondents being priests and officials attached to the temple of the Sun-god and to the other temples in that city. Two of the documents, although of the shape of letters, are not strictly letters but tablets of accounts concerning temple-offerings (Nos. 238 and 239). The bulk of the letters probably date from the latter part of the period of the Second Babylonian Empire and the beginning of that of the Persian Empire in Babylonia, i.e., from about B.C. 550 to about B.C. 500, though it is possible that some of the tablets are to be set earlier and others later than these limits, i.e., within the period from about B.C. 600 to B.C. 450. All the tablets that are actually dated belong to four consecutive reigns, i.e., those of Nabonidus, Cyrus, Cambyses, and Darius. Thus four letters are stated to have been written during the reign of Nabonidus, of which one is probably dated in his eleventh year (No. 165), two in his fifteenth year (Nos. 51 and 173), and one in his sixteenth year (No. 143); six were written in the reign of Cyrus, of which one is dated in his third year (No. 179), three in his fifth year (Nos. 218, 219, and 233), one in his seventh year (No. 166), and one in his eighth year (No. 93); two were written in the reign of Cambyses, of which one is dated in his second year (No. 236), and the other in his sixth year (No. 88); while one is dated in the fifth year of Darius (No. 108). Two of the letters were dated, but the names of the kings are wanting (Nos. 50 and 125). The letters are written on small oblong tablets of clay, far smaller than those employed for letters in the Old-Babylonian period, and the characters are smaller and the writing more closely packed. After the letters were written; they were carefully enclosed in envelopes of clay as in the earlier periods, a practice which ensured the privacy of their contents and at the same time secured the inscription from damage or defacement. On the outside of the envelope was written the name of the person to whom the letter was addressed, and probably also the name of the sender. One such envelope belonging to a letter of this period is preserved in the British Museum, and, in addition to the name of the person to whom it was sent, it bears the name and seal of the sender (see No. 142). The following is a list of the separate letters in the order in which the texts are arranged upon the plates, together with the names of the writers and their correspondents, and the dates where they are given on the tablets:

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1 The scribe has probably written šù for šur by mistake.
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II. Neo-Babylonian Maps and Plans.

1. Babylonian Plan of the World, or *Mapa Mundī*, furnished with a descriptive commentary, and representing ideas concerning the form of the world which were current in the late Babylonian period. The map upon the obverse of the tablet represents Babylonia and Assyria and the neighbouring districts as a circular plain surrounded by the Persian Gulf (\(\text{Mar-vatum}\)). Near the centre of this plain is marked the city of Babylonia (\(\text{Babylōn}\)), and to one side of it the land of Assyria (\(\text{Ashšur}\)). The positions of other cities are indicated by circles, of which Dūr-ūkina (\(\text{Dūr-ùkina}\)) is the only one labelled by name. Bit-I-rīkinu (\(\text{Bit-I-rīkinu}\)), the Southern district of Babylonia, is marked near the Persian Gulf, on the edge of a region labelled as full of canals and marshes. On the opposite side of the circular plain, evidently intended roughly for the north, is marked a district, labelled as mountainous. Beyond the circular zone labelled *Marratum*, the Persian Gulf, are drawn a series of triangles, with their bases resting on the outer edge of the zone; each of these is labelled *magū* (\(\text{magū}\)), “region” or “district,” showing that the scribe or draughtsman knew of the existence of other lands beyond the Persian Gulf, but had vague conceptions with regard to them. [No. 92687]...

2. Fragment of a plan of a city labelled *Tuba* (\(\text{Tuba}\)), which may possibly be identified with the Elamite city of *Tābu* (\(\text{Tābu}\)) conquered by Ashur-bani-pal (see Rawlinson, *Cuneiform Inscriptions of Western Asia*, Vol. V, p. 5, li. 52 and 80). On the upper side of the city the course of a canal or river is indicated, flowing outside the city wall. On the opposite side is marked the position of one of the city gates, which was named the Gate of Shamash the Sun-god, abul Shamash. [No. 35385]...
3. Fragment of a map of a portion of Northern Babylonia, marking the position of the city of Sippar (𒈶𒈠𒈦𒈠), the river Euphrates (𒈲𒈠𒈦𒈠), and a canal, one branch of which is labelled as the Tabbishtum Canal (𒈠𒈠𒈠𒈠, Tāb-bi-šiḫ-tum). [No. 50644]...

4. Fragment of a map of the city of Babylon, marking the position of the temple of the god of Bel, i.e., Marduk (𒀭𒉪𒉪𒉪), situated on the principal street (𒄱𒍂𒂗). The temple on the plan may be probably identified with E-sagila, the great temple of Marduk at Babylon, and “the principal street” is probably the sacred procession-road, named Aa-ibur-shabû, which led up to the temple. [No. 73319]...

5. Fragments of the plan of a large building, probably a royal palace, giving the measurements of the covered portions of the building and of the open courts. [Nos. 68841 + 68843 + 68845 and 68840 + 68842]...

ADDITIONS AND CORRECTIONS.

Pl. 1, No. 1, for “26576 and 26578” read “25676 and 25678.” Pl. 3, No. 7, l. 7 for 𒈠 read 𒈠; No. 8, l. 8 for 𒈠 read 𒈠; No. 10, l. 25 perhaps read 𒈠 for first break; No. 11, for “93088” read “73762.” Pl. 6, No. 27, l. 8 perhaps read 𒈠 for 𒈠. Pl. 7, No. 32, l. 12 perhaps read 𒈠 for 𒈠. Pl. 15, No. 73, l. 30, for 𒈠 read 𒈠; No. 74, l. 23 for 𒈠 read 𒈠, l. 24 for 𒈠 read 𒈠. Pl. 16, No. 78, l. 10, for the first word read 𒈠. Pl. 19, No. 94, l. 18, add 𒈠 after 𒈠; No. 96, between ll. 15 and 16 insert the line 𒈠𒈠𒈠𒈠𒈠. Pl. 22, No. 112, l. 20 for 𒈠 read 𒈠. Pl. 23, No. 74, l. 10 for 𒈠 read 𒈠. Pl. 24, No. 139, l. 7, between 𒈠 and 𒈠 possibly read 𒈠. Pl. 25, No. 150, between ll. 12 and 13 insert, from the edge of the tablet, the line 𒈠𒈠𒈠𒈠. Pl. 29, No. 152, l. 18 for 𒈠 read 𒈠. Pl. 38, No. 209, l. 15, at the beginning insert 𒈠, which has been written in afterwards by the scribe. Pl. 43, No. 238, l. 10, for 𒈠 read 𒈠. Pl. 46, No. 247, l. 27, after 𒈠 there are traces of 𒈠. Pl. 50, for “68840 + 68841 and 68844” read “68841 + 68843 + 68845 and 68840 + 68842.”
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No. 25. 84012. Obverse.


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These two tablets, although not duplicates, refer to the same subject matter.
PLATE 46.

LETTER TO THE KING FROM AN OFFICER.

38493 + 38852.

OBVERSE.

REVERSE.
BABYLONIAN PLAN OF A BUILDING.

PLATE 50.

68840 + 68841 AND 68844.