Exploration and Discovery

THE TEIMA STONE

While few Semitic monuments surpass the Teima Stone [frontispiece] in interest and importance, it is one of the least known of the great inscriptions. Teima in North Arabia is generally identified with the Tema of Job 6:19. The place must have been famous in antiquity, doubtless as a caravan center between Petra, Gerra, and Sheba, for it is often mentioned by Old Testament writers, who knew little of Arabia in general; cf. Gen. 25:15; I Chron. 1:30; Isa. 21:14; Jer. 25:23.

Wandering through that region in 1876-78, Charles Doughty found and copied many Nabataean inscriptions of the time of Christ, and less considerable Aramaic inscriptions of an earlier time. A rumor of a long Aramaic text somewhere in that district reached Doughty, but he did not see the stone. In 1880 Charles Huber passed that way, and not far from Hail discovered this longer inscription, a part of which he copied. The importance of the tablet as revealed by Huber's copy led him to revisit the spot in 1884 with Jules Euting. They found the stone, which was built bottom upward into a wall in Tlehan. Euting made a careful copy of it and both he and Huber took impressions of it. They found it possible to purchase it from the Arabs, and ordered its removal to Hail, after which they proceeded to el-Ala, and parted. The sequel is well sketched by Hogarth, in *The Penetration of Arabia*. Euting was soon attacked by Bedouin, but escaped after killing two of them, and arrived in safety at el-Wij on the coast, and so reached Jerusalem. Huber remained longer in Arabia, returning to Hail, in the interior, and then proceeding by way of Mecca to Jidda on the coast. Having sent his squeeze of the stone to Renan from Jidda, he started back for Hail, but was murdered by his own guides on July 29. Meantime Euting had on June 12 sent his squeeze and copy from Jerusalem to Nöldeke at Strassburg, and thus Euting's copy of the inscription first reached Europe, and was promptly published by Nöldeke. Only a few days later, Huber's copy reached Renan, who bitterly lamented the chance that had robbed his friend of the fruits of his tragic enterprise. Yet Huber's fame in connection with the Teima Stone is secure; he was its discoverer, and brought to Europe the first account of it, while his efforts led to its transfer to a European museum. The death of Huber left the stone with his other effects in the hands of the Emir at Hail. With the Germans and French competing for its possession, its fate was for a time in doubt; Snouck-Hurgronje, the Dutch

After Lidzbarski]

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scholar famous for his long residence at Mecca, tried to help Euting, and the French secured his expulsion from Mecca in consequence. At length Lostalot, the French consul at Jidda, secured the stone and had it forwarded to the Louvre.

The Teima Stone is generally believed to date from the fifth century before Christ, although some would place it early in the sixth century. It deals with the introduction of the worship of a new divinity, Salm of Hagam, into Teima, the appointment of his priest, Salmshezeb bar Petosiri, and the stipend of the latter, which is fixed at the produce of twenty-one palm trees. First in importance among Aramaic inscriptions of Arabia, it bears fresh testimony to the ancient relations of Teima with Egypt and Assyria, for while its names suggest Egypt, its art recalls Assyria. The front of the stone is occupied with the inscription; but on its side is carved the figure of the new god, in Assyrian dress, with his priest below him.

The stone measures forty-three inches in height, seventeen in width, and not quite five in thickness. The inscription consisted of twenty-three lines, rather more than half of which are preserved. It is dated "in the twenty-second year," but the name of the king has disappeared. The gods of Teima are mentioned, but little more can be read before the eighth line. From this point the text reads:

This therefore is [the tablet] which Salmshezeb son of Petosiri [set up] in the shrine of Salm of Hagam. For the gods of Teima [have consecrated] Salmshezeb son of Petosiri, and his seed in the temple of Salm of Hagam. And if anyone destroys this tablet, may the gods of Teima pluck him and his seed and his posterity up from the face of Teima. And this is the gift which the gods of Teima, Salm of Mahram, Sangala and Asira [grant] to Salm of Hagam; from the field sixteen palms and from the royal treasury five palms; in all twenty-one palms annually. Let not gods or men [remove] from this temple Salmshezeb, son of Petosiri nor his [seed] nor his posterity [who are priests] in this temple [forever].

It has been conjectured that the Teima Stone was a votive tablet erected by the new priest, who perhaps credited some deliverance from peril to his foreign god, and on that account took the name of the god, became his priest, built a shrine for him in Teima, endowed his worship there, and with the consent of the local authorities sought to perpetuate it by the erection of this tablet. The stone is of interest not only as an early example of Aramaic epigraphy, but as affording an unusual glimpse of the religious life of ancient polytheistic Arabia, in the time of Nehemiah the governor, Ezra the scribe, and Geshem the Arabian.

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