

ARCHAEOLOGY

King Nabonidus and the Missing Link City

Three Brief Tablets Tell How a King Deserted His Court To Set Up Another in a Conquered Cross-Roads City

By EMILY DAVIS

NEW facts have been discovered about Nabonidus, last of the native kings of Babylon—a most unusual ruler, even in a world's record of strange kingly careers.

Because it was a custom for a king to record boastfully his own achievements, and because it was equally customary for his enemies to record them for him—or rather against him—a good many of Nabonidus' deeds are known.

We know that he was one of the world's earliest archaeologists, a scholarly king who specialized in excavating ancient temples and restoring them. He forced upon the people of Babylon a Moon God far from popular in that city, and some historians deduce that this may have led to discontent and treachery within Babylon, and so to the downfall of the city. We know that this idealistic, scientific, unpopular king went off from Babylon on a strange expedition and stayed eight years, leaving his eldest son Belshazzar to steady the tottering throne.

Because government records and accounts of old Babylon were inscribed on durable little tablets of clay, instead of our fragile paper, Dr. Raymond P. Dougherty of the Yale Babylonian Collection has been able to fit together evidence that makes clearer one of the most mysterious stages in Nabonidus' career. That is his long absence from his gay, ill-fated capital, at which time he was staying at a place called Tema.

Now, Nabonidus may have been about sixty years old when he was crowned in Babylon. He reigned there only three years before he gathered an army and set out at its head to take this city of Tema, leaving Crown Prince Belshazzar to act as ruler in Babylon.

Mysteriously, the king did not return in triumph to Babylon after he had slain the prince of Tema with the sword and subdued the city, and, altogether, conducted a successful campaign. Instead, he set up a court in Tema and, as he says in one of his own inscriptions, he glorified the city so that it

rivalled Babylon in splendor. And in his newly built garden spot, the elderly monarch remained for eight years, which was the greater part of his entire reign.

Historians have thought it likely that the city of Tema must have been somewhere in Babylonia. But it now appears that the expedition was far afield in the Arabian desert. There is a place there called Teima, which is spelled, you will note, not very differently from the old Tema.

Did you ever hear of this Teima in the desert of Arabia? Modern explorers have called it one of the most inaccessible towns in the world. Only seven of them have ever succeeded in crossing the "roads of death" in the treacherous, bandit-infested, hot and sandy desert to reach the blissful contrast of the oasis of Teima, with its palm tree shade, its cool breezes blowing through the houses, its refreshing water.

Not Urged to Tarry

Those daring explorers who did arrive at Teima came away after brief visits, without doing much sight-seeing, though there were interesting ruins lying beyond the present settlement. Courteously, the adventurous visitors were received, but the Arabs of Teima did not urge them to tarry, for these Arabs are political-minded folk, engaged in involved tribal disputes and always wary of strangers of unknown political pedigree.

Inhospitable as Teima seems, and little as it cares what the world may think about it, it has been chosen for a new distinction. It has been satisfactorily identified as Tema, important missing-link city of Babylonian history, a city that was front page news to the people of Babylon in the days of Nabonidus and Belshazzar.

Dr. Dougherty has worked out this problem, not by digging at the oasis city itself—the most daring archaeologist has not yet attempted that—but by long-distance methods of archaeology. He has pieced together the clues from three clay tablets. These three tablets, reposing at Yale, Goucher College, and

the British Museum, have held the secret of Tema's location between them.

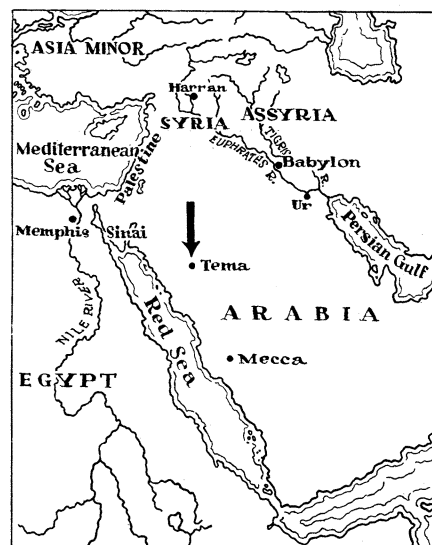
One of the clay tablets, in the British Museum, tells of King Nabonidus entrusting government affairs in Babylon to Belshazzar, and of his campaigning against Tema from the region of Syria in the third year of his reign. The remoteness of Tema is described.

A second tablet, belonging to Goucher College in Baltimore and pronounced by Dr. Dougherty to be extremely important, records that a man was provided with flour and a camel to journey from Babylonia to the land of Tema. The food ration provided was large and shows that the destination was distant.

The third tablet, at Yale, records the fact that a camel from a Babylonian temple was lent to a man to carry food from the temple to Nabonidus in the land of Tema. This shows, Dr. Dougherty points out, that temples of Babylonia provided food for royal consumption in Tema and furnished transportation for it.

The oasis known as Teima fits in with all these descriptions. That a Babylonian monarch might think it worth while to control the oasis can be readily understood, for it has long been an important cross-roads station for caravans.

But why Nabonidus did not come



LITTLE KNOWN TEIMA

The missing link city, isolated many days' journey in the desert. Jealous Arabs have guarded it well from archaeologists.

home to Babylon, leaving his conquered oasis in the hands of a subordinate Babylonian officer, is a problem in royal psychology of 550 B. C.

Psychologists today would probably class Nabonidus as an introvert personality, that is, a man who was a thinker, solitary-minded and self-sufficient, in contrast with the extrovert personality type which is active and social in its interests. An introvert type of king might be expected to look regally upon a desert as no barrier between his home country and his chosen residence and might keep messengers and food on the road to his desert court, as he willed.

King Nabonidus' archaeological and religious activities also demonstrate his type of personality. Temple-building, of course, was a royal duty in his time, but Nabonidus' methods were unusual. One of his first acts upon becoming established as King at Babylon was to go to the home town of his fathers, a place called Harran, and to excavate the ruins of a demolished temple to the Moon God, Sin. After figuring the proportions and measurements of the old building, in true scientific manner, the king restored it for worship, for he meant to revive interest in this god of his fathers.

In one of the king's own inscriptions, he gives what we should call today a report of his archaeological field work. He says, in the florid style of oriental royalty, that he dug into the "pure abode, the place of the rites of the priestess." He recognized the foundation area, and he saw the inscriptions with the names of the preceding kings, including a priestess of Ur. He reconstructed the house anew like the old, he declares.

Nabonidus' enthusiasm for the worship of the Moon God, Sin, led him to repair the temple of the Moon Goddess at Ur of the Chaldees. He refloored this damaged temple and made a more imposing entrance for it. It was Nabonidus, too, who added a topmost tower to the great ziggurat or stage-tower which was one of the important parts of the temple structures at Ur.

His daughter, the Princess Belshalti-Nannar, was sent to Ur to be high priestess of the Moon cult. This princess inherited some of her father's liking for antiquities. When archaeologists excavated at Ur of the Chaldees recently, they found a room in which she kept a museum of local antiquities, and a museum label which appears to be the oldest ever found.

From his study of old inscriptions



FIRST ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESTORATION

The Ziggurat or stage-tower at Ur of the Chaldees as it was rebuilt by the strange King Nabonidus.

the earlier kings of Babylonia. Because King Nabonidus estimated the dates of Nabonidus declared that King Sargon had reigned 3,200 years before him, historians until recently accepted his statement, and depended upon it as a landmark of ancient history. But as archaeologists have unearthed temples and graves in the East and have found new inscriptions, they have begun to doubt the royal scholar's exactness. Nabonidus appears to have allowed about 1,000 years too many in his generous estimate of old Sargon's antiquity.

Political Reasons

It now appears that Nabonidus was not entirely the scholar-king, pursuing knowledge for its own glory, but that, more likely, he had reasons of political significance behind his digging. When he planned to make the Moon God the chief of gods in Babylon, he was promoting the worship of a deity popular among the Semitic people at Ur and Harran, the Sinai Peninsula and the Wilderness of Sin. This Moon God was known in Babylon, but Nabonidus well realized that such a deity was not likely to be popular there. And the priests of rival gods in Babylon were jealous and powerful men.

So, it has been suggested that the king hoped to make his favorite deity more impressive to the Babylonians by showing how ancient was this god and by reviving the temple worship in its early, venerable forms. But with all his efforts, the people of Babylon did not relish the Moon God's intrusion.

Nabonidus made a statue of his Moon God, and that, like much else in his career, was a queer affair. It was a figure of lapis-lazuli, we are told,

wearing a crown. The old Babylonian inscriptions that mention this statue say that instead of having a crescent for a moon symbol, as Moon Gods usually did, this deity designed by Nabonidus represented the Moon in eclipse—a strange and depressing aspect for a deity of power to wear. It would appear that Nabonidus wanted to show that the god was angry because of his neglected temples.

Dr. Sidney Smith, specialist in Babylonian literature at the British Museum, has expressed the view that Nabonidus' Moon God image and his building of the temple are referred to in the Biblical Book of Daniel. In that book, the king who sets up an image and calls upon the people to bow down or be cast into a fiery furnace is said to be the great Babylonian king, Nebuchadnezzar, one of Nabonidus' predecessors on the throne. But Dr. Smith reminds us that the Book of Daniel was not written until many years after the events it describes, and after Nebuchadnezzar's death, he became a legendary figure, as Alexander the Great did, so that many deeds and anecdotes were ascribed to him which belonged by right to other rulers.

Dr. Smith further suggests that the story in Daniel which tells of Nebuchadnezzar becoming insane and eating grass and living like an animal is also a reflection of events in Nabonidus' career. The insanity story may have been in invention of Babylon's enemies. Nabonidus himself only says that when he was restoring the glories of the Moon God, he was so anxious to make the temple a worthy shrine that his "face grew troubled." This is interpreted in ancient Persian (*Turn to page 58*)

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record to mean that Nabonidus had a demoniac seizure. But then the Persians were the enemies who at last conquered Babylon, and they lost no chance to put the Babylonian King in a poor light.

In the Book of Daniel, Nebuchadnezzar's insanity results from his worry over dreams which were linked with his religious perplexity, his fear of displeasing the most powerful of the deities, and losing his kingdom. Whether Nebuchadnezzar and Nabonidus are blended in the Biblical account of Babylon or not, Nabonidus surely was troubled about religion throughout his reign, and his devotion to his chosen Moon God may have caused his downfall.

One historian suggests that Nabonidus' religious beliefs were so violently opposed by the priests of Babylon that these priests even incited the people of the city to welcome Cyrus the Persian when he came to take Babylon. For Cyrus, the priests knew, would restore the old religious order of things and their own prestige. Whether Nabonidus was in Babylon at the time of its fall is not known. History says that Cyrus treated him kindly.

If the site of Teima is ever explored, it is predicted that the result will shed new light on some of these tangled events in the lives of Nabonidus and Belshazzar.

Science News Letter, January 24, 1931

it would be necessary to have scientific tests made, for which work the bureau is not equipped at present.

It is believed that the public is being cheated of vast sums of money through being induced to purchase foods falsely advertised as rich in one or more of the essential vitamins.

The agricultural appropriation bill, passed by the House and now before the Senate, carries an item of \$30,200. for the vitamin testing work by the U. S. Department of Agriculture.

Science News Letter, January 24, 1931

ARCHAEOLOGY-ETHNOLOGY

To Study The Mayas By Living With Them

THIS WEEK a treasure-hunting party left the Field Museum of Natural History, in Chicago, to visit the extremely dense tropical forests of Central America. The treasure they will seek is not to be doubloons, however, but buried traces left behind centuries ago by the ancient Mayas which may give modern man new knowledge of the life of that great people.

The expedition is led by J. Eric Thompson, assistant curator in charge of Central and South American archaeology at the Field Museum. The party will sail from New Orleans to Belize, in British Honduras; then up the coast to the New River; and then inland up the river as far as a boat can go; and finally will travel by mule pack train and on foot to the ancient city called in the Mayan tongue Kax Unuic, or "Man of the Woods." Here ruins will be explored which probably date back as far as the beginning of the Christian era, perhaps even further.

Later the expedition will visit the dense forests of the Petén district of Guatemala, a locality where man has not lived for many years, in search of ancient Mayan cities which are known to exist but which have never been found by modern white men. If the explorers are lucky, they will find in these ruined cities the remains of old monuments bearing dates in Maya hieroglyphics.

The aid of the modern Mayan people will be enlisted to find the ruins, and by living among these people, the archaeologists hope also to be able to trace many of the present customs back to the culture of the early Mayas.

Science News Letter, January 24, 1931

PSYCHOLOGY

Women Remember Pleasant Events; Men Unpleasant

IF YOU are a woman you tend to remember, as time passes, more of the pleasant experiences in life than the unpleasant. But if you are a man, you remember the unpleasant to a greater degree than the happy things that happen to you.

This is what Dr. H. Meltzer, psychologist of the psychiatric clinic of St. Louis and lecturer at Washington University, St. Louis, found in an investigation reported to the psychologists of the American Association for the Advancement of Science in Cleveland.

He gave a new sort of psychological test to seventy-seven men and fifty-five women. Just after they had spent their last Christmas holidays he asked each to list all the pleasant and unpleasant experiences of the vacation period. Then without warning six weeks later he asked them to do the same thing. He compared the listings and found that there is a sex difference in the kind of experiences remembered after a month and a half.

The feminine tendency to forget, which Dr. Meltzer discovered, is explained by him as what psychoanalysts speak of as an escape mechanism. The female of the species uses this method of forgetting instead of resorting to alcohol, in Dr. Meltzer's opinion.

"Men more frequently than women even in modern days use what George Bernard Shaw talks of as the opiate of booze to make them forget," the psychologist said.

The larger extent of remembering of the pleasant by women is explained by Dr. Meltzer in terms of the psychology of compensation.

"The richer memory-experiences in women," he said, "are a compensation for their poorer actual experience in everyday life."

Science News Letter, January 24, 1931

NUTRITION

Government To Check Vitamin Food Claims

BUYERS of food have become so vitamin-conscious, that an expenditure of over \$30,000 by the Food and Drug Administration will be required next year to check up on foods advertised as containing these important substances.

In presenting to the House Committee on Appropriations the necessity for the vitamin work, the Food, Drug and Insecticide Administration pointed out that to take action in cases where false claims were made for vitamin potency,