

## ORDINARY MEETING, JANUARY 4, 1886.\*

THE REV. R. THORNTON, D.D., VICE-PRESIDENT, IN THE CHAIR.

The Minutes of the last Meeting were read and confirmed.

The CHAIRMAN then said : I have the pleasure of calling on Mr. St. Chad Boscawen, who is well known among Assyriologists, for his learning and research, to read his paper on "The Historical Evidences of the Migration of Abram." I think Mr. Boscawen has very properly used the designation "Abram," because the migration to which the paper refers took place, as we all know, at a time when he was called "Abram," and not "Abraham."

The following paper was then read by the Author :—

*HISTORICAL EVIDENCES OF THE MIGRATION  
OF ABRAM.*—BY W. ST. CHAD BOSCAWEN, ESQ.,  
F.R.Hist.Soc.

NOT many years ago it would have been considered almost impossible to deal with the subject of my paper this evening, and two strong objections would have been urged against its adequate treatment. In the first place, to many it would have seemed irreverent thus to place the Scriptures in comparative contact with secular records, and it would have been urged that to do so threw at once an onus of doubt upon their authenticity. A second, and still more forcible objection could then have been advanced, that provided that such a comparison was proposed, where were the monuments by which the Hebrew records were to be tested? The few traditions preserved by the Greek writers, Herodotus and Ctesias, were so brief and so full of late oral tradition and second-hand caricatured history of the ancient empires of the East that they could not throw any light upon the birth of the Hebrew nation. In like manner the writings of Josephus, the Greco-Hebrew historian, were too essentially based upon the Scriptures themselves to be admissible as evidence. If, however, thirty years ago, it was impossible to

---

\*The large number attending this meeting rendered it necessary to hold it at the Hall of the Society of Arts, which is close to the Institute's House.

institute such a comparison, and to produce evidence which would tend to prove the migration of Terah and his descendants to be a great and important historical event, such is no longer the case.

Only of late have the grave-mounds of the land of Chaldea yielded up the monuments and inscriptions which the decipherer has revived by his almost magic skill, and breathed into their long silent characters the breath of life, forcing them to become living witnesses in the cause of truth.

The discoveries made by Sir Henry Layard and M. Botta in Nineveh, followed by those of recent years resulting from the explorations of Mr. Hormuzd Rassam in Chaldea, have given to the history of the East a retrospective enlargement far beyond the expectations of the most ardent believer in the resurrection of the past.

When we remember that this series of historic records, won from the bosom of the earth, extends back to a period of twenty-five centuries before the Christian era in almost unbroken sequence, and that further still we find isolated and epoch-marking records, we may naturally expect that points of contact may be found between the Hebrew writings and these monuments, and that they will afford us the evidence we require.

Before proceeding to deal with these valuable stone commentaries which come from the dark storehouse of centuries, as new and illuminating lights, it is necessary to glance at the Hebrew account of the migration of Abram to see upon what points we have to obtain evidence to emphasise more strongly for those who doubt its accuracy, the historical character of the events, and their agreement with contemporary testimony.

The points we require to treat of are :—

- 1.—That the ancestors of Abram belonged to the Semitic branch of the human family (Gen. xi. 10–27).
- 2.—That their original home was on the east side of the Euphrates (Josh. xxiv. 2).
- 3.—That the dwelling-place of Terah was in Ur of the Casdim or Chaldeans, that is, in Chaldea (Gen. xi. 31, and Neh. ix. 7).
- 4.—That the first step in the migration was from Ur to Kharran, in North Mesopotamia, and that all the tribe of Terah took part in that migration (Gen. xi. 31).

- 5.—That while Abram journeyed still further to Canaan (Gen. xii. 5), the rest of the family of Terah remained in Kharran and established a colony there (Gen. xxiv. 10–15; xxix. 4).
- 6.—That at the time of the leaving of Chaldea, or shortly after, that country was ruled by a confederation of Mesopotamian tribes; at the head of which was the King of Elam (Gen. xiv.).

With these points before us, therefore, we turn to the monuments and inscriptions from Chaldea. The most ancient inscriptions of the land are the work of the ancient Akkadians, or mountaineers, who had come down from the mountains of the East to the plains of Chaldea, and brought with them the germs of civilisation and the first elements of the Cuneiform writing. A record of this migration is preserved in the Hebrew writings: "And it came to pass as they journeyed in the East, they found a plain in the land of Shinar and dwelt there" (Gen. xi. 2). Turning to the Cuneiform inscriptions, we meet with a most emphatic endorsement of this statement, both in tradition and legend, and by evidence of a still more solid character. In the legends and traditions of the earliest inhabitants of Chaldea, as preserved in the Deluge Tablet, and in the hymns and Magical litanies, we find all the traditions of origin centre round the "Mountain of the East," the "Mountain of the World," the "Mountain of the Nations," to which evidently reference is made by the Prophet Isaiah (xiv. 13): "I will sit upon the Mountain of Congregation in the uttermost parts of the North" \* (R.V.). That these people were the inventors of the Cuneiform mode of writing is shown by an examination of the characters composing the syllabary. The Cuneiform writing, like the Egyptian and Hittite characters, was originally pictorial, and we can see in these characters—that is, in the more primitive forms—a picture of the home and surroundings of the people who invented them. The pictures would be derived from the objects around, as an Esquimaux would draw a reindeer, but not a lion; a bear, but not a tiger; fir-trees, but not palms. So, when we turn to this ancient series of pre-historic sketches placed before us in the earliest forms of the Cuneiform characters, we at once see that they must have been depicted in a locality *different* from Chaldea—a more northern and mountainous one.

---

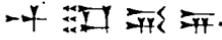
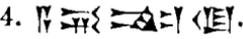
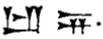
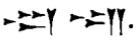
\* The arrangement of the cardinal points in Chaldea was not in true correspondence with the magnetic points, N., N.W., S., S.E., E., N.E., W., S.W. The writer, therefore, refers here to the north-east in the expression north.

Thus the sign for mountain and country  $\text{^A}$  are synonymous, showing that the country, *par excellence* the home, was a mountainous one. As an illustration of this, we may show how this pictorial representation of land was carried out in the pictorial systems of the Egyptians and Hittites. Thus the home royalty of the flat plains of the Nile valley was represented by the sign  $\text{≡}$  NEB-TA, "lord of the two lands," — being the ideograph of country; but the sign for a foreign land was  $\text{~}$ , a picture of mountain-peaks similar to that Hittite group which Professor Sayce identifies as the sign for country. In the fauna of the land we find individual ideographs for the bear and the wolf, but not for the lion, tiger, and jackal, which were common in Chaldea; and still more important is the fact that the compound ideograph for camel denotes an animal with two humps—that is the species of Upper Asia, as distinct from the Arabian species. In the flora we find the pine and cedar, but not the palm or the vine; while the earliest form of the house or dwelling was a cave. All these facts tend to show that if the Cuneiform writing did undergo a considerable enlargement and modification in Chaldea, yet, at any rate, the first elements were invented in a land differing in many respects from the delta of the Tigro-Euphrates valley. The language of these first inhabitants is known to us from numerous inscribed bricks and tablets, and the labours of Dr. Paul Haupt and the late M. François Lenormant have elucidated the nature of the grammar and vocabulary, showing it to differ entirely in both of these important features from the Semitic families. The mode of reading the characters from left to right, the use of ideographs and polyphones, all point to the non-Semitic origin of the writing, and this fact is stated most clearly by so great an authority on all relating to Semitic languages as M. Ernest Renan, who says, "No one in the present day can doubt that this (Turanian) civilisation possessed, and most probably created, the writing called Cuneiform,"—that is, he adds, if we take the word Turanian as a synonym for that which is neither Aryan or Semitic.

While the Chaldean inscriptions show, undoubtedly, a Turanian civilisation at the base of the culture of the nations of the Tigro-Euphrates Valley, they also reveal the important fact that at a very early period, tribes of Semitic nomads had come and settled in the land and had adopted the Cuneiform mode of writing which they found in use among their Akkadian countrymen.\* This borrowing must have taken

\* A curious and important record of the relative position of the homes of the Semitic and non-Semitic elements in the population of Chaldea is pre-

place at a very early period, for as early as B.C. 3750, the kings of North Chaldea wrote their inscriptions in Semitic Babylonian, thus affording proof of the existence of a Semitic population in the land. In the British Museum there is a small ovoid of pink and white marble, bearing an inscription of Sargon I., King of Agadhe, or Akkad, one of the quarters of the city of Sippara, the Sepharvaim of the Bible, in North Chaldea; and an inscribed vase belonging to Naram-Sin, the son of this ruler, was found by M. Fresnel, but unfortunately lost in the Tigris; also a third inscription of this period is the seal of IBNI SAR, the tablet-writer of Sargon I. This inscription, of which I give a facsimile, is one of particular interest, as showing the importance of the scribe caste even at this early period. All of these inscriptions are written in very archaic characters, quite in agreement with their great antiquity.\* The inscription upon the seal of Ibni-Sar reads, when transcribed into modern Babylonian characters,

1. 	2. 	3. 
AN - SAR - GA NI	SAR LUKII	SAR
<i>To Sargon</i>	<i>the good King?</i>	<i>King</i>
4. 	5. 	6. 
A - GA - DHIE	IB - NI -	SARRU
<i>King of Agadhe (AKKAD)</i>	<i>Ibni -</i>	<i>Sarru</i>
7. 	8. 	
DUP - SAR	ARAD - SU	
<i>the scribe</i>	<i>his servant.</i>	

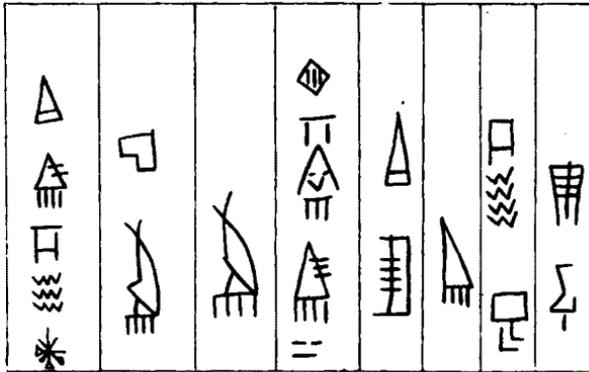
This word DUPSAR or TUPSARRU, literally "Tablet-writer," was of Akkadian origin, being composed of DUP tablet and

served in the names of the cardinal points. From a small astronomical tablet we learn that the North-East was the land which the Akkadians placed behind them, the land which they left in their journey from the East; while the Semites called the West Akharri—the "Hinterland" of the Germans—pointing to Arabia as their home.

\* The date of these inscriptions rests upon the statement, twice repeated in cylinder inscriptions, of Nabonidus, King of Babylon (B.C. 555-538), that in his restoration of the temple of the Sun-god he found in the foundations the memorial record of Naram-Sin, the son of Sargon, which for 3,200 (III <Y- II >- 3 × 10 × 100 + 2 × 100) years none of the kings his predecessors had seen (W.A.I. v. 64, ii. 61). In a second cylinder (W.A.I. v. 65, i. 38) the king also speaks of this discovery. In the former of these records the king speaks of the Kassite king Sagarakteyas, son of Kudur-Bel, or more probably Kudur-Kharbi, whose reign, he says, was 800 (VV >-) years

EARLY SEMITIC INSCRIPTIONS.

SARGON. B.C. 3750.



Wright & Stone, 1846

DUNGI. B.C. 2500.

