

weather, at any rate, are, over the greater part, very fair. As we approached Jerash we came across a cart, much like an ambulance wagon, accompanied by over a dozen well-mounted Circassians, which was bringing a Circassian bride all the way from K̄unieitra, through Jerash to 'Ammân. Over a considerable part of the way the horses were able to make quite a rapid progress, primitive though the cart wheels were. From Jerash to es-Salt we followed the greater part of the way a quite respectable road, made partly by the Circassians and partly by their neighbours, the Turkmans, of the village of er-Rummân. We passed at one place near this village no less than eighteen of their carts, each with a yoke of splendid oxen, loaded high with hay. I have never before seen hay carefully collected and stored away for the summer in this country. Although we left the road on approaching es-Salt, the Church Missionary Society teacher there told me that carts do from time to time come to that place; and the last few months I have seen several of them, loaded with tree trunks, wending their way to Jerusalem. These colonists to the east, and the Jewish colonists to the west, of the Jordan are doing much to open up means of communication.

RECENT DISCOVERIES NEAR GALILEE.

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By the kindness of Professor Sellin I am permitted to give the following brief report on *Archæological Excavations on Tell Ta'anek*:—

In March, Professor Dr. Sellin, of the Vienna University, commenced archæological excavations, under an Imperial firman, on the site of the old biblical Taanach, the present *Khirbet* and *Tell Ta'anek* (Ta'anuk). Both sites are situated some six miles to the north-west of the town of Jenin, on the high road leading from that place to Haifa, on the southern borders of the plain of Esdraelon. The tell rises from 120 to 140 feet above the surrounding plain. It has distinctly terraced slopes, and on its summit is a large pear-shaped plateau of a maximum length of 1,050 feet and a greatest width of about 450 feet. Its culminating point reaches nearly 800 feet above sea level. The summit showed heaps of scattered building stones and fallen walls, and a sharp edge bordering the plateau. The stones are of the soft Nâri limestones of the local formation. At the southern foot of the tell a small village of 22 huts is built, a few gardens containing figs, pomegranates, apples, and olive trees are planted, and on the north-east of the village, about 100 yards distant, we find a small mosque which, according to Guérin (in *Memoirs of the Palestine Exploration Fund*, vol. ii, p. 68), "passes for an ancient Christian church." The jambs of the northern door show very peculiar ornaments, the interior is vaulted and modern,

but the foundations, and especially those of neighbouring ruined buildings, may be Byzantine and Roman. 200 yards to the north of the mosque a monolith of Nâri stone, standing 6 feet high, with a rounded top, can be seen erected among foundation walls of square buildings; the monolith shows faint lines of a frame on its southern face as if surrounding an inscription, but the space where such must have stood is entirely weathered. The monument strikingly resembles that of *Sakhrat Eyyûb* (Job's stone), in the Haurân, only that it is not of basalt. At the northern foot of *Tell Ta'annek*, near the road, are several springs containing bad water, which are used by the natives. A large number of caves honeycomb the rocky slopes of the tell, several of which we explored. Some of them are of a large size, and connected with each other by narrow and low passages; every cave has in the rock-ceiling one or more air holes. Some of the caves must have been inhabited, others are of a sepulchral character. The large ones resemble the underground dwellings of *Derâ'd* in the Haurân.

In the maps of the Palestine Exploration Fund and elsewhere the name of the place is spelled *T'annuk*, but it should be *Ta'annek* or *Ta'annak*

(تَعْنَك), as pronounced by the Government officials and people of Jenin; the fellahin call it *Ta'ennej* or *Ta'ennedsh*, the last letter, *kaf* (ك) being changed, as usual, into *j* (ج).

On the plateau of the tell we began excavations at four different places. On the northern, eastern, and western edges, and in the centre of the mound, large trenches, 17 feet wide, were driven into the site; one of these in the centre reached a depth of over 36 feet until the rock was found, the western one touched the rock at 27 feet, the northern and eastern at considerably less depth. The *débris* through which the excavations pierced, showed different strata or building periods, each measuring from 5 feet to 6 feet in height, lined with ashes and remains of coal; in some parts heaps of ashes and burnt *débris* illustrate the fact that the old town has on more than one occasion been at least partially destroyed by fire. A large amount of pottery was found, the most recent near the surface being of Mohammedan origin, some centuries old. Below this we found Phœnician and Jewish remains, and several feet above the rock Amorite and early Jewish, probably also pre-Amorite, pottery. A number of these discoveries can be identified with the fragments of pottery found at Tell el-Hesi by Professor Flinters Petrie, whose excellent book on the excavations carried out on that ancient site is to every explorer of great value and interest, and an unrivalled guide.

In the western trench we struck, at a depth of 15 feet, the remains of a huge city wall of not less than 66 feet in width. This wall is composed of large flat blocks, unhewn and unshaped, quarried not in the immediate neighbourhood of the tell, for the limestone used is of a very hard structure. The wall is built up in rows of 6 feet to 8 feet thickness, the spaces between these rows are filled in with smaller stones; lime mortar

has evidently been used. Alongside the inner end of the wall, pottery jars, human remains, and bronze implements were found buried immediately above the rock. The wall must be Amorite. Remains of a glacis are visible on the exterior, the slope of which runs parallel to the present upper slopes of the tell.

On the northern trench we also struck a wall on the edge of the plateau, only a few feet below the surface. It is built up of small, soft stones, and is later than the western wall. Nearly rectangular to this wall, and close to it, two rows of upright monoliths, set several feet apart, each measuring 3 feet to 5 feet in height, are found. They are of the Nâri lime stone, are rectangular in shape, and dressed. Originally there must have been five or six monoliths in each row; the group is surrounded by rude walls founded on the earth, and probably representing an ancient Jewish shrine. Continuing the line of this row towards the south we found that it pointed exactly to a street found on the surface of the tell, which was bordered by a wall of masonry on each side. The shaft sunk below this modern Mohammedan street near the centre of the tell proved very interesting. Most of the Amorite and Phœnician remains of pottery were found here, where the rock inclines from north to south, forming an abrupt scarp of a maximum depth of over 36 feet. Below this cliff ancient pottery of probably a pre-Amorite date was discovered. Before reaching the rock in this shaft we struck a very peculiar place of sacrifice, composed of large hewn Nâri stones, set together in the shape of a dolmen, with long side slabs and shorter stones laid across the ends; the foundation upon which this work was built consists of flat stones, one of which contains a dish of about a foot in diameter for offerings. Remains of burnt seeds were found beneath the cracks in the stones. A little to the south of this place a single monolith of square shape, yet standing upright, was brought to daylight, the top being hollowed in the shape of a dish for offerings. Roughly-made walls surround these shrines.

The actual commanding summit of the tell is crowned by an Arab fort, 1 foot to 2 feet below the surface, the rooms of which have yet only been partly cleaned. Cisterns of considerable size surround this building, the largest one of which is still vaulted.

The trench on the eastern edge of the tell soon struck a brick wall; brick buildings, two cisterns, and heaps of Jewish pottery were found. Some jars were still unbroken, and contained the remains of very young children; the site may therefore represent an ancient Jewish children's cemetery, as no remains of grown people had been discovered. The bricks were made of very coarse material, and were perished when found; only a few dozen were brought intact to daylight which contained mason's marks. Amidst this infant cemetery a rock altar, with a rock-cut step, dishes for offerings, and channels for diverting the blood were found. Some 30 yards westwards from the edge the trench struck a well-built wall, with horizontal courses running from north to south; each stone was hewn; some had a conical shape; most

of them were not square and had bossed faces. The wall was followed up, and ultimately proved to be the western part of a Jewish fort of about 25 yards square, with buttresses and gates.

I prepared careful drawings of all these discoveries, which will be published by Professor Sellin. The marks and inscriptions found are very few, but, it is hoped, that the summit of the mount, below which the main Amorite buildings must have dominated, will yet show remarkable results. The excavations will be carried on until July. It seems worth mentioning, that practically no Roman remains of any kind have been traced, the site of Taanach has, therefore, so far not been occupied by Roman warriors.

The heat has been very intense during April, but, apart from occasional fevers, the health of the exploration party, consisting of four or five Europeans, an Imperial Commissioner, and 70 to 150 workmen and women, has been very satisfactory.

The camp consists of four large barracks, built of corrugated iron and lined with wood, a tent and huts made of mats, wood, and branches of trees. Caves were cleaned as shelter for the workmen, but did not answer the purpose.

A mile south-west of *Tell Ta'annek* lays the village of *Rummâneh*. Its kind and hospitable Sheikh, Mustafa el Ahmed, showed us around the village, and led us into a yard on the west containing a rock altar, with numerous cups for offerings, and the remains of an ancient building, made of carefully-dressed, large stones. The natives call this place *Kentset Nâifeh* (كنيسة نابفة), and a site, where once a large olive tree is said to have stood, 50 or 60 yards to the west of the building, bears the same name, *Zétânet Nâifeh*. Modern huts and stables have been built into these ancient remains, a plan of the *Kentset Nâifeh* can therefore not be prepared. The masonry seems Roman, but some parts may be Byzantine additions. Local tradition places a Christian church at this site. Numerous cisterns and wine presses are cut into the rocks surrounding the village.

Van de Velde identifies *Rummâneh* with the ancient city of Hadad-Rimmon; Guérin found no ancient buildings there (*Palestine Exploration Fund Memoirs*, vol. II, p. 68). It probably marks the site of Maximianopolis (*op. cit.*, p. 45).

The large village of *Sily*, one mile south-east of *Tell Ta'annek*, contains an old Mohanmedan building, called *el batta* or *el khâbi*, which has a length of 30 yards and a width of 20. Several oil presses and oil stones are erected in the vaulted interior. The building is said to be two centuries old, being used by the neighbouring villages as an olive mill; it contains ancient building stones. The village is separated into two quarters, which live in disharmony with each other. Ahmed es-Slimân, of the once great and mighty family of ej-Jeradât, governed the place and surrounding country in the beginning of the nineteenth century, and contended with the 'Abd el-Hâdy family and the Jarrâr for the over-lordship of the Northern Sh'arawiyeh country.