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MESOPOTAMIAN ARCHÆOLOGY

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MESOPOTAMIAN ARCHÆOLOGY

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE ARCHÆOLOGY OF BABYLONIA AND ASSYRIA. BY PERCY S. P. HANDCOCK, M.A. WITH NUMEROUS ILLUSTRATIONS, ALSO MAPS

NEW YORK: G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS
MDCCCCXII

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PREFACE

IN every department of science the theories of yesterday are perpetually being displaced by the empirical facts of to-day, though the ascertainment of these facts is frequently the indirect outcome of the theories which the facts themselves dissipate. Hence it is that the works of the greatest scholars and experts have no finality, they are but stepping-stones towards the goal of perfect knowledge. Since the publications of Layard, Rawlinson, Botta and Place much new material has been made accessible for the reconstruction of the historic past of the Babylonians and Assyrians, and we are consequently able to fill in many gaps in the picture so admirably, and as far as it went, so faithfully drawn by the pioneers in the field of excavation and research. This work, which owes its origin to a suggestion made by Dr. Wallis Budge, represents an endeavour on the part of the writer to give a brief account of the civilization of ancient Babylonia and Assyria in the light of this new material.

It is hoped that the infinitude of activities and pursuits which go to make up the civilization of any country will justify the writer's treatment of so many subjects in a single volume. It will be observed that space allotted to the consideration of the different arts and crafts varies on the one hand according to the relative importance of the part each played in the life of the people, and on the other hand according to the amount of material available for the study of the particular subject.

No effort has been spared to make the chapters on Architecture, Sculpture and Metallurgy as comprehensive as the limitations of the volume permit, while for

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the sake of those who desire to pursue the study of any of the subjects dealt with in this book, and to work up the sketch into a picture, a short bibliography is given at the end.

It has not been thought desirable to amass a vast number of references in the footnotes, and the writer is thereby debarred from acknowledging his indebtedness to the works of other writers on all occasions as he would like to have done.

In addition to the chapters which deal expressly with the cultural evolution of the dwellers in Mesopotamia, two chapters are devoted to the consideration of the Cuneiform writing—its pictorial origin, the history of its decipherment, and the literature of which it is the vehicle, while another chapter is occupied with a historical review of the excavations. The short chronological summary at the end obviously makes not the slightest pretension to even being a comprehensive summary ; it merely purports to give the general chronological order of some of the better known rulers and kings of Babylonia and Assyria to whom allusion is made in this volume, together with a notice of some of the more significant landmarks in the history of the two countries.

The writer's thanks are due to the Trustees of the British Museum for permission to photograph some of the objects in the Babylonian and Assyrian Collections, and to Dr. Wallis Budge for facilities and encouragement in carrying out the work ; to the University of Chicago Press for allowing him to reproduce illustrations from the *American Journal of Semitic Languages* and also diagrams from Harper's Memorial Volumes ; to M. Ernest Leroux for permitting him to make use of some of the plates contained in the monumental works of De Sarzec and Heuzey, and to M. Ch. Eggimann of the "Libraire Centrale d'art et d'architecture ancienne maison Morel," for his very kind permission to reproduce two of the plates contained in Dieulafoy, *L'Art*

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Antique de la Perse. He is similarly indebted to the Deutsche-Orient Gesellschaft for allowing him to make an autotype copy of one of the plates in Andrae's *Der Anu-Adad Tempel*. He further desires to acknowledge the generosity of Prof. H. V. Hilprecht in allowing him to make use of many of the illustrations contained in his numerous publications, and also of Dr. Fisher for permitting him to reproduce some of the photographs contained in his magnificently illustrated work on the excavations at Nippur. He is very sensible of his indebtedness to these two gentlemen, as also to M. Leroux and the Deutsche-Orient Gesellschaft, for the photographs of excavations in progress are obviously of a unique character and admit of no repetition; he further desires to express his obligations to Dr. W. Hayes Ward for his most kind permission to copy a number of seal-impressions and other illustrations contained in his recently published work—*Cylinder-Seals of Western Asia*. Lastly, he welcomes the opportunity of acknowledging the kindness of Mr. Mansell for allowing him to publish many photographs of objects in the British Museum and the Louvre contained in his incomparable collection, and for in other ways facilitating the illustration of this volume. Most of the plans and drawings used for this volume are the work of Miss E. K. Reader, who has performed her task with her usual skill.

P. S. P. H.

March, 1912.

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ERRATA ET CORRIGENDA

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p. 6, l. 18, *for* 2500 B.C. *read* 2400 B.C.
p. 43, l. 7 from foot, *read* both French and English explorers
p. 62, l. 2, *for* considerable *read* much
p. 89, l. 5, *for* ± *read* —
p. 110, l. 2, *for* 2500 B.C. *read* 2400 B.C.
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p. 130, l. 23, *for* 2400 B.C. *read* 2350 B.C.
p. 155, l. 31, *for* having *read* have
p. 235, l. 9 from foot, *for* Sumu-la-ilu *read* Sumu-ilu
p. 247, l. 1, *for* 2500 B.C. *read* 2400 B.C.
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Mesopotamian Archæology

CHAPTER I—INTRODUCTION

(*a*) LAND AND PEOPLE

THE Mesopotamian civilization shares with the Egyptian civilization the honour of being one of the two earliest civilizations in the world, and although M. J. de Morgan's excavations at Susa the ruined capital of ancient Elam, have brought to light the elements of an advanced civilization which perhaps even ante-dates that of Mesopotamia, it must be remembered that the Sumerians who, so far as our present knowledge goes, were the first to introduce the arts of life and all that they bring with them, into the low-lying valley of the Tigris and Euphrates, probably themselves emigrated from the Elamite plateau on the east of the Tigris ; at all events the Sumerians expressed both "mountain" and "country" by the same writing-sign, the two apparently being synonymous from their point of view ; in support of this theory of a mountain-home for the Sumerians, we may perhaps further explain the temple-towers, the characteristic feature of most of the religious edifices in Mesopotamia, as a conscious or unconscious imitation in bricks and mortar of the hills and ridges of their native-land, due to an innate aversion to the dead-level monotony of the Babylonian plain, while it is also a significant fact that in the earliest period Shamash the Sun-god is represented with one foot resting on a mountain,

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or else standing between two mountains. However this may be, the history of the Elamites was intimately wrapped up with that of the dwellers on the other side of the Tigris, from the earliest times down to the sack of Susa by Ashur-bani-pal, king of Assyria, in the seventh century. Both peoples adopted the cuneiform system of writing, so-called owing to the wedge-shaped formation of the characters, the wedges being due to the material used in later times for all writing purposes—the clay of their native soil—: both spoke an agglutinative, as opposed to an inflexional language like our own, and both inherited a similar culture.

A further, and in its way a more convincing argument in support of the mountain-origin theory is afforded by the early art of the Sumerians. On the most primitive seal cylinders[1] we find trees and animals whose home is in the mountains, and which certainly were not native to the low-lying plain of Babylonia. The cypress and the cedar-tree are only found in mountainous districts, but a tree which must be identified with one or the other of them is represented on the early seal cylinders; it is of course true that ancient Sumerian rulers fetched cedar wood from the mountains for their building operations, and therefore the presence of such a tree on cylinder seals merely argues a certain acquaintance with the tree, but *ceteris paribus* it is more reasonable to suppose that the material earthly objects depicted, were those with which the people were entirely familiar and not those with which they were merely casually acquainted. Again, on the early cylinders the mountain bull, known as the *bison bonasus*, assumes the rôle played in later times by the lowland water-buffalo. This occurs with such persistent regularity that the inference that the home of the Sumerians in those days was in the mountains is almost inevitable. Again, as Ward points out, the composite man-bull Ea-bani, the

[1] Cf. Ward, *Seal Cylinders*, p. 24 ff.

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companion of Gilgamesh, has always the body of a bison, never that of a buffalo. So too the frequent occurrence of the ibex, the oryx, and the deer with branching horns, all argues in the same direction, for the natural home of all these animals lay in the mountains.

The Mesopotamian valley may, for the immediate purpose of this book, be divided into two halves, a dividing-line being roughly drawn between the two rivers just above Abû Habba (Sippar); the northern half embraces the land occupied by the Assyrians, and the southern half that occupied by the Babylonians. The precise date at which Assyria was colonized by Babylonia is not known, but to the first known native[1] king of Assyria, Irishum, we may assign an approximate date of 2000 B.C. Babylonia proper is an alluvial plain the limits of which on the east and west are the mountains of Persia and the table-land of Arabia respectively. This valley has been gradually formed at the expense of the sea's domain, for in the remote past the Persian Gulf swept over the whole plain at least as far northward as the city of Babylon where sea-shells have been found, and probably a good deal further. It owes its formation to the silt brought down by the two rivers and deposited at the mouth of the Gulf: the amount of land thus yearly reclaimed from the sea in early times is not known, but as Spasinus Chorax the modern Mohammerah, which is now some forty-seven miles inland, was situated on the sea-coast in the time of Alexander, we know that the conquest of the land over the sea has been progressing since his time at the rate of 115 feet yearly.

Thus the physical characteristics of the country in which Babylonian civilization was developed, if it was not actually the place of its origin, form a close parallel to those of Lower Egypt; in Egypt however

[1] Cf. Pinches, *Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Archæology*, 1910, p. 42.

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such evidence as there is, would indicate the South, or Upper Egypt as the earliest scene of civilization, the North being conquered by the Mesniu (Metal-users) of the South, not only in the battlefield but also in culture and civilization. Both countries have but a small sea-board where their rivers find an outlet, the Nile into the Mediterranean, and the Tigris and Euphrates into the Persian Gulf; both countries had emerged and were yearly emerging out of the sea, for it is certain that at one time the Mediterranean penetrated as far south as Esneh, while as already mentioned, the Persian Gulf extended at least as far as Babylon; we are accordingly not surprised to find in both the Babylonian and Egyptian cosmologies a tradition which told of the creation of the world out of a primæval mass of water, though this idea looms less conspicuously in the Egyptian than in the Babylonian and Hebrew cosmologies. Both countries also were visited by a yearly inundation which, while it brought no small amount of devastation in its train, at the same time deposited the mud so essential to the enrichment of the soil, the desolation being checked or at least mitigated in either country by an elaborate system of irrigation canals, which same canals were in the summer-time the means of conveying the life-giving water to the dry and thirsty land. Both Babylonia and Egypt enjoy a warm climate, though Egypt is much more dry and therefore healthier, and the corresponding dryness of its soil has preserved the tangible evidences of its ancient history in a far more perfect condition than the marsh-country of Lower Mesopotamia; and lastly the climate of Egypt is not subject to the same violent changes of temperature incident to the seasons in the Valley of the Euphrates.

The evidence of any racial connection between the earliest known inhabitants of the two countries is very meagre; as regards their arts, their customs and their language the Sumerians on the one hand, and the pre-

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dynastic and early dynastic Egyptians on the other, show a complete independence of each other; both countries were probably invaded at an early period of their histories by the Semites, who in the case of Mesopotamia completely supplanted their predecessors of different stock, but who were at the same time themselves absorbed by the higher civilization of the Sumerians to which they were the destined heirs, and to the further development of which they themselves were to contribute so largely; but at what period or periods the Semites swept over Egypt and the north coast of Africa, impressing their indelible and unmistakable stamp upon the foundation-structure of the Egyptian and Libyan languages is not known; whenever it was, we can safely assume that their advent took place in prehistoric days, for the hieroglyphs and probably also the language of the dynastic Egyptians were the natural development of the language and crude picture-signs of their predecessors, and the theory of a violent break in the continuity of early Egyptian civilization at the commencement of the first dynasty is daily becoming more untenable. We are similarly unable to assign any definite date to the arrival of the Semites in the Mesopotamian Valley, though the Neo-Babylonian King Nabonidus gives us a traditional date for Shar-Gâni-sharri[1] (Sargon) and his son Narâm-Sin, kings of Agade, who, so far as we know, established the first Semitic empire in the country. There were indeed Semitic Kings of Kish before the time of Shar-Gâni-sharri, but the extent of their sway was clearly very limited compared with the far-reaching empire of the rulers of Agade. But there are reasons for doubting the accuracy of the traditional date of 3750 B.C. which Nabonidus assigns to Narâm-Sin, the chief reason being the extraordinary gap in the yieldings of Babylonian excavations between

[1] "Sargon" (i.e. Sharru-ukin) was the name given to this ancient king by the later Assyrian scribes.

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the time of Shar-Gâni-sharri and Narâm-Sin, and that of Gudea, the priest-king of Lagash in Southern Babylonia, who reigned about 2500 B.C.; that is to say, concerning a period of about 1300 years the excavations have afforded us practically no information whatever, while both at the beginning and at the close of that period, we have abundant evidence of the civilization and history of the inhabitants of Babylonia; secondly, the style of art characteristic of the time of Gudea and the kings of Ur, as also the style of writing found in their inscriptions, presuppose no such long interval between the time of Sargon and their own day. But there are yet other considerations which are even more potent, and which deserve greater attention than has been up to the present accorded to them, depending as they do upon the stratification of the ruined mounds themselves. Now it is a very significant fact that the architectural remains of Ur-Engur (*circ.* 2500 B.C.) at Nippur, are found immediately above those of Narâm-Sin, for such an arrangement is hardly conceivable if a period of some thirteen hundred years separated these two rulers. Again, the excavations carried on by Dr. Banks for the University of Chicago at Bismâya have been productive of similar evidence, for immediately below the ruined ziggurat of Dungi, Ur-Engur's successor on the throne of Ur, large square bricks of the size and shape characteristic of the time of Shar-Gâni-sharri were discovered, while among the bricks a strip of gold inscribed with the name of Narâm-Sin was also brought to light. The evidence afforded by the excavations on these two sites would thus appear to be exceedingly strong against the traditional date recorded by Nabonidus.[1]

It is therefore tempting to reason that that long silent period, the silence of which cannot be adequately accounted for, had no existence at all, that Nabonidus' statement is therefore to be discredited, and that Shar-

[1] Cf. however Fisher in *Records of the Past*, Vol. II, part iv, p. 116.

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