

Chapter Two - The Egyptians, The Babylonians, The Cretans, The Hittites



Making Pottery In Ancient Egypt - A wall-painting in a pyramid.

A. The Early Egyptians

We have already dropped a hint that the man who first grew corn regularly, took a great step towards civilisation. Let us discuss this a little further. When a man found a patch of fertile soil he would want to settle there. Unlike the wandering shepherds or hunters, he would think it worth his while to build a solid house, and his wife would do her best to make it comfortable. He would plant little trees round it. He might never see them tall and thick himself, but he liked to think his children would live on at the farm and the trees would give them shade and shelter. If he had neighbours in his happy valley, he would come to some agreement with them about boundaries, lost cattle or the water supply, and so there would develop a greater respect and desire for law and order. A little temple might be built to the Sun-God or the Earth-Goddess, and at certain times of the year they would meet for a festival. Before long there might be a hundred families in the valley, who felt vaguely that they belonged to a community.

Some of the men would become noted for being very handy with tools, and the other farmers would frequently ask them to put up a barn or mend a plough. One or two of these men would give up farming altogether and become carpenter, mason, metal-worker or weaver, their daily practice giving them increasing skill and speed. And so a class of craftsmen would arise who would pass a lifetime's experience on to their sons or the sons of other farmers who came as apprentices, because there were already enough brothers on the farm.

The most conveniently situated of such villages would grow into towns where craftsmen settled because there would be more regular work for them to do in such a central community. Farmers and their wives would come there to exchange their surplus produce for new tools, clothes or home requirements. In town or country some families, either through unusual prosperity or bold leadership in a time of danger, would win great respect, and if their descendants could cause that respect to be maintained indefinitely, and were very proud of their descent, we should have the beginnings of "nobility." As religion grew more complicated, priests would become an important class. Finally some very clever and daring noble would persuade or force the other nobles to recognise him as their leader, and he would be hailed as the first king of the land.

From what we said at first, we should expect all these processes to take place first in those parts of the ancient world where there were great stretches of fertile soil. And this is just what happened. For the first civilisations arose in Egypt in the valley of the Nile, and in Mesopotamia (or Iraq) along the lower course of the Tigris and Euphrates.

Look at Egypt on the map and see how little of that country matters except the long valley of the Nile. It is only the last stretch of the Nile that you see on this map, although even this is about seven hundred miles long. For most of this distance (except for the large delta, once a gulf, that silted up) the river flows along a narrow valley which varies from five to thirty miles across. The valley ends abruptly in steep cliffs on either side, and from the top of those cliffs stretches the barren, uninhabited desert, one hundred to two hundred miles of it eastwards to the Red Sea while westwards are the limitless wastes of the Sahara. Egypt, then, is really a long, narrow, sunken oasis, with the Nile for its well, where, since the dawn of History, corn, beans, date-palms and other fruit trees have flourished.

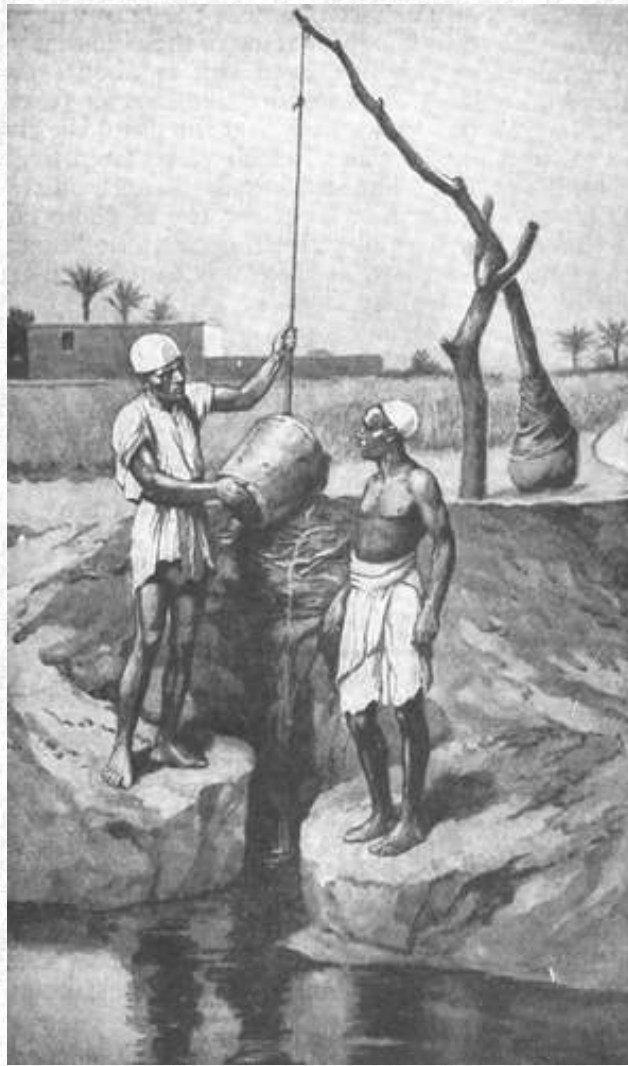
So hot is Egypt, and so little rain ever falls (they say London gets in a year as much as Egypt in a century), that the valley too would

be a desert if the Nile did not overflow its banks every autumn in a mighty flood, and leave behind it, when it flows in its channel again, a covering of fertile mud which is at once ploughed and sown. When this rich soil dries up again, it is irrigated with water caught in dykes and pools during the flood, and when these too dry up, the water has to be baled up on a rough-and-ready sort of crane, from the river itself. The flood is due to the very heavy summer rainfall in the Abyssinian mountains where the Blue Nile and other eastern tributaries rise.



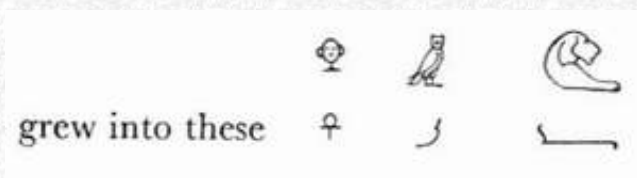
Date Palm

So the first thing we learn in History is that the Egyptians grew numerous in this fertile valley, and learned to combine together to control the water. They studied the sun, moon, and stars in order to know more accurately when the river would rise and fall, and simple geometry would be necessary to survey the fields.



Irrigation On The Nile

Very early on they learned to write, an art which proves that they were intelligent, and in turn enabled them to be more intelligent still. As in all the earliest forms of writing, they began with little pictures which told a story. Then they took a big step forward. You know when you play charades, you take a long word and split it up into short words which have really nothing to do with the long word, but which are accidentally contained in it. The Egyptians did the same. Supposing they wanted to write "before." They might draw a little picture of a bee and put next to it the figure four. In time the pictures were greatly simplified, for speed and convenience, so that for instance these signs,



which could be drawn with quick strokes of the brush.

For most of their writing the Egyptians used paper, which they made by taking the inner rind of a tall, thick reed that was common in the marshes. They fastened strips of this together, then gummed another layer right across this at right angles. On this they wrote with a brush that was simply a stick frayed out at the end. They used black ink usually, with red for special headings, as we do.

So Egyptian scribes wrote down particulars of crops and cattle, of cargoes that came up the river, of the building of huge temples and tombs. Priests wrote prayers and magic spells. And one of the earliest uses to which writing was put was to make careful records of the kings and queens of Egypt.

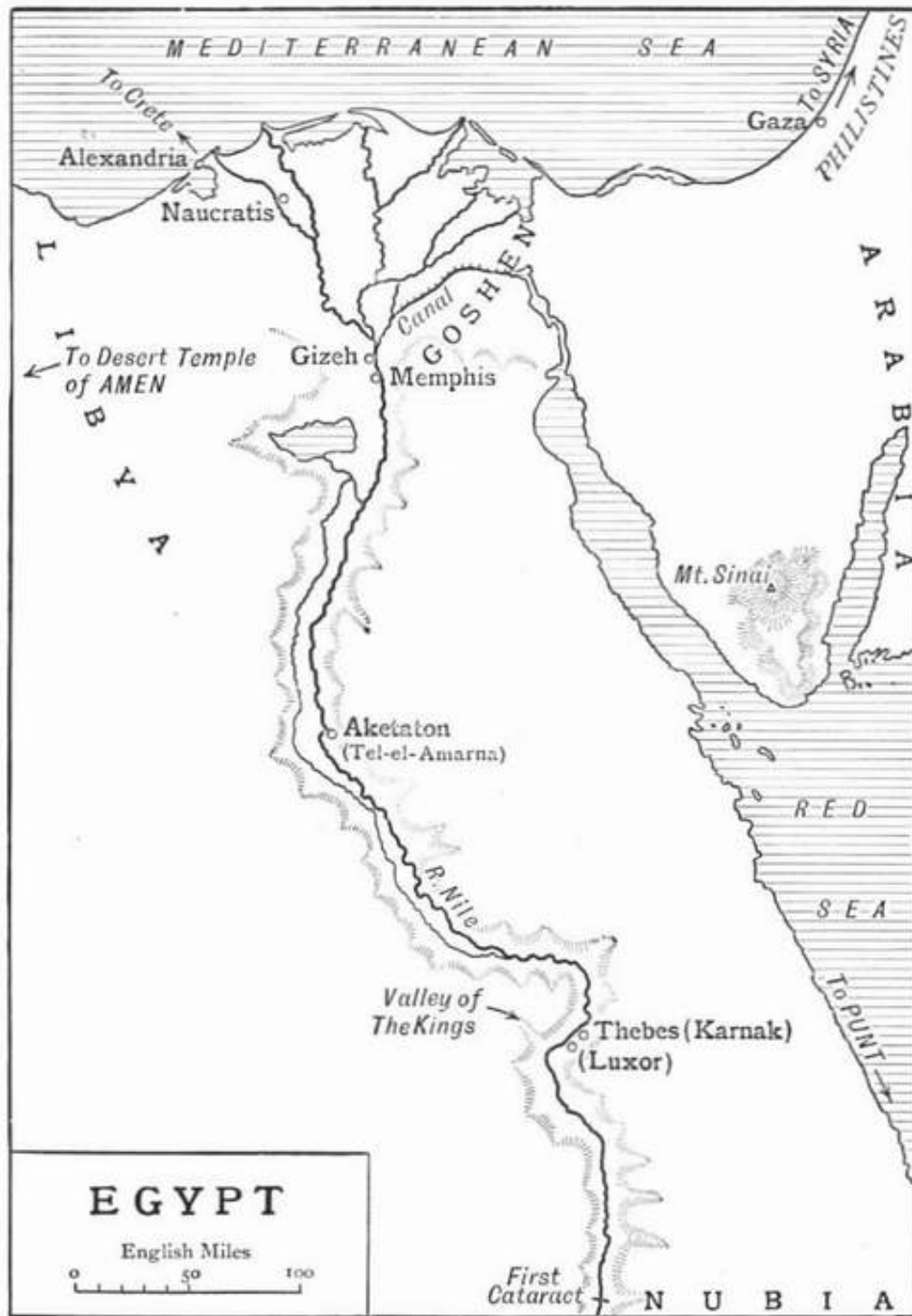


Papyrus Reeds

These rulers are divided into dynasties, a dynasty being a series of rulers descended from the same ancestors, and so having some family relationship to each other. These records tell us that at first there were two kings of Egypt, one ruling the Delta, the other the upper valley, but that about 3500 B.C. the king of the upper river conquered the other and the two kingdoms were henceforth united, the capital being Memphis, about twenty-five miles south of modern Cairo and on the other side of the river. About 3000 B.C. a powerful line of monarchs began to rule (Fourth and Fifth Dynasties), who built those mighty tombs for themselves which we call the Pyramids of Gizeh, a few miles south-west of Cairo. You can begin to have some idea of the power that these kings controlled when you learn that each side of the largest pyramid is two hundred and fifty yards long, that it is a hundred and sixty yards high, and that it is composed of two million three hundred thousand blocks of granite, each weighing on an average two and a half tons, yet accurately placed to the fraction of an inch.

The head of the Sphinx is really a statue of one of these monarchs, for the Egyptian kings were fond of erecting colossal images of themselves.

After about 2500 B.C. the kings were not so mighty, and local nobles and princes ruled their provinces pretty much as they pleased, so that the next three hundred years are sometimes called the Feudal Age of Egypt. Then about 2200 B.C. came another strong line of monarchs (Twelfth Dynasty), who brought the nobles to heel again, and whose reigns were long, peaceful and prosperous. They improved the control of the Nile waters by building great embankments, draining marshes and making careful observations and surveys of the river.



Map - Egypt

They encouraged commerce with distant regions. A canal was dug from the most southerly point of the delta to the Red Sea. Gold came from Nubia, cedar wood from the forests of Lebanon in Syria, strangely decorated pottery and richly dyed stuffs from Crete, and valuable spices and plants from "the land of Punt" at the southern end of the Red Sea.



The Big Round Up Of Cattle On An Egyptian Estate



A Boat On The Nile

To this age of sea-faring belongs one of the favourite fairy tales of the Egyptians. An Egyptian noble was sailing "to the mines of Pharaoh" in a large ship with a crew of a hundred and fifty bold sailors. A great storm arose, the ship was wrecked and only the nobleman survived, being washed on to an island, a pleasant place with all sorts of fruits growing and strange birds flitting by. The castaway lit a fire and had just eaten some fruit, when suddenly there was a roar like thunder, and the island shook. He looked around him and saw a huge golden serpent with a beard three feet long approaching him. But the monster was quite friendly, carried him gently to his lair and asked, "What has brought thee, little one, what has brought thee to this isle of the sea?" When the monster heard the tale of the shipwreck he said, "Fear not, little one, and let not thy face be sad. You shall dwell four months in this isle with me and my brethren and my children, for there are seventy-five of us in all."



A Queen Of Ur

Then a ship of thine own land shall come and you shall go home and embrace thy wife and children." When the four months had passed, an Egyptian ship did arrive at the island. Whereupon the monster, who claimed to be Prince of the land of Punt, bade his guest a friendly farewell, loading him with gifts of perfume, scented woods, ivory and baboons.

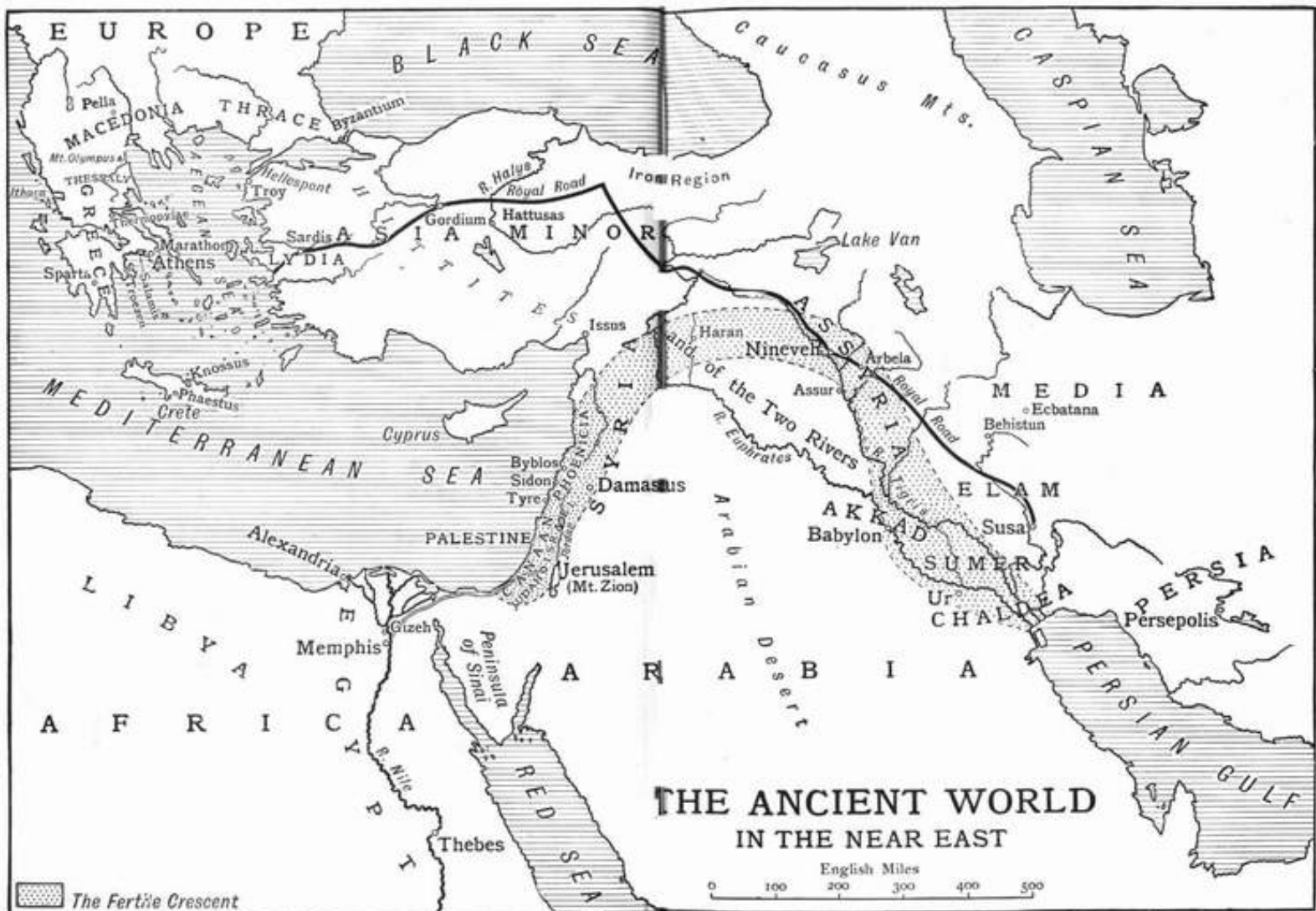
About 1800 B.C. the peace of Egypt was rudely interrupted. So far we have not heard of invaders in Egypt. On all sides there was sea or desert to protect the land, and it was because of this that Egypt had enjoyed so long and so prosperous a history. Now on the other side of the Red Sea from Egypt lies the vast peninsula of Arabia. It was probably not so dry in those far-off days as it is to-day, and its grasslands supported many tribes of fighting shepherds. Many a time in History has the fierce onset of these Arabian tribes shaken empires. And they play their part in the earliest chapters. For a host of these Semites, as they are called, found their way across the Sinai peninsula and conquered Egypt. Their war-chariots terrified the Egyptians, who had never seen horses before. For the first time foreign kings sat on the ancient throne of Egypt. The records tell us little about the "Hyksos," or Shepherd Kings, for the Egyptians were very much ashamed and angry at their downfall. So let us leave the Egyptians for a while, with their hearts full of bitterness, and travel further east still, to learn something of another civilisation which had also grown up in a great river-valley.

B. The Early Babylonians

About a thousand miles east of the Nile delta lies another vast river mouth, where the united Tigris and Euphrates run into the head of the Persian Gulf. To reach it from Egypt you would have to make a very uncomfortable journey, whether you crossed the great Syrian desert or sailed round the immense peninsula of Arabia, i.e. down the Red Sea, along the Gulf of Aden and up the Persian Gulf, the hottest seas in the world. When our story begins, that is, about 3500 B.C. (as in the case of Egypt), the two rivers ran separately into the sea, although, then as now, there were minor channels connecting them.



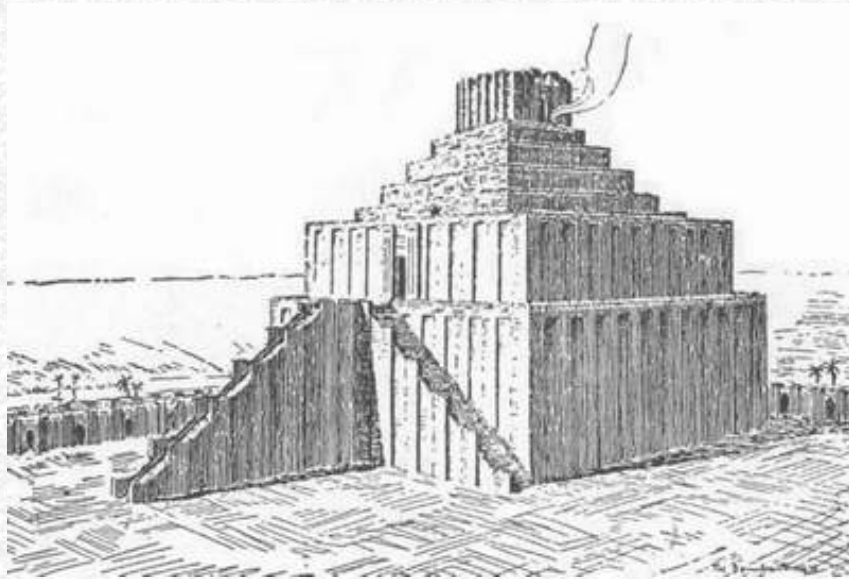
Irrigation On The Euphrates - A leather tank automatically dips in the river, rises and empties itself in the channel running between the date palms. It is attached to a water-wheel.





Map - The Ancient World (In The Near East)

The district between the river mouths was called Sumer. And in the last stretch of the Euphrates valley we find well-organised cities which already seem to have a long history behind them even in 3500 B.C.!



The Ziggurat Of Ur, As It May Have Been

Judging from their sculptures, the Sumerians were a short, thick-set race. Their round heads and faces were shaven, and they wore a sort of thick woolen or sheepskin kilt and, in cold weather, a cloak. By careful drainage and irrigation they had turned the swamps of the river mouth into rich farm land, centering round well-built cities, each ruled by a king who was also the high priest. The cities were keen rivals, and there was endless war between them. In each town the most prominent feature was a tall temple-tower, close to but separate from the temple itself. These temple towers ("ziggurats" they called them) resembled the newer modern type of "skyscraper," being a series of cubes of decreasing size piled on top of one another. A number of flights of stairs (or rather ramps) led up the outside of the tower to an altar near the top where the most solemn ceremonies took place. There is, no doubt, an echo of the building of some colossal ziggurat in the Bible story of the tower of Babel. The temple itself comprised a whole collection of buildings, apart from the actual place of worship.



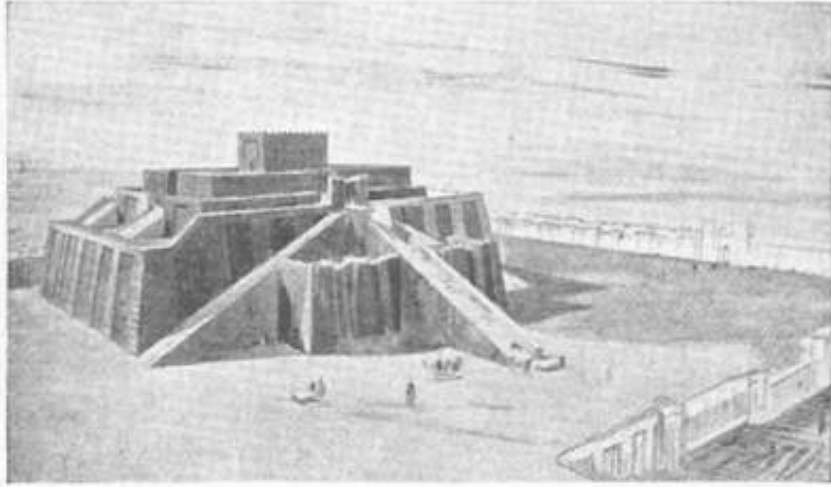
The Ziggurat Of Ur

Remains of the first storey, showing one front and two side ramps. As clay was the only building material easily available, the cities of the Euphrates were built of soft, sun-baked brick.

There was usually a large courtyard in front which acted as a public meeting-place, market and exchange. There would be the living-

quarters of the priests, cells for pilgrims, places to store the produce from the large farms which every temple owned, and strong rooms for the deposit of gold and other valuables, for the priests acted as bankers. The city school was at the temple, too, the priests teaching boys and girls. Their system of writing was quite different from that of the Egyptians, though it began in the same way with picture signs.

They took tablets of damp clay and pressed the end of a simple wooden tool into it so as to make narrow, wedge-shaped marks. Many thousands of such tablets have been discovered, and every big museum has some. When you see them, you will be struck by the smallness and neatness of the characters that run so evenly between the parallel lines ruled across.



The Ziggurat of Ur, Another Restoration - From a drawing by F.G. Newton.


Important documents were specially baked to harden them, and had a wrapper of clay put over them which acted as an envelope or was sometimes made into a second copy of the document. This could be stamped with a special seal design by running an embossed little cylinder over it while it was still wet. As in the case of Egyptian writing, the early picture signs were simplified for convenience. Take, for instance, the sign for "sun" or "day." It was not convenient to draw a circle (the usual picture symbol everywhere for day) with the tool. So they made it in four strokes like this:


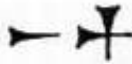








But then they got tired of altering the angle of the tool, and they changed all the signs so as to make as few changes of angle as possible.



Brick Letter Of Hammurabi

So “ day ” was written at last like this . Here are other examples of these changes.

God		
Mountain		
Ox		
Fish		

To the north of Sumer there later arose another group of cities, inhabited by bearded Semites from the southern deserts who had settled down to town life. This district was known as Akkad. For long there was rivalry between the two groups of cities, but finally the Semites conquered the Sumerians, and the two districts were united. But the Akkadians, realising that the Sumerians had a higher standard of life, copied their arts and employed them as officials, but kept their own Semitic language.

It was later in this period, after another inroad of Semites, that one of the cities of Akkad, about four hundred miles up the Euphrates, grew to be the capital of the combined kingdom. This was Babylon, in its day the greatest centre of civilisation and commerce in the

ancient world. One of the early rulers of Babylon, Hammurabi (2123-2081 B.C.), is the most outstanding figure in early History. He checked the enemies who constantly threatened Babylon from the mountains to the east and the north, and having safeguarded his realm from the terrors of invasion, he devoted his great energy and genius to making his people happy and prosperous. As befitted the descendant of a pastoral race, he spoke of himself as a good shepherd who carefully tended his flock. "... I dug the canal called 'Hammurabi-the-abundance-of-the-people,' which brings abundant water to the people of Sumer and Akkad. Its banks on both sides I turned into corn land. The scattered people of Sumer and Akkad I gathered, with pasturage and watering I provided them and settled them in peaceful dwellings."

A very important relic of Hammurabi has come down to us. (It is now in the Louvre, Paris, but there is an exact copy in the British Museum.) It is a pillar of polished black stone, eight feet high. On one side of its rounded top there is a carving of Hammurabi in conference with Shamash, the Sun-God and lover of Justice. Beneath this, round and round the pillar, there are over three thousand six hundred lines of writing, setting out the ancient laws which the king had collected and arranged. The Code, as it is called, was severe, and inflicted many barbarous punishments, but we know from other sources that the full penalty was seldom exacted, and the wrongdoer was often let off with a fine. We learn from the Code that people were divided into four classes, nobles, priests, common people and slaves. The punishments for the nobles were the most severe. The priests were numerous, and the most highly educated class.



The Top Of The Stele Of Hammurabi - Showing the king before Shamash the Sun-God.

The chief gods they served were Marduk, the special hero-god of Babylon itself, Ishtar, the cruel goddess of love and war, and Shamash, the Sun-God and lover of justice. Women were allowed to enter professions, and trade on their own account, and in other ways enjoyed rights which with us they have only regained in modern times.

After the reign of Hammurabi the glory of Babylonia declined. The Hittites (of whom we shall hear more later) began to raid from the north-west. More serious still, the Kassites, mountain tribes from the east who used horses, first raided, then in growing numbers settled in the land, and finally annexed it. So that Kassite kings ruled Babylon for six hundred years (1746-1169 B.C.). But it still remained the most important city of its period. It drew traffic from the Mediterranean and from the Far East, by land and by sea. And it was not merely the greatest city of merchants. Its central position in the ancient world and its high standard of civilisation made it the teacher of less developed nations. Its laws and its alphabet, its weights and measures, were adopted by the surrounding peoples. It is from the Babylonians that we get our divisions of time, for they put astronomy on a scientific basis.

They divided the year up into a period of twelve moons, and they knew that this did not quite correspond to a year according to the sun, so they corrected their calendar accordingly. They divided the month into weeks of seven days, each seventh day being a "Sabattu" or day of rest, and the day they divided into twenty-four hours. They discovered the planets and named the days after them. They observed the twelve groups of stars through which the sun seems to pass in the course of the year, and so gave us "the signs of the Zodiac." It was they who divided the circle into three hundred and sixty degrees, and invented sun-dials and water-clocks. They used simple algebra.

The Babylonians were greatly interested in forecasting the future, especially by studying the organs of sacrificed animals and by that special form of astronomy which we call astrology. Both these practices spread throughout the ancient world. They had a silly and dreary idea of the life after death, namely that people lay half awake and motionless in dust and gloom, and so they dreaded death.

And now, till its glory revives again about eleven hundred years later, we must leave Babylon and its ziggurats adorned with coloured tiles, its date palms and orchards, caravans and barges, its priests, gardeners, merchants and officials, and the shepherds and fishermen in their mud-and-reed huts by the Euphrates.



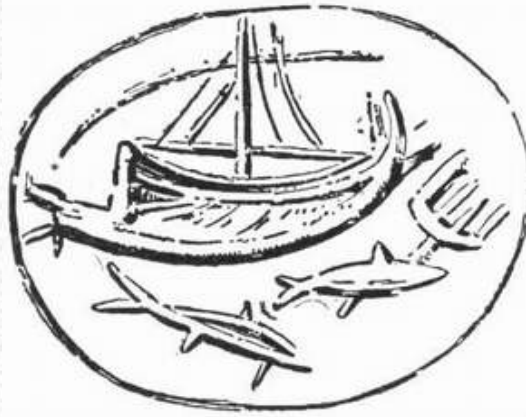
A Priest-Prince Of Crete - A beautifully coloured wall-painting in the palace at Cnossus.

C. The Cretans

The third of the earliest civilisations in the world, which we are going to study now, is quite different from the other two. It was a sea-empire with its capital in the island of Crete, which lies between Greece and Egypt. We know very little as yet about its history, and perhaps we shall never know very much. It came to an end very suddenly, and there are hardly any written records, nor can we yet understand the few that are left. The Greeks had legends about a powerful king named Minos who lived in Crete long before their history began and who ruled the seas with his strong navy; and the early Greek poet Homer wrote:

*"There is a land amid the wine-dark sea
Called Crete; rich, fruitful, girded by the waves,
She boasts unnumbered men and ninety towns.*

*One city in extent the rest exceeds,
Cnossus, the city in which Minos reigned."*

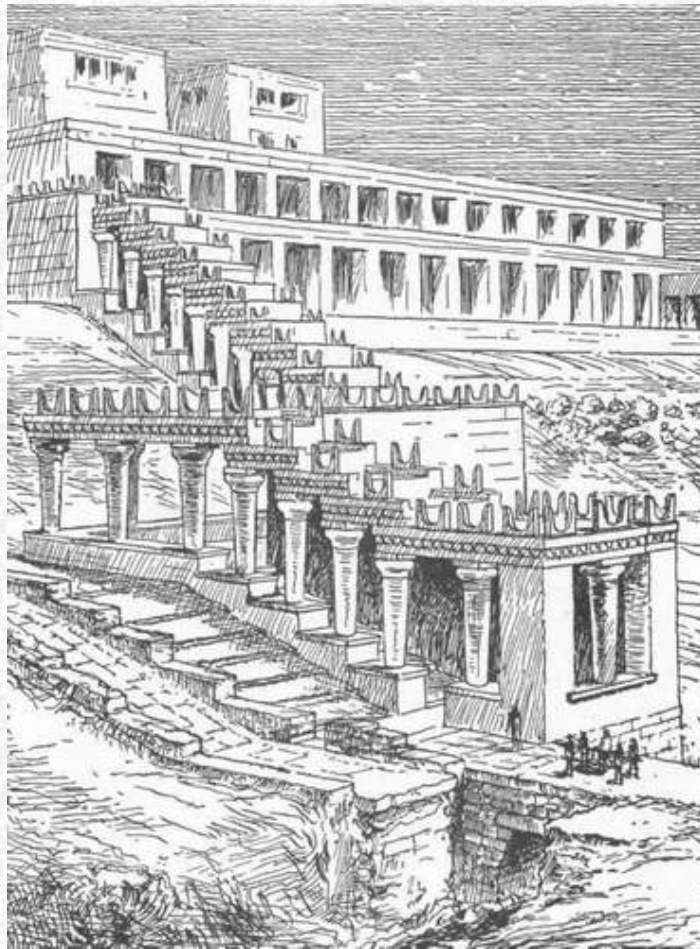


Cretan Seal-Stone Showing Ship And Dolphins

But until recent years nobody dreamt that there was any truth behind these legends. Then an English scholar began to dig in Crete, and he dug up a whole civilisation which had never been even suspected before. So that although we still know very little about the history of the Cretans, we know a good deal about their way of life, which is at least as interesting, if not more so!

Both at Cnossus near the north coast, and at Phaestus near the south, excavations revealed luxurious palaces (with curiously modern sanitation) not on the colossal scale of the Eastern empires, but elaborately planned, with a great number of smaller rooms surrounding the main halls and courtyards. These palaces are obviously the residences of kings who are in close contact with numerous retainers, and the subjects in these capital cities live compactly in crowded streets grouped round the palace. Crete is a mountainous island, so we do not look for vast, fertile plains. The population was bound to crowd into a few sheltered corners round the harbours, and to seek prosperity from trade. There are no strong walls to protect the Cretan cities, for they were subject to Cnossus and relied on the navy to protect them from invaders. Nor had they any large temples corresponding to those of Egypt and Babylonia, for they worshipped chiefly a deity whom we can call Mother Nature, in small shrines either indoors or in caves and groves.

Among the chief features of the palace at Cnossus are first a large hall, the walls of which are beautifully painted. A throne made of stone stands against one wall, and benches of stone are arranged all round the hall. This hall is often referred to as the Throne Room. A handsome staircase leads from it to the queen's hall and apartments. There are courtyards surrounded by rows of the curious Cretan pillars which are narrower at the bottom than at the top. There are stoves in many of the rooms and baths with excellent copper piping. Underneath the palace is a perfect maze of cellars used mostly as storehouses for large jars of olive oil, wine and corn, and this is perhaps the Labyrinth which is mentioned in the legend of Theseus. Near the entrance to the palace is a large open court which was probably used for watching games such as boxing, wrestling and a strange form of bull-fighting in which unarmed boys and girls seized a charging bull by the horns, swinging on to his back, then clean off again.



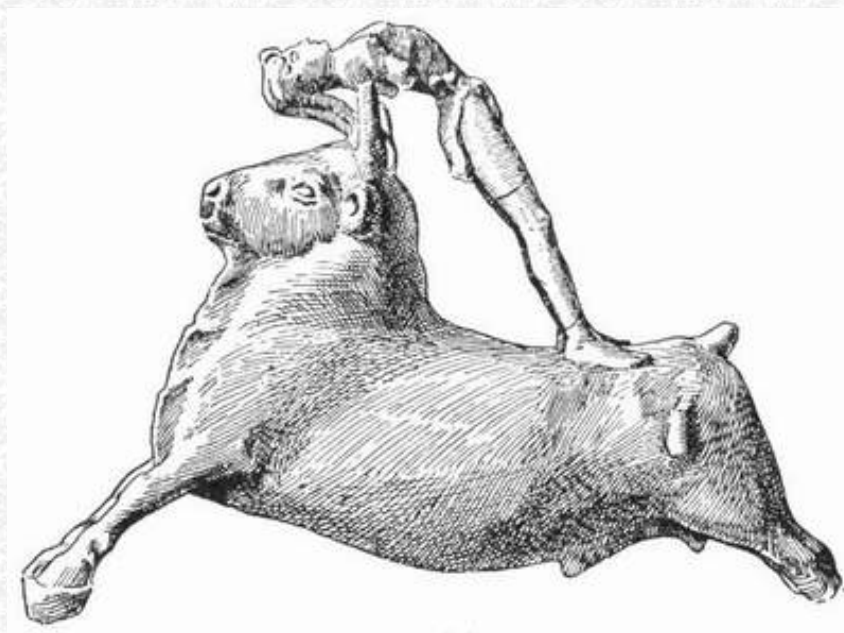
Staircase And Terrace Of The Palace Of Cnossus



In The Queen's Apartments, Palace Of Cnossus

The delight of the Cretans in athletic displays is one of the things that make us think of them as belonging to the West, and as fore-runners of the Greeks. Both men and women had long, black hair, carefully arranged in curls which hung down well below the

shoulder. The men usually wore little else but a long loin-cloth, finely embroidered, or a kilt, and high boots. The women wore a long, flounced skirt with an apron-like Basque and a close-fitting bodice cut very low in front.



Bronze Figure Showing Cretan Bull-Sport

They seem to have been a high-spirited, artistic race, fond of sport and enjoyment. From its very position, without other evidence, we could assume that Crete traded with Egypt, Asia Minor and Greece, and very probably with south Italy and Sicily. The Cretans exported wine and olive oil, stuffs dyed with rich purple obtained from a little shell-fish, sponges, delicately engraved jewellery and great quantities of fine pottery of original design and beautiful colouring.



A Cretan Lady

They had sharp eyes for the denizens of the blue-green waters over which their vessels plied, and they made designs of dolphins, flying-fish, and the octopus lurking for his prey behind pumice rocks and seaweed. They brought back to Crete timber and resin for their ships, building materials for their palaces and houses, horses, ivory, and copper for their tools, weapons and plumbing.



Cretan Jar Showing Octopus, Coral And Sea-Weed

Like all traders of the ancient world, they were unscrupulous. They kidnapped people and sold them as slaves, and when a tempting opportunity arose, they turned even to piracy.

During this period (2000-1500 B.C.) there were a number of cities in south-eastern Greece which reached a high standard of Bronze Age civilisation, if not quite as high as that of Crete. The best-known of these, owing to the impressive remains of their-fortress-palaces, are Mycenae and Tiryns in the district later known as Argolis. The huge, rough stones of which their massive walls are built and the rock-tombs of their princes remind us of the late Stone Age (p.19). Many of these cities, as their decorations clearly show, had some connection with Crete, but we cannot tell as yet whether they were colonies, or whether their inhabitants were of the same stock as the Cretans, or whether they were simply subjects or allies of Crete. Another Aegean town of great importance was Troy, on the north-west coast of Asia Minor.

Athens, later to grow into one of the most illustrious cities of the ancient world, seems in its earliest history to have belonged to the subject class. According to its old legend, Athens was compelled to send to Crete, every nine years, seven of its choicest youths and seven maidens, who were there thrown to the Minotaur, a monster with the body of a man and the head of a bull. This monster was kept in an underground dungeon approached by a maze of passages known as the Labyrinth. From what we have read on p.51, we know that there was a certain amount of grim truth behind this fantastic legend.



Cretan Wine-Jar Showing Dolphins, Coral And Sea-Weed

The third time the Athenian youths and maidens were sent to Crete, the king's son was among them, a fearless youth named Theseus. Ariadne, daughter of Minos, helped Theseus to kill the monster, by drugging the guards and lending him a ball of thread and a sword, by means of which he killed the Minotaur and found his way out of the Labyrinth. This had been built for Minos by Daedalus (=Craftsman), an Athenian exile, who at last, weary of making things for Minos, escaped from Crete by air, as it was impossible to escape by sea, because of the Cretan navy. You have probably already heard the story of how Daedalus built wings for himself and his son Icarus, and how they escaped in this way from Crete. Icarus was drowned through disobeying his father's instructions. Daedalus Minos pursued him there, but was killed by the king of Sicily's daughter.



Cretan Coin - Showing Minotaur

"Minos" may not have been the name of just one king, but a title, like "Pharaoh" in Egypt. So that the whole period is sometimes called the Minoan age. About 1400 B.C. Cnossus and the other towns were suddenly and violently destroyed, probably by fierce, barbarous tribes from the north, of whom we shall hear more later. Crete never really recovered from that disaster. What was the fate of the Cretan navy before these invaders landed we do not know. But from that time the glory of the sea kings declined.

D. The Hittites

Up to quite recent times very little was known of the Hittites. They are mentioned in the Bible as if they were merely one of the Syrian tribes whom the Israelites had to conquer before they could settle in Palestine. But we know now that their settlement in northern Syria was only the southward bulge of a great empire that sprawled right across eastern Asia Minor, and that they played a

much more important part in the first chapter of History than was ever suspected. They were a yellow-skinned race with slanting eyes ("Mongols," p.12), large, curving noses and retreating chins. Their hair was arranged in a sort of pig-tail down their backs. They wore top-boots to get through the snows of their highlands, and they are even shown sometimes with snow-shoes.



Cretan Vase Showing Harvest Festival

They seem to have settled in Asia Minor about 3000 B.C. and to have united with the tribes there in a union by consent, in which these tribes agreed to follow the lead of the Hittites but local rights were respected. The Hittites remind us in many ways of the Romans (about whom we shall read a good deal, later on). They were good fighters, probably using iron weapons and war chariots long before the other nations of whom we have read. They were well disciplined, built fortified camps in war-time and were closely supported in war by the other tribes, with whom they had carefully-worded contracts as to duties and privileges. In this way too they remind us of the Romans, the careful manner in which agreements of every kind were drawn up, and their respect for a legal contract. This well-organised empire of a practical people had its chief capital at Hattusas (= Silvertown) in north-central Asia Minor.



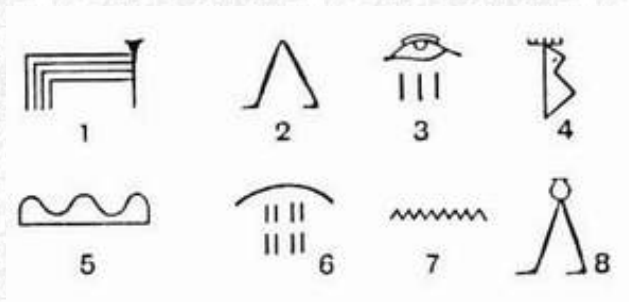
Hittite God As Soldier

Excavations there have revealed a double line of massive town-walls strengthened by numerous towers and finely carved gateways. Their palace-fortresses were built in a similar style. It is interesting to note that the royal double-headed eagle, used as a symbol of certain modern empires, was a Hittite device. At first they had their own system of writing on clay, and we do not yet understand it, but they also adopted the Babylonian system, and it is from careful records in the latter language that we have discovered the little that we know of their history.

They were mainly a nation of cattle-breeders and metal-workers. But Asia Minor is a high and rather bleak country, and the Hittites decided to cross the passes of the Taurus Mountains and seize a part of the Fertile Crescent, which is a name historians are fond of giving to the belt of fertile land which runs from Palestine up to Syria, then across to the upper reaches of the Euphrates and down the valleys of Mesopotamia to the Persian Gulf. About 2000 B.C. the Hittites began to find their way into the Crescent. They once carried out a terrible raid on Babylon, and returned home laden with rich spoils. At last they won northern Syria and also the upper valley of the Euphrates. And where the caravans from the Far East forded that river on their way to the Mediterranean, a rich city arose, Carcemish, which became a sort of second capital, and where some of the finest Hittite remains are being dug out. But by this time Egypt had become a fighting empire, with ambitions of its own in Syria which clashed sharply with those of the Hittites. Let us see how this had come about.

Exercises

1. Look up: hiero-glyphic, feudal, cuneiform, style, the derivation of "paper" and "Bible."
2. Which of these early Egyptian and Babylonian signs do you think means "rain," "king," "mountains," "water," "house," "sorrow," "carrying," "moving"?



3. Make a model of a ziggurat.
4. Why are there so few Babylonian remains compared with those of Egypt? What was the chief Babylonian building material?
5. What is at the other end of the rope held by the Priest-Prince shown on p. 49.



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