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# PROGRESS OF ARCHAEOLOGY

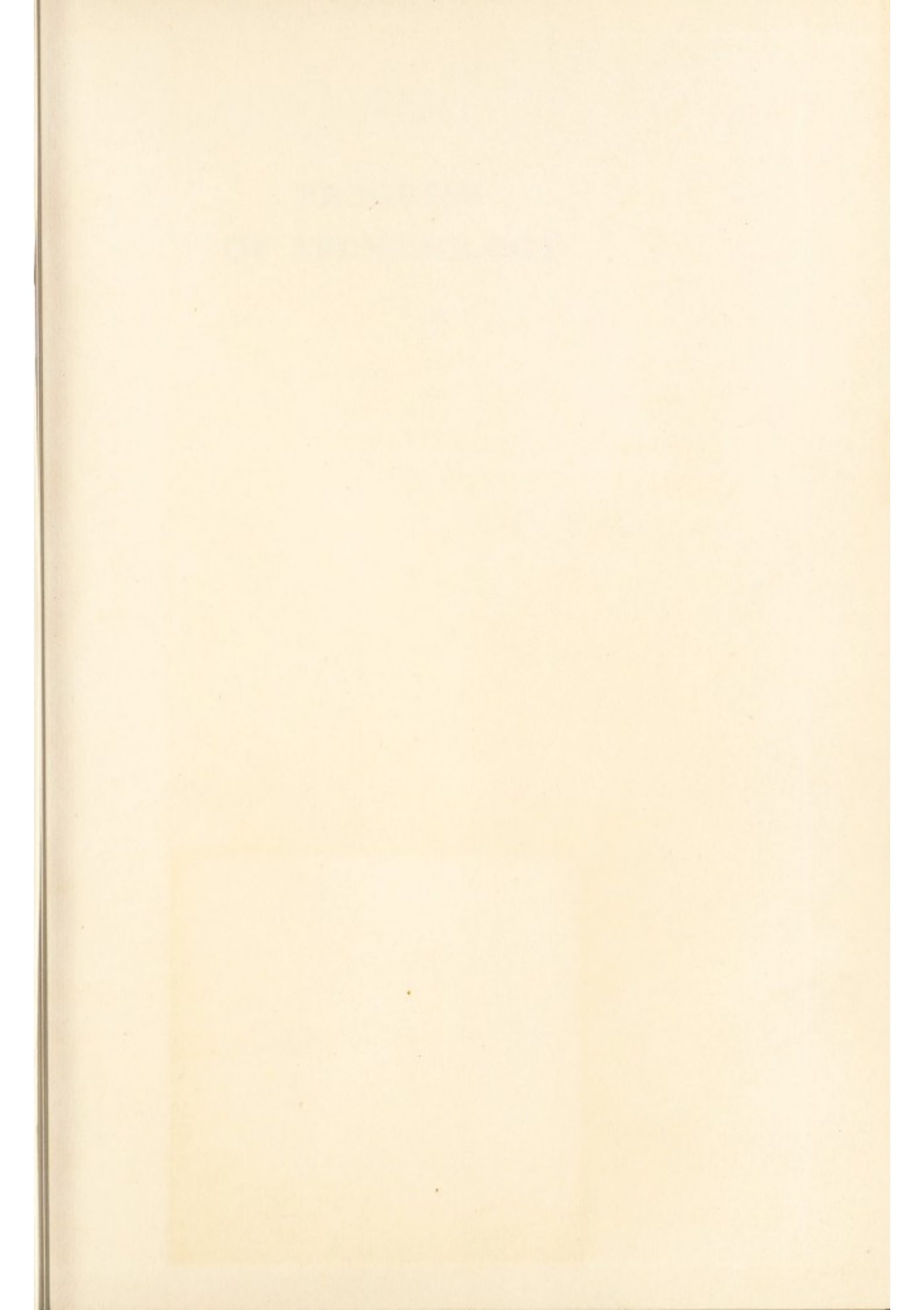
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PROGRESS  
OF ARCHAEOLOGY



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PROGRESS  
OF ARCHAEOLOGY

BY

STANLEY CASSON

M.A., F.S.A.

LONDON  
G. BELL AND SONS, LTD.

1934

20(2)



## PREFACE

THE chapters of this book originally appeared as a series of articles in 1933 in the *Listener*. Certain additions and alterations have been made, but I am indebted to the Editor of the *Listener* and to the B.B.C. for permission to reproduce those articles.

My intention in this book is to make a survey of recent additions to archaeological knowledge and to the study of history made as a result of excavations carried out during the last twenty years. Most of the discoveries have, however, been made since the War.

I have made no attempt to mention all excavations—that would indeed be impossible in a book of this size, but I have tried to emphasise those regions where discovery has made the greatest strides and to concentrate on those particular discoveries which have made real additions to knowledge. I am fully conscious that there are many gaps and omissions and that students of archaeology will differ from me in the importance which I assign in some cases to special finds and particular areas.

But as far as possible I have tried to take a purely objective outlook on the present state of archaeo-

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logical research, without letting my own particular interests prejudice my selection.

I think it is safe to say that the last fifteen years has seen a great increase of archaeological research and a vast improvement in the methods of excavators. I have done my best to pay my tribute to archaeological colleagues by thus attempting to explain to non-specialist readers the importance of their discoveries, above all by making clear the interrelation of areas and finds, where they are interrelated ; where there is no relation or connection between what at first sight seem to be related finds, it is equally important to emphasise the isolation of those areas or finds.

I have avoided technical archaeological terms as far as possible, and I have equally avoided, I hope, any attempt to 'popularise' what, by its nature, is a study unsuitable for popularisation, in the accepted sense of that term.

S. C.

OXFORD, 1934

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## CHAPTER I

# WHAT THE ARCHAEOLOGIST WANTS TO DO

THE purpose of this book is to survey the progress of archaeological discovery in all regions where archaeological investigation has been carried out in recent years. It is not my purpose to discuss merely the most startling or the most recent finds. I hope to attempt rather a co-ordinated enquiry as to the general results achieved, so that the relations between the various areas examined may be established, and their relative importance in the development of human history made clear. For various reasons isolated discoveries are given from time to time an undue importance, or perhaps too much stress is laid on certain of their aspects to the detriment of others more important but less sensational. All too often the importance of a discovery in relation to other discoveries is obscured by its own sensational character. The grave of a Tutankhamen or the burial of a Mycenaean prince is so rich in itself that interest is focussed on its wealth more than on its general implications. Sometimes a mere barbaric village-site (Fig. 3) may have more actual archaeological

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and scientific importance than the regalia of kings or the funerals of princes. Sensation-hunting is the bane of archaeology, but, as long as treasure lies hidden in the ground, there must inevitably be aroused the ancient passions of the treasure-hunter which will always for the moment obscure the more rarified instincts of the scientific investigator. Without unduly subduing the passions of the former, I hope to give full value to the qualities of the latter.

Archaeology is the study of the human past, concerned principally with the activities of man as a maker of things—of artefacts, to use a technical term. *Homo sapiens*, active before he put his *sapientia* to the practical purpose of manufacturing objects, is thus not the concern of the archaeologist but of the anthropologist. But the moment man chipped his first flint he and his flint become the concern of the archaeologist. Ethnology, anthropology and geology are all close allies of archaeology, but they are concerned with different material. From the geologist the archaeologist has learned much. Above all he has learnt that the way in which Nature constructed the crust of the earth bears some analogy to the way in which man has, by his activities, overlaid that natural crust. In all excavations the level at which the archaeologist ceases his operations is that on which the latest natural geological deposit is found. To get down to bedrock is the first and last duty of the excavator. But the analogy with geological formations cannot be pressed. The geologist knows,

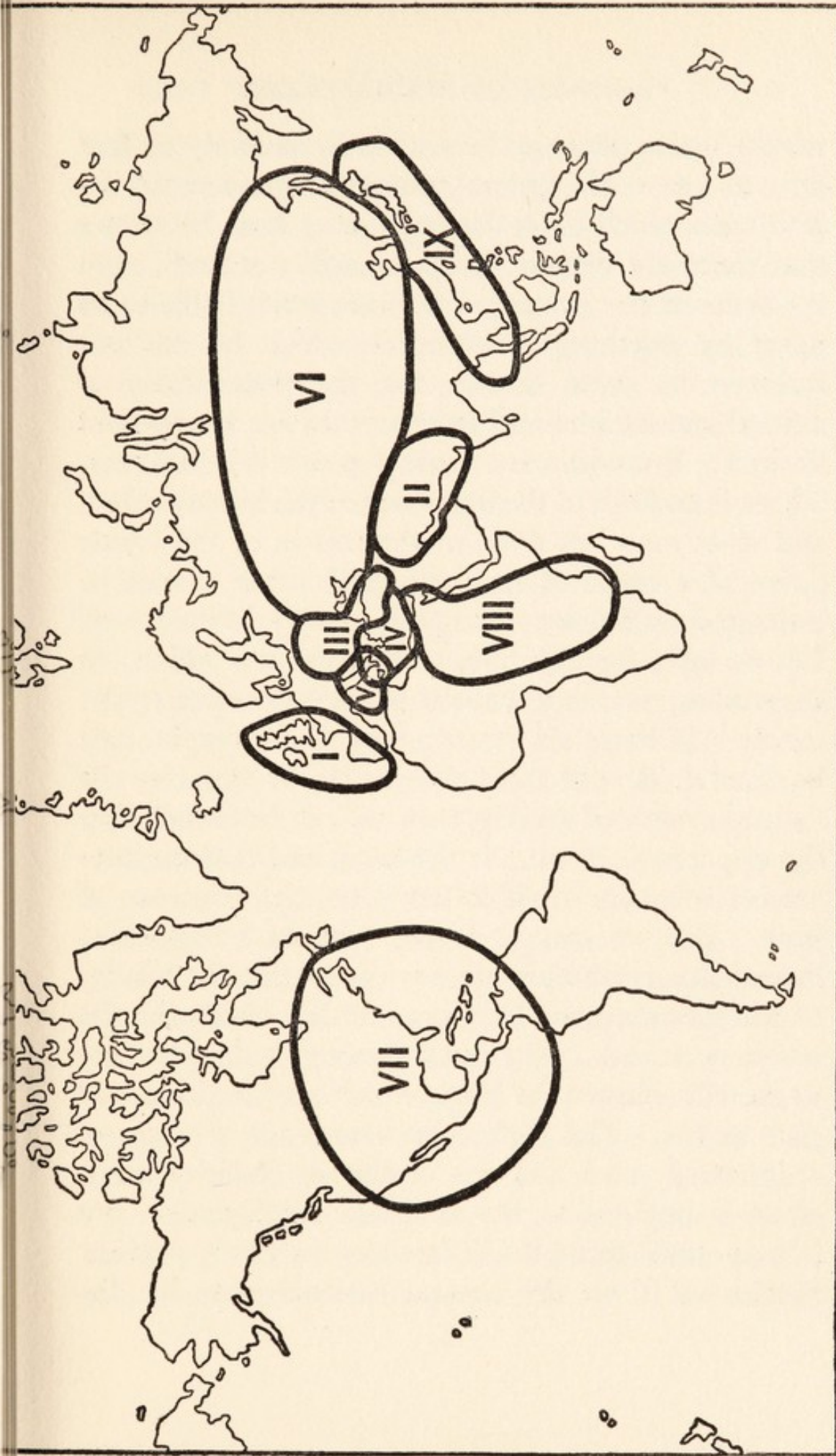


FIG. 1.—Map to show the areas dealt with in the succeeding chapters. A reference will be found at the head of each chapter to the area on this map with which it is concerned.

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within limits, more or less what he is likely to find once he knows the general geological character of the area with which he is dealing—or at least he knows that there are certain things he will not find; and the order of the strata he examines is not liable to be upset by anything catastrophic which he has not foreseen to some extent, for the possibilities of natural catastrophe and interruption are known and limited. But with man-made deposits it is different. There is no limit to the ingenuity of the human mind, and what man has done in the course of the laying down of a series of archaeological strata cannot be estimated or foreseen except in a very limited way. Let us take, for example, an ancient site which, on excavation, proves to consist of six successive settlements. If those six strata prove to be regular and horizontal, deposited in the course of time by the natural agency of gravity, then we can be certain that the uppermost stratum is the latest and that the successive five beneath it follow a normal sequence of time. But we cannot know, without complicated investigation, whether we have a continuous history or whether there are long gaps during which the site was unoccupied. Nor can we ever give the certainty to our classification of strata which a geologist would give to his. The difference between a stratum of sedimentary rock and one of clay or chalk or sandstone is obvious to the simplest intelligence. But in man-made strata the differences are rarely so clear. Settlement I on the natural bedrock may be dis-

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tinguished from Settlement II only by a barely perceptible change in the objects found in it. Settlement IV may be separated from Settlement V by signs of destruction and catastrophe. Yet in V we may still find objects of the same type as those found in IV. For destroyers do not come fully equipped with household goods: and, as often as not, they intermarry with the women of the destroyed settlement and the women still carry on the domestic crafts and make for their new husbands what they made for their old.

In fact archaeological strata are rarely deposited in so simple and obvious an order as I have suggested. You will find that a householder of Settlement IV has perhaps decided to make a bigger and better house than anyone else in his village. He may dig deep into the remains of Settlement III and II. The excavator will find a confusing stratification which has to be most carefully disentangled, and he must disentangle it by recreating in his mind the activities of the ancient builder of the house. Let me give an example from what I might call an 'architectural stratification'. The walls of the Acropolis at Athens on the north side (Fig. 2) and part of the foundations of the present Parthenon are composed of massive architectural fragments which are derived from an earlier Parthenon, begun about 500 B.C. and never finished. In 480 B.C. when the Persians overran and destroyed the buildings of Acropolis, they damaged the partly-built Parthenon, which then consisted of a complete

foundation, columns standing several drums high, and a stylobate of marble. When Pericles and Ictinus designed the new Parthenon and when Kimon hastily ran up defence walls, both used the remains of the earlier Parthenon as building material. They took first what they found first: what they found first were the unfluted column-drums of the unfinished temple. These consequently form the bottom level of the walls and foundations they built. As such you can see them to-day on the Acropolis bedded near the natural rock. Next they took the marble slabs of the stylobate and the more massive blocks which supported the columns. Those you see placed above the column-drums, as if the temple were upside down. By putting yourself in the place of the builders of the wall you can see how they worked and how the deposit of fragments was laid down. So, in a confused stratum, you must calculate the various possibilities and infer from the facts how the minds of the ancient inhabitants were working and what were the results of their activities. A hole dug by an ancient house-builder into the strata laid by his predecessors will produce areas where the strata are in reverse order.

These are but some of the possibilities that the excavator has to face. But there is no limit. Each site excavated will have its own stratification: each site must be examined on its own merits. You can anticipate nothing with certainty and draw no conclusions until your site is fully excavated. Chronology, relative or absolute, is the first aim of the archae-

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ologist and excavator : comparison of cultures is his next objective : inferences from similar or related cultures is his next duty : classification of his finds is his continuous task : discovery of impressive objects, of gold, treasure and works of art his good fortune rather than his deliberate objective. Above all, he must take everything as it comes and never have preferences. All too much damage has been done in the past, and indeed is still done, by archaeologists who prefer one period to another and fail to record faithfully the remains of the periods in which they are not interested. A site, for instance, in Greece may be found to contain deposits of the Roman, Byzantine and Turkish periods. Even if the excavator is interested solely in the Greek period he must not fail to record and preserve the relics of the later ages. For archaeology is the process of recording the past as revealed by objects made by man.

And there is another fault to which archaeologists are prone. They tend sometimes to be mere recorders. While record is essential, the appreciation of values is even more essential. Stratum II or V or VI of our hypothetical site may exhibit a sudden development or a sudden decline of skill, of taste, or of art. Such change of quality is of the utmost importance, for the qualitative improvement of the works of man is the best testimony to the development of human progress. Archaeology is thus indissolubly bound up with artistic considerations, and not compelled to regard every artefact as if it were a scientific

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exhibit. The moment that man, at any period of history or pre-history, began to make not merely things, but beautiful things, is a moment of vital importance for the archaeologist. The civilisation he is examining from then on has certain spiritual values which it had not before, and its importance in relation to other civilisations becomes wider and deeper.

The origin of archaeology as a learned study is interesting in itself, for it gives us a clue to its purpose. Briefly, it might be said that archaeology arose as a direct consequence of the Industrial Revolution and as a corollary to geology. The construction of railway-cuttings, tunnels, mines, harbours and the rest, that were the immediate consequence of the industrialisation of the world at the end of the eighteenth century, led to the study of geology as the science of observing and explaining the strata revealed and the fossils and 'curios' discovered as a result. Long before this, indeed as early as the time of Herodotus, fossils had been observed and speculated upon, but they had never been explained scientifically. So, too, with archaeology, which developed hard on the heels of geology. The same large-scale operations which made geology possible revealed flint implements and other traces of early man. Anthropology and archaeology combined developed rapidly. Although flint-implements had been discovered in England as early as 1693 and again in 1797 no scientific explanation of them was pro-

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posed till 1838 when Boucher de Perthes gave a rational explanation of the finds in France. From 1859 onwards archaeology developed and improved its methods. But the same Industrial Revolution which had brought about the science of geology produced secondary consequences which were almost fatal to the immature study of archaeology.<sup>1</sup> The industry which had delved into the crust of the earth had enriched the Captains of Industry, who in an age of enquiry and discovery turned collector and used their acquisitive habits for the purposes of making private collections. These were formed on a basis which was wholly unscientific, and the very fact that many of the collections were inaccessible to study made them a hindrance to progress. The collectors, anxious for loot and nothing else, were responsible for the destruction of many valuable archaeological sites. The excavation of the Etruscan tombs in the early fifties and sixties of the nineteenth century is a long story of lost evidence, ruthless destruction and search for sheer loot, which has seriously prejudiced the whole study of Etruria. The barrows of Britain were frantically torn open to enrich the collections of 'antiquarians', into whose cabinets the objects found were thrust with scant record and little consideration. A generation later the same process was repeated in China, when the fashion for Chinese works of art was beginning, with the result that

<sup>1</sup> For a full discussion of this aspect see an article by O. G. S. Crawford in the *Sociological Review*, April-June, 1932.

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Chinese archaeology is almost non-existent, while the collections of Chinese art in private hands are unsurpassed.

In saying that Chinese archaeology is virtually non-existent I mean that properly controlled excavations in China have not been undertaken until the last few years. Chinese archaeology thus rests on the basis of comparative study of existing objects, the circumstances of whose finding are largely obscure. This is a serious handicap in the study of the archaeology of any land. But the course in Chinese Archaeology which can be taken at the Courtauld Institute of Art comprises a scholarly study of existing monuments coupled with such excavational material as is available, and so constitutes the most important attempt to build up the study of Chinese archaeology in England.

Tomb-rifling for rich collectors was the other aspect of the process which gave archaeology birth. Early discovery in Egypt is a long and dreadful story of reckless and uncontrolled looting. With difficulty the study of archaeology and its methodical pursuit was at last firmly established by Sir Flinders Petrie in Egypt and Britain, by Sir John Evans in Britain, by Heinrich Schliemann in Greece and by Sir Arthur Evans in Crete, and firm standards were at last set for serious workers. It is with the systematic researches of recent years on sound archaeological lines, and of the magnificent results so obtained, that the subsequent chapters will

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deal, as impartially and lucidly as is possible within small compass. The areas to be dealt with are indicated on the map (Fig. 1). Most of the discoveries here discussed have been made since 1914.

## CHAPTER II

### WESTERN EUROPE

(See Area I. on the Map on p. 3)

IT may be true to say that more has been found out about the archaeology of Great Britain during the last twenty years than was previously found out in a century. British discoveries will be discussed in this chapter in connection with the archaeology of the coastal lands of the Channel and the North Sea and of the Atlantic coastboard as a whole, because the principal discoveries of the last decade have resulted in the fixing of the continental connections of our island and the breaking down of that insular aspect of British archaeology which was an inheritance from the historians. For the further back in British history and prehistory we go, the less insular was the life of the inhabitants of our islands.

But there are still gaps in our knowledge. Irish archaeology is hardly systematised and little or no organised excavations have taken place in Ireland until the last two years. Scotland is now beginning to produce evidence for her prehistoric periods, but much remains to be done. Most of the important discoveries in British archaeology have been made since the War, and a few during the War. A genera-

tion ago the easy classification of an Old Stone Age, a New Stone Age, a Bronze Age, a Celtic and Roman period, was thought to cover all the possibilities of research. It was thought that, after the Romans left, England was plunged into chaos, and, after a period of barbaric and incompetent Saxon control and Danish intrusion, the Norman Conquest came as a final civilisation that laid the foundations of our present glory. Such is the account in the average school history book of our early history. To this story archaeology has now added many new and strange chapters and expunged from it many illusions.

The vague 'Old Stone Age', represented by the palaeolithic implements of river gravels, is now seen to be a sequel to a much earlier development of man. In 1914 the case for the existence of man in East Anglia in the Tertiary Age, at a date before the Red Crag deposit was laid down, was fully stated, and that view is now generally accepted. For the early archaeology of our island this stands out as the most remarkable scientific achievement of archaeology. I cannot describe the results of this discovery better than in the words of Mr. Kendrick of the British Museum<sup>1</sup> who says 'pre-Crag man stands forth suddenly, unheralded and astonishing, revealed, as it were, by the swift drawing aside of a curtain: his background is the darkness of the immeasurable past and he inhabits a land which was believed to

<sup>1</sup> Kendrick and Hawkes, *Archaeology in England and Wales*, 1932, page 7.

be untenanted by the human race'. The discovery of the implements he made in a geological deposit which throws the existence of humanity back into the Pliocene Age is an achievement of which British archaeology must be always proud. For here is the ancestry of palaeolithic man, the first appearance of man as a maker of artefacts. Of the dim age of climatic disturbances which intervened between palaeolithic man and neolithic man we know little more than was known a generation ago. Of the origin of neolithic man in western Europe we likewise know nothing. But of his affinities in western Europe we know a very great deal. We can hardly trace neolithic man back earlier here than 3000 B.C., but a thousand years later he emerges in greater clarity. From the archaeological discoveries of the last fifteen years we know that he was of common stock with continental peoples. From the patient and scientific excavations at Windmill Hill near Avebury, which is the only large neolithic habitation site to be fully excavated, it is clear that France and Europe across the North Sea held folk of the same type, or at least folk who made similar pottery and implements, and lived in the same way. South-east Britain, the southern midlands and the south, were allied with the coasts opposite. Northern England, on the other hand, lived in the archaeological setting of the Baltic regions and north-west Europe. Away in the south-west, in Cornwall, and on the Welsh coast and in Ireland, there was, on the other hand, a neolithic

culture allied with the Atlantic lands of Spain, Portugal and Brittany. All these neolithic folk of the south seem to have been affected by the intrusion of a strange mode of life and strange ways of belief. They were passionately devoted to the cult of the dead and, alone of prehistoric Britons, have left us vast records of their belief in an after-life, and almost none of their ordinary daily existence. The Long Barrows and 'dolmens' of the West are identical with the monuments to the dead raised by prehistoric Portuguese and Spaniards, by the Irish, Welsh and Southern Scots, all dwellers by the deep Atlantic. How communications across such treacherous seas were established we cannot tell. But it is significant that all the wooden dugout canoes which have been disinterred are attributed to the Neolithic Age, and it is in vessels such as these that the ideas which reached our shores soon after 2500 B.C. must have been conveyed. Into the larger question of the spread of megalithic monuments and their interconnection, and into the strange hypothesis of ultimate Egyptian influences that spread westwards by way of Gibraltar, it is no part of my purpose to go. Archaeologists must base their hypotheses on archaeological facts, and the facts now available do not as yet admit of trustworthy conclusions into these larger questions.

The Long Barrows were communal burial grounds, or family vaults, and their makers were a people in close touch with a great maritime world. The gaunt

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dolmens of the West Country are the denuded cores of Long Barrows, and the tragedy is that almost all the larger and more important were ruthlessly excavated by unscientific collectors many years ago. We rely on chance record and fragmentary finds for our feeble knowledge. 'Kit's Coty House' in Kent and 'Wayland's Smithy' on the Berkshire Downs are outlying barrows of this ancient race, long broached and emptied of their contents. To about the year 2000 B.C. must be attributed that most ancient of all British large-scale monuments, Avebury Circle. It seems to have been built about the time that the first big invasion of our island took place—that called the invasion of the 'Beaker Folk', a continental people from Holland and Germany who entered in two waves along the eastern and southern coasts. These were the first users of metal in our islands and, to judge by their remains, a strongly built, round-headed people whose physiognomy was that of the 'John Bull' of the caricatures. Excavations in the last few years have shown that these people had reached Avebury and the circle must have been made about the time of their arrival. But as a monument, Avebury continues the Atlantic tradition of big stone building that had gone on for several centuries in the west. The 'Beaker Folk'<sup>1</sup> soon amalgamated with the indigenous neolithic

<sup>1</sup> The best account of the 'Beaker Folk' is to be found in Professor H. J. Fleure's book, *The Races of England and Wales*, 1923, p. 47 ff.

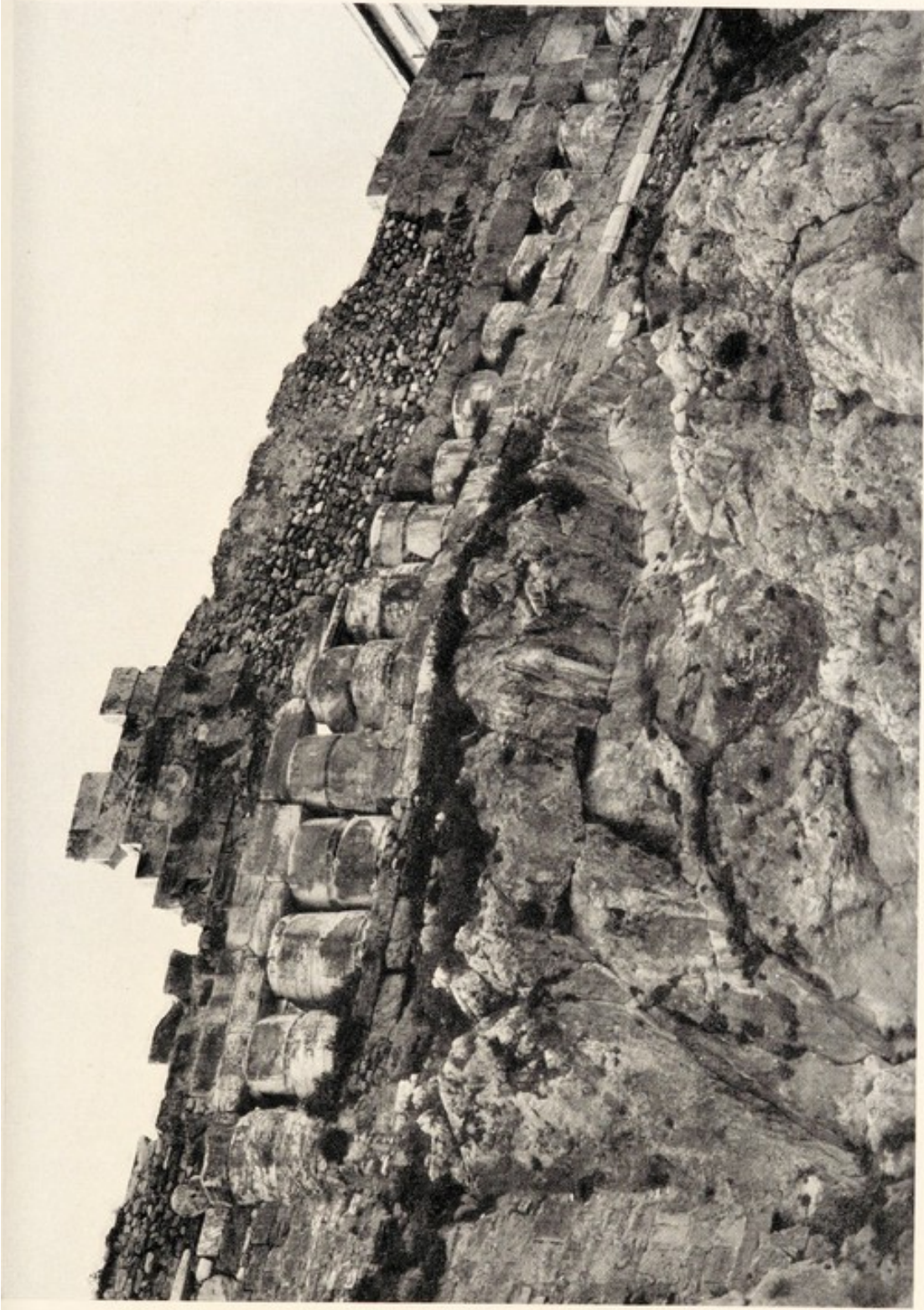


Fig. 2. North Wall of the Acropolis at Athens



Fig. 3. Prehistoric Village-site of the Bronze and Iron Ages  
in Macedonia



Fig. 4. Entrance to the Chambered Cairn of Bryn Celli Ddu in  
Anglesey

people. From this blend developed the British Bronze Age.

To the middle of the Bronze Age—roughly 1500 B.C.—belongs a monument which was only added to the prehistory of Britain in 1925, the great circle known as 'Woodhenge'. It was discovered solely by the aid of air-photography, although the earth-works that surround it had been noted earlier. Woodhenge is so called from the fact that it is a monument identical in type with Stonehenge, and perhaps its forerunner in type and time. It consisted of six concentric circles of wooden uprights and must have been an impressive monument. Its diameter was about 250 feet and it is orientated in the same way as Stonehenge. Excavation has checked the record of air-photography—a further triumph for scientific archaeology.

The great activity of Wiltshire archaeologists has also shed much light on the greatest of all prehistoric monuments—Stonehenge—which is without a rival in the world. A concentrated campaign of excavation and research has resulted in at least some solutions of the numerous problems connected with this great monument. For centuries Stonehenge has been the target of strange, sometimes frantic theories, of idle speculation and of vain enquiry. But now we can say at least this with confidence: Stonehenge is as composite a monument as Westminster Abbey. Some of it is very ancient, some of it borders on the historic period. It consisted, when complete, of a ditch that limited its maximum area, of three

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rows of posts or stones outside the present circle, the huge existing sarsen stone circle of local origin and the small inner circle of 'blue stones', not of local origin. Not all these parts were built at the same time. The ditch and first circle were probably contemporary with Avebury or Woodhenge: the standing sarsen stones that we see are, on the other hand, thought by many to belong to quite a late date, say 500 B.C., in the Iron Age. But the 'blue stones' have been shown conclusively to have been brought from as far away as Wales, where perhaps they already formed a sacred circle, but were transferred to the now very holy religious centre in Wiltshire. In other words, generations of the pious added to and improved the mighty sanctuary. Oddly enough, the seventeenth century attribution of the circle to the Druids receives now some sort of confirmation, as long as by 'Druids' we mean the priests described by ancient historians, whose existence cannot be proved before the Iron Age.

In general we are thus able to get now a much clearer idea of the culture of the West European Bronze Age. The Atlantic coasts of France and Spain, western Britain and Ireland are now seen to have formed one cultural area. The great wealth of gold in Ireland, in the Wicklow mountains, seems to have drawn to the British Isles a steady stream of adventurous folk from the continent. How rich was the output of Irish gold is seen in the distribution of gold finds. Nearly five hundred gold ornaments

## WESTERN EUROPE

of the Bronze Age, some weighing as much as 16 ozs., are to be seen in the National Museum in Dublin. Cornwall seems to have imported more Irish gold objects than most parts of western Europe, and a welcome addition to our knowledge comes in the find at Towednack, near St. Ives, in 1931, of two torques and six large rings, now in the British Museum (Fig. 6). Irish gold reached also to Brittany, Wales, Scotland, and even as far as Holland and Denmark, where isolated finds of definite Irish types have been found. In short the whole Bronze Age in these regions was an age of wide enterprise, high taste and interchange of peoples and commodities. But Ireland and England perhaps played the most important part.

An expedition organised by Harvard University has now undertaken a comprehensive scheme of research in the Irish Free State and Northern Ireland. It commenced work in 1933 on sites which represented the Bronze Age and the early Pagan and Christian periods from the first century A.D. to the Viking Age.

To the middle of the Bronze Age belongs a fine round chambered cairn at Bryn Celli Ddu in Anglesey (Figs. 4 and 5) which was scrupulously excavated in 1925. For the first time we know something about the ceremonial which accompanied a Bronze Age burial, for no similar mound has hitherto been so carefully examined. In the tomb-chamber was a sacred pillar, carefully cut with primitive tools.

## PROGRESS OF ARCHAEOLOGY

Human sacrifice seems to have been made at the burial. A primitive sculpture in the shape of a stone incised with a spiral pattern was buried beside a pit in the centre of the monument outside the chamber,

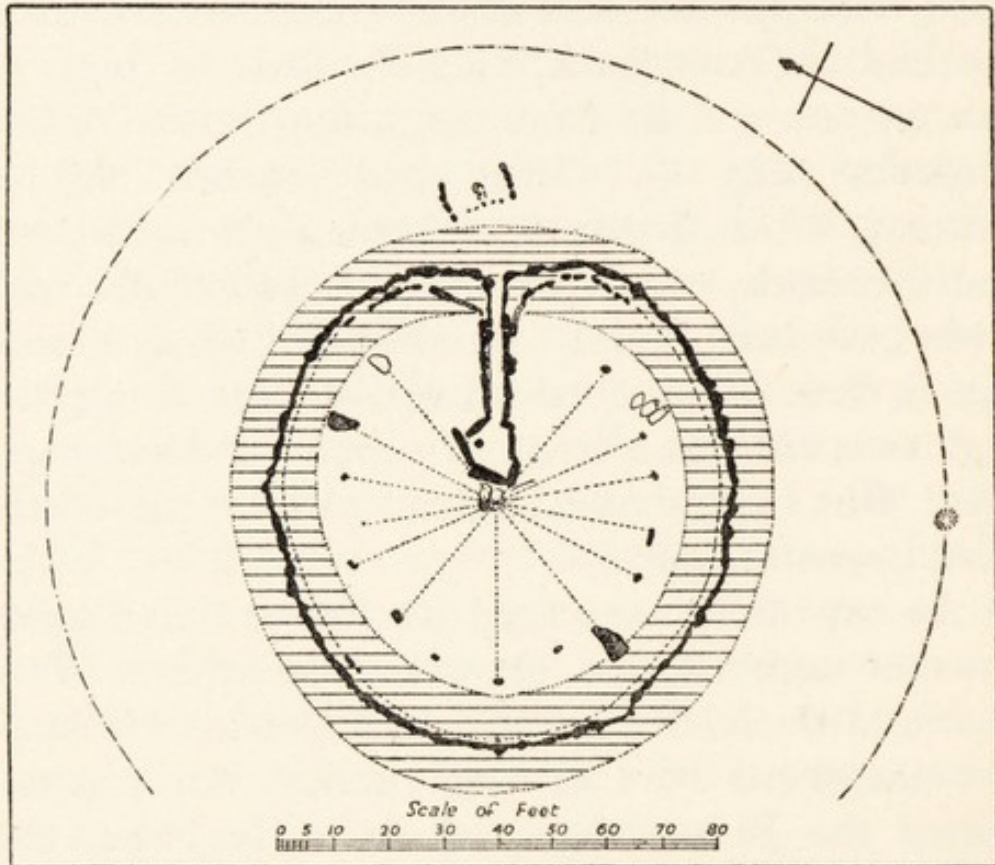


FIG. 5.—Plan of the chambered cairn of Bryn Celli Ddu. The spiral-patterned stone adjoins a plain stone which is the centre of the circle.

which, as the plan shows, was not in the centre. The sanctity of the dead in the Bronze Age was, indeed, astonishing. The religion of the Atlantic seaboard must have been a strange one.

Of the Iron Age in Britain we now know a very great deal, mainly the result of the last six years' work. Soon after 800 B.C. a change is seen in the culture and products of the Bronze Age people and

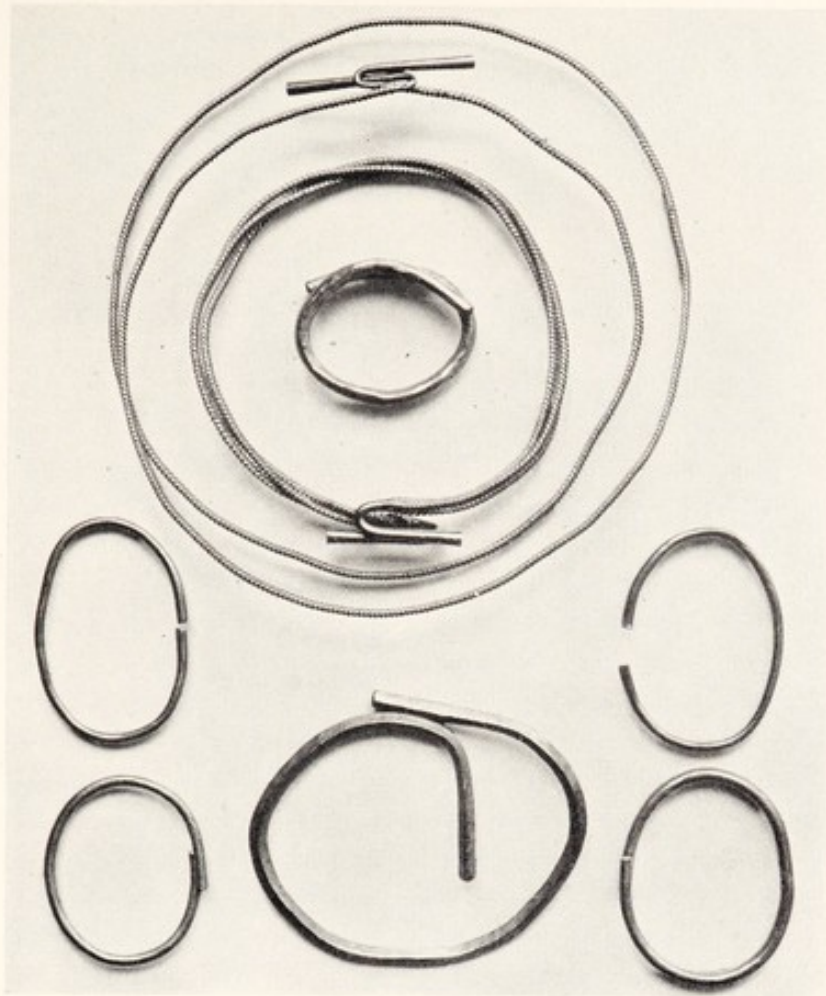


Fig. 6. Gold Ornaments from Towednack, Cornwall  
Scale  $\frac{1}{2}$



Fig. 7. Celtic Bronze Vessels from France  
Scale  $\frac{1}{6}$

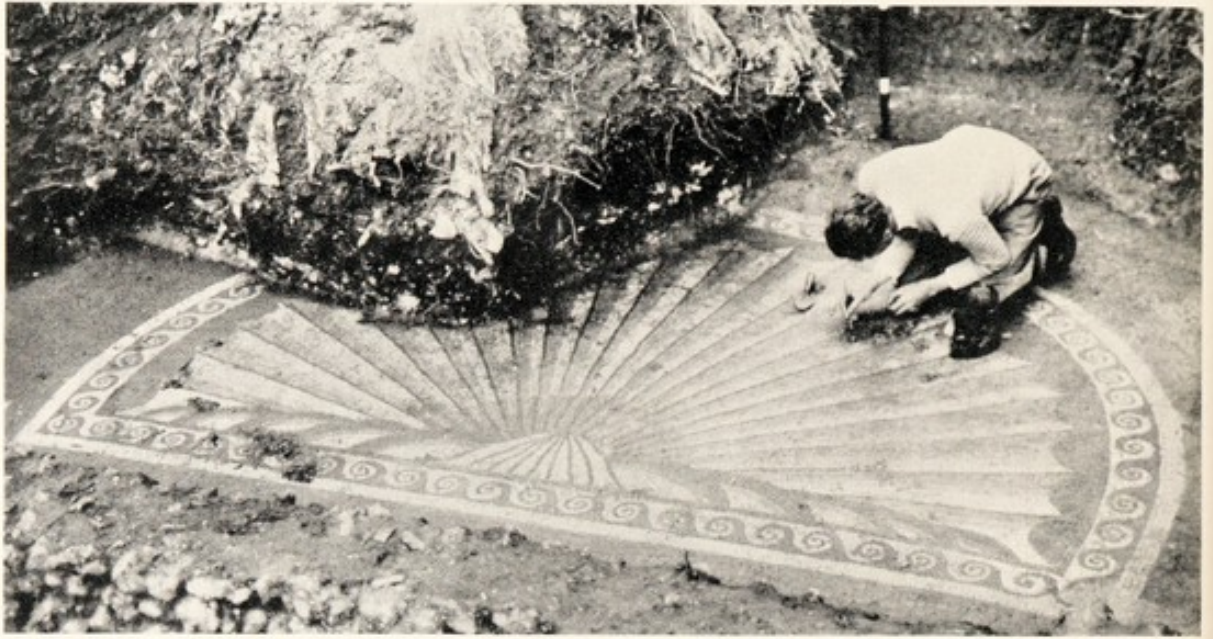


Fig. 8. Mosaic Floor from Verulamium



Fig. 9. The Romsey Rood

## WESTERN EUROPE

there is an intrusion of new folk who belong to the same type, archaeologically, as the peoples of the salt-mining areas of eastern Austria, who began the great Central European Iron Age. Many would like to identify these early Iron Age intruders with the first and earliest wave of Celtic people in Britain. Certainly in Austria at this time the race was Celtic. But ethnological conclusions are always precarious if based on archaeological facts. For the moment the facts must suffice.

The discovery of the Central European connections of our own nascent Iron Age is one of the most recent and most important of British archaeological discoveries. The earliest settlements of the new people were found in Wiltshire, again, as in the dim past, an objective of newcomers.

But the Iron Age culture was not introduced by one definite movement of peoples. Fresh waves of immigrants came over a period of centuries. The first developed slowly across south-east England, the immigrants coming from the Rhine region. The second, following in the footsteps of the megalithic culture of the Atlantic, came across the Channel from Spain and Brittany, began the great tin-mining industry of Cornwall, and pressed slowly up the Severn valley towards the iron deposits of the Forest of Dean. To this second wave belong the great circular hill-fortresses of the west, miner-settlements like Chysauster in Cornwall, now excavated, and ultimately the well-defended lake-villages of Glaston-

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bury and Meare in Somerset. Here at last we see the artistic products of the Celtic Age which founded a style of art which seems to have survived the whole period of the Roman occupation and emerged again in Saxon times. The third wave of immigrants came from France and Belgium and overran the south and parts of the east coast. These were the Belgae of history, the Britons whom Caesar saw. The preceding wave were the Celtic Britons whom the Greek sailors saw and described on the coasts of Cornwall at St. Michael's Mount. Careful archaeological research has at last classified our Celtic ancestors and traced their movements with certainty. A recent acquisition by the British Museum of four superb bronze wine flagons with richly enamelled decoration illustrates the contemporary culture of France, probably also Celtic. They were found by chance near Metz and show how strong was the Greek influence that was permeating to western Europe in the late Iron Age, for the shapes of the flagons and much of their decoration are of Greek inspiration (Fig. 7). Many Greek influences reached our shores also, particularly in the types of British coins of the pre-Roman age and in the form of bronze vessels of late Celtic type, based on Greek or Italo-Greek models.

The great hill-camps that stand out on every skyline can now be classified according to these various Iron Age invasions. They represent the settlements of the new Britons and as such were the first objectives of the Roman forces. They can at last be clearly

distinguished from the neolithic camps, which are few and rare, and from the very occasional earthworks of the Bronze Age. Excavators are now concentrating on that fascinating period, the period of transition from Celtic to Roman control. Colchester and Verulamium are key sites where the overlap of the two periods can be studied. The discovery in the last two years of the separate Celtic city at St. Albans and the examination now in progress of the Celtic city at Colchester are among the most important of recent work. Another illusion has been dispelled. The pre-Roman Britons were not the woad-covered savages of Mrs. Markham's history book. They were possessed of a capacity for art vastly superior to the Roman, and of powers of organisation and cantonal government of a high order. For they, too, were newcomers to Britain and had been forced to subject and control a large native population. They in turn fell before the better-organised military power of Rome.

Roman Britain, thanks to the work of Professor Haverfield a generation ago, is better known archaeologically than any period of British history. The excavations of recent years have served to fill the gaps left in the permanent historical structure built by earlier excavation. The results have been rich. The military depot at Richborough, which served the whole Roman army during its period of occupation from the first landing, is under close scrutiny. Verulamium, the south midland capital which super-

seded the Celtic capital, has already produced some of the finest works of art of which Roman taste was capable, sound pedestrian work in mosaic-flooring for the most part (Fig. 8). Pre-Roman art lay dormant and the fashions of the conqueror were paramount. Caerleon, Wroxeter, and a host of small sites and villas have helped to enlarge our knowledge. In Wales the excavation of coastal camps has shown that in these regions the Romans left coastal defence to some extent in the hands of the natives, who lived in camps more of the pre-Roman than of the Roman model. The camp of Tre'er Ceiri in North Wales is the type site, from which this form of coast defence can be studied. Of London itself in Roman times we now know much more, as a result of the careful co-ordination and supervision of occasional discoveries during road and house building. But the dim age of Roman abandonment is still obscure, and Saxon archaeology in its early periods is still a field for wide research. The discovery of a burial near Winchester, which contained a superb bronze bowl of the sixth or seventh century, decorated with highly competent enamel escutcheons with coloured designs of a style that recalls pre-Roman Celtic art, suggests how permanent was the undercurrent of Celtic art. In this and similar objects we have the reappearance of Celtic art in its new form, unaltered by Roman influence. The submergence and later rebirth of a native art after a period of foreign domination is a phenomenon of art-history which must be studied

with caution and circumspection, but one of the profoundest interest.

For full Saxon-Christian times organised research is barely beginning. It now seems that the Anglo-Saxons of historical records were towards the end of the Saxon period a people of wide foreign contacts, of great literary and artistic culture and of sophisticated outlook. By the tenth century Anglo-Saxon art had a European reputation, and in painting and sculpture England was ahead of most western European countries. The all-pervading influence of Byzantine civilisation had made itself felt in the far west and the debt of Anglo-Saxon art to the east was considerable. Sculptures long thought to be Norman are now identified as Saxon of pre-Conquest times and the Norman Conquest is believed to have interrupted a high development of artistic taste rather than to have contributed to it. Only in architecture did the Normans in the eleventh century bring a new contribution of culture. Saxon schools of art like the Winchester school of painting, and Saxon sculpture like the Romsey Rood (Fig. 9), show that the artistic quality of English work was superior to that of any other region in the British Isles or western Europe at the time.

The study of late Saxon archaeology is, as yet, immature. Much is known about Saxon book illustration, but the study of Saxon art in other branches for the last two centuries before the Conquest has not been largely pursued.

### CHAPTER III

## THE EAST—FROM IRAQ TO INDIA

(See Area II. on the Map on p. 3)

THE possibility of excavation depends on many factors. Funds available, political conditions of the regions investigated, public safety and international diplomacy, are among the numerous elements which have to be considered. When all are favourable, excavations begin. But the dependence of excavation upon these factors has tended to distort the perspective of the researchers. Greece and Egypt, the earliest regions to be scientifically examined, have sometimes tended to distract attention from other areas. Chief of these is Mesopotamia, where, before the War, little that was earlier than the historical Babylonian and Assyrian ages had been examined. Even so, the amazing advance of knowledge based on the researches of the middle of last century showed how important were the alluvial plains of the Tigris and the Euphrates. The close of the War saw in Mesopotamia political conditions and social security sufficient to justify extensive research. Work began almost as soon as the Armistice was signed, and the results of the excavations carried out since then have been astonishing. Chief among

## THE EAST—FROM IRAQ TO INDIA

the excavations sponsored by British and American organisations have been those at Ur, Kish, and related sites in the plain. At last we are in a position to make an outline of Mesopotamian history and pre-history for those early periods of which, before the War, we knew almost nothing, and, more important still, we are at last beginning to get some light on the obscure problem of the origin of civilisation itself and its spread. Every year that passes brings more evidence to show the extent of Sumerian civilisation and to illustrate the other civilisations with which it was in contact.

In the previous chapter it was made clear that the most primitive periods of British prehistory occurred between 3000 and 4000 B.C. Britain was then inhabited by people, whose affinities were possibly Mediterranean, but whose life was just emerging from the stage of mere food-collecting and hunting to one of elementary agricultural and village life. Briefly, in that dim age life was little more than a bare subsistence. And in the rest of Western Europe it was the same. Central Europe and south-eastern Europe, on the other hand, were beginning to feel the impact of a larger and more inventive existence. There strayed up the Danube valley influences and people from the East who had come into contact with a civilised world. And that civilised world was Sumeria. Egypt, too, was not far behind, and in the Nile Valley the flower of civilisation was budding, as in the valley of the twin rivers.

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At once we are face to face with the problem of deciding where civilisation as such began in the world. And by civilisation I mean that stage of life in which there takes place the organisation of sedentary folk into towns and cities, in order that life may become safer, more cultured, happier, and more productive of those elements which induce what is optimistically called progress. Organisation is the basis of the civilised life, and organisation is barely perceptible in the life of primitive villagers or nomads.

Mesopotamia had not begun to be extensively excavated when a theory was propounded that Egypt was the centre from which civilisation had sprung, the birthplace of that organised life which rapidly spread the length and breadth of the Mediterranean. To this theory the excavations at Ur (Fig. 10) brought a serious check. For the earliest cemetery at Ur is dated by the excavators to 3500 B.C., and the Royal Graves of that cemetery contained works of art of so high an order that, at the very least, several centuries must be allowed for the development of the art which they represent. For we can say at once that the artistic qualities of, for instance, the gold vessels, the mosaic 'standard' (Figs. 11 and 12) and the great gold helmet of Mes-Kalam-Dug, and the very existence of elaborate music, as illustrated by the discovery of four large harps (Fig. 12), presupposes a very considerable period of development, either in Mesopotamia or in that unknown land whence the Sumerians came. The First Dynasty of



Fig. 10. The Site of Ur from the Air



Fig. 11. Gold Vessels from Ur  
Scale  $\frac{1}{4}$

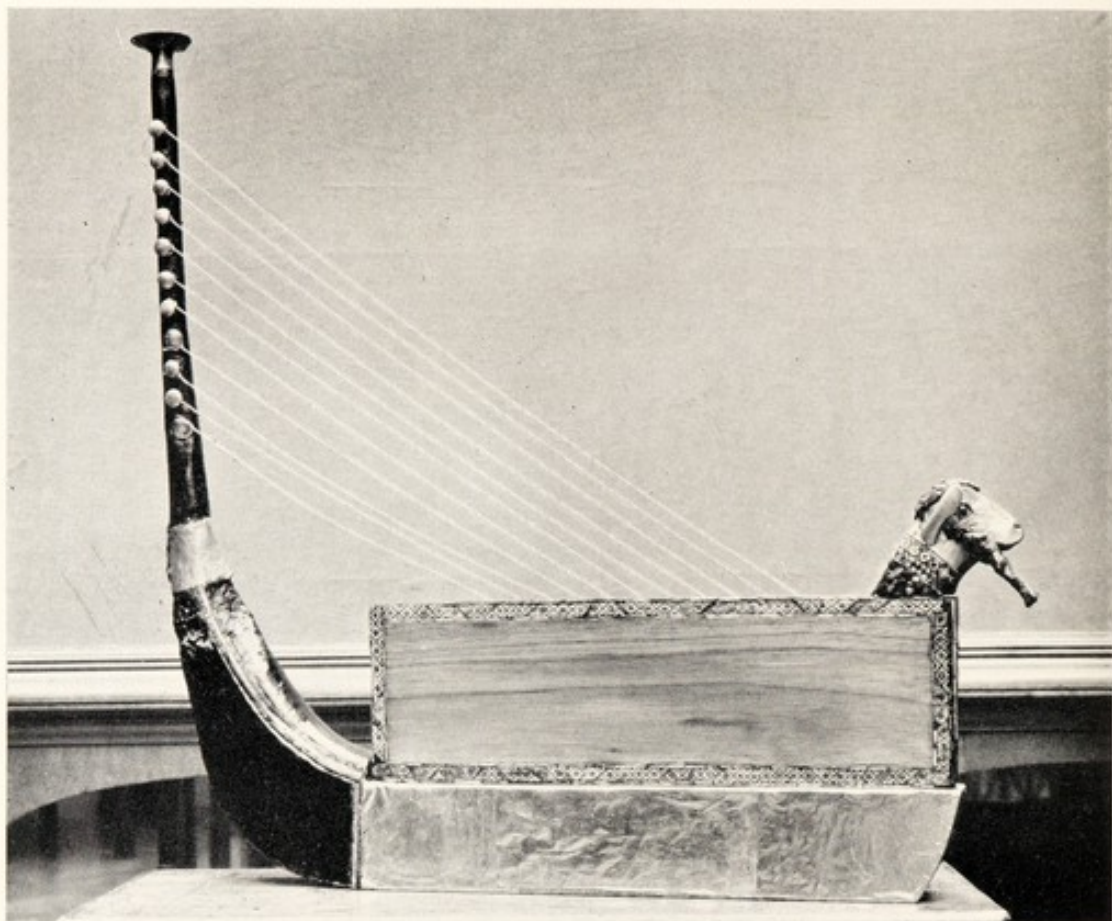


Fig. 12. Harp from Ur  
Scale  $\frac{1}{8}$



Fig. 13. Mosaic 'Standard' from Ur  
Scale  $\frac{1}{4}$

Egypt, during which Egypt was for the first time organised into a land of the same complex nature as Mesopotamia, did not occur till about 3300 B.C. And this new organisation and culture of the First Dynasty is now recognised itself as due to some external contact. It is also agreed that certain material characteristics of the new Egyptian culture of this time are themselves derived from the Euphrates valley. The Sumerians are the first to use the potter's wheel, the first to become experts in metallurgy, the first to make efficient weapons and the first to organise military forces. The last invention was probably the mainspring of their existence. By the discovery of disciplined fighting and organised force they had put themselves into a position of complete supremacy. To the Sumerians can be attributed the invention of war.

But the great graves of Ur deserve consideration in themselves. From them alone we can reconstruct many of the main elements of the life of the early Sumerians. Their discovery was one of the greatest triumphs of archaeology: their contents probably the richest in wealth and art ever found. From a study of the vast collection of golden vessels and ceremonial weapons of gold, electrum and silver; from the elegant shapes of the stone cups and jars; from the elaborate gold jewels of the women, and the practical equipment of the Royal Guard whose bodies accompanied their kings and queens, we see a state which had, already nearly five and a half

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thousand years ago, devised a systematised mode of life in which most of the main elements of civilisation were present. Let us look at the contents of these great graves and see for ourselves.

The excavations at Ur began soon after the War. For some five years steady routine work began to reveal the history of this city. But as yet there was no sign that it had been a place of enormous wealth or productive of a great art. But in 1927 was found a superb gold dagger, lying with a heap of discarded weapons. The immediate sequel was the discovery of a royal tomb. But, to the disappointment of the excavators, the tomb itself had been robbed in antiquity. The excavations, however, proceeded, and in close proximity to the robbed tomb were found, in a wide trench, the bodies of five men, and further on those of ten women, elaborately dressed in headdresses of gold, lapis lazuli and carnelian. At the end of this row of women was a harp of wood capped and fitted with gold and richly inlaid with stones. Further on was a sledge, also adorned with gold and stones, and in front of the sledge the skeletons of two asses. By their bones were the bodies of their grooms. Near the sledge was such a wealth of gold and silver cups and bowls as would excite the most jaded treasure-hunter. Beyond this treasure lay the bodies of six royal guards, with copper spears and copper helmets. Beyond them were two four-wheeled ox-wagons. Other bodies of attendants and soldiers were found, and it soon

became apparent that here was to be seen the complete regalia, with the bodies of most of those present at the ceremony of a royal burial of the first importance. Next to the robbed grave of the king was a second tomb which, when opened, revealed the unrobbed burial of a queen, complete with all her richest possessions. And at last the story could be reconstructed. Probably they were husband and wife. The queen, whose name was revealed as Queen Shubad, had apparently died after her husband, and been buried near him. For this purpose the ground near the king's grave had been reopened and the workmen employed at that time had, unnoticed, rifled the king's tomb and covered over the hole they made. Nothing else would explain the facts as they were revealed. The ceremony which the objects and skeletons indicated was a grim one. The death of royalty resulted in a large-scale *suttee* of his court. Three people had been buried in the king's grave with him and sixty-two outside. Twenty-five had perished with the queen. The sacrifice was, it appears, voluntary. The excavators are, indeed, of the view that the victims took, or were given, poison, for there were no signs of violence.

Of the views on the after-life indicated by these ceremonies we can venture no more than to say that the future life must, by the Sumerians, have been held to be a replica of this life. Of the religion which necessitated the ceremony we know little or nothing.

Of the works of art revealed we must not let the

glitter of gold obscure the discerning eye. The golden bowls stand out as works of art of great purity and simplicity. Their purity of line and absence of ornament stamp them as the product of a people of high aesthetic sense. The fluted cups, in particular, exhibit a deep feeling for the structure of the vessels and the nature of the metal employed. The harps and the standard, on the other hand, exhibit a formal and linear art which presupposes a long period of development. They are, perhaps, too rich and at times slightly barbaric, but the knowledge of metalcraft and stonework implies a very high standard of craftsmanship.

At Ur this was only the beginning of a series of magnificent discoveries. The grave of Meskalamdug, opened later, added further treasures as rich and lovely as the previous finds. The strange figure of the 'ram caught in the thicket' is not least of the later finds. Its purpose and use are unknown: probably it was a ceremonial ornament, the memory of which reached the ancient Hebrews. The excavations at Ur continued and have only this year at last come to an end. Finds at the lowest levels now enable us to say that the Sumerians were an immigrant folk who entered the great plain of Mesopotamia perhaps from a hill-country. They found in the plain, living in humble villages on high ground among the marshes, a people of Semitic strain. These latter are identified at various sites and related to similar peoples who produced similar pottery at Susa

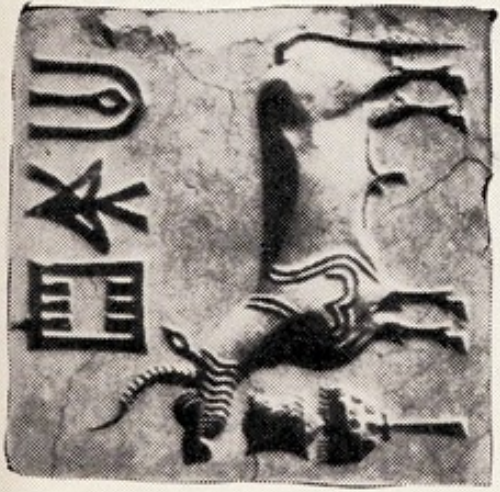


Fig. 14. Inscribed Seal-stones from Mohenjodaro  
Scale †

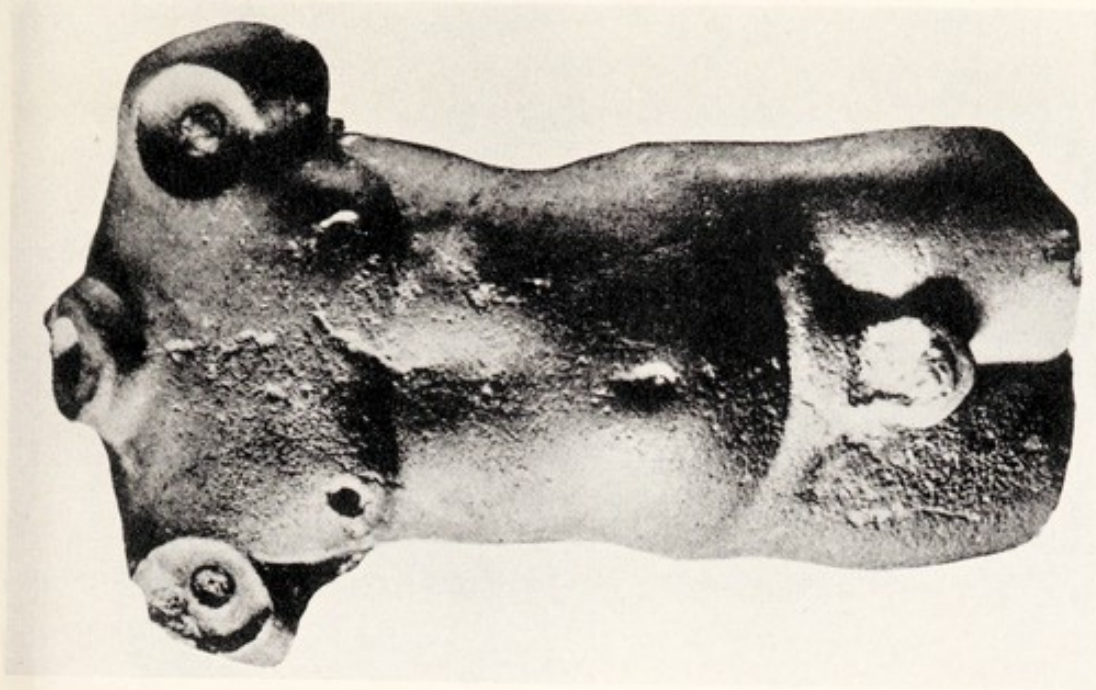


Fig. 15. Red Sandstone Statue from  
Harappa

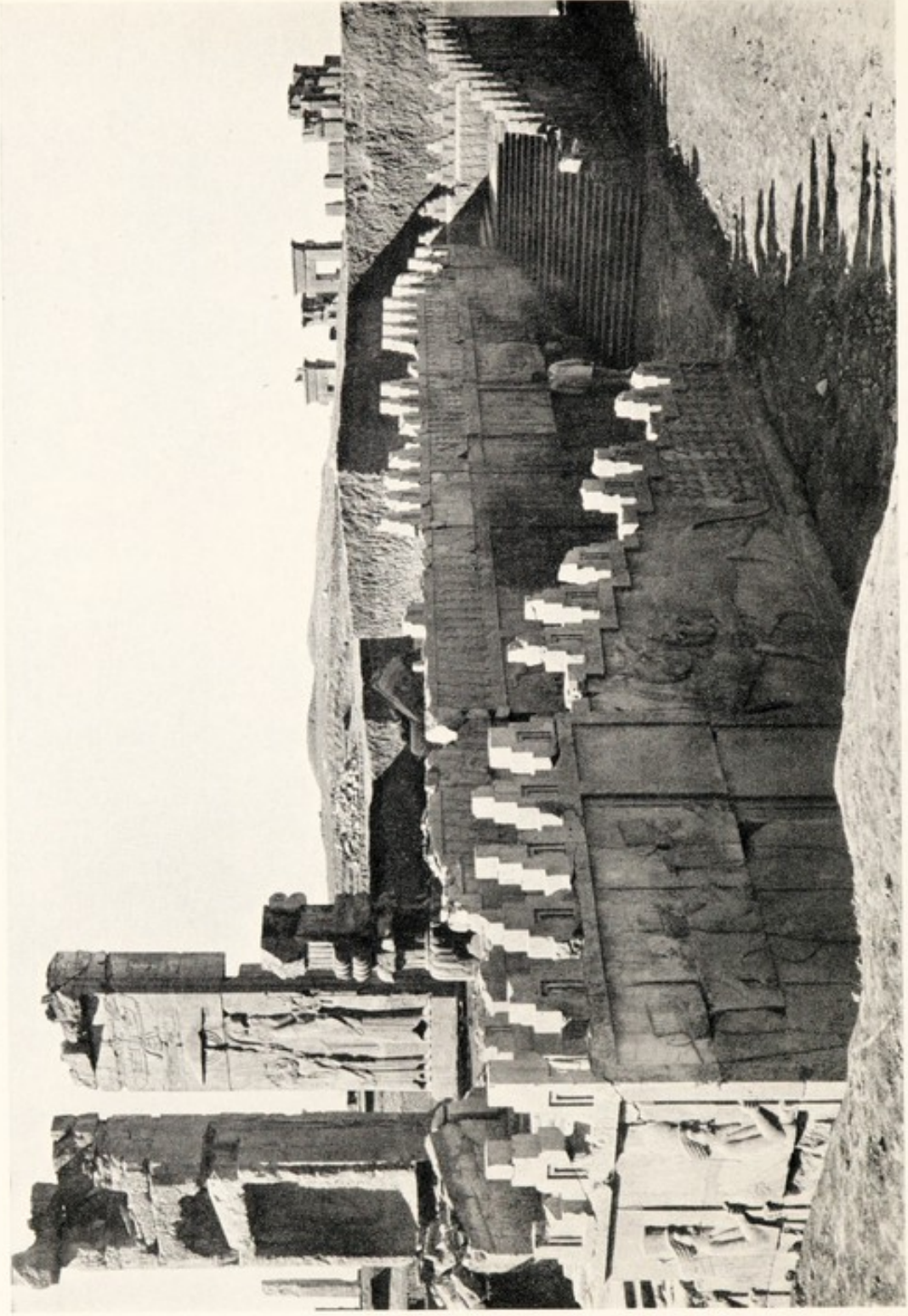


Fig. 16. Staircase of the Palace at Persepolis

in Elam and at Bushire, at Eridu and at Kish. The arrival of the Sumerians, probably from the North, as town-makers and town-dwellers, accords with the famous Sumerian 'Hymn of Creation' which describes the earliest inhabitants as swamp dwellers who 'drank ditchwater' and relates how they became civilised. Between the earliest time of Sumerian occupation and the culture revealed by the royal graves occurred a disastrous flood which has survived in history as the flood of the Babylonian records and the flood of Genesis. This flood, due to lack of fully developed drainage and scientific control of disastrous inundations, came as a dislocation of national life and persisted in Sumerian folk-memory and record. Much still remains to be found of the earlier periods of Sumerian life, and each year that passes increases our knowledge.

Equal in importance, though in no way as sensational as the graves of Ur, comes the discovery, made in the last few years, of the interconnection of Sumerian-Babylonian civilisation with that of India. After many generations of complete neglect the prehistoric culture of India has at last been fully revealed at two sites in the Indus valley—Harappa and Mohenjodaro. Here was developed a city-life in every way as complicated and complete as that of Sumeria. At present all we know of it is that it flourished roughly between 3000 and 2500 B.C., and originated at a much earlier date, that it was a culture in which fully organised city-building with brick was

## PROGRESS OF ARCHAEOLOGY

practised on an extensive scale, and that the inhabitants were gifted with a very considerable artistic ability of an original kind and possessed knowledge of writing and a script of their own. The contact with Mesopotamia was definite. And in the discovery of this interrelation of the two cultures archaeological research can claim another important achievement. For, several years before the Indian excavations were begun, excavators in Mesopotamia had recorded the discovery of occasional seals inscribed with an unknown script and bearing designs in an unknown style. At Mohenjodaro seals of this type were found in such numbers that it was at once evident that India was their place of origin (Fig. 14). Once this was known, further search among the accumulated discoveries of Mesopotamia revealed others and, in addition, what seem to be local Mesopotamian copies of Indian seals. There were also found at Ur, in 1926, two clay objects, a brick and a vase, bearing what are thought to be letters in the Indian script. In brief, the two cultures of India and Sumeria seem to have been in direct touch with trade connections. Here is a conclusion based on material of no great value, which is in every way as important as those drawn from the treasures of the Ur graves. It remains to be seen what was the length of the period of contact. All that can be said at present is that that period antedates 2000 B.C. and may go back to 3000 B.C. The fixed dating of some of the Indian objects found in a Mesopotamian setting serves to act as an external

check on the dating assigned internally to the Indian discoveries. Here is a field where further discovery is essential. Continued excavation in India will tell us much more. One incidental discovery in the Indian excavations was of exceptional and most unusual interest. A statue carved in red sandstone was found, of a boy, of such exquisite workmanship and such complete competence that at first sight it might be mistaken for good Greek work of the fourth century B.C. (Fig. 15). Yet from the context in which it was found it seems that it must certainly belong to the third millennium. Here is an artistic mystery of the first order which can only be explained by further discovery. Finds of this nature show that the progress of art is not comparable to the progress of history. The Indians may prove to have been the earliest naturalistic sculptors in the world.

South Central Asia undoubtedly holds the clue to many problems. If the Indian and Sumerian civilisations are derivative from a common source, that source may possibly be found in the intervening plains and valleys of Baluchistan. Persia, too, holds many secrets and is still hardly as yet open to full scientific excavation. Recent investigations at Asterabad on the Caspian suggest a far-away north-eastern extension of Sumerian culture. In North Persia large cemeteries have been ruthlessly torn open by peasants in the last two years, and the objects found have flooded the European markets. These objects are the now well-known 'bronzes of Luristan'. Through

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lack of knowledge of the context in which they were found, it is as yet impossible to date them or to assign them to any known culture. But it seems probable that the earliest have some Sumerian affinities and that, later, the nomad art of the Asiatic steppes penetrated far into Persia.

Historic Persia also is now being more closely investigated. The ruins of Persepolis, already long known and largely above the surface, have in the last two years been most closely examined, and extensively cleared, by an American expedition. The result has been the discovery of enormous areas of palace frontage of the fifth and fourth centuries B.C., showing superb reliefs carved by Persian artists, in some cases almost in their original condition. This is a magnificent addition to our knowledge of Persian sculpture in relief, even if it is not a specifically new contribution to knowledge like the tombs of Ur. The ramps and staircases, balustrades and battlements, now saved and, in part, restored, show us a major part of a Persian palace of the time of the great Persian attempt to conquer Europe which was defeated by the Greeks (Fig. 16). Here is adequate illustration of the descriptions of Persian life preserved by Greek authors. Persia, indeed, is a new and wide field for discovery, as yet barely touched. Here may be found further connecting links between Sumeria and India. Here is almost virgin soil for the explorer of antiquity; the discoveries of the last few years are like the stray surface nuggets that indicate the unworked Eldorado.



Fig. 17. The River Danube at the Iron Gates



Fig. 18. The Site and Plain of Troy

In the middle foreground are the Walls of the Earliest Settlement at Troy



Fig. 19. Bronze-smith's Hoard from Ras-Shamra



Fig. 20. Sculptured Gateway at Hattosas

## CHAPTER IV

# CENTRAL EUROPE AND ASIA MINOR

(See Area III. on the Map on p. 3)

**A**FTER the previous survey of the extreme west of Europe and the regions of hither Asia it will be more easy to comprehend the intervening area that connects the two extremes. Central Europe, particularly the south-eastern part of it, is at all periods so closely in touch with Little Asia that for all practical purposes of history and prehistory the two areas form a unity. Every recent discovery of excavation and research has served to confirm the hypothesis (already formulated by the Greeks) that the extremities of eastern Europe and western Asia were culturally connected. The connection was made at the Dardanelles and the Bosphorus. Over the barrier of these waters Asia has eternally attempted to press into Europe, and, as eternally, Europe has returned the compliment. History and prehistory repeated itself between 1912 and 1922, when Asia and Europe were striving once more to hold the bridgeheads. Troy and Constantinople were always guardians of the bridges that lead from Europe to Asia, rather than forts to prevent egress from or entrance to the Black Sea. The great Europe-Asia

## PROGRESS OF ARCHAEOLOGY

route was controlled by geographical facts, not deliberately made by man. The swarming peoples of the Danube plains, of what are now Hungary, Rumania, Slavonia, Lower Austria and Bohemia, in seeking a way to the luring cities of the east, to the warmer lands of hither Asia and the Levant, found their way blocked southwards by the mountains of Albania and Dalmatia and by Pindus and the Balkans. Individuals could cross without difficulty, but for tribes no passage was possible. One outlet alone allowed passage to the south—the valley of the Vardar-Morava rivers, down which to-day the railway passes from Vienna to Salonika. Eastwards of this route there was no passage at all until, near the Black Sea, the lower levels of the Balkan ridge allowed passage round it into the downlands of eastern Thrace. Here, as the great European promontory narrowed to its point, movement was restricted until, in the end, the passage to Asia had perforce to be at Troy or at Constantinople. And that is why Troy in the dim and distant ages and Constantinople in later times were planted in those key positions. That is why each city reflects occident and orient in almost equal proportions.

The earliest movement of all was from the East. Let us get to the heart and core of the matter. At the site of Vintcha, near Belgrade, almost in the centre of our area, systematic excavations have been carried out for some years and are still continuing. The conclusions of the most recent research is that peoples

of Little Asia, moving slowly and steadily westwards, coasting the waters of the Black Sea near the Bosphorus, worked their way along to the Danube mouth, found congenial dwelling-places, and slowly, almost imperceptibly, pressed up the river valley (Fig. 17). Here at Vintcha the earliest Neolithic period was well illustrated, dating to between 3000 and 2600 B.C. The settlers were agriculturalists, peaceable and primitive. They had no weapons of war. As they developed they lost their eastern flavour. But for a long time hints of the east are found on their sites. By the discovery of one thing alone their eastern origins are clear. For ornament they were addicted to a shell known as *Spondylus gaederopus*, found only in the Mediterranean. Yet that shell has been found in settlements of these Danubian folk as far inland as Bohemia and Saxo-Thuringia. The shape of the clay vessels they made was that of the gourd, which does not grow adequately north of the Balkans. The spirals with which so many Central European folk decorated their ceramic may be indigenous, but its earliest use as a decorative device is in the graves of Ur in Mesopotamia. At last we see light through the enormous ramifications of Central European prehistory. Vintcha illustrates the earliest periods, and a score of sites on and near the Danube the later. Impoverished and altered, the superior civilisation of the East had filtered into Europe across the dividing waters and up the Danube. The tremendous culture of Sumeria was like a distant sun that slowly

penetrated the mists of a waste and almost vacant land.

This is one of the most important conclusions of post-War archaeology, the result of a careful and scientific analysis of accumulated material that at first sight defied classification or synthesis or analysis. Recent excavations by an American expedition in 1931 at Startchevo opposite Vintcha have served to add to our knowledge of the earliest periods.

As traffic between Europe and Asia increased Troy was founded (Fig. 18). Who first built it we do not know, but the excavations of Schliemann in 1873 revealed that the second city of Troy, built about 2400 B.C., grew rich and powerful. The Bronze Age was now in full swing and by 2000 B.C. Troy was the wealthiest centre of the Mediterranean after Cnossos. Trojan metalwork and gold jewellery has long been recognised as identical in type with similar metalwares of Hungary and the Danube valley. Movements backwards and forwards across the Straits enriched the bridgehead city. But you cannot long be rich in a world of envious barbarians. This second city of Troy was swept out of existence about 1900 B.C. by an inroad from Europe of savage people who were probably of Nordic strain. The Trojans themselves were perhaps a blend of Nordic and Asiatic races, as one would expect in a city which lived at the meeting-point of two continents. Excavations have begun again at Troy. In 1932 an American expedition opened new areas which had

not been dug by Schliemann and Doerpfeld in 1872 and 1900. The main object of these new excavations is to re-examine the stratification in the light of discoveries made since the German excavations were carried out. With good fortune the excavators will find the tombs of the Trojan kings. But at present there is no trace of any early Trojan necropolis, either of kings or commoners. But there is work yet for many years at the site.

The constant movements backwards and forwards across the dividing waters led, as Troy grew old, to the racial unification, as far as we can judge, of Thrace and Phrygian Asia Minor. Away in the background, with its capital city in the rock-fastnesses of Cappadocia, was the great inland empire of the Hittites. We now know with some certainty that at the time when the second city of Troy was at its summit of power and wealth, the Hittites had scarcely appeared on the horizon. But a few centuries later, about 1500 B.C., the Hittites had established the strongest internal power in Asia Minor for long ages. Troy at this time was in an eclipse. Until 1924 it was thought that the Hittites were mainly an Asiatic folk who were little in touch with the west. But it is still uncertain whether they are of Indo-European origin or not. Whence they came is equally a mystery: conceivably they pressed down from the north or from eastern European regions into Asia.

In 1924 the first results of long research on certain Hittite inscribed tablets found in 1908 at the Hittite

capital of Hattosas, were published. At Hattosas, now the Turkish village of Boghaz-Keui (Fig. 20), several thousands of these tablets were excavated. Most are written in cuneiform script and have been deciphered, and published. Some 2685 tablets remain to be translated. The result of the translation of some of the tablets reveals that they are what might be called the Foreign Office Records of the Hittite Empire. To the astonishment of Homeric scholars there was found repeated mention in them of a people called the Ahhiyava, now firmly identified as the Homeric Achaeans. It seems that these Ahhiyava had settled on the southern coasts of Asia Minor, in Cilicia and Pamphylia, whence they had raided and established themselves in some military strength. They appear to have been essentially a sea-folk, with a base at Cyprus, and to have been in the position sometimes of vassals and mercenaries, sometimes of equals and allies with the Hittite kings. Their presence in these parts covers a period from about 1350 B.C. to 1200 B.C. Here, in other words, were Greeks, who had set out on marauding expeditions and as colonists, in the manner of the sea-raiders who gave such trouble to Egypt about the same time. Greeks were virtually in control of the Levant and sailed whither they wished. Among the names mentioned of Greek leaders some seem to be identical with known Greek names, but none can safely be identified with actual men known to Homer or to Greek legend. But the conclusion that the Hittites knew Greeks intimately

and were in touch with Greek forces and Greek enterprise is an historical conclusion of the very first importance. Excavation has here given us an enormous mass of new literary records of inestimable value. The Homeric Age is illuminated by a new and brilliant light. But the story does not end here.

French excavations begun six years ago at a site near Ras Shamra, on the north Syrian coast, have revealed a settlement near the head of the gulf of Alexandretta, which extends our knowledge of Homeric Greeks still further. For here, apparently, was a cosmopolitan port, in which was a colony of Achaeans of the same kind as those who had harried the Hittites. Here were their houses and tombs in a city which was polyglot and mixed. The natives were Semites, perhaps the ancestors of the Phoenicians: pottery from Rhodes, from Babylonia and from Cyprus showed the trade contacts of the city. The contents of the workshop of a bronze-smith showed that he was making swords of the European-Danubian type used by Achaeans (Fig. 19): the tombs of the wealthier residents showed affinities with even more ancient Cretan types. Egypt too was represented by many imports and by an all-pervading Egyptian influence. Beneath the cosmopolitan culture so revealed was a background of Asiatic Semitic religion and culture. Here in fact was a port as varied and mixed in population as Marseilles of to-day. And it was used by the very sea-raiders who had come from Greece to Cyprus and Pamphylia.

To give point to the cosmopolitan nature of the city there was found a library of inscribed tablets in which no less than eight languages were recognised. The tablets were all in cuneiform, but one group shows that the cuneiform characters had been used in the manner of an alphabet. As such this seems to be the rudimentary alphabet from which, perhaps, the Phoenician alphabet that we know evolved. It has about the same number of letters as our own alphabet.

Among the important documents were certain dictionaries for the use of the scribes. In some cases the dictionary gave the words in one column in Accadian (or Babylonian), and in the other in an unknown language. Scholars will await with the keenest interest the deciphering of these tablets, which has not yet been fully carried out. At Ras Shamra may lie the clue to much that is at present mysterious. We may learn more of Cretans and Achaeans and more of Hittites. But further excavation in these regions is of the utmost importance.

Among the finds at Shamra is a splendid ivory relief of the Mother Goddess, a work of Mycenaean art, comparable to others from Mycenae and from Cyprus. A fine bronze Mycenaean tripod was also found, of great perfection. It is a far call from the valleys of the Danube to the confines of Syria; but Greeks, who originally developed in southern Europe and pressed down into the Balkans, ultimately settled in Little Asia and up against the coasts of Lebanon in those dim Homeric days before the catastrophe



Fig. 21. Cretan Gold Cup from Mideia  
Scale  $\frac{1}{2}$



Fig. 22. Gold Mask from a Grave near Lake Ochrida  
Scale  $\frac{1}{2}$



Fig. 23. Greek Bronze Vessel from a Grave  
near Lake Ochrida  
Scale  $\frac{1}{8}$



Fig. 24. Silver-gilt Drinking Horn from a Grave near Lake Ochrida  
Scale  $\frac{1}{8}$

## CENTRAL EUROPE AND ASIA MINOR

which brought all the cities of the Aegean and the Levant tumbling to the ground and, with these, the Hittite Empire, at the dawn of the Iron Age, about 1050 B.C. Here is a new chapter in the history of the Greeks of that ancient world, of the Greeks before there was the Greece that we know. The Hellenes of history were yet to be forged by new iron.

## CHAPTER V

### GREEK LANDS

(See Area IV. on the Map on p. 3)

**A**RCHAEOLOGICAL investigation in Greece may be said to have begun as early as 1835, immediately after the War of Independence. Greece is therefore in the fortunate position of being the first country to have undertaken organised archaeological research on a proper basis, controlled by the State and aided by most competent archaeologists. Research to-day in Greece is better organised than in any country in the world, thanks largely to the broad-minded enterprise of the Government, which has for over two generations encouraged foreign scholars to excavate and has helped their excavations with advice and practical assistance. Greek archaeology is thus far in advance of the archaeology of other lands, and the results of the last twenty years' work must not be expected to have revolutionised our knowledge, which was already so full. But the War did in fact give an impetus to research in certain regions which had previously been closed for political reasons. Immediately after the War the large area of Macedonia and western Thrace, previously Turkish lands, acquired by

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Greece in 1913, but then from 1915 to 1918 transformed into a wilderness once more by the War, were made accessible to excavation for the first time. But even if the work in Greece before the War had covered most periods of Greek history, the innumerable problems of Greek history and prehistory were far from being solved. Renewed excavations at Mycenae after the War and at sites in the Peloponnese revealed the existence of a unified culture of the Greek mainland which had not previously been taken fully into consideration by the workers in the prehistoric field. Crete, the centre of prehistoric civilisation in the Aegean, so fully excavated before the War and so clearly revealed by the finds at Cnossos, Phaestos, Gournia, Palaekastro and other kindred sites, was seen to be based on a native culture wholly different from that of the mainland of Greece. Cretans entered Greece either as colonists, traders or conquerors, and placed upon the native non-Cretan inhabitants the indelible stamp of Cretan civilisation. But the native culture was not entirely ousted, and played its part in the blend which later developed into the 'Mycenaean'. This conclusion was one based on the results of several patient and scientific excavations in the eastern Peloponnese. The excavations at Mycenae in 1920-23 helped to amplify the knowledge of that site so magnificently accumulated by Schliemann forty years previously.

The discovery referred to in the last article of the wide knowledge of Homeric Greeks among the

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Hittites of Asia Minor has not as yet been further illustrated on the mainland of Greece by the discovery of any large number of Hittite objects. This contact has yet to be further illuminated. But our general knowledge of the Mycenaean world has been greatly increased by the discovery in 1926 by Swedish scholars at the site of the ancient citadel of Midea, a few miles from Mycenae, of an unrobbed domed tomb of a Mycenaean princely family of the fourteenth century B.C. Here, for the first time, was found the complete funeral paraphernalia of a king, queen and princess, with every object in the tomb left as it was when the final ceremony was concluded and the tomb finally closed. It was possible to reconstruct the whole ceremony with its ritual. Chief among the finds was a superb Cretan gold cup (Fig. 21) probably purchased or looted from some Cretan town, decorated with a delicate repoussé design of octopuses and sea-plants. Another gold cup bearing a formal design of bulls' heads inlaid on a silvered covering in niello testified to the goldsmith's art of the mainland. Necklaces, gems, gold-mounted swords, copper vessels in large numbers and ivory caskets were found in abundance. A third cup of gold overlaid on the outside with silver suggests that silver was the more precious of the two metals at this time. In addition to this tomb was found a humbler tomb which was a cenotaph to two people who had, perhaps, perished on some foreign expedition of war similar to the raids described in the Hittite tablets or the

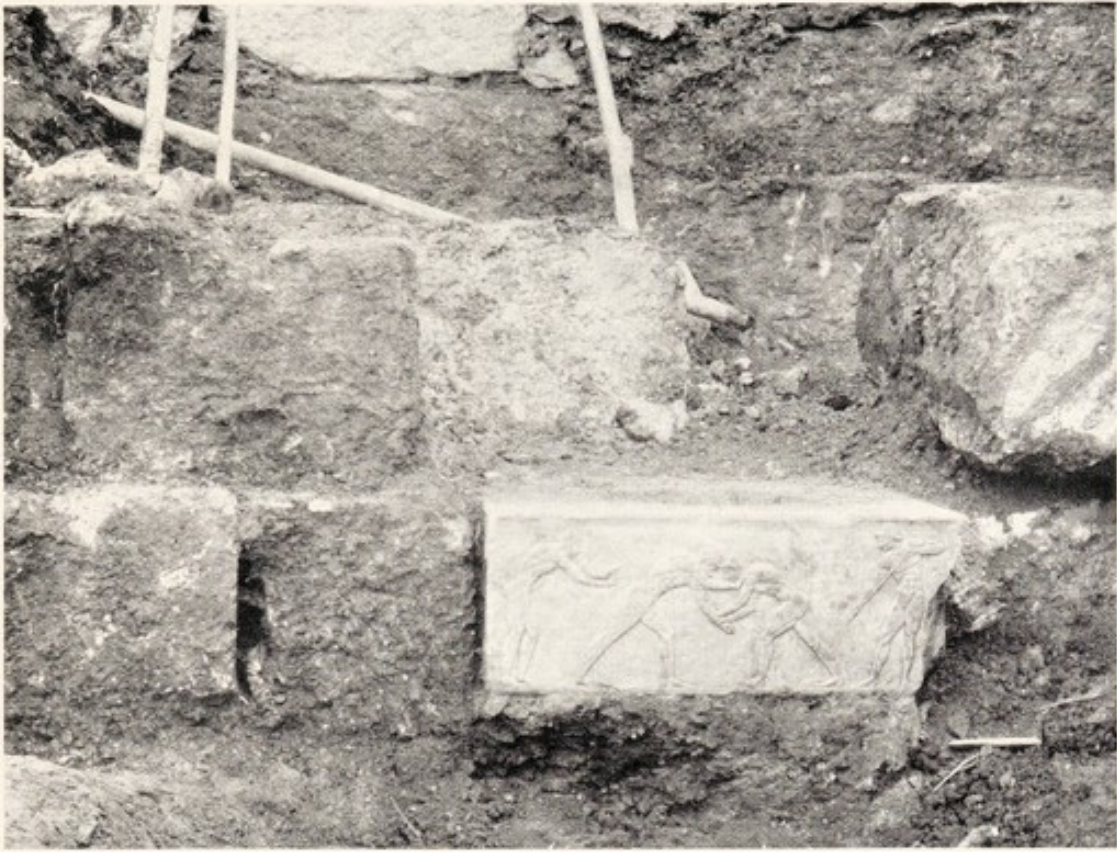


Fig. 25. Relief of the late sixth century B.C. found at Athens



Fig. 26. City-wall of Histria, with Inscription of the Time of Hadrian



Fig. 27. Head of the Apollo of Veii

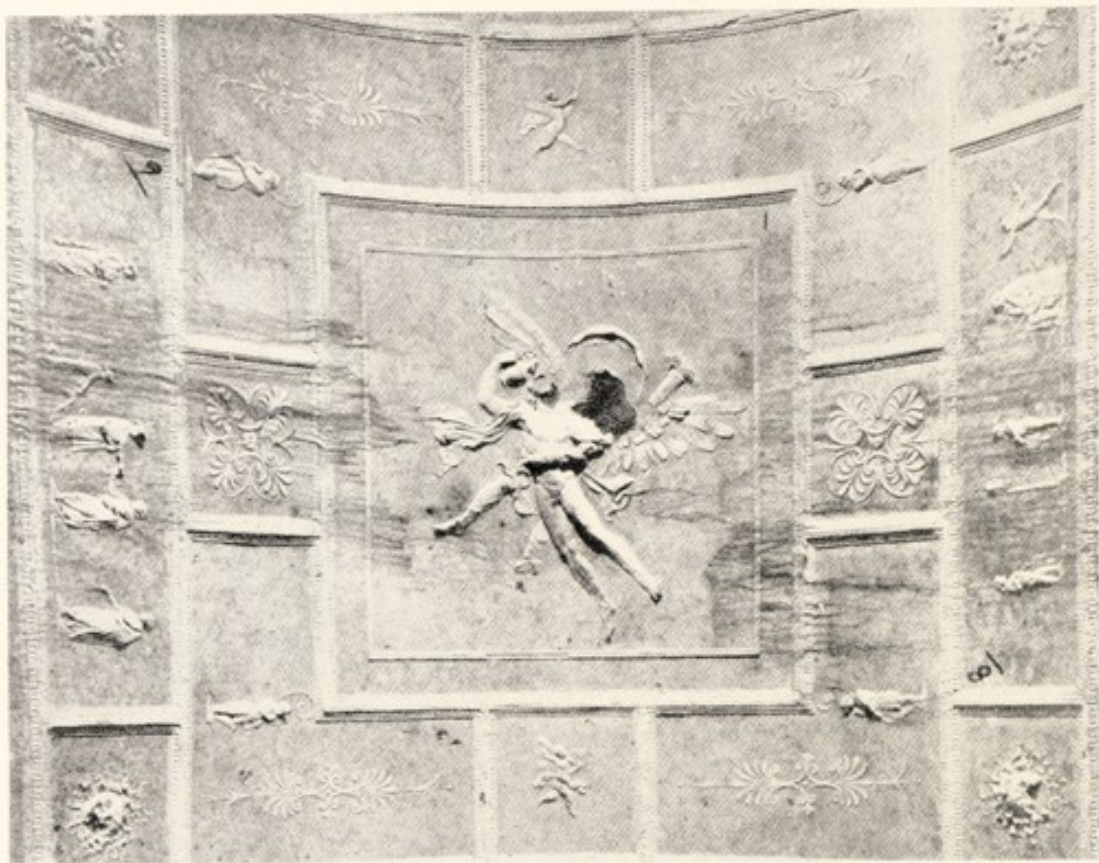


Fig. 28. Stucco Designs on the Vault of the underground *Basilica* at the Porta Maggiore, Rome

Egyptian monuments. In this cenotaph were vessels of stone used in the blood-sacrifice of animals and two stone slabs which are thought to have represented the dead men, rather in the tradition of western European megalithic monuments. Altogether our knowledge of Mycenaean religion has been enormously increased by these finds and our already full knowledge of Mycenaean and Cretan art made fuller still. This tomb is the richest opened since the discovery by Schliemann of the great shaft-graves at Mycenae.

In Crete itself the French excavations in 1925 at Mallia, on the north-east coast, have added another palace to those already known in Crete. But this palace is of an early period and not rebuilt at a later date, so that we now know more fully what a Cretan palace was in origin. Apparently it had similarities in design and character with the palaces of Sumeria and also with later Hittite palaces, showing thus that Crete was indebted to the East more than had been thought. In the ruins of this palace at Mallia was found a ceremonial sword mounted in gold and crystal and a ceremonial axe of stone carved in the likeness of a panther. These were probably part of the palace regalia.

The earlier periods of historic Greece are now in process of a closer investigation. Numerous excavations at small sites are yielding further knowledge of that obscure period from the eleventh to the eighth century, when the Greek people of history were

emerging from that dim world of ruin and wandering which succeeded the Mycenaean Age and heralded the new Age of Iron. Contacts with Egypt almost from the beginning of the Greek period proper indicate the region from which Greeks derived one at least of those oriental stimuli which ended in the fine flower of Greek art as a whole.

For the early archaic age a series of important discoveries has been made at a site known as Perachora, on a headland near Corinth, now under excavation by British archaeologists. Here the art of Corinth is now fully documented. For the close of the sixth century a further illumination of Greek art, and especially of Corinthian art, has been surprisingly made in the far north just across the present Greek border, in the marches of Yugoslavia. Just before the end of the War in 1918, when this territory was in Bulgarian hands, there were found seven unrobbed graves of warriors at the village of Gorentchi, on the shore of Lake Ochrida, and situated on the line of the ancient route from the Aegean to the Adriatic which was later known to Romans as the Via Egnatia. Here in the heart of the wild Balkan mountains, in a region which was never Greek, but always autonomous in Greek times, ruled by semi-civilised chieftains who fought either with or against Greek forces, there seems to have been an outpost of Hellenism which was the farthest north to which Greek art and culture had penetrated in the interior of Europe. The Bulgarian excavations were supplemented in

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1930 by further Yugoslav excavations which resulted in the discovery of further graves and of a city site on an adjoining hill. Again in 1932 four new tombs were found. The previous tombs were all of warriors and contained astonishing wealth of bronze vessels of Corinthian fabric, some being the finest extant examples of Greek art of this kind (Fig. 23). On the bodies of the dead were, strangely enough, gold masks (Fig. 22), also of Greek workmanship, and in two cases gold gloves on the hands. Silver-gilt drinking-horns (Fig. 24) and bronze jugs were also found. Spears and swords of iron illustrated the equipment of the warriors. Four new graves found in 1932 are the graves of women of the same date as those of the warriors. Another gold mask was found and numbers of gold and silver pins, trinkets and ornaments. The explanation of this rich centre of Hellenic art, nearly a hundred miles distant from any Greek colony, and two hundred from the main cities of Central Greece, must be left to the historians. But that barbarian chieftains could so completely have absorbed the culture of Greece in the sixth century at so remote a place is testimony to the penetrative qualities of Greek art and life. No inscriptions were found in the cemetery and few objects which might illustrate the barbarian life of the inhabitants. The limits of Hellenism must be pushed farther north than has been the custom hitherto. None of the objects found comes as a surprise, and none is of an unknown type to add to our repertoire of Greek art except the strange gold

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masks over the faces. These are new and hard to explain, found in this wholly Hellenic setting. The only parallel is from a distant age and place, Mycenae. Greeks were not buried with masks over their faces in historic times. Here is a problem that awaits solution. The excavation, now in progress, of the city to which this cemetery belongs may go far to clear up the points in dispute.

It is from the wilder regions that we must hope for more discoveries of the kind, for barbarian chieftains imported Greek works of art not only in Western Macedonia but also in Thrace. The tramlings of history that have robbed the well-known sites of Southern Greece of so much of their wealth (like the Roman destruction of Corinth, the age-long looting of Athens, Olympia and Delphi) force us to search the remote highlands of the Balkans for the forgotten tombs of distant folk who, in the fourth, fifth and sixth centuries, were avid to purchase the art of Greece for their enjoyment. Bulgaria is now a rich ground for such finds. Tombs of Thracian chieftains have been found in the past, always richly filled with objects of art made at Athens in the fifth or fourth centuries B.C. Thrace looked to Athens for its culture, while Western Macedonia looked to Corinth. Silver vessels made in Athens in the 5th century B.C. have been found in graves near Philippopolis in the last few years. Further excavation in 1932 has produced another tomb in which the principal objects of art are a superb

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silver cup bearing chased designs round its sides of a maenad and satyr on one side, and Dionysos and a satyr on the other. It is mid-fifth century in date and has no rival, or even parallel, in the museums of the world. Here is a treasure indeed, made by one of the finest artists of one of the finest periods of Greek art. Such are the rewards that wait for the excavator in remote places where the survival of precious metal is more likely than in the more troubled regions of the south. That Thrace has been a wilderness for so many centuries is perhaps the reason why so much has been preserved there.

But even Athens itself is not yet exhausted. The recent excavations undertaken at great expense by Americans beneath the Acropolis have been fruitful of results. A fine bronze head of the fifth century, a fourth-century statue of some merit, and inscriptions of the highest literary interest are the reward of the first two seasons. Chance finds in the city also occur almost annually during the course of building at Athens. In 1922 a three-sided relief (Fig. 25) of the late sixth century added a great masterpiece to the collections of sculpture. And on the Greek coasts the sea has rendered up two bronze statues of superlative quality. The now famous Zeus of Artemisium can rank as the finest example of early fifth-century Greek art in existence. The other bronze, a graceful standing boy, tells us much of the art of the fourth century.

Of the many hundred colonies of Greek cities only

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a very small number have been excavated. In Sicily the site of Himera has now been productive of some fine architectural sculpture, that of Selinus of good terra-cottas. But Selinus was largely excavated many years ago. In Spain there is some investigation of Greek colonies on the east coast, but much remains to be done. The establishment of Rumania as a large central European state has led to the development there of archaeological research on sound lines. The excavations carried out during and after the War at the site of the ancient Histria (or Istros), near the Danube mouth on the Black Sea, has revealed a delightful little Greek city perched on a desolate coast, far from any neighbours. Sacked and ruined many a time by envious Scyths and Thracians, it yet survived long enough to be granted its freedom in the Roman Empire under Hadrian. Over two hundred inscriptions enable us to reconstruct its history. A few humble works of art show that it lived up to its Hellenic traditions. Its walls stand to-day many courses high (Fig. 26), with gates and towers, as when this diminutive outpost of civilisation withstood the rigours, human and climatic, of the rolling steppes that lie for many leagues behind and round it. Further down this bleak coast the Greek cities of Tomi (now Constanza) and Dionysopolis, have also been partly excavated. We now know some little more of Greek life on the very confines of the habitable world. Rumanian archaeologists are to be congratulated on their enterprise.

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Another outlying city, Olynthos, in Macedonia, has yielded up interesting information. Here have been found the full plans of late Greek houses and on their floors the earliest known mosaic designs. The future of Greek excavations will lie mainly in the colonial settlements. Yet, surprisingly enough, there is still scope for much work on Old Greece. The islands have still many unexcavated sites, and at Samos German excavators have recently added some fine works of art in sculpture to those already known from that island. Indeed, there seems no limit to the number of fine works of art still to be found in Greece.

## CHAPTER VI

# ETRURIA, ROME AND ITALY

(See Area V. on the Map on p. 3)

**I**TALY, like Greece, has been so thoroughly explored and investigated that recent research has of necessity confined itself to the simple task of enlargement of our already considerable knowledge of things Roman, Etruscan and Italian. Excavation in Italy is, with a few unimportant exceptions, only allowed to be carried out by Italians. There has not been, in consequence, quite the activity and extensive research that has restored to us so much of the past of the Greek world. But a multitude of small undertakings, together with several large enterprises controlled directly by the State, has given us a mass of new information. The difficulty is to segregate the important from the merely sensational. In this context we can at once dismiss the drainage of the lake of Nemi and the discovery of the sunken State Barges of the Roman Empire as an enterprise of some small interest but of no scientific importance. The state-controlled clearance of the forum of Trajan and that of Augustus rank among the major excavations, the prime object of which is the disentanglement of old buildings from modern, while those at Pompeii,

Herculaneum and Ostia are excavations in the proper sense of the term for the purpose of actual discovery of new knowledge.

Much research, excavation at small sites, and general speculation have been carried out in the last ten years in the Etruscan field. Strange though it may seem, the Etruscans still remain the principal riddle of Italian history. For here was a people of great gifts artistically, of great organising power and military ability, who differed from the Italians and Romans in almost every particular. Their language was unlike any other in Europe, though it was written in Greek characters. Nor has it yet been fully understood or translated, although hundreds of inscriptions exist. Their religion was strange and exotic and their art an odd adaptation, touched with a streak of genius, of Greek art, from which it steadily drew almost all its main inspiration. Antiquity maintained that the Etruscans entered Italy from Asia Minor in the early part of the first millennium B.C. But no absolutely certain proof of this has yet been forthcoming. On the other hand, excavations in Asia Minor give some hints of a connection. There have been many views on the origins of the Etruscans and it is safe to say that no one single view has been conclusively proved. Yet there is a general consensus of opinion that antiquity was right and that the Etruscans were part of a great migration of an ancient Asiatic race of unknown origin from Asia Minor, who ultimately reached Umbria about the ninth

century B.C. It is a remarkable fact that the earliest Etruscan sites are on the sea-coast, which seems to verify this belief. Another fact which seems to me, at any rate, to prove conclusively the Asiatic origin of the Etruscans, is that among their religious rites they indulged in divination by means of liver-inspection of sacrificed animals (or hepatoscopy), which happens to be one of the rarest modes of divination in the world. But it is a mode of divination common in both Asia Minor and in ancient Sumeria, and found in antiquity in no other area. In the face of this one piece of evidence it is extremely difficult for those who maintain—as many Italians attempt to-day to do—that the Etruscan race is indigenous, to stick to their guns. But those who, in fact, maintain that the Etruscans are indigenous assume that they are of a very ancient stock of pre-Aryan origin which had revived and recreated its racial unity. Theoretically, a resurgence or renaissance of ancient stock is just possible, but I know of no other instance in the history of Europe. And that not only their racial stock but also their ancient language and manner of life should have survived so completely from a Bronze or Neolithic Age is to assume the impossible. Ancient stocks often lasted late, like the Minoans of Crete who still survived in stray towns in Crete down to the fourth century B.C., and ancient styles of art can acquire a new lease of life like the Celtic art of Britain, which revived after the collapse of the Roman domination. But in both cases we can trace the ultimate

origins of Minoan and Celt and see how a more or less continuous life was carried on during the period of foreign supremacy. But the Etruscans appear in an Italian world suddenly, completely equipped with all the elements of civilisation, and they join forces with the Italian native stock, not as conquerors, nor yet as resurgent nationalists of ancient stock, but quite simply as utter and complete strangers to a world in which they found a thriving population whose mode of life differed from their own in almost all fundamental things. Recent excavations have given no support of any kind to the view that the Etruscans are indigenous, however flattering that view may be to Italian nationalism: while, on the other hand, the new discoveries made at the island of Lemnos off Asia Minor give some colour to the theory that Lemnos was one of the halting-places of Etruscan people on their way west; and those now engaged on the decipherment of the new tablets from Ras Shamra, referred to in an earlier chapter, think that there are Etruscan linguistic affinities in one of the new languages revealed by the tablets. Here, in any case, is another problem which the pick and shovel of the patient excavator will ultimately decide.

A great deal of steady work has been done in Italy on the culture of the Italian peoples of the Iron Age who were in occupation of Italy when the Etruscans arrived. Archaeology again has been able to correct the traditional history-book view that Italy was inhabited by savage and primitive tribes and by a few

less primitive Etruscans, until Rome at last civilised this rude barbarism. Quite otherwise, Italy was occupied by a variety of tribes of which the majority had evolved a very high stage of civilisation indeed long before the Romans set out on their long journey of organisation and imperial progress. In the Bronze Age Italy received a powerful immigration of tribes from the great breeding grounds of the Danube Valley. Where Greece had been civilised in the Bronze Age by the magnificent culture of Crete, acting on a native culture, which was only tinged at first by Danubian influences, Italy developed in the same Bronze Age, wholly untouched by Crete or Mycenae, but tremendously vitalised by the Bronze Age of the Hungarian plains. No trace of Cretan or Mycenaean remains has been found in the whole of the Italian peninsula from the Alps to the toe of Italy. Sicily is quite another story, and is largely dependent upon Greek influences in prehistoric days. But by about 1500 B.C. the Danubian Bronze Age peoples had created a fairly uniform culture of a high order throughout Italy. There was, indeed, little difference between the highest European Bronze Age culture and that of Italy, which looked northwards, not to the south. But if the culture was uniform the racial stock was not. Older Neolithic stock survived with some of its older characteristics in the east side of Central Italy throughout the Bronze and Iron Ages. The Iron Age itself began about 1200 B.C., due, like the Bronze Age, to influences from the

north. The most important and most competent of these early Italian peoples were the Villanovans (as they are known to archaeologists). These people had brought the art of metal-working to its highest perfection. They had learned it in the Danube valley and arrived already fully competent. Bologna was the main centre of an enormous trade in metal-work, and by the sixth century Bolognese ornaments and vessels of bronze were imported to Western Europe until later they were purchased by the pre-Roman Iron Age Celts of France and Britain. Most areas of Italy, even down to Rome itself, have provided traces of these Villanovans. And it was into an Italy already half-civilised that the Etruscans came in the ninth century. They joined forces with the natives and learned from them almost as much as they taught. The blend was a most fortunate one for Italy. In the north-east Etruria had but little influence, and the Iron Age native life continued even long after the foundation of Rome. Bologna and the province of Venetia still kept up the strong connection with the Danube valley. But farther south on the east coast the people were more primitive, being descendants of the Neolithic Age who had adopted the Bronze Age life but not advanced much beyond it, although they retained a strong local nationalism. Among these more primitive and non-Danubian peoples were the Samnites of history.

This in the main is the outline of recent research into Italian prehistory, a study fundamentally dif-

ferent from Greek prehistory and meeting it at hardly any point. It is unnecessary for me to say how important it is to establish clearly the origins of the Greek and Roman peoples. That the distinction between the two has been so clearly made is one of the chief results of post-War research.

Among the most important excavations to illustrate the various periods of Italian history the following deserve note. In 1916 work near the site of the Etruscan city of Veii, which was throughout Roman history a particular thorn in the side of Rome, revealed the remains of a group of terracotta figures of great size which had originally adorned the pediment of an Etruscan temple. The almost complete figure of an Apollo larger than life-size was the principal discovery (Fig. 27). With it were large fragments of other figures sufficient to make it certain that the pedimental scene was the well-known Greek subject of the dispute of Apollo and Herakles for the tripod at Delphi. But the workmanship of the group, in the manner of Etruscan art of about 500 B.C., was of the very highest order. Indeed we can say that Etruscan art as seen in these figures was an art of the first rank, although dependent for subject-matter on Greek art. The spirit and vigour of these terracottas show the vitality and strength of Etruscan artistic genius, and the actual medium, when used for large-scale statues, was one in which Etruscan artists were supreme in the ancient world. Greek terracottas of this size were rarely made. The statues were found in a posi-

tion which suggested that after the capture of Veii pious Etruscans had deliberately buried the damaged statues of their sanctuary.

Among the larger excavations those of the Port of Ostia have been most successful. Here was revealed the complete plan of the great port, with many of the buildings standing more than one storey high. The port developed out of a small nucleus, a fort not two hundred yards square. The earliest remains went back to the fourth century B.C. The most ancient walls of Ostia were probably visible in the time of Virgil, and they may have inspired his description of the settlement of Aeneas in a *castrum* at the Tiber mouth. Of later dates many important inscriptions were found, one in a Mithraeum being of particular interest, since it recorded the replacement of a painted figure of a god on canvas by a stone statue. Shops, streets and warehouses were cleared and the main outlines of ancient Ostia restored. Work has been carried out steadily at Herculaneum and Pompeii. The virtue of these sites is that they preserve two cities which were abandoned at a fixed moment of time. Sites which were destroyed by human agency, or left uninhabited, leave less material with which to reconstruct the daily life of the inhabitants. No site is so satisfactory as a site overwhelmed by a cataclysm. These two towns thus remain ideal from the archaeologist's point of view. That they have in the past or are likely in the future to contribute largely to our knowledge of ancient art

is more speculative. Statues from both places are numerous and much has been learned of Greek and Roman art at second hand by the medium of poor copies of better works by Greeks. There have been some few fine finds, like the bronze boy found recently in the *Via dell' abbondanza* at Pompeii. But for the most part these towns were neither very rich nor very cultured. The villas of the Emperors are much more likely to yield up fine works of art. The recent finds at Herculaneum (Fig. 30) show that the houses here, being buried in liquid mud and not by ashes as at Pompeii, are better preserved, even an example of wood-carving having been found. The houses, too, are larger and better than those at Pompeii.

Strangest of all discoveries was that originally made in 1915 by accident of a complete underground *basilica* near the Porta Maggiore, actually beneath the track of the railway from Rome to Naples. It was first found by the chance revelation that the track-ballast was slipping into a hole into the ground and endangering the permanent way. The hole was found to lead down to an unsuspected building of great elegance and beauty. The building is in almost perfect preservation and measures 12 by 9 metres. It had an atrium-like vestibule and the main hall was supported by six rectangular columns. At the end was an apse. The walls were adorned with numerous scenes in stucco-relief rendered in the manner apparently of the first century A.D. (Fig. 28). The scenes



Fig. 29. House at Herculaneum



Fig. 30. Forum of Augustus at Rome



Fig. 31. Quilted Rug from a Tomb near Lake Baikal

in the panels were all taken from Greek mythology and all seem to contain some religious connotation or meaning. But what the religion was to which this chapel was dedicated we do not know. It has been suggested that it was used by a secret cult of Pythagoreans or by some Orphic creed. However that may be, there was evidently some need of secrecy, otherwise it is difficult to see why the building should have been under the ancient Roman level of the ground.

The excavation of the Imperial Fora has proceeded apace and many modern buildings in Rome have been removed in order to throw open these ancient spaces. Few individual works of art of importance have been found, but new buildings not previously known have been revealed. Thus in the Forum of Trajan the plan of a library has been made out, and in the Forum of Augustus (Fig. 29) a close examination of the architectural remains has suggested that the Forum had a two-storey colonnade in the Hellenistic manner. Ancient Rome is now more visible to the eye than at any period in recent times. Every area of the great *fora* that can possibly be cleared of encumbering modern houses is in process of clearance. The state control of these enterprises has undoubtedly aided them enormously.

## CHAPTER VII

# RUSSIA, TURKESTAN, MONGOLIA, SIBERIA AND CHINA

(See Area VI. on the Map on p. 3)

IT might seem almost impossible to deal with so vast an area as this—all upper Asia—in the space of one brief chapter. Paucity of excavation and research alone makes it possible to attempt such a survey. But this survey is also aided by the fact that a very large area of upper Asia had acquired a unity of culture which lasted over a period of time as immense as the area of space involved. And certain scientific excavations have in fact been carried out which throw a disproportionate flood of light on vast problems. Here the luck of the excavator has held.

Geography, as always, is the conditioning factor. And geography has made it plain beyond cavil that the continent of Asia from the Baltic to the Sea of Okhotsk shall allow movement of peoples without hindrance from mountain barriers, other than the Urals, in the upper part of the continent. Climate alone might delay or forbid movement, not the land-forms themselves. In consequence there has been, ever since the earliest known ages of man, an interchange of ideas through the movements of nomadic

peoples across the whole immense area under discussion. Movements to the south were barred all the way along by the great masses of the Baikal Mountains, the Altai range, the Caucasus and the Himalayas. Southern Asia could only with difficulty be penetrated at Persia, in the highlands south of the Altai (whence Mongolia was reached) and round by way of Manchuria or Mongolia to China. Asia was thus geographically divided into halves, along a line east and west, and the history of Asia has always been that of considerable lateral movement of peoples throughout the upper half and of their continuous pressure southwards upon a series of cultures which, in the southern half, had established static civilisations. Only at the Black Sea did the teeming peoples of nomadic Asia finally coalesce with the static world of Europe. In Persia, in Mesopotamia, in Syria, in India and in China the nomads of the plains and steppes of Siberia and Asiatic Russia have sought time and time again to make inroads into the settled and prosperous south. The written records of the southern Asiatic peoples are full of stories of the inroads of the northern peoples.

Now from a strictly archaeological point of view we must consider only the material objects made by the peoples of upper Asia in order to see what unity they have, what contacts they established and what influence they had on surrounding cultures. At the very outset one is presented with an astonishing artistic unity in all the works of art (and nearly

every object of daily use in upper Asia was a work of art) which belong to the main area with which we are dealing, that lying west of China. In Russian museums there has accumulated an enormous mass of objects in gold, bronze, wood and bone which are stamped with the stamp of a very high art indeed. Archaeologists to-day are in the main agreed that the northern parts of northern Asia produced a Stone Age culture in which artistic taste was high. From the masterpieces of the Stone Age in Siberia we can see the germ of a style of art which developed with enormous energy and skill among nomadic peoples and had such vigour and life that it has lasted almost until recent historical times. Such was its vitality that it extended ultimately westwards and affected the whole of the art of the Teutonic and Scandinavian peoples of the Christian era. Here, indeed, is a story to fit into the history of art which requires great patience to unravel. We must imagine a situation comparable to one in Europe in which the genius of palaeolithic man had continued in unbroken artistic tradition down to historical times: a situation in which superb ivory carvings of animals made by cave men became transformed into an art applicable to the subtleties of bronze-founding and gold-smithing. Something of this kind seems to have happened in the remote valleys and plainlands of upper Asia. The valley of the Yenesei and the foothills of the Altai mountains probably saw the fullest development of this culture, which we only know from its artistic

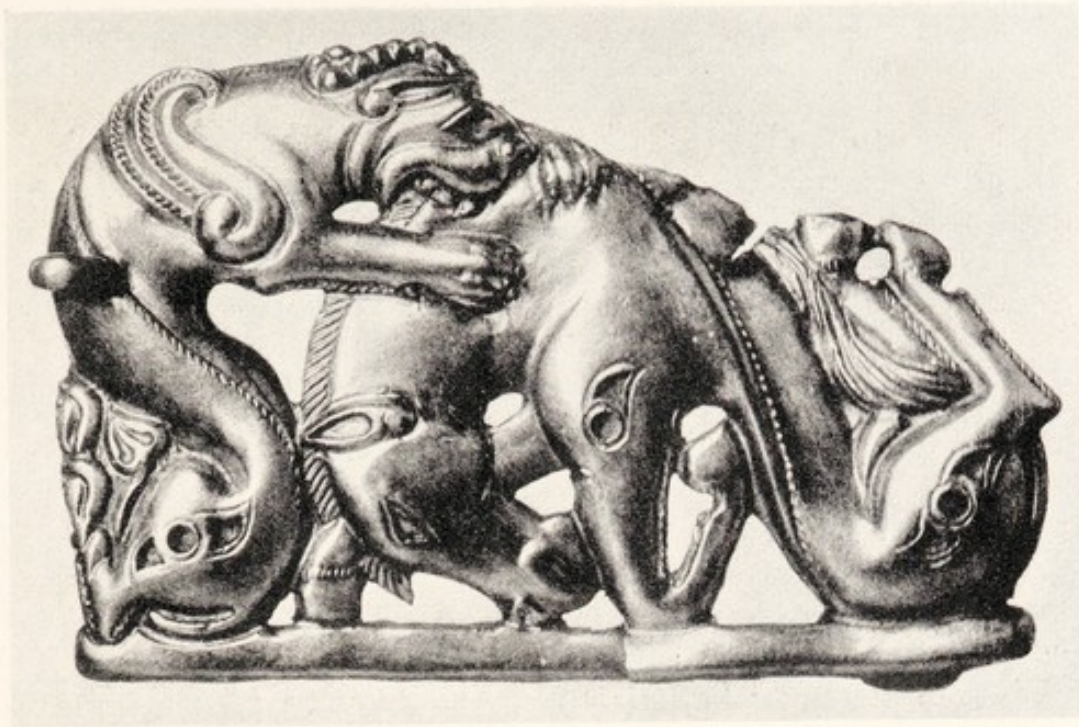


Fig. 32. Gold Ornament from Siberia  
Scale  $\frac{2}{3}$

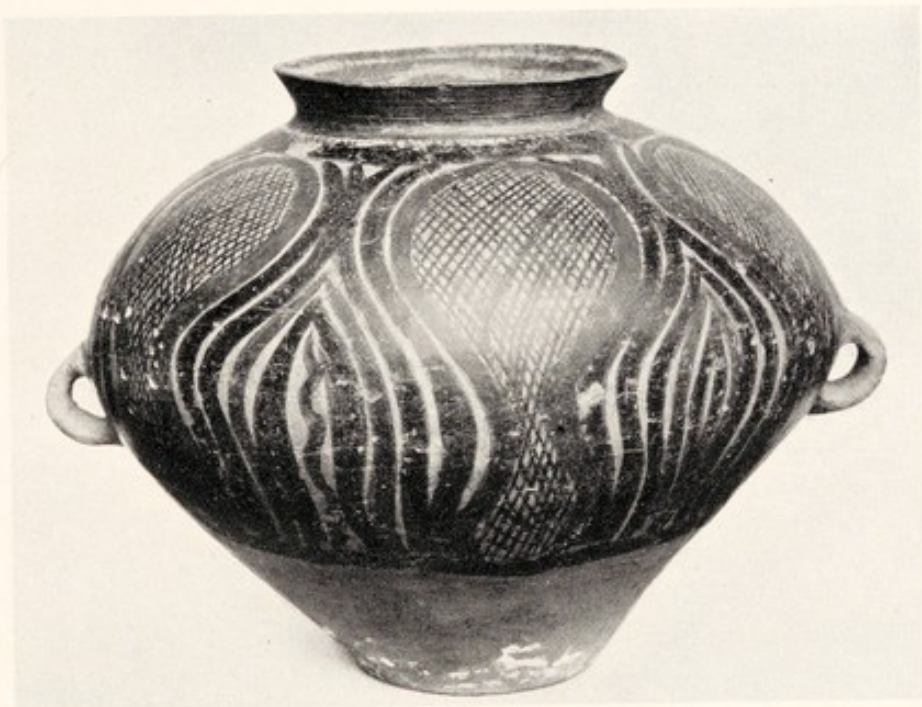


Fig. 33. Vase from China, of the Neolithic or  
Bronze Age  
Scale  $\frac{1}{4}$



Fig. 34. Maya Carving in Jadeite  
Scale  $\frac{1}{2}$



Fig. 35. Maya Painted Cup  
(in red, black and white)  
Scale  $\frac{1}{2}$

products. For it is dumb and silent, without knowledge of writing, as far as we know, and a civilisation of essentially nomadic peoples. But, all too often, we tend to use 'nomad' as a term of abuse and to suggest that any nomadic culture must be a low culture. The nomad peoples of upper Asia can rank among the most artistic in the world. For cities are not the only cauldrons in which art is generated: the nomadic life can be one of very high taste and refinement, as indeed the discoveries prove. It is the agricultural life pure and simple that rarely, if ever, develops artistic taste without the aid of cities. And nomads are only agriculturists in the most limited sense.

It is hard to get a full notion of the immense wealth of works of art found in Siberia and Russia. Some ten thousand gold plaques are preserved in the Hermitage Museum alone, at Leningrad. This collection is, in the main, due to an ordinance of Peter the Great, which he personally put forth to preserve some of the finds which began to be made increasingly in the eighteenth century (Fig. 32). On the foundation of what he so wisely built the archaeologists of the Soviet Union are now attempting to raise a scientific structure by the aid of excavation.

The style of art of these Siberian and Russian ornaments found throughout the length and breadth of upper Asia is particularly pure and fine. The art is instinctive and not elaborated. And the tendency throughout is to capture the beauty of the

forms and shapes of animals and to adapt those shapes quite arbitrarily to the utility aspect of the objects made. And the artist is always making patterns, never copying nature. In a word, the Northern Asiatic in ancient times was an instinctive artist, a wandering hunter with a hunter's eye for beauty.

In the south, near the Black Sea, these northern artists came into touch with the Greek world and, until quite recently, we knew little from a strictly archaeological point of view about their life and activities except from what had been found in the great Scythian tombs of the Crimea and Kuban districts. 'Scythian' is a term which can be used only to describe those particular Northern Asiatics whom the Greeks encountered. They were preceded by Cimmerians, in the same southern areas, and it was Cimmerians who, largely in the earlier periods, invaded at intervals the settled lands of Syria, Mesopotamia and Asia Minor. After Scythians came Sarmatians, who were mainly in contact with Rome. But there is no particular reason to emphasise ethnological distinctions, more especially as we know relatively nothing of the ethnology of upper Asia in ancient times.

Recently two excavations in the very heart of Asia have revealed the art of these peoples in circumstances which have been scientifically studied. Both excavations are concerned with the Altai-Baikal region, in a land sealed almost by perpetual frost

RUSSIA, TURKESTAN, MONGOLIA, SIBERIA, CHINA and ice. The climatic conditions, indeed, helped beyond all expectation. Just as the bone-dry soil of Egypt has preserved countless perishable objects from destruction, so the frosts of the Altai have kept intact the contents of a series of tombs. The first excavations were carried out in 1924 and 1925 by Colonel Kozlov just south of Lake Baikal. Here were found some two hundred tombs, about seventy miles north of the city of Urga. The excavators date the few tombs which were excavated to the first century B.C., but not with exactitude. The tombs were apparently those of a nomad people of the Scythian type and represented a tribal cemetery. This means that the tribes in question were nomadic within a given area and that on the death of a chieftain the tribe repaired to its burial-ground. The tombs were mounds situated on a wooded mountain. Most had been partially robbed in early times, but a wealth of discoveries were nevertheless made. Gold plaques and studs, bronze ornaments, wooden carvings, lacquer, and, above all, an astonishing number of embroidered textiles, in splendid preservation, were found. Here were the trappings of a rich tomb of a nomad chief.

The other excavations were in the Altai mountains, in a similar clan burial-ground. The excavations took place in 1929, and the contents of the chief graves opened were found firmly cemented in ice owing to the almost continuous frost which had lasted since the day of the burial. One grave-mound was

no less than 4500 feet up in the mountains; the inside of the grave gave the appearance, in the words of the excavators, 'that hardly a year had passed since its construction'. The bodies of ten horses, sacrificed at the burial, were found almost intact. Textiles, wood and metal ornaments were found in abundance.

These discoveries serve as illustration of the culture of inner Asia, of which we had hitherto only the rather unsatisfactory evidence of chance finds (numerous though they were) and of the Scythian graves on the coasts of the Black Sea. Until the interior of Asia was examined it would obviously be rash to draw conclusions as to Northern Asiatic art and culture solely from the Black Sea finds, which were clearly deeply influenced by Greek life. For Scythians and Greeks, and Sarmatians and Greeks or Romans had lived in close touch for many centuries in these parts. What was found could not serve to illustrate far regions until those regions had been examined scientifically. These recent excavations now allow us to conclude that far off in the wild regions of the very heart of Asia the ordinary nomad lived a life in which art played a very large part, and, moreover, an art which was a composite of strains drawn from all over the ancient world. On the floor of one of the Baikal tombs was a quilted rug decorated with a superb scene of a reindeer attacked by a griffin and other similar devices (Fig. 31). Here for the first time we see Scytho-Siberian art in textiles.

## RUSSIA, TURKESTAN, MONGOLIA, SIBERIA, CHINA

Here is the pure art of the nomads. But other embroideries were found to be pure Greek work, imported from the Greek cities of the Black Sea, far away to the south. Others again were pure Chinese, in silk, of the Han dynasty. There was also a Chinese lacquer bowl. Indeed, this nomad chieftain had drawn his wealth from every land to which nomad peoples had gone. And from China as well as from the Black Sea in the first century B.C. we hear of continuous movements of people from the inner heart of Asia.

But the fringes of this world of wandering folk were held by static cultures, some of which had started in remote prehistoric times. In Turkestan a few years before the War excavations at Askhabad (near Merv) had shown that there was a fully developed region of the Copper and Bronze Ages which showed affinities with the culture of Persia and Mesopotamia. Perhaps it was an intrusion from the south. But along the lower rim of upper Asia there seems to have been a fairly continuous culture in the early Bronze Age which extended ultimately as far as western Russia and Rumania. It was distinguished by a very high standard of ceramic art in which the designs were painted, not incised. From western Turkestan to south-eastern Europe movements of peoples would find no hindrance of any kind. To put it in the simplest way one might say that it is possible to ride a bicycle from the foot of the Pamir to Bucharest, going north of the Caspian

and the Black Sea, without encountering any obstacles except rivers. In this enormous area there seems to have been a separate community of culture. But from here to China is a far call, and the highlands of Mongolia have to be negotiated. Yet in western China there have recently been discovered in the provinces of Shansi, Honan and Kansu a series of graves and settlements which contained superb vases decorated with designs in paint which seem to bear some relationship to the Copper and Bronze Age style of the west Asiatic and European wares just referred to (Fig. 33). It is significant that they are found in exactly those Chinese provinces which are on the eastern end of the great Asiatic trade routes of immemorial antiquity. The earlier of these Chinese wares, which are at present tentatively assigned to a late Neolithic or early Bronze Age, seem superior in quality to the later, so that we may assume that the origins of this culture have not yet been found. Dating is as yet uncertain, and until further work has been done it would be rash to correlate these finds with complete confidence with the western and European cultures. What is quite certain is that these are the products of static peoples and to be sharply distinguished from the world of the nomads of the northern half of Asia.

Our knowledge of earliest Chinese archaeology is still in its infancy. But a recent find near Anyang in Honan province, the reputed capital of the Shang Dynasty (which is dated by Chinese record to 1766-

1122 B.C.), has illustrated a period of Chinese history in which it comes into touch with the prehistoric cultures of western Asia. These excavations at Anyang by Chinese archaeologists revealed a few examples of the painted pottery referred to above. There were also found a large number of inscribed pieces of bone which bore inscriptions in the earliest known form of Chinese script. These inscriptions seem to be religious and record the oracular utterances of a god. There was also found an example of stone sculpture. The latter discovery throws back the art of sculpture in China to a very remote age. Hitherto the earliest sculpture known belonged to the Han Dynasty.

From these few scattered but important discoveries it is evident that some kind of light is appearing in the confused mass of accumulated material. Asia, enormous, impenetrable and almost unknown to the scientific explorer, has at last yielded some of its secrets, or at least sufficient clues to its mysteries to enable us to sketch a not improbable outline of its history from the dim ages of stone and copper to historic times.

## CHAPTER VIII

### AMERICA

(See Area VII. on the Map on p. 3)

**A**RCHAEOLOGY has acted as a brake upon the imaginative flights of historians of American history. The Spaniards have been represented on the one hand as the conquerors of a civilisation greater than their own, and on the other as the civilisers of a barbarism rude beyond belief. The discovery last century that there were predecessors to the Aztecs of Spanish record came as a surprise to the historians. American and English exploration followed, and there emerged a wide knowledge of the civilisation now known as that of the Maya, which was soon recognised as being superior to anything which the Spaniards encountered and in itself a phenomenon of pre-Columbian culture without precedent. The area comprised by British Honduras, South Yucatan, the Republic of Honduras, and that of Guatemala, was found to contain the remains of many ruined cities which testified to an astonishing growth of cultured city-life in a remote age.

The discoveries, not yet fully examined by archaeological method, were soon the prey of inexpert en-



Fig. 37. Recently found  
Maya Sculptured Stele  
from Guatemala  
Scale  $\frac{1}{15}$



Fig. 36. Maya Inscription from British  
Honduras  
Scale  $\frac{1}{15}$

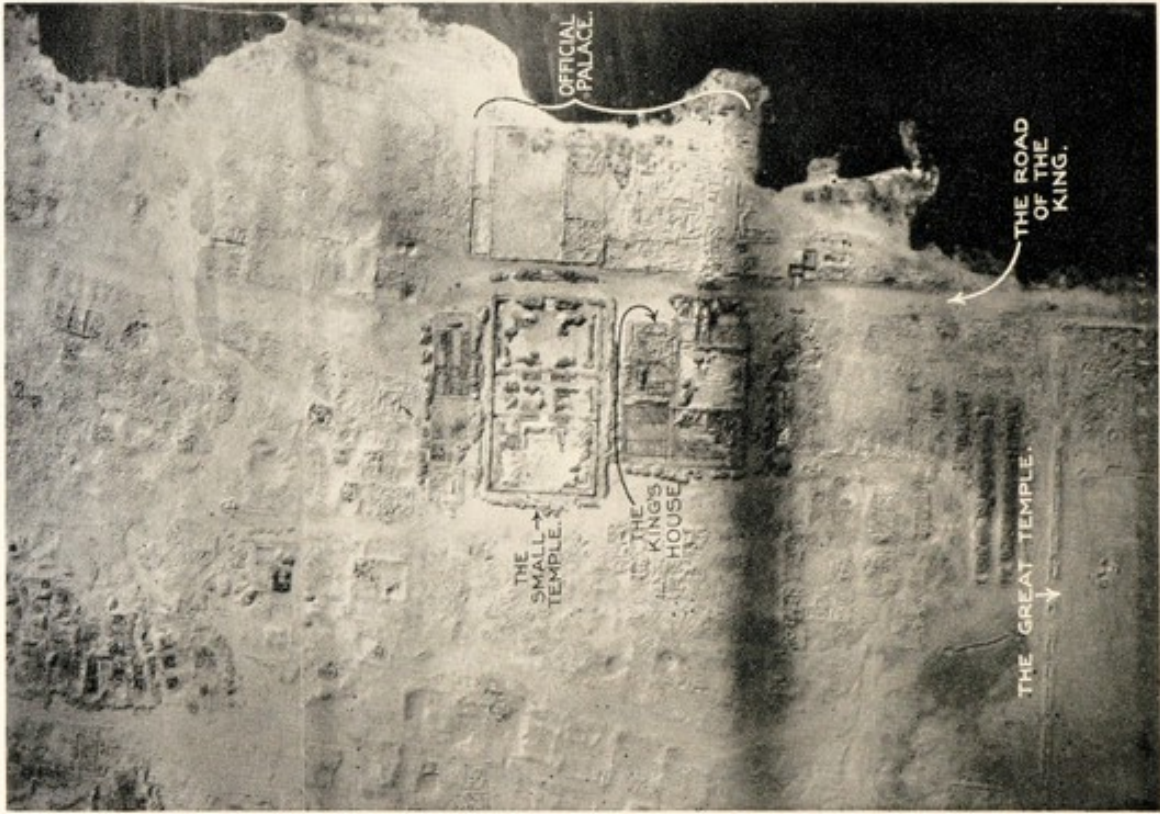


Fig. 38. Amarna, the Capital of Akhenaton, seen from the Air

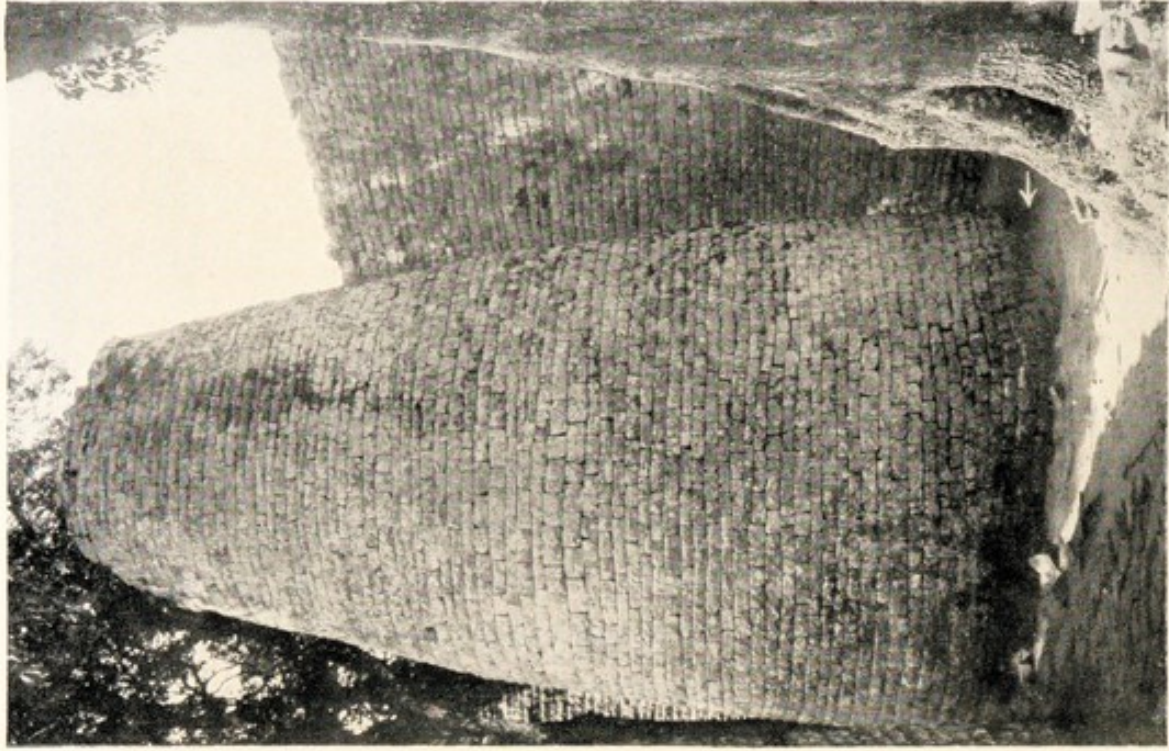


Fig. 39. The Conical Tower and Walls of Zimbabwe

thusiasts. The Maya were rapidly claimed as the Lost Ten Tribes, or the survivors of Atlantis, and identified with all the waifs and strays of illiterate antiquarianism. With Stonehenge and the Egyptian pyramids, the temples and cities of the Maya shared the unenviable reputation of being associated with crank religions and fantastic historical heresies. The mere existence of a civilisation in Central America was sufficient to tempt the uncritical to derive that civilisation from any place other than America itself. It was at once branded as immigrant Asiatic in origin, Cambodian-Chinese by derivation, or even Egyptian, brought by remote 'Children of the Sun'. Even Easter Island—itsself as romantic as Yucatan—was dragged in. But in the last two decades patient excavation not only in Central America but also in Mexico and in the Southern States has made it possible to reconstruct at least an outline of American ancient history.

It is now clear that the Maya were a people who established a city-life for some four and a half centuries, beginning roughly about the first years of the Christian era. At present the main task of excavation is to find out their origin. For we only know them as a finished product. Whence they came and how they developed in the regions where they first settled is obscure. Some hold them to be the descendants of the mound-builders of the Mississippi Valley who had passed round or across the Gulf of Mexico: others that they were originally highlanders of the

Central American mountains : others again that they were autochthonous and native : others that they were aliens of unknown origin who subdued a native population. Whoever they were, the problem will only be solved by another ten years' scientific excavation to find the lowest levels of the oldest Maya cities.

At the outset it must be admitted that there are certain elements in what we know of Maya culture which suggest East Asiatic contacts. But to argue from these to an Asiatic origin of the Maya is hazardous. In the main the life of the Maya peoples was the life of the Stone Age transmuted into an elaborate city-civilisation. To us with our knowledge of metals this is difficult to envisage. Yet the Maya, with hardly any knowledge of metals at all, reached extremely high levels of art in stone-carving, painting, pottery-making and architecture (Figs. 34-37). Indeed, as an artistic people, the Maya must rank among the most artistic in the world. Like the Asiatic nomads of the northern half of Asia, dealt with in a previous chapter, they had an instinctive feeling for design that was rarely if ever purely naturalistic. Maya ornaments and Maya sculptures recall in character the Scythian and Siberian plaques and ornaments in which such high artistic taste was seen. But the Maya artist prefers human to animal figures, or human combined with animal into delightful patterns. Not that I would suggest the faintest contact with North Asiatic art : Maya designs are their own invention.

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A limited use of gold, a smattering of knowledge of copper and of an accidental natural alloy of copper and tin, which was in fact bronze, constituted their only knowledge of metal. All their tools were of stone or wood. Their art and architecture were achieved on the basis of a purely Stone Age technique. And yet, notwithstanding, they seem to have been of a profoundly mathematical turn of mind and are responsible for an organisation of the calendar which had no equal in the ancient Old World. Their calendar was more exact than any before the present Gregorian. They also possessed a kind of syllabary, but no alphabet, and an elaborate system of glyphs or signs by which their dating was expressed. These last, alone of their written records, have been read, largely by the aid of surviving documents left by degenerate Maya descendants whom the Spaniards encountered in Yucatan. Strangely enough, they are the only ancient people who invented a sign for zero, a matter in which not even the Greeks could claim equal mathematical invention.

Their culture was apparently one of peace, and they had no fortifications and no weapons. Their precocious civilisation spread all over the region described, and further discovery suggests that it established trade-contacts with New Mexico and Ecuador. But their Empire, if such it can be called, came to a rapid end. One by one their great cities were abandoned abruptly. It is estimated that some of their cities must have had populations which ran

into hundreds of thousands. For some reason yet to be discovered they abandoned them and moved to north Yucatan where they rapidly degenerated. Semi-barbaric peoples from the north pressed down and soon replaced them in Central America. The first of these were the Toltecs in the eighth century, and after them the Aztecs. Aztec records do not take us back earlier than the twelfth century A.D.

Why this great civilisation came to an end we can only speculate. Possibly their technical equipment, being that of a Stone Age, was unequal to deal with climatic and forest conditions. The richness of the Central American jungle and its rapid encroachment on civilised areas is notorious. With only stone axes it would be a hard fight to keep the jungle out. Perhaps an increased rainfall added to this difficulty the problem of malaria, which, with the breakdown of agriculture, would make their cities uninhabitable. Whatever the cause of their collapse, their cities were evacuated one by one within a few years. Nor are there to be found any signs of violent destruction. Probably we are faced with the strange phenomenon of a people artistically and intellectually gifted beyond the ordinary who turned their gifts to directions other than those of immediate importance. Faced by a constant fight against the rudimentary dangers of nature, they preferred to turn their gifts to speculation, to religion, to mathematics and to art, without mastering those essentials of an inventive life which would enable them to survive. As such we can look

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on the Maya civilisation as one of the most interesting phases of human endeavour known to history. Probably religion played its part in the decline, for they were evidently an empire organised on a theocratic basis. However that may be, they will stand for all time as a warning of the cynical rewards which are meted out to those who pay excessive respect to the spiritual interests of man.

In view of the obvious necessity to add authentic knowledge, based on properly controlled excavation, to what we know of Maya culture, the British Museum undertook in 1927 a series of campaigns on the site known as Lubaantun, some fifty miles from the coast in British Honduras, supplementary to the American excavations in Honduras and Guatemala. It may, indeed, prove that the main clues to American ancient history are to be found in a British Crown Colony. Lubaantun seems to be one of the older Maya cities and a remarkable complex of buildings was discovered. Three or four periods of architecture were found, after most difficult excavation in dense jungle. The surface finds were of the oldest Maya style, which suggests that beneath, at the lower levels, the most primitive Maya remains may be found. Exploration in the neighbourhood showed the existence of another city-site near the Guatemalan frontier, at a place known as Minanha.

In the meantime other excavations farther north carried out by American expeditions have revealed a primitive culture in New Mexico distinguished by

a genius for pottery-making and for painted design. In the Mimbres valley the discoveries in graves have provided us with a fine collection of ceramic which is at present given only the vaguest of datings. It may be as late as A.D. 600 or as early as 2000 B.C. according to the excavators—a conclusion which sufficiently shows the urgent need of more excavation and closer co-ordination of results. The pottery itself shows a genius for linear design rarely found in the Old World. The vessels found had the strange peculiarity of rarely repeating the same design. One might say, indeed, that this peculiarity is shared by the pottery of all Central and upper South America. Peruvian pottery has an enormous repertoire of design and also rarely repeats itself. Maya pottery, on the other hand, as shown by the example illustrated here, is an extremely sophisticated ware on which designs and scenes often found on sculptured reliefs reappear as painted designs, done in delicate and well-chosen colours. The vase here illustrated can rank as one of the finest types of Maya ceramic of the best period (Fig. 35).

South American archaeology is as yet in its infancy. There seems to have been a primitive and semi-barbaric culture in southern Peru which was active in the early centuries of our era. It may reflect some of the qualities of Maya art, but this is, as yet, mere conjecture. In graves of what is called the early Nasca period textiles have been found which seem to repeat as designs patterns which originated in

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Maya calendar-glyphs. But at present the only area to have been examined in some detail by expert archaeologists is the Honduras and Guatemalan region of the Central States. One thing is certain, that Maya culture must take premier place in all the pre-Columbian cultures of America. Artistically Maya work can rank with the highest art of the Old World. Toltec and Aztec art is fine and often first-rate, but it is never so subtle or sophisticated as Maya art. When the Spaniards arrived they found only the scattered remnants of degenerate Maya folk who had migrated from their ruined empire, and, more widespread and more competent as rulers of the country, the Aztecs.

North America has still many secrets hidden. Nothing absolutely certain has yet been found to prove the presence of the Norsemen who reached, according to the records, the coasts of Massachusetts. Certain objects are associated with their settlements but none with certainty. There still may yet be found something to prove their presence.

A recent survey of the problem of the Norsemen in America<sup>1</sup> has obscured rather than illuminated the main problems. The author, by attempting to authenticate an obviously forged 'Norse' inscription on an island called No Man's Land, near New York, has prejudiced the issue. On the other hand the author rejects as a forgery an inscription found in

<sup>1</sup> *Lief Eriksson, Discoverer of America, A.D. 1003*, by Edward F. Gray, Oxford University Press.

## PROGRESS OF ARCHAEOLOGY

Minnesota. A further inscription was reported in October 1933 to have been found near Winnipeg. But as yet no reliable information concerning it is forthcoming. The most cautious opinion tends to accept the Minnesota inscription as genuine.

Nor have we as yet much certain information about the early periods of the American Indian. His Asiatic origin is generally accepted, and recent finds suggest that his way of entry was through Alaska. One thing is certain—that before we look for external contacts of American cultures we must first study their ultimate origins. As we have seen in the case of the Maya, their origins are among the most obscure points about them. Until this and other fundamental points are cleared up we cannot indulge in speculation about Asiatic affinities and external derivations. Suffice it that we have found a whole series of artistic monuments which show once again that man will create beauty without regard to his material comforts or to his material progress. That is a conclusion of no little importance to sociologists, and a conclusion which archaeology alone has provided.

## CHAPTER IX

### AFRICA

(See Area VIII. on the Map on p. 3)

**A**PART from the Nile valley, there are few regions in Africa where the penetration of influences from the Mediterranean were possible. A certain traffic existed across the narrows at Gibraltar and again opposite Sicily, and Crete served always as a stepping-stone between the Aegean and the Egyptian Delta. The Red Sea allowed of easy transit across from coast to coast, but there was little likely to come from Arabia and little that Arabia needed from Egypt, so that this traffic never amounted to much. But in the early Middle Ages Arabs penetrated East Africa and spread inland from the northern African coasts.

Archaeologically Africa has to offer to the excavator the Greek and Carthaginian sites of the north coast, the immense wealth of the Nile valley, where the whole course of unbroken human development can be studied in one fertile but rigidly limited area, and finally the southern and eastern provinces of Rhodesia and Kenya, where recent research has thrown much light upon palaeolithic man as well as on mediaeval Bantu culture. Elsewhere little has been attempted.

## PROGRESS OF ARCHAEOLOGY

So great is the wealth of antiquity in Egypt that the study of Egyptian archaeology is separately labelled as Egyptology. This very segregation indicates the character of the Egyptian world; it was a self-contained internally developed world which reached to the highest levels of material culture and political organisation. In so far as the expansion of Egypt into an empire was undertaken, the only region where expansion was possible lay to the north-east, and along the Nile valley to the south. But imperialism never went far afield. Egypt pushed its frontiers into Syria where they marched with the Hittites in the fourteenth century B.C., and extended a spearhead of Egyptian control southwards to the Sudan. But Egypt never planted colonies, like the colonies of Minoan Crete in Greece or like the Hellenic colonies of the Black Sea and the western Mediterranean. For Egyptian civilisation had neither the proselytising character of Hellenism nor those qualities which would be likely to convert barbarians. Egypt lived on her own resources throughout her history, and, except for those early influences in predynastic times that, as we saw, came in from Sumeria, owed little or nothing to alien cultures.

The massive tombs and dry sands of Egypt have preserved the remains of the past almost as faithfully as the ashes of Vesuvius. So much work has been done in Egypt during the last fifty years that it might have been thought that there were no surprises left. Yet one of the most important of recent results

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of research has been the identification of the very earliest phase of Egyptian culture. Excavations during 1922-1925 revealed the very beginnings of Egypt. Until then the remains of what was called Predynastic Egypt had represented the earliest known phase, which preceded the First Dynasty and yet anticipated the main features of Egyptian life. The new finds reveal to us the very first agriculturists of the Nile valley whose date precedes 3500 B.C. and may extend as far back as 4500 B.C. These very primitive Egyptians, the ancestors of the whole Egyptian culture, to whom the name of 'Badarians' has been given by the excavators (from the name of the village Badari where the main discoveries were made), were in an advanced stage of a neolithic life. Their tools were of chipped flint and polished stone, but very finely worked, their garments of tanned leather, and they had a knowledge of copper for purposes of ornament; their pottery was fine and delicate. They carried on a limited local trade and cultivated barley and emmer-wheat. They also were fishers and hunters. In the Fayum depression, which then was a lake, was found evidence for a kindred culture, mainly of fishermen. But even they were in touch with the outside world, for, as ornaments, they used shells from the Mediterranean and the Red Sea. So much for the earliest times, which rank among the most important periods of Egyptian history.

Of the numerous and continuous discoveries made

in Egypt by various expeditions it is hard to select the most interesting. It is perhaps worth recording the recent clearance of that most famous of all ancient monuments—the Sphinx. Carved out of an outcrop of rock the Sphinx (who, by the way, is male, not female) has stood visible for nearly 5000 years. It was built in the time of Chephren of the Fourth Dynasty and has faced only one enemy—the desert sand. Recently the sand has been cleared away and the great paws (partly made up of brickwork) have been revealed. This clearance is but the repetition of a pious duty. For the Sphinx was first disembedded from the sand in 1420 B.C. in the time of Tuthmosis IV., again in Ptolemaic times, later in 1818 by an English society, and again in 1886.

But of all recent discoveries in Egypt two stand out as of unusual importance—the excavations at Amarna which were carried out by German archaeologists just before the War and continued since the War by the British, and the opening of the tomb of Tutankhamen. The former has thrown light upon that strange and, perhaps, most interesting period of Egyptian history, the monotheistic Utopia which Akhenaton founded and his tremendous but unsuccessful fight against the all-powerful polytheistic priesthood of Egypt: the latter has given us an enormous mass of artistic material for the obscure period which immediately succeeded Akhenaton's fall and failure. The period covered by the two

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bodies of material is roughly the brief generation of 1380 to 1350 B.C.

The principal objects of importance found by the Germans were artistic and consisted of the contents of the studio of a sculptor named Thuthmose. The best of the finds were taken to the Berlin Museum, where they can now be seen. The finest of the sculptures then found was the now famous head of Nefertiti and some heads of Akhenaton himself.

Further British excavations in 1932 produced two exceptionally fine heads, one in relief of exquisite beauty. Indeed, the artistic revival of the revolutionary period of Akhenaton has been richly documented and the work of individual sculptors, known by name, identified. For the history of art this period of artistic renaissance is of unusual interest. For it illustrates that perpetual tendency of art to break the shackles imposed by religion. Religion often inspires art, but the art so inspired is soon compelled to conform to religious requirements. Akhenaton abolished the traditional religion of Egypt, substituted a monotheistic sun-worship, built a vast city on the banks of the Nile that was to be the centre of a new Egypt, and gave to art a fresh impetus. Ultimately, no doubt, the new religion would have damped down the enthusiasm of the artists, but the fire of a new freedom illuminated art as never before since the early dynasties, and artists did what they wished as they wished. Hand in hand with art went a new architecture, and vast palaces and courts and temples

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were laid out (Fig. 38). It was in the rooms of one of these palaces that the famous tablets of Amarna were found by chance in 1887. The tablets constitute the Foreign Office records of Egypt at a time when Egypt was engaged in wars and negotiations with the Hittite and Babylonian Empires, and was holding the frontiers of her own outlying dominions in Syria with some difficulty. The present excavations at Amarna have been so fruitful that further artistic finds as well as other literary documents may be discovered in the near future.

The discovery of the tomb of Tutankhamen, sensational as it was, caught the public mind and excited the latent treasure-hunting instinct in everyone who read the strange tale. As treasure after treasure was found and the wealth of gold and jewels was recorded from day to day, as discovery revealed them, it was evident that the largest known haul ever made in one tomb had been found. Among the objects recovered some, undoubtedly, were of exquisite workmanship and great beauty. But there was a pronounced element of sheer vulgarity and ostentation in many of them.

Tutankhamen succeeded to the throne as a child after the brief reign of Smenkhkhere, the son-in-law of Akhenaton, who had taken over the kingdom after the fall and death of his father-in-law, the collapse of the new Utopia and the victory of a reactionary priesthood and their ancient cults. The young Pharaoh Tutankhamen was probably a puppet in the

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hands of the priests. His Court abandoned Amarna and returned to the ancient capital of Thebes. But he reigned only for six years and it seems probable that he failed to achieve what the priests had hoped, for after his death his name was erased from the official lists of kings as well as from other documents. How and why he died is also a mystery which was conceivably known only to the priests, but there is as yet no explanation of the enormous wealth of objects deposited in his tomb, objects which were by no means wholly funerary. The actual coffins in which the mummy of the king was found rank as among the strangest of the finds. The sarcophagus was enclosed in four shrines, and in the sarcophagus were three coffins of which the two outer were of wood plated with gold, while the innermost was of solid gold. The value of the latter as sheer bullion has been estimated at £13,500, but as a work of art it is perhaps the finest thing found in the tomb. Though many of the other objects were tawdry and vulgar, this innermost coffin is of great beauty. The diadem of the king can also rank high as a supreme example of the goldsmith's art at a period when this art was perhaps at its summit. The only tombs ever opened which can rival that of Tutankhamen in wealth are those of Mycenae and those of Ur.

Greek settlements on the African coast were few, but the colony of Cyrene has proved a rich source of discovery (Fig. 40). Its excavation was begun in 1915

by Italian archaeologists, although the site had been surveyed and partly excavated many years before by two British naval officers who brought back several fine Graeco-Roman statues which are now in the British Museum. But the North African coast, dominated as it was by fanatical Arab tribes, was not properly open to research until Italian colonial forces undertook its subjection. Improved political conditions made further enterprise possible after the War. The site of the great temple and much of the city of Cyrene was cleared, and finds of all periods from the foundation down to Roman times were made. Two archaic statues of the 'Maiden' type of the sixth century B.C. and a superb Aphrodite of the Hellenistic age were among the chief artistic finds. (The Aphrodite was found in the earlier excavations in 1915 and was sent to the Terme museum at Rome.) The most recent finds include a fine bronze head of the fifth century and a copy, perhaps of the Olympian Zeus of Pheidias, of Graeco-Roman workmanship, and a fine group of late Imperial Roman copies of Greek work. But the full publication of the discoveries is awaited.

Among the problems which Africa has to offer the archaeologist, one of the most striking is that of the famous ruins of Zimbabwe (Fig. 39). Like the lost cities of Yucatan and Honduras these ancient remains have been for a generation, and, indeed, still are, the playground of cranks and the sport of frantic theorists. In order that some background

of solid knowledge should be obtained and the views of the amateur theorists finally laid to rest in the limbo of discredited hypotheses, scientific excavations were undertaken at the instance of the British Association for the Advancement of Science in 1929, the results of which appeared in a very thorough report.<sup>1</sup>

It is interesting to see how the legends that surround Zimbabwe had grown up. The great ruins are first referred to at second hand by Portuguese writers in the early sixteenth century. These first accounts associate the ruins with hypothetical gold-mines and their working. They are referred to again in the eighteenth century by the Governor of Goa, though as yet there was no first-hand account of them. In 1868 an ivory trader found them by chance and in 1888 we get our first description at first hand. Imagination then ran riot and every conceivable theory was let loose. Most popular was the attribution of the ruins to the Phoenicians, who have been made to father so many mysteries. Then in 1905 Dr. Randall MacIver carried out excavations and came to the conclusion that the ruins were mediaeval, to the alarm and despondency of the amateur theorists. The recent excavations have supported MacIver's conclusions in general that the ruins were of indigenous origin and no great antiquity, but have resulted in pushing back the date to not earlier than

<sup>1</sup> *The Zimbabwe Culture : Ruins and Reactions*, by G. Caton-Thompson, Oxford University Press.

the ninth century A.D. Imported Chinese pottery, mostly Celadon ware, Persian Rhages ware, and Arab glass, all of the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries, found in the ruins, provided the material upon which MacIver formed his conclusion as to date. But the evidence of glass beads and an allowance of time for the imports to reach the site from Persia and China through the traders of the coast, as well as for the type of architecture and building to be developed, force the date back. Undoubtedly the Zimbabwe ruins were made by natives of Bantu origin. What impelled them to begin elaborate stone buildings of great complexity we do not know, but it is certain that some stimulus came from India through the Arab coast traders. The Bantu at Zimbabwe were invaders surrounded by hostile elements and their need of fortification was great. Some forgotten ruler of genius may alone have inspired the new architecture of his tribe. The working of gold for their own purposes cannot be ruled out, for gold wire ornaments and gold objects are found in various Rhodesian sites. One of the most recent finds from a grave at Mapungabwe near the Limpopo river illustrates the mediaeval goldsmithing of the natives. But there is no reason at all for considering Zimbabwe as in any sense a centre of a gold-mining empire. It was rather the citadel of a purely African tribe who rose to considerable heights of culture and achieved some small degree of art derived entirely from their own native genius.

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This genius developed under a stimulus which reached them from foreign traders, who were in search of the ivory, precious wood and other African products that, in the Middle Ages, were in demand among Oriental potentates.

## CHAPTER X

# THE FAR EAST

(See Area IX. on the Map on p. 3)

**T**HE immense group of large islands which, as the relics of a submerged mountain system, stretches to the south-east from Siam and Cambodia, has attracted to itself throughout the ages a steady infiltration of peoples from India and the Burma-Siam peninsula. Farther still to east and south-east the various blends of races so generated have pressed on until in the end they formed the mixed race of Asiatic origin known to ethnologists as the Polynesian. It is held nowadays that the Polynesians so developed as a result of movements which started not earlier than 400 B.C. from the Indian and Burma-Siam peninsula. Consequently there is a probability that there is a majority of Asiatic blood in all Polynesians and some percentage of Indo-European strain. But it must not be forgotten that these movements of peoples passed through lands which had aboriginal inhabitants, the admixture of whom must have changed the Asiatic character of the immigrants. The route of these movements was from Malay to Sumatra and Java and thence to the innumerable islands of Oceania. From these the more

isolated Hawaiian Islands and New Zealand were ultimately reached by Polynesian peoples, and the eastern trend took them even as far afield as Easter Island and so within reasonable distance of the coast of South America. Stray boatlands of Polynesians may quite conceivably have been blown to the American coast, or even have reached there by design, so that it must always be borne in mind that the Asiatic characteristics detected in early American art and culture may have been due to sea-borne Polynesians as well as to the infiltration from the north of Red Indian elements. Both strains can be considered as Asiatic in origin, racially speaking. Authentic Asiatic contacts may well have been brought by long-distance prospectors in relatively recent times. Of all this archaeology has remarkably little to give in the way of proof. As was seen in a previous chapter, our knowledge of the origins of the Maya is nebulous, and direct evidence for Asiatic coastal contacts at any time, recent or ancient, is lacking, except by inference.

Yet there emerges in the Far East in the vast sea-areas a hint of unity of race and movement comparable to that seen in the enormous land-area of Upper Asia, dealt with in an earlier chapter. Japan stands out by itself as an ultimate terminus for other Asiatic movements. The Japanese islands are comparable to the British islands in so far that both accumulated the immigrants of numerous inroads from the neighbouring continent, that both formed of these varied elements a racial fusion, insular and self-contained,

and that the spent waves of distant upheavals washed continually on their shores.

Recent research in the varied countries in this area has been active in illustrating the more recent periods. Of the early periods we know as yet all too little. First among those areas which have benefited from well-organised research and excavation is Cambodia, or Cochin-China. Here the French School of Oriental Far Eastern Studies has recovered and preserved numerous architectural and sculptural remains of the first order of importance. The Cambodians speak of themselves as the Khmer, and the splendours of architecture and art to which they are the heirs have been in recent times most fully studied. Khmer lands were strongly influenced in the eighth and ninth centuries A.D. by the culture of Sumatra, which in that time was of a high order. Indian and Chinese influences were almost as strong, and behind all was a foundation of indigenous Khmer style and race which adapted the alien influences into the characteristic Khmer art that we know. From the ninth to the fourteenth century the Khmer kingdom grew and flourished into a splendour hardly excelled in other neighbouring regions. But the story so often told in history was repeated, and the accumulated splendours of the Cambodian realm fell victim to an invasion of barbarous people from the north known as the Thai, who came from inner China. These same people also invaded Siam. Annamites from the east also invaded Khmer lands and the kingdom fell

into decay. The greatest building of Khmer times is the great temple of Angkor (Fig. 41), a replica of which was built for the French Colonial exhibition of 1930 at Paris. This temple is first referred to by a Chinese traveller in 1295, again in the sixteenth century by two priests, who described the strange buildings as 'built by the Romans or by Alexander the Great'. In the seventeenth century and again in the eighteenth they were noted by missionaries. But their discovery proper dates from 1861, when a French traveller described them in full. Excavations followed in 1908 and again in 1916, but it has only been since the War that full clearance and restoration were effected. The great temple was almost hidden in tropical vegetation, and clearance and excavation alike were arduous. The monument so revealed and restored stands now as one of the most striking of all oriental buildings.

Throughout Indo-China, French energy has been responsible for much work besides this main undertaking. A museum was completed in 1932. So far only the remains of recent cultures have been examined. But three years ago a number of neolithic sites were excavated and their publication is still awaited. Nothing palaeolithic has so far been found. Khmer art, and particularly Khmer sculpture, as revealed by these investigations, is seen to be of a high order. The centre of this art was at Lopburi in Siam and the twelfth and thirteenth centuries A.D. produced the finest work. Research in Siam has

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preserved at least one magnificent monument, the Vat Mahathat at Lopburi (Fig. 42), which has been restored and cleared by the Siamese Archaeological Service. It stands as a smaller rival of Angkor Vat.

In the Malay peninsula little seems to have been done and there is little activity on the part of British investigators. In Java and in the adjoining small island of Bali, on the other hand, the Dutch authorities have done good work in the last few years. An Archaeological Service has been active since 1913. Javan culture was under strong Hindu influence from the seventh to the tenth centuries, at least in its western half. In the eastern part, however, no Hindu influence is perceptible and a fine culture developed between A.D. 1000 and 1500. After 1500 Islam gained supremacy in Java and the old Javanese art perished almost completely, surviving only in the marionettes, textiles and woodwork that are produced in Java down to the present day. In Bali alone Islam did not penetrate until later. Palaeolithic remains have been found in caves in Sumatra and Celebes, beginning about 5000 B.C. Neolithic objects and sites are now being found in Celebes, Java and in Sumatra. It seems that there was little or no Bronze Age and the neolithic peoples were the aborigines encountered in the early centuries of this era by incoming Indian immigration.

The steady pressure out towards the sea from the mainland of Asia naturally brought about movements

of the invaded peoples further east, across the sea. This, as has been noted above, led to the gradual development of the Polynesian peoples. While northern Asia was nomadic, southern Asia held static civilisations whose surplus populations pressed into the Indonesian islands. The emigrants forced out by these movements became a sea people. How long this process took and how many invasions from the north were needed to bring about the gradual emigration of Indo-Asiatic peoples by sea is not known. But it is improbable that the movements go back to a very remote period, and the beginnings of Polynesian development may not antedate a few hundred years B.C., while their latest movements eastwards seem to have been quite recent. Into the innumerable islands of the Pacific the immigrants filtered and there encountered another branch of the human race, the dark Melanesians (of the type seen best in Papua or Borneo). These had been long established there and are in no sense Asiatic in blood or appearance. The blend of the Polynesian with the Melanesian produced the dark types seen, for instance, in the Marquesas Islands or in Tahiti. The immigrants were probably mostly male and they married women of indigenous Melanesian type. Into this strange story of sea-wandering Asiatic folk comes the stranger tale of Easter Island. This remote volcanic fragment has as its nearest inhabited western neighbour, other than Pitcairn Island, the Gambier Islands, which are about 1200 miles distant.

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It is probable that the present natives of Easter Island originally came from the Gambier Islands. In any case they came from the west, for they are of Polynesian type, with only a small admixture of some other stock, perhaps Melanesian. The immigrants are believed to have reached Easter Island soon after A.D. 1400. Easter Island is 2000 miles from the South American coast, and thus perhaps the loneliest island in the world.

In 1914 a small expedition sponsored by the British Association went to Easter Island and there carried out detailed ethnological and archaeological researches of great value. The island was first discovered by a Dutch Admiral in 1722.<sup>1</sup> Later in the same century it was visited by Captain Cook and Admiral Laperouse. In 1868 it was visited by a British warship, which brought back the famous Easter Island statues that now stand in the entrance to the British Museum. The 1914 expedition is the only expedition which produced solid scientific results.<sup>2</sup>

There is no mystery about Easter Island except in so far as the working of man's aesthetic activities are mysterious. For the island is famous for containing in its microscopic area (it is only twelve miles long) several hundred statues in stone of colossal size.

<sup>1</sup> It is by some identified as the 'Davis Land' reported to have been discovered in 1687 by the English Captain Davis.

<sup>2</sup> The most recent study is that of Robert J. Casey (*Easter Island*, New York, 1933), who describes a recent visit.

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These statues were set up in two separate areas. Along the coasts they were erected in connection with ceremonial burial places, built in terrace shape: inland they were placed in rows along a steep hillside near the quarries where they were cut. All alike are of soft volcanic tufa and all were cut with stone implements only. No less than 150 of these figures stand on the hillside near the quarries. Some 230 are found along the coast. The largest figures were on the hillside, one being no less than 66 ft. in length. The largest on the coast sites was 36 ft. in length. There are in all 120 terraces.

Without having recourse to wild theories about lost civilisations we have nevertheless to explain this strange outbreak of megalithic sculpture in this forgotten island. We have also to explain the existence of a very highly developed script which was in use until very recent times, so recent that a few natives were found who knew the signs of the script without knowing their significance. The statues are almost all of the same type, broadly conceived, boldly executed and instinct with a fine feeling for form and design, and unconsciously carved into works of art of immense power and majesty. Here among these forgotten islanders there sprang up suddenly a school of artists of originality and high quality. Among the other Pacific islands no satisfactory clues have as yet been found. The habit of megalithic sculpture is not known in any other neighbouring island, with a few isolated and unimportant exceptions. The

Easter Islanders made a school of art of their own. And they were as expert in woodcarving, for there exist in the British Museum some superb small carvings made within the last two hundred years on the island. We can only hope to solve this artistic mystery by reflecting how many sudden outbursts of art are found in unexpected places, and how the course of art seems to run wholly independently of the course of history. Palaeolithic painting and carving, the art of the Siberian nomads and of the theocratic Maya, bud and blossom irrespective of the amenities of civilisation or the advantages of education and culture. Art seems based on uncontrollable instincts and the history of art does not run parallel to the history of social conditions.

The script (Fig. 43) is a deeper problem, complicated by the fact that in no other place in the Pacific or South Atlantic is any script used or known to have been used in the past by any of the natives. And the Easter Island script is as neat and clearly defined in its arrangement and characters as any sophisticated script.

A correspondence in the *Times* in 1933 led to the suggestion by certain scholars that there was a connection between the Easter Island script and the script revealed by the discovery of sealstones at Harappa and Mohenjodaro in India. I need hardly say that suggestions of this type are as fanciful as they are untenable and unscientific. There is a gulf of time of almost five thousand years between

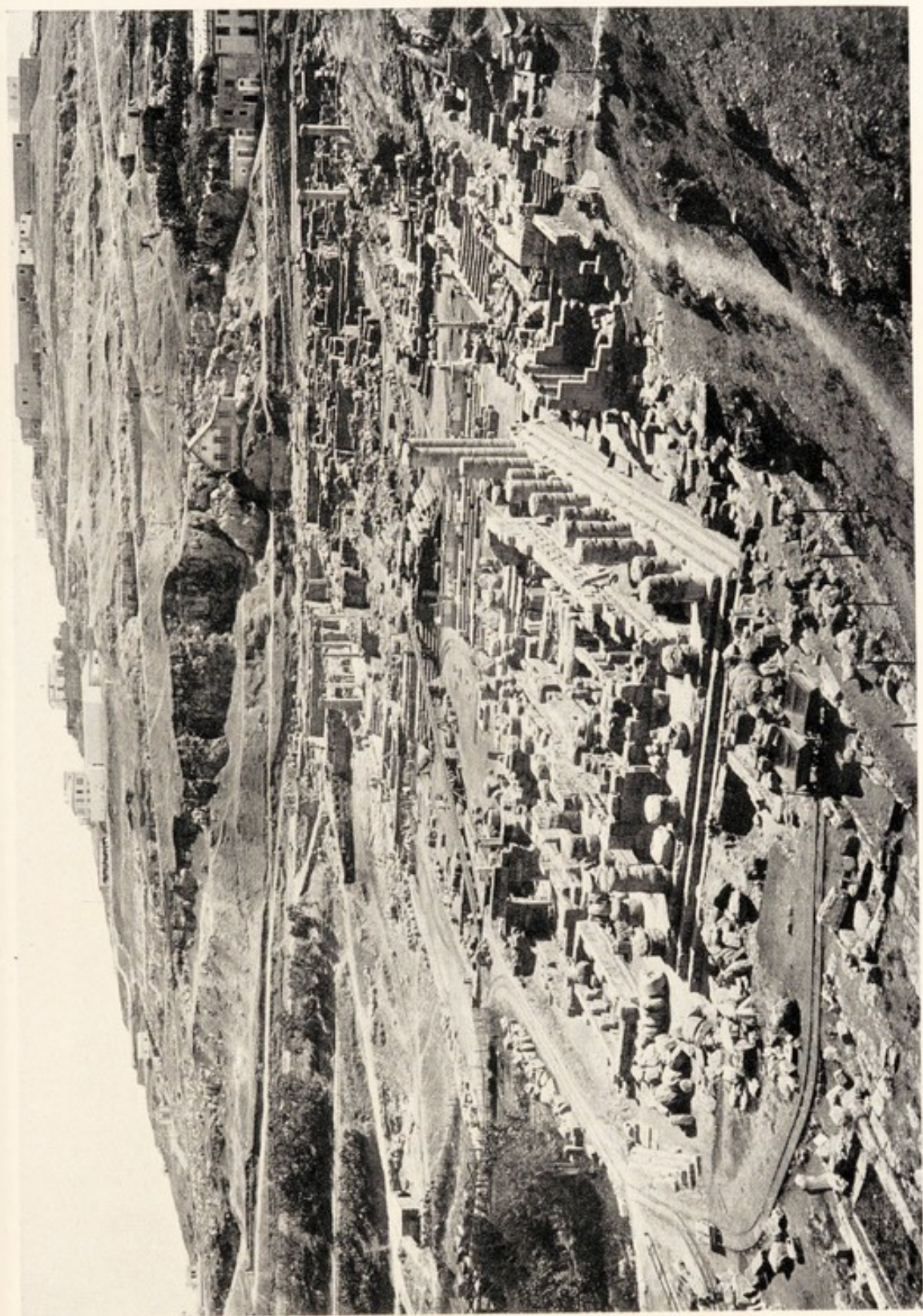


Fig. 40. The Site of Cyrene

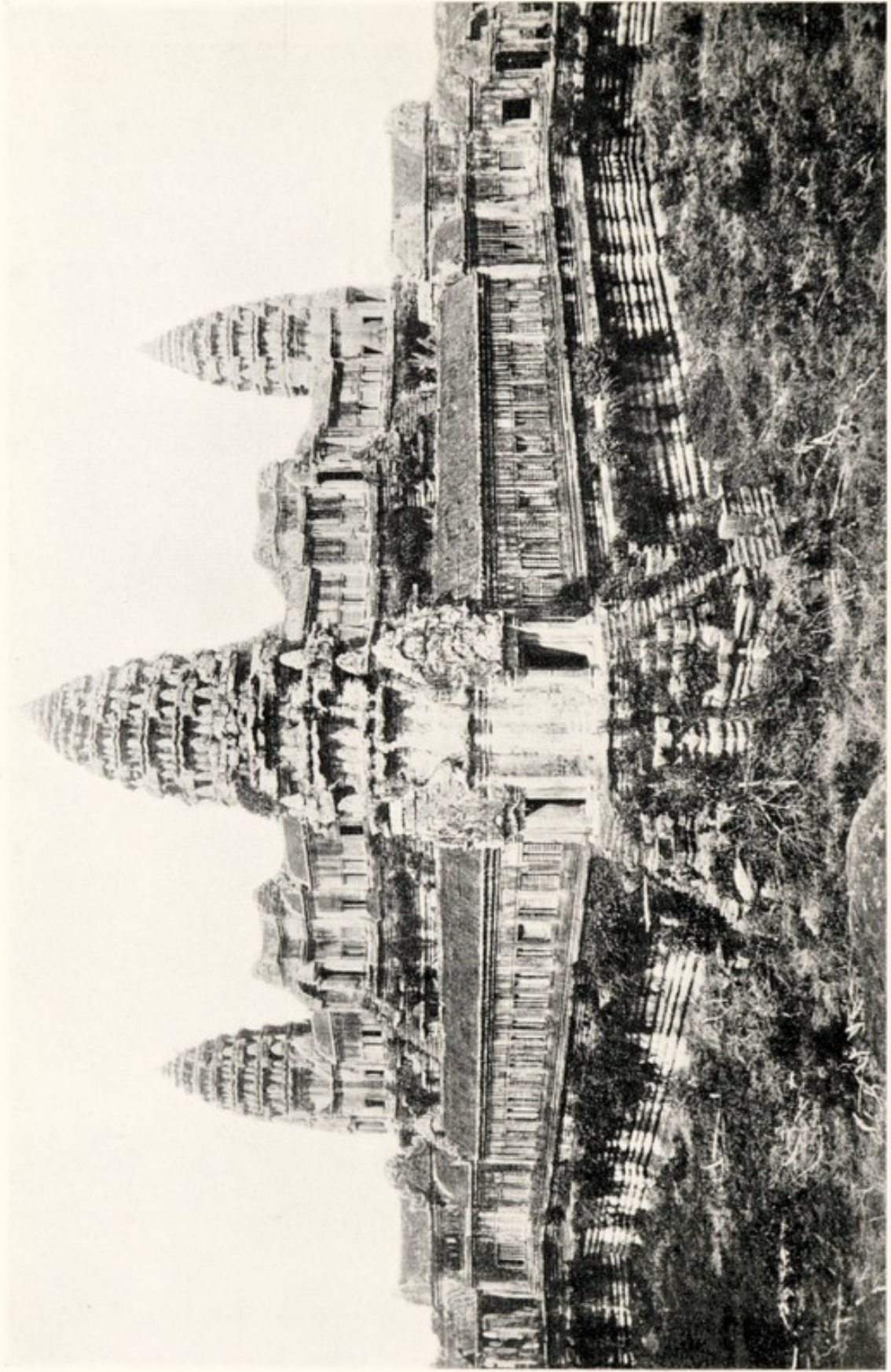


Fig. 41. The Temple of Angkor in Cambodia



Fig. 42. The Vat Mahathat at Lopburi in Siam



Fig. 43. Inscribed Tablet from Easter Island  
Scale †

the two scripts,<sup>1</sup> and any attempt to bridge that gulf must be on methods more scientific than the simple methods of analogy and similarity which were employed to bolster up the connection.

Many memories of the script and its uses survive among the inhabitants and it is said to have been brought into the island by the first immigrants. I am inclined to think that it, like the sculpture, was internally developed in the island by the normal faculties of the human mind. Insular life is strangely inventive and reflective. The ancient culture of Malta holds many surprises for those who doubt the inventive capacities of primitive peoples. Crete, in its day a very isolated place, was the very home of invention, itself personified in the name of Daedalus. I think that Easter Island is but another example of a small community, living in a favourable climate, drawing from its own fertile resources. The mere fact that the inhabitants had reached the island at all proves that they must have been of immense resource and endurance. I feel that people who could traverse thousands of miles of sea in primitive canoes could have achieved anything, given favour-

<sup>1</sup> The best study of the Indian scripts is that by Mr. G. R. Hunter published in 1934, and entitled *The Script of Harappa and Mohenjodaro and its connection with other Scripts*. In this scholarly work the author concludes that the Proto-Indian script is connected with the scripts of Egypt and Sumer-Elam, and that it is a syllabary of some 250 characters, which itself perhaps was the parent of Phoenician and Cypriote scripts. Any attempt to trace its connections farther afield must be considered as unlikely to prove profitable.

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able circumstances and enough time. 'Anything', said Herodotus, 'can happen in the long passing of time'. Here on a fragment of a lost volcano, protruding bleakly from an immeasurable waste of waters, a resourceful people turned their hands to the achievements of art and invented the rudiments of literature. That is a marvel rather than a mystery.



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