

known as the Acca'dians—who laid the basis of the Babylonian culture. But the territory became at last the home of a Semitic people, who probably came from Arabia, who conquered and absorbed the earlier peoples, taking up their customs and institutions, and becoming the dominant race. It is this mixed people that we call the Babylonians. The date of the earliest occupation of this country by the Semites cannot be accurately fixed; but it can hardly be later than 5000 B. C.

Not many years ago our knowledge of this ancient people was derived chiefly from the Greek historian Herod'otus and the Chalda'an priest Bero'sus. The accounts of these writers, so far as the earliest history was concerned, were based upon traditions, which were of course not very trustworthy. In recent years, however, our knowledge has been greatly increased and made more definite by the large number of excavations made among the ruins of ancient cities. The remains of palaces and temples have been brought to light, and inscriptions have been deciphered which show the great antiquity of this people, and reveal much regarding their history, their arts, and their institutions.

The Early City States; Sargon I.—The first light that falls upon the Euphrates valley reveals the existence of many cities of more or less importance, each under its own government and ruled by its own king. At a very early day the rulers of some of these cities sought to establish something like an imperial government, by bringing other cities under their power. So far as we know the first successful attempt to create an empire was made by Sargon I, king of Accad, who flourished in 3800 B. C.—the first authentic date, it is said, in the world's history. With Accad as his capital, Sargon extended his authority to the upper part of the Mesopotamian valley and as far west as the Mediterranean Sea.

Hammurabi and the Old Babylonian Empire.—Although the earliest empire of Babylonia was really established by Sargon I, the most prosperous period of what is usually called the "Old Babylonian Empire" began with Hammurabi, one of the greatest of ancient kings. He made the city