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THE CRADLE OF MANKIND

I

PROFESSOR SIR ARTHUR KEITH is to be congratulated on restating, in his Frazer Lecture on March 4th, 1932, in the University of Glasgow, the general truth of the Caucasian theory. He states, "the evidence to my mind is now conclusive that Europe was colonized by Caucasians at a comparatively late date when reckoned according to the calendar used by geologists." This statement is the more welcome since there has been a very strong tendency in recent years to overthrow the Asiatic for an African or African-cum-European hypothesis.

The knowledge that relationships existed between Early Stone Age cultures in Europe and those of Northern Africa became strong presumptive evidence for a connection between the races of Europe and Africa. This, of course, was more and more strengthened as discoveries in Africa proved that not only were the relations of European culture with Northern African demonstrable, but also with those of Kenya, Rhodesia and even South Africa.

The outcome of these discoveries developed a great school of thought which looked upon Africa as the primitive homeland, not only of the great apes, but also of early man. From little-known Africa, men streamed northwards to settle in Europe at the close of the glacial period. Some of these peoples fixed their homes on the shores of the northern seas and underwent a process of bleaching which gave rise to the fair-skinned, light-eyed and yellow-haired peoples of Britain, Scandinavia and Germany. Such is the viewpoint which we may term the African hypothesis and one accepted *in parte*, or *in toto*, by many leading anthropologists and archæologists. The theory of the independence of Europe from Asia, however, has in the past received strong support from well-known philologists. In fact, it is perhaps to the philologist that this outlook is very largely due. Dr. Isaac Taylor¹ echoes the views of many scholars both past and present, when he classes as a mere figment, wholly contrary to the evidence and highly improbable, "the hypothesis that a small Aryan clan

¹ *The Origin of the Aryans*, 1906, p. 5.

in Central Asia could have sent out great colonies which marched four thousand miles to the shores of Europe."

To be brief, many philologists, ethnologists, archæologists and anthropologists have, in the past, slowly forsaken an Asiatic centre of dispersion for men and civilization, in favour of development, very largely, in Europe supported by inflowings of Africans. It is at such a point that we do well to hearken to the voices of the scholars of outstanding distinction who have dissented in whole or in part from these views. In fact, it is essential to the traditionalist to review very carefully the whole field, for, if the view—"lux ex oriente"—is untenable, in the face of revealed facts, then is his school of thought, with its highly developed philosophical, ethical and religious concepts, in imminent danger of disintegration.

Fifty years ago philologists were led to the valley of the Oxus and the mountains to the south as the starting points of the nations. These views were based on the then known historical and linguistic evidence. By comparative philological methods these views were raised almost to a level of an historical certainty. Adolphe Pictet¹ attempted to show that the Aryan cradle was ancient Bactria. From this original homeland of the white race, according to Pictet, came the Celts, who settled round the Southern Caspian in the region of the Caucasus, in the districts of Albania and Iberia, before they moved northwards to maritime Europe. Slowly opinion turned, as already stated, against such a hypothesis. The views of Karl Penka², O. Schrader³ and others represent the late anti-oriental school. However, opposing these, we have the famous Max Müller⁴, Ch. de Ujfalvy⁵, Van de Gheyn⁶. Max Müller's conclusion is interesting: "I cannot bring myself to say more than *non liquet*. But if an answer must be given as to the place where our Aryan ancestors dwelt before their separation, whether in large swarms of millions, or in a few scattered tents and huts, I should still say, as I said forty years ago, 'Somewhere in Asia,' and no more."

Thus we find that while the trend of opinion was rising against an oriental origin, there were yet great names willing to

¹ *Origines Indo-Européennes*, 1859.

² *Origines Ariacae*, 1883.

³ *Sprachvergleichung und Urgeschichte*.

⁴ *Biographies of Words and the Home of the Aryas*, London, 1888.

⁵ *Le Berceau des Aryas d'après des ouvrages récents*, Paris, 1884: *extrait des b. de la société d'anthropologie*.

⁶ *L'origine européenne des Aryas*, Antwerp, 1885, Paris, 1889.

subscribe to that view. In other words, the oriental cradle, while badly shaken, was not disproved or cast into limbo. We may venture to suggest that the early discoveries of Stone Age men in Europe (and not elsewhere) were moving factors in this direction.

However, we again find ourselves at a crucial point in the history of discovery and investigation. It is now known that early men were not confined to Europe. True, their discovery in Africa tended to support, at first, the occidentalist; but to-day we find very ancient remains coming from all over the world, including Asia. Therefore, there is now no point in such an argument. At this juncture the purely archæological evidence is exceptionally important. We have the oldest centres of civilization, so far discovered, located in Egypt, Mesopotamia (Kish, Ur, Al'Ubaid, Eridu, Erech, etc.), Susa and the Indus basin (Mohenjo, Daro, Harappa, etc.). Investigations also indicate that Anau in Turkestan must be taken within this purview, while cropping up all over the now arid mountainous area between Anau, the Indus and Mesopotamia, there are numerous sporadic evidences of the remains of civilization equally early. Therefore our evidence nowadays turns to this area, once considered the cradle of the Aryans (and, indeed, by some, of mankind), as the centre of the world's earliest civilizations.

In consequence of these considerations, investigators are being compelled to go back to theories of an older generation represented by the names of Max Müller and others. We find that Dr. A. C. Haddon¹ voices these new, but old, concepts when he says: "The tall, fair, blue-eyed dolichocephals of North Europe are generally believed to be a variety of the Mediterranean race, but these may equally well be two varieties of a common stock, the former probably having their area of characterization in the steppes north of the plateaux of Eur-Asia"—while Sir Arthur Keith, in the lecture referred to, says, speaking of the mountainous area of Iran, "Discoveries are being made which, if they do not reveal the actual original Aryan home, do guide us in its direction."

Therefore scientific discovery has completed its cycle of development in this matter, and is returning with added proofs, to a position in accordance with the minds of great scholars of the past. Furthermore, it is slowly, but surely, aligning itself

¹ *The Wandering of the Peoples*, p. 16, Cambridge, 1927.

with traditional and historical conceptions. From the Orient come our peoples and our civilizations—and from that Orient with which we are familiar in our ancient literature. Civilization and race-development neither started in the shell heaps of the Baltic nor in the equatorial regions of Africa.

II

In the foregoing I outlined the Caucasian theory as based upon the conceptions of philologists during the past century. Its growth and eventual decadence were traced. Finally the resuscitation of the hypothesis, due to the amazing amount of archæological and anthropological evidence since discovered, was outlined. In this connection Professor Sir Arthur Keith's adherence to the Caucasian theory was welcomed.

Before dealing further with evidence of an archæological or anthropological character in favour of this point of view, there arises a natural difficulty to be surmounted—a question of biogeography! If we are to postulate that races and civilizations grew up in, and spread out of, Iran, what of the climatic factors? This is a very natural difficulty which is bound to present itself to enquirers at the outset. The plateau region of Iran is part of the great Eurasian spine, rising from 6,000 feet in Anatolia to nearly 12,000 feet over much of Persia. To-day this plateau region consists very largely of poor steppes and deserts. The January temperatures (reduced to sea level) are 60° to 50° Fahrenheit. Let us say 55° Fahrenheit. When due allowance is made for altitude, let us take an average height of 6,000 feet, this means that the average temperature in this month is about 35° Fahrenheit. The July temperature similarly approximated, gives us an average of over 70° Fahrenheit. A range of 35° Fahrenheit between the two months. (The range between these months in most of Britain is about 20° Fahrenheit.) The rainfall, which is a more important matter than temperature in this case, is less than one inch in January and July. The consequence is, the population is less than two persons to the square mile in some areas, and in the more populous parts, ranges from two to twenty-six persons per square mile. Bearing these facts in mind, the Caucasian theory, be it never so strong in its purely academical concepts, seems to be untenable on a physical basis. Can the great mountain mass of Iran really be the home of

civilization ? On first consideration it seems hard to believe such a region as this could be the centre of dispersion of hordes of humanity and in particular the focal centre of the great Aryan peoples.

At this point it is necessary to remember that climate has not always been the same as it is to-day. In fact, concerning this region the many prehistoric sites demonstrate forcibly that something radical has happened to the general conditions of life during the last 6,000 years.

Meteorology, astronomy, anthropology, archæology, zoology and geology all unite in proving that there have been great changes in climate since life appeared on the earth ; and in the case of geology alone, there is evidence of these changes before the appearance of life at all. Proof of an Ice Age is to be found in the oldest known rocks—the Archæan. Later in Lower Cambrian, then in Permo-Carboniferous and finally in Quaternary times, evidences of cycles of glaciation are found.

In post-glacial and historical times climatic alterations are known to have occurred. Some of these changes have been noted, either in early meteorological registers, e.g. those of Ptolemaeus, first century ; Tycho Brahe in the sixteenth century ; or in legends and history ; or else they are inferred from the distributions of civilization in now uninhabitable lands ; or from the recording of lake levels, as for instance those of the Caspian Sea ; and so on. Many reasons have been advanced to account for these changes of climatic conditions. We have theories of eccentricity of the earth's orbit, formulated by Croll, and of obliquity of the plane of the ecliptic, by Drayson. Then we have views based upon the changes in radiation and the consequent climatic variation with the changing amounts of carbon dioxide and impurities in the air, held by Chamberlain, Humphrey, Tyndall and Frech. There is also the sun-spot cycle theory of Huntington and Visher. Finally we have the hypothesis of Continental Drift, and a movement of the poles which owes its origin to the work of Kreich-Gauer, Köppen and Wegener.

We cannot here discuss further the relative claims of these theories, but the fact remains that we have definite evidence of continuous change in climatic and meteorological conditions from earliest geological to recent times. Concerning our "home of the nations" (in particular, the Iran Plateau), we know that it formerly enjoyed much milder and more temperate

conditions. The lake levels in the Near East were higher, and steppe lands appeared where now is desert, and forest instead of steppes. These differences were no doubt due, in part at least, to the cyclonic paths following another track than that customary in modern times. To these great alterations in our climate we must attribute many stories which have been stigmatized by ignorant critics as fables. The Twilight of the Norse Gods, the Flood legends of the Chaldaeans, and the Biblical account of the Deluge are all references to actual events which happened at periods of greater snowfall and more pluvial conditions.

Therefore from a purely practical and physical standpoint there is no reason why these ancient eastern lands should not have been a centre of dispersion of nations, tribes, languages and civilizations. In fact, when the full significance of what the ancient climatic optimum in these parts really means, is grasped, it would be surprising if these lands, so admirably suited, were not a focal point of distribution. Thus we have evidence that in the realm of geographical science, there is not a single factor in opposition to the philologist's (Max Müller) view of a dispersion from "somewhere in Asia" or to Sir Arthur Keith's supporting on anthropological grounds, of the Caucasian theory.

It is well to emphasize that this hypothesis is also supported by the whole weight of tradition, legend and history. Thus we have the migration of races into India from Iran, the pouring out eastward from Central Asia of peoples into China, and the migrations westward of Huns, Magyars, Avars, Goths and others. We must also correlate with these movements the eruptions of Kassites and Elamites into Mesopotamia and possibly even the Hyksos and the Israelites into Egypt and the Hittites into Syria. All these events are widely separated in space and time, but, there seems not the slightest doubt, they illustrate that hither Asia and Iran were places out of which swarms of people came. We have no comparable streams emanating from any other region in early times.

The Biblical story, which is of considerable antiquity, is not without significance. The Ark is the Biblical fountain-head of races and civilizations. Its grounding is located by the ancient writers in "High Hills" (wrongly left untranslated as Ararat) which lie in the East from whence migrate the peoples : Genesis viii. 4 ; xi. 2. From the account there seems to be no doubt that the Iranian or other mountains still further to the east are

meant. Such a view is taken by Ferrar Fenton, the translator, in *The Complete Bible in Modern English*.

Thus in our review; as time and space will not permit more than cursory notes, we see a general alignment of traditions and history with the facts already ascertained by scientific investigation. Further, archæological enquiry has discovered several centres of very ancient civilization. These are Egypt, Mesopotamia and the Indus basin. In the earlier stages of investigation these were treated as entirely separate from each other. That day and view has gone. The evidence that is constantly coming to light is beginning to give us glimpses of the possibilities of one great widespread civilization, composed of many cultures, stretching from the shores of the Mediterranean, and lying along the Persian Gulf, to the Indian Ocean. Here, then, at the feet of the western Eurasian mountains, forming a peripheral margin to the upland regions, existed civilization, while the rest of the world was still hidden in primeval darkness.

G. R. GAIR.

Edinburgh.