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The Biblical Flood: Evidence from Egypt

Preb. Victor Pearce has earlier shown that the Biblical Flood offers a ready explanation of a wide variety of archaeological findings (101, 228 ). In this article he considers in some detail the evidence afforded by Egypt.

Egyptologists, amongst them Frankfort, Petrie, Aldred, Baumgartel and Caton-Thompson; and now more recently Arkell and Ucke, have discussed the problem of the dramatic change in culture in ancient Egypt between 4,100 and 3,400 b.c. (Dates given as b.c. refer to C-14 datings; the BC dates would be about 4,900 and 4,200 BC respectively. See this Journal 101,229). There appears to be a remarkable change at this time between the Chalcolithic Amratian and the early bronze Gerzian cultures. (The old names were Nakada I and Nakada II.)

This change is also accompanied by geological changes. Consequently the Chalcolithic people lived on spurs high above the valleys to avoid the marshes in the times when Sahara was lush with vegetation and forest. By contrast the later bronze-age Gerzians built low down on the mud flats of the Nile valley, because the whole topography had changed. Sahara had become desert. The game animals and vegetation had disappeared. The sites upon the hill spurs once occupied by the Amratians were barren and dry, and only the flats down near the Nile were able to support life and agriculture. It all seems to fit into the general evidence pointing to the Flood occurring after the Chalcolithic age.

The tools and pots of the Gerzians who settled there centuries later were different in shape and conception, and the clay for their pottery was purified and well processed.

Because the two cultures were located in different places it is difficult to know what time lapse there might be between the disappearance of the Amratians and the arrival of the Gerzians. But the greatest puzzle is the source of the creativity of the Gerzians. They brought the beginnings of civilization with them which rapidly developed into the succeeding dynastic eras.

Later the separate dynasties of Upper and Lower Egypt were welded into a united Nile power by the Scorpion and then by Narmer. As dynasty succeeded dynasty the milieu of the Land of the one mighty river evolved into the concept of a king as the supreme autocratic despot and god-like Pharaohs familiar to Joseph and Moses of the Bible.

A problem is that the source of this upsurge of bronze age creativity appears to have been first established in Mesopotamia. The great questions are, was its appearance a migration of Semetic peoples or of a conquest by them of the Hamitic, or was it an absorption of cultural ideas (called acculturation) by the former Hamitic Chalcolithic Amratians? Or was there a complete cultural and racial break accompanying the geological and climatic change; and so therefore, were the Gerzians a mixture of both Semetic and Hamitic peoples as their language suggests, who migrated more or less together as sections of Ham and Shem's dispersal after the Flood? Emery put the problem in the following words:

At a period approximately 3,400 years before Christ, a great change took place in Egypt, and the country passed rapidly from a state of advanced neolithic culture with a complex tribal character, to two well-organized monarchies, one comprising the Delta area and the other the Nile valley proper. At the same time the art of writing appears, monumental architecture and the arts and crafts developed to an astonishing degree, and all the evidence points to the existence of a well-organized and even luxurious civilization. All this was achieved within a comparatively short period of time, for there appears to be little or no background to these fundamental developments in writing and architecture.

Authorities are divided in their opinions as to the reason for this sudden cultural advance, but it would seem probable that the principal cause was the incursion of a new people into the Nile valley, who brought with them the foundation of what, for want of a better designation, we may call Pharaonic civilization.<sup>1</sup>

Evidence has been weighed from the fields of art, architecture, palettes, writing, pottery, boats, geology and physical-anthropology.

A fresh outburst of discussion was evoked by Arkell and Ucko who are cultural evolutionists and favour the thought that the Gerzian descended locally from the Chalcolithic Amratian and the neolithic cultures before it — the Badarian and Tasian in Upper Egypt and the Fayum, Merinde and Omari in Lower Egypt. They

do not dispute that the bronze age civilization came from Mesopotamia, but they prefer to think that it was an acculturation rather than a movement of peoples. As Ucko is an African this outlook is understandable and useful in promoting the discussion which first commenced in 1965 in *Current Anthropology*.<sup>2</sup> The authors attempt to alter the opinions of the archaeologists before them who carried out the excavations. In spite of two hiatuses – one between palaeolithic and neolithic cultures and the other between Chalcolithic and Gerzian, they wish to contemplate an independent Egyptian evolution of culture.

To set it out clearly, the cultural succession is as follows:-

*Sequence of Cultural Phases in Egypt*

*Palaeolithic* hunter-gatherers

(hiatus of culture in Egypt)  
.....

*Neolithic to Chalcolithic* and predynastic

Kartoum artifacts (Uko argues for their being mesolithic contrary to others)

Tasian in Upper Egypt	Fayum in Lower Egypt
Badarian     "     "	Merinde     "     "
Amratian     "     "	Omari etc.   "     "

(hiatus at about 4,000 b.c.)  
.....

*Bronze Age*

Gerzian (Nakada or Naggada II, Pre-dynastic) 3,400 b.c.  
Unification of Upper and Lower Egypt 3,200 b.c.  
Archaic Dynasties I and II of the Old Kingdom.

Baumgartel, whose work of excavation is well known,<sup>3</sup> had written in 1955 of a "fundamental and abrupt change" between the Amratian and Gerzian. Her reply to Arkell and Ucko in 1964 is that "the changes which come in with Naggada II (Gerzian) are too vital to be explained by development only. As the imported pieces show, there was a connection with Western Asia which had not existed before."<sup>3a</sup>

The Gerzian post-Flood culture replaces what was largely a hunter-gatherer complex with some agriculture, although Caton-Thompson<sup>4</sup> brings evidence that these pre-Flood neolithic and chalcolithic peoples of Egypt were more serious farmers than they were hunter-gatherers. However, these communities were comparatively simple and small and they lived in reed and grass huts of "bee-hive" and rectangular shapes. James Mallaart reminds Arkell & Ucke that even this early farming is a derived culture from the Near East. "Neither the wild ancestors of wheat, barley, etc., nor those of sheep and goat are native to North Africa, and their presence in Egypt is artificial and man-made."<sup>2b</sup>

The chalcolithic Amratians lived, as has been said, when all the Sahara was covered with forest and grassland, inhabited with a full complement of roaming game. According to Myers there are tree trunks where it is now desert and the reason why the Badarians and Amratians built on spurs was to be out of reach of the marshes.<sup>5</sup> The change from forest to desert had taken place before the Gersians arrived with their new culture, and built towns on the mud flats of the Nile banks. It was in exploiting this new ecology that by 3,200 b.c. the large scale organised irrigation, and hoe and plough agriculture, were introduced. This important epoch is depicted upon the famous mace-head of the Scorpion king, now in Ashmolean Museum, Oxford. The Scorpion wears the skittle shaped White Crown of Upper Egypt and is officially opening the excavation of a canal amidst a scene of rejoicing. Organised agriculture is indicative of the growing towns whose populations need to be fed.

There is a problem, however, with the rise of civilisation of architecture and writing. Why is it that this Mesopotamian style of culture has in it much that is exclusively Egyptian?

In explanation, Aldred says that the Egyptians were quick to adopt new styles in all spheres, but only as a rapid transition into a typical Egyptian milieu.<sup>6a</sup> The marks of origin rapidly became assimilated into a Nilotic application.

This is illustrated by the advent of writing in Egypt. The Egyptians soon changed the Mesopotamian symbols in writing to those figures which are typically their own, and although they wrote from left to right at first as the Mesopotamians did, they soon changed from right to left. The story of the advent of writing is as follows.

It may have been the idea of writing which was first communicated to Egypt. The earliest step is thought to be shown upon the macehead of king Scorpion mentioned above. The king's name is pictographically shown by the Horus. Similarly there are two signs on the Hunters Palette. Pictographic writing made its first appearance on small limestone tablets in Mesopotamia, used in recording the tithes paid in gifts to the temple 3,500 b.c.

There are a number of pointers to Mesopotamia as being the source of Egypt's development of writing. First the carbon 14 date places it at 200 years later than its appearance in Mesopotamia. Secondly, writing itself suddenly appears in Egypt without much preparation. The Egyptian system of Hieroglyphic writing in ideograms and phonograms appears in fully developed style and in complete sentences in contrast to the brief tallies in Mesopotamia. This indicates that Egypt received the invention of writing already well developed from elsewhere. That source is certainly Mesopotamia because there we have the record of the evolution of writing. Further, the system of writing which arrives in Egypt is from left to right which is that of Mesopotamia. Later, this is reversed by the Egyptian development to right to left.

Moreover, Aldred contends that the system of writing in origin had been devised to record Semitic manner of speech in spite of the fact that it is mixed with Hamitic words.<sup>6</sup> This supports Frankfort's reply to the problem of why the symbols are not Mesopotamian. He says that Egyptians always liked the pictorial and concrete rather than the Mesopotamian abstract, so they assist understanding by clothing the hieroglyph with their own figures and meaning. This is of course, in keeping with Egyptian treatment in art and architecture where the subjects are clearly Mesopotamian in origin but the application is indigenised by environment.

Again the factor which solves these enigmas is to realise that the Flood affected Egypt as well as the Near East; and that the absence of evidence to show that the Gerzian culture was an invasion is due to the fact that they came into an empty land, and came as a mixture of elements of both Shem's descendants (Semitic) and of Ham's descendant. This would also explain the presence of these two elements in their language, and does not need even the theory of acculturation to solve it. The same explanation clarifies the evidence of Art, Architecture, seals, pottery, and other artifacts, and anthropology. In examining the evidences which these give we shall see that the opinions of most Egyptologists that the Gerzians are of Mesopotamian origin are well founded.

## Art

In art the renowned Nimrod of Genesis 10: 8-12 is depicted on the Gebel-el-Arak knife handle and the Lion hunt palette. The style of both shows affinities with Mesopotamia, yet both of these works of art were found in Egypt. Nimrod is described in Genesis as "a mighty hunter before the Lord". The account tells us that his name became proverbial, and that people would speak of someone as being "like Nimrod -- a mighty hunter, blessed of God".

It is notable that although the knife handle was found in Egypt, Nimrod features in Mesopotamia, and that indeed is where the passage in Genesis places him. He is spoken of as founder of the cities of Sumer and that later he went north to re-build Nineveh. After the scattering of the peoples at the Tower of Babel in Genesis 11, some of the Hamitics and Semitics would reach Egypt. In Genesis Nimrod features as being Hamitic, so therefore the Hamitic element in Egypt was not due to the natives being subjected to Gerzian invaders; they were part of the Gerzian migration. We are told that Nimrod descended from Ham through Cush. It is remarkable that both the knife handle and the palette found in Egypt, contain Mesopotamian art conceptions -- there are carvings of a mighty hunter with an organised hunt of men equipped with bows and arrows, spears and lassoes with the help of dogs, who are hunting lions, deer, antelopes, bulls, and what looks like an ostrich.

On the knife handle which is of ivory carved in low relief, there is depicted in heraldic style two lions rising up on either side of a man as in a lion act. This hero of the hunt bears out the Genesis statement that his name became proverbial for anyone who excelled in hunting. The hero between two lions reflects the Mesopotamian "Lord of the beasts" concept of Gilgamesh. The heraldic motif was a feature in the Ubaidian temple near Ur, of an eagle between two gazelles. Moreover the dress styles of the garment on the Egyptian palettes are Mesopotamian, and even the hair style of winding up of the chignon at the back is similar to that of the mask of Sargon found at Samarra in north Mesopotamia, and likewise the conception of the human figure in leg muscle, thigh and shoulder is Mesopotamian. Yet other elements are Egyptian, particularly on the reverse side of the knife handle where wrestlers are associated with two styles of boats, and later the Egyptians add their own style of leg muscle.

A significant link is a Gerzian styled painting in the tomb of Hierakonpolis in Egypt. It is similar to Ubaidian art in Mesopotamia, and concerning its link with the dynasties Baumgartel writes "The famous painted tomb of Hierakonpolis emphasises the close connection between the Gerzian period and the rise of the dynasties".<sup>3a</sup>

The Lion hunt palette is made of typically Egyptian dark-grey slate ground into a long heart-shape. In the centre there is a lipped flat hollow for paint or cosmetics and all around in low relief is depicted the hunting scene of animals and men. The petit chanchet or wedge-shape of their arrow-heads are true to discoveries in the tombs. The wedge-shape would gash the animals and was calculated to slow down the fleet-footed beasts through loss of blood so that the men could come near enough to lassoe them with the ropes. Something of the democracy of Mesopotamia is reflected in equality of size and therefore of social importance of the hunters. The later ascendancy of chief and pharaoh is depicted in succeeding dynasties by the dominating size of the king and the relatively pigmy size of his subjects.

The Gebel-et-Tarif motifs and the Narmer palette show the same characteristics of heraldic symmetrical arrangement of animals facing each other, and of mythical composite beasts combining parts of the bodies from different animals into one weird creature. On the Narmer palette, for example are depicted two creatures like dogs symmetrically opposed to each other but with intertwined snake-necks upon which are collars and leads each held by a man. The intertwined snake-necks are Mesopotamian. They are the unmistakable serpo-pards of the Mesopotamian seals. One of these was found in a Gerzian grave and had a motif of winged griffins and intertwined snakes.

Yet the palette depicts the white skittle shaped crown of Upper Egypt and the red tall-feathered-hat crown of Lower Egypt. Frankfort describes this as an Egyptian subject depicted in Mesopotamian style.<sup>7</sup> This would be supplied in the formative period when some elements from the settler's Mesopotamian origin was accepted, but the developing Egyptian consciousness was exerting its independence by rejecting the uncongenial, in much the same way as the American colonies did when exerting independence of their country of origin.

Politics likewise was being influenced by the extensive unity of the Nile. The Galleries of the Saqqara tomb depict the king wearing the crown of Upper Egypt, but holding the symbolic flail of a primitive pastoral king. This no doubt



indicated that it was the pastoralists who achieved ascendancy rather than the hardworking agriculturist whose mobility was restricted to his fields, a situation reflected in many a culture since.

#### *Architecture*

The Gerzian building styles of Egypt betray their origin in several ways. The use of bricks of two sizes as depicted on the Hunter's Palette, and the buttressed and recessed facades of the White Temple of Ereck in Mesopotamia are reflected in the tomb of Queen Nithotep at Nagadeh and other immense tomb facades at Saqqara. Professor J. Evans remarked that whereas the breaking up of the facades of buildings was necessary in Mesopotamia, the very complicated facade rebating copied in Egypt was not necessary to that land.<sup>8</sup> Even the pylon type towers of the Djet Stele were used later in Egypt. Yet in contrast the pise walls and ree matting of the first Ubaidian settlers in south Mesopotamia are reflected in the early Egyptian period of the Hunter's Palette.

#### *Boats and Artifacts*

At Hierakonpolis the Gerzian mural depicts boats of Mesopotamian origin with their high dominant prow and streamlined stern.

There is a great contrast in the flint tool shapes. The "U" shaped and comma shaped hamstringers and fishtail knives of the Amratians, are replaced by the flat banana-shaped knives and "V" shaped lanceheads of the Gerzians. The latter also made the bronze dagger of Mesopotamian style with the same techniques of rivetting on the hilt except that the convex shaped border has been given an Egyptian adaptation of a crescent moonshape. This shape eventually passed to Europe reversed to a concave border.

#### *Pottery*

In pottery, the shapes and materials reveal great differences from the pre-flood Amratians and others before them. The spouts of the tortoise jars and pots of the Post-flood Ubaidian hand-made ware of Mesopotamia is seen more fully developed in the Egyptian Gerzian teapot shaped spouts and the spouts of larger calibre. This characteristic spout, not seen in earlier cultures, passes on into later cultures, (Ereck and Jemat Nasr). The clay body used to make the pottery is much more finely processed.

The large black-topped storage pots have a completely new shape. These heavier pots are baked upside down in a carbonizing atmosphere. The base which is uppermost gets reddened and the top upon which it is standing gets blackened. These earthenware pots of the neolithic to chalcolithic are mostly of squatter shapes, but the Gerzians make a high vessel with open mouth but with a pointed base. This shape is similar to that depicted on the mosaic frieze in the temple at al Ubaid where in the milking scene it is used for storing the milk after it is strained. This shape for storage jars or amphora which stand on a pointed base passes on into Europe to become a well-known feature down to Greek and Roman times.

Alfred<sup>6</sup> says that the wavy handled jars are of Palestinian origin which is a reminder that the great high road from Mesopotamia came via the fertile crescent through Palestine; but the pink and buff were with linear painted motifs of triangular hills, flamingoes, ibexes, stylised trees and human figures, are distinctly Mesopotamian, especially the pond and stream motifs. Baumgartel<sup>3</sup> gives very full details of the "Maltese" cross pond motif and the development of Egyptian water motifs from it. One of the important processes introduced by the Gerzians was that of alkaline vitreous glaze.

#### *Physical anthropology*

An important question is whether the new culture from its Near Eastern source was the result of a migration of people. Indications that it was a migration comes from the skeletal remains in Gerzian graves. The Gerzian skulls were broadheaded and longfaced, whereas the Amratians were longheaded. Emery<sup>1</sup> says that the graves of the Gerzians "were found to contain the anatomical remains of a people whose skulls are of greater size and whose bodies were larger than those of the (earlier) natives, the difference being so marked that any suggestion that these people derived from the earlier stock is impossible".<sup>1a</sup>

It should be remembered also that the graves of these people are in different areas, and that no mixed types are found in them.

The context of the above evidences, the geological and climatic changes which preceded the Gerzian Egyptian civilization, have great significance. Karl Butzer says that there was not only a hiatus between the terminal palaeolithic and the neolithic in Egypt, but the great changes before Gerzian times coincide with the European Atlantic phase (when England was cut off from the continent).<sup>9</sup>

Baumgartel speaks of the rejuvenation of the Hils at this time.<sup>3</sup> Geologists know that a river is rejuvenated when either the land is raised or the sea level lowered. This means more than a climatic fluctuation to which some attribute the advance of desert conditions. The lowering of the ocean would lower the water-table in the limestone syncline which underlies the Sahara, and this would result in the rapid disappearance of the lush vegetation through the drying up of the Sahara.

Such changes would not be due to ice-melt at the end of the ice-age because that would raise the ocean and water-table level and not lower it. Neither would it correlate with the Wurm regression as that was 8,000 years earlier. The explanation must be connected with the evidence that there was a general climatic change associated with the Flood, but not caused by what is sometimes called the canopy theory. The sudden lowering of the level of Lake Fayum at this time is significant.<sup>10</sup>

In conclusion, the acceptance that the Flood wiped out the Chalcolithic peoples of Egypt, and that the Gerzians entered empty lands, from Mesopotamia, and ultimately from Ararat, solves most of the Egyptological problems.

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