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SOME ARCHÆOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

BY D. J. WISEMAN, O.B.E., M.A., A.K.C.

SYNOPSIS

Current views of Genesis 10 and its place in the early narratives are summarized. It is suggested that the text is marked by colophons which reveal the nature and contents of each part of the list according to Japhet, Ham and Shem. Lack of evidence precludes many theories based on physical anthropology. Possible meanings of *mishpahoth* show that the relationships discussed may be physical and/or linguistic and political. Recent archaeological evidence to help in identifying the sons of Japhet, Ham and Shem is listed, including some new information for the earlier existence of some of these peoples and places. The earliest inhabitants of Babylonia and Assyria are shown to be non-Semitic though some descendants of Shem in the area later gained supremacy politically and linguistically. The whole ancient Near East always bore a mixed population. A survey of areas known to early inhabitants of Babylonia and Egypt shows that Genesis 10 conforms to their possible geographical knowledge. Accumulating evidence therefore points to a date of c. 1500 B.C. or earlier for the compilation of the "Table of Nations".

THE so-called "Table of Nations" in Genesis 10 has long roused the interest of students in various branches of scholarship. There has been a general tendency among Old Testament scholars who, consciously or otherwise, follow Dillmann and Driver, in considering the chapter "an attempt to show how the Hebrews supposed they were related through their "eponymous ancestor" Shem to the other principal nations". Since the names mentioned are not considered as real individuals the list is interpreted as having a primitive ethnological arrangement and as neither a scientific classification of the races of mankind nor an historically true account of their origins which it places about 2500 B.C. The chapter is thought to conform to a geographical knowledge current through trade about the seventh century B.C., by which time a number of the place names are referred to by Jeremiah, Ezekiel and in Assyrian inscriptions. Exponents of this school of thought, following their view of its late composition, are forced to draw attention to seeming omissions in the lists (e.g. Moab, Ammon, China, India). There are, of course, many variations on this view expressed by individual scholars to some of which I shall refer. Professor Albright has recently opted for about 1000 B.C. as the date of composition, but his reasons are, so far as I know, as yet unpublished. The

place and general purpose of this chapter within Genesis are more generally agreed. The Hebrew historian gives us sufficient introduction in the brief compass of Gen. 1-9 in which he narrows the focus from the universe to the Flood, and in the small space of Chapters 10-11 covers the long period from the Flood to Abraham. In accordance with his practice the author condenses large periods of history by the use of historical lists (*toledoth*). The text of Genesis 10 is in little doubt since we have a duplicate with few but important variations in 1 Chron. 1: 4-23.

The Arrangement of the List

The list is divided according to the sons of Noah—Shem, Ham and Japhet—and as such continues the genealogies from Gen. 5: 32, but thereafter (v. 2), in accordance with the method observed in Genesis, it notes first those branches not so intimately concerned with the narrative and thus leads to the line which is the subject of the subsequent history; i.e., the order is Japhet, Ham and Shem, Ham perhaps being considered closer to Shem through Cush, Mizraim and Canaan. The main divisions of the table are clear: (1) the descendants of Japhet (vv. 2-5); (2) the descendants of Ham (vv. 6-20); and (3) the descendants of Shem (vv. 21-31). Each of these divisions ends with a descriptive "catch-phrase" (vv. 5, 20, 31) which is reminiscent of the colophon, a literary device typical of Babylonian and Assyrian literature. The purpose of a colophon is to summarize the preceding narrative and form a link with subsequent texts which bear the same or a similar ascription and which were originally recorded on separate documents. A comparison of these phrases, together with the final colophon or sentence added after the three separate lists have been brought together (v. 32), reveals the intent of their compiler. The omission of these verses in 1 Chron. 1 supports this view that they are not part of, but comments on, the lists. For the phrase, "These are the sons of Japhet", expected in v. 5 (which some scholars would insert on the assumption of textual corruption by comparison with vv. 20, 31), we read, "From these separated off the islands and coastlands of the nations" (so *goyim* is to be translated elsewhere in this chapter; cf. v. 32). This might be a reference to additional territory, such as the European coastlands of Greece which were populated from Asia Minor. The term *me'eloh* ("from these") can be interpreted only as a separation from the main (parent) body (cf. Gen. 2: 10; 25: 23; Judg. 4: 11). For the moment it is sufficient to notice that the *common* catch-phrase begins after the purpose and content of each list with the words "in/with their land" and "with/in their nations" (each is governed by the preposition *beth*); and "with reference to their language (tongue)" and "with reference to their family relationship" (each expression being governed by the preposition *lamedh*). In each colophon the order of these terms varies and may be significant in showing the emphasis placed on each in the list.

Each has in common the feature that they end with the term "in their nations"; that is, the lists include within each branch units which have national affiliations. The list of sons of Japhet would, according to this view, emphasize the territorial or geographical ("with their lands") and the linguistic ("with their tongues") more than family relationships. Those of Ham and Shem deal more with tribal relationships and languages than with geographical relationships. In these it will be observed that the statements giving geographical detail (vv. 10-12, 19, 30) are introduced as explanations or expansions of the genealogical elements in the list. Whether or not this be the true explanation of the formation of these lists it cannot be denied that these "colophons" correctly state that each list contains elements of geography, linguistics and physical affinities. All these are essentially combined in any appreciation of "ethnology" according to ancient Near Eastern thought. Failure to appreciate the mixed nature of these documents has sometimes led to unwarranted criticism. To follow a merely geographical division (i.e. the sons of Japhet as the northern races, Ham as the southern and Shem as the central) requires some of the facts to be ignored, e.g., southern tribes such as the sons of Joktan are listed under Shem. Nor can they be simply linguistic groupings; e.g. Elamite (v. 22) so far as it can be traced is a non-Semitic language. Moreover all attempts to trace existing languages back to these three parent groups have failed and in most cases the earliest texts found in the area are pictographic and therefore there is no certainty to which group they may belong. The confusion of tongues has been further complicated by borrowings and other influences which, combined with insufficient historical data for many languages, make it at present impossible to formulate more than theories on this difficult subject. The most common views of this chapter are that it is either an early "ethnological" or late geographical survey. There is, however, little evidence given here to aid the study of physical anthropology. Too little is known of the racial types in the limited areas here mentioned for any continuous picture to be drawn. There is therefore a tendency to rely for "anthropological conclusions" on such linguistic evidence as can be recovered, but since this is scanty the chapter is seldom mentioned in modern works. It could be argued that the terms for "families" (*mishpachoth*) may not be used in early Biblical Hebrew to denote a physical relationship so much as a group of persons who are *subordinate*. Compare the only other word probably from the same root, *shiphah*, used of a maidservant or one in an inferior position (Gen. 16: 1; 2 Kings 4: 2, etc.). The word is used somewhat loosely for "clan" or any national subdivision, whether Hebrew or not, or even of animals. Since the etymology and range of this word are still uncertain, too much weight cannot be put upon this but it may point to inter-group relations other than physical and perhaps the result of influence or conquest is covered in this chapter—e.g. Semitic domination

of non-Semitic Elam (v. 22). Early ancient Near Eastern texts (especially Babylonian) frequently use the terms of family relation to denote merely political relations between nations; "brother" being freely used for allies or equals, "father" by a dependent of a more powerful nation and "children" in the case of a major nation of its dependents. This does not apply, of course, to each case in Genesis 10, but should evoke caution in interpreting possible ethnological connections dogmatically.

A further caution seems to be needed since some investigators object to the use of personal names to denote either a nation or place. A study of Near Eastern city names shows that many are named after their individual founder, whether he be thought of as a god or a mortal. Larger territories usually take their name from the principal city, or from the name given to the most numerous or powerful group of inhabitants, who themselves are often called after a prominent ancestor or leader. There can therefore be no objection on these grounds, to nations or places in Chapter 10 being named as "sons" or to the seeming interplay of individuals, places and generic terms. I personally believe that the tradition of these relationships, where they are listed in the genealogical manner ("begat"), goes back to an initial physical relationship, e.g. that the founder of the tribe of Seba was a person of that name, son of Cush, and that his name was retained to describe the line of his descendants, each of whom had his individual name. In the only *direct* reference to cities they are said to have been *built* or their geographical location is precisely given (vv. 10-12, 19-30). In all other places undoubted city-names are used only as gentilic, i.e. to denote their inhabitants (e.g. vv. 16-18). The only sure conclusion, then, from a survey of the arrangement of the list is that it contains both geographical, linguistic and ethnographical data. An appreciation, if not a verbal expression, of this fact has guided most investigators to analyse the list *seriatim*. Few have, however, followed G. Rawlinson's comprehensive work *The Origin of Nations* (1877) in trying to bring together data on individual references.

The Line of Japhet

In a comprehensive survey of the first list enumerating the sons of Japhet, E. Dhorme (*Les Peuples issus de Japhet*, 1932) shows that "the Bible groups under Japhet all those neighbours of Phoenicia, N. Syria and E. Mesopotamia who were non-Semitic in physiognomy, language and custom." He argues that the descendants of Yawan (Ionians) spread from Cyprus to Rhodes and Tartessos, while the sons of Gomer (Cimmerians) spread northward, colonizing Scythia, where they later met with the Tibarenians (Tubal) and Mushki (Meshek). The Medes, also linked with Japhet, joined up with Persia and the Eastern countries. On the sea borders Tiras (the Etruscans) were pirates until later they settled on the Tyrrhenian coast.

In general, recent archaeological discoveries, and especially the inscriptions found, support the view that the Japhetic list covers the N.E. Mediterranean-Anatolian region. The Cimmerians (Gomer) and Scythians (I/Ashguzai-Ashkenaz)¹ first appear as settlers in Eastern Anatolia, having crossed the Caucasus some time before the eighth century to infiltrate into Urartu (Armenia) but, since they do not move into the "Fertile Crescent" until the next century, no early direct reference is necessary or is made to them by the Assyrian or Hebrew historians (Ezekiel 38: 1-2, 6). Similarly the Medes do not rise to world power until the sixth century but this does not mean that they were not known earlier as an Aryan group inhabiting the Lake Van area. Shalmaneser III (859-824 B.C.) mentions them with Parsua (later Persians) in a way that implies that they are the normal (old) inhabitants of the area. It has been common to deny the existence of Ionians before the eighth century B.C. but there now seem to be undoubted references to them as *ym'n* in the Ras Shamra texts (thirteenth century B.C.). Tubal or Tabal, east of Cilicia, was annexed to Assyria in 837/6 B.C. and is probably the same as the Hittite Tupal and the earlier Tibar district through which Naram-Sin passed c. 2200 B.C. The neighbouring area of Meshek (*Mushki*) was already well known to Assyrian writers in the time of Tiglath-pileser I (c. 1116-1090 B.C.). Tiras was linked with the sea peoples by the Egyptians at least by c. 1220 B.C., since it is mentioned in a stela of Menephtah (*tw-rw-s*) and men named *ty-w-r*'s of the sea are depicted in Anatolian headdress among the captives of Rameses III (1198-1167 B.C.). There seems every reason then to agree with Dhorme's identification of Tiras with the Etruscans.

The next generation is represented by the sons of Gomer. As already mentioned, the Ashguzai (Ashkenaz) are linked with the Cimmerian (Gomer) influx of peoples into Eastern Anatolia. Riphath remains unknown although identified by some with Bithynia or Paphlagonia. The form of the name would agree with a location near the Black Sea and relate him with the early Cimmerians, Scythians and thus with Tubal and Meshek. Togarmah has been the subject of a number of theories, the most reasonable being an equation with Tagarama in the Carchemish district of the Upper Euphrates mentioned by the Hittite king Mursilis II in the fourteenth century B.C.

The grandsons of Japhet by Yawan are listed as Elisha (Alashia), a name for Cyprus which is frequently found in cuneiform documents in the eighteenth century B.C. (e.g. at Alalakh) and which is linked with *ym'n* in the Ras Shamra texts. Recent excavations at Enkomi-Alasia in Cyprus show that c. 1200 B.C. the "Mycenaean" group there was displaced by a non-Semitic people who are believed to be the Philistines en route for Palestine. Tarshish can be variously identified with sites on the southern coast of Asia Minor, Sardinia and Spain where there is evidence

¹ L. Piotrovicz, *L'invasion des Scythes*, p. 477.

for a Tartessos (the name may mean something like "iron-works"). Recent interpretations show that a "ship of Tarshish" carried metal ore and that the name Tarshish is to be found at a number of Near Eastern mining centres. It would seem therefore that one of these Anatolian sites (even Tarsus?) may be referred to here. Similarly Kittim denotes similar coastal areas East of Rhodes (Rodanim, 1 Chron. 1: 7; so Samaritan and Septuagint read for Dodanim in Gen. 10: 4). If we then take the sentence, "from these were the islands of the nations separated off", it would imply that the more westerly Greek mainland and islands were later peopled from the Anatolian mainland, which accords with such little evidence as we yet have for the complex question of the origin of the Greeks.

The Sons of Ham

There is now general agreement over the location of the countries founded or taking their name from the sons of Ham—Cush (Nubia-Ethiopia), Mizraim (Upper and Lower Egypt), Phut (Libya) and Canaan. Despite ingenious attempts, made in a previous paper on this subject to the Victoria Institute,¹ archaeology does not furnish evidence that the Hamites are "ethnically Semites" who spring from the area of Kish (near Babylon). Nor does Ham designate in a general way the native stock in Babylonia and Arabia. A study of Near Eastern civilizations shows that the earliest traces in Egypt are of a non-Semitic people probably directly influenced, and even founded, by the non-Semitic Sumerians of Babylon and that it was a similar people who were the first inhabitants of Canaan. Verse 7 groups the sons of Cush who are to be identified with South Arabian tribes (and places) on both sides of the Southern Red Sea area across which there is now known to have been an early and active sea traffic. That the peoples of this area were correctly considered as a mixture of both Hamitic and Semitic folks is acknowledged by the repetition of some names (e.g. Havilah on the African coast) also under Eber (Semite nomads). In these areas which were later overrun by Semites there still survive elements in the language and customs which are "Hamitic". The Hebrews themselves imply that Babylonia, Aram, Hittites and Canaan influenced the development of their language.² Finds such as early pottery, seals and statuary known to be "Sumerian" have been found in each of the areas listed under Ham.

The list of Hamites goes into more detail when the Babylonians and Assyrians are mentioned, for they were to play an important part in Hebrew history. The method of presentation now differs perhaps because the narrative is more expanded. The early civilization of Mesopotamia is

¹ G. R. Gair, "The Places and Peoples of the Early Hebrew World", *Journal of Transactions of Victoria Institute*, 68 (1936).

² e.g., G.R. Driver, *Problems of the Hebrew Verbal System*, p. 151.

described first as the kingdom of Babylonia belonging to Nimrod. The cities of his kingdom are significantly Babylon, Erech (Warka) and Agade. These, with Eridu and Ur, are some of the earliest cities in which civilization began and whose earliest occupations are in part known to us. Babylon was so extensively reconstructed by Nebuchadrezzar in the seventh century that our knowledge of its beginnings rests upon early documents found in other cities. It had previously been the centre of power under Hammurabi (1792–1750 B.C.) and even earlier was the seat of the worship of the sun-god. Erech (Warka) has been excavated by the Germans (1936–1939, 1954), who have unearthed there examples of the earliest writing, pottery and other arts which have led to the levels being styled “Early Dynastic” or “Early Literate” period (dated c. 3000 B.C.). The earliest finds at Djemdet Nasr near Babylon are somewhat later and in turn are followed by those at Eridu near the Persian Gulf. A theory once propounded that Erech, written Unuk or Urug in Sumerian, might be the first city mentioned in the Bible, founded by and named after Enoch, and that Irad, Enoch’s son, might be the founder of Eridu, may be correct (Gen. 4: 17–18). We know of early Agade only from early texts but by the time of its hero king Sargon (c. 2300 B.C.) it was the military centre of the whole of Mesopotamia. Calneh has been considered as (1) an old name for Nippur (another Early Dynastic site); (2) a site in the Habur region identified with the Sangara district, i.e. Shinar (Isaiah 10: 9); while (3) a large majority of Hebraists, perhaps influenced by these uncertain identifications, now interpret it as “all of them” (*kullanah*) and thus find a term to include the many other early settlements otherwise unmentioned! Others argue that Shinar stands for the Southern Babylonian plain. This is by no means certainly proved, though likely if “in the land of Shinar” qualifies all the cities and not just Calneh. “From that land (referring to Shinar) went forth Asshur” (v. 11), whose name, as belonging to a god, was given both to the land of Assyria and to the oldest city in it. Nineveh and Calah (modern Nimrud) near Mosul have been excavated and soundings or observations at the lowest (earliest) levels show the presence of remains (e.g. Ninevites pottery) which can be dated back to the Djemdet Nasr period, that is soon after the founding of Erech.

Excavation at other Assyrian sites shows that civilization, as early brought here, has close affinities with the southern kingdom (e.g. Obeid pottery). Rehoboth, “city square,” and Resen (Ras Ain?) have led to varied explanations—the most probable, despite its seeming fantasy and ingenuity, being that made by G. Dossin.¹ He thinks that while translating these early lists from Sumerian into a Semitic language a scribe has merely translated some of the rarer names. *Rehoboth-ir* he interprets as the equivalent of ASH-UR since ASH is Sumerian for the *ribatu*, “square”, and UR equals *uru*, “city”. By this means Assur, the

¹ *Muséon*.

earliest known Assyrian city, is to be found in our lists. Resen he finds to be an early name for Assur also. By a similar early transposition of languages he finds Babylon in Arpachshad (v. 22). We shall return to this question in discussing the occurrence of Asshur in the list of Shem’s sons. Important to an understanding of the Hamitic list is the certainty resulting from archaeological discoveries that the earliest inhabitants and languages of both Babylonia and Assyria were, contrary to popular belief, non-Semitic. The civilization before 2600 B.C. in both is “Sumerian” and the racial types found are not true Semitic. There is a direct cultural link between Assyria, Babylonia and Egypt which extended to their polytheistic religious ideas. Sidney Smith believes the Assyrians originated among the western nomads in the Habur region which was noted for its hunting and which he, with others, believes to be the Shinar of Genesis 10. At this point it be may worthy of note that Lutz suggests that Nimrod may be the Hamitic god Nergal, whose Egyptian name means “the mighty hunter”. After briefly listing a number of non-Semitic groups which include the Ludim (also mentioned under Shem), and Caphtor (Crete?) and other non-Semitic sea-coast dwellers in the Nile Delta, the Hamitic list gives details of Canaan.

The pre-dispersion area of Canaan is correctly given as from Gaza and Gerar to Sidon. The eastern border being marked by Sodom and Gomorrah, this section at least must pre-date the destruction of these two cities in the early Patriarchal period (1900–1700 B.C.), for no archaizing reference would make sense to a later reader. The omission here of Tyre must also point to a date earlier than its founding in the thirteenth century, for thereafter until the sixth century it was a powerful factor in Palestinian history. Excavations at Ras Shamra (Ugarit) and neighbouring Alalakh show that the population of Syria was largely Hurrian (Horite) in the same period and spoke that language, which is non-Semitic and akin to those known to us from the countries listed under Japhet. Canaan is referred to in these cuneiform texts as an area roughly corresponding to Genesis 10: 19. A further mixture of races in later Canaan resulted from Arameans penetrating southwards probably almost in the time of Abraham; but, as subsequent Hebrew history clearly shows, the native (Hamitic) population was never completely extinguished. By the thirteenth century this Semitic influence was markedly increased, and is soon reflected in the Hebrew history after the Exodus; but of this the present description of Canaan makes no mention, being therefore probably much earlier. Of the eleven groups of inhabitants mentioned as descendants of Canaan, five are known from early texts or excavations (Sidon, Jebus, Amurru, and Hamath) while the remainder are known only from the Old Testament narrative. As with the sons of Japhet, archaeology, so far as it has revealed evidence, corresponds with the Genesis 10 list and, as the colophon in v. 20 implies, shows that the list contains both

geographical, linguistic and ethnographical data which are to the ancient mind inseparable if not indistinguishable.

The Descendants of Shem

The list of Shem's issue contains difficulties apart from obscurities in identification (e.g. Arpachshad, Lud). So far as we know, Elam was originally a non-Semitic people. The groups entitled Aram and Eber, the nomads west of the Euphrates in what was later called *mat ebiru* ("the land across [west of] the River"), were always, according to our present discoveries, Semitic in language and racial type. Similarly the sons of Joktan, in so far as they are identifiable, are Semitic tribes inhabiting Southern Arabia, the Hadramaut (an area described in v. 30), and across the Red Sea, where they lived alongside peoples of Hamitic extraction. The only difference among the sons of Eber was probably between those who were semi-nomadic and cultivated irrigated land (*palgu-Peleg*) and the pure nomads (Eber). Asshur as son of Shem may denote the Semitic element which moved north to overspread the Sumerian civilization already established there by descendants of Ham under a leader of the same name. If this is so the capital city of Asshur itself may one day be found to be of Semitic origin (though present discoveries do not support this) and all theories which seek to find its name in the Ham list are unnecessary. Since, however, Elam like early Asshur is of non-Semitic foundation most scholars have been led to view this list as purely geographical ("the central group"). This tenet cannot be sustained, since places or peoples in the same general area have been already listed under Ham, e.g. the cities of Babylonia and Assyria (east of Aram and west of Elam, vv. 10-12), and Lud also has been included in that same genealogy. Another prevalent opinion is that the list includes those nations or areas which were early dominated by Semites, but if this were the case one would expect, for example, the inclusion of Canaan and the exclusion of Elam which never totally succumbed. The simplest solution is to believe that Semites early penetrated Elam even though they were later not the dominant racial and linguistic group, whereas in "Hamitic" Assyria (and Babylonia=Arpachshad?) they later inherited the Sumerian culture. From c. 2000 B.C. onwards the whole of the "Fertile Crescent" from the Persian Gulf to Canaan became semitized. Although a few centuries later there were incursions by the Kassites (of the same stock as non-Semitic Elam) and by the Hittites (Indo-Aryans from the area of Japhet) these were temporary dominations only. All this would fit in with the general picture given us in this chapter of Semites occupying a limited area at first. This area was, at the time the list was compiled, wider than Shinar which seems to be the initial home of the "Sumerian" group. Before the time of the confusion of tongues (Gen. 11: 2), the Sumerians seem to have moved there from the East (the Iranian plateau).

The above survey accords with evidence which, if increased by future archaeological research, may eventually show that the three dominant language-groups in the ancient Near East were the Semitic, Hamitic (Sumer-Egypt), and the Japhetic (Indo-Aryan), typified by Hurrian and Hittite.

The Geographical Horizon of the Early Hebrews

The general, if confusing, picture we have gathered from a survey of these three groups of peoples of the earliest Near East can be a little clarified by examining the potential and actual knowledge of geography possessed by the inhabitants.

The predominant feature of Sumerian civilization is that men dwelt in large walled cities. Archaeological investigation has produced no proof for a gradual evolution from village to town and then city. This means that they were industrialists and exported their varied wares, while importing other things necessary for their economy. Thus we find Sargon of Agade in c. 2300 B.C. on long expeditions into Asia Minor seeking for valuable raw materials. His successors Naram-Sin and Gudea of Lagash have also left us detailed records of similar journeys to collect metals, wood and stone from the areas now identified as Anatolia and Syria. In even earlier periods the results of trade between these earliest inhabitants of Babylonia can be traced in India (Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa) and in Egypt. One of the earliest Sumerians, Enmerkar, has left us the detailed text of his complex business relations with the land of Aratta, bordering on the Iranian plain. The literary evidence for this early trade is supported by the discovery of archaic Sumerian type vessels near Asterabad (N. Persia) while even farther off in Anau (Turkestan) figures, models, vases, copper work, seals and beads of the same period attest Sumerian trade or influence. Similarly in the West even the jewelry of Early Crete speaks of some contact with Ur and Kish, and other goods of this epoch have found their way to the Aegean Islands, the Anatolian coasts and even as far as Macedonia. Well before the Agade dynasty there is literary evidence of the merchant colonists from Mesopotamia working at Kanish in Cappadocia. With an increasing number of cuneiform texts we can now follow in some detail the numerous journeys taken by messengers or caravans in the 19th-17th centuries between Egypt-Canaan-Anatolia-Assyria-Babylonia and Elam. One detailed tablet published by Professor A. Goetze in 1953 gives the daily stages travelled by a merchant (c. 1750 B.C.) from Larsa (near Erech) via Assur, Nineveh and up into Anatolia as far as Kanish (less than 150 miles from the Black Sea) before returning via the Euphrates and Habur river routes. The diary nature of this document could well be compared with the detailed entries of Moses' itineraries in Numbers and Deuteronomy. Texts from Ur in the same period give details of a sea trade mainly in ivory, gems and spices.

between that city and Dilmun (Bahrain) and other places on the Arabian coast (Ophir). They travelled to India itself if we can judge by the seals, ivories and other objects found at Ur. It will be obvious from these references, which could be multiplied, that before c. 2000–1800 B.C. the flow of trade, and therefore of merchants and their supporting caravans and military expeditions, is abundantly attested by contemporary documents and implies a knowledge of the very area outlined in Genesis 10. It would not be unreasonable to assume that the information in this chapter could therefore be known to Abraham himself.

Similar evidence from Egyptian archaeology shows how in Early Dynastic times that country colonized Byblos in Syria and boats from the Delta anchored in Cycladic ports. Their land trade-routes stretched towards Nubia (Cush), the Red Sea coasts and along the North African coast beyond the Libya (whence Crete [Caphtor] was founded), as far as Spain. Soon after the end of the Old Empire (c. 2400 B.C.) there were expeditions into Sinai (Pepi II) doubtless to exploit its mineral deposits, and Nubia was colonized. Contacts with, and knowledge of, Asia via Syria would be strengthened by the coming of the Asiatic Hyksos c. 1730 B.C. About this time the early Indo-Aryan Hurrians are also found established in North Syria and as far east as the Tigris. A few found their way to Egypt. Thus contact with the east, in addition to a known steady liaison with Babylonia, was established. It is certain from the Tel El-Amarna tablets that Pharaoh's court in 1483–1380 B.C. was receiving letters and reports from allies in and near their newly conquered Asiatic lands, the Mitanni, Babylon and Elam, and would in this way have a wide and detailed geographical knowledge. Even before this the Egyptian painters distinguished the various races (including Negroids). Since, however, we know that the spread of civilization in Africa (as in Europe and across Inner Asia) did not come until later it is not surprising that Genesis 10 should be silent on these points. It may well be that, even if information of the early beginnings of these distant peoples had reached the highly-developed centres of civilization in the ancient Near East, the compiler who brought the three lists together, adding his own note in v. 32, sought to confine attention to the so-called "white" races. It is becoming increasingly clear that the geographical information in Genesis 10 could have been available to the Egyptian court when Moses received his education there in the fifteenth or fourteenth century B.C.