

out the region north and east of Canaan (cf. 2 Sam. 8. 2-8). In this development the rise of Aram-Dammesek, the Aramaeans of Damascus, is especially notable (cf. 1 Ki. 11.23-25), as this state was to be the dominant power in Syrian politics until it was crushed by Tiglath-pileser IV in 732.

The political power of the Aramaeans was thus ultimately broken, and they were swallowed up in the "melting pot" of the Assyrian empire and its successors. But for causes not yet satisfactorily determined--unless it be due to the vigor of a new blood--the Aramaic type of language came to prevail in the whole of the imperial Semitic world, not only in upper Mesopotamia and the mountain land of Syria, but equally in the ancient home of Babylonian culture. In Hezekiah's time (701 B.C.) Aramaic appears as an international language (2 Ki. 18.26), and texts of Esarhaddon's ~~xxx~~ reign (681-668) refer to Aramaic scribes along with those writing in Assyrian. Schiffer notes the interesting progress of this phenomenon; weights of Tiglath-pileser IV's reign are inscribed in Assyrian alone; of Shalmaneser IV's, in Assyrian and Aramaic; of Sargon's, in Aramaic alone (721-705). Also in the 8th century, the Aramaic monuments found in Central and North Syria (at Zenjirli, etc.) reveal the rapid Aramization of official inscriptions away from the Hebraic type of earlier monuments in the same region. The literary progress of Aramaic may be said to date from the 8th century, and it was furthered by the collapse of Assyria and, soon afterwards, of the Neo-Babylonian empire. The adoption by the Aramaic peoples of the alphabetic script may have been a contributing cause to the retirement of the Babylonian language.

With the rise of the Persian empire, ~~xxx~~ we find its administration using the Aramaic as the lingua franca over its Semitic territories, from the east to the upper end of Egypt, while the presence of the language in Ionia is revealed by the recent discovery of a bilingual Lydian-Aramaic inscription at Sardis. An Aramaic papyrus text has been found at Assuan which is an official duplicate of the trilingual Behistun inscription of Darius I, and the mass of Aramaic documents shows that it was the recognized language of the Persian chan-