

impossible, in that they were Semites who had inhabited northern Babylonia from the earliest known times. Old Babylonian law flourished from 2200 to 1800 B.C. With the downfall of Sumerian rule social changes, resulting probably from the immigration of Semitic tribes from west and north, led to the rise of Semitic dynasties as well as to the absorption of the Sumerians in the Semitic population. The power of Babylonia under the first Babylonian dynasty intensified its cultural influence upon Elam, where legal documents were drawn up in the Akkadian language at about this time. Old Assyrian law developed during the last centuries of the third millennium. While there is no evidence of this law for Assyria itself, there are documents from Assyrian trading colonies in Asia Minor. These colonies were located near Kaisarieh in what was later called Cappadocia, and the documents are therefore called Cappadocian. These extremely difficult texts--legal documents and letters--indicate the existence of a highly developed commerce with Assur. To the present time they have constituted also the chief proofs of the existence of a specific commercial law in the area of the Near East. This problem, however, requires further research. The fall of the first Babylonian dynasty, caused by a migration which brought the barbarous mountain people of Kašsu (Cassites) into Babylonia, represented a collapse of civilization. For centuries thereafter sources are lacking; and in the period from 1500 to 1200 B.C., for which sources are once more available, they indicate the emergence of a new world, a renaissance of Babylonian civilization, which for the first time spread visibly through the entire Near East, taking on an international^{al} character. In a political system of several rival powers, cuneiform writing became the prevailing script, used even for the recording of foreign idioms, while the Akkadian language became the language of international and diplomatic communication. Hence it is not by chance that there are extant legal records covering the territories of all the powers in existence at the time. There are distinctions between Middle Babylonian law which shows the Cassites to have been already wholly assimilated by Babylonian culture; Middle Assyrian law,