

Aramaic, so that during the period of the Seleucids the cuneiform document was used solely in the conservative temple administrations. Together with cuneiform law it disappeared here as well about the end of the second century B.C.

Whether these laws, the number of which may be increased in time through new excavations, are related otherwise than by their common cuneiform script is largely a moot question today. It may be said that the phrases of the Sumerian documents influenced most profoundly those of the Old Akkadian and Old Babylonian texts and that their influence continued to the Cassite period. This influence, however, scarcely extended so far as Elam and Assyria; and the neo-Babylonian documents represent a type concerning whose origin nothing at all is known. The problem of the material interaction of these laws is a much more difficult matter, especially in the field of civil law. With respect to civil law, which is based upon the elementary instincts of man and conservative in its evolution, comparative law indicates that corresponding development, even in the laws of peoples who came into historical contact with one another, is due to an independent parallel evolution rather than to diffusion, even if diffusion could be evidenced in business forms. Therefore it is for the present hypothetical whether cuneiform law exerted any influence upon the West, particularly upon Greek law, with which it came into contact during the last stage of its evolution.

A history of the evolution of cuneiform law is impossible today, and it is unlikely that it can ever be written. The various known periods are separated by intervals which are poor in sources or for historical reasons possess none at all, because periods of migration and of cultural decay leave little or no written records. During these periods Babylonian civilization was not destroyed, it is true; it was merely buried. It is to be assumed, however, that the new population had to travel the road from primitive legal conditions to higher forms of law, which made written records necessary. Yet as far as it is possible to compare the various periods with one another there is no continuously ascending line of development. The oldest records