

# The Dawn of European Civilization

By

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*B.Litt. (Oxon.)*



NEW YORK

ALFRED A. KNOPF

1925-

6/000 -

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PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN BY HEADLEY BROTHERS,  
18, DEVONSHIRE STREET, E.C.2 ; AND ASHFORD, KENT.

## PREFACE

THE material basis and spiritual context of modern life are the cumulative result of the achievements and discoveries of the past. Europeans share with the Chinese and even with the aborigines of Australia a part of this cultural heritage. With the genesis of that common substratum however we are not here immediately concerned ; it has been described by M. de Morgan in an earlier volume in this series. My theme is the foundation of European Civilization as a peculiar and individual manifestation of the human spirit.

But on this topic sharply opposed views are current. One school maintains that Western Civilisation only began in historic times after 1000 B.C. in a little corner of the Mediterranean and that its true prehistory is to be found not in Europe but in the Ancient East. On the other hand, some of my colleagues would discover the origin of all the higher elements in human culture in Europe itself. I can subscribe to neither of these extreme views ; the truth seems to me to lie between them. In such a field it would of course be presumptuous to pretend to have attained a final synthesis. I can but present in all due humility the results of an earnest attempt to survey all the facts as a whole.

The Occident was, I would submit, indebted to the Orient for the rudiments of the arts and crafts that initiated man's emancipation from bondage to his environment and for the foundation of those spiritual ties that co-ordinate human endeavours. But the peoples of the West were not slavish imitators ; they adapted the gifts of the East and united the contributions made by Africa and Asia into a new and organic whole capable of developing on its own original lines. By the sixteenth century B.C. the new organism was already functioning and the point had arrived when the Westerners were ready to assume the rôle of masters. Among the Early Bronze Age peoples of the Ægean, the Danube valley, Scandinavia,

and Britain, we can recognize already the expression of those very qualities of energy, independence, and inventiveness which distinguish the western world from Egypt, India or China. But this does not justify the contention that the mutual rôles of the Ancient East and the Modern West, as they existed at the dawn of history, had been mysteriously reversed in a more remote antiquity.

My task is then to exhibit the creation out of the cultural capital common to many lands of the new force, the growth of which has ultimately transformed the face of the world. Since the germs of the new are evidently active in the Middle Bronze Age that period puts a natural term to the enquiry. But the existence of such divergent schools of thought necessitates a careful study of the evidence.

The Orientalists indeed treat the humble productions of early man in Europe with a certain contempt and have relied largely on *a priori* theories. But their opponents have lavished a loving care on the rude artefacts of our forerunners and by patient research have built up a powerful case in support of their thesis which cannot be demolished by a few generalizations. The material itself must be examined and the reader must judge which view allows of its coordination into the most logical and coherent whole. To that end the continent has been divided into several provinces, the spatial relations of which at different epochs are illustrated by four maps. Within these provinces the sequence of observed phenomena is well known ; disputes begin with the interrelation of the groups. Here I have tried to set forth the material objectively in its proper order and to expound the several views of competent authorities upon its interpretation.

But it must be remembered that our material is only the skeleton of an organism which once was clothed with flesh and which still is immanent in every moment of our lives. The continent which is so neatly mapped for us is itself a heritage from prehistoric times. Peasants with stone hoes and axes opened up its valleys to cultivation ; hunters and herdsmen blazed the trail through the primæval forests ; mariners in dug-out canoes sailed the seas to the isles of the West ; prospectors with picks of horn and flint revealed the

treasures of the earth and crossed mountain passes in search of merchandise. These explorers were the forerunners of Greeks and Phœnicians ; the paths they discovered have been followed by Roman roads and modern railways.

The monuments of early man are but insignificant bits of flint and stone, bronze and baked clay. Yet such fragments embody concretely the achievement of our spiritual ancestors. In such rude implements are revealed the preconditions of our gigantic engines and of the whole mechanical apparatus that constitutes the material basis of modern life. Progress is an indivisible whole in which the invention of a new way of hafting an axe formed a necessary prelude to the invention of the steam-engine or the aeroplane. In the first innovations the germs of all subsequent improvement were latent ; and the first steps on the path of discovery were the hardest. Thus the achievements of our nameless forerunners are in a real sense present in our cultural heritage to-day.

In conclusion, I should like to express my deep indebtedness to many workers in the same field, not excepting those whose conclusions I have been unable to accept. Moreover, to supplement their published works which I so often cite, Mr. M. C. Burkitt, Sir Arthur Evans, Mr. E. J. Forsdyke, Mr. W. A. Heurtley, Dr. Ferencz Laszlo, Dr. Adolf Mahr, Mr. Harold Peake, Dr. P. Reinecke, Prof. Tallgren, Dr. P. Vouga, Mr. A. J. B. Wace and others have very kindly given me valuable advice and assistance on several points. To Miss M. Joachim I owe a further debt of gratitude for reading the proofs. For permission to reproduce here illustrations from their publications I am indebted to the courtesy of Dr. Ailio (Helsingfors), the Accademia dei Lincei, the Trustees of the British Museum, the British School at Athens, the Editors of the *Bullettino di Paleontologia Italiana*, the Cambridge University Press and Messrs. Wace and Thompson, the Comisión de Investigaciones paleontológicas y prehistoricas and Prof. H. Obermaier (Madrid), Sir Arthur Evans, Prof. Kozłowski (Lemberg), the Greek Ministry of Public Instruction, Dr. Hans Reinerth and the Urgeschichtliches Institut (Tübingen), Dr. J. Schránil (Prague), Mr. R. B. Seager (Crete), Dr. H. Seger (Breslau), the Royal Anthropological Institute, the

Society of Antiquaries of London, the Société des Antiquaires du Nord (Copenhagen), the Société d'Anthropologie de Bruxelles, Dr. Stocký (Prague), the Schweizerisches Landes-Museum (Zurich), Prof. A. M. Tallgren (Helsingfors), Prof. Tsountas (Athens), the University of Bordeaux, Faculty of Letters, the K. Vitterhets, Historie och Antikvitets Akademien (Stockholm) the Director of the Prähistorische Abteilung of the Museum für Völkerkunde (Berlin), Dr. P. Vouga (Neuchâtel), and others.

I might add that the index is especially designed to enable the layman to locate at once the explanation (usually illustrated by figures) of the technical terms inevitably employed. The addenda will allow the reader to gauge the progress made in prehistory while this book was actually in the press.

V. GORDON CHILDE.

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# THE DAWN OF EUROPEAN CIVILIZATION

## CHAPTER I

### THE SURVIVAL OF THE FOOD GATHERERS

IT has been customary to divide the history of human civilization at least in Europe into two main phases, the palæolithic or old stone age on the one hand and the neolithic and metal using ages on the other. Throughout the long palæolithic period which reaches back far into geological time, man remained in a state of helpless barbarism, a mere food gatherer dependent for his livelihood on the products of the chase and fishing supplemented by such wild nuts and berries as mother Nature might provide. Palæolithic man had no domestic animals, save the dog and that only late in the epoch, practiced no agriculture, was ignorant of pottery, and did not polish stone or flint. The neolithic period saw man master of his own food supply through the possession of domestic animals and cultivated plants, and shaking off the shackles of environment by his skill in fashioning tools for tree-felling and carpentry, by organization for co-operative labour, and by the beginnings of commerce. The study of the palæolithic period belongs to the history of humanity as such. European civilization as a specific and individual expression of human activity only began to take shape during the neolithic epoch.

But the two epochs can no longer be regarded as standing over against one another sharply contrasted and separated by an impassable gulf. The neolithic arts were not suddenly introduced complete and fully developed into an empty continent as our forefathers imagined. A whole series of intermediate stages have come to light to fill the old hiatus.

## 2 DAWN OF EUROPEAN CIVILIZATION

The transitional cultures are sometimes called mesolithic, but the term epipalæolithic is better; for the remains which fill the gap in time do not certainly lead on to the new civilization; only in their light we can recognize palæolithic survivals, albeit as vanishing moments, in the nascent civilization of our continent. However some authorities would in effect deny any fundamental cultural distinction between two periods and attribute to palæolithic man in Europe some of the discoveries traditionally reserved for his neolithic heirs. Dr. Bayer, of Vienna, goes so far as to ascribe the beginnings of agriculture to the Lower Palæolithic inhabitants of southern Europe. Later on in the ice ages, he says, they migrated, taking their civilization with them to Africa and Asia and only returned at the end of our reindeer age.<sup>1</sup> Even if Bayer's thesis be correct, the Lower Palæolithic is separated from the neolithic by long ages in which food-gatherers developed in Europe the series of cultures—Aurignacian, Solutrean, and Magdalenian—constituting Upper Palæolithic industry.

More germane to our enquiry is the criticism levelled at the old sharp distinction by Mr. Reginald Smith.<sup>2</sup> He has pointed out that both in this country and France the remains of species resembling the later domestic animals, short-horned cattle, sheep, and swine, have been found in levels corresponding to the Upper Palæolithic industry. However the domestication of the animals is quite unproven and most competent authorities are more than sceptical of palæolithic stock-raising. The same is true of allegedly palæolithic pottery from some French and Belgian caves and the flint mines of Grimes' Graves in Norfolk.<sup>3</sup> The Belgian "sherds" ascribed to the Acheulean epoch dissolved when moistened and the pots attributed to the reindeer age seem to be identical with the late Danubian pottery from the neolithic huts of Hesbaye.<sup>4</sup> If our troglodyte predecessors really had made the advances here claimed for them, the orthodox view of the position of Britain and Western Europe in the history of civilization would need revision. But it

<sup>1</sup> *L'Anthr.*, XXXIV, p.132.

<sup>2</sup> *Arch.*, LXIII, pp. 145f.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 151; cf. *C.P.F.*, 1909, pp. 235f. and (3) p. 166.

Numbers refer to the bibliography at the end of each chapter.

<sup>4</sup> *B.S.A. Brus.*, XXV, p. LXXX.