

## NARAM-SIN'S STELE.

BY THE EDITOR.

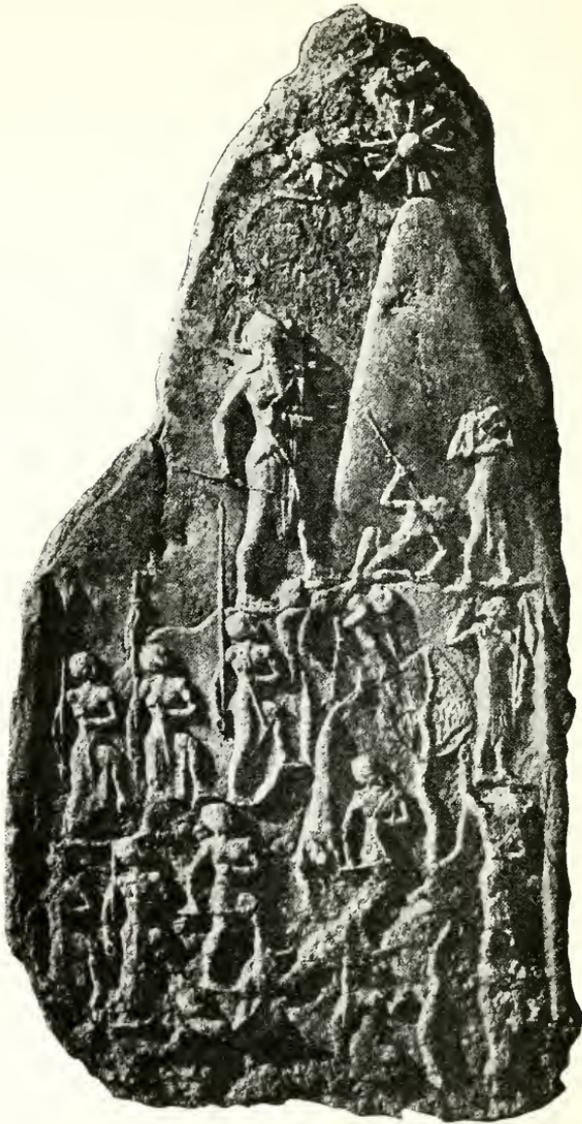
A MOST remarkable monument of ancient Babylonian art and civilization, a stele about two metres high was discovered in the year 1898 by M. Jacques de Morgan, the French ambassador to Persia, during his excavations at Susa, the ancient capital of Elam. The monument bore two inscriptions, one in Semitic, the other in Elamite. The former is obliterated and the latter sufficiently readable to let us know that Shutruk Nakhunta, one of the greatest kings of Elam, on capturing Sipara, the ancient capital of Akkad, had this monument of Naram-Sin transferred to Susa, the capital of Elam.

The Elamites, a tribe of warlike mountaineers in the east of Mesopotamia, belonged to the most dangerous enemies of the more civilized inhabitants of the valley of the Euphrates and Tigris, and we know that from time to time they made inroads into the fertile fields of Babylonia, sacking the cities and despoiling the farms of the country. In the fourth millennium B. C., King Sargon I of Akkad fortified the empire against its ferocious neighbors, and his son Naram-Sin, a worthy successor to his great father, carried the victorious arms of the Akkado-Babylonians into the mountains of Elam. Obviously it is this triumph which is commemorated in our monument, which accordingly must have been erected about 3750 B. C.

But the supremacy of Babylon over Elam could not be maintained. The Elamites regained their independence and the valley of Mesopotamia was again exposed to their raids. Sipara was taken by Shutruk Nakhunta and the monument of Naram-Sin's victory was now taken to Susa, this time in commemoration of the triumph of Elam, and the Elamite inscription proves that revenge was taken for the former defeat.

Thereafter, the stele has remained in the undisturbed posses-

sion of Elam. The empire of Babylon continued to decline and the new power, another Semitic nation, Assyria, came to the front. The

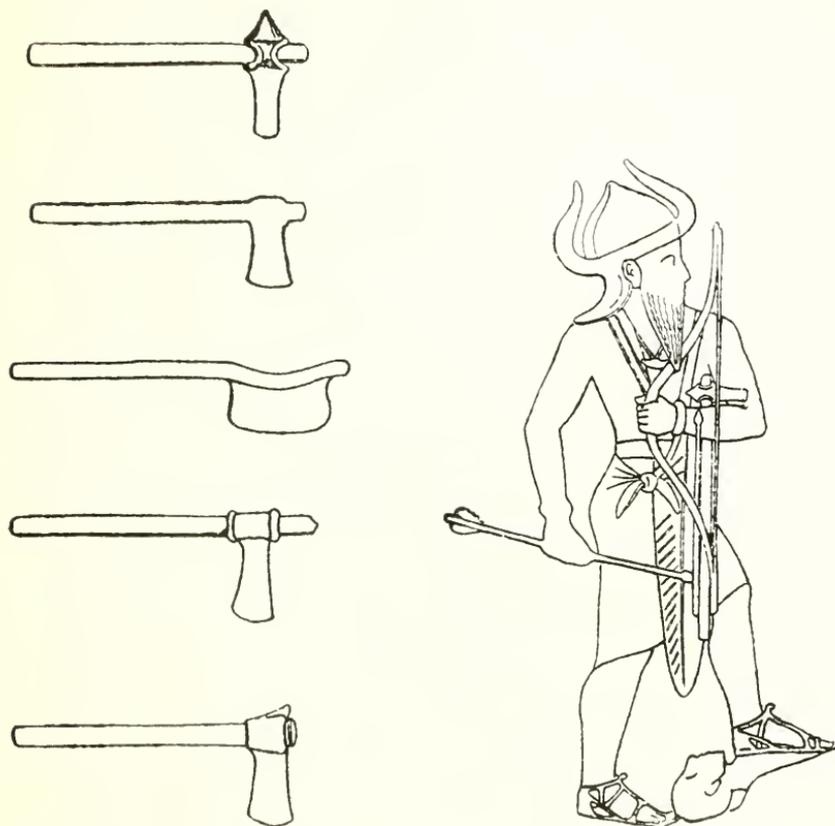


STELE OF NARAM-SIN, KING OF AKKAD.  
Found in the ruins of Susa, now in the Louvre.

Assyrian armies descended from the upper Tigris into the valley of Babylon and swept over the countries of Hither Asia like an irre-

sistible cyclone. Elam tried in vain to preserve its independence. Susa was conquered, sacked, and burned, and in the conflagration, the stele of Naram-Sin was buried in the ruins of the city. There it lay forgotten until in 1898 the spades of M. Morgan's diggers brought the monument to light again. It stands now in the Louvre at Paris.

On the top of the stele we see two symbols, one representing the



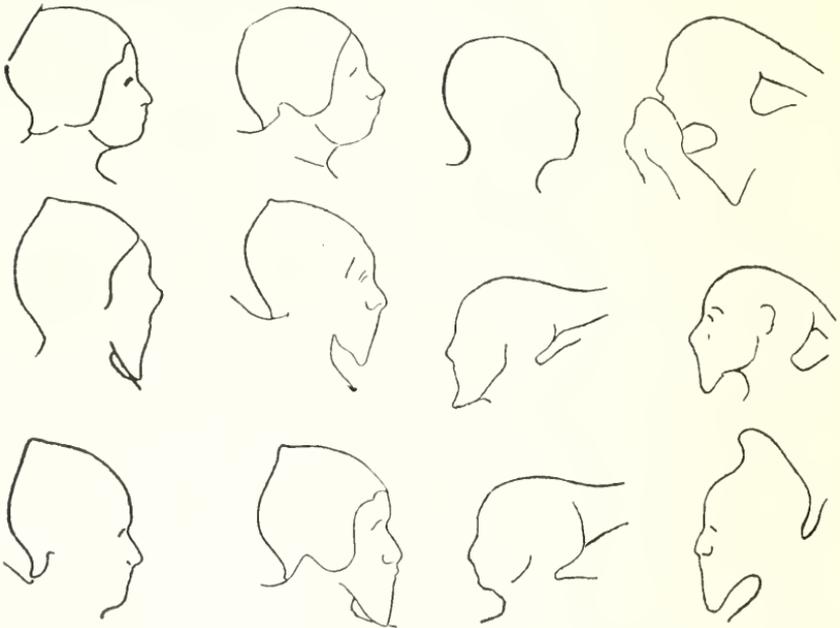
BATTLE-AXES OF THE TIME OF  
NARAM-SIN.

NARAM-SIN.

sun, the other a star, both shaped in the same way as they appear on later Babylonian and Assyrian monuments, and we must assume that the third symbol of the divine trinity, the moon was not missing on Naram-Sin's stele.

For reasons which cannot be here detailed it is commonly assumed that the religion of the Babylonians, including their doctrine

of the trinity, has in all its essentials been shaped by the ancient Sumerians and Akkadians and the monument of Naram-Sin appears to bear witness to the fact. The trinity was represented: first, by the moon, symbolizing the great father, the parent of all gods and the creator of the universe; secondly, by the sun, representing the saviour and governor of the world, the favorite son of the All-Father and privy to his councils; third, by the star, the planet Venus, symbolizing the great queen of heaven, sometimes represented as the divine mother, sometimes as the bride of God, the saviour, sometimes as virgin and mother in one person.



OUTLINES OF FACES FROM THE STELE OF NARAM-SIN.

The Babylonians are facing to the right, the Elamites to the left.

Other features of our monument are not less interesting. We see the king dressed in old Babylonian fashion, and we have reason to believe that it is a portrait true to life. He is armed with bow and arrows, clenching in his left arm a war hatchet. He is shod with sandals and his helmet is decked with buffalo horns. His attitude, as he stands on a heap of dead enemies, is dramatic and well studied. The artist indicates that Naram-Sin is a leader in battle, exhibiting a happy combination of courage and circumspection.

The Babylonian warriors are armed with long lances and

march in soldierly fashion, keeping step. The Elamite mountaineers whose facial types are different from those of the Babylonians are on the point of realizing their defeat. One of them is pulling out an arrow from his neck and has sunk down on his knees before the victorious king while another approaches him with a gesture of supplication.

The state of culture represented in the monument must have been very primitive still as is indicated in the dress and weapons of both parties. The more remarkable is the artistic skill and the freedom with which the figures are represented.

The Elamites were inferior in civilisation to the Babylonians, but we may very well assume that the sturdy mountaineers possessed good qualities, and it may be that they were less subject to corruption than the inhabitants of the plain. We must remember that when the Babylonian empire had played out, first the Assyrians from the upper Tigris took possession of Babylon for the short span of a few centuries, and then the Persians, the neighbors of the Elamites, a monotheistic, pure-hearted, and truth-loving people, descended upon Babylon and assumed the government of the vast empire of Western Asia, which they only lost through the boldness of Alexander the Great, when the rising power of Greek civilisation produced new conditions. Since then not only the ancient cities lay literally buried for more than two millenniums, but also the very best knowledge of the past,—Babylonian language, Babylonian science, and Babylonian history,—until in recent times modern archaeologists began to dig and recover the entombed records of her deeds and accomplishments.