present under cultivation and still more on those to the east of them indicate that the limits of agriculture were once more exten­sive and the population much denser than at present. During the Roman period frontier fortresses on the edge of the steppe served to check the rapacity and barbarizing influence of the Bedouin hordes.

Syria presents great diversities of climate. The mountains, though sometimes not absolutely very high, arrest the west winds blowing from the Mediterranean, so that the atmospheric precipita­tion is much greater on the western than on the eastern slopes. Hence the springs on the eastern versant are fewer, and cultivation is therefore confined to isolated areas resembling oases. The rainfall drains off with great rapidity, the beds of the streams soon drying up again. Within historic times the climate, and with it the productivity of the country, cannot have greatly changed ; at most the precipitation may have been greater, the area under wood having been more extensive. Except for Jerusalem, we have hardly any accurate meteorological observations ; there the mean annual temperature is about 63° Fahr. ; in Beyrout it is about 68°. The rainfall in Jerusalem is 36·22 inches, in Beyrout 21·66. The heat at Damascus and Aleppo is great, the cooling winds being kept off by the mountains. Frost and snow are occasionally experienced among the mountains and on the inland plateaus, but never along the coast. Even the steppe exhibits great contrasts of temperature ; there the rainfall is slight and the air exceed­ingly exhilarating and healthy. The sky is continuously cloudless from the beginning of May till about the end of October ; during the summer months the nights as a rule are dewy, except in the desert. Rain is brought by the west wind ; the north-west wind, which blows often, moderates the heat. On the other hand, an ozoneless east wind (sirocco) is occasionally experienced—especially during the second half of May and before the beginning of the rainy season—which parches up everything and has a prejudicial influence on both animal and vegetable life. On the whole the climate of Syria—if the Jordan valley and the moister districts are excepted —is not unhealthy, though intermittent fevers are not uncommon in some places.

Of the political relations of Syria in ancient times we know but little. Each town with its surrounding district seems to have con­stituted a small separate state ; the conduct of affairs naturally devolved upon the noble families. At a very early period—as early probably as the 15th century B.c.—Syria became the meeting- place of Egyptian and Babylonian elements, resulting in a type of western Asiatic culture peculiar to itself, which through the com­merce of the Phoenicians was carried to the western lands of the Mediterranean basin. Industry especially attained a high state of development ; rich garments were embroidered and glass and the like were manufactured. The extant inventories of spoil carried off by the ancient conquerors include a variety of utensils and stuffs. The influence exercised at all times on Syrian art by the powerful neighbouring states is abundantly confirmed by all the recent finds. The Syrians were more original in what related to religion : every place, every tribe, had its “lord” (Ba'al) and its “lady” (Ba'alat) ; the latter is generally called 'Ashtar or 'Ashtaret. Besides the local Baal there were “the god of heaven” (El) and other deities ; human sacrifices as a means of propitiating the divine wrath were not uncommon. But in the Syrian mythology foreign influences frequently betray themselves. Over against its want of originality must be set the fact, not merely that Syrian culture spread ex­tensively towards the west, but that the Syrians (as is shown by recently discovered inscriptions) long before the Christian era exercised over the northern Arabs a perceptible influence, which afterwards, about the beginning of tho 1st century, became much stronger through the kingdom of the Nabatæans. The art of writing was derived by the Arabs from the Syrians.

Something about the ancient political and geographical relations of Syria can be gleaned from Egyptian sources, especially in con­nexion with the campaigns of Thothmes III. in western Asia. The Egyptians designated their Eastern neighbours collectively as 'Amu. Syria up to and beyond the Euphrates is called more pre­cisely Sahi (or Zabi), and is regarded as consisting of the following parts (1) Rutenu, practically the same as Palestine (occasionally Palestine with Coelesyria is called Upper Rutenu, as distinguished from Lower Rutenu extending to the Euphrates) ; (2) the land of the Cheta (sometimes reckoned as belonging to Rutenu), with Kadesh on the Orontes as its capital ; (3) Naharina, the land on both sides of the Euphrates (extending, strictly speaking, beyond the Syrian limits) ; (4) Kaftu, the coast land of the Phoenicians (Fenchu), along with Cyprus. The Canaanites in general are called Chara. From these lands the Egyptian kings often derived rich booty, so that in those days Syria must have been civilized and prosperous. Moreover, we possess enumerations of towns in the geographical lists of the temple of Karaak and in a hieratic papyrus dating about 200 years after Thothmes III. Some of these names can be readily identified, such as Aleppo, Kadesh, Sidon, and the like, as well as many in Palestine. These materials, however, do not enable us to form even a moderately clear conception of the

condition of the country at that time. It is certain that most of the cities are of very great antiquity. It appears that the Cheta very probably were a non-Semitic people and that their power for a time extended far beyond the Syrian limits. Their inscriptions have not yet been deciphered with certainty. Within Syria their kingdom extended westwards from the middle course of the Eu-

phrates to the neighbourhood of Hamath ; their capital appears to have been Carchemish. The most prevalent opinion identifies Carchemish with Jerábís on the Euphrates, an identification which is favoured by the recent discovery of important “Hittite” monu­ments at the place. Before then the so-called “Hamath stones” were the most important inscriptions of the Cheta we possessed, but numerous others, as well as various other remains, are now at our command, and show that the influence of the powerful Cheta kingdom extended far into Asia Minor (compare Hittites). The kingdom disappeared at an early date, but some of the minor Cheta states continued to subsist down to the 12th century b.c.

Next to the Cheta the Aramæans were the people who held the most important towns of Syria, gradually advancing until at last they occupied the whole country. Of the Aramæan stocks named in Gen. x. 23, xxii. 21 *sq.,* very little is known, but it is certain that Aramæans at an early period had their abode close on the northern border of Palestine (in Maachah). A great part was played in the history of Israel by the state of Aram Dammesek, *i.e.,* the territory of the ancient city of Damascus (see vol. vi. p. 790) ; it was brought into subjection for a short time under David. The main object of the century-long dispute between the two king­doms was the possession of the land to the east of the Jordan (Hauran, and especially Gilead). Another Aramæan state often mentioned in the Bible is that of Aram Zobah. That Zobah was situated within Syria is certain, though how far to the west or north of Damascus is not known ; in any case it was not far from Hamath. Hamath in the valley of the Orontes, at the mouth of the Beká' valley, was from an early period one of the most important places in Syria; according to the Bible, its original inhabitants were Canaanites. The district belonging to it, including amongst other places Riblah (of importance on account of its situation), was not very extensive. In 733 B.C. Tiglath-Pileser II. compassed the overthrow of the kingdom of Damascus ; he also took Arpád (Tell Arfad), an important place three hours to the north of Aleppo. Hamath was taken by Sargon in 720. Henceforward the petty states of Syria were at all times subject to one or other of the great world-empires, even if in some cases a certain degree of in­dependence was preserved.

The foundation of numerous Greek cities shortly after Alexander’s time was of great importance for Syria; Antioch *(q.v.),* founded about 300 b.c. by Seleucus, became the capital of the Syrian kingdom of the Seleucids. Among other influential Greek towns were Apamea on the Orontes and Laodicea. The Seleucids had severe struggles with the Ptolemies for the possession of the south- era part of Syria (comp. Israel, vol. xiii. p. 420).

After having been reckoned for a short time (from 83 to 69 b.c.) among the dominions of Tigranes, king of Armenia, the country was conquered for the Romans by Pompey (64-63 b.c.). It is impossible here to follow in detail the numerous changes in the distribution of the territory and the gradual disappearance of particular dynasties which maintained a footing for some time longer in Chalcis, Abila, Emesa, and Palestine ; but it is of special interest to note that the kingdom of the Arab Nabatæans (comp. vol. xvii. p. 160) was able to subsist for a considerable period towards the north as far as Damascus. In the year 40 b.c. Syria had to endure a sudden but brief invasion by the Parthians. The country soon became one of the most important provinces of the Roman empire; its proconsulship was from the first regarded as the most desirable, and this eminence became still more marked afterwards. Antioch, adorned with many sumptuous buildings, as the chief town of the provinces of Asia, became in point of size the third city of the empire ; its port was Seleucia, surnamed Pieria. The high degree of civilization then prevailing in the country is proved by its architectural remains dating from the early Christian centuries ; the investigations of De Vogué have shown that from the 1st to the 7th century there prevailed in north Syria and the Hauran a special style of architecture,—partly no doubt following Græco-Roman models, but also showing a great deal of originality in details.

The administrative divisions of Syria during the Roman period varied greatly at different times ; subjoined is an enumeration of them as they existed at the beginning of the 5th century. (1) Syria Euphratensis, which had for its capital Hierapolis (Syr. *Mabóg* ; Arab. *Mambidj ;* Gr. B*αμβύκη).* The kingdom of Com­magene, beyond the limits of Syria, belonged to Syria Euphra­tensis ; its capital was Samosata, at the point where the Euphrates leaves the mountains, and it had other important towns on that river, such as Europus (the modern Barbalissus). (2) Syria I., or Coelesyria, having Antioch as its capital. The name Coelesyria (*ἡ κoιλὴ* *Συρία)* originally, no doubt, was applied to the valley between Libanus and Antilibanus, but was afterwards extended