

race. For many centuries their culture and civilization was foremost in Mesopotamia. Their influence remained ~~for~~ long after they had completely disappeared as a race and is still to be seen today in many particulars.

In view of this great importance of the Sumerians, it is striking that we know practically nothing about their origin. They were not a Semitic people like the Hebrews and the Arabs and the Babylonians proper. Neither were they an Indo-Germanic people like the Latins, Greeks or French, the Hittites or the Aryan peoples of India. It is generally believed that they came into Mesopotamia by way of the Persian Gulf. Many conjectures have been made as to the place from which they came. Almost every conceivable suggestion has been ^{offered} suggested. No suggestion has ^{been} ~~one~~ general acceptance, but their language is entirely different from the Semitic language of the Babylonians.

They invented the cuneiform system of writing. It is well adapted to their language and remarkably ill adapted to the ^{Babylonian} language. The Babylonians took it over from them and adapted it to fit their language to some extent, but there were always ambiguities and weaknesses in it, because of its comparative unfitness for this other language.

The Sumerians possessed great mechanical ability. The terms for skilled workers of many kinds and many sorts of technical expressions went from Sumerian into Babylonian and many of them were carried over in the later Arabic.

We find the real arch and the dome among the Sumerians. The Babylonians took them over from them and when Alexander the Great conquered the Persian Empire, his men brought these elements of architecture back with them to Europe. Previously they had been unknown to Greece.