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2 Assyrians, Babylonians, Chaldeans

2.1 Introduction

Sometimes, names of peoples, nations, regions or countries in foreign languages differ essentially from the names that are used in their own languages. An ethnic name by which a people knows itself, or the name of a region that is used by its inhabitants, is called an *endonym* or *autonym*; other ethnic and geographical names are *exonyms*.¹ For example, the Germans are called *Deutsche* by themselves, *Duitsers* in Dutch, *Allemands* by the French, *Germans* by the British, and *Němci* in Czech. The Greeks were called *Graeci* by the Romans, but Δαναοί, Ἀχαιοί (archaic period) or Ἕλληνες (classical and later periods) by themselves. The ancient Greeks usually called the Persians Πέρσαι, but sometimes also Μῆδοι. *Deutsche*, *Duitsers*, Ἕλληνες and Πέρσαι are endonyms, while *Allemands*, *Němci*, *Graeci* and Μῆδοι are exonyms. Often the cause of this difference in naming is innocent, having geographical or historical roots: in the Romance languages, the Germans are called after the *Alemanni*, a confederation of tribes who lived in the upper Rhine area. But some foreign names were originally pejorative, for example the Slavic names of the Germans, which are often thought to have been derived from proto-slavic *němъ ‘mute’, and *Eskimos* as a name of the people who call themselves *Inuit*. A difference between endonyms and exonyms is also found in the geographical and ethnic names that are studied in this chapter, such as Mesopotamia and Babylonia.

Mesopotamia is the land of the two rivers, the Euphrates and the Tigris. It is also the land of the Assyrians and Babylonians. Usually, it is clear to us what is meant by geographical names such as Assyria, Babylonia and Mesopotamia, and ethnic names such as Arameans, Assyrians and Babylonians, but the meaning of these names in ancient literature is not always as clear as it seems. The Assyrians, Babylonians and Hebrews did not have a name for Mesopotamia, and they sometimes used other ethnic and geographical names than we do, or they used similar sounding names with other meanings. The modern names are usually derived from the Greek ones, but there are many differences between Greek and modern idiom. For example, the Greeks often called the whole of Mesopotamia Assyria, and its inhabitants Assyrians

¹ Durnford 2013: 51-53.

or Syrians, and in late source sometimes even Persians. This chapter explores which names were given to Assyria and Babylonia, and to the Assyrians and Babylonians in the Hebrew Bible and in Greek literature, and what the similarities and differences are between Greek and biblical names of regions and inhabitants of Mesopotamia.

Many peoples have lived in Mesopotamia, not only Assyrians and Babylonians, but also Sumerians, Amorites, Arameans, Chaldeans and Kassites. The Sumerians were probably not known to the Greeks or to the authors of the Bible, although their influence on the culture of the ancient Near East was considerable and a few names such as Gilgamesh were widely known.² The Arameans were known to Greeks and biblical authors. Their contribution to Mesopotamian culture is in particular visible in the realm of language.³ During the first millennium, Aramaic gradually replaced Akkadian (Assyrian, Babylonian) as the language of everyday life, while Akkadian remained in use as a written language, especially for religious purposes and in scholarly and scientific texts. Yet, in our sources the Arameans are less prominently present than the Assyrians and Babylonians, especially in Greek sources. They will be mentioned occasionally, but the main subject of this chapter are the Assyrians, Babylonians and Chaldeans.

² The Sumerians are not mentioned in the Bible (Bodine 1996: 19). It is sometimes thought that Shinar (Babylonia) is Sumer, but erroneously so (see section 2.2). On Gilgamesh, see chapter 8.

³ Frame 1992: 48.

2.2 Mesopotamia in the Hebrew Bible

The most important regions in Mesopotamia that are mentioned in the Hebrew Bible are Paddan Aram, Assyria and Babylonia. Paddan Aram, also known as Aram Naharaim or *Mesopotamia* (LXX), is the area within the great bend of the Euphrates. It was inhabited by Arameans. Originally, Assyria was the region around the city of Ashur, situated east of Aram Naharaim, along the banks of the river Tigris, but after the Assyrian kings had subjugated much of the ancient Near East, it also became the name of the Assyrian empire. And Babylonia, in the Bible known as ‘Shinar’ or ‘the land of the Chaldeans’, is southern Mesopotamia. Its inhabitants are usually called Chaldeans. It is difficult to say how much biblical authors knew of the geography of Mesopotamia. Both the Assyrians and Babylonians are depicted as enemies from the north (Is. 14:31; Jr. 4:6; 25:9; Ezk. 26:7; Zeph. 2:13), because their armies did not traverse the Syrian desert, and always invaded Israel and Judah from the north,⁴ but this does not necessarily imply that the Israelites and Judeans really thought that Assyria and Babylonia lay north of Israel. How exactly they envisioned their world remains largely a mystery, because maps are not known from Israel.

Paddan Aram

In the Bible, the area within the great bend of the Euphrates is known under various names: פֶּדֶן אַרָם *paddan ʾarām*,⁵ שְׂדֵה אַרָם *śdē ʾarām* ‘the land of Aram’ (Hos. 12:13) and אַרָם נַהֲרַיִם *ʾarām nahʾrayim* ‘Aram of the two rivers’.⁶ In the Septuagint, this region is called Μεσοποταμία, Μεσοποταμία (τῆς) Συρίας, Συρία ποταμῶν or πεδῖον Συρίας. Its inhabitants were Arameans (Hebr. אַרְמִיִּם *ʾammīm*, Σύροι in the Septuagint).⁷

⁴ Vlaardingerbroek 199: 158.

⁵ It is often thought that *Paddan Aram* means ‘plain of Aram, land of Aram’, but the origin of *Paddan* is uncertain (Simons 1959: 219; HAL sv פֶּדֶן; Lipiński 2000: 68-73).

⁶ Hebr. אַרָם נַהֲרַיִם is a dual. Finkelstein (1962: 84-85) doubts if it is really a dual, but even if it is originally not a dual, it was almost certainly perceived as a dual by speakers and readers of biblical Hebrew.

⁷ The distinction between Arameans and Assyrians is not always straightforward. Even in the heydays of the Assyrian empire, Aramaic was widely spoken in the Assyrian heartlands, and probably even used in Assyrian administration (Blasberg 1997: 20-21; Geller 2007: 239).

It is difficult to say what, in the eyes of the biblical authors, the extent of Paddan Aram was. Its main city was Haran, the hometown of Nahor and Laban, but it is not possible to say if the city of Gozan also lay in Paddan Aram.⁸ Pethor, the homeland of Bileam, was regarded as a part of Aram Naharaim (Dt. 23:5), but that does not help us to determine the extent of Paddan Aram, because the location of Pethor is uncertain. Therefore, it is not possible to be very specific. Paddan Aram lay around Haran, between the Euphrates and the Habor. Its western border was the Euphrates, its eastern border is uncertain. Haran is mentioned in the Hebrew Bible as one of the early conquests of the Assyrian kings (2K. 19:12), together with the nearby city of Gozan (Ass. *Gūzāna*) and the region called Bet Eden (Ass. *Bīt-Adini*), which suggests that these areas were not seen as parts of Assyria proper.

Assyria

East of Paddan Aram lay Assyria (Ashur). In Hebrew, both Assyria and its inhabitants are usually called אַשּׁוּר *'aššūr*. Assyria is sometimes called אֶרֶץ אַשּׁוּר *'ereṣ 'aššūr* (e.g. Is. 7:18), but as a rule it is just אַשּׁוּר. It is difficult to say what in the eyes of the biblical authors the extent of Assyria was. A few indications can be found: the cities of Nineveh and Kalhu are in Assyria (Gen. 10:11; Zeph. 2:13), and the rivers Tigris and Euphrates flow through or along Assyria (Gen. 2:14; Jr. 2:18). It is often not clear of which *Ashur* biblical texts speak: the city of Ashur, the region around the city, the Assyrian empire, or the Persian or Seleucid satrapy of Assyria.

It is controversial whether the city of Ashur is mentioned in the Hebrew Bible. The only text in which, according to many scholars, אַשּׁוּר is a city, and not a region or a nation, is Genesis 2:14.⁹ According to the text, the Tigris flows קִדְמַת אַשּׁוּר *qidmat 'aššūr* 'east of Ashur', which is true of the city of Ashur, but not of Assyria. The Tigris flowed *through* Assyria during most of its history.¹⁰ Nineveh, Kalhu and Arbela, which were Assyrian cities, were east of the river Tigris. An exception is perhaps,

⁸ Finkelstein 1962: 83-84. Gozan is modern Tell Halaf in northern Syria.

⁹ Speiser 1964: 17; Westermann 1974: 298; Wenham 1987: 66; Hamilton 1991: 170.

¹⁰ Sometimes *qidmat 'aššūr* is translated 'in front of Ashur', but this translation is probably impossible; see Stordalen 2000: 264-265.

and only to a certain degree, the Persian period. The border of the Persian satrapy *Aθurā* (Assyria) followed, from south to north, the Tigris until the junction with the little Zab and from there on the little Zab, leaving Arbela outside Assyria, but including Nineveh and Kalhu.¹¹ In this period, Assyria was in its southern half bounded by the river Tigris, but not in its northern half.

In older scholarship, it was thought that Genesis 2-3 was written by the Jahwist, the author of the oldest source of the Pentateuch, who lived in the early monarchy.¹² Genesis 2-3 was the Jahwist's account of the creation and fall of man, while Genesis 1 was the creation story from the Priestly codex, which was written much later. In the period when the Jahwist was believed to have lived, the Tigris flowed through Assyria, not east of Assyria. If Gen. 2-3 is from this period, אַשּׁוּר in Gen. 2:14 must refer to the city of Ashur. But ideas on when the Jahwist lived and ideas on the authorship of the parts of Genesis 1-11 that are not from the hand of the Priestly writer have changed dramatically.¹³ This is especially true of Genesis 2-3, which is now often considered as late, from the late Persian period, for example by Schmid and Mettinger, and not by the same hand as the other parts of the Pentateuch that are traditionally considered Jahwistic.¹⁴ The main ground for this late date is the proximity to the wisdom literature, especially Ecclesiastes and Job, which are as a rule regarded as (very) late. But not all modern scholars accept this view. According to Van Seters, who points at the proximity to Ezekiel 28, the paradise story is from the Neo-Babylonian period,¹⁵ and according to Becking, who calls it a garden story and not a paradise story, it is from the late monarchic era.¹⁶

Both adherents of the classical documentary hypothesis and followers of the newer ideas about the Jahwist as a rule regard Gen. 2:10-14, in which the Tigris and Ashur

¹¹ Jacobs 1994.

¹² Skinner 1980: 52. See chapter five.

¹³ Van Seters 1975 and 1992; Schmid 1976; Levin 1993; Blenkinsopp 2002.

¹⁴ Otto 1996; Schmid 2002; Blum 2004; Mettinger 2007: 134; Arneft 2007.

¹⁵ Van Seters 1992: 128.

¹⁶ Becking 2011: 4.

are mentioned, as an addition to the story of the paradise and fall.¹⁷ The main argument is ‘that it is out of keeping with the simplicity of the main narrative, and seriously interrupts its sequence’.¹⁸ Of course, this argument is very weak, as Blum points out.¹⁹ The text does not furnish any indications that Gen. 2:10-14 is a learned gloss. The idea is based solely on the uneasiness of many modern readers with this digression, which was probably not shared by its readers in Antiquity, who were accustomed to this sort of digressions, and perhaps even loved them.

But whether Gen. 2:10-14 is a later addition or not, the arguments to determine if Ashur in Gen. 2:14 is a city, a region or an empire remain the same. The Tigris did not flow east of Assyria, nor did it flow east of the Assyrian empire, but it did flow east of the city of Ashur. This points to the city of Ashur. Of course, there is no reason why Ashur should have been forgotten in the time of the author of Genesis 2-3, as some scholars assume. Biblical authors knew about the city of Kalhu (Gen. 10:11), and they knew about the city of Akkad (Gen. 10:10). There is no reason why they should not have known about the city of Ashur, despite it having lost much of its political importance in their time. The most convincing argument to consider אַשּׁוּר in Gen. 2:14 as a country is the fact that Havilah (2:11) and Cush (2:13) are both countries, but this argument is not really compelling. Both Havilah and Cush are explicitly preceded by אֶרֶץ *’ereṣ*, and Ashur is not, which suggests that Ashur is a city. Therefore, it is likely that the city is meant, although it is not certain.

In other texts, אַשּׁוּר is Assyria, the Assyrian empire or the Assyrian people. In 2K. 17:6 and 18:11, we are told that after the fall of Samaria, the Israelites were carried off to Assyria and settled in Halah, on the Habor and in the cities of the Medes. It is not completely clear how to read these words. The most natural interpretation is to regard ‘[the king] carried the Israelites away to Assyria’ as a general statement and ‘he placed them in Halah, on the Habor, the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes’ as an elaboration. That would mean that Assyria is used here in a very broad sense, including Halah, northeast of Nineveh, the river Habor, west of Assyria, and

¹⁷ Levin 1993: 92; Ska 2008: 16.

¹⁸ Skinner 1980: 52.

¹⁹ Blum 2004: 18.

even the cities of the Medes, east of Assyria. Of course, there is a problem with this interpretation: normally, the cities of the Medes are not regarded as part of Assyria. The Assyrian king Sargon II mentions the same events in an inscribed prism, and he only says that he settled the Israelites 'in Assyria' (*ina qereb* ^{KUR}*aššur*),²⁰ but other cuneiform sources prove or make it at least likely that Israelite deportees lived in Halah, on the river Habor, in Media and in Assyria proper.²¹ So perhaps 'he carried the Israelites away to Assyria' and 'he placed them in Halah, on the Habor, the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes' should be read as two separate statements, which do not imply that Halah, the Habor and the Median cities were in Assyria. Although this interpretation of the text of Kings better fits the normal use of Assyria, it gives a somewhat strained reading of the text, and the first interpretation is probably better: Assyria is used here in a very broad sense, including the other regions. As a consequence, Assyria is in many biblical texts the land of Israel's exile, often mentioned together with Egypt. 'Assyria and Egypt' became a fixed expression for the diaspora (Is. 11:16; 27:13; Hos. 9:3; 11:11; Zech. 10:10). It must have arisen in the seventh century, before the Babylonian era, and certainly before the Persian period, when the known world and the diaspora covered a much wider area.

In Gen. 2:14 אֲשׁוּר is mentioned in connection with the river Tigris, in 2K. 17:6 and 18:11 with the river Habor, and in Jr. 2:18 with the river Euphrates. This text speaks of a river (Hebr. נָהָר *nəḥār*), without mentioning its name, but there is no doubt that the Euphrates is meant.²² Of course, this creates a problem, because the Euphrates does not flow through Assyria. There are a number of solutions to this problem. Holladay thinks that in this text אֲשׁוּר is Babylon.²³ Fischer believes that Ashur here refers to the whole of Mesopotamia.²⁴ Carroll points to the fact that Assyria and Egypt, which are mentioned here together, is a traditional combination, and that we should not conclude too much from this text.²⁵ Carroll's explanation is the most

²⁰ Becking 1992: 28-31; COS II 295-296; Cogan 2008: 89-91; Weippert 2010: 301.

²¹ Becking 1992: 61-93.

²² HAL sv נָהָר.

²³ Holladay 1986: 96.

²⁴ Fischer 2005: 151-152.

²⁵ Carroll 1986: 129-130.

illuminating. As he points out, Assyria and Egypt often represent the great powers that oppressed Israel and Judah (Is. 10:24; 19:23-25; 52:4; Hos. 7:11), even in texts that were written after the fall of Assyria (Is. 52:4). Jr. 2:1-4:4 is part of this tradition. It is a long poetic text about the faithlessness of Israel and Judah in the past. Egypt and Assyria, had been the most powerful enemies of Israel and Judah throughout their histories, and not Babylonia. In Jr. 2:18, אַשּׁוּר is clearly Assyria, or the Assyrian empire, the greatest threat to Israel and Judah in the past, the eighth and seventh centuries. From Jr. 4:5 onwards, the prophet speaks of Babylonia, the new threat to Judah. The Euphrates being mentioned remains strange, but it must be due to inaccuracy in matters geographical, rather than to anything else.

Hebr. אַשּׁוּר is not only a geographical name, referring to an empire or a city, but it is also an ethnic name, referring to the Assyrian people, or to individual Assyrians. In this sense, sometimes בְּנֵי אַשּׁוּר *b'nē 'aššūr* is found, but rarely, only in Ezekiel (e.g. Ezk. 23:23). The plural אַשּׁוּרִים *'aššūrīm* is also rare (Gen. 25:3). Probably it does not refer to the Assyrians at all, but to an Arab tribe.²⁶ In the Septuagint אַשּׁוּר is most of the time translated by Ἀσσυρία (rarely by Ἀσσοῦς), also in texts in which modern translators would write 'Assyria', which shows that it was primarily seen as an ethnic name by the translators of the Septuagint.

To sum up, Hebr. אַשּׁוּר *'aššūr* is sometimes a topographical name, the region around Ashur or the Assyrian empire, and sometimes the people of the Assyrians. Only in Gen. 2:14 it is the city of Ashur. The use and meaning of *'aššūr* as a topographical name varies across texts and time. A few texts give an idea of the extent of Assyria: the cities of Ashur, Kalhu and Nineveh were located in Assyria, while Gozan and Haran, and also Babylon, Uruk and Akkad (see next section) lay outside Assyria. This gives an indication of the location of Assyria proper in the eyes of the Israelites: east of Paddan Aram, north of Babylonia, and on both banks of the river Tigris.

²⁶ Simons 1959: 11-12; HAL sv אַשּׁוּרִים.

Babylonia

In ancient times, southern Mesopotamia was inhabited by Sumerians, Babylonians, Arameans, Chaldeans, Amorites and many others. Biblical authors probably did not know much about most of these peoples. The Bible does not mention the Sumerians, while ‘Chaldeans’ has become a synonym of ‘Babylonians’. This section contains a few facts about the use of Chaldeans (כַּשְׁדִּים *kašdīm*) and the various ways in which Babylonia is referred to in the Hebrew Bible: אֶרֶץ כַּשְׁדִּים *’ereš kašdīm*, בְּבֶל אֶרֶץ *’ereš bəbēl*, שִׁנְעָר *šin‘or* (Shinar) and מְדִינַת בְּבֶל *m’dīnat bəbēl*.

Often, especially in the books of Kings and Jeremiah, Nebuchadnezzar is called king of Babylon (מֶלֶךְ בְּבֶל *mēlek bəbēl*), his army consists of Chaldeans (כַּשְׁדִּים *kašdīm*), and sometimes of Chaldeans and Arameans (Jr. 35:11), and Babylonia is called ‘the land of the Chaldeans’ (אֶרֶץ כַּשְׁדִּים *’ereš kašdīm*). Other monarchs who are called king of Babylon are Merodach-baladan (2K. 20:12), Evil-merodach (2K. 25:27), Belshazzar (Dan. 7:1), and the Persian kings Cyrus (Ezr. 5:13) and Artaxerxes (Neh. 13:6), while ‘king of the Chaldeans’ (מֶלֶךְ כַּשְׁדִּים *mēlek kašdīm*) is rare (2Chr. 36:17). In Ezra (5:12), Nebuchadnezzar is called ‘the Chaldean’ (Aram. מֶלֶךְ־בְּבֶל כַּסְדִּיָּא *mēlek bəbēl kasdō’ā*), and in Daniel (5:30), Belshazzar is called ‘the Chaldean king’ (מַלְכָּא כַּשְׁדִּיָּא *malkā kašdō’ā*).²⁷ Amraphel (probably Hammurabi, see chapter eight) is the only one to be called ‘king of Shinar’ (Gen. 14:1). Titles other than ‘king of Babylon’ are late. Texts that were written when the Babylonian empire existed always use ‘king of Babylon’, which is a literal translation of Akk. *šar Babilī*.

Babylonia is often called אֶרֶץ כַּשְׁדִּים *’ereš kašdīm* in Hebrew (Is. 23:13; Ezk. 1:3; 12:13; often in Jr.). Sometimes אֶרֶץ is left out. כַּשְׁדִּימָה *kašdīmā*, with the ה that indicates motion towards a place, is found only three times, all of them in Ezekiel (11:24; 16:29; 23:16).²⁸ A few times, Shinar (שִׁנְעָר *šin‘or*) is used (Gen. 10:10; 11:2; Jos. 7:21; Is. 11:11; Zech. 5:11; Dan. 1:2). Gen. 10:10 makes it clear where Shinar was: Babylon, Uruk and Akkad are located in Shinar, Nineveh and Kalhu lie outside Shinar, which shows that Shinar is Babylonia. The author of the Genesis Apocryphon (second or

²⁷ Aram. *kasdā’ā* from older *kašdāyā* (Rosenthal 1974: 13, 29).

²⁸ Jouon 1923: 223 (§93d).

first century BC) apparently knew this: he translated מלך־שנער *melek šin'or* into Aramaic as מלך בבל 'king of Babylon' (1QapGen ar XXI.23). Shinar is identical to Egypt. *sng*r and Akk. and Hitt. *šanḫar(a)* (El Amarna, Hittite texts, 16/15th-13th century), both names for Babylonia. The origin of the name Shinar/*šanḫara* is debated.²⁹ It is sometimes derived from Sumer (akk. *šumeru*), but philologically this is impossible.³⁰ Other explanations derive Shinar from *Singāra*, the name of a town that is found in Assyrian texts, or *Samḫarû*, a gentilic name found in Babylonian texts (Zadok), but none of these hypotheses is really convincing. According to Blenkinsopp, Shinar is used only in post-exilic sources, but due to the difficulties in dating most texts, this is also uncertain, and it is unexpected, because the name Shinar was already in use in the fifteenth century BC.³¹ Finally, Babylonia is sometimes called ארץ בבל *'ereṣ bābel* or just בבל. It is not always possible to make out whether בבל is the city of Babylon or the country of Babylonia, but both are possible: in Jr. 29:7, בבל is 'the city (העיר *hō'ir*) where I have sent you into exile', but in Ezk. 12:13, בבל is 'the land of the Chaldeans' (ארץ כשדים). The district of Babylonia (מדינת בבל *m'dīnat bābel*), which is mentioned in Daniel (2:48; 3:1, 12, 30) and in Ezra (7:16), is probably the Persian satrapy of Babylonia.

Babylonia was a multi-ethnic country in Nebuchadnezzar's time. It was inhabited by Babylonians, Chaldeans, Arameans and many other peoples, but these ethnic names are rare or absent in late Babylonian cuneiform texts.³² The Babylonian kings seem to deny or at least ignore that they ruled a "society fragmented along ethnic, tribal, and linguistic lines".³³ In the Bible, the inhabitants of Babylon and Babylonia are usually called Chaldeans (כשדים),³⁴ but occasionally they are called 'sons of Babel, Babylonians' (בני־בבל *b'nē-bābel*). There is no difference in meaning between these names. For example, in Ezk. 23:14-15 it is clear that 'Babylonians' and 'Chaldeans' alternate for stylistic reasons only: 'she saw male figures carved on the wall, images

²⁹ Simons 1959: 85-86; Zadok 1984; Van der Toorn and Van der Horst 1990; HAL sv שנער.

³⁰ Van der Toorn and Van der Horst 1990: 3.

³¹ Blenkinsopp 1992.

³² Beaulieu 2013: 32-33.

³³ Beaulieu 2013: 51.

³⁴ Beaulieu 2008: 199.

of Chaldeans portrayed in vermillion, [. . .] a picture of Babylonians whose native land was Chaldea'. Both בני־בבל (Ezekiel) and בת־בבל (deutero-Isaiah) recall the Akkadian expression *mār bābili*, and both are rare in the Hebrew Bible. They are only used by Ezekiel and deutero-Isaiah, who lived in Mesopotamia, and could have been familiar with Akkadian idiom. However, it is uncertain if these expressions are really influenced by Akkadian, because in the sixth century, Aramaic was the most spoken language in Mesopotamia, and the use of בן *ben* (or Aram. בר *bar*) and בת *bat* in the sense 'individual, member of a nation' is also known in Hebrew and Aramaic.

Two times, Chaldeans are depicted as brigands and marauders. The first time is in the description of Jehoiakim's reign: 'The Lord sent against [Jehoiakim] bands of Chaldeans (גְּדוּדֵי כַשְׁדִּים *g'dūdē kaśdīm*), bands of Arameans, bands of Moabites, and bands of Ammonites' (2K. 24:2). Of course, in ancient warfare brigands and a regular army were often difficult to tell apart. The difference between these bands and the army of Nebuchadnezzar was perhaps not all that great. Still, the text does not speak of an army, but of marauders, some of whom were Chaldeans. The other text is in the book of Job: 'The Chaldeans formed three columns, made a raid on the camels and carried them off, and killed the servants with the edge of the sword' (Jb. 1:17). In Job, the Chaldeans are mentioned parallel with the Sabeans (שָׁבִי' *š'bv*), an Arabian tribe. According to Lipiński, this text does not refer to the Chaldeans. He believes that כַּשְׁדִּים means 'raiders'.³⁵ Despite the fact that the Septuagint seems to support this view, it seems a bit far-fetched. Other scholars think that Chaldeans are meant, not in the usual meaning of 'Babylonians', but as tribesmen and marauders.³⁶ Chaldeans is used in this context in the same sense as in Assyrian and Babylonian sources: people from a group of tribes from southern Mesopotamia. The fact that Job is probably late, and that is not history, does not make this interpretation impossible. The Greek geographer Strabo, living in the first century BC, also knew 'Chaldeans' in this meaning (see the next section).

³⁵ Lipiński 2000: 418-419.

³⁶ Pope 1973: 14; Clines 1989: 32-33.

In Daniel, Chaldeans are usually astrologers or magicians, as is often immediately clear from the context: 'So the king commanded that the magicians, the enchanters, the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans be summoned to tell the king his dreams' (Dan. 2:2). Only two times, Chaldeans is used in the meaning Babylonians (Dan. 5:30; 9:1), as in older books like Kings and Jeremiah. In its final form, Daniel is probably late, from the second century. Using 'Chaldeans' in the meaning 'astrologers, magicians' seems a late development, probably under Greek influence, which was motivated by the fame the Babylonians had as astrologers or magicians.

To sum up, Babylonia is sometimes called Shinar or the land of Babylon, but usually it is called the land of the Chaldeans. Its inhabitants are a few times referred to as Babylonians, but usually as Chaldeans. In Daniel, Chaldeans are astrologers, just as in many Greek texts, and in two texts in the Hebrew Bible, Chaldeans are tribesmen from southern Mesopotamia, as in Assyrian texts and Greek geographical literature.

Conclusion

The most important regions in northern Mesopotamia that are mentioned in the Bible are Paddan Aram (or Aram Naharaim) and Assyria. Geographically, Paddan Aram and Assyria were not exactly delimited. Paddan Aram is the region around Haran. Assyria comprised the cities of Ashur, Nineveh and Kalhu, and perhaps the region of Halah, and it is mentioned in connection with the rivers Tigris, Habor and even the Euphrates. Assyria was one of the great powers of Israel's world and it was one of the countries of its exile. Babylonia is southern Mesopotamia. Usually it is called the land of the Chaldeans in the Bible, and sometimes Shinar. It comprised the cities of Babylon, Uruk and Akkad (see chapters three, five and seven). How the inhabitants and the kings of Assyria and Babylonia were seen by biblical and Greek authors is the subject of one of the following chapters, but first a few words will be dedicated to ethnic and geographical names in Greek literature.

2.3 Mesopotamia in Greek Literature

Ancient Greek historians and geographers were often confused by foreign ethnic and geographical names. After discussing the obscure nations of the *Eremboi* and *Aramboi*, and their relation to the better known Arabians and Arameans, Strabo laments the confusion caused by the mutability of foreign names: ‘The changes in names, and particularly in those of the barbarians, are numerous: for example, they called Darius Dariekes, Parysatis Pharziris, and Athara Athargatis, though Ktesias calls her Derketo’ (Strab. 16.4.27).³⁷ Much of this confusion was caused by the imprecise way in which Greek authors wrote these names down. Therefore many foreign names in Greek historiography are difficult to identify. Strabo does not mention Mesopotamia in this context, be he could have done so, because many Mesopotamian geographical, ethnic and personal names in Greek literature are difficult to explain. This problem is in Greek literature greater than in the Bible, because in Greek literature the use of ethnic and geographical names is more varied than in the Bible. An exhaustive study of the use of Assyrian, Babylonian and Chaldean in Greek historic and geographic literature does not exist, although there is an old study by Nöldeke of the use of Ἀσσύριος, Σύριος and Σύρος,³⁸ a paper by Parpola on Assyrian Identity, in which he lists the names of the Assyrians in Greek sources,³⁹ and a recent study by Madreiter of the use of Babylonia by Ktesias.⁴⁰ This gap will not be filled here, but some remarks will be made about the use of Assyrian, Babylonian and Chaldean by Herodotos, Xenophon, Diodoros, Strabo and Arrian – authors who show some interest in Mesopotamia and its history and whose works have been handed down to us intact. Drawing conclusions from fragments and citations is more difficult, because it is almost never clear how closely the original has been followed. Despite this problem, the lemma ‘Chaldeans’ in Stephanos’ *Ethnika*, which refers to a number of older sources, will be studied, because it gives

³⁷ Translation by H.L. Jones (Loeb 1930).

³⁸ Nöldeke 1871; cf. Ruge in *RLA* sv Leukosyroi (1925) en Honigmann in *RE* sv Syria (1932).

³⁹ Parpola 2004.

⁴⁰ Madreiter 2011.

us some important facts about the use of Babylonian and Chaldean in the classical period.

Archaic Period

The discussion will focus on historians and geographers, but first, three poets from the archaic period have to be mentioned: Homer, Alkaios (late seventh, early sixth century) and Phokylides (*floruit* traditionally ca. 540, in reality perhaps earlier). Homer mentions Syria, Alkaios mentions the Babylonians and the city of Babylon, and Phokylides seems to know about Nineveh's fall.

Homer mentions Syria (Hom. *Od.* 15.403) and calls it an island (Νῆσός τις Συρίη). The location of Homer's Syria is subject to discussion.⁴¹ One could speculate whether in this text νῆσος is a real island, or a region between two rivers, i.e. Assyria or Mesopotamia, but Homer's Syria is a mythical country, where all people are wealthy and prosperous, and perhaps it is wise not to speculate about its location.

Alkaios mentions in one of his poems that his brother Antimenidas had fought as an ally of the Babylonians (Βαβυλωνίοις συμμαχοῦντα) in Nebuchadnezzar's campaign against Askalon (604), and elsewhere, in a poem too fragmentarily preserved to make a translation possible, he speaks of 'holy Babylon' (Βαβύλωνος ἵρας).⁴² It is not clear why Babylon is holy: perhaps because of the many temples in the city.

In one of the sentences of Phokylides 'the foolish city of Nineveh' is mentioned,⁴³ but doubts have been raised about its authenticity. This fragment, which is cited by Dio Chrysostom, deserves to be quoted in full:

⁴¹ Heubeck and Hoekstra 1990: 257.

⁴² Strabo 13.2.3; frg. 48 (p.260-263); frg. 350 (p.386-387 ed. Campbell).

⁴³ Frg. 4 ed. Diehl = frg. 8 ed. West.

Πόλις ἐν σκοπέλῳ κατὰ κόσμον⁴⁴ οἰκεῦσα σμικρὴ κρέσσων Νίνου ἀφραινούσης.
A small town on a cliff that is well governed is stronger than foolish Nineveh.

Apparently, the author of these words thought that Nineveh was located in a plain (which is true) and that it was badly governed. This sentence is usually regarded as Phokylides' comment on the fall of Nineveh (612), but according to Korenjak and Rollinger, it was written by a Hellenistic Jewish author who lived between 100 BC and 50 AD and who is known as pseudo-Phokylides.⁴⁵ Korenjak and Rollinger present three arguments why this fragment is out of keeping with Archaic Greek literature. First, this fragment is the only mention of the city of Nineveh before the middle of the fifth century. Second, a negative assessment of the city of Nineveh is unusual in Greek literature (although a negative assessment of Assyrian kings, especially Sardanapallos, is common). Third, πόλις οἰκεῦσα in the meaning 'a city that is governed' is for the first time found in Attic prose from the fifth century⁴⁶ and is not expected in earlier Greek. Korenjak and Rollinger argue on these grounds that this fragment is better in keeping with the biblical image of Nineveh, as found in Judith, Tobit and the minor prophets, especially Jonah. But none of these arguments to deny Phokylides the authorship of this fragment is convincing, although the last one seems the most serious. It is undeniable that πόλις οἰκεῦσα in the meaning 'a city that is governed' is, except in this fragment, found for the first time in fifth century Attic prose, but that does not mean that it is impossible that it was used earlier in this way. Not enough is known of sixth century Ionic to be certain that οἰκέω was never used intransitively.⁴⁷ In absence of convincing arguments to the contrary, it seems best to ascribe these words to the archaic poet Phokylides.

⁴⁴ "Kata kosmon has to do with a sense of propriety, a respect for the way things ought to be done" (Pratt 1993: 44). Dio contrasts *kata kosmon* with ἄκοσμος, ἄνομος 'lawless' and ἄφρων 'foolish' (Orat. 36.13.5).

⁴⁵ Korenjak and Rollinger 2001. The sentences of pseudo-Phokylides have been translated and annotated by Van der Horst (1978) and Wilson (2005). Van der Horst attributes frg. 4 to Phokylides, Wilson remains uncommitted. Burkert (2009: 502) ascribes frg. 4 to Phokylides.

⁴⁶ Examples: Plat. *Leg.* 599d; Th. 2.37.

⁴⁷ Personal communication of G.J. Boter and R.J. Allan.

To sum up, these fragments learn us that the city of Babylon, the Babylonians, and the city of Nineveh, were known to the Greeks in the sixth century. According to Alkaios, the city of Babylon was holy, and according to Phokylides, the city of Nineveh was foolish, but if this was generally held to be true is impossible to say.

Fifth and Fourth centuries

Herodotos is not very consistent in the use of Assyrian (Ἀσσύριος) and Babylonian (Βαβυλώνιος). Typically, Assyria (Ἀσσυρία) is the whole of Mesopotamia, including Babylon (1.178). Its inhabitants are Ἀσσύριοι and the corresponding adjective is Ἀσσύριος. Babylonia (Βαβυλωνία) is the region around Babylon, the southern part of Mesopotamia. It is impossible to say what according to Herodotos the boundaries of Babylonia were. Βαβυλώνιοι can either refer to the inhabitants of Babylonia (1.200)⁴⁸ or to the city of Babylon (3.151). Sometimes ‘Assyrian’ and ‘Babylonian’ are interchangeable. Labynetos is called a Babylonian (1.74; 1.77), but also an Assyrian (1.188); elsewhere, Herodotos uses ἡ Βαβυλωνία χώρα and ἡ Ἀσσυρία χώρα without difference in meaning (1.192). Finally, in the Babylonian logos, chaldeans (χαλδαῖοι) are priests of Belos (1.181; 1.183), but in the description of Xerxes’ army, they are a people: ‘With [the Assyrians] were the Chaldeans’ (7.63). Of course, it is possible that there was a unit of priests in the Persian army, but it is more likely that Herodotos’ source meant Chaldeans as a nation. As a consequence of this inconsistency in the use of ethnic designations, the precise meaning of ‘Assyrian’, ‘Babylonian’ and ‘Chaldean’ has to be inferred from the context.

Xenophon (ca 425 – post 355 BC) also calls the whole of Mesopotamia, including the city of Babylon, Assyria (Cyr. 2.1.5; 5.3.5), and its inhabitants Assyrians (Ἀσσύριοι). He makes a distinction between Syrians (Σύριοι) and Assyrians (Cyr. 1.1.5; 1.5.2; 4.5.56).⁴⁹ Babylonians (Βαβυλώνιοι) seems to be reserved for the inhabitants of the city of Babylon (Cyr. 7.5.15, 36). Chaldeans (Χαλδαῖοι) do not have any connection

⁴⁸ The preceding section (1.196-199) does not describe the customs of the city of Babylon, but of the whole of Babylonia, as becomes clear from ‘in every village’ (1.196).

⁴⁹ Of course, Xenophon’s *Cyropaedia* is a difficult text, because we do not know what kind of work it is, and for what purpose it was written (Dillery 2002), but for this investigation it does not really matter whether it is intended as historiography or as a novel.

with Mesopotamia in Xenophon's work. They are a nation living near the Black Sea, neighbours of the Armenians (Cyr. 3.1.34 – 3.3.1). On the whole, Xenophon does not show much interest in the inhabitants of Mesopotamia, neither in his *Anabasis* nor in his *Cyropaedia*. In the latter work, the Assyrians are opponents of the Persian king Cyrus, but their character is not elaborated on. The name of their king is not even mentioned. He is called ὁ τῶν Ἀσσυρίων βασιλεύς 'the king of the Assyrians' or just ὁ Ἀσσύριος 'the Assyrian' (e.g. Cyr. 5.3.8; 5.4.1).

Unfortunately, Ktesias' *Persika*, written shortly after 400 BC, has been lost, so we do not know how he used 'Assyrian', 'Babylonian' and 'Chaldean', but the second book of Diodoros' *Bibliothēke* (first century BC), which is based mainly on Ktesias' *Persika*, has been handed down to us. Generally, Diodoros makes a clear distinction between Assyrians and Babylonians, for example in Diod. 2.1.7: 'Ninos, king of the Assyrians, [. . .] marched with a great army against the Babylonians, whose country bordered upon his'. Ninos and his people are almost always called Assyrians (Ἀσσύριοι). In two passages Σύρ(ι)ος is found. First, in his description of Bagistanos (Behistun), Diodoros speaks of Συρίοις γράμμασιν (Diod. 2.13.1): 'Syrian letters', probably better 'Assyrian letters', i.e. cuneiform. In Thuk. 4.50.2, 'Assyrian characters' clearly refers to Aramaic script: Persian kings did not send letters in cuneiform to the Spartans, but in Aramaic.⁵⁰ However, in a description of Behistun, cuneiform script is the only possible interpretation of 'Syrian letters'. Second, in the description of the Hanging Garden, Diodoros relates that they were built by 'a Syrian king' (τινος [. . .] Σύρου βασιλέως, Diod. 2.10.1). The story of the Hanging Garden is usually attributed to Kleitarchos.⁵¹ Probably Kleitarchos used Σύρος, but it is difficult to say in which sense he used it: Syrian, Assyrian, or as an unspecified denotation of an inhabitant of Syria or Mesopotamia. And finally Diodoros uses 'chaldeans' like Herodotos, in the sense of 'priests, astrologers' (Diod. 2.9.4; 2.24.2). It is likely that generally Diodoros closely followed Ktesias in his use of ethnical names, and that the description of the Hanging Garden with its different usage is not from Ktesias, but from Kleitarchos.

⁵⁰ Burkert 2009: 509.

⁵¹ Boncquet 1987: 95-96; Van der Spek 2008a: 307.

Herodotos on the Persians (7.61)

At first, it seems odd to include a discussion of Herodotos' genealogy of the Persians (Hdt. 7.61) here. The reason to do so is the similarity to Stephanos' lemma *Chaldaioi*, which will be discussed later on in this chapter. The genealogy of Perses and the explanation of the name Πέρσαι (Persians) in Hdt. 7.61.2-3 is part of the description of Xerxes' army (7.61-99). It has been suggested that Herodotos took it from an earlier source,⁵² but it is not clear from which source. The similarity to Stephanos' lemma *Chaldaioi* suggests that it could have been Hellanikos, but there are marked differences between Herodotos and Stephanos.

Translation

In ancient times they [the Persians] were called Kephenes by the Greeks, but they were called Artaiοι (Ἀρταῖοι) by themselves and their neighbours.^a It was not till Perseus, the son of Zeus and Danae, visited Kepheus, the son of Belos, married his daughter Andromeda and had by her a son called Perses (whom he left behind in that country because Kepheus had no male offspring), that the nation took from this Perses the name of Persians (Πέρσαι).^b

Notes

^a Ἀρταῖος is also known as personal name (Diod. 2.32.6). It is either derived from OP. *artāvan-* 'righteous, blessed',⁵³ or from OP. **artaya-* (both from *arta-* 'truth, justice').⁵⁴ *Artāvan-* seems to have been used of the dead, rather than of the living (XPh. 48, 55: both times in connection with *marta-* 'dead, deceased'). Hesychius mentions it in his lexicon: ἄρταῖοι: οἱ ἥρωες, παρὰ Πέρσαις. It is not likely that someone from Persia would have called himself *artāvan-*, but he may have called himself *ariya-* 'Aryan', as Darius does (DNa: *Ariya Ariya ciça* 'an Aryan, of Aryan stock').⁵⁵ Perhaps Herodotos or

⁵² Armayor 1978; Lateiner 1989: 102; Flower 2006: 279 [Cambridge Companion].

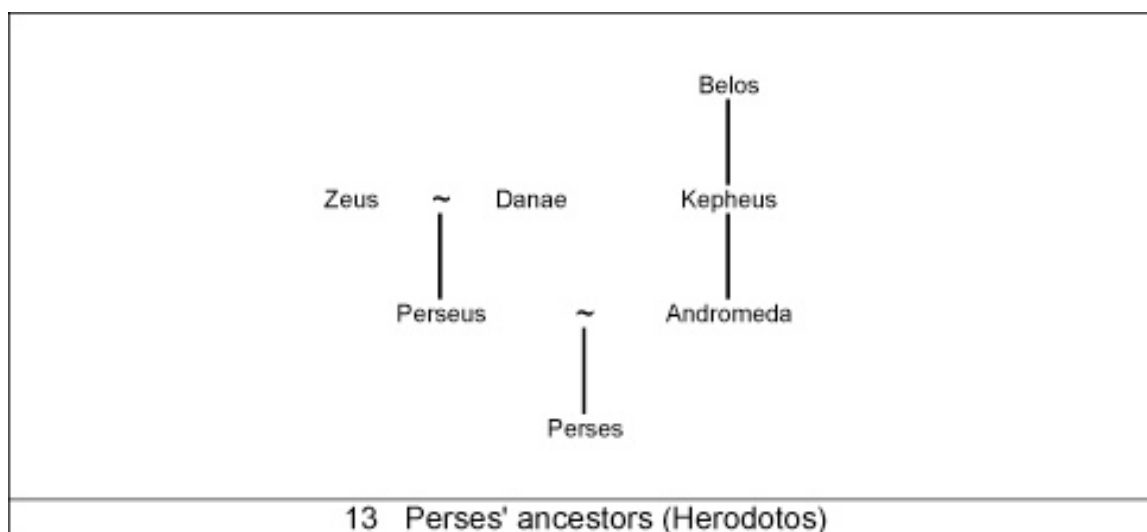
⁵³ Kent 1953: 171; Brandenstein and Mayrhofer 1964: 106; Briant 2002: 550-551.

⁵⁴ Pirart (1995: 58-62): **rta-ya-* 'qui se préoccupe de l'harmonie rituelle, pieux'; Schmitt 2006: 83-85: **rt-aya-*.

⁵⁵ Brandenstein and Mayrhofer 1964: 1; Briant 2002: 180-182, 909. According to Henkelman (2011: 612) *ariya* is 'a mark of distinction'.

his source had heard something about *artāvan-* and *ariya-*, without understanding what they meant, and concluded that the Persians called themselves Ἀρταῖοι.

^b Of course, in reality Πέρσαι derives from OP *Pārsa* ‘Persian’, which can be used as an adjective, but also as a noun, denoting modern Fars in southwestern Iran or an inhabitant of this region.⁵⁶ Persians called themselves *Pārsa*: Darius calls himself *Pārsa Pārsahyā puça* ‘a Persian and a son of a Persian’ (DNa 13-14).



Interpretation

Herodotos tells us that the Persians were formerly called Kephenians, but that they changed their name on account of Perses, son of Perseus and Andromeda. The origin of the name Kephenians is uncertain. Perhaps, it is derived from the name of the country called *Qipānu* by the Assyrians, which lies in Syria, north of Harran.⁵⁷ But how and when this name became known to the Greeks and why they regarded Kephenians as an older name for Persians remains unexplained.

Strabo (64/63 BC – ca. 24 AD)

Part of the sixteenth book of Strabo's *Geography* is devoted to Mesopotamia. Strabo, who was born in 64/63 BC, calls the whole of Mesopotamia Assyria (Ἀσσυρία) and

⁵⁶ Kent 1953: 196; Brandenstein and Mayrhofer 1964: 138; Pirart 1995: 62-68.

⁵⁷ Baumstark in *RE* sv Chaldaioi.

Babylon its metropolis (16.1.16). Roughly speaking, Aturia (Ἀτουρία in 16.1.1-3, from OPers. *Athurā* or Aram. אַתּוּרָא) is the northern half of Mesopotamia, while Babylonia (Βαβυλωνία in 16.1.5-6, or ἡ χώρα τῶν Βαβυλωνίων in 16.1.8) is its southern part. Strabo (16.1.19) regards Adiabene (Ἀδιαβήνη), the region between the great Zab and the little Zab, part of Babylonia. At first sight, this seems strange, because it is in the northern half of Mesopotamia and it is part of the old Assyrian heartland, but it is in accordance with the division of the Persian empire in satrapies, which was largely retained during the Seleucid period.⁵⁸ Strabo calls the inhabitants of the whole of Mesopotamia, including Babylonia, sometimes Assyrians (Ἀσσύριοι in 16.1.1), but more often he uses Syrians (Σύριοι regularly from 16.1.2 on). Herodotos already noticed that the Greeks often used Syrians (Σύριοι) instead of Assyrians (Ἀσσύριοι), but Strabo is the only one of the authors discussed here who does this often. According to Strabo 16.1.16, Babylonians are inhabitants of Babylonia ('not after the city, but after the country'). Finally, Chaldeans (Χαλδαῖοι) has two meanings in Strabo's *Geography*: it is the name of the Babylonian philosophers and astrologers, but also of the inhabitants of the extreme south of Mesopotamia (16.1.6, 8).

Arrian (second century AD)

Geographical names in Arrian's *Anabasis* are also important. Of course, Arrian lived in the second century AD, but it is generally assumed that he closely followed his main sources from the third century BC, Ptolemy and Aristoboulos. Arrian shows a certain dichotomy in his naming of geographical areas in Mesopotamia. Sometimes, he calls the whole of Mesopotamia Assyria or Babylonia, as Herodotos did, but he also uses the name Mesopotamia. According to Finkelstein and Schachermeyr, 'the earliest reliable references to the proper geographical name Mesopotamia are those in Arrian's *Anabasis*'.⁵⁹ To find out what Arrian means by Mesopotamia and Assyria, one has to look at his description of Alexander's itinerary in the summer of 331 (*An.* 3.7) and at his explanation of the name Mesopotamia (*An.* 7.7), but especially at the list of nations that is found a number of times in the *Anabasis*. But first, we will take a closer look at the use of Assyria(n) and Babylonia(n).

⁵⁸ Jacobs 1994.

⁵⁹ Schachermeyr in *RE* sv Mesopotamien (1931); Finkelstein 1962: 73.

An interesting example of the use of Assyria and Babylonia is found in book seven of the *Anabasis*: ‘Aristoboulos says that the cypresses of Babylonia (τὰς κυπαρίσσους τὰς ἐν τῇ Βαβυλωνίᾳ) were being cut down in order to build Alexander yet another fleet, cypress being the only tree that grows abundantly in the land of the Assyrians (ἐν τῇ χώρᾳ τῶν Ἀσσυρίων)’ (*An.* 7.19.4).⁶⁰ Babylonia and the land of the Assyrians are apparently the same. Something similar is found in the description of the Pollacopas (*An.* 7.21.1-5), which is south of the city of Babylon, but still in the Assyrian land (τὴν γῆν τὴν Ἀσσυρίαν in 7.21.2 and 7.21.4). Like in Herodotos, Assyria and Babylonia seem to have the same meaning, but its inhabitants are always called Assyrians. Babylonians is reserved for the inhabitants of the city of Babylon (*An.* 3.16.3-5; 7.17.1-4). However, a number of texts use ‘Mesopotamia’, a name that is not found in the works of Herodotos and his contemporaries.

In the summer of 331, Alexander crossed the Euphrates at Thapsakos (location not known) and proceeded through Mesopotamia: ‘He then advanced inland, keeping the Euphrates and the mountains of Armenia on his left, through the country of Mesopotamia (διὰ τῆς Μεσοποταμίας καλουμένης χώρας)’ (*An.* 3.7.3). After their march, Alexander and his army reached the Tigris, crossed the river and proceeded through Assyria: ‘Starting from the Tigris, Alexander marched across Assyria (διὰ τῆς Ἀσσυρίας χώρας), keeping the Gordyenian Mountains on his left, the Tigris on his right’ (*An.* 3.7.7). Apparently, the region between the Euphrates and the Tigris is called Mesopotamia and the region east of the Tigris is called Assyria. This is in accordance with the Roman provincial division during Trajan’s reign: the region between the Euphrates and the Tigris is Mesopotamia and the region east of the Tigris is Assyria. This is unlike the Persian and Hellenistic satrapal division, in which *Aθουρά* (Assyria) lies mainly between the Euphrates and Tigris.⁶¹ Probably, in *An.* 3.7 Arrian uses the geographical names of his own time, not those of his sources. As a consequence, it is not possible to draw conclusions from this text about the use of Mesopotamia in the third century BC.

⁶⁰ Translation by Pamela Mensch.

⁶¹ Jacobs 1994.

In *An.* 7.7.3, Arrian explains the origin of the name Mesopotamia: ‘Of the two rivers, the Euphrates and the Tigris, that enclose Assyria (Ἀσσυρίαν) – this is why the country is called Mesopotamia (Μεσοποταμία), or ‘land between the rivers’, by the inhabitants – . . .’ (*An.* 7.7.3).⁶² According to Arrian, Mesopotamia is the land between the two rivers, between the Euphrates and the Tigris, and it is the name that the inhabitants of Mesopotamia themselves used. In the time of Alexander, and in Arrian’s own time, Aramaic was the most widely spoken language in this area. Therefore, Μεσοποταμία is probably the Greek translation of Aram. בֵּין נְהַרַיִן *bēn nahrēn* (or *nahrīn*, or *nahrain*) ‘between (two) rivers’, which is not attested before the second or first century BC (see the next section), but which was probably already in use in earlier times.

Perhaps the most interesting and illuminating is a list of nations that Alexander and his army have conquered. It is found four times, with minor variations (*An.* 3.8.6; 3.11.4; 5.25.4; 7.9.8). It mentions, among others, the Babylonians (Βαβυλώνιοι) and the Syrians from Hollow Syria and those from Syria between the rivers (Σύρους δὲ τοὺς τε ἐκ τῆς κοίλης καὶ ὅσοι τῆς μεταξὺ τῶν ποταμῶν Συρίας in *An.* 3.8.6; οἱ τε ἐκ κοίλης Συρίας καὶ οἱ ἐκ τῆς μέσης τῶν ποταμῶν in *An.* 3.11.4; Συρία ἢ τε κοίλη καὶ ἡ μέση τῶν ποταμῶν in *An.* 5.25.4; ἢ τε κοίλη Συρία καὶ ἡ Παλαιστίνη καὶ ἡ μέση τῶν ποταμῶν in *An.* 7.9.8). According to Bosworth, the geographical term ‘Syria between the rivers’ is a problem, and he finds the only contemporary parallel to Arrian in a pseudo-Aristotelian treatise, *de mir. ausc.* 149 (ἐν τῇ Μεσοποταμίᾳ τῆς Συρίας).⁶³ But there are more parallels: in the Septuagint, which is roughly contemporary with Arrian’s main sources, (ἡ) Μεσοποταμία (τῆς) Συρίας is found a number of times, most of them in Genesis (Gen. 28:7; 33:18; 35:9, 26; 46:15; 48:7; Ps. 59:2), and once even the similar expression Συρία ποταμῶν (Jud. 3:8) is used. The juxtaposition of τὴν Μεσοποταμίαν Συρίας and τὴν Συρίαν Σωβα in Ps. 59:2⁶⁴ even reminds of the juxtaposition of hollow Syria and Syria between the rivers in the text of Arrian. Thus, one can safely assume that Arrian found the expressions in *An.* 3.8.6; 3.11.4;

⁶² Translation by Pamela Mensch, slightly changed. To me, it is not clear why she translates κληῖζεται (praes.) by ‘has been called’.

⁶³ Bosworth 1980: 292.

⁶⁴ Ps. 60:2 in the Masoretic text. The exact location of Soba is unknown.

5.25.4; 7.9.8 in one of his sources. These texts also make clear what is meant by 'Syria between the rivers'. It is distinguished from hollow Syria, the area west of the Euphrates, and Babylon is not regarded as part of it. This means that it must be an area between Euphrates and Tigris, north of Babylonia. Whether it is only the area in the bend of the Euphrates (*Aram naharaim* in the Hebrew Bible), or the whole area between Euphrates and Tigris (Pers. *Aθurā*) is not clear, but it is striking that Assyria is lacking from these lists, which suggests that Assyria is included in 'Syria between the rivers'. Clearly, these Greek names were still fluid in the third century. Besides Μεσοποταμία, sometimes in combination with Συρία, expressions such as ἡ μεταξὺ/μέση τῶν ποταμῶν Συρία are found. This fluidity suggests that they were recent translations from the language spoken in that period and in that area, i.e. Aramean.

Stephanos on the Chaldeans

Stephanos of Byzantium was a Greek grammarian, who lived in the sixth century AD. His Ἑθνικά, a geographical lexicon, is not preserved in its original form, but only in excerpts.⁶⁵ Some *lemmata* are lost, others have been handed down shortened and garbled, and still others seem to have been preserved fully intact. Unfortunately, the lemma Χαλδαῖοι seems to be corrupt. It looks as if the excerptor did not really understand the original text. Of course, it is also possible that the article Χαλδαῖοι makes a somewhat confused impression because Stephanos himself did not fully understand his sources, Hellanikos (fifth century BC) and Dikaiarchos (fourth and third centuries BC). As is his custom, Stephanos does not use the Bible, or Christian sources, despite the Chaldeans often being mentioned in them. He does not mention Herodotos either, although the pedigree that Stephanos gives of Perses is identical to the one in Hdt. 7.61. Perhaps Stephanos does not mention Herodotos because in his *Historiae*, the Chaldeans are as a rule a Babylonian priesthood, not a people.

⁶⁵ Editions: *Stephani Byzantii Ethnicorum quae supersunt*, ed. August Meineke, 1849 (reprinted 1958); *Stephani Byzantii Ethnica*, ed. Margarethe Billerbeck, 2006 (until now, only the first volume has been published: alpha-gamma).

Stephanus Byzantius.
Ethnica.
Ed. August Meineke, 1958 (1849).

Χαλδαῖοι, οἱ πρότερον Κρηῖνες, ἀπὸ Κρηέως τοῦ
πατρὸς Ἀνδρομέδας, ἀπ' ἧς καὶ τοῦ Περσέως τῆς Δανάης
καὶ Διὸς Πέρσης, ἀπ' οὗ οἱ Κρηῖνες καὶ Χαλδαῖοι πρότερον
[Πέρσαι] ἐκλήθησαν, ὡς εἴρηται ἐν τῷ περὶ Κρηνηῖος. Ἐλ-
λάνικος δὲ φησὶ ἐν πρώτῳ Περσικῶν οὕτως «Κρηέως οὐκίτι

Μαλίμ τοῦ. 13. τῆς] 14. Πέρσης Η εὐ. Herod. 7, 61, Περσείδης libti.
15. Πέρσαι κού. Η. 16. οὕτως RV, δι. Α. Κρηέως R, Κρηῖνος Δ.

ζῶντος στρατιωσάμενοι ἐκ Βαβυλωνίως ἀνέστησαν ἐκ τῆς χώρας
καὶ τὴν γῆν ἔσχον . . . οὐκίτι ἡ χώρα Κρηνηῖα καλεῖται,
οὐδὲ οἱ ἄνθρωποι οἱ ἐνοικούντες Κρηῖνες, ἀλλὰ Χαλδαῖοι”.
καὶ ἡ χώρα αὕτη πᾶσα νῦν Χαλδαῖκή καλεῖται. ἐκλήθησαν
δὲ ἀπὸ Χαλδαίου τινός, ὡς Δικαίαρχος ἐν πρώτῳ τοῦ τῆς
Ἑλλάδος βίου «τούτῳ δὲ συνέσει καὶ δυνάμει διάφορον γε-
νόμηνον τὸν καλούμενον Νίον τὴν οὐνόμηνον αὐτῷ συνοικίσαι
πόλιν. ἀπὸ δὲ τούτου τέταρτον ἐπὶ δέκα βασιλεῖα γενόμενον
ᾧ τὸ ὄνομα Χαλδαῖον εἶναι λέγουσιν, ὃν φασὶ καὶ Βαβυλωνί-
αν τὴν ὀνομαστοτάτην πόλιν περὶ τὸν Εὐφράτην ποταμὸν κατα-
σκευάσαι, ἅπαντας εἰς ταῦτόν συναγαγόντα τοὺς καλούμενους
Χαλδαίους”. λέγεται καὶ Χαλδαία χώρα. εἰσὶ δὲ καὶ Χαλ-
δαῖαι ἔθνη πλησίον τῆς Κολχίδος. Σοφοκλῆς Τρυπαισιταῖς
«Κύλχος τε Χαλδαῖός τε καὶ Σύρων ἔθνος”. οἱ μάλιστα χα-
ριώτεροι περὶ Βαβυλωνίαν λέγουσιν οἰκεῖν αὐτούς, ὡς δέδωκε-
ται, μαντεῖον δ' ἔχειν αὐτοὺς παρὰ βαβυλώνας, ὡς Δελφοὶ
παρ' Ἑλλήνων.

1. χώρας libti. 2. γῆν P, Κοχῆν Salmasius, Κοχῆν ARV, in
sequentiibus plura excidisse aperta est, itaque lacunam indicavi.
Κρηῖνη V. καλεῖται ΓρRV, καλεῖται A. 3. οὐδὲ οἱ R, οἱ δ' AV.
ἐνοικούντες libti. 4. καὶ ἡ — καλεῖται] Nescio an haec quoque
cum Hellenici loco coniungenda sint, quod si ita est, scribendum:
καὶ ἡ χώρα αὕτη πᾶσα Χαλδαῖκή, verbis sc̄n ei καλεῖται omisissis.
6. τούτου V. an τούτων? nisi τούτων ad patrem Nini spectat et post
γενόμηνον excidit εἶον. 7. τῆσαν V. συνοικίσαι R. 8. τέ-
ταρτος R. 9. Χαλδαῖοι R. lacunam indicavi M. 11. τοὺς
[ἀπ' αὐτοῦ] καλούμενους? 12. Χαλκ... ἢ καὶ Χαλ...αχ" R,
Χαλδ... λέγεται καὶ Χαλ...α χώρα V. 13. Σοκλίδος R.
14. 15. χαριώτεροι X, χαριώτερον libti. 16. παρὰ βαβυλώνας
[ὀνομαστοτάτων,] ὡς Δελφοὶ?

Translation

Chaldeans, formerly [named] Kephenians, after Kepheus, the father of Andromeda, to whom and to Perseus, the son of Danae and Zeus, Perses [was born], after whom the Kephenians and Chaldeans were formerly called [Persians],^a as is said in *On Kephenia*. Hellanikos^b says in the first [book of his] *Persika*:⁶⁶ ‘When Kepheus was no longer alive, they marched from Babylon, and left the country, and took possession of the earth^c ... The country was no longer called Kephenia, nor the people who lived there Kephenians, but Chaldeans’. And that entire country is now called Chaldaïca.^d They were named after a certain Chaldaïos, as Dikaiarchos^e [says] in the first book of his *Life of Hellas*:⁶⁷ Being renowned^f for his understanding and power, a certain Ninos founded the city named after himself. It is said that the fourteenth king after him was called Chaldaïos, who allegedly built Babylon, the most famous city, on the river Euphrates, and that he assembled all the people called Chaldeans in it’.^g The country is [therefore] also called Chaldea. There is also a nation [living] near Colchis [called] Chaldeans.^h Sophokles [says] in his *Tympanistai*:⁶⁸ ‘a Colchian and a Chaldean and a crowd of Syrians’. However, those who are more kindly inclined say that the people living near Babylon, as has been demonstrated, have the power of prophecy among the barbarians, as the Delphians among the Greeks.

Notes

^a The phrase ἀφ’ οὗ οἱ Κηφήνες καὶ Χαλδαῖοι πρότερον [Πέρσαι] ἐκλήθησαν is puzzling. If οὗ refers to Perses, one has to add Πέρσαι, as Meineke does, or καλούμενοι Πέρσαι, as Jacoby does, but the result does not make sense. Perses lived after Kepheus. Consequently, the name Kephenians must be older than Persians, but Stephanos says the opposite. Probably, the text originally read ἀφ’ οὗ οἱ Κηφήνες καὶ Χαλδαῖοι ὕστερον Πέρσαι ἐκλήθησαν ‘after whom the Kephenians and Chaldeans were afterwards called Persians’. This is not supported by any textual evidence, but would definitely make more sense. The most simple explanation is to consider it as a scribal error of a copyist who still had the πρότερον of the

⁶⁶ *FGrH* 4 F 59.

⁶⁷ Wehrli 1967: 26 (frg 55); Mirhady 2001: 68-71 (frg 60).

⁶⁸ *TrGF* vol 4 *Sophocles* F 638 (458-461).

preceding phrase in mind and wrote a second πρότερον instead of the intended ὕστερον (*aberratio oculi*).

^b Hellanikos of Lesbos is a historian from the fifth century and a contemporary of Herodotos.⁶⁹

^c It seems unlikely that Hellanikos has really said that the Kephenians had conquered the whole earth. Jacoby reads Ἀρταίην instead of γήν, because Hellanikos calls Persia Ἀρταίη in another fragment.⁷⁰

^d It is not clear if this sentence is by Hellanikos (Jacoby) or Stephanos (Meineke).

^e Dikaiarchos of Messene, philosopher, pupil of Aristotle and Theophrast, according to Strabo (1.1.1) also a renowned geographer, lived in the fourth and early third century. His *Life of Hellas* is a 'historical anthropology'.⁷¹ As far as we can ascertain from the remaining fragments, it described the development of human society from the earliest times to the Greek society of Dikaiarchos' days.

^f The meaning of τούτῳ is not clear. In its original context, it must have had a meaning that is lost in its present context. It is sometimes changed into τούτων (of the Chaldeans).⁷² This would mean that Ninos was considered a Chaldean by Dikaiarchos, which is unlikely, because Ninos lived fourteen generations before Chaldaios, the eponymous hero of the Chaldeans.

^g Apparently Dikaiarchos called the inhabitants of Babylon Chaldeans, as is usual in the Hebrew Bible. It is not likely that the city was populated with astronomers and astrologers only.

⁶⁹ Fowler 1996: 65-66.

⁷⁰ *FGH* 4 F 60.

⁷¹ Saunders 2001: 237.

⁷² Fortenbaugh and Schütrumpf 2001: 68-69.

^h Apparently Sophokles mentioned another people, also called Χαλδαῖοι. They are the inhabitants of Χαλδία, sometimes called Χάλδοι by the Greeks, and lived near the Black Sea. This meaning of Χαλδαῖοι is also found in Xenophon's *Cyropaedia*, as we have seen before.

Interpretation

Stephanos' lemma combines data from three different sources from the fifth and fourth centuries. First, Babylonia was formerly called Kephenia, and its inhabitants Kephenians, after Kepheus, Andromeda's father (Hellanikos). Second, the Chaldeans and Chaldea are named after Chaldaios, the fourteenth Assyrian king after Ninus (Dikaiarchos). Third, there is another people called Chaldeans and they live near Colchis (Euripides). Stephanos tries to merge these data into a coherent whole.

If one accepts the explanation of ἀφ' οὗ οἱ Κηφῆνες καὶ Χαλδαῖοι πρότερον ἐκλήθησαν given above, it becomes clear that Stephanos thought that Babylonia was first inhabited by the Kephenians, then by the Chaldeans, and finally by the Persians. Each of these nations had its own eponymous hero: Kepheus of the Kephenians, Chaldaios of the Chaldeans, and Perses, son of Perseus, of the Persians. Authors from late antiquity or the Byzantine period often call the inhabitants of Mesopotamia Persians, because Mesopotamia was part of the neo-Persian empire. An early example of this use of *Persians* is perhaps found in Arrian's *Bithynica*, cited by Eustathios: 'Arrian (*Bith.* frg 53) says that the Persians whose capital was Babylon were once called Kephenians'.

In the end, Stephanos' sequence – Kephenians, Chaldeans, Persians – is a political one, not an ethnic one. In Stephanos' own time, but also in the time of Hellanikos, Babylon was ruled by the Persians (in Stephanos' time the Sassanids, in Hellanikos' time the Achaemenids). Before the Persians, the Chaldeans (i.e. the Babylonians) had reigned over Babylon, the empire of Nebuchadnezzar. And the Kephenians were believed to have been masters of Babylon before the Chaldeans. Important for the discussion of ethnic names is the fact that apparently two of Stephanos' sources, Hellanikos and Dikaiarchos, called the inhabitants of the city of Babylon or the region of Babylonia Chaldeans.

Conclusion

As we have seen, Greek sources as a rule do not make a clear distinction between Syria(n), Assyria(n) and Babylonia(n). Assyria(n) is used to refer to the whole of Mesopotamia and its inhabitants, Babylonia(n) is sometimes used as a synonym of Assyria(n), and sometimes to refer to southern Iraq or to the city of Babylon. Mesopotamia is rare and does not have the meaning it has in modern speech. In the Septuagint, it is the region within the bend of the Euphrates, in Hebrew known as Paddan Aram or Aram Naharaim. In Greek Hellenistic works it refers to a wider area, but it still is not the whole Tigris-Euphrates basin, because Babylon is not regarded as part of Mesopotamia. ‘Chaldean’ normally refers to Babylonian priests, and sometimes to inhabitants of the area near the Persian Gulf, but ‘Chaldeans’ was in Greek also used in the meaning ‘Babylonians’, even in fifth and fourth centuries, as was seen from the discussion of the lemma ‘Χαλδαῖοι’ in Stephanos’ *Ethnika*.

2.4 Greek and Biblical Geographical names explained

In the two previous sections, the use of the ethnic and geographical names such as Assyria, Babylonia and Chaldea in biblical and Greek literature has been discussed. Ultimately, most of these Hebrew and Greek names are derived from Akkadian ones, sometimes directly, but probably often through Aramaic. Geographical and ethnic names in cuneiform sources are different from modern names, and not only because of the languages in which they are written. The names under which Assyria and Chaldea are known are recognisable to modern ears, but Babylonia is known under two or three names that do not resemble 'Babylonia' or the name of the city of Babylon at all, and 'the land between the rivers', which is only rarely mentioned, is not what nowadays is called Mesopotamia. In this section, the origins of the Hebrew and Greek names of Assyria, Babylonia, Chaldea, Mesopotamia and Kephania and their relations to the corresponding Akkadian names are investigated.

Ashur, Assyria

Akkadian. Akk. *aššur* is sometimes the city of Ashur (written ^{URU}*aš-šur*^{KI}, ^{BAL.TIL}^{KI}),⁷³ but more often it is Assyria or the Assyrian empire (^{KUR}*aš-šur*^{KI}, *māt aššur*).⁷⁴ In the old Assyrian period, it comprised only the city of Ashur and its immediate environment, but later on it became the name of a wider area, which comprised also Nineveh, Kalhu and Arbela.⁷⁵ The Neo-Assyrian pronunciation must have been *A(s)sur* or *Sur*. Written <š> was pronounced [s] in Assyrian, as is demonstrated by transcriptions of Assyrian names in Hebrew and Aramaic, for example Hebr. אֶסַרְחַדְדִּין *'esar-ḥaddon* for Akk. *Aššur-aḥ-iddin* (chapter eight), and Aram. אֶסַרְסַלְמַח for Akk. *Aššur-šallim-aḥḥē*.⁷⁶ Loss of an initial vowel is for example found in Aram. אֶסַרְסַלְמַח for Akk. *Aššur-šallim-aḥḥē* in a seventh century document from Mesopotamia (AssU 2). That Assur was

⁷³ Of course, there is often more than one way to write the same word in cuneiform. Only the ones that are common in Neo-Assyrian and Neo- and Late Babylonian texts are mentioned. In writing this section, I have made much use of Parpola 1970 and Zadok 1985.

⁷⁴ URU (det. of cities) and KUR (det. of countries) are sometimes confused, and are therefore not absolutely reliable to determine whether the city or the country is meant.

⁷⁵ Forrer in *RLA* sv Assyrien (1928); Radner 2004: 152.

⁷⁶ Millard 1976; Maraqtan 1988: 233; Hug 1993: 22-23; Rollinger 2006.

sometimes pronounced without the initial vowel is confirmed by a eighth century Luwian inscription.⁷⁷ In Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian texts, the gentilic is *aššurai* (^{LÚ}*aš-šur-a-a*), while in older texts *aššurīum*, *aššurû* is used (with a different suffix).⁷⁸ The king of Assyria is called *šar (māt) aššur* (LUGAL ^{KUR}*aš-šur^{KI}*).

Aramaic. In Aramaic, Assyria is called אַתּוּר *'a(t)tūr* (Ahiqar 4: מֶלֶךְ אַתּוּר 'the king of Assyria').⁷⁹ In Old Aramaic, it was pronounced *'a(θ)θūr*, written אַשּׁוּר, for example in a seventh century Aramean letter from Ashur (AssB. 11 and 18).⁸⁰

Hebrew. Akk. *aššur* refers to the city of Ashur, the surrounding country, or the Assyrian empire. Hebrew אַשּׁוּר *'aššūr* is used in the same three ways. It also refers to the Assyrians and is always used in the singular. Hebr. *'aššūr* is not in accordance with the Neo-Assyrian pronunciation, which shows that it must have been known in the West before the Neo-Assyrian period.⁸¹ Perhaps Hebr. *'aššūr* developed from older *'aθθūr*, like the Aramaic form, and not directly from Akk. *'aššūr*.

Old Persian. *Aθurā* 'Assyria', *Aθuriya* 'Assyrian'.⁸² Pers. *Aθurā* is probably derived from Old Aram. *'a(θ)θūr*.⁸³

Greek. Greek Ἀσσυρία (ἠσσυρία) is sometimes Assyria proper, but more often the whole of Mesopotamia, and Ἀσσύριοι, Σύριοι or Σύροι are its inhabitants. It seems that at first Σύρ(ι)οι was the usual ethnic name (Hdt. 7.63). Parpola has argued that the omission of an initial vowel is a feature of Assyrian phonology and that the Greek form Σύρ(ι)οι reflects the Assyrian pronunciation of the eighth and seventh

⁷⁷ Rollinger 2006. Cf. Parpola 2004: 17.

⁷⁸ It is uncertain how the gentilic ending *-a-a* was pronounced: perhaps *-ai*, or *-āja* (indecl.), or *-āju* etc. (Von Soden 1995: 85; Hämeen-Anttila 2000: 84); *-iju* etc. has been also proposed, because the feminine is *-ītu* etc.

⁷⁹ Porten and Yardeni 1986 C1.1.

⁸⁰ Hug 1993: 20-21; Folmer 1995: 74.

⁸¹ Millard 1976: 9.

⁸² Kent 1953: 56; Lecoq 1997: 140.

⁸³ Lecoq 1997: 140; Brandenstein and Mayrhofer 1964: 108.

century.⁸⁴ This view has been confirmed by a Luwian inscription from the eighth century.⁸⁵ This makes it very likely that Σύρ(ι)οι was borrowed from Neo-Assyrian, not later than the seventh century. Ἀσσύριοι is for the first time found in fifth century texts, but it is possible that it was used earlier, perhaps alongside Σύριοι. It has to be of Babylonian or Levantine origin, because the initial vowel is retained, as in Akk. and Hebr. *’aššūr* and Aram. *’a(θ)θūr*, *’a(t)tūr*. The use of Ἀσσυρία and Ἀσσύριοι to refer to the whole of Mesopotamia and its inhabitants is easily explained as a *pars pro toto* (cf. French *Allemagne* ‘Germany’, *Allemand* ‘German’, from *Alemanni*, a people that lived in the upper Rhine area, which gave their name to the whole of Germany in most Romance languages). Ἀσσυρία is Assyria proper and is used only in books on geography. It is probably derived from Official Aramaic. The city of Ashur was unknown to the Greeks.

To sum up, the biblical name for Assyria is used in the same way as the Akkadian name; the Greek name is used in a wider sense, but it is easily explained from the original meaning. Greek Συρία and Σύρ(ι)οι reflect the Neo-Assyrian pronunciation, while Hebr. *’aššūr* retains the older form with an initial vowel, as in Babylonian and in Aramaic.

Babylon, Babylonia

Akkadian. Akk. *bābili* (written e.g. *ba-bi-lam*^{KI}, *KÁ.DINGIR.RA*^{KI}, *TIN.TIR*^{KI}, *E*^{KI}) is the city of Babylon, but in a small number of documents from the Achaemenid period it is the satrapy of Babylonia.⁸⁶ The origin and meaning of the name are unknown, but the Babylonians themselves probably interpreted it as *Bāb-ilī* or *Bāb-ilāni* ‘Gate of the Gods’.⁸⁷ The corresponding gentilic is *bābilai* (e.g. ^{LÚ}*TIN.TIR*^{KI}-*a-a*). The king of Babylon is called *šar bābili* and an inhabitant of the city *mār bābili*.

⁸⁴ Parpola 2004: 17.

⁸⁵ Rollinger 2006.

⁸⁶ Zadok 1985: 58.

⁸⁷ Borger in *BHH* sv Babylon (1962).

Hebrew and Aramaic. In Akkadian, *bābili* is usually the city of Babylon, and sometimes the satrapy of Babylonia. Hebrew בבל *bəbəl* also refers usually to the city of Babylon, and sometimes to the region around the city. The expression בני־בבל *b^enē-bəbəl* ‘Babylonians’ is sometimes found, but rarely. In Aramaic, the name of the city is sometimes written בבל (e.g. in three fifth century letters from Egypt),⁸⁸ but more often בבל. The gentilic is בבלִי *bablōy*, for example הדרדנורי בבלִי ‘Hadadnuri the Babylonian’ in a letter from 464 BC, found in Egypt.⁸⁹

Old Persian. *Bābiruš* ‘Babylon’, *Bābiruviya* ‘Babylonian’.⁹⁰ The substitution of r for l is regular (cf. *Arbairā* ‘Arbela’, *Tigrā* ‘Tigris’, Akk. *diqlat*).⁹¹

Greek. Greek authors call the city Βαβυλών, the region around it Βαβυλωνία and the inhabitants of both the region and the city Βαβυλώνιοι. Βαβυλών is derived from the longer form *Bāb-ilāni* ‘gate of the gods’. As this longer form is not found in Hebrew, Aramaic or Old Persian, and as it is already found in Alkaios, it has to be derived directly from Akkadian in the seventh century or earlier.

To sum up, there is a clear difference in the use of Babel or Babylon by biblical and Greek authors. They both use it to refer to the city, but the corresponding name of the region is rare in the Bible and common in Greek literature. A corresponding ethnic name is lacking in biblical Hebrew, but it is common in Old Persian, Greek and Aramaic. And finally, the Greek name of the city is derived from *Bāb-ilāni*, while Hebrew and Aramaic both have the shorter form Babel.

Akkad

Akkadian. Akk. *akkadū* (often A.GA.DÈ^{K1}) is the city of Akkad (Akkade, Agade). *Māt-akkadī* (often KUR-URI^{K1}) is normally (northern) Babylonia, but in documents from the

⁸⁸ Porten and Yardeni 1986 A6.13-6.15.

⁸⁹ Porten and Yardeni 1986 B2.2 19.

⁹⁰ Kent 1953: 56; Lecoq 1997: 140.

⁹¹ Kent 1953: 38; Brandenstein and Mayrhofer 1964: 35.

Achaemenid period it sometimes is the satrapy of Babylonia.⁹² The king of Babylonia is called *šar akkadī*, more often *šar šumeri u akkadī*. The latter expression was used for the first time around 2100 (in Sumerian: **lugal ki-en-gi ki-uri**) by Urnamma, the first king of the third dynasty of Ur.⁹³ In Neo- and Late-Babylonian texts, *šumeru* (southern Babylonia, originally Sumer) has become an archaic word, and it is never used on its own, but only in the expression 'king of Sumer and Akkad'.⁹⁴ *Kardunijaš* (^{KUR}*kár[-an]-du-ni-ia-áš*), in the Kassite period the prevailing name of Babylonia, is rare in Neo- and Late-Babylonian texts.

Hebrew and Aramaic. Akkad is in the Hebrew Bible only known as the name of a city (Hebr. אַכַּד *'akkad* in Gen. 10:10). In Old Aramaic it is (?also) used to refer to the region of Babylonia: מַת אַכַּדָּה *mat 'akkadē* in a seventh century law (AbgG. 2) and מַתְאֲכַדָּי *matakkadē* (AssB. 2; in combination with מֶלֶךְ בַּבֶּל 'the king of Babylon').⁹⁵

To sum up, Akkad, or Sumer and Akkad, is the usual name of Babylonia in the first millennium. It is in this meaning also used in Old Aramaic, but not in Hebrew and Greek. Akkad as the name of a city is found in Genesis.

Chaldeans

Akkadian. Akk. *kaldu* (^{KUR}*kal-du*) is Chaldea, the southern part of Mesopotamia. The corresponding gentilic is *kaldu* (^{LÚ}*kal-du*), *kaldānu* (^{LÚ}*kal-da-a-nu*) or *kaldai* (^{LÚ}*kal-da-a-a*).⁹⁶ Sometimes, Chaldeans are in modern literature regarded as Arameans, or as people of Aramean descent. Lipiński, for example, argues that they had originally been Arameans, but had become Babylonised, often bearing Babylonian names and to a certain degree following a Babylonian way of life.⁹⁷ But whatever their origins are, they are always regarded as a separate ethnic group in cuneiform sources.

⁹² Zadok 1985: 226.

⁹³ Flückiger-Hawker 1999: 62; Averbeck, Studevent-Hickman and Michalowski 2006: 52-53.

⁹⁴ Zadok 1985: 297.

⁹⁵ Hug 1993: 15, 20, 161.

⁹⁶ Frame 1992: 37-28.

⁹⁷ Lipiński 2000: 416-422; cf. Frame 1992: 36-27.

Hebrew and Greek. Chaldeans (Hebr. כַּשְׁדִּים *kaśdīm* Gr. Χαλδαῖοι) is used in three meanings. First, the Chaldeans were a confederation of tribes, who lived in the most southern parts of Mesopotamia.⁹⁸ This meaning is found in Greek geographical works (Strabo) and probably at least once in the Hebrew Bible (Job 1.17), and is in conformity with the meaning of Akk. *kaldu*. Second, the inhabitants of Babylon and Babylonia are called Chaldeans in the Hebrew Bible. This meaning is rare in Greek literature, but it is found in Hellenikos and in Dikaiarchos' *Life of Hellas*. Third, chaldeans are astronomers or astrologers, originally of Babylonian descent, but later on also of other origins. This is the most common meaning of χαλδαῖος in Greek literature. In the Bible it is only found in the book Daniel, which was written in the Hellenistic period. The second and third meanings are also found in biblical Aramaic.

The difference between Akk. *kaldu*, Gr. Χαλδαῖοι, with an l, and Hebr. כַּשְׁדִּים *kaśdīm*, Aram. כַּשְׁדַּאִין *kaśdō'in*, with a sibilant, is best explained by the substitution of an l for a sibilant before a dental, which is regularly found in Akkadian from the Middle Babylonian and Middle Assyrian period onwards.⁹⁹ In Middle Hebrew and in many Aramaic dialects forms such as כַּלְדִּי, כַּלְדִּיָּא are found.

How and why and when Chaldeans became a name for Babylonians is not so clear. It could have happened during the rise of the Neo-Babylonian empire. Chaldean (and Aramean) soldiers were part of the Babylonian army, and it seems that Chaldean (and Aramean) officials occupied key position in the administration.¹⁰⁰ Therefore, biblical authors may have perceived 'Babylon as a state ruled and led militarily at that time by West Semitic tribal leaders, especially Chaldeans', as Beaulieu thinks,¹⁰¹ and called it 'land of the Chaldeans'. Of course, this explanation leaves unanswered how Babylonia was called in Hebrew before the rise of the Neo-Babylonian empire. It seems unlikely that Babylonia was unknown in Judah and Israel before the end of

⁹⁸ Orthmann in *RLA* sv *Kaldu*; Roitman 1994: 254-256; Lipiński 2000: 416-422.

⁹⁹ Moscati 1980: 35; Ungnad-Matouš 1969: 26.

¹⁰⁰ Beaulieu 2013.

¹⁰¹ Beaulieu 2013: 32.

the seventh century. Therefore, it is more likely that ‘Chaldeans’ came into use as a name for Babylonians during the reign of Marduk-apla-iddina II (722-710, 703), the Chaldean king who ruled over Babylon until he was expelled by the Assyrians. The Judeans and Israelites must have heard about the struggle between Marduk-apla-iddina and the Assyrians and in this way ‘Chaldean’ became linked to Babylon.

Aram Naharaim, Mesopotamia

Akkadian. As Finkelstein shows, the expressions *māt birītim* ‘between-land’ and *birīt nārim* ‘[area] enclosed by a river (sg.), peninsula’, are sometimes used in Old Babylonian texts to refer to the country within the bend of the Euphrates,¹⁰² the north-western part of what is now called Mesopotamia.¹⁰³ According to Van der Spek, almost the same expression, *birīt nārīm* (written *bi-rit īd^{MEŠ}*) ‘[area] between the rivers (pl)’ is found in a Babylonian astronomical diary from 367 BC.¹⁰⁴ But it seems that these expressions were not often used.

Aramaic and Hebrew. In Hebrew, the area within the bend of the Euphrates was sometimes called שְׂדֵה אֲרָם *sēdē ʾarom* ‘the land of Aram’ or אֲרָם נְהָרַיִם *ʾarom naharayim*, but most often פַּדְדַן אֲרָם *paddan ʾarom*. In Aramaic, it was called בֵּין נְהָרַיִן *bēn nahrēn* (or *nahrīn, nahrain*) ‘between (two) rivers’. This name is found for the first time in the *Genesis Apocryphon* from Qumran (1Q20 = 1QapGen ar XXI.24).¹⁰⁵ In the same text, the expression אֲרַעַס דִּי בֵּין תְּרִינֵי נְהָרַיִם *ʾarēṣ dī bēn tʿrēn nahrayō* (xvii.9) ‘the land between the two rivers’ is found. This is the land allotted to Aram, i.e. the area known in Hebrew as Aram Naharaim. At first the Aramaic expression בֵּין נְהָרַיִן, which is probably a translation of Akk. *birīt nārim*, designated Paddan Aram, the area within the bend of the Euphrates, but later, it became the name of Mesopotamia in the modern sense of the word: the whole of the Tigris-Euphrates basin.

¹⁰² The Euphrates was the river par excellence and is sometimes simply referred to as ‘river’: *nārum* in Akkadian and נְהַר *nahar* in Hebrew.

¹⁰³ Finkelstein 1962; cf. CAD sv *birītu*.

¹⁰⁴ Van der Spek 1998: 253-254.

¹⁰⁵ Fitzmyer 1966: 143-144.

Greek. At first, most clearly in the Septuagint, Μεσοποταμία is the area in the bend of the Euphrates, Paddan Aram or Aram Naharaim. Later on, it was used in the same sense as nowadays: the area between the Euphrates and Tigris, or perhaps more accurate: the whole of the Tigris-Euphrates basin. Aram Naharaim was during the first millennium inhabited by Arameans, and their name of the area (בֵּין נַהַרַיִן) is the origin of Mesopotamia and expressions like ἡ μεταξύ τῶν ποταμῶν Συρία. These expressions and the name Mesopotamia were apparently not used in Greek before the Hellenistic period.

Kephenia

According to Herodotos, Κηφῆνες is an older name for Persians, but according to Hellanikos, the Kephenians were inhabitants of Babylonia in an older era. The origin of the name Κηφῆνες is uncertain. Perhaps it is derived from *Qipānu*. In that case, the identification of Kephenia with Babylonia must be secondary. Pliny gives another location: between Adiabene, the area between the Great Zab and the Lesser Zab, and Armenia (Plin. *NH* 6.10, 16). Of course, this still is not the same area as *Qipānu*, but it demonstrates the uncertainty of ancient geographers on the location of Kephenia.

Conclusion

It has become clear in this chapter that the use of Ashur/Assyria and Mesopotamia in Hebrew and Greek is easily explained from Akkadian (and Aramaic) idiom: the shorter form Syria is based on the Neo-Assyrian pronunciation; Assyria as a name for the whole of Mesopotamia, which is often found in Greek texts, is a *pars pro toto*; and Greek *Mesopotamia* is a translation of Aram. *bēn nahrēn*, which on its turn is a translation of Akk. *birūt nārim*. Foreign names for the southern half of Mesopotamia are usually not in accordance with Akkadian idiom.

The names for Babylonia can be divided into endonyms and exonyms. Endonyms are found in Akkadian and Old Aramaic, exonyms are found in Old Persian, Hebrew, later Aramaic and Greek. In Late Babylonian documents the region around Babylon was usually called (Sumer and) Akkad, and more rarely Karduniaš, but these archaic

names were seldom used by other nations. In Old Aramaic sources, Babylonia is sometimes called *mat 'akkadē* (endonym), but Hebrew and Greek authors never use Akkad for Babylonia. Instead, the name of the city of Babylon and 'the land of the Chaldeans' are used to refer to Babylonia (exonyms).

Names that are identical to or derived from Babylon are common. In Hebrew and Old Persian, the name of the city (Hebr. בבל, OP. *Bābiruš*) was used to refer to the surrounding region, and in Greek the name of the country was derived from that of the city (Βαβυλωνία). Its inhabitants were called בני־בבל *b'nē-babel* in Hebrew (although rarely), *Bābiruviyā* in Old Persian, and Βαβυλώνιοι in Greek.

Sometimes, especially in Hebrew and biblical Aramaic, names are used that were derived from Akk. *kaldu* and *kaldai*: Hebr. כשדים and ארץ כשדים (*'ereš kašdīm*), Greek Χαλδαῖοι and Χαλδαϊκή (Hellanikos and Dikaiarchos). In the Hebrew Bible, these are the usual names for Babylonia(ns), but in Greek literature they are less common than 'Babylonia(ns)'. In Neo-Assyrian sources, *kaldu* and *kaldai(a)* refer to the most southern parts of Mesopotamia and their inhabitants, but never to the people of Babylon and Babylonia; and in Late Babylonian sources *kaldu* and *kaldai(a)* are not found at all.¹⁰⁶

It is likely that the use of 'Chaldea(n)' for 'Babylonia(n)', which is found in the Bible, but also in Jewish writings in post-biblical Hebrew and Aramaic, was not typically Hebrew, but that it was more widespread in the western parts of the Ancient Near East. It probably originated during the reign of the Chaldean king Marduk-apla-iddina II over Babylon. The Greeks must have heard this name in the Levant and used it sometimes, but most of the time preferred their own creation Babylonia.

What is seen here is a well known mechanism. Babylonia was inhabited by a number of peoples: Arameans, Chaldeans, inhabitants of Babylon, Uruk, and other cities. The Chaldeans were only a part of the population of Babylonia, yet in Hebrew all its inhabitants were called Chaldeans; the Assyrians were only part of the population of

¹⁰⁶ Beaulieu 2013: 32-33.

Mesopotamia, yet in Greek their name became attached to all its inhabitants; just as, in later times, *Alemanni* were only a part of the inhabitants of what was to become Germany, but all its inhabitants became known as *Allemands* in French.

When these geographical names were used for the first time in Greek is difficult to say. Most of them were probably already known to the Greeks in the archaic period, except Μεσοποταμία, which is not attested before the time of Alexander. It is clear that Βαβυλώνιοι was already used in the archaic period, because the poet Alkaios mentioned the Babylonians around 600. Σύρ(ι)οι and Συρία must also have been known in the archaic period, because they reflect the Assyrian pronunciation of the eighth and seventh century, without an initial a. When Ἀσσύριοι came in use, is difficult to say, but it must be of Babylonian or Levantine (?Phoenician) origin.

Clearly, most of these Greek geographical and ethnic names have no West-Semitic origins: in Hebrew and Aramaic, Assyria retains its initial **a**, unlike Greek Συρία; the name of the city of Babylon has the shorter form Babel, unlike Greek Babylon; and the Babylonians are called Chaldeans, which is rare in Greek. As mentioned before, Σύρ(ι)οι and Συρία are of neo-Assyrian origin, while Βαβυλών and Βαβυλωνία are of Babylonian or Assyrian origin, because the longer form of the name of the city (*bāb-ilāni*) is only attested in Akkadian. The only ethnic and geographical names in pre-Hellenistic Greek literature that betray West-Semitic or Levantine influence are Χαλδαῖοι and Χαλδαϊκή. They are mentioned for the first time in the fifth century (Hellanikos) and never became very popular. Geographical and ethnic names in older Greek literature more closely follow Assyrian and Babylonian than West-Semitic or Levantine idiom, in so far as can be ascertained. The names Μεσοποταμία and Ἀτουρία are clearly of Aramaic origin, but they are only found in literature from the Hellenistic period onwards.