

 **Assyrian Education Network**

The A to Z of the ancient Chaldeans and their relation to modern Chaldeans

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Few points will be presented separately here in order to put things into prospective and avoid confusing the reader, hoping that by the time all the various issues are covered, the reader will acquire a much clearer picture about the ancient and modern Chaldeans.

Before we get into the main subject, we need first to distinguish between the ancient Chaldeans and the Babylonians. The fact that the Chaldean dynasty ruled over Babylon for (87) years only (626-539 BC) should not be interpreted as if that the Babylonians became Chaldeans. The Ottoman Turks ruled Mesopotamia for almost (400) years (1534 – 1921), a rule that ended basically at the end of World War I, and officially with the crowning of Prince Faysal I king on the newly established country Iraq. Is there any confusion today about who the inhabitants of Iraq are? Does anybody call the Iraqis Ottoman Turks?

The Sumerian, Akkadian, Assyrian and Babylonian civilizations existed thousands of years before the Chaldeans were ever mentioned in Mesopotamian history. After their appearance in southern Mesopotamia around the 10th century BC, they began continuous rebellions against the Babylonians. How the Babylonians felt towards the Chaldeans is well documented in many sources. It is a historical known fact that when the Persians entered Babylon in 539 BC, and hence ended the rule of the Chaldean kings, the Babylonians met the Persians with cheers and treated them as liberators, John Curtis tells us.

Mar Ephrem, one of the great fathers of Christianity said in “Hymns against Julian” / Hymn 2 - 14

“The king, the king of Babylon, confuted the Chaldeans, nor did he summon others, for he tested one in another. He cast them out and expelled them; to slaughter he gave them. That one, indeed, whose own they were, renounced them. But if they misled him, how much indeed will they mislead you!

For if all of them lie, who indeed will trust one?”

The Chaldeans were merely nomadic tribes with little civilization to their name compared to the Babylonians. Oppenheim says; “Of course, it would be rash to liken Sin-muballit to Nabopolassar and Hammurabi to Nebuchadnezzar II” [Sin-muballit and Hammurabi being earlier Babylonian kings and Nabopolassar and Nebuchadnezzar II being Chaldean kings]. The ancient Chaldeans appeared in history around the 10th century BC in southern Mesopotamia living in the marshlands around today's Basrah, Iraq. Their origin is still not clear, few scholars believe that they originated from Elam in Persia, others believe that they are from the Sealand region of the Persian Gulf. While very few have confused them with the Arameans, there are those who say that they came from Arabia. The Chaldeans took advantage of the civil war and the disintegration of the Babylonian political life in 626 BC and attacked Babylon. The Chaldean rule over Babylon

began a very rapid decline soon after the rule of their first two kings, Nabopolassar and Nabuchadnezzar II. Interesting to know is that the origin of their last king Nabunaid has not been confirmed, we know that he was the son of a nobleman and of the high priestess of the god Sin at Harran and of the Assyrian royal house.

Historical data dealing with the obscurity of the origin of the ancient Chaldeans, or in a sense being outsiders to Mesopotamia, and being different than the Babylonians, are numerous. The following quotes from learned in the subject attest to that fact.

1. "The Ancient Near East; c. 3000-330 BC" (vol. II) / Amelie Kuhrt

"... in 626, Nabopolassar, acceded to the throne in Babylon; his background is unknown, except for a much later statement by Berossus that he was a general appointed by the Assyrian prince Sinshar-ishkun. Nabopolassar's accession was not welcomed by everyone, and he met with both Babylonian and Assyrian resistance. Fighting for control of Babylonia was protracted and violent for the next six to ten years..."

2. "The Penguin Encyclopedia of Ancient Civilization" / Arthur Cotterell

"Throughout the remainder of the 8th century BC Babylonian Political life was disturbed by the Chaldeans, a Semitic speaking group of people who had entered the plain earlier and who were now settled along the coast of the Persian Gulf. One tribe of Chaldeans, Yakin, produced an eminently capable leader called Merodach-baladan, who with Elamite support made numerous attempts to seize the Babylonian crown..."

3. "History of the World" / J. M. Roberts

"The Babylonian astrology pushed forward the observation of nature and left another myth behind, that of the wisdom of the Chaldeans, a name sometimes misleadingly given to the Babylonians."

4. "Larned's History of the World" or (Seventy Centuries of the life of Mankind) / J. N. Larned

"No longer ago than 1870, in the second edition of his Five Great Monarchies of the Ancient World—which was then the accepted summary of oriental learning in that field—Professor George Rawlinson, writing of Babylonian history under what is now known to be the erroneous name of 'Chaldean'..."

5. "Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta; Languages and Cultures in contact at the Crossroads of Civilizations in the Syro-Mesopotamian Realm. (Proceedings of the 42nd RAI)" / I. Sassmannshausen

"It may be a matter of dispute whether the Babylonian society has to be considered a multicultural society. It certainly was a multiethnic society. In the Kassite period the population of Babylonia consisted, of course, mainly of Babylonians (The Babylonian designation for the Babylonians was akkadu "Akkadian"), but quite numerous were also Kassites and Hurrians. Other attested ethnic minorities were Western Semites (ahlamu and amurru), Assyrians, Elamites, Hittites, Lullubeans and people from Ullipi."

The Kassite period in Babylon was during 1570-1160 BC, and this scholar who presented his paper in front of the most famous in the field, mentioned some of the ethnic groups in Babylon in that period but did not mention the Chaldeans! Which proves the already known fact that the Chaldeans began to settle in southern Mesopotamia around the 10th century BC coming from the Sea Land perhaps (the Persian Gulf region).

6. "Early Mesopotamia: Society and Economy at the Dawn of History" / J.N. Postgate

"His (Hammurabi) stele lists proudly the ancient centers of civilization, north and south, which the gods had entrusted to his rule: including Assur, Mari and an ancient Hurrian center, Ninua, the later capital of Assyria. This political success was not just another of the swings of the political pendulum, but represents a turning point. Even if more by default than otherwise, Babylon takes on the role of the single capital of the south: only the 1st Dynasty of Babylon remains as a dynastic line, and despite a murmur of resistance from Larsa, the only contenders for power in the future would be outsiders: the Sea-Land Dynasty, the Kassites and, still later, the new nomadic stock of the Aramaeans and Chaldeans."

7. "Babylon" / Joan Oates

"The Chaldeans: In Babylonia the period that follows the conquests of Shamshi-Adad is obscure. After the death of Adad-Nirari III (783) Assyrian power too seems to have declined. In Babylon the resulting political vacuum was filled by the Chaldeans, first encountered in the 9th century annals of Shalmaneser III, and one of whose shaikhs now claimed the throne. The Chaldeans lived among the swamps and lakes along the lower courses of the Tigris and Euphrates. Their organization was tribal, and each Chaldean bitu (house) was under the leadership of a Shaikh who at times called himself a king. But the tribal regions were ill-defined and the political strength of each individual shaikh was largely a matter of

personal ability and prestige.”

8. “Babylonians” / H.W.F. Saggs

“The Chaldeans (Kaldu) were first referred to in 878 BC as a people in south Babylonia. Their antecedents remain in doubt. Some scholars suppose that they represented another migration of Aramaeans, earlier than the rest, who settled in the southern marshes to become regarded as a special ethnic group. But there is no proof of this; cuneiform sources invariably make a distinction between the two peoples, and there are features besides name, which set the Chaldeans apart from the Aramaeans. One distinguishing mark was distribution. Whereas the Aramaeans were to be found not only throughout most rural areas of north and south Mesopotamia, but also in Syria and Transjordan, the Chaldeans as originally encountered were restricted to south Babylonia, and always remained predominant there.”

9. "The Sealand of Ancient Arabia" / Raymond Philip Dougherty /Yale University / Vol. XIX, 1932

“However, the existence of numerous Chaldeans, Arameans, and Sealander outside the land of the two rivers should not be forgotten" Streek regards ("das gewaltige 'vom Meere' heranrueckende de Heer" as composed of the people of the Sealand, i.e., the Chaldeans and the Arameans) "Since the Sealand gave rise to the Neo-Babylonian [Chaldean] Empire and since there are strong reasons for association of the Sealand with Arabia, evidence of Neo-Babylonian contact with Arabia should be of special significance.”

10. “Ancient Assyria” / C.H.W. Johns

“The Chaldeans had in great numbers emigrated to the coast of Elam and settled there. Thence they perpetually harassed Lower Babylonia.”

11. “Ancient Mesopotamia” / A. Leo Oppenheim

“In three campaigns he [Sennacherib] took Babylon, forced Merodach-Baladan into exile in Elam, and in a seaborne invasion destroyed the cities along the Elamite coast, where Chaldean exiles used to organize rebellions

in Babylonia.”

It is interesting to note that the name Kaldu or Chaldeans has not been mentioned in any of the tablets left during the Neo-Babylonian period. For example throughout the tablets concerning the fall of Assyria Nebupolassar and Nebuchadnezzar are called “the King of Akkad” (shar Akkad) rather than the “Chaldean King”, however, the English translator has labeled these records as the “Chronicles of the Chaldean Kings”. Read D.J. Wiseman’s “Chronicles of the Chaldean Kings”.

Now, lets discuss the issue of the existence of the ancient Chaldeans in Assyria. The ancient Chaldeans never settled in Assyria, they always lived in southern Mesopotamia. Here are some historical data attesting to this fact.

1. “The Conquest of Civilization” / James Henry Breasted

“The Chaldeans, or Kaldi, the desert tribe from the land of the southwest Persia, began to creep slowly around the heads of the Persian Gulf and settling along its shores at the foot of the eastern mountains. In 604 BC, Nebuchadnezzar II, the greatest of the Chaldean emperors, began his reign of over 40 years over Babylonia and it was in 616 BC that he had mastered his control over the entire Babylonia region. When the Medes, in 614 BC marched down the Tigris and captured Assur, Nebuchadnezzar II arrived too late to share in the assault. He did establish an alliance with Cyaxares, the Median king, and together they attacked Nineveh but the Medes were left in possession of the northern mountains of Assyria.”

2. “Arbil and its Historical Periods” / Dr. Zubair Bilal Ismael

“Arbil fell to the Medes. Asia Minor and the Assyrian Empire was split between the Medes and the Babylonians, the Medes took the upper parts of Mesopotamia, including the Land of Ashur and the Babylonians controlled the southern parts of Bet Nahrain, Syria and Palestine...”
(Translated from Arabic by the author of this article)

3. “Ancient Iraq” / Georges Roux

The author attest to the fact that the Babylonians (at this time ruled under the Chaldean kings) did not live in Assyria, he wrote after Nineveh fell;

“The Babylonians remained in full possession of Assyria, but did not occupy it and made no attempt to repair the damage they had caused. All their efforts were devoted to the religious and cultural revival of southern Mesopotamia, and in the field of foreign policy to the protection of the

Taurus frontier and the subjection of Syria-Palestine.”

And he states:

“The Babylonians arrived too late to take part in the action.”

He continues to refer to southern Mesopotamia as Babylonia even after the Chaldean dynasty took control over it and he calls its kings “The Chaldean kings of Babylon” and not Chaldea. A good reason could be because the Chaldeans’ control over Babylonia was one of the shortest of any other dynasty.

4. “The Babylonians” / H.W.F Saggs

“... the Chaldeans as originally encountered were restricted to south Babylonia, and always remained predominant there...”

Later he says:

“... there is no hint of any non-Semitic linguistic background, but this does not preclude the possibility that their ancestry included elements from earlier groups who had ruled the south of the country, or from the Kassites. Some scholars suggest that they were originally of east Arabian origin; there is little positive evidence for this, but it is not impossible, and if they came in via the west coast of the Persian Gulf it might explain why they were in the main only in the south of Mesopotamia.”

5. “Kinooz al-Matthaf al-Iraqi” (The Treasures of the Iraqi Museum) / Dr. Faraj Basmachi

“Key Akhsar controlled the north eastern parts of Land of Ashur, while Nebuchadnezzar controlled the southern parts.”

6. “Mesopotamia and Iran in the Persian Period” / John Curtis

“So, when Cyrus entered the city in the autumn of 539 BC, he was greeted by the people as a liberator rather than as a conqueror. In spring 539 the Persian Army had started to move down the Diyala valley and in August of the same year there was a battle at Opis on the Tigris. On 10 October

Sippar surrendered and Nabonidus fled to Babylon. Two days later the Persian army entered Babylon and Nabonidus was taken prisoner.”

What can we learn from this paragraph:

“In spring 539 the Persian Army had started to move down the Diyala valley and in August of the same year there was a battle at Opis on the Tigris”

This paragraph is very important, because it attests to the fact that the Persians were in control in Assyria (northern Mesopotamia) after the fall of Nineveh in 612 BC. For those who are not familiar with the geography of Iraq, Diyala valley is basically between Assyria and Babylonia. So this proves that there were no Chaldeans in Assyria for the Persians to fight, rather the Persians moved south the Diyala valley to meet Nabonidus.

7. “Assyrian Studies; A History Bypassed by History” / Georgis Fatih Allah

“Around this date, 605 BC the Assyrian Empire was divided between the two allies (the Medes and the Babylonians). It seems that the original Land of Ashur became the Medes’ king share.”

8. “The Ancient Near East; c. 3000-330 BC” / Amelie Kuhrt

“By 605 the larger part of the Assyrian empire was in the hands of a new Babylonian dynasty with its political center in southern Mesopotamia, while the eastern fringes and, eventually, the territory to the north, formed part of a new confederation controlled by the Medes, centered on Ecbatana (modern Hamadan) in western Iran.”

So far we have argued based on many facts that the ancient Chaldeans were, in a sense, foreigners to Mesopotamia and showed that they did not settle in Assyria, they rather lived in southern Babylonia. Since history does not mention of any mass migration of Chaldeans from southern Mesopotamia to the north at any time and under any capacity, a question presents itself: who are then the modern Chaldeans who live predominantly in Nineveh (Assyria)? Let’s read from scholars, historians, and notable people in our own society about the present day title ‘Chaldean’.

1. "The political Dictionary of Modern Middle East" / University Press of America, 1995.

“Assyrians: Remnants of the people of the ancient Mesopotamia,

succeeding the Sumero-Akkadians and the Babylonians as one continuous civilization. They are among the first nations who accepted Christianity. They belong to one of the four churches: the Chaldean Uniat, the Syrian Orthodox Church, the Syrian Catholic Church and the Assyrian Church of the East. Due to the ethnic-political conflict in the Middle East, they are better known by these ecclesiastical designation. The Assyrians use classical Syriac in their liturgies while the majority of them speak and write a modern dialect of this language. They constitute the third largest ethnic group in Iraq with their communities in Syria, Lebanon, Turkey, Iran, Russia and Armenia. Today they remain stateless and great numbers of them left their homeland and settled in Western Europe, the United States and Australia.”

2. “Arabs and Christians? Christians in the Middle East” / Antonie Wessels

“In 1551, the Assyrian community refused to accept the appointment of Shim’un VII Denka as Patriarch of the Church of the East. They sent a monk, Youhanna Sulaqa, to Rome, where he was appointed Patriarch of Babylon and head of the first church in the Middle East to unite with Rome. While the name Assyrian refers to an ethnic identity, the name Chaldean refers to the (Catholic) ‘rite’. He later died as a martyr in Diyarbekr (Eastern Turkey) at the hands of the anti-Catholic community.

In 1672 more than a century after the failure of Patriarch Sulaqa to effect the ‘return’ of the Nestorians, a separate Chaldean rite was organized.”

3. “Aqaliyat shimal al-‘Araq; bayna al-qanoon wa al-siyasa” (Northern Iraq Minorities; between Law and Politics) / Dr. Jameel Meekha Shi’yooka

“The Assyrians themselves are broken into Nestorians (not connected to Rome or the Catholic Church and are the minority) and are members of the Assyrian Church of the East, and besides the Nestorians there are the Chaldeans, a majority who came out from the Nestorians and are connected with the Catholic Church in Rome.”
(a translation from Arabic)

4. “Asshur and the Land of Nimrod” / Hormuzd Rassam

“A difficulty now arose; the new converts styled themselves 'Sooraye' and 'Nestornaye' . The Romanists could not call them 'Catholic Syrians' or 'Syrian Catholics' for this appellation they had already given to their

proselytes from the Jacobites, who also called themselves 'Syrians'. They could not term them 'Catholic Nestorians,' as Mr. Justin Perkins, the independent American missionary does, for this would involve a contradiction. What more natural, then, than that they should have applied to them the title of 'Chaldeans' to which they had some claims of nationality, in virtue of their Assyrian Descent."

5. "The Eastern Christian Churches" / Ronald Roberson

"In 1552, when the new patriarch was elected, a group of Assyrian bishops refused to accept him and decided to seek union with Rome. They elected the reluctant abbot of a monastery, Yuhannan Sulaqa, as their own patriarch and sent him to Rome to arrange a union with the Catholic Church. In early 1553 Pope Julius III proclaimed him Patriarch Simon VIII "of the Chaldeans" and ordained him a bishop in St. Peter's Basilica on April 9, 1553.

The new Patriarch returned to his homeland in late 1553 and began to initiate a series of reforms. But opposition, led by the rival Assyrian Patriarch, was strong. Simon was soon captured by the pasha of Amadiya, tortured and executed in January 1555. Eventually Sulaqa's group returned to the Assyrian Church of the East, but for over 200 years, there was much turmoil and changing of sides as the pro- and anti-Catholic parties struggled with one another. The situation finally stabilized on July 5, 1830, when Pope Pius VIII confirmed Metropolitan Youhanna (John) Hormizd as head of all Chaldean Catholics, with the title of Patriarch of Babylon of the Chaldeans, with his see in Mosul."

6. The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church / F. L. Cross and E. A. Livingstone

Chaldean Christians.

"The convenient, if not very appropriate, title applied to that part of the Church of the East in communion with the see of Rome. They fall into two main groups, those of the Middle East (esp. Iraq), and those of Malabar [India]. As a result of dispute over succession within the Middle Eastern group, a separate line of Uniat Patriarchs came into existence in 1553, when Simeon Sulaqa was consecrated in Rome after submitting his profession of faith to Pope Julius III. Over the next three centuries, difficulties of communication gave rise to problems. The Sulaqa line (normally with the name Simeon) remained in communion with Rome until 1672, while members of the other line (with the name Elias) briefly entered communion with Rome on several occasions. In 1681 a new Uniat line of Patriarchs at Diyarbekr was inaugurated (with the name of Joseph), to last for well over a century. In 1830 affairs were regularized and the Uniat Patriarchate was again restored, now at Baghdad, with the title 'of Babylon'. The customs and

discipline of the Chaldeans have been partially assimilated to those of the Latin rite, and they follow the Gregorian calendar. Syriac liturgical tradition and languages are, however, retained. In the Middle East the Chaldeans are said to number c. 800,000. For the Indian group, see Malabar Christians.”

7. “Hagarism: The Making of the Islamic World” / Patricia Crone and Michael Cook

“We know that Chaldeans very quickly converted to Islam in the 7th and 8th centuries AD, and assimilated into the Arab/Muslim culture and disappeared from history.”

8. “Christianity in the Arab World” / El Hassan Bin Talal, Crown Prince of Jordan.

“Attending the Council of Florence [1444], alongside the representative of the Jacobite patriarch Bahnam al-Hadli, were representatives of the Cyprus branch of the Nestorian Church, whose principle base was still in Iraq. These Nestorians, like the Jacobite patriarch, were persuaded to adopt the Roman Catholic confession and declare allegiance to Roman papacy, whereupon they came to be called the Chaldeans (as distinct from the Nestorians who refused to unite with Rome...

“Subsequently, in 1551, Pope Julius III appointed a leading Catholic Nestorian, John Sulaka, as first patriarch of his Uniate church. The successors of Sulaka later adopted the title of patriarch-catholicos of Babylon and the Chaldeans.”

9. “The Middle East” A Physical, Social and Regional Geography / W. B. Fisher

“During periods of Moslem persecution, the autonomous Christian sects of the east obtained support from the Church of Rome, but often at the price of obedience to Rome. Agreements were made whereby in return for recognition of the Pope as head of the community, local usages in doctrine and ritual were permitted to continue. Hence a number of eastern Christians broke away from sects such as the Jacobites or Nestorians, and formed what are known as the Uniate Churches--i.e. Communities with practices that differ widely from those of the main Roman Church, but which nevertheless accept the supremacy of the Pope. There have thus come into existence the Armenian Catholic, the Greek Catholic, the Syrian Catholic, the Coptic Catholic, and the Chaldean (Nestorian) Catholic Churches.”

10. The Catholic Encyclopedia is very clear in defining Chaldeans as a Christian denomination of the Eastern Church, since it states;

“Chaldeans: The name of former Nestorians now reunited with the Roman Church. Ethnologically they are divided into two groups [Turco-Persian and Indian], which must be treated apart, since in their vicissitudes one group differs considerably from the other. The first group is usually known as Chaldeans, the second as Christians of St. Thomas [also called the Syro-Malabar Church].”

11. “History of Syria” / Dr. Philip Hitti, professor of Semitic literature at Princeton University.

“Before the rise of Islam the Syrian Christian Church [Assyrian] had split into several communities. There was first the East Syrian Church or the Church of the East. This communion, established in the late second century, claims uninterrupted descent in its teachings, liturgy, consecration and tradition from the time the Edessene King Abgar allegedly wrote to Christ asking him to relieve him of an incurable disease and Christ promised to send him one of his disciples after his ascension. This is the church erroneously called Nestorian, after the Cilician Nestorius, whom it antedates by about two and a half centuries. The term Nestorian was applied to it at a late date by Roman Catholics to convey the stigma of heresy in contradistinction to those of its members who joined the Catholic Church as Uniats and received the name Chaldeans.”

12. “The Assyrians and their Neighbors” / Rev. W. A. Wigram

“Facts are too that the first time a Patriarch was associated with the word Chaldean was Mar Youhannan Hurmizd who was called by Pope Pius XIII in 1828 “Patriarch of Babil over the Chaldean Rite” in which the Church became definitely Papal in its obedience as one of the “Uniate Churches” of the East. And the first to be called the “Chaldean Patriarch” was Mar Nicolas Zaia in 1844 and later the word Babil was added in 1847 when Mar Yousif Odo was consecrated as “Patriarch of Babil over the Chaldean.”

13. “The Chaldeans of today and their relation to the Chaldeans of yesterday”
Dr. Bahnam Abu al-Soof, Professor of Archaeology in Baghdad University.

“All the inhabitants of the villages which are called Chaldean--TelKeif, Alqosh, Batnaya, Telesqoof, Karamles, Qaraqoush, and others—no connection with the Chaldeans of antiquity. Today’s Chaldean term is new to us, it came from the west, and from Rome precisely. You people, the inhabitants of the above mentioned villages are originally Assyrians,

descendants of the Assyrians of antiquity. I, for example, was born in Mosul, and belong to the Chaldean Church, yet I am Assyrian and we all are Assyrians, being Syrians, Chaldeans, or Maronites.”

14. “The British Betrayal of the Assyrians” / Yousuf Malek, member of the Chaldean Catholic Church.

“The Assyrians, although representing but one single nation as the direct heirs of the ancient Assyrian Empire as indicated in chapter 1, are now doctrinally divided, inter sese, into five principle ecclesiastically designated religious sects with their corresponding hierarchies and distinct church governments, namely, Nestorian, Jacobite, Chaldean, Maronite and Syrian Catholic...”

15. “Reasons for the backwardness of the Assyrians” / Professor Ashur Yousuf, member of the Syrian Orthodox Church, published on October 20, 1914.

“The hindrance to the development of the Assyrians was not so much the attacks from without as it was from within--the doctrinal and sectarian disputes and struggles like monophysitism and dyophysitism is a good example. These caused division, spiritually and nationally, among the people who quarreled among themselves even to the point of shedding blood. To this very day the Assyrians are still known by various names, such as Nestorians, Jacobites, Chaldeans...”

The above examples should prove beyond any reasonable doubt that the so-called Chaldean title, used today, represents a religious denomination of the Assyrian people, applied by the Vatican on the newly converted Catholics who united with the Roman Catholic Church. It is due to confusion and ignorance of some, and the special interest of the few others, that the Chaldean title has been used as an ethnic appellation.

There remains couple arguments made by the few regarding a so-called migration and so-called deportations of the ancient Chaldeans to Assyria and hence the presence of today’s Christian Chaldeans in Nineveh. Allow me to present few remarks regarding those two issues.

The issue of ancient Chaldeans so-called deportations to Assyria

This argument focuses on the so-called deportation of the ancient Chaldeans to Nineveh by the kings of the Neo-Assyrian dynasty. Those who argue this point claim that (400,000) Chaldeans were deported to Assyria by Assyrian kings during the 8th and 7th centuries BC, which justify the presence of the Chaldeans in Nineveh today! If this is true and since the ancient Chaldeans, as history tells us, in 626 BC captured and ruled Babylon, there should have been then more Chaldeans in the south to accomplish such mission. Therefore, and in reality, those presenting this theory are telling us that the population of the ancient Chaldeans was at least half a million if

not more! Half a million or more Chaldeans during the 7th century BC!

It is a well-established fact that the entire population of the mighty capital of Babylon, which ruled most of what is known today as the Middle East, was (200,000). This figure, which included of course all the various peoples of Babylon, was proven by very highly technical, aerial, and scientific studies undertaken more recently. H.W.F. Saggs in "Everyday Life in Babylonia and Assyria" attests to this fact, he says:

"The total population of Babylon at the time of Nebuchadnezzar has been estimated to have been up to 200,000. This estimate is based on measurements made for the city area and figuring out how many people could have lived within its walls."

Something does not add up here, should we believe scientists and historians and their figures about Babylon or those few wishful thinkers who claim the so-called deportation figures. I wonder whom should we believe! In II Samuel 10:18 we read: "And the Syrians fled before Israel; and David slew the men of seven hundred chariots of the Syrians, and forty thousand horsemen, and smote Shō'bāch the captain of their host, who died there." Yet in I Chronicles 19:18 we read about the same account the following: "But the Syrians fled before Israel; and David slew of the Syrians seven thousand men which fought in chariots, and forty thousand footmen, and killed Shō'phāch the captain of the host." How about that for a controversy! Do we really want to mess around with figures mentioned in the ancient days?

Historians tell us that there is no doubt that all the figures relating to war in the days of antiquity were exaggerated. It has been proven that kings in the ancient days did so to achieve the status of greatness by claiming higher figures than the actual to have been killed or taken prisoners. James Wellard in "Babylon" tells us that such numbers were, of course, impossible to assess. He adds "the claim of Sennacherib that he captured (200,000) men in one battle need not be taken literally but rather as an exaggeration typical of a press hand-out in wartime". Sennacherib's capture of Babylon lists the following prize of his victory: (208,000) men and women prisoners; (11,073) asses; ...etc., an interesting feature of the list is the precise enumeration of the animals—(11,073 asses), and the round figures for the 'body count' of the humans. Assyrian kings, for a matter of fact, took as prisoners, whenever alive of course, the defeated king, the royal family, high ranking officers, noted people within the defeated kingdom, it was never like deporting the entire population.

Therefore, such deportation argument has no merit.

The claims of ancient Chaldean so-called migration to Assyria during the Islamic conquest

The Islamic Arab invasion of the middle and southern Bet Nahrain began in AD 637, when the Arabs defeated the Persians in the battle of al-Qadisiya, south of Babylon. At this time all the Christian inhabitants of southern Mesopotamia were Nestorians. The conversion of these Nestorians living in Babylonia from Christianity to Islam happened quickly. Samuel Moffett tells us in "History of Christianity in Asia":

"But in the first rough years of Arab conquest, it was the conquered who

represented civilization, and the conquerors were still nomad warriors from the desert. They shunned the cities and built army camps for themselves in centers like Basra and Kufa [both in the south].”

This quote confirms indirectly that Christianity did not survive in southern Mesopotamia soon after the Islamic conquest. Christians in southern Mesopotamia became a tiny minority compared to the Muslims, contrary to those Christians living in the northern parts of Mesopotamia. Philip Hitti in “History of the Arabs” confirms this as he wrote:

“... and as late as the early 10th century Mesopotamia (northern Iraq) was Muslim in name but Christian in character.”

These facts are undisputed, therefore, if any migration from the south to the north did occur, it would have been a Muslim migration and not some Christian Chaldeans!

The claims of ancient Chaldean so-called migration to Assyria during the Abbasid Dynasty. Few argue that a migration of ancient Chaldeans occurred during the Abbasid Dynasty rule, which started in AD 750, because of the persecution, killing and destruction of Christian properties in Babylonia. True, there have been certain intervals of persecutions during the Abbasid period, but who were the Christians during that period? And did that persecution constitute a migration? In the days of Caliph al-Mutawakkil (847-861), it has been documented that he deposed the Nestorian patriarch, destroyed many churches, and prevented Christians from riding horses and commanded them to wear dyed garments. In addition, the Christians were excluded from military service for reasons of national security. Well, if Christians were not allowed to ride horses, were identified easily by their clothing, and were considered concern for national security, how would a migration of massive numbers of Christians hundreds of miles to the north take place without alerting the authorities? If they were considered concern for national security how could we explain this so claimed massive migration? The most important question here, yet, should be, who were these Christians? Weren't they simply known as Nestorians! To hint that those Christians were Chaldeans ethnically is a hoax. On the other hand, since there was so much dislike by ancient Chaldeans towards the Assyrians, why would those ancient Chaldeans then migrate to Assyria? It just does not make sense! The move of the Nestorian Patriarchal See from Seleucia-Ctesiphon (al-Mada-in) to Baghdad in AD 762, only (10) miles away, hardly qualifies to be regarded as "a migration from the south to the north"! The Caliph al-Mansur built Baghdad, moved there and made it his capital and the Nestorian Patriarch simply followed suit.

On the other hand, it has been attested to by the Nestorian patriarch himself that the Abbasid era was not a situation, which might have caused a serious migration. Lets read a letter from Patriarch Yeshuyab III (650-660) to the bishop of Fars (Persia):

“They [Abbasids] have not attacked the Christian religion, but rather they have commended our faith, honored our priests ... and conferred benefits on churches and monasteries.”

The tolerance of the Abbasid Caliphs can be seen in its best picture with the famous debate that brought the Nestorian Patriarch Timothy I (779-823) face to face with the third Caliph al-Mahdi. It was a remarkable display of courtesy, considering the times and the situation. It is this Patriarch Timothy who came to Baghdad from Adiabene (Arbil), moving the other way around, from the north to the south!

Here again, the immigration argument does not make sense.

The claims of ancient Chaldean so-called migration to Assyria during the Mongol invasions

Aubrey Vine in "The Nestorian Churches" tells us that "when Baghdad became unsafe for the Nestorian Patriarch Denkha I (1265-1281) because of the Mongols, he moved to Azerbaijan. Still, his successor Yaballaha III was often in Baghdad, but seems to have spent much of his time at Maragha, east of Lake Urmi in Azerbaijan. Mosul and Urmi were frequent places of residence. There were, however, periods of residence in Baghdad as late as the 15th and 16th centuries." Does this mean that every time the Patriarch moved between Baghdad, Urmi, and Mosul, the entire Christian population moved with him? In 1401 Tamerlane, who was a Muslim, marched on Baghdad and killed thousands of Christians. The majority of the Christians who did survive though yielded to the forcible acceptance of Islam, which was imposed on the wretched remnants. Those few lucky Nestorians who managed to escape, fled to the mountains of Hakkari.

On the other hand, it will be ludicrous to claim that during the invasion of Tamerlane there was still a distinct Christian Chaldean community in Babylonia, a community that has managed to separate itself from all the other people. It will be down silly to claim that this community alone managed to escape Tamerlane, migrated to Assyria and later established the present day Chaldean community in Mosul (Nineveh). The only accounts, which substantiate this fictitious story, are the claims of the Chaldean Catholic Church clergymen. It is a very well known fact that the Christian community in Babylonia has recognized itself as a Christian Nestorian Community since the 5th century AD. This Babylonian Christian community was a multiethnic society of many peoples who ruled Babylon like the Sumerians, Babylonians, Assyrians, Amorites, Hurrians, Kassites, Arameans, Arabs, Chaldeans, Persians, Greeks, among others. No logical person can accept an argument stating that the Chaldeans overshadowed all the other people who ruled Babylon keeping in mind that the Chaldeans had the shortest rule in Babylonia totaling (87) years only. Why is it that we do not hear from some group calling itself Kassites, when they ruled (400) years in Babylonia? Could it be because the Book of Daniel, for example, kept the Chaldean name in the memory of the people and not the Kassites'? Mari Bar Shlemun (1350) in his book "Book of tower" states that by the 14th century the "Church of the East" had only six Metropolitans left, mainly in north Bet Nahrain. The point here is that the Christian had almost no presence in southern Mesopotamia at this time.

Hence, a very weak immigration theory.

The Nestorian Patriarch and his seals

One final theory that has been argued lately is that the Nestorian Patriarch has himself legally legitimized the title Chaldean because he used a seal referring to himself as 'Patriarch of the Chaldeans'. It is well a known fact that the Kurdish plundering, destruction, and massacres of the Assyrians and their villages in Hakkari Mountains, Turkey, intensified during the 1840's under Badir Khan Beg. The Ottoman Turks authorities supported those horrible events. It was during that difficult period that such a seal was used and only for these two reasons:

1. To escape the persecution of the Kurds and Turks who were authorized and paid by the Latin missionaries to force the Nestorians to become Catholics and unite with Rome.
2. Rev. George Percy Badger explained the second reason very eloquently in his book "The Nestorians and their Rituals". Rev. Badger wrote: "It was to put themselves, meaning the Nestorian Patriarchs, on an equality with the Patriarchs of the plains [the Catholic Patriarchs who were protected], after they had joined the Church of Rome and taken that appellation, and as a stratagem to repel the name of Nestorian." In a nutshell, the Nestorian Patriarch needed protection in order to save himself and his people during that horrifying period, he needed to gain the support of the Latin missionaries, so he was forced to use that title temporarily. Worth emphasizing here that such seal was never used again after the Nestorian Patriarch and his flock were forced to leave their homes in Hakkari.

Final thoughts

Let's ask ourselves these reasonable questions: Why is it that we cannot find any ancient Chaldeans in southern Babylonia today, a region where they always lived? Why are all of the so-called Chaldeans living in the heartland of Assyria hundreds of miles to the north? If those ancient Chaldeans hated the Assyrians, as it is known historically, why would they then migrate to Assyria? Does that make sense to anybody? And if a minority of the ancient Chaldeans were deported to Assyria, wouldn't it be reasonable to assume that they would have assimilated in the host society? Why do we have to consider that the minority of the ancient Chaldeans, who were hated by the ancient Assyrians and Babylonians survived in Assyria, meanwhile, the majority of them has assimilated in the southern Babylonian society since they are no longer found there! To reach a reasonable and logical answer to such an important matter, we must then acquire a vision for the whole picture. This complete picture shows that the ancient Chaldeans were, in a sense, foreigners to Mesopotamia, they appeared in the 10th century BC and settled predominantly in southern Babylonia, they ruled (87) years, less than any other people in the region. The absence of all types of artwork and lack of documents is noticed clearly in ancient Chaldean society. That fact could be due to their short history and rule or perhaps due to their nature as nomads, as the Dictionary of the King James Version of the Bible states: "The early people of Chaldea were fishermen and small-scale herdsmen and farmers, opposed to urbanized life." Exceptions to these facts are of course the rebuilding of the Babylonian City wall and temple, which were partly destroyed earlier, and the well-known Hanging Gardens of Babylon. Such projects in fact were undergone by the Babylonians themselves subjects now to the Chaldean rulers. There are no historical documents whatsoever attesting to the claim that the ancient Chaldeans as people migrated to the northern region of Assyria. They lived in the south as nomads and became part of the Babylonian society, the most multiethnic society in those days. There is no reason then to doubt that they assimilated in that society just as all the other peoples, mentioned earlier, living in Babylonia. Putting all the above arguments and historical data together, one can reach only one factual and definite conclusion, which should state clearly that the modern Chaldeans are not related to the ancient Chaldeans, and that they are simply Catholic Assyrians.

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