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## *Babylonia under the Greeks and Parthians*

WHILE much attention has been devoted in the last forty years to the earlier history of the countries adjoining the Tigris and Euphrates, their condition under Makedonian, Parthian, and Sassanian rule has been little attended to. Native records for this period are scanty, and our chief sources of information are classic writers who deal chiefly with the relations of the countries to the west, and in a lesser degree—and scarcely at all before the time of the later Persian or Sassanian monarchy—the works of Arab and Persian writers who collected the native traditions after the establishment of Mahometanism. Yet the period referred to is interesting as having witnessed the dying out of the cuneiform writing and the language for which it was used, as well as of the ancient religion of Assyria and Babylon, and the rise in the same district of the Talmudic development of Judaism, and of several curious semi-Christian sects. The information which the classical and later oriental historians furnish respecting the Parthian and Sassanian dynasties is exhaustively set forth in Canon Rawlinson's 'Sixth and Seventh Monarchies,' but these works contain little respecting the internal history of the empire, and especially Babylonia. The most important sources of information still remaining to be used, when some scholar possessing the requisite knowledge undertakes the task, seem to be the scanty records of this period known to

exist in the ancient Babylonian language and writing, the latest of which are doubtfully assigned to the beginning of the second century of our era, the incidental notices in the Talmud, and (especially for religious matters) the sacred writings of some of the local sects which grew up in this period, and the abundant Christian Syriac literature which flourished from the third to the thirteenth centuries of our era, and of which much is still unpublished.

We know pretty well the circumstances attending the fall of Egyptian paganism, and the adoption of a new mode of writing the Egyptian language. In Babylonia also the final disuse of the old writing was probably connected with religious change, but we know far less about it. The Achaemenidae from the time of Dareios I seem to have generally looked on the Babylonian religion with disfavour, but at the same time they made no attempt to suppress it. The partial destruction of the temple of Bel at Babylon by Xerxes<sup>1</sup> was rather a punishment for rebellion than an act of religious hostility; the other sanctuaries do not seem to have been molested, and the priests continued to possess the estates which had been granted by 'Assyrian kings.'<sup>2</sup> The Babylonian language is one of the three employed in the official inscriptions of the Achaemenidae, and many documents in it of this period are extant. Yet Aramaic, the language of commerce and diplomacy through Western Asia, would seem as early as the time of Kyros to have been the vernacular of the mass of the people in Babylonia, since it was this dialect and not that of the cuneiform inscriptions and literature which the Jews brought back to Palestine after the captivity. The Achaemenidae, unlike their successors, seem to have left no permanent impression of either their religion or language in Babylon. When Alexander took possession of the city, it was the Chaldaeans, the priests of the old national religion, whom he favoured. Bagophanes, indeed, the Persian prefect, and the 'Magi'—probably the royal chaplains—whose presence was required by the frequent residence of the Persian court, joined in outwardly welcoming the conqueror,<sup>3</sup> but of Magi at Babylon we hear no more till a much later period,<sup>4</sup> while Alexander at once took steps for the restoration of the temple of Bel. The continued use of the Babylonian language and the cuneiform character under his immediate successors is attested by numerous documents dated in the reigns of Philip III and Alexander IV, and the regency of Antigonos.

Seleukos (from whose recovery of Babylonia in B.C. 312, some years before his assumption of the regal title, dates the era of the Seleukidae) adopted the policy of depressing native in favour

<sup>1</sup> Ktesias, *Pers.* 52(21); Aelian, *V. H.* xiv. 3; Arrian, *Exp. Alex.* iii. p. 195.

<sup>2</sup> Arrian, vii. p. 480.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* iii. 195; Curtius, v. p. 1.

<sup>4</sup> In Appian, *Syr.* 125, we are evidently to understand Chaldaeans. Such mistakes are common in classical writers.

of Makedonian interests, and accordingly founded Seleukeia on the Tigris as a rival capital, which was to be purely Greek,<sup>5</sup> the opposition of the native priesthood being, if we may believe Appianus,<sup>6</sup> overcome by a miracle. Many other Makedonian colonies were founded in the same neighbourhood, and down to the close of the dynasty of the Arsakidae continued an important element in the country. Still it is remarkable how little we really know of these cities. Seleukeia was under the Parthians the largest city in their empire, and the rival of Antioch and Alexandria in wealth and population. In the first century A.D. its *plebes urbanae* numbered 600,000,<sup>7</sup> and in A.D. 164, when taken by the generals of Varus, its population was still half a million. It possessed a constitution of a Greek republican type, with a senate of 300 and a popular assembly.<sup>8</sup> Under the Seleukidae it was controlled by an officer styled *ἐπιστάτης* or president.<sup>9</sup> Under the Parthians, though liable to be entered by the king's general at his pleasure,<sup>10</sup> its independence was probably much more real than that of a *libera civitas* under the Romans. The population included a large 'Syrian'<sup>11</sup> and Jewish element, but the government seems to have been exclusively in the hands of the Greek citizens, and the temples were dedicated to Greek gods.<sup>12</sup> Though Ktesiphon, the Parthian capital, was but three miles distant across the Tigris,<sup>13</sup> Seleukeia more than once revolted, holding out on one occasion for six or seven years.<sup>14</sup> This last revolt, and another about B.C. 42, seem to be commemorated by autonomous coins of the city. The great mass of Parthian tetradrachmas and copper coins, though bearing the king's head and name, was probably struck by some of the Greek cities in Babylonia, especially Seleukeia, and present legible Greek inscriptions down to the overthrow of the Parthian empire.<sup>15</sup>

The other most important Makedonian colonies in Babylonia were Artemita and Charax Spasini, near the mouth of the Euphrates. The latter, originally founded by Alexander, was restored by Antiochos I, and again by an Arab king Pasionos or Spasinus,<sup>16</sup> who probably introduced a barbarian element. Under the Parthians it was not a free city, but the capital of a vassal kingdom, whose rulers from their names<sup>17</sup> were evidently non-Greek. Some of the coins too bear Aramaic (?) inscriptions. Yet of all these cities scarcely any remains are known, except a few coins. The ruins of Seleukeia are

<sup>5</sup> Plin. *H. N.* vi. 28.

<sup>6</sup> *Syr.* 125-6.

<sup>7</sup> Plin. vi. 28.

<sup>8</sup> Tacitus, *Ann.* vi. 42; comp. Plutarch, *Crass.* p. 1029.

<sup>9</sup> Polyb. v. 48.

<sup>10</sup> Plutarch, *loc. cit.*

<sup>11</sup> This term evidently included the native Babylonian inhabitants, an additional proof of how far Aramaic had become their vernacular.

<sup>12</sup> Capitolinus, *Verus*, Ammianus, xxiii. 6, p. 270.

<sup>13</sup> Plin. vi. 28.

<sup>14</sup> A.D. 40-47, Tacitus, *Ann.* xi. 9.

<sup>15</sup> Gardner, *Parthian Coinage*, pass.

<sup>16</sup> Plin. vi. 27.

<sup>17</sup> For Artabazus, see Lucian, *Makrob.* 16. For Abenneriges see Josephus, *A. J.* xx. 2.

said to have been employed in the construction of Bagdad, but it is hard to believe that excavations properly conducted on the site would not lead to important discoveries. The literary remains of the Babylonian Greeks are also few and unimportant. Diogenes of Seleukeia, who lived about the time of the Parthian conquest, is mentioned as a Stoic or Epikurean philosopher, and some fragments of his works are extant.<sup>18</sup> Herodikos, a 'Babylonian' grammarian repeatedly quoted by Athenaeus, is the author of some epigrams. Agathokles ὁ Βαβυλωνίος is quoted as an historian, and Seleukos of Seleukeia, who is styled by Strabo<sup>19</sup> a Chaldaean, as an author of geographical or astronomical works.<sup>20</sup> Berosus, the most famous Greek writer whom Babylonia produced, was not of Greek race. 'Zachalias Babylonius,'<sup>21</sup> who dedicated his work to 'King Mithridates,' was from his name probably a Jew. Charax produced two geographers of some note—Dionysios, who lived not long before Pliny,<sup>22</sup> and Isidoros, who is frequently quoted, and whose *Σταθμοὶ Παρθικοί* is still extant. Dorotheus ὁ Χαλδαῖος is referred to by the Pseudo-Plutarch *De Fluviiis*, as a writer *περὶ λίθων*. Lastly Apollodoros ὁ Ἀρτεμεσίτης is mentioned by Strabo<sup>23</sup> and Athenaeus<sup>24</sup> as an author of 'Parthika.'<sup>25</sup>

Antiochos I, son of Seleukos (B.C. 293–263), who ruled Babylon for several years before his father's death,<sup>26</sup> unlike him, adopted the policy of conciliating the native priesthood. His restoration of the temple at Hierapolis is related by the author of the treatise *De Dea Syra* (17–24), and a small terra-cotta cylinder, found by Rassam at Babylon a few years ago, interesting as the latest royal document in cuneiform writing known to exist, and remarkable for the archaistic type of the characters (reminding us of some of the affectations of the contemporary Alexandrians), tells of the restoration of the temples of Babylon and Borsippa by King Anti-ku-us in the forty-third year of the Seleukidean era, and prays to Nebo for the prosperity of the king, his son Silukku, and his queen Astartaniku (Stratonike).<sup>27</sup>

His interest in the affairs of his Babylonian subjects took another form, which for us is of much greater importance, for it

<sup>18</sup> Strabo, xvi. 1, p. 845; Athenaeus, iv. 168, &c.; Diogenes Laertius, vi. p. 157; Cicero, *De Div.* ii. pp. 48, &c.

<sup>19</sup> xvi. 1, p. 857. <sup>20</sup> Strabo, i. 1, p. 8, ii. 5, xvi. 1, p. 837. <sup>21</sup> Plin. xxxvii. p. 668.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.* vi. 27.

<sup>23</sup> ii. 5, p. 187.

<sup>24</sup> xv. 682.

<sup>25</sup> Since this article was written, I have noticed that Schottus, in his edition of the *Bibliotheca* of Photios, quotes on codex 94 (the epitome of a lost romance of Iamblichos, called *Babyloniaka*) a scholium *repertum in antiquis Graecis codicibus*, to the effect that Iamblichos was a Syrian, *non de illis advenis Graecis sed de ipsis Syriis indigenis*, who, having become the slave of a certain Babylonian, was (in addition to Syriac) instructed in the 'Babylonian' language, and having been taken prisoner on the capture of Babylon, became acquainted with Greek and wrote his romance, the scene of which is laid in Babylonia under King Garmos.

<sup>26</sup> Appian, *Syr.* 126.

<sup>27</sup> Budge, *Babylonian Life and History*, p. 94.

was under his auspices that Berosus, a Babylonian priest, compiled the work in three books known as 'Chaldaika,' the fragments of which furnish us with almost the only trustworthy Greek account of Assyro-Babylonian history. That the Babylonian language and religion continued in use after the time of Antiochos I is shown not only by allusions in classical authors, but by the existence of a number of documents relating, more especially, to the property of the priests at Erech. The fact that many of them are mortgages of temple lands and dues may perhaps suggest that the prosperity of the temple establishments was declining.

Under Antiochos III (b.c. 222-187) Babylonia, with the rest of the eastern provinces of the empire, passed for a short time into the hands of Molon, the rebel satrap of Media (b.c. 222-220).<sup>28</sup> Ktesiphon, the future capital of the Parthian and Sassanian kings, appears to be first mentioned in connexion with the war between Molon and his opponents.<sup>29</sup> On the suppression of the revolt the people of the Greek city of Seleukeia were punished with the utmost severity for the part they had taken in it. Towards the close of Antiochos's reign, his financial troubles induced him to make an attempt to plunder a wealthy temple of Bel, in Elymais. The inhabitants resisted him, and he was slain in the conflict which ensued.<sup>30</sup> His son, Antiochos IV, Epiphanes (b.c. 176-164), made a similar attempt to plunder the still more celebrated sanctuary at Susa, where a cultus was maintained, formed by a combination of the worship of the Zoroastrian deity Anahita, whose image had been set up there in the time of Artaxerxes II, with that of Nanaia, or Ishtar, who seems to have been the patron goddess of the city in the time of the Assyrian empire. This attempt seems to have been nearly as disastrous to its author as that made by his father.<sup>31</sup> Outrages of this class, to which the less easily defended temples of Babylonia itself were probably even more subject, must have alienated the affections of the native population from the Seleukidae, and shortly after Babylonia was the seat of a revolt under Timarchos, whom<sup>32</sup> Antiochos had made satrap of the province. He struck coins, which still exist, bearing the legend ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΜΕΓΑΛΟΤΙΜΑΡΧΟΥ; but having made himself unpopular, was slain by Demetrios, the new king of Syria, in b.c. 162, who was honoured by the Babylonians (we are perhaps to understand Seleukeians) with the title of Soter.<sup>33</sup> Demetrios I reigned till b.c. 150, and to his reign or to that of Demetrios II, Nikator, belong the latest Babylonian documents dated in the reign of a Syrian king. The Parthians under Mithridates I (b.c. 174-136) had made

<sup>28</sup> Polyb. v. 40 sq.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.* v. 46.

<sup>30</sup> Strabo, xvi. 1, p. 846; Diodoros, xxix. p. 123; Justin, xxxii. 2.

<sup>31</sup> 1 Maccab. vi. 1; Polyb. xxxi. 11; Appian, *Syr.* 181.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.* 117.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.* 118.

themselves masters of all the provinces and vassal states of Syria east of Babylonia, Elymais being the last subdued,<sup>34</sup> but the weak authority of Orosius<sup>35</sup> is not sufficient to justify the assumption that Babylonia was conquered by them before the time of Demetrios II. He was completely defeated by them and taken prisoner in B.C. 188, and that on this occasion Babylonia fell into their hands seems certain from the fact that the Syrians had to reconquer it in their next Parthian expedition, that of Antiochos Sidetes (B.C. 129)<sup>36</sup> against Phraates II, after the failure of which Babylonia was finally lost to the Seleukidae. That the Parthian king, at least before the Syrian invasion, treated his Babylonian and Greek subjects with some harshness, may be inferred from Justin, xxxvi. 1, xlii. 1, and Diodoros, xxxiv. 19.<sup>37</sup> The government of the western provinces of the Parthian empire was entrusted by Phraates to an Hyrkanian Greek, named Himeros or Euemerus, who, on his master's death in battle in B.C. 124, seized the sovereignty of Babylon, assuming, as we learn from his coins, the titles of a Parthian king, and treated his subjects with the greatest cruelty, destroying many of the temples and public buildings of Babylon, and banishing some of the citizens to Media.<sup>38</sup> His coins are dated Ann. Seleuk. 189 (B.C. 124); and to this very year belongs a Babylonian contract tablet in the British Museum, dated '125th year [of the Arsakidae] which is the 189th year, Arsaka king.' There are other documents bearing dates which fall in the long reign of Mithridates II (B.C. 124-89), in several of which the same double reckoning occurs, by which we are enabled to fix the commencement of the Parthian power to B.C. 249-248. One document, dated about B.C. 108, relating to temple first-fruits, is interesting as containing the name of a Greek Eraklidē (Herakleides). Somewhat later is an important chronological record—a table of cycles of eighteen years from the nineteenth year of Dareios II to the 218th of the Seleukidean era, B.C. 99. It was probably drawn up for astronomical purposes. There are few cuneiform documents of later date, the latest being a contract assigned by Professor Sayce to the reign of Pakorus II, A.D. 78.

Side by side with the Babylonians there existed a large Greek or Makedonian population occupying the cities founded by Alexander and his successors, speaking their own language, and worshipping the Olympian gods. They represented the ruling race under the Seleukidae, but under the Arsakidae a new element was added, the Parthian courtiers and nobles with their dependents, who seem to have been chiefly confined to the two cities of Ktesiphon and

<sup>34</sup> Justin, xxxvi. 1, xli. 6.

<sup>35</sup> v. 5.

<sup>36</sup> Justin, xxxviii. 10

<sup>37</sup> Compare Rawlinson, *Sixth Oriental Monarchy*, p. 110.

<sup>38</sup> Poseidonios, fr. 21; Diodoros, xxxiv. 21, p. 211; Justin, xli. 1; Rawlinson, *Sixth Oriental Monarchy*, p. 108; Gardner, *Parthian Coins*.

Vologesocerta, the latter probably not founded till the first century of our era. The native language of the Parthians appears to have been a Turanian dialect, which however does not seem to have been used in writing, while their religion was, at least in name, Zoroastrianism, borrowed from their Aryan neighbours and former rulers. The Jewish populations, who, with their own religion, were also an important factor in all the cities, Babylonian, Greek, and Parthian alike, seem, as in modern Russia, to have occupied whole towns by themselves, and in the second century A.D., when the Parthian power was declining, they established what almost amounted to an *imperium in imperio* in Babylonia.

In Assyria, under the dynasty of Sargon (B.C. 721-606), Aramaic, the language of northern Syria, was so extensively used for commercial purposes that it was found expedient to place dockets written in it on contract tablets of which the body was in Assyrian. That it was generally understood by the higher classes is evident from 2 Kings xviii. 26; indeed, it appears to have occupied a position like French in modern Europe, as a sort of international language. Its introduction into Babylonia as a commercial language was probably somewhat later, but its use must have been greatly stimulated by the forced immigration of Aramaic-speaking races. Under the Achaemenidae, though it was not allowed a place in the royal inscriptions, its practical importance was such that it was the language employed in official correspondence in the western half of the empire,<sup>39</sup> and was used for the inscriptions on the standard weights and the coins struck by the satraps even in Greek-speaking districts. In Babylonia it had already acquired so firm a footing before the time of Kyros that the Jewish exiles there adopted it as their vernacular instead of either their own Hebrew or the local Babylonian. This curious circumstance may perhaps be explained by the fact that they had already some knowledge of it in their own country,<sup>40</sup> and that for purposes of commercial intercourse it was as serviceable as Babylonian, while it was free from the cumbersome writing of the latter. To the Jews of the Achaemenid period are due the earliest literary specimens of Aramaic (Ezra, Daniel, Tobit).

Under the Makedonian kings Greek became the court and official language,<sup>41</sup> but alike in Makedonian colonies such as Seleukeia and in the ancient cities, Aramaic seems to have become by this time the vernacular of the whole non-Greek population.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>39</sup> Ezra iv. 7.

<sup>40</sup> 2 Kings xviii.

<sup>41</sup> There is, however, at least one instance of the use of Babylonian in a public record of this period—the cylinder of Antiochos I, already referred to.

<sup>42</sup> The evidence of this may be summed up thus: 1. The occasional use of Aramaic even under the native Assyrian and Babylonian rulers. 2. The fact that it was Aramaic which the Jews adopted as their vernacular when resident in Babylonia. 3. The use of Syrian as the general designation of the native population of Seleukeia. 4. The use of Aramaic in literary works compiled in Babylonia at this period.



Under the earlier Parthian kings (though even they are said to have had 'Syriac' translations made of ancient records relating to their dominions<sup>45</sup>) Greek continued the language of the court,<sup>46</sup> and down to at least the time of Mithridates IV (A.D. 112), to judge from coins and from the inscription of Gotarzes (A.D. 42), it continued to be used for public purposes; but the Greek legends on coins other than those probably struck by Greek cities become unintelligible, and are at last replaced by Aramaic.

Under the tolerant rule of the Arsakidae, whose own religion was, as we have seen, nominally Zoroastrianism of a corrupt kind,<sup>48</sup> the old Babylonian religion, though not specially favoured, was apparently exempt from persecution, the instances of oppression referred to by Diodoros<sup>45</sup> and Strabo<sup>47</sup> being exceptional. Strabo<sup>48</sup> in the time of Augustus, and Pliny<sup>49</sup> near the end of the first century A.D., attest the existence of flourishing priestly colleges at Sippara, Orchoe (or Erech), and Borsippa, and Pliny expressly states that the temple of Bel at Babylon was in existence in his time, though the city had decayed. These writers also bear witness to the astronomical learning of the priesthood, Strabo mentioning several Babylonians (Kiden, Naburianus, and Sudinus) who had written on this subject apparently in their native tongue.<sup>50</sup> We have independent evidence as to the condition of Erech at this period in the extensive remains of buildings, and the numerous coffins found there along with Parthian coins.<sup>51</sup> The old Babylonian probably continued (like Latin in the middle ages) the language of religion, science, and law. To carry out the temple ritual in its completeness, the priesthood must have had some knowledge of it, and also for the comprehension of the astronomical records, which were still understood in the time of Claudius Ptolemaeus, about A.D. 150. Few legal documents of this late date are indeed known, but they have not been specially sought for, and the statement of Pliny,<sup>52</sup> '*Nuper et in Euphrate nascens circa Babylonem papyrus intellectum est eundem usum habere chartae. Et tamen adhuc malunt*

Besides Jewish literature we know of the Syrian translations composed for the earlier Parthian kings, and the 'Nabathean Agriculture,' and other works probably composed in Aramaic during the later years of their rule (compare Josephus, *B. J.* Proem. § 1, 2). 5. The adoption of Aramaic inscriptions on the Parthian coins when the mint officer ceased to understand Greek. 6. The enormous Aramaic element in the Persian inscriptions and literature of the time of the Sassanidae present from the commencement of their imperial rule, due probably to the admixture of the vernacular of the seat of their government with that of their native province.

<sup>45</sup> Moses of Chorene, i. 7-8.

<sup>46</sup> Plutarch, *Crassus*, p. 1030.

<sup>48</sup> An edition of the sacred books of Zoroastrianism is ascribed to them in the Dinkard.

<sup>49</sup> xxxiv. 21.

<sup>47</sup> xvi. 1, p. 346.

<sup>50</sup> *Ib.* p. 837.

<sup>51</sup> *H. N.* vi. 26.

<sup>52</sup> The few literary Babylonian documents later than the time of the Achaemenidae are chiefly astronomical.

<sup>53</sup> Loftus, *Chaldaea and Susiana*, p. 201 *et seq.*



*Parthi vestibus literas intexere,*' may throw some light on their disappearance. At the same time the general adoption of papyrus, a material for which cuneiform writing is most unsuitable, must have contributed to the substitution of the more flowing scripts of Aramaic origin. The knowledge of the cuneiform writing having been specially preserved by the Babylonian priesthood, there can be little doubt that its final disuse coincided with the suppression of their colleges and the religion they practised. When this took place is not directly stated by any ancient writer; but we can have little doubt that it was at the time of the transfer of the empire from the Arsakidae to the Persian Sassanidae under Artaxerxes IV, in A.D. 226. The latter dynasty certainly adopted a policy of intolerance towards non-Persian religions and customs. It is only in the case of Armenia that we have direct evidence of the suppression of non-Zoroastrian rites by Artaxerxes,<sup>53</sup> but his policy elsewhere was no doubt the same, and his accession was for non-Zoroastrian rites in his empire what the edict of Theodosius was for non-Christian ones in the dominions of Rome. The latest detailed accounts of Babylonia under the Parthians refer to both native and Greek religious rites as flourishing there, and to Seleukeia as retaining its Greek character,<sup>54</sup> while the first similar account given by a classical author after the establishment of the Sassanian dynasty refers to no religion as existing there save Zoroastrianism, which under neither the Achaemenidae nor the Arsakidae had obtained any firm footing in the country. Seleukeia appears no longer as a free Greek city, but has become a mere suburb of Ktesiphon, and its name has been replaced by that of Koche.<sup>55</sup> Both the Greek and Babylonian idolatries in the Persian empire fell, so far as we know, without a struggle, but the latter had considerable influence on the various sects, Manichean and Mazdakite, which arose under the successors of Artaxerxes. The Manicheans, in addition to various doctrines borrowed from Zoroastrianism and Christianity, are described by Epiphanius<sup>56</sup> as *ἡλιόν τε σέβοντες καὶ σελήνην, ἄστροις*

<sup>53</sup> Moses of Chorene, ii. 74.

<sup>54</sup> The very latest allusions to the old rites as still existing in Babylon seem to be the mention of the worship of Bel and Nebo at Babel and Borsippa in an early Talmudic tract, perhaps of the second century (see Rawlinson, *Herodotus*, i. p. 664), and the description of the worship of Tammuz at Babylon in the 'Book of Nabathean Agriculture,' published by Chwolson, the Aramaic original of which probably belonged to the time of the latest Parthian kings. Claudian (*De Laud. Stilich.* l. 60-64) is not to be taken seriously.

<sup>55</sup> Ammianus, xxiv. pp. 297, 299; Rufus Festus, p. 418. That it was not deserted in the time of Julian, as some might hastily conclude from the words of Ammianus (xxiv. p. 297), *civitatem desertam collustrans*, is evident from S. Gregorius, *In Julianum*, ii. p. 88. Ammianus is merely alluding to the flight of the inhabitants on the approach of the Romans. The foundation of 'Antioch on the Tigris' by Chosroes I in A.D. 540 (Rawlinson, *Seventh Monarchy*, p. 895) might seem contrary to the usual policy of the Sassanidae, but Chosroes was in many respects the most tolerant king of this dynasty.

<sup>56</sup> *Anakeph.* ii. 2.

τε καὶ δυνάμει καὶ δαίμοσιν ἐνχόμενοι, which might be taken for a summary of the Babylonian religion, while to the modern Mandaïtes or Sabians of the neighbourhood of Bagdad similar doctrines are attributed. In Assyria, which belonged to the Roman empire, the old Assyro-Babylonian rites seem to have continued in a more or less corrupt form as late as the sixth century;<sup>67</sup> but Babylon had been the chief seat of priestly learning, and it may be doubted how far the northern priesthood preserved the knowledge of the ancient language. The source of the very accurate information respecting the Assyro-Babylonian mythology given by Damaskios, who resided at the Persian court about A.D. 530, is uncertain. The notices in the Byzantine lexicographers are probably taken from earlier Greek writers now lost.

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<sup>67</sup> Ammianus, xxiii. p. 258; James of Sarug quoted in Lenormant, *Hist. Anc.* v. p. 70.