



CHALDEANS

CHALDEANS (Kaldu), West Semitic tribes of southern Babylonia attested in Assyrian texts from the early 9th century B.C. By the middle of the 8th century they had lost their political and ethnic identity and became a constituent element in the population of Babylonia. Following Berossus, classical authors referred to Babylonians as Chaldeans and also used the name Chaldaioi as a synonym for astrologers and magicians.

The Chaldeans were traditional allies of the Elamites and Iranians in their struggle against the Assyrians. In about 814 b.c. the Chaldeans, together with the Elamites and other allies, were fighting Assyrian troops in the Dīāla region. When the Chaldean chief Merodach-Baladan seized the Babylonian throne in 721 b.c., he organized an alliance between the Chaldean tribes and the Elamites against Assyria. In 693 Sennacherib defeated the joint Babylonian-Elamite forces at Nippur. A year later the Babylonians, under the leadership of Mushezib-Marduk, joined with Chaldean and Aramaic tribes, Elamites, and all the Zagros tribes (Parsumash, Anzan, Ellipi, etc.) in rebellion against the Assyrians. The nucleus of the army consisted of Elamite and Iranian charioteers, infantry, and cavalrymen. These combined forces defeated the Assyrians in battle at Halule on the Tigris, but their losses were so great that they were unable to take advantage of their success. In 626 the Chaldean leader Nabopolassar decided to renew the Babylonian struggle against Assyrian domination; he founded the Neo-Babylonian, or Chaldean, dynasty. In 614 the Medes, led by King Cyaxares, captured the Assyrian capital, Aššur. After the battle had ended, Nabopolassar arrived with his army. The Medes



and Babylonians concluded an alliance, reinforced by a dynastic marriage between Nabopolassar's son Nebuchadnezzar and Cyaxares' daughter Amytis. The Chaldean dynasty continued to rule Mesopotamia until the Achaemenid conquest in 539 b.c.

Bibliography : J. A. Brinkman, *A Political History of Post-Kassite Babylonia, 1158-722 B.C.*, Rome, 1968, pp. 260-67. Idem, *Prelude to Empire, Babylonian Society and Politics, 747-626 B.C.*, Philadelphia, 1984. D. O. Edzard, "Kaldu," *RIA* V, 1977, pp. 291-97.