

*Babylonian Male Names**Julia Giessler*

Babylonian male names make up the majority of the name material in the Babylonian cuneiform sources dating to the first millennium BCE. This chapter discusses typical elements of male names and also how these elements are formed and combined. The second part of the chapter is dedicated to abbreviated forms of these names as well as to the phenomenon of some individuals having more than one legitimate name.

Typology of Male Names*Introduction*

Babylonian male names are usually marked with a single vertical wedge, the so-called '*Personenkeil*' (see Chapter 1). Exceptions to this rule are the names of the Neo-Babylonian kings, which are frequently spelled without a personal marker. Female names are clearly distinguished from male ones by the female marker MUNUS. Other than that, male and female names differ only slightly with regard to grammatical features, semantics, and structure (Chapter 3).

Besides male names, family names can also be introduced by the '*Personenkeil*' or, in rare cases, even by MUNUS. Several male and a few female names are known to serve as family names concurrently.¹ While these family names hark back to ancestral names, there are also family names which derive from occupational titles or places of origin. In these cases, the '*Personenkeil*' can be replaced by or combined with the determinative LÚ, which is otherwise not used as a personal but as a professional marker in this period (see Chapter 4).

¹ Examples of family names that go back to male ancestors will be given in the course of this chapter. Family names that refer to female ancestors are Maqartu 'Precious', Qaqqadānitu '(The one) with large head', and perhaps Arrabtu '(Female) dormouse' (Wunsch 2006).

The longest personal names express complete sentences, consisting of two to four or, in rare cases, even more words.² On the other hand, names can also consist of single and compound terms. In modern translations of Babylonian texts, personal names are capitalised and hyphens are used to connect the constitutive elements of the name. Personal markers and determinatives are usually not displayed, but in this volume we mark female names by placing ^f in superscript before the name. In the course of this chapter it will also be indicated whether a name is attested only as a male name or also as a family name.

The literal meaning of personal names varies greatly. Apart from names heavy with religious meaning, profane statements, questions, and vocabulary from daily life are also used to denote individuals. Nonsense names, on the other hand, are hardly attested. Possible pet names with reduplicated syllables (so-called ‘Banana names’) are not common in this period. Exceptions might, for instance, be the male names Bazuzu (common) and Igigi (rare), whose literal meaning still escapes us. Compared to older periods, there are also very few names in the Babylonian onomasticon of the first millennium which cannot yet be associated with a specific language; such names are discussed by Ran Zadok in this volume (see Chapter 18).

The overwhelming majority of personal names relates directly to the name-bearers and their environment. Tangible topics such as the newborn child, its family, and the circumstances of its birth are connected with the grand scheme of things: the value of life, its creation, and, of course, the divine influence on it. Thus, the onomasticon contains a great number of recurring terms related to religion, progeny, family, and social life. Some of the most common terms will be introduced in this chapter.

Although names remain untranslated in modern text editions, knowledge about their meaning is fundamental for creating correct transliterations and transcriptions, especially when ambiguous logographic spellings are involved (see Chapter 6). Moreover, the interpretation of names also enables us to understand their social significance, as names can convey information that goes far beyond a gender dichotomy. Many names

² The Babylonian onomasticon comprises a few names consisting of five words, for example, Lūmur-pāni-Marduk-itti-balātu ‘May I see the face of Marduk with life’ (Baker 2004 no. 265 r. 7’), Ultu-pāni-Bēl-lū-šulum ‘May well-being (come) from the face of Bēl’, and Papsukkal-ša-iqbū-ul-īni ‘That, which has been commanded by Papsukkal, is irrevocable’ (Tallqvist 1905, 240, 271). An example from Assyria is the name of the prince Aššur-etel-šamē-eršeti-muballissu ‘Aššur, the prince of heaven and earth is the one who keeps him alive’ (Pempe in PNA 1/I, 184–5).

contain relevant hints about the social status and origin of their bearers (see Chapter 1).

Interpretations of names given in the course of this chapter are based on Knut L. Tallqvist (1905), Johann J. Stamm (1939), John P. Nielsen (2015), and Cornell Thissen (2017), who collected and analysed a large amount of material from the Babylonian onomasticon. For supplementary information and further attestations, the online database *Prosobab* has been used (Waerzeggers and Groß et al. 2019).

Typical Elements of Male Names

Deities are particularly common elements of Babylonian, and generally of all Akkadian, names. In addition to the generic terms *ilu* ‘god’, *ilī* ‘gods’ (or ‘my god’), and *ilānu* ‘the gods’, spelled mostly with the logogram DINGIR plus possible endings,³ names of specific divinities occur in large numbers. Starting with Nabû, the most popular god in the onomasticon of this period, Knut L. Tallqvist counted a total of 84 divine names attested in personal names (1905). This included not only deities, but also divine titles, epithets, and unclear logographic spellings. The number of deities frequently used as theophoric name elements is in fact much smaller (Table 2.1).⁴

Several groups of male names show a flexible use of theophoric elements. The common name type DN-iddin ‘(God x) has given’ is, for instance, attested with all kinds of different deities – for example, Anu-iddin, Bēl-iddin, Ea-iddin, Nabû-iddin, among others. The choice of a specific deity as theophoric name element depends on several factors (see also Chapter 1). Personal preferences, local customs, and historical trends, but also the social status of the name-bearer can play a role. Generally, men tend to include the principal god or goddess of their hometown in their names. There are also some who show a preference for deities associated with their professions, and still others who follow a theological pattern when naming their children, one by one in accordance with their birth order, after the hierarchical position of the gods in the pantheon (see Baker 2002).

³ Plural forms can be marked by the signs MEŠ and ME or by annexing the syllable *-ni*. Spellings for ‘my god’ include DINGIR, DINGIR-*ia*, *-ia*, and *-ú-a*.

⁴ The frequency by which the thirty most common deities occur in names is illustrated in a table provided by Tallqvist (1905, xix–xx). Regarding all periods of Akkadian, Johann J. Stamm counted 53 different theophoric elements in the onomasticon (Stamm 1939, 68–9).

Table 2.1 *Divine names frequently used in Babylonian male names, along with their logographic spellings*

| | | | | | | | | | |
|-------------------|--|--------|--|--------|--|----------|---|---------|----------------------------|
| Adad | ^d IŠKUR ^d ₁₀ | Bānītu | (syll.) | Ea | ^d IDIM | Marduk | ^d AMAR.UTU ^d ŠÚ | Ninlil | ^d NIN.LÍL |
| Amurru | ^d KUR.GAL ^d MAR.TU | Bēl | ^d EN | Enlil | ^d ₅₀ | Mār-bitī | ^d A.É ^d DUMU.É | Ninurta | ^d MAŠ |
| Anu | ^d ₆₀ | Bēltu | ^d GAŠAN ^d NIN | Gula | ^d ME.ME | Nabû | ^d AG ^d PA | Nusku | ^d PA.KU |
| Aya | (syll.) | Bunene | ^d ĪHAR | Ištar | ^d IN.NIN ^d INANNA ^d ₁₅ | Nanāya | (syll.) | Šin | ^d ₃₀ |
| Bābu ⁵ | ^d BA.Ú ^d KÁ | Būru | ^d AMAR | Madānu | ^d DI.KUD | Nergal | ^d IGI.DU ^d U.GUR | Šamaš | ^d UTU |

⁵ The reading of this god's name is debated; see recently Sandowicz (2021) on this matter.

Foreign gods can be mentioned in names that also include Babylonian elements and vice versa. More information on these hybrid names, reflecting the multi-cultural setting of this period, can be found elsewhere in this book (see Chapters 7, 8, and 12).

Apart from the deities themselves, their sanctuaries are also mentioned in personal names. Eanna, Ezida, Esagil, and other temples occur, as well as smaller places of worship, such as Bīt-Akītu and Bīt-Papsukkal. Secular toponyms and localities that link name-bearers to their home towns cover a similar range. Cities across the region of Akkad, from the capital of Babylon to provincial centres such as Sippar, Nippur, and Kish, are used as elements in personal names, alongside generic terms such as *bitu* ‘house’ (É) and *ālu* ‘city’ (URU).

Within the group of kinship terms that occur as elements in names, children play a larger role than adults. The mentioning of *abu* ‘(biological) father’ (AD)⁶ and *ummu* ‘mother’ (AMA) is less common than that of *abu* ‘brother’ (ŠEŠ) and *abātu* ‘sister’ (mostly written syllabically), which can refer either to the newborn child itself or to its siblings. In any event, the mentioning of siblings indicates that the name-bearer was not the first-born. It is possible that the term *māru* ‘son’ (DUMU) likewise expresses birth order, when a child bearing such a name was born after the one designated as *aplu* ‘son, heir’ (A, IBILA), *kinu* ‘legitimate one’ (GIN), or *kudurru* ‘heir’ (NÍG.DU).⁷

The terms *šumu* ‘name’ (MU) and *zēru* ‘seed’ (NUMUN) are typical for male names. As expressions for human continuity, they relate exclusively to sons who will hand down their father’s heritage, including his household and family name.⁸ By contrast, references to the brief biological existence of human beings are contained in all kinds of names. Related concepts of life, health, and survival concern both male and female offspring. They are integrated in names through elements such as *balātu* ‘life’, ‘to live’ and *bullutu* ‘to keep alive’ or ‘to bring into being’ (TIN), *šulmu* ‘well-being’ (mostly written syllabically), and *šillu* ‘protection’ (GIŠ.MI).

⁶ The term *abu* can also refer to divine father figures and to owners of slaves; see Stamm (1939, § 8).

⁷ For a detailed discussion regarding the meaning of these name elements, see Stamm (1939, § 7). In case of the terms *abu* and *abātu* it is often unclear whether the imagined speaker uttering the name is the name-bearer (in which case these elements refer to siblings) or the sibling(s) (in which case these elements refer to the newborn child).

⁸ For a comprehensive analysis of Mesopotamian personal names as metaphors and manifestations of the individual’s fame and memory, see Radner (2005).

Frequently recurring verbs in names are *amāru* ‘to see’ (IGI), *aqāru* ‘to be precious’ (KAL), *banū* ‘to create’ (DÜ), *bašū* ‘to exist’ (GÁL), *erēšu* ‘to wish for’ (APIN, KAM, KÁM), *ešēru* ‘to be/go well’ (GIŠ), *eṭēru* ‘to save’ (KAR, SUR), *lē’ú* ‘be able, powerful’ (Á.GÁL, DA), *nadānu* ‘to give’ (MU, SUM.NA), *nādu* ‘to praise’ (I), *kānu* ‘to be(come) permanent, firm, true’ (GI.NA, GIN), *našāru* ‘to protect’ (ÜRÜ, PAB), *paḥāru* ‘to gather’ (BÁḤAR), *qabū* ‘to name, call’ (E), *rāmu* ‘to love’ (ÁG), *šalāmu* ‘to be(come) healthy, intact’, and *šullumu* ‘to keep healthy, intact, safe’ (GI). Adjectives used as elements in names often derive from these verbs. Additionally, *damqu* ‘good’ (SIG₅), *dannu* ‘strong’ (mostly written syllabically, sometimes KAL), and *ṭābu* ‘good, sweet’ (DÜG.GA) are frequently used adjectives.

Sentence Names

Personal names expressing complete sentences do not necessarily follow the common word order of the Late Babylonian language (subject–object–predicate). Often, the predicate stands at the beginning of the name. The phrase ‘Marduk has given (an heir)’ occurs, for instance, in two different names: Marduk-(aplu-)iddin and Iddin-Marduk (also a family name). Along with the example of Aplu-iddin ‘He has given an heir’, it becomes clear that elements were not only exchanged but also omitted in order to create short or alternative forms of names. The practice of shortening or modifying names will be discussed in greater detail in the section on ‘Shortened Names’.

Despite their variation in length and word order, Babylonian sentence names can be divided into a number of subcategories based on their contents and narrative structure.

- a) Names like ‘Marduk has given (an heir)’ express **favourable actions** by revered entities towards the name-bearer and his social environment from the viewpoint of an anonymous narrator. The actors included in these names are usually deities, while the newborn child and its environment appear as the beneficiaries of the actions.⁹ Less often masters (of slaves), the king (as superior of his officials), and cities as well as regions are mentioned as entities bestowing favour.¹⁰

⁹ Exceptionally, relatives of the name-bearer are mentioned as agents – for example, Aḥu-ālu-ušur ‘O brother, protect the city’ (Nielsen 2015, 17).

¹⁰ For an extensive discussion of names of slaves and officials, see Chapters 1 and 5 in this volume.

This group of names shows a huge diversity in structure. Names that obey the common word order usually consist of the subject in initial position followed either by an object and a conjugated verbal form or by a genitive construction consisting of a participle plus object. Compare, for instance, the parallel names Nabû-šumu-iddin ‘Nabû has given the name’ (also used as a family name) and Nabû-nādin-šumi ‘Nabû is the giver of the name’. Occasionally the subject is followed by two verbal forms indicating consecutive actions towards the newborn child: for example, Sîn-tabni-ušur ‘O Sîn, you have created (the child), now protect (it)’ (also a family name).¹¹ Names in this category usually consist of three words, but more elements occur when compound nouns are involved or prepositions are added: for example, Nabû-zēr-kitti-līšir ‘O Nabû, may the seed of truth thrive’ and Nergal-ina-tēšī-eṭir ‘O Nergal, save from confusion’. In names using a reversed sentence order, the object is usually not retained; see, for instance, the male names Ibni-Ištar ‘Ištar has created’, Iddin-Bēl ‘Bēl has given’, and Eriḫa-Enlil ‘Enlil has replaced for me’.

- b) **Conditions and qualities** constitute the topic of another common group of sentence names, expressed by (verbal) adjectives. The subjects are usually deities, the king, the name-bearer, or relatives. Most of these names consist of two words, as in the male names Bēl-dannu ‘Bēl is strong’, Ištar-lē?i ‘Ištar is capable’, and Aḫḫū-ṭābū ‘The brothers are good’. Three elements occur when compounds are employed or when positive injunctions are expressed, as in the rare male names Abi-ummi-aqar ‘The (maternal) grandfather is precious’ and Šarru-lū-dari ‘May the king be eternal’, or in the family name Arkāt-ilāni-damqā ‘The future of the gods is good’. Four elements are exceptional: for example, the rare male name Abu-Enlil-dāri-libūr ‘O father, may Enlil stay firm forever’.
- c) Apart from sentences pronounced by anonymous speakers, names can also express **personal statements** of the newborn child or a parent. Examples of such male names are Ana-Bēl-atkal ‘I trusted in Bēl’, Nanāya-ušalli ‘I prayed to Nanāya’, and Abu-ul-īde ‘I do not know the (or my) father’ (also used as a family name).¹² Invocations of deities frequently precede such statements, as in the male names Bēl-ina-nakutti-alsika ‘O Bēl, I called out to you in distress’ and Bābu-alsiki-abluṭ ‘O Bābu, I called on you and I lived’. The name

¹¹ Another (rare) example of this sentence structure is the male name Nabû-tabni-šuklil ‘O Nabû, you have engendered, now cause (the child) to be carried to full term’ (Nielsen 2015, 254).

¹² Female names possibly reflecting a mother’s lament in childbirth are discussed in Chapter 3 (Classification, 6).

Lūši-ana-nūr-Marduk ‘May I go out into the light of Marduk’ (also used as a family name) is a popular example of a name with atypical word order.

A particularly common element of this type of names is the wish to see (*lūmur* ‘may I see’), mostly referring to a certain deity. Desired occasions and places can be named, as in the male names Nabû-ina-Esagil-lūmur ‘May I see Nabû in (the temple) Esagil’, Bēl-ina-kāri-lūmur ‘May I see Bēl at the mooring place’, Nabû-nūrka-lūmur ‘O Nabû, may I see your light’, and Pāni-Sîn-lūmur ‘May I see the face of Sîn’. Also, the wish for siblings or for one’s hometown can be expressed: for example, the male names Aḥḥē-lūmur ‘May I see (the) brothers’ and Ālu-lūmur ‘May I see the city’.

- d) **Equations** between entities occur in names expressing declarative sentences as well as questions. In order to stress the estimation of a personal god, deities are matched with relatives of the name-bearer, authorities, and protective forces, or sometimes also with each other: for example, the male names Aḥu-kî-Sîn ‘The brother is like Sîn’, Adad-dayyānu ‘Adad is the judge’, Bēl-usātu ‘Bēl is (my) help’, Enlil-kidin ‘Enlil is protection’, and Sîn-kî-Nabû ‘Sîn is like Nabû’.¹³ Comparisons between relatives and other phenomena are exceptional; see, for instance, the uncommon male name Aḥu-dūru ‘The brother is (like) a wall’. Compound nouns occur only scarcely: for example, the rare male name Aḥī-šadi-ili ‘My brother is (like) the mountain of the god’. As predicates are not employed, these names cannot always be distinguished from names based on nouns in genitive construction. When phrased as a question, they are usually recognisable by the initial interrogative particle *mannu* (or *mamma*) ‘who’: for example, the male names Mannu-kî-Nanāya ‘Who is like Nanāya?’, Mamma-kî-Ezida ‘Who is like Ezida?’, and Mamma-kî-šarri ‘Who is like the king?’.
- e) **Other questions** expressed by male names are, for instance, Ammēni-ilī ‘Why, my god?’, Aya-aḥu ‘Where is the brother?’, Mannu-izkur ‘Who has proclaimed?’, and Mīnu-ēpuš-ilī ‘O my god, what have I done?’. Some are preceded by invocations of deities: for example, the male name Bēl-ammēni ‘O Bēl, why?’.

Not all sentence names can be assigned to one of the aforementioned groups. Some are completely exceptional, while others do not entirely

¹³ Such names might have been more common in older periods, as seen from the examples listed by Stamm (1939, 299–301).

match the structures and meanings of comparable names, such as the common male names Itti-DN-balātu ‘With DN there is life’, attested with various theophoric elements, and Ša-Nabû-šû ‘He is the one of Nabû’, also attested with the variant Ša-Bêl-šû ‘He is the one of Bêl’. The latter name constitutes a borderline case: by linking the name-bearer to the god Nabû or Bêl, respectively, this name’s meaning shows affinity with sentence names expressing equations between entities but its structure resembles that of names based on a genitive construction.

Compound Names (Genitive Constructions)

As the example of Ša-Nabû-šû ‘He is the one of Nabû’ illustrates, names based on genitive constructions do not have to be completely different from sentence names. Besides the fact that some can be interpreted as nominal sentences uttered by an anonymous speaker, parallels in meaning also occur. The relationship between deities and name-bearers or their environment is the most popular topic in both categories of names. Yet, the majority of compound names are characterised by a distinct vocabulary that indicates that we are not dealing with short forms of sentences, but with original names.

- a) Some frequently attested compound names refer to the name-bearers as **servants and subordinates of deities**. This relationship can be expressed by the status terms *amīlu* ‘man’ and *ardu* ‘servant’ in male names and family names alike;¹⁴ see Amīl-Nanāya ‘Man of Nanāya’, Arad-ili-rabī ‘Servant of the great god’, and Arad-Nergal ‘Servant of Nergal’ (also a family name). Alternatively, subordination is indicated metaphorically by terms like *kalbu* ‘dog’ and *būru* ‘calf’, such as in the male names Būr-Adad ‘Calf of Adad’ and Kalbi-Bābu ‘Dog of Bābu’. Occupational titles, temple designations, and geographic references are frequently employed in family names that express subordination, but hardly ever in male names of this type.¹⁵
- b) Compound names that refer to the birth of the name-bearer as a **present of the gods** can employ several synonymous terms for ‘gift’; see the male names Nidinti-Anu ‘Gift of Anu’, Qīšti-Marduk

¹⁴ Female names can likewise include the status term *amtu* ‘maidservant’. Yet, an Akkadian term for ‘woman’ is, to my knowledge, not attested in personal names at all.

¹⁵ An exception might be Šangū-Ninurta ‘Priest of Ninurta’. This is mostly known as a family name, but at least once attested as a male name (UET 4 89:11).

- ‘Gift of Marduk’, Rēmūt-Bābu ‘Gift of Bābu’, and Širikti-Šamaš ‘Gift of Šamaš’.
- c) Another group of common compound names express **divine help and patronage**; see, for instance, the male names Gimil-Gula ‘Favour of Gula’, Ina-šilli-Esagil ‘Under the protection of Esagil’, also attested with the variant Ina-šilli-šarri ‘Under the protection of the king’, and Kidin-Sîn ‘Protection of Sîn’ (also a family name). The contents and terminology of these names sometimes equal that of the aforementioned sentence names that express equations between deities and protective forces; compare, for instance, Bēl-eṭēri ‘Lord of saving’ (also a family name) and Bēl-eṭēri-Nabû ‘Lord of saving is Nabû’ (male name), or the male names Bēl-usātu ‘Bēl is (my) help’ and Nabû-bēl-usāti ‘Nabû is the lord of help’.
- d) Widely known as a name for orphans and foundlings is Ša-pî-kalbi ‘From the mouth of a dog’ (see Chapter 1). Structurally similar names mention deities instead of the term *kalbu* ‘dog’, for example, Ša-pî-Bēl. In these cases, a metaphorical interpretation is also possible: ‘The one promised by Bēl’.¹⁶

Single Words (Non-Compound Names)

The briefest names, consisting of only one word, show the biggest variety regarding contents. On the one hand, they can refer to concepts and ideas that also occur as elements of sentence names and compound names. These names might well be short versions of originally longer forms; see, for example, the male names Ēṭiru ‘Saviour’ (cf. Amurru-ēṭir ‘Amurru has saved’), Dābibi ‘My plea’ (cf. Iššar-dābibi-nēr ‘O Iššar, kill those who plot against me’), Gimillu ‘Favour’ (cf. Gimil-Nergal ‘Favour of Nergal’ or Nabû-mutir-gimilli ‘Nabû is the one who returns kindness’), Balāssu ‘His life’ (cf. Enlil-balāssu-iqbi ‘Enlil pronounced his life’), Ribātu ‘Compensation’ (cf. Šamaš-eriba ‘Šamaš has replaced for me’), and Talīmu ‘Favourite brother’ (cf. Nabû-talīmu-ušur ‘O Nabû, protect the favourite brother’).¹⁷ On the other hand, brief names can be based on a totally different vocabulary than those consisting of sentences or compounds. In addition to nouns denoting phenomena from the social and natural environment, isolated adjectives and verbs are also used as names.

¹⁶ See Stamm (1939, 259). Nielsen (2015) gives a literal translation: ‘Of the mouth of Bēl’.

¹⁷ Some of these names are also used as family names: Balāssu ‘His life’, Dābibi ‘My plea’, Gimillu ‘Favour’, and Šamaš-eriba ‘Šamaš has replaced for me’. Also, the male name Ēṭiru ‘Saviour’ corresponds with the family name Eṭēru ‘To save’.

- a) **Natural phenomena** are represented when individuals are named after plants, stones, or other materials; see, for instance, the male names Burāšu ‘Juniper’ and Ḥuṣābu ‘Chip of wood’.
- b) Also, a large group of **animal names** serve to denote individuals, both male and female (see Chapter 3 for female names). Curiously, wild beasts are more often referred to than domesticated ones, and highly symbolic animals, including lions, eagles, and the mythological Anzû bird, are completely lacking in the onomasticon. Instead we find, for instance, men called Barbaru ‘Wolf’, Arrab(t)u ‘(Female) dormouse’ (both forms are also used as family names), Ḥaḥḥuru ‘Raven’, Uqūpu ‘Monkey’, Šellebu ‘Fox’, Murašû ‘Wildcat’, and Kulbibu ‘Ant’. Regarding domesticated animals, especially terms for offspring are used as male names; e.g., Kalūmu ‘Lamb’ and Mūrānu ‘Puppy’. Thus, it seems that animal terms serve mainly as pet names and nicknames, mimicking physical qualities and character traits of humans. Yet, despite their informal and at times humoristic connotation, hardly any of them are actually attested as the second name of an individual (Stamm 1939, § 4). The phenomenon of second names will be further discussed under ‘Nicknames and Double Names’.
- c) The same holds for male names that refer directly to **physical features and other personal characteristics**, such as Dullupu ‘Sleepy’, Dummuqu ‘To be gracious’, Arrakūtu ‘Very tall’, Nummuru ‘Brilliant’, Tardennu ‘Second(ary)’, and Ašarēdu ‘The foremost one’ (also a family name). Despite their informal appearance, these names are not known as secondary names.
- d) The **geographical origin** of men is reflected in names such as Bābilāya ‘Babylonian’, Balīḥû ‘Man from Balikh’ (cf. Bālīḥāya ‘The Balikhian’), or Miširāya ‘Man from Egypt’. These names are mainly used as family names, but occasionally they also denote male individuals.
- e) The **time of birth** can play a role in name-giving. Some individuals are named after the month in which they were born, such as Ulūlāya ‘Man born in Ulūlu’, or after a festival taking place at the time, for example, Kinūnāya ‘Man born during the Kinūnu festival’.
- f) An individual’s **social rank** can be mirrored by names such as Batūlu ‘Young man’, Zikaru ‘Man’, Līdānu ‘Bastard’, and perhaps also Banūnu (West Semitic) ‘Little son’ (if not to be read in Akkadian: Bānūnu ‘Our creator’).
- (g) **Occupational titles** constitute a particularly large group amongst the original one-word names. Most of them serve only as family names in

the first millennium BCE, such as *Asû* ‘Physician’, *Gallābu* ‘Barber’, and *Ṭābiḫū* ‘Butcher’ (see Chapter 4). Only a few are used as male names; see, for instance, *Dayyānu* ‘Judge’ and *Ḥazannu* ‘Mayor’.

Variants of Male Names

Individuation by Filiation

Although personal names denote individuals, they are not unique themselves. This does not only apply to popular names. Even uncommon names lose their exceptional status when reused in memory of their original bearers. Within small communities, such as nuclear families and local work teams, the fundamental non-uniqueness of personal names can be ignored. The mentioning of simple names and even generic titles, such as ‘mom’ or ‘boss’, is usually sufficient to identify a specific member of an in-group. Otherwise, short forms and nicknames can be employed to differentiate between namesakes within a community. However, the larger a group, the more it needs unambiguous ways to identify a specific person in time and place. Especially in official contexts, for instance, when drawing up long-term contracts such as property deeds, societies need a way to ensure that witnesses, acting parties, and their descendants can be identified in the future.

Official documents from first millennium BCE Babylonia frequently use additional data when referring to individuals. Besides indications of origins like ‘the Borsippian’ (^{lú}BAR.SIP^{ki}), status terms such as *qallu* ‘slave’ (of another individual) and occupational titles like *ṭupšar bīti* ‘college scribe’ were used. Freeborn people are usually designated as sons or daughters of their fathers. Occasionally, maternal names are given instead of paternal ones (see Chapter 1). In addition, the urban gentry also used family names taken from occupational titles of their members or from personal names of their (alleged) ancestors (see Chapter 4). In Seleucid times genealogies expand even more, as individuals are frequently mentioned by name, patronym, grandfather’s name, and family name.

Shortened Names

Shortening of names can take place for practical as well as affectionate reasons. In contrast to modern short names, Babylonian ones are not necessarily less official than their original full forms, as they are attested in all kinds of formal documents. Depending on the structure of the

original name, there are different ways and degrees of shortening. The longer the original name, the more possibilities it offers for shortening. In addition to simple and multiple reductions, modifications also occur.

Names expressing complete sentences can be shortened by omitting one or more elements. Short forms created by such reductions still constitute complete and grammatically correct sentences that express the same basic meaning as the original full forms. Sometimes, however, the omission of elements led to ambiguous short forms in which the original sentence structures of the full names are not recognisable anymore. This is the case when, for instance, the male name Ana-Bēl-ēreš 'He desired Bēl' is shortened to the form Bēl-ēreš. This can be interpreted as either 'He desired Bēl' or 'Bēl-desired'. Yet, most sentence names keep a grammatically clear structure, even when shortened by more than one element. The four-part male name Nergal-ina-tēši-eṭir 'Nergal, save from confusion!' can be shortened in two steps: firstly, to Ina-tēši-eṭir 'Save from confusion!' and, secondly, to Tēši-eṭir 'Save (from) confusion!' All three forms – Nergal-ina-tēši-eṭir, Ina-tēši-eṭir, and Tēši-eṭir – are known to be variants used to denote the same individuals.¹⁸ These persons are to my knowledge never called Nergal-tēši-eṭir 'O Nergal, save (from) confusion!', although this name exists in general and appears to be another shortened variant of the full form Nergal-ina-tēši-eṭir. Similarly, it is most likely that structurally similar names such as Šamaš-ina-tēši-eṭir 'O Šamaš, save from confusion' or Nabû-ina-tēši-eṭir 'O Nabû, save from confusion!' generate the same short forms as Nergal-ina-tēši-eṭir, but such cases are, to my knowledge, not attested. Since the principles of shortening names have not been studied in detail yet, only attested variants are discussed in this chapter. All examples of short forms and nicknames given in the further course of this chapter are based on identified individuals recorded in the online database *Prosobab*; text references can be found there.

As the example of the name Nergal-ina-tēši-eṭir, with its variants Ina-tēši-eṭir and Tēši-eṭir, illustrates, theophoric elements and prepositions are often omitted to create short forms. Several male names are shortened in the same way (Table 2.2).

Male names based on genitive constructions usually generate short forms by omitting the theophoric element (Table 2.3).

¹⁸ Two persons are attested with all three variants of this name: Nergal-ina-tēši-eṭir, son of Ina-Esagilmukin-apli, from the Baliḫū family (BM 77352, BM 77372, and BM 77386), and Nergal-ina-tēši-eṭir, son of Zēria, from the Šangū-Šamaš family (e.g., BM 74583, BM 74595, and BM 74597).

Table 2.2 *Shortening of Babylonian sentence names by omission of elements*

| Full form | Theophoric element omitted | Preposition omitted | Double reduction |
|--|--|---|--------------------------------------|
| Nergal-ina-tēši-eṭir 'O Nergal, save from confusion' | Ina-tēši-eṭir 'Save from confusion' | | Tēši-eṭir 'Save (from) confusion' |
| Nabû-bēšunu 'Nabû is their lord' | Bēšunu 'Their lord' | | |
| Lâbâši-Marduk 'May I not come to shame, O Marduk' | Lâbâši 'May I not come to shame' | | |
| Lâbâši-Sîn 'May I not come to shame, O Sîn' | Lâbâši 'May I not come to shame' | | |
| Šulum-ana-Bâbili 'Well-being to Babylon' | | Šulum-Bâbili 'Well-being (to) Babylon' | |
| Ana-Bēl-ēreš 'He desired Bēl' | | Bēl-ēreš 'He desired Bēl' or 'Bēl-desired' | |
| Itti-Nusku-īnīa 'With Nusku is my eye' | | Nusku-īnīa 'Nusku is my eye' | |
| Itti-Šamaš-balātu 'With Šamaš is life' | | Šamaš-balātu 'Šamaš is life' | |
| Itti-Nabû-balātu 'With Nabû is life' | | | Balātu 'Life' |

Table 2.3 *Shortening of Babylonian compound names by omission of the theophoric element*

| Full form | Short form |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Širikti-Marduk 'Gift of Marduk' | Širiktu 'Gift' |
| Kiribti-Marduk 'Blessed by Marduk' | Kiribtu 'Blessedness' |
| Nidinti-Marduk 'Gift of Marduk' | Nidintu 'Gift' |
| Nidinti-Bēl 'Gift of Bēl' | Nidintu 'Gift' |

The particularly common type of sentence names that consist of three basic elements and that express favourable actions of revered deities can be shortened in two steps. First, the subject or the direct object of these names can be omitted. Then, further reduction is achieved by omitting either the direct object or the object of a genitive construction as seen in the examples of male names presented in Table 2.4.

The direct object of a sentence name can also be replaced by a structurally different element such as a personal suffix. The full male name Nabû-šumu-ušur 'O Nabû, protect the name' is shortened into Nabû-ušuršu 'O Nabû, protect him'. Names with comparable structures can probably be modified in the same way.

Other cases of modified names illustrate that elements, isolated by double reduction, can be replaced by grammatically different forms of these elements: verbs can be replaced by substantives and vice versa. Balātu 'Life', for instance, is not only a double reduced short form of the male name Itti-Nabû-balātu 'With Nabû there is life' but also a modified short form of the male name Šamaš-uballit 'Šamaš has kept alive'. Curiously, the structurally equal male name Itti-Marduk-balātu 'With Marduk there is life' generates the modified short form Libluṭ 'May he live'. This illustrates that not all principles of modification are easily predictable.

A widespread phenomenon is the modification of short forms by annexing a meaningless syllable, also known as a hypocoristic ending. Although hypocoristic forms give the impression of pet names, they are used in official contexts just like other short forms. Several hypocoristic endings occur. It is not always possible to distinguish them from Akkadian plural markers, possessive pronouns, and other meaningful suffixes, as, for

Table 2.4 *Shortening of Babylonian sentence names*

| Full form | Subject omitted | Direct object omitted | Double reduction |
|--|--|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Nabû-nādin-aḫi 'Nabû is the giver of the brother' | Nādin-aḫi 'Giver of the brother' | | |
| Nabû-šumu-ukīn 'Nabû has established the name' | Šumu-ukīn 'He has established the name' | | |
| Marduk-šumu-iddin 'Marduk has given the name' | Šumu-iddin 'He has given the name' | | |
| Nabû-šumu-iddin 'Nabû has given the name' | | Nabû-iddin 'Nabû has given' | |
| Bēl-aḫu-ittannu 'Bēl has given the brother' | | Bēl-ittannu 'Bēl has given' | |
| Šamaš-pir'u-ušur 'O Šamaš, protect the offspring' | | | Pir'u 'Offspring' |
| Nabû-nādin-šumi 'Nabû is the giver of the name' | | | Nādinu ¹⁹ 'Giver' |

¹⁹ Note also a well-known case from Assyria: a certain Nabû-šumu-iddin, *ḫazanu* of the Nabû temple in Kalḫu, also used the name Nādinu in letters to the king (Esarhaddon); see Baker in PNA 2/II, 885–6 s.v. Nabû-šumu-iddina 15.

instance, in the male name Aḥ(h)ūtu ‘Brotherhood’ or, hypocoristically, ‘Brother’. Especially popular in the Babylonian onomasticon is a group of hypocoristic endings that coincide with the forms of the possessive suffix of the first person singular, namely the hypocoristic endings *-ia*, spelled *Ci-ial/ia*, and *-āya*, spelled *Ca-a*, or infrequently also *Ca-ia*, followed by *-ea* or *-ēa*, spelled *Ce-e-a* or (C)VC-*e-a*. Additionally, hypocoristic endings of West Semitic origin, including *-ā*, *-ān*, and *-ī*, also occur frequently (see Chapter 8). Table 2.5 provides a selection of differently structured male names and their hypocoristic short forms.

Nicknames and Double Names

In contrast to short names that always show at least some kind of similarity to their original full forms, nicknames and double names are completely different from the name that a person bears otherwise. Babylonian documents attest to this phenomenon frequently, sometimes directly by mentioning individuals with a ‘second (or: other) name’ (*šumu šanū*). More often, people use different personal names interchangeably without marking them as such. A son of Lūši-ana-nūr-Marduk (‘May I go out into the light of Marduk’) from the family Ili-bāni (‘My god is the creator’) is, for instance, mostly referred to as Nādinu ‘Giver’, but in some documents he appears as Dādia ‘My favourite’ (Joannès 1989, 50–2). The frequency by which he is called Nādinu may indicate that this is his primary name. Still, the name Dādia, which is also attested as another name of a man called Nergal-ašarēdu (‘Nergal is the foremost’),²⁰ is obviously valid in official contexts too. Male double names frequently show shifts between comprehensive and short names, as Table 2.6 shows. Shifts between names with serious content and seemingly humoristic names are, by contrast, not particularly common; however, note the example of Nergal-ušēzib ‘Nergal has rescued’ whose second name is Puršū ‘Flea’.²¹

Not only personal names but also family names can vary. Some individuals use two family names interchangeably – one that refers to a (prebendary) profession, the other taken from the name of an ancestor. In the case of Ingallēa (meaning uncertain) and Gallābu ‘Barber’ the acquisition or disposal of prebends may have caused different branches of the clan to use the name that reflects their actual tenure or lack of the

²⁰ He is a son of Puḥḥuru ‘Assembled’ from the family Ilūtu-bāni ‘Creator of divinity’; for references, see Joannès (1989, 370).

²¹ The first three examples in this table are taken from Jursa (1999, 146); the others are taken from the *Prosobab* database.

Table 2.5 *Hypocoristic short forms of Babylonian male names*

| Full form | Short form |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| Arad-Marduk | Ardia |
| 'Servant of Marduk' | 'Servant' (hypocor.) or 'My servant' |
| Ṭāb-šilli-Marduk | Ṭābia |
| 'Good is the protection of Marduk' | 'Good' (hypocor.) |
| Iddin-Nabû | Iddināya |
| 'Nabû has given' | 'He has given' (hypocor.) |
| Šamaš-iddin | Iddia |
| 'Šamaš has given' | (meaning unknown, probably hypocor.) |
| Iqīša-Marduk | Iqīšāya |
| 'Marduk has granted to me' | 'He has granted to me' (hypocor.) |
| Bēl-iqīša | Iqīšāya |
| 'Bēl has granted to me' | 'He has granted to me' (hypocor.) |
| Šamaš-erība | Eribāya |
| 'Šamaš has replaced for me' | 'He has replaced for me' (hypocor.) |
| Nabû-tabni-ušur | Tabnēa |
| 'O Nabû, you have created (the child), now protect (it)' | 'You have created' (hypocor.) |
| Nabû-bān-aḫi | Bānia |
| 'Nabû is the creator of the brother' | 'Creator' (hypocor.) or 'My creator' |
| Šamaš-aplu-iddin | Aplāya |
| 'Šamaš has given an heir' | 'Heir' (hypocor.) |
| Nūr-Bēl-lūmur | Nūrea |
| 'May I see the light of Bēl' | 'Light' (hypocor.) |

barber's office.²² There is also a family that abandoned their professional family name Ṭābiḫu 'Butcher' for unknown reasons in favour of a new ancestral family name Eṭēru 'To save'. According to a study by Cornelia Wunsch (2014a), this shift took place gradually over the course of several decades. Within one generation, members of the family switched back and forth from one name to the other or used both names interchangeably. It is possible that they tried to differentiate themselves from other, non-prebendary butchers called Ṭābiḫ-kāri 'Butcher at the quay or market' by using either the specified name Ṭābiḫ-Marduk 'Butcher of Marduk' or the new one, Eṭēru 'To save'. Also, some members of the clan Zērāya (hypocoristically based on *zēru* 'seed' or *Zēr-Aya* 'Seed of Aya') may have changed their family name to Ile²³i-Marduk 'Marduk is powerful'.²³

²² Pedersén 2005, 204–6; Nielsen 2011, 65–6.

²³ Jursa 1995, 73–4. Wunsch (2014a, 757) also mentions a possible change of the family names Iddin-Papsukkal ('Papsukkal has given') and Ša-ī-luḫ (reading and meaning unclear).

Table 2.6 *Double names borne by Babylonian men*

| | |
|--|---------------------------|
| Itti-Marduk-balātu | Iddināya |
| ‘With Marduk there is life’ | ‘He has given’ (hypocor.) |
| Marduk-nāšir-apli | Širku |
| ‘Marduk is the protector of the heir’ | ‘Gift’ |
| Nergal-ušēzib | Puršū |
| ‘Nergal has rescued’ | ‘Flea’ (hypocor.?) |
| Nādinu | Dādia |
| ‘Giver’ | ‘My favourite’ |
| Nergal-ašarēdu | Dādia |
| ‘Nergal is the foremost’ | ‘My favourite’ |
| Nabū-ittannu | Aplāya |
| ‘Nabū has given’ | ‘Heir’ (hypocor.) |
| Munaḥḥiš-Marduk | Nidintu |
| ‘Marduk is the one who makes prosperous’ | ‘Gift’ |

Further Reading

The works of Knut L. Tallqvist (1905) and Johann J. Stamm (1939) constitute the most comprehensive studies on Akkadian names and name-giving, especially with regard to Babylonia in the first millennium BCE. While Tallqvist focusses on this period, Stamm provides diachronic analyses that illustrate the development of names and naming practices in the course of time. The structures, typical elements, and socio-cultural meanings of Babylonian names outlined in the present chapter are discussed by these authors in more detail. Also, additional examples for individual names, short forms, and variants can be found there. Despite their early composition, both publications are still most relevant for onomastic studies.

For revised readings and interpretations of personal names, the reader should consult the user-friendly volume by John P. Nielsen (2015). His alphabetically arranged list of Babylonian names of the Neo-Babylonian period does not only provide English translations but also references to attestations and further literature. With regard to family names, Cornelia Wunsch (2014b) provides a concise overview of orthography and historical developments. John P. Nielsen (2011) offers a more extensive discussion of the emergence and spread of family names in the early Neo-Babylonian period.

For a broader approach to Akkadian names, the encyclopaedic article by Dietz-Otto Edzard (1998) is recommended. His outline of Akkadian onomastics goes beyond the aforementioned publications by including names of deities and demons, places, waters, walls, and fields. Moreover, Edzard also touches upon linguistic aspects of names, including their relation to (literary) language, their morphology, and Sumerian influences.

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