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Nabonidus Chronicle: New Readings and the Identity of Darius the Mede

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Introduction

The Contract Tablets. In pursuit of the elusive Darius the Mede of the book of Daniel (Dan 5:31) I once spent a considerable amount of time examining the dates and royal titles on the published contract tablets from the early Persian period.¹ In the end it did not turn out to be a very informative procedure. The study did confirm that the one year of Cambyses' coregency with Cyrus in Babylon occurred in Cyrus' first year, from 538 to 537 B.C.² The title search also confirmed that Cyrus did not take up the title, "King of Babylon," until the end of that year of coregency.³ Other than that little progress on the identity of Darius the Mede was gained through that avenue.

The Nabonidus Chronicle. Informative historical sources from this narrowly defined period are few. The verse account of Nabonidus and the Harran inscriptions do not extend to the transition to Persian control.⁴ The Cyrus Cylinder does treat this transition but in a rather propagandistic way which is of only modest historical value.⁵ Excluding the later Greek writers leaves the Nabonidus Chronicle as the main cuneiform document describing the events surrounding the fall of Babylon.

I have given some attention to that document in previous studies also, mainly in an effort to straighten out its chronology.

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There is one place where its dates are clearly out of order. After describing the return of the gods to their cities from the ninth month to the twelfth month of the year in which Babylon was captured, the text goes on to tell of the deaths of Ugbaru, the general who conquered Babylon for Cyrus, and an unnamed queen. These occurred in the eighth month.

Following this order, I attempted to date the death of Ugbaru one year and three weeks after the fall of Babylon, rather than just three weeks after that event.⁶ The purpose of that revision in chronology was to give Ugbaru, my candidate for Darius the Mede, a full year of governmental activity in Babylon before his death. That chronological conclusion was also misguided, and correlations with the contract tablets make it necessary to return to the non-sequential order here. The arrangement of this text by the scribes probably stems from thematic or topical concerns, or from a matter of emphasis. This conclusion indicates that Ugbaru died on VIII/11 in the fall of 539 B.C. according to the dates in the chronicle. This was 25 days after he conquered Babylon and only 8 days after Cyrus arrived there.

Chronological Data from Daniel. The question these dates from the chronicle raise is: Does this short period of time allow Ugbaru to carry out the activities attributed to Darius the Mede in Daniel? This requires an examination of the book of Daniel to determine just how much time his Darius requires.

Darius the Mede is mentioned in four passages in Daniel: 5:31; 6:1-28; 9:1; 11:1. Daniel 5:31 simply records that Darius received the kingdom when Belshazzar's Babylon fell to the Medes and Persians. In the chronicle's dates this occurred on VII/16 when Ugbaru and his division of the army took Babylon without a battle.

Daniel 9:1 gives mainly genealogical data about Darius, indicating that he was of the seed of the Medes and his father's name was Ahasuerus. Since no genealogical data is available for Ugbaru this point cannot presently be checked.

One chronological point does appear in Daniel 9:1. Both Daniel's prayer and the prophecy which followed came in Darius' first year. How much time would be necessary for that? Since neither day nor month are mentioned, it could theoretically have occurred in as brief a period as one day into that year. The eight

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days that Ugbaru lived after the arrival of Cyrus in Babylon would have allowed sufficient time for the prayer and prophecy. It need not have been a full year or even a sizeable portion thereof.

Daniel 11:1 gives little more chronological information about Darius. From the vantage point of the third year of Cyrus (Dan 10:1), Gabriel refers back to the first year of Darius as a time when he, Gabriel, stood up to confirm and strengthen him. The nature of this action indicates that it should have occurred at the very beginning of Darius' first year, at the time of his accession to the throne. Relatively little time need be allowed for the event.

Chapter 6 is the one full narrative in Daniel which deals with the activities of Darius the Mede. He set about establishing the new bureaucracy of Babylon under the Persians. This was the sort of political structure that was needed very soon after the conquest in order to insure a smooth transition to Medo-Persian control. Relatively little time need be allowed for this type of activity, either before or after the arrival of Cyrus. There may well be a reference to this type of activity in the chronicle (III, 19) even before the death of Ugbaru.

There is only one specific chronological datum in this narrative. This involves the length of time decreed by Darius for no (prayer) requests to any other god or man. It was specified that this period was to last 30 days (Dan 6:7). We need not expect, however, that the whole 30 days had to elapse before the spies accused Daniel of violating this statute.

Daniel continued praying the same way that he did before the law went into effect. His actions would have been readily apparent to the spies after only a day or two of the 30 days. Thus most of the action described in Daniel 6 probably took place relatively early in that period, before Ugbaru died.

What would have happened to the rest of the 30 day period if Darius died sometime during its course? As the officials pointed out to Darius, the laws of the Medes and Persians did not change (Dan 6:12); therefore, the 30 days would have run their course whether the king who pronounced the law was still alive or not.

From this brief chronological review it can be seen that the events described in these four passages dealing with Darius the Mede occurred at the beginning of

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his reign, at the beginning of Medo-Persian control over Babylon. None of them specifically require more time to extend beyond the death date of Ugbaru according to the chronicle.

The Nabonidus Chronicle Reexamined

The chronological factors for Darius the Mede discussed above require only a relatively short time for his rule at the beginning of Medo-Persian control over Babylon. The chronicle is the best historical document available since it describes the events of this transition period. The chronicle should be examined again, therefore, to see if any of the details from Daniel can be correlated with those found in the chronicle. For that purpose a new translation of the most important lines is presented here. The especially relevant portion comes from the end of col. III (ll. 15-22) where these events are described, beginning with line 15 of column III.⁷ The translation and the interpretation of line 15 are clear and present no problems.

Line 15: “On the 16th day (of Tishri) Ugbaru, the governor of Gutium, and the army of Cyrus entered Babylon without a battle.”

This passage indicates that the city of Babylon was taken by stratagem rather than frontal assault. This is in harmony with Herodotus’ story of the diversion of the Euphrates as a means by which the Persians gained access to Babylon. It is also implied in the narrative of Daniel 5. The record here dates the conquest (the 16th of Tishri is supplied from the preceding lines). In addition the statement names the general of the Persian army who led out in directing this conquest. That already makes him a prime candidate for the identification of Darius the Mede, and the proposal deserves further examination.

Line 16a: “Afterwards, after Nabonidus retreated, he was seized in Babylon.”

There are no translational or interpretational problems with this portion of this line either. Lines 12-14 describe how Nabonidus led one division of the Babylonian army and did battle with Cyrus first at Opis on the Tigris River and then at Sippar, nearer to Babylon. He was defeated on both occasions, so he fled back to the capital, undoubtedly hoping to find it still in Babylonian hands. Unfortunately for him, the Persian forces had already taken over

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there, and he was captured and made prisoner. His fate was decided later.

Line 16b-17: “Until the end of the month (Tishri) the shields of Gutium (i.e., troops) surrounded the gates of the Esagil.”

This is the first of three main statements about activities at the main temple of Babylon. The chronicle takes great interest in the religious affairs in the temple. Earlier, for example, the scribe noted each of the years during which the New Year’s ritual was suspended while Nabonidus was away in Tema of Arabia.⁸ So it is natural for him to take an interest in what was going on in the temple at this important juncture. The translation of this passage presents no problems, but its interpretation does.

The standard interpretation of Assyriologists who have dealt with this text has been that these troops were stationed at the gates of the temple to insure that all of the rituals proceeded in the usual manner and without any interruption.⁹ The other alternative is that these troops were stationed at the temple to prevent any of those rituals from taking place. This is the interpretation we have adopted here. The matter can only be settled by the next two lines, and this is one place where the readings and interpretation of previous treatments of the chronicle need to be revised.

Line17 b: *baṭ-la ša mim-ma ina E-sag-gil u ekurrati. Meš.DIS*

“There was a cessation of everything in the Esagil and the (other) temples.”

The first sign of this phrase (see Labat No. 69) has been read by Smith as *be*, as *til* by Oppenheim, and as *baṭ* by Grayson.¹⁰ These are all permissible values for this sign, but Grayson’s reading appears to be preferable. That makes the word present here a verb coming from *baṭalu*, “to stop, cease.” The verb is not negated, however, which means that there was a stopping or a cessation. This is followed by the relative *ša*, “of,” and the indefinite pronoun *mimma*, “all, whatever.” Thus these three crucial words say that there was a stopping or a cessation of whatever had previously been going on in the main temple and the other temples in the city. The correct translation of this portion of the line complements the preceding phrase by indicating that the Gutian (= Median) troops had been posted at the temple gates to prevent the people from going into the temples and performing their rituals there.

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The next line of the text extends this idea further. Grayson has suggested that the single vertical wedge at the end of this line is simply a scribal error.¹¹ On the other hand it fits well as the number “one,” as a subject of the verb that follows at the beginning of the line. If so, the syntax of the two phrases in the next line follow the same pattern: subject—negation—verb.

Line 18:

išten ul iš-ša-kin “nothing was established while (and)
u simanu ul innitiq (DIB)*iq* the appointed time had not passed.”

The single vertical stroke at the end of the preceding line is not taken here by us as a scribal error, but rather as it commonly is used, to represent the number “one.” This is followed by the negative particle and then by the verb “to establish.” Literally this translates as, “one was not established.” To put this in better English word order it should be translated, “not one was established,” or, “no thing was established.”

The question then is, What was it that was not established? In context it clearly has to do with the temple(s). Nothing was established in connection with the temples. What types of things or functions went on in the temples? There are a number of possibilities: sacrifices, prayers, services, priestly activities. Any or all of these could be included in this reference. The point is that the temples were not functioning as normal. Their procedures, by and large, had been suspended.

How long was this state of affairs to go on? The next phrase in Line 18 refers to the fact that this situation was to obtain for a particular “appointed time.” This does not refer to the services of the temple, but to the suspension thereof. Those services, according to whatever aspect is referred to here, were suspended, and they were to remain suspended until the appointed time had passed when they could be resumed. How long a period of time did this last? The chronicle does not tell us, but we have another extra-chronicle source which gives us some information on this subject. That extra-chronicle source is the book of Daniel. The events of Daniel 6 need to be considered in this context.

According to Daniel 6, Daniel himself came into prominence as the new bureaucracy was being installed in Babylon after the Persian takeover. As a result, professional jealousy caused his fellow

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civil servants to rise up against him with a plot. They knew that they could not obtain his conviction on the basis of unfaithfulness in the affairs of his office or functions for the king. They knew that the only way they could remove him was to gain his conviction on matters of his own personal religion. This they knew received his total allegiance and dedication. His prayers to his God were evident and well known down to his specific prayer practices. The plot involved attempting to gain a conviction of him on the basis of these practices. This they arranged with the unwitting complicity of the king, Darius the Mede, who agreed to their idea that no prayers would be said to any god for 30 days. This occurred at a time when Babylon was in a disturbed state of transition. It would not have been feasible at another time when the situation was more normal.

How could one prevent prayers being said? The simplest expedient would be to cut off access to the gods who were in the temples in Babylon. Preventing access to the gods would be simpler than attempting to monitor thousands of people. Closing of the temples by Median troops, as described in the chronicle, would accomplish the new governmental policy. Thus the services and other aspects of temple activities, such as prayer, were cut off. The fact that the gods from the other cities had been brought into Babylon by Nabonidus before the Persian attack, facilitated the program involved here, because they were temporarily inaccessible to the worshipers of their own cities and temples. It is of interest, therefore, to see that the chronicle mentions later that these gods did not *begin* to return to their cities and temples until the ninth month.

The chronology of these events should be compared. Babylon was captured about the middle of the seventh month, Tishri. Sometime after that Darius the Mede made a decree suspending prayers, in the temples and elsewhere, for 30 days. We do not know the exact date upon which that decree went into effect, but it probably was sometime during the last half of the seventh month. Thirty days from that point in time would have extended to a point sometime in the last half of the eighth month. With the new moon of the next month, the ninth, the gods begin to return home, and once having reached their home cities and temples they were available to their worshipers to receive their prayers there.

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Thus the 30 days during which these operations were suspended according to Daniel 6, fit perfectly into the time period during which the chronicle says that these operations were suspended. We may see this type of activity reflected in the chronicle as coming from Darius the Mede according to Daniel. That brings one particular candidate for Darius the Mede to the fore, and that is Ugbaru, the general who conquered Babylon with his division of the army of Cyrus. Cyrus himself did not arrive on the scene of action until well after this time and thus we may see this biblical and chronicle activity as stemming from Ugbaru/Darius the Mede.

Line 18b: “Arahsamnu, day 3, Cyrus entered Babylon.”

Line 19a: “The way before him they filled.”

The statement about the entry of Cyrus is straightforward and requires no detailed explanation. The point to notice here is that this was 17 days after the city was conquered by the division of the army under Ugbaru, and he had been the military ruler of the city during that period of time. The first word at the beginning of the next phrase has posed a problem and there has not been any unanimity of opinion as to what it means. The original word is *ha-ri-ni-e*. As a rare word there is not much comparative material with which to judge its significance. It seems to me that there is a more common word with which to connect this one here, and that is the word *harranu*, “way, road,” written here with only one *r*. This probably refers to the great processional way which led up to the Ishtar gate, the main gate of entrance into the city from the north.

As Cyrus entered the city through this great portal, the people thronged the way in front of him, welcoming him as a deliverer from the unpopular Nabonidus. The object of the verb here is not quite clear. The question is whether the people themselves filled the street, as would be the case from Grayson’s translation of this verb, or whether they filled the street before him with some objects like branches, as Oppenheim has suggested.¹² The effect was the same, the great conqueror was welcomed by an enthusiastic throng. What is more important is to note his activities and those of Ugbaru after he arrived. These are described especially in the next three statements of the chronicle.

Line 19b: *šu-lum ana ali ša-kin^m Ku-raš*

“peace to the city established Cyrus”

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Line 20a: *šu-lum ana Babil^{ki} gab-bi-šu qi-bi^m Gu-ba-ru*
“peace to Babylonia, all of it, spoke Gubaru.”

Line 20b: *^{lu} pa htū(NAM)šu^{lu} pahatuti(NAM.MES) ip-te-qid*
“his governor governors appointed”

There are several different ways in which these three statements can be translated. The common way is to make Cyrus the subject of the first two statements and to make Ugbaru/Gubaru the subject of the last statement. In that case the phrase, “his governor” stands in apposition to Gubaru, and he is the one who carried out the appointing of the governors. In either event, Cyrus did not do the appointing of the governors, except through the agency of his co-workers. This bears upon the identification of Darius the Mede in Daniel 6, because he did that kind of appointing. That would appear to weigh against Cyrus for this identification and weigh in favor of Gubaru. The conclusion seems sound, but it is emphasized all the more when the syntax of these statements is considered in parallel.

The question of translation involves the matter of syntax, because it is syntax which determines where these sentences should be divided. If one follows the parallelism of expression that is present here, then it is Cyrus who carries out the first action, establishing peace in the city of Babylon. Then it is Gubaru who speaks peace to all of Babylonia. Finally, it is Gubaru’s governor who appoints the needed governors in the third statement.

The syntactical basis for following this translation comes from noting the parallel syntax. For that reason I have supplied the transliterated Akkadian and a very literal translation following the Akkadian word order. When that is done it is noted that the first two statements follow exactly the same word order: Direct object, indirect object, verb, subject. The direct object in both cases is the same, *šulum* or “peace.” The indirect object, found in a prepositional phrase is very similar. In the first case it is the city of Babylon; in the second case it is the country of Babylon. The larger realm comes with the second statement. The verbs are related too in a general sense, but they are not exactly the same. In the first instance peace was “established.” In the second instance that peace is “spoken” to Babylonia, probably by royal decree. The word which follows this second verb is the name Gubaru. The personal name

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stands in exactly the same location in its sentence as Cyrus does in the preceding instance. In both cases, therefore, the subject comes last. That should make Cyrus the subject of the first statement and Gubaru the subject of the second statement.

This parallel arrangement also separates the title of “governor” in the third statement from Gubaru. In actuality he stands above the governor. The governor carries out his work in the third statement, whereas Gubaru carries out his activity in the second statement, namely, to state or decree the state of peace that has now overtaken Babylonia in its totality.

This order of the text points out that Gubaru stands in a position midway between Cyrus, the emperor of the Persian empire, and the governor in Babylonia, who acts in the third statement. What office would Gubaru occupy on this basis? The office that would have put him into a real midpoint in officialdom would have been that of a vassal king. This he was *de facto* from the time he conquered Babylon and began its government operations there, and this would have been confirmed by Cyrus when he arrived at the city on the third day of the eighth month.

That also brings up the question of the identification of the governor who did the appointing. The pronominal suffix on the end of the singular word governor refers most directly back to Gubaru, not Cyrus. Who was Gubaru’s governor? If Gubaru and Darius the Mede of Daniel 6 are the same person, as seems reasonable since they carry out the same kind of activities, then this governor of Gubaru would have been the governor which he, alias Darius the Mede, appointed. We have no information elsewhere on the identity of the governor whom Gubaru appointed, but we have a good idea about the governor that Darius the Mede appointed.

Daniel 6 opens with Daniel being numbered among the three “presidents” and Darius considering his appointment as chief governor (vs. 3). The end of the story does not specifically state that Daniel was then made full governor, but that is the most logical way in which to understand the outcome of the narrative. It says that Daniel prospered under Darius, and if he was already under consideration for full governor, then his appointment to that office would be consistent with the account. We may take it as implied, therefore, that Daniel would have been the one who made the

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appointments mentioned in the chronicle, even if his name is not specifically spelled out.

What appointments would these have been? According to Daniel 6, Darius the Mede had made his own appointments. But some of those officials fell by the wayside when they were killed in the lion's den after Daniel's deliverance. Thus, there was need for a second series of appointments to replace those who died in the lion's den. Those appointments could have been left to the chief governor, Daniel, in this case.

Lines (21-22a) "From the month of Kislev to the month of Adar, the gods of Akkad which Nabonidus had brought down to Babylon returned to their places."

There are no translational or interpretational problems with this line. Nabonidus brought these gods to Babylon to defend the city, theologically speaking, and they were still there after the city had fallen to the Persians. Thus it was necessary to send them back to their cities and their temples. The important thing to notice here is, as has been mentioned above, the date upon which this activity began, Kislev, the ninth month. The task was not completed until Adar, the twelfth month and the end of the year.

Why were the idols not sent back in the eighth month, right after Cyrus arrived, or in the seventh month, soon after the city was conquered? The 30-day decree of Darius had to run from a point in the second half of the seventh month until the second half of the eighth month. The decree would have interrupted the religious services of the land, delaying the return of the gods. If they had been sent back to their temples then, the people in those cities would have had them available for prayers and other services. When the 30 days were over, late in the eighth month, the process of returning the idols could begin in the next or ninth month. That process lasted until the end of the Babylonian year four months later.

Line (22) "In the month of Arahsamnu, on the night of day 11, Ugbaru died in Baby[lon KI]"

Line (23) (and) the wife of the king died."

There are three signs that present problems in these two lines: the first sign in the personal name, the sign at the end of line 22, and the sign at the beginning of line 23. The reading for the sign at the beginning of line 23 has been largely settled by reexamining the

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tablet. The consensus is that the sign represents the word for “wife” (*aššat*). It is evident that this was some female figure, because the verb which follows has the female phonetic complement (*-at*) following the logogram (BAD). Thus, even if it were not the queen who died, it was indeed some important female personage. The verb clearly indicates this was a female, and that she died.

The question is, When did she die? Previous interpreters have assumed that the broken sign present following the verb for Ugbaru’s death was the determinative for month. This is not the case. In the heart of the rectangle of the sign for month (*arah*), a horizontal row of wedges are incised. These are not present in the rectangle of this broken sign, according to S. Smith’s copy.¹³ What is present here is one wedge pointed vertically across the bottom line of the sign. This is the sign for Babylon, and it can be compared favorably with half a dozen other occurrences of the same sign in the preceding lines.

Thus, what this statement says, is that Ugbaru died in the city of Babylon; it does not go on to give a separate date for the death of the queen. There is no more room for another date here. Following the sign for Babylon, the determinative KI for a place name would have been incised. However, this has been broken away from the present line. There is only enough space for one or two signs, which is not enough for another date. So, in all likelihood, this line ended with the word for Babylon and the determinative KI following it. The meaning of the statement is that when Ugbaru died, on the 11th of Arahsamnu, he died in Babylon.

The close relationship between Ugbaru who died and the wife of the king who died at the same time suggests that the “king” was Ugbaru. Other possibilities have been considered: Nabonidus and Belshazzar among the Babylonian kings, but both of them had been deposed or slain earlier; Cyrus among the Persian kings, but there is no mention of him here in connection with this queen’s death or with the period of mourning for her which came later. Ugbaru then makes the most logical connection here in this passage of the text. The fact that they both died at the same time and in the same place suggests their matrimonial connection. Furthermore, the fact that no king was in attendance at her period of mourning also points

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most directly to Ugbaru as her husband. He was unable to attend, because he too was dead.

The close connection between these two individuals in the text also suggests a reason for their death. Until this time Darius appears to have been in good health, carrying out his duties without difficulty. He led the Persian troops that conquered Babylon; then he went about organizing the administration of the conquered city. No sign of difficulty with his health surfaces during these activities. The fact that he and his wife died at the same time, suddenly and unexpectedly, suggests an irregular cause for their death. The fact that they both died at night, a most unusual item for the chronicle to mention, adds to the mystery here.

In the absence of a body upon which to perform an autopsy, the cause for Ugbaru's death may be hypothesized: he was poisoned. This would explain why his wife died at the same time. Eating and drinking from the same banquet table, she consumed the same poison intended for him with the same effect. It is most unusual for the chronicle to mention the time of day when it gives death dates. Commonly the day number is sufficient for that purpose. The fact that their deaths occurred at night suggests they ate the poisoned meal in the evening.

If the couple were poisoned, the question naturally arises, Who poisoned them? Ugbaru/Darius had quite a few enemies in Babylon. In the first place, the priests in the temple would have been at odds with him because he had suspended their activities. In addition, the officials of the city and country had reason to dislike him and to be afraid of him. He had thrown some of their colleagues into the lions' den, with fatal results. Probably there were other plotters who had escaped this first execution, and they feared for their lives if they were found out. They could have seen this as a case of kill or be killed. Thus there were several classes of people in Babylon who would have had good motives for wanting to see king Darius dead. The poison given to him could have come from any one of these groups, or they may have acted in concert.

This is the point at which the line by line evaluation of the Nabonidus Chronicle may be concluded. There are only two further items that need be noted. A ceremony of mourning was held for the queen at the end of the year, from the 27th of Adar to the 3rd of

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Nisan. The next day after the mourning period, Cambyses, the son of Cyrus, marched into the temple to take part in some sort of ceremony. This ceremony fits well with his taking up the reins of government in Babylonia at the time of the New Year's festival.

This was, in essence, his installment as coregent with his father Cyrus. Cyrus served as king of the empire, "King of Lands" as the title was known, and Cambyses served as "King of Babylon." This arrangement of the coregency lasted for only one year. Then, for reasons unknown to us, Cyrus appears to have removed Cambyses from that post. He did not serve in it again until eight years later, when Cyrus died. Then the tablets take up anew the title of "King of Babylon" for Cambyses, but this time (530 B.C.) he also reigned as ruler of the empire.

Summary

The details of these new readings from the Nabonidus Chronicle can now be integrated with what was already known about Ugbaru from this text, and these can be compared with what is known about Darius the Mede from the book of Daniel. The thesis of this study is that when these details are compared they make a good case for identifying Darius the Mede as Ugbaru the Persian general.

The general's name appears three times in the Chronicle, and it is spelled in different ways, with a different sign in the first position in each case. These variations are minor, and all three references should be taken as referring to the same individual. His original personal name probably was Gubaru, but since the text refers to him twice as Ugbaru and only once as Gubaru, the name of Ugbaru has been used for him throughout this study.

The name Darius should be taken as a throne name in Babylon where Ugbaru served briefly as a vassal king under the authority of Cyrus as suzerain and emperor of the Persian empire. His reign as a vassal king was short-lived. The reason suggested above for the brevity of his reign being that he probably was poisoned. We now summarize the various points that suggest the identity of Ugbaru as Darius the Mede.

1. Ugbaru was the conqueror of Babylon. He took his division of the Medo-Persian army to besiege the capital, while Cyrus met

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Nabonidus in the field. Nabonidus was defeated and fled, while Ugbaru and his division seized the city by stratagem in which the use of arms was minimal. Belshazzar, left behind by Nabonidus to guard the city with the other division of the Babylonian army, died that night when the city was taken. Cyrus did not arrive in Babylon for another two and one-half weeks, leaving Ugbaru as regent of the city in charge of its affairs, thus giving him the powers with which he is described in Daniel 6. Thus, when Darius “received” the kingdom (Dan 5:31), he received it from the hand of God as stated in the prophecy in Daniel 5:24-28.

2. According to these new readings and interpretation of the Nabonidus Chronicle, Ugbaru (= Darius) did indeed interrupt the services of the main temple of Babylon and the subsidiary temples of the land. This was the purpose for stationing Median (i.e., Gutian) troops around the temple gates. They were not there to continue the normal functions of the temple; they were there to prevent the services of the temple. Daniel 6 shows why this was so. A prohibition had been placed upon the citizenry. They could not pray to any god or person other than Darius for 30 days. This was enforced by preventing them from going into the temple areas where they would have normally offered those prayers. The chronicle indicates that this interruption began in the last half of the seventh month, when Ugbaru was in control of Babylon, and it lasted until sometime late in the eighth month. We know that by the ninth month the gods of Babylonia were being returned to their cities and temples. By this time the prohibition would have been lifted.

A question may be asked here about what would have happened to this decree when Ugbaru died on the 11th of the month of Arahsamnu, the eighth month. The fate of this decree is clear from other passages in Daniel 6 which indicate that the laws of the Medes and the Persians could not be changed (vss. 8, 12, 15). Thus even though the ruler who proclaimed this law had died, the time element in the decree should have run its full course to some point in the last half of the eighth month. This was the appointed time about which the chronicle spoke. It was the time “appointed” by Ugbaru/Darius.

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3. There are several elements which suggest the status of kingship for Ugbaru after his conquest of Babylon:

a. The fact that his personal name is used in the chronicle puts him in a category with royalty. The vast majority of personal names used in the Babylonian chronicle series of texts belong to kings.¹⁴

b. The fact that his death date is given also puts him in the category of royalty, since almost all of the individuals whose deaths are dated in the chronicles are kings.¹⁵

c. The association of his name with the immediately following phrase about the death of the wife of the king suggests that the antecedent to the word king is Ugbaru. It was most likely his wife who died. This becomes all the more likely once it is realized, according to these new readings, that they both died on the same night, probably as a result of having been poisoned at the same meal.

d. According to the syntax of the statements which follow the recorded entry of Cyrus into Babylon, Ugbaru stands in mid-position between that of Cyrus the king of the empire and his (Ugbaru's) governor. The most likely position for such an individual to occupy in that case would have been the office of vassal king of Babylon. Ugbaru occupied that position on an informal basis for two and one-half weeks before Cyrus arrived at Babylon, and for another week (8 days) after his arrival. It probably was upon his arrival that Cyrus appointed Ugbaru the official vassal king of the country.

For these four reasons there is justification to suspect that the scribe of the Nabonidus Chronicle followed a series of conventions in the chronicle to point to the fact that Ugbaru was serving as a king, albeit on a level lower than that of Cyrus himself.

4. The book of Daniel supplies us with a series of biographical and personal details about Darius the Mede. Unfortunately most of the corresponding details from Persian sources for Ugbaru are not currently available in the texts that have survived from ancient times. These include:

a. His age. Daniel 5:31 gives the age of Darius the Mede at the time of the conquest of Babylon as 62 years. No sources give us the age of Ugbaru at the time of Babylon's capture. We can estimate, however, that he was sufficiently senior to have commanded a

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division of the Persian army in its attack upon the capital city of the country. Thus an estimate of 62 years of age could not be far from the mark for a man of such seniority.

b. His father's name was Ahasuerus. Unfortunately, we have no ancient sources from which we can obtain the name of Ugbaru's father, so this detail must remain unattested.

c. He is identified as a Mede. The ethnic origin of Ugbaru is not clearly identified in the ancient texts. We do know, however, that a battalion of his crack troops were Medes, given the label of Gutians in the chronicle. These were the troops who surrounded and guarded the temple in Babylon when it was closed off to the public.

The Gutians were hill-country people. They are identified as an old group of barbarians who were responsible for disrupting the established order down on the plain of Mesopotamia, especially in the time of the Ur III Dynasty, ca. 2000 B.C. At the collapse of Babylon the Medes played that same role again, and thus were given the older identification to show how much distaste the civilized Babylonians had for them. One can also read the name, Gutium, as standing for Media. Ugbaru was governor of Gutium before he came to Babylonia. Thus Ugbaru was governor of Media, and the special troops under his control were Medians. These two points add up to a strong argument that Ugbaru was himself a Median.

5. The thesis of this study is that Ugbaru, the general of the Persian army who conquered Babylon and ruled it for approximately a month afterwards, makes the best candidate for Darius the Mede in the book of Daniel. The principal objection to this identification is that he did not live long enough after the conquest to satisfy the chronological requirements for Darius the Mede in the book of Daniel. This raises the question, Just how much time is required for Darius the Mede in the book of Daniel?

These factors have been reviewed above, and the answer is, not much. Daniel 5:31 only requires that he be around at the time Babylon was conquered. As general of the victorious army, Ugbaru surely was. Daniel 6 requires that he be in office for enough time to appoint new officials to their tasks. Then the problem over Daniel arose. The main chronological requirement here is the 30 days set apart by the decree Darius gave.

Since Ugbaru did not live a full 30 days after the surrender of

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Babylon, it might be thought he could not satisfy the requirement. But this is not a valid objection, however. Daniel was undoubtedly arrested on one of the first few days after the decree went into effect. After Ugbaru died, the decree would have continued to run its course. He himself did not have to live out the full 30 days to satisfy that qualification; he only had to live long enough to start the process.

Daniel 9:1 requires only an unspecified date in Darius' first year. Theoretically, one day could satisfy this requirement, a week into that reign would certainly be adequate. Presumably this would be after Cyrus had formalized Ugbaru's vassal reign, not before. As a byproduct this historical datum could be used to narrow down the date of Daniel 9. It would fall between the 3rd and the 11th of Arahshamnu in the fall of 539 B.C. He need not have ruled any longer than that to have received a date in his first year. The same could be said for the reference to Darius the Mede in Daniel 11:1.

6. For the data about Darius the Mede in the book of Daniel, therefore, some are fulfilled in a very specific way by Ugbaru, some are fulfilled in a general way by him, and some we still do not know whether they are fulfilled by him or not, because the information is lacking in order to confirm or deny these points about him.

Given the present status of our knowledge about Ugbaru in the Nabonidus Chronicle and Darius the Mede in the book of Daniel, the two fit together as the same individual reasonably well. They operate in the same limited amount of time, and they carry out the same or similar actions.

It has been said that there is no room in history for Darius the Mede. Actually, there is room for him. It is only a limited amount of time, three and one half weeks to be exact. Even though it is less time than previously thought, it is enough time for him to carry out his designated actions according to the book of Daniel. Thus, there is room in history for Darius the Mede. Ugbaru the Medo-Persian general fits very neatly and specifically into that limited amount of time.

7. A side effect of this study suggests there is also room for Daniel at a point in history identified by the Nabonidus Chronicle. This comes at the point in column III where the text states, as translated above, "his (Ugbaru's, not Cyrus') governor appointed

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(sub-) governors.” The logical conclusion of Daniel 6 is that Daniel was indeed finally elevated to the post of the highest governor for which he was considered at the beginning of the narrative. When he came out of the lion’s den and prospered (in appointment) under Darius the Mede, that should have been the post to which he was appointed.

If Darius the Mede was Ugbaru the general, as suggested in this study, then Ugbaru’s chief governor would have been the chief governor of Darius the Mede. Since Darius the Mede’s governor should have been Daniel according to the outcome of Daniel 6, it means that Ugbaru’s governor mentioned in the chronicle, but not named there, would have been Daniel too. Thus, we have a place in the chronicle’s recitation of events surrounding the fall of Babylon into which Daniel should fit. The governors that Daniel appointed were not the first wave of appointments done by Darius/Ugbaru: they would have been the second wave of appointments following the loss of some of these officials in the lions’ den. There is room in 6th century B.C. history, therefore, for both Darius the Mede and Daniel the prophet.

Endnotes

1 W. H. Shea, “An Unrecognized Vassal King of Babylon in the Early Achaemenid Period,” *AUSS* 9 (1971): 51-67; Id., *Ibid.*, pt. II, *AUSS* 9 (1971): 99-128.

2 Id., “Darius the Mede in His Persian-Babylonian Setting,” *AUSS* 29 (1991): 236-237.

3 *Ibid.*, p. 238.

4 For the Verse Account of Nabonidus see J. B. Pritchard, ed., *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University, 1955), pp. 312-315. For the Harran inscriptions of Nabonidus see C. J. Gadd, “The Harran Inscriptions of Nabonidus,” *Anatolian Studies* 8 (1958): 35-92. For a recent treatment of the Harran inscriptions with special attention to how long Nabonidus spent in Tema of Arabia see P.-A. Beaulieu, *The Reign of Nabonidus King of Babylon 556-539 B.C.*, Yale Near Eastern Researches, 10 (New Haven: Yale University, 1989), pp. 149-202.

5 *ANET*, pp. 315-316.

6 W. H. Shea, “An Unrecognized King of Babylon in the Early Achaemenid Period, III,” *AUSS* 10 (1972): 88-117; Id., *Ibid.*, pt. IV, *AUSS* 10 (1972): 147-178.

7 For A. L. Oppenheim’s translation of the Nabonidus Chronicle see *ANET*, pp. 305-307. For A. K. Grayson’s transliteration and translation of the relevant portions of this text see his *Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles*, TCS 5 (Locust Valley, NY: J. J. Augustin, 1975), pp. 104-112. For S. Smith’s earlier publication of this text see his *Babylonian Historical Texts Relating to the Capture and*

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Downfall of Babylon (London: Methuen, 1924), pp. 28-123. The hand copy of this text that I have used is that of Smith, Pl. XIII. Another recent translation of this text occurs in the work published by Beaulieu mentioned in n. 4, pp. 224-225.

8 *ANET*, p. 306. For a discussion of this period see especially Beaulieu's study mentioned in the preceding note, pp. 149-202.

9 See the translations of Oppenheim, Smith, Grayson, and Beaulieu mentioned in n. 7.

10 R. Labat, *Manuel d'epigraphie Akkadienne* (P. Geuthner: Paris, 1976), p. 67. Smith, p. 113; Oppenheim, p. 306, n. 12; Grayson, p. 110.

11 *Ibid.* Grayson's commentary on column III, line 17.

12 *Ibid.* Oppenheim, p. 306, n. 13.

13 Smith, Plate XIII.

14 W. H. Shea, "An Unrecognized Vassal King of Babylon in the Early Achaemenid Period: IV," *AUSS* 10 (1972): pp. 147-151.

15 *Ibid.*, pp. 152-154.