The background of the image is a photograph of an ancient stone building. It features several large, cylindrical columns supporting a heavy stone entablature. A prominent window with a white metal grid is visible on the left side. The scene is brightly lit, suggesting a sunny day, with shadows cast on the ground.

Darius the Mede: A Reappraisal

Steven D. Anderson

Darius the Mede: A Reappraisal

by Steven D. Anderson

*A revision of the author's May 2014 Ph.D.
dissertation from Dallas Theological Seminary*

Print copies available from CreateSpace/Amazon: <http://amzn.com/1502390388>

Copyright © 2014 by Steven David Anderson. All rights reserved. Not to be reproduced without the explicit written consent of the author.

Minor errata corrected, April 2015

Published by Steven D. Anderson on <http://Bible.TruthOnly.com>

Author's blog: <http://truthonlybible.com>

Citation for *The Chicago Manual of Style* (Turabian) and *The SBL Handbook of Style*:
Anderson, Steven D. *Darius the Mede: A Reappraisal*. Grand Rapids: Steven D. Anderson,
2014.

Cover photograph (taken by the author): Qasr Iraq el-Amir, which is a Tobiad palace near Amman, Jordan. Darius the Mede's palace no longer stands.

Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are given by the author.

ABSTRACT AND OVERVIEW

This study is an investigation of the historical problem concerning the identification in extrabiblical sources of the king called “Darius the Mede” in the biblical book of Daniel. The central issue concerns two different stories of the end of the Median dynasty and the accession of Cyrus the Persian, as presented by two different Greek historians, Herodotus and Xenophon. The goal of this study is to establish the identity of Darius the Mede in extrabiblical literature, and to give an explanation for contradictory accounts regarding the accession of Cyrus and the existence of a Median king at the time of Babylon’s fall.

The thesis of the work is that Cyrus shared power with a Median king until about two years after the fall of Babylon. This king is called Cyaxares (II) by the Greek historian Xenophon, but is known by his throne name Darius in the book of Daniel. Cyrus did not make a hostile conquest of Media, did not dethrone the last Median king, and did not become the highest regent in the Medo-Persian Empire until after the fall of Babylon. Cyrus was Darius’ co-regent, the hereditary king of the realm of Persia, the crown prince of Media, and the commander of the Medo-Persian army—yet it was still Darius who was officially recognized as the highest power in the realm. Darius died naturally within two years after the fall of Babylon, and as he had no male heir and Cyrus had married his daughter, Cyrus inherited his position upon his death and united the Median and Persian kingdoms in a single throne.

Chapter 1 of this study is intended to provide basic introductory information to understand the issue of Darius the Mede and the history of interpretation of the problem before proceeding to an analysis of the sources. A major conclusion of this chapter is that the issue of Darius the Mede has as much to do with the nature of the accession of Cyrus as it does with Darius himself.

Chapter 2 summarizes, compares, and evaluates the two major classical historians who give an account of the accession of Cyrus, Herodotus and Xenophon. Herodotus began his account of Cyrus’ accession by stating that he knew of three other versions of the story in circulation—a remark which sets the tone for the analysis of other sources in this study. It is found that Herodotus and Xenophon told different and contradictory stories of the accession of Cyrus. Notably, Xenophon describes a Median king, Cyaxares II, who was the actual head of government while Cyrus led the Medo-Persian armies on campaigns of conquest. Herodotus, on the other hand, claims that Cyrus overthrew the previous Median king (Astyages) in a coup, and recognizes no further Median kings. A preliminary analysis finds that Xenophon’s story is more credible than Herodotus’.

Chapter 3 analyzes various proposals to identify a figure in either of the two Greek versions of the Cyrus story with Daniel’s Darius the Mede. Xenophon’s Cyaxares II is found to parallel Darius the Mede very closely; there are differences between the two, but not contradictions. However, each of the many attempts to identify a figure in the Herodotean story with Darius the Mede breaks down upon analysis; Herodotus and the book of Daniel are in conflict.

Chapter 4, the largest chapter in this study, analyzes the remaining extrabiblical texts of significance for the issue of Darius the Mede. This analysis reveals a basic division between texts which generally support Herodotus and texts which generally support Xenophon and Daniel (which were found in chapter 3 to concur). The major witnesses which support Herodotus are cuneiform propaganda texts produced by the government of Cyrus. These texts are found to be historically problematic due to a propagandistic bias, contradictions, and implausible claims. A strong and diverse minority of witnesses supports Xenophon and Daniel.

Chapter 5 summarizes the historical scenario proposed in this study and evaluates prospects for future research on Darius the Mede.

For a list of major supporting arguments made in this work, the reader may refer to the appropriate section of the appendix.

Table of Contents

ABSTRACT AND OVERVIEW	III
TABLE OF CONTENTS	V
FOREWORD: A PROBLEM OF BIAS.....	IX
ABBREVIATIONS	XI
General Abbreviations	xi
Abbreviations of the Books of the Bible.....	xii
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE PROBLEM	1
PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY	1
NEED FOR THIS STUDY	2
HISTORY OF INTERPRETATION	2
<i>Interpretations in the LXX</i>	2
<i>Darius as Cyaxares II</i>	3
<i>Darius as Gubaru</i>	6
<i>Darius as Cyrus</i>	7
<i>Minor Proposals</i>	8
<i>Darius as Historical, but of Uncertain Identity</i>	8
<i>Darius the Mede as Fiction</i>	9
PLAN OF THIS STUDY.....	10
CHAPTER 2: HERODOTUS AND XENOPHON ON THE ACCESSION OF CYRUS.....	12
BACKGROUND TO HERODOTUS	13
<i>Ancient Writers</i>	15
Aristophanes	15
Diodorus of Sicily.....	15
Strabo.....	16
Plutarch.....	16
Summary.....	17
<i>Modern Writers</i>	17
HERODOTUS' ACCOUNT OF CYRUS.....	20
BACKGROUND TO XENOPHON'S ACCOUNT OF CYRUS	22
<i>Background to Xenophon</i>	22
<i>Background to the Cyropaedia</i>	22
<i>The Historicity of the Cyropaedia</i>	23
XENOPHON'S ACCOUNT OF CYRUS.....	26
PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT OF HERODOTUS AND XENOPHON	28
<i>Evaluation of Xenophon</i>	28
The Existence of Cyaxares II	28
The Nature of the Death of Cyrus	30
Instances of Historical Precision	31
Conclusion.....	33
<i>Evaluation of Herodotus</i>	34
Possible Distortion of the Cyrus Story.....	34
Themes in Herodotus.....	35
<i>Summary</i>	36
CHAPTER 3: CORRELATION OF HERODOTUS AND XENOPHON WITH DANIEL'S DARIUS THE MEDE.....	38
THE CRITICAL APPROACH TO DANIEL.....	39
DARIUS THE MEDE AND XENOPHON.....	41
<i>Correspondence of the Names</i>	42
Keil's Proposal	42

Darius and Ahasuerus as Throne Names.....	42
<i>The Accession of Cyrus</i>	44
DARIUS THE MEDE AND HERODOTUS	45
<i>Darius as Gubaru</i>	45
Whitcomb's View	46
Shea's View	48
General Problems	49
<i>Darius as Cyrus</i>	52
Arguments for This Identification	52
Arguments against This Identification.....	54
Conclusion.....	55
<i>Other Proposals</i>	56
Cambyses II	56
Astyages.....	57
DANIEL AND THE MEDES.....	59
THE SEVENTY YEARS	60
SUMMARY	60
CHAPTER 4: ANALYSIS OF OTHER ANCIENT SOURCES ON DARIUS THE MEDE	62
CYRUS CYLINDER	63
<i>Introduction</i>	63
<i>Contents</i>	64
Argument.....	64
Summary.....	65
<i>Historicity</i>	65
A Bloodless Conquest?.....	66
Belshazzar or Nabonidus?.....	67
Impiety of Nabonidus?.....	67
Unpopularity of Nabonidus?	68
Conquest of the Medes?.....	69
<i>Comparable Texts</i>	70
<i>Conclusion</i>	71
VERSE ACCOUNT OF NABONIDUS	72
<i>Introduction</i>	72
<i>Contents</i>	73
<i>Analysis</i>	73
NABONIDUS CHRONICLE	75
<i>Background</i>	75
<i>Contents</i>	77
<i>Bias and Historicity</i>	78
Bias.....	79
Historicity	81
<i>Conclusion</i>	83
DREAM TEXT	83
<i>Date</i>	84
<i>Overview</i>	84
Prologue.....	85
Rebuilding of the Eḫulḫul	85
Rebuilding of the Ebabbar.....	86
Rebuilding of the Eulmash	86
<i>The Cyrus Passage</i>	86
<i>Analysis</i>	87
Incongruity with Nabonidus' Attitude toward Cyrus	87
Incongruity with Nabonidus' Religious Convictions	89
Incongruity with Other Sources	91

The Basis of the Cyrus Passage	92
<i>A Similar Inscription</i>	93
<i>Conclusion</i>	93
HARRAN STELE	94
DYNASTIC PROPHECY	95
BABYLONIAN CONTRACT TEXTS	97
<i>Content</i>	98
<i>Analysis</i>	99
<i>Conclusion</i>	100
CTESIAS	101
<i>Historical Credibility</i>	101
<i>Contents</i>	102
<i>Evaluation</i>	103
<i>Conclusion</i>	104
BEROSSUS	104
<i>The Babyloniaca</i>	105
<i>Sources</i>	107
<i>The “Darius the King” Text</i>	107
<i>Conclusion</i>	110
THUCYDIDES	111
ARISTOTLE	112
HARPOCRATION	113
AESCHYLUS	114
<i>Significance for the Issue of Darius the Mede</i>	115
First View—The Two Median Kings Are Fictional	116
Second View—The Two Median Kings Are Cyaxares I and Astyages	116
Third View—The Two Median Kings Are Astyages and Cyaxares II	117
<i>Conclusion</i>	118
<i>Epilogue</i>	118
SUMMARY	119
<i>Review of the Evidence</i>	119
<i>Analysis of the Evidence</i>	120
Explanation for the Herodotean Story	121
Evidence for Xenophon’s Story	122
Conclusion	122
CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION	123
THE HISTORICAL SCENARIO PROPOSED IN THIS STUDY	123
FUTURE PROSPECTS	127
SUMMARY	129
APPENDIX: TABLES AND CHARTS	130
VERSIONS OF THE CYRUS STORY	130
<i>Notes on the Chart</i>	130
Cyrus Subordinate to Astyages	130
Cyrus the Grandson of Astyages	131
Year of the Accession of Cyrus	131
Conquest of Media	132
Aggressor in the Battle	133
Nabonidus Taken in Babylon	133
MAJOR SUPPORTING ARGUMENTS MADE IN THIS WORK	134
EVIDENCE FROM PRIMARY SOURCES	136
REGNAL YEARS OF NABONIDUS	137
KINGS OF THE NEO-BABYLONIAN EMPIRE	138

NEW CHART OF PERSIAN AND MEDIAN ROYAL LINEAGES TO 359 BC	139
BIBLIOGRAPHY	141

Foreword: A Problem of Bias

This book is written explicitly from a biblical Christian worldview—a true rarity for an academic study in 2014, since the market for such writing has virtually evaporated. Mainstream scholarship has become thoroughly secular; mainstream evangelical Christian scholarship has moved so close to mainstream secular academia that it also dislikes writing from a biblical Christian worldview (in academic publications); and traditional/fundamental Christian groups have generally retreated from academia to the point where they no longer produce top-level academic works.

This book is no diatribe; it is a careful historical study which is written from a biblical Christian, rather than secular, point of view. Does that make it biased? Only if bias is defined subjectively as stating as fact, without supporting arguments, something that is not held as fact by the majority of current mainstream scholarship. It may be noted, however, that since scholarly opinion is always changing, there would have been times when writing from a biblical Christian worldview was considered unbiased in academia—during the seventeenth, eighteenth, and parts of the nineteenth centuries, for example. If one wishes to read a version of this book that would be considered largely without bias by contemporary academic standards, he may read the author's May 2014 Ph.D. dissertation from Dallas Theological Seminary, which was written and edited according to the contemporary requirements of that institution.

This book accuses several ancient extrabiblical writings of bias, by which is meant that their goal is to support a political aim, rather than to tell the historical and spiritual truth. A bias, properly defined, is a prejudice against truth. Sometimes a biased writing specifically seeks to oppose and distort truth; but sometimes a biased writing merely shows disregard for truth through a higher regard for something else (e.g., polishing the king's image). Truth is objective reality, and therefore cannot be defined subjectively, whether by one individual's opinion or by the opinion of the majority of modern academic scholarship. Truth is defined objectively by the Bible, which is the Word of God (and, as such, is self-authenticating, without the need for any external proofs of its validity). The ultimate bias, therefore, is denying the absolute truth and authority of the Bible. Even if one does not deny the truth of the Bible, but carefully avoids any reference in his work to biblical faith, he is expressing a strong bias. The exclusion of any expression of biblical faith in academic writing is an expression of hostility towards truth. By an objective standard, therefore, the concept of "bias" in modern mainstream academia is itself strongly biased.

"Bias" cannot be defined simply as one's point of view, since everyone has a worldview, and it is not possible to think outside of any view of reality. Writing in a way that does not contradict commonly held viewpoints is not the same thing as writing without a viewpoint. Further, for a viewpoint to avoid circularity or arbitrariness, it must ultimately be rooted in some self-evident, real foundation. The biblical Christian worldview has just such a foundation in the Bible, whereas the secular academic worldview is in constant flux, no different than the shifting, windblown sands of the desert. The more a writer aims to bring his analysis into conformity with the Bible, the more objective his writing will be, since he is showing indifference to any external factors that would skew his conclusions away from the truth.

The result of the secular concept of "bias," which banishes all references to a writer's Christian theological viewpoint and rejects all arguments made from the Bible, is not objectivity—it is forced secularization, it is thought control, and, ultimately, it is part of Satan's lost war against the Lord God Almighty. If all references to faith in the Bible must be excluded

from academic writing, one is writing within a framework of methodological unbelief (methodological naturalism), which differs little, in practice, from a philosophical expression of unbelief. Methodological unbelief can never lead a scholar to a conclusion of faith, since faith has been excluded by the rules.¹ In the context of the present study, a passing statement that the book of Daniel is a late forgery would not be considered biased in mainstream academia, whereas a passing statement that the book of Daniel is the Word of God would be considered biased, and inadmissible to the scholarly discussion (even if supported by arguments and evidence). A work that made such a reference would be so offensive to most critics² that it would stand no chance of being published by any academic press, and would be unlikely to be read by most critics. It would appear that secular scholarship has no answer to the biblical Christian worldview, for it desperately wants to avoid scholarly interaction with this worldview. It would also appear that secular scholarship hates the biblical Christian worldview for preexisting spiritual reasons, since the rules of the game have been set up to completely exclude it from being expressed or advocated in academic writing. The biblical response is to faithfully proclaim the truth in the face of opposition and scorn (2 Tim 4:1-5; Jude 3-4). So, let us attempt to set forth in this volume the truth as it is, for those who are willing to receive it.

Steven D. Anderson
Grand Rapids, Michigan
September, 2014

¹ This is the rebuttal to the argument that “they won’t listen to you if you make your faith explicit”: writing in a way that does not make one’s faith explicit does no spiritual good for anyone.

² In the context of biblical studies, a “critic” is someone who uses higher criticism to analyze the Bible. Likewise, “critical” scholarship is scholarship that analyzes the Bible using higher criticism, and “critical” issues are issues related to the application of higher criticism to biblical studies. “Critical” in this sense does not mean “important,” or even “analytical.” A “critic” of the Bible is a detractor of the Bible, though this is not the technical sense of the term “critical.” Critical scholars are theologically liberal or non-Christian to one degree or another, but “critical” is the term which is generally preferred these days to “liberal.” Note that textual criticism is different from higher criticism, although higher criticism can be applied to textual criticism.

Abbreviations

General Abbreviations

For standard abbreviations used in the field of biblical studies, the reader may consult *The SBL Handbook of Style* (2nd ed.; Atlanta: SBL Press, 2014). Some common abbreviations used in this book include:

- E ····· English
- COS ··· *The Context of Scripture*. Edited by William W. Hallo. 3 vols. Leiden: Brill, 1997–2002
- G ····· Greek
- KJV ··· King James Version
- LXX ··· Septuagint (an ancient Greek translation of the Old Testament)
- MT ··· Masoretic Text (the best preserved form of the Hebrew/Aramaic Old Testament)
- NIV ··· New International Version
- NT ····· New Testament
- OG ··· Old Greek
- OT ····· Old Testament
- Sym ··· Symmachus
- Th ····· Theodotion
- v. l.* ··· variant reading (*varia lectio*)

Abbreviations of the Books of the Bible

Gen ······ Genesis
Exod ······ Exodus
Lev ······ Leviticus
Num ······ Numbers
Deut ······ Deuteronomy
Josh ······ Joshua
Judg ······ Judges
Ruth ······ Ruth
1 Sam ······ 1 Samuel
2 Sam ······ 2 Samuel
1 Kgs ······ 1 Kings
2 Kgs ······ 2 Kings
1 Chr ······ 1 Chronicles
2 Chr ······ 2 Chronicles
Ezra ······ Ezra
Neh ······ Nehemiah
Esth ······ Esther
Job ······ Job
Ps ······ Psalm
Pss ······ Psalms
Prov ······ Proverbs
Eccl ······ Ecclesiastes
Song ······ Song of Songs
 (Song of Solomon)
Isa ······ Isaiah
Jer ······ Jeremiah
Lam ······ Lamentations
Ezek ······ Ezekiel
Dan ······ Daniel
Hos ······ Hosea
Joel ······ Joel
Amos ······ Amos
Obad ······ Obadiah
Jonah (or Jon) ···· Jonah
Mic ······ Micah

Nah ······ Nahum
Hab ······ Habakkuk
Zeph ······ Zephaniah
Hag ······ Haggai
Zech ······ Zechariah
Mal ······ Malachi
Matt ······ Matthew
Mark ······ Mark
Luke ······ Luke
John ······ John
Acts ······ Acts
Rom ······ Romans
1 Cor ······ 1 Corinthians
2 Cor ······ 2 Corinthians
Gal ······ Galatians
Eph ······ Ephesians
Phil ······ Philippians
Col ······ Colossians
1 Thess ······ 1 Thessalonians
2 Thess ······ 2 Thessalonians
1 Tim ······ 1 Timothy
2 Tim ······ 2 Timothy
Tit ······ Titus
Phlm ······ Philemon
Heb ······ Hebrews
James (or Jas) ··· James
1 Pet ······ 1 Peter
2 Pet ······ 2 Peter
1 John ······ 1 John
2 John ······ 2 John
3 John ······ 3 John
Jude ······ Jude
Rev ······ Revelation

CHAPTER 1

Introduction to the Problem

The biblical book of Daniel describes a figure called Darius the Mede, the son of Ahasuerus, who is said to have assumed rule over the Neo-Babylonian Empire after the fall of Babylon to a Medo-Persian force (Dan 5:31[E] / 6:1[MT]; cf. Dan 11:1). Darius the Mede is a major character in Daniel 6, and the vision of Daniel 9 is said to have occurred during his reign. However, mainstream scholarship affirms that there never was such a person as Darius the Mede. The conventional view states that Cyrus the Persian conquered Media ca. 553 BC and deposed the last Median king. Cyrus, as king of Persia, reigned over the entire (Medo-)Persian Empire when Babylon fell in 539 BC. Evangelical Bible scholars have proposed various solutions to harmonize the book of Daniel with this version of history, but there remains a measure of dissatisfaction with these solutions.

The thesis of this study is that Cyrus shared power with a Median king until about two years after the fall of Babylon. This Median king is called Cyaxares (II) by the Greek historian Xenophon, but is known by his throne name Darius in the book of Daniel.¹ Cyrus did not make a hostile conquest of Media, did not dethrone the last Median king, and did not become the highest regent in the Medo-Persian Empire until after the fall of Babylon. Xenophon's detailed account agrees remarkably well with the book of Daniel, and is supported by a surprising variety of other ancient sources. The account of the accession of Cyrus given by the Greek historian Herodotus, which forms the basis for the reconstruction of these events by modern historians, is a legendary recasting of a propagandistic myth promoted by Cyrus as a means of legitimating his conquest in the minds of an unfavorable Babylonian populace. Cuneiform references to Cyrus (and his son Cambyses) as "king" soon after the fall of Babylon are easily explained through a coregency which lasted until the death of Darius the Mede/Cyaxares II. There is surprisingly solid biblical and extrabiblical support for Xenophon's claim that Cyrus began his career as the commanding general of the Medo-Persian army and crown prince of Persia, and that he was not made king of both Media and Persia until after the fall of Babylon.²

Purpose of This Study

The purpose of this study is to establish the identity of Darius the Mede in extrabiblical literature, and to give an explanation for contradictory accounts regarding the accession of Cyrus and the existence of a Median king at the time of Babylon's fall. This study will examine the parallels and discrepancies between Daniel's presentation of Darius the Mede and the

¹ For a chart of Persian and Median royal lineages reconstructed according to the conclusions of this study, see the appendix.

² For a more detailed overview of the historical scenario argued for in this study, one may read the first main section of chapter 5.

presentation of the history of the transition between the Babylonian and Medo-Persian Empires in relevant extrabiblical historical sources. The goal of such a study is to determine with greater clarity the nature and identity of Daniel's Darius the Mede, and to give an explanation for the discrepancies among the historical sources. An additional, related aim of this study is to lay the groundwork for interpreting future archeological discoveries, as new texts which bear on the issue of Darius the Mede come to light.

The questions asked and answered in this study are primarily historical questions. However, since the book of Daniel has become a focus of critical attacks on the divine origin of the Bible, issues of apologetics lie in the background. Although faith is the ultimate proof of the Bible (Heb 11:1), the Scriptures themselves contain arguments which are intended to convince skeptics of the Bible's authenticity (Isaiah 40–66 is a prominent example). Thus, it is hoped that this study will be an encouragement to believers and unsettling to skeptics by demonstrating the reasonableness of biblical faith, on the one hand, and the folly of mistrusting the Bible, on the other.

Need for This Study

The view that Darius the Mede is the man identified by Xenophon as Cyaxares II was the dominant view among Christian and Jewish commentators on the book of Daniel from the first century AD through the middle of the nineteenth century, but was virtually abandoned after Akkadian inscriptions that supported Herodotus were published around 1880. There is more extrabiblical evidence in support of this view than the attention currently given to it would suggest, and problems with the prevailing views of Darius the Mede demand that scholarship take a fresh look at the identification of Cyaxares II with Darius the Mede. The present study is the first book-length work to interpret the Akkadian inscriptions within a historical framework that recognizes the existence of Darius the Mede as a real king of Medo-Persia who preceded Cyrus.

History of Interpretation

A survey of the history of interpretations of Darius the Mede will begin with the Greek translations of the OT, will move through five categories of views held (mainly) by believers in rough chronological order of the proposals, and will conclude with the standard view of critical writers.

Interpretations in the LXX

Probably the oldest extant interpretations of Darius the Mede are to be found in the Greek versions of Daniel. The Theodotonic text of *Bel and the Dragon* 1.1 (intended to follow Daniel 12:13) evidently identifies Darius the Mede with the Median king Astyages, given the parallel wording to Daniel 6:1(Th) / 5:31(E) and the fact that the chapter is set after the fall of Babylon: “And King Astyages was gathered to his fathers, and Cyrus the Persian received his kingdom” (καὶ ὁ βασιλεὺς Ἀστυάγης προσετέθη πρὸς τοὺς πατέρας αὐτοῦ καὶ παρέλαβεν Κῦρος ὁ Πέρσης τὴν βασιλείαν αὐτοῦ). This statement was probably not intended as a denial of the existence of

Darius the Mede, but rather gives an interpretation of who Darius the Mede was. The name “Astyages” was evidently substituted for “Darius” for the sake of clarity, since Astyages was commonly held to be the last Median king.

Also potentially significant but less clear is Daniel 11:1, in which OG has Κύρου τοῦ βασιλέως (Th Κύρου) for MT (and 4QDan^c) יְהִי־וְשִׁירְיָהּ (Aquila and Sym Δαρείου τοῦ Μήδου). MT certainly represents the original text, referring to the angel’s activity at the beginning of the Medo-Persian Empire (following the fall of Babylon). It is possible that OG (which Th follows) is an attempt to match the heading of the vision in Daniel 10:1, which refers to the reign of Cyrus. However, it is also possible that, because most scribes knew of no such person as Darius the Mede from extrabiblical history, at some point the OG and Th texts (or, more likely, the *Vorlage* of these texts) were “corrected” in places to fit with Herodotus’ presentation of Cyrus as the first king of the Persian Empire, without recognizing Darius the Mede. If so, OG is inconsistent, for although it has Ἀρταξέρξης ὁ τῶν Μήδων in Daniel 6:1(G) / 5:31(E) for MT אֲרִיָּהּ שִׁירְיָהּ,³ OG does use Δαρείος three times later in Daniel 6. The Old Greek definitely does not attempt to identify Darius and Cyrus as one and the same individual, against the claims of Baldwin and Steinmann,⁴ since it says in 6:29(G) / 6:28(E) that Cyrus “received” (παρέλαβε) the kingdom after the death of Darius.

The apocryphal *I Esdras* (date uncertain; probably 2nd cent. BC) implicitly gives an interpretation of Darius the Mede, for it describes a “King Darius” who reigned as an absolute sovereign over the Medo-Persian Empire (*I Esd.* 3.1-3), yet who shared power with Cyrus and confirmed the decree of Cyrus to allow the Jewish exiles to return and rebuild the temple (*I Esd.* 4.42-44, 57). Modern commentators do not accept the historicity of this section of *I Esdras* (3.1–5.6), but it does preserve an ancient Jewish perspective on Darius the Mede.

Darius as Cyaxares II

Among early Christian and Jewish commentators on Daniel, Josephus and Jerome were the most influential for later church history. Josephus, the earlier of the two sources, writes:

Δαρείω δὲ τῷ καταλύσαντι τὴν Βαβυλωνίων ἡγεμονίαν μετὰ Κύρου τοῦ συγγενοῦς ἔτος ἦν ἐξηκοστὸν καὶ δεύτερον, ὅτε τὴν Βαβυλῶνα εἶλεν, ὃς ἦν Ἀστυάγου υἱός, ἕτερον δὲ παρὰ τοῖς Ἕλλησιν ἐκαλεῖτο ὄνομα.⁵

Now Darius put an end to the dominion of the Babylonians with Cyrus his relative, being sixty-two years old when he took Babylon—who was the son of Astyages, but was called by another name among the Greeks.

³ Th has Δαρείος ὁ Μήδος.

⁴ Joyce G. Baldwin, *Daniel: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, ed. D. J. Wiseman (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1978), 27; Andrew E. Steinmann, *Daniel*, Concordia Commentary (Saint Louis: Concordia, 2008), 293.

⁵ Josephus *Jewish Antiquities* 10.248/10.11.4.

Xenophon is the only Greek historian who is known to refer to a son of Astyages, and his works were read widely in antiquity. Thus, although Josephus does not explicitly refer to Xenophon, he appears to identify Daniel's Darius the Mede with Xenophon's Cyaxares II.

Next to Josephus, the most important ancient commentator to express a view on Darius the Mede is Jerome, who writes as follows:

. . . quo interfecto a Dario rege Medorum, qui Cyri regis Persarum auunculus fuit, et Cyro Persa — quae duo regna, Esaias : ascensorem bigae, cameli et asini uocat — destructum esse imperium Chaldaeorum — quod quidem et Xenophon in Cyri maioris scribit Infantia, et Pompeius Trogus, et multi alii qui barbaras scripsere historias —; hunc Darium, in graecis uoluminibus, quidam Astyagen, alii Astyagis filium putant et alio apud eos appellari nomine.⁶

Archer's translation: *After he had been killed by Darius, King of the Medes, who was the maternal uncle of Cyrus, King of the Persians, the empire of the Chaldeans was destroyed by Cyrus the Persian. It was these two kingdoms [the Median and the Persian] which Isaiah in chap. 21 addresses as a charioteer of a vehicle drawn by a camel and an ass. Indeed Xenophon also writes the same thing in connection with the childhood of Cyrus the Great; likewise Pompeius Trogus and many others who have written up the history of the barbarians. Some authorities think that this Darius was the Astyages mentioned in the Greek writings, while others think it was Astyages' son, and that he was called by the other name among the barbarians.*⁷

Although Jerome acknowledges a difference of opinion among commentators of his own day regarding Darius the Mede, his statement that Darius was the maternal uncle of Cyrus indicates his preference for the identification of Darius the Mede with Xenophon's Cyaxares II, since both Herodotus and Xenophon testify that Astyages was not Cyrus' uncle, but his grandfather.⁸ In another place, Jerome actually quotes Josephus's view, and seems to represent it as his own.⁹

The identification of Daniel's Darius the Mede with Xenophon's Cyaxares II by these two early and important writers ensured the adoption of this view by many later commentators on Daniel. This view clearly predominates among major Protestant writers of the Reformation and post-Reformation period. The great Reformer John Calvin expressed this view in the sixteenth century.¹⁰ In the mid-seventeenth century, it was defended by James Ussher in his famous *Annals of the World*.¹¹ In the eighteenth century, it was expressed by William Lowth, father of the Robert Lowth who is famous for his *Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the*

⁶ Jerome *Commentariorum in Daniele libri III<IV>* 820-21.

⁷ Gleason L. Archer Jr., ed., *Jerome's Commentary on Daniel*, trans. Gleason L. Archer Jr. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1958), 55.

⁸ Herodotus 1.107-8; Xenophon *Cyropaedia* 1.2.1.

⁹ Jerome *Commentariorum in Daniele libri III<IV>* 829.

¹⁰ John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Book of the Prophet Daniel*, trans. Thomas Meyers, vol. 1, Calvin's Commentaries (Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1852; repr., Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948), 347-48.

¹¹ James Ussher, *The Annals of the World: Deduced from the Origin of Time, and Continued to the Beginning of the Emperour Vespasians Reign, and the Totall Destruction and Abolition of the Temple and Commonwealth of the Jews* (London: J. Crook and G. Bedell, 1658), 85-86, 101.

Hebrews.¹² In the first part of the nineteenth century, it was affirmed by Adam Clarke, who wrote a major commentary on the entire Bible; by Thomas Hartwell Horne, who wrote the first great introduction to the Bible; and by the celebrated grammarian and lexicographer Wilhelm Gesenius.¹³ In the mid-nineteenth century, it was propounded by Humphrey Prideaux, whose *OT and NT Connected* was a standard work for many decades; by C. F. Keil, whose *Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament*, coauthored with Franz Delitzsch, remains a classic today; by Albert Barnes, whose multivolume Bible commentary is still in print today; by E. W. Hengstenberg, a prominent German scholar of the mid-nineteenth century; and by Otto Zöckler in *Lange's Commentary*, edited by James Strong and Philip Schaff.¹⁴ However, this view was almost completely abandoned after Akkadian inscriptions that supported Herodotus were discovered and published in the late nineteenth century (ca. 1880).¹⁵

Thus, although the identification of Darius the Mede with Xenophon's Cyaxares II goes back at least to Josephus and Jerome, this view has virtually disappeared from commentaries on Daniel since Keil—so much so that many modern OT scholars probably are not even aware of this position or of the evidence which supports it. While Keil presented good arguments based on the evidence then available, he made no reference to cuneiform inscriptions, presumably because none was available to him at the time. Waterhouse has made an attempt to update Keil's position, but a more detailed and careful study is needed.¹⁶

¹² William Lowth, *A Commentary upon the Prophecy of Daniel, and the Twelve Minor Prophets*, 2 vols. (London: William Mears, 1726), 1:52.

¹³ Adam Clarke, *The Holy Bible . . . with a Commentary and Critical Notes*, vol. 5 (New York: Abraham Paul, 1825), 19.H.1-2; Thomas Hartwell Horne, *An Introduction to the Critical Study and Knowledge of the Holy Scriptures*, 8th ed., vol. 4 (London: T. Cadell, 1839), 213, 217; Samuel Davidson, *The Text of the Old Testament Considered: With a Treatise on Sacred Interpretation; and a Brief Introduction to the Old Testament Books and the Apocrypha*, vol. 2.2 of *An Introduction to the Critical Study and Knowledge of the Holy Scriptures*, by Thomas Hartwell Horne, ed. Thomas Hartwell Horne, Samuel Davidson, and Samuel Prideaux Tregelles (London: Longman, Brown, Green, Longmans, & Roberts, 1856), 926; Wilhelm Gesenius, *Thesaurus philologicus criticus linguae hebraeae et chaldaeae veteris testamenti*, 2nd ed., vol. 1 (Leipzig: F. C. G. Vogelii, 1835), 349-50.

¹⁴ Albert Barnes, *Daniel*, 2 vols., Notes on the Old Testament (London: Blackie & Son, 1853; repr., Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 1:303-4; 2:3, 6-10, 158; E. W. Hengstenberg, *Dissertations on the Genuineness of Daniel and the Integrity of Zechariah*, trans. B. P. Pratten (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1847), 40-43; C. F. Keil, *Biblical Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, trans. M. G. Easton, Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1877; repr., Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955), 192-200; Humphrey Prideaux, *An Historical Connection of the Old and New Testaments: Comprising the History of the Jews and Neighboring Nations, from the Decline of the Kingdoms of Judah and Israel to the Time of Christ*, ed. J. Talboys Wheeler, 3rd ed., vol. 1 (London: William Tegg & Co., 1877), 106-12; Otto Zöckler, *The Book of the Prophet Daniel: Theologically and Homiletically Expounded*, trans. and ed. by James Strong, vol. 13 of *Commentary on the Holy Scriptures: Critical, Doctrinal and Homiletical, with Special Reference to Ministers and Students*, ed. John Peter Lange and Philip Schaff (New York: Scribner, Armstrong & Co., 1876), 35-36.

¹⁵ Two exceptions are: Clarence Larkin, *The Book of Daniel* (Glenside, PA: The Clarence Larkin Estate, 1929), 90-91; and Waterhouse, who is cited below.

¹⁶ S. Douglas Waterhouse, "Why Was Darius the Mede Expunged from History?" in *To Understand the Scriptures: Essays in Honor of William H. Shea*, ed. David Merling (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Institute of Archeology, 1997), 173-89. Waterhouse proposes that Cyrus was vilified by Darius Hystaspes and his successors, who were from a different lineage, and that this explains the distortion of the Cyrus story in many historical documents. Such an explanation, however, cannot adequately account for the documents which precede the time of Darius Hystaspes—especially the Dream Text and the dates on Babylonian contract texts. In addition,

Darius as Gubaru

With the abrupt decline of the Cyaxares theory following the publication of cuneiform texts, a new theory came to predominate among evangelical writers: Darius the Mede was identified with a Persian-appointed governor (and/or general) named Gubaru (and/or Ugbaru).¹⁷ This view was the most popular one among evangelical writers during the first three quarters of the twentieth century—though, significantly, it was not seriously considered before the late nineteenth century, and was then proposed only on the basis of extrabiblical texts. Whitcomb gave the classic statement of this view, while Shea has contributed numerous articles which attempt to preserve the view in a new form against new problems that have been found with it.¹⁸ Koch has advocated this position from a critical point of view, though without significant interaction with Whitcomb, Shea, and the problems they raise.¹⁹ Albright is an earlier writer who also advocated this position from a critical point of view.²⁰

most of the extant stories about Cyrus appear intended to glorify him or to create a mystique about him, rather than to discredit him.

¹⁷ H. Deane, *Daniel: His Life and Times*, Men of the Bible (London: James Nisbet, 1888), 100-101; Sir Robert Anderson, *Daniel in the Critics' Den: A Defense of the Historicity of the Book of Daniel*, 3rd ed. (London: J. Nisbet, 1909; repr., Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1990), 37-38; H. A. Ironside, *Lectures on Daniel the Prophet*, 2nd ed. (Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, 1920), 98; W. F. Albright, "The Date and Personality of the Chronicler," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 40 (1921): 112-13; Robert Dick Wilson, *Studies in the Book of Daniel: Second Series* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1938), 258-64; H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of Daniel* (Columbus, OH: Wartburg, 1949), 238-42; R. K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament with a Comprehensive Review of Old Testament Studies and a Special Supplement on the Apocrypha* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969), 341-43; Leon Wood, *A Commentary on Daniel* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1973), 153-54; Renald E. Showers, *The Most High God: A Commentary on the Book of Daniel* (West Collingswood, NJ: Friends of Israel, 1982), 60-61; Gleason L. Archer Jr., "Daniel," in *Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin et al., vol. 7 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1985), 16-19.

Some scholars may wonder why I cite writers such as Ironside and Showers (here) or Campbell and Larkin (in subsequent notes), in what may seem to be popular-level works. In some instances, I think these works give a much more cogent interpretation of the book of Daniel than many technical commentaries, which makes them significant for the study of the book of Daniel. These commentaries are also important for the history of interpretation of Darius the Mede within evangelical circles. In addition, I think that the opinion of a well-known scholar or churchman, such as Tremper Longman, is worth citing as an informed and influential judgment, even if his views are stated in a non-technical work.

¹⁸ John C. Whitcomb Jr., *Darius the Mede: A Study in Historical Identification* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959), 17-23; William H. Shea, "An Unrecognized Vassal King of Babylon in the Early Achaemenid Period," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 9 (1971): 51-67; William H. Shea, "An Unrecognized Vassal King of Babylon in the Early Achaemenid Period: II," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 9 (1971): 99-128; William H. Shea, "An Unrecognized Vassal King of Babylon in the Early Achaemenid Period: III," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 10 (1972): 88-117; William H. Shea, "An Unrecognized Vassal King of Babylon in the Early Achaemenid Period: IV," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 10 (1972): 147-78; William H. Shea, "Darius the Mede: An Update," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 20, no. 3 (1982): 229-47; William H. Shea, "Nabonidus Chronicle: New Readings and the Identity of Darius the Mede," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 7, no. 1 (1996): 1-20; William H. Shea, "The Search for Darius the Mede (Concluded), or, The Time of the Answer to Daniel's Prayer and the Date of the Death of Darius the Mede," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 12, no. 1 (2001): 97-105. Whitcomb's book was a published revision of his B.D. thesis: John Clement Whitcomb, "The Historicity of Darius the Mede in the Book of Daniel" (B.D. thesis, Grace Theological Seminary, 1951).

¹⁹ Klaus Koch, "Dareios, der Meder," in *The Word of the Lord Shall Go Forth: Essays in Honor of David Noel Freedman in Celebration of His Sixtieth Birthday*, ed. Carol L. Meyers and M. O'Connor, American Schools

Darius as Cyrus

A second proposal to reconcile Daniel's account with Herodotus' identifies Darius the Mede as none other than Cyrus himself. This theory was evidently first put forth by Boscawen in 1878, as an early response to the publication of cuneiform texts which indicated that Cyrus conquered Babylon and began to reign as king immediately afterward.²¹ Boscawen's proposal was disparaged shortly thereafter by Rawlinson, who, after a few brief criticisms, wrote, "We will not insult our readers' intellects by continuing."²² After suffering neglect for many years, this proposal was revived by the noted Assyriologist D. J. Wiseman, who gave it a more credible defense.²³ The identification of Darius with Cyrus has been the most popular view among recent evangelical writers who take a position on Darius the Mede, probably due to increasing problems discovered in the Gubaru theory.²⁴ It has also been advocated by Colless from the critical side.²⁵

of Oriental Research Special Volume Series, ed. Eric M. Meyers, vol. 1 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1983), 287-99; Klaus Koch, "Darius the Mede," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman et al., vol. 2 (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 38-39.

²⁰ W. F. Albright, "The Date and Personality of the Chronicler," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 40 (1921): 112-13.

²¹ W. St. Chad Boscawen, "Babylonian Dated Tablets, and the Canon of Ptolemy," *Transactions of the Society of Biblical Archaeology* 6, no. 1 (1878): 29-30.

²² George Rawlinson, *Egypt and Babylon from Sacred and Profane Sources* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1885), 127-28.

²³ D. J. Wiseman, "Some Historical Problems in the Book of Daniel," in *Notes on Some Problems in the Book of Daniel* (London: Tyndale, 1965), 12-16.

²⁴ James M. Bulman, "The Identification of Darius the Mede," *Westminster Theological Journal* 35, no. 3 (1973): 247-67; William H. Shea, "Darius the Mede in His Persian-Babylonian Setting," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 29, no. 3 (1991): 235-57; Ernest C. Lucas, *Daniel*, *Apollos Old Testament Commentary*, ed. David W. Baker and Gordon J. Wenham, vol. 20 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 134-37; Steinmann, *Daniel*, 290-96. Baldwin defends Wiseman's view, but then says, "the identity of Darius cannot be established for sure on the present state of our knowledge" (Baldwin, *Daniel: An Introduction and Commentary*, 28). Note that Shea's article represented only a temporary change from his view that Darius was Gubaru.

Also worthy of mention is George R. Law, *Identification of Darius the Mede* (Pfafttown, NC: Ready Scribe Press, 2010). Law's book is a self-publication of his 2010 dissertation from Piedmont Baptist College and Graduate School. Law, who has a background in social science and jurisprudence, attempts to apply a social science method to the problem of Darius the Mede. Both this method and Law's selection of criteria for identifying Darius the Mede may be questioned. (One of his six criteria is that the potential candidate must be male, but that he be called "Darius" is not listed as a criterion.) Law presents historical evidence concerning each potential candidate for Darius the Mede, but generally only cites and follows other studies, often quoting other authors at length. He apparently is trained more as a researcher and social scientist than as a historian and exegete. The goal of the major portion of his work is not to do a critical historical and exegetical analysis of primary sources, but is rather to apply a social science method to the study of Darius the Mede, supposedly to obtain scientific proof of his identity. As a result of his methodology of starting with secondary analyses, rather than starting with an analysis of the primary sources themselves, Law has failed to add significant new historical analysis to the discussion concerning Darius the Mede. His work does have value as a collection of relevant citations and data, though there is some clutter, and problems exist with some citations (e.g., Law sometimes takes cites sources "as referenced in" other sources, he sometimes

Minor Proposals

Other proposals for identifying Darius the Mede have attracted few adherents. Only two other views have been advocated by major writers. First, Boutflower advocated the view that Darius the Mede was Cambyses II, the son of Cyrus and his successor.²⁶ Second, the identification of Darius the Mede with the Median king Astyages was proposed occasionally from antiquity until the early twentieth century.²⁷

Darius as Historical, but of Uncertain Identity

Many evangelical commentators on Daniel, recognizing problems in the prevailing views of Darius the Mede, state that some or all of the proposed solutions are possible, but that none is provable; nevertheless, they do not doubt that Darius the Mede was a historical figure.²⁸ This has been the dominant position among evangelical commentators since the late 1970s. This shift is

cites sources of poor quality, and he often quotes secondary sources at length). In general, Law's dissertation, though clearly the product of much effort and good intentions, is subpar as an academic work.

²⁵ Brian E. Colless, "Cyrus the Persian as Darius the Mede in the Book of Daniel," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 56 (1992): 113-26.

²⁶ Charles Boutflower, *In and around the Book of Daniel* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1923; repr., Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1977), 142-55.

²⁷ George Synkellos *The Chronography of George Synkellos: A Byzantine Chronicle of Universal History from the Creation* 275-78; John Lightfoot, *The Works of the Reverend and Learned John Lightfoot D. D., Late Master of Katherine Hall in Cambridge and Prebend of Ely*, vol. 1 (London: Robert Scot, Thomas Basset, Richard Chiswell, and John Wright, 1684), 134-35; Brooke Foss Westcott, "Darius," in *Dr. William Smith's Dictionary of the Bible: Comprising Its Antiquities, Biography, Geography, and Natural History*, rev. and ed. by H. B. Hackett and Ezra Abbot (New York: Hurd and Houghton, 1868), 549; Bernard Alfrink, "Darius Medus," *Biblica* 9 (1928): 316-40.

²⁸ So E. B. Pusey, *Daniel the Prophet: Nine Lectures, Delivered in the Divinity School of the University of Oxford* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1885), 158-64; Charles H. H. Wright, *Daniel and His Prophecies* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1906), 134-39; Edward J. Young, *A Commentary on Daniel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1949), 131, 299-300; John F. Walvoord, *Daniel: The Key to Prophetic Revelation* (Chicago: Moody, 1971), 132-34; Baldwin, *Daniel: An Introduction and Commentary*, 26-28; Donald K. Campbell, *Daniel: Decoder of Dreams* (Wheaton: Victor, 1977), 70; J. Dwight Pentecost, "Daniel," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: Old Testament*, ed. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck (Colorado Springs: Chariot Victor, 1985), 1347; Sinclair B. Ferguson, *Daniel*, Communicator's Commentary, ed. Lloyd J. Ogilvie, vol. 19 (Waco, TX: Word, 1988), 125-27; John E. Goldingay, *Daniel*, Word Biblical Commentary, ed. David A. Hubbard, Glenn W. Barker, and John D. W. Watts, vol. 30 (Dallas: Word, 1989), 111-12; Stephen R. Miller, *Daniel*, New American Commentary, ed. E. Ray Clendenen ([Nashville]: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 171-77; Tremper Longman III, *Daniel*, NIV Application Commentary Series, ed. Terry Muck (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999), 157-58; Andrew E. Hill, "Daniel," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Revised Edition*, ed. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 114; John F. Walvoord, *Daniel*, ed. Charles H. Dyer and Philip E. Rawley, John Walvoord Prophecy Commentaries (Chicago: Moody, 2012), 163-66.

probably due to a more postmodern mindset,²⁹ as well as to the recognition of problems with each of the proposed solutions.

Darius the Mede as Fiction

With only a few exceptions, commentators who follow a historical-critical approach to the book of Daniel regard Darius the Mede as a fictional or historically inaccurate character, as a part of their general view of the book of Daniel as a late forgery (pseudepigraph).³⁰ Rowley and Grabbe have produced studies defending this view,³¹ which in most instances is asserted or assumed by critical commentators without a detailed analysis. No serious efforts are made by Rowley, Grabbe, or allied commentators to harmonize the book of Daniel with extrabiblical data; rather, they seem intent on discrediting the book of Daniel.

²⁹ While there were some earlier commentators who adopted this position because they were simply bewildered by the problem, the view of Darius the Mede as of uncertain identity has definitely risen in popularity since the advent of postmodernism. Postmodernism shies away from dogmatism and claims of absolute truth (with obvious contradictions). Since postmodernism questions the very existence and nature of truth, it is less concerned about finding what is true than it is with doing a subjective literary and theological analysis of the biblical text. Earlier evangelical commentators on Daniel were concerned to prove a single solution of Darius the Mede, because if the Bible is true then one and only one solution must fit the data. It was a problem which genuinely troubled them, and which drove them to seek a solution. In addition, the earlier commentators had a spiritual concern to present a defense of the Bible's historicity against the destructive claims of critical scholarship. Today, nearly all prominent evangelical seminaries use critical methodologies themselves and hold critical scholarship in high regard, and therefore do not wish to write against it. Additionally, while probably most evangelical Old Testament scholars would say that Darius the Mede is a problem that needs to be solved, the fact remains that they and their students have not made a major effort to solve the problem. Since increasing numbers of evangelical scholars are denying major historical claims in the Old Testament while continuing to profess to be evangelical, it is hard to see why they could not also deny the historicity of Darius the Mede, if they deemed it to be necessary, through some literary-theological reading of the text.

³⁰ So S. R. Driver, *The Book of Daniel*, Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges, ed. A. F. Kirkpatrick (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1900), 70; James A. Montgomery, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, International Critical Commentary (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1927), 63-65; Otto Eissfeldt, *The Old Testament: An Introduction including the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha, and also the Works of Similar Type from Qumran: The History of the Formation of the Old Testament*, trans. Peter R. Ackroyd (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), 519; Norman W. Porteous, *Daniel: A Commentary*, Old Testament Library, ed. G. Ernest Wright et al. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1965), 83-84; André Lacocque, *Le livre de Daniel*, Commentaire de l'Ancien Testament, vol. 15b (Paris: Neuchatel, 1976), 90; Louis F. Hartman and Alexander A. Di Lella, *The Book of Daniel*, Anchor Bible, ed. William Foxwell Albright and David Noel Freedman, vol. 23 (New York: Doubleday, 1977), 35-36; André Lacocque, *The Book of Daniel*, trans. David Pellauer, rev. ed. (Atlanta: John Knox, 1979), 109-10; J. Alberto Soggin, *Introduction to the Old Testament: From Its Origins to the Closing of the Alexandrian Canon*, trans. John Bowden, 3rd ed., Old Testament Library, ed. Peter Ackroyd et al. (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 1989), 476; John J. Collins, *A Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, Hermeneia, ed. Frank Moore Cross (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 30-31; George Wesley Buchanan, *The Book of Daniel*, Mellen Bible Commentary: Old Testament Series, ed. George Wesley Buchanan, vol. 25 (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 1999), 149-52. For critical writers who uphold the historicity of Darius the Mede, see the previous citations of Albright, Koch, and Colless.

³¹ H. H. Rowley, *Darius the Mede and the Four World Empires in the Book of Daniel: A Historical Study of Contemporary Theories* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press Board, 1935); Lester L. Grabbe, "Another Look at the Gestalt of 'Darius the Mede,'" *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 50, no. 2 (1988): 198-213.

The view of Darius the Mede as fiction rejects the book of Daniel out of hand as a historical source, for it includes, at best, an *a priori* assumption that Herodotus and the cuneiform inscriptions (which supposedly agree in not recognizing Darius the Mede) can be trusted and the book of Daniel cannot; or, at worst, an *a priori* insistence that the authenticity of the book of Daniel must be denied at all hazards. This view is certainly not the product of faith seeking understanding.

While the remainder of this study will present and analyze extrabiblical evidence regarding Darius the Mede, it may be noted preliminarily that the idea that Darius the Mede is unhistorical is open to question even from an analysis of the extrabiblical sources themselves. There are numerous problems within the Greek and Akkadian sources which do not recognize Darius the Mede that call their credibility into question. The sources which reflect the portrayal of the accession of Cyrus by Herodotus differ on key elements in the story, and Herodotus himself says, “I am able to present three other versions of the Cyrus story.”³² There are also many credible extrabiblical ancient sources that do recognize Darius the Mede or Cyaxares II. Further, those who regard Darius the Mede as unhistorical have not been able to agree on an explanation as to why, how, and from which traditions he was created—indications that the theory is not as obvious as it is sometimes presented.³³ Fifth, the apparent fact Cyrus held the title and position of “king” at the time when Babylon fell does not rule out the possibility that there could have been another, lesser-known king reigning at the same time. Coregencies, alliances, and power-sharing agreements were common enough in the ancient world so that one cannot dismissed as far-fetched the idea that two or more kings could have been reigning in the early Medo-Persian Empire at the same time. By way of comparison, references in Greek and Akkadian literature to Nabonidus as the last king of Babylon do not disprove the historicity of Belshazzar, whom Daniel presents as reigning over Babylon when the city fell.

Plan of This Study

The most natural place to begin a study on Darius the Mede might seem to be the book of Daniel. However, the problem is not with the book of Daniel, which does not narrate a detailed history of the Medes and the Persians and is (arguably) internally consistent. The problem is rooted in a historical conflict between Herodotus and Xenophon, the two major Greek historians who narrate histories of Cyrus. Proposals exist for correlating figures in the histories of both Herodotus and Xenophon with Daniel’s Darius the Mede. Therefore, this study will begin in chapter 2 with an analysis of Herodotus and Xenophon in order to make an initial assessment of the nature and credibility of their works, before assessing how they may relate to the book of Daniel. In chapter 3, an assessment will be made of the various proposals for identifying Daniel’s Darius the Mede in either one of the two major Greek histories of the rise of the Medo-

³² Herodotus 1.95. The Greek text given in the Loeb edition is: “. . . ἐπιστάμενος περὶ Κύρου καὶ τριφασίας ἄλλας λόγων ὁδοῦς φῆναι.” For a chart of discrepancies among the historical sources, see the appendix.

³³ It is, of course, possible to form speculative hypotheses to explain the creation of a fictive Darius the Mede; many writers have done so, each presenting his hypothesis as if it were certain. However, the existence of competing explanatory theories shows that there is in fact no single obvious explanation for the creation of a fictional Darius the Mede. On these theories, see Koch, “Darius the Mede,” 38-39; Whitcomb, *Darius the Mede*, 50-63.

Persian Empire which were analyzed in chapter 2. Attention will then shift in chapter 4 to other classical and cuneiform sources which provide pertinent information; each text will be analyzed in turn and evaluated. It will be seen that many important texts support, in general, the version of the Cyrus story given by Herodotus, but that each is problematic; the histories of Xenophon and Daniel, though the weaker voice in extant extrabiblical texts, can claim support from a surprising number and variety of credible sources. The study will conclude in chapter 5 with a synthetic presentation of how the evidence fits together in a “big picture” historical scenario. Brief consideration will also be given to prospects for future direction of research on the problem of Darius the Mede.

The primary historical issue in this study is whether Cyrus deposed the last Median king (Astyages) ca. 560–550 BC, well before the fall of Babylon, or whether he inherited the position of the last Median king (Cyaxares II/Darius the Mede) ca. 537 BC, about two years after the fall of Babylon.

CHAPTER 2

Herodotus and Xenophon on the Accession of Cyrus

The reason why the identification of Darius the Mede has become a difficult problem is that there are surprisingly few primary sources which describe the history of the period. The natural place to begin looking for extrabiblical information concerning Darius the Mede would be Median inscriptions. Unfortunately, no Median inscriptions have been discovered to date—a point which nullifies any so-called “argument from silence” regarding the non-existence of inscriptions left by Darius the Mede. An outline of Median history has been inferred from Herodotus, but much is unknown or debated; Young laments, “we know all too little of Median history.”¹

In the absence of any Median inscriptions, the next place to look for information concerning Darius the Mede is in Persian inscriptions, since the Bible presents Darius the Mede as the first king of the Medo-Persian Empire following the fall of Babylon. Here again we have little to work with: the first significant inscription in the Persian language is the Behistun inscription of Darius Hystaspes² (ca. 518 BC), which is trilingual and does not describe the accession of Cyrus or the fall of Babylon. The only extant Old Persian texts that may date from before the time of Darius Hystaspes are three short, trilingual inscriptions from Pasargadae attributed to Cyrus which do little more than mention his name.³ However, based on a disputed line in the Behistun inscription, some scholars believe that Darius Hystaspes created the script for Old Persian and was the first to write in it, and that Darius added the Old Persian inscriptions at Pasargadae after the death of Cyrus.⁴ At any rate, there are no extant texts in the Persian language which provide a history of Cyrus or of his Median predecessors.

Without any Median or Persian texts available, the only other potential extrabiblical contemporary sources for the accession of Cyrus and the fall of Babylon are cuneiform texts from Mesopotamia. A few relevant texts are extant, and they will be analyzed in chapter 4.

¹ T. Cuyler Young Jr., “The Early History of the Medes and the Persians and the Achaemenid Empire to the Death of Cambyses,” in *Persia, Greece and the Western Mediterranean c. 525 to 479 B.C.*, ed. John Boardman et al., vol. 4 of *The Cambridge Ancient History*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 23.

² The nomenclature “Darius Hystaspes” is preferred over “Darius I” in this study in order to avoid potential confusion with Darius the Mede, who, it is argued, preceded the king conventionally called “Darius I.”

³ Edwin M. Yamauchi, *Persia and the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1990), 76. See also Roland G. Kent, “The Oldest Old Persian Inscriptions,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 66 (1946): 206-12.

⁴ Yamauchi, *Persia and the Bible*, 74-76. Mallowan writes, “Many and elaborate dissertations have been written about whether or not the Old Persian writing on these monuments was actually inscribed during the lifetime of Cyrus or after his death” (Max Mallowan, “Cyrus the Great (558–529 B.C.),” in *The Median and Achaemenian Periods*, ed. Ilya Gershevitch, vol. 2 of *The Cambridge History of Iran* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985], 395).

However, the information they provide regarding the accession of Cyrus, though important, is scant and contradictory. There are other problems as well: the Cyrus Cylinder and Verse Account are propaganda pieces, and must be viewed with a critical eye; the Dream Text, or Sippar Cylinder, of Nabonidus is found, upon analysis, to be a propaganda piece as well; and the Nabonidus Chronicle also appears to reflect a Persian point of view. After eliminating the Dream Text, the Harran Stele is the only extant inscription attributable to Nabonidus, the last king of Babylon, which so much as mentions the Medes or the Persians. Its passing reference to the king of the Medes is important, but is insufficient in itself to reconstruct the whole history of the period.

In the end, the only available narrative histories for the rise of the Medo-Persian Empire are those given by the classical Greek historians, primarily Herodotus. Modern scholars acknowledge that they are left with little choice but to rely mainly on Herodotus in order to reconstruct the history of the Medes and the rise of Cyrus to power—along with the history of subsequent kings of Persia.⁵ While modern historical works are willing to challenge Herodotus at many points, the conventional histories are united in accepting his claim that Cyrus overthrew Astyages and became king of Medo-Persia well before the fall of Babylon.⁶

Because the *Histories* of Herodotus is the primary basis for the reconstruction of the rise of Cyrus in conventional history, this study of Darius the Mede will begin by analyzing Herodotus and his work. Further, because another Greek historian, Xenophon, presents the only major competing account of the rise of Cyrus, Xenophon and his account will also be analyzed in detail.

Background to Herodotus

Herodotus was born around 484 BC in Halicarnassus, a Greek city on the Aegean coast of Asia Minor that was then under Persian control.⁷ Although little is known about his life, it is

⁵ Young says, “For all four phases of the early growth of the Achaemenid empire any historic details concerning these important and startling events, with the exception of certain aspects of the conquest of Babylon, come primarily from Herodotus” (Young, “Early History,” 28-29). Even as late as Cambyses II, the son and successor of Cyrus, it is still the case that “we have no sources for his reign other than Herodotus” (ibid., 47). The situation is similar for later Persian kings. Lewis writes, “if one is to write a narrative account of the reigns of Darius and Xerxes at all, there is no alternative to using Herodotus’ narrative as the core of that account” (David M. Lewis, “Persians in Herodotus,” in *The Greek Historians: Literature and History: Papers Presented to A. E. Raubitschek* [Saratoga, CA: ANMA Libri, 1985], 101-2). Regarding the whole history of the Persian Empire, Briant says, “given the available evidence, we have no choice but overwhelming reliance on Greek historiography to reconstruct a narrative thread” (Pierre Briant, *From Cyrus to Alexander: A History of the Persian Empire*, trans. Peter T. Daniels [Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2002], 8).

⁶ See, e.g., J. M. Cook, “The Rise of the Achaemenids and Establishment of Their Empire,” in *The Median and Achaemenian Periods*, ed. Ilya Gershevitch, vol. 2 of *The Cambridge History of Iran* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 209-12; Briant, *Cyrus to Alexander*, 31-44; I. M. Diakonoff, “Media,” in *The Median and Achaemenian Periods*, ed. Ilya Gershevitch, vol. 2 of *The Cambridge History of Iran* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 142-48; Mallowan, “Cyrus the Great (558–529 B.C.),” 404; Yamauchi, *Persia and the Bible*, 77-92; Young, “Early History,” 28-46.

⁷ For general background information for Herodotus, see John P. A. Gould, “Herodotus (1),” in *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, ed. Simon Hornblower and Antony Spawforth, 4th ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press,

clear from his work (sometimes left untitled; sometimes called the *Histories* or *The Persian Wars*) that he traveled widely. The history he records ends in the 420s BC, which is probably when he died. According to Marincola, “the main time of composition for Herodotus’s work was from the 450s into the 420s.”⁸ Some scholars argue that at least the earlier part of the *Histories* was already known in Athens by 425, when Aristophanes allegedly parodied it in a play.⁹ Fornara, however, argues that Aristophanes does not in fact poke fun at the *Histories* in his *Acharnians* (produced in February 425).¹⁰ He suggests 414 as the date when Herodotus published his work, when Aristophanes does in fact parody Herodotus in his *Birds* (produced in March 414).¹¹ Euripides alludes to the *Histories* in the same year in his *Electra*.¹² In any case, Herodotus wrote about seventy-five to a hundred years after the death of Cyrus and about 150 years after Cyrus’ birth—too long afterward to interview firsthand witnesses, yet recently enough to hear stories which were still circulating orally.

Both Herodotus’ sources and his credibility have been hotly disputed since ancient times. Herodotus refers to his work as a “history” (ἱστορία), a word which originally meant “a learning by inquiry.”¹³ Most of his stories are prefaced by some such statement as “it is said by the Egyptians,” which makes it clear that Herodotus is claiming to represent oral tradition. Sometimes Herodotus will present competing oral traditions side by side. It appears as though Herodotus’ work is in fact based largely on things he had heard or seen in his travels, though some of the information he attributes to oral sources was actually taken from written sources.¹⁴ The related and all-important questions of Herodotus’ reliability and historical method have been debated since antiquity. Some of the accounts that Herodotus presents as historical fact have been corroborated by archeological data and inscriptional evidence, while others have been contradicted.¹⁵ The extent of the historical accuracy or inaccuracy of Herodotus is a matter of scholarly debate.

Before summarizing Herodotus’ story of Cyrus, we will note opinions on Herodotus given by other historians, both ancient and modern.

2012), 674-75; Klaus Meister, “Herodotus [1],” in *Brill’s New Pauly: Encyclopaedia of the Ancient World: Antiquity*, ed. Hubert Cancik, Helmuth Schneider, and Christine F. Salazar, vol. 6 (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 265.

⁸ John Marincola, *Greek Historians*, Greece & Rome: New Surveys in the Classics, no. 31 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 24.

⁹ See Gould, “Herodotus (1),” 674; Marincola, *Greek Historians*, 24; Joseph Wells, *Studies in Herodotus* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1923), 171-77.

¹⁰ Charles W. Fornara, “Evidence for the Date of Herodotus’ Publication,” *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 91 (1971): 25-28.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 28-29. See Aristophanes *The Birds* 1124-38.

¹² Fornara, “Evidence,” 30-32. See Euripides *Electra* 1280-83.

¹³ Herodotus 1.1; 2.99.

¹⁴ Marincola, *Greek Historians*, 31-35.

¹⁵ See Edwin M. Yamauchi, “Herodotus,” in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman et al., vol. 3 (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 180-81; Marincola, *Greek Historians*, 39.

Ancient Writers

There are four notable ancient writers who criticized Herodotus: Aristophanes, Diodorus of Sicily, Strabo, and Plutarch. But there were also many ancient writers who relied on Herodotus as a historical source and who emulated him to one degree or another.

Aristophanes

As has already been noted, modern scholars consider that the comedian Aristophanes (ca. 450–shortly before 386 BC) parodies Herodotus in lines 1124–38 of his *Birds* (produced in March 414). In this scene, two braggarts are describing a massive wall. Although Aristophanes does not mention Herodotus by name, the description of the wall by the braggarts is very similar to the exaggerated description of the walls of Babylon given by Herodotus.¹⁶ There is also a mocking allusion to Herodotus' claim to have measured a pyramid himself.¹⁷ Aristophanes is therefore implicitly seeking to discredit Herodotus for these two alleged exaggerations. Right from the beginning, Herodotus had his critics.

Diodorus of Sicily

The historian Diodorus of Sicily (first century BC) criticized Herodotus for deliberately recording false tales in order to please his readers:

ὄσα μὲν οὖν Ἡρόδοτος καὶ τινες τῶν τὰς Αἰγυπτίων πράξεις συνταξαμένων ἐσχεδιάκασιν, ἐκουσίως προκρίναντες τῆς ἀληθείας τὸ παραδοξολογεῖν καὶ μύθους πλάττειν ψυχαγωγίας ἕνεκα, παρήσομεν, αὐτὰ δὲ τὰ παρὰ τοῖς ἱερεῦσι τοῖς κατ' Αἴγυπτον ἐν ταῖς ἀναγραφαῖς γεγραμμένα φιλοτίμως ἐξητακότες ἐκθησόμεθα.¹⁸

Now as for Herodotus and certain of those who drew up an account of Egyptian affairs, they invented stories, deliberately preferring over the truth the telling of marvelous tales and the fabrication of myths in order to amuse; these we pass over, and we shall set forth the things that are written in the registers by the priests with respect to Egypt, having diligently scrutinized them.

In another place, Diodorus states that Herodotus “is found to have followed contradictory conjectures” (ἠκολουθηκὼς δὲ ἀντιλεγόμεναις ὑπονοίαις εὕρισκεται) in his description of the Nile, whereas Diodorus commends Xenophon and Thucydides for having the wisdom to refrain completely from a description of Egypt.¹⁹

¹⁶ Herodotus 1.178.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 2.127.

¹⁸ Diodorus of Sicily *Bibliotheca historica* 1.69.7.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 1.37.4.

Strabo

The geographer Strabo (ca. 64 BC–after AD 21) also derided the credibility of Herodotus, in a context in which he is lamenting the lack of a reliable historical account of the early history of the Medes and the Persians:

ἽΟρῶντες γὰρ τοὺς φανερῶς μυθογράφους εὐδοκιμοῦντας ᾠήθησαν καὶ αὐτοὶ παρέξεσθαι τὴν γραφὴν ἠδεῖαν, ἐὰν ἐν ἱστορίας σχήματι λέγωσιν, ἃ μηδέποτε εἶδον μηδὲ ἤκουσαν ἢ οὐ παρά γε εἰδόντων, σκοποῦντες δὲ αὐτὸ μόνον τοῦτο, ὅ τι ἀκρόασιν ἠδεῖαν ἔχει καὶ θαυμαστὴν. ῥᾶον δ' ἂν τις Ἡσιόδῳ καὶ Ὁμήρῳ πιστεύσειεν ἠρωολογοῦσι καὶ τοῖς τραγικοῖς ποιηταῖς ἢ Κτησίᾳ τε καὶ Ἡροδότῳ καὶ Ἑλλανικῶ καὶ ἄλλοις τοιοῦτοις.²⁰

For, seeing that those who write myths openly are highly regarded, they thought that they would also produce delightful literature if they told in the guise of history that which they had never seen nor heard—or at least not from eyewitnesses—while seeking this thing only, to tell whatever amuses and amazes. Now one could more easily believe Hesiod and Homer telling epic poems and made-up tragedies than Ctesias, Herodotus, Hellanicus, and others like them.

Strabo elsewhere accuses Ctesias, Herodotus, and Hellanicus of intentionally narrating myths,²¹ and derides Herodotus for “talking much nonsense” about the Nile:

Πολλὰ δ' Ἡρόδοτός τε καὶ ἄλλοι φλυαροῦσιν, ὥσπερ μέλος ἢ ῥυθμὸν ἢ ἡδυσμὰ τι τῷ λόγῳ τὴν τερατείαν προσφέροντες· οἷον καὶ τὸ φάσκειν περὶ τὰς νήσους τὰς πρὸς τῇ Συήνῃ καὶ τῇ Ἐλεφαντίνῃ, πλείους δ' εἰσὶ, τὰς πηγὰς τοῦ Νείλου εἶναι, καὶ βάθος ἄβυσσον ἔχειν τὸν πόρον κατὰ τοῦτον τὸν τόπον.²²

Now both Herodotus and others talk much nonsense, adding to their account some marvelous thing, as it were a tune or rhythm or seasoning; as, for example, the assertion that the islands near Syene and Elephantine—and there are several—are the sources of the Nile, and that its channel has a bottomless depth at this place.

Plutarch

Probably the fiercest critic of Herodotus in antiquity was the biographer and philosopher Plutarch (before AD 50–after 120), who mercilessly assailed the integrity of Herodotus in his *Moralia*.²³ He accuses Herodotus of all manner of duplicity, of deliberately falsifying historical facts in order to support his personal aims, and of being insincere in his professed objectivity. Although Plutarch focuses his criticism on the representation of the Greeks by Herodotus, he affirms that Herodotus is guilty of many other “lies and fabrications” (ψεῦσματα καὶ πλάσματα), which would require many additional treatises to expose fully.²⁴ Among the historiographical

²⁰ Strabo *The Geography of Strabo* 11.6.3.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 1.2.35.

²² *Ibid.*, 17.1.52. This is not quite a fair summary of Herodotus 2.28.

²³ This consists of an entire book of the *Moralia*, called *On the Malice of Herodotus*, comprising sections 854-74 in the Loeb edition.

²⁴ Plutarch *On the Malice of Herodotus* 854F.

fallacies for which Plutarch faults Herodotus is his (alleged) habit of agreeing with the least creditable account when two or more versions of a particular incident are current—an accusation which is relevant to Herodotus’ narration of the Cyrus story.²⁵ While Plutarch’s presentation is less than gracious, and modern historians agree that many of Plutarch’s accusations against Herodotus are unfair and extreme, these criticisms do show that not all ancient historians regarded Herodotus as trustworthy and sincere.

Summary

In summary, it is apparent that Herodotus’ work was criticized as unreliable by some ancient historians; however, the reason why attention was given to Herodotus by these writers is that the *Histories* were in fact popular in ancient times, and were generally well received. Meister states that Herodotus “had an enormous influence on all subsequent Greek and Roman historiography.”²⁶ In some instances, historians may have criticized Herodotus in order to denigrate a worthy competitor. Cicero probably best represented the mixed opinion of the ancient world on Herodotus when he famously called him “the father of history” (*patrem historiae*), but said in the same sentence that his works contain “innumerable fabulous tales” (*innumerabiles fabulae*).²⁷

Modern Writers

Among modern critics of Herodotus, there is a minority opinion which seeks to discredit severely his historical reliability—an opinion which is generally considered to be hypercritical.²⁸ Probably the majority of writers take a middle-of-the-road approach to Herodotus, describing his methods, strengths, and weaknesses without strongly denouncing his approach or exaggerating his achievements.²⁹ Marincola represents the mainstream view by stating that the *Histories*

²⁵ Ibid., 855E. The Greek text given in the Loeb edition is: Τέταρον τοίνυν τίθεμαι σημεῖον οὐκ εὐμενοῦς ἐν ἱστορίᾳ τρόπου τὸ δοῦν ἢ πλείονων περὶ ταύτου λόγων ὄντων τῷ χεῖρονι προστίθεσθαι. “I put, then, for a fourth sign of ill-will in history-writing, the custom, when two or more versions of the same story are current, of agreeing with the less [creditable].”

²⁶ Meister, “Herodotus [1],” 269.

²⁷ Cicero *De Legibus* 1.1.5.

²⁸ The best known of the so-called hypercritical studies is Detlev Fehling, *Herodotus and His ‘Sources’: Citation, Invention and Narrative Art*, trans. J. G. Howie, ARCA Classical and Medieval Texts, Papers and Monographs, ed. Francis Cairns, Robin Seager, and Frederick Williams, vol. 21 (Leeds, Great Britain: Francis Cairns, 1989). Other so-called hypercritics and their studies are discussed in W. Kendrick Pritchett, *The Liar School of Herodotus* (Amsterdam: J. C. Gieben, 1993).

²⁹ So Sara Forsdyke, “Greek History, c. 525–480 BC,” in *Brill’s Companion to Herodotus*, ed. Egbert J. Bakker, Irene J. F. de Jong, and Hans van Wees (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 548-49; Gould, “Herodotus (1),” 674-76; Simon Hornblower, “Herodotus and His Sources of Information,” in *Brill’s Companion to Herodotus*, ed. Egbert J. Bakker, Irene J. F. de Jong, and Hans van Wees (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 373-86; John L. Myres, *Herodotus: Father of History* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1953), 31.

contain a complex mixture of fact and fiction that is not easily described by a particular label.³⁰ But on the other extreme, some modern historians view Herodotus as a hero, “the man who invented history,” to use the title of one recent book.³¹ Supposedly, all who wrote before Herodotus were writers of legends and myths, and were bound by moral and religious prejudices. Herodotus was, supposedly, the first writer to record history objectively, to do primary research through personal travels, and to make critical judgments about the reliability of various stories and reports. The biases and failures of Herodotus are downplayed as much as possible by such writers, and his history is given as much credibility as possible.³²

In response to the last view, it may be noted that the *Histories* are indeed qualitatively different from the extant Greek writings which preceded them, and that Herodotus went far to advance the concept of written history in the Greek world through his use of the term *ιστορία* and his skillful use of narrative to preserve a record of past events. Also, Herodotus does accurately preserve much of what he saw and heard in his travels, and he is a valuable source of information on the ancient world for this reason. He is more objective than earlier writers as well, since he shows a willingness to present conflicting stories, and to adjudicate between them. Though he has a Greek bias of sorts, he is almost relativistic in his presentation of differing practices and values in other cultures. However, a claim that Herodotus was the first person in the entire world to have invented the concept of history, or that earlier writers did not make critical judgments when encountering conflicting historical sources, is an overstatement.

The idea that Herodotus was the first person in the world to have invented the concept of history is a very narrow-minded perspective which ignores historical writings in other cultures and periods. Most notably, while genre classifications and dates of composition may be debated, even critics acknowledge that the Old Testament Scriptures contain many historical texts which predate Herodotus, and mention is frequently made of official historical records in the royal chronicles of both Israel and other ancient nations (cf., e.g., 1 Kgs 14:19, 29; 1 Chr 27:24; 29:29; Ezra 6:1-2; Esth 2:23; 6:1; 10:2). Both biblical writings and historical documents from Mesopotamia were composed within a specific religious worldview and political environment, but Herodotus tells stories of interaction with the gods in his work, too. Modern historians, for their part, typically write from a secular and evolutionary (Darwinian) point of view, and hold to specific political viewpoints (such as democracy and human rights). The very claim that Herodotus invented history seems to reflect an evolutionary view of history that deliberately ignores the Bible. While definitions of history and historiography vary, perhaps one can speak of historical writings as writings that accurately preserve a record of the past, and that are intended

³⁰ Marincola, *Greek Historians*, 39.

³¹ Justin Marozzi, *The Man Who Invented History: Travels with Herodotus* (London: John Murray, 2008).

³² Thus, Lateiner says, “Herodotus’ prose saved the events of the previous generation so that no one would ever again need to inquire fruitlessly: ‘What happened and what did it all mean for us?’ The proem asserts this intent for a new intellectual and literary genre, and the *Histories* fulfil it. Historiography as we know it was then created at one time and by one man, Herodotus” (Donald Lateiner, *The Historical Method of Herodotus*, Phoenix: Journal of the Classical Association of Canada: Supplementary Volume 23 [Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989], 227). Van Wees, while acknowledging the strong influence of pagan religious beliefs in the historical explanations given by Herodotus, nevertheless affirms that “it is Herodotus’ achievement to have turned the past into history” (Hans van Wees, “Herodotus and the Past,” in *Brill’s Companion to Herodotus*, ed. Egbert J. Bakker, Irene J. F. de Jong, and Hans van Wees [Leiden: Brill, 2002], 348-49).

to do so. In this sense of the term, there are many historical writings from non-Greek cultures which predate Herodotus.

The idea that Herodotus was the first history writer to recognize the need to make critical judgments when encountering conflicting historical sources is also an overstatement. It seems that any ancient scribe who drew up an official record of past events would have to make critical judgments when sources conflict. Further, the criticism of Herodotus by other ancient writers for (allegedly) not telling the truth and for (allegedly) doing so to serve an agenda of pleasing his readers shows that there was a concept of objectivity within the ancient world. The ancient writers who criticized Herodotus may not have used the term “objectivity,” but their criticisms seem to assume that some such notion existed, and that those who wrote history were expected to do so in a manner which is truthful and accurate. These criticisms of Herodotus were made as early as Aristophanes, who wrote soon after the *Histories* were published. Also, the idea that Herodotus had no purpose or agenda, and therefore that he invented the concept of objectivity in history writing, is open to criticism due to his penchant for telling entertaining or audience-pleasing stories which were designed to popularize his work. His claim to objectivity could itself be viewed partly as a marketing device.

The claim that Herodotus invented history writing even within the Greek world falters upon analysis. As Fehling argues, the *Histories* only represent one step in the development of history writing in the Greek world—halfway between Homer and Thucydides, one could say.³³ Homer’s masterful poetic representation of the Trojan War in the *Iliad* reads like a history in some ways, and it is certainly rooted in historical events, but it contains significantly more myth than reality. Herodotus wrote his *Histories* as a narrative, rather than as poetry, but intermingles historically accurate descriptions with myths and legends.³⁴ Shortly thereafter, Thucydides moved more fully beyond the legendary, carefully following a well-defined historiographical methodology in his description of the Peloponnesian War. Herodotus may have redefined the word *ιστορία*, but he did not invent the concept in a vacuum, nor did he make the jump from myth-writing to history-writing in a single herculean leap.

The modern historian would be gullible and naive simply to trust what Herodotus says, though it would also be an overreaction to dismiss all that he wrote. The historian who is seeking only to discover what happened in the past will have no *a priori* commitment either to attack or to defend Herodotus’ reputation. While Herodotus does have commendable characteristics as a historian, he also had some serious faults. His weaknesses are shown by: (1) a penchant for telling entertaining stories; (2) problems with his use of sources; and (3) other ancient sources that give conflicting historical information. Herodotus’ account of the rise of Cyrus will be evaluated on the basis of these and other criteria at the conclusion of this chapter.

³³ Fehling, *Herodotus and His ‘Sources’*, 253. See further, Robert Fowler, “Herodotus and His Prose Predecessors,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Herodotus*, ed. Carolyn Dewald and John Marincola (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 29-45; John Marincola, “Herodotus and the Poetry of the Past,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Herodotus*, ed. Carolyn Dewald and John Marincola (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 13-28.

³⁴ It should be noted that the use of poetry or song as a literary medium does not necessarily mean that the events described are mythical. There are many ancient cultures in which bards or court poets composed and recited stories of historical events. In fact, one could even argue that the recitation of history through poetry or song is more culturally and intellectually sophisticated than a bland prose narrative.

Herodotus' Account of Cyrus

The general purpose of the *Histories*, as stated in the proem (introduction), is to tell the history of the conflict between the Persians and the Greeks—though this history takes many detours down the path of interesting scenes and stories from foreign lands. The first book of the *Histories* tells the story of how the Persians came to rule all of Asia Minor. The rise of Cyrus is central to this story, since it was Cyrus who defeated Croesus (the king of Lydia) and became the master of his territory, then defeated Babylon to win an empire. Through Cyrus' conquests, Persia became the “barbarian” (foreign) nation that would oppose the Greeks.³⁵

Herodotus begins his account of the accession of Cyrus with a disclaimer: “I shall write what certain of the Persians say, who do not wish to make a fine tale of the things concerning Cyrus, but to tell what actually happened, though I am able to present three other versions of the Cyrus story.”³⁶ Contextually, “the things concerning Cyrus” (τὰ περὶ Κῦρον), refers to the account which follows in the narrative, which Herodotus calls “the manner in which Cyrus both grew up and became king.”³⁷ Herodotus' acknowledgement that he had heard four different versions of the birth and accession of Cyrus is an important statement. It will be argued subsequently that popular confusion regarding Cyrus' origins resulted when Cyrus himself published a fallacious version of his accession. This version was published in various forms, and also became distorted as folklore grew up around the heroic figure of Cyrus. Herodotus claims to have selected the version that was the least mythical and encomiastic, though there are still strong elements of both in his story.³⁸

Herodotus first lists the line of Median kings who preceded Cyrus. He begins with Deioces, the eponymous founder of the Median dynasty.³⁹ Then he describes Phraortes, his successor, who supposedly attacked and conquered Persia, followed by much of Asia Minor, but

³⁵ For a more detailed analysis of the structure of the *Histories*, see Thomas Harrison, “The Persian Invasions,” in *Brill's Companion to Herodotus*, ed. Egbert J. Bakker, Irene J. F. de Jong, and Hans van Wees (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 551-55.

³⁶ Herodotus 1.95. The Greek text given in the Loeb edition is: ὡς ὧν Περσέων μετεξέτεροι λέγουσι, οἱ μὴ βουλόμενοι σεμνοῦν τὰ περὶ Κῦρον ἀλλὰ τὸν ἔοντα λέγειν λόγον, κατὰ ταῦτα γράψω, ἐπιστάμενος περὶ Κύρου καὶ τριφασίας ἄλλας λόγων ὁδοῦς φῆναι.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 1.130. The Greek text given in the Loeb edition is: Οὕτω δὴ Κῦρος γενόμενός τε καὶ τραπεὶς ἐβασίλευσε (Literally, “In this manner, therefore, Cyrus both grew up and became king.”)

³⁸ This is generally recognized in the scholarly world. Stronach writes, “In the case of the long account provided by Herodotus (i. 107-130), which he disarmingly reports to have been the ‘least embroidered’ of the four distinct versions of the rise of Cyrus that were known to him, we can see that there is much of a purely mythical character” (David Stronach, *Pasargadae: A Report on the Excavations Conducted by the British Institute of Persian Studies from 1961 to 1963* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978], 285). Commenting on the account given by Herodotus of the growth of Persian power, Tuplin writes, “The general lineaments of this story are reliable, but some specific components are suspect: for example, Cyrus' origins are saga, and his onetime subjection to the Medes debatable” (Christopher Tuplin, “Herodotus on Persia and the Persian Empire,” in *The Landmark Herodotus: The Histories*, ed. Robert B. Strassleer [New York: Pantheon, 2007], 794).

³⁹ Herodotus 1.96-101.

suffered heavy losses in a war with Assyria and was killed.⁴⁰ He was followed by Cyaxares (I), who laid siege to Nineveh but was driven away by a huge Scythian army, after which the Medes lost all of their territory in Asia Minor.⁴¹ After twenty-eight years, Cyaxares recaptured Asia Minor from the Scythians, and also destroyed Nineveh.⁴² He was succeeded by his son Astyages.⁴³ While Astyages had no son, Cyrus was born of the marriage of Astyages' daughter Mandane to a Persian named Cambyses.⁴⁴ Herodotus proceeds to give an elaborate mythical account of the birth and upbringing of Cyrus.⁴⁵ While the main plot of this story is recognized as mythical, modern scholarship accepts the end of the story as basically factual—namely, that Cyrus fought a war with Astyages in which he captured Astyages and made Media a vassal state of Persia.⁴⁶ Importantly, however, the story of this war is of one piece with Herodotus' account of the birth and upbringing of Cyrus. The war between Astyages and Cyrus does not happen for no reason, but rather is the direct result of all the problems described in the preceding narrative—which, as numerous scholars have observed, reads much more like ancient legends than a truthful history.⁴⁷

⁴⁰ Ibid., 1.102. Modern scholars question the account which Herodotus gives of both Deioces and Phraortes, especially Deioces. See Yamauchi, *Persia and the Bible*, 49-52.

⁴¹ Herodotus 1.103-4.

⁴² Ibid., 1.106.

⁴³ Ibid., 1.107.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 1.107-9.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 1.107-22. The story could be summarized as follows: Astyages had two obscene dreams to the effect that his daughter's offspring would supplant him as king. After she married a Persian man, Astyages sought to kill her firstborn son immediately after his birth, but a stillborn child was substituted for Cyrus, who then was raised in a herdsman's family. When Cyrus grew up, Astyages discovered he had been tricked and he killed the son of Harpagus, the official whom he had assigned to put Cyrus to death as an infant, making Harpagus eat the flesh of his own son. But when the Persians found out who Cyrus was, he was welcomed by them and hailed as their leader. A vengeful Harpagus incited the Persians to revolt, and Astyages sent an army against Cyrus to quell the revolt. Cyrus defeated this army and subjugated the Medes.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 1.123-30.

⁴⁷ Brown writes, "The story of Cyrus, all the way from the circumstances surrounding his birth to his conquest of the Medes reads like a fairy tale rather than a history, a tale with resemblances to the familiar story of Romulus and Remus and many others" (Truesdell S. Brown, *The Greek Historians, Civilization and Society: Studies in Social, Economic, and Cultural History*, ed. Theodore K. Rabb [London: D. C. Heath, 1973], 37). Jones writes, "We are rendered somewhat doubtful of the historicity of this story about the birth of Cyrus the Great if we compare it with the tale of Romulus and Remus" (Tom B. Jones, *Paths to the Ancient Past: Applications of the Historical Method to Ancient History* [New York: Free Press, 1967], 88). Waterhouse writes, "The sequence-pattern of an unwanted child who becomes a renowned ruler, suspiciously bears the same imprint as the Greek legend of Oedipus and the story of the rise of Sargon of Agade in the 23rd century BC" (S. Douglas Waterhouse, "Why Was Darius the Mede Expunged from History?" in *To Understand the Scriptures: Essays in Honor of William H. Shea*, ed. David Merling [Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Institute of Archeology, 1997], 178). Diakonoff concurs: "Such stories are common about famous kings, conquerors and founders of dynasties" (Diakonoff, "Media," 144). See also Robert Drews, "Sargon, Cyrus and Mesopotamian Folk History," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 33, no. 4 (1974): 387-93; Henry R. Immerwahr, *Form and Thought in Herodotus*, American Philological Association Monograph Series, ed. Walton Morris, vol. 23 (Cleveland, OH: Western Reserve University, 1966), 161-62; Shahrokh Razmjou, "The Cyrus Cylinder: A Persian Perspective," in *The Cyrus Cylinder: The King of*

Throughout Book 1 of Herodotus, Cyrus is presented as the king of Persia, who reigns over the Medes as his vassals. Cyrus was king when he defeated Croesus, and he was king when he conquered Babylon.⁴⁸ There is no Median monarch who follows Astyages in the version of the Cyrus story given by Herodotus.

Background to Xenophon's Account of Cyrus

Although modern scholarship is focused on Herodotus, he was not the only classical Greek writer to give an account of the rise of Cyrus from primary sources. We turn now to an analysis of Xenophon, who gives the major competing account of Cyrus in his *Cyropaedia*.

Background to Xenophon

Xenophon was a disciple of Socrates who won fame for leading an army of ten thousand Greeks back from Mesopotamia after a failed attempt to place Cyrus the Younger, the brother of Artaxerxes II, on the throne of Persia in 401 BC.⁴⁹ In antiquity, Xenophon was viewed as both a model man and a model writer, and it is evident from his life and works that he possessed exceptional abilities.⁵⁰ Xenophon's works were written after he was exiled by Athens and settled by the Spartans on a private estate in 394 BC.⁵¹ His *Hellenica* records events as late as the mid-350s, and thus Xenophon wrote approximately thirty to sixty years after Herodotus. However, this was still during the Persian Era, and Xenophon travelled personally in the Persian Empire with the Persian entourage of Cyrus the Younger.

Background to the Cyropaedia

Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* (Κύρου παιδεία, "The Education of Cyrus") is a biography of Cyrus, told in chronological order from the birth to the death of the great king.⁵² Although the *Cyropaedia* is presented in the style of historical narration with dialogue, its intention is

Persia's Proclamation from Ancient Babylon, ed. Irving Finkel (London: I. B. Tauris, 2013), 109, 124-25 (note 2); Yamauchi, *Persia and the Bible*, 80.

⁴⁸ Herodotus 1.46, 1.188.

⁴⁹ Christopher J. Tuplin, "Xenophon (1)," in *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, ed. Simon Hornblower and Antony Spawforth, 4th ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 1580-81. For a biography of Xenophon, see J. K. Anderson, *Xenophon*, Classical Life and Letters, ed. Hugh Lloyd-Jones (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1974). For a chart of Persian and Median royal lineages, see the appendix.

⁵⁰ Eckart E. Schütrumpf, "Xenophon [2] of Athens," in *Brill's New Pauly: Encyclopaedia of the Ancient World: Antiquity*, ed. Hubert Cancik, Helmuth Schneider, and Christine F. Salazar, vol. 15 (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 831; Tuplin, "Xenophon (1)," 1581.

⁵¹ Tuplin, "Xenophon (1)," 1581.

⁵² For a summary of the plot of the *Cyropaedia*, see James Tatum, *Xenophon's Imperial Fiction: On The Education of Cyrus* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 69-71.

philosophical, to describe the ideal king.⁵³ Xenophon chose Cyrus the Great as his role model for an ideal king, in part because Cyrus really was a great king who conquered a great empire, and in part as a reflection of Xenophon's admiration for Cyrus the Younger.⁵⁴ Some aspects of Xenophon's narrative are contrived, to one degree or another, to serve his philosophical aim. Most notably, such details as speeches and descriptions of clothing and mannerisms must be contrived, though Hirsch argues that Xenophon's picture of Cyrus the Great and ancient Persian customs is based on his observations of Cyrus the Younger and his Persian entourage.⁵⁵

Tuplin notes that in antiquity the *Cyropaedia* was very popular, though in modern times it has largely been neglected.⁵⁶ This is probably because modern historical criticism has largely rejected the historical value of the *Cyropaedia*.⁵⁷ The modern critical rejection of the *Cyropaedia* as a historical work follows the judgment of Cicero in antiquity, though Cicero had high regard for the *Cyropaedia* as a work of political philosophy.⁵⁸

The Historicity of the Cyropaedia

Most modern scholars classify the *Cyropaedia* as "historical romance," or a romantic retelling of history.⁵⁹ Diakonoff, expressing the common view, states that the *Cyropaedia* is "pure romance . . . in it both history and geography have nothing in common with the true events and places, apart from cases when some fact was borrowed from Herodotus or from Ctesias."⁶⁰ There is, however, a minority opinion which is more generous. Hirsch concludes his analysis of the historical accuracy of the *Cyropaedia* with a strong affirmation of its importance as a primary source text on Persian history, while recognizing the presence of some fictional elements:

⁵³ This purpose is made explicit in Xenophon *Cyropaedia* 1.1.3-6; 8.1.21.

⁵⁴ Steven W. Hirsch, "1001 Iranian Nights: History and Fiction in Xenophon's *Cyropaedia*," in *The Greek Historians: Literature and History: Papers Presented to A. E. Raubitschek* (Saratoga, CA: ANMA Libri, 1985), 75.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 79-80.

⁵⁶ Tuplin, "Xenophon (1)," 1582. See also Tatum, *Xenophon's Imperial Fiction*, 3-35.

⁵⁷ For the prevailing scholarly view of *Cyropaedia*, see, e.g., Richard A. Burridge, *What Are the Gospels? A Comparison with Graeco-Roman Biography*, 2nd ed., Biblical Resource Series, ed. Astrid B. Beck et al. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 69, 131, 165; Alexandru Cizek, "From the Historical Truth to the Literary Convention: The Life of Cyrus the Great Viewed by Herodotus, Ctesias and Xenophon," *Antiquité classique* 44 (1975): 548-49; H. H. Rowley, *Darius the Mede and the Four World Empires in the Book of Daniel: A Historical Study of Contemporary Theories* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press Board, 1935), 41-43; Schütrumpf, "Xenophon [2] of Athens," 827-28.

⁵⁸ Cicero *Letters to Quintus* 1.1.23. It should be noted, however, that Cicero does not say that the *Cyropaedia* is wholly fictional—he says only that Xenophon presents Cyrus in an idealized manner, rather than a historical one.

⁵⁹ C. W. Gleason, ed., *The Cyropaedia of Xenophon: Abridged for Schools* (New York: American Book Company, 1897), 205; Walter Miller, ed., *Xenophon: Cyropaedia*, 2 vols., Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1914), 1:viii. See further, Cook, "Rise of the Achaemenids," 207-8; Mallowan, "Cyrus the Great (558–529 B.C.)," 417.

⁶⁰ Diakonoff, "Media," 142.

Numerous episodes, conversations, speeches and private encounters must have been invented by Xenophon, for there could have been no possible source for such material. And it is precisely in these scenes, the didactic and philosophical core of the *Cyropaedia*, that the patently Greek elements of thought, speech and values are strongest. However, it should now be acknowledged that this core is set into a historical and cultural framework, and that, for the construction of this framework, Xenophon had access to credible sources As a result, the *Cyropaedia* contains a greater quantity of valuable information about Persian history, culture and institutions than is generally recognized, and even where one is inclined to doubt the historicity of a given event, it should be conceded that Xenophon may have preserved an authentic Greek or barbarian tradition — however false or distorted — about Persian history. The student of ancient Iran would be foolish to neglect the *Cyropaedia* or reject it out of hand.⁶¹

If Xenophon used credible sources for the framework of the *Cyropaedia*, and only some secondary details were his own invention, this would mean that the major historical claims made in the *Cyropaedia* are potentially reliable. As such, the *Cyropaedia* differs from the story of the rise of Cyrus given by Herodotus, in which major elements in the plot are generally recognized as mythical or legendary.

Among the outright historical errors with which Xenophon is charged, the foremost is usually considered to be his description of Cyaxares II, a Median king who succeeds Astyages and ends up passing his power to Cyrus. As for others, Miller notes the following: Xenophon attributes the subjugation of Egypt to Cyrus, rather than to his son and successor Cambyses as Herodotus does;⁶² he portrays Cyrus' armies and battle tactics in the style of Spartan armies and tactics; he has Cyrus create a Spartan-style constitution; and he describes the death of Cyrus as a peaceful passing, rather than the violent death that Herodotus says he suffered.⁶³ However, after an analysis of some of these claims, Hirsch concludes, "A solid body of evidence seems to indicate that, as regards the three primary didactic topics of the *Cyropaedia*—education, military command, imperial administration—Xenophon has taken over general concepts and specific practices from Persia."⁶⁴ Xenophon's sources include ancient historians, some of whose works are no longer extant, though he likely was familiar with Herodotus; his own travels through the East; what he had been told by his Persian contacts; and oral tradition from various sources.⁶⁵ Hirsch argues that "Xenophon received a particularly vivid picture of Cyrus the Great and Old Persia from the entourage of the younger Cyrus."⁶⁶

Dismissing the *Cyropaedia* as a historical fiction, in which nearly everything but the names used is made up, is hypercritical. The *Cyropaedia* is at least a semi-fiction, since Xenophon uses the frame of actual historical persons and events, but fills in unknown or

⁶¹ Hirsch, "History and Fiction," 83-84. Miller also argues that Xenophon's critics have overlooked much information of historical value in the *Cyropaedia* (Miller, ed., *Xenophon: Cyropaedia*, 1:x).

⁶² It may be noted that this is not necessarily a contradiction. It is possible that Egypt offered formal submission to Cyrus, possibly through a marriage alliance, but that Egypt rebelled after the death of Cyrus, thereby forcing Cambyses to launch an invasion.

⁶³ Miller, ed., *Xenophon: Cyropaedia*, 1:vii-x.

⁶⁴ Steven W. Hirsch, *The Friendship of the Barbarians: Xenophon and the Persian Empire* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1985), 89.

⁶⁵ Hirsch, "History and Fiction," 72-73; Miller, ed., *Xenophon: Cyropaedia*, 1:x.

⁶⁶ Hirsch, "History and Fiction," 84.

secondary details from his own imagination, creating his own story and themes in the process. In more modern terms, the *Cyropaedia* would bear similarities to a movie designed to portray a true story. But the *Cyropaedia* crosses traditional genre lines, since it has a moral aim alongside its historical aspect. Hirsch classifies it as “a didactic work on the subjects of education, values, military science, and political administration, with Cyrus used as a paradigm.”⁶⁷ As for the claims which Xenophon makes for himself, he states in the preface to the *Cyropaedia* that the work was written in response to the question of how a man can effectively bear rule over other men.⁶⁸ Since, in Xenophon’s estimation, Cyrus seemed to have been the ideal ruler of men, he undertook an investigation into his life in order to understand what made him such an effective king.⁶⁹

Four final points may be noted with regard to the historicity of the *Cyropaedia*. First, Xenophon wrote after Herodotus, so it is significant that he contradicts Herodotus in his history of how Cyrus came to the throne. Second, whereas Herodotus tells elaborate mythical stories, such as dreams Astyages supposedly had to the effect that his daughter’s son would replace him as king, and a supposed oracular utterance from Delphi that predicted the accession of Cyrus,⁷⁰ such stories are almost completely lacking from the *Cyropaedia*. Xenophon is focused almost exclusively on military and political matters. Third, Xenophon writes in a disinterested style. Tatum notes that “he does not name himself . . . he prefers most of the time to use an impersonal ‘we’ and a rare ‘I.’ ”⁷¹ Fourth, since Cyaxares II figures prominently in Xenophon’s account, one’s opinion of the historical value of the *Cyropaedia* will hinge largely on his judgment regarding Cyaxares II. The prevailing scholarly view of the *Cyropaedia* as essentially fictional is largely a product of the modern scholarly rejection of the historicity of Cyaxares II.⁷²

⁶⁷ Hirsch, *Friendship of the Barbarians*, 66-67.

⁶⁸ Xenophon *Cyropaedia* 1.1.1-3.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 1.1.4-6.

⁷⁰ Herodotus 1.55, 107-8.

⁷¹ Tatum, *Xenophon’s Imperial Fiction*, 35.

⁷² A matter of textual criticism may be noted at this point: the authenticity of the eighth and final chapter of the eighth and final book of the *Cyropaedia* (the “epilogue”) is debated, though it is included in all extant manuscripts. Miller recommends that his readers set down the book after chapter 7 and skip over this final chapter (Miller, ed., *Xenophon: Cyropaedia*, 2:438-39). Hirsch, as well, argues that the epilogue was not part of Xenophon’s original work (Hirsch, *Friendship of the Barbarians*, 91-97). After the heroic death scene which concludes chapter 7 of book 8, the work appears to be completed. Chapter 8, describing the alleged degeneration of the Persian Empire which followed upon the death of Cyrus, was apparently added by a patriotic Greek who was angered by Xenophon’s glorification of the Persians, and who wished to warn his readers not to be influenced by their customs. This is exactly the opposite of Xenophon’s intent, which is that his readers would seek to emulate Cyrus. The epilogue would indicate that Cyrus’ accomplishments were a short-lived failure, and therefore he was not actually the ideal monarch. The extreme diatribe against the customs of the Persians in the epilogue is also completely incongruous with the high praise for the same in the rest of the *Cyropaedia*. Although some modern writers, such as Tatum (Tatum, *Xenophon’s Imperial Fiction*, 220-25), treat the final chapter as authentic, they still struggle to explain how it fits with the rest of the *Cyropaedia*.

Xenophon's Account of Cyrus

Xenophon's story of the life of Cyrus differs considerably from Herodotus'. According to Xenophon, Cyrus was the son of the Persian king Cambyses (I), who was subordinate to the Median king Astyages.⁷³ Like Herodotus, Xenophon names Cyrus' mother as Mandane, the daughter of Astyages.⁷⁴ Unlike Herodotus, Xenophon describes a son of Astyages named Cyaxares, who succeeded his father to the throne upon Astyages' death, which occurred at about the time when Cyrus reached manhood.⁷⁵

Shortly after Cyaxares' accession, the "Assyrians" (i.e., Babylonians) joined forces with Croesus, king of Lydia, and other nations in order to attack the Medes and Persians.⁷⁶ Cyrus was made commander of the Persian army, which was separate from the Median army.⁷⁷ After a preliminary campaign, Cyrus and Cyaxares set out together to attack the Babylonians and Lydians.⁷⁸ Cyrus soundly defeated the Babylonians, and while Cyaxares partied, Cyrus pursued after the enemy at night with the combined Medo-Persian army.⁷⁹ When Cyaxares awoke from his drunkenness the next day and discovered that Cyrus had taken command of the Median army, he angrily ordered the Medes to be recalled.⁸⁰ However, Cyrus wrote a letter to Cyaxares explaining that he was not being traitorous or insubordinate, and the Median soldiers themselves opted to stay with Cyrus rather than obey Cyaxares' order.⁸¹ Cyrus then continued to prosecute the war against Babylon independently.⁸² After driving the Babylonian army back behind the walls of Babylon, Cyrus bypassed the city and sent a message to Cyaxares to come join him for a council of war.⁸³ Cyrus warmly received his uncle Cyaxares, who the next day sat on a Median

⁷³ Xenophon *Cyropaedia* 1.2.1.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 1.5.2, 1.5.4.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 1.5.2-3. The reference to the Assyrians is not a historical blunder. The Greeks frequently referred to the Babylonians as Assyrians, since the Babylonians were the inheritors of the Neo-Assyrian Empire. The same practice is attested in the Bible (Ezra 6:22) and in other extrabiblical literature. One may also note the references to the king of Persia as the "king of Babylon" in Ezra 5:13 and Nehemiah 13:6. See further Peyton Randolph Helm, "'Greeks' in the Neo-Assyrian Levant and 'Assyria' in Early Greek Writers" (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1980), 289, 301-5.

⁷⁷ Xenophon *Cyropaedia* 1.5.5.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 3.3.20-24.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 4.2.8-11, 4.5.8.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 4.5.9-12.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 4.5.27-33, 5.1.19-29.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 5.3.1.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 5.5.1.

throne in royal attire and convened the war council.⁸⁴ Cyaxares, Cyrus, and all their generals agreed to continue the campaign.⁸⁵

In what follows in Xenophon's account, Cyaxares remains in Media with a home guard, while Cyrus conducts the war as commander of the army.⁸⁶ After Cyaxares' departure, Cyrus attacked and defeated Lydia, capturing both its capital, Sardis, and its king, Croesus.⁸⁷ He then conducted a series of smaller campaigns, conquering the rest of Asia Minor on his way back to Babylon and adding many foreign soldiers to his army.⁸⁸ Cyrus took Babylon by diverting the Euphrates River and attacking via the riverbed on the night of a feast.⁸⁹ The Medo-Persian army killed the soldiers they encountered in the streets and defending the palace, then killed the (unnamed) king himself.⁹⁰ When morning broke the next day, the soldiers on the wall and in the citadels saw that the city was taken and their king slain, and they surrendered to the Medo-Persian army.⁹¹ Cyrus began to act as king in Babylon, managing the affairs of state and moving into the royal palace.⁹² After a very full description of Cyrus' organization of the empire and conduct as king, Xenophon describes his return journey to Persia.⁹³ When Cyrus met Cyaxares, he gave him great gifts and assured him that he had prepared a palace for him in Babylon.⁹⁴ Cyaxares then gave Cyrus his daughter in marriage and all of Media as a dowry.⁹⁵ Cyrus, for his part, agreed that his father, Cambyses, would continue to rule Persia until his death, after which his domain would pass to Cyrus.⁹⁶ Cyrus then returned to Babylon and appointed satraps.⁹⁷ He selected Babylon as his winter residence, Susa as his spring residence, and Ecbatana as his summer residence.⁹⁸ After his seventh return visit to Persia, that is, after a seven-year reign,

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 5.5.38-40, 6.1.6.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 6.1.19.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 6.3.2.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 7.1.26, 7.2.1-9.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 7.4.8-16.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 7.5.15-16.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 7.5.26-31.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 7.5.33.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 7.5.37, 7.5.57.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 8.5.1.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 8.5.17.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 8.5.18-19.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 8.5.26-27.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 8.6.1.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 8.6.22.

Cyrus appointed his son Cambyses as his successor and died peacefully following a heroic farewell speech.⁹⁹

Preliminary Assessment of Herodotus and Xenophon

It is easy to see that the accounts given by Herodotus and Xenophon are hopelessly contradictory. Xenophon portrays Cyrus as coming to power peacefully as a vicegerent of Cyaxares the son of Astyages. Herodotus claims that Astyages had no son, and that Cyrus fought a war with Astyages in which he captured him and subjugated the Medes. Xenophon has a Median king named Cyaxares reigning during Cyrus' campaign of conquest, whereas Herodotus claims that Astyages had no natural successor, since Cyrus overthrew the Medes before beginning his conquests. It can be stated definitively that between the stories of Xenophon and Herodotus, at least one of them is largely fictive. Further, the differences are too great to have come about by an innocent mistake; the fictional account must have been created intentionally. A full evaluation of the historical merits of the two accounts will be developed as other evidence is considered, but a preliminary assessment may be made here.

Evaluation of Xenophon

Our evaluation of the historical fidelity of Xenophon's account will begin by examining the two major areas in which his accuracy is criticized—the existence of Cyaxares II and the nature of Cyrus' death. Four areas in which Xenophon appears to give more accurate information than Herodotus will then be examined.

The Existence of Cyaxares II

The major historical error laid to Xenophon's charge is that Cyaxares II—the leading character in the narrative after Cyrus—never existed. However, if Cyaxares were unhistorical, it would be inexplicable why Xenophon would have created him, given his aim in the *Cyropaedia* of presenting Cyrus as the ideal king.¹⁰⁰ The presence of Cyaxares in the narrative hinders this

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 8.7.1, 8.7.9-11, 8.7.28.

¹⁰⁰ Explanations offered by critics are unconvincing. Atkinson says, “the reason for inventing him was doubtless to give greater chronological probability to the story of Cyrus' marriage to the daughter of the king of Media” (K. M. T. Atkinson, “The Legitimacy of Cambyses and Darius as Kings of Egypt,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 76, no. 3 [1956]: 173). However, inventing one of the two main characters in a story would seem to be more trouble than it is worth if it were merely an attempt to make the claim that Cyrus married the king of Media's daughter more believable. Cyrus could plausibly have married a daughter of Astyages instead, since Astyages died or was dethroned when Cyrus was an adult man. Tatum says, “The story of Cyaxares is instructive to those princes who would like to know how to manipulate recalcitrant relatives to their advantage, rather than exterminate them” (Tatum, *Xenophon's Imperial Fiction*, 133). This is fair enough, but such an aim could have been served just as well by presenting Cyrus as a subordinate general of Astyages instead. Further, Xenophon has to push Cyaxares aside while he is still alive in order to present Cyrus as organizing and ruling the empire on his own after the fall of Babylon, which seems to indicate that he gets in the way of Xenophon's core aims.

aim, since Cyrus does not actually become king until near the end of his conquests. Even then, Xenophon's portrayal of Cyrus organizing the empire as its king after the conquest of Babylon is somewhat awkward, since the elder king, Cyaxares, has neither died nor abdicated.

It is generally assumed that Xenophon was familiar with Herodotus' version of the accession of Cyrus, since Herodotus wrote several decades earlier.¹⁰¹ Working on this assumption, there would be no reason for Xenophon to include Cyaxares in his own biography of Cyrus if he were not convinced that the *Histories* wrongly omits Cyaxares. A swift conquest of Media by mighty King Cyrus would sweep the Median king out of the way from the start and allow Xenophon to teach principles of absolute rule throughout his narrative. If Xenophon believed that Cyrus had conquered Media and become king ten to twenty years before he conquered Babylon, there would be every reason for him to say this and no reason for him to change the story to make Cyrus a subordinate until the final years of his life. Further, there is nothing historically implausible about the power-sharing arrangement between Cyaxares and Cyrus, given the known association of the Medes with the Persians in the government of the Persian Empire and the known fact that Cambyses I, the father of Cyrus, was king of Persia and yet subordinate to the Median king.

Should it be suggested that Xenophon took his story from a contemporary legend, it is difficult to imagine how the legend could have originated. Why would someone have created such a story, and why would such a bland fiction gain wide circulation? The story of Cyrus' origins given by Herodotus is much more sensational, dramatic, and interesting. In short, the only plausible explanation for the presence of Cyaxares II in the *Cyropaedia* is that Xenophon believed he actually existed.

Positive evidence for the existence of Cyaxares comes from the famous Behistun (Bisitun, Bisutun) inscription of Darius Hystaspes, who seized power in 522 BC after fighting off various other claimants to the throne following the death of Cambyses. In this inscription, which is at least partially extant in four languages (Akkadian, Old Persian, Elamite, and Aramaic), two different rebels, at separate times, proclaimed themselves king on the basis of the claim that they were Medians of the family of Cyaxares.¹⁰² According to the inscription, these claims were false, and the claimants were impostors. Since Cyaxares I died around 590, and by all accounts was not the last Median king, it would seem strange that neither one of these rebels claimed to be of the family of Astyages, if he were the last Median king. Would not the claimants seem less legitimate if they had only a distant connection to the Median royal house? Other rebels made the best claims they possibly could for themselves. According to the same inscription, two different rebels, on two separate occasions, falsely claimed to be "Nebuchadnezzar," the son of Nabonidus, and proclaimed themselves king in Babylon on this basis.¹⁰³ Two different Persians are said to have proclaimed themselves king based on false claims to be Bardiya (Smerdis), the

¹⁰¹ Most writers also assume that Xenophon took some information from Herodotus. Specific examples involve a certain degree of speculation, however, since Xenophon never quotes directly from Herodotus, nor does he ever tell exactly the same story in the same way. For such speculative connections, see Tatum, *Xenophon's Imperial Fiction*, 147-49, 154-55.

¹⁰² L. W. King and R. Campbell Thompson, *The Sculptures and Inscription of Darius the Great, on the Rock of Behistun in Persia: A New Collation of the Persian, Susian and Babylonian Texts, with English Translations* (London: British Museum, 1907), 23-24, 37-38, 63, 88-89, 113-14, 123-24, 141-42, 155, 174, 182, 198, 208-9.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 16, 56-57, 62, 64, 87, 90, 107, 138, 141-43, 154, 156, 170, 194, 197, 199, 208-9.

son of Cyrus and brother of Cambyses.¹⁰⁴ Even if the Median rebels were not impostors, and they actually were of the family of Cyaxares I, they would also be of the family of Astyages, and so could boast of the latter heritage all the same. Or, if they were impostors, they could have boasted of being descendants of Cyaxares I, rather than merely claiming a family relation.

The claims made by the Median rebels in the inscription are far easier to make sense of historically if Xenophon's description of Cyaxares II as the final Median king is correct. The Median rebels would, in this case, be making a claim to rule based on a connection with the last, and only recently deceased, Median sovereign. However, they do not claim to be *sons* or *descendants* of Cyaxares II, but only of his family, since Cyaxares II had no sons. It is also understandable why the name "Cyaxares" is used in the inscription instead of "Darius" (if this indeed was the throne name of Cyaxares), since the latter name could create confusion with the king who continually identifies himself as "Darius" in the inscription.

The Nature of the Death of Cyrus

Another point of conflict between Herodotus and Xenophon regards their divergent accounts of the death of Cyrus. Xenophon portrays a peaceful passing of Cyrus after a heroic deathbed speech, whereas Herodotus portrays Cyrus as dying violently in battle with the Massagetae, and subsequently having his corpse dishonored by the victors.¹⁰⁵ As with the stories of the rise of Cyrus, Herodotus notes that there were many other stories of Cyrus' death in circulation.¹⁰⁶ There is less evidence available to adjudicate between the stories of Cyrus' death than between the stories of his rise; the subject is still a matter of academic debate, and scholars have found reasons to question elements in both of the Greek accounts.

With regard to the account given by Herodotus, the background to the story of Cyrus' death is filled with sensational personal intrigues which sound more like legend than truth. The resolution of the story in Herodotus comes when the queen of the Massagetae finds Cyrus' body on the battlefield after the Persian army has fled, and sticks his head in a flask filled with human blood. Aside from the way in which such an account sounds too sensational to be true, one may also note that Cyrus had carefully prepared a tomb for himself in Pasargadae which remains to this day. If statements by other classical writers are to be believed,¹⁰⁷ this tomb actually housed Cyrus' corpse in antiquity, and was not merely a cenotaph. The person who believes Herodotus' story would have to argue that the Persian army somehow managed to regroup, counterattack, and recover the body of their fallen king almost immediately after a disastrous defeat. This is

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 8, 46, 61, 64, 86, 89, 98-100, 130, 141-42, 154, 156, 163-65, 187-88, 197, 199, 207, 209; Jonas C. Greenfield and Bezalel Porten, eds., *The Bisitun Inscription of Darius the Great: Aramaic Version*, Corpus Inscriptionum Iranicarum: Part I: Inscriptions of Ancient Iran, ed. Harold Bailey, vol. 5.1 (London: Lund Humphries, 1982), 36.

¹⁰⁵ Xenophon *Cyropaedia* 8.7.1-28; Herodotus 1.214.

¹⁰⁶ Herodotus 1.214.

¹⁰⁷ Arrian *Anabasis Alexandri* 6.29; Strabo *The Geography of Strabo* 15.3.7.

theoretically possible, but difficult to believe. Such problems lead Razmjou to say, “The story in Herodotus . . . seems to be fictitious.”¹⁰⁸

The story of Cyrus’ death given by Xenophon sounds too heroic to be true, and also too similar to Plato’s story of the death of Xenophon’s mentor Socrates. While acknowledging the Greek (and therefore presumably contrived) elements of the deathbed scene, Hirsch states that “the historical framework of the scene is manifestly not the invention of Xenophon.”¹⁰⁹ Evidence for this claim is twofold. First, the Greek historian and Persian court physician Ctesias, who wrote slightly before Xenophon, tells a somewhat similar story of Cyrus’ death.¹¹⁰ Second, Xenophon follows the “story patterns of ancient Iranian oral tradition,” in which “the life of the ideal king ends with a scene in which the dying king summons family, friends and advisors, arranges the succession, makes known his last wishes, and communicates to his successors a political testament.”¹¹¹ While the fact that Xenophon’s story accords with Iranian tradition does not entail that it is historically accurate, it at least is an indication that Xenophon received it from authentic Persian sources. The story cannot be completely Xenophon’s invention if a similar story is told by Ctesias. It may also be noted that, whereas Herodotus’ account raised questions as to how Cyrus came to be buried in his tomb in Pasargadae, this problem is removed by Xenophon’s claim that Cyrus died peacefully in his Persian homeland.

In conclusion, the difference between Xenophon and Herodotus on the death of Cyrus does not demonstrate that Herodotus is more reliable as a historian than Xenophon. If anything, Xenophon’s story appears to have more truthful elements than Herodotus’.

Instances of Historical Precision

Although no one would argue that every detail of Xenophon’s narrative is historically accurate, the *Cyropaedia* appears to follow the general storylines of actual history. Where Xenophon gives information that diverges from Herodotus, it is often corroborated by other sources. Four of these are noted below: (1) the royal upbringing of Cyrus; (2) the existence of Belshazzar; (3) the existence of Gobryas; and (4) the marriage of Cyrus to the daughter of Cyaxares.¹¹²

The Royal Upbringing of Cyrus

Xenophon’s statement that Cyrus was born to the Persian king Cambyses, who ruled a principality within the Median Empire, is corroborated by the Cyrus Cylinder; Herodotus, on the

¹⁰⁸ Razmjou, “Persian Perspective,” 125 (note 8).

¹⁰⁹ Hirsch, “History and Fiction,” 82.

¹¹⁰ For the reference in Ctesias, see Felix Jacoby, *Geschichte von Staedten und Voelkern (Horo-graphie und Ethnographie): Autoren ueber einzelne Laender: Aegypten–Geten Nr. 608a–708*, vol. 3C.1 of *Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker* (Leiden: Brill, 1958), 457.28 (688 F9.8).

¹¹¹ Hirsch, “History and Fiction,” 83.

¹¹² Many other instances of historical precision are noted by Hirsch, *Friendship of the Barbarians*, 76-139. Of interest for biblical scholarship is the correspondence between Xenophon’s description of the function and power of a cupbearer in the Medo-Persian court, and the high status which the Bible portrays Nehemiah holding as a cupbearer. Compare Nehemiah 1:11–2:8 with Xenophon *Cyropaedia* 1.3.8-11.

other hand, says merely that Cambyses was “of a good house” (οἰκίης . . . ἀγαθῆς), and he tells a folklore story of the attempted exposure of Cyrus as an infant, and of how he was raised by a herdsman.¹¹³ Tatum also notes the contrast between Herodotus’ mythical story of the rise of Cyrus to power with the normal court upbringing and natural rise to power of Xenophon’s Cyrus.¹¹⁴

The Existence of Belshazzar

Xenophon, unlike Herodotus, implies a recognition of Belshazzar, whom he says was killed on the night when the Persians broke into Babylon (cf. Dan 5:30).¹¹⁵ Although Xenophon does not name either Nabonidus or Belshazzar, he refers to “the king who then was, the father of the one who now is” (τοῦ τότε βασιλέως, πατὴρ δὲ τοῦ νῦν)—not only recognizing the existence of a son of Nabonidus, but also correctly calling this son “king” in agreement with Daniel.¹¹⁶ Xenophon’s first reference to Belshazzar as “king” comes in the context of the initial battle between Cyrus and the Babylonians, which the Nabonidus Chronicle says occurred while Nabonidus was in Teima—and when, therefore, Belshazzar would have been regent in his father’s stead.¹¹⁷ Herodotus, for his part, calls the Babylonian king “Labynetus” (Λαβυνήτοϛ), a corruption of the name “Nabonidus.”¹¹⁸ Herodotus’ confusion regarding Babylonian history is shown in that he presents two different kings called “Labynetus,” one of whom he says was reigning during the reign of Cyaxares I (634–594[?] BC) and was married to Nitocris—and who therefore must be Nebuchadnezzar II—while the Labynetus who was reigning when Babylon fell is presented as the son and successor of the first Labynetus and Nitocris.¹¹⁹

The Existence of Gobryas

Unlike Herodotus, Xenophon describes the defection of a Babylonian noble, Gobryas (= Gubaru/Ugbaru), who helped lead the Medo-Persian campaign against Babylon—information which is corroborated by the Nabonidus Chronicle.¹²⁰ Xenophon’s claim that Gobryas was

¹¹³ Herodotus 1.107-114; Xenophon *Cyropaedia* 1.2.1; 1.5.4. See lines 21-22 of the Cyrus Cylinder, in Hanspeter Schaudig, *Die Inschriften Nabonids von Babylon und Kyros’ des Großen samt den in ihrem Umfeld entstandenen Tendenzschriften: Textausgabe und Grammatik*, *Alter Orient und Altes Testament*, ed. Manfred Dietrich and Oswald Loretz, vol. 256 (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2001), 552-53.

¹¹⁴ Tatum, *Xenophon’s Imperial Fiction*, 101-2.

¹¹⁵ Xenophon *Cyropaedia* 4.6.3; 7.5.30.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 4.6.3.

¹¹⁷ See Nabonidus Chronicle ii 10-18, in A. K. Grayson, *Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles*, *Texts from Cuneiform Sources*, ed. A. Leo Oppenheim, vol. 5 (Locust Valley, NY: J. J. Augustin, 1975), 107-8.

¹¹⁸ Herodotus 1.188.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 1.74, 77, 188. According to Kuhrt’s analysis, “Herodotus thought Babylon was an important city of Assyria which somehow escaped the Median destruction of the Assyrian Empire and continued to flourish briefly under its own rulers” (Amélie Kuhrt, “Berossus’ *Babyloniaka* and Seleucid Rule in Babylonia,” in *Hellenism in the East: The Interaction of Greek and Non-Greek Civilizations from Syria to Central Asia after Alexander*, ed. Amélie Kuhrt and Susan Sherwin-White [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987], 32).

¹²⁰ Xenophon *Cyropaedia* 4.6.1-10; 7.5.24-30. See also Nabonidus Chronicle iii 15-22 in Grayson, *Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles*, 109-10.

governor of Gutium is corroborated by other texts which describe the status of Gutium at the end of the Neo-Babylonian empire.¹²¹ Likewise, Xenophon's claim that Gobryas defected because Belshazzar murdered his son on a royal hunt fits chronologically with the timeframe of Belshazzar's regency and the initial conflict between Medo-Persia and Babylon.

The Marriage of Cyrus to Cyaxares' Daughter

Shea has noted interesting historical evidence which corroborates Xenophon's claim that Cyaxares gave his daughter to Cyrus in marriage following Cyrus' return from Babylon.¹²² The Nabonidus Chronicle states that the wife of "the king" died soon after Cyrus had taken Babylon, and that there was an official mourning period in the land of Akkad for her.¹²³ This correlates with Herodotus' statement that Cassandane, a wife of Cyrus and the mother of Cambyses, died during Cyrus' lifetime, and that Cyrus proclaimed an official period of mourning throughout the empire for her.¹²⁴ It would therefore seem that Cyrus' favorite wife, or queen, died soon after the fall of Babylon. This would provide the necessary circumstance for a politically significant marriage to be arranged when Cyrus returned from Babylon to report to Cyaxares in Media.

As for Xenophon's claim that Cyrus was given possession of Media as a dowry, Atkinson has shown that the story must have had a Persian origin. She writes, "It is inconceivable that the 'claim by dowry' version of the transmission of the kingdom of Media to Cyrus was invented by a Greek historian, because it is in conflict with Greek law concerning dowry and inheritance, or at all events, with Greek law of the Persian period."¹²⁵ After an analysis of ancient dowry customs, she concludes that "the 'claim by dowry' implied in Xenophon's story of the marriage of Cyrus reflects an institution peculiar to Persian law."¹²⁶ While she still does not believe that Xenophon's claim is historically true, she believes that the story must have originated from an official Persian source.¹²⁷ In any case, it seems that a Persian claim to the Median throne by dowry would be unnecessary to make if Cyrus had subjugated, annexed, and pacified Media more than ten years before the marriage is supposed to have taken place.

Conclusion

Such instances of historical precision, coupled with evidence for an authentic Iranian setting of the *Cyropaedia*, belie the conventional view of the *Cyropaedia* as a historical fiction,

¹²¹ See the analysis in Paul-Alain Beaulieu, *The Reign of Nabonidus, King of Babylon 556–539 B.C.*, Yale Near Eastern Researches, ed. William W. Hallo, Marvin H. Pope, and William K. Simpson, vol. 10 (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989), 226-30.

¹²² William H. Shea, "Darius the Mede in His Persian-Babylonian Setting," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 29, no. 3 (1991): 241-43; Xenophon *Cyropaedia* 8.5.18-19.

¹²³ Column iii, lines 22-23 in Grayson, *Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles*, 110.

¹²⁴ Herodotus 2.1.

¹²⁵ Atkinson, "Legitimacy of Cambyses," 173.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 175.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 175-76.

that is, as a story with a thoroughly Hellenistic setting and a contrived plot, to which is merely transferred the historical name of Cyrus.¹²⁸ It would seem that, far from taking a cavalier attitude to historical facts in order to create a historical romance, Xenophon was actually all the more attentive to follow a historically accurate storyline in order to provide an authentic context for the presentation of his political philosophy. It is highly unlikely that Xenophon would correctly report historical details concerning such then-obscure persons as Belshazzar and Gubaru, in contrast to Herodotus, and yet miss the major fact of the conquest of the Medes by Cyrus.¹²⁹

Evaluation of Herodotus

An initial comparison of the *Cyropaedia* with the *Histories*, coupled with an internal analysis of the *Histories*, casts shadows of doubt from two different angles on the version of the Cyrus story found in the *Histories*, as described below. From the first angle, it is easy to see how the version of the Cyrus story found in the *Cyropaedia* could be distorted into that found in the *Histories*, but not vice versa. From the second angle, it is found that the version of the Cyrus story selected by Herodotus fits perfectly with the major themes he seeks to develop in his work, raising the specter that he may have selected it for this reason.

Possible Distortion of the Cyrus Story

Although the accounts of Xenophon and Herodotus are different enough so as to be irreconcilable, they are not so different as they might at first seem. If we take as a working hypothesis that Xenophon's account generally represents what actually happened historically, it is easy to see how the historical facts preserved by Xenophon could be distorted into the version of the story preserved by Herodotus. (Of course, Xenophon's actual account was not distorted by Herodotus, since Herodotus wrote before Xenophon.) For example, Herodotus' claim that Astyages had no son, thereby making Cyrus a threat to his position, could be a distortion of the reality claimed by Xenophon that Cyaxares had no son, thereby making Cyrus the heir

¹²⁸ Hirsch comes to similar conclusions in *Friendship of the Barbarians*, 62-63, 67-68.

¹²⁹ In his *Anabasis*, Xenophon refers, without naming Cyrus or Astyages, to a war between the Medes and the Persians, in which the Medes lost their empire to the Persians (Xenophon *Anabasis* 3.4.8-12). This obviously contradicts the story of the accession of Cyrus told in the *Cyropaedia*. However, the references to this war in the *Anabasis* are made in passing, as Xenophon reports local folklore that he heard as he passed by two abandoned, supposedly Median, fortresses near the Tigris River. The local inhabitants told stories of how the Persian king was unable to conquer these fortresses while he was invading Media, but Zeus intervened with demonstrations from heaven in order to force the inhabitants to flee on their own. While we could fault Xenophon for failing to comment on these stories, it would be too judgmental to discount the entire *Cyropaedia* merely on the basis of the presence of these brief, mythical stories in the *Anabasis*. Xenophon was simply reporting what local people told him. It may also be noted that the Tigris River is far away from the heartland of Media, and is nowhere near the area where any battles between the Medes and the Persians would have been fought. These legends obviously represented what the local inhabitants wanted outsiders to believe had happened, rather than what actually happened. According to the Loeb editors, the two abandoned cities which Xenophon passed by were actually the great Assyrian cities of Nimrud/Kalhu and Nineveh (Carleton L. Brownson and John Dillery, eds., *Xenophon: Anabasis*, Loeb Classical Library [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001], 264-65).

apparent.¹³⁰ Likewise, Herodotus' statement that Cyrus let Astyages live in "his own house" until he died naturally¹³¹ looks like a fabrication by an early source of the story that is intended to explain how it was that a king was living in the royal residence in Media while Cyrus was conquering foreign countries. As a historical claim, it is completely incredible that Cyrus would not only keep alive a rival king who had just led an army to overthrow him, but would even let him continue to live in the royal palace while Cyrus left the country for long periods of time.

Finally, Xenophon's report of serious arguments between Cyrus and Cyaxares, and of the decision of the Median soldiers to obey orders from Cyrus rather than from Cyaxares, could easily be turned into a story of the subjugation of the Medes by Cyrus, and of the deposing of the Median sovereign when his army defected. By all accounts, Cyrus did, in fact, begin his career as a subordinate to the Median king, and ended it as ruler of both the Medes and the Persians. At issue is whether the Medes were regarded as a conquered people or as a brother people, and whether Cyrus actually deposed the Median king or simply inherited his position after gradually gaining stature and popularity.

Themes in Herodotus

The story of the rise of Cyrus found in the *Histories* involves a long series of cause and effect, in the form of threat, retribution, and counter-retribution, all the way from dreams which preceded Cyrus' birth to the final outcome of the conflict in the war between Astyages and Cyrus. Gould notes that, "The principle of reciprocity is essential to Herodotus' writing: to answer the question 'why did this happen?' it is necessary to ask the further question: 'to what previous act was this act a response?'. The chain of reciprocity may reach far back and encompass many people."¹³² To cite another example, it is known that Herodotus tells a legendary story of Cambyses' tauricide of the Apis bull in order to find a chain of reciprocity.¹³³ Herodotus may have judged stories like these to convey the truth of history because of his firm belief that men receive what is owed them by the demands of justice, and that fortune and misfortune alike must be explained as recompense for good or evil deeds. It is known that the idea that people get what they deserve was a common belief in the ancient world,¹³⁴ which might explain how certain stories in the *Histories* that fit this theme came to be created and told.

Herodotus also believed strongly that "reversals in human fortune . . . reveal the influence of the divine in history,"¹³⁵ which may explain his preference for stories of the rise of Cyrus in which the gods foretold his destiny to rule Asia Minor—including the portentous dreams which supposedly started the whole conflict between Astyages and Cyrus.¹³⁶ The particular nature of

¹³⁰ Herodotus 1.109; Xenophon *Cyropaedia* 8.5.19.

¹³¹ Herodotus 1.130. The Greek text is ἐῖχε παρ' ἑωυτῷ, i.e., "he kept him in his own house."

¹³² Gould, "Herodotus (1)," 675-76.

¹³³ Herodotus 3.27-29, 64-66. See Yamauchi, *Persia and the Bible*, 115-22.

¹³⁴ For biblical examples, see Luke 13:1-5; John 9:1-2; Acts 28:4.

¹³⁵ Harrison, "The Persian Invasions," 578.

¹³⁶ On the role of the gods in establishing the rule of Cyrus, see Herodotus 1.55, 107-8.

these dreams was such that, in order to fulfill them, Cyrus would have to supplant Astyages and become king of the Medes and Persians before beginning his conquests, thereby leaving no room for Cyaxares II. Herodotus' partiality for these stories is shown by the number of times he tells stories of alleged divine intervention during his central narrative of Xerxes' invasion of Greece.¹³⁷

Third, within the overall plan of the *Histories*, in which Xerxes' unsuccessful invasion of Greece is the centerpiece and culmination, Herodotus presents a pattern in which successive kings overreach their bounds, launching expeditions which go too far and end in disaster.¹³⁸ First were Astyages and Croesus, whose assaults on Cyrus failed and resulted in the loss of their kingdoms to the Persians.¹³⁹ This was followed by Cyrus' disastrous expedition against the Massagetae far to the east; then Cambyses' expedition against the "Ethiopians" in which he nearly lost his army; and Darius' expedition against the Scythians, which ended in retreat.¹⁴⁰ Herodotus is implicitly offering an explanation as to why Xerxes' invasion of Greece failed by demonstrating in the earlier portions of his work that this is what happens when kings extend themselves beyond the natural limits of their empires. When faced with numerous competing accounts of the life of Cyrus, Herodotus may well have selected the account which best fit with this principle of historical explanation.

Finally, Yamauchi notes that "Herodotus was above all a raconteur of entertaining stories. The fact that he himself did not believe an account did not deter him from relating an interesting tale. At times he gives several contradictory stories."¹⁴¹ Since Herodotus says that he knew three other stories of the rise of Cyrus besides the one he gives, the fact that the story in the *Histories* is far more entertaining and sensational than that in the *Cyropaedia*—as a reader of the two accounts will see—surely must have been a factor in the selection of this story by Herodotus.

Summary

More primary evidence is needed beyond the two histories of Xenophon and Herodotus in order to make a firm decision regarding the historicity of their accounts of the rise of Cyrus. Neither account is without problems, but there is more reason to trust Xenophon's overall storyline of the accession of Cyrus than the storyline in Herodotus. There is no obvious reason to think that Xenophon invented Cyaxares II in order to advance the purposes of his work, and independent evidence supports the existence of Cyaxares II. On other matters where Xenophon differs from Herodotus, Xenophon is corroborated by other sources. As for Herodotus, some of the claims he makes are intrinsically improbable, and his account of the birth and upbringing of Cyrus is widely recognized as mythical. Herodotus' story of Cyrus also fits with the three main categories of historical causation which he seeks to develop in his work: the principle of

¹³⁷ See *ibid.*, 8.13, 35-39, 65, 109, 129; 9.41-43, 61-62, 65.

¹³⁸ On this pattern, see Harrison, "The Persian Invasions," 554-55.

¹³⁹ Herodotus 1.46-86, 127-30.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 1.201-14; 3.25-6; 4.83-144.

¹⁴¹ Yamauchi, "Herodotus," 180.

reciprocity, the sovereignty of the divine in history, and the reach of kings beyond the natural bounds of their empires. Thus, if there were no other historical records of Cyrus' accession than the accounts given by Herodotus and Xenophon, Xenophon's account would appear more credible.

CHAPTER 3

Correlation of Herodotus and Xenophon with Daniel's Darius the Mede

Among the sources available to describe the transition of power from Babylon to Medo-Persia, the most objective and best informed is undoubtedly Daniel. Herodotus and Xenophon were reporting stories second hand, long after the events. Daniel described events that he had witnessed and participated in as a high official in the royal courts of both Babylon and Medo-Persia. Cyrus utilized a heavy propaganda campaign to conquer and placate the Babylonians, and he shamelessly glorified himself in his recitation of events. Daniel's interests, on the other hand, were apolitical, since he served in the royal courts of two competing world powers, yet as an outsider whose ultimate and true loyalty lay with the God of Israel. Further, the purposes for which Daniel wrote his book would be thwarted if the history he recorded never occurred. That is, the book of Daniel would not be a demonstration of God's sovereignty over kings and nations if the stories which Daniel told to prove his point were unhistorical. Most importantly, Daniel was a prophet who wrote infallibly under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, whereas extrabiblical sources for the life of Cyrus are ordinary human writings. Since God was speaking through Daniel as he wrote, the book of Daniel is not to be viewed as an account of uncertain trustworthiness, whose veracity is to be judged by other data, but rather must be the standard by which all other accounts are measured. Daniel's multiple references to Darius the Mede shows that there was in fact some historical Median king called Darius at the time of Babylon's fall to the Medo-Persian army.

For the believer, then, there is no question as to the *existence* of Darius the Mede. That is a matter of faith. The problem for the believer comes when he seeks, as a historian, to *identify* Darius the Mede in extrabiblical sources which give a narrative history of the period, for the book of Daniel is not written as a narrative history of Neo-Babylonia, Media, and Persia—it rather assumes this history as a background for the historical vignettes it presents. Daniel says nothing of Cyrus' position or activities prior to the fall of Babylon, or of the history of the conflict between Nabonidus and Cyrus. Nor does he describe the history of dynastic succession in Media and Persia. He calls Darius and his father, Ahasuerus, by names which are not—on the conventional view—used of Median kings in extant extrabiblical sources. This has led various scholars to suggest ways to reconcile Daniel's account with either of the two major extrabiblical versions of the accession of Cyrus—that of Xenophon, and that of Herodotus. The case for reconciling Xenophon's account with the book of Daniel will be considered first, as it is the most straightforward. This will be followed by an examination of the various attempts to reconcile Herodotus with the book of Daniel. First, however, a word must be said regarding the critical approach to the book of Daniel, and the implications of this approach for the issue of Darius the Mede.

The Critical Approach to Daniel

The historical-critical issues surrounding the book of Daniel are well known in the world of biblical studies.¹ The book of Daniel presents itself as a work composed by a Jewish prophet named Daniel who was active in the royal courts of Babylon and Medo-Persia from about 605 to 537 BC.² As such, it claims to relate primary information regarding Babylonian and Medo-Persian history from a source who was far better informed than either Herodotus or Xenophon. While evangelical scholars typically accept the claims the book of Daniel makes for itself, mainstream critical scholarship views the book as a pseudepigraph (false writing), that is, as a book composed at a much later time (ca. 165 BC) by someone other than the prophet Daniel.³ On the view of the book of Daniel as a pseudepigraph, the historical information in the book of Daniel, along with the very existence of Daniel himself, is viewed with a skeptical eye by mainstream scholarship.

However, just as evangelical Bible scholars hold varying views on Darius the Mede, there is also room for such variance among theologically liberal (critical) Bible scholars. From the critical side, the possibility that the book of Daniel preserves authentic historical information concerning Darius the Mede cannot be ruled out. Most critics would argue that it was only the final redaction of the book of Daniel which took place around 165 BC; it is usually suggested

¹ For a more extensive description of these issues, see Steven D. Anderson, *Dr. Anderson's Interpretive Guide to the Major Prophets (Isaiah–Daniel)*, August 2014 ed., *Dr. Anderson's Interpretive Guide to the Bible*, vol. 4 (Grand Rapids: Steven D. Anderson, 2014), 187-96.

² This is contested by Collins, who states that “this claim is not actually found in the text” (John J. Collins, *A Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, Hermeneia, ed. Frank Moore Cross [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993], 24). However, Collins seems to presuppose that the book of Daniel was not originally published as a single, unified book, since the entire prophetic section of the book of Daniel, chs. 7–12, consists of first person narrative by Daniel. Daniel even states directly in Daniel 7:1 that he wrote down the vision of that chapter. With regard to the narratives of the first six chapters of the book, only Daniel would have been in a position to know, or to know firsthand, all of the information recorded in these chapters if they are regarded as authentic. If the book of Daniel is regarded as a unity, Daniel would be the author of the entire book. An author who wrote openly and who publicly delivered his book to his own people would have no need to protest his authorship of every subunit in the book for the satisfaction of later critics. In fact, it is hard to see how it would even be possible for the book to make a self-claim of unity, or why it would do so unless there were doubts and suspicions from the start. While the authenticity of the book of Daniel is routinely contested, it is fair to say that if the book is regarded as authentic and as a unity, Daniel must be regarded as the author.

³ For a defense of the authenticity of Daniel (the “early date” position), see Tremper Longman III and Raymond B. Dillard, *An Introduction to the Old Testament*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 373-81; Gleason L. Archer Jr., *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, rev. ed. (Chicago: Moody, 1994), 423-47; R. K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament with a Comprehensive Review of Old Testament Studies and a Special Supplement on the Apocrypha* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969), 1106-27. For the historical-critical view of the book (the “late date” position), see Collins, *A Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, 24-26; J. Alberto Soggin, *Introduction to the Old Testament: From Its Origins to the Closing of the Alexandrian Canon*, trans. John Bowden, 3rd ed., Old Testament Library, ed. Peter Ackroyd et al. (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 1989), 475-78; Otto Eissfeldt, *The Old Testament: An Introduction including the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha, and also the Works of Similar Type from Qumran: The History of the Formation of the Old Testament*, trans. Peter R. Ackroyd (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), 517-27.

that parts of the book, especially chs. 2–6, had their origin in an earlier period.⁴ On the critical view, it is possible that these early stories preserve authentic historical information. The critics now accept the existence of Belshazzar, for example, and Beaulieu accepts that the book of Daniel accurately reports the manner of Belshazzar’s death.⁵ In fact, the survey of views in chapter 1 discovered at least three scholars who follow a historical-critical approach to the book of Daniel who nevertheless have written in defense of the historicity of Darius the Mede: Albright, Colless, and Koch. The issue of the existence and identity of Darius the Mede may therefore be seen as a legitimate problem within critical scholarship.

On the other hand, the alleged non-existence of Darius the Mede has always been a key piece of evidence used by critical scholars to support their general view of the book of Daniel as a late forgery. An admission on the part of mainstream scholarship that the book of Daniel has accurately given the name and position of Darius the Mede would be a considerable blow to the whole historical-critical approach to the book. Such details about a man whose name and position are not preserved by later historians could really only be given by a contemporary, especially by someone who had just such “insider” posts in government as the book claims that Daniel had.⁶ Daniel’s existence has also hitherto been denied by critical scholarship for purely theological reasons, as there is not a shred of evidence to indicate that he did not exist.⁷ If mainstream scholarship acknowledged that Daniel did exist, and that he did write the book which bears his name, this would be a death knell for liberal theology, which is why no book of the Bible is more polarizing in academia than Daniel. Daniel gives eyewitness accounts of extraordinary miracles performed by the God of heaven, which are officially confirmed by authorities.⁸ This book also hits critics where they are weakest by giving prophecies of the far future, portions of which have already been fulfilled in exact detail, and which therefore could only have come by revelation from God. The book of Daniel is thus the greatest threat to the

⁴ For a presentation of the various critical theories on the composition of the book of Daniel, see John J. Collins, *Introduction to the Hebrew Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2004), 553-54; John J. Collins, *A Short Introduction to the Hebrew Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 279; Collins, *A Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, 26-38; André Lacocque, *Daniel in His Time*, Studies on the Personalities of the Old Testament, ed. James L. Crenshaw (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1988), 59-81.

⁵ Paul-Alain Beaulieu, *The Reign of Nabonidus, King of Babylon 556–539 B.C.*, Yale Near Eastern Researches, ed. William W. Hallo, Marvin H. Pope, and William K. Simpson, vol. 10 (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989), 231.

⁶ It may also be noted that references to Darius the Mede are found in four different chapters of the book (5, 6, 9, and 11), including within the key prophecy of ch. 11 and throughout the miracle story of ch. 6.

⁷ Positive evidence that Daniel did exist includes: (1) the claims made by the book of Daniel; (2) the accuracy of Daniel’s account of the Neo-Babylonian and early Medo-Persian governments (a key difference with pseudepigraphical works); and (3) the fact that the book of Daniel was accepted by the Jews as Scripture, with Daniel held to be a prophet. References to Daniel are found already by his contemporary Ezekiel (Ezek 14:14, 20; 28:3), and Jesus Himself refers to the writings of “Daniel the prophet” (Matt 24:15).

⁸ Official proclamations followed each of the miracles recorded in the book of Daniel, and it is not impossible that one or more of these proclamations may yet be discovered in an extrabiblical source.

fundamental premise of higher criticism that the Bible is a human product. Critical scholarship can in no way admit its authenticity, no matter what the evidence to the contrary.⁹

To summarize: while the identification of Darius the Mede is, in theory, an open issue for critical scholarship to consider from a critical point of view, the historicity of Darius the Mede is in reality a very hard pill for the critics to swallow. It is for this reason that the issue has not been given a proper historical investigation in contemporary times, and also why attempts to search for Darius the Mede in extrabiblical texts have encountered irrational opposition from mainstream scholarship. The present study is, however, a historical investigation, not a theological treatise, and it is to the investigation of historical issues that we now return.

Darius the Mede and Xenophon

If Daniel's Darius the Mede is to be found in Xenophon's account, he is Cyaxares (II), the son of Astyages. The positions of these two men are obviously parallel—Cyaxares was king of the Medo-Persian Empire, and so was Darius. Daniel 9:1 states that Darius was a Median king, and Cyaxares was the son of the Median king Astyages. Xenophon portrays Cyrus as commander of the combined Medo-Persian army while still a subordinate to the Median king. This offers a way of harmonizing the biblical (Isa 45:1-3) and extrabiblical texts that present Cyrus as a conqueror of kingdoms with Daniel's implied claim that the reign of Cyrus over the empire did not begin until sometime after the fall of Babylon. Xenophon notes that Cyaxares was Cyrus' uncle, and he states explicitly that Cyaxares was older than Cyrus.¹⁰ Although Xenophon does not give Cyaxares' age, Daniel's statement that Darius was sixty-two¹¹ when he "received" (קִבַּל)¹² the Babylonian kingdom (Dan 5:31[E] / 6:1[MT]) fits easily within the expected parameters. Initially, Xenophon's account appears to have many correspondences to Daniel's.

⁹ So what would happen if an early manuscript of the book of Daniel were discovered? What would happen if a cuneiform text of Nebuchadnezzar's proclamation in Daniel 4 were discovered? It might provoke a crisis in the mainstream scholarly community, but the response to the crisis would be to create new critical theories on the book of Daniel. It would not, in most cases, make genuine Christian believers out of the critics. This is because the real reason for the critics' unbelief is a wicked heart; it has never been because of lack of evidence or proof.

¹⁰ Xenophon *Cyropaedia* 4.5.32; 6.1.6.

¹¹ The translation of כֶּבֶר as "about" in Daniel 5:31(E) / 6:1(MT) by most English translations is dubious; the NIV is probably correct in taking sixty-two as an exact statement of the age of Darius, rather than an estimate. The Aramaic is literally "as a son of sixty and two years" (כְּבֵר שְׁנַיִן וְשִׁטְיִן וְתַרְסִיִן). The word כֶּבֶר can be used with a numeral in the sense of "about" (cf. Dan 4:16[MT]), but also in the sense of "as" (cf. Dan 2:35). However, in the only other use of כְּבֵר in biblical Aramaic (Dan 7:13), the meaning of כֶּבֶר is "as." In the context of Daniel 5:31(E) / 6:1(MT), if an estimate of Darius' age were being given one would expect a round number, such as sixty, rather than sixty-two.

¹² Xenophon *Cyropaedia* 1.5.2. The term קִבַּל (*received*) in Daniel 5:31(E) / 6:1(MT) could be read to indicate that Darius did not take an active role in conquering the Neo-Babylonian Empire—Cyrus did the work for him, and handed him the prize. The Hophal הִמְלִיךָ (*was made king/became king*) in Daniel 9:1 could be understood similarly. Against this, Goldingay understands קִבַּל as a statement of simple succession (John E. Goldingay, *Daniel*, Word Biblical Commentary, ed. David A. Hubbard, Glenn W. Barker, and John D. W. Watts, vol. 30 [Dallas: Word, 1989], 102). It may be noted, however, that וַיִּקְבַּלֵּנוּ indicates more than simple succession in Daniel 7:18. Others

Correspondence of the Names

The most obvious objection to the identification of Darius the Mede with Xenophon's Cyaxares is the use of different names. Daniel 9:1 refers to "Darius the son of Ahasuerus" (דָּרִיּוּס בֶּן-אַחַשְׁוֵרֶשׁ), whereas the corresponding figure in Xenophon's story is called "Cyaxares" (Κυαξάρης), the son of "Astyages" (Ἀστυάγης). This is, however, merely a *difference*, not a *contradiction*, since one individual may have multiple names.

Keil's Proposal

Keil attempted to resolve the problem by stating that Cyaxares and Astyages represent Median words, and that Darius and Ahasuerus represent Persian words with meanings equivalent to the two Median names.¹³ One problem with this proposal is that names typically are transliterated, rather than translated, between languages. But the real problem is it appears as though Keil claimed more certainty about scholarly knowledge of the Median and Persian languages than he should have. In fact, Keil's hypothesis is highly speculative at best and cannot be demonstrated linguistically. Briant writes,

we know virtually nothing of Median, for the plain and simple reason that we do not have a single inscription in that language. By reasoning that might be considered circular, Median has been reconstructed on the basis of Persian borrowings, themselves reconstructed. Given this fact, and not without solid arguments, the very existence of a Median language has itself been called into question.¹⁴

If the Medes and the Persians spoke the same language, Keil's hypothesis has no basis. There is, however, a much simpler way to approach the issue.

Darius and Ahasuerus as Throne Names

While it may not have been a common practice in the ancient Near East for kings to translate their names into other languages, as Keil proposed, it was in fact typical for Persian

may suggest the theological explanation that Darius was given the kingdom by God, though this certainly is not the usual biblical manner of speaking; I have not been able to find any other possible OT example of the language of a king "receiving" a kingdom. In any case, if the use of these two terms (קָבַל and הִמְלִיךָ) is exegetically significant, the only views of Darius the Mede that would struggle to explain them are the view that Darius was the same individual as Cyrus and the view that Darius was a fictive king created by a confused writer.

¹³ C. F. Keil, *Biblical Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, trans. M. G. Easton, *Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1877; repr., Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955), 200.

¹⁴ Pierre Briant, *From Cyrus to Alexander: A History of the Persian Empire*, trans. Peter T. Daniels (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2002), 25.

rulers to adopt throne names that were different from their given names.¹⁵ Thus, the original name of Artaxerxes I (465–425/4 BC) was Cyrus; that of Darius II (424–405/4) was Ochus; that of Artaxerxes II (405/4–359/8) was Arses; and that of Artaxerxes III (359/8–338/7) was Ochus.¹⁶ The next king, Arses (338/7–336/5), may have taken a throne name during his brief reign, but if so it is not known.¹⁷ The last king of Persia, Darius III (336/5–330), was originally named Artaxerxes.¹⁸ Most of these name changes are attested by both Greco-Roman writers and late Babylonian astronomical texts, which will refer, for example, to “Aršu called Artakšatsu the king.”¹⁹ Schmitt regards it as “obvious” that Darius Hystaspes and Xerxes (= Ahasuerus) are also known by their throne names, even though their birth names are not attested in any extant texts.²⁰ Cambyses evidently took two throne names, Ahashuerus and Artaxerxes, which are not (apparently) attested in extant extrabiblical sources, though they are attested in Ezra 4:6-7. In light of this clear pattern of the use of throne names in the Persian Empire, and of their use by biblical historians as the more proper form of address, it is likely that Cyaxares and Astyages also took throne names, and it is reasonable to suggest on the basis of the book of Daniel that these throne names were Darius and Ahasuerus. One would expect that Daniel, as a government official, would refer to the king by his throne name, even if outsiders knew him better by another name.

An item of extrabiblical evidence for “Darius” as a throne name for Cyaxares and “Ahasuerus” as a throne name for Astyages is the use of these two names by Darius Hystaspes and his son Xerxes. Darius was a usurper who was not a descendant of Cyrus, and who therefore had no legitimate right of succession. This fact “was intended to be concealed or glossed over by taking another name.”²¹ In such a situation it is unlikely that Darius would have invented a throne name that had never been used before, and it is logical that he would have called himself by the name of the last king of the Median dynasty which preceded Cyrus. It is also logical that when Xerxes was made crown prince, his father would have given him the throne name of an earlier king from the same dynasty.²² Esther 1:1 also indicates that there was at least one king called “Ahasuerus” (אַחַשְׁוֵרֶשׁ) who reigned before Xerxes, as it explains that “this is the Ahasuerus who reigned from India to Kush, over 127 provinces” (הוּא אַחַשְׁוֵרֶשׁ הַמֶּלֶךְ מֵהַיַּדּוּם וְעַד־) (כּוֹשׁ שְׁבַע וְעֶשְׂרִים וּמֵאָה מְדִינָה).

¹⁵ The use of papal names is a contemporary example of a similar practice.

¹⁶ Rüdiger Schmitt, “Achaemenid Throne-Names,” *Annali dell’Istituto Orientale di Napoli* 42 (1982): 83-85.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 86.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 90.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 87.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 93-94.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 94.

²² The birth names of Darius Hystaspes and Xerxes are not known, probably because Darius was virtually unknown in the empire before he took the throne, while Xerxes may have been given his throne name when he came of age.

Further positive evidence for the use of “Darius” as a throne name for the last Median king will be provided in chapter 4, when two ancient references to a certain King Darius who preceded Darius Hystaspes are considered.

The Accession of Cyrus

There appears to be a difference between Daniel and Xenophon on the matter of when Cyrus began his reign over the Medo-Persian Empire. In the book of Daniel, it is Darius the Mede who appoints satraps and governors, and who issues decrees to the entire empire which no higher authority can overrule. In the *Cyropaedia*, on the other hand, Cyrus begins acting as king and appointing satraps immediately after the fall of Babylon—even though King Cyaxares is still alive and well in Media. That Xenophon might be loose with the facts here is understandable—he builds his presentation of Cyrus as the ideal king around a detailed description of the organization of the empire by Cyrus following the conquest of Babylon, which means he has to push Cyaxares aside. Cyaxares’ happy forfeiture of power to Cyrus after Cyrus appears to have usurped his elder’s prerogatives by acting as king over their conquered territories looks like an artificial creation by Xenophon to suit the purposes of his work.

This being said, the difference between Xenophon and Daniel on this point is not as large as it might at first appear. Cyrus was already either the king or crown prince of Persia—a position which was his by inheritance—and as his power grew it seemed natural that he would unite the confederated Median and Persian monarchies through his own rule after the death of his heirless uncle Cyaxares. When Cyaxares gave Cyrus his daughter in marriage, Cyrus officially became the crown prince of Media in addition to being the king or crown prince of Persia, and the two realms were thereafter to be united as one. On either Xenophon’s account or Daniel’s, it would seem that Cyrus succeeded Cyaxares when Cyaxares died of natural causes; the reference to Darius’ age in Daniel 5:31(E) / 6:1(MT) shows that he was old enough to die naturally. Cyrus was appointed as Darius’ successor because of the stature he gained through his conquests, because of his forceful personality, and because Darius had no son.²³

Thus, Xenophon and Daniel differ only in the matter of whether it was Cyrus or Darius who organized the empire after the fall of Babylon. The role of Cyaxares after the fall of Babylon is not as clear in the *Cyropaedia* as is the role of Darius in the book of Daniel, probably because Xenophon needed to push Cyaxares to the side in order to portray Cyrus acting as the ideal king. Regardless, Daniel does not affirm that Cyrus was not king of Persia or crown prince of Media during the reign of Darius the Mede. Daniel’s references to the “first year” of Darius (Dan 9:1; 11:1) imply that he is counting the reign of Darius from the beginning of his rule over the former Babylonian Empire, and not from the beginning of his reign over Media. By analogy, therefore, Daniel’s references to the first and third years of Cyrus (Dan 1:21; 10:1) must refer to his rule as “emperor” (to use a later term), that is, to his rule over the entire realm without an elder king above him in the authority structure of the Medo-Persian confederation. Xenophon’s presentation of Cyrus acting as king of the empire after the fall of Babylon differs with Daniel’s presentation only in rank or degree, not in kind.

It is significant that, given Xenophon’s presentation of Cyrus as beginning to reign immediately after the conquest of Babylon, his chronology implies that Cyrus did not begin to

²³ Xenophon states that Cyaxares had no son in *Cyropaedia* 8.5.19.

reign until approximately two years after the fall of Babylon. It has already been noted that Xenophon gives a seven-year reign for Cyrus.²⁴ Various other sources place the fall of Babylon in 539 BC and the death of Cyrus in 530, after a nine-year reign. Since Xenophon is relying on historical sources that recognize the reign of Cyaxares before that of Cyrus, it appears that his figures for the reign of Cyrus are two years shorter than the others because his sources included a two-year reign of Cyaxares following the fall of Babylon. Such a brief reign would fit perfectly with Daniel's presentation of Darius the Mede reigning briefly before the accession of Cyrus.

Darius the Mede and Herodotus

At first glance, there is no obvious correspondence between Daniel's Darius the Mede and any of the figures in Herodotus' version of the Cyrus story. This has led to four different proposed identifications, which will be analyzed in turn below. The two major proposals (i.e., proposals with many adherents) are the identifications of Darius with Gubaru and with Cyrus. The two minor proposals (i.e., proposals with few adherents) are the identifications of Darius with Cambyses II and with Astyages.

Darius as Gubaru

The attempt to identify Darius with Gubaru, as noted in chapter 1, was the dominant view among evangelical commentators on Daniel for the first three-quarters of the twentieth century. Gubaru is not actually mentioned by Herodotus, although his version of the Cyrus story allows for his existence. Gubaru is described by the Nabonidus Chronicle by the names Gubaru and Ugbaru, and by Xenophon as Gobryas.²⁵ Proposals to identify Darius the Mede with Gubaru take various forms, but the basic argument is the same in all of its permutations: (1) Gubaru was appointed governor of Babylon (or the province of Babylonia) by Cyrus, and was responsible for appointing officials in Babylonia (cf. Dan 6:1-2[E] / 6:2-3[MT]); (2) Gubaru could have been given the title of "king"; (3) Gubaru could have been a Mede; (4) Gubaru could have been given the name "Darius" in addition to "Gubaru"; and (5) Gubaru's father could have been called "Ahasuerus." Point 1 is presented as certain, and points 2-5 as possibilities that can neither be proved nor disproved. According to the argument, since Gubaru is well documented in extrabiblical historical sources and was a significant figure, to identify him with Darius the Mede removes any apparent discrepancy between the Bible and extrabiblical sources. The position of Cyrus as king of the Persian Empire can be recognized side by side with that of his governor Gubaru/Darius, who ruled "over the realm of the Chaldeans" (עַל מְלְכוּת כַּשְׁדִּים) Dan 9:1). In its outline form, this appears to be a very attractive solution, which is why it was so widely adopted for a time. When this view is examined in detail, however, it seems to fall apart, which is why its popularity has declined.

²⁴ Xenophon *Cyropaedia* 8.7.1; cf. 8.6.22.

²⁵ Nabonidus Chronicle iii 15, 20, 22 in A. K. Grayson, *Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles*, Texts from Cuneiform Sources, ed. A. Leo Oppenheim, vol. 5 (Locust Valley, NY: J. J. Augustin, 1975), 110; Xenophon *Cyropaedia* 4.6.1-10; 7.5.24-30. Herodotus does mention a later individual named Gubaru, but not the one who has been put forth as a candidate for Darius the Mede.

Major studies which have defended the identification of Darius the Mede with Gubaru have been produced by Whitcomb and Shea.²⁶ As they represent different versions of this theory, their views are analyzed separately below.

Whitcomb's View

John Whitcomb, who is best known in the evangelical world for coauthoring *The Genesis Flood* with Henry Morris in 1961, had two years earlier published a work on Darius the Mede, which was also well known at the time.²⁷ Whitcomb attempted to prove the identification of Darius the Mede with Gubaru by arguing for a very specific identification of Gubaru. Rowley understood the names Gubaru, Ugbaru, and Gobryas to all refer to the same person.²⁸ He argued that the Nabonidus Chronicle uses the names "Gubaru" and "Ugbaru" to refer to the individual whom Xenophon calls "Gobryas."²⁹ Whitcomb, on the other hand, argued that "Gubaru" is not merely a variant spelling of "Ugbaru," but rather names a completely different person.³⁰ To make his case, Whitcomb collated some twenty-six different cuneiform texts, ranging from the fourth year of Cyrus to the fifth year of Cambyses, which name Gubaru as the governor of Babylon and of the Trans-Euphrates.³¹ Since the Nabonidus Chronicle states that Ugbaru died three weeks after Babylon fell, he must be a different person than the long-tenured governor Gubaru. Thus, Whitcomb concluded that Gubaru was an otherwise unknown figure who was appointed by Cyrus as governor of most of the territory of the former Babylonian Empire, and that he held this position from the fall of Babylon until the fifth year of Cambyses. Whitcomb identified Darius the Mede with Gubaru, rather than with Ugbaru.³² Whitcomb questioned the historical worth of Xenophon's *Cyropaedia*, but acknowledged that his Gobryas "was probably Ugbaru, not

²⁶ Koch's articles may be noted again here: Klaus Koch, "Dareios, der Meder," in *The Word of the Lord Shall Go Forth: Essays in Honor of David Noel Freedman in Celebration of His Sixtieth Birthday*, ed. Carol L. Meyers and M. O'Connor, American Schools of Oriental Research Special Volume Series, ed. Eric M. Meyers, vol. 1 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1983), 287-99; Klaus Koch, "Darius the Mede," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman et al., vol. 2 (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 38-39. Koch seems to miss one of the major problems raised by Shea and Whitcomb when he dates the death of Ugbaru/Gubaru to eight months after the fall of Babylon. This is a simple misreading of the Nabonidus Chronicle, and Koch therefore seems to make a case for an artificial Gubaru.

²⁷ John C. Whitcomb Jr., *Darius the Mede: A Study in Historical Identification* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959).

²⁸ H. H. Rowley, *Darius the Mede and the Four World Empires in the Book of Daniel: A Historical Study of Contemporary Theories* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press Board, 1935), 19.

²⁹ Gubaru is referenced in Nabonidus Chronicle iii 20, while Ugbaru is referenced in iii 15, 22. See Grayson, *Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles*, 110.

³⁰ Whitcomb, *Darius the Mede*, 17-23.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 11-16.

³² *Ibid.*, 24.

Gubaru”—in spite of the fact that Γωβρύας appears to be a transliteration of ^m*Gu-ba-ru*, not ^m*Ug-ba-ru*.³³

Whitcomb’s major contribution was his demonstration that there was a governor of Babylon named “Gubaru” who was a different person than the Ugbaru of the Nabonidus Chronicle. The critical flaw in Whitcomb’s historical analysis was his failure (apparently) to look up cuneiform texts dated to the first three years of Cyrus which name the governor of Babylon. The book of Daniel describes Darius the Mede’s accession as occurring immediately after the fall of Babylon (Dan 5:30–6:3[E] / 5:30–6:4[MT]), so he would have to be the governor documented during the accession year of Cyrus. However, Whitcomb had already supposed that the “Gubaru” in the Nabonidus Chronicle was a different person than the Chronicle’s Ugbaru. Since it seemed that he was made governor of Babylon in the Chronicle, Whitcomb connected him with the later references to Gubaru the governor of Babylon. Whitcomb evidently was not troubled by the lack of references to Gubaru in administrative or economic texts dated to the accession year or the first three years of the reign of Cyrus, and he evidently did not check to see whether texts dated to these years may name a different man as governor of Babylon.

In fact, as Grabbe has pointed out, Whitcomb’s Gubaru did not become governor of Babylon until the fourth year of Cyrus; various texts name a different man as governor of Babylon during the first three years of Cyrus (see below), and Gubaru is not referenced as governor in any texts until the fourth year of Cyrus.³⁴ According to Daniel 1:21, Daniel retired from government service in the first year of Cyrus, so if Gubaru did not become governor of Babylon until the fourth year of Cyrus, he cannot be the Darius in whose administration Daniel served. The governor of Babylon who preceded Gubaru was the same person who held the position for the final eight years of the reign of Nabonidus, Nabû-aḥḥê-bullit̄.³⁵ Since it is highly unlikely that Nabû-aḥḥê-bullit̄ was a Mede, and since he merely retained his position rather than “receiving” (Dan 5:31[E] / 6:1[MT]; 9:1) his power over the former Babylonian Empire when Cyrus deposed the Babylonian king, he would not be a candidate for Daniel’s Darius the Mede.

³³ Ibid., 22-23, 27.

³⁴ Lester L. Grabbe, “Another Look at the *Gestalt* of ‘Darius the Mede,’” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 50, no. 2 (1988): 206-7.

³⁵ This is noted by Marino San Nicolò, *Beiträge zu einer Prosopographie neubabylonischer Beamten der Zivil-und Tempelverwaltung*, Sitzungsberichte der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften: Philosophisch-historische Abteilung, vol. 2.2 (Munich: Bayerische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1941), 61-62; Grabbe, “Another Look,” 206-7. Nabû-aḥḥê-bullit̄ is named already in a text from Uruk dated to the eighth year, third month, twenty-sixth day of the reign of Nabonidus (Raymond Philip Dougherty, *Records from Erech: Time of Nabonidus (555-538 B. C.)*, Yale Oriental Series: Babylonian Texts, vol. 6 [New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1920], 145.6). Nabû-aḥḥê-bullit̄ is still named as governor in a text from Uruk dated to the third year, twelfth month, eighteenth day of the reign of Cyrus (Arch Tremayne, *Records from Erech: Time of Cyrus and Cambyses (538-521 B. C.)*, Yale Oriental Series: Babylonian Texts, ed. Albert T. Clay, vol. 7 [New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1925], 33:13). Incidentally, the fact that Nabû-aḥḥê-bullit̄ retained his position after Babylon fell corroborates the book of Daniel’s presentation of Daniel being carried over from a high position in the Neo-Babylonian Empire to one in the Medo-Persian Empire.

Shea's View

Although Shea acknowledges that there was a later governor of Babylon named Gubaru who was different than the Ugbaru of the Nabonidus Chronicle, he argues (correctly, in my view) that the reference to Gubaru in the Chronicle merely represents a variant spelling of Ugbaru; the “Gubaru” of the Nabonidus Chronicle is the same individual whom the Chronicle calls “Ugbaru”—Xenophon’s Gobryas.³⁶ Shea once argued, against Whitcomb, that Ugbaru died “a year and three weeks after the fall of Babylon, rather than just three weeks after that event,”³⁷ though new evidence later forced him to change his view, and to conclude that Ugbaru could not have held a position of authority in Babylon for more than a week before he died.³⁸ According to the Nabonidus Chronicle, Ugbaru led the Medo-Persian army into Babylon on the night it was conquered (Tishri 16), Cyrus entered Babylon two weeks later (Marchesvan 3), and Ugbaru died a week after this (Marchesvan 11).³⁹ Shea reasons that if Cyrus elevated Ugbaru to the position of “king of Babylon,” he must have done so after he entered the city in person, and therefore Ugbaru could have reigned only for a single week.⁴⁰

Points in favor of Shea’s proposal are the high position of authority which Ugbaru evidently held, and the fact that he is said in the Nabonidus Chronicle to have appointed officials in Babylon as Cyrus organized a new administration after the city’s fall.⁴¹ Additionally, Ugbaru’s death was evidently unexpected, and Shea surmises that he was poisoned in a plot by priests and officials who were angry with the actions he took in Daniel 6.⁴²

An obvious difficulty with Shea’s view is the brevity of Ugbaru’s proposed reign. Although Shea attempts to work out a possible chronology, one week hardly seems to leave sufficient time for the following events which took place during the reign of Daniel’s Darius the Mede:

1. Darius appoints 120 satraps and three presidents, of whom Daniel was one (Dan 6:1-2[E] / 6:2-3[MT]).
2. Daniel distinguishes himself in government service, resulting in the king’s plan to promote him (Dan 6:3[E] / 6:4[MT]).
3. Other officials scrutinize Daniel to find grounds of accusation against him (Dan 6:4[E] / 6:5[MT]).
4. A plot is formed against Daniel (Dan 6:5[E] / 6:6[MT]).
5. The king issues a decree (Dan 6:6-9[E] / 6:7-10[MT]).

³⁶ William H. Shea, “Darius the Mede: An Update,” *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 20, no. 3 (1982): 245.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 243 (emphasis his).

³⁸ William H. Shea, “The Search for Darius the Mede (Concluded), or, The Time of the Answer to Daniel’s Prayer and the Date of the Death of Darius the Mede,” *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 12, no. 1 (2001): 97-98.

³⁹ See Nabonidus Chronicle iii 15-22 (Grayson, *Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles*, 109-10).

⁴⁰ Shea, “Darius the Mede (Concluded),” 98-99.

⁴¹ See Nabonidus Chronicle, iii 15, 3.20 (Grayson, *Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles*, 109-10).

⁴² Shea, “Darius the Mede (Concluded),” 101-3.

6. Daniel is arrested, cast into the den of lions, and released the next day (Dan 6:10-23[E] / 6:11-24[MT]).
7. The men who accused Daniel are killed (Dan 6:24[E] / 6:25[MT]).
8. Darius issues a new decree (Dan 6:25-27[E] / 6:26-28[MT]).
9. Daniel continued to prosper (Dan 6:28[E] / 6:29[MT]).
10. Daniel reads about Jeremiah's prophecy of a return from exile, fasts, prays, and receives a prophecy of seventy weeks (Dan 9).

General Problems

Particular problems with both Whitcomb's Gubaru and Shea's Gubaru have been noted above, which would disqualify either one from being identified with Darius the Mede. However, there are also more general problems faced by both views. The most basic problem is that none of the outstanding facts about Gubaru is an exact match to the facts concerning Darius the Mede given by the book of Daniel. In other words, virtually everything that is known about the person of Gubaru, as described in extrabiblical sources, has to be altered or enhanced in order to make him the King Darius of the book of Daniel. In the end, there are no one-to-one correspondences between Gubaru and Darius the Mede, and therefore there is no correspondence at all.

First, the name "Gubaru" is not "Darius." Whitcomb acknowledges that "the cuneiform texts uniformly refer to him as Gubaru and not as Darius," but nevertheless argues that he could have been called Darius as well.⁴³ However, this is simply a conjecture.

Second, Darius is said to have been the son of Ahasuerus (Dan 9:1), and there is nothing to suggest that Gubaru was the son of some well-known personage named Ahasuerus. Cyrus, because he was of royal lineage, names his father Cambyses in the Cyrus Cylinder, but no extant inscription names the father of Gubaru.⁴⁴ Whitcomb points out that it is theoretically possible that Gubaru's father was named Ahasuerus; but, once again, there is no positive evidence to support this.⁴⁵

Third, any assertion that Gubaru was a Mede directly contradicts Xenophon's statement that Gobryas was "by birth an Assyrian" (γένος Ἀσσύριος), that is, a native Babylonian.⁴⁶ Since Daniel 9:1 states that Darius was "of the seed of the Medes" (יְדִי עֵמֶדִי), this alone ought to rule out the identification of Darius with Gubaru. Whitcomb attempted to circumvent Xenophon's testimony by maintaining that Xenophon's Gobryas needs only be identified with the Ugaru of

⁴³ Whitcomb, *Darius the Mede*, 26-28.

⁴⁴ See lines 20-22 of the Cyrus Cylinder, in Hanspeter Schaudig, *Die Inschriften Nabonids von Babylon und Kyros' des Großen samt den in ihrem Umfeld entstandenen Tendenzschriften: Textausgabe und Grammatik*, *Alter Orient und Altes Testament*, ed. Manfred Dietrich and Oswald Loretz, vol. 256 (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2001), 552-53.

⁴⁵ Whitcomb, *Darius the Mede*, 28.

⁴⁶ Xenophon *Cyropaedia* 4.6.2.

the Nabonidus Chronicle, and not with the Chronicle's Gubaru.⁴⁷ He pointed out that there were many Median officials in the Persian Empire, and so Gubaru could have been a Mede.⁴⁸ However, as has already been noted, Whitcomb created a Gubaru who did not exist by mixing references to Gubaru in the Nabonidus Chronicle with references to a later governor of Babylon by the same name. Xenophon's Gobryas is clearly identical to the Gubaru/Ugbaru of the Nabonidus Chronicle, and the Chronicle appears to use these two names interchangeably for the same person. Shea, who correctly identifies the Gubaru/Ugbaru of the Chronicle as the only plausible candidate for Darius the Mede, simply dismisses the historical worth of the *Cyropaedia*, while asserting, against Whitcomb, that Gutium was part of Media and therefore Gubaru must have been a Mede.⁴⁹ However, any claim that Gubaru was a Mede explicitly contradicts Xenophon, and no other ancient source states otherwise.

Fourth, Daniel refers to Darius the Mede by the title of “king” some thirty times and does not ascribe any other title to him, whereas all the sources that describe Gubaru present him as holding some lesser rank. Daniel 5:31(E) / 6:1(MT) directly states that Darius received “the kingdom” (מְלֻכּוּתָא). Daniel 6:1(E) / 6:2(MT) states that Darius had 120 satraps in his kingdom, which corresponds very closely to the 127 provinces that were in the kingdom of Ahasuerus some sixty years later (Esth 1:1-2). Gubaru may have appointed some officials, but he could not have appointed all the satraps and presidents over the whole kingdom. In Daniel 6:25-27(E) / 6:26-28(MT), Darius makes a decree that is universal in scope—“to all the peoples, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth” (לְכָל-עַמְּמָא אֲמִיָּא וְלִשְׁנַיָּא דִּי-דְאַרְיִן בְּכָל-אַרְעָא)—which shows that he was king over the entire empire. In Daniel 6:28(E) / 6:29(MT), Darius' reign is spoken of in the same way as Cyrus', which indicates that he held the same position as Cyrus held after him.

Whitcomb acknowledges that Gubaru would not have been called *šarru* in the Akkadian language, but claims that there was no contemporary Aramaic word for “governor,” forcing Daniel to use the Aramaic term מְלִיָּה.⁵⁰ This claim is simply wrong, given Daniel's use of both פְּקִיָּה (Dan 3:2-3, 27; 6:8[MT]) and אֲחַשְׁדָּרְפָּן (Dan 3:2-3, 27; 6:2-5, 7-8[MT]). Daniel knew the official terminology well, and he must have applied the proper term to Darius. Whitcomb also appeals to the Behistun inscription for evidence that a Persian governor could call himself

⁴⁷ Whitcomb asserted that Xenophon's Gobryas, if he existed, should be identified Ugbaru, not Gubaru, in spite of the fact that he seems to hinge his whole argument on the idea that Ugbaru was a different person than Gubaru because his name started with “Ug” instead of “Gu.”

⁴⁸ Whitcomb, *Darius the Mede*, 29.

⁴⁹ Shea, “Darius the Mede: An Update,” 247; William H. Shea, “Nabonidus Chronicle: New Readings and the Identity of Darius the Mede,” *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 7, no. 1 (1996): 17; Whitcomb, *Darius the Mede*, 22-23. Note that Shea's denigration of the historical worth of the *Cyropaedia* in these articles contradicts his earlier defense of the *Cyropaedia* in William H. Shea, “Darius the Mede in His Persian-Babylonian Setting,” *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 29, no. 3 (1991): 240-44.

⁵⁰ Whitcomb, *Darius the Mede*, 31-33.

“king,” but he does not seem to realize that the governors who proclaimed themselves “kings” were rebelling against Darius and claiming a new title.⁵¹

Shea, for his part, argues that Ugbaru was installed by Cyrus as a vassal king in Babylon prior to the installation of Cambyses as his coregent.⁵² However, as Dandamaev notes, “not once in the Chronicle is Ugbaru called king; besides, there are no documents which are dated to his rule.”⁵³ In fact, Shea changed his interpretation of the date of Ugbaru’s death because of the publication of texts which indicated that Cyrus installed Cambyses as king of Babylon less than a year after that city’s fall. Since Shea attributes a reign of only one week to Ugbaru, it would not be expected that documents dated to his reign should have been found—though, still, none has been found. However, Daniel’s Darius the Mede must have reigned for substantially longer than one week after the fall of Babylon.

Fifth, the term “realm of the Chaldeans” (מְלִכּוּת כַּשְׁדִּים), which is used in Daniel 9:1, has a different meaning than the term “land of the Chaldeans” (אֶרֶץ כַּשְׁדִּים), which is used in eleven other OT verses (Isa 23:13; Jer 24:5; 25:12; 50:1, 8, 25, 45; 51:4, 54; Ezek 1:3; 12:13). The former term refers to the entire Neo-Babylonian Empire—now merged with the Medo-Persian Empire—while the latter term refers solely to the area where native Chaldeans lived. Thus, Darius the Mede did not rule merely over a local province, but over the entire empire. Accordingly, the reference to Cyrus as “king of Babylon” in Ezra 5:13 means that he was the ruler of the entire former Babylonian Empire (cf. Ezra 6:22; Neh 13:6).⁵⁴

The most serious and intractable of all the problems with the identification of Darius the Mede with Gubaru (however he may be interpreted) is the decree made by Darius in Daniel 6:7-9(E) / 6:8-10(MT) that no one could make a petition to any god or man but himself for thirty days.⁵⁵ No oriental monarch would permit a subordinate to make such a decree, nor would he excuse him for doing so.⁵⁶ Persian kings held absolute power, and would not tolerate an attempt to honor a subordinate above themselves. Further, it is stated three times in Daniel 6 that the decree issued by Darius could not be altered (Dan 6:8, 12, 15(E) / 6:9, 13, 16[MT]), which shows that it was issued by the highest regent in the kingdom, whom none could overrule. The

⁵¹ Ibid., 31. Darius Hystaspes’ claim that his father was a king will be examined in chapter 4, under the analysis of Ctesias. Suffice it to say at this point that scholars consider this claim to be an attempt to give the false impression that Darius Hystaspes had a legitimate right to the throne.

⁵² Shea, “Darius the Mede (Concluded),” 105.

⁵³ M. A. Dandamaev, *A Political History of the Achaemenid Empire*, trans. W. J. Vogelsang (Leiden: Brill, 1989), 59.

⁵⁴ Cyrus also calls himself “king of Babylon,” among other titles, in the Cyrus Cylinder, lines 20-22; see Schaudig, *Die Inschriften*, 552-53. Note that he does *not* call himself “king of Media,” which fits with Daniel and Xenophon, but not so much with Herodotus.

⁵⁵ Presumably this decree was meant only to apply to the satraps and presidents, and was presented to the king as a test of loyalty for officials in the new administration. It should be noted that the decree was not about worship *per se* or acts of sacrifice, but was narrowly restricted to making formal petitions of a certain sort. It does not appear that the king was worshipped as a god in ancient Persia.

⁵⁶ If the “Darius the Mede” in Daniel 6 were Gubaru, his officials would have suggested issuing a decree that petition could be made only to *Cyrus* for thirty days—though even in this instance Gubaru would have lacked the power to issue such a bold proclamation.

statement in Daniel 11:1 that the primary angelic opponent of Satan was assigned to help Darius the Mede in the first year of his reign is yet another indication that Darius was the highest ruler in the empire. Thus, it is ultimately from the book of Daniel itself that one is able conclusively to disprove the attempt to identify Darius the Mede with Gubaru, or with any other governor in the Medo-Persian Empire.

Darius as Cyrus

A second proposal to reconcile Daniel's account with Herodotus' identifies Darius the Mede as none other than Cyrus himself—a view most famously advocated by D. J. Wiseman.⁵⁷ Wiseman's view has the advantage of identifying Darius with an absolute sovereign. This avoids the largest problem in the identification of Darius with Gubaru, which is the absolute power of the king in Daniel 6. It also avoids the major problem in the identification of Darius with Xenophon's Cyaxares II—namely, that many extant sources present a different version of the accession of Cyrus which does not acknowledge the existence of Cyaxares II.

Arguments for This Identification

Grabbe dismisses Wiseman's theory as “an exercise in apologetics,” claiming that “he actually gives no positive evidence for this identification but rather seeks to demonstrate that it is not impossible.”⁵⁸ Wiseman does, however, make a couple of positive arguments which Grabbe fails to mention. He points to an inscription of Nabonidus called the Harran Stele—to be analyzed in more detail in the following chapter—in which Nabonidus refers to the actions of a certain king of the Medes during the tenth year of his reign, i.e., in 546/5 BC.⁵⁹ Wiseman points to this as evidence that Cyrus was called “king of the Medes,” since the subjugation of the Medes by Cyrus is said by other sources to have occurred well before 546.⁶⁰ However, since Cyrus does not, in his extant inscriptions, call himself “king of the Medes,” it is more likely historically that

⁵⁷ D. J. Wiseman, “Some Historical Problems in the Book of Daniel,” in *Notes on Some Problems in the Book of Daniel* (London: Tyndale, 1965), 12-16. Wiseman's basic thesis and argumentation have been little improved by later advocates of his position: James M. Bulman, “The Identification of Darius the Mede,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 35, no. 3 (1973): 247-67; Shea, “Persian-Babylonian Setting,” 235-57; Brian E. Colless, “Cyrus the Persian as Darius the Mede in the Book of Daniel,” *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 56 (1992): 113-26; Ernest C. Lucas, *Daniel*, Apollos Old Testament Commentary, ed. David W. Baker and Gordon J. Wenham, vol. 20 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 134-37; Andrew E. Steinmann, *Daniel*, Concordia Commentary (Saint Louis: Concordia, 2008), 290-96. Note that Shea's article represented only a temporary change from his view that Darius is Gubaru.

⁵⁸ Grabbe, “Another Look,” 207.

⁵⁹ For the text and translation of the Harran Stele, see Schaudig, *Die Inschriften*, 486-99; C. J. Gadd, “The Harran Inscriptions of Nabonidus,” *Anatolian Studies* 8 (1958): 35-92. For an alternate English translation, see James B. Pritchard, ed., *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, 3rd ed. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969), 562-63. In Exemplar 1, the reference to the king of the Medes is in i 42-44. In Exemplar 2, it is in i 48-ii 3.

⁶⁰ See the appendix for a comparison chart of these sources and the dates they give.

a different man was in fact king of the Medes in 546/5, and that Cyrus was still subordinate to him.⁶¹ In other words, the Harran Stele is simply evidence that the conventional view of the conquest of Media by Cyrus is historically inaccurate—a point which Wiseman does not consider.⁶² Since, in context, Nabonidus is referring to the kings of Egypt, Media, and Arabia as the major powers who were hostile to him, one would expect a reference to the king of the Persians instead of the king of the Medes if the Persians had come to dominate the Medes several years before 546/5.

Bulman adds to Wiseman's argument by noting that Herodotus once refers to Cyrus as "king of the Medes."⁶³ Indeed, by all accounts Cyrus became king of both the Persians and the Medes at some point in his life. However, both Wiseman and Bulman have missed the point, for the book of Daniel never calls either Cyrus or Darius "king of the Medes." Instead, Daniel specifically calls Darius "the Mede," that is, a person of Median descent, and calls Cyrus "the Persian," that is, a person of Persian descent. Since a king could be of a different nationality than his subjects, potential references to Cyrus as "king of the Medes" do not prove the legitimacy of calling Cyrus "the Mede." A reference to Cyrus as "king of the Medes" before the fall of Babylon would certainly create serious problems for the identification of Darius the Mede with Cyaxares II, but the Harran Stele does not name the king of the Medes.

For a second positive argument, Wiseman points to 1 Chronicles 5:26 as an example of a verse in which a single king is called by two different names, separated by a *wāw*: "the spirit of Pul king of Assyria, even the spirit of Tilgath-pilneser king of Assyria" (אֶת־רוּחַ פּוּל מֶלֶךְ־אַשּׁוּר וְאֶת־רוּחַ תִּלְגַּת־פִּילְנֶסֶר מֶלֶךְ־אַשּׁוּר).⁶⁴ He then suggests that Daniel 6:28(E) / 6:29(MT) does the same, and translates "in the reign of Darius, even [rather than 'and'] in the reign of Cyrus the Persian" (בְּמַלְכוּת דָּרְיֹוֹשׁ וּבְמַלְכוּת כּוּרְשׁ פַּרְסִיָּא).⁶⁵ With this interpretation, the only verse in the book of Daniel that apparently makes an explicit distinction between Darius and Cyrus actually becomes a statement of their identity.

In response, it may be noted that 1 Chronicles 5:26 is not an exact parallel to Daniel 6:28(E) / 6:29(MT), since the former passage uses the same descriptive phrase, "king of Assyria," with both names. In Daniel 6:28(E) / 6:29(MT) a contrast of persons seems to be implied—Darius, who is called "the Mede" in 5:31(E) / 6:1(MT), versus Cyrus "the Persian." In

⁶¹ In line 21 of the Cyrus Cylinder, Cyrus repeatedly calls himself "king of Anshan"; see Schaudig, *Die Inschriften*, 552-53. The same title is used of Cyrus in line 1 of the second column of the Nabonidus Chronicle, though Cyrus is called "king of Parsu" in line 16; see Grayson, *Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles*, 106-7. Also significant is Daniel 11:2, הִנֵּה־עוֹד שְׁלֹשָׁה מְלָכִים עֹמְדִים לְפָנַי (behold, there will arise three more kings in Persia), which implicitly identifies Cyrus as king of Persia.

⁶² This is noted by Shea, "Persian-Babylonian Setting," 240.

⁶³ Bulman, "The Identification of Darius the Mede," 247, 259; Herodotus 1.206.

⁶⁴ On the dual name of this Assyrian king, see Gary N. Knoppers, *1 Chronicles 1-9: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, Anchor Bible, ed. William Foxwell Albright and David Noel Freedman, vol. 12 (New York: Doubleday, 2004), 391. This king's name is normally spelled "Tiglath-pileser"; the form in the text is a variant spelling.

⁶⁵ Wiseman, "Historical Problems," 12-13. It should be noted that Daniel 6:28(E) / 6:29(MT) is written in Aramaic and 1 Chronicles 5:26 is written in Hebrew, though this does not necessarily invalidate the point. See further Colless, "Cyrus the Persian," 115. Neither Wiseman nor Colless mentions Ezra 4:6-7, in which Cambyses is evidently called by two different throne names in close proximity.

addition, it is very hard to understand why Daniel would mix the nomenclature of “Cyrus (the Persian)” (Dan 1:21; 6:28[E] / 6:29[MT]; 10:1) and “Darius (the Mede)” (Dan 5:31[E] / 6:1[MT]; 6:1, 6, 9, 25, 28[E] / 6:2, 7, 10, 26, 29[MT]; 9:1; 11:1) if one and the same person was intended by them. Indeed, there is a historical reference to the first year of “Darius the Mede” (Dan 11:1) in the context of a vision that is said to have occurred in the third year of “Cyrus king of Persia” (Dan 10:1). The most straightforward explanation of the references in Daniel 10:1 and 11:1 is that Cyrus had succeeded Darius by the time of this vision—not that the writer of the book was haphazardly mixing the names and descriptions of a single person. Daniel refers once to the first year of Cyrus (Dan 1:21), so the difference cannot be explained by the hypothesis that Cyrus took a different name during his first year.

Thus, in fact, the book of Daniel presents the actions and reigns of Darius and Cyrus separately, and indicates that the reign of Cyrus followed consecutively the reign of Darius. Wherever two different names are used for a single person elsewhere in the book, the identification is made explicit (Dan 1:7; 2:26; 4:8, 19; 5:12; 10:1). Daniel 6:28(E) / 6:29(MT) does not identify Darius and Cyrus as one and the same person, but rather distinguishes between the two men and their reigns in accordance with the ordinary and expected meaning of *wāw*. The entire narrative of Daniel 6 refers to the king always as Darius and never as Cyrus; it is only when Daniel’s career in the government of Medo-Persia is summarized in Daniel 6:28(E) / 6:29(MT) that Cyrus is named as one of the two kings under whom Daniel served.

Arguments against This Identification

In addition to the problems already noted, there are three major historical difficulties with the proposal to identify Cyrus with Darius the Mede. First, Cyrus always identifies himself as Persian, rather than Median, as do other historical records from the period. Thus, when Cyrus boasts of his royal lineage in lines 20-22 of the Cyrus Cylinder, he speaks only of his Persian ancestry through his paternal lineage, and says nothing about his maternal Median ancestry.⁶⁶ The book of Daniel, as well, calls Cyrus “the Persian” (Dan 6:28[E] / 6:29 [MT]), but calls Darius “the Mede” (Dan 5:31[E] / 6:1[MT]; 11:1), a man “of the seed of the Medes” (מְדַיָּיִ Dan 9:1). In his own inscriptions, Cyrus does not call himself a Mede, nor does he even take the title “king of Media”—the reference in Herodotus notwithstanding. He was an Achaemenid, descended from an ancient line of Persian kings. Certainly Cyrus had close connections with the Medes, as Wiseman argues,⁶⁷ but this did not make him a Mede. The maternal lineage of Cyrus is known only from secondary, non-official sources. Given the biblical and extrabiblical references to Cyrus as a Persian, one would need to make a very strong case for the determination of nationality through maternal lineage before claiming that Cyrus could legitimately be called “the Mede.”⁶⁸

⁶⁶ For the text of the Cyrus Cylinder see Schaudig, *Die Inschriften*, 552-53.

⁶⁷ Wiseman, “Historical Problems,” 13-14.

⁶⁸ The opinion of this writer is that nationality was always determined through paternal lineage, and never through maternal lineage, in the patriarchal world of the ancient Near East. This is certainly always the case in the Bible. However, such a claim would face resistance in the scholarly world today due to the influence of egalitarian feminism. To attempt to prove that nationality was always determined through paternal lineage would be more

Second, the names do not match. The name “Cyrus” is not “Darius,” and there is no evidence that Cyrus was ever called “Darius.” Likewise, Darius is said to have been the son of Ahasuerus (Dan 9:1), whereas Cyrus was the son of Cambyses I. Once again, it could be posited that Cyrus could have also been called “Darius,” and that Cambyses I could have also been called “Ahasuerus,” but there is no positive evidence to support this. In fact, Strabo says that Cyrus’ original name was Agradates,⁶⁹ and no extant source preserves another throne name, either for Cyrus or for his father Cambyses.

Third, Daniel 5:31(E) / 6:1(MT) states that Darius the Mede was sixty-two when Babylon was conquered, whereas Herodotus, Xenophon, and cuneiform evidence unanimously describe Cyrus as just having reached manhood at the time when he began his conquests, ten to twenty years before the fall of Babylon.⁷⁰ Xenophon twice affirms directly that Cyaxares was older than his nephew Cyrus.⁷¹ Cyrus, then, was probably forty to forty-five years old when Babylon fell.

Against this, the famous orator Cicero (106–43 BC) cites an account by Dinon of Colophon (4th cent. BC) in which a divination is said to have portended a thirty-year reign of Cyrus and his death at the age of seventy.⁷² If Cyrus were seventy years old when he died in 530, he could have been sixty-two when Babylon fell in 539. However, the historical reliability of Dinon of Colophon is doubtful, especially since his figure for the age of Cyrus appears to contradict Herodotus, Xenophon, and the cuneiform evidence noted above. Dinon’s work is “often novel-like and sensationalist,”⁷³ and considered of little historical worth. In the context of Cicero’s citation, Cicero is not affirming that Dinon’s story is factual, but is merely citing examples of divination stories from various sources before proceeding to ridicule the entire concept of divination.

Conclusion

In conclusion, while Wiseman may have demonstrated that the identification of Darius the Mede with Cyrus the Persian is logically possible, no one has demonstrated that it is historically or exegetically probable. The greatest difficulty in seeing an identity between Darius the Mede and Cyrus the Persian is the apparent distinction made between the two in the book of Daniel itself. Further, no source outside of Daniel gives any indication that Cyrus was known as Darius the Mede. In fact, it would seem historically inaccurate for an ancient writer to call Cyrus

trouble than it is worth for the purposes of the present study, but the doubtful reader may undertake his own investigation.

⁶⁹ Strabo *The Geography of Strabo* 15.3.6. In his story of the upbringing of Cyrus, Herodotus says that Cyrus was not originally called “Cyrus,” but does not say what his original name was (Herodotus 1.113-14).

⁷⁰ Herodotus 1.123; Xenophon *Cyropaedia* 1.5.4. For the cuneiform evidence, see column i, line 27 of the Dream Text in Schaudig, *Die Inschriften*, 417.

⁷¹ Xenophon *Cyropaedia* 4.5.32; 6.1.6.

⁷² Cicero *De Divinatione* 1.23.46.

⁷³ Klaus Meister, “Dinon,” in *Brill’s New Pauly: Encyclopaedia of the Ancient World: Antiquity*, ed. Hubert Cancik, Helmuth Schneider, and Christine F. Salazar, vol. 4 (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 421. Dinon’s work is an adaptation of the *Persika* of Ctesias, which will be analyzed in chapter 4.

“the Mede,” rather than “the Persian.” This view also discounts the possibility that Xenophon’s presentation of Cyaxares II as the last Median king could be historically accurate. Proponents tend to make their case solely from Herodotus and sources which are in general agreement with him, without even considering that this entire version of the Cyrus story may be historically inaccurate. From a historical and exegetical perspective, the identification of Darius the Mede with Cyrus the Persian simply cannot be sustained. There are serious incongruities between what is known about Cyrus from extrabiblical sources and the data concerning Darius the Mede in the book of Daniel, including their respective names, ancestries, and ages. There are also serious exegetical difficulties in attempting to argue that the book of Daniel does not distinguish Cyrus from Darius as two distinct individuals.

Other Proposals

Two other proposed identifications of Darius the Mede were noted in chapter 1, namely, the proposals to identify him with Cambyses II and with Astyages. These identifications have no outstanding recent proponents, though each was advocated by one major writer in the 1920s. These two views are considered in turn below.

Cambyses II

The major advocate of the first view was the Anglican clergyman Charles Boutflower (ca. 1847–1936), who published a significant treatise defending and elucidating the book of Daniel in 1923, when he was already in his mid-seventies.⁷⁴ Boutflower’s proposal identified Darius the Mede with Cambyses II, Cyrus’ son and successor, based on inscriptional evidence that Cambyses acted as coregent with his father during the first full year after Cyrus had conquered Babylon.⁷⁵ Since Cambyses was given the title of “king,” he could potentially fill the role of the “King Darius” who received the Neo-Babylonian kingdom. This view still recognizes Cyrus as king of the Medo-Persian Empire, in accordance with Herodotus and supporting cuneiform texts, while drawing support from cuneiform texts for the coregency of Cambyses.

A significant problem for this view is that all of the extant sources present Cambyses as a Persian, not as a Mede, and his father as “Cyrus,” not as “Ahasuerus.” If Cambyses is

⁷⁴ Charles Boutflower, *In and around the Book of Daniel* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1923; repr., Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1977), 142-55.

⁷⁵ For an analysis of the large number of relevant texts, see Jerome Peat, “Cyrus ‘King of Lands,’ Cambyses ‘King of Babylon’: The Disputed Co-regency,” *Journal of Cuneiform Studies* 41, no. 2 (1989): 199-216. Several writers note that they have no explanation as to why the coregency of Cambyses disappears after the first year of Cyrus. Apparently no one has considered that these references may be to Cyrus’ *father*, who was also called Cambyses. According to Xenophon, Cambyses the father of Cyrus was still alive after the fall of Babylon (Xenophon *Cyropaedia* 8.5.22-27). If these texts are referring to Cambyses I, it would of course undermine the proposal to identify Darius the Mede with Cambyses II, though it would open the door for a new proposal to identify Darius the Mede with Cambyses I.

consistently referred to as the son of Cyrus the Persian, it is hard to see how he could be the man identified in Daniel 9:1 as “Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of the seed of the Medes.”⁷⁶

It is even more significant that, while Cambyses is always called “Cambyses” in extant extrabiblical sources, Ezra 4:6-7 shows that he took the throne name(s) Ahasuerus and/or Artaxerxes (probably both, though some suggest that one of these was the throne name of Bardiya). On this basis alone, it may be stated definitively that Cambyses was not called “Darius.”

A problem this view shares with the identification of Darius with Gubaru is that Cambyses could not have issued the decrees of either Daniel 6:7-9(E) / 6:8-10(MT) or Daniel 6:25-27(E) / 6:26-28(MT) while his father was king. A problem it shares with the identification of Darius with Cyrus is that the reign of Darius the Mede is always presented in the book of Daniel as preceding that of Cyrus, not as running concurrently with Cyrus and then successively.

There is one more historical problem with this view, which is Cambyses’ age. As has already been noted, most of the sources present Cyrus as middle aged when Babylon fell, and no source presents him as older than in his early sixties. Thus, his son Cambyses would have to be much younger than sixty-two years old when Babylon fell, against Daniel 5:31(E) / 6:1(MT). Boutflower hypothesizes textual corruption, but without any manuscript evidence to support his hypothesis.⁷⁷

In conclusion, too many known facts would have to be altered, and too many unknown facts assumed, in order to identify Darius the Mede with Cambyses II.

Astyages

A second minor proposal seeks to identify Darius the Mede with the Median king Astyages. This view was most recently defended by Bernard Alfrink in 1928, while he was still a doctoral student.⁷⁸ Alfrink served as a cardinal in the Roman Catholic church from 1955 to 1987, among many other notable achievements in both the church and academia. This proposal, as noted in chapter 1, was not original to Alfrink, but has been advocated intermittently by commentators on Daniel since at least the early church. If one accepts Herodotus’ claim that

⁷⁶ Cambyses was an adult at the time when Babylon fell, and therefore his mother was not the daughter of Cyaxares II, whom Xenophon says was given in marriage to Cyrus after the fall of Babylon (Xenophon *Cyropaedia* 8.5.18-19). Herodotus specifically states that the mother of Cambyses was a Persian from the Achaemenid line (Herodotus 3.2). Boutflower, however, relies on Ctesias’ claim that Cambyses’ mother was Amytis, the daughter of the Median king Astyages (Boutflower, *In and around the Book of Daniel*, 152-53; Felix Jacoby, *Geschichte von Staedten und Voelkern (Horoographie und Ethnographie): Autoren ueber einzelne Laender: Aegypten-Geten Nr. 608a-708*, vol. 3C.1 of *Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker* [Leiden: Brill, 1958], 455.5-12 [688 F9.1-2]; 460.9 [688 F13.11]). Even if Ctesias happened to be correct (unlikely, since Herodotus and Xenophon say that Astyages was the maternal grandfather of Cyrus), the proponent of this view would still have to make an argument that Cambyses’ nationality was counted by his maternal, rather than paternal, lineage.

⁷⁷ Boutflower, *In and around the Book of Daniel*, 156-59. Boutflower suggests that דָּרִיּוֹס was written in proto-Masoretic manuscripts with numerals as כב . He suggests further that ב is a misreading for a carelessly written כ , so that the original number was כ" (12)—in spite of the fact that this number is not written with numerals in any extant manuscript. Even so, Cambyses appears to have been older than twelve when Babylon fell.

⁷⁸ Bernard Alfrink, “Darius Medus,” *Biblica* 9 (1928): 316-40.

Astyages was the last Median king and that he had no son,⁷⁹ then it is natural to attempt to identify Daniel's Darius the Mede with Astyages.

Although Herodotus clearly affirms that Astyages was deposed by Cyrus, a door is opened for speculation concerning a later career for Astyages when Herodotus states that Cyrus did not kill him, but allowed him to live in his own house (the Median palace?) until he died.⁸⁰ Ctesias goes even further, stating that Cyrus honored Astyages as his own father, married his daughter Amytis, and made him ruler of the province of Bactria.⁸¹ A hypothesis can then be formed that when the young Cambyses was made coregent with Cyrus, the aged Astyages was made his protector or advisor, so as to instruct him in the manner of the kingship. Astyages was the grandfather (according to Herodotus and Xenophon) of Cyrus and an experienced ruler, and therefore would be the natural choice for such a responsibility. Astyages' father, Cyaxares (I), has a name which is similar in sound to Xerxes, who is called "Ahasuerus" (אַחַשְׁוֵרֶשׁ) in the Bible, while Astyages may have been given the throne name "Darius" when he assumed his new function as guardian of Cambyses. If this scenario is correct, then Daniel's Darius the Mede would be a genuine Median sovereign of royal lineage, who exercised kingly authority in behalf of the young crown prince Cambyses.

This view obviously contradicts the history of Xenophon, who not only recognizes the presence of a Median successor to Astyages, but also states that Astyages died before Cyrus began his campaigns of conquest.⁸² It otherwise rests almost completely on speculations that are unsupported by positive evidence. Herodotus and the cuneiform inscriptions give no indication that Astyages was reinstated to the kingship after Cyrus (allegedly) deposed him and subjugated the Medes. By all accounts, Astyages lost the throne at least eleven years before the fall of Babylon, and one would expect some mention of his resurgence in one of the sources if indeed he were given the title and role of "King Darius" at a later time. However, if Astyages fought a war with Cyrus in order to prevent him from gaining power, it is unbelievable that Cyrus would make him king of his own empire at a later time.

Further evidence against the hypotheses made by this view comes from the book of Daniel, which states that Darius the Mede was sixty-two years old when Babylon fell (Dan 5:31[E] / 6:1[MT]). If Astyages were sixty-two years old in 539 BC, this would imply that he was a mere boy of seven years when he became king in 594—assuming that the figures given by Herodotus are to be believed.⁸³

⁷⁹ Herodotus 1.109, 130.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 1.130.

⁸¹ Jacoby, *Aegypten–Geten: Nr. 608a–708*, 455.2-5 (688 F9a).

⁸² Xenophon *Cyropaedia* 1.5.2.

⁸³ The date of 594 for the accession of Astyages is based on the figures given in Herodotus for a thirty-five year reign of Astyages, followed by a thirty year reign of Cyrus (Herodotus 1.130, 214).

Daniel and the Medes

An aspect of Daniel's account that both supports Xenophon's history and contradicts Herodotus' is Daniel's representation of the Medes and Persians as partners in a united Medo-Persian Empire, with the Medes ascendant over the Persians at the beginning of the empire.

The Bible clearly affirms the primacy of the Medes at the time of Babylon's fall. Daniel refers four times in Daniel 5–6 to “the Medes and the Persians” (Dan 5:28; 6:8, 12, 15[E] / 5:28; 6:9, 13, 16[MT]; cf. 8:20), because a Median king was reigning over the empire at the time of the events in these chapters. However, the book of Esther reverses this order to “the Persians and the Medes,” because Persian kings were reigning at the time of that book's history (Esth 1:3, 14, 18-19).⁸⁴ This fits well with the vision of the ram in Daniel 8:3 (cf. 8:20), which indicates that the Medes were initially dominant when the Medo-Persian Empire began, but that the Persians subsequently became dominant. This is further corroborated by Isaiah 13:17 and Jeremiah 51:11, 28, in which God says He will bring the *Medes* against Babylon.⁸⁵ If Cyrus had conquered the Medes, so that the Persians were ruling over them, these prophecies should have represented the Persians as the primary nation that comes against Babylon. Instead, the Bible presents the Medes as the leading nation which overthrew Babylon.⁸⁶ Thus, this biblical evidence indicates that Cyrus the Persian did not in fact become the highest regent in the Medo-Persian Empire until after the fall of Babylon.

Both biblical and many extrabiblical sources present the Medes and the Persians as confederated, rather than one people being a vassal in the other's empire. If Persia conquered Media, as Herodotus says, the Medes would be servants to the Persians—no different from the Lydians, the Babylonians, and other conquered peoples in their empire. However, the biblical references noted in the previous paragraph represent the Medes and the Persians as being confederated. Further, there is abundant archeological evidence, such as from the stairway reliefs at Persepolis,⁸⁷ to demonstrate that the Medes were senior partners and equals with the Persians, rather than their vassals. One even finds an occasional reference to “Persians and Medes” in Greek writers such as Xenophon and Thucydides, instead of the usual “Persians.”⁸⁸ Olmstead, who believes that Cyrus subjugated the Medes, nevertheless admits that, subsequently, “Medes

⁸⁴ Esther 10:2 retains the order “Media and Persia” when referring to the historical succession of kings in the empire.

⁸⁵ Although there is no mention of the Persians in these key prophecies, the role of the Medes and Persians (= Elam; cf. Dan 8:2) together in conquering Babylon is acknowledged in Isaiah 21:2. The role of other nations conquered by Cyrus in the fight against Babylon is acknowledged in Jeremiah 51:27.

⁸⁶ One may also note the reference in Esther 10:2 to “the book of the chronicles of the kings of Media and Persia,” implying at least one Median king in the dynasty, without a hostile conquest of Media by Persia.

⁸⁷ “The northern part of the eastern staircase depicts alternating Persian and Median nobles conversing with each other” (Edwin M. Yamauchi, *Persia and the Bible* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1990], 347, 351 [illustration]). These reliefs make no distinction in official rank or status between the Persian and Median nobility. For photos, see Arthur Upham Pope and Phyllis Ackerman, eds., *Pre-Achaemenid, Achaemenid, Parthian and Sāsānian Periods*, vol. 4 of *A Survey of Persian Art from Prehistoric Times to the Present* (London: Oxford University Press, 1938), 90, 92.

⁸⁸ Thucydides *History of the Peloponnesian War* 1.104.2; Xenophon *Anabasis* 3.2.25. See further Christopher Tuplin, “The Persian Empire,” in *The Long March: Xenophon and the Ten Thousand*, ed. Robin Lane Fox (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004), 156.

were honored equally with Persians; they were employed in high office and were chosen to lead Persian armies.”⁸⁹ Thus, the extrabiblical evidence agrees with the biblical evidence in suggesting that Cyrus did *not* violently subjugate the Medes.

Together, the biblical and extrabiblical evidence concerning the Medes points to the authenticity of Xenophon’s account of the rise of Cyrus, and to the inauthenticity of Herodotus’ account.

The Seventy Years

The biblical description of Judah’s exile as a seventy-year period (see the following references) creates a problem for all attempts to reconcile the Bible with Herodotus. If Herodotus’ version of the Cyrus story is correct, then the return from exile occurred in 539/8 BC, which was the first year of the reign of Cyrus over the former Babylonian Empire. This does not quite allow for seventy years from the first deportation to Babylon in 605 until the return from exile. Although it could be suggested (problematically) that Jeremiah 25:11-12 and 29:10 refer to the period from 609 to 539, both Daniel 9:2 and 2 Chronicles 36:20-21 can only refer to the period from the first deportation until the return under Sheshbazzar.⁹⁰ Others may wish to argue that the figure of seventy years is merely a round number, although a *shorter* number of years does not seem possible in 2 Chronicles 36:20-21, and Daniel based his prayer for the restoration of his people on a literal interpretation of the seventy years (Dan 9:1-3). In any case, an exile of exactly seventy years solves all of the exegetical and theological problems. A return in 536, which results in an exile of exactly seventy years, is possible only if a brief reign of Darius the Mede is recognized following the Medo-Persian conquest of Babylon. It can hardly be a coincidence that Xenophon gives a seven-year reign for Cyrus, which, counting backward from the death of Cyrus in 530, would place at least part of the year 536 within the first year of Cyrus’ reign.

Summary

The analysis in this chapter found that Daniel’s account of Darius the Mede corresponds very closely to Xenophon’s description of Cyaxares II and the accession of Cyrus. There are only two notable differences—the names used, and the manner in which Cyrus received the kingship from Cyaxares. The use of throne names, for which there is ample evidence, can explain the difference between the names used in the two accounts, while Xenophon’s description of the accession of Cyrus was found to be only slightly different from Daniel’s.

⁸⁹ A. T. Olmstead, *History of the Persian Empire* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948), 37.

⁹⁰ Winkle attempts to argue for the period from 609 to 539 in all the passages; see Ross E. Winkle, “Jeremiah’s Seventy Years for Babylon: A Re-Assessment. Part I: The Scriptural Data,” *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 25, no. 2 (1987): 201-14; Ross E. Winkle, “Jeremiah’s Seventy Years for Babylon: A Re-Assessment. Part II: The Historical Data,” *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 25, no. 3 (1987): 289-99. Problems include the fact that Jeremiah 25:11-12 is stated as a prophecy, though it was given in 605, and the specific references to the seventy years as a period of the desolation of the land/Jerusalem in Daniel 9:2 and 2 Chronicles 36:20-21.

On the other hand, an analysis of the four major attempts to reconcile the book of Daniel with Herodotus found fatal flaws in each. There is no room in Herodotus' account for Daniel's Darius the Mede; the two accounts are irreconcilable.

An analysis of another historical claim made by Daniel, the confederation of the Medes with the Persians in their empire, found that this claim is amply supported by both biblical and extrabiblical evidence. Since Xenophon presents the Medes and Persians as a united confederacy, while Herodotus presents one nation ruling the other, this is further reason to prefer Xenophon's account of the rise of Cyrus over Herodotus'.

Finally, it was found that the biblical prophecy of a seventy-year exile can only be understood in a literal manner (i.e., as exactly seventy years), if a two-year reign of Darius the Mede following the fall of Babylon is recognized prior to the accession of Cyrus as emperor. This is yet another strong indication that Xenophon's account of Cyrus is the historically accurate one.

In conclusion, the only viable interpretation of Daniel's account is that there was a king of Media who reigned over the Medo-Persian Empire both before and after the fall of Babylon, and before Cyrus became the king of highest rank in the empire. Attempts to reconcile the book of Daniel with Herodotus are far more problematic historically and exegetically than following Xenophon's history of the rise of Cyrus instead.

CHAPTER 4

Analysis of Other Ancient Sources on Darius the Mede

The focus of chapter 2 was on the two major Greek historians who give competing narrative accounts of the accession of Cyrus, namely, Herodotus and Xenophon. The focus of chapter 3 was on the book of Daniel. The present chapter will examine other ancient sources which supply information of significance regarding Darius the Mede and the accession of Cyrus. These sources fall into two distinct categories: Akkadian inscriptions and classical writers.

There are four significant Akkadian texts which describe or allude to the accession of Cyrus: the Cyrus Cylinder, the Verse Account of Nabonidus, the Nabonidus Chronicle, and the Dream Text (Sippar Cylinder) of Nabonidus.¹ It will be found that each of these inscriptions supports Herodotus' claim that Cyrus conquered the Medes and became sole king of the Medo-Persian realm before his conquest of Babylon, and yet each is problematic in certain ways. Contract texts from Mesopotamia, though not directly about historical matters, are also relevant to the issue. They also support Herodotus, though they do not directly contradict Xenophon. A late cuneiform text called the Dynastic Prophecy is also relevant, as is a stele erected by Nabonidus at Harran. The Dynastic Prophecy offers some support to Herodotus, while the Harran Stele lends support to Xenophon.

¹ An additional literary text which provides information concerning the reign of Nabonidus, the so-called Royal Chronicle, is fragmentary, and the extant portion deals only with events in the early part of Nabonidus' reign, thus giving no information concerning Cyrus or the Medes. For the text of the Royal Chronicle, see W. G. Lambert, "A New Source for the Reign of Nabonidus," *Archiv für Orientforschung* 22 (1968–69): 1-8; Hanspeter Schaudig, *Die Inschriften Nabonids von Babylon und Kyros' des Großen samt den in ihrem Umfeld entstandenen Tendenzschriften: Textausgabe und Grammatik*, Alter Orient und Altes Testament, ed. Manfred Dietrich and Oswald Loretz, vol. 256 (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2001), 590-95; Jean-Jacques Glassner, *Mesopotamian Chronicles*, ed. Benjamin R. Foster, Writings from the Ancient World, no. 19 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2004), 312-17. See also Paul-Alain Beaulieu, *The Reign of Nabonidus, King of Babylon 556–539 B.C.*, Yale Near Eastern Researches, ed. William W. Hallo, Marvin H. Pope, and William K. Simpson, vol. 10 (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989), 4-6, 166-69.

Another potential literary source for the reign of Nabonidus is the text titled by Lambert as "Nebuchadnezzar King of Justice" (W. G. Lambert, "Nebuchadnezzar King of Justice," *Iraq* 27, no. 1 [1965]: 1-11). This text is regarded by Lambert and Beaulieu as an inscription of Nebuchadnezzar II, while Berger, von Soden, and Schaudig regard it as a propaganda text of Nabonidus (Beaulieu, *Reign of Nabonidus*, 4-5; P.- R. Berger, "Der Kyros-Zylinder mit dem Zusatzfragment BIN II Nr. 32 und die akkadischen Personennamen im Danielbuch," *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie und vorderasiatische Archäologie* 64, no. 2 [1975]: 222; Wolfram von Soden, "Kyros und Nabonid: Propaganda und Gegenpropaganda," in *Aus Sprache, Geschichte und Religion Babyloniens*, ed. Luigi Cagni and Hans-Peter Müller [Naples: Istituto Universitario Orientale, 1989], 287-89; Schaudig, *Die Inschriften*, 580). According to Lambert's interpretation, the unnamed king boasts of his conquest of Egypt, which identifies him as Nebuchadnezzar; Schaudig argues from a proposed restoration of the word *Eḫullḫul* in column v and the references to carrying out reforms in the land that the text was produced by Nabonidus after his return from Arabia. In any case, the text contains no references to Cyrus, the Medes, or the Persians.

Classical writers who offer significant primary (though not necessarily firsthand) information on the accession of Cyrus may be divided into two categories: those who, like Herodotus, claim that Cyrus overthrew the last Median king; and those who corroborate Xenophon's claim that Cyrus was the natural successor of the last Median king. The most significant writer on the side of Herodotus, but with many discrepancies, is Ctesias. Statements made by Thucydides and Aristotle are also noted because of the fame of these two authors, but they only offer limited support to Herodotus.² On the side of Xenophon and Daniel are three significant witnesses: Berossus, Harpocration, and Aeschylus. Berossus and Harpocration are particularly significant for their apparent use of the name "Darius" for the last Median king.

Cyrus Cylinder

The analysis of Akkadian texts will begin with the so-called Cyrus Cylinder, since the question of bias is not so disputed in this text as in some others: the Cyrus Cylinder is universally recognized as a classic propaganda text produced by Cyrus or his officials, which contains the basic propaganda claims made by Cyrus.³

Introduction

The Cyrus Cylinder is a small clay barrel with a cuneiform text that was discovered at Babylon in 1879, and was subsequently deposited in the British Museum—though another fragment of the same cylinder which had passed through the antiquities market into the Yale Babylonian Collection was identified nearly a hundred years later by P.-R. Berger.⁴ Although

² Later classical historians will not be noted, since they are secondary, and do nothing more than repeat what the earlier extant sources say.

³ Yamauchi describes the Cyrus Cylinder as "a propagandistic effort to manipulate public opinion and to legitimate Cyrus's authority over Babylon" (Edwin M. Yamauchi, *Persia and the Bible* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1990], 88). (Note: Yamauchi is citing another scholar's study, but he seems to agree with it.) See also Beaulieu, *Reign of Nabonidus*, 143; Pierre Briant, *From Cyrus to Alexander: A History of the Persian Empire*, trans. Peter T. Daniels (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2002), 41-43. I have not read an author who argues that the Cyrus Cylinder is not a propaganda text.

⁴ Of the various published editions of the Cyrus Cylinder, the most up to date is Finkel's, which incorporates fragments discovered in 2010. See Irving Finkel, "Transliteration of the Cyrus Cylinder Text," in *The Cyrus Cylinder: The King of Persia's Proclamation from Ancient Babylon*, ed. Irving Finkel (London: I. B. Tauris, 2013), 129-35. For an updated translation incorporating the newest fragments, see Irving Finkel, "The Cyrus Cylinder: The Babylonian Perspective," in *The Cyrus Cylinder: The King of Persia's Proclamation from Ancient Babylon*, ed. Irving Finkel (London: I. B. Tauris, 2013), 4-7. For photographs, one could consult the British Museum's website (www.britishmuseum.org), or *ibid.*, 8, 14, 16-17, 19. For earlier editions with a bibliography and German translation, see Schaudig, *Die Inschriften*, 550-56; Berger, "Der Kyros-Zylinder," 192-234. Schaudig's edition gives the most complete technical details of the text, and is cited when line numbers are referenced in this study. For more English translations, see William W. Hallo and K. Lawson Younger Jr., eds., *Monumental Inscriptions from the Biblical World*, vol. 2 of *The Context of Scripture* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 314-16; James B. Pritchard, ed., *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, 3rd ed. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969), 315-16; Bill T. Arnold and Piotr Michalowski, "Achaemenid Period Historical Texts

scholars debate the exact find spot of the Cyrus Cylinder,⁵ its barrel shape is typical of dedicatory inscriptions that were placed in the foundation deposit of a construction project, and the text indicates that it was composed on the occasion of the rebuilding of the inner wall of Babylon (lines 38-45).⁶ However, the discovery in 2010 of two fragments of a tablet excavated in or near Babylon with the same text⁷ shows that the Cyrus Cylinder was more than just a building inscription—it was an imperial decree, meant to be displayed and disseminated for propaganda purposes. More than half of the text is narrated in the first person by Cyrus, which leaves no question as to its source and viewpoint. There is no date on the extant copies of the Cylinder; its propaganda function points to a date of composition early in the reign of Cyrus, while its description of the administration of Babylonian affairs by Cyrus and the return of displaced peoples to their original homelands necessitates a gap of a few years between the fall of Babylon and the publication of the text.

Contents

An analysis of the contents of the Cylinder shows that it can be interpreted as agreeing with Herodotus in its account of the rise of Cyrus to power, though it is lacking in details. The key point of agreement is in the Cylinder's claim that the Medes submitted to the lordship of Cyrus before the fall of Babylon, though it does not say how this occurred, or whether Cyrus actually dethroned the last Median king. At the same time, the Cylinder betrays a clear bias, and many of its historical claims seem exaggerated or simply wrong.

Argument

The Cyrus Cylinder gives Cyrus' official justification for his conquest of Babylon and his acquisition of an empire. According to the Cylinder, Marduk appointed Cyrus to conquer Babylon in order to protect his (Marduk's) position and that of other gods in the face of a campaign against them by Nabonidus, as well as to free the Babylonian people from the suffering they endured under the reign of the unjust king Nabonidus. That this is the true interpretation of events is proved by the fact that Marduk brought Cyrus into his city—Babylon—peacefully, without a battle, and that he was greeted with joy by the Babylonians. After this theological-historical explanation, Cyrus begins a first person narrative; he spends the

concerning Mesopotamia,” in *The Ancient Near East: Historical Sources in Translation*, ed. Mark W. Chavalas, Blackwell Sourcebooks in Ancient History (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2006), 426-30.

⁵ See John Curtis, *The Cyrus Cylinder and Ancient Persia: A New Beginning for the Middle East* (London: British Museum, 2013), 33-35; Jonathan Taylor, “The Cyrus Cylinder: Discovery,” in *The Cyrus Cylinder: The King of Persia's Proclamation from Ancient Babylon*, ed. Irving Finkel (London: I. B. Tauris, 2013), 56-59.

⁶ Beaulieu notes that Nabonidus had undertaken restoration work on exactly the same wall, yet the Cyrus Cylinder and the Verse Account seek to leave the impression that the fortifications of Babylon were neglected by Nabonidus—“evidence that these two compositions were chiefly intended as propaganda” (Beaulieu, *Reign of Nabonidus*, 38-39).

⁷ For the story of the discovery of these fragments, see Finkel, “The Babylonian Perspective,” 15-23.

remainder of the inscription proclaiming his own greatness, and his wise and beneficent dealings as king.

Summary

The text opens with an invocation to Marduk (lines 1-2). It immediately turns to a series of vicious accusations against Nabonidus (lines 3-8). Nabonidus is accused of all sorts of evils, including incompetent governance, establishing improper rites for the gods, ending proper rites for the gods, plotting to depose Marduk, and imposing heavy burdens on the people of Babylon.

The next paragraph (lines 9-11a) describes Marduk's fury at Nabonidus for his impious and wicked acts, which now also included the removal of the gods from their proper shrines throughout Mesopotamia to bring them to Babylon. Marduk resolved to act against this religious maverick.

Lines 11b-19 describe Marduk's exaltation of Cyrus as the king to liberate Babylon. As Marduk searched for a king to replace Nabonidus, he raised up Cyrus, the king of Anshan,⁸ and gave him lordship over the Gutians and the Medes. Marduk was so pleased by the manner in which Cyrus exercised power that he ordered him to march to Babylon. Marduk marched alongside Cyrus and delivered both Babylon and Nabonidus into his hands without a battle. All the people of Babylon were overjoyed to have Cyrus as their new ruler, and were relieved to be saved from the hardships imposed by Nabonidus.

In lines 20-22a, Cyrus begins his first person narrative by proclaiming the royal titles and rights which he claimed for himself. The next paragraph emphasizes the peacefulness of the Persian conquest, which occurred without looting, without damage to cult places, and with restoration of religious and social order in Babylon (lines 22b-28a). In lines 28b-37, Cyrus describes how he was beneficent in the way he ruled his newly conquered empire. Kings gladly brought him tribute; Cyrus returned the displaced gods to their original shrines and rebuilt them, he returned peoples who had been displaced by the Babylonians to their original homelands, and he increased the daily offerings to the gods. Lines 38-45 describe the building project for which the Cylinder was the foundation deposit, with the final two lines formally dedicating this work to Marduk.

Historicity

Despite the universal recognition of the Cyrus Cylinder as a heavily slanted propaganda text, an older generation of scholarship accepted virtually all of the Cylinder's historical claims at face value, with the exception of the claimed actions of Marduk.⁹ Perhaps this is because the Cylinder was found early on in the history of archeology, when cuneiform inscriptions were first beginning to be discovered and deciphered. In the enthusiasm of the day, cuneiform texts were all too often regarded as giving the definitive record of events, especially if produced by an official source—though subsequent study has shown that they have all the same problems as

⁸ Anshan was the ancient capital of Persia.

⁹ See, e.g., A. T. Olmstead, *History of the Persian Empire* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948), 49-51; Yamauchi, *Persia and the Bible*, 85-87.

other historical documents. While newer scholarship is reading the Cylinder with a more skeptical eye,¹⁰ the acceptance of the Herodotean version of the rise of Cyrus still necessitates a general acceptance of the historical claims which Cyrus makes for himself.

A Bloodless Conquest?

One historical claim made in the Cylinder which newer scholarship has begun seriously to doubt is the assertion that the Medo-Persian army entered Babylon “without battle or combat” (*balu qabli u tāḥāzi*, line 17). Briant writes, “It appears *prima facie* unlikely that Babylon could have fallen without resistance.”¹¹ Michalowski concurs: “there is no contemporary evidence to support this suspicious claim.”¹²

What the Cylinder appears to do at this point is to exaggerate what actually happened for propaganda purposes. According to both Herodotus and Xenophon, Babylon was taken by a sort of ruse or sneak attack: after defeating the Babylonian army in the field and forcing the Babylonians to take refuge behind the walls of their great city, Cyrus partially diverted the main flow of the Euphrates River, and sent his army into the city via the riverbed on the night of a great feast.¹³ According to Xenophon, the Medo-Persian army killed the Babylonian soldiers they encountered, including any whom they found in the streets and defending the palace, and finally the (unnamed) king himself.¹⁴ When morning broke the next day, and the soldiers on the walls and in the citadels saw that their city was taken and their king slain, they surrendered.¹⁵ Xenophon’s account of the fall of Babylon is entirely believable, and it is confirmed by Scripture. There are verses which indicate that Cyrus captured Babylon suddenly, without a pitched battle or prolonged fighting (Isa 47:9; Jer 51:8, 30-32; Dan 5:30), though there are also verses which indicate that limited fighting and carnage did in fact occur (cf. Jer 50:30, 35-37; Dan 5:30). It is easy to see, however, how the true facts of a sneak attack and a sudden collapse could be called a non-violent conquest in a propaganda piece, since the fighting was so brief and limited. The claim of a non-violent conquest was a lie, but it was a boast that Cyrus felt he could get away with, since it was close to what actually happened.

¹⁰ See, e.g., Briant, *Cyrus to Alexander*, 41-44; Arnold and Michalowski, “Historical Texts,” 426-27. Vanderhooft says, “In the aggregate, the Greek and Biblical traditions caution the historian that cuneiform sources can be flawed sources for historical reconstruction notwithstanding their proximity or formulation in Akkadian” (David Vanderhooft, “Cyrus II, Liberator or Conqueror? Ancient Historiography concerning Cyrus in Babylon,” in *Judah and the Judeans in the Persian Period*, ed. Oded Lipschits and Manfred Oeming [Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2006], 368).

¹¹ Briant, *Cyrus to Alexander*, 41.

¹² Arnold and Michalowski, “Historical Texts,” 426.

¹³ Xenophon *Cyropaedia* 7.5.15-16; Herodotus 1.191.

¹⁴ Xenophon *Cyropaedia* 7.5.26-31.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 7.5.33.

Belshazzar or Nabonidus?

It is known from the book of Daniel (Dan 5) that Belshazzar was reigning in Babylon when Cyrus captured it, with Nabonidus absent for unstated reasons, whereas the Cyrus Cylinder makes it sound as if Nabonidus was in Babylon when Cyrus took the city (line 17). The Cylinder claims that Marduk handed Nabonidus over to Cyrus, but says nothing about the execution of Belshazzar by the Medo-Persian army on the night of Babylon's fall. Nor is it Daniel alone who is contradicted: Xenophon also records the execution of the king (unnamed but contextually Belshazzar) by the Medo-Persian soldiers,¹⁶ and Berossus claims that Nabonidus had fled to Borsippa before Cyrus took Babylon, and that he surrendered in Borsippa after the fall of Babylon.¹⁷

The Cylinder's portrayal of the Medo-Persian conquest of Babylon as a struggle between Cyrus (with Marduk) and Nabonidus (against Marduk) was deemed necessary for propaganda purposes, but it is deceptive and misleading. Since Nabonidus had shut himself out of Babylon ahead of the advance of the Persian army, it was Belshazzar who was the true powerbroker in the city. The battle was between Belshazzar and Cyrus (with his field commander Gubaru), while Nabonidus was not even in the immediate vicinity. Cyrus implicitly recognized Belshazzar as the more threatening of the two regents by executing him but leaving his father alive. However, it was necessary for propaganda purposes to portray the battle as a contest solely between Cyrus and Nabonidus, since Belshazzar was religiously orthodox and opposed his father's attempt to make Sîn the head of the Babylonian pantheon.¹⁸ Thus, the propaganda texts are all directed against Nabonidus, with Belshazzar mentioned only in passing and never by name. Cyrus' propaganda campaign was so successful that the existence of Belshazzar is not acknowledged by Herodotus, and the name of Belshazzar was not known from extrabiblical historical texts before modern times.

Impiety of Nabonidus?

Although other evidence does point to an attempt by Nabonidus to elevate Sîn to the head of the Babylonian pantheon in the later years of his reign, resulting in the demotion of Marduk,¹⁹ some of the Cylinder's accusations against Nabonidus appear rather unfair. For example, the removal of the gods from their shrines in other cities to Babylon, which the Cylinder presents as an impious act, was really done to prevent their capture by Cyrus and in the hope that they would defend the city of Babylon against foreign invaders. Nabonidus, for his part, certainly would have protested his own piety as a worshipper, including as a worshipper of Marduk. In fact, Nabonidus appears to have been a much more fervent idolater than previous kings of Babylon, and thus more "pious" in the Babylonian view of the term; he did not actually seek to do away with Marduk, though he did seek to elevate Sîn above Marduk. Cyrus the Persian, on the other

¹⁶ Ibid., 7.5.29-30; cf. 4.6.3.

¹⁷ Jacoby, *Aegypten-Geten: Nr. 608a-708*, 393.17-394.11 (680 F9.151-153).

¹⁸ See Beaulieu, *Reign of Nabonidus*, 65.

¹⁹ See the analysis in *ibid.*, 43-65.

hand, was most likely a worshipper of Iranian deities who merely paid lip service to the gods of other nations in accord with a polytheistic worldview.²⁰ Cyrus, together with Darius the Mede, did not invade Babylonia out of religious feeling toward Marduk, but probably with the typical motivations of conquerors—an insatiable lust for wealth, fame, and power, coupled with the need to remove threatening enemies. Nabonidus in fact showed the sincerity of his (misguided) religious devotion by initiating religious reforms that were politically disadvantageous, whereas Cyrus appears to have treated religion insincerely, as a tool for political advantage.

While historians might debate the Cylinder's subjective portrayal of the religious attitudes of Nabonidus and Cyrus, the objective religious claims made in the Cylinder are patently false. The prophecies of Isaiah make plain that Cyrus was actually called and raised up by Yahweh to conquer kingdoms long before any supposed incitement of Marduk by Nabonidus (Isa 44:28–45:7). The Bible presents the fall of Babylon as a judgment on the Marduk cult, rather than a vindication of it (Isa 46:1; Jer 50:2; 51:17-18, 44, 47, 52; Dan 5:22-31). The idea that Marduk—a lifeless figment of the Babylonian imagination—raised up Cyrus and led him to Babylon was a bald lie invented by Cyrus or his officials for political gain. It was Yahweh, the God of Israel, who raised up Cyrus and led him to Babylon, not Marduk.

Unpopularity of Nabonidus?

It does not seem either that Nabonidus was as unpopular as the Cyrus Cylinder suggests, or that Cyrus was accepted by the Babylonian populace as readily as the Cylinder suggests. With regard to the claim that Nabonidus was unpopular in Babylon, it is significant that about eight years after the death of Cyrus, and seventeen years after the fall of Babylon, two different men launched anti-Persian revolts in Babylon on two separate occasions on the basis of (allegedly) false claims to be descendants of Nabonidus. The fact that their rebellions were briefly successful shows that Nabonidus appears to have retained significant stature among the Babylonian people even after the propaganda campaign and after his death. With regard to the speculation by some scholars that the elite priests of Marduk opposed Nabonidus, Weisberg replies: “the mere fact that Nabonidus survived the ten years of his absence from the capital city, with his son in charge at home, is clear evidence that he was well-accepted by the people whose opinions really mattered in the power-politics of his day.”²¹ Conversely, while Cyrus always portrayed himself as a popular and magnanimous ruler, the Dynastic Prophecy, which was composed long after the dynasty of Cyrus had come to an end, portrays his reign as oppressive to the people of Akkad.²² The strident tone of Cyrus' propaganda, and the sheer volume of the propaganda texts, is indicative of a need to reshape public opinion, which evidently was not as decisively on Cyrus' side as he claimed.

²⁰ For a discussion of Cyrus' religious beliefs, see Curtis, *Cyrus Cylinder and Ancient Persia*, 51-52; Yamauchi, *Persia and the Bible*, 422-24.

²¹ David B. Weisberg, “Polytheism and Politics: Some Comments on Nabonidus' Foreign Policy,” in *Crossing Boundaries and Linking Horizons: Studies in Honor of Michael C. Astour on His 80th Birthday*, ed. Gordon D. Young, Mark W. Chavalas, and Richard E. Averbeck (Bethesda, MD: CDL Press, 1997), 554.

²² Dynastic Prophecy 2.22-24 in A. K. Grayson, *Babylonian Historical-Literary Texts*, Toronto Semitic Texts and Studies (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1975), 32-33.

Thus, it does not seem historically likely that all, or even most, of the officials in Nabonidus' kingdom were overjoyed to have been conquered by Cyrus, as the Cylinder claims. Nor does it seem likely that all or most of the people of Babylon were thrilled by the prospect of Medo-Persian rule, as the Cylinder claims. However, it does seem that the transition to Medo-Persian rule of Babylon occurred without any large civil disturbances. One possible reason for this is that the Babylonians were moved to accept the Medo-Persian conquest as an expression of the divine will following Belshazzar's portentous vision of the handwriting on the wall (Dan 5:1-12). This vision and its interpretation were publicly verified on the night of the Persian conquest, as heralds passed throughout Babylon to proclaim the promotion of Daniel to third regent, and then the city fell immediately afterward as Daniel had said (Dan 5:13-29). Although Daniel emphasized that the Medo-Persian conquest was brought about by the God of heaven as a judgment on the polytheism of Belshazzar, the people of Babylon probably would have interpreted the vision to mean that the Medo-Persian conquest was brought about by the will of the gods, especially Marduk. Cyrus must have seized on this vision, and possibly also on Isaiah's prophecies, to create the propaganda line regarding Marduk's choice of him, thereby claiming divine sanction for his conquests in a way that would resonate better with the Babylonian worldview than the biblical claim that the God of heaven (or Yahweh, in Isa 44:28-45:1) had given him the kingdom.

A second reason for the smoothness of the transition to Medo-Persian rule of Babylon is that Cyrus (and Darius) retained some Babylonian administrative officials in the new government. The book of Daniel affirms that Daniel himself was retained (Dan 6:1-3[E] / 6:2-4[MT]), and extrabiblical evidence has already been noted which indicates that Nabû-ahhê-bullit retained his position as governor of Babylon. If these two high officials in the Neo-Babylonian Empire retained their positions after the fall of Babylon, others must have as well. Since Cyrus did not sack or raze Babylon or deport its populace, and since he left the existing administrative structure largely in place, daily life could continue in Babylon as before the Medo-Persian conquest. The lack of significant disruptions in daily life or daily routine would have helped greatly to keep unrest from building in Babylon following the humiliation a foreign conquest.

Thus, while extrabiblical sources do not give a plausible reason for the general acceptance of Medo-Persian rule in Babylon—the Cylinder's claim that the Babylonians were being oppressed by Nabonidus and sought a liberator can hardly be believed—the Bible offers two sound historical explanations: the proclamation of a portentous vision, and the retention of Babylonian administrative officials in the new government.

Conquest of the Medes?

In order to justify these false propaganda claims, as well as to provide another opportunity for Cyrus to glorify himself, it became necessary to portray Cyrus as having actually *conquered* the Medes, rather than gradually appropriating control over the confederated Medo-Persian army, and finally succeeding the last Median king. While a full-fledged story of a conquest of the Medes is found in other texts, it is debatable whether the Cyrus Cylinder actually makes this claim. Cyrus is said to have been given lordship over the land of Guti (line 13), which probably refers to the defection of Gubaru with his Gutian army. It also claims that Cyrus was given lordship over *gimir Ummān-manda* (line 13), "all the Medes," which may be read as

meaning “the whole Median army.”²³ If Cyrus was given lordship over all the Medes prior to the fall of Babylon, this would fit better with Herodotus, though in Xenophon’s story Cyrus seems to have had some sort of authority over the Medes through his coregency with Cyaxares. If Cyrus was given lordship over the Median army before the fall of Babylon, this would fit with either Herodotus or Xenophon. Regardless, the argument of the Cylinder is that Cyrus’ acquisition of power over foreign peoples demonstrated that Marduk had chosen him to be king of the world before leading him to Babylon.

It is also noteworthy that the Cylinder presents Cyrus alone as the great king who conquered Babylon, ignoring coregents. It is known from the Nabonidus Chronicle and the contract texts that Cambyses (either I or II) was a coregent with Cyrus for at least a year following the conquest of Babylon, and this study has argued that Darius the Mede/Cyaxares II was also a coregent with Cyrus for about two years after the fall of Babylon. But the Cylinder aims to exalt Cyrus alone, which he could do after the death of Darius in 537. In addition, the Cylinder’s theological justification of Cyrus’ conquest of Babylon would be much a more difficult argument to make if coregents such as Belshazzar (who was religiously orthodox) and the king of the Medes (who was a longstanding enemy of Babylon) were included in the picture.

The Cylinder nowhere explicitly claims that Cyrus conquered the Medes and deposed the last Median king before the fall of Babylon. The Cylinder says nothing about a king of the Medes, either before Cyrus’ rise to power or afterward. However, the language of the Cylinder does not seem strong enough to claim a clear contradiction with Xenophon; other sources must be considered to resolve the disputed point. One may, however, conclude from the Cylinder that the rule of Cyrus over the Medes was seen as a useful claim to publish in a propaganda document.

Comparable Texts

The propaganda texts published by Cyrus follow the same pattern used in other Mesopotamian usurpation texts, both in claiming the support of the gods for his conquests and in misrepresenting historical facts to his own advantage. As for the first point, virtually any king who wished to reign over Babylon had to claim that he was chosen by Marduk because of his own virtues and the impiety of the previous king. Nabonidus himself had justified his coup against Labashi-Marduk by arguing that the latter was incompetent and wicked, and that Marduk had entrusted him (Nabonidus) with the kingship.²⁴ An example from an earlier period of Mesopotamian history is the Tukulti-ninurta epic (13th century BC), which describes how Marduk and the other gods had deserted the previous Babylonian king and had chosen to support Tukulti-ninurta to replace him.²⁵

²³ The word *gimru* means “totality,” but the closely related word *gimirtu* can mean either “totality” or “army” (i.e., “the whole body of troops”).

²⁴ See Beaulieu, *Reign of Nabonidus*, 88-90; E. J. Bickerman and H. Tadmor, “Darius I, Pseudo-Smerdis, and the Magi,” *Athenaeum* 56 (1978): 242.

²⁵ For bibliographical information and an English translation of the Tukulti-Ninurta Epic, see Benjamin R. Foster, ed., *Before the Muses: An Anthology of Akkadian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Bethesda, MD: CDL Press, 2005), 298-317.

The distortion of historical facts is common not just in usurpation texts, but in any text that is published for a political purpose. These texts may present a historical narrative, but they do so not (primarily) with the aim of recording what actually happened; they aim, rather, to achieve political outcomes. There are at least two prominent examples of such texts from the Persian period. First, many historians believe that the great Behistun inscription of Darius Hystaspes was an official hoax, designed to convince an unfavorable public that Darius' overthrow of Bardiya (Gaumata) was legitimate.²⁶ Second, when Cyrus the Younger launched a revolt against his brother Artaxerxes II in 401 BC, the latter sponsored propaganda pieces which claimed that Cyrus the Great was actually a commoner who was not from royal lineage.²⁷

That Cyrus exaggerated some facts to make his argument is not unusual, nor is it remarkable that there are many sources which follow the official propaganda line. What is surprising is that there are any extant records at all that contradict the official version of the Cyrus story.

Conclusion

The Cyrus Cylinder is a boastful and propagandistic inscription that freely slants and distorts history in order to support the personal and political aims of Cyrus. The Cylinder does

²⁶ According to the inscription, Cambyses secretly murdered his full brother Bardiya in 526 BC (or early 525), and then left Persia to launch his invasion of Egypt. Early in 522, while Cambyses was still in Egypt, a member of the magi named Gaumata launched a revolt on the basis of a false claim to be Bardiya, whose murder was not publicly known. Gaumata quickly gained control over the empire, and Cambyses died in Syria of a freak accident as he was returning to do battle with Gaumata. After Darius and six other nobles discovered that Gaumata was not actually Bardiya, they formed a conspiracy against him. Gaumata and his followers were killed, and Darius claimed the throne. Since Darius' claim to the throne seemed weak, many opportunists throughout the empire launched separate rebellions against him, usually on the basis of a claim to be of some royal lineage. According to the inscription, all of these claims were false and the claimants were impostors, whereas Darius was from a line of Achaemenid kings—which is why the god Ahuramazda gave him victory over all of the rebels. However, many modern scholars believe that Darius was not from a line of kings, though he apparently was an Achaemenid. They also believe that Cambyses did not, in fact, murder his brother Bardiya, and that “Gaumata” therefore was the real Bardiya, who was murdered by the opportunistic and power-hungry Darius. For proponents of the “hoax” theory, see Jack Martin Balcer, *Herodotus & Bisitun: Problems in Ancient Persian Historiography*, *Historia: Einzelschriften*, vol. 49 (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 1987), 49-69, 100, 117; Bickerman and Tadmor, “Darius I, Pseudo-Smerdis, and the Magi,” 239-61; Olmstead, *History of the Persian Empire*, 108-9. According to Briant, whose own view is skeptical but nuanced, the hoax theory is “these days generally accepted” (Briant, *Cyrus to Alexander*, 101). Young and Dandamaev are deeply skeptical of the claims made in the inscription, but do not think it is possible to determine the truth (M. A. Dandamaev, *A Political History of the Achaemenid Empire*, trans. W. J. Vogelsang [Leiden: Brill, 1989], 89-92; T. Cuyler Young Jr., “The Consolidation of the Empire and Its Limits of Growth under Darius and Xerxes,” in *Persia, Greece and the Western Mediterranean c. 525 to 479 B.C.*, ed. John Boardman et al., vol. 4 of *The Cambridge Ancient History*, 2nd ed. [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988], 54-55). Herodotus, for his part, gives essentially the same account of the accession of Darius as that given by the Behistun inscription (Herodotus 3.66-79), and it is another entertaining story that fits with his theme of reciprocity. Yamauchi, who often seems to have an almost biblical trust of Herodotus, argues for the veracity of the Behistun inscription (Yamauchi, *Persia and the Bible*, 143-45).

²⁷ See Steven W. Hirsch, “1001 Iranian Nights: History and Fiction in Xenophon’s *Cyropaedia*,” in *The Greek Historians: Literature and History: Papers Presented to A. E. Raubitschek* (Saratoga, CA: ANMA Libri, 1985), 76-77. Hirsch detects this propaganda in the *Persika* of Ctesias and in a pair of inscribed gold tablets found at Ecbatana and dated orthographically to the time of Artaxerxes II.

not present pure fabrications, but it does distort and exaggerate what actually happened. As a propaganda piece, it appeals to the popular belief in the ancient world that the fall of kings was due to impiety, and the rise of kings was due to their piety. The Cylinder is also careful not to present Cyrus as acting in behalf of the Medes, who were enemies of the Babylonians, but rather as an outsider who was given power over the Medes by Marduk. Cyrus was thus able to portray his conquest of Babylon as a liberation undertaken by a neutral but beneficent outsider at the behest of Marduk.

For the purposes of the present study, it is important to note that the Cylinder describes events following the fall of Babylon which must have occurred over a period of a few years. This gap would allow for time for a short reign of Darius the Mede immediately following the fall of Babylon. After the death of Darius, Cyrus would have had a free hand to exalt himself in Babylonian propaganda texts without giving credit to the monarch with whom he had previously shared power. While it must be acknowledged that the Cylinder does not make any allusion to Darius the Mede, the circumstances of its composition nevertheless allow for his reign.

Verse Account of Nabonidus

A second inscription that is recognized without dispute as a propaganda text is the so-called Verse Account of Nabonidus (also called the Cyrus Panegyric).²⁸ There is only one extant source for the Verse Account—the 4¾ x 4½ inch middle piece of an originally much larger cuneiform tablet, the edges of which are now missing. “The present fragment may represent a little more than the bottom left quarter of the original.”²⁹ This fragment is housed in the British Museum (BM 38299), and belongs to a collection of objects discovered mainly at Babylon and Sippar.

Introduction

The Verse Account is an account of the reign of Nabonidus and the accession of Cyrus which covers essentially the same historical material as the Nabonidus Chronicle (the next text analyzed in this chapter), but does so in poetic form, openly praising Cyrus and disparaging Nabonidus. It must have been composed at about the same time as the Cyrus Cylinder—a couple of years after the fall of Babylon—since it records acts performed by Cyrus during the opening stages of his rule over Babylon (column vi), and was produced to support the rule of Cyrus in Babylonia.

Scholars universally recognize the Verse Account as a propaganda text. Beaulieu calls the Verse Account “an overtly biased composition which describes the reign of Nabonidus in negative terms and glorifies the deeds of Cyrus, the conqueror of the Neo-Babylonian empire.”³⁰

²⁸ For the text and translation of the Verse Account, see Schaudig, *Die Inschriften*, 563-78; Sidney Smith, *Babylonian Historical Texts Relating to the Capture and Downfall of Babylon* (London: Meuthen, 1924), 27-97. For another English translation, see Pritchard, ed., *ANET*, 312-15.

²⁹ Smith, *Babylonian Historical Texts*, 27.

³⁰ Beaulieu, *Reign of Nabonidus*, 4.

“The Verse Account is a piece of propaganda.”³¹ Sparks says that the author’s “objective was to present the last ruler of Babylon in the most unfavorable way possible.”³² Smith calls the Verse Account “a diatribe in the guise of an historical narrative.”³³

Contents

Of the original eight columns of the Verse Account which likely existed (four on each side), only portions of six are extant.

The first fifteen lines of column i describe Nabonidus’ incompetence and injustice during the early years of his reign. The remainder of column i (lines 16-32) and (apparently) the first three lines of column ii accuse Nabonidus of religious impiety and unorthodoxy. Lines 4-11 of column ii record a purported speech by Nabonidus in which he outlines his plans to change the Babylonian religion by (re)building a new temple (the Eḫulḫul) to house a new and unorthodox image of the god Šin. The construction of the Eḫulḫul is recorded in ii 12-17. The remainder of column ii (lines 18-34) records how, following the completion of the Eḫulḫul, Nabonidus gave his eldest son charge over Babylonia, along with one part of the army, while he himself led a campaign to Teima in Arabia with the other part of the army. Column iii is badly broken, and contains only a few words in ten lines. It notes the conclusion of a successful campaign, and mentions the name of Cyrus, but is too fragmentary to determine whose campaign is described.

Two missing columns apparently intervene between columns iii and iv. Column iv is even more fragmentary than column iii; on the basis of the few preserved words, Smith suggests that it recorded an exchange of insults between Nabonidus and Cyrus in their competing propaganda campaigns.³⁴ Column v opens with an account of propaganda claims made by Nabonidus (v 1-3), the rebuttal given by Cyrus (v 4-5), and more propaganda claims inscribed on stelae erected by Nabonidus (v 6-7). The remainder of extant lines in the column (v 8-28) record impious claims and deeds of Nabonidus in a mocking tone. Column vi (28 lines) describes the rectification of Nabonidus’ deeds by Cyrus, who thoroughly destroyed everything Nabonidus had built and written, and restored religious and economic affairs in Babylonia to the state in which they were before Nabonidus had begun to rule.

Analysis

The details of the storyline presented in the Verse Account are sketchy, due to significant breaks in the text. The extant portions of the Verse Account make no mention of the Medes or a Median king. However, the text appears to describe Cyrus as “lord of lords” (*bēl bēlī*) and “king

³¹ *Ibid.*, 207.

³² Kenton L. Sparks, *Ancient Texts for the Study of the Hebrew Bible: A Guide to the Background Literature* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2005), 380.

³³ Smith, *Babylonian Historical Texts*, 32.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 96.

of the world” (*šar kiššat*)³⁵ during the propaganda war between Cyrus and Nabonidus which occurred before the fall of Babylon. The Verse Account may have presented Cyrus as ruler of both the Medes and the Persians from some point before the fall of Babylon, in agreement with Herodotus, though the extent portions of the text do not make this claim explicitly. Against this hypothesis, the Cyrus Cylinder claimed that Marduk had proclaimed Cyrus as king of the world before he was given lordship over foreign peoples (line 12), and Cyrus certainly did not rule the world (of the ancient Near East) while he was exchanging insults with Nabonidus.

The Verse Account is of less importance than other texts which support Herodotus due to its fragmentary nature. It can only be said that it may support Herodotus, without any clear picture of how it does so or of how it may have differed. It does show, however, that the official story of the accession of Cyrus—which the Verse Account describes—was originally promulgated as part of a vicious and voluminous propaganda campaign. The one-sided nature of the official propaganda texts ought to cause scholars to question not only the slanderous accusations against Nabonidus in these texts (as some do),³⁶ but also their glorification of Cyrus. Yet scholars who are committed to the version of the Cyrus story given by Herodotus, as opposed to that given by Xenophon, must accept the official version of the rise of Cyrus to power as historically accurate.

In spite of its bias, the Verse Account does contain a historical notice which is important for the present study: it describes the propaganda campaign which Nabonidus waged against Cyrus, to which the latter’s own propaganda campaign was evidently a response. According to the Verse Account, Nabonidus erected numerous stelae in which he claimed to have defeated Cyrus, conquered his lands, and plundered his palace (v 1-7). The Verse Account states further that after Cyrus conquered Babylonia he destroyed all of these stelae (vi 19-24), which explains why cuneiform inscriptions which told a different story of the accession of Cyrus have yet to be found. The grandiose exaltation of Cyrus in Persian propaganda texts would probably make better sense if viewed against Nabonidus’ belittling of Cyrus in his own propaganda. In addition, it is possible that Nabonidus or Belshazzar actually did plunder the royal palace at Ecbatana, perhaps while Cyrus was campaigning in Lydia, since according to the Verse Account this is what Nabonidus claimed to have done. That would explain why Cyrus may have produced a counter-claim to have actually plundered Ecbatana himself in a fictitious war against the Medes, in which Cyrus seized power over the Medes but retained their loyalty and treated the Median king graciously. Such a war which could be made believable on the basis of hearsay accounts of the arguments between Cyrus and Cyaxares, coupled with the well-known facts that the Median army was loyal to Cyrus, and that Cyrus came to wield power over both Media and Persia. Government proclamations were the news media of the day, so most people were likely to believe the official story.

In summary, the Verse Account suggests compelling rationale for the creation of a false propaganda story of the accession of Cyrus, which forms the basis of the story found in Herodotus.

³⁵ v 2-4 in Schaudig, *Die Inschriften*, 568-69.

³⁶ Michalowski says, “Nabonidus is one of the most enigmatic figures in Mesopotamian history. . . . It is difficult to understand both his motivations and contemporary reactions to his actions because although documents and inscriptions from his time have survived, later opinions about him were formed on the basis of the words of his enemies” (Arnold and Michalowski, “Historical Texts,” 426).

Nabonidus Chronicle

We turn now to cuneiform texts whose classification as propaganda is disputed. The so-called “Nabonidus Chronicle” (which is about Nabonidus, not composed by him), is contained on a moderately damaged literary tablet with an Akkadian text which describes historical events during, and immediately after, the reign of Nabonidus.³⁷ It is part of the Babylonian Chronicle Series, a long series of documents compiled from more detailed accounts which describe Mesopotamian history chronologically from the eighth to third centuries BC. The Nabonidus Chronicle agrees with Herodotus that Cyrus became king of the Medes and the Persians well before the fall of Babylon by supplanting Astyages and seizing his realm. However, an analysis of the text finds that it disagrees with other sources in many details of this story.

Background

The Babylonian Chronicle Series, as it is presented by Grayson, consists of thirteen partially extant texts, which are subdivided for convenience into two parts: the Neo-Babylonian Chronicle Series (Chronicles 1–7), covering the years 747 to 538 BC, and the Late Babylonian Chronicle Series (Chronicles 8–13), which extend to some point in the third century BC.³⁸ Grayson calls them a “series” because they are all written in the same format, with the same characteristic expressions, and, at least in the case of Chronicles 1–7, they cover successive chronological periods.³⁹ The colophon of Chronicle 1 even identifies itself as the first tablet in a series.⁴⁰ The Neo-Babylonian Chronicle Series is more important than the Late Babylonian Chronicle Series, since it covers an earlier historical period and the extant texts are better preserved. The Nabonidus Chronicle is Chronicle 7.

Chronicle 1, which describes events from the years 747 to 648 BC, contains a colophon in its best-preserved exemplar which dates the tablet to the twenty-second year of Darius (Hystaspes), that is, 500 BC, and is said to have been written in Babylon, where it was found.

³⁷ For the text and translation of the Nabonidus Chronicle, see Glassner, *Mesopotamian Chronicles*, 232-39; A. K. Grayson, *Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles*, Texts from Cuneiform Sources, ed. A. Leo Oppenheim, vol. 5 (Locust Valley, NY: J. J. Augustin, 1975), 104-11; Smith, *Babylonian Historical Texts*, 98-123; A. K. Grayson, Bert van der Spek, and Jona Lendering, “ABC 7: The Nabonidus Chronicle,” Livius, last modified January 23, 2009, accessed November 8, 2013, http://www.livius.org/cg-cm/chronicles/abc7/abc7_nabonidus1.html. The web page referenced is an authorized revision of Grayson’s work in *Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles*, based in part on the work of Irving Finkel and Bert van der Spek in their forthcoming *Babylonian Chronicles of the Hellenistic Period*. For additional English translations, see Pritchard, ed., *ANET*, 305-7; Arnold and Michalowski, “Historical Texts,” 418-20.

³⁸ For a more detailed background to the Babylonian Chronicle Series, see Grayson, *Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles*, 8-28; Glassner, *Mesopotamian Chronicles*, 77-88.

³⁹ Glassner rejects the very idea of a Babylonian Chronicle Series, arguing that “there were several parallel or concurrent chronological traditions” (Glassner, *Mesopotamian Chronicles*, 44). For this reason, Glassner includes three chronicles within the group of Babylonian chronicles which Grayson does not believe are part of the unique series. All three of these overlap chronologically with other chronicles. These are Chronicles 18–20 in Glassner, and Chronicles 14–16 in Grayson. Both Glassner and Grayson also make note of a fragment of a Neo-Babylonian chronicle (*ibid.*, 238-39; Grayson, *Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles*, 280).

⁴⁰ This is column iv, line 39, in Grayson, *Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles*, 87.

This is significant, since, according to Grayson and Wiseman, the same scribe who copied this exemplar of Chronicle 1 also copied the only extant exemplar of the Nabonidus Chronicle.⁴¹ Although 500 BC is only the date of the copy, rather than of the original composition, it provides a narrow range for the date of composition of the Nabonidus Chronicle: between the last events it records—538 BC in the extant portions—and about 500 BC.

The seven chronicles in the Neo-Babylonian Chronicle Series consist of a series of entries, organized chronologically by the year of the king's reign, concerning major events in the history of Babylonia. Horizontal lines separate the entries for each year, and each entry begins with a notation of the year for the entry. The chronicles do not explicitly show their *Tendenz*; they are written in a dispassionate style, in prose, in the third person, in the past tense, and with crisp, brief entries. Glassner notes that “the chronicles gave special attention to those events that were filled with potential for change . . . and that became effectively historical categories.”⁴² These historical categories, located within an exact chronology, include wars in or near Mesopotamia, civil disturbances, the accession and death of kings in or near Babylon, and changes in the status of religious affairs in Babylon.

There remain many debated questions about the Neo-Babylonian Chronicle Series—most notably, who wrote them, using which sources, and for what purpose. Grayson hypothesizes that “the documents were compiled from a genuine interest in writing history.”⁴³ However, documents that are written for the purpose of recording history typically consist of lengthy narratives and include many more details, digressions, and explanations than the Neo-Babylonian Chronicle Series does. Glassner's proposal fits better with the subject matter of the chronicles as an account of various historical threats to the cosmic order: “The underlying intention was to add up the innumerable tiny clues that hinted at these threats in order to show their significance and to warn against them.”⁴⁴ The chronicles, then, were possibly intended to provide a data pool by which to test and sharpen models of astrological analysis. As such, it would be expected that they would be written in an objective and succinct style, with no analysis contained in the data bank itself. A connection with astrology is also indicated by the probable source material of the chronicles—whether, as Grayson argues, the Neo-Babylonian Chronicle Series was compiled from astronomical diaries; or, as Glassner argues, the chronicles were compiled from divinatory literature.⁴⁵

If the chronicles were indeed written in order to collect historical data for later analysis via astrology, they may well have been composed by Chaldean astrologers, and/or by their

⁴¹ Ibid., 14; D. J. Wiseman, *Chronicles of Chaldean Kings (626–556 B.C.) in the British Museum* (London: British Museum, 1956), 3. For unstated reasons, Glassner dates our exemplar of the Nabonidus Chronicle to the Seleucid period (Glassner, *Mesopotamian Chronicles*, 232). Glassner is probably following the older opinion of Smith, who says “the script shows that it was probably written in the Seleucid Period” (Smith, *Babylonian Historical Texts*, 98).

⁴² Glassner, *Mesopotamian Chronicles*, 83.

⁴³ Grayson, *Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles*, 11.

⁴⁴ Glassner, *Mesopotamian Chronicles*, 84.

⁴⁵ Grayson, *Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles*, 12-14; Glassner, *Mesopotamian Chronicles*, 47-48.

Medo-Persian counterparts with whom they came to be closely associated, the magi.⁴⁶ There is evidence that detailed historical records were not available before the first year of Nabu-nasir (747 BC), who evidently destroyed many previous records,⁴⁷ which explains why the Neo-Babylonian Chronicle Series begins with his reign. Since the college of magi persisted for hundreds of years (cf. Matt 2:1-12), identifying the series with this group of scribes/astrologers explains how tablets could continue to be composed and copied for centuries after the series began to be collated.

Contents

The sole extant copy of the Nabonidus Chronicle, written on a single tablet with two columns on each side, contains many significant breaks and lengthy lacunae. Though the Chronicle evidently contained a record of events during each year of the reign of Nabonidus except the eighth, significant portions of text are extant only for years six, seven, nine, ten, eleven, and seventeen. The longest extant portion of text is for the seventeenth year, though strangely a new section does not begin after the fall of Babylon and the capture of Nabonidus early in this year, or even when the participation of Cambyses in the New Year's festival of the following year is recorded.

Column i of the Nabonidus Chronicle is badly broken, with only enough text remaining to show that it described campaigns of Nabonidus toward the west during the first three years of his reign. The record of years four and five is completely missing.

Parts of column ii contain significantly more preserved text, covering the sixth through eleventh years of Nabonidus, before reaching a point where the rest of the column is broken completely away. The entry for the sixth year (550/49) notes that Cyrus, "king of Persia" (*šar Anšan*), led his army against Astyages, who was deposed when his army mutinied; Cyrus then plundered Ecbatana, the Median capital (ii 1-4). The entry for the seventh year (549/48) notes that Nabonidus was in Teima throughout the year, and that the New Year's festival for Bel and Nabu was not observed (ii 5-8). The entry for the eighth year (548/47) is blank (ii 9). The entry for the ninth year (547/46) notes the same alleged failures of Nabonidus as in the seventh year, but also notes two additional events: the death of the queen mother, and the conquest of Lydia(?) by Cyrus (ii 10-18).⁴⁸ The entries for the tenth and eleventh years note the same alleged failures of Nabonidus (he was absent, and the New Year's festival was not celebrated), but the record of other events during these years is too broken to recover any intelligible sense (ii 19-25).

The top of column iii is missing, which, combined with the loss of the bottom of column ii, means that the record of years twelve through fifteen has been completely lost. There are only

⁴⁶ On the magi, see Yamauchi, *Persia and the Bible*, 467-91. Xenophon says that Cyrus first organized the college of magi (Xenophon *Cyropaedia* 8.1.23).

⁴⁷ See Grayson, *Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles*, 13.

⁴⁸ The name of the country specified in the text (ii 16) is very faint and mostly broken; Grayson initially read it as "Lydia," but in his *Addenda et Corrigenda* stated that this is little more than a guess based on historical probability (ibid., 107, 282). Glassner also gives "Lydia" in his translation (Glassner, *Mesopotamian Chronicles*, 236-37). For evidence that Berossus dated the fall of Sardis to 547/46 BC (the second year of the fifty-eighth Olympiad) based on cuneiform records, see Alden A. Mosshammer, *The Chronicle of Eusebius and Greek Chronographic Tradition* (London: Associated University Presses, 1979), 118, 261-62.

a few words preserved for the sixteenth year. A horizontal line, indicating the beginning of a new entry, follows; the notation of the year is broken away, but it must be the seventeenth year of Nabonidus (539/38). The following section is very long, with no further horizontal lines in the column. The first matters of note are religious: the New Year's festival was celebrated in the normal way, and the gods (idols) of certain cities were brought to Babylon (iii 5-12a; cf. Dan 5:4). The next matters are military and political: Cyrus defeated Nabonidus at Opis; after the retreat of the Babylonian army, the Persian army captured Sippar (iii 12b-14). Two days after the fall of Sippar, Ugbaru led the army of Cyrus into Babylon, and Nabonidus was subsequently captured in Babylon (iii 15-16a). The text then states that Cyrus entered Babylon peacefully, maintained and restored proper religious rites, and was well received by the general population (iii 16b-22a). The deaths of Ugbaru and the king's wife are recorded next (iii 22b-24a), and Cambyses the son of Cyrus is mentioned before the text begins to break up again (iii 24b). The broken lines evidently documented the participation of Cambyses in the New Year's festival, though no complete sentences can be read (iii 25-28).

Column iv is almost entirely broken away, with only a few words preserved on nine lines. It must have continued the narrative of the beginning of Persian rule in Babylon, though what it said or the span of time encompassed is mere conjecture.

Bias and Historicity

Before analyzing the Nabonidus Chronicle for bias and historicity, it may be useful to briefly survey the mixed scholarly opinion on the issue. Some scholars have defended the historicity of the Nabonidus Chronicle, arguing that it is an unbiased historical record. Yamauchi calls it "a relatively objective contemporary account,"⁴⁹ and Grayson goes so far as to assert that the texts in the Babylonian Chronicle Series "are impartial historical documents."⁵⁰ However, Beaulieu says this is "a mere assumption"; in fact, "these copies of the Neo-Babylonian Chronicle Series seem to come from the reign of Darius I, and it is possible that material unfavorable to the Persians was removed when they were compiled."⁵¹ Glassner speaks of "two diametrically opposed historiographical traditions concerning Nabonidus," and classifies the Nabonidus Chronicle with the tradition hostile toward Nabonidus, which took "its information from Persian writings of the time of Cyrus that sought to discredit him."⁵² Michalowski groups the Nabonidus Chronicle along with the Cyrus Cylinder and the Verse Account as "three one-sided texts, written by scribes working for the conquerors."⁵³ Dougherty claims that the Nabonidus Chronicle was deliberately composed as a propaganda piece: "The *Nabonidus Chronicle* and the *Cyrus Cylinder*, although written in cuneiform, represent the Persian

⁴⁹ Yamauchi, *Persia and the Bible*, 77.

⁵⁰ Grayson, *Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles*, 11.

⁵¹ Beaulieu, *Reign of Nabonidus*, 199. It may be noted that the two (possibly three) exemplars for Chronicle I contain numerous differences, including whole paragraphs that are present in one exemplar but not in the other.

⁵² Glassner, *Mesopotamian Chronicles*, 232-34.

⁵³ Arnold and Michalowski, "Historical Texts," 426-27.

interpretation of what took place in connection with the fall of Babylon. Both these documents were recorded for the purpose of glorifying Cyrus and vilifying Nabonidus.”⁵⁴

Bias

The question of bias in the Nabonidus Chronicle goes beyond the question of whether the scribes who composed and copied the Babylonian Chronicle Series intentionally wrote with a bias, since the bias of a text could be due to political pressure or official control rather than the agenda of the scribes themselves. One must also consider whether a biased text is slanted merely in its selection and presentation of material, or whether historical facts are actually falsified in support of the bias.

It seems clear enough from an analysis of its text that the Nabonidus Chronicle, though dispassionate in tone, intends to portray historical events in a way which is positive toward Cyrus and negative toward Nabonidus. This is hardly surprising, for it is unlikely that any official history of Nabonidus and Cyrus composed in Babylon early in the Persian period would have been allowed to deviate from the official propaganda line. The story of the rise of Cyrus to power presents him as a glorious conqueror who received the power, riches, and happy allegiance of the Medes (ii 1-4). Cyrus is again presented as the glorious conqueror of another kingdom, probably Lydia, in the entry for the ninth year (ii 15-18). The account of Cyrus’ conquest of Babylon and of the beginning of his reign over Babylon is much more lengthy than the account of any preceding year, and presents Cyrus as a beneficent liberator who conquered Babylon swiftly, simply making a grand entrance into the city without any fighting (iii 12-16). A detailed account follows concerning Cyrus’ restoration of Babylonian religious and administrative affairs after their disruption by Nabonidus, with emphasis given to the claim that no religious ceremonies were interrupted by the peaceful Persian conquest (iii 16-28). The Chronicle emphasizes that Cyrus chose a native Babylonian, Gubaru,⁵⁵ to oversee affairs in Babylon. It also emphasizes the participation of Cambyses in the New Year’s festival that the Chronicle had earlier accused Nabonidus of neglecting. Although it could be argued that this is what actually happened, a Babylonian apologist would hardly have told the story in this way.

The Chronicle’s portrayal of Nabonidus also shows signs of Persian bias. The entries for four of the years preserved on the tablet note that the New Year’s festival for Bel (Marduk) and Nabu was not celebrated. These notations seem to imply that the failure to observe the feast was a major fault for which Nabonidus was responsible, implying that Nabonidus harbored ill-will toward Marduk. The real reason, however, was that the king was needed to fill the lead role in the feast, and the king was out of town.⁵⁶ Thus, the Chronicle admits that the feast was duly celebrated in the seventeenth year, after Nabonidus had returned from Teima (iii 5-8). But if

⁵⁴ Raymond Philip Dougherty, *Nabonidus and Belshazzar: A Study of the Closing Events of the Neo-Babylonian Empire*, Yale Oriental Series, vol. 15 (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1929), 180.

⁵⁵ Gubaru was a governor of Gutium in Zagros under the Babylonians who defected to the Persian side. See Yamauchi, *Persia and the Bible*, 85-86; Xenophon *Cyropaedia* 4.6.1-2.

⁵⁶ Since the propaganda texts try to exaggerate as much as possible the significance of Nabonidus’ non-participation in the New Year’s festival, it is difficult to judge whether his absence actually did create discontent among the people; we only hear one side of the story from the extant texts. The actual situation was probably more complex and multifaceted than these texts make it out to be.

Nabonidus were writing the Chronicle from his perspective, he would not even mention the non-observance of the New Year's ritual in Babylon among the most significant events of the year.

Although the Chronicle alludes to Belshazzar, it does not mention him by name in the extant portions, and it follows Persian propaganda in its focus on Nabonidus. It is known from other sources that Belshazzar was religiously orthodox, and was in fact hostile to his father's eccentric religious tendencies.⁵⁷ The criticisms of Nabonidus' religious posture would not apply to Belshazzar.⁵⁸ Belshazzar's long reign during his father's absence presents a problem for the propaganda claim that Marduk appointed Cyrus to restore proper worship in Babylon because Nabonidus had attempted to demote Marduk from the head of the pantheon. In fact, Nabonidus did not take aggressive action to demote Marduk until after his return from Teima, and Belshazzar followed Babylonian religious orthodoxy while his father was away.⁵⁹ However, since the conflict between Cyrus and the Babylonians began at least five years before Nabonidus' return from Teima, Cyrus had to produce some justification for the earlier attacks, and the non-observance of the New Year's festival while Nabonidus was away furnished the necessary excuse. The Nabonidus Chronicle is therefore careful to note this alleged fault, and to note the rise of Cyrus at the same time.⁶⁰

Thus, although it is never stated explicitly, an implicit thread of historical causation is conveyed by the Nabonidus Chronicle which matches that of the Persian propaganda campaign: Nabonidus dishonored the gods (especially Marduk), resulting in his fall, while Cyrus was chosen by the gods (especially Marduk) to overthrow the impious king and restore religious order in Babylonia. The Babylonians, like the Medes, welcomed Cyrus with joy as their liberator, and Babylon prospered under his beneficent rule. Cyrus did not undertake his campaign of conquest out of a selfish lust for power, but rather to make life better for all the peoples of the world by freeing them from oppressive tyrants and reestablishing proper worship of their gods.

Glassner observes that after the Neo-Babylonian Chronicle Series was composed, the same group of Babylonian scribes undertook a project to draw up chronicles of the remote past.⁶¹ These chronicles have many of the same characteristics as those of the Neo-Babylonian Chronicle Series, except that a theory of historical causation is identified explicitly: "Every change in reign was legitimized by relating it to the king's inadequate attention to Marduk's

⁵⁷ See Beaulieu, *Reign of Nabonidus*, 65.

⁵⁸ If Belshazzar were mentioned directly in the texts, a critical reader could ask why Marduk did not appoint Belshazzar to succeed his aged father, which would have happened within a few years of Cyrus' conquest of Babylon anyway. Belshazzar would have restored normal religious order in Babylon in the same way that the propaganda texts claim Cyrus did.

⁵⁹ Beaulieu, *Reign of Nabonidus*, 65.

⁶⁰ The surviving evidence is insufficient, in my opinion, to prove that the Babylonian populace viewed the absence of Nabonidus at the New Year's festival as a serious transgression. The propaganda texts claim that it was, and it may well have come to be viewed in this way, but other evidence indicates that Nabonidus retained popular support until the end of his reign. One suspects that previous kings of Babylon, such as Nebuchadnezzar, had occasionally been absent on military campaigns at the New Year, without any serious popular discontent developing as a result.

⁶¹ See Glassner, *Mesopotamian Chronicles*, 84, 263-92.

cult.”⁶² This interpretation is implicit in the Nabonidus Chronicle as well, and it is the theme of the Persian propaganda against Nabonidus. It would appear, therefore, that the magi and/or Chaldean astrologers were ordered or influenced by the Persian administration to compile chronicles of the remote past in order to support the propaganda claim that an interruption in the rites of the Babylonian religion portended a regime change. If the chronicles of the remote past were compiled with this motive, it would come as no surprise if the Nabonidus Chronicle were also composed under official Persian influence; Grayson notes that “matters of a ritual nature [i.e., about the Marduk cult] appear more commonly in this text than in Chronicles 1–6.”⁶³ The inordinate length of the entry for the seventeenth year, describing in positive terms the actions of Cyrus and his administration after Babylon fell, also suggests that the Nabonidus Chronicle was compiled under Persian influence.

Historicity

The Nabonidus Chronicle appears to be a document of mixed historical credibility. From a positive point of view, the general outline of the reign of Nabonidus, of his extended hiatus in Teima while his son remained in Babylon, of his religious reforms, and of his ultimate defeat by Cyrus are well corroborated by other sources. Further, there is strong evidence that the Chronicle’s date for the fall of Babylon (Tašrītu/Tishri 16) is correct.⁶⁴

As for actual historical errors in the Nabonidus Chronicle, the narrative of the seventeenth year uncharacteristically describes events out of chronological sequence. The return of Nabonidus to Babylon in the month Tebeth (iii 6) must have occurred in his sixteenth year, before the New Year’s festival was celebrated, and therefore seems to have been placed in the wrong section of the tablet, with a confusing order within the section (the celebration of the New Year’s festival is mentioned both before and after Nabonidus’ actions in the month Tebeth). The death of Ugbaru, on the eleventh of the month Araḥsamnu, is also mentioned out of sequence, after the return of the gods to their original locations from the months Kislev to Adar. Toward the end of column iii, the celebration of the New Year’s festival the following year is recorded without the customary horizontal line to mark the beginning of a new entry. It is possible that the arrangement is intentionally made more topical than chronological in this section, but Glassner faults the entry for the seventeenth year for containing “great disorder in the chronology”⁶⁵; certainly it does not follow the normal pattern. Even if the actual information in the entry is correct, the order seems erroneous, or at least confusing or careless.

Although there are few sources for the historical period covered by the Nabonidus Chronicle, the Chronicle does contain some significant discrepancies with other texts. The most glaring discrepancy concerns the year of the supposed conquest of Media by Cyrus. As documented in the appendix, the Nabonidus Chronicle places this event in the sixth year of

⁶² Ibid., 85.

⁶³ Grayson, *Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles*, 21.

⁶⁴ Two lines of evidence which corroborate this date include the dates on the contract texts and the fact that this date coincides with the date of a Babylonian religious festival.

⁶⁵ Glassner, *Mesopotamian Chronicles*, 261, n. 47.

Nabonidus (550/49); the Dream Text places it in his third year (553/2), Herodotus in 559, and Ctesias in 560, while Xenophon implies that Cyrus did not begin to reign over Media until 537. Although these discrepancies do not in themselves prove that the Nabonidus Chronicle gives the wrong date, the Chronicle does give the date which fits best with the propaganda claim that Marduk chose Cyrus to become king of the world because Nabonidus had dishonored him. (The dates given by Herodotus and Ctesias would have made Cyrus begin to rise to power before Nabonidus even became king.) There are other discrepancies, as well, between the Nabonidus Chronicle and other sources which tell the story of the subjugation of the Medes by Cyrus, as noted in the appendix. The existence of these discrepancies casts a shadow of suspicion on the whole story of Cyrus' conquest of Media.

The story of Cyrus' accession presented in the Nabonidus Chronicle is the main point of contradiction between the Chronicle and Xenophon—and, as was argued in chapter 3, the book of Daniel. In fact, however, the story in the Nabonidus Chronicle is historically implausible. It does not seem likely from a historical point of view that, were the Medes and Persians engaged in hostilities with one another, the Median army would have mutinied against its own king in order to be subjugated by a foreign power. And had this actually happened, it is equally unlikely that Cyrus could have plundered Ecbatana without the powerful Median army turning on him. A man with such political savvy as Cyrus would surely know better than to devastate the capital city of the people who had just handed him power. And how is it that the Medes are subsequently presented as joint rulers and partners with the Persians, if Cyrus had indeed conquered Media? This looks rather like an intentional corruption of, as Xenophon describes it, Cyaxares' angry attempt to recall Cyrus, and the Median army's choice to follow Cyrus over Cyaxares. However, in Xenophon's account Cyrus does not attempt to dethrone Cyaxares or to plunder Ecbatana, presumably because he would have lost the support of the Median soldiers if he had done so.

Finally, there are strong reasons to disbelieve the Chronicle's claim that Nabonidus was captured in Babylon⁶⁶ (iii 15-16). According to Xenophon⁶⁷ and Daniel (Dan 5), Belshazzar was the king who was in Babylon when the city fell, and he was killed on the night when the city was captured. According to Berossus, Nabonidus had fled to Borsippa after being defeated in the field by Cyrus. Cyrus captured Babylon first, then marched to Borsippa, where Nabonidus surrendered.⁶⁸ The Nabonidus Chronicle seems confused on this point, since it states that Nabonidus fled and the army of Cyrus entered Babylon without a battle, but then says that Nabonidus was captured in Babylon after withdrawing. A capture of Nabonidus, rather than Belshazzar, in Babylon would certainly fit better with the Persian propaganda line, which sought to portray the war as a contest between Cyrus, on Marduk's side, and Nabonidus, who opposed Marduk. Belshazzar gets minimized in the propaganda, since he supported Babylonian religious orthodoxy in opposition to his father. Thus, it seems that the Chronicle's account of the capture of Nabonidus in Babylon has confused the actual events due to the necessity of portraying the fall of Babylon as a judgment on the impious king Nabonidus.

⁶⁶ Not "Babylonia," which is, e.g., *māt Akkadī* or *māt Šumerī u Akkadī* (compare the Hebrew terms אֲרָץ כַּשְׂדִּים, אֲרָץ שְׁנַעַר, and אֲרָץ כַּשְׂדִּים).

⁶⁷ Xenophon *Cyropaedia* 7.5.29-30.

⁶⁸ Jacoby, *Aegypten–Geten: Nr. 608a–708*, 393.17-394.11 (680 F9.151-153).

Conclusion

The Nabonidus Chronicle was composed early in the Persian period, probably during the reign of Cyrus, and gives clear indications that it is a biased document of mixed historical credibility. Bias is often a problem in texts which discuss the history of the writer's own time, and all the more so when composed by an official source in the context of heavy political pressure and a propaganda campaign. The portrayal of Nabonidus and Cyrus in the Nabonidus Chronicle includes much overlap with explicit Persian propaganda texts, and the Chronicle's focus on the king's attention, or the lack thereof, to the Marduk cult is an irregularity in the Neo-Babylonian Chronicle Series. Of course, the Nabonidus Chronicle remains an important text for early Persian historiography, due to the poverty of contemporary sources, but an analysis of its contents shows that it contains factual errors in the area of its bias. It supports Herodotus in general, but diverges widely from him regarding the date of Cyrus' conquest of Media, and also on the issue of whether the takeover of Media occurred peacefully (Nabonidus Chronicle) or violently (Herodotus). All things considered, the Nabonidus Chronicle cannot be viewed as indubitable proof of the historical reliability of Herodotus; instead, it may be taken as evidence that Herodotus followed a propagandistic version of the Cyrus story.

Dream Text

The inscription referred to as "The Dream Text of Nabonidus" or "The Sippar Cylinder of Nabonidus" is significant in that it is the only extant inscription attributed to Nabonidus in which Cyrus is mentioned.⁶⁹ Although this is not the only text in which Nabonidus reports a dream that he purportedly had,⁷⁰ it is by far the most abundantly attested, with no less than seventy-five exemplars discovered to date, most of which are fragmentary.⁷¹ By comparison, the

⁶⁹ For a complete listing of fragments, copies, and publications of this text, along with a transliteration (with variants) and a German translation, see Schaudig, *Die Inschriften*, 409-40. This document is called "2.12. Eḫulḫul-Zylinder" by Schaudig. It is called the "Dream Text of Nabonidus" in Young, "Early History," 30. Berger lists this text as "Nabonid Zylinder III, 2" in Paul-Richard Berger, *Die Neubabylonischen Königsinschriften*, *Alter Orient und Altes Testament*, ed. Kurt Bergerhof, Manfred Dietrich, and Oswald Loretz, vol. 4/1 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1973), 371-75. Beaulieu lists this text as "Inscription 15" in Beaulieu, *Reign of Nabonidus*, 34. For the cuneiform text of one of the two main exemplars (Schaudig's Exemplar 11), see Friedrich Delitzsch, ed., *Vorderasiatische Schriftdenkmäler der Königlichen Museen zu Berlin*, vol. 1 (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1907), no. 53. For the cuneiform text of the other main exemplar (Schaudig's Exemplar 1), see Ludwig Abel and Hugo Winckler, eds., *Keilschrifttexte zum Gebrauch bei Vorlesungen* (Berlin: W. Spemann, 1890), 40-43; Robert Lau and J. Dyneley Prince, *The Abu Habba Cylinder of Nabuna'id*, *Semitic Study Series*, ed. Richard J. H. Gottheil and Morris Jastrow Jr., vol. 5 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1905). For a complete English translation, see Hallo and Younger., *Monumental Inscriptions*, 310-13. Also see Beaulieu's translations in Beaulieu, *Reign of Nabonidus*, 107-8, 210-11, 14 and Smith's partial translation in Smith, *Babylonian Historical Texts*, 44-45.

⁷⁰ Others include Beaulieu's Inscriptions 1, 13, and 16. See Beaulieu, *Reign of Nabonidus*, 60, 111-13, 151-52.

⁷¹ Schaudig, *Die Inschriften*, 409-14. Schaudig states (on p. 409) that it is expected that even more fragments of this text will be discovered as the relevant collections of cuneiform texts are analyzed further.

second most frequently attested inscription attributed to Nabonidus is known by eleven copies.⁷² After an extensive analysis, it will be concluded that the Dream Text was redacted from genuine inscriptions of Nabonidus, but was actually commissioned by Cyrus as part of his massive propaganda effort to get the Babylonians to accept his rule. It is, in other words, an official forgery.

Date

According to Beaulieu's analysis, the Dream Text was written sometime after the thirteenth year of the reign of Nabonidus (543/2), likely in his sixteenth year (540/39).⁷³ The text refers to the rebuilding of the ziggurat Ekunankugga at Sippar as a past event, and there is strong evidence that this ziggurat was rebuilt in the tenth year of Nabonidus (546/5).⁷⁴ The Dream Text also describes the rebuilding of the Eḫulḫul as a past event, and the best evidence indicates that it was not rebuilt until after the return of Nabonidus from Teima, probably in his fifteenth or sixteenth year (541–539).⁷⁵ In addition, the personal nature of the Dream Text would indicate that it was commissioned directly by Nabonidus (rather than by Belshazzar in his father's name), and therefore, again, after his return from Teima. Since Nabonidus was in the oasis of Teima in Arabia from his third year until his thirteenth year, the Dream Text could not have been written before his thirteenth year (543/2).⁷⁶ If it is considered an authentic inscription of Nabonidus, it was probably written in 541 or 540.

Overview

The Dream Text is a lengthy inscription in which Nabonidus describes his restoration of three temples as a demonstration of his piety toward the gods. These include the Eḫulḫul (the temple of Sîn at Harran), the Ebabbar (the temple of Shamash at Sippar), and the Eulmash (the temple of Anunītu at Sippar-Anunītu). Since three restoration projects are described in this text, Beaulieu expresses some uncertainty as to which project the text was produced to commemorate,

⁷² This is Schaudig's "Elugalmalgasisa-Zylinder" (ibid., 350-51). Beaulieu labels this as "Inscription 17" (Beaulieu, *Reign of Nabonidus*, 37-38).

⁷³ Beaulieu, *Reign of Nabonidus*, 42. But in *COS*, Beaulieu dates the inscription to the thirteenth year of Nabonidus (Hallo and Younger, *Monumental Inscriptions*, 310).

⁷⁴ Beaulieu, *Reign of Nabonidus*, 30-31.

⁷⁵ See the discussion in ibid., 205-9. Beaulieu dates the rebuilding of the Eḫulḫul to this period based on his Inscription 13. The Verse Account contains contradictory statements, one implying that the Eḫulḫul was rebuilt in the third year of Nabonidus, and another that it was not rebuilt until after the return of Nabonidus from Teima. The stele of Adad-guppi implies that the Eḫulḫul was rebuilt before the ninth year of Nabonidus, but Beaulieu finds strong reasons to believe this statement is fictional.

⁷⁶ Nabonidus may not have actually reached Teima until his fourth or fifth year, but he left Mesopotamia to begin his campaign in his third year. For the dating of the period of Nabonidus' absence from Mesopotamia, see ibid., 163-69.

though he thinks it was for the Eulmash.⁷⁷ Most of the exemplars were found in the remains of the Ebabbar (between one and five exemplars were found in Babylon),⁷⁸ although the Ebabbar was rebuilt long before other events described in the text.

Prologue

The Dream Text opens with a short prologue in which Nabonidus identifies himself by a long list of self-glorifying appellations (i 1-6).⁷⁹ Beaulieu notes that “the adoption of the Assyrian titulary and the *anāku* RN formula” in the Dream Text is “unusual for a Neo-Babylonian ruler.”⁸⁰ In other words, the titles taken by Nabonidus in the prologue of the Dream Text are different from those that he takes in his other inscriptions—though, significantly for the proposal that the text is a Persian forgery, they are similar to those taken by Cyrus in the Cyrus Cylinder.

Rebuilding of the Eḫulḫul

The prologue is followed by the longest section of the text, which describes the restoration of the Eḫulḫul temple by Nabonidus (i 7–ii 23). The section opens with a description of the destruction of the Eḫulḫul by the Medes and its resultant state of disrepair (i 7-14). This sets the historical context for the description of a dream which Nabonidus reportedly had (i 15-31a). The dream is the key passage that will be analyzed in more detail in the following section; in it, Marduk appears to Nabonidus and promises to raise up Cyrus to remove the Median threat to Harran and thereby allow him to rebuild the Eḫulḫul. Within the record of the dream is a historical note concerning how Cyrus defeated the powerful Median army with a much smaller force during the third year of the reign of Nabonidus. It may be noted here that the section about Cyrus is placed as close to the beginning of the inscription as possible, which makes sense if it is a propaganda piece. Further, although the point of the dream is supposed to be that Marduk removed the Median threat from Nabonidus, the point which comes across is that Cyrus is the anointed servant of Marduk and a glorious conqueror. The remainder of the paragraph describes the actual work of rebuilding and dedicating the Eḫulḫul by Nabonidus (i 31a–ii 23).

Still on the subject of the Eḫulḫul, the next paragraph records a dedicatory prayer to Šin offered by Nabonidus (ii 24-41a). Finally, there is a short record of the burying of the foundation deposit (ii 42b-45).

Beaulieu suggests that the whole section describing the restoration of the Eḫulḫul is based on the original inscription which dedicated the Eḫulḫul at the time of its rebuilding, which

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 34.

⁷⁸ Schaudig, *Die Inschriften*, 412.

⁷⁹ The column and line numbers given follow Schaudig, who uses Exemplar 11 as his primary text.

⁸⁰ Beaulieu, *Reign of Nabonidus*, 214.

has not yet been found.⁸¹ However, descriptions of the rebuilding (or planned rebuilding) of the Eḫulḫul have been found in other inscriptions attributed to Nabonidus.⁸²

Rebuilding of the Ebabbar

The next main section of the text describes the rebuilding of the Ebabbar temple at Sippar in the third year of Nabonidus (ii 46–iii 22). According to Beaulieu (in *COS*), this section is redacted from the original building inscription composed for the dedication of the Ebabbar.⁸³ The text may be subdivided into three paragraphs: a description of the work of rebuilding (ii 46–iii 7), the burying of the foundation deposit (iii 8-10), and a prayer to Shamash (iii 11-22).

Rebuilding of the Eulmash

The final, and shortest, section of the inscription describes the rebuilding of the Eulmash temple at Sippar-Anunītu (iii 23-55). It consists of a description of the rebuilding work (iii 23-40), a prayer to Anunītu (iii 41-45), and an address concerning the foundation deposit (iii 46-55). This address seems to imply that the inscription was placed in the Eulmash as its foundation deposit—though, problematically, none of the seventy-five exemplars was found in the Eulmash.

The Cyrus Passage

The part of the Dream Text which deals with Cyrus is lines 15-31a of column i, according to Schaudig's presentation of the text. Since an analysis of this section is critical to an evaluation of the authenticity of the Dream Text, as well as to the issue of the historicity of Cyrus' conquest of the Medes, it is quoted here in full:

(15) *i-na re-eš* LUGAL-ú-ti-ia da-ri-ti ú-šab-ru-'i-in-ni šu-ut-ti (16) ^dAMAR.UTU EN GAL ù ^{d+}EN.ZU na-an-na-ri AN-e ù KI-ti (17) iz-zi-zu ki-lal-la-an ^dAMAR.UTU i-ta-ma-a it-ti-ia (18) ^dNA-NÍ.TUKU LUGAL TIN.TIR^{ki} i-na ANŠE.KUR.RA ru-ku-bi-ka (19) i-ši SIG^{hi.a} É.ḪÚL.ḪÚL e-pu-uš-ma ^{d+}EN.ZU EN GAL-ú (20) i-na qé-er-bi-šu šu-ur-ma-a šu-ba-at-su (21) pa-al-ḫi-iš a-ta-ma-a a-na ^{d+}EN.LÍL DINGIR^{mes} ^dAMAR.UTU (22) É šu-a-ti ša taq-bu-ú e-pe-šu (23) ^{lú}ÉRIN-man-da sa-ḫi-ir-šum-ma pu-ug-gu-lu e-mu-qá-a-šu (24) ^dAMAR.UTU-ma i-ta-ma-a it-ti-ia ^{lú}ÉRIN-man-da šá taq-bu-ú (25) ša-a-šu KUR-šu ù LUGAL^{mes} a-lik i-di-šu ul i-ba-áš-ši (26) i-na ša-lu-ul-ti MU.AN.NA i-na ka-šá-du (27) ú-šat-bu-niš-šum-ma ^{ku}ra-áš LUGAL KUR an-za-an ÌR-su ša-aḫ-ri (28) i-na um-ma-ni-šu i-šu-tu ^{lú}ÉRIN-man-da rap-šá-a-ti ú-sap-pi-iḫ (29) ^{lú}iš-tu-me-gu LUGAL

⁸¹ Ibid., 211.

⁸² Ibid., 210-11. These include the Adad-guppi stele, and Beaulieu's Inscription 1, Inscription 13 (the Harran Stele), and possibly his Inscription 14.

⁸³ Hallo and Younger, *Monumental Inscriptions*, 310.

^{lú}ÉRIN-man-da iṣ-bat-ma ka-mu-ut-su a-na KUR-ṣu il-qí⁽³⁰⁾ a-mat^{d+}EN GAL-ú^dAMAR.UTU ù^{d+}EN.ZU na-an-na-ri AN-e ù ki-tì⁽³¹⁾ šá qí-bi-it-su-nu la in-nen-nu-ú⁸⁴

⁽¹⁵⁾ At the beginning of my everlasting reign, he [Marduk] caused me to see a dream. ⁽¹⁶⁾ Marduk, the great lord, and Šîn, the luminary of heaven and earth, ⁽¹⁷⁾ stood together. Marduk spoke with me: ⁽¹⁸⁻²⁰⁾ “Nabonidus, king of Babylon, carry bricks with your chariot-horses, rebuild the Eḫulḫul, and cause Šîn, the great lord, to establish his dwelling in its midst.” ⁽²¹⁾ Reverently I spoke to the Enlil of the gods, Marduk: ⁽²²⁾ “That temple which you commanded to build— ⁽²³⁾ the Medes surround it, and their forces are strong.” ⁽²⁴⁾ It was Marduk who spoke with me: “The Medes whom you mentioned, ⁽²⁵⁾ they, their country, and the kings who walk at their side will cease to exist.” ⁽²⁶⁾ [Indeed,] when the third year arrived, ⁽²⁷⁾ they had Cyrus king of the land of Anshan, his young servant, rise against them, ⁽²⁸⁾ who with his few troops scattered the extensive Median forces. ⁽²⁹⁾ He captured Astyages, king of the Medes, and took him captive to his own land. ⁽³⁰⁾ The word of the great lord Marduk and of Šîn, the luminary of heaven and earth, ⁽³¹⁾ whose pronouncement is not revoked.

Analysis

It will be apparent that the passage quoted above, which describes Cyrus and his deeds so gloriously, and which even claims that Cyrus was called to kingship by Marduk himself, is nothing short of remarkable, even shocking, for an inscription commissioned by Nabonidus. However, an analysis of the Dream Text shows that it could not have been composed by Nabonidus at any point in his reign. It is another propaganda text produced by Cyrus, and as such its claims concerning Cyrus ought to be viewed with a skeptical eye. Three glaring categories of historical incongruities are analyzed below, followed by a brief analysis of potential sources for the Cyrus passage.

Incongruity with Nabonidus’ Attitude toward Cyrus

If the Dream Text is considered an authentic inscription of Nabonidus, then Nabonidus composed a text within one or two years before the fall of Babylon in which he called Cyrus

⁸⁴ Schaudig, *Die Inschriften*, 416-17. The transcription given is of Schaudig’s Exemplar 1. The column and line numbers are the same between the two main exemplars in this passage. The existence of seventy-five exemplars for this text results in a large number of textual variants, which Schaudig duly notes. Most of these are spelling variations. The only notable textual variation between the two main exemplars is that Schaudig’s Exemplar 11 always has *um-man-ma-an-du* where Exemplar 1 has ^{lú}ÉRIN-man-da. By its etymology, the term *Ummān-manda* means “numerous horde,” but it is used as a proper name for different specific people groups in specific historical contexts. Beaulieu states that “in texts from the Neo-Babylonian and Achaemenid periods, the word *Ummān-manda* always refers to the Medes” (Beaulieu, *Reign of Nabonidus*, 229). See further, G. Komoróczy, “Ummān-manda,” *Acta Antiqua Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 25 (1977): 47-49. Against this, Waterhouse argues that, in the Cyrus Cylinder, the Nabonidus Chronicle, and the Dream Text, the term *Ummān-manda* refers to the Scythians, in which case these inscriptions would not be affirming that Cyrus conquered the Medes (S. Douglas Waterhouse, “Why Was Darius the Mede Expunged from History?” in *To Understand the Scriptures: Essays in Honor of William H. Shea*, ed. David Merling [Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Institute of Archeology, 1997], 181-82). However, the Nabonidus Chronicle uses the names “Astyages” and “Ecbatana,” and the Dream Text identifies Astyages as king of the *Ummān-manda*. These references would seem to demonstrate that the *Ummān-manda* in view are the Medes. One may also note the identification of Astyages and the Medes by name in the parallel Greek stories given by Herodotus and Ctesias.

Marduk’s “young servant,”⁸⁵ glorifying him as a brilliant general who defeated the large army of the Medes with his small army. This description would have to be considered an invention of Nabonidus, as no one would argue that the gods of the Babylonian pantheon are living deities, and therefore it can be taken for granted that Marduk did not actually appear to Nabonidus in a dream and prophesy the accession of Cyrus. This dream was invented for propaganda purposes, no matter whether it was invented by Cyrus or by Nabonidus. However, when the historical circumstances of the reign of Nabonidus are considered, it is impossible that Nabonidus would have published a text which glorifies Cyrus—especially in the latter period of his reign, by which time Cyrus and Nabonidus were bitter enemies, and it had become clear that Cyrus was a far greater threat to Babylon than Astyages had ever been.

There is strong evidence that Cyrus and Belshazzar had fought a battle in the eighth year of Nabonidus (548/7), or possibly in his ninth (547/6). According to the Nabonidus Chronicle, Nabonidus’ mother died on April 6, 547 in a fortified military camp on the Euphrates, upstream of Sippar, where she was with Belshazzar and the army.⁸⁶ Since a combination of Greek evidence and the most probable reading of the Nabonidus Chronicle points to a conquest of Lydia by Cyrus in 547, it seems that Belshazzar was stationed in northern Babylonia with the army to fight against Cyrus. Both Herodotus and Xenophon state that Babylon and Lydia had concluded an alliance.⁸⁷ In light of this, it would seem very strange if Babylon stood on the sidelines and watched passively while Cyrus conquered Lydia, which greatly increased Medo-Persian pressure on the Neo-Babylonian Empire. Likewise, Cyrus was too great a strategist for it to be supposed that he took the main division of the Medo-Persian army far to the west without first doing battle with the powerful Babylonian army on his own border.

According to Xenophon, soon after the death of Astyages and the subjugation of Arabia by Nabonidus, Belshazzar mustered his army and joined forces with Croesus, king of Lydia, to launch an attack on the Medes and the Persians due to the threat they posed to Babylonian ambitions in the ancient Near East.⁸⁸ After soundly defeating the Babylonian-led alliance,⁸⁹ Cyrus chose not to launch an assault on the city of Babylon immediately, instead withdrawing back to the original battle site.⁹⁰ Other historical factors support the plausibility of Xenophon’s

⁸⁵ Scholars disagree on the translation of *arassu şahri* and the antecedent of the pronoun. Young argues that “the phrase ‘young servant’ refers to the relationship between Cyrus and Marduk, not Cyrus and Astyages” (Young, “Early History,” 31). Whether Cyrus is actually called Marduk’s servant or not, he is still presented as acting in behalf of Marduk, and therefore as Marduk’s servant.

⁸⁶ This is column ii, lines 13-14 of the Nabonidus Chronicle. For an interpretive discussion, see Beaulieu, *Reign of Nabonidus*, 197-99. Beaulieu also notes that “Belshazzar does not appear in any archival text dated to the eighth year,” presumably because he was away from Babylon with the army (ibid., 199).

⁸⁷ Herodotus 1.77; Xenophon *Cyropaedia* 1.5.3.

⁸⁸ Xenophon *Cyropaedia* 1.5.2-3. Although Xenophon does not name either Belshazzar or Nabonidus, he implies by a reference to “the king who then was, the father of the one who now is” that the battle between Cyrus and the Babylonians occurred during the regency of Belshazzar (ibid., 4.6.3).

⁸⁹ Ibid., 3.3.60-4.2.31.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 5.4.51.

account.⁹¹ The reason why Cyrus bypassed Babylon was strategic—by invading and subjugating Lydia first, Cyrus could conscript many more men in his army, obtain the money needed to finance his military operations, and create pressure on Babylon from the north as well as the east.

If there was a battle between the Babylonians and Cyrus in 547, as seems likely, it certainly cannot be proposed that Nabonidus would speak later in his reign of Cyrus as Marduk's young servant, and would glorify him publicly for removing the Median threat to Harran. Certainly after the fall of Lydia in 547, Nabonidus must have viewed Cyrus as his archenemy and greatest threat. In such a context, Nabonidus would not create an inscription that says, essentially, "I was too weak and incapable to fight off the Medes, so Marduk had to raise up Cyrus to do it." Worse yet for Nabonidus, the Dream Text claims that Cyrus was called to the kingship by Marduk himself—implying, it would seem, that Cyrus had a right to be king of Marduk's city of Babylon (as the Cyrus Cylinder argues). According to the Verse Account (v 1-7; vi 19-24), however, Nabonidus commissioned propaganda texts which belittled Cyrus and denied the fact of his conquests, which is exactly the opposite of what the Dream Text does. The portrayal of Cyrus in the Dream Text is therefore completely disharmonious with the attitude and claims of Nabonidus. This disharmony is hard to explain in any other way than to consider the Dream Text a Persian forgery.

Incongruity with Nabonidus' Religious Convictions

The Dream Text is the only text dated by Beaulieu to the later period of the reign of Nabonidus (after his return from the oasis of Teima in his thirteenth year) that mentions Marduk.⁹² The texts from the later period of the reign of Nabonidus show that after Nabonidus returned from Teima, he attempted to make Sîn the chief god of the Babylonian pantheon, displacing Marduk. As Beaulieu puts it, "In the last years of his reign Nabonidus was no longer hesitant to publicize his fanatical devotion to Sîn and his intention to relegate Marduk to nearly total oblivion."⁹³ It was this effort to upset the pantheon that Cyrus took advantage of in his propaganda texts. In Cyrus' propaganda, particularly the Cyrus Cylinder and the Verse Account, Cyrus protests to the Babylonian populace that his conquest of Babylon was justified because Nabonidus did not honor Marduk properly. Marduk anointed Cyrus king and sent him to overthrow Nabonidus in order to restore Marduk's honor. Cyrus' whole aim in conquering

⁹¹ Although Nabonidus returned to Babylon with his division of the Babylonian army within about a year and a half following this battle, he did not rush home immediately, probably because Cyrus had chosen not to invade Babylonia proper. Had Cyrus done so, Belshazzar could retreat behind the walls of Babylon with his division of the army and wait for Nabonidus to return and raise the siege.

Beaulieu suggests that the account of this battle was left out of the Nabonidus Chronicle, which was written during the Persian period, because the Persians wanted the information suppressed (Beaulieu, *Reign of Nabonidus*, 199). Although he suggests this is because Cyrus was defeated, it appears as though it was actually Belshazzar who was defeated, leaving Lydia open to conquest. Most likely, then, the record of the battle between Cyrus and Belshazzar was suppressed because the Chronicle presents Cyrus as the friend of Babylon, whom Marduk sent to peacefully conquer Babylon in order to restore proper reverence for Marduk. Since Nabonidus did not attempt to exalt Sîn over Marduk until after his return from Teima, this would not be a viable explanation for the earlier conflict between Cyrus and Babylon.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 45.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 62.

Babylon, according to the Cylinder, was to restore proper worship of Marduk. This is a consistent theme of all of Cyrus' propaganda: Marduk made Cyrus king and conqueror in order to restore proper religious piety in Babylonia.

In light of the fact that no other text dated to the later period of Nabonidus' reign even mentions Marduk, the fact that he is mentioned five times in the section of the Dream Text that is about Cyrus and actually is the lead character in Nabonidus' dream is very surprising, to say the least.⁹⁴ The remainder of the long inscription does not mention Marduk (or Cyrus) a single time. The section about Cyrus refers to Marduk twice (and Sîn once) as "the great lord," and also once calls Marduk "the Enlil of the gods." In the rest of the inscription, only Sîn and Shamash are called by such exalted titles. Shamash is twice called "the great lord."⁹⁵ Sîn is twice called "the king of the gods of heaven and earth,"⁹⁶ and is three times called "the father their creator."⁹⁷ The section regarding Anunītu refers twice to "Enlil her father,"⁹⁸ but also to "Sîn, the father your begetter,"⁹⁹ implying that Sîn (not Marduk) is the Enlil of the gods. The reference to Cyrus, rather than Nabonidus, as the servant of Marduk, rather than the servant of Sîn, is incongruous and appears artificial. In fact, according to the Harran Stele, the dream in which Nabonidus was commanded to rebuild the Eḫulḫul was given by Sîn, with Marduk nowhere mentioned in the text. In addition, this dream revealed that it was Nabonidus, not Cyrus, who was raised up by Sîn to be conqueror of all lands:

DINGIR^{meš} u^{d+} INANNA a-na UGU-⁽¹⁰⁾ -[i]a ú-ṣal-lu-ú ù^{d30} a-na LUGAL-ú-ti⁽¹¹⁾ [i]m-ba-an-ni
ina šá-at mu-ši MÁŠ.GI₆ ú-šab-ra-an⁽¹²⁾ um-ma É.ḪÚL.ḪÚL É^{d30} šá URU KASKAL ḫa-an-tiš
⁽¹³⁾ e-pu-uš KUR.KUR^{meš} ka-la-ši-na a-na ŠU^{min}-ka⁽¹⁴⁾ lu-mál-la¹⁰⁰

The gods and the goddesses prayed for me, and Sîn called me to the kingship. At night he caused me to see a dream, saying: "Build quickly Eḫulḫul, the temple of Sîn of the city of Harran, and I will deliver all lands into your hand."

It can thus easily be seen from the Harran Stele that the Dream Text has twisted the authentic inscription of Nabonidus nearly completely around. The references to Marduk in the Dream Text are easily explained only if the text is considered a Persian propaganda piece. The propaganda texts commissioned by Cyrus consistently argue that Marduk anointed Cyrus as conqueror to restore the honor due to him. The Dream Text argues that Marduk commanded Nabonidus to rebuild Sîn's temple in Harran, but that Nabonidus was unable to do so because of

⁹⁴ This is recognized by Moran: "in view of Nabonidus' well-known attachment to Sin, the latter's rôle as a mere by-stander in the dream that follows, with Marduk giving all the orders, strikes one as strange and implausible" (W. L. Moran, "Notes on the New Nabonidus Inscriptions," *Orientalia* 28, no. 2 [1959]: 131-32).

⁹⁵ Dream Text ii 59; iii 11 (Exemplar 1).

⁹⁶ Dream Text ii 26, 33 (Exemplar 1).

⁹⁷ Dream Text ii 31, 41; iii 51 (Exemplar 1).

⁹⁸ Dream Text iii 23, 34 (Exemplar 1).

⁹⁹ Dream Text iii 42 (Exemplar 1).

¹⁰⁰ Column i, lines 9b-14a of the Harran Stele (Exemplar 1), in Schaudig, *Die Inschriften*, 488. Variants in Exemplar 2 include *ú-šab-ra-an-n[i]* for *ú-šab-ra-an*, and KASKAL^{min.ki} for URU KASKAL.

Median pressure. Marduk then announced that he has raised up Cyrus to remove the Median threat to Harran, thereby allowing Nabonidus to rebuild this temple. Thus, in the propaganda version of the story, the whole reason why Cyrus overthrew Astyages in Media was, ultimately, to bring honor to the gods of Mesopotamia in accordance with the wishes of Marduk. A dream given by Sîn, or a description of Cyrus as the servant of Sîn, would not have fit the overall message of Cyrus' propaganda campaign.

Incongruity with Other Sources

The Dream Text obviously supports Herodotus' claim that Cyrus overthrew Astyages. In placing the coup in the third year of Nabonidus (553/2), however, the Dream Text differs from both Herodotus (559) and the Nabonidus Chronicle (550/49). The story of Cyrus' accession presented in the Dream Text is that Cyrus attacked the Median king Astyages in the third year of Nabonidus (553/2), defeated the Median army, and brought Astyages back to Persia as his prisoner. The version of the story presented in the Nabonidus Chronicle is that Astyages attacked Cyrus to conquer his land in the sixth year of Nabonidus (550/49), but the Median army mutinied, turned Astyages over to Cyrus as his prisoner, and submitted to Cyrus. These two sources thus disagree in the year of the conflict between Cyrus and Astyages, the initiator of the conflict, the reason for the conflict, and whether Cyrus' coup was peaceful or violent. Since both stories describe only a single armed confrontation between Astyages and Cyrus, the suggestion that a war between Astyages and Cyrus began in the third year of Nabonidus and lasted until his sixth year contradicts both sources.¹⁰¹ In fact, these are two contradictory stories. It may be noted, however, that the date of Cyrus' conquest of Media in each text fits well with that text's explanation of why Cyrus was made king. In the Dream Text, Cyrus was made king by the gods in order to relieve Median pressure on Harran and allow Nabonidus to rebuild the Eḫulḫul, which could not have occurred later than Nabonidus' third year (when he left on a ten-year campaign). In the Nabonidus Chronicle, it is implied, though not directly stated, that Cyrus was made king by Marduk because the New Year's festival was not observed while Nabonidus was absent from Babylonia, thereby necessitating a later date.

It is also significant that both of these accounts present Cyrus as Astyages' enemy and give no indication of any relationship between the two. Neither account states (depending upon one's interpretation of *arassu šahri*) that Cyrus was a vassal of Astyages, and the Chronicle implies that he was not. Both Herodotus and Xenophon, on the other hand, state that Cyrus was

¹⁰¹ This is suggested by Young, "Early History," 31-32. Drews proposes that the figure given by Herodotus of a twenty-nine year reign of Cyrus includes a five-year reign over Persia as a Median vassal before launching his coup in 554 (Robert Drews, "The Fall of Astyages and Herodotus' Chronology of the Eastern Kingdoms," *Historia: Zeitschrift für alte Geschichte* 18, no. 1 [1969]: 5-6). (Drews considers "the third year" to be the third year after Nabonidus had his dream, not his third official regnal year.) This proposal ignores the whole story of the humble origins of Cyrus given by Herodotus, which leaves no room for a reign as a vassal king before his rebellion. Drews also proposes that because there is a lengthy lacuna before the description of the overthrow of Astyages by Cyrus in the Nabonidus Chronicle, it could be a continuation of the entry for the third year of Nabonidus from the previous column (*ibid.*, 2). Though this would match the date given in the Dream Text, there is no lacuna *after* the description of Cyrus' victory, and the entry for the seventh year immediately follows. The entry must therefore be for the sixth year, and the date is three years later than that given in the Dream Text.

Astyages' grandson, and Herodotus claims that the Persians were vassals of the Medes.¹⁰² It is striking that so many discrepancies among the sources exist when there are so few details given in the cuneiform texts. It is difficult to believe, however, that the Dream Text alone is right and all the others wrong to one degree or another. Since the Dream Text presents a positive image of Cyrus, the most obvious reason why it would give a fictional account of his accession is that it was a part of the broader Persian propaganda campaign.

The Basis of the Cyrus Passage

Beaulieu suggests that the dream recorded in the Dream Text is a modified version of the dream reported by Nabonidus in a stele erected in his first regnal year, in which Sîn and Marduk are standing together and Marduk calls Nabonidus by name—contextually, to confirm his kingship, although there is a break in the inscription at this point.¹⁰³ Later in the same inscription, “Marduk entrusts Nabonidus with the restoration of the Eḫulḫul”¹⁰⁴—which is exactly the point of the dream in the Dream Text. (As already noted, these references to Marduk occur in Nabonidus' inscriptions only in the first three years of his reign, when he was attempting to win popular support as the new king.)

Another potential source for the dream is the Harran Stele, which has already been quoted. Its record of a dream in which Nabonidus is commanded to build the Eḫulḫul appears to have influenced the composition of the Dream Text, but with significant differences. However, neither of these other inscriptions mentions Median pressure on Harran, nor the rise of Cyrus to relieve this pressure.

There is no doubt that the Dream Text was not an entirely new composition; it was redacted from existing texts with similar stories and themes. However, it is difficult to identify these texts with certainty in view of the fact that we possess only a partial corpus of the texts produced by Nabonidus and his court.¹⁰⁵ Indeed, it is possible that the entire Dream Text virtually reproduces, except for the modification of the dream passage, an original inscription of Nabonidus which was subsequently destroyed by Cyrus and replaced. The intent of the original inscription would have been to recapitulate some of Nabonidus' major building projects as a

¹⁰² Herodotus 1.107-9; 1.127-29; Xenophon *Cyropaedia* 1.2.1.

¹⁰³ Beaulieu, *Reign of Nabonidus*, 113. Beaulieu labels this as “Inscription 1” (ibid., 20-22). Schaudig lists it as “3.3^a. Babylon-Steile” (Schaudig, *Die Inschriften*, 514-29).

¹⁰⁴ Beaulieu, *Reign of Nabonidus*, 22.

¹⁰⁵ One may also note the strong parallels between Yahweh's proclamation to Cyrus in Isaiah 44:26–45:6 and Marduk's proclamation concerning Cyrus in the Dream Text. In Isaiah, Yahweh raises up Cyrus as His servant, anoints him to perform His will, and causes him to subdue nations and kings. One of the primary purposes in Yahweh's commissioning of Cyrus was to restore His worship in Jerusalem (Isa 44:28). In the Dream Text, Marduk chooses and commissions Cyrus as his “young servant,” sending him to overthrow the Medes in order to allow the restoration of proper worship of the gods in Babylonia. The argument made in the Cyrus Cylinder is that, ultimately, Marduk sent Cyrus against Babylon itself to restore his worship there after the acts of impiety committed by Nabonidus. These parallels are probably more than coincidence; it is quite possible that Cyrus' propaganda was influenced by Isaiah's prophecies concerning his rise, which could have been reported to him and to his officials by Daniel.

demonstration of his piety before describing his rebuilding of the Eulmash and dedicating it with formulaic prayers, blessings, and imprecations.

A Similar Inscription

A very fragmentary piece of a clay cylinder found at Harran has “striking correspondences of vocabulary and subject matter”¹⁰⁶ to the section of the Dream Text which relates to Cyrus and the rebuilding of the Eḫulḫul. The text is too fragmentary to draw any definite conclusions, but apparently Marduk orders Nabonidus to rebuild the Eḫulḫul in Harran, and Nabonidus protests that “the Medes surround it, and their forces are strong . . . and they have no rival.”¹⁰⁷ Although Cyrus is not mentioned in the preserved portion of the broken text, line 14 mentions “Astyages, the king of the Medes” (*[I]štumegu šar Ummān-manda*) and, following more broken text, the second column apparently records the rebuilding of the Eḫulḫul. Presumably part of the broken text described how Marduk raised up Cyrus as a rival to Astyages when Nabonidus was unable to defeat him and rebuild the Eḫulḫul. Significantly, this inscription is even more effusive in its praise of Marduk than the Dream Text, to the exclusion of Sîn, so much so that Beaulieu concludes it could not have been commissioned by Nabonidus at any point in his reign.¹⁰⁸ Although Beaulieu suggests the inscription could have been produced pseudonymously by Belshazzar while Nabonidus was in Teima, it seems better to understand it as another propaganda piece—this one purporting to be the dedicatory inscription for the Eḫulḫul in Harran, whereas the Dream Text purports to be the dedicatory inscription of the Eulmash at Sippar-Anunītu. It is also significant that the Dream Text and this fragment are the only two extant inscriptions attributed to Nabonidus or Belshazzar that mention Cyrus or Astyages. Extant inscriptions from the reign of Nabonidus that are indisputably genuine say nothing about Cyrus—presumably because, as the Verse Account states, Cyrus destroyed all such texts, which portrayed him negatively. The only surviving cuneiform sources for the reign of Cyrus are propaganda texts commissioned by Cyrus himself, and each of these texts presents Cyrus in a positive light.

Conclusion

The Dream Text has been wrongly considered a genuine inscription of Nabonidus. To regard it as authentic would create too many incongruities with what is known elsewhere about Nabonidus and Cyrus. The Dream Text is actually another piece of Persian propaganda,

¹⁰⁶ Beaulieu, *Reign of Nabonidus*, 240. This inscription was first published by Veysel Donbaz, “Deux nouvelles inscriptions de Nabonide, roi de Babylone,” *Anatolia antiqua* 1 (1987): 15-21. The transliterated text and a German translation is given by Schaudig, who calls it “2.19. Ḫarrān-Zylinder” (Schaudig, *Die Inschriften*, 472-74). Beaulieu refers to this inscription as “Fragment 3” (Beaulieu, *Reign of Nabonidus*, 239-41). See also Thomas G. Lee, “The Jasper Cylinder Seal of Aššurbanipal and Nabonidus’ Making of Sîn’s Statue,” *Revue d’Assyriologie* 87, no. 2 (1993): 132.

¹⁰⁷ This is column i, lines 12-13a. The text given by Schaudig is: [ÉRIN-man-d]a sa-ḫir-šum-ma pu-ug-gu-lu ʾe-mu-qa-a-šúʾ [x x x] ʾxʾ-ma šá-ni-ni ul i-ši. Compare column i, line 23 of the Dream Text.

¹⁰⁸ Beaulieu, *Reign of Nabonidus*, 240.

published by Cyrus around the time that he conquered Babylon, as part of his effort to convince the Babylonians to accept his rule. The text was redacted from genuine inscriptions of Nabonidus, with the most significant editing occurring in the section about Cyrus. Its account of the accession of Cyrus agrees with the other propagandistic inscriptions in the claim that Cyrus supplanted Astyages and took his dominion, but disagrees with the others in the date given for Cyrus' subjugation of the Medes. The point of the propaganda inscriptions is not to tell a perfectly consistent historical narrative, but is rather to consistently present the message that Cyrus' conquests were performed at the command of Marduk in order to protect his honor, and that Cyrus is the friend of Babylon.

A second reason to regard the Dream Text as propaganda, besides the inconsistencies with other texts, is that it is historically implausible that Nabonidus would have viewed Cyrus as a friend after his return from Teima. This was well after the outbreak of open hostilities between Cyrus and the Babylonians, and after Cyrus had already defeated the Babylonian army at least once and had subjugated Babylon's ally Lydia. The historical references in the piece preclude dating the inscription to the early part of the reign of Nabonidus. The only plausible explanation of the section which glorifies Cyrus is that it is representing Cyrus' point of view.

Third, the prominence given to Marduk in the section of the Dream Text which is about Cyrus is incongruous with the religious posture of Nabonidus in the latter period of his reign. However, the description of Cyrus as Marduk's servant fits with the themes of Cyrus' own propaganda campaign, and therefore the most plausible way to explain Marduk's prominence in this section is to attribute its authorship to Cyrus.

It should not be surprising that a forged temple inscription should be used as propaganda, for, as Beaulieu notes, one of the purposes of temple inscriptions was propaganda.¹⁰⁹ The number of extant copies of the Dream Text is itself strong evidence that it was produced to be widely publicized as a propaganda piece. To find seventy-five copies of the same inscription is virtually unheard of; the Cyrus Cylinder is known only from two exemplars (each consisting of two fragments), the Nabonidus Chronicle by one, and the Verse Account by one. The only plausible explanation as to why this text would be copied so many times (more than seventy-five, given the probability that many copies have been lost) is that it was part of a massive propaganda campaign, sponsored by official sources.

If the Dream Text were indisputably a genuine inscription of Nabonidus, its praise of Cyrus for his conquest of the Medes would carry great historical weight. But since, as has been argued, the Dream Text appears to be a propaganda text commissioned by Cyrus, one must express grave doubts regarding the historical claims it makes about Cyrus. These doubts are confirmed by the existence of discrepancies between the Dream Text and other sources for the reign of Cyrus, which results in the conclusion that the Dream Text is untrustworthy as a historical document.

Harran Stele

There is a single extant inscription of Nabonidus which contains a brief notice apparently contradicting the version Cyrus' accession given by Herodotus and the Persian propaganda texts.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 19.

This is a stele which Nabonidus erected at Harran, of which two copies are extant.¹¹⁰ This inscription was commissioned to commemorate Nabonidus' restoration of the Eḫulḫul, the temple of Sîn in Harran, after his return from Teima. The aforementioned "Dream Text" purports to do the same, but there is no reason to question the authenticity of the Harran Stele. Beaulieu dates the inscription to the fourteenth or fifteenth year of Nabonidus (542–540).¹¹¹ The main body of the text consists of a narrative of the reign of Nabonidus, of which the important part for the present study describes how hostile kings invited him to return to Babylonia in the tenth year of his reign (546/5):

... LUGAL KUR *mi-šir* KUR [v. l. URU] *ma-da-a-a* KUR *a-ra-bi u nap-ḫar* LUGAL^{MEŠ} *na-ki-ru-tú a-na su-lum-mu-ú u ṭu-ub-ba-a-ti i-šap-pa-ru-nu a-na maḫ-ri-ia*.¹¹²

... the kings of the land of Egypt, of the land of [v. l. the city of] the Medes, of the land of the Arabs, and all the kings of hostile (lands) were sending to me for peace and good (relations).

Since this text was written long after Cyrus' supposed conquest of Media and usurpation of the king of Media, its reference to a king of the land of the Medes (or "the city of the Medes," referring to Ecbatana) is unexpected. Although Cyrus was supposedly ruling over the Medes, he is elsewhere referred to as the king of Anshan, the ancient capital of his homeland of Persia. This inscription thus apparently recognizes a Median sovereign as late as 546/5, and ranks him with the king of Egypt and the king(s) of the Arabs as among Nabonidus' leading enemies. Had Cyrus subjugated the Medes many years previously and founded a Persian empire, the text should have referred to a king of Anshan, or of the Persians. The Harran Stele thus offers strong support for the existence of Xenophon's Cyaxares II (and Daniel's Darius the Mede) by implying that there was a king of the Medes whom Cyrus did not overthrow.

Dynastic Prophecy

We turn now to a much later, yet most remarkable, cuneiform text—the so-called Dynastic Prophecy. The Dynastic Prophecy, which is contained on a poorly preserved cuneiform tablet (BM 40623), purports to be a prophecy of the rise and fall of dynasties and empires, from the Neo-Babylonian conquest of Assyria to the conflict between Alexander the Great and Darius III, and beyond.¹¹³ The prophecy refers to personages cryptically, but the descriptions are clear

¹¹⁰ For the text and translation, see Schaudig, *Die Inschriften*, 486-99; C. J. Gadd, "The Harran Inscriptions of Nabonidus," *Anatolian Studies* 8 (1958): 35-92. Schaudig lists this text as "3.1. Ḫarrān-Stele"; Beaulieu calls it "Inscription 13." For an additional English translation, see Pritchard, ed., *ANET*, 562-63. It is notable that, although both stelae contain a depiction of Nabonidus in bas-relief, in both of them the king's face has been deliberately damaged—presumably at the order of Cyrus, as recorded in the Verse Account.

¹¹¹ Beaulieu, *Reign of Nabonidus*, 32.

¹¹² In Exemplar 1, this is i 42b-45a. In Exemplar 2, it is i 49–ii 3a.

¹¹³ For an analysis, text, and translation, see Grayson, *Babylonian Historical-Literary Texts*, 24-37. Also see Beaulieu, *Reign of Nabonidus*, 231; William W. Hallo and K. Lawson Younger Jr., eds., *Canonical Compositions from the Biblical World*, vol. 1 of *The Context of Scripture* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 481-82. Grayson notes that it is "not impossible" that the small fragment BM 34903 could be part of the same text (Grayson, *Babylonian Historical-Literary Texts*, 24).

enough to enable precise identifications. The introductory section of the text (i 1-6) is too broken for translation. A horizontal line follows, after which a (purported) prophecy of the fall of Assyria and the ascendance of the Neo-Babylonian Empire is given (i 7-25). After another horizontal line, a lacuna follows, but enough of the next section (ii 1-10) is readable to determine that it ends with a “prediction” of the reigns of Neriglissar and Labashi-Marduk. After another horizontal line, the reign of Nabonidus is described in very negative terms (ii 11-16). The “prophecy” after the next horizontal line describes the rise of Cyrus and his overthrow and forced exile of Nabonidus (ii 17-24). The text then skips ahead to a description of the rise of Darius III to the throne (iii 1-7) and a notation of his five-year reign (iii 8). After a description of the invasion of the Persian Empire by Alexander the Great (iii 9-10), and of the Persian defeat at Issus (iii 11-12), the prophecy describes in glowing terms how Darius will refit his army and, with the gods marching at his side, will crush the Greek army, carry off their booty, and bring peace and prosperity to the land of Akkad while canceling the people’s taxes (iii 13-23). A lacuna follows. A brief section follows which apparently gives short predictions of the reigns of three further kings (iv 1-6). However, most of this section is broken, which makes it difficult to draw any definite conclusions as to its content. Most likely, it gives brief, bogus predictions of a few Persian kings to follow Darius III, so as to disguise to contemporaries the fact that it was a forgery created by the regime of Darius III. The text concludes with the statement that it is a secret of the great gods which may only be shown to the initiated (iv 7-9; cf. Dan 8:26; 12:9-10). The end of the tablet (iv 10-14) is badly broken but evidently is a colophon which purports to give the name of the scribe and the date on which the tablet was composed (both likely bogus).

The Dynastic Prophecy was written by an exceptionally skilled scribe,¹¹⁴ and was evidently commissioned by Darius III as a propaganda piece to rally Mesopotamian support for his battle with Alexander at Gaugamela.¹¹⁵ Evidence that the piece is intended as propaganda is that the reigns of both Nabonidus and Cyrus are described as oppressive to the people of Akkad, after which the prophecy skips all the way to the accession of Darius III and predicts that the people of Akkad will finally enjoy happiness and tax exemption after his great victory over the Greeks. Parallels have been noted between the Dynastic Prophecy and Daniel’s prophecies;¹¹⁶ it appears that the Dynastic Prophecy used Daniel’s prophecies as a pattern because Daniel’s prophecies had come true to date and so were well known (cf. Josephus *Ant.* 11.8.5 [11.337]). However, the Dynastic Prophecy would have been intended as a counter to Daniel’s prophecy of the powerlessness of Persia against Alexander (Dan 8:7-8, 20-21; 11:3).

¹¹⁴ Grayson, *Babylonian Historical-Literary Texts*, 27.

¹¹⁵ This is similar to the view taken by Neujahr, who, however, proposes an unnecessarily complicated scheme of redaction. See Matthew Neujahr, “When Darius Defeated Alexander: Composition and Redaction in the Dynastic Prophecy,” *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 64, no. 2 (2005): 107. To be honest, I am dumbfounded as to why more scholars have not recognized that the Dynastic Prophecy is a Persian propaganda piece; Grayson, for example, says, “I have no answer” for the question as to why the Dynastic Prophecy gives the wrong result for the battle of Gaugamela (Grayson, *Babylonian Historical-Literary Texts*, 26).

¹¹⁶ See Edwin M. Yamauchi, “Hermeneutical Issues in the Book of Daniel,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 23, no. 1 (1980): 15-16. Some parallels include the commands to close up the vision in Daniel 8:26 and 12:9-10, compared with the Dynastic Prophecy’s concluding statement that it is a secret of the great gods which may only be shown to the initiated (iv 7-9); the Dynastic Prophecy’s description of the rise and fall of several empires; the use of what would be archaisms for later readers of the prophecy; and the non-use of personal names of kings in both the Dynastic Prophecy and Daniel’s prophecies.

As no one would argue that the Dynastic Prophecy is a genuine prophecy, the document may safely be dated to the period between the battles of Issus and Gaugamela, that is, 333–331 BC. This was about 200 years after the fall of Babylon, which means that the document does not report firsthand information concerning the reign of Nabonidus and the accession of Cyrus. The description of the reign of Nabonidus (ii 11-16) uses language that is very similar to the Verse Account and the Nabonidus Chronicle, depicting Nabonidus as an evil, impious king. Cyrus (*šar Elamti*, “a king of Elam”) is described as the king who removes Nabonidus from the throne and takes his place as ruler of Akkad (ii 17-24). Unlike in the Cyrus Cylinder, the Verse Account, and the Nabonidus Chronicle, however, Cyrus is also characterized as an oppressor—a king who increases taxes on Akkad and disturbs the land after his removal of Nabonidus. Again, this is likely propaganda to serve the interests of Darius III, who presents himself as the king who will finally remove oppression from the land of Akkad.

Thus, while the Dynastic Prophecy may be taken as supporting Herodotus due to its non-mention of Darius the Mede, the document is too late and propagandistic to be considered a significant witness to the history of Cyrus and Nabonidus. In addition, there is very little information preserved on the tablet concerning the accession of Cyrus, and there are no direct statements concerning Cyrus’ relation to the Medes. It may also be noted that the Dynastic Prophecy contradicts Cyrus’ propaganda texts in two significant ways. First, its presentation of Cyrus as an oppressive ruler indicates that Cyrus’ propaganda texts have, at a minimum, exaggerated the degree of public support which Cyrus enjoyed in Babylonia. Second, the Dynastic Prophecy supports the disputed account of Berossus regarding the forced exile of Nabonidus by Cyrus to a distant land—about which more will be said when the *Babyloniaca* of Berossus is analyzed.

Babylonian Contract Texts

The last cuneiform evidence to be reviewed is not a single specific text, but rather an entire corpus of texts—Babylonian contract literature. Contracts are among the most abundantly attested types of cuneiform texts in existence, with thousands of exemplars, many still unpublished.¹¹⁷ They describe a wide range of everyday legal and commercial transactions, such as marriages, loans, purchases, and legal verdicts. Because of their legal nature, contract texts are often dated—sometimes only with the year noted, but often with the specific month and day of the transaction. Since the ancient Mesopotamians did not use a calendrical system which counted years from a specific beginning point, the year is identified by the year of the current king’s reign. Applied to the issue of Darius the Mede, contract texts are an important primary source. Since they are so abundantly attested, they will show precisely in which month the transition occurred from the reign of Nabonidus to the reign of the/a king (or kings) who succeeded him, and they will give the name(s) and title(s) of the/a successor king (or kings). However, if more than one king succeeded Nabonidus as part of a coregency, the contract texts may not list every coregent. Thus, the contract texts, while important, are insufficient in themselves to provide a

¹¹⁷ For general background information regarding contract texts, see John Huehnergard, *A Grammar of Akkadian*, 2nd ed., Harvard Semitic Studies, ed. Jo Ann Hackett and John Huehnergard (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2005), 113-14.

definitive answer to the problem of Darius the Mede. They only record a fixed day on the calendar for legal purposes, and do not explain the whole historical situation.

Content

An analysis of contract texts shows, apparently, no recognition of Darius the Mede.¹¹⁸ Within three days after the date given for the fall of Babylon in the Nabonidus Chronicle, and five days after the fall of Sippar, an extant contract text from Sippar (BM 56154) is dated to the accession year of Cyrus.¹¹⁹ Another text from Sippar (BM 101100), produced one day later, is also dated to the accession year of Cyrus.¹²⁰ There was a short period after the fall of Babylon during which a few texts continued to be dated by the reign of Nabonidus, but this does not affect the overall picture.¹²¹ In the picture presented by the contract texts, the reign of Cyrus began immediately after the reign of Nabonidus ended. In an older work, Strassmaier published some 384 contract texts dated to the reign of Cyrus,¹²² but many others exist, both published and

¹¹⁸ It is not impossible that there may be cuneiform texts which mention Darius the Mede that have been mistakenly identified by modern scholars with one of the three Persian kings called “Darius.” Any reference to Darius the Mede would have to be very explicit and otherwise unexplainable to be recognized as such by a conventional scholar.

¹¹⁹ According to the most recent analysis of the tablet, it is dated to the nineteenth day of the seventh month of the beginning of the reign of Cyrus. For this date, see Erle Leichty, J. J. Finkelstein, and C. B. F. Walker, *Tablets from Sippar 3*, vol. 8 of *Catalogue of the Babylonian Tablets in the British Museum* (London: British Museum, 1988), 198; T. G. Pinches, ed., *Neo-Babylonian and Achaemenid Economic Texts*, vol. 57 of *Cuneiform Texts from Babylonian Tablets in the British Museum* (London: Trustees of the British Museum, 1982), 717 (plate 242). One may find the same information by searching for “1882,0714.515” on the British Museum’s website (www.britishmuseum.org). But according to Shea, who received information on this then-unpublished text directly from Wiseman, it is probably dated to the twenty-third day of the seventh month of the accession year of Cyrus (William H. Shea, “An Unrecognized Vassal King of Babylon in the Early Achaemenid Period: II,” *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 9 [1971]: 107-9). Shea, citing private communication with Wiseman, reports that the sign for the day is slightly damaged, and could be read in various ways.

¹²⁰ The date is the twentieth day of the seventh month of the beginning of the reign of Cyrus. Information on this text may be found by searching for “1883,0121.2761” on the British Museum’s website (www.britishmuseum.org), or by consulting Leichty, Finkelstein, and Walker, *Tablets from Sippar 3*, 396.

¹²¹ For an analysis, see Richard A. Parker and Waldo H. Dubberstein, *Babylonian Chronology: 626 B.C.–A.D. 75*, Brown University Studies, vol. 19 (Providence, RI: Brown University Press, 1956), 13-14; Vanderhooff, “Liberator or Conqueror,” 352. For the relevant texts, see Raymond Philip Dougherty, *Archives from Erech: Time of Nebuchadrezzar and Nabonidus*, Goucher College Cuneiform Inscriptions, vol. 1 (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1923), 390 (plate 50); J. N. Strassmaier, ed., *Inschriften von Nabonidus, König von Babylon (555–538 v. Chr.)*, 2 vols., *Babylonische Texte* (Leipzig: Eduard Pfeiffer, 1887, 1889), 1054-55.

¹²² J. N. Strassmaier, ed., *Inschriften von Cyrus, König von Babylon (538–529 v. Chr.)*, *Babylonische Texte*, vol. 7 (Leipzig: Eduard Pfeiffer, 1890). Strassmaier’s first text (BM 60744), which he dates to the seventh month of the accession year of Cyrus (the day is illegible), is sometimes cited as another example of a text dated within a few days after the fall of Babylon. However, according to Wiseman, in private communication with Shea, the month is not clearly legible (Shea, “Unrecognized Vassal King: II,” 109). Strangely, Leichty and Grayson date BM 60744 to the sixth month of the accession year of Cyrus (i.e., before the fall of Babylon or Sippar) in Erle Leichty and A. K. Grayson, *Tablets from Sippar 2*, vol. 7 of *Catalogue of the Babylonian Tablets in the British Museum* (London: British Museum, 1987), 20; Leichty, Finkelstein, and Walker, *Tablets from Sippar 3*, 441. This

unpublished.¹²³ These dates span the period from the fall of Babylon until the month when news of Cyrus' death reached Babylonia, about nine years later. There are not, apparently, any texts which name a certain "Darius" as a coregent or associate with Cyrus, though "Cambyses" (probably Cyrus' son; possibly his father) is sometimes named as a coregent during the first full year after the fall of Babylon.¹²⁴ The basic fact that contracts began to be dated by the reign of Cyrus nearly immediately after the fall of Babylon, and that they continued to be dated by his reign until his death nine years later, is not disputed.

Analysis

For Rowley, the contract texts are the trump card in his argument against the identification of Darius the Mede with Cyaxares II. He writes, "No imperial monarch interposed his rule between Nabonidus and Cyrus, for ere the month in which Cyrus entered Babylon had run its course, contracts were being dated by his reign."¹²⁵

However impressive this argument may seem at first glance, it suffers from two faulty assumptions. First, Rowley seems to assume that there could not have been a coregency. He thinks that because the contracts are dated to the reign of Cyrus, Cyrus must have been the only king reigning. This appears to be a careless oversight, since the coregency of Belshazzar with Nabonidus is well attested. Even many of the early contract texts to which Rowley refers are dated by the coregency of both Cyrus and Cambyses. Could not Cyrus (as king of Persia), Cambyses II (as crown prince of Persia), and Darius the Mede (as king of Media) all have been reigning simultaneously?

Second, Rowley seems to assume that the contracts must reflect the official reckoning of the royal court. The book of Daniel itself shows the problem with this assumption, for Daniel dates certain events by the reign of Belshazzar (Dan 7:1; 8:1), whereas contemporary Babylonian contracts, and even building inscriptions commissioned by Belshazzar, are always dated by the reign of Nabonidus.¹²⁶ Although Beaulieu claims on this basis that the book of Daniel is in error, in fact Daniel is being more precise and historically accurate than the inscriptions, which Beaulieu admits are intended to produce the false impression that Nabonidus was the active ruler while in Teima: "The fiction of Nabonidus' full kingship was carried out for the whole period of Belshazzar's regency."¹²⁷ If Babylonian contracts reflected a popular, but technically imprecise, manner of reckoning dates during the reign of the Babylonian king Belshazzar, could they not

date may also be found by searching for "1882,0918.718" on the British Museum's website (www.britishmuseum.org).

¹²³ Shea lists thirteen examples of contracts dated to the short accession year of Cyrus, and thirty-four examples dated to the first year of Cyrus in "Unrecognized Vassal King: II," 107-9.

¹²⁴ See Jerome Peat, "Cyrus 'King of Lands,' Cambyses 'King of Babylon': The Disputed Co-regency," *Journal of Cuneiform Studies* 41, no. 2 (1989): 199-216.

¹²⁵ H. H. Rowley, *Darius the Mede and the Four World Empires in the Book of Daniel: A Historical Study of Contemporary Theories* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press Board, 1935), 43.

¹²⁶ Beaulieu, *Reign of Nabonidus*, 186.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 187.

also be technically imprecise in dates given according to the rule of a foreign empire? The dating of Babylonian contract texts by the reign of Cyrus right from the fall of Babylon simply does not prove that the Median court was not reckoning dates by the reign of Darius the Mede, nor does it prove that Darius the Mede was not the highest ruler in the coregency.

If the argument of this study regarding the identity and position of Darius the Mede is correct, the failure of the contracts to give dates by his reign would be understandable. Cyrus, as coregent with Darius and leader of the Medo-Persian force which conquered Babylon, was evidently hailed as the new king when he entered the city in a carefully choreographed procession, and his entrance was preceded and followed by a heavy propaganda campaign. Certainly the Babylonian populace must have been aware that there was King Darius ruling in Media in association with Cyrus, but Cyrus, the hereditary king of Persia, had taken possession of the city and was ruling it in person. For the Babylonian populace, it was far more natural to see Cyrus as the new king of Babylon than Darius.

As to why extrabiblical texts which reckon dates by the reign of Darius the Mede have not been found, one reason has already been noted: no Median documents whatsoever have been found. The existence of the Medes and their rulers is known only from outside sources. A second reason is that, as Dandamayev notes, "Babylonian cuneiform documents of the first millennium B.C. come mostly from temple and private archives. State archives, which naturally contained primary information on governmental administration, with a few exceptions have not come down to us."¹²⁸ Dandamayev thinks that state records during the Neo-Babylonian and Persian periods were kept in Aramaic and written on leather or papyrus scrolls, which have long since rotted away. Thus, he says, "Our information on the Babylonian administrative system during the Chaldean and Achaemenid Periods is very limited."¹²⁹ The extremely limited nature of extant primary source material is not, of course, merely a problem with regard to the identification of Darius the Mede. It also provides an explanation for the silence of extrabiblical sources with regard to many other subjects in the book of Daniel, including Daniel (Belteshazzar) himself.

Conclusion

The above analysis has found that, while Babylonian contract texts do not recognize Darius the Mede, they nevertheless allow for his existence. They say nothing about Darius the Mede, but they also say nothing about the basic Herodotean claim that Cyrus overthrew Astyages in a coup. What little they do say would be technically true according to any historical scenario. If the historical scenario proposed in this study is correct, the contracts are technically imprecise (because they do not reflect the official reckoning of the Medo-Persian court), but they are not fictional. It is true that Cyrus began to reign over Babylon immediately after the city fell to his army, but it is also true that Darius the Mede and Cambyses began to reign over Babylon at the same time. According to Daniel 5:31(E) / 6:1(MT), the legal head of the Medo-Persian confederation was Darius. While the argument of this study would be easier to make (or unnecessary to make) if the contracts began to be dated by the reign of Darius immediately after

¹²⁸ M. A. Dandamayev, "Neo-Babylonian and Achaemenid State Administration in Mesopotamia," in *Judah and the Judeans in the Persian Period*, ed. Oded Lipschits and Manfred Oeming (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2006), 373.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

the fall of Babylon, it is not surprising that they are dated by the reign of Cyrus (and, in some instances, Cambyses) instead. In the end, the contract texts are inconclusive.

Ctesias

We turn now from cuneiform sources to classical sources. Aside from Herodotus and Xenophon, there are only two other significant classical historians who claim to relate the history of Cyrus from independent primary sources, Ctesias and Berossus. Ctesias was a Greek physician who served in the court of the Persian monarch Artaxerxes II (405/4–359/8 BC). Among other writings, he composed the *Persika* (*Persica*), a 23-volume history of Persia from Neo-Assyrian times until the year 398 BC.¹³⁰ Books 7 to 11 describe the rise of Cyrus to power and the events of his reign. The *Persika* has been lost as an independent work, but a summary of books 7–23 has been preserved in Book 72 of the *Bibliotheca* of Photius (a ninth century patriarch of Constantinople). In addition, scholars generally agree that Nicolaus of Damascus (a friend of Herod the Great) took his story of the rise of Cyrus to power from Ctesias, although Nicolaus does not say this himself.¹³¹ Between Photius, Nicolaus, and scattered references to Ctesias by other writers, enough is said to be able to piece together most of Ctesias' history of Cyrus.

Historical Credibility

Ctesias called Herodotus a liar (ψεύστης), and claimed to be representing historical facts derived from primary sources.¹³² As an insider in the Persian court, Ctesias was well placed to compose a superb history of Persia. Unfortunately, he chose not to do so. Scholars have found that his history is very unreliable, and consists mostly of romantic, gossipy stories and legends.¹³³ Högemann calls Ctesias a “historian in terms of literary genre, but in modern terms a

¹³⁰ For collections of the fragments of Ctesias (and Nicolaus of Damascus), see Jacoby, *Aegypten–Geten: Nr. 608a–708*, 416–517 (num. 688); Felix Jacoby, *Zeitgeschichte: Universalgeschichte und Hellenika: Nr. 64–105*, vol. 2A of *Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker* (Leiden: Brill, 1961), 361–70 (90 F66); Karl Müller, ed., *Ctesiae Cnidii et chronographorum Castoris, Eratosthenis, etc.: Fragmenta dissertatione et notis illustrata*, Herodoti historiarum libri IX, ed. Wilhelm Dindorf (Paris: A. Firmin-Didot, 1928); John Gilmore, ed., *The Fragments of the Persika of Ktesias* (London: MacMillan, 1888). For a French translation of Ctesias, see Janick Auberger, ed., *Ctésias: Histoire des Perses*, *Histoires de l’Orient* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1991). For an English translation, see Lloyd Llewellyn-Jones and James Robson, eds., *Ctesias’ History of Persia: Tales of the Orient*, *Routledge Classical Translations* (New York: Routledge, 2010). For a German translation in parallel with the Greek text, see Friedrich Wilhelm König, *Die Persika des Ktesias von Knidos*, *Archiv für Orientforschung*, vol. 18 (Graz, Austria: Ernst Weidner, 1972).

¹³¹ See the detailed analysis in Hartmut Melchert, “Ktesias’ Persika, Books 7–13” (PhD diss., Brown University, 1996), 20–30.

¹³² So Diodorus of Sicily *Bibliotheca historica* 2.32.4; Photius *Bibliothèque* 35b.35–36a.8.

¹³³ For scholarly evaluations, see, e.g., Alexandru Cizek, “From the Historical Truth to the Literary Convention: The Life of Cyrus the Great Viewed by Herodotus, Ctesias and Xenophon,” *Antiquité classique* 44 (1975): 544; J. M. Cook, “The Rise of the Achaemenids and Establishment of Their Empire,” in *The Median and Achaemenian Periods*, ed. Ilya Gershevitch, vol. 2 of *The Cambridge History of Iran* (Cambridge: Cambridge

novelist.”¹³⁴ There are no outstanding scholars who seek to defend the historical reliability of Ctesias, and those who wonder whether the scholarly evaluations of him are too harsh need only to read the surviving fragments of his works in order to understand why he is considered a novelist. However, given the paucity of extant ancient sources for early Medo-Persian history it is necessary to consult all of the available evidence, and so is necessary to analyze Ctesias.

Contents

Photius states that Ctesias’ account of the accession of Cyrus differs from both Herodotus’ and Xenophon’s in certain respects,¹³⁵ though he does not present a detailed comparison. According to the summary of the *Persika* given by Photius, when Cyrus, who was not related to Astyages, initially launched a coup d’état (the background of which is not supplied by Photius), Astyages fled to Ecbatana and hid himself in the palace, but later surrendered.¹³⁶ Cyrus imprisoned him at first, but later set him free and honored him.¹³⁷ Cyrus also married a daughter of Astyages, Amytis, after executing her husband.¹³⁸ At a later time, when Cyrus attempted to recall Astyages from a distant country, the latter was murdered in a plot, and Cyrus honored him with a grand funeral.¹³⁹ Unfortunately, Photius preserves no record of what Ctesias may have written concerning the Medo-Persian conquest of Babylon. Photius concludes his summary of the life of Cyrus according to Ctesias with the statement that Cyrus reigned for thirty years—one more than Herodotus gives.¹⁴⁰

According to the excerpt of Ctesias given by Nicolaus of Damascus, Cyrus was of common birth; his father was an impoverished thief, his mother a goatherd.¹⁴¹ Being destitute, the boy Cyrus sold himself into slavery to a Median palace employee.¹⁴² Through a series of happenstance and intrigues, Cyrus gradually gained power in the Median court, and received a

University Press, 1985), 205-6; Max Mallowan, “Cyrus the Great (558–529 B.C.),” in *The Median and Achaemenian Periods*, ed. Ilya Gershevitch, vol. 2 of *The Cambridge History of Iran* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 396-97; Melchert, “Books 7-13,” 54-55; Heleen Sancisi-Weerdenburg and Amélie Kuhrt, “Ctesias,” in *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, ed. Simon Hornblower and Antony Spawforth, 4th ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 396; Yamauchi, *Persia and the Bible*, 79.

¹³⁴ Peter Högemann, “Ctesias,” in *Brill’s New Pauly: Encyclopaedia of the Ancient World: Antiquity*, ed. Hubert Cancik, Helmuth Schneider, and Christine F. Salazar, vol. 3 (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 969.

¹³⁵ Jacoby, *Aegypten–Geten: Nr. 608a–708*, 418.3-5 (688 T8).

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 454.14-455.2 (688 F9.1).

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 455.2-5 (688 F9.1).

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 455.5-8 (688 F9.1).

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 456.24-457.7 (688 F9.6).

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 457.28 (688 F9.8); Herodotus 1.214.

¹⁴¹ Jacoby, *Universalgeschichte und Hellenika*, 361.30-362.2 (90 F66.3).

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 361.27-362.15 (90 F66.2-5).

portent of his eventual conquest of an empire.¹⁴³ Cyrus determined to act upon the portent, and plotted an armed revolt against Astyages.¹⁴⁴ Contextually, this was an extremely treacherous act, since Astyages trusted in Cyrus as if he were his own son, while Cyrus lied, broke pledges, enlisted the help of a lowlife named Oebaras, and was complicit in the murder of his Chaldean friend and advisor. After Cyrus went to Persia to lead the revolt, and his plans became known to Astyages, a series of battles ensued—first, a cavalry clash, then a major battle in which the Persians killed large numbers of Medes, then a second battle in which the Persians retreated, then further battles around Pasargadae which yielded mixed results.¹⁴⁵ Somehow rumors were started which led most of the Median governors to defect to Cyrus with their troops, and Astyages was easily defeated and captured.¹⁴⁶ The extant portions of Nicolaus do not provide a further account of the reign of Cyrus.

Little is added by other excerpters. According to Diodorus of Sicily (first century BC), Ctesias described how Cyrus defeated Astyages, and how his kingdom passed to the Persians.¹⁴⁷ According to the twelfth century AD Byzantine scholar Johannes Tzetzes, Ctesias claimed that Cyrus made Astyages the governor of Bactria after deposing him.¹⁴⁸ According to Photius' excerption of Ctesias, Astyages was in "Barcania" when Cyrus sent to recall him just before his murder—by which name Photius (or Ctesias) apparently meant "Hyrcania," a province which was near Bactria.¹⁴⁹

Evaluation

Ctesias agrees with Herodotus that Cyrus overthrew the last Median king well before the fall of Babylon, and thereby ended the Median dynasty. However, the story of how he did this, and of the relation of Cyrus to Astyages, differs considerably. It should be remembered that Herodotus said he had knowledge of four different versions of the Cyrus story, and that he told only one of the four.¹⁵⁰ Apparently two of the other three versions of the rise of Cyrus are given by Xenophon and Ctesias, presumably with some modifications by each author. At least three of the four stories of Cyrus known by Herodotus must have contained significant deviations from what actually happened. Thus, it seems that legends had grown up around the heroic figure of Cyrus according to stereotypical ancient Near Eastern models. Drews argues that Ctesias' story of the rise of Cyrus is a recast form of the legend of Sargon of Akkad, which first appears in

¹⁴³ Ibid., 362.15-363.8 (90 F66.6-10). A characteristically bizarre aspect of the story is that the portent was interpreted by the leading Chaldean in Babylon, who then became a companion of Cyrus!

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 363.9-366.14 (90 F66.11-23).

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 366.15-370.9 (90 F66.24-44).

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 370.10-24 (90 F66.45).

¹⁴⁷ Diodorus of Sicily *Bibliotheca historica* 2.34.6.

¹⁴⁸ Jacoby, *Aegypten-Geten: Nr. 608a-708*, 455.2-5 (688 F9a).

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 456.24-25 (688 F9.6).

¹⁵⁰ Herodotus 1.95.

seminal form in the Sumerian King List and becomes more developed over time;¹⁵¹ Melchert points to possible connections with Iranian epic traditions.¹⁵²

Some scholars see additional motives at play in Ctesias' story of the rise of Cyrus. According to Högemann, Ctesias possessed a "capricious zeal" to discredit Herodotus by presenting everything differently than him.¹⁵³ Melchert's analysis reached the same conclusion.¹⁵⁴ Waterhouse argues that Ctesias was an official propagandist for the Persian monarch Artaxerxes II, who very nearly lost the throne to his brother Cyrus the Younger, and who therefore wished to smear the reputation of Cyrus the Great.¹⁵⁵ Hirsch makes an argument similar to that made by Waterhouse, noting that Artaxerxes II went so far as to claim in his own inscriptions that the father and grandfather of Darius Hystaspes were kings of Persia—implying that Cyrus was not from the legitimate line of kings.¹⁵⁶ Mallowan agrees: "his story was merely aimed at discrediting the line of Cyrus and justifying the seizure of the throne by Darius" in order to discredit the propaganda claims of Cyrus the Younger.¹⁵⁷

Conclusion

Since the *Persika* is universally regarded as untrustworthy, its disagreements with Xenophon carry little historical weight. Ctesias is, after all, largely in disagreement with Herodotus as well, aside from the basic claim of a coup d'état by Cyrus against Astyages. However, his account does reinforce the picture of a very confused historical tradition regarding the circumstances of the rise of Cyrus to power, as well as of considerable variation among the sources which claim that Cyrus put an end to the Median dynasty by overthrowing Astyages.

Berosus

Another classical historian who relates a significant history of Babylon and Persia from primary sources is Berosus (Berosus, Berossos). Although Berosus is considered an important and independent source for Babylonian history, little is known with certainty about the man and his work. According to Tatian, Berosus was a priest of Bel/Marduk in Babylon (and therefore probably at the temple complex of Esagil) who was born during the reign of Alexander the Great

¹⁵¹ Robert Drews, "Sargon, Cyrus and Mesopotamian Folk History," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 33, no. 4 (1974): 387-93. For the legend of Sargon of Akkad, see Foster, ed., *Before the Muses*, 912-13.

¹⁵² Melchert, "Books 7-13," 36-40.

¹⁵³ Högemann, "Ctesias," 970.

¹⁵⁴ Melchert, "Books 7-13," 38-39, 182-83.

¹⁵⁵ Waterhouse, "Darius the Mede," 176-77.

¹⁵⁶ Steven W. Hirsch, *The Friendship of the Barbarians: Xenophon and the Persian Empire* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1985), 34.

¹⁵⁷ Mallowan, "Cyrus the Great (558-529 B.C.)," 396-97.

(331–323 BC).¹⁵⁸ Tatian also reports that Berossus composed a history of Babylonia in three volumes (τὴν Χαλδαίων ἱστορίαν ἐν τρισὶ βιβλίοις) for the Seleucid king Antiochus I (281–261).¹⁵⁹ According to Vitruvius, Berossus eventually took up residence on the island of Cos in the Mediterranean (then under the rule of Ptolemaic Egypt), where he is said to have opened a school of astrology.¹⁶⁰

The Babyloniaca

The work for which Berossus is famous (known to modern scholars by its probable original title of *Babyloniaca*) was written in Greek and described Babylonian history in considerable detail from its mythical beginnings to the start of the Hellenistic period. Though a historical work by genre, the *Babyloniaca* shows more of an apologetic purpose (to change Greek attitudes about Babylonian culture) than a historical one (to teach the Greeks about Babylonian history). Unfortunately, the *Babyloniaca* is no longer extant as originally written.¹⁶¹ Fragments exist, but it appears that nearly all surviving fragments of the *Babyloniaca* do not preserve the text exactly as Berossus wrote it. Most are based on an abridgment of the text (with minor changes) by Alexander Polyhistor (first century BC); or, in some cases, on an abridgment by Juba of Mauretania (ca. 50 BC–ca. AD 23).¹⁶² In addition, Poseidonios of Apamea (first century BC) excerpted some astronomical and astrological material from Berossus. None of these three abridgments survives directly, however. Poseidonios of Apamea is sparingly quoted by a handful of pagan writers. Josephus (late first century AD) and Abydenus (second century AD) transmit some material quoted from Polyhistor, with abridgments and possible interpolations of their own.¹⁶³ The fragments of Abydenus are, in turn, preserved mainly in quotations found in the *Chronicle* and *Preparation for the Gospel* of Eusebius (early fourth century AD). Eusebius may also quote directly from Polyhistor in places, though in an abridged

¹⁵⁸ Tatian *Oratio ad Graecos* 36.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁰ Vitruvius *On Architecture* 9.2.1; 9.6.2.

¹⁶¹ For a discussion of the history of the transmission of the *Babyloniaca*, see Stanley Mayer Burstein, ed., *The Babyloniaca of Berossus*, Sources from the Ancient Near East, ed. Giorgio Buccellati, Marilyn Kelly-Buccellati, and Piotr Michalowski, vol. 1.5 (Malibu, CA: Undena, 1978), 6, 10–11; Gerald P. Verbrugghe and John M. Wickersham, eds., *Berossos and Manetho, Introduced and Translated: Native Traditions in Ancient Mesopotamia and Egypt* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1996), 27–31. These two works also give an English translation of the fragments of Berossus. For a critical edition of these fragments, see Jacoby, *Aegypten–Geten*: Nr. 608a–708, 364–97 (num. 680).

¹⁶² For the fragments of Alexander Polyhistor, see Felix Jacoby, *Geschichte von Staedten und Voelkern (Horographie und Ethnographie): Autoren ueber verschiedene Staedte (Laender): Aegypten–Geten Nr. 262–296 Text*, vol. 3A of *Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker* (Leiden: Brill, 1954), 96–126 (num. 273). For the fragments of Juba of Mauretania, see *ibid.*, 127–55 (num. 275).

¹⁶³ For the fragments of Abydenus (Abydenos), see Jacoby, *Aegypten–Geten*: Nr. 608a–708, 398–410 (num. 685).

form. A few other small fragments of the *Babyloniaca* survive through quotations by various writers, once again following a twisted path of excerpts from excerpters.¹⁶⁴

According to Burstein, Eusebius' *Chronicle* is "our principal witness for books one and two of the *Babyloniaca*."¹⁶⁵ The *Chronicle*, a universal and comprehensive chronology of world history, also does not survive as originally written.¹⁶⁶ The *Chronicle* was redacted in several forms and translated into several languages soon after the death of Eusebius, and some scholars argue that it was revised by Eusebius himself during his lifetime. There are only fragmentary remains of the original Greek text, but an ancient Armenian translation (dating at least as early as AD 600) preserves most of both volumes of the *Chronicle*.¹⁶⁷ To summarize the situation, the Armenian translation is the only extant witness for the quotations of Berossus in the *Chronicle*.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁴ For charts, see Paul Schnabel, *Berossos und die babylonisch-hellenistische Literatur* (Leipzig: B. G. Teubner, 1923), 110, 168, 171.

¹⁶⁵ Burstein, ed., *The Babyloniaca of Berossus*, 11.

¹⁶⁶ For an analysis of the *Chronicle* and its confused history of transmission and scholarly reconstruction, see Mosshammer, *Greek Chronographic Tradition*, 21-83. Note, however, that Mosshammer's concern is with Greek chronography, rather than Mesopotamian historiography. For this reason, he is more concerned with the reconstruction of the *Chronicle* than with the reconstruction of Berossus. Mosshammer focuses on the second volume of the *Chronicle*, whereas all the quotations of Berossus are in the first volume.

¹⁶⁷ There is one published edition of the Armenian text of the *Chronicle*, in parallel with a Latin translation: Iohannis Baptistae Aucher Ancyrani, ed., *Eusebii Pamphili chronicon bipartitum* (Venice: Typis Coenobii PP. Armenorum in Insula S. Lazari, 1818). It is regrettable that Aucher was not permitted to work directly from the only Armenian manuscript of the *Chronicle* then known; his edition was made from a hand copy of that manuscript. Since few scholars can read Armenian, and other Armenian manuscripts have since been discovered and studied, most work from Karst's German translation, which was made from a photographic facsimile of the best Armenian manuscript of the *Chronicle*: Josef Karst, ed., *Die Chronik aus dem Armenischen übersetzt mit textkritischem Commentar*, vol. 5 of *Eusebius Werke*, Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten drei Jahrhunderte, vol. 20 (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1911). Karst's edition also has the advantage of preserving, as exactly as possible, the format and pagination of the Armenian original. Other translations of the *Chronicle* will be cited in the discussion which follows, but Karst's is the most recent and most highly regarded.

¹⁶⁸ The *Chronicle* was composed in two volumes: the first contained the raw material for constructing a chronology (the *Chronographia*), while the second contained the actual chronological tables themselves (the *Chronological Canons*). The first volume, which consists of excerpts from various ancient writers, is the one that is significant for reconstructing Berossus. It is this volume for which the Armenian translation is the only extant witness. The Armenian translation is complete, except for a few missing pages at the end. Studies have found that the Armenian version was, for this first volume, translated directly from a Greek text (Mosshammer, *Greek Chronographic Tradition*, 59). For the second volume, consisting of a world chronology in tabular form, there exists, in addition to the Armenian translation (which shows some Syriac influence in this volume), a Latin translation/redaction from Jerome, which some scholars think was revised in stages by Jerome during his lifetime. For Jerome's version of the *Chronicle*, see Rudolf Helm, ed., *Die Chronik des Hieronymus*, 2nd ed., vol. 7 of *Eusebius Werke*, Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten Jahrhunderte, vol. 47 (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1956). There are, as well, other fragmentary witnesses to the *Chronological Canons* in various languages, through various redactions, but the Armenian translation and Jerome's Latin translation are the two primary witnesses. There are many theories regarding the composition of the *Chronicle*, its original format, and possible editions produced by Eusebius and/or later translators. Almost all of the hypothesized editing work is, however, for the second volume only. No scholar has found cause to dispute the idea that the Armenian version accurately translates the first volume of the *Chronicle* from a Greek text that is essentially unchanged from what Eusebius originally wrote.

The text-critical position of the *Babyloniaca* is thus nearly as complex as could be imagined. The greater part of the extant *Babyloniaca* has been pieced together from an Armenian translation of Eusebius' *Chronicle*, which contains material abridged from Abydenus, which was abridged from Alexander Polyhistor, which was abridged from Berossus. In addition, there exists the Greek text of certain passages in Josephus, which are an abridgment of Alexander Polyhistor, which are an abridgment of Berossus. Not only are the preserved portions of the *Babyloniaca* abridgments, they are also fragmentary in the sense that they do not cover the complete contents of the *Babyloniaca*, but only selected portions of interest. Many capable scholars have expended much time and energy to try to piece the *Babyloniaca* back together, but what is really needed to resolve the problem is the discovery of manuscripts of the *Babyloniaca* itself. Such a discovery does not seem promising, however, due to the essential neglect of the *Babyloniaca* by its original Hellenistic audience.¹⁶⁹

Sources

Scholars believe that Berossus relied primarily on Babylonian sources, such as cuneiform records stored in the Esagil, to compose the *Babyloniaca*.¹⁷⁰ It is generally agreed that Berossus accurately reports authentic Mesopotamian traditions, which of course must be subjected to historical criticism. Not enough is known about Berossus and the *Babyloniaca* to identify more specifically the sources he used to compose his account of the end of the Neo-Babylonian Empire. However, it appears as though he followed sources of a different historical tradition than the extant cuneiform inscriptions, for he says nothing (in the extant excerpts) of the ten-year hiatus of Nabonidus in Teima, or of his alleged failure to honor Marduk. Berossus also includes additional details regarding the fall of Babylon which are not found in extant contemporary inscriptions, though one key point is corroborated by the Dynastic Prophecy. It is to an analysis of these details that we now turn.

The "Darius the King" Text

The excerpt of Berossus which concerns the fall of Babylon in 539 BC is presented below. Most of the quotation is given in Greek, from Josephus, with the exception of a single sentence found only in the parallel quotation from Berossus in the Armenian *Chronicle* of Eusebius, which is given in Karst's German translation (reprinted by Jacoby):

οὔσης δὲ τῆς βασιλείας αὐτοῦ ἐν τῷ ἑπτακαιδεκάτῳ ἔτει προεξεληλυθῶς Κῦρος ἐκ τῆς Περσίδος μετὰ δυνάμεως πολλῆς [καί] (v. l. omits) καταστρεψάμενος τὴν λοιπὴν βασιλείαν πᾶσαν ὄρμησεν ἐπὶ τῆς Βαβυλωνίας.⁽¹⁵¹⁾ αἰσθόμενος δὲ Ναβόννηδος τὴν ἔφοδον αὐτοῦ, ἀπαντήσας μετὰ τῆς δυνάμεως καὶ παραταξάμενος, ἠττηθεὶς τῇ μάχῃ καὶ φυγὼν ὀλιγοστὸς συνεκλείσθη εἰς τὴν Βορσιπηνῶν πόλιν.⁽¹⁵²⁾ Κῦρος δὲ Βαβυλῶνα καταλαβόμενος καὶ συντάξας τὰ ἔξω τῆς πόλεως τεῖχη κατασκάψαι διὰ τὸ λίαν αὐτῷ πραγματικὴν καὶ δυσάλωτον φανῆναι τὴν πόλιν ἀνέζευξεν ἐπὶ Βορσίπων ἐκπολιορκήσων τὸν Ναβόννηδον.⁽¹⁵³⁾ τοῦ δὲ Ναβοννήδου οὐχ ὑπομείναντος τὴν

¹⁶⁹ On the reception of the *Babyloniaca*, see Verbrugge and Wickersham, eds., *Berossos and Manetho*, 31-33; Burstein, ed., *The Babyloniaca of Berossus*, 8-10.

¹⁷⁰ Beaulieu, *Reign of Nabonidus*, 88; Verbrugge and Wickersham, eds., *Berossos and Manetho*, 15-24.

πολιορκίαν ἄλλ' ἐγχειρίσαντος αὐτὸν πρότερον, χρησάμενος Κύρος φιλανθρώπως καὶ δοῦς οἰκητήριον αὐτῷ Καρμανίαν ἐξέπεμψεν ἐκ τῆς Βαβυλωνίας. Darius der König riß von seiner Provinz einiges an sich. Ναβόννηδος μὲν οὖν τὸ λοιπὸν τοῦ χρόνου διαγενόμενος ἐν ἐκείνῃ τῇ χώρᾳ κατέστρεψε τὸν βίον.¹⁷¹

But it came to pass in the seventeenth year of his [Nabonidus'] reign, that Cyrus came out of Persia with a great army; and having subdued all the rest of his kingdom, he rushed upon Babylonia. And when Nabonidus learned of his attack, he met [him] with his army and joined battle, and was defeated in the battle; and, fleeing with a few [troops], he was confined within the city of the Borsippans. Then Cyrus seized Babylon, and ordered the outer walls of the city to be torn down, because the city had been very troublesome to him, and seemed hard to conquer. He then marched against Borsippa to force Nabonidus to capitulate. But Nabonidus did not wait out the siege, but gave himself up. Cyrus at first treated him kindly, and, giving a residence to him in Carmania, sent him out of Babylonia. (*But Darius the king took away some of his province for himself.* [v. l.—(But) Darius the king kept him out of that province.] So Nabonidus passed the rest of his time in that land and died.

Unlike the contemporary inscriptions, Berossus affirms that after Cyrus took Babylon, he marched to Borsippa to besiege Nabonidus, but Nabonidus surrendered and was exiled by Cyrus to the province of Carmania. Karst's translation of the Armenian indicates that Cyrus did not merely exile Nabonidus to Carmania, but actually appointed him the titular governor of that province. Evidence that Berossus gives reliable information concerning the fate of Nabonidus comes from the Dynastic Prophecy, which alludes to the forced exile of Nabonidus by Cyrus to a distant Persian province.¹⁷² Beaulieu is impressed enough by the agreement of these two witnesses to take it as conclusive proof of the fate of Nabonidus, while he acknowledges that Xenophon and Daniel agree that Belshazzar was killed in Babylon.¹⁷³ The exile of Nabonidus to Carmania may also provide a potential origin for Ctesias' claim that Cyrus made Astyages ruler of Bactria (near Carmania) after deposing him.¹⁷⁴

For the present study, however, the most significant line in the passage quoted above is the one which occurs only in the Armenian text of Eusebius' *Chronicle*, referring to the actions of a certain "King Darius," who either took for himself part of the province which Cyrus (whom he does not call "king") had given to Nabonidus, or else barred Nabonidus from entering the

¹⁷¹ Josephus *Against Apion* 1.150-53 (1.20); Jacoby, *Aegypten–Geten: Nr. 608a–708*, 409.3-4 (685 F6.14); Karst, *Die Chronik*, 20, 246. The full sentence in Karst's translation is, "Diesem gewährte Kyros, als er Babelon eingenommen hatte, die Markgrafschaft des Landes der Kermanen; Darius der König riß von seiner Provinz einiges an sich." ("To this one Cyrus gave, when he had taken Babylon, the governorship of the land of the Carmanians; [but] Darius the king took away some of his province for himself.") Karst also notes an alternate translation of the final clause (after König), based on a proposed emendation of the Armenian that he thinks gives a better sense of the hypothetical Greek *Vorlage*: "schloß ihn von seiner Provinz aus" ("[but] Darius the king kept him out of that province"). In his English translation of Berossus, Burstein brackets the statement concerning King Darius to indicate that it is in the Armenian text of the *Chronicle*, but not in the parallel Greek witnesses. Verbrugghe and Wickersham do not include this line at all in their translation, presumably because Jacoby places it under the collection of fragments of Abydenus, rather than of Berossus. Assuming that Berossus was the original author of the line, it could be considered as belonging to the writings of four different ancient authors—Berossus, Alexander Polyhistor, Abydenus, and Eusebius.

¹⁷² Dynastic Prophecy ii 20-21 in Grayson, *Babylonian Historical-Literary Texts*, 32-33.

¹⁷³ Beaulieu, *Reign of Nabonidus*, 231.

¹⁷⁴ Jacoby, *Aegypten–Geten: Nr. 608a–708*, 455.2-5 (688 F9a).

province.¹⁷⁵ If this statement is authentic, Berossus speaks of a “King Darius” who was on the throne of the Medo-Persian Empire at the time of Babylon’s fall, and who had the authority to override Cyrus’ edicts. It is obvious that such a statement would directly corroborate the book of Daniel. It would indirectly corroborate Xenophon, as well, by presenting the picture of a Median monarch who exercised authority over distant provinces (not just Babylonia—unlike Gubaru), and who was distinct from and of higher authority than Cyrus. Such a picture does not fit with any of the proposed harmonizations of the book of Daniel with Herodotus, but it does fit with the proposal to identify Darius the Mede with Xenophon’s Cyaxares II.

As already indicated, however, the complex text-critical situation of the *Babyloniaca* raises questions as to whether the statement concerning King Darius was actually written by Berossus, or whether it may have been added by a later excerpter or copyist. This key statement is contained only in Eusebius’ *Chronicle* (and therefore only in Armenian), and not in an excerpt of the same passage from Berossus in Eusebius’ *Preparation for the Gospel* (9.40-41/455-57),¹⁷⁶ or in the Greek text of Josephus quoted above.

While the text-critical question cannot be answered with certainty, the balance of probabilities favors the authenticity of the line in question. Contextually, the word *πρότερον* (*at first*) seems to anticipate just such a change in Nabonidus’ treatment as the disputed sentence describes. But it is easy to see why an excerpter—whether it be Alexander Polyhistor, Josephus, or a later scribe—would omit this sentence as superfluous. It is harder to understand why the clause would have been added if it were not in the original text of the *Babyloniaca*. A Jewish or Christian apologist, for example, who wished to defend the existence of Darius the Mede against critics, would explicitly call him “Darius the Mede,” and would probably give some sort of explanation as to who he was. And why would a pagan author even think to add such an offhanded remark, with no explanation (in the extant excerpts) as to who this King Darius was? The simplest explanation is that the statement was part of the original text of the *Babyloniaca*. Kuhrt has shown, by a comparison of parallel quotations, that Berossus presented a very detailed history of Persia in the *Babyloniaca*, of which only a bare summary has been preserved by Eusebius.¹⁷⁷ It is not impossible that Berossus originally supplied more information about this

¹⁷⁵ For the Armenian text of the line with a Latin translation, see Aucher Ancyrani, ed., *Eusebii Pamphili chronicon bipartitum*, 61. For the Armenian text of the line with an alternate German translation, see J. Marquart, “Untersuchung zur Geschichte von Eran (II),” *Philologus: Zeitschrift für das classische Altertum: Supplementband X 1* (1905): 145. For Latin translations of the passage, see J.-P. Migne, ed., *Eusebii Pamphili, Cæsareæ Palæstinæ episcopi, opera omnia quæ exstant*, vol. 1, *Patrologiæ cursus completus: Series Græca: Patrologiæ Græcæ*, vol. 19 ([Paris], 1857), 126; Angelus Maius and Iohannes Zohrabus, eds., *Eusebii Pamphili chronicorum canonum libri duo* (Milan: Regiis Typis, 1818), 28; Alfred Schoene, ed., *Eusebii chronicorum libri duo: Liber prior* (Berlin: Weidmannos, 1875), 41. Schnabel labels this as “Fragment 53” in his edition of Berossus (Schnabel, *Berossos*, 274).

¹⁷⁶ For a critical edition of the Greek text of the passage in the *Preparation of the Gospel*, see Karl Mras and Édouard des Places, eds., *Die Praeparatio Evangelica: Erster Teil: Einleitung, die Bücher I bis X*, 2nd ed., vol. 8 of *Eusebii Werke*, Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten Jahrhunderte (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1982), 550-52. For an English translation, see Edwin Hamilton Gifford, trans. and ed., *Eusebius: Preparation for the Gospel*, vol. 1 (Oxford: Clarendon, 1903; repr., Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981), 456-57. For a French translation in parallel with the Greek text, see Édouard des Places and Guy Schroeder, eds., *Eusèbe de Césarée: La préparation évangélique, livres VIII-IX-X*, Sources chrétiennes, vol. 369 (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1991), 336-41.

¹⁷⁷ Amélie Kuhrt, “Berossus’ *Babyloniaca* and Seleucid Rule in Babylonia,” in *Hellenism in the East: The Interaction of Greek and Non-Greek Civilizations from Syria to Central Asia after Alexander*, ed. Amélie Kuhrt and Susan Sherwin-White (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 45-46.

King Darius, including his relation to Cyrus, and that this was entirely cut out by Alexander Polyhistor. The single preserved sentence about Darius would make more sense in such a context. As for Berossus, he appears to have had access to reliable and detailed sources for the history of the period,¹⁷⁸ and there is no obvious reason why he would have concocted such a statement of his own accord. If the statement were added by an excerpter, it could still be true, of course, but it would have significantly less credibility.

Marquart says of the statement concerning King Darius that it “ist rätselhaft” (is enigmatical).¹⁷⁹ Beaulieu wonders whether the statement may be a gloss, but suggests that the Darius in question could be Darius Hystaspes.¹⁸⁰ By his own admission, however, Nabonidus was between sixty-five and seventy years old when he became king in 556,¹⁸¹ which means that he would have been between 99 and 104 years old when Darius Hystaspes ascended to the throne in 522, if he were still alive (possible, but unlikely). In addition, the mention of “King Darius” is in the context of the fall of Babylon, and before Berossus concludes his account of the reign of Cyrus, or even of the career of Nabonidus. The actions of this “King Darius” are presented as occurring almost immediately after Nabonidus was sent to Carmania. Thus, Berossus seems to believe that there was a “King Darius” who was reigning concurrently with Cyrus, and who had greater authority than Cyrus within the Medo-Persian Empire. From a historical point of view, Daniel’s Darius the Mede (as Cyaxares II) corresponds very well to this “King Darius,” whereas Darius Hystaspes does not fit at all.

Conclusion

Two conclusions may be drawn from the review of the evidence above. First, if the statement in the *Babyloniaca* may be regarded as part of the original text composed by Berossus, it offers very strong corroboration for the identification of Daniel’s Darius the Mede with Xenophon’s Cyaxares II, and for the existence of both (for those who are not convinced from the Bible). Berossus was an independent, well-placed source, and his history of the Neo-Babylonian period is respectably accurate. He lived and wrote in the Hellenistic period, about 250 years after the fall of Babylon, which gives sufficient distance to mitigate potential biases and political agendas with respect to Cyrus and Nabonidus. He was also a pagan priest, and therefore had no agenda to corroborate the book of Daniel. Thus, this single remark by Berossus carries significant weight, even when judged against the earlier and lengthier texts which do not recognize Darius the Mede.

The second conclusion is that the potential strength of this evidence is weakened somewhat by text-critical issues of rare complexity, involving an incredibly convoluted history of transmission (and history of modern scholarly reconstruction) for two ancient works which are no longer extant as originally written—the *Babyloniaca* of Berossus, and the *Chronicle* of

¹⁷⁸ See *ibid.*, 46.

¹⁷⁹ Marquart, “Geschichte von Eran (II),” 145.

¹⁸⁰ Beaulieu, *Reign of Nabonidus*, 231.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 77, 83.

Eusebius.¹⁸² While there is no obvious reason why a scribe would have added the statement regarding “King Darius” as a gloss, and it is easy to see why a redactor would remove it as apparently out of place, its authenticity cannot be proved with certainty from the evidence presently available. We may hope that there will be a discovery in the future of a Greek manuscript of the *Babyloniaca* which will allow the authenticity of this important statement finally to be resolved.

Thucydides

Thucydides (ca. 460–ca. 400 BC), the classical historian who composed the *History of the Peloponnesian War*, wrote during the decades between Herodotus and Xenophon.¹⁸³ Thucydides does not comment at length on the life of Cyrus, though he does call Cyrus “the first king of the Persians” (Περσῶν πρώτου βασιλεύοντος).¹⁸⁴ This seems to imply agreement with the version of the Cyrus story found in Herodotus, in which Cyrus leads the Persians in a revolt against the Medes and deposes the Median king. However, in the Cyrus Cylinder, Cyrus claims to be from an eternal line of kingship,¹⁸⁵ and Xenophon claims that Cambyses, the father of Cyrus, was king of the Persians.¹⁸⁶ Thucydides is therefore not technically correct to call Cyrus the first king of the Persians. Thucydides also incorrectly affirms that Darius Hystaspes succeeded Cambyses,¹⁸⁷ which may indicate that his knowledge of early Persian history was incomplete.

In the only other paragraph in the *History of the Peloponnesian War* that mentions Cyrus the Great, Thucydides attributes the conquest of Asia Minor to “Cyrus and Persia” (Κῦρος καὶ ἡ Περσικῆ).¹⁸⁸ According to Xenophon, Cyrus did indeed conquer Asia Minor, but he acted as part of a Medo-Persian confederacy. Agreement with Herodotus therefore seems to be implied once again.

Although Thucydides was an early and important classical historian, he did not compose a history of the origins of the (Medo-)Persian Empire. His work was narrowly focused on recent Greek history. Although contemporary Persian kings played a peripheral role in this history, the founders of the empire did not. Thucydides therefore had no reason to do significant research on

¹⁸² The chain of transmission appears to have been: Berossus → Alexander Polyhistor → Abydenus → Eusebius → Armenian translation, with possible editing (and the normal process of copying manuscripts) at each step in the chain.

¹⁸³ According to Hornblower, Thucydides began to write in 431 BC, and his work probably records events as late as 397 (Simon Hornblower, “Thucydides [2] of Athens,” in *Brill’s New Pauly: Encyclopaedia of the Ancient World: Antiquity*, ed. Hubert Cancik, Helmuth Schneider, and Christine F. Salazar, vol. 14 [Leiden: Brill, 2009], 632-33).

¹⁸⁴ Thucydides *History of the Peloponnesian War* 1.13.6.

¹⁸⁵ See lines 20-22 of the Cyrus Cylinder, in Schaudig, *Die Inschriften*, 552-53.

¹⁸⁶ Xenophon *Cyropaedia* 1.2.1; 1.5.4.

¹⁸⁷ Thucydides *History of the Peloponnesian War* 1.14.2.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 1.16. The Cyrus who is mentioned in 2.65.12 is Cyrus the Younger.

early Persian history. It is unsurprising that he appears to follow Herodotus' version of this history, since the *Histories* was published while Thucydides was writing. It is equally unsurprising that Thucydides does not follow Xenophon's version of the Cyrus story, since Xenophon did not begin to write the *Cyropaedia* until after Thucydides' death. Since Thucydides' passing comments about Cyrus appear to represent secondary information taken from Herodotus, they are relatively insignificant as support for the Herodotean version of the accession of Cyrus.

Aristotle

The great Greek philosopher Aristotle (384–322 BC) lived at the end of the Persian period, and saw the fall of the Persian Empire to the armies of his one-time pupil Alexander the Great. Since Aristotle was not primarily a historian, his extant works do not contain any detailed account of Cyrus' rise to power. He does, however, make a brief comment in his *Politics* which is relevant for the present study.

καὶ οἱ οἰόμενοι δύνασθαι κατασχεῖν τὴν ἀρχὴν τρόπον τινὰ διὰ τὸ καταφρονεῖν ἐπιτίθενται· ὡς δυνάμενοι γὰρ καὶ καταφρονοῦντες τοῦ κινδύνου διὰ τὴν δύναμιν ἐπιχειροῦσι ῥαδίως, ὥσπερ οἱ στρατηγοῦντες τοῖς μονάρχοις, οἷον Κῦρος Ἀστυάγῃ καὶ τοῦ βίου καταφρονῶν καὶ τῆς δυνάμεως διὰ τὸ τὴν μὲν δύναμιν ἐξήρηκέναι αὐτὸν δὲ τρυφᾶν, καὶ Σεύθης ὁ Θρᾶξ Ἀμαδόκῳ στρατηγὸς ὄν.¹⁸⁹

And as for those who seem to have the power to seize the government, they attack because of a certain manner of disdain: for having power, and despising the danger because of their power, they attack lightheartedly, as generals who [attack] their monarchs; for instance, Cyrus [attacked] Astyages when he despised both his manner of living and his power, because his power had languished, while he himself lived wantonly; and the Thracian Seuthes [attacked] Amadocus when he was his general.

In this comment, Aristotle follows Herodotus in affirming that Cyrus attacked and overthrew Astyages. He diverges significantly from Herodotus, however, in portraying Cyrus as an army commander for Astyages *before* he overthrew the Median monarch. This is much different from Herodotus' presentation of Cyrus as a man of no repute and an outcast who suddenly organized a Persian revolt in response to attempts on his life by Astyages. Aristotle portrays Astyages as a weak king who was susceptible to a coup, which Cyrus attempted out of contempt, rather than revenge or self-defense. It seems, then, that Aristotle's version of events combines aspects of Herodotus with aspects of Xenophon. Some characteristics of Xenophon's Cyaxares II appear to have been transferred to Astyages, such as his weakness in the shadow of Cyrus, and his appointment of Cyrus to lead his armies. And, as in Herodotus, the decision of the Median army to side with Cyrus over Cyaxares in their quarrel seems to be distorted into an outright coup in which Cyrus deposed Astyages. Perhaps Aristotle was familiar with another of the four versions of the Cyrus story that were known to Herodotus.

¹⁸⁹ Aristotle *Politics* 5.8.15 (1312 a 8-15).

Harpocraton

Some modern scholars favor the view that the Persian gold coin called the *Δαρεικός* (*daric*) by the Greeks takes its name from the Persian throne name “Darius.”¹⁹⁰ This is based in part on the affirmation of this etymology by Herodotus,¹⁹¹ and in part on philological and archeological evidence. There is another ancient reference regarding the origin of the *daric* that is significant to the purposes of this study, regardless of whether this theory of the origin of the *daric* is correct or not. This reference comes from Valerius Harpocraton, a Greek lexicographer and teacher of rhetoric who was active in Alexandria during the last half of the second century AD.¹⁹² Harpocraton was closely associated with members of the Museum (library), and was almost certainly a member himself. He was a tutor of the emperor Verus (reigned AD 161–169), and is mentioned in a letter discovered at Oxyrhynchus (POxy. 2192) as looking for certain scrolls. Harpocraton’s only surviving work is *Lexicon of the Ten Orators*. Wilson describes it as follows:

The contents are words (including proper names) and phrases, mainly from the orators, in alphabetical order, generally assigned to their sources, with explanations of points of interest or difficulty. Some entries deal with non-oratorical literature, and Harpocraton quotes nearly every important Greek writer, from Homer onwards. He gives valuable information on many topics, mainly religious, legal, constitutional, and social. His sources include scholarly works of the imperial age, e.g. some by Didymus (1), and earlier writings by historians and antiquarians, e.g. Hecataeus (1), Hellanicus, Theopompus (3), and Ister, as well as Hellenistic monographs by Aristophanes of Byzantium and Aristarchus (2). The Aristotelian *Athenian Constitution* is also regularly cited.¹⁹³

In the entry for *Δαρεικός*, Harpocraton makes the following comment:

εἰσὶ μὲν χρυσοῖ στατήρες οἱ Δαρεικοί, ἡδύνατο δὲ ὁ εἶς ταῦτο ὅπερ καὶ ὁ χρυσοῦς παρὰ τοῖς Ἀττικοῖς ὀνομαζόμενος. ἐκλήθησαν δὲ Δαρεικοί οὐχ ὡς οἱ πλεῖστοι νομίζουσιν, ἀπὸ Δαρείου τοῦ Ξέρξου πατρὸς, ἀλλ’ ἀφ’ ἑτέρου τινὸς παλαιότερου βασιλέως.¹⁹⁴

¹⁹⁰ A. D. H. Bivar, “Achaemenid Coins, Weights and Measures,” in *The Median and Achaemenian Periods*, ed. Ilya Gershevitch, vol. 2 of *The Cambridge History of Iran* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 621; Yamauchi, *Persia and the Bible*, 180-81.

¹⁹¹ It is implied in Herodotus 4.166 that Darius Hystaspes invented the *daric* as a memorial to himself.

¹⁹² For background information regarding Harpocraton and his work, see John J. Keaney, ed., *Harpocraton: Lexeis of the Ten Orators* (Amsterdam: Adolf M. Hakkert, 1991), IX-XI; Renzo Tosi, “[2] (Valerius) Harpocraton,” in *Brill’s New Pauly: Encyclopaedia of the Ancient World: Antiquity*, ed. Hubert Cancik, Helmuth Schneider, and Christine F. Salazar, vol. 5 (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 1150-51; Nigel Guy Wilson, “Harpocraton, Valerius,” in *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, ed. Simon Hornblower and Antony Spawforth, 4th ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 646.

¹⁹³ Wilson, “Harpocraton, Valerius,” 646. The numbers in parentheses are to distinguish between various persons with the same name.

¹⁹⁴ Harpocraton *Lexeis of the Ten Orators* Δ 5, *Δαρεικός*. The accentuation of *πατρὸς* is retained as it is presented in Keaney’s edition, but it apparently should be *πατρός*. (The acute accent of the oxytone remains when followed by punctuation.)

Darics are gold staters, and each of them also had the value of what the Athenians call the ‘gold coin’ (ὁ χρυσοῦς). But darics are not named, as most suppose, after Darius the father of Xerxes, but after a certain other more ancient king.

Thus, Harpocration affirms that there was a king named “Darius” who *preceded*, at an unspecified distance in time, Darius Hystaspes. This comment is striking because of its source—a secular Greco-Roman researcher who did his research at the greatest library in antiquity. Harpocration could not have taken this information from Xenophon, since Xenophon does not refer to Cyaxares as “Darius.” It is theoretically possible, but quite unlikely, that Harpocration (or his source) based this comment on the book of Daniel, for Harpocration’s work does not show an interest in the Bible, and Daniel does not say that the daric was named after Darius the Mede regardless. Harpocration most likely obtained this information from an independent ancient historical source that has since been lost—one of the 500,000+ volumes in the Alexandrian library.

The essence of Harpocration’s comment is reproduced in two later sources: the scholiast to the *Ecclesiazusae* (*Assemblywomen*) of Aristophanes, commenting on lines 601-2,¹⁹⁵ and Suidas, a massive tenth century Byzantine encyclopedic work.¹⁹⁶ Although Rogers confidently affirms that the daric was in circulation well before the time of Darius Hystaspes,¹⁹⁷ Bivar claims that the daric was first minted in 515 BC.¹⁹⁸ The origin of the daric is, however, a secondary issue for the purposes of this study. The importance of Harpocration’s comment for this study lies in his affirmation that there was a king named “Darius” who reigned sometime before the man who is called “Darius I” by modern historians. Evidently Harpocration or some other writer surmised, or even knew, that the daric was named after this earlier Darius rather than after a later Darius. But why would Harpocration believe that there was an earlier king named “Darius”? As a secular Greek writer and researcher, Harpocration cannot be dismissed as an apologist who made historically suspect claims for theological reasons, nor as an ignoramus who carelessly repeated hearsay, nor as a storyteller who invented legends. His remark stands as a significant ancient witness to the existence of a king of the Medes and Persians named “Darius” who is unknown to modern conventional scholarship.

Aeschylus

The Greek tragic dramatist Aeschylus (ca. 525/4–456/5 BC) produced the play *Persae* (*Persians*) in 472 BC, in Athens, as a dramatic reenactment of the decisive Greek victory over Persia at the battle of Salamis (in 480).¹⁹⁹ Aeschylus cleverly succeeded in creating a great

¹⁹⁵ For the comment of the scholiast, see Benjamin Bickley Rogers, ed., *The Ecclesiazusae of Aristophanes* (London: G. Bell and Sons, 1917), 90-91.

¹⁹⁶ Suidas *Lexicon* Δ 73, Δαρεικούς. This work is now commonly referred to as “Suda,” less often “Souda,” which are alternate forms of the author’s name.

¹⁹⁷ Rogers, ed., *The Ecclesiazusae of Aristophanes*, 90.

¹⁹⁸ Bivar, “Achaemenid Coins, Weights and Measures,” 617.

¹⁹⁹ There is a large corpus of literature regarding Aeschylus and the *Persae*, and several editions and commentaries are cited in the notes which follow. General background information may be found in Bernhard

tragedy (tragic drama) to memorialize a great national victory by presenting the battle entirely from the Persian point of view (as a devastating defeat). Pericles personally financed the play's inaugural performance, and Aeschylus won first place in the competition of playwrights.²⁰⁰

Since Aeschylus actually fought at both Marathon and Salamis, and since he was a contemporary of both Darius Hystaspes and Xerxes, he is regarded as a significant primary source for early Persian history. According to Murray, "his account of the actual Battle of Salamis [in the *Persae*] is better even than that of the historian Herodotus."²⁰¹ Further, since the *Persae* predates both Xenophon and Herodotus, it is free of influence from either historian's work—Aeschylus is an independent source.

Significance for the Issue of Darius the Mede

The *Persae* contains a historical notice which is significant for the present study. The context is as follows: Atossa, the Persian queen mother, has gone to the tomb of Darius Hystaspes and summoned his ghost through divination. After conversing with Atossa, Darius' ghost reflects upon the fact that the Persian defeat at Salamis is the greatest calamity to befall the country since the beginning of the Medo-Persian confederacy (lines 759-64). To prove the point, Darius recounts the succession of kings in the realm, and their deeds, since the confederacy began (lines 765-81). The opening lines of this list are notable for their description of two Median kings who preceded Cyrus as rulers of Medo-Persia:

Μῆδος γὰρ ἦν ὁ πρῶτος ἡγεμὼν στρατοῦ·
ἄλλος δ' ἐκείνου παῖς τόδ' ἔργον ἤγνυσεν,
φρένες γὰρ αὐτοῦ θυμὸν ὠακοστρόφουν.
τρίτος δ' ἀπ' αὐτοῦ Κύρος, εὐδαίμων ἀνὴρ·
ἄρξας ἔθηκε πᾶσιν εἰρήνην φίλοις.²⁰²

For the Mede was the first leader of [our] host;
And another, his son, completed this work,
For [his] mind directed his passion.
And third from him was Cyrus, a fortunate man;
When he ruled, he established peace for all his own.

Zimmermann, "Aeschylus [1] of Athens," in *Brill's New Pauly: Encyclopaedia of the Ancient World: Antiquity*, ed. Hubert Cancik, Helmuth Schneider, and Christine F. Salazar, vol. 1 (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 244-51. For a helpful overview of the *Persae*, see Gilbert Murray, "The *Persae*," in *Aeschylus: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Marsh H. McCall Jr. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1972), 29-39.

²⁰⁰ Murray, "The *Persae*," 29.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*

²⁰² Aeschylus *Persians* 765-69. Some editors, such as Broadhead and Sommerstein, transpose the third line in the citation (767) to the end (after 769) without manuscript support, since they believe that Darius should be praising Cyrus, rather than the unnamed Median ruler who preceded him (H. D. Broadhead, ed., *The Persae of Aeschylus* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960], 193; Alan H. Sommerstein, ed., *Aeschylus: Persians, Seven against Thebes, Suppliants, Prometheus Bound*, Loeb Classical Library [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008], 100). However, if the second Median ruler was named Darius, then it would not be surprising that the Darius who is speaking would have words of praise for the ruler whose throne name he took. Contextually in the *Persae*, line 767 is fitting as an explanation for the second king's accomplishments.

In these lines, Aeschylus, speaking through Darius, states that the work (of establishing an empire?) begun by the first king, “the Mede” (Μῆδος), was completed by another, his unnamed son, before Cyrus, as the third king in the succession of rulers, became ruler of the empire. Since Aeschylus does not name the two Median kings in this list, and since the conventional view holds that there never was a Medo-Persian confederacy which Cyrus inherited and continued, there is a historical-critical problem in identifying the two Median kings whom Aeschylus describes.

First View—The Two Median Kings Are Fictional

“The usual view,” according to Garvie, regards the first two kings in the list as historically inaccurate due to “supposed discrepancies with Herodotus.”²⁰³ However, it does not seem likely that such a well-placed and early source as Aeschylus, who presented his work publicly to critics, would make such a glaring error regarding the first two kings of the Medo-Persian Empire.²⁰⁴ Also, if the second king were created as part of a fictional, eponymous dynastic ancestry, it is strange that there would be no name associated with him. Furthermore, it would seem to prejudge the historical reliability of Aeschylus to claim that a contradiction with Herodotus demonstrates that Aeschylus was wrong. Why could Herodotus not be wrong? Aeschylus wrote earlier than Herodotus, and the historical information that he gives is otherwise highly regarded by modern scholarship. One should not merely dismiss the historicity of the two Median kings named by Aeschylus without investigating other possibilities.

Second View—The Two Median Kings Are Cyaxares I and Astyages

A second view, advocated by Broadhead and Garvie, sees the list as accurate, but explains the first two Median kings as Cyaxares I and Astyages—the two Median kings who immediately preceded Cyrus in the Herodotean version of the story.²⁰⁵ The major problem with this view is that Astyages did not complete the work of Cyaxares I in the version of events given

²⁰³ A. F. Garvie, ed., *Aeschylus: Persae: With Introduction and Commentary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 300. Some proponents of this view include: P. Groeneboom, *Kommentar*, vol. 2 of *Aischylos' Perser*, *Studentexte Griechischer und Lateinischer Schriftsteller*, vol. 3 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1960), 161; James C. Hogan, *A Commentary on the Complete Greek Tragedies—Aeschylus* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 237; Gilbert Murray, ed., *Aeschylus: The Persians: Translated into English Rhyming Verse with Preface and Notes* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1939), 87-88; Anthony J. Podlecki, ed., *The Persians, by Aeschylus: A Translation with Commentary*, Prentice-Hall Greek Drama Series, ed. Eric A. Havelock and Maynard Mack (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1970), 92-93; Aaron Poochigian, ed., *Aeschylus: Persians, Seven against Thebes, and Suppliants: Translated, with an Introduction and Notes*, Johns Hopkins New Translations from Antiquity (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011), 126; Alexandre Tourraix, “Les Perses, la géopolitique et l’histoire,” *Cahiers du GITA* 7 (1992-93): 113-14.

²⁰⁴ It could be suggested that Aeschylus has made just such an error in listing two kings between Bardiya and Darius in line 778. Two of the co-conspirators with Darius are named as the intervening kings. This line, however, is deleted in most modern editions, and is considered by most commentators to have developed from a marginal variant on line 774. See the analyses in Garvie, ed., *Aeschylus*, 300-1; Sommerstein, ed., *Aeschylus*, 102-3.

²⁰⁵ Broadhead, ed., *Aeschylus*, 192; Garvie, ed., *Aeschylus*, 300.

by Herodotus. According to Herodotus, Cyaxares I did not establish a Medo-Persian confederacy—there never was such a confederacy—and Astyages simply lost the throne he had inherited from his father by initiating a foolish conflict with Cyrus. The attempt to reconcile Aeschylus with Herodotus thus breaks down, not only because of the problem of correlating the Median kings, but also because of the problem of a Medo-Persian confederacy. Aeschylus presents the Medes and Persians as a united host right from the first Median king in the list, and does not indicate that there was a violent conquest of Media by Cyrus, as Herodotus claims there was.

Third View—The Two Median Kings Are Astyages and Cyaxares II

The interpretation taken by Thomas Stanley, who edited what was the standard edition of Aeschylus' works from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries, is that the first two kings in the list of rulers are Astyages and Xenophon's Cyaxares II.²⁰⁶ This is also the view advocated by Keil, Barnes, and Bertholdt in their nineteenth century commentaries on Daniel, in which they identified Cyaxares II with Darius the Mede.²⁰⁷ This view makes the best sense of both the passage in the *Persae* and the corresponding external historical data. Though I am not aware of any primary source which states directly that Astyages founded the Medo-Persian confederacy, Xenophon and Herodotus agree that Astyages gave his daughter Mandane in marriage to Cambyses I, who was king of the Persians (according to Xenophon and the Cyrus Cylinder).²⁰⁸ In the ancient Near Eastern context, such marriages signified the formation of political alliances, and it seems that Astyages made just such an alliance with Persia with a view toward checking Babylonian hegemony. Astyages should therefore be seen as the founder of the Medo-Persian Empire. The work which he began of opposing Babylonian hegemony through the confederation with Persia was completed by his son Darius/Cyaxares II, who occupied the Median throne when Babylon fell to the Medo-Persian army. Indeed, the way in which Aeschylus presents the Persian Empire as the natural continuation of what was from the beginning a Medo-Persian confederation leads Kranz to complain that Aeschylus did not know that the Persians had overthrown the Median kingdom in a great revolution.²⁰⁹

²⁰⁶ Thomæ Stanleii, ed., *Æschyli: Tragœdiæ septum, cum scholiis græcis omnibus, deperditorum dramatum fragmentis, versione & commentario* (London: Jacobi Fleisher, 1664), 776.

²⁰⁷ Albert Barnes, *Daniel*, 2 vols., Notes on the Old Testament (London: Blackie & Son, 1853; repr., Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 2:9; Leonhard Bertholdt, *Daniel aus dem Hebräisch-Aramäischen: neu übersetzt und erklärt, mit einer vollständigen Einleitung und einigen historischen und exegetischen Excursen: Erste Hälfte* (Erlangen: Johann Jakob Palm, 1806), 852-53; C. F. Keil, *Biblical Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, trans. M. G. Easton, Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1877; repr., Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955), 199-200.

²⁰⁸ Herodotus 1.107; Xenophon *Cyropaedia* 1.2.1.

²⁰⁹ “Gewiß kann man rügen, daß also Aischylos (wie seine Hörer) nichts wußte von der gewaltigen Umwälzung im Osten beim Übergang der Herrschaft an die Perser” (Walther Kranz, *Stasimon: Untersuchungen zu Form und Gehalt der griechischen Tragödie* [Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1933], 96). Translated: “Certainly one could complain, that thus Aeschylus (like his hearers) knew nothing about the enormous revolution in the East regarding the changeover of the dominion to the Persians.”

Most recent commentators on Aeschylus do not mention the older view. Groeneboom does note that “Stanley u. a.” (Stanley and others) identify Μῆδος with Astyages, and his son with Xenophon’s Cyaxares II, but objects that Aeschylus does not know the name of the second king and may only have conjectured his existence and accomplishments.²¹⁰ However, if the name of this king was Darius, it is understandable that the ghost of another Darius (who is speaking in the context of the *Persae*) would not refer to his predecessor by his own name. The non-mention of the second king’s name, like the non-mention of the first king’s name, need not be read to imply ignorance of his name and deeds by the playwright.

Conclusion

In summary, Aeschylus is widely recognized as a well-placed, independent, and reliable source for early Persian history who predates both Herodotus and Xenophon. Further, as a Greek warrior, he does not share the pro-Persian bias of the cuneiform propaganda texts, even though the *Persae* reenacts the battle of Salamis from the Persian side. In lines 765-69, Aeschylus describes a Median king who reigned between Astyages and Cyrus, and who evidently was on the throne when the Medo-Persian army conquered the Neo-Babylonian Empire. The position occupied by this king corresponds to that of Daniel’s Darius the Mede and Xenophon’s Cyaxares II, but has no place in the *Histories* of Herodotus. The testimony of Aeschylus therefore adds significant weight to the evidence supporting Xenophon’s version of the accession of Cyrus, against that of Herodotus.

Epilogue

It was previously noted in the discussion of the Cyrus Cylinder that, according to the majority view of contemporary historians, the Behistun inscription of Darius Hystaspes promulgates an official lie by claiming that the man who called himself Bardiya (or Smerdis, Mardos), the son of Cyrus, was really an impostor named Gaumata. Some historians cite Aeschylus as contradicting the Behistun inscription in the list of kings of the Medo-Persian Empire which Aeschylus gives through the ghost of Darius (continuing after the first two Median kings and Cyrus).²¹¹ However, this supposed contradiction is based only on the non-mention of the fact that Bardiya (called “Mardos” by Aeschylus) was an impostor, not on the assertion that he was not an impostor. Since Aeschylus does not explicitly contradict the Behistun inscription, most commentators on the *Persae* seem unaware of a supposed discrepancy. Tourraix says of the view, “On voit mal, si telle est la conviction d’Eschyle” (“It is unclear whether this is the belief of Aeschylus”).²¹² Nevertheless, Aeschylus is the only extant ancient source who is sometimes

²¹⁰ Groeneboom, *Kommentar*, 161.

²¹¹ Aeschylus *Persians* 774-79. For proponents of this view, see Balcer, *Herodotus & Bisitun*, 108, 115; Dandamaev, *Political History*, 91; Edith Hall, *Inventing the Barbarian: Greek Self-definition through Tragedy*, Oxford Classical Monographs (Oxford: Clarendon, 1989), 56; Olmstead, *History of the Persian Empire*, 109. See also Garvie, ed., *Aeschylus*, 300.

²¹² Tourraix, “Les Perses,” 115.

cited as contradicting the story of the accession of Darius presented in the monumental Behistun text. The majority of recent scholars have come to reject key claims in the Behistun inscription, along with their embellished repetition by Herodotus, Ctesias, and others, largely on the basis of circumstantial evidence, with only this one dubious ancient reference cited in support. Unfortunately, they have not to date been willing to do the same with the story of the accession of Cyrus found in official cuneiform sources and repeated with embellishments by Herodotus and Ctesias, in spite of the much clearer contradictions of the official story by strong and varied ancient witnesses.

Summary

This chapter has surveyed a wide range of ancient sources which give information regarding the accession of Cyrus and the existence of Cyaxares II/Darius the Mede. To these may be added the evidence cited in chapter 2 regarding the historicity of Xenophon's account of Cyaxares II—especially the references to Cyaxares in the Behistun inscription.

Review of the Evidence

The first four texts analyzed—the Cyrus Cylinder, the Verse Account, the Nabonidus Chronicle, and the Dream Text—were identified as propaganda texts produced by the administration of Cyrus. The Nabonidus Chronicle and the Dream Text explicitly support the basic Herodotean claim that Cyrus overthrew Astyages in a coup, while the Cyrus Cylinder and Verse Account are less clear. Yet each of these texts contains serious historical problems, obvious biases, and conflicting details with other texts.

The next text analyzed, the Harran Stele, is an inscription of Nabonidus which mentions a certain king of the land of the Medes at a time well past the supposed overthrow of the Median king by Cyrus. This text therefore offers support to Xenophon, while posing a difficult problem for supporters of Herodotus.

The remarkable but late Dynastic Prophecy was considered next. It appears to support the Herodotean non-recognition of Cyaxares II, though it differs from Cyrus' propaganda texts in important details.

The final cuneiform evidence considered was that of the Babylonian contract texts. These do not recognize Cyaxares II/Darius the Mede, but they do not deny or disallow his existence, either. It would be expected that they would give dates by the reign of Cyrus no matter which version of the accession of Cyrus may be the true one—that of Xenophon, or that of Herodotus. They may be considered as supporting Herodotus, but are by no means conclusive.

The review of classical writers began with Ctesias, whose history supports the basic Herodotean claim that Cyrus overthrew Astyages, but conflicts with Herodotus in virtually every other aspect of the story. Ctesias is held in such disrepute as a historian that his support of Herodotus is only of marginal significance.

The last classical historian who narrated a significant history of Neo-Babylonia and Persia from primary sources, Berossus, is considered to be of much higher credibility. There exists among the preserved fragments of his work a passing statement regarding the actions of an unspecified “King Darius” shortly after the fall of Babylon. This statement has not received enough attention—or any at all—in contemporary discussions of Darius the Mede. It is

significant evidence for just such a King Darius as is presented by the book of Daniel, corresponding to Xenophon's Cyaxares II. This evidence is weakened only by the complex text-critical issues surrounding the *Babyloniaca* of Berossus.

Next, two Greek writers who are famous for works outside the scope of early Medo-Persian history were noted, namely, Thucydides and Aristotle. Thucydides makes a couple of passing comments which appear to agree with Herodotus—and which appear, in any case, to be technically inaccurate—but which in all probability represent secondary information, taken from Herodotus. As for Aristotle, he makes a passing comment in his *Politics* which supports the major Herodotean claim that Cyrus attacked and overthrew Astyages, but which supports Xenophon in other respects. This comment follows the pattern of other sources which support Herodotus in giving widely divergent details for the same basic story.

The next writer considered, Valerius Harpocration, is somewhat later (last half of the second century AD), but is still significant because he was a professional researcher and lexicographer at the great Alexandrian library. In his *Lexicon of the Ten Orators*, Harpocration affirms, without explanation, that there was a king of the Medo-Persian Empire named “Darius” who reigned sometime before Darius Hystaspes. There does not seem to be any easy way to dismiss this remark or to give it an alternate explanation. Harpocration is therefore a significant ancient witness to the existence of a king of the Medes and Persians named “Darius” who is unknown to modern mainstream scholarship. It is obvious that such a King Darius would exactly fit Daniel's description of Darius the Mede.

The final ancient writer considered, Aeschylus, predates Herodotus and is considered an important and credible source for early Persian history. Although Aeschylus does not describe the foundation of the Medo-Persian Empire in detail, what he does say is completely different from Herodotus, but in accord with Xenophon and Daniel. Aeschylus differs from Herodotus in three major respects: (1) He presents Astyages—whom he does not name—as the founder of a Medo-Persian confederation, rather than as the man who lost the Median Empire to the Persians. (2) He describes a Median king who reigned between Astyages and Cyrus, and implies that this king was on the throne of the empire when Babylon fell. (3) He presents Cyrus as the natural successor to the last Median king, rather than as a usurper who conquered the Medes. Since it appears from both Herodotus and Xenophon that Astyages indeed concluded an alliance by marriage with the Persian king Cambyses I, the claims made by Aeschylus are substantiated by outside sources. Aeschylus is widely recognized as giving a better historical account of the battle of Salamis than Herodotus, and he is earlier than Herodotus. If Herodotus is the great witness on the side of those who deny the existence of Cyaxares II and Darius the Mede, he is more than canceled out by Aeschylus.

Analysis of the Evidence

The numerical majority of ancient evidence stands essentially on the side of Herodotus, though with some variation from Herodotus' story. The witnesses which support Herodotus include the Cyrus Cylinder (possibly), the Verse Account (possibly), the Nabonidus Chronicle, the Dream Text, the Dynastic Prophecy, the contract texts, Ctesias, Thucydides, and Aristotle. Of these, only the cuneiform texts are significant as witnesses; but the first four named betray a strong bias which provides a reason for historical distortion. The Dynastic Prophecy is late, and the contract texts do not affirm that Cyrus overthrew Astyages. A diverse minority of ancient

evidence stands on the side of Xenophon (and Daniel): the Harran Stele, Berossus, Harpocraton, and Aeschylus. Each of these four witnesses is independent and of high credibility.

Explanation for the Herodotean Story

With so many ancient witnesses contradicting each other, some explanation must be given for the divergent accounts. The Herodotean version of the Cyrus story can plausibly be explained as originating in a propaganda campaign, even though in Herodotus the specific propaganda elements are washed out and replaced with typically Greek humanistic emphases. The major texts which support Herodotus are Persian propaganda texts, sponsored by Cyrus himself. The preceding analysis has found many reasons why the claim that Cyrus launched a coup against Astyages and conquered the Medes might have been fabricated. First, evidence from the Verse Account indicates that Nabonidus (or Belshazzar acting in his behalf) claimed to have plundered Ecbatana, perhaps while Cyrus was in Lydia with the main division of the Medo-Persian army, and had boasted of this in his inscriptions. Cyrus sought to cover up this real or alleged fact in his propaganda by claiming that he had actually plundered Ecbatana himself in a war against the Medes—while, at the same time, he destroyed the propaganda texts commissioned by Nabonidus.

Second, the Babylonians viewed the Medes as their enemies, which would make Cyrus appear to be their friend if he had subjugated them. This argument is best exemplified by the Dream Text. The Dream Text presents Cyrus as a friend of the Babylonians and of their gods who attacked Astyages at the behest of Marduk in order to remove Median pressure on Harran. The removal of Median pressure by Cyrus then enabled Nabonidus to rebuild the Eḫulḫul temple in Harran (according to the inscription).

Third, in order to make the argument that Cyrus had been anointed king by Marduk to liberate Babylon from Nabonidus—a line of argumentation best exemplified by the Cyrus Cylinder and the Nabonidus Chronicle—the propaganda texts had to find some way to present Cyrus as having already become an absolute sovereign before he began his campaign of conquest. Since there had indeed been a feud between Cyrus and the Median king Cyaxares II in which the Median army sided with Cyrus, the texts could present this as an outright coup in which Cyrus seized power over the Medes. However, the claim would have to be made that Cyrus overthrew Astyages, rather than Cyaxares II, since everyone knew that the latter held the title of “king” at the time of Babylon’s fall. The propaganda texts purposefully avoid mentioning Cyaxares—as they also avoid naming Belshazzar—but Cyaxares could plausibly be conceived as a provincial ruler who somehow shared power with Cyrus. In no version of the story is the claim made that Cyrus killed Astyages, presumably so that those who asked questions could find some explanation for the reign of his son Cyaxares.

Fourth, Cyrus was a boastful and arrogant ruler, and the false propaganda claim to have conquered the Medes glorified him as a greater king than he actually was. Cyrus had a very forceful personality, and the death of Cyaxares within two years after the fall of Babylon gave Cyrus a free hand to publish texts which recognized no other ruler but himself. The Cyrus Cylinder and the Verse Account best exemplify this impetus toward self-glorification. It has already been noted that both of these texts appear to have been published at about the time when Xenophon indicates that Cyaxares died, two years or so after the fall of Babylon.

It is not insignificant that each of the sources on the Herodotean side of the evidence presents differing details in the storyline. The most obvious and quantifiable discrepancies

concern the date of the supposed usurpation of the Median king by Cyrus, but there are nearly as many other discrepancies as there are elements in the story. Presumably the discrepancies occur because the story is a forgery, and so certain details had to be made up by those who filled out the basic storyline. Since witnesses who describe a fiction usually disagree in the details, it should not be surprising that all of the available witnesses in support of Herodotus differ. Although Vanderhooff asserts that “harmonization of the details of the cuneiform and Greek traditions is not required,”²¹³ some such harmonization would in fact seem to be required if one wishes to reconstruct a consistent historical narrative. If the details cannot be harmonized, there is an element of fiction in the texts.

Evidence for Xenophon’s Story

At first glance, it may seem as if the weightier texts support Herodotus. However, this may be due to the weight of the scholarly opinion which supports these texts, for when the actual strength and diversity of witnesses is analyzed, Xenophon is more than adequately supported. Aeschylus is recognized as a better historical source than Herodotus, and Xenophon is certainly better than Ctesias. Herodotus and Ctesias give an elaborate and legendary tale of Cyrus’ origins, whereas Xenophon and Aeschylus are matter-of-fact. The four major cuneiform texts which support Herodotus—the Cyrus Cylinder (maybe), the Verse Account (maybe), the Nabonidus Chronicle, and the Dream Text—also lay out an elaborate story, and all four originate from the same official source and have the same propagandistic purpose. Berossus, Harpocration, and the Harran Stele, by contrast—three highly credible sources completely independent of one another—support Xenophon by means of a passing reference for no other purpose than to note a pertinent fact. It is these latter texts which have the mark of historical fidelity, since there is no concocted story or need to support a bias, only a mention of a known fact that is part of a larger but unstated history. Even Xenophon’s *Cyropaedia* does not have as its major purpose to present a history of Cyrus and Cyaxares, but to use the framework of Cyrus’ life as the basis for teaching moral lessons. The book of Daniel, as well, was not written as a history of Babylon and Medo-Persia, for it would be very incomplete as such. Rather, Daniel relates selected historical events, and prophecies of the rise and fall of empires, for the purpose of teaching theological lessons regarding the sovereignty of the God of heaven over kings and empires. Creating a fictional king alongside of or in place of Cyrus would be self-defeating for the message of the book of Daniel, and a fictional king would not suit Xenophon’s purposes either. The evidence therefore points strongly to the historicity of Cyaxares II/Darius the Mede.

Conclusion

After a comprehensive review of ancient texts which offer evidence regarding the accession of Cyrus and the existence of Cyaxares II/Darius the Mede, the credibility of Xenophon and Daniel has not been destroyed. Far from it—the balance of other ancient evidence strongly favors the existence of Cyaxares II/Darius the Mede.

²¹³ Vanderhooff, “Liberator or Conqueror,” 361.

CHAPTER 5

Conclusion

Having reviewed the evidence in detail, it is now time to draw conclusions together in order to elucidate the larger picture.

The Historical Scenario Proposed in This Study

Worried about the growth of Neo-Babylonian power under Nebuchadnezzar II, the Median king Astyages (throne name: Ahasuerus/Xerxes) formed an alliance with the Persians which was formalized when he gave his daughter Mandane in marriage to the Persian king Cambyses I (ca. 580 BC). Henceforward, the Medes and the Persians were to be confederated as a single state. Since Media was the more powerful of the two peoples, the Median king was to be head of the confederated government.

The firstborn son of Cambyses I and Mandane was Cyrus, who therefore stood in line to succeed his father as king of Persia. Cyrus was probably installed as crown prince when he reached manhood. He also was, by virtue of pedigree and aptitude, made field commander of the Persian army. At about the same time that Cyrus was elevated to this position, Nabonidus was made king of Babylon following a coup d'état led by his son Belshazzar (May/June 556 BC), while in Media Astyages died and was succeeded by his son Cyaxares II (throne name: Darius). Medo-Persia and Babylon were now rivals, and their rivalry inevitably turned violent within a few years—probably after Nabonidus had led one division of the Babylonian army on a campaign to distant Arabia (553 BC).

Whatever the immediate cause of the conflict might have been, Babylon had allied itself with Lydia, and so the Babylonian-Lyidian army met the Medo-Persian army on the border between their realms, and fought a pitched battle (ca. 547 BC). The Medo-Persian army won this battle, and Cyaxares responded by partying in his tent. With the leader of the Median army out of action, so to speak, Cyrus took command of the entire Medo-Persian host, and pursued the enemy army by night in order to complete the rout. This led to a fierce argument between Cyrus and Cyaxares, who accused Cyrus of insubordination, but the Median army sided with Cyrus. Cyrus therefore retained command of the entire force and pursued the Babylonian army for some distance into Babylonia, but withdrew for strategic reasons when he realized that Babylon was too strong to be taken immediately. Cyaxares was left in Media with a home guard, while Cyrus invaded the kingdom of Lydia, Babylon's ally, and subjugated it. It is possible that Belshazzar invaded Media while Cyrus was away with the main Medo-Persian force, and that he sacked the Median palace at Ecbatana in his father's name. This act would have weakened the Medes and strengthened the Persians in the Medo-Persian alliance, and would have forced Cyrus to wait a few years to recover strength before reinvading Babylonia.

After capturing Sardis, Cyrus successfully persuaded the Lydians and their king, Croesus, to join his anti-Babylonian alliance. Over time, Cyrus persuaded many others as well. Probably the most notable ally he recruited was Ugbaru (Gubaru/Gobryas), governor of the Babylonian

province of Gutium, who defected to Cyrus with his army out of personal animosity toward Belshazzar. Cyrus campaigned skillfully on the battlefield, but also in the court of public opinion, where he made his case through propaganda and generous policies. He shamelessly glorified himself, building a personality cult, and proved himself to be tolerant and merciful as a conqueror. Within a few years, Cyrus had won the support of many nations and had effectively surrounded Babylonia with his forces. He conducted his campaigns largely in independence of Cyaxares, who was still formally the head of government. At some point, Cyrus had been given the title of “king,” either when his father died, or when he was formally recognized as the crown prince. Cyrus finally began to push toward Babylon during the seventeenth year of Nabonidus (539 BC).

Nabonidus, for his part, had not been idle. Recognizing the seriousness of the Medo-Persian threat, Nabonidus had returned from Teima in his thirteenth year (543/2 BC) with his division of the Babylonian army. He responded vigorously to Cyrus’ propaganda, erecting numerous stelae and publishing numerous texts which contradicted the Medo-Persian propaganda message. He even went so far as to celebrate the New Year’s festival for Marduk and Nabu, which had been for so long neglected. As Cyrus pushed into Babylonia, Nabonidus gathered nearly all the major statues of the gods in his realm, and moved them to Babylon as a means of securing divine protection for the city.

Cyrus’ advance into Babylonia seemed unstoppable. As he moved forward, he destroyed the propaganda texts published by Nabonidus, and he gained support by fomenting discontent with Nabonidus through his own propaganda. Nabonidus mustered the Babylonians for a decisive battle near Sippar. The Babylonian army was soundly defeated, but not broken. Nabonidus retreated to Borsippa with one group of survivors; the rest fled for refuge behind the broad walls of Babylon, whose defense was directed by the crown prince Belshazzar. As Belshazzar settled down to wait out the siege, the Medo-Persian forces suddenly took Babylon and killed Belshazzar in a sneak attack on the night of October 12, 539 BC, after Cyrus had diverted the main flow of the Euphrates River. While Gubaru occupied Babylon, Cyrus led another division of the Medo-Persian army to Borsippa, where Nabonidus surrendered immediately. Cyrus made a ceremonial grand entrance into Babylon shortly thereafter, in which the priests of Marduk opened the city gates and the populace hailed the victor as their new king. The ceremonial entrance of a conqueror was a longstanding Babylonian tradition which not only obligated the people to a new lord, but also obligated the conqueror to properly care for the city and its gods.¹ This ceremony could not have been performed by Cyaxares, who was enjoying the comforts of his palace in Media. Cyaxares’ absence was also the reason why it was Cyrus who initially organized Medo-Persian rule over Babylon, and why it was Cyrus who was recognized as the new king in the contract texts. Officially, however, Cyaxares was still head of government in the realm of Medo-Persia.

It seemed inevitable that Cyrus must succeed Cyaxares as head of government in the empire. He had won the loyalty and admiration of peoples throughout Near East, including the Medians themselves. He deserved the position due to his great conquests and administrative skill. His strength was needed to meld together such a large realm. By blood, he was part of the Median royal family, though only through his maternal lineage. And Cyaxares had no son, and

¹ On this tradition, see Amélie Kuhrt, “Berossus’ *Babyloniaka* and Seleucid Rule in Babylonia,” in *Hellenism in the East: The Interaction of Greek and Non-Greek Civilizations from Syria to Central Asia after Alexander*, ed. Amélie Kuhrt and Susan Sherwin-White (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 49.

therefore no natural successor. To complete the circumstances, Cassandane, the wife of Cyrus who had borne him Cambyses, died shortly after the fall of Babylon. Thus it was, that when Cyrus returned to Media to present the spoils of victory to Cyaxares, the latter gave him his daughter in marriage and betrothed Media to Cyrus along with her. Cyrus was now crown prince of Media, in addition to being king of Persia and commander of the army.

When Cyaxares died about two years after the fall of Babylon (ca. 537 BC), Cyrus established a new dynasty which occupied a united Medo-Persian throne. He immediately took advantage of his newfound independence by publishing a series of propaganda pieces that were intended to glorify himself and win the hearts of the conquered Babylonians. Like many other ancient Near Eastern monarchs, Cyrus had no reservations about lying or exaggerating in order to suit his purposes. All of the extant propaganda texts derive from Babylonia, which was apparently the focus of the propaganda campaign. In his Babylonian propaganda texts, at least, Cyrus distorted the historical fact of his argument with Cyaxares and his usurpation of command of the Median army into a story of an outright coup, in which Cyrus actually supplanted the Median king Astyages. The story of this coup seemed to grow over time, and to take hold in popular imagination. Among official sources, the Dream Text apparently represents an early version of the story, perhaps designed to test its reception, while the Nabonidus Chronicle represents a more elaborate, final version. The coup story was intended partly to glorify Cyrus, and partly to support his theological justification for the conquest of Babylon by arguing that Marduk had anointed him as king of the world before his conflict with Babylon began. Since it is extremely common in Babylonian texts for both victory and defeat to be attributed to Marduk's pleasure or displeasure, the propagandistic claim that Cyrus was given dominion over Babylon because Nabonidus had dishonored Marduk was a natural claim to make in the Babylonian culture.

In spite of the overwhelming flood of propaganda produced by Cyrus, educated people somehow remained aware that he had shared rule with a Median king until after the fall of Babylon. This tradition is remembered by Aeschylus, Xenophon, Berossus, and Harpocration. In fact, it might have been the only tradition preserved in classical sources, were it not for the circumstance that Herodotus opted to tell a different version of the story. This was, in its essence, the propaganda version of Cyrus' accession, adapted to popular legend. The *Histories* had such a great influence on classical antiquity that nearly all later historians repeated what Herodotus wrote. A few repeated Ctesias, whose fanciful account adds even more layers of legend to the official propaganda story.

By the time that extant commentaries began to be written on the book of Daniel, the Herodotean version of Cyrus' accession had become the standard one among classical historians, though Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* remained well known. Josephus and Jerome, the two most influential early commentators for subsequent writers in the Medieval period and beyond, both identified Daniel's Darius the Mede with Xenophon's Cyaxares II, though Jerome noted that some commentators of his day identified Darius the Mede with Astyages. Subsequent commentators who followed Xenophon's history identified Darius the Mede with Cyaxares II, while those who followed Herodotus identified Darius the Mede with Astyages. The majority view until the nineteenth century identified Darius the Mede with Cyaxares II, and affirmed the historicity of both. This view virtually became dogmatized among eighteenth and nineteenth century evangelical writers. The fundamental argument for this view was that Cyaxares II corresponded well to Darius the Mede, whereas Astyages (and others) did not. The Bible was

thus used as the primary proof of the case, though not without analyzing and evaluating the extrabiblical material.

While the evangelical view was being elucidated and dogmatized, an opposing current began to rise in biblical scholarship, that of liberal theology and higher criticism. The anti-supernaturalist critics presupposed that the book of Daniel, with its prophecies and miracle stories, must be pure fiction. They responded to the evangelical identification of Darius the Mede with Cyaxares II by dogmatizing the Herodotean version of the story which recognizes no further Median kings after Cyrus' alleged overthrow of Astyages. Over time, the critics became the stronger voice in academia.

As the debate raged between evangelicals and critics over the book of Daniel, the Cyrus Cylinder, the Nabonidus Chronicle, the Dream Text, and Babylonian contract texts from the reigns of Nabonidus and Cyrus were all published at about the same time (ca. 1880). Each of these cuneiform sources appeared to reflect the Herodotean story of the accession of Cyrus, and did not recognize the reign of any Median king between Nabonidus and Cyrus. The critics immediately claimed confirmation of their view that Herodotus gives the true version of Medo-Persian history, and that the book of Daniel is pure legend. In retrospect, it must be said that evangelicals abandoned Xenophon far too hastily; cooler heads should have prevailed among men of faith. But evangelical scholars were under intense pressure from the critics, and the cuneiform texts did seem, at the time, to have confirmed Herodotus. Those scholars who continued to profess faith in the Bible as the inerrant and inspired Word of God therefore searched for some way to solve the problem of reconciling the book of Daniel with Herodotus and the cuneiform texts. During the late nineteenth century, evangelicals proposed several new ideas for solving the problem, but did not defend them in detail.

The twentieth century saw the publication of numerous studies on Darius the Mede that were written within the framework of the Herodotean version of the accession of Cyrus. Mainstream critical scholarship became entrenched in its view that Darius the Mede is fictional—a view which generally was asserted as unquestioned fact, but which was defended in a couple of critical studies. Only a few critics published dissenting views which upheld the historicity of Darius the Mede. Evangelicals, for their part, published several lengthy studies which defended four different identifications of Darius the Mede in great detail. On both sides, however, the Herodotean version of the accession of Cyrus was itself not disputed. The fact that there were a diversity of stories in the ancient world regarding the accession of Cyrus and the origins of the (Medo-)Persian Empire, and that there are numerous ancient witnesses which present a version of the story that harmonizes easily with Daniel's portrayal of Darius the Mede, was not recognized in the literature. The Herodotean history of Cyrus became so dominant in the literature that most scholars to this day are unaware that there is any alternative. The issue of Darius the Mede eventually stagnated, with little more to say from either the evangelical side or the critical side.

The end of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first saw the rise of postmodernism, which has brought about a certain change in scholarly attitudes concerning Darius the Mede. Whereas earlier evangelical commentators sought to defend a particular identification of Darius the Mede, commentators since the 1970s have tended (with a few exceptions) simply to cite previous studies and list proposed solutions, with seemingly little concern to prove a single solution as the true one. Many evangelical scholars have lost interest in historical problems in the OT, preferring to focus instead on a literary and theological analysis of the text in which historical issues are of secondary concern. Postmodernism, combined with the

lapse of time since the publication of the cuneiform texts which support Herodotus, has also brought about a change in the attitude of the critics. Recent historical works on Neo-Babylonia and Achaemenid Persia are now less dogmatic, and are more open to questioning assertions about Cyrus made by Herodotus and the cuneiform propaganda texts, though they still adhere to the basic claim that the Median Empire was overthrown by Cyrus. One also senses a greater willingness on the part of some critics to acknowledge the existence of legitimate historical material in the book of Daniel and Xenophon's *Cyropaedia*. This study has already noted Hirsch's works which argue for a much higher view of the historical reliability of the *Cyropaedia*, and Beaulieu's acknowledgement of Daniel's accuracy with regard to the death of Belshazzar.

As for future prospects (see further below), it goes without saying that the history of Cyrus' accession presented in this study contradicts the view of current historical scholarship. One might ask, would it not be unprecedented to advocate overturning the great body of ancient evidence in support of the conventional view, to say nothing of the weight of modern scholarship which holds to it? Actually, it would not. As has already been noted in the discussion of the Cyrus Cylinder and Aeschylus' *Persae*, the majority view in recent scholarship rejects the historicity of both Herodotus and the monumental Behistun inscription of Darius Hystaspes regarding the whole story of that king's accession to the throne. This is done, moreover, with only one possible but disputed ancient witness (Aeschylus) to contradict the oft-repeated story. Far more ancient evidence exists to contradict the official version of the accession of Cyrus which is repeated by Herodotus, Ctesias, and later writers, yet to date mainstream scholarship has not seriously considered rejecting this story.

Future Prospects

It remains to be seen whether the presentation of historical evidence in this study will alter scholarly opinion on Darius the Mede, though it is hoped that it will at least open up a new discussion of the issue. However, future archeological discoveries or studies of archival texts may well force a change in the conventional position. There are, in fact, two significant examples of other kings who were named in the Bible but not in other extant literature, whom nearly all scholars said at one time were either unhistorical or were to be identified with figures known from other extant sources. In both of these instances, scholars have since backtracked and acknowledged the independent existence of these kings following new archeological discoveries.

The first such example is Sargon, a king of Assyria who is mentioned in Isaiah 20:1, but is not named by any extant classical historian. Jewish and Christian commentators on Isaiah from Jerome until the mid-1800s generally assumed that "Sargon" was another name for some other, known king.² Some scholars suggested that Sargon was Sennacherib or Shalmaneser or Esarhaddon, or perhaps that he was a co-regent with Shalmaneser. Everything changed when it was discovered that Sargon was a great king who had built a separate palace for himself and left a large corpus of texts in it describing his campaigns.

² On the history of interpretation, see Edward J. Young, *Chapters 19 to 39*, vol. 2 of *The Book of Isaiah: The English Text, with Introduction, Exposition, and Notes*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament, ed. R. K. Harrison (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969), 51-52.

A second example is Belshazzar, who was not named by any of the classical writers, and who was therefore assumed by many critics to be fictional.³ Some commentators on Daniel attempted to identify Belshazzar with Nabonidus or Amel-Marduk (Awēl-Marduk, Evil-Merodach).⁴ Everything changed in the latter part of the nineteenth century, when Akkadian texts which named Belshazzar and described his coregency with Nabonidus were published. To this day, Daniel is not given sufficient credit as a historian for providing accurate details about the name and position of this son and coregent of Nabonidus, who is known by name elsewhere only from Babylonian cuneiform documents.

Belshazzar and Sargon are cases in which scholars were not sufficiently cautious when dismissing the historicity or independent existence of kings who were named in the Bible but not in other extant literature. In the case of Darius the Mede, however, one is not dealing with a figure who is unrecognized in extrabiblical literature. There are, to be sure, ancient witnesses which do not recognize Darius the Mede, but the statement that “Darius the Mede is not known from any extrabiblical sources”⁵ simply is not true. The name “Darius” is known from Berossus and Harpocration, and it is implied in the throne name taken by Darius Hystaspes, while the man himself is given a very full description by Xenophon. Aeschylus, the Behistun inscription, and the Harran Stele also attest to this king’s existence. These are numerous and varied witnesses of high credibility. It is only in *some* extrabiblical sources, as well as in *some* modern scholarly sources, that one finds no recognition of Darius the Mede.

It is not a question of “if,” but of “when,” new historical texts from the late Neo-Babylonian and early Achaemenid Persian period are published. Beaulieu comments (in 1989):

Archival texts of the Neo-Babylonian period are among the most complete for any period in ancient Near Eastern history: the Ebabbar of Sippar has yielded more than thirty thousand tablets and fragments from the reign of Nabopolassar to that of Darius the Great (Leichty 1986), and the Eanna of Uruk has yielded several thousand well-preserved documents covering a comparable period. Many of these documents are as yet unpublished, and study of the published material is still in its early stages. . . .

One major research source offering promise of new information consists of the thousands of documents from Babylon in museum drawers all over the world, the majority of which are in the British Museum. Their publication will supplement what we already know of archives, such as those of the Egibi house. It may be that more documents from the archive of the Esagil, new portions of the Neo-Babylonian Chronicle series, and literary compositions of historical relevance will turn up in museums or excavations.⁶

While the exact nature of new discoveries cannot be predicted, this study does provide a paradigm for interpreting a new text which may somehow state that a man named Darius was

³ It was apparently overlooked that a recognition of Belshazzar is implied in Xenophon *Cyropaedia* 4.6.3.

⁴ See H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of Daniel* (Columbus, OH: Wartburg, 1949), 208-10; Edward J. Young, *A Commentary on Daniel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1949), 115-16.

⁵ Ernest C. Lucas, *Daniel*, *Apollos Old Testament Commentary*, ed. David W. Baker and Gordon J. Wenham, vol. 20 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 134.

⁶ Paul-Alain Beaulieu, *The Reign of Nabonidus, King of Babylon 556–539 B.C.*, Yale Near Eastern Researches, ed. William W. Hallo, Marvin H. Pope, and William K. Simpson, vol. 10 (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989), 234-35.

king of the Medes when Babylon fell. Such a claim could not be processed within the conventional (Herodotean) version of the history of the period. This study provides a means of explaining how and why Herodotus and the cuneiform texts which support him could have errors, and shows that there are a number of significant ancient witnesses which present a different version of the accession of Cyrus.

Summary

The identification of Darius the Mede is immensely important as a historical issue.⁷ If the general outline of events in Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* is correct, with Cyaxares II corresponding to Daniel's Darius the Mede, volumes of historical works will require significant rewriting. The historical conclusion of this study is that the available extrabiblical evidence points to Xenophon's version of the accession of Cyrus as the most reliable one. Further, an analysis of proposed identifications of Darius the Mede led to the conclusion that Xenophon's version of the accession of Cyrus agrees quite closely with the book of Daniel, whereas the Herodotean version conflicts with Daniel. A correlation of biblical and extrabiblical data suggests that Cyrus obtained absolute power over the Medo-Persian Empire approximately two years after the fall of Babylon. Cyrus was preceded by the biblical Darius the Mede, who is called Cyaxares (II) by Xenophon. The version of the accession of Cyrus which Herodotus gives is a legendary embellishment of a deceitful propaganda history created by Cyrus as a means of legitimating his kingship in the minds of an unfavorable Babylonian populace. The brevity of Darius' reign, and his weakness in the shadow of Cyrus, together with the propaganda version of the accession of Cyrus which did not mention Darius, made it possible for Darius to be overlooked by many later historians.

Because this study involved an extensive analysis of ancient texts, some aspects of its analysis may have to be modified as new discoveries further illuminate the history of the period. However, one conclusion is sure: there was a Median king named Darius who was reigning as head of the Medo-Persian confederation at the time of Babylon's fall.⁸ Cyrus was his coregent, the hereditary king of the realm of Persia, the crown prince of Media, the commander of the Medo-Persian army—yet it was King Darius who was officially recognized as the highest power in the realm.

⁷ There are also high theological stakes in the debate over Darius the Mede, as was already noted at the beginning of chapter 3. If there never was such a person as Darius the Mede, this would indicate that the book of Daniel is a late forgery produced by someone who did not have accurate knowledge of the history of the period. On the other hand, if Darius the Mede (as Cyaxares II) is historical, when he was an obscure figure even to Herodotus, this would offer compelling evidence that the book of Daniel was written in the sixth century by someone who had firsthand knowledge of the events described. While some would like to avoid all mention of theology, and to discuss Darius the Mede solely as a historical issue, in fact a scholar's approach to historical issues in the book of Daniel is closely linked to his theology. Indeed, as has been argued, the reason why it has been so difficult for modern scholars to examine the historical evidence for Darius the Mede/Cyaxares II is because of the theologically charged atmosphere surrounding discussions of the book of Daniel, which exists whether one states the issues explicitly or not.

⁸ The reason why the author is sure of this conclusion is because it is, he is convinced, the only historical scenario allowable by the book of Daniel.

APPENDIX

Tables and Charts

Versions of the Cyrus Story

	NC	CC	DT	VA	Hdt	Ct	Xen
Cyrus subordinate to Astyages	N(?)	?	N(?)	?	Y	Y	Y
Cyrus the grandson of Astyages	?	?	?	?	Y	N	Y
Year of Cyrus' accession	550/49	—	553/2	—	559	560	537
Conquest of Media	peaceful	?	violent	?	violent	violent	no conquest
Aggressor in the battle	Astyages	—	Cyrus	—	Astyages	Astyages	no battle
Nabonidus taken in Babylon	Y	Y(?)	—	?	—	?	N

NC = Nabonidus Chronicle; CC = Cyrus Cylinder; DT = Dream Text; VA = Verse Account; Hdt = Herodotus; Ct = Ctesias; Xen = Xenophon

Notes on the Chart

Cyrus Subordinate to Astyages

Herodotus and Xenophon state clearly that Cyrus began his career as a servant of the Median king—though a different type of servant in the respective accounts of the two historians.¹ Ctesias states that Cyrus was a common slave of a servant of Astyages.² The Cyrus Cylinder, however, presents Cyrus as a Persian king who was descended from other Persian

¹ Herodotus 1.130; Xenophon *Cyropaedia* 1.5.4.

² Felix Jacoby, *Zeitgeschichte: Universalgeschichte und Hellenika: Nr. 64–105*, vol. 2A of *Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker* (Leiden: Brill, 1961), 362.8-15 (90 F66.5).

kings (lines 20-23); the Medes were simply made to bow at his feet (line 13).³ The Nabonidus Chronicle is even stronger, stating that Astyages marched against Cyrus for the purposes of conquest—implying, though not directly stating, that Cyrus ruled an independent kingdom.⁴ The Dream Text, too, presents Cyrus as a rival king, the king of Anshan (Persia).⁵ The Verse Account is too fragmentary to determine what it said on this matter.

Cyrus the Grandson of Astyages

Herodotus and Xenophon both state that Cyrus was the son of Astyages' daughter.⁶ Ctesias states that Cyrus was not related to Astyages by blood, but that he adopted Astyages as his father after conquering him, and that he married Astyages' daughter.⁷ The cuneiform texts do not explicitly state that Cyrus was not the grandson of Astyages, but they give no indication of any familial relationship between the two. In the Dream Text, Cyrus is merely called the king of Anshan (Persia), while in the Cyrus Cylinder only the paternal lineage of Cyrus from his Persian ancestors is recorded.⁸ The Nabonidus Chronicle simply presents Cyrus as an enemy of Astyages.⁹ The extant portions of the Verse Account do not say anything regarding Cyrus' relationship to Astyages.

Year of the Accession of Cyrus

The Dream Text states that the conquest of Media by Cyrus occurred during the third year of Nabonidus, i.e., 553/2 BC.¹⁰ The generally accepted interpretation of the Nabonidus Chronicle interprets the description of the conquest of Media as under the entry for the sixth year of Nabonidus (550/49), though Drews disputes this in an attempt to harmonize the various

³ See Hanspeter Schaudig, *Die Inschriften Nabonids von Babylon und Kyros' des Großen samt den in ihrem Umfeld entstandenen Tendenzschriften: Textausgabe und Grammatik*, Alter Orient und Altes Testament, ed. Manfred Dietrich and Oswald Loretz, vol. 256 (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2001), 552-53.

⁴ Nabonidus Chronicle ii 1; in A. K. Grayson, *Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles*, Texts from Cuneiform Sources, ed. A. Leo Oppenheim, vol. 5 (Locust Valley, NY: J. J. Augustin, 1975), 106.

⁵ In both main exemplars of the Dream Text, this is i 27 (Schaudig, *Die Inschriften*, 417).

⁶ Herodotus 1.107-9; 1.127-29; Xenophon *Cyropaedia* 1.2.1.

⁷ Felix Jacoby, *Geschichte von Staedten und Voelkern (Horographie und Ethnographie): Autoren ueber einzelne Laender: Aegypten–Geten Nr. 608a–708*, vol. 3C.1 of *Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker* (Leiden: Brill, 1958), 454.14-455.9 (688 F9.1).

⁸ In both main exemplars of the Dream Text, this is i 27 (Schaudig, *Die Inschriften*, 417). In the Cyrus Cylinder, this is lines 21-22; see *ibid.*, 552-53.

⁹ Nabonidus Chronicle ii 1-4; in Grayson, *Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles*, 106.

¹⁰ In both main exemplars of the Dream Text, this is i 26 (Schaudig, *Die Inschriften*, 417).

sources.¹¹ Herodotus states that Cyrus reigned for twenty-nine years.¹² Counting backward from the year 530 would give 558 or 559 as the year of the Cyrus' accession. Diodorus of Sicily states that Cyrus became king in the first year of the fifty-fifth Olympiad, that is, in 560–559, and claims that all Greek historians agree on this date.¹³ This would therefore isolate 559 as the year of Cyrus' accession in the Herodotean version of the story. But Ctesias states that Cyrus reigned for thirty years, one more than Herodotus.¹⁴ Xenophon gives a seven-year reign for Cyrus.¹⁵ The Cyrus Cylinder and the Verse Account do not give a date for the accession of Cyrus.

Conquest of Media

Herodotus tells the story of a violent conquest of Media by Cyrus.¹⁶ Ctesias does as well, but with a much more elaborate storyline of the war, including multiple battles with an account of the numbers and types of troops involved.¹⁷ In the storyline of Xenophon's *Cyropaedia*, Cyrus never formally conquers Media; the Medes and Persians are allies, and Cyrus simply inherits the throne of the Median kingdom from the last Median king. In the Nabonidus Chronicle, Cyrus gains control over Media without a battle, since Astyages' army mutinies.¹⁸ In the Dream Text, Cyrus' army scatters Astyages' army, implying a pitched battle.¹⁹ The Cyrus Cylinder says that Marduk caused the Medes to submit to Cyrus, but does not say how this happened.²⁰ The Verse Account is very fragmentary, but it may portray Cyrus as having gained sovereignty over Media before the fall of Babylon.²¹

¹¹ There is a lacuna before the description of the conquest of the Medes by Cyrus, but the entry for the seventh year of Nabonidus immediately follows. See Nabonidus Chronicle ii 1-5, in Grayson, *Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles*, 106. For the view of Drews, see Robert Drews, "The Fall of Astyages and Herodotus' Chronology of the Eastern Kingdoms," *Historia: Zeitschrift für alte Geschichte* 18, no. 1 (1969): 1-2.

¹² Herodotus 1.214.

¹³ Diodorus of Sicily *Bibliotheca historica* 9.21.1.

¹⁴ Jacoby, *Aegypten–Geten: Nr. 608a–708*, 457.28 (688 F9.8).

¹⁵ Xenophon *Cyropaedia* 8.7.1; cf. 8.6.22.

¹⁶ Herodotus 1.124-30.

¹⁷ Jacoby, *Universalgeschichte und Hellenika*, 366.15-370.24 (90 F66.24-46).

¹⁸ Nabonidus Chronicle ii 1-2 in Grayson, *Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles*, 106.

¹⁹ In both main exemplars of the Dream Text, this is i 27-29 (Schaudig, *Die Inschriften*, 417).

²⁰ These are lines 13-14 in the Cyrus Cylinder; see *ibid.*, 552.

²¹ See iii 7-8 and v 2-4 in *ibid.*, 568-69.

Aggressor in the Battle

According to the Nabonidus Chronicle, it was Astyages who initiated the war between the Medes and the Persians, marching against Cyrus to conquer his realm.²² According to Herodotus and Ctesias, Astyages was responsible for launching the actual assault on Cyrus, but only after Cyrus had already led the Persians to revolt against him.²³ In the Dream Text, Cyrus is said to have been stirred up by Marduk and Šin to fight against Astyages, implying that Cyrus was the aggressor in the battle.²⁴ In Xenophon's account, there was no battle, and therefore no aggressor. The Cyrus Cylinder and the Verse Account do not identify the aggressor.

Nabonidus Taken in Babylon

The Nabonidus Chronicle states that Nabonidus was captured in Babylon after Cyrus' army entered the city.²⁵ The Cyrus Cylinder implies, but does not directly state, that Nabonidus was captured in Babylon.²⁶ The Dream Text purports to have been written before the fall of Babylon. The Verse Account implies that Cyrus has overthrown Nabonidus, but the extant portions do not state precisely where or how. Although Xenophon does not name either Nabonidus or Belshazzar, in his account it is Belshazzar who is killed in Babylon, not Nabonidus (cf. Dan 5:30).²⁷ Herodotus does not give an account of what happened to the Babylonian king(s) when Cyrus conquered the city, nor does Ctesias in his extant portions. Not included in the chart is Berossus, whose fragmentary history contains a notice that after Cyrus took Babylon, he marched to Borsippa to besiege Nabonidus, but Nabonidus surrendered and was exiled by Cyrus to the province of Carmania, which Cyrus graciously allowed him to govern.²⁸

²² Nabonidus Chronicle ii 1-2 in Grayson, *Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles*, 106.

²³ Herodotus 1.124-30; Jacoby, *Universalgeschichte und Hellenika*, 366.15-368.19 (90 F66.24-34).

²⁴ In both main exemplars of the Dream Text, this is i 26-29 (Schaudig, *Die Inschriften*, 417).

²⁵ Nabonidus Chronicle iii 15-16 in Grayson, *Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles*, 109-10.

²⁶ This is line 17 in the Cyrus Cylinder; see Schaudig, *Die Inschriften*, 552.

²⁷ Xenophon *Cyropaedia* 4.6.3; 7.5.29-30.

²⁸ Jacoby, *Aegypten–Geten: Nr. 608a–708*, 393.17-394.11 (680 F9.151-153). Compare also column ii, lines 18-21 of the Dynastic Prophecy in A. K. Grayson, *Babylonian Historical-Literary Texts*, Toronto Semitic Texts and Studies (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1975), 32-33.

Major Supporting Arguments Made in This Work

1. The historical reliability of Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* was found to be much higher than scholarly consensus currently holds. (One scholar of Xenophon, Steven W. Hirsch, also argues for a much higher view of the historical reliability of the *Cyropaedia*.) Xenophon was found to be historically credible, and superior to Herodotus, with regard to his accounts of the royal upbringing of Cyrus, the existence of Belshazzar, the existence of Gobryas, and the marriage of Cyrus to Cyaxares' daughter.
2. The Behistun inscription of Darius Hystaspes states that two Medians who launched rebellions against Darius at separate times did so on the basis of (allegedly) false claims to be of the family of Cyaxares. The fact that they claimed a relation to Cyaxares, rather than to Astyages, is evidence that Cyaxares II did indeed exist and was the last Median king.
3. The adoption of "Darius" and "Ahasuerus" (= Xerxes) as throne names of the first two Persian kings in the dynasty which followed that of Cyrus is evidence that they were used as throne names by kings of an earlier dynasty. This is indirect evidence that there indeed was a Median king named "Darius," and another named "Ahasuerus," as the book of Daniel presents them (Dan 9:1). The use of throne names by Persian kings also gives plausibility to the suggestion that the given name of Darius the Mede was "Cyaxares."
4. There are strong historical evidences that the Medes and the Persians had formed a confederated government, and that Herodotus' story of Cyrus subjugating the Medes and deposing the last Median king is therefore historically inaccurate. Xenophon and Herodotus agree that the Median king Astyages gave his daughter Mandane in marriage to Cambyses I, who was king of the Persians. In the ancient Near Eastern context, such marriages signified the formation of political alliances, and it seems that Astyages made just such an alliance with Persia with a view toward checking Babylonian hegemony. A passage in the *Persae* of Aeschylus is noted in chapter 4 which presents Astyages as the founder of the alliance, though without naming him directly. Chapter 3 noted biblical texts which describe the Medes and Persians governing their empire jointly, and also noted abundant archeological evidence which presents the Medes as senior partners and equals with the Persians, rather than their vassals.
5. The Harran Stele, which is an inscription of Nabonidus, mentions a certain "king of the land of the Medes" alongside the kings of Egypt and Arabia as Babylon's leading enemies. This inscription was produced well after the supposed conquest of Media by Cyrus, and therefore seems to indicate that Cyrus did not depose the last Median king.
6. The historian Berossus, whose history of Neo-Babylonia is well respected but poorly preserved, refers to the actions of an unspecified "King Darius" shortly after the fall of Babylon. The conventional version of the history of the period does not recognize any such "King Darius."

7. Valerius Harpocration, a professional researcher and lexicographer at the library of Alexandria, affirms in a lexical work that there was a king of the Medo-Persian Empire named “Darius” who reigned sometime before Darius Hystaspes. Once again, the conventional version of the history of the period has no explanation for this “Darius.”
8. The Greek tragic dramatist Aeschylus, who wrote before Herodotus, describes two Median kings who preceded Cyrus as rulers of Medo-Persia. Although Aeschylus does not name these two kings, he presents the first as the founder of the dynasty, the second as his son and the king who was on the throne when Babylon fell, and the third, Cyrus, as the natural successor of the second king. The conventional history of the period does not recognize this second Median king.

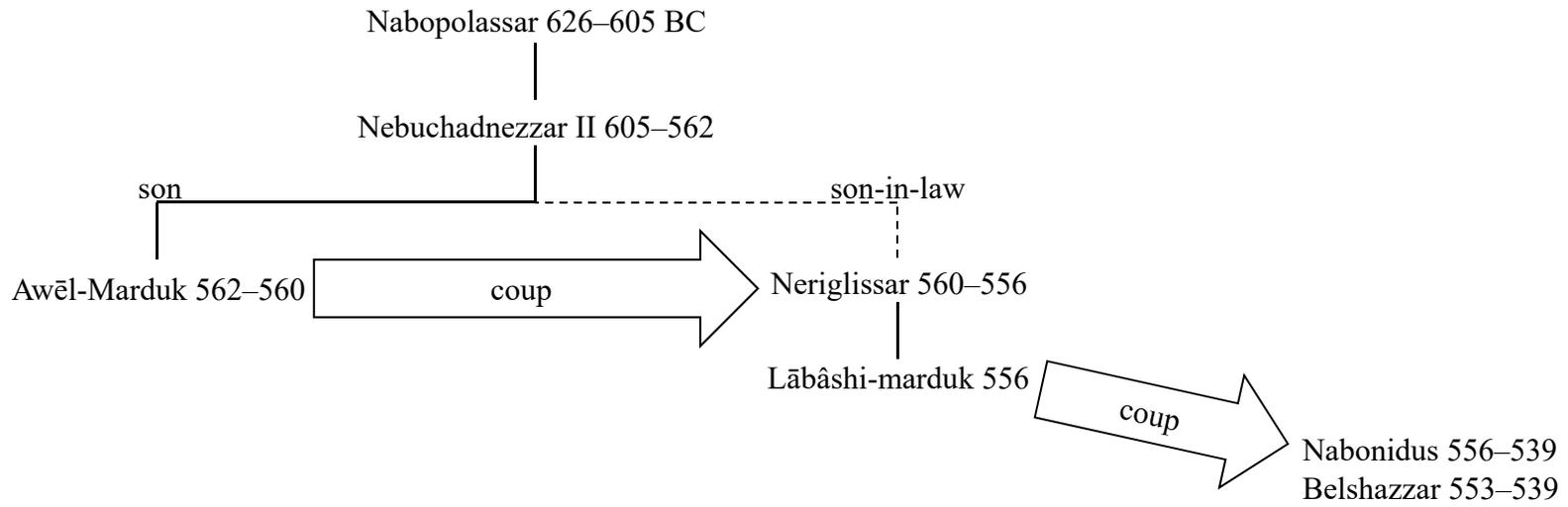
Evidence from Primary Sources

Name of Source	Existence of Darius the Mede/Cyaxares II
Herodotus	not recognized
Xenophon	supports
Daniel	supports
Cyrus Cylinder	not recognized
Verse Account of Nabonidus	not recognized
Nabonidus Chronicle	not recognized
Dream Text/Sippar Cylinder of Nabonidus	not recognized
Harran Stele	supports
Dynastic Prophecy	not recognized
Babylonian contract texts	not recognized
Ctesias	not recognized
Berossus	supports
Valerius Harpocration	supports
Aeschylus	supports
Behistun inscription	supports

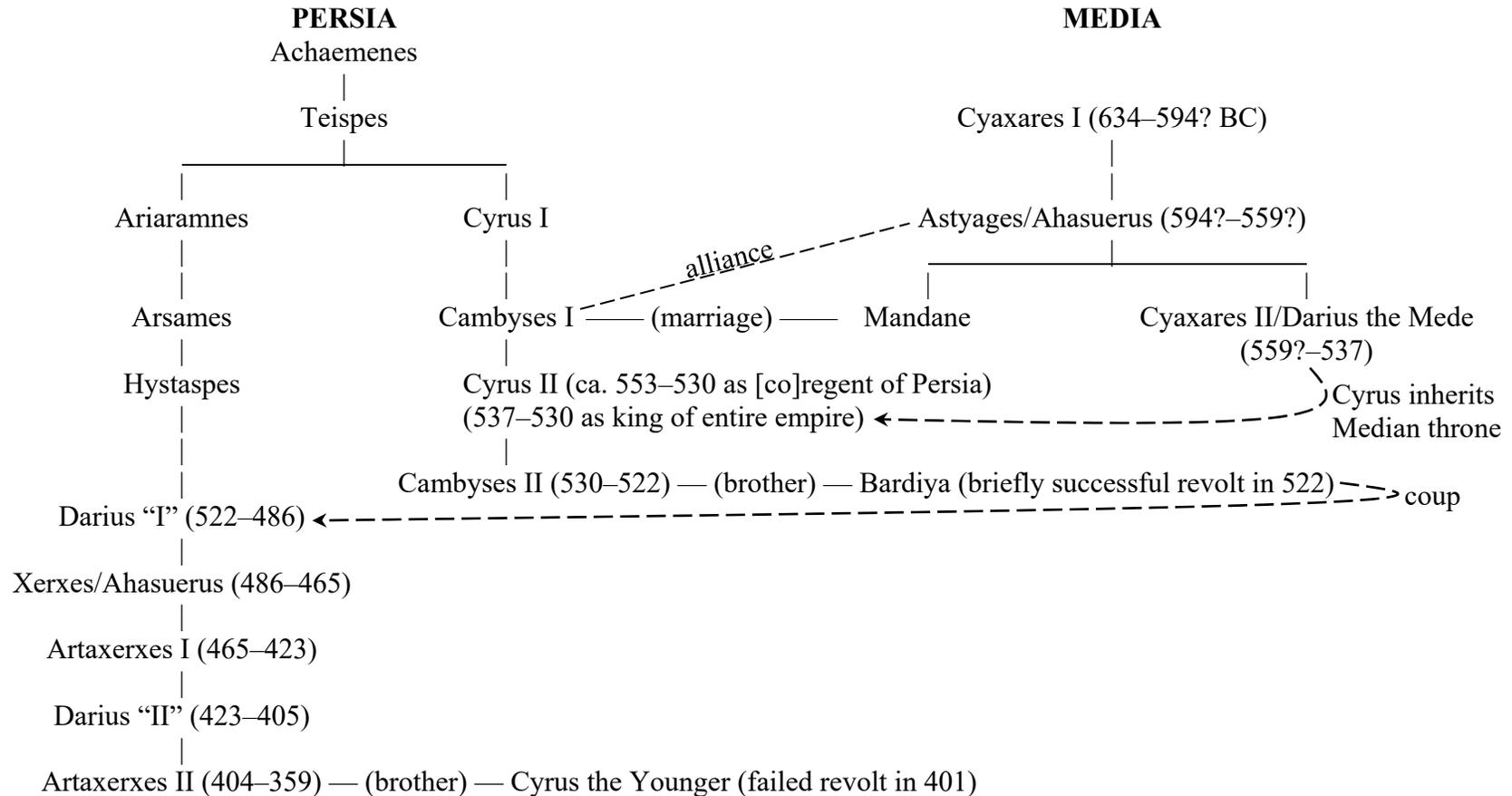
Regnal Years of Nabonidus

Accession year of Nabonidus ······	556/55 BC	→	Accedes May–June, 556
First year of Nabonidus ······	555/54		
Second year of Nabonidus ······	554/53		
Third year of Nabonidus ······	553/52	}	Nabonidus in Teima
Fourth year of Nabonidus ······	552/51		
Fifth year of Nabonidus ······	551/50		
Sixth year of Nabonidus ······	550/49		
Seventh year of Nabonidus ······	549/48		
Eighth year of Nabonidus ······	548/47		
Ninth year of Nabonidus ······	547/46		
Tenth year of Nabonidus ······	546/45		
Eleventh year of Nabonidus ······	545/44		
Twelfth year of Nabonidus ······	544/43		
Thirteenth year of Nabonidus ······	543/42		
Fourteenth year of Nabonidus ······	542/41		
Fifteenth year of Nabonidus ······	541/40		
Sixteenth year of Nabonidus ······	540/39		
Seventeenth year of Nabonidus ······	539/38	→	Deposed October, 539 BC

Kings of the Neo-Babylonian Empire



New Chart of Persian and Median Royal Lineages to 359 BC¹



¹ Adapted from S. Douglas Waterhouse, "Why Was Darius the Mede Expunged from History?" in *To Understand the Scriptures: Essays in Honor of William H. Shea*, ed. David Merling (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Institute of Archeology, 1997), 179. The dates given for the reigns of Cyaxares I and Astyages are based on Herodotus, who gives a twenty-nine year reign for Cyrus and a thirty-five year reign for Astyages (Herodotus 1.130, 214).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abel, Ludwig, and Hugo Winckler, eds. *Keilschrifttexte zum Gebrauch bei Vorlesungen*. Berlin: W. Spemann, 1890.
- Aeschylus. *Persians*. Translated by Herbert Weir Smyth. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1922.
- Albright, W. F. "The Date and Personality of the Chronicler." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 40 (1921): 104-24.
- Alfrink, Bernard. "Darius Medus." *Biblica* 9 (1928): 316-40.
- Anderson, J. K. *Xenophon*. Classical Life and Letters, edited by Hugh Lloyd-Jones. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1974.
- Anderson, Sir Robert. *Daniel in the Critics' Den: A Defense of the Historicity of the Book of Daniel*. 3rd ed. London: J. Nisbet, 1909. Reprint, Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1990.
- Anderson, Steven D. *Dr. Anderson's Interpretive Guide to the Major Prophets (Isaiah–Daniel)*. August 2014 ed. Dr. Anderson's Interpretive Guide to the Bible, vol. 4. Grand Rapids: Steven D. Anderson, 2014.
- Archer, Gleason L., Jr. "Daniel." In *Expositor's Bible Commentary*, edited by Frank E. Gaebelein et al., vol. 7, 1-157. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1985.
- Archer, Gleason L., Jr., ed. *Jerome's Commentary on Daniel*. Translated by Gleason L. Archer Jr. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1958.
- Archer, Gleason L., Jr. *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*. Rev. ed. Chicago: Moody, 1994.
- Aristophanes. *The Birds*. Translated by Benjamin Bickley Rogers. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1924.
- Aristotle. *Politics*. Translated by H. Rackham. Loeb Classical Library. London: William Heinemann, 1944.
- Arnold, Bill T., and Piotr Michalowski. "Achaemenid Period Historical Texts concerning Mesopotamia." In *The Ancient Near East: Historical Sources in Translation*, edited by Mark W. Chavalas. Blackwell Sourcebooks in Ancient History, 407-30. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2006.
- Arrian. *Anabasis Alexandri*. Translated by E. Iliff Robson. 2 vols. Loeb Classical Library. London: William Heinemann, 1929–33.
- Atkinson, K. M. T. "The Legitimacy of Cambyses and Darius as Kings of Egypt." *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 76, no. 3 (1956): 167-77.

- Auberger, Janick, ed. *Ctésias: Histoire des Perses*. Histoires de l'Orient. Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1991.
- Aucher Ancyrani, Iohannis Baptistae, ed. *Eusebii Pamphili chronicon bipartitum*. Venice: Typis Coenobii PP. Armenorum in Insula S. Lazari, 1818.
- Balcer, Jack Martin. *Herodotus & Bisitun: Problems in Ancient Persian Historiography*. Historia: Einzelschriften, vol. 49. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 1987.
- Baldwin, Joyce G. *Daniel: An Introduction and Commentary*. Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, edited by D. J. Wiseman. Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1978.
- Barnes, Albert. *Daniel*. 2 vols. Notes on the Old Testament. London: Blackie & Son, 1853. Reprint, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996.
- Beaulieu, Paul-Alain. *The Reign of Nabonidus, King of Babylon 556–539 B.C.* Yale Near Eastern Researches, edited by William W. Hallo, Marvin H. Pope, and William K. Simpson, vol. 10. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989.
- Berger, P.- R. "Der Kyros-Zylinder mit dem Zusatzfragment BIN II Nr. 32 und die akkadischen Personennamen im Danielbuch." *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie und vorderasiatische Archäologie* 64, no. 2 (1975): 192-234.
- Berger, Paul-Richard. *Die neubabylonischen Königsinschriften*. Alter Orient und Altes Testament, edited by Kurt Bergerhof, Manfred Dietrich, and Oswald Loretz, vol. 4/1. Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1973.
- Bertholdt, Leonhard. *Daniel aus dem Hebräisch–Aramäischen: neu übersetzt und erklärt, mit einer vollständigen Einleitung und einigen historischen und exegetischen Excursen: Erste Hälfte*. Erlangen: Johann Jakob Palm, 1806.
- Bickerman, E. J., and H. Tadmor. "Darius I, Pseudo-Smerdis, and the Magi." *Athenaeum* 56 (1978): 239-61.
- Bivar, A. D. H. "Achaemenid Coins, Weights and Measures." In *The Median and Achaemenian Periods*, edited by Ilya Gershevitch. Vol. 2 of *The Cambridge History of Iran*, 610-39. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985.
- Boscawen, W. St. Chad. "Babylonian Dated Tablets, and the Canon of Ptolemy." *Transactions of the Society of Biblical Archaeology* 6, no. 1 (1878): 1-78.
- Boutflower, Charles. *In and around the Book of Daniel*. London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1923. Reprint, Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1977.
- Briant, Pierre. *From Cyrus to Alexander: A History of the Persian Empire*. Translated by Peter T. Daniels. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2002.
- Broadhead, H. D., ed. *The Persae of Aeschylus*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960.

- Brown, Truesdell S. *The Greek Historians*. Civilization and Society: Studies in Social, Economic, and Cultural History, edited by Theodore K. Rabb. London: D. C. Heath, 1973.
- Brownson, Carleton L., and John Dillery, eds. *Xenophon: Anabasis*. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001.
- Buchanan, George Wesley. *The Book of Daniel*. Mellen Bible Commentary: Old Testament Series, edited by George Wesley Buchanan, vol. 25. Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 1999.
- Bulman, James M. "The Identification of Darius the Mede." *Westminster Theological Journal* 35, no. 3 (1973): 247-67.
- Burridge, Richard A. *What Are the Gospels? A Comparison with Graeco-Roman Biography*. 2nd ed. Biblical Resource Series, edited by Astrid B. Beck et al. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004.
- Burstein, Stanley Mayer, ed. *The Babyloniaca of Berossus*. Sources from the Ancient Near East, edited by Giorgio Buccellati, Marilyn Kelly-Buccellati, and Piotr Michalowski, vol. 1.5. Malibu, CA: Undena, 1978.
- Calvin, John. *Commentaries on the Book of the Prophet Daniel*. Translated by Thomas Meyers. Vol. 1. Calvin's Commentaries. Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1852. Reprint, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948.
- Campbell, Donald K. *Daniel: Decoder of Dreams*. Wheaton: Victor, 1977.
- Cicero. *De Divinatione*. Translated by William Armistead Falconer. Loeb Classical Library. London: William Heinemann, 1923.
- Cicero. *De Legibus*. Translated by Clinton Walker Keyes. Loeb Classical Library. London: William Heinemann, 1928.
- Cicero. *Letters to Quintus*. Translated by D. R. Shackleton Bailey. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, MA: Harvard, 2002.
- Cizek, Alexandru. "From the Historical Truth to the Literary Convention: The Life of Cyrus the Great Viewed by Herodotus, Ctesias and Xenophon." *Antiquité classique* 44 (1975): 531-52.
- Clarke, Adam. *The Holy Bible . . . with a Commentary and Critical Notes*. Vol. 5. New York: Abraham Paul, 1825.
- Colless, Brian E. "Cyrus the Persian as Darius the Mede in the Book of Daniel." *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 56 (1992): 113-26.
- Collins, John J. *A Commentary on the Book of Daniel*. Hermeneia, edited by Frank Moore Cross. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993.

- Collins, John J. *Introduction to the Hebrew Bible*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2004.
- Collins, John J. *A Short Introduction to the Hebrew Bible*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007.
- Cook, J. M. "The Rise of the Achaemenids and Establishment of Their Empire." In *The Median and Achaemenian Periods*, edited by Ilya Gershevitch. Vol. 2 of *The Cambridge History of Iran*, 200-91. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985.
- Curtis, John. *The Cyrus Cylinder and Ancient Persia: A New Beginning for the Middle East*. London: British Museum, 2013.
- Dandamaev, M. A. *A Political History of the Achaemenid Empire*. Translated by W. J. Vogelsang. Leiden: Brill, 1989.
- Dandamayev, M. A. "Neo-Babylonian and Achaemenid State Administration in Mesopotamia." In *Judah and the Judeans in the Persian Period*, edited by Oded Lipschits and Manfred Oeming, 373-98. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2006.
- Davidson, Samuel. *The Text of the Old Testament Considered: With a Treatise on Sacred Interpretation; and a Brief Introduction to the Old Testament Books and the Apocrypha*. Vol. 2.2 of *An Introduction to the Critical Study and Knowledge of the Holy Scriptures*, by Thomas Hartwell Horne. Edited by Thomas Hartwell Horne, Samuel Davidson, and Samuel Prideaux Tregelles. London: Longman, Brown, Green, Longmans, & Roberts, 1856.
- Deane, H. *Daniel: His Life and Times*. Men of the Bible. London: James Nisbet, 1888.
- Delitzsch, Friedrich, ed. *Vorderasiatische Schriftdenkmäler der Königlichen Museen zu Berlin*, vol. 1. Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1907.
- Diakonoff, I. M. "Media." In *The Median and Achaemenian Periods*, edited by Ilya Gershevitch. Vol. 2 of *The Cambridge History of Iran*, 36-148. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985.
- Diodorus of Sicily. *Bibliotheca historica*. Translated by C. H. Oldfather et al. 12 vols. Loeb Classical Library. London: William Heinemann, 1933-67.
- Donbaz, Veysel. "Deux nouvelles inscriptions de Nabonide, roi de Babylone." *Anatolia antiqua* 1 (1987): 15-21.
- Dougherty, Raymond Philip. *Archives from Erech: Time of Nebuchadrezzar and Nabonidus*. Goucher College Cuneiform Inscriptions, vol. 1. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1923.
- Dougherty, Raymond Philip. *Nabonidus and Belshazzar: A Study of the Closing Events of the Neo-Babylonian Empire*. Yale Oriental Series, vol. 15. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1929.

- Dougherty, Raymond Philip. *Records from Erech: Time of Nabonidus (555-538 B. C.)*. Yale Oriental Series: Babylonian Texts, vol. 6. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1920.
- Drews, Robert. "The Fall of Astyages and Herodotus' Chronology of the Eastern Kingdoms." *Historia: Zeitschrift für alte Geschichte* 18, no. 1 (1969): 1-11.
- Drews, Robert. "Sargon, Cyrus and Mesopotamian Folk History." *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 33, no. 4 (1974): 387-93.
- Driver, S. R. *The Book of Daniel*. Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges, edited by A. F. Kirkpatrick. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1900.
- Eissfeldt, Otto. *The Old Testament: An Introduction including the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha, and also the Works of Similar Type from Qumran: The History of the Formation of the Old Testament*. Translated by Peter R. Ackroyd. New York: Harper and Row, 1965.
- Euripides. *Electra*. Translated by Arthur S. Way. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1912.
- Fehling, Detlev. *Herodotus and His 'Sources': Citation, Invention and Narrative Art*. Translated by J. G. Howie. ARCA Classical and Medieval Texts, Papers and Monographs, edited by Francis Cairns, Robin Seager, and Frederick Williams, vol. 21. Leeds, Great Britain: Francis Cairns, 1989.
- Ferguson, Sinclair B. *Daniel*. Communicator's Commentary, edited by Lloyd J. Ogilvie, vol. 19. Waco, TX: Word, 1988.
- Finkel, Irving. "The Cyrus Cylinder: The Babylonian Perspective." In *The Cyrus Cylinder: The King of Persia's Proclamation from Ancient Babylon*, edited by Irving Finkel, 4-34. London: I. B. Tauris, 2013.
- Finkel, Irving. "Transliteration of the Cyrus Cylinder Text." In *The Cyrus Cylinder: The King of Persia's Proclamation from Ancient Babylon*, edited by Irving Finkel, 129-35. London: I. B. Tauris, 2013.
- Fornara, Charles W. "Evidence for the Date of Herodotus' Publication." *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 91 (1971): 25-34.
- Forsdyke, Sara. "Greek History, c. 525-480 BC." In *Brill's Companion to Herodotus*, edited by Egbert J. Bakker, Irene J. F. de Jong, and Hans van Wees, 521-49. Leiden: Brill, 2002.
- Foster, Benjamin R., ed. *Before the Muses: An Anthology of Akkadian Literature*, 3rd ed. Bethesda, MD: CDL Press, 2005.
- Fowler, Robert. "Herodotus and His Prose Predecessors." In *The Cambridge Companion to Herodotus*, edited by Carolyn Dewald and John Marincola, 29-45. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.

- Gadd, C. J. "The Harran Inscriptions of Nabonidus." *Anatolian Studies* 8 (1958): 35-92.
- Garvie, A. F., ed. *Aeschylus: Persae: With Introduction and Commentary*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.
- Gesenius, Wilhelm. *Thesaurus philologicus criticus linguae hebraeae et chaldaeae veteris testamenti*. 2nd ed. Vol. 1. Leipzig: F. C. G. Vogelii, 1835.
- Gifford, Edwin Hamilton, trans. and ed. *Eusebius: Preparation for the Gospel*, vol. 1. Oxford: Clarendon, 1903. Reprint, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981.
- Gilmore, John, ed. *The Fragments of the Persika of Ktesias*. London: MacMillan, 1888.
- Glassner, Jean-Jacques. *Mesopotamian Chronicles*. Edited by Benjamin R. Foster. Writings from the Ancient World, no. 19. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2004.
- Gleason, C. W., ed. *The Cyropaedia of Xenophon: Abridged for Schools*. New York: American Book Company, 1897.
- Goldingay, John E. *Daniel*. Word Biblical Commentary, edited by David A. Hubbard, Glenn W. Barker, and John D. W. Watts, vol. 30. Dallas: Word, 1989.
- Gould, John P. A. "Herodotus (1)." In *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, edited by Simon Hornblower and Antony Spawforth, 4th ed., 674-76. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.
- Grabbe, Lester L. "Another Look at the *Gestalt* of 'Darius the Mede.'" *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 50, no. 2 (1988): 198-213.
- Grayson, A. K. *Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles*. Texts from Cuneiform Sources, edited by A. Leo Oppenheim, vol. 5. Locust Valley, NY: J. J. Augustin, 1975.
- Grayson, A. K. *Babylonian Historical-Literary Texts*. Toronto Semitic Texts and Studies. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1975.
- Grayson, A. K., Bert van der Spek, and Jona Lendering. "ABC 7: The Nabonidus Chronicle." Livius. Last modified January 23, 2009. Accessed November 8, 2013. http://www.livius.org/cg-cm/chronicles/abc7/abc7_nabonidus1.html.
- Greenfield, Jonas C., and Bezalel Porten, eds. *The Bisitun Inscription of Darius the Great: Aramaic Version*. Corpus Inscriptionum Iranicarum: Part I: Inscriptions of Ancient Iran, edited by Harold Bailey, vol. 5.1. London: Lund Humphries, 1982.
- Groeneboom, P. *Kommentar*. Translated by Helga Sönnichsen. Vol. 2 of *Aischylos' Perser*. Studentexte Griechischer und Lateinischer Schriftsteller, vol. 3. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1960.

- Hall, Edith. *Inventing the Barbarian: Greek Self-definition through Tragedy*. Oxford Classical Monographs. Oxford: Clarendon, 1989.
- Hallo, William W., and K. Lawson Younger Jr., eds. *Canonical Compositions from the Biblical World*. Vol. 1 of *The Context of Scripture*. Leiden: Brill, 1997.
- Hallo, William W., and K. Lawson Younger Jr., eds. *Monumental Inscriptions from the Biblical World*. Vol. 2 of *The Context of Scripture*. Leiden: Brill, 2000.
- Harpocration. *Lexeis of the Ten Orators*. Edited by John J. Keaney. Amsterdam: Adolf M. Hakkert, 1991.
- Harrison, R. K. *Introduction to the Old Testament with a Comprehensive Review of Old Testament Studies and a Special Supplement on the Apocrypha*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969.
- Harrison, Thomas. "The Persian Invasions." In *Brill's Companion to Herodotus*, edited by Egbert J. Bakker, Irene J. F. de Jong, and Hans van Wees, 551-78. Leiden: Brill, 2002.
- Hartman, Louis F., and Alexander A. Di Lella. *The Book of Daniel*. Anchor Bible, edited by William Foxwell Albright and David Noel Freedman, vol. 23. New York: Doubleday, 1977.
- Helm, Peyton Randolph. "'Greeks' in the Neo-Assyrian Levant and 'Assyria' in Early Greek Writers." PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1980.
- Helm, Rudolf, ed. *Die Chronik des Hieronymus*. 2nd ed. Vol. 7 of *Eusebius Werke*. Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten Jahrhunderte, vol. 47. Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1956.
- Hengstenberg, E. W. *Dissertations on the Genuineness of Daniel and the Integrity of Zechariah*. Translated by B. P. Pratten. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1847.
- Herodotus. Translated by A. D. Godley. 4 vols. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1920–25.
- Hill, Andrew E. "Daniel." In *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Revised Edition*, edited by Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland, vol. 8, 19-212. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008.
- Hirsch, Steven W. "1001 Iranian Nights: History and Fiction in Xenophon's *Cyropaedia*." In *The Greek Historians: Literature and History: Papers Presented to A. E. Raubitschek*, 65-85. Saratoga, CA: ANMA Libri, 1985.
- Hirsch, Steven W. *The Friendship of the Barbarians: Xenophon and the Persian Empire*. Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1985.

- Hogan, James C. *A Commentary on the Complete Greek Tragedies—Aeschylus*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984.
- Högemann, Peter. “Ctesias.” In *Brill’s New Pauly: Encyclopaedia of the Ancient World: Antiquity*, edited by Hubert Cancik, Helmuth Schneider, and Christine F. Salazar, vol. 3, 969-70. Leiden: Brill, 2003.
- Hornblower, Simon. “Herodotus and His Sources of Information.” In *Brill’s Companion to Herodotus*, edited by Egbert J. Bakker, Irene J. F. de Jong, and Hans van Wees, 373-86. Leiden: Brill, 2002.
- Hornblower, Simon. “Thucydides [2] of Athens.” In *Brill’s New Pauly: Encyclopaedia of the Ancient World: Antiquity*, edited by Hubert Cancik, Helmuth Schneider, and Christine F. Salazar, vol. 14, 632-37. Leiden: Brill, 2009.
- Horne, Thomas Hartwell. *An Introduction to the Critical Study and Knowledge of the Holy Scriptures*. 8th ed. Vol. 4. London: T. Cadell, 1839.
- Huehnergard, John. *A Grammar of Akkadian*. 2nd ed. Harvard Semitic Studies, edited by Jo Ann Hackett and John Huehnergard. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2005.
- Immerwahr, Henry R. *Form and Thought in Herodotus*. American Philological Association Monograph Series, edited by Walton Morris, vol. 23. Cleveland, OH: Western Reserve University, 1966.
- Ironside, H. A. *Lectures on Daniel the Prophet*. 2nd ed. Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, 1920.
- Jacoby, Felix. *Geschichte von Staedten und Voelkern (Horographie und Ethnographie): Autoren ueber einzelne Laender: Aegypten—Geten Nr. 608a—708*. Vol. 3C.1 of *Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker*. Leiden: Brill, 1958.
- Jacoby, Felix. *Geschichte von Staedten und Voelkern (Horographie und Ethnographie): Autoren ueber verschiedene Staedte (Laender): Aegypten—Geten Nr. 262—296 Text*. Vol. 3A of *Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker*. Leiden: Brill, 1954.
- Jacoby, Felix. *Zeitgeschichte: Universalgeschichte und Hellenika: Nr. 64—105*. Vol. 2A of *Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker*. Leiden: Brill, 1961.
- Jerome. *S. Hieronymi presbyteri opera: Pars I: Opera exegetica 5: Commentariorum in Daniele libri III<IV>*. Corpus Christianorum: Series latina, vol. 75A. London: Typographi Brepols Editores Pontificii, 1964.
- Jones, Tom B. *Paths to the Ancient Past: Applications of the Historical Method to Ancient History*. New York: Free Press, 1967.
- Josephus. *Against Apion*. Translated by H. St. J. Thackeray. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1926.

- Josephus. *Jewish Antiquities*. Translated by H. St. J. Thackeray et al. 6 vols. Loeb Classical Library. London: William Heinemann, 1930–65.
- Karst, Josef, ed. *Die Chronik aus dem Armenischen übersetzt mit textkritischem Commentar*. Vol. 5 of *Eusebius Werke*. Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten drei Jahrhunderte, vol. 20. Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1911.
- Keaney, John J., ed. *Harpocration: Lexeis of the Ten Orators*. Amsterdam: Adolf M. Hakkert, 1991.
- Keil, C. F. *Biblical Commentary on the Book of Daniel*. Translated by M. G. Easton. Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1877. Reprint, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955.
- Kent, Roland G. "The Oldest Old Persian Inscriptions." *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 66 (1946): 206-12.
- King, L. W., and R. Campbell Thompson. *The Sculptures and Inscription of Darius the Great, on the Rock of Behistûn in Persia: A New Collation of the Persian, Susian and Babylonian Texts, with English Translations*. London: British Museum, 1907.
- Knoppers, Gary N. *1 Chronicles 1–9: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. Anchor Bible, edited by William Foxwell Albright and David Noel Freedman, vol. 12. New York: Doubleday, 2004.
- Koch, Klaus. "Dareios, der Meder." In *The Word of the Lord Shall Go Forth: Essays in Honor of David Noel Freedman in Celebration of His Sixtieth Birthday*, edited by Carol L. Meyers and M. O'Connor. American Schools of Oriental Research Special Volume Series, edited by Eric M. Meyers, vol. 1, 287-99. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1983.
- Koch, Klaus. "Darius the Mede." In *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, edited by David Noel Freedman et al., vol. 2, 38-39. New York: Doubleday, 1992.
- Komoróczy, G. "Ummān-manda." *Acta Antiqua Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 25 (1977): 43-67.
- König, Friedrich Wilhelm. *Die Persika des Ktesias von Knidos*. Archiv für Orientforschung, vol. 18. Graz, Austria: Ernst Weidner, 1972.
- Kranz, Walther. *Stasimon: Untersuchungen zu Form und Gehalt der griechischen Tragödie*. Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1933.
- Kuhr, Amélie. "Berossus' *Babyloniaka* and Seleucid Rule in Babylonia." In *Hellenism in the East: The Interaction of Greek and Non-Greek Civilizations from Syria to Central Asia after Alexander*, edited by Amélie Kuhrt and Susan Sherwin-White, 32-56. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987.

- Lacocque, André. *The Book of Daniel*. Translated by David Pellauer. Rev. ed. Atlanta: John Knox, 1979.
- Lacocque, André. *Daniel in His Time*. Studies on the Personalities of the Old Testament, edited by James L. Crenshaw. Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1988.
- Lacocque, André. *Le livre de Daniel*. Commentaire de l'Ancien Testament, vol. 15b. Paris: Neuchatel, 1976.
- Lambert, W. G. "Nebuchadnezzar King of Justice." *Iraq* 27, no. 1 (1965): 1-11.
- Lambert, W. G. "A New Source for the Reign of Nabonidus." *Archiv für Orientforschung* 22 (1968-69): 1-8.
- Larkin, Clarence. *The Book of Daniel*. Glenside, PA: The Clarence Larkin Estate, 1929.
- Lateiner, Donald. *The Historical Method of Herodotus*. Phoenix: Journal of the Classical Association of Canada: Supplementary Volume 23. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989.
- Lau, Robert, and J. Dyneley Prince. *The Abu Habba Cylinder of Nabuna'id*. Semitic Study Series, edited by Richard J. H. Gottheil and Morris Jastrow Jr., vol. 5. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1905.
- Law, George R. *Identification of Darius the Mede*. Pfafftown, NC: Ready Scribe Press, 2010.
- Lee, Thomas G. "The Jasper Cylinder Seal of Aššurbanipal and Nabonidus' Making of Sîn's Statue." *Revue d'Assyriologie* 87, no. 2 (1993): 131-36.
- Leichty, Erle, J. J. Finkelstein, and C. B. F. Walker. *Tablets from Sippar 3*. Vol. 8 of *Catalogue of the Babylonian Tablets in the British Museum*. London: British Museum, 1988.
- Leichty, Erle, and A. K. Grayson. *Tablets from Sippar 2*. Vol. 7 of *Catalogue of the Babylonian Tablets in the British Museum*. London: British Museum, 1987.
- Leupold, H. C. *Exposition of Daniel*. Columbus, OH: Wartburg, 1949.
- Lewis, David M. "Persians in Herodotus." In *The Greek Historians: Literature and History: Papers Presented to A. E. Raubitschek*, 101-117. Saratoga, CA: ANMA Libri, 1985.
- Lightfoot, John. *The Works of the Reverend and Learned John Lightfoot D. D., Late Master of Katherine Hall in Cambridge and Prebend of Ely*. Vol. 1. London: Robert Scot, Thomas Basset, Richard Chiswell, and John Wright, 1684.
- Llewellyn-Jones, Lloyd, and James Robson, eds. *Ctesias' History of Persia: Tales of the Orient*. Routledge Classical Translations. New York: Routledge, 2010.
- Longman, Tremper, III, and Raymond B. Dillard. *An Introduction to the Old Testament*. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006.

- Longman, Tremper, III. *Daniel*. NIV Application Commentary Series, edited by Terry Muck. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999.
- Lowth, William. *A Commentary upon the Prophecy of Daniel, and the Twelve Minor Prophets*. 2 vols. London: William Mears, 1726.
- Lucas, Ernest C. *Daniel*. Apollos Old Testament Commentary, edited by David W. Baker and Gordon J. Wenham, vol. 20. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002.
- Maius, Angelus, and Iohannes Zohrabus, eds. *Eusebii Pamphili chronicorum canonum libri duo*. Milan: Regiis Typis, 1818.
- Mallowan, Max. "Cyrus the Great (558–529 B.C.)." In *The Median and Achaemenian Periods*, edited by Ilya Gershevitch. Vol. 2 of *The Cambridge History of Iran*, 392-419. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985.
- Marincola, John. *Greek Historians*. Greece & Rome: New Surveys in the Classics, no. 31. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.
- Marincola, John. "Herodotus and the Poetry of the Past." In *The Cambridge Companion to Herodotus*, edited by Carolyn Dewald and John Marincola, 13-28. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.
- Marozzi, Justin. *The Man Who Invented History: Travels with Herodotus*. London: John Murray, 2008.
- Marquart, J. "Untersuchung zur Geschichte von Eran (II)." *Philologus: Zeitschrift für das classische Altertum: Supplementband X 1* (1905): 1-258.
- Meister, Klaus. "Dion." In *Brill's New Pauly: Encyclopaedia of the Ancient World: Antiquity*, edited by Hubert Cancik, Helmuth Schneider, and Christine F. Salazar, vol. 4, 421. Leiden: Brill, 2004.
- Meister, Klaus. "Herodotus [1]." In *Brill's New Pauly: Encyclopaedia of the Ancient World: Antiquity*, edited by Hubert Cancik, Helmuth Schneider, and Christine F. Salazar, vol. 6, 265-71. Leiden: Brill, 2005.
- Melchert, Hartmut. "Ktesias' Persika, Books 7-13." PhD diss., Brown University, 1996.
- Migne, J.-P., ed. *Eusebii Pamphili, Caesareae Palaestinae episcopi, opera omnia quae exstant*, vol. 1. Patrologiae cursus completus: Series Graeca: Patrologiae Graecae, vol. 19. [Paris], 1857.
- Miller, Stephen R. *Daniel*. New American Commentary, edited by E. Ray Clendenen. [Nashville]: Broadman & Holman, 1994.
- Miller, Walter, ed. *Xenophon: Cyropaedia*. Loeb Classical Library. 2 vols. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1914.

- Montgomery, James A. *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Daniel*. International Critical Commentary. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1927.
- Moran, W. L. "Notes on the New Nabonidus Inscriptions." *Orientalia* 28, no. 2 (1959): 130-40.
- Mosshammer, Alden A. *The Chronicle of Eusebius and Greek Chronographic Tradition*. London: Associated University Presses, 1979.
- Mras, Karl, and Édouard des Places, eds. *Die Praeparatio Evangelica: Erster Teil: Einleitung, die Bücher I bis X*. 2nd ed. Vol. 8 of *Eusebius Werke*. Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten Jahrhunderte. Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1982.
- Müller, Karl, ed. *Ctesiae Cnidii et chronographorum Castoris, Eratosthenis, etc.: Fragmenta dissertatione et notis illustrata*. Herodoti historiarum libri IX, edited by Wilhelm Dindorf. Paris: A. Firmin-Didot, 1928.
- Murray, Gilbert, ed. *Aeschylus: The Persians: Translated into English Rhyming Verse with Preface and Notes*. London: George Allen & Unwin, 1939.
- Murray, Gilbert. "The Persae." In *Aeschylus: A Collection of Critical Essays*, edited by Marsh H. McCall Jr., 29-39. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1972.
- Myres, John L. *Herodotus: Father of History*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1953.
- Neujahr, Matthew. "When Darius Defeated Alexander: Composition and Redaction in the Dynastic Prophecy." *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 64, no. 2 (2005): 101-7.
- Olmstead, A. T. *History of the Persian Empire*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948.
- Parker, Richard A., and Waldo H. Dubberstein. *Babylonian Chronology: 626 B.C.–A.D. 75*. Brown University Studies, vol. 19. Providence, RI: Brown University Press, 1956.
- Peat, Jerome. "Cyrus 'King of Lands,' Cambyses 'King of Babylon': The Disputed Co-regency." *Journal of Cuneiform Studies* 41, no. 2 (1989): 199-216.
- Pentecost, J. Dwight. "Daniel." In *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: Old Testament*, edited by John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck, 1323-75. Colorado Springs: Chariot Victor, 1985.
- Photius. *Bibliothèque*. Translated by René Henry. Vol. 1. Collection Byzantine. Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1959.
- Pinches, T. G., ed. *Neo-Babylonian and Achaemenid Economic Texts*. Vol. 57 of *Cuneiform Texts from Babylonian Tablets in the British Museum*. London: Trustees of the British Museum, 1982.
- Places, Édouard des, and Guy Schroeder, eds. *Eusèbe de Césarée: La préparation évangélique, livres VIII-IX-X*. Sources chrétiennes, vol. 369. Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1991.

- Plutarch. *On the Malice of Herodotus*. Translated by Lionel Pearson. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1965.
- Podlecki, Anthony J., ed. *The Persians, by Aeschylus: A Translation with Commentary*. Prentice-Hall Greek Drama Series, edited by Eric A. Havelock and Maynard Mack. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1970.
- Poohigian, Aaron, ed. *Aeschylus: Persians, Seven against Thebes, and Suppliants: Translated, with an Introduction and Notes*. Johns Hopkins New Translations from Antiquity. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011.
- Pope, Arthur Upham and Phyllis Ackerman, eds. *Pre-Achaemenid, Achaemenid, Parthian and Sāsānian Periods*. Vol. 4 of *A Survey of Persian Art from Prehistoric Times to the Present*. London: Oxford University Press, 1938.
- Porteous, Norman W. *Daniel: A Commentary*. Old Testament Library, edited by G. Ernest Wright et al. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1965.
- Prideaux, Humphrey. *An Historical Connection of the Old and New Testaments: Comprising the History of the Jews and Neighboring Nations, from the Decline of the Kingdoms of Judah and Israel to the Time of Christ*. Edited by J. Talboys Wheeler. 3rd ed. Vol. 1. London: William Tegg & Co., 1877.
- Pritchard, James B., ed. *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, 3rd ed. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969.
- Pritchett, W. Kendrick. *The Liar School of Herodotus*. Amsterdam: J. C. Gieben, 1993.
- Pusey, E. B. *Daniel the Prophet: Nine Lectures, Delivered in the Divinity School of the University of Oxford*. New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1885.
- Rawlinson, George. *Egypt and Babylon from Sacred and Profane Sources*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1885.
- Razmjou, Shahrokh. "The Cyrus Cylinder: A Persian Perspective." In *The Cyrus Cylinder: The King of Persia's Proclamation from Ancient Babylon*, edited by Irving Finkel, 104-25. London: I. B. Tauris, 2013.
- Rogers, Benjamin Bickley, ed. *The Ecclesiazusae of Aristophanes*. London: G. Bell and Sons, 1917.
- Rowley, H. H. *Darius the Mede and the Four World Empires in the Book of Daniel: A Historical Study of Contemporary Theories*. Cardiff: University of Wales Press Board, 1935.
- San Nicolò, Marino. *Beiträge zu einer Prosopographie neubabylonischer Beamten der Zivil- und Tempelverwaltung*. Sitzungsberichte der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften: Philosophisch-historische Abteilung, vol. 2.2. Munich: Bayerische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1941.

- Sancisi-Weerdenburg, Heleen, and Amélie Kuhrt. "Ctesias." In *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, edited by Simon Hornblower and Antony Spawforth, 4th ed., 396. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.
- Schaudig, Hanspeter. *Die Inschriften Nabonids von Babylon und Kyros' des Großen samt den in ihrem Umfeld entstandenen Tendenzschriften: Textausgabe und Grammatik*. Alter Orient und Altes Testament, edited by Manfred Dietrich and Oswald Loretz, vol. 256. Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2001.
- Schmitt, Rüdiger. "Achaemenid Throne-Names." *Annali dell'Istituto Orientale di Napoli* 42 (1982): 83-95.
- Schnabel, Paul. *Berosos und die babylonisch-hellenistische Literatur*. Leipzig: B. G. Teubner, 1923.
- Schoene, Alfred, ed. *Eusebii chronicorum libri duo: Liber prior*. Berlin: Weidmannos, 1875.
- Schütrumpf, Eckart E. "Xenophon [2] of Athens." In *Brill's New Pauly: Encyclopaedia of the Ancient World: Antiquity*, edited by Hubert Cancik, Helmuth Schneider, and Christine F. Salazar, vol. 15, 824-33. Leiden: Brill, 2010.
- Shea, William H. "Darius the Mede in His Persian-Babylonian Setting." *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 29, no. 3 (1991): 235-57.
- Shea, William H. "Darius the Mede: An Update." *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 20, no. 3 (1982): 229-47.
- Shea, William H. "Nabonidus Chronicle: New Readings and the Identity of Darius the Mede." *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 7, no. 1 (1996): 1-20.
- Shea, William H. "The Search for Darius the Mede (Concluded), or, The Time of the Answer to Daniel's Prayer and the Date of the Death of Darius the Mede." *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 12, no. 1 (2001): 97-105.
- Shea, William H. "An Unrecognized Vassal King of Babylon in the Early Achaemenid Period." *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 9 (1971): 51-67.
- Shea, William H. "An Unrecognized Vassal King of Babylon in the Early Achaemenid Period: II." *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 9 (1971): 99-128.
- Shea, William H. "An Unrecognized Vassal King of Babylon in the Early Achaemenid Period: III." *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 10 (1972): 88-117.
- Shea, William H. "An Unrecognized Vassal King of Babylon in the Early Achaemenid Period: IV." *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 10 (1972): 147-78.
- Showers, Renald E. *The Most High God: A Commentary on the Book of Daniel*. West Collingswood, NJ: Friends of Israel, 1982.

- Smith, Sidney. *Babylonian Historical Texts Relating to the Capture and Downfall of Babylon*. London: Meuthen, 1924.
- Soden, Wolfram von. "Kyros und Nabonid: Propaganda und Gegenpropaganda." In *Aus Sprache, Geschichte und Religion Babyloniens*, edited by Luigi Cagni and Hans-Peter Müller, 285-92. Naples: Istituto Universitario Orientale, 1989.
- Soggin, J. Alberto. *Introduction to the Old Testament: From Its Origins to the Closing of the Alexandrian Canon*. Translated by John Bowden. 3rd ed. Old Testament Library, edited by Peter Ackroyd et al. Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 1989.
- Sommerstein, Alan H., ed. *Aeschylus: Persians, Seven against Thebes, Suppliants, Prometheus Bound*. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008.
- Sparks, Kenton L. *Ancient Texts for the Study of the Hebrew Bible: A Guide to the Background Literature*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2005.
- Stanleii, Thomæ, ed. *Æschyli: Tragœdiæ septum, cum scholiis græcis omnibus, deperditorum dramatum fragmentis, versione & commentario*. London: Jacobi Flesher, 1664.
- Steinmann, Andrew E. *Daniel*. Concordia Commentary. Saint Louis: Concordia, 2008.
- Strabo. *The Geography of Strabo*. Translated by Horace Leonard Jones. 8 vols. Loeb Classical Library. London: William Heinemann, 1917–32.
- Strassmaier, J. N., ed. *Inschriften von Cyrus, König von Babylon (538–529 v. Chr.)*. Babylonische Texte, vol. 7. Leipzig: Eduard Pfeiffer, 1890.
- Strassmaier, J. N., ed. *Inschriften von Nabonidus, König von Babylon (555–538 v. Chr.)*. Babylonische Texte. 2 vols. Leipzig: Eduard Pfeiffer, 1887, 1889.
- Stronach, David. *Pasargadae: A Report on the Excavations Conducted by the British Institute of Persian Studies from 1961 to 1963*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978.
- Suidas. *Lexicon*. Edited by Ada Adler. 5 vols. *Lexicographi Graeci: Recogniti et Apparatu Critico Instructi*, vol. 1. Leipzig: B. G. Teubneri, 1928–38.
- Synkellos, George. *The Chronography of George Synkellos: A Byzantine Chronicle of Universal History from the Creation*. Translated by William Adler and Paul Tuffin. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.
- Tatian. *Oratio ad Graecos*. Edited and translated by Molly Whittaker. Oxford Early Christian Texts, edited by Henry Chadwick. Oxford: Clarendon, 1982.
- Tatum, James. *Xenophon's Imperial Fiction: On The Education of Cyrus*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989.

- Taylor, Jonathan. "The Cyrus Cylinder: Discovery." In *The Cyrus Cylinder: The King of Persia's Proclamation from Ancient Babylon*, edited by Irving Finkel, 35-68. London: I. B. Tauris, 2013.
- Thucydides. *History of the Peloponnesian War*. Translated by Charles Forster Smith. 4 vols. Loeb Classical Library. London: William Heinemann, 1928–35.
- Tosi, Renzo. "[2] (Valerius) Harpocraton." In *Brill's New Pauly: Encyclopaedia of the Ancient World: Antiquity*, edited by Hubert Cancik, Helmuth Schneider, and Christine F. Salazar, vol. 5, 1150-51. Leiden: Brill, 2004.
- Tourraix, Alexandre. "Les Perses, la géopolitique et l'histoire." *Cahiers du GITA* 7 (1992-93): 99-117.
- Tremayne, Arch. *Records from Erech: Time of Cyrus and Cambyses (538-521 B. C.)*. Yale Oriental Series: Babylonian Texts, edited by Albert T. Clay, vol. 7. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1925.
- Tuplin, Christopher. "Herodotus on Persia and the Persian Empire." In *The Landmark Herodotus: The Histories*, edited by Robert B. Strassleer, 792-97. New York: Pantheon, 2007.
- Tuplin, Christopher. "The Persian Empire." In *The Long March: Xenophon and the Ten Thousand*, edited by Robin Lane Fox, 154-83. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004.
- Tuplin, Christopher J. "Xenophon (1)." In *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, edited by Simon Hornblower and Antony Spawforth, 4th ed., 1580-83. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.
- Ussher, James. *The Annals of the World: Deduced from the Origin of Time, and Continued to the Beginning of the Emperour Vespasians Reign, and the Totall Destruction and Abolition of the Temple and Common-wealth of the Jews*. London: J. Crook and G. Bedell, 1658.
- Vanderhooft, David. "Cyrus II, Liberator or Conqueror? Ancient Historiography concerning Cyrus in Babylon." In *Judah and the Judeans in the Persian Period*, edited by Oded Lipschits and Manfred Oeming, 351-72. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2006.
- Verbrugge, Gerald P., and John M. Wickersham, eds. *Berosos and Manetho, Introduced and Translated: Native Traditions in Ancient Mesopotamia and Egypt*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1996.
- Vitruvius. *On Architecture*. Translated by Frank Granger. 2 vols. Loeb Classical Library. London: William Heinemann, 1931, 1934.
- Walvoord, John F. *Daniel*. Edited by Charles H. Dyer and Philip E. Rawley. John Walvoord Prophecy Commentaries. Chicago: Moody, 2012.

- Walvoord, John F. *Daniel: The Key to Prophetic Revelation*. Chicago: Moody, 1971.
- Waterhouse, S. Douglas. "Why Was Darius the Mede Expunged from History?" In *To Understand the Scriptures: Essays in Honor of William H. Shea*, edited by David Merling, 173-89. Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Institute of Archeology, 1997.
- Wees, Hans van. "Herodotus and the Past." In *Brill's Companion to Herodotus*, edited by Egbert J. Bakker, Irene J. F. de Jong, and Hans van Wees, 321-49. Leiden: Brill, 2002.
- Weisberg, David B. "Polytheism and Politics: Some Comments on Nabonidus' Foreign Policy." In *Crossing Boundaries and Linking Horizons: Studies in Honor of Michael C. Astour on His 80th Birthday*, edited by Gordon D. Young, Mark W. Chavalas, and Richard E. Averbek, 547-56. Bethesda, MD: CDL Press, 1997.
- Wells, Joseph. *Studies in Herodotus*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1923.
- Westcott, Brooke Foss. "Darius." In *Dr. William Smith's Dictionary of the Bible: Comprising Its Antiquities, Biography, Geography, and Natural History*, revised and edited by H. B. Hackett and Ezra Abbot, 548-50. New York: Hurd and Houghton, 1868.
- Whitcomb, John C., Jr. *Darius the Mede: A Study in Historical Identification*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959.
- Whitcomb, John Clement. "The Historicity of Darius the Mede in the Book of Daniel." B.D. thesis, Grace Theological Seminary, 1951.
- Wilson, Nigel Guy. "Harpocraton, Valerius." In *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, edited by Simon Hornblower and Antony Spawforth, 4th ed., 646. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.
- Wilson, Robert Dick. *Studies in the Book of Daniel: Second Series*. New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1938.
- Winkle, Ross E. "Jeremiah's Seventy Years for Babylon: A Re-Assessment. Part I: The Scriptural Data." *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 25, no. 2 (1987): 201-14.
- Winkle, Ross E. "Jeremiah's Seventy Years for Babylon: A Re-Assessment. Part II: The Historical Data." *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 25, no. 3 (1987): 289-99.
- Wiseman, D. J. *Chronicles of Chaldean Kings (626-556 B.C.) in the British Museum*. London: British Museum, 1956.
- Wiseman, D. J. "Some Historical Problems in the Book of Daniel." In *Notes on Some Problems in the Book of Daniel*, 9-18. London: Tyndale, 1965.
- Wood, Leon. *A Commentary on Daniel*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1973.

- Wright, Charles H. H. *Daniel and His Prophecies*. London: Williams and Norgate, 1906.
- Xenophon. *Anabasis*. Translated by Carleton L. Brownson and John Dillery. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001.
- Xenophon. *Cyropaedia*. Translated by Walter Miller. 2 vols. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1914.
- Yamauchi, Edwin M. "Hermeneutical Issues in the Book of Daniel." *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 23, no. 1 (1980): 13-21.
- Yamauchi, Edwin M. "Herodotus." In *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, edited by David Noel Freedman et al., vol. 3, 180-81. New York: Doubleday, 1992.
- Yamauchi, Edwin M. *Persia and the Bible*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1990.
- Young, Edward J. *Chapters 19 to 39*. Vol. 2 of *The Book of Isaiah: The English Text, with Introduction, Exposition, and Notes*. New International Commentary on the Old Testament. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969.
- Young, Edward J. *A Commentary on Daniel*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1949.
- Young, T. Cuyler, Jr. "The Consolidation of the Empire and Its Limits of Growth under Darius and Xerxes." In *Persia, Greece and the Western Mediterranean c. 525 to 479 B.C.*, edited by John Boardman et al. Vol. 4 of *The Cambridge Ancient History*, 2nd ed., 53-111. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988.
- Young, T. Cuyler, Jr. "The Early History of the Medes and the Persians and the Achaemenid Empire to the Death of Cambyses." In *Persia, Greece and the Western Mediterranean c. 525 to 479 B.C.*, edited by John Boardman et al. Vol. 4 of *The Cambridge Ancient History*, 2nd ed., 1-52. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988.
- Zimmermann, Bernhard. "Aeschylus [1] of Athens." In *Brill's New Pauly: Encyclopaedia of the Ancient World: Antiquity*, edited by Hubert Cancik, Helmuth Schneider, and Christine F. Salazar, vol. 1, 244-51. Leiden: Brill, 2002.
- Zöckler, Otto. *The Book of the Prophet Daniel: Theologically and Homiletically Expounded*. Translated and edited by James Strong. Vol. 13 of *Commentary on the Holy Scriptures: Critical, Doctrinal and Homiletical, with Special Reference to Ministers and Students*, edited by John Peter Lange and Philip Schaff. New York: Scribner, Armstrong & Co., 1876.