

A FURTHER NOTE ON DANIEL 6: DANIEL AS "GOVERNOR"

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Although Darius the Mede has received considerable attention in discussions on the historical aspects of Dan 6, Daniel's own part in the events described there has not received a similar amount of attention from historians. In my earlier article, "Darius the Mede: An Update,"¹ I endeavored to assess the current state of the studies pertaining to this individual, as well as giving the evidence for my own view that identifies him as Gubaru, the general mentioned in connection with the fall of Babylon in the Nabonidus Chronicle. It is fitting that I should follow up that earlier article with at least a brief analysis of Daniel's own role in Babylon, as envisaged in chap. 6. Further attention to this matter, in relationship to chap. 10, will be given in a future article.

From the standpoint of Daniel himself, the importance of Dan 6 is what it tells us about the position he occupied in the Babylonian bureaucracy when it was reorganized under Persian control. It was this position that engendered the jealousy of his fellow officials and thus brought his physical well-being into jeopardy. That narrative indicated his position as one of pre-eminence. Darius the Mede appointed 120 satraps and three chief ministers over them, and Daniel was the first of these three chief ministers. While Dan 6 does not specifically identify Daniel as the governor of Babylon, that appears to be the logical way to understand the terminology employed there. The outcome of the story does not detract from that interpretation, since Daniel did not lose his pre-eminent position, but rather "prospered during the reign of Darius, and during the reign of Cyrus the Persian" (Dan 6:28).

The recognition of Daniel's occupancy of this important political position raises the question of whether or not we are in

¹In *AUSS* 20 (1982): 229-247.

possession of any extra-biblical information that might be relevant to a recognition of Daniel's possible governorship of Babylon. What do we know about the governors of Babylon in the early Persian period? The Gubaru who served as governor of Babylon from the 4th year of Cyrus to the 5th year of Cambyses is the first governor of this period whose name is attested in the contract tablets.

J. C. Whitcomb has collected all of the known references to this governor in his presentation of the proposal that this governor was Darius the Mede.² On the other hand, as noted above, I have identified Darius the Mede with an earlier Gubaru, the general who captured Babylon. One of the significant problems encountered in attempting to identify Darius the Mede with the later governor Gubaru was not mentioned in my earlier article: namely, the chronological distribution of the cuneiform references to this later governor. The fact that the Gubaru who earlier appointed governors in Babylonia died there soon after his conquest of the capital city, according to the Nabonidus Chronicle,³ means that there are no references to any governor of Babylon to fill the void of some four years between the events described in the Chronicle and the first appearance of the name of the governor Gubaru in the contract tablets.

The most likely explanation for this distribution is that this later Gubaru began to serve as governor of Babylon in the 4th year of Cyrus, when he first appears in these texts, and that he completed his term of service in that office at some time during the 5th year of Cambyses, when he disappears from the texts written in Babylonia. Such an interpretation of the data supports the idea advanced in my earlier article that all three of the references to Gubaru in the Nabonidus Chronicle refer to one and the same individual—namely, the person who conquered the city of Babylon, appointed governors there, and died soon afterwards. Thus, that Gubaru is to be distinguished from this later governor with the same name.

An additional objection to identifying the later governor Gubaru with Darius the Mede is that such an identification leaves

²John C. Whitcomb, *Darius the Mede* (Grand Rapids, Mich., 1959), pp. 11-16.

³A. L. Oppenheim, "Babylonian and Assyrian Historical Texts," in *ANET*, p. 306.

no room for Daniel as governor of Babylon, since in that case Gubaru must have governed Babylon all the way through the reign of Cyrus. On the other hand, if Daniel was the governor of Babylon early in the reign of Cyrus, the distribution of texts mentioning Gubaru the governor is just what one would expect. It would indicate that Gubaru took over the post of governor from Daniel at some time during the 4th year of Cyrus.

In this connection, a reference of special interest is Dan 10:1, where the last historical date in the book of Daniel is found. That date is the first month of Cyrus' 3d year; and the indication is, of course, that Daniel was still alive up to that point. He was, however, quite elderly by this time, and in the normal course of events probably died soon thereafter. It is not unexpected, therefore, that we should find another individual—Gubaru—in the governor's position soon after we last hear of Daniel.

Thus, not only do the contract tablets provide a place in history for Darius the Mede, but they also provide a place in history for Daniel as governor of Babylon. Moreover, that place fits very well with the requirements of the chronological references in Daniel. The name of the person who governed Babylon during the four years prior to the governor named Gubaru has not yet been recovered from contemporary cuneiform texts. However, if and when it is recovered, we should not be surprised to find that it bears some relationship to Daniel's Babylonian or Hebrew name.